

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

THE ELOPEMENT.

The big clock on the staircase had the night to itself, and ticked with a vehement emphasis not noticeable in the daytime. A shaft of wan moonlight slid through the stained-glass window and settled on the floor of the hall like a pool of milk. The curtains, the chairs, and a big carved cabinet of black wood wore their secret personalities, and, safe from the needs of mankind till the morning, looked like severe and disapproving living things.

Adela tip-toed down the stairs with shivering caution, her little brown boots in one hand, her wraps gathered closely about her. Bar the boots, she was fully rigged for going out—at half-past two of a bitter morning; and despite her trembling and the pallor of her face below her brown curls, there was that in her expression which showed that there was to be no hesitation about it either. She came past the door of her father's room without breathing, and paused to listen. The floor creaked under her as floors never creak when the sun is high, and she passed on as silently as a bare-foot ghost. She had lit the match that was to burn her boats, and in a few minutes all opportunity for withdrawing would be gone, and she would be pledged to go forward. It was all her father's fault, she told herself again and again. He was so silent, so unsympathetic, so grim and stern: they could never have asked him. When she had mentioned Tom a week before, shyly and hopefully, he had closed her mouth with a sharp, "Don't be silly, Adela—that boy!"

So there was nothing more for it. Adela, aged nineteen, and Thomas Furnival, three years her senior, were about to elope. They knew very little of life, but Tom had been at some pains to gather information concerning registry offices, and neither of them looked much beyond that. They were very fond of one another, and both were extremely fond of love-making, and that contented them. Adela's father had not invited confidence, they agreed, and therefore he should learn of their love only when it was too late for him to cast obstacles in the way of it. This sort of logic suits young love.

In the hall, Adela sat down to put the little brown boots on. One was on, and the other was being laced, when a sudden sound froze her motionless. At the end of the wide passage a door opened—the door of her father's business room. She watched the light from within shoot out across the floor as the door swung back, and her father came out.

"Better wait in here, Adela," he said. "There's a fire."

Adela shrank back, lacking a voice.

The tall, dark man came towards her and too her hand.

"I thought," he said, in his quiet, assured voice—"I thought you would prefer to have none of the servants about. So I have made you some hot tea. I often make tea for myself at night. It's a bad habit, but since you are going out into the cold you had better have some."

He led her into the bright room, and placed her in an armchair facing the cheering fire. She could not speak, but she was grateful that in that position she need not look at him or catch his eye.

"Here is the tea," he said, from behind her. She took the cup mechanically from his hand. "You have plenty of time, Adela; it is barely half-past yet."

"Thank you," she murmured.

The tall man stood at the table and looked sadly, but with a half smile, at the dark brown curls. He had a strong, dark face, deeply marked, and clean-shaven. There was a wide sympathy in it, and humor, too; the sternness attributed to him lay in the accident of heavy brown and deep-set eyes.

"Shall I see you again soon?" he asked, gently.

"I—I don't know," stammered Adela, not daring to look around.

"I hope you will come and see me, though," he said. "I should be sorry to think you were leaving me for good, Adela."

She put down her cup and turned in her chair to face him.

"How—how did you know?" she asked.

He smiled. "Oh, that doesn't matter, does it?" he replied. "I knew, of course. You don't mind my knowing, do you? I should have to know sooner or later."

"Are you—going to—"

He shook his head. "I'm going to do nothing," he answered. "If you must leave me, Adela, it is not in me to stop you. I want to help, that's all. That's why I'm here. Have you any money?"

She nodded. She had four pounds, six shillings and ninepence.

"You had better have this, though." It was an envelope. "And, Adela! You have a ring there, I wish you would leave me that."

She fumbled at the ring to draw it off. "You see," he explained, "it was your mother's ring." He spoke very gently. "You don't remember her, Adela. But she left me that ring and you, and I should be sorry to lose both. Thank you, Adela."

He took the ring from her and held it in his hand.

"Father," cried Adela, but at the same moment there came from without a low whistle. Her father nodded to her with a little smile.

"Shall I let you out?" he asked.

"No, no," fluttered Adela, coming to him. She took his hand. "Oh, father, do go and speak to him. Tell him I can't. Say—say—Oh, father, say anything!"

He lifted her face and kissed her tenderly. "I'll tell him to come to dinner tomorrow," he answered.—British Weekly.

NAGGING AND FUSSY WOMEN.

Beware, always, of the fussy or nagging woman. You will know her among a thousand by her look of utter dejection, corners of the mouth drawn down, and fish eyes that look upon every living thing as dishonest, disloyal, and untrustworthy. Woe and misery are ever at her heels, be she mistress or servant. If the latter, her work will always be lagging, her pastry will be heavy, and her bread as soggy as her disposition. She will make constant trouble with the other servants, and keep the entire household in turmoil until she is gotten rid of. If it is the mistress of the house who is inclined toward this unfortunate habit, affairs of the home will indeed be pitiable. She will whine at everything, and prove herself to be one of the most tiresome creatures on earth.

The fussy woman is generally idle and lazy, and one of the best cures in the world for fussiness is work. Let her be made to do for herself what others do so unsatisfactorily for her.—Frances van Etten, in Leslie's Weekly.

THE ZUNI BABY.

The Zuni child spends his early days in a cradle. But a cradle in Zuni-land does not mean down pillows, silken coverlets and fluffy laces; it is only a flat board, just the length of the baby, with a hood like a doll's buggy top over the head. Upon this hard bed the baby is bound like a mummy—the coverings wound round and round him until the little fellow can not move except to open his mouth and eyes. Sometimes he is unrolled, and looks out into the bare white-washed room, blinks at the fire burning on the hearth, and fixes his eyes earnestly on the wolf and cougar skins that serve as chairs and beds and carpets in the Zuni home. By the time he is two or three years old he has grown into a plump little bronze creature, with the straightest of coarse black hair and the biggest and roundest of black eyes. He is now out of the cradle, and totts about the house and the village. When the weather is bad he wears a small coarse shirt, and always a necklace of beads or turquoise.—From Maria Brace Kimball's "The Children of Zuni," in September St. Nicholas.