

MOTHER'S HAIR PRESERVATIVE.

"**B**EEN to the store, Jim?"
 "Yes."
 "What y'got tied up?"
 "You go along and 'tend to your own business. I ain't a-going to tell."

"Well, it looks like a bottle, any way. If you don't tell me, I'll go and put the boys on to the bottle of ale."

"Well, then, you'll tell them a lie, for it ain't ale."

"Well, then I guess it's soda-water."

"No, it ain't soda-water."

"Then it's mineral water."

"No it ain't that."

"Then I guess it's cod-liver oil."

"No, there ain't no one to our house got consumption."

"Then I give it up."

"Well, then, I'll tell you. It's a bottle of Hair Preservative to keep mother's hair from turning gray and falling out. I don't believe I should mind having gray hairs half so much as she does, but I know I wouldn't want mine all to fall out and leave me bald-headed."

"Oh, oh!" called out the other boy. "What's making her get gray? I've heard that worry does it. Worrying over your badness, I'll bet."

"Huh! better take that to yourself."

Then the boys separated and went their ways.

But the boy who first spoke did take the first words of the other to himself. He couldn't help thinking to himself, as he went down street, what he had just remarked about worry making gray hairs, and wondering if some of these days he should have to be lugging home a bottle from the drug-store, containing hair preservative, to keep his mother's hair from growing gray.

"If I do," he said to himself with a shrug of his shoulder, "I don't want that Jim Ashton to catch me at it; for just as like as not he'd up and say, 'I told you so; worrying over your badness!'"

Then he walked a little further, in a meditative sort of way, cutting the head off a daisy with his stick here, and jabbing it into the ground after a tumble-bug who was scrambling to get out of his way there, but thinking neither of the daisy nor the tumble-bug.

Finally he stopped, and squared his back around against the fence.

"I wonder," he quizzed himself, "if it is worry that makes people's hair grow gray? For if it is, then I know a way to keep mother's from getting so, that's better than anything in the drug-store."

He went home determined to keep his word.

And he did. He slipped around into the wood-shed, and split a whole armful of the nicest kind of kindling, finished the job by shaving off a handful of long feathery shavings, and this he tucked into one end of the wood-box, which he quickly filled with seasoned wood. Then he called his mother's attention to it.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" she said. I was just going to worry about your forgetting it, as you usually do, and father finding it out after he came home; but now I'll have that off my mind."

Then the boy slipped around behind the woodshed door, and grinned and chuckled, and rubbed his hands together, as though he were enjoying something hugely. "Ha, ha!" he said to himself. "First dose of Mother's Hair Preservative. Shake up well and apply frequently." And then he went off to find his sister Susan.

"See, here, Sue," he called to her confidentially, "you aren't going to dilly-dally and poke around about those dishes this evening, --are you? -- and make mother come out to the kitchen half a dozen times, and ask you when you are going to get done?"

"What business is that of yours?" Susan answered, a little sharply.

"Because if you are?" said he, "I'm just a-going to --"

"Just a-going to what, I'd like to know?" Susan demanded, with a little more asperity in her tone.

"Why," said Tom, with the utmost good-nature, "I'm just a-going to come out and help you myself."

"You help wash the dishes? I'd like to see you!"

"Well, see if I don't, then."

If Susan was a little slower than usual that evening, it must have been just to test her brother's threat. And, sure enough, he did come, and helped her through so good-naturedly and so cleverly that she was surprised more than a little.

"Tom," she said, what kind of a joke is this you are playing on me?"

"The joke ain't on you," said Tom; "it's on mother."

"On mother?" repeated Susan.

"Yes," said Tom; "It's another dose of Mother's Hair Preservative. She doesn't know anything about it."

"Mother's Hair Preservative!" again exclaimed Susan. "What in the world is the boy talking about?"

Then Tom let her into the secret of the thing. Susan looked very thoughtful for a moment.

"Well, I declare!" she said at last. "Who ever would have thought of such a thing as that?"