

"EAT THAT AND THEN GO TO SLEEP."

P. 60

## CHAPTER VI.

### CHICKEN-HEARTED TOM.

Just at this moment—this the happiest moment of these two young lives—but just why it should have been at this moment, this of all others, the very moment when they ought to have been left severely alone, safely veiled from prying eyes—that moment when the wayfarer upon that broad road so many have traveled, so many will continue to travel in spite of the many haps and mishaps, which leads one down through the beautiful meadows where blooms the rose and the lily, where grows the wheat and the corn, where everything is common-place; from whence we can turn back, down across the sparkling rills, along the babbling brook-side to the foot of the hills where the shadows of doubt begin; and then away up in the mountains of passion, where the lightnings flash, where the torrents roar, where the avalanche sweeps, where precipices yawn—in whose dark and unfathomable depths lie buried the wreck of human hearts; away up among the mountain peaks of love, upon whose summits the gates stand ajar inviting one to enter and partake of the fruit—not the forbidden fruit, ah, no!—the fruit which, to that hungered wayfarer, brings to him the very consumation of all earthly bliss, from whence no man can turn back, nor woman should—just at this moment, I say, this moment when no mortal eye had business to pry, Silas Loffden, the last man on earth who should have seen, appeared upon the scene.

(51)

How it happened that he chanced to come upon them at this most inopportune moment, I will not undertake to say. Perhaps that he entertained some slight suspicion, then again, perhaps that he did not; however Silas Loffden stood before the lovers.

"Ah! oh! a thousand pardons!" he exclaimed in well feigned surprise; and he turned quickly and walked away.

"Ah," he muttered in a voice choked with passion, as he strode swiftly away, "ah, the cat's out of the bag now! O, ho! so it's young Lovejoy is it, my pretty bird, that stands between you and I? Ah, well, he's not the first man that has stood in my way, nor will his taking off be the first person whom I have been called upon to remove. Out of my way, you cursed American!" he hissed between his clinched teeth. "A hundred lives shall not deter me! No, no. Almighty, but I will have that girl though I have to wade in blood to gain her! I will stir up the natives against the settlement—and a very easy matter will it be too, for they are almost upon the point of an out-break even now. The hope of plunder, together with a promised reward, and they will sweep down upon the settlement, and then—ah, yes, my sweet little beauty, I will be there. Oh, but you shall see the day that you will be glad to marry me; that you shall go down upon those dainty, little knees and beg and pray me to fulfill the promise, but it shall not be. I will teach you that Silas Loffden is not to be trifled with! Love you! Ah, yes, I love you! Ha, ha! yes, I love as I loved Gretchen. I will marry you as I married Gretchen—by a promise; and then—ah, but we shall see!" and fairly wild with rage, he frothed and fumed

like a wild beast, as he rode like the whirlwind down the road toward his home.

For nearly two weeks after Harry's return to the Winterstine's, everything went on as usual, though many remarked a wonderful change in little Tom's appearance, though still as bashful as ever; and it had even been whispered that she had been seen, actually seen, alone and talking with the young man. Nearly two weeks, and still Silas Loffden was a constant visitor.

Prosperity attended them now, and they were happy, as happy goes, especially Tom. Nothing had happened to create any ill feeling between the two rivals; for rivals, indeed, Lovejoy and Loffden were considered to be by all—all save little Tom; she did not consider Silas Loffden as a rival to Harry Lovejoy. Many were the comments made as to how it would end, and there were those not wanting in readiness to prophesy that it would yet end in bloodshed; for that was the usual ending of a serious difficulty, whether it be of love or other matter, in that semi-civilized country.

But Loffden did not hope to win the affections of the fair little Tom. Ah, no; he had planned his final triumph after an altogether different plan.

Tom, as has already been said, was an artist of no mean ability, and her rare gems of art and paintings had proven such a source of income, that she had become to devote her entire time to this work. In this way she managed to provide for the family and had, so far, been able to keep the wolf from the door and had proven and verified her words, that she could provide for herself and father.

