

And he said no, he didn't have time; an' I said it was a shame to waste such a nice lunch, an' he laughed an' said, "You eat it," but after I heard that rat I didn't seem to feel hungry." She looked at him and her dark eyes sparkled. "Please will you watch through the door real close just a minute? If the rat sees you lookin' he won't come out. Just a minute," and she turned and trotted into the counting-room. In a moment she was back again with a long pasteboard box. "Here's the lunch." She looked at him and half closed her eyes. "Let you and me eat it," she said.

He shook his head. "Eat it yourself," he muttered. "I can't eat it all," she cried. "I'm not a pig. It's very nice. Mamma took extremely pains with it. Let's divide. What's yours?" He hesitated. Then he pushed his apple and crackers into view. She looked at the display gravely.

"My papa had 'it once," she said. "Had what?" "Dyspepsy. He couldn't eat hardly anything neither." "I can eat quite enough," the old man dryly remarked.

The child looked at him curiously. "You're pretty thin," she said. "Maybe I'd be pretty thin too if I lived on apples and crackers. An' now it's my turn. See this." And she whisked the cover off the box, and showed the neatly packed contents. "Now," she said, as she drew out a sandwich, "I'll trade you this for two crackers. I don't much care for crackers, but it will seem more fair."

She held the sandwich toward him. He hesitated again. A frosty smile stole across his wrinkled face. He gravely extended the two crackers and took the proffered sandwich. Then he bit a goodly segment from it.

"Very good," he said. "Mamma made 'em herself. Papa says she's a dabster at makin' sandwiches. But then I guess mamma's always make things better than anybody else can. Don't you find it so?"

He paused with the remainder of the sandwich uplifted. His face grew more gentle.

"I believe it's a fact that is generally admitted," he said.

The child looked at him with a quick laugh. "That's just the way papa talks sometimes," she said, "an' I don't understand a word he says. But ain't we havin' a good time, jus' you an' me?" "Why, yes," said the old man. "I think it must be a good time—although I'm afraid a pretty poor judge."

The child regarded him critically. "You do look pretty poor," she said. "Have another sandwich. Oh, do! An' mercy, here's some cheese an' a nice pickle. Yes, you must. Papa says it isn't polite to refuse a lady. That's when mamma offers him the second cup of coffee." The old man took the second sandwich, but he frowned a little at the cheese and crackers.

"Rather extravagant," he growled. "That's just what papa says to mamma sometimes," cried the child. "An' mamma says she guesses he'd have hard work to find anybody who could make a dollar go further than she can. We have to be awful careful, you know. There's clothes to buy, an' what we eat, an' the rent. Why, mamma says she's always afraid to look the calendar in the face for fear rent day has come round again. Where do you live?"

"I live in a house uptown," he answered. "Can you swing a cat in it?" "Swing a cat?"

"You can't in our rooms, you know. They're the teeniest things. We're on the fifth floor—but the janitor's a real nice man. He asked me to ask my papa if he'd trade me for two boys. An' papa said to tell him that he might do it for the two boys an' a couple o' pounds o' radium to boot. An' I told the janitor, an' he said he guessed papa wasn't very anxious to trade. An' I told papa what Mr. Ryan said, an' he pulled one of my curls an' said he wouldn't trade me for all John Ramsey's millions twice over. That's the man papa works for. Do you know him?"

The old man had frowned and then suddenly smiled. "Yes, I've met him," he replied. "He's very rich, papa says, an' he lives all alone in a great big house, an' he hasn't little girl, an' he needs somebody to take care of him, an' all he thinks about is money, money, money! 'It's too bad to be as rich as that, isn't it?"

The old man looked hard at the child. "Money is a pretty good thing, isn't it?" "I guess it is," the child replied. "But mamma says it's only good for what it will buy. It's good for clothes, and what you eat, and the rent. Then it's good for nice things what you specially like, but not

too many. Then it's good for helpin' those that need helpin', like lame Joe, an' when people is sick. An' it's good to have a little in the bank for a rainy day—though I don't see what difference the rain makes. Ain't this sponge cake good?"

"Money is very useful, then?" "Tis sometimes. When mamma's mamma died 'way out in Kansas mamma couldn't go to the funeral 'cause papa was just gettin' over a fever an' all our money was gone, every cent, an' we owed the doctor an' the rent. Mamma cried and cried all day."

There was a little silence. "And what would you do if you had lots of money, child?"

She looked up at him with her eyes sparkling. "I'd give most of it to mamma and papa. But I'd keep a little myself." She smiled at him in her bewildering way. "Guess you don't know what a lot of things you can buy for fifty cents! An' then I'd keep some for a chair—the kind you wheel around—for lame Joe. He's a little boy that lives near our house, an' he can't never walk any more. An' he sits on the steps an' makes faces at us when we run by. An' mamma says it's too bad somebody who has the money to spare can't get him a chair like he needs, 'cause it would be such a happiness to him. An' mamma says maybe Mr. Ramsey would buy it, and papa laughed in such a funny way. Mr. Ramsey is the man he works for, you remember."

"I remember," said the old man. "An' mamma said she guessed she'd come down some day an' tell Mr. Ramsey about lame Joe, an' papa said real quick he guessed she'd better not. An' mamma said she was only joking. Funny kind of joking, wasn't it?"

"It sounds that way to me," said the old man, dryly.

"Yes, I think so, too. When a man's got as much money as Mr. Ramsey, it wouldn't be any trouble at all for him to buy a chair for a little lame boy, would it?"

He did not answer her. "How old are you?" he presently asked. "I'm six. And how old are you?" He laughed in his unaccustomed way. "I'm seventy—to-day."

The child gave a little scream of delight. "Mercy! It's your birthday! Oh, I wish I had known it! Mamma could make you such a beautiful birthday cake. Wouldn't it have to be a big one! Just 'magine seventy candles! We think a lot of birthdays at our house. Do you get many presents?"

"Not one." She looked at him with startled eyes. "Why, that's too bad. Did your folks forget?" "I haven't any folks."

The pity on her face deepened. "I'm sorry for you," she said. Her little hand pushed the pasteboard box towards him. "You shall have the other piece of cake." Then her face brightened.

"Couldn't you buy some presents for yourself?" He shook his head.

"No," he answered. "I don't believe I could." Her glance fell on the half-eaten apple and the crackers.

"Perhaps you are too poor?" she softly said. "Yes," he answered, "I am too poor."

Her little heart was touched. "Have you worked here long?" she asked. "Nearly fifty years."

"Mercy! that's a long time." Her quick glance travelled over his thread-bare suit. "Maybe Mr. Ramsey would give you more wages."

He laughed again. "He seems to think I'm worth only my board and clothes."

"Dear, dear! An' he's so rich. We went by his house once—papa an' mamma an' me—an' it looked so big an' dark. Mamma said she'd just like to have the care of it for a while. She'd let in the air an' the sunshine, an' drive out the dust an' the gloom an' she'd try to make life really worth livin' for the lonely old man. That's what mamma said. An' papa said he guessed mamma could do it if anybody could. You know Mr. Ramsey. What do you think about it?"

He suddenly laughed. "It might be an experiment worth tryin'," he said. Then he stared into the pasteboard box. "Why, look at this!" he cried; "the lunch has all disappeared! I'm sure I ate more than half of it. Come, now, how much do I owe you?"

"Mercy," cried the child, "you don't owe me anythin'! I couldn't eat it all, an' papa didn't have time. I hope you liked it."

"It was the best luncheon I have eaten for years," said the old man.