

and Mamie returned to the States. After much searching, the surviving members of the Douglass family were discovered in a Canadian village, and to them Myrtle went, under the care of a clergyman and his wife who were bound for the New World.

The fire burned low—a sobbing wind shrieked around the Hall and wailed like a disembodied spirit outside the eastern window. Nervous and desolate, the watcher by the embers hastily unrobed herself, and crying bitterly, crept in among the fleecy blankets. So ended her second evening in her new home—the home of Theresa Douglass.

CHAPTER III.

Tom was up with the sun next morning. Hastily dressing himself, he knocked softly at Miss Douglass's room.

"Come in," called a low voice, and he marched in and kissed the lady heartily.

"I'm sorry, upon my honor, Aunt. Can a fellow do anything for you?"

"Thank you, Tom," replied Miss Douglass, "I am much better. Dr. Burke says I only want rest, and must not excite myself. Sit down, and let me look at you."

"Think I'm growing, Aunt?"

"Yes, you will be a young giant soon. Do the freckles still worry you?" she asked with a funny little laugh, for Tom's crop of freckles was a sore trouble to him.

"As bad as ever, Aunt. Rosalie says buttermilk and tansey is splendid to take them off. Did Philip get the black ponies?"

"Yes, but he has them away with him."

"When is he coming, Aunt?"

"I cannot tell you, I am sure. His movements, you know, are uncertain. On Saturday, in all probability. We missed you sadly, Tom."

"That's good," he said with a droll laugh.

The dark-eyed lady smiled lovingly at the great boy, who was her especial pride.

"How did it happen that you reached Heathfield so late last night? I must have been sound asleep."

"Train ran off the track into the snow at Lee Point, so Guy, and Gerard, and the Fletchers started on snow-shoes with me. The Irvings wanted me to stay all night at Greyley, but you see I wanted to get home, so I came. It was tough work, though, and I feel all-overish this morning. I'm off now; I got up early on purpose to come and see you before I started."

"You are not going away this morning, Tom?" she enquired in surprise.

"Yes, I must, Aunt. You see, my boxes and things will be coming on the train. I brought them all home because I did not know whether Philip intended me to return to Trapp. I promised Arthur honestly to meet him at the station. The house is awfully dull, Aunt; you sick, and Philip off for 'de log and de shanty.' That Rosalie beats the Dutch. I suppose I'll have to answer all Baptiste's letters. Oh, Aunt, who in thunder and brass candlesticks is Miss Haltin? Rosalie was telling me some nonsense last evening."

A shade passed over the wan face on the pillow at Tom's heedless words.

"Myrtle Haltaine, Tom. The daughter of my stepmother's son."

"Why, Aunt, I thought they all shipped for glory long ago"

"Oh, Tom, my boy, you speak so lightly. I did think myself that Ernest was dead years ago. He never wrote to us, and I often wondered where the little girl was, until—"

"Aunt, she's never going to live here?" broke in Tom in excitement.

"Certainly. She has no home or friends. I hope you will try and make it pleasant for her."

Tom glowered darkly, and Miss Douglass went on softly.

"She has had great sorrow, Tom.