

A Filler of Chinks.

(Margaret E. Sangster, in the 