

STORIES  
POETRY

## The Inglenook

SKETCHES  
TRAVEL

## "MANY A SLIP."

(By David Lyall.)

A man and woman were standing together in the bow of one of the smaller mail steamers which was making her way up the St. Lawrence towards Montreal. It was an exquisite day in the early part of September, and the incomparable picture made by the noble city of Wolfe and Montcalm, perched on its heights at the mouth of the river, was presented at its best. As they made their way merrily up the river, the scenery perhaps lost a little of its majestic beauty, but it was still enchanting enough to win praises on every side.

But while excitement of a pleasurable kind surrounded them, the man and woman in the bow seemed silent and unobservant.

"Then what are you going to do?" asked the man, looking at her with eagerness and a certain yearning in his eyes. They made a goodly pair as they stood there, she tall, slim, and finely featured, he well-knit and manly, with a soldier's air.

She lifted her eyes to his with a sudden flash.

"Do, there is only one thing to do; I will go on to my destination."

"To Vancouver, and—ah—marry the other chap?" he said dully.

"No," she answered. "I will not do that, but I will go there, and tell him the truth."

"But why go, if we care for one another, and surely we do that, Maud? Write to him at the hotel tonight, and tomorrow I can get a special license, and we can be married before we go on."

She lifted her eyes to him again, and something flashed in them.

"I will never do that. If I don't marry him, it is certain that I shall never marry you."

"But, in Heaven's name, why not, if we care for one another?"

"You seem very certain about it, I am not," she answered quickly, and was for a moment silent, watching the long trail of foam left by the steamer, and there was a far-away look in her eyes.

"But, Maud, what is going to happen to you?" he asked desperately. "You have told me how little money you have."

"Yes," she said passionately. "Unfortunately I have told you too much."

"And you are going a long way; you must know how much it costs to come back."

"I may not come back. I have heard that they need women out there for teaching and for household tasks. I have been used to earn my own living, and I am not afraid, but first I will be honest with him, for the first time in five years."

"And what is to become of me, Maud? Haven't I the right to—some little niche in your scheme of things?"

"No," she answered clearly. "Not the smallest right to the smallest niche. We have behaved badly, both of us, and I at least will do the best to atone for my share in it."

"It can't end here, you know, Maud."

"It will," she answered, and she kept her word. They parted amid the confusion at the landing stage, and Maud Legard managed to disappear. When Captain Tremlett was released from the custom house officers, who were examining his baggage, and returned to the spot where he had left her, she was gone, and he never saw her again.

Three days later, a man and woman walked slowly to and fro the wide platform of the Canadian Pacific Railway Depot at Vancouver, awaiting the arrival of the Imperial Limited Express from the east—Morton Wingate and his friend, Mrs. Raynor, to whose care he would consign the girl he hoped to make his wife in a few days' time.

Wingate was the second son of an impoverished Scottish family of good birth. Disheartened by the lack of money and the lack of prospect at home, he had been lured to the west by the hope of building up a better position and founding a home there. On the whole he had taken not been disappointed. But it had taken a long time, longer than he had expected. For six years he had lived alone on his ranch, suffering isolation, anxiety, frequent disappointment, determined not to ask the woman he loved to share it until the last corner should be turned, and he could offer her at least comparative immunity from care. The idea, nurtured by an unselfish love, had been the great mistake of Wingate's life. He had waited too long. But he did not know it. There was no suggestion of anxiety about him then, only a visible impatience. His still boyish looks were stamped by the unmistakable eagerness of a man in a hurry. He who had waited with a grim patience so long could hardly bear the additional hour imposed upon his spirit by an overdue train. But it came at last. His keen, swift eye, trained to cover immeasurable distances, quickly singled her out among the throng of the passengers, and he sprang forward. Nora Raynor, very sympathetic, even a trifle emotional, the occasion being one which appealed to all her womanly feelings, stood back until such time as the first greeting should be over, and Wingate should bring the traveller to her side. She saw them before they found her, and had time to make a little mental picture of Maud Legard. She liked her, though she thought her face preternaturally grave, even a little hardly set. There was no cloud apparently on Wingate's sky. He presented her with just the right mixture of boyish happiness and manly pride, and while Nora, moved by a very natural impulse, kissed the girl on both cheeks, she felt her heart go out to her, and yet was repelled by a certain haunting coldness in her eyes.