Her sketching tours had gradually extended farther and farther into the surrounding country. This fact was noted by Silas Loffden with especial interest and satisfaction—an interest so intense that he had, at one time, so nearly betrayed himself that he had aroused the suspicion of young Lovejoy.

“Ah,” said Harry to himself, as he returned from his prospecting trip to the mountains where he went every few days, “I don't like that fellow to hang around quite so much. I meet him every time I go out and I have seen him watch Tom. By thunder now, I am going to settle this business; I don't like to hurry Tom, but she must answer, yes or no—I will know whether I have a right to protect her. Ah, I have a plan. I will persuade her to go up into the mountains with me to-morrow. She has been wanting to go up there.” Thus musing, he rode on and soon turned into the little cottage home of Aunt Jane, where the Winterstine family were still staying.

“Tom,” he said, reprovingly, as he met the shy little lass just returning from the pasture, “I told you I would be back in time to get the cows.”

“But I thought that you would be tired, Harry,” she answered sweetly.

“Tired! and why should I be more tired than you? I bet a new hat that you've been at work all day! Honor bright now, haven't you!” and he edged suspiciously near.

“No, I haven't been working very much to-day; you have frightened all the courage out of me—precious little though I ever had to lose. I met Loffden this morning

just as I was crossing the bridge at the river,” she said, with a shy, rogueish glance into her lover's face. In an instant, as if a thunder cloud had swept over it, his face, always so kindly and pleasant, darkened, and a look of such intense hatred and passion flashed from his dark eyes, that it fairly took her breath away.

“Ah!” exclaimed Harry, “I suppose he offered to go along as a sort of body guard! Tom, I am going up into the mountains to-morrow; don't you want to go with me? You've been wanting to go. It's about fifteen miles up there where I am going. I have been prospecting up there. Will you go with me, Tom?”

“Oh, I would like to ever so much,” she said gladly, “but I—I”

“What?” questioned Harry, passionately. “Are you afraid to go with me?”

“O Harry!” cried Tom, and her lustrous eyes filled with tears. O, I don't mean that! I never thought of such a thing! I wouldn't be afraid to go anywhere with you! But Aunty and Lucy—”

“Hang Aunty, and Lucy too!” interrupted Harry. “Between Aunty and Lucy, Loffden and me, you are kept in hot water all the time. I know that they will kick up a devil of a racket, but I don't care a—”

“Harry!”

“Well, it's the first time that I ever asked a favor of you, Tom, and if you refuse me this time, I will never have the courage to ask another I'm afraid. I want to talk with you, I—I want to—I've got some business, or something. You know that we can't have a minute without some one's watching us. Will you go?” he pleaded

anxiously. "Be brave once; don't let them boss you all the time."

"Yes, I will go," she answered, resolutely; "but don't tell anybody; they needn't to know anything about it. You can saddle my pony for me in the morning, and then go on and wait for me at the bridge."

"Better tell your father, Tom, hadn't you?"

"I will if you think best, but I'd rather not. Lucy and Auntie have worried him so much they will tease the life out of him if I tell him, for they will ask him and he won't deny it if he knows," she answered.

"Just as you please, Tom; only I don't want to have him think that I am trying to mislead you."

"He won't think that, Harry; he ain't afraid to trust me with you," answered the girl, confidently.

"Tom—T-o-o-m!" came in the shrill piping tone of Aunt Jane's voice.

"O gracious!" cried Tom, as the voice came echoing down the lane, and at the same time she saw Aunt Jane standing on the back porch. "I forgot, Auntie told me to hurry, for she wants to go over to Gootsman's this evening. Open the gate, Harry, while I bring old Snow back."

"A kiss first!" cried Harry seizing her hand and holding her fast

"O Auntie is looking!" cried the girl, struggling to free herself.

