

# **THE AFFAIR AT THE INN**

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The affair at the inn by Various

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**VARIOUS**

**THE AFFAIR  
AT THE INN**



The  
Affair at the Inn

• *by*  
Kate Douglas Wiggin  
Mary Findlater  
Jane Findlater  
Allan McAulay

Gay and Hancock, Ltd.  
12 and 13 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden  
LONDON  
1910

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AN account of certain events which are supposed to have occurred in the month of May 19—, at a quiet inn on Dartmoor, in Devonshire; the events being recorded by the persons most interested in the unfolding of the little international comedy.

The story is written by four authors, each author being responsible for one character, as follows:—

MISS VIRGINIA POMEROY, of Richmond, Virginia, U.S.A.,  
by *Kate Douglas Wiggin*, Author of 'Penelope's Experiences,' etc.

MRS. MACGILL, of Tunbridge Wells, by *Mary Findlater*,  
Author of 'The Rose of Joy,' etc.

MISS CECILIA EVESHAM, Mrs. MacGill's companion, by  
*Jane Findlater*, Author of 'The Green Graves of Balgowrie,' etc.

SIR ARCHIBALD MAXWELL MACKENZIE, of Kindarroch,  
N.B., by *Allan McAulay*, Author of 'The Rhymer,' etc.



# THE AFFAIR AT THE INN

## I

VIRGINIA POMEROY

DARTMOOR, DEVONSHIRE,  
THE GREY TOR INN,  
Tuesday, May 18th, 19—

WHEN my poor father died five years ago, the doctor told my mother that she must have an entire change. We left America at once, and we have been travelling ever since, always in the British Isles, as the sound of foreign languages makes mamma more nervous. As a matter of fact, the doctor did not advise eternal change, but that is the interpretation mamma has placed upon his command, and so we are for ever moving on, like What's-his-name in *Bleak House*. It is not so extraordinary, then, that we are in the Devonshire moorlands, because one

cannot travel incessantly for four years in the British Isles without being everywhere, in course of time. That is what I said to a disagreeable, frumpy Englishwoman in the railway carriage yesterday.

'I have no fault to find with Great Britain,' I said, 'except that it is so circumscribed! I have outgrown my first feeling, which was a fear of falling off the edge; but I still have a sensation of being cabined, cribbed, confined.'

She remarked that she had always preferred a small, perfectly finished, and well-managed estate to a large, rank, wild, and overgrown one, and I am bound to say that I think the retort was a good one. It must have been, for it silenced me.

We have done Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, and having begun at the top of the map, have gone as far as Devon in England. We have been travelling by counties during the last year, because it seemed tidier and more thorough and businesslike; less con-



fusing too, for the places look so alike after a while that I can never remember where we have been without looking in my diary. I don't know what will come after England,—perhaps Australia and New Zealand. I suppose they speak English there, of a sort.

If complete ignorance of a place, combined with great power of appreciation when one is introduced to it,—if these constitute a favourable mental attitude, then I have achieved it. That Devonshire produces Lanes, Dumplings, Cider, Monoliths, Clouted Cream, and Moors I know, but all else in the way of knowledge or experience is to be the captive of my bow and spear.

It is one of the accidents of travel that one can never explain, our being here on this desolate moor, caged, with half a dozen strange people, in a little inn at the world's end.

In the hotel at Exeter mamma met in the drawing-room a certain Mrs. MacGill, who like herself was just recovering from the

influenza. Our paths have crossed before ; I hope they 'll not do so too often. Huddled in their shawls, and seated as near to the chilling hotel fire as was possible, they discussed their symptoms, while I read *Lorna Doone*. Mrs. MacGill slept ill at night and found a glass of milk-arrowroot with a teaspoon of brandy and a Bath Oliver biscuit a panacea ; mamma would not allow that any one could sleep worse than she, but recommended a peppermint lozenge, as being simple, convenient, and efficacious. Mrs. MacGill had a slight cough, so had mamma ; Mrs. MacGill's chest was naturally weak, so was mamma's. Startlingly similar as were the paths by which they were travelling to the grave, they both looked in average health, mamma being only prettily delicate and Mrs. MacGill being fat and dumpy, with cap ribbons and shoulder capes and bugles and brooches that bespoke at least a languid interest in life. The nice English girl who was Mrs. MacGill's companion in the railway

train, sat in the background knitting and reading,—the kind of girl who ought to look young and doesn't, because her youth has been feeding somebody's selfish old age. I could see her quiet history written all over her face,—her aged father, vicar of some remote parish ; her weary mother, harassed with the cares of a large family ; and the dull little vicarage from whose windows she had taken her narrow peeps at life. We exchanged glances at some of Mrs. MacGill's reminiscences, and I was grateful to see that she has a sense of humour. That will help her considerably if she is a paid companion, as I judge she is ; one would hardly travel with Mrs. MacGill for pleasure. This lady at length crowded mamma to the wall and began on the details of an attack of brain fever from which she had suffered at the Bridge of Allan thirty years ago, and I left the room to seek a breath of fresh air.

There is never anything amusing going on in an English hotel. When I remember