

as he did so until he was a little more hideous than a Piute chief with all his war-paint on.

"You're a hateful old thing yourself," cried Bertha, her own visage bathed in tears. "You——"

"Be quiet, children," commanded mamma. "It was an accident; no one is to blame, unless you, Bertha, did wrong to come upstairs. Why did you leave the table?"

"Well, mamma," said Bertha, "if we're going to have fruit, I think we ought to have fruit-napkins too."

"You must not be so particular, my child," said mamma. "You are not having a regular dinner; it is only a sort of lunch, you know."

"Well, we're making believe it's a big dinner, any how; the first sandwich apiece we made believe was soup, and the next was fish, and——"

"Never mind, dear," said mamma; "do your best with what you have, and make believe the napkins are fruit-napkins."

"We can't, unless they're coloured," said Bertha, "and——" The remainder of her sentence was extinguished by the wet towel which mamma passed over her mouth as she washed the tears from her daughter's face. Then Fred, who had been operating upon his own face at the basin, displayed a spot of blood on his collar, and was ordered to redress his neck, which change he made only after considerable grumbling, while mamma resumed her work. In about ten minutes Fred descended, and a second later a loud remonstrance in his voice was wafted upward, followed by this pointed conversation:

"You'd no business to do it."

"I had."

"You hadn't."

"I had, too."

"You hadn't, either."

"You're a mean, ugly, hateful thing."

All this came up the stairs before mamma could reach the hall, and call down in her most authoritative tones:

"Children, stop quarrelling this instant. What will your little friends think?"

"Well, mamma," said Fred, running out into the hall and looking up, "Bertha has been and sliced all the oranges—my half of them and all."

"What do you want me to do about it, my boy—put them together again?"

Fred dropped his head and muttered: "No."

"Then run back and make yourself agreeable to your company."

Fred returned to his seat and mamma to hers. There was but one more little stocking now, and, although mamma had left this until the last, because it was the very, very worst, she felt that victory was as good as achieved, and her heart exulted as it had not done since a fortnight before, when she finished one of Bertha's dresses on which work had dragged in a most discouraging manner. But the end was not yet, for again Fred's voice came up the stairs:

"Mamma, where's the powdered sugar

"In the bowl."

"Well, the bowl's empty."

"Then go down to Bridget and ask her to fill it."

"She isn't there; I did go down."

"You can use ordinary sugar then. You won't know the difference."

"Why, mamma," whispered Fred, though loud enough to be heard by his visitors, had they been out of doors; "do you think that's a nice way to treat company?"

Mamma dropped the stocking, and went down; she found Fred in the hall hugging the sugar bowl, and led

him to the kitchen floor, filled the bowl, and hurried back to her work, to find that The Jefful had imagined herself deserted and was wailing pitifully. Mamma had the distressed baby on her breast in an instant, and said:

"Did ze hateful o' mamma wun away f'om her poo' ittie an'zel Jefful? Was a awfoo' unkind mamma, an' ought to be isopped up into a fousand pieces—so s'e ought."

Nobody knows how these well-selected words comforted The Jefful: the little thing stopped crying at once, and looked so happy that mamma kissed her again and again, and conversed with her so satisfactorily that no one knows when she would have stopped had not Bertha appeared.

"Bertha!" exclaimed mamma; "go down again this instant."

Bertha burst into tears.

"Oh, well," sighed mamma: "what is it?"

"Why, you see, mamma, there were six pieces of cake, and, after each of us took a piece, there was one left, and Fred wants to cut it in two and give half to Adolphe and half to Ellie: but I think it ought to be cut into five pieces, or else you can give us four more pieces. Anyhow, all of us ought to have a share."

"Cut it in five—no, do as Fred suggested. You should be ashamed of yourself to quarrel about such a little thing. No, stop; bring it up here, and let Jefful have a share in the tea-party."

Then Bertha's tears burst forth in floods, and her emotions were so uncontrollable that she sobbed aloud, as she started slowly down. Mamma sprang from her chair, seized Bertha's shoulder, led her back, and closed the door.

"Now, my daughter," said she, "if you don't stop crying this instant you shall go to bed at once, and stay there until morning."

Bertha stifled her sobs, kneaded her cheeks and eyes industriously with her knuckles, and at last became sufficiently composed to say:

"It was *our* cake, and I think we ought to share it around."

"Bertha!" exclaimed mamma, stamping impatiently, "one would suppose that you had never seen or tasted cake before. How dare you be so greedy and silly?"

Bertha's tears started again, for she was a tender-hearted little girl, and very sensitive to blame or praise.

"Stop crying!" said mamma, "or go to bed. Make up your mind this instant which of the two you prefer to do."

Bertha made a desperate effort; she staunched her tears, swallowed her sobs, wiped her face with a towel, and went below looking like a very bad case of erysipelas to which the sufferer is compulsorily resigned. Mamma's complexion was somewhat erysipeletic, too, as she picked up that dreadful last stocking once more, and it took several moments of vigorous tugs and plaintive pleadings by The Jefful to bring mamma back to the semblance of tranquillity. Finally, however, the stocking, which had steadily grown hateful during the last quarter-hour, was finished, and mamma's exultation was resumed as she placed it with its mate, and assorted the others into pairs, and put them into the proper drawers, after first proudly contemplating the entire heap.

Then she thought it would be pleasant to take The Jefful, descend to the dining-room, and give the children a final treat in the shape of some figs and nuts. So down she went, and just in time, for the company had already arisen, and were in a glorious heap on the floor in some sort of play that only children understand and