

closet door and calling to Tom to come and defend her from wild beasts.

It was not only in her dreams that she cried. She awoke sobbing, and saw Susan standing over her.

"What's the matter, darling?" she said.

"I don't know," said Dody. "My throat chokes me."

Susan knew well enough that the croup had come. She had heard Dody breathe that way before, and lost no time in bringing mamma.

Tom got up; papa got up; and they walked the hall in their stockings, listening at the keyhole every time they passed Dody's door; for mamma and Susan were the only ones needed and allowed within.

Papa in his anxiety did not dream that Tom could be more anxious than he; and that besides anxiety, regret and shame tormented him. He paced the hall, still soldierly in stocking feet, and half undress; still straight, though his soul was bowed and his heart wounded.

What a mean, mean little trick that had been of his! How the falseness of his words had come back to punish him!

And what was that he had called her afterwards? Cross-grained, disagreeable, conceited. He had heard of fellows' little sisters dying with the croup. And if anything like that should happen, he had done it, that was all.

"Don't worry, Tom," said his father, as he caught a glimpse of his face under the gaslight. "She's had it before, and your mother knows just how to manage it."

"Yes, sir," said Tom; "but you know I've got it all on my shoulders if anything should happen."

"Why, what's the matter, boy?" for Tom's firm mouth was quivering in curves that Dody would have liked to see.

"It was all some nonsense about getting planted. I told her she could grow that way, and she took it in earnest and went out and jumped in one of the holes they've been digging for posts, and she couldn't get out, and was caught in the rain."

"Oh!" said his father. "You musn't tease her quite so much, Tom. She's nothing but a baby."

No, nothing but a baby, Tom thought, as he paced again—only six, and he twelve; twice as old. Yet he had felt called upon to lord it over the little thing—tormenting her about inferiority, and "teaching her her place." He would have been in better business finding his own place, he thought. It would be a good idea for him to try that after to-night, if—

"She is better," said mamma's voice in the hall.

Tom put his head down on the banisters, for it was giddy with the relief the words brought. There was a rushing through his brain of plans for Dody's benefit. He would make it up to her to-morrow, and on other to-morrows.

"Tell her I send her a kiss," he said.

CHAPTER XII.

DODY REIGNS.

Tom had had his reign. Now it was Dody's turn to be queen. She slept most of the day after the croup. But the morning after that Tom came in with the softest of steps and meekest of faces, to submit himself to her rule. He asked so many times if she wanted anything, that she became rather tired of the question, though to be sure she never hesitated to answer "Yes," to it.

Yes, she said, he might take off his boots and put on slippers. Never a boy hated slippers as Tom did. They always made him think of velvet cat-paws creeping after rats, slyly seeking something to be devoured. But he found a pair in his closet that mamma had embroidered for him last Christmas, and put them on.

After that she wanted the cologne, she wanted a fan, she wanted a book in the parlor. Then she wanted another book in the library, then one in mamma's room. Then she thought she would like her slate and pencil; then she thought