



Tom as an Army Officer – Delightful Sadness

TOM WENT TO REPORT TO AUNT POLLY. SHE WAS SITTING BESIDE AN open window. She was half asleep, and she was holding the sleeping cat. She was surprised to see Tom. She thought that he had run away from his work long ago.

Tom said, “May I go and play now, Aunt?”

“Already? How much have you done?”

“It is all done, Aunt.”

“Tom, is that true? It makes me sad if you do not tell the truth.”

“It is true, Aunt; it is all done.”

She went to see, and her surprise was very great. “You can work when you want to, Tom. But you do not often want to. Go and play. But remember to come home again.” And she gave him a large apple. She did not see him take a piece of cake as he passed through the kitchen.

Tom hurried to the center of the village. There two armies of boys had met for a battle. Tom was the leader, the General, of one army, and his good friend, Joe Harper, was the General of the other. Tom and Joe did not fight. They sat together and sent their orders to the armies.

When the battle was finished, they agreed to have another battle on another day. Then the armies marched away, and Tom started to go home alone.

As he passed Jeff Thatcher's house, he saw a new girl in the garden. She had blue eyes and yellow hair. She was beautiful. Tom had loved a girl named Amy Lawrence. A week ago she had said that she loved him. He had been happy and proud. But now in a moment she was gone from his heart.

He watched the new girl until she discovered him. Then he looked at other places, as if he had not seen her. And he began to jump, and dance, and walk on his hands, so that she would continue to watch him.

She walked toward the house, and Tom's heart was sad. But she threw a flower over the fence. Then she was gone.

Tom looked around. There was no person to see him. Slowly he picked up the flower. He put it under his shirt, near his heart.

And he stayed near the fence until darkness came.

Then he went home to eat. He was full of joy. His aunt wondered why.

Later that evening his brother Sid was a bad boy. He took some sweets. But his aunt did not believe that Sid could be bad. She gave Tom the blow that she should have given to Sid. She learned the truth later, and was sorry. But she said nothing to Tom.

Therefore, Tom was very sorry for himself. He began to wish that he would die. She would feel sorry then. He could see himself being carried home from the river, dead, his hair wet, his troubles past.

He went out into the darkness, and went to the river. It would be good to **drown**—if he could drown without pain.

He thought of his flower, and took it from inside his shirt. Would the new girl be sad if he died? Would she put her arms around him? Or would she turn coldly away?

This picture brought him much delightful suffering. He kept it a long time in his mind.

Then he started home.

He stopped near the Thatcher house. There was a light in one window. Was that the new girl's room? He lay down on the ground below the window, with her flower in his hands. He would lie there and die in the cold. In the morning, she would look out the window, and see him.

The window opened suddenly. He heard the voice of a woman who worked for the Thatchers. She threw water out of the window, and it fell on him.

Tom jumped up and ran.

Sid opened his eyes and saw Tom, ready for bed, looking at his wet clothes. Tom's wild eyes made Sid afraid. He did not dare to speak.

But he would remember and tell his aunt.