

letter, assuring her that I would be glad to look in soon again.

The next day I was called away for a week, and it was two weeks before I passed the little dun house again. It was with an eagerness that increased to anxiety that I scanned it as I approached. Sure enough, there were various signs of unusual life about the house and grounds. Two boys of about fifteen and sixteen were playing ball in the yard; noise of chatting and laughter came from the rear of the house; fresh curtains were up at the front windows, and the front door was hospitably open. Inside, I glimpsed a tall, handsome woman, and a keener glance discovered the little mother sitting near by. Just then one of the lads, tall and good to look at, ran toward the front of the house, calling, lustily: 'Grandma! Grandma! Don't you want us to cut the grass for you?'

If tears stung my eyes as I hurried past, they helped me to sense something of the great happiness which must be filling that tender, kind old heart.
Are Maria.

THE MOTHER AND HER BOY

'Tom, let that alone!' exclaimed a mother, petulantly, to a boy seven years old, who was playing with a tassel that hung from one of the window-blinds, to the imminent danger of its destruction.

The boy did not seem to hear, but kept on fidgeting the tassel.

'Let that be, I tell you! Must I speak a hundred times? Why don't you mind at once?'

The child slowly relinquished his hold of the tassel, and commenced running his hand up and down the Venetian blind.

'There! there! Do for gracious sake let those blinds alone. Go away from the window this moment, and try and keep your hands off of things. I declare! you are the most trying child I ever saw.'

Tom left the window and threw himself at full length into the cradle, where he commenced rocking himself with a force and rapidity that made everything crack again.

'Get out of that cradle! What do you mean? The child really seems possessed! And the mother caught him by the arm and jerked him from the cradle.

Tom said nothing, but, with the most imperturbable air in the world, walked twice around the room, and then pushing a chair up before the dressing-bureau, took therefrom a bottle of hair lustral, and, pouring the palm of his little hand full of the liquid, commenced rubbing it upon his head. Twice had this operation been performed, and Tom was pulling open a drawer to get the hair-brush, when the odor of the oily compound reached the nostrils of the lad's mother, who was sitting with her back toward him. Turning quickly, she saw what was going on.

'You! fell angrily from her lips, as she dropped the baby in the cradle. 'Isn't it too much!' she continued, as she swept across the room to where Tom was standing before the bureau-dressing glass.

'There, sir!' and the child's ear rang with the box he received. 'There, sir!' and the box was repeated. 'Haven't I told you a hundred times not to touch that hair-oil? Just see what a spot of grease you've made on the carpet! Look at your hands!'

Tom looked at his hands, and, seeing them full of oil, clapped them quickly down upon his jacket, and tried to rub them clean.

'There! stop! mercy! Now, see your new jacket that you put on this morning. Grease from top to bottom! Isn't it too bad! I am in despair!' And the mother let her hands fall by her side, and her body drop into a chair.

'It's no use to try,' she continued: 'I'll give up. Just see that jacket! it's totally ruined; and that carpet, too. Was there ever such a trying boy! Go downstairs this instant, and tell Jane to come up here.'

Tom had reason to know that his mother was not in a mood to be trifled with, so he went off briskly and

called Jane, who was directed to get some fuller's-earth and put upon the carpet where oil had been spilled.

Not at all liking the atmosphere of his mother's room, Tom, being once in the kitchen, felt no inclination to return. His first work there, after delivering his message to Jane, was to commence turning the coffee-mill.

'Tommy,' said the cook, mildly, yet firmly, 'you know I've told you that it was wrong to touch the coffee-mill. See here, on the floor, where you have scattered the coffee about, and now I must get a broom and sweep it up. If you do so, I can't let you come down here.'

The boy stood and looked at the cook seriously, while she got the broom and swept up the dirt he had made.

'It's all clean again now,' said the cook, pleasantly. 'And you won't do so any more, will you?'

'No, I won't touch the coffee-mill.' And, as Tom said this, he sidled up to the knife-box that stood upon the dresser, and made a dive into it with his hand.

'Oh, no, no, no, Tommy! that won't do, either,' said the cook. 'The knives have all been cleaned, and they are to go on the table to eat with.'

Then what can I play with, Margaret?' asked the child, as he left the dresser. 'I want something to play with.'

The cook thought a moment, and then went to a closet and brought out a little basket filled with clothes-pins. As she held them in her hand, she said:

'Tommy, if you will be careful not to break any of these, nor scatter them about, you may have them to play with. But, remember, now, that as soon as you begin to throw them around the room, I will put them up again.'

'Oh, no, I won't throw them about,' said the little fellow, with brightening eyes, as he reached out for the basket of pins.

In a little while he had a circle formed on the table, which he called his fort; and inside of this he had men, cannon, sentry-boxes, and other things that were suggested to his fancy.

'Where's Thomas?' asked his mother, about the time he had become fairly interested in his fort.

'I left him down in the kitchen,' replied Jane.

'Go down and tell him to come here instantly.'

Down went Jane.

'Come along upstairs to your mother,' said she.

'No, I won't,' replied the boy.

'Very well, mister! You can do as you like; but your mother sent for you.'

'Tell mother I am playing here so good. I'm not in any mischief. Am I, Margaret?'

'No, Tommy; but your mother has sent for you, and you had better go.'

'I don't want to.'

'Just as you like,' said Jane, indifferently, as she left the kitchen and went upstairs.

'Where's Thomas?' was the question with which she was met on returning to the chamber.

'He won't come, ma'am.'

'Go and tell him that if he doesn't come up to me instantly, I will put on his nightclothes and shut him up in the closet.'

The threat of the closet was generally uttered ten times where it was executed once; it made but little impression upon the child, who was all absorbed in his fort.

Jane returned. In a few moments afterward, the quick, angry voice of the mother was heard ringing down the stairway.

'You, Tom! come up here this instant.'

'I'm not troubling anything, mother.'

'Come up, I say!'

'Margaret says I may play with the clothes-pins. I'm only building a fort with them.'

'Do you hear me?'

'Mother!'

'Tom! if you don't come to me this instant, I'll almost skin you. Margaret! take those clothes-pins