

"I want to have my face washed and my hair combed."

As the water would not wash his face, nor the comb enter his hair, after storming a long time he changed his mind, and asked for his new blouse and buckled shoes. It was the same story. The blouse and the shoes had heard his refusal, and, like well-bred people, refused in their turn to go where they were not wanted. The blouse rose in the air when he attempted to put it on; the higher he raised his hand, the higher it rose, until finally it fastened itself to the ceiling, whence it looked down on him with a mocking air. As to the shoes, the first one that he attempted to put on suddenly became so small that a cat could not have put her paw into it, while the other grew so large that Ravageot might have put both feet into it at once.

His mother, seeing this, sent away the servants, who stood wonder-struck, and whose astonishment added to the shame of the little boy; then, gathering all her maternal strength to resist the terror that seized her, she gently clasped her poor child to her breast.

"What will become of us, my poor boy," said she, "if you will not obey at once and without resistance? This is what the good fairy wished to teach you by her fatal parting gift. *When children are commanded to do anything, it is for their good; and the worst thing that could happen to them would be to have the power to disobey.* You have this power now, and you see already what it has cost you. For Heaven's sake watch over yourself henceforth, if you would not kill me, for it would be impossible for me to live and see you as miserable as you will soon become if you continue to disobey your papa and me."

Ravageot was not a fool, and he perfectly understood the truth of what was said to him. He loved his mother besides, (what child, however wicked, could do otherwise?) and the profound and gentle grief of this tender mother softened his little stony heart in spite of himself. He threw his arms around her neck, and laying his dirty face against her smooth cheeks, wiped away the large tears that fell silently on it. They alone had power to break the enchantment, since he had declared that he would not have his face wet.

The reconciliation effected, they went down stairs to the room where they usually sat, and there, on a beautifully polished table were the books and copy-books of the little boy.

"Study hard, my dear child," said his

mother, kissing his forehead. "Learn the page which you are to recite to papa this evening like a studious little boy. Perhaps the good fairy will relent when she knows that you have learned it thoroughly, and will take back her vile gift."

If Ravageot had had the choice, he would have gone to play in the garden; but after the humiliating lessons which he had received, one after another, he dare not resist. He seated himself at the table, therefore, and, with a great effort, set to work to learn his page. Unhappily, in the fourth line came a long, hard word, to which he immediately took an aversion. This hard word spoiled everything; it was like a great stone in his path. After uselessly trying several times to spell it, he angrily threw the book on the floor.

"I don't want to study," said he. "I am tired of it."

"Oh!" said his mother, with a look that pierced his heart, "is this what you promised me?"

"Forgive me, mamma," said he, ashamed, and he picked up the book to begin to study his lesson again. It was impossible to open it. His terrified mother used all her strength, but in vain. She called the coachman and the porter—two very strong men—each took hold of one of the covers, and pulled with all his might, but the book did not stir. She sent for the locksmith with his hammer, and the carpenter with his saw; both broke their tools on the book without opening it.

"I will take another," said Ravageot, and he stretched out his hand toward a fairy book that amused him greatly. Alas! it was so firmly glued to the table that he could not stir it. A third disappeared when the little boy attempted to take it, and insolently returned the moment he withdrew his hand. In short, Ravageot had declared that he did not want books; the books no longer wanted Ravageot.

"Ah! unhappy child, what have you done?" exclaimed his mother, in tears. "Now there are no more books for you. How will you ever learn anything? You are condemned to remain in ignorance all your life." Her tears flowed in such abundance on the unfortunate book, the author of all the evil, that it was wet through, and already, under this all-powerful rain, was beginning to open, when suddenly it remembered its command in time, shook off the tears, and shut with a snap.

Except the book of fairy tales, which he sincerely regretted, Ravageot would have readily resigned himself to being rid of