

## THE CROSS-BOX.

It was a rainy day, and all the children had to stay in the house. Ned had planned to go fishing, and Johnnie wanted to set up a windmill he had made. Susie wanted to gather her flower-seeds, and Pet was anxious to hunt for her white kitten in the barns.

So all were disappointed, and before night had become cross and peevish, and snappish. Mamma called them to her, and talked very gravely.

They were quiet for a while after it. In half an hour, Ned brought a small box and showed his mother. He had cut a hole in the top just large enough to let a cent through, and under it was the word "cross-box."

"Look, mamma," he said, "supposing, whenever any of us speak cross, we make ourselves pay a cent for a fine? Susie and Johnnie and Pet are so cross it would be a good thing. We'll try who can keep out of the box longest."

Mamma laughed, and said it might be a good plan, if they all agreed to it; but, if they did agree, they must do as they promised.

"I'll agree," said Susie. "I'm not going to be cross any more."

"Nor I," said Johnnie.

"Nor I," added Pet.

"What shall we do with all the money?" asked Susie.

"We'll buy a magic lantern," replied Ned.

"No, we'll buy a whole lot of candy," said Johnnie.

"No," added Susie, "we'll spend it for a bed in the Children's Hospital."

"I tell you," said Ned, angrily, "if you don't do as I want to, I'll pitch the penny out of the window."

"Where's your penny, Ned?" asked mamma.

Ned looked very foolish, but brought the first penny, and dropped it into the box.

Mamma thought the box really did some good. The children learned to watch against getting angry, and little lips would be shut tight to keep the ugly words from coming through.

When school began, they were so busy that the box was forgotten. Weeks later, mamma was putting a closet in order one Saturday.

"Here's the cross box," she said.

"I am going to see how much money there is," cried Ned. "Seventeen cents! That's enough to buy lemons and nuts and play peanut stand. Let us do it."

"Oh," said Susie, "there goes poor little lame Jimmy. I think it would be nice to give it to him."

"I say"—whimpered Pet.

"I won't!" whined Johnnie.

"I"—No one knows what Ned was going to say in a very crabbed voice; for just then he clapped one hand on his mouth, and with the other held up a warning finger.

"Look out," he half-whispered, "or there'll be four more cents in the cross-box for Jimmy.—*Sydney Day e, in Our Little Ones.*

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