

Myrtle could not help seeing, however, the great deference which both husband and wife paid Mr. Douglass. To them he appeared to be a dear friend on whom they rested, in whom they trusted. Philip soon introduced draughts, and in an easy way asked Myrtle to play with Mr. Trevor. Then he expressed a wish for some music, and Mrs. Trevor sang merry snatches with Tom, and dashed off rippling little airs in such a joyous way that Myrtle wondered, deep down in her heart, how one who had known such sorrow, and over whose life the storm was ever liable to break, could be so blythe and gay.

This pleasant evening was followed by many equally happy ones, and although Mr. Douglass was always the same grave, silent man, still he was ever considering the comfort and pleasures of others. In spite of all, Myrtle at times felt her old dislike, for though he was kind and thoughtful, there was the same cold, polished courtesy, which made her fancy herself an interloper in the family.

CHAPTER VIII.

March came in like a lion and went out like a lamb. April brought sunshine, smiles, and one or two keen frosts, but the "beautiful snow" vanished as if by magic, leaving only great white patches on the wide meadows and in the woods. Mud was the order of the day, for raindrops mingled with the sunbeams. One bright crisp morning, Tom came bounding up the avenue, and springing into the hall, cried:

"Myrtle, Myrtle, where are you? Hiloa there, Myrtle!"

"Him up to the garret," said Rosalie, who was as usual quickly brought on the scene.

"In the garret! Well, I will find him." Tom rushed up the long stairways to find Myrtle seated on an old feather bed, crying bitterly over "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

"What's wrong, Myrtle?" panted Tom, as he flung himself on a dilapidated sofa.

"Oh, little Eva is just dying," sobbed Myrtle.

"Is that all?" laughed Tom. "Let her die. I don't care. You girls are such geese; crying over humbug. And after all there is only one in a hundred of you that has a heart."

"Tom, you don't know what you are talking about," said Myrtle, sharply, as she dried her tears. "You are exactly like your cousin, and judge as he does. For my part, I cannot see that he has a wonderful amount of feeling. He"—

"Oh, Myrtle!" broke in Tom earnestly. "If you only knew Philip, Myrtle! Don't talk hardly against Philip. If you could only guess what I owe him." Tom stopped short, and shook his head gravely. Any unkind allusion to Mr. Douglass wounded the affectionate boy sorely.

"I'm sorry, Tom," said Myrtle, quickly. "I spoke without thinking, and said more than I meant. You see I do not know Mr. Douglass as you do."

"That's so," said Tom, emphatically, and forgiving.

"Sometime, Myrtle, I will tell you all about us, and then you will know why I think girls, taken as a batch, deceitful and heartless, and everything else. You, and Aunt Theresa, and—yes, Mrs. Trevor, I can trust. But the rest—"

"What about Miss Baxter?" put in Myrtle, laughingly. "She was here yesterday, when you were out with Arthur Fletcher."

"Was she? Well, what did you think? Isn't she a character? We have some odd people in Heathfield. What was she harping on yesterday?"

"Economy. She had just turned a dress, and made her new spring bonnet, or *bunnet* she called it. Then she had a new receipt for a 'puddin,' and Mr. Kairn, some relative of colonel some-