

THE LITTLE FOLK.

THE GRUMBLE BOX.

"Here, Nell, put in your cent; that was a big one!"

"I only said the potatoes are stone cold, and it's the honest truth—they are. If that's grumbling, I'd like to know. Is that a grumble, mother?"

"I rather think it is, Helen," answered Mrs. Porter. "Some one had better read our contract again. We haven't heard it for nearly two days. You read it, Harry." Harry took a box from the middle of the table, and read aloud:

"Each and every member of this family of Porter agrees to pay one cent into this box for each and every grumble or complaint he or she shall make about any article of food on this table. Signed, Edward Porter, Mary Porter, Harry Porter, Helen Porter, Elizabeth Porter."

"If that isn't the strangest agreement I ever heard!" exclaimed Aunt Margaret, who had come in unexpectedly for lunch. "How did it ever come about?"

"Oh, we've had it for a month or more now, and the box is nearly full," said Helen. "For the first day or two, cents just poured in; but now father can eat salt butter and drink weak coffee without a word. He's almost heroic. Mother always was a martyr; nothing but tough beefsteak ever made her complain, and she would swallow shoeleather now and smile. I suppose Harry and Bess and I are to fill the box; we're no saints, yet."

"But," said Aunt Margaret, "you haven't told me why you began to have a grumble box."

"I'll tell you," said Mrs. Porter. "Don't you remember some of the times you have been here to lunch or to dinner when everything was wrong on the table? The soup was either too hot or too cold: the beef was overdone; the vegetables either too salt or not salt enough, the bread was dry or the toast was burnt. Sometimes we didn't even have the right kind of dessert. If there was pie, every one longed for custard or cream." Aunt Margaret smiled.

"I've known such things to happen in other people's houses, too."

"So have I," said Mrs. Porter; "but don't you remember, too, the little blessing, father so often asks before meals: 'O Lord, for the food that Thou hast given us, give us grateful hearts?' We would bow our heads and listen, and then grumble over every mouthful."

"You didn't mother; you never did. It was the rest of us."

"Well," continued Mrs. Porter, "one beautiful Sunday morning we all went to church and heard an unusually good sermon. Then we came home and sat down to a very good dinner; but it was worse than ever, and before we left the table, father stopped us and said: 'I've been thinking, children, it would be just as well not to ask a blessing on the food any longer. We have such poor things to eat we cannot feel grateful.'"

"I tell you, that took the breath out of us!" said Harry.

"Yes, but it opened our eyes," said Helen. "We couldn't believe that we found so much fault with everything."

"It was father who thought of the box," said Harry. "He said it would help us keep a good resolution if we had to pay for breaking it."

"I've got some pennies in it, too," said little Bess, "'cause I cried for more sugar on my oatmeal."

"And what are you going to do with the money when the box is filled?" asked Aunt Margaret.

"We don't know yet what kind of heathen are to have it," answered Harry. "Chinese, Siamese, Japanese, Indian, or plain American, it will go from heathen to heathen."

Aunt Margaret rose to take her departure.

"Must you go, Margaret?" asked Mrs. Porter. "I am so glad you came in for lunch. I am only sorry we did not have a better meal to offer you."

"A cent, mother! a cent from you!" exclaimed

the children. "That's a genuine out-and-out grumble."

And Mrs. Porter laughingly slipped a coin into the grumble-box.—S.S. Times.

HOW TOTTIE HELPED.

"More callers! Oh, dear, I shall never get this sewing finished," and mother sighed as she let the breadths of a skirt that she had just pinned together for her machine, slip to the carpet, and began to make a hurried toilet.

Tottie looked up from her blocks with a pitying expression on her round childish face.

"Poor mamma!" she cried. "I wish I could help you."

"I wish you could, dear," mamma answered. "If you were a few years older, I should expect to find these long seams all sewed up when I came upstairs again, for I know you would help mamma if you could."

Mamma had given the last touch to her hair by this time, and giving Tottie a kiss, she hurried downstairs to her waiting guests.

Tottie sat on the floor by the blocks for a while, but they had lost their charm, for she was thinking how nice it would be if she could only help mamma while she was downstairs, and have a nice little surprise for her when she came back.

"I believe I could sew on the machine," thought Tottie, going over to the machine and looking questioningly at it. "I know mamma raises that little thing up and puts the sewing under, and then slips it down again and turns the wheel. I know what I will do. I will just try and sew up her dress while she is downstairs." Her blue eyes sparkled with delight, as she picked up the breadths of the silk skirt and began her work. The thread was white and the silk was blue, but four-year-old Tottie did know that it made any difference.

It was a little harder than she thought it would be to get such a large piece of work in place, but she kept patiently at it until she succeeded at last.

It had always seemed so easy for mamma to put her foot on the treadle and make the wheel spin, and Tottie grew hot and flushed as she tried to imitate the regular motion.

Slowly she stitched down the seam, and by the time mamma had accompanied her callers to the door, and ran lightly upstairs to get back to her work again, Tottie had triumphantly reached the end of the long skirt.

"Look, mamma, dear!" she cried joyously, as her mother entered the door. "I did help you after all, I really did. I sewed this long seam for you all by myself. Now wasn't that ever so much help to you?"

Mamma checked the exclamation of dismay that rose to her lips, as she saw the closely stitched white seam running in a wavering zigzag line down the blue silk.

The dear little face was so eagerly happy, and Tottie seemed so delighted to think that she had really helped, even if she was a little girl.

Sitting down and taking her little daughter up in her arms, she thanked her for her loving intention that had prompted the effort, but explained to her that she must never touch the machine again until she should be older and know how to use it, lest she might hurt herself.

Tottie promised to obey, and happy in the thought of what she had accomplished, went back to her play again. Mamma sewed up the other seams, and that evening, when Tottie was fast asleep in her crib, she patiently ripped out the long seam with its closely set stitches.

"Dear little witch, I am glad she didn't know how much unnecessary trouble she gave me," she said, as she picked out the last thread, but then as she thought of the loving impulse that prompted the mischief, she added, with a tender smile at the little sleeper, "yet she did help me, after all, for she showed her love for me, and her willingness to lighten my burden."—"The Daisy."