

"Yes—yes—oh, yes—I have them : I'll have everything, little boy, if it will keep you from crying."

But Bobboker had already got his eyes screwed up, and his lower lips rolled down, and he did not know exactly how to roll up and unscrew again, so he began to whimper in a doleful, draggy way, that sounded as if he was taking his cry so leisurely that he would never finish it.

"Bobboker, dear," said mamma, hastily laying baby in the corner of the lounge, and picking up her small boy, "mamma has a bad headache, and Bobboker's cry makes it hurt worse and worse - oh so bad."

"Den lomme bit" squealed Bobboker, "that'll make the hurt go 'way. An' tell me story about good 'ittie boy name Bobboker, how he was always hweet to his mamma. Be quick : I feel the k'y all comin' out again."

Mamma hugged her boy, and patted his cheek, and at the same instant began : "Once there was a little boy —" when open flew the door behind her, striking the wall with a loud bang, and she heard Fred's voice saying :

"Mamma, can't we buy a new slate-pencil apiece while we're out ?"

"Yes, dear," said mamma very sweetly. But Fred did not see the look that came over her face.

"And a stick of candy, too ?" asked Bertha.

"No," said mamma, very shortly.

"Now, mamma," said Fred, "it's only two more pennies, you know."

"Candy is not good for little children, my boy," said mamma. "You know papa and I have told you so a hundred times."

"Well I——" said Fred.

"I——" said Bertha at the same time.

"That will do," said mamma, so sharply that baby started violently, took her finger out of her mouth, and stared at mamma's face : there she saw something that caused her to burst into a howl, which was so high and long that it seemed as if it never could have come from so small a thing as baby's throat. Mamma sprang from her chair, set Bobboker on the floor, pushed Fred and Bertha out of the room, and shut the door as if it was a very hard one to manage. Then she picked up The Jeffful, dropped back into the rocking-chair, and cried a great deal harder than baby did, though she made no noise about it.

"It's wainin' on you' face, mamma," observed Bobboker, after a moment : "shall Bobboker get mamma umbayella ?"

Then mamma stopped crying, and laughed, and managed to drag the little fellow up into her lap with baby, and shut her eyes, and rocked with both of them ; but when she opened her eyes by accident, and saw the pile of shirts and stockings again she groaned, and stopped rocking.

"Bobboker," said she, "don't you want to build a great, high block house for baby ?—one of the big funny houses that nobody but Bobboker can make ?"

"Ess," said Bobboker, after a moment of deliberation. "Get me de blockses."

"You get them, dear," said mamma. "Run up to the play-room, and bring them down in your apron."

Bobboker started, and mamma tucked baby away in the corner of the lounge, and drew her chair and work-basket near, so as to be ready to save The Jeffful in case she should tumble forward. She picked up her work, and had just taken her needle in hand, when a little voice said :

"You mus' opin de door for me."

"Oh, mamma's big boy can open the door—just hold the knob tight, and turn it."

"Me do," said Bobboker, "but de knob don't hold Bobboker hand a bittie pittie."

"Try again, like a great big man," said mamma kindly.

The knob rattled ; some grunts, and puffs, and quick breathings were heard ; then a pattering of little feet was heard, and mamma saw a serious little face and two big eyes in front of her, and heard :

"Me tried aden, but door-knob didn't try any much at all. An' door-knob'll k'y if mamma don't open it."

"Then it may cry," said mamma, and took such a vigorous stitch that she stuck the needle quite a way into her finger before she fully understood what she was doing. Then she took the needle out very slowly, and put her finger into her mouth quite quickly.

"Why, mamma, said Bobboker, "don't you know it isn't nice to put fingers in moufs ? You'll never gwow up to be a man if you do dat. An' the door is stayin' shut all dis time."

Mamma snatched baby, hurried to the door, and opened it, and said :

"Go !"

"Fare is me to go to ?" asked Bobboker, looking very much surprised.

"Go upstairs and get the blocks."

"Fot blockses ?"

"The blocks to make a house for baby."

"Fare is dey ?"

"Up in the play-room."

"Oh !" said Bobboker, and mamma said exactly the same thing as she returned to her chair.

"Peace for two---three—perhaps five minutes," murmured mamma, as she picked up her work again. "But how I am beginning to hate my work." Peace did endure for two minutes, but not quite three, for suddenly the door-bell rang violently, and mamma remembered that her servant had gone to the grocer's.

"Oh, oh ! I hope it's no one to call," said mamma, putting baby hurriedly upon the floor. Then she changed her dress almost in a moment, gave her hair a few quick touches before the mirror, hurried to the door, and let in—Fred and Bertha.

"We got a—why, mamma, what is the matter ?" said Fred.

"Nothing, my boy," replied mamma.

Fred seemed for a moment to doubt his mamma's statement, but at last he started for the sitting-room, remarking as he went :

"I think that nothing must be one of the dreadfulest things in the world."

Mamma followed her children, and as they seated themselves, said :

"Now, children, you must get a plate over which to peel your apples, and——"

Fred looked at Bertha, and Bertha looked at Fred, and then both looked very blank, and Fred said :

"I declare ! If we didn't forget to get those apples after all !"

"What did you go out for ?" asked mamma severely.

"Why, for apples," said Fred.

"And candy," interrupted Bertha.

"And slate-pencils," continued Fred ; "and the slate-pencil place was nearest, so we got them first, and then we got the candy because the candy-store came next, and then—let me see, what *did* we do then, Bertha ?—oh, yes, we saw an organ-grinder, and we thought maybe he was one of the ones that play before our house sometimes, so we followed him up this way to see if he was, and here we are."

"I think here you had better stay, too," said mamma, "until you learn to remember what you go out for, particularly when it is for something that you yourselves