

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

LOVER AND FRIEND.

By David Lyall.

Paterson knew quite well that Sylvia Crystal's interest in him had waned since his friend Bertram had appeared upon the scene, introduced at the old house near the Dean Bridge by Paterson himself. But he suffered no hint of his feelings to betray themselves as he and Bertram walked together in the amber clearness of a March evening towards the Professor's house. Paterson was a large, elow man, with a somewhat heavy featured face and deep-set eyes which had an uncomfortable habit of glowering at folks and disconcerting them, especially if they happened to be fippant and careless hearted. It was a mere habit, and as for sternness, though his jaw was square and his mouth at times had a terrible, forbidding look, Paterson's heart was the heart of a little child, as pure and clean and tender, and as free from guile. He was a keen student, and though a little elow of comprehension, he never stopped till he had made a subject his own, and those who knew regarded him favorably as one who would do well for himself and also add fresh lustre to the roll of his Alma Mater. Bertram, by whose side he walked, and whose arm was linked in his, was cast in a different mould of lith, graceful figure; he had a fine head, and a handsome face lit by a pair of merry grey eyes, which lighted up at odd times with flashes of uncommon humor. His mobile mouth was as sweet as a woman's and if it had a weak line or two, these were quickly forgiven for the sake of all the rest, which was so pleasant to the eye. His nature was sunny, too, if a little selfish, and he managed to get the best out of life. He was not a worker, and, as his parents were rich, it did not matter so much, at least that was the view Bertram took of it. Paterson's father was a poor minister in Aberdeenshire, and it was of moment to the manse of Arbriolot that its eldest son should not only do well, but take prizes in money that would lessen the burden of college expenses. Paterson had the Aberdeen face and the Aberdeen grit, and had not so far failed in any expectation of those who were watching his career with a very affectionate, albeit perfectly undemonstrative, pride. Paterson and Bertram were very close friends, and the one was good for the other, though people sometimes smiled and wondered what there could be in common between them. Both were welcome in the Professor's house on the Water of Leith, but of late the welcome that had begun to be so sweet to Paterson had waned, and he fancied he knew the cause. He had had one fierce battle with himself in the black night watches for Sylvia Chrystal for a year and more had represented to him the ultimate goal of all his hopes. But Bertram easily and gracefully, as he did most things of life, had sailed in an easy winner. So Paterson thought, and now he must stand back. They were going by invitation to dinner at the house, and Bertram, as became a rich man's son, wore evening dress, and a vast expanse of white shirt front singularly becoming to his clear coloring. Paterson possessed no dress clothes, and would not possess any, he knew full well, till he had earned the wherewithal to pay for them. The thought of his attire, however, did not disturb him: it was neat and efficient to the occasion; he had a singular loftiness of mind, which lifted him above petty details, and spared him nearly all the petty humiliations of a poor man's college life. He experienced

a pang, however, when he beheld Bertram emerge radiant from the enveloping folds of his Highland cloak in the Professor's hall, and smiled a bit grimly.

"I'm without the wedding garment, Jimmy. Do you think they'll let me in?"

Jimmy had not time to answer, for at the moment the Professor's dignified wife appeared at the drawing-room door to give them a homely welcome, and though Paterson hung back with a little diffidence, the looker-on might have noticed it was to him she chiefly addressed herself, and that her manner was most cordial. There were other guests, but Paterson was placed at the right hand of his hostess, and she drew him out to talk of the things he knew, with all a woman's tact and tenderness, which prompts her to acts of single-hearted kindness.

Paterson did not know the man opposite to him; his hostess called him familiarly Stephen. He supposed his name had been mentioned in the drawing-room, but in the confusion of the moment, he had not noticed it. He was an elderly man, however, with a somewhat distinguished air, and he wore two decorations on his breast. His talk was chiefly of the East, and Paterson, intensely interested, and completely carried out of himself, talked well, and with a grasp of Eastern affairs which pleased the gentleman of the decorations. Sylvia, that disturbing vision in a white and silver frock, was further down the table, opposite to Bertram, and not beside him, as he had hoped, but they managed to get a few remarks in across the table.

