

"Bertha—begin dressing—at once!" said mamma.

"Fred is reading," said Bertha, with the air of one who was explaining away a misapprehension. For if either of the twins could not do whatever the other did, that twin felt greatly aggrieved.

"Never mind," said mamma. "Stop reading—both of you, this instant."

Fred laid his book down; Bertha closed hers, but held it tightly, while her eyes filled with tears.

"What are you crying about, my daughter?" asked mamma.

"Fred read longer than I did," sobbed Bertha.

"It was wrong for Fred to read at all before he was dressed, or before he had eaten his breakfast," said mamma, "so dry your eyes, and dress yourself; you know papa is always worried when every one does not come promptly to the breakfast-table."

Bertha dried her eyes slowly, but she evidently felt that she was a martyr, not that she was one willingly, however, for suddenly Fred complained:

"Mamma, Bertha is making perfectly awful faces at me."

"Bertha, what is the matter?" asked Mamma.

"Well, he *did* read longer than I did," said Bertha, and then her tears burst forth again.

"Don't be silly, my daughter," said mamma; "it is foolish and wrong too, to want to do anything improper merely because your brother did it. Now brighten your eyes and dress yourself; all these minutes in which you are crying are flying away, and you will never get them again."

"You'll have lots more though, Bertha," said Fred.

"I 'spect you'll always be doing things to make me unhappy in them though," answered Bertha.

"You're a hateful, ungrateful thing," said Fred.

"Ya—ya—ya," said Bertha, showing her pretty teeth in a very ugly way.

"Children—children!" exclaimed mamma, stamping with her foot, "be quiet! Fred, take your clothes into my room, and dress there alone. If either of you is down late you shall have only bread and butter for breakfast."

Fred snatched his clothes together in any temper but the best, and went into his mother's room, while mamma heard a small voice saying:

"Bobbokor 'awnts room alone to d'ess in, too."

"Mamma hasn't any more rooms to spare," said Mrs. Mayburn.

"Dimme one, den," said Bobboker.

"But I haven't any," replied mamma.

"Den dimme one."

"Mamma hasn't any, she told you."

"Well Bobboker 'awnts one."

"I haven't one."

"Dimme it, den."

"How can I give you what I haven't got?"

"Dimme it 'ight away."

"Don't be silly, bechboy."

"Well, I 'awnts another 'oom."

"You—can't—have—it," said mamma with such emphasis that Bobboker looked up into her face in utter wonder. Then it occurred to him that mamma meant what she said, and an angrier little boy than Bobboker was for a minute or two after that was a something that mamma could scarcely imagine. He cried and screamed and yelled and howled and wailed, and when mamma tried to pacify him he snarled like any dreadful little dog might have done. Finally, when he was conquered by a promise of a lump of sugar at the breakfast-table, and mamma turned her head to see whether Bertha was dressing, she saw Fred prowling aimlessly and half-dressed about the room, while Bertha was invisible.

"What are you doing, my boy? Why are you in this room again? Where is your sister?" asked Mrs. Mayburn.

"I don't know where she is, and I'm looking for one of my shoes; I guess I dropped it when I picked up my clothes," said Fred.

"Find it quickly, Freddie, there's a darling; I'd like you to finish dressing the beebboy while I go see how Bridget is getting on with breakfast."

"Well, I'd like to know who took my shoe. I believe Bertha's hid it just because she's ugly. I can't dress without shoes. Bobboker, have you had buvver Fred's s'oo?"

"Idono," said Bobboker.

"You ought to know."

"Sh—h—h!" said mamma. "Put slippers on—Sunday shoes—anything, but be quick. If breakfast isn't ready in time, papa will be dreadfully bothered. What are you doing?"

"Looking for my shoe, I tell you," said Fred, very sharply, as he languidly turned over spools, thimbles, scissors, etc., in mamma's work-basket.

"Did you ever find a shoe in my work-basket, and do you suppose one could be hidden under those little things?"

"Well"—began Fred; but somehow he could find no excuse for his absent-mindedness, so he sneaked back toward the room in which he had been dressing. Suddenly he stumbled and howled: looking to see what had caught his foot, he saw the missing shoe lying just where he had dropped it five minutes before. Fred was so ashamed of himself then that he felt he must do something unusual, so, without intending anything of the sort, he dressed himself quite rapidly. Meanwhile Bobboker was nearly dressed, and mamma, leaving him in care of Fred, hurried toward the kitchen. The cook was doing reasonably well; true, she had forgotten to go to the butcher, only a block away, for the chops which he had promised to have ready for the Mayburn's at precisely seven, but she had cut a slice of ham and put it on to broil. Then, finding there were no eggs, she had hurried out to the grocer's, and the ham had begun to burn in her absence; but mamma reached the kitchen in time to save it. Papa afterwards said, at the breakfast-table, that if there was anything he hated it was meat with the slightest burnt taste about it; but one thing mamma would never do, not if she had to cut her tongue out to keep from it, and that was to talk to her husband about the servants; so she merely said it was a shame, but one never could be sure of the exact heat to broil by.

After making sure that breakfast would be on the table in time, mamma hurried above to see that the children were ready to descend when the bell should ring. As she ascended, she saw Bertha emerging from the guest-chamber.

"What were you doing in that room, my daughter?"

"Dressing—in a room all alone by myself; you let Fred do it."

Mamma began to say something, but two or three people seemed to be saying so much in her own room that she hurried to learn what it all was about. Opening the door, she found Bobboker on the floor crying very loudly, The Jeffful in Fred's arms crying in a way that showed she was not to be outdone by any three-year-old boy, while Fred was rocking wildly to and fro in a rocking-chair, and singing,

"We'll stand the storm it won't be long."

"Oh, what is the matter?" cried mamma, hurrying to Bobboker's aid.