

but Tom and Myrtle enjoyed it immensely. The bright spring breeze brought a richer bloom to the young girl's cheeks, and her eyes darkened with a soft sheen in their grey depths.

"What is it, Tom?" asked Myrtle as they came in sight of the great comfortable house with its wide galleries, odd, old-fashioned roof, and low, long windows.

"It's Olive," replied Tom in a rueful voice. "She always makes me think of my Marion."

"Who, Tom? Who is Marion?"

"My sister."

"Your sister, Tom? You have no sister."

"Yes, I have, Myrtle," answered the boy slowly, in a hard, constrained voice. "Get along, old hoss," he called, jerking at the reins. "So we will sing and banish melancholy." Tom laughed a long, loud laugh which nevertheless had a ring of pain.

"Who is that running to open the gates?" asked Myrtle, glad of something that would make Tom forget his thoughts, that were evidently bitter. Although her curiosity was aroused, yet the girl's delicate sense of a matter that was sacred, prevented her probing at Tom's secret.

"Oh, that is Gerard, Myrtle; you never met him. He left just after I broke my arm. He is the sailor boy. See his blue jacket. You will like him."

"Glad to see you, Tom," cried Gerard with a wave of his hat.

"So am I," said Tom. "Whoa, Jess. Jump in, Gerard. This is Myrtle's jaunting-car. There is plenty of room behind. This is Gerard, Myrtle," said Tom, by way of an introduction.

"Very glad to see you," said Gerard, shaking her hand in a firm grasp. "Mother hoped you would come."

"Tom," he said, turning laughingly towards his friend, "Grace Harris is here."

"You don't say so."

"Honestly. Olive invited her again.

They are fast friends. Drive round that way, Tom. I want to take Miss Haltaine to mother. Olive is with Miss Harris, and Father is in the parlor with the Fletchers and the rest."

"Maud here?" queried Tom quizzingly.

Gerard nodded assent, and colored up to his temples.

Mrs. Irving met Myrtle. She was an old lady, stout, fair and pretty, with a tender smile and soft, silvery hair. She greeted the shy new-comer in a hearty, cordial manner, and then drew her down the hall to a room, from the open door of which issued shouts of merry laughter.

"Come, my dear," said Mrs. Irving, and Myrtle was soon in the midst of a light-hearted party of boys and girls. After being introduced she was immediately taken possession of by Mr. Irving, a genial old gentleman whose early education in England, after-life in India, and varied, experience in Canada, together with an inexhaustible fund of general information, and a most alarming memory, made him a favorite with young and old.

"How do you like Heathfield?" he asked as Myrtle ensconced herself in a deep cushioned chair.

"I am liking it better," replied Myrtle, wishing to be honest as well as polite.

"When the young folks are home in the summer, I hope we shall see more of you. My daughter Olive returns to her studies on Monday. Yes, Heathfield is a charming place when the woods and fields are green. I came here, Miss Haltaine, when this place was a wilderness of trees."

"Oh, how nice!" said Myrtle, growing interested. "Were there any Indians?"

"Plenty of them. Your present home was the scene of an encampment. Do not be at all alarmed if you have dark, ghostly visitants some night, for there is a burying ground, I believe, in your garden, and a beautiful young squaw