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GLENGARRY SCHOOL DAYS

STORY OF EARLY DAYS IN GLENGARRY

By RALPH CONNOR—REV. C. W. GORDON.

"Well, mother," said Thomas, crossing the floor to her and laying his hand upon her shoulder, "have I been long away? I have brought Hughie back with me, you see."

"Not so very long, Thomas," said the mother, her dark face lighting with a look of love as she glanced up at her big son. "And I am glad to see Hughie. He will excuse me from rising," she added, with fine courtesy.

Hughie hurried toward her.

"Yes, indeed, Mrs. Finch. Don't think of rising." But he could go no further. Boy as he was, and at the age when boys are most heartless and regardless, he found it hard to keep his lip and his voice steady and to swallow the lump in his throat, and in spite of all he could do his eyes were filling up with tears as he looked into the little woman's face, so worn and weary, so pathetically bright.

It was months since he had seen her, and during these months a great change had come to her and to the Finch household. After suffering long in secret, the mother had been forced to confess to a severe pain in her breast and under her arm. Upon examination the doctor pronounced the case to be malignant cancer, and there was nothing for it but removal. It was what Dr. Grant called "a very beautiful operation, indeed," and now she was recovering her strength but only slowly, so slowly that Thomas at times found his heart sink with a vague fear. But it was not the pain of the wound that had wrought that sweet, pathetic look into the little woman's face, but the deeper pain she carried in her heart for those she loved better than herself.

The mother's sickness brought many changes into the household, but the most striking of all the changes was that wrought in the slow and stolid Thomas. The father and Billy Jack were busy with the farm matters outside, upon little Jessac, now a girl of twelve years, fell the care of the house, but it was Thomas that, with the assistance of a neighbor at first, but afterwards alone, waited on his mother, dressing the wound and nursing her. These weeks of watching and nursing had wrought in him the subtle change that stirred Mrs. Murray's heart as she looked at him that day, and that made even Hughie wonder. For one thing his tongue was loosed, and Thomas talked to his mother of all that he had seen and heard on the way to the Cameron's and back, making much of his little visit to the manse, and of Mrs. Murray's kindness, and enlarging upon her promised visit, and all with such brightness and picturesqueness of speech that Hughie listened amazed. For all the years he had known Thomas he had never heard from his lips so many words as in the last few minutes of talk with his mother. Then too, Thomas seemed to have found his fingers, for no woman could have arranged more deftly and with gentler touch the cushions at his mother's back, and no nurse could have measured out the medicine and prepared her egg-nog with greater skill. Hughie could hardly believe his eyes and ears. Was this Thomas the stolid, the clumsy, the heavy-handed, this big fellow with the quick tongue and the clever, gentle hand?

Meantime Jessac had set upon the table a large pitcher of rich milk, and oat cakes and butter, and honey in the comb.

"Now, Hughie, lad, draw in and help yourself. You and Thomas will be too hungry to wait for supper," said the mother. And Hughie, protesting politely that he was not very hungry, proceeded to establish the contrary, to the great satisfaction of himself and the others.

"Now, Thomas," said the mother, "we had better cut the seed."

"Indeed, and not a seed will you cut, mother," said Thomas, emphatically. "I'm may boss the job, though. I'll

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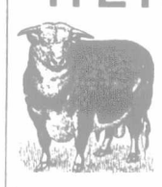

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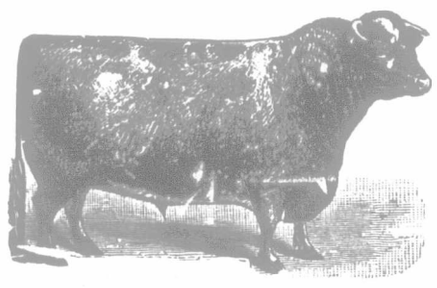

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