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HALIFAX, N. S.

HALIFAX, N. S.

TRUE HEART: OR THROUGH DEVIOUS PATHS.

It all came about in the strangest way that Clara Osborne became a member in the household on the Strong farm. One day from her widow in the city, she had seen a flower girl faint in the street, and by the aid of a young farmer who happened to be going by, she had carried the poor girl into her own room.

When Amy Boyd recovered consciousness she insisted on being permitted to go and sell her flowers, because they would wither, and her mother needed the money. Generous hearted Clara offered to go and sell them herself, and every day found her in front of the hotel selling flowers that David Strong, the young farmer, kindly provided her with.

One day David came earlier than usual, bringing with him a placid-looking, gray-haired little lady, whom he proudly introduced as his mother.

"I've come to take you both home with me, my dears," Mrs. Strong said, as if it were the most natural thing in the world to do. And she did it, in spite of Clara's remonstrances against imposing upon her so, and assertions that only Amy needed a change.

"Nonsense, my child; you're as white as one of my bridal roses now. You must come and let the sun paint those pale cheeks."

On, the delight of that old farm house, with its quaint, old-time furniture, its great, rambling gardens, with the meadows lying green and fair beyond! Such an easy, peaceful life after the noise and toil of the great city. Clara felt a happiness stealing like sunshine away down into her heart, and she bloomed into new beauty, like the roses that turned their blushing faces up to receive the sun's warm kisses.

But Amy did not grow strong. Some trouble seemed to prey upon her mind and keep the frail body in a fever of unrest. At first Clara thought she was fretting for her mother, but she found out the secret one day. David came suddenly to the porch where they were sitting, and she saw the hot blush leap to Amy's pale cheeks, and the dark, sunken eyes grow fairly luminous with the fire of her love.

"She loves him. Poor Amy!" said Clara to herself, as her own face grew white with a sudden sorrow. "And, oh! I fear that he—he loves me. But I must go away. She shall never know that I care for him. I can understand it all now."

That same day Clara announced her departure to Mrs. Strong, at which she said;

"David must talk to you."

Clara blushed painfully, for David had just come in, and stood looking at her strangely, while his mother raised on tiptoe to give the girl a kiss, and then stole out of the room.

"Clara, I want you," said David softly. "Will you not stay for my sake? As my wife? I love you! With my whole heart I love you!"

He did not offer to approach her, but his tone was a caress, and, oh! it was so sweet to the girl who stood there with downcast eyes, not daring to look up lest her eyes should betray her. For she loved him. But he must not know it. She would pray for him.

"David," she said at last, and now she had conquered the weak heart and could look up steadily into his dear face, "David, Amy loves you, and she is dying, the doctor fears. You must love her. Surely, it will not be hard, she is so gentle and lovely: and it will make her so happy."

"Did she ask you to plead for her?" he asked. And his words hurt Clara. She knew the sacrifice she was making. Why did he not understand and pity her?

"She does not even know that I have guessed her secret; but, oh! David, if you had not been blind you must have seen."

"I have been blind, for I thought you cared for me," he said, bitterly, and went out without one look at the girl, whose heart seemed breaking.

That evening he sat beside Amy at the open window, and the solemn moon looked down as if in benediction.

"Amy, can you love me a little, such a great rough fellow as I? But I would be gentle to you, little Amy. Will you be my wife?" David asked. Amy's great brown eyes sought his wistfully.

"Don't you love me?" she said simply.

What could he answer? Nothing. But stopping he put his arms around her slight form, tenderly, reverently, and held her for a moment close to his heart, saying;

"God deal with me as I am true to you."

The moon veiled her face at the betrothal, and Amy shivered as it grew dark, faintly saying:

"Carry me into the house. I am cold and tired."

David lifted her in his strong arms and bore her to her room, thinking with a strong tenderness of that other time when he had so carried her. The next morning she sent for him and Clara to come to her room.

"Come here, friends," she said, motioning them toward her easy-chair: and, taking a hand of each, held them together with her own slender fingers clasped above.

"Clara dear, did you think I would accept the sacrifice your loving heart would have made for my poor sake? I heard all through my open window. David, there is your bride! No, not a word"—(as they would have spoken.) "Kiss me both, and let me feel always that I gave you to each other," she said. "You have both done so much for me."

Two weeks later there was a quiet wedding in the old farm house. But it was gray haired Mrs. Strong and Amy (who had wonderfully revived since she had conquered her love, and was at peace) who went on the "bridal tour," as they said laughingly, taking Amy's mother with them to the seaside for a month, while David and Clara, his bride, in the tranquil solitude of home learned best how to walk through life together.