

STORIES  
POETRY

## The Inglenook

SKETCHES  
TRAVEL

## BUTTONS' FRIEND.

Hilda was cooking Buttons' dinner. Buttons was a beautiful black cat with lustrous golden eyes and a tiny dash of white upon his breast.

Just then Buttons saw a fly. His whiskers quivered. A fly in January was an unexpected luxury. Buttons sprang after it, followed it across the room, from a chair to a table, from the table to a shelf.

Oh, poor Buttons!—right into the kettle of molasses!

"Oh, he's spoiled! he's spoiled!" wailed Hilda.

"Before I'd have such a looking cat!" jeered Brother Ned.

"It will never come off," declared Ruth.

"Put him out in the yard," said mamma. "He'll never be fit to come into the house again."

"Someone must wash him," said Hilda.

"Oh, Josephus, Josephus!" she cried. "Come quick! Something dreadful has happened!"

Josephus dropped his wooden shovel and came as quickly as his wooden leg would let him.

"What's the matter, Miss Hilda?" he asked.

"It's Buttons, my dear, dear Buttons!" cried Hilda. "He fell into a kettle of molasses and, oh, Josephus, I want you to wash him!"

Josephus threw back his head and laughed uproariously.

"Then I'll have to do it myself," said Hilda.

She got a pail of water, captured the cat and placed him gently in the pail. There was a frantic struggle and a tremendous splash. Then over went the pail and away dashed Buttons!

Half an hour later Hilda, still grieving over the accident, looked out of the kitchen window.

Buttons was sitting forlornly upon a snowbank.

"Poor, poor Buttons!" sighed Hilda.

Then Buttons lifted his voice in lamentation. "Meow, meow, meow," he mournfully cried.

In a moment a large gray cat came slowly up the driveway, two tiger cats leaped the fence, closely followed by a small Maltese tabby, a yellow cat struggled across the snow-covered lawn, and a handsome black-and-white puss crept around the corner of the house.

"Mew, mew," said the little Maltese.

"Miaow, miaow," said the two tigers.

"Meow, meow, meow," chanted the whole six.

Then the big gray cat approached Buttons solemnly. "Pr-r-r," said he, and began to lick his molasses-drenched friend.

"Pr-r-r," said the yellow cat, following the gray cat's example.

"Oh!" exclaimed Hilda; "they're washing Buttons!"

"They certainly are," said mamma.

"Pr-r-r," said the black-and-white cat, the two tigers and the little Maltese all coming forward to assist.

Till dark Hilda watched the funny scene. And after supper in came Buttons, purring happily, his beautiful fur just as clean and shiny and velvety as ever.

"Those dear, good cats!" cried Hilda.

"They were friends in need," said mamma.

"Meow!" agreed Buttons.

While playing golf on the Brancaster Links, Norfolk, a Mr. Fernie drove a ball which killed a lark.

## GOAL OR GRAVE.

By Evelyn Orchard.

The two men met in Fleet street in the noontide rush. Whitney was the first to pause and turn round, when Rossmore took a step back.

"It can't be Dick Whitney!" he said with that smile of his, that had been his chief asset through life. It was a smile which won men's confidence and women's hearts, a valuable asset indeed, but which had undoubtedly some few serious things to answer for. Rossmore had never sought to exploit his looks, but they had served him in the place of the strenuous effort of other men, such effort as had drawn the lines on Dick Whitney's attractive face. Rossmore was tall and slim and finely proportioned. Whitney was short and inclined to squatness of figure, and his face, though showing strength and capability, was undeniably plain.

That was a fact which in no way troubled Whitney now; as a middle-aged bachelor it cost him nothing.

The time had been, however, when he had fiercely envied Rossmore's looks, and even cried out against the injustice of nature's distribution of her gifts. That was in the long ago time, when they both had striven after the same prize, the prize which, of course, Rossmore had won. That was to be expected, a foregone conclusion from the start to those who looked on. Then Whitney, unable to bear life bereft of the forlorn hope that had sweetened it, had gone abroad to fill a modest post in that cheerful climatic region known as the White Man's Grave.