Paterson enjoyed the dinner, but was unhappy in the drawing-room, where he felt himself uncouth. He did not know what to do with his feet, encased in boots fashioned by the Arbriolot shoemaker, and guaranteed for use rather than ornament. He had no small talk, and Sylvia never came near him the whole evening. When she sang to the company it was Jimmy, the handsome and debonnaire, who turned over her music and murmured soft nothings in her ear. Paterson was uncomfortable beyond his powers of endurance, and on the stroke of ten he rose desperately and said he must go.

Bertram, who was enjoying himself immensely, committed a breach of good manners and remained behind.

Mrs. Chrystal came out to the hall to speak a kind word to the departing guest.

"You've deserted us of late, Mr. Paterson, and we like old friends to be faithful."

"I've been busy, ma'am," replied Paterson, with perfect truth, and then added simply, "besides I don't think this sort of thing is very good for a man when he has to work and get his living; it is too distracting."

She smiled most sweetly and motherly upon him.

"Nonsense; all work and no play, you know the rest! Come to tea on Sunday and you will see my brother again. He has taken a fancy to you."

"Your brother?"

"Yes, Sir Stephen Arbuthnot; we've just got him back after fifteen years' exile in the East, but he returns in the autumn again."

"Oh, I should like to come, thank you, if it would not be intruding."

"I have asked you, and it is because I want you; but come alone. Your handsome friend can come another day. Say nothing to him about it."

Paterson flushed suddenly and deeply, and made a somewhat hasty adieu. Also he felt rather guilty all the rest of the week toward Jimmy, who talked incessantly of Sylvia Chrystal's charms, and his open determination to win her if he could. And he took it upon himself to pay a call on his own account early on Sunday afternoon, but was not admitted, the servant simply informing him that Mrs. Chrystal was not at home.

As he sauntered back along Princes-street, sorely abashed, for he had a fine conceit of himself, he met Paterson.

Already the veil of reserve had fallen between them, and the old comradeship had suffered a check.

"The very man I want to see. Come for a stroll, Bob. Shall it be Samson's ribs or Rest-and-be-thankful?"

Paterson replied somewhat haltingly.

"I'm sorry I can't come just now, Jimmy. I've an engagement elsewhere."

Jimmy, with his customary airiness of touch, laid his finger on the spot at once. "If it's the Dean Brig you're after, Bob, you needn't fash. I've been there—not at home."

Paterson was not good at prevarication and, besides, there was nothing to hide. He therefore answered quite simply,

"I'm asked to tea at four o'clock."

Bertram stared at him a moment, flushed angrily, then, turning on his heel with a rude epithet walked off. Paterson's heart was heavy as he trudged on his way, for he was a man of peace. But he forgot Bertram's childish anger the moment he was received into the warmth and cosiness of Mrs. Chrystal's drawing-room. Sylvia, to be sure, did not say much to him, and he imagined she had looked beyond him at the opening of the door, for more welcome figure, but he enjoyed his visit, and left the house feeling that he might yet achieve something and be able to take his place in the world of men. It was characteristic of him that he should go straight from the Dean to Jimmy's lodgings, where he found that youth lying in the sulks upon his bed, reading a French novel.

"I don't want you here," he said crossly. "You can stop among the big folks, you like them best."

Paterson coolly removed his overcoat and pushed up his sleeves.

"Get off that bed, you lazy lout, and let's have it out, Sunday afternoon and all as it is."

Jimmy laughed but did not move.

"But own up, Bob, you've played it rather low down. I don't want to put your eye out with the fair Miss Chrystal: there are other girls in Edinburgh just as good."

"Or better, perhaps, but so far as I'm concerned, Jimmy, if you're in earnest you can go ahead. It's not likely that a poor beggar like me could ever have a chance in that direction. She never even looked at me today."

Peade was made between them and Jimmy made up his mind to go in and win. He laid siege with a conscientious concentration which, applied to other branches of study, might of proved a most valuable asset in his career. But when it came to the crucial point his answer was a very decided no. Sylvia gave no reason for her refusal, and when he reproached her she merely looked him straight in the eyes and told him he had imagined all the encouragement he spoke of. Then he tore home to Paterson, and in a burst of anguish, threatened to end his life in St. Margaret's Loch, which was the nearest bit of water available for the purpose. But that fell design was not carried into execution.