

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVELTHE STORY OF JOHN MARKHAM'S
"RISE."

By Helen A. Hawley.

The train whistled out of the station and was getting underway. Suddenly an elderly woman started up with a hurried bewildered manner, exclaiming, "Was that Starkey? Starkey's my station! I must get off." The "haust" was emphatic.

"This is Starkey," her seat companion answered. "You're too late, though."

The woman was about sixty-five, dressed in respectable black, and wearing a widow's cap. She struggled to get past the one next her. It was all in a breath—much quicker than words can tell it.

A tall newsboy was crying his papers through the car. At sight of the distressed woman, he threw them down in a vacant seat, rushed forward and grabbed the conductor. In an instant the bell rang, and the train came quivering to a standstill. Some one hurried the woman off, though in her perplexity she tried the wrong door, and had to be sent back to avoid another train on the side track. Everybody had taken an interest, though some laughed as people will when distress seems comical. Everybody breathed freer when the motherly figure walked away, with a parting wave of her hand. The newsboy gathered up his papers and renewed his monotonous call.

Mrs. Pollard trudged back to Starkey station over the quarter of a mile she had gone beyond it.

"What did possess me?" she thought. "The Lord helped me off—the Lord and that boy; I do hope he'll keep me till I can walk on something safer'n railroad ties!" It took her ten minutes or so to reach the station, and she puffed painfully as she stopped to get her bearings.

"Yes, now I know where I am," she said. "That's Melissa's house 'round that corner. I expect she's up and about by this time; Frank wrote she was so much better."

As she approached her daughter's home, a curious air of stillness struck and chilled her. No, there was no creak on the front door; she couldn't help looking to see. Hesitating to ring she stole 'round to a side door, which opened, as she knew, into the family sitting room. Softly she turned the knob and entered. Frank Henderson, the son-in-law, started from his chair where he was sitting dejectedly.

"Mother!" he said in a whisper, while something approaching gladness crept into his eyes.

"Melissa? What does it mean?" Mrs. Pollard anxiously questioned.

"Oh, mother," the strong man almost sobbed. "She was doing so well—maybe she overdid. Yesterday she had a relapse—I telegraphed you; of course you'd started first. Last night we doubted if she'd pull through till morning, much less till you could make the long journey. She couldn't speak much, but every time she did she moaned for mother. Doctor said you'd do her more good than medicine." The poor fellow groaned anew. It had been hard to see his young wife pining for a mother's tenderness.

"I'm so glad you've come," he added fervently.

Mrs. Pollard was a master hand in sickness, and courage seldom forsook her. Then and there she made her resolve. First lifting her eyes as if beseeching heaven, she placed her hand firmly on Frank's trembling finger. Her very touch was strength.

"I've pulled Melissa through a many disease before you ever set eyes on her," she announced cheerily, "and please the Lord, him and me'll pull her through now. Don't you worry, son Frank, it takes the heart out of

you." She set her lips resolutely to keep back her own fears.

"Just let me put on a white apron; I wouldn't look natural to her without that, and I'll go up."

"Don't startle her mother," "Startle her!" the tone showed that Mrs. Pollard needed no warning.

Very quietly she walked into the sick room, and as quietly motioned the nurse to give up her chair by the bedside.

Mrs. Pollard seated herself and laid her warm palm on the thin hand which rested on the counterpane, softly stroking it. The invalid stopped her moan, and slowly lifted tired eyelids. There was reason and recognition in the glance.

"Mother," she breathed, with a sort of restless satisfaction.

"Yes, lovey," said the tender voice.

"Now, mother's going to give 'er baby this little bit of milk, and then baby's going to sleep. There, there, dear."

The nurse looked on amazed. Was it magic? This treatment was not down in the books.

"You're wife is going to live the doctor told Frank Henderson that night, 'and it'll be mother love that did it. If Mrs. Pollard hadn't come in the nick of time I wouldn't dare to say she'd be alive this minute."

Two months later, when Melissa was quite recovered, Mrs. Pollard started for her Eastern home. To all entreaties she answered, "No, my child, I'm getting to be an old woman, and home is home. When you're both well, Almira needs me most. She hasn't any husband, and we've been together so close since father died, we've sort o' grown together. You've got Frank and the boy. The Lord be thanked that I could come now. Next year it'll be your turn to come to me."

