

Purple Poppies

By MISS MARY LOFF, Cambridge, Mass.

"OH! Aunt Margaret," called Peggie Martin, bursting breathlessly into the room, "you'll come with me this afternoon, won't you? I've asked you first! Say yes quick, please, 'cause Tom says he's going to take you driving, and I want you very much."

"Why yes, girly; since you made such an effort to ask me first I haven't the heart to refuse. But where is it that you want me to go?"

"Oh, well, I'll tell you after lunch. You won't mind waiting, will you?"

"Peggie dear, how long did you want your new frock?" asked her mother, with a mischievous twinkle in her eye. "I fear you would have tripped had you had it on as you came up the stairs just now. I was sure it was Jack and Patters. I should think, Margaret, you could be persuaded to stay with us a little longer when you see how the children plot to have the most of your time for these last few days."

Aunt Margaret smiled. These nieces and nephews were very dear to her, but her invalid husband could not spare her for long, so her yearly visit to her sister, which was anticipated so joyfully by the children, meant a scramble among them to secure her company as often as possible during her stay, which was too short by far.

"Oh, I say, Aunt Margaret," demanded Tom, a large handsome lad of twenty, "you don't really mean that you are going off with Peggie this afternoon when I wanted so much to drive you along the road by the old dam? I meant to drive up and carry you off the minute luncheon was over, but Peggie heard me tell Forbes to have Dick ready, and off she flew to you. I call it a shame!"

"I am sorry I am but I get on so much a desperate case to get here that I couldn't do less than accept. My belongings are the sole property of your mother, but I am sure she would spare you a couple of hours before

breakfast, so why shouldn't we get up early and take the drive then?"

"Done," said Tom, seizing her hand in a huge grip, "and thank you for your gentle hint. I will leave you to Mother."

Mrs. Martin's eyes followed him fondly as he left the room. Her sister read her glance and sighed.

"How like Paul he is. I don't blame you for being proud of him; and how very pretty Peggie is growing. I have noticed it more every day; and she is tall for her age. Do you remember when you were sixteen?"

Until luncheon time they sat going over old times, and a keen observer might have read much in their faces that was not mentioned between them. They had been married happily, and their sons were born about the same time; but before Mrs. Clayton's child was four years old he was killed in a railroad accident. Mrs. Clayton was slightly hurt, but her husband was injured for life. At first she was stunned by this grief; but her husband's condition required much tending and constant cheerfulness. Year by year her sorrow grew less, and she became more dear to all who knew her. Her sister's happy family were all very healthy, her husband a fine, vigorous man, and in this noisy household Aunt Margaret was almost a divinity.

After lunch Peggie claimed her prize, and waltzed triumphantly away with her aunt, casting laughingly victorious glances at Tom and the numerous small fry, who begged them to come back soon.

As they went through the gate Peggie said, "Aunt Margaret, I am going to take you to a meeting of the Purple Poppie Club, so I will tell you all about it. First of all you must promise not to laugh."

"I do promise," said Aunt Margaret, "and I will tell you all about it."

"You must come to my room before tea. I'll get it all told to you then."