

MRS. MAYBURN'S TWINS.

THE STORY OF ONE DAY.

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"Oh, did bad mamma hurt her dear little beeboy?" said mamma, dropping the comb and kissing the child; "well, she sha'n't do it any more; there," and mamma tried with her hands to put the larger tangles on whatever part of the head they rightly belonged to, fixing them in place with the wet brush.

"Come, pet, aren't you ready?" shouted a manly voice from somewhere below.

"Right away, dear," replied mamma. "Run, Freddie, and tell Bridget to hurry upstairs to baby."

"I can't find my necktie," said Fred.

Mamma stood Bobboker on the floor, scratched a ribbon from a drawer, tied it about Fred's neck, and pushed him toward the door; then she picked up Bobboker and hurried down-stairs, where papa, who was in his seat at the foot of the table, remarked:

"We're ten minutes late again, little girl. I wish we could be more punctual."

Mamma looked at the lid of the coffee-pot, and the lid did not melt, which showed what excellent metal it was made of. As soon as mamma and the three children were seated, papa asked a blessing, and all mamma knew about it was that she shut her eyes and remembered that she had not dressed her own hair, and that she had forgotten to tell Bridget not to move out the children's bed again without replacing the castor that had dropped from one of the legs, leaving the latter to stump, so to speak, across and through the matting. Papa completed his devotional exercise before mamma got through wondering whether there was or was not in the store-room a piece of matting that would replace the width ruined by the leg of the bed, but Bobboker recalled her to present scenes by pulling her sleeve and saying:

"Mamma, 'oor py'ate is 'ooked down to enough," while papa laughed and said:

"Any time to-day will do for my coffee, little girl."

Mamma poured two cups of coffee hastily, and took a sip from one, for it did seem as if she would break in two unless she swallowed something at once. Then she served and put sugar and milk on three saucers of oatmeal, poured three cups of milk, reminded Fred that he had not put on his napkin, helped her husband from the side dishes nearest her, and began to cut a mouthful from the fragment of ham her husband had passed her, when back came Fred's saucer for more oatmeal; Bertha's saucer followed, and then Bobboker remembered the promised lump of sugar. A second cup of coffee for Mr. Mayburn consumed a minute or two; Bertha's meat had to be cut for her, because she was quite awkward with knife and fork, but finally mamma got that mouthful of meat to her lips, and was buttering a piece of bread, when Bobboker remarked:

"Awnt mamma to wheed Bobboker."

"Mamma's beeboy feed himself, like a great big man," suggested mamma, as she bit industriously at the bread.

"Bobboker isn't big manny; Bobboker dot saw om." (Sore arm.)

This was too much for mamma, for Bobboker's right shoulder had once been dislocated, and he had been told of it so often, in sympathetic terms, that he was disposed to rate the accident at its full value. So mamma took the spoon, and fed the little fellow, and between two mouthfuls he said, "Dee mamma," which for the

moment comforted mamma more than a full meal could have done. But she knew that as foundation for a busy morning a full heart could not take the place of an empty stomach, so she again attempted to get something from her plate, and succeeded to the extent of a mouthful or two of meat and a single piece of fried potato, when Bobboker protested; said he,

"Bobboker tumuk aw empaty some more."

Everybody laughed at this, but papa was thoughtful enough of the family welfare to say:

"Do see that he eats enough, won't you, dear?"

"Oh, yes!" said mamma, in such a way that papa looked up in surprise, upon which mamma looked down without being able to see distinctly for a moment. But her husband was finishing his breakfast; he would go in a moment, and not return for several hours; he was her husband—her dearest—and somehow she had hardly seen him or spoken to him that morning. She wanted to say something or hear him say something before he went, but her head was in such a tired whirl, that she could not think of anything to say—not, it seemed, as if she were to die for not doing it. At last she succeeded in asking:

"What is the news this morning?"

"Oh, nothing—yes, there is too: such a jolly row between the Mayor and the Police Commissioners. Just let me read you a bit of it." And papa read, in merry humor, a scene from the proceedings, and laughed so heartily, that mamma, like the good wife that she was, laughed too, though she wondered what there was funny or even interesting in the story.

"There!" said papa, suddenly pocketing the paper, and arising from the table, "this isn't business. I must be off—bye-bye." Papa kissed each of the children hastily, touching his lips to brow, nose, or hair according to whatever was the easiest spot to reach. He devoted a little more time to mamma, stooping over her and putting an arm about her neck; when he started to go, he found one of mamma's arms around his waist as tightly as if it intended to remain there, and mamma's head was leaning against him, as if it, too, wanted to stay.

"Bless you, pet," said papa, "you do love me, don't you?"

"Love you!" exclaimed mamma. Then she held him tighter, and he stroked her hair, and Bobboker remarked:

"Mamma mus' not 'pash wawtoo in her facey," at which papa looked down for an explanation, and saw that mamma was crying. The tears were promptly kissed out of her eyes, but more came, and papa asked:

"My poor little girl, what is the matter?"

Mamma swallowed something that was not food, and answered,

"Oh, nothing—yes—a great deal. I wish we ever had any time together."

"Why, we have every evening together," said papa.

"Yes," said mamma. It was not the word, but the tone in which she said it, that made papa look at her inquiringly, tenderly, pityingly, irresolutely, and then to press her head tightly against him. Both were quiet for a moment; then papa looked at the clock, kissed his wife again, whispered, "Poor little girl," and hurried off to his business, though, as he donned his overcoat and hat in the hall, he said something in a low tone, to the man in the hat-rack mirror, about the peculiar ways of women.

Papa had hardly left the dining-room when Fred got out of his chair, and, hurrying to mamma's side, hugged her and kissed her most tenderly, though he said not a word; then he pressed his soft cheek to mamma's cheek, at which mamma's eyes broke down again; but she pushed