

CHAPTER V.



It was in early April, when nature was looking her loveliest clothed in spring attire, that Giles Conolly found himself knocking at Hillside. He had ascertained that the Lovels still lived there, and that Nance was "Miss Nance" yet. He had only waited to bury poor Jack Lovel and dispose of his own farm before taking his passage to England, where, after an interview with his lawyers, he had at once hastened to Meriton, feeling bound to deliver the message and book, which Lovel had left in his charge.

He hardly dared hope that Nance would still love him after all his cruel silence, and yet the thought of seeing her once more made his pulses throb tumultuously.

"Are any of the family in?" he inquired, as the trim housemaid opened the door.

"Will you walk in, sir, and I will see. I think they are all out, except Miss Nance."

The pretty drawing-room looked very bright with fresh spring flowers, and Giles waited there impatiently while the maid left the room. At last she returned and said—

"I'm sorry to keep you waiting, sir. I find Miss Nance must be in the garden, but I will fetch her in one moment. What name did you say?"

"Kindly tell her a gentleman wishes to see her, who brings news of Mr. Jack Lovel."

Would she be much altered? How would she greet him? These were the thoughts that rushed through his mind as he waited, and then he heard a light step outside, and the door opened.

The little figure with its quiet dignity was unaltered, and the face, though it had lost the child-like look, had gained a sweetness and depth of expression that made it very lovely.

She looked at the tall bronzed man for a moment, and then turned very pale as she said quietly—

"I think you wished to see me?"

All Conolly's resolution to meet her calmly vanished, and advancing towards her he murmured brokenly—

"Nance, Nance, don't you know me?"

The blue eyes met his dark pleading ones for a moment, as she said gravely—

"I hope you are well, Mr. Conolly. Won't you tell me the news you have of my cousin, for this interview is painful to us both?"

Conolly's face grew white beneath its tan, and his strong frame trembled.

"Ah," he pleaded, "hear of my bitter repentance, my life-long remorse for my doubt and hardness, and grant me one word of forgiveness. Nance, I have heard all from Jack, and though I know, to my infinite sorrow, that by my cruel jealousy I have forfeited all that is most precious in life to me, yet—is there no chance for my pardon?"

Nance stood as though she heard not, and her face was hidden from him. What had happened? Was this Giles—her Giles—who stood before her after all the weary years—and did he love her still? Her limbs refused to move, and the sudden joy almost paralysed her.

Knowing nothing of what was passing in her mind, and fearing from her silence that he had pleaded in vain, Conolly moved away with a groan, sank into a chair, and folding his arms on the table, bent his head upon them. Nance turned at last, and her eyes grew tender as she gazed at the bowed figure. Moving swiftly towards him she held out her arms, and in a low voice murmured—

"Giles!"

He raised his head, his dark eyes wet with tears; a look of incredulous joy dawned there as he saw her, and, rising, he caught her in his arms, and with a deep "Thank God," closed with his passionate kisses the sweet eyes that looked into his with unutterable love.

"Darling, darling, am I dreaming?" he whispered.

Later, sitting under the old apple-tree, now covered with its pink blossoms, he told her of Jack's last days, and her tears fell softly as she heard his message and received the little Bible.

Then he spoke of his uncle's death, and how he had found in Jack the missing heir, and Nance's blue eyes grew wide with wonder as she listened.

"Dearest," she said, as she nestled against his broad shoulder, "when you gave the weary tramp food and shelter, you little thought that he would prove to be our good angel. Poor Jack."

[THE END.]



TOFFEE AND A CAKE.

"TOFFEE for breakfast, toffee for dinner, toffee for tea, toffee for supper—even toffee under these circumstances may become monotonous." This is perfectly true.

But toffee just now and again is by no means a bad thing, if only in order that one shall not quite forget what it tastes like. When home-made and well made it generally tastes very nice. No souvenir of home can perhaps give more delight to the boy off to a boarding school than a tin—respectable in size—filled with nice toffee; and if, in response to his companions' verdict, "It's jolly good," he is able to say, "Yes, my mother (or my sister) made it," he experiences a feeling of pride as well as pleasure. That he would wish to have a cake in addition goes without saying. Here is a recipe for excellent toffee. Put a teaspoonful of cold water into a very clean pan and place on gas stove; add two ounces of fresh unsalted butter. As soon as the butter is melted, add two ounces of white (not crystallised) sugar and stir quickly with a

wooden spoon. Add a few drops of juice from a fresh lemon and boil and stir rapidly, for some six or eight minutes, until it seems to set when a little is tried on a plate. Butter a rather deep plate and pour the toffee on to it, letting it remain until crisp and cold enough to cut into small pieces.

The cake, of course, cannot be completed quite so quickly. Provide yourself with a pound and a half of pastry flour, one pound of washed (or better, fresh unsalted) butter, one pound of fine white sugar, one pound of new-laid eggs (weighed unshelled), half a pound of sultanas, one teaspoonful of baking powder.

Rub the butter into the flour, then the sugar. Beat the yolks of the eggs, add these and mix. Beat the whites separately (on a plate with a knife) into a stiff froth and add them. Mix well; then add the raisins; mix, and lastly the baking powder. Bake from two to three hours in a moderate oven.