

CHAPTER XLVI.

ASHES OF MAPLE LEAVES.

It was late autumn now, and the leaves lay thick upon the path along which Nan Malcolm and Mollie Gray walked at the close of a short day.

Indian summer, with her gold and mist, had come and gone. Heavy gray clouds banked the sky, save away to westward. There a dash of crimson marked the good-bye kiss of day.

"Hearts, like the yellow leaves of Autumn,
Grow brighter in the Dawn of Chill;
Throw us a tender smile of beauty,
Then flutter earthward and lie still."

Nan spoke the words softly, and threw her arm about her friend's waist.

"I'm blue, Mollie," she said. "I'm awfully blue."

"I know you are, dear," Mollie replied, gently.

"Blue because you're going away again to-morrow. Blue because the whole world seems so gray and cold. Mollie, Mollie, what is the matter with me?"

Her friend patted the girl's hand softly. She did not attempt to answer Nan's question. At length, after a long silence, she spoke.

"Nan, Mr. Simson has proposed to me—and I have accepted."

"Oh, you darling!" cried Nan. "Why—why didn't you tell me before?"