

SELF-RAISED

BY:

EMMA D. M. SOUTHWORTH

While they were still sitting there, chatting over the old times and the new days, the sound of wheels was heard approaching, and Sam drove up in the wagon, in which was Ishmael's trunk and a large box.

Jim was called in from the kitchen where he had been engaged in making love to Sally, to assist in lifting the luggage in.

The trunk and box were deposited in the middle of the parlor floor to the surprise of the guests, all that being usually reserved for the piano and look on at the opening.

Ishmael's personal effects were in the trunk they guessed; but what was in the box? That was the riddle and they could not solve it. Both the children pressed forward to see. Even the dog stood with his ears pricked, his nose straight, and as though he expected a fox to break his eyes fixed on the interesting box cover from it as soon as it was opened.

Ishmael had mercy on their curiosity and ended their suspense by ripping off the cover.

And lo, a handsome hobby horse which he took out and set up before the delighted eyes of Johnny.

He lifted the tiny man into the saddle, fixed his feet in the stirrups, gave him the bridle and showed him how to manage his steed.

"There, Johnny," said Ishmael, "I cannot realize your aspirations in respect to the driver's seat on the ox-cart, but I think this will do for the present."

"Ah, yes," cried the ecstatic Johnny, "put Molly up behind and let her sit and hold on to me. My horse can carry double."

"Never mind; I've got something for Molly that she will like better than that," said Ishmael, smiling kindly on the little girl, who stood with her finger in her mouth looking as if she thought herself rather neglected.

And he unlocked his trunk and took from the top of it a large and finely painted substantially dressed wooden doll, that looked as if it could bear a great deal of knocking about without injury.

Molly made an impulsive spring towards this treasure, and was immediately rendered happy by its possession.

Then Sally was elevated to the seventh heaven of delight by the gift of the coral brooch.

Hannah received a handsome silk dress and Reuben a new writing desk, and Sam a silver watch, and Jim a showy vest pattern.

And Ishmael, having distributed his presents, ordered his trunk to be carried upstairs, and the box into the outhouse.

When the children were tired of their play Hannah took them off to hear them say their prayers and put them to bed.

And then Ishmael and Reuben were left alone.

And the opportunity that Ishmael wanted had come.

He could have spoken of his parents to either Reuben or Hannah separately, but he felt that he could not enter upon the subject in the presence of both together.

Now he drew his chair to the side of Gray and said:

"Uncle Reuben, I have something serious to say to you."

"Eh, Ishmael, what have I been doing for I desay something wrong in the bringing up of the young and said Reuben, in dismay, expecting to be court-martialed on some grave charge."

"It is of my parents that I wish to speak, Uncle Reuben."

"Oh," said the latter with an air of relief.

"You know my mother, Uncle Reuben; but did you know who my mother was?"

"No," said Reuben, thoughtfully. "All I knowed was as he married of your mother in private manner, and from circumstances never owned up to it; but left her name and yours to suffer for it—the cowardly rascal, whoever he was."

"Hush, Uncle Reuben, hush. You are speaking of my father."

"And a nice father he was to let your good mother's fair name come to grief and leave you to perish a' most."

"Uncle Reuben, you know too little of the circumstances to be able to judge."

"Law, Ishmael, it takes but little knowledge and less judgment to understand, as when a feller forsakes his wife and child for nothink, and leaves them to suffer undeserved scandal and cruel want, he must be an unnatural monster and a parjured villain."

"Uncle Reuben, you are unjust to my father. You must listen to his vindication from my lips, and then you will acquit him of all blame. But first I must tell you in confidence his name—it is Herman Brudenell."

"There now," exclaimed Reuben, dropping his pipe in his astonishment; "to think that I had that fact right afore my eyes all my life and never could see it. Well, of all the blind moles and owls, I must be the blindest. And to think as I was the very first as warned the poor girl agin him at that birthday feast. But, law, arter that I never saw 'em together agin no more, no not once. So I had no cause to spicion him, no more nor others. And now, Ishmael, tell me all how and about it. Long as it was him, Mr. Herman, there must a been something uncommon about it, for I don't believe he'd do anything dishonorable, not if he knowed it."

"Not if he knew it. You are right there, Uncle Reuben," said Ishmael, who immediately related the tragic story of his parents' marriage, ending with the family wreck that had ruined all their happiness.

"Dear me, what a sorrowful story for all hands, to be sure. Well, Ishmael, whoever was most to be pitied in former times, your father is most to be pitied now. Be good to him."

said Reuben. "You may be sure that I will do all I can to comfort my father, Uncle Reuben. And now a word to you. Speak of this matter to me alone whenever you like, or to Aunt Hannah alone whenever you like, but to no others; and not even to us when we are together, for I cannot bear that this old tragic history should become the subject of general conversation."

"I know, Ishmael, my boy, I know. Mum's the word," said Reuben.

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