

One evening Sam took his small change from his pocket to give his son Tom money enough to buy a half-bushel of corn-meal in the village. As he held a few pieces of silver in one hand, touching them rapidly with the forefinger of the other, his son Tom exclaimed,—

"You're just overloaded with money, old man! Say, gi' me a quarter to go to the ball-game with? I'm in trainin', kind o' like, an' I ain't afraid to say that mebbe I'll turn out a first-class pitcher, one of these days."

"Tom" said the father, trying to straighten his feeble frame, as his eyes brightened a little, "I wish I could: I'd like you to go into anything that make muscle. But I can't afford it. You know I'm not workin' yet, an' until I do work the only hope of this family is in the little bit of money I've got in my pocket."

"Well" said Tom, thrusting out his lower lip, slouching across the room, and returning again, "I don't think a quarter's enough to trouble anybody's mind about what'll happen to his family afterwards. I've heard a good deal from mother about you bein' converted, and changin' into a different sort of a man, but I don't think much of any kind of converted dad that don't care enough for his boy to give him a quarter to go to a ball-game."

"Food before fun, Tom," said the father, resolutely closing his hand upon such remaining silver as he had, and then thrusting the fistful into his pocket,—*"food before fun. Ball isn't business to this family just now, an' money means business ev'ry time. When I was away an' couldn't help it, things mebbe didn't go as they ort to have gone, but now that I'm back again there shan't be any trouble if I know how to stand in the way of it."*

This expression of principle and opinion did not seem to favorably impress the eldest male member of the second generation. Master Tom thrust out his lower lip again, glared at his father, took his hat, and abruptly departed. There was no dinner at the Kimper table that day, except for such members of the family as could endure slices of cold boiled pork with very little lean to it. Late in the afternoon, however, Tom returned, with an air of bravado, indulged in a number of reminiscences of the ball-game, and at last asked why supper was not ready.

"Tom" asked the father, "why didn't you come back to-day with what I gave you money to buy?"

"Well," said the young man, dipping his spoon deeply into a mixture of hasty-pudding, milk and molasses, "I met some of the boys on the street, an' they told me about the game, an' it seemed to me that I wouldn't 'pear half a man to 'em if I didn't go 'long, so I made up my mind that you an' the mother would get along some way, an' I

went anyhow. From what's in front o' me, I guess you got along, didn't you?"

"Tom," said the father, leaving his seat at the table and going around to his son's chair, on the top bar of which he leaned—"Tom, of course we got along; there'll be somethin' to eat here ev'ry day just as long as I have any money or can get any work. But, Tom, you're pretty well grown up now; you're almost a man; I s'pose the fellers in town think you *are* a man, don't they? An' you think you're one yourself, too, don't you?"

The young man's face brightened, and he engulfed several spoonfuls of the evening meal before he replied.—

"Well, I guess I am somebody, now'days. The time you was in jail I thought the family had a mighty slim chance o' countin'; but I tumbled into base ball, an' I was pretty strong in my arms, an' pretty spry on my feet, an' little by little I kind o' came to give the family a standin'."

"I s'pose that's all right," said the father; "but I want you to understan' one thing, an' understan' it so plain that you can't never make any mistake about it afterwards. When I put any money into your hands to be used for anythin', it don't matter what, you must spend it for that, or you must get an awful thrashin' when you come back home again. Do you understan' me?"

The feeding motions of the eldest male of the Kimper collection of children stopped for an instant, and Master Tom leered at his father as he said—

"Who's goin' to give the thrashin'?"

"I am, Tom—your father is—an' don't make any mistake about it. He'll do it good and brown, too, if he's to die used up right away afterwards. This family is goin' to be decent from this time on; there ain't to be no more thieves in it, an' any member of it that tries to make it diff'rent is goin' to feel so bad that he'll wish he'd never been born. Do you understan'? Don't go to thinkin' I'm ugly; I'm only talkin' sense."

The cub of the family looked upward at his father from the corners of his eyes, and then he clinched his fists and turned slightly in the chair. Before he could do more his parent had him by both shoulders, had shaken him out of the chair, thrown him upon the floor, and was resting upon him with both knees.

"Tom," said Sam to his astonished son, "you was the first boy I ever had, and I'd give away my right hand rather than have any real harm come to you, but you've got to mind me now, and you've got to do it until you're of age, an' if you don't promise to do it now, right straight along, from this time forth, I'll give you the thrashin' now. That ain't all, either; you've got to be man enough to stand by your dad an' say somethin'."