

HOLIDAY HOUSE

"It looks rather over-done! If you think so, we could get another in a minute!"

"No; they are better well boiled."

"Then probably it is not enough done. Some people like them quite hard; and I could easily pop it into the slop-basin for another minute."

"I am really obliged to you, but it could not be improved."

"Do you not take any more salt with your egg?"

"No, I thank you."

"A few more grains would improve it."

"If you say so, I daresay they will."

"Ah! now I am afraid you have put in too much. Pray do get another."

This long-continued attack upon her egg was too much for Laura's gravity, who appeared for some minutes to have a violent fit of coughing, and ended in a burst of laughter, after which she hastily finished all that remained of it, and thus the discussion closed.

In the midst of all their happiness, while the children thought that every succeeding day had no fault but being too short, and Harry even planned with Peter to stop the clock altogether, and see whether time itself would not stand still, nobody ever thought for a moment of anything but joy; and yet a very sad and sudden distress awaited Mrs. Darwin. One forenoon she received a letter, and at the top was written, in large letters, the words "To be delivered immediately."

THE BROKEN

When Mrs. Darwin hurriedly tore open this letter, she found that it came from her own house-keeper in town, to announce the dreadful event that her sister, Lady Barnet, had been that day seized with an apoplectic fit, and was thought to be at the point of death; therefore it was hoped that Mrs. Darwin would not lose an hour in returning to town, that she might be present on the melancholy occasion. The shock of hearing this news was so very great that poor Mrs. Darwin could not speak about it, but, after trying to compose herself for a few minutes, she went into the play-room, and told the children that, for reasons she could not explain, they must get ready to return home in an hour, when the car would be at the door for their journey.

Nothing could exceed their surprise on hearing Mrs. Darwin make so unexpected a proposal. At first Peter Grey thought she was speaking in jest, and said he would prefer if she ordered out a balloon to travel in this morning; but, when it appeared that Mrs. Darwin was really in earnest about their pleasant visit being over so soon, Harry's face grew perfectly red with passion, while he said, in a loud, angry voice,—

"Grandmamma allowed me to stay here till Friday!—and I was invited to stay—and I will not leave this nice, pretty house!"

"Oh, fie, Master Harry!" said Mrs. Crabtree. "Do not talk so! You ought to know better! I shall soon teach you, however, to do as you are bid!"

Saying these words, she stretched out her hand to seize violent hold of him, but Harry dipped down and escaped. Quickly opening the door, he ran, half in joke and half in earnest, at full speed up two pairs of stairs, followed closely by Mrs. Crabtree, who was now in a terrible rage, especially when she saw what a piece of fun Harry thought this fatiguing race. A door happened to be standing wide open on the second landing-place, which, having been observed by Harry, he darted in, and slammed it in Mrs. Crabtree's face, locking and double-locking it to secure his own safety, after which he sat down in the empty apartment to enjoy his victory in peace.

As long as Mrs. Crabtree continued to scold and rave behind the door, Harry grew harder and harder; but at length the good old lady Mrs. Darwin herself arrived upstairs, and represented how ungrateful he was, not doing all in his power to please her, when she had taken so much pains to make him happy. This brought the little rebel round in a moment, as he became quite sensible of his own misconduct, and resolved immediately to submit. Accordingly, Harry tried to open the door, but what is very easily done cannot sometimes be undone, which turned out the case on this occasion, as, with all his exertions, the key would not turn in the lock! Harry tried it first one way, then another. He twisted with his whole strength, till his face became perfectly scarlet with the effort, but in vain! At last he put the poker through the

handle of the key, thinking this a very clever plan, and quite sure to succeed; but after a desperate struggle, the unfortunate key broke in two, so then nobody could possibly open the door!

After this provoking accident happened, Harry felt what a very bad boy he had been, so he burst into tears, and called through the keyhole to beg Mrs. Darwin's pardon; while Mrs. Crabtree scolded him through the keyhole in return, till Harry shrunk away as if a cannonading had begun at his ear.

Meantime, Mrs. Darwin hurried off, racking her brains to think what had best be done to deliver the prisoner, since no time could be lost, or she might perhaps not get to town at all that night, and the car was expected every minute to come round for the travellers. The gardener said he thought it might be possible to find a few ladders, which, being tied one above another, would perhaps reach as high as the window, where Harry had now appeared, and by which he could easily scramble down; so the servants made haste to fetch all they could find, and to borrow all they could see, till a great many were collected. These they joined together very strongly with ropes, but when it was at last reared against the wall, to the great disappointment of Mrs. Darwin, the ladder appeared a yard and a half too short!

What was to be done?

The obliging gardener mounted to the very top of his ladder, and Harry leaned so far over the