

"Nonsense!" says Mrs. Monkton laughing, and looking as pleased as married women—even the happiest—always do, when they are told they look *unmarried*. "Why Tommy is seven years old."

"Oh! That's nothing!" says Joyce airily, turning her dark eyes, that are lovelier, if possible, than her sister's, upon the sturdy child who is sitting at his father's right hand. "Tommy, we all know, is much older than his mother. Much more advanced; more learned in the wisdom of *this* world; aren't you, Tommy?"

But Tommy, at this present moment, is deaf to the charms of conversation, his young mind being nobly bent on proving to his sister (a priceless treasure of six) that the salt-cellar planted between them belongs *not* to her, but to him! This sounds reasonable, but the difficulty lies in making Mabel believe it. There comes the pause eloquent at last, and then, I regret to say, the free fight!

It might perhaps have been even freer, but for the swift intervention of the paternal relative, who, swooping down upon the two belligerents with a promptitude worthy of all praise, seizes upon his daughter, and in spite of her kicks, which are noble, removes her to the seat on his left hand.

Thus separated hope springs within the breasts of the lookers-on that peace may soon be restored; and indeed, after a sob or two from Mabel, and a few passes of the most reprehensible sort from Tommy (entirely of the facial order), a great calm falls upon the breakfast-room.

"When I was your age, Tommy," says Mr. Monkton addressing his son, and striving to be all that the orthodox parent ought to be, "I should have been soundly whipped if I had behaved to my sister as you have just now behaved to yours!"

"You *haven't* a sister," says Tommy, after which the argument falls flat. It is true, Mr. Monkton is innocent of a sister, but how did the little demon remember that so *apropos*.

"Nevertheless," said Mr. Monkton, "if I *had* had a sister, I *know* I should not have been unkind to her."

"Then she'd have been unkind to you," says Tommy, who is evidently not afraid to enter upon a discussion of the rights and wrongs of mankind with his paternal relative. "Look at Mabel! And I don't care *what* she says," with a vindictive glance at the angelic featured