"T-o-o-o-m-m!" shriller now, came the voice of Aunt Jane.

"Just one!" pleaded Harry.

"For shame, Harry!" cried Tom, striving to hide her blushing face with her hands.

"Just one!" pleaded Harry, removing her hands and holding them up in his strong hands above her head.

"T-o-o-o-o-m-m-m!" louder and still shriller this time, came the piping voice of Aunt Jane, who had been joined by Lucy and the two Gootsman girls just at this stage of the game.

"Kiss me quick!" cried Tom, struggling desperately "and let me go! O Jerusalem!" she exclaimed, for just then she spied the three girls, and they were looking. "O Lord!" worse yet, for there at the front gate and taking it all in, stood Silas Loffden. "I don't care!" she declared, as she darted away after old Snow.

"Hurry up, Tom," laughed Harry, a little vexed to be sure; "hurry, for they've seen it! O, they've got it laid up for us this time, sure!"

"I don't care!" cried Tom, angrily. "It's none of their buiness, and I'll tell 'em so; so there!"

"Phe-w-w!" whistled Harry. "But look out how you fool with a 'chicken-hearted girl! Arn't angry at me are you, Tom?" pleaded Harry, humbly.

"No, no, but there's that miserable Loffden! O, how I hate him!" she cried.

"O, how sly we are!" twitted Lucy, as Tom dodged by her and the other girls and entered the house.

"A pretty pass things are coming to, I should say," stormed Aunt Jane.

"What's the matter? What's the matter now?" asked the father anxiously. "Tom, come here! What is it, child?" he asked, stroking her golden curls. "There, there, don't cry; don't be so chicken-hearted.

"Matter!" cried Aunt Jane, in utter disgust. "A pretty ado things are coming to when young girls get to allow the young men to hug and kiss 'em right afore the whole town!" and she bounced out of the room in high dudgeon.

"What does it mean, child?" asked the father, wiping away her tears.

"Harry kissed me and they saw us."

"Yes," said Harry entering the room, "I kissed her, but I didn't know that the whole town was a watching us."

"Well, well, be a little more careful after this. There child, don't cry about it any more. I know how it is, I was young once myself. Come now to supper; you've been working hard all day and I know you'r hungry."

"I won't go in there—I ain't hungry!" declared Tom.

"Neither am I," said Harry.

"Well, well," muttered the father, as he turned to the dining-room, "I know how it is—yes, yes!"

"It's all right, Tom," said Harry; "your father don't care; it don't make any difference about the rest. But what did you mean, Tom, by telling me that you hadn't been working much to-day?"

"Oh, I didn't want you to know—I didn't want you to be angry at Lucy."

"And you've been doing this all along! You'll work hard all day and tramp a mile or more after cows at night, when that la—"

"Harry!" she interrupted.

"She might do that much to help you, anyway!" declared Harry.

"She doesn't feel well," said Tom.

"She's tired—she's always tired; she was born tired, and she'll make the man tired that marries—"

"For shame, Harry, to talk so about a girl! I never heard you say such tuings about anybody before."

"It's an ungentlemanly thing to do I know, but I know who I am talking to—I know it won't go any further."

"You had better go and get your supper, Harry, you are hungry, I know—"

"And so are you!" interrupted Harry.

"I couldn't eat—I'm going to bed."

"Not without your supper, Tom."

"Yes," and hearing them leaving the table, she turned and hurried away.

"Good enough for her," ejaculated Aunt Jane. "She don't deserve any supper! If she was my child, I'd lock her up and keep her on bread and water for a week!"

"You were never young yourself, Jane, I presume?" queried the father.

"Oh, of course you'll take her part, you always do. Ah, Master Harry," she said, stately, "you'd better go to your supper."

"And why not send me to bed without my supper, too?" asked Harry.

