

by the glowing fireplace in her apartment. "What an odious boy! He looked like a young lunatic, striding across the hills on those great kites. Then how the dogs barked, and that 'Meester Tom' confounding me! Impertinence! Oh, how I hate it all, and I'm only fifteen yet! Three years more! I wonder how I will live in this tomb. If it were not for the scenery, and the people passing on the road, I know I could not bear it. I half think Miss Douglass is very nice. She smiles so kindly, and has such beautiful dark eyes. I wonder what her nephew is like. I hope he is a kind old man; but this Tom is a young savage."

The fire crackled, and in the light from the dancing flames, Myrtle wandered dreamily over her previous life. Like a half-forgotten dream was the remembrance of a lovely home, where her slightest wish was law to the many negro servants who were constantly around her.

Now came a picture of a proud old lady bending tenderly over her; following this was her father, driving wildly up a dark avenue, and catching her in his arms. Just as if she had read it years ago, she saw a room beautiful as fairyland, where the air was perfumed by sweetest flowers, and birds sang in exquisite gilded cages; a lady, white and worn, resting on a couch; then the lady kissing her, and raining great hot tears on her baby face. All vanished, and Myrtle was roaming far and wide with her father and two trusty servants. Sometimes they dwelt quietly in a little village, sometimes a great city was their home. By and by they settled in Nice. And there Myrtle grew from a wee, winsome maiden into a bright fresh girl of fourteen, and then her father died. That some mystery hung about his life she was assured, but she could not solve it. In vain she had questioned Sambo and his wife about her early home. However, they could not enlighten her, as they had entered Mr. Haltaine's service only a few days before

his leaving America for Europe, when Myrtle was a pretty prattler of five. It was impossible to glean any information from her father, and though she listened eagerly to the delightful tales with which he whiled many of the hours away when he was free from pain, still there were no allusions to his young days. All the scenes of his former existence were as a sealed book. Only once he touched on old familiar things; then the words seemed wrung from his white lips. How distinctly Myrtle remembered the very air, soft and balmy, of that beautiful evening shortly before his death, when he had called her from watching a gorgeous sunset to listen to his directions for her future life!

"I've been putting off the evil day too long, little one," he said, as she drew a low seat close beside him; "I cannot be with you long now. Don't fret, Myrtle, for it will be an unspeakable relief to me; my only grief is that you will be left alone in this hard, weary world."

Myrtle shuddered at this, and clung closer to him,—an awful sorrow seemed to be creeping over her, and in a dreary, dazed way, she listened, while Mr. Haltaine told her that, had he been stronger, he would have taken her back to their own home; but now it was impossible, and he had written to Gilbert Douglass, his best friend long ago, begging him to accept the charge of Myrtle until her eighteenth year, when she would come into the possession of her father's estate and great wealth. He paused a moment, and then said: "If Theresa Douglass is living, Myrtle, she will be your truest friend. Oh, my child, may God save you from the sorrow which has blighted other lives quite as lovely." Here a frightful cough choked his utterance, and that night Myrtle was an orphan girl, alone in a distant country. For some months Myrtle Haltaine resided with the family of the lawyer to whom her father had entrusted her for the present. Sambo