

books, for he was not reasonable enough as yet to understand the use of them; but his mother's grief troubled him, and he wept bitterly with her, promising never more to disobey.

Meanwhile, his father returned to supper, worn out with fatigue, and still vexed from the scene at dinner. He had been walking since morning all about the town, avoiding every face that he knew, and fearing to be met, lest he might have to answer questions about the fairy's visit, which was talked of everywhere; consequently, he was not in the best humor toward the child that had caused him such an affront. I leave you to judge of his anger when he saw his son come to the table with his clothes torn, his hair in disorder, and his face still daubed with half of the morning's cream. Looking at his wife with an angry air, he said, in a loud voice.

"What does this mean, madam? Do you think that we are not yet sufficiently the laughing-stock of the town, that you wait for more visitors to come here before you wash that little wretch?"

The poor woman, seeing her husband so angry, dared not tell him what had happened, and suffered herself to be unjustly accused in order to spare her little boy the punishment that his father might have inflicted upon him, happy that all the anger should fall on her. In this she was wrong again, for the child, full of gratitude to her, was indignant in his heart against his father's injustice, without reflecting that he was the true culprit, and that it was his place, if he had a heart, to justify his mother by telling the truth. The spirit of rebellion once aroused in him, with an appearance of reason, the child set up his will against that good father, whose displeasure was so natural, and he was left in ignorance of what had happened; and when the latter, softening a little, handed him a plate of soup, saying, "Here, eat your supper, child, and afterward we will see about washing you," he answered, in a resolute tone, "I don't want any."

It must be confessed that it was a kind of soup of which he was not very fond, a circumstance which doubtless added something to his resolution. Scarcely had he spoken that unfortunate "I don't want any," when the soup sprang from the plate and fell back with one bound into the tureen, splashing everybody around the table.

His father, who had received a large share of the soup on his waistcoat, thought that Ravageot had thrown it in his face.

Nothing was too bad for such a child to do. He rose furious, and was about to punish him on the spot, when the mother rushed between them. "Stop, my dear," said she, "the poor child had nothing to do with it. He is unhappy enough without that; now he can eat no more soup." And upon this she was forced to tell Ravageot's father of the fatal power that the fairy had bestowed on him, and to explain the consequences which had already followed from it. As may be imagined, this did not calm him. More angry than ever, he broke into reproaches against his poor wife.

"This is a fine gift," said he; "I congratulate you on it. What is to be done now with this little wretch? The meanest rag-picker would not have him. I want nothing more to do with him; and to-morrow morning I mean to send him as cabin boy on board a vessel, where he will have to endure more hardships than he will like. Until then, take him away from my sight and put him to bed, at least he can do no more mischief in his sleep."

His mother wished to take him away herself, for fear of a new accident, but her husband would not hear of it. "No, no," said he, "you will find means of coaxing him, and making him believe that he is an innocent victim; Mary Ann shall put him to bed."

Mary Ann was a tall country girl, as fresh as a rose and as strong as a man; she had already received more than one kick from Ravageot, and was not one of his best friends. She took him in her arms without ceremony, and carried him off as if he had been a feather.

Left alone with her husband, the poor mother set to work to caress him and attempt to soften his heart. She at last persuaded him not to send Ravageot to sea as a cabin boy; but, that it might not be believed that he had yielded to his wife, the father swore solemnly that he pardoned him for the last time, and that he would be merciless at the next offence.

Meanwhile the time passed; half an hour, an hour went by since Ravageot had been carried away, yet Mary Ann did not return. Unable to resist her anxiety, the mother hastened up stairs, when what did she see but Mary Ann clinging to the curtains, and trying with all her might to hold down the bed, which was capering about the room. Vexed at being obliged to go to bed without his supper (for he had not dined, you must remember), the little boy had refused at first to go to bed, and the bed had taken him at his word. As soon