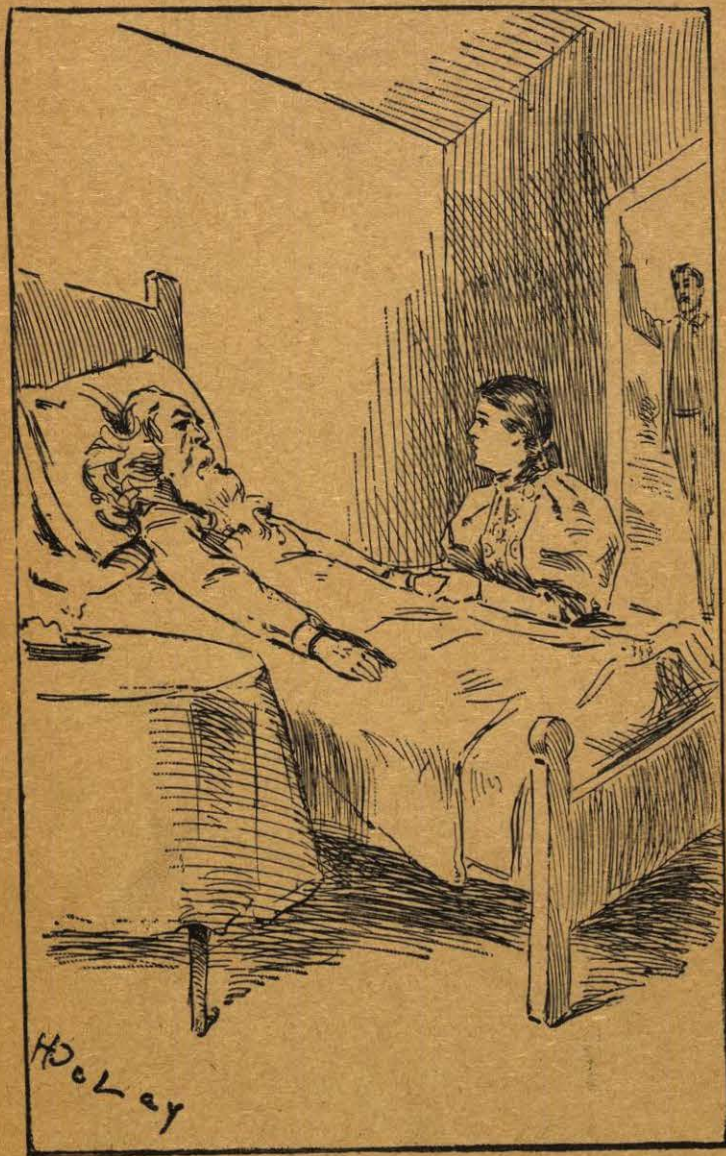
"Come Aunty," cried Lucy from the garden, "we are waiting!"

"Good!" muttered Harry, as Aunt Jane bustled out of the house. "Good! I'll just help myself. Tom," he

called, knocking on her bedroom door, "get up, Tom; come, are you in bed?"

"I ain't hungry," came in a voice that told of tears.

"You shall eat just the same," declared Harry, bringing a plate heaped with a little of everything that he could find upon the table. "Here Tom, you shall not go without your supper! Eat that and then go to sleep, so you will be ready for to-morrow."



AGAIN HIS EYES RESTED UPON THAT SWEET FACE. P. 67.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE HERMIT.

Early the next morning, as was her custom, little Tom was up and busily engaged in the kitchen preparing breakfast. Lucy never made her appearance, unless upon some special occasion, until breakfast was ready and waiting. Aunt Jane was a little late this morning, or Tom was, perhaps, a little early, but Harry was up and, going down into the kitchen, he found Tom, rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed and, with sleeves rolled up and hands in the dough, busily engaged in making a batch of bread for their breakfast.

“Heigho!” cried Harry, walking over to her side; and there was a suspicious twinkle in his eye as he said:

“We’ll have some good biscuit for breakfast this morning.”

