

upon the lawn, looked up, and beheld my youngest nephew strutting back and forth on the tin roof of the piazza, holding over his head a ragged old parasol. I roared—

"Go in, Toddie—this instant!"

The sound of my voice startled the young man so severely that he lost his footing, fell, and began to roll toward the edge and to scum, both operations being performed with great rapidity. I ran to catch him as he fell, but the outer edge of the water-trough was high enough to arrest his progress, though it had no effect in reducing the volume of his howls.

"Toddie," I shouted, "lie perfectly still until uncle can get to you. Do you hear?"

"Ess, but don't want to lie 'till," came in reply from the roof. "'Tan't shee noffin' but sky an' rain."

"Lie still," I reiterated, "or I'll whip you dreadfully." Then I dashed upstairs, removed my shoes, climbed out and rescued Toddie, shook him soundly then shook myself.

"I wazh only djust payin mamma, an' walkin' in ze yain wif an umbayalla," Toddie explained.

I threw him upon his bed and departed. It was plain that neither logic, threats, nor the presence of danger could keep this dreadful child from doing whatever he chose; what other means of restraint could be employed? Although not as religious a man as my good mother could wish, I really wondered whether prayer, as a last resort, might not be effective. For his good, and my own peace, I would cheerfully have read through the whole prayer-book. I could hardly have done it just then, though, for Mike solicited an audience at the back door, and reported that Budge had given the carriage-sponge to the goat, put handfuls of oats into the pump-cylinder, pulled hairs out of the black mare's tail, and with a sharp nail drawn pictures on the enamel of the carriage-body. Budge made no denial, but looked very much aggrieved, and remarked that he couldn't never be happy without somebody having to go get bothered; and he wished there wasn't nobody in the world but organ-grinders and candy-store men. He followed me into the house, flung himself into a chair, put on a look which I imagine Byron wore before he was old enough to be malicious, and exclaimed:—

"I don't see what little boys was made for, anyhow; if everybody gets cross with them, an' don't let 'em do what they want to. I'll bet when I get to heaven, the Lord won't be as ugly to me as Mike is,—an' some other folks, too. I wish I could die and be buried right away,—me an' the goat—an' go to heaven, where we wouldn't be scolded."

Poor little fellow! First I laughed inwardly at his idea of heaven, and then I wondered whether my own was very different from it, or any more creditable. I had no time to spend even in pious reflection, however. Budge was quite wet, his shoes were soaking, and he already had an attack of catarrh; so I took him to his room and redressed him, wondering all the while how much similar duties my own father had had to do by me had shortened his

life, and how, with such a son as I was, he lived as long as he did. The idea that I was in some slight degree atoning for my early sins, so filled my thoughts that I did not at first notice the absence of Toddie. When it did become evident to me that my youngest nephew was not in the bed in which I had placed him, I went in search of him. He was in none of the chambers, but hearing gentle murmurs issue from a long, light closet, I looked in and saw Toddie sitting on the floor, and eating the cheese out of a mouse-trap. A squeak of my boots betrayed me, and Toddie, equal to the emergency, sprang to his feet, and exclaimed:—

"I didn't hurt de 'little mousie one bittie; I just letted him out, and he runded away."

And still it rained. Oh, for a single hour of sunlight, so that the mud might be only damp dirt, and the children could play without tormenting other people! But it was not to be; slowly, and by the aid of songs, stories, an improvised menagerie, in which I personated every animal, beside playing ostrich and armadillo, and a great many disagreements, the afternoon wore to its close, and my heart slowly lightened. Only an hour or two more, and the children would be in bed for the night, and then I would enjoy, in unutterable measure, the peaceful hours which would be mine. Even now they were inclined to behave themselves; they were tired and hungry, and stretched themselves on the floor to await dinner. I embraced the opportunity to return to my book, but I had hardly read a page, when a combined crash and scream summoned me to the dining-room. On the floor lay Toddie, a great many dishes, a roast leg of lamb, several ears of green corn, the butter-dish and its contents, and several other misplaced edibles. One thing was quite evident; the scalding contents of the gravy-dish had been emptied on Toddie's arm, and how severely the poor child might be scalded, I did not know. I hastily slit open his sleeve from wrist to shoulder, and found the skin very red; so, remembering my mother's favorite treatment for scalds and burns, I quickly spread the contents of a dish of mashed potato on a clean handkerchief, and wound the whole around Toddie's arm as a poultice. Then I demanded an explanation.

"I was only d'just reachin' for a pieshe of bwed," sobbed Toddie, "an' then the bad old tabo begind to froe all its fings at me, an' tumble down bang."

He undoubtedly told the truth as far as he knew it; but reaching over tables is a bad habit in small boys, especially when their mothers cling to old-fashioned heir-looms of tables, which have folding-leaves; so I banished Toddie to his room, supperless, to think of what he had done. With Budge alone, I had a comfortable dinner off the salvage from the wreck caused by Toddie, and then I went upstairs to see if the offender had repented. It was hard to tell, by sight, whether he had or not for his back was to me, as he flattened his nose against the window, but I could see that my poultice was gone.