Then he had not cared whether it should prove goal or grave, and when a man is in such mood, he sometimes, as if by sheer perversity of fate, strikes the goal. Whitney was now the official head of his whole district, and had come home by Government command. He had that very day been received in audience by his Sovereign, from whose hands he had received reward for distinguished service.

Rossmore was unaware of this interesting fact, though his wife knew it. Rossmore was a superficial person who seldom read newspapers, but received his political views for the day from the front page of the halfpenny sheet which he glanced over in the train.

His wife had read the various paragraphs regarding Whitney, and the eulogistic notice of his work at his official post, his healing and beneficent work, which had subdued native prejudice, and created an extraordinary revulsion of feeling in favour of British rule.

But she had not mentioned it to her husband.

"When did you come, and where have you come from, old boy?" enquired Rossmore jovially, as he pressed the friendly hand. "And, by jove, don't you look fit! We've quite lost sight of you. Where are you stopping?"

When Whitney mentioned Claridge's, Rossmore elevated his brows.

"Struck it, eh? Must have, unless you've cottoned to some millionaire who's doling out the oof."

Whitney laughed.

"It seemed advisable, but I'm shifting to-morrow—going down to Dartmoor to see how many of the old folks are left."

"Going away to-morrow again? Then can you come out to-night with me, six forty sharp at Cannon street, to see Enid and the kids?"

Whitney hesitated a moment. He had half accepted another invitation from one in a high official position, but it

would be possible to get out of it by telephone, and he hesitated. He had not intended to look up the Rossmores; they belonged to the old order of things, with which he had no further concern, but some whispered longing to look once more on the face of the woman he had loved, and for whose sake he had never been able to see beauty in any other woman's face, decided him. He would see whether all was well with her, and pass on. That was all.

"Six-forty at Cannon street! All right, thanks. I'll be there."

"I'll telephone Enid that a man's coming, but I shan't say who. It isn't really necessary to phone, old chap. Enid's the sort of woman that you can always bring home a chap to dinner, sure there'll be something to eat, and that she won't make faces behind his back. It counts a good deal."

Whitney smiled, and admitted that it did. So they parted. Rossmore did not mention Whitney's name in his telephone message, but bade his wife prepare for a surprise. But she was not in the least surprised; she had known all day that Whitney would come.

Whence came these subtle intuitions of the spirit? Like the wind, whether they list, and we know not, nor can ever know.

She did not dress herself with more elaboration than usual, simply because it was natural to her to be always nicely dressed, and she would have paid the same attention to her toilet in the backwoods as in the fashionable London suburb where she lived. The Rossmores were well to do, not by reason of Rossmore's strenuous efforts, but because he had inherited a comfortable income from his father. He was one of those extremely busy persons who talk much, but who achieved nothing. But Rossmore believed implicitly in himself.

Enid came out of the drawing-room when she heard her husband's key in the door. Her face was a little flushed, which gave to it a singular brightness and charm. Whitney was surprised to see her so little changed, so youthful after twenty years. She must be forty-five now, he calculated, yet she could have passed for thirty. She wore a black frock open a little at the neck, where there was a white tucker that did no shame to the bosom it caressed. A big red rose freshly culled from the garden diffused its sweetness about her bodice, and seemed to reflect the dusky light in her eyes.

"I'm so very glad to see you," she said in her frank, sincere voice. "I thought you would come."

"You thought he'd come, Enid!" cried Rossmore, disappointed that his surprise had failed. "How did you know he was back in town?"

"I saw his name in the newspapers. How did you get on to-day at Buckingham Palace?"

Whitney smiled, and put up a deprecating hand.

"What's he been at Buckingham Palace for, eh?" asked Rossmore banteringly. "Got anything to sell—rubber, by any chance? Better go across to Brussels."

Whitney laughed a little awkwardly.

"You ought to read your newspaper. Will. If you ever did, you would have known that you had invited Sir Richard Whitney to dinner."

"My stars!" cried Rossmore blankly. "I'd better make haste and change my toga." He disappeared on the moment, and Enid and Whitney were left. They were still standing in the little square hall where a fire burned cheerfully. Enid stood by it, and put her hand up to the mantelpiece to steady her foot on the fender.

"I am sorry you won't see the children. They are in Surrey at present with