And then, if Aunt Jane had been listening, (and who shall say that she was not?) she might have heard something that sounded suspiciously like a kiss, but, of course, it wasn’t. Oh no! Although, a moment later, when Aunt Jane entered the kitchen, the very first thing that she noticed, was a guilty blush upon Tom’s fair cheek and a little flour on Harry’s mustache; but of course she didn’t know the cause of all these suspicious evidences. Tom was a chicken-hearted girl and she would faint dead away if a young man was to kiss her.”

"A-hem-m," from Aunt Jane, as Harry went out to do the chores. "A-hem—you are up early this morning, Tom."

"I went to bed early last night," suggested Tom, looking out of the window.

"A-h-em-m—" from Aunt Jane in a hesitating and doubtful manner, as if she wanted to say something but was in doubt just how to do it.

Tom put her bread in the oven and then going to the open window, leaned her head against the casement and looked away towards the mountains.

"Ah," she mused, "I wonder what he wants me to go up there with him for?"

And her weak little heart that would always fail her just when it ought not, fluttered and began to climb up as if struggling to escape.

"Oh, I wish I knew whether I ought to go—but I ain't afraid—I will go—I—I know he wouldn't take me there if it was wrong."

And a big, round tear chased another down across her plump, dimpled cheek and fell upon Aunt Jane's hand, who had just stepped to her side and rested her short, fat hand upon the window-sill.

"A-he-e-m." Aunt Jane's throat always did bother her some. "A-h-e-m—Tom, I am sorry for what I said last night," she said kindly; "forgive me Tom, for I was angry; but I was wrong—I see it now—there, there, child, don't cry, don't be so tender-hearted—what is Harry saddling his horse so early for, he isn't going to leave us because I made a fool of myself last night? Don't let him go, Tom!"

"No, no, he won't leave," said Tom, at a loss to understand her aunt's sudden change of heart.

"You ain't going anywhere with him to-day, are you, Tom?" asked Aunt Jane, for she suspected that something was up.

"Yes," replied Tom, slowly.

"Tom, what is he up to? what's he coaxing you away for? He ain't trying to coax you off to get married, is he?" sputtered Aunt Jane, in dismay.

"Phe-w-w!" whistled Harry, coming in with an arm load of wood, and sniffing the air. "Phew—biscuits are burning!"

"O dear," cried Tom, "they are spoiled."

"Just right!" declared Harry, "I like 'em hard."

"They'll suit you, then, for they'r as hard as bricks," moaned Tom.

"It's all my fault!" declared Aunt Jane, as they sat down to breakfast.

"Just right," declared Harry, trying to crack one by hitting it with the handle of his knife.

"Try this Harry," said Tom, innocently, handing him the hatchet.

"That's just the thing," he laughed, as he aimed a blow at the refractory biscuit. "Shall I crack one for you?" And he reached over toward Tom's plate.

"If you please," and she placed one up on edge. "Try the sharp edge of the ax," suggested Tom, as the first blow had failed to have the desired effect.

"Better try one, Lucy," ventured Harry. "Shall I crack it for you?"



"Thank you," replied Lucy, shortly, "I don't care for any."

"They look tough, but they taste good," declared Harry, cracking another.

But the breakfast was soon over and the horses, saddled and bridled, were impatiently awaiting their riders.

"Papa," said Tom, with downcast eyes, "may I go up into the mountains with Harry to-day?"

"Go where?" he asked. And Lucy raised her brows in amazement, and ejaculated—

"Well, I never!"

"Why it's twenty miles up there, and not a soul within ten miles!" exclaimed Aunt Jane, shocked at the idea.

"Please papa—I promised to go," pleaded the girl.

"The idea!" exclaimed the shocked and horrified Lucy. But Tom was always doing things that shocked her very delicate sense of propriety. "The idea! to go romping into the woods with that great, awkward boy!"

"And alone, too!" And Aunt Jane could, in her shocked state of mind, hardly believe her own ears.

