

more than six ineffectual attempts to clutch the cup, and spring out of mamma's lap, and break her precious little neck, when mamma happened to notice the clock, and to see that the time for the children to start for school was a scant quarter of an hour distant; so she shouted.

"Bertha!"

There was no response; so she called.

"Freddie!"

Then she repeated each name two or three times, startling baby each time into wonderment and a general drizzling of milk out of the corners of her pretty little mouth.

"I'll find 'em for you, mem," said Bridget, starting up from the table.

"Oh, thank you!" said mamma, continuing, as the domestic disappeared: "You're a real comfort, though sometimes you'd provoke the temper of a Job."

Within five minutes Bridget returned with Bertha, whom she had found hammering the piano.

"Are you ready for school, my child? And where is your brother?"

"I don't know."

"Find him at once. Both of you get ready, and come and show yourselves to me before you start."

Bertha disappeared, and five minutes later Fred bounced into the dining-room with:

"Mamma, have you had my spelling-book?"

"What should I want of your spelling-book, my boy?"

Fred looked rather sheepish, but said he wished he knew who had taken it.

"Where did you put it when you came home yesterday?" asked mamma.

"Nowhere."

"Where have you looked for it?"

"Everywhere."

"Where are your other books?"

"I don't know."

"Did you bring them home from school?"

"Certainly I—anyhow no, I didn't either."

"Now, hurry on your cap and overcoat and come back to me."

Shame imparted haste to Fred; he was back within five minutes, bringing Bertha with him.

"Now kiss us good bye," said Fred, hitting mamma's face all at once with his forehead, nose and chin.

"Stop a moment," said mamma. "There's a button about to drop from your overcoat. Run upstairs and get me my work basket, quick. Oh, Bertha, the toes of your shoes are almost white; go get me the bottle of polish."

While mamma had been talking, The Jefful had been springing and bouncing and climbing about at a great rate, but the absence of the other children gave the youngest an opportunity to appease her hunger, and even to give a caress or two to mamma, who was too nervous to notice them. Then Fred returned with the work-basket and Bertha with the polish, and both thrust their burdens into mamma's face, and the button was sewed on without much assistance from the baby hands that tugged at the maternal sleeve, and Bertha blacked the toes of her shoes and the tips of her fingers, so that she had to seek a basin of water; and Fred, without saying anything about it, hurried off to school alone, for fear of being late and getting a mark against him, and he left the front door open; and Bertha, while searching for him, happened to look out the door, and saw him a square away; so she returned to mamma to complain and have a good cry, and mamma unsympathetically mopped her eyes, and started her after him, after which she cuddled the baby very close, and sat for some moments with her eyes shut, trying to collect her thoughts, but not succeeding particularly well.

Of one thing she was very certain: if she did not at once wash and dress her baby, she would be late with her marketing, which meant a late dinner, which papa, who preferred dinner at midday, could not endure, for he had none too much time at noon. So she took The Jefful upstairs into her neat, warm, light, sunny room, and placed a basin of warm water on the table, and with it the soap, and sponge, and powder, and towels, and napkins, and comb and brush, and laid clean clothing upon a chair, within easy reach, and The Jefful shrieked with delight as each article was placed, for to be washed and dressed seemed to delight her almost as much as to eat. What an excitement she broke into as mamma removed her night clothing! She frantically gripped the insides of her sleeves, as the little nightgown was being taken off; she tried to unbutton her own shoes, and when mamma gave her one of the shoes to pacify her, she sucked ecstatically at the toe of it. She pinched her little stockings with her wee toes, and then kicked them vigorously; she wiggled and twisted all sorts of ways as her little shirt was being removed, and when, finally, that small garment was drawn entirely off from the little head it had obscured for a moment, and mamma said, "Peep bo!" The Jefful burst into a merry, melodious peal of laughter that broke mamma's tired face into countless smiles, and made her a hundred times lovelier to behold than the handsome girl her husband had married ten years before.

And the bath—oh! First The Jefful's face and head were washed, which she did not particularly enjoy, for water got into her eyes, and mamma firmly refused to allow her to suck the sponge, though the baby fought hard for it. But when the little face was wiped dry, and as much of the remainder of The Jefful as the basin could accommodate was placed therein—oh, bliss, bliss, bliss! She kicked, and squealed, and paddled, and crowed, and wiggled, and exulted in all the languages she knew, and twisted, and grasped the rim of the basin, and tried to drink, and tumbled forward, and began to cry, but changed to a laugh, and grinned at mamma, and turned her head to see if anyone else was enjoying the fun; and then she did it all over again, varying the order of exercises somewhat, but not omitting a single number of the programme. Once, indeed, she went into such an ecstasy that she had to throw her head back to express it all; mamma's hand was behind her, but the little back was so slippery with water, and The Jefful twitched so convulsively, that backward she went, slipping about in the water until her feet and hands and head and a frightened howl all went up into the air at the same time. But mamma rescued her and listened to her frightened explanations, and reassured her, so that back she went again, until mamma was afraid to leave her in the water any longer. Then she was laid upon a dry warm towel in mamma's lap, and another was placed over her, and she was gently pressed and rubbed until quite dry, and then she was powdered: after which mamma kissed her so thoroughly that she looked like a statue that had been pelted with roses which had forgotten to take their tints with them as they dropped away. Then she was dressed, though not without considerable remonstrance; and her flossy hair was brushed into a general fuzz of tiny curls, and she dropped a little sigh and subsided quietly into mamma's arms, and within five minutes she was fast asleep, with such a—oh! such a sweet mouth uttering gentle aspirations and delicate perfume, and mamma pronounced herself the happiest woman that had ever lived, and wondered what she had felt bad about that morning, when suddenly the hateful little clock struck half-past nine, and the noon-day roast was still at the butcher's.

Mamma made haste to don cloak and hat and start to