Mrs. Raynor lived in Vancouver, where her husband occupied a Government position of considerable importance. The Raynors were warmly attached to Wingate, believing him to be one of the best of men, and that no woman could be too good for him. And they had rejoiced with a very hearty and sincere joy over his coming happiness. But Nora Raynor, with the intuition which seldom failed her, knew in that very moment of greeting that something had happened, and that Wingate was not to sail just yet with flying colours into the port of happiness. But she said nothing, only made herself busy about the girl's welcome, helping by her cheery speech to relieve the strain of the moment. They drove directly to the Raynors' house, the aide and luxury of which surprised Maud Legard very much.

When they entered the house, Mrs. Raynor considerably left them. She had three little children, and it was their dinner-time; she explained that the good mother likes to see what her children eat. So she left them at the drawing room door and absented herself for a long time. She was summoned at last by one of the Japanese ser-

vants, who made her understand that the gentleman wanted her. When she went downstairs she found him standing in the middle of the hall. His face was quite white, and his looks desperate.

"Morton, whatever has happened?" she cried sharply.

"Everything. It's all over," he answered, with strange breaks in his voice.

"All over! What do you mean? Why, she's here; nothing can be over when she's actually here."

"It's all over, I tell you. There's another man she likes better."

"Then why, in heaven's name, did she come? That was the unforgivable sin, surely?"

"No, no, she's like that; she'll face the music, Nora. She thought it her duty to come right out here and tell me. Besides, it only happened on the boat."

"On the boat, an Atlantic flirtation. Oh, that will be easily disposed of," said the small woman with a note of relief in her voice.

"I—I don't think so, she's altogether changed, Mrs. Raynor; she says she ought to have been here from the first; that five years was too long; in fact, that nothing is the same. And she won't marry me. I'm off back to the ranch. You'll look after her, won't you, till—till something can be done. I must get away, you understand, until I see light."

"Yes, of course, and Morton, you'll stop away and leave me to engineer this thing, won't you, dear, Stanley and I together? I believe we can do it."

"I don't mind what you do. I suppose she'll go back to England; you must find out everything and let me know without telling her. She will need money even. It's a difficult business, a monstrous thing altogether, but I'm hip-pled, too much hippled to be able to think of anything. I must leave it all to you."

"Why, yes, of course, that's what I'm here for. Go—go now, Morton, and stop at the Island till I send for you."

Morton Wingate thanked her as well as he knew how. How he blessed her for her quick perception, her restraint, her practical sympathy, she would never know, though the day came when he tried to tell her. He passed out of the house. Nora Raynor dashed some really angry tears from her eyes, but wiped them dry before she entered the room where the girl sat. It was impossible to map out a course of conduct for circumstances so wholly unexpected; she must just trust to her own intuition, and to the inspiration she might get for the moment.

"I am sure you are famished, Miss Legard," she said cheerily. "Do come and get something to eat. My husband does not come home at middle day, and we'll have a cosy luncheon together."

Maud Legard turned to her in amazement.

"Have you seen Mr. Wingate? Has he told you what has happened?"

"Oh yes, but one must eat, though the heavens fall. Of course, I am sorry about it. He's such a very good fellow, and he has worked so hard to get the home ready for you. It is a beautiful place, really; as nearly like Paradise as any spot can be here below. But, of course, one cannot help one's feelings changing. I am thankful you had the courage to be quite honest. I have known cases where courage was lacking, and the consequences disastrous. Come, then, and let us eat; then we can go into a committee of ways and means about you later on."