"Let the child alone!" exclaimed the father impatiently. Yes, yes, child, go if you want to," he said, looking down into her blushing face. "Ah," he mused, as he walked down toward the gate where Harry was waiting with the horses, for Tom had told him that she was going to ask her father. "Ah, it must be, but I can hardly realize that my baby has grown up to be a woman. Ah, yes, times flies so swiftly—only a little while ago she was a laughing, prattling babe upon her mother's bosom, now, —yes, yes, Harry," he answered, to the lover's stammer-

ing and rather embarrassed and disjointed pleading, "yes, you may have her and may God bless you and her."

"Ah, Tom," he said, as the girl came running down the path to the gate, "be careful, child, and don't get hurt. The road is rough and the horse is skittish and high spirited."

"Don't worry, papa!" cried the happy girl, kissing her hand to him as she rode swiftly away.

On like a whirlwind dashed the fearless little rider; fearless, for hadn't she broke many a colt upon their little farm at Cliffside?"

On, on; they were fast nearing the mountains. Now, dashing down a deep, narrow defile through which the road wound its serpentine length, they came suddenly and unexpectedly upon Silas Loffden, mounted upon his coal-black horse and riding leisurely toward the mountains.

With a low bow and a pleasant "Good morning," he reined in his horse and allowed them to pass on.

"Darn that man!" muttered Harry, between his clenched teeth; and his brow contracted into a dark scowl.

"O Harry!" cried Tom, reproachfully, "please don't swear."

"I didn't mean to; but I tell you what, that man has dogged me just about long enough—confound him, I say, I don't like him!"

"Neither do I!" said Tom, quickly.

"I meet him every time I come up here. He's watching for something. Confound him, I say! I'd like to know what he's up to anyhow?"

"O! O!" cried Tom in delightful surprise, as they dashed out of the gloomy defile and entered a little park—a veritable paradise in that wilderness of gloomy hills and dark valleys. "O how delightful! and look! look! There's a little log house! Oh, isn't it lovely? And see, Harry, there's an old, white haired man. Do you know him, Harry?"

"No," replied Harry, "let's stop and see him." So they turned in and halted before the little cabin.

"Ah, good morning, good morning!" welcomed the old man, arising and coming out to meet them.

"Good morning, father!" greeted the girl, extending her hand and clasping his wrinkled hand in her soft, warm fingers while her dark, blue eyes sparkled and her beautiful face beamed with the glad, happy emotions that filled her heart.

"Quick! quick, Harry!" cried Tom in alarm, holding to the old man's hand to prevent him from falling. "Quick, catch him, Harry, he's sick!"

In an instant, Harry was beside him and supporting him in his strong arms assisted him to a large, arm-chair which was standing before the cabin door.

"O father!" cried the frightened girl, brushing his snow-white locks back from his aged brow, "can't I do something for you?"

But the old man did not answer. His head dropped upon his bosom and the tears trickled down his furrowed cheeks.

"Father, father!" pleaded the girl, anxiously. "Speak! O tell me what to do! O Harry," she implored, "can't you do something for him?"

"Hold him—don't let him fall, while I look in the house and see if I can find something."

Resting the old man's head upon her soft, warm bosom, she held him in her arms till Harry returned.

"Here's some camphor," he said, and began bathing the old man's face, and put a few drops in his mouth.

"Will he die?" asked the frightened girl, beginning to cry.

"No, no, Tom; he is beginning to revive," answered Harry, chafing his hands and temples briskly. "Let's get him into the house; there, I can carry him;" and raising him in his strong arms, he carried him into the house and laid him on the bed.

Slowly the old man recovered, and again his deep, gray eyes rested upon that fair, sweet face bending so anxiously, so pityingly over him.

"O God!" murmured the old man. "It is her face—her eyes. O Edith!" and he covered his eyes with his hands to shut out the vision of some past recollection. "Ah," he said, "I am better now. Leave me now, but stop when you come back, and see me."