She left on an early train, and there were few passengers at first. Pretty soon she caught sight of a familiar figure. It was the newsboy who had helped her off the train.

"Sure, this is his beat," she thought. He had disposed of all papers possible, until a larger place should bring in more people and on some Western roads the stations are far apart. So he sat down near the front.

Mrs. Pollard was not a woman to hesitate. She went forward and tapped the boy on the arm. He sprang to his feet, lifting his cap. A quick light of recognition flashed over his face.

"Sit down," Mrs. Pollard said, placing herself beside him. "I see you remember me. Yes, I'm the same woman who was carried past Starkey station eight weeks ago. What's your name?"

"John Markham," he answered, much amused.

"John—that's a good, strong, honest name. I always did like plain names for boys—none of your high falutin' for me. Well, John Markham, do you know what you did that day? You saved a life!"

"You wern't in any danger, ma'am, at least I think not," he ventured.

"Not my life, young man, but one worth more—my daughter's. She was at the last gasp. If I'd gone on to the next station and waited for a return train, she wouldn't have held out; the doctor said so. Now I want to know what made you spring so quick to help me, when other folks laughed. Oh, I saw 'em."

The lad hesitated. "I think I'd have done it for anybody; I hope I would. But you looked like my grandmother, with that white streak inside your bonnet—she always wore one. She brought me up. She was awfully good to me when I was a little chap."

"And she's—"

"Dead, five years ago." He completed the sentence with a sad gravity.

"And you was an orphan, of course, and haven't anybody now!"

John Markham nodded.

"Well, well," the old lady reflected, "how far the Lord makes goodness go. It's like an endless chain. I don't know the beginning, but to go back's far as I do know, your grandmother was good to you, and that made you good to me, and that saved my child's life."

Suddenly a thought struck Mrs. Pollard. She was nothing if not practical. "Maybe I can help you forge the next link," she considered.

"Wouldn't you like some business where you needn't be on the road, and could hope for a rise?" she asked.

"You bet I would—excuse me," he laughed and blushed.

She smiled charitably in return, but said no word more of his future. It happened, however, that a long letter went promptly from his mother-in-law to Frank Henderson, which letter was almost a command. A command willingly obeyed, though; and later, a letter went from Mr. Henderson to the newsboy.

Now John Markham is clerk in Mr. Henderson's book store, with prospect of becoming junior partner, and this is the story of how he got his "rise."

THE GARDEN OF DAMASCUS.

The chief attractions at Damascus are the world-famed gardens which surround the city, the glimpse we get of Oriental life as found in the bazaars, fine streets, the shops, and last, but by no means of less interest the famous Mosque of Omicades.

One hundred and fifty square miles of green lies in compact order round about Damascus, spread out with all the profusion of a virgin forest. Orchard and flower gardens, parks plantations of corn and of other produce pass before the eye in rapid and changeable succession. The natives claim that there are more than 3,000 miles of shady lanes in the gardens of Damascus through which it is possible to ride. On such a ride the visitor passes orchards of figs and orchards of apricots. For hedges there is the briar rose and for a canopy the walnut. Pomegranate blossoms grow through the shade; the vine boughs trail across the briars; a little waterfall breaks on the edge of the road, and all this water and leafage are so lavish that the broken mud walls and slovenly houses have no power to vex the eye. These long gardens of Damascus form the paradise of the Arab world. Making a pilgrimage to the city after weeks and months of dreary and desolate life, the running water is a joy to his sight and music to his ears, and it is something to walk through shady lanes, to admire the variety of landscape and the beauty of scenery in a land where the sun beats down all day with unremitting force until the earth is like a furnace or iron beneath a sky of molten brass.—Biblical World.

HE WOULDN'T INTRUDE.

Lady Duff-Gordon thus told this story of an Ignorant Yorkshireman who went to London to see the British Museum:

"Unfortunately, the Yorkshireman chose a close day for his visit, and the policeman at the gate, when he presented himself there, waved him away.

"'But I must come in,' said the Yorkshireman. 'I've a holiday on purpose.'

"'No matter,' said the guardian. 'This is a close day, and the museum is shut.'

"'What? Ain't this public property?'

"'Yes,' admitted the policeman; 'but,' he cried, excitedly, 'one of the mummies died on Tuesday, and do you begrudge us one day to bury him in?'

"'Oh, excuse me,' said the Yorkshireman, in a hushed voice. 'In that case I won't intrude.'"