

WORTH TRYING.



WAIT a minute, Will."

"What for?"

"I want to get that bunch of blue-bells."

Ned laid down his fishing-tackle and sprang over a fence, presently to return with a handful of the flowers, with their dainty coloring thrown out by a background of two or three ferns.

"You're a great fellow for flowers."

"Oh, they're not for myself; but mother's always crazy over wild flowers." And all through the walk home, notwithstanding that he was already well laden with rod and fishing-basket, Ned gave good heed to his flowers, once stopping to wet his handkerchief to wrap about the stems, that they might not suffer from the warmth of his hands.

"There she is!" While still at a distance, Ned spied his mother, and made a dash toward her across the large yard. Will, following more slowly, saw him drop his rod and take off his hat as he offered his flowers with a bow and a smile. A little stir of pain was in Will's heart as he saw them received with a kiss and some words, evidently loving ones, which he could not hear.

"Come round to the barn with your traps, and then you stay to supper; mother says so," said Ned, rejoining his friend.

"You're different from most boys," said Will; and Ned colored a little, for he was inwardly a trifle afraid of his mother's display of fondness provoking ridicule from the boys.

"How?" he asked, although knowing well what was meant.

"Oh—that," said Will, with an indefinite backward nod over his shoulder. "But I like it—I do, really."

"I like it," said Ned, his deepening color due now to feeling. "Don't know how I'd get along if my mother wasn't just that way. And, as she is just that way, how can I help being just that way, too? Of course, it comes natural that I should be."

Ned's mother, if she had heard this, might have smiled in remembrance of the many lessons it had taken to inculcate the grace of politeness, which was now, indeed, if not natural, rapidly becoming second nature to the boy.

"If I had a mother, I'd like to be so," said Will.

"Well, it isn't only just mothers, you know. That is, of course, nobody else can be like your mother; but I mean you can be it to other folks—in a way; to anybody in your home. They all like it."

Will burst into a laugh.

"All, hey? I wish you knew my Aunt Susan. But you will; for, now we're getting settled,

you must come over. You'll laugh at the idea of such doings for her. Why, if I should bring her a flower or take off my hat to her, she wouldn't know what to make of it. She'd think I was crazy."

"I don't believe it," said Ned. "That is, if she's a good woman. And of course," he added, in quick politeness, "your aunt must be."

"Good! I guess she is! She's so good herself she thinks there's no good in such a thing as a boy. I believe she thinks boys were only made to be a torment to such as her."

"Some boys are, I suppose."

Will colored a little as he inwardly realized that Aunt Susan might be somewhat justified in holding such an opinion.

"Well," continued Ned, "I thought all ladies liked flowers, and liked to be nicely treated, too. And," he added stoutly, "I think so still."

"I don't think Aunt Susan would take the trouble to notice either flowers or nice behavior," replied Will.

"Have you ever tried?"

Boys are not much in the habit of reading moral lectures to one another, so it is not likely Ned would have enlarged on the subject, even if they had not just then been ready to carry in their string of fish, to be duly admired by Ned's mother.

But Ned's lightly spoken and quickly, by him, forgotten question returned to Will's mind as, later, he walked alone in the direction of his own home—"Have you ever tried?"

"Well, I haven't—that's a fact. But," he gave a little laugh, "the idea of bringing flowers to Aunt Susan! Fancy her stare! She would not know what to make of it."

But the remembrance of Ned's grateful thought of his mother, and the sweetness of the caressing tenderness between mother and son, had touched the conscience as well as the heart of the motherless boy.

"If it wasn't flowers, I suppose it might be something else. She's as stiff and proper as a poker, and I suppose a boy might smile, and bow, and be polite all his life, and she'd never know but what he was cutting up some new kind of pranks. But, then, perhaps it's no wonder. She doesn't know much about any boys but me. I guess she thinks all they're good for is to carry mud in on their shoes, and slam doors, and leave the fly-screens open, and be late at meals. But, I say!—I've a great mind to try Ned's way; that is, partly—just for the fun of seeing how she'll take it."

With which determination Will walked around the house, to find his aunt approaching the side door with a huge parcel in her arms. At any other time he would not have troubled himself about this, but now he stepped up and opened the door for her. She took little notice of him except to ask:

"Do you know where Hiram is?"