

# LITTLE FOLKS

## The Stained Table Cloth.

(By Adele E. Thompson, in 'Christian Intelligencer'.)

If there was any one thing that Fred and Lottie especially enjoyed in the summer, it was to have a picnic under the cherry trees in the back yard. Mamma had a low cutting table that she let them take, and there was a little tablecloth kept in the lower drawer of the sideboard on purpose for their use.

One July day when Mrs. Hill had gone to spend the afternoon with a sick friend, Fred and Lottie had company, Will and Stanley Strong, from the next street. A charming time the children had. They played that they were a fire company and ran to fires. And they played that they were Indians, and went hunting on the plains. And when they were too tired and too warm to hunt any longer they all sat down to rest under the big cherry tree.

Then Fred whispered to Lottie, and Lottie smiled and nodded, and they both went into the house and brought out the little cutting-table, and set it under the tree on a smooth place where it would stand level.

Next Lottie went to ask Jane for something for a picnic, something nice, as they had company. And as Jane's work was done, and she was feeling good-natured, she made Lottie some ham sandwiches and gave her some tarts and cookies.

This took quite a little time, and when she went out again, Fred had the table spread with a table cloth, and four glass tumblers on it. Lottie looked at the cloth a minute before she set her plate of sandwiches down, 'That's not the table cloth mamma lets us have,' she said.

'Tis, too,' answered Fred, a bit gruffly.

'No, it isn't,' insisted Lottie, 'I'm sure this is larger, and mamma says we must never take but the one, so you must carry it right back.'

Now it would have been bad enough for Fred to have Lottie, who was two years younger, speak to him like that at any time, but before Will and Stanley he was not



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going to give up, even though he began to suspect that he had made a mistake.

'I guess I know, Lottie Hill, and this is the right one,' more stoutly than ever; 'you hurry and get the rest of the things, while I make some cherry bounce.' This was a favorite drink of Fred's, and was made by squeezing the cherries into some water, and adding a little sugar.

When at last all was ready, and they sat down to the table, Fred felt rather cross. Perhaps the feeling that he was in the wrong about the table cloth and should have taken it back, as Lottie said, helped to make him so; besides he thought the 'bounce' was not quite as good as usual, and for company, too.

So, when presently, a robin came in the tree above them for some cherries, though there were plenty for the children and the birds, too, Fred jumped up to throw a stick

at it, and in his hurry gave the table a jar that spilled half his cherry—and-water, which ran in a red stain across the white cloth.

'O Fred Hill, see what you've done,' exclaimed Lottie. But Fred, whose temper had not been helped by the accident, told her to 'shut up her clam-shell,' a phrase he had heard the stable-boy next door use.

He thought it was quite manly to talk that way before the other boys, but Lottie, who was only seven years old, opened her eyes wide at language such as she had never heard before, and said if he was going to act like that she should go in and stay with Jane.

After that Will and Stanley did not stay much longer, and after they were gone, Lottie carried back the plates, which had not so much as a crumb left on them, and Fred gathered up the table cloth, stain and all, and jammed it into the sideboard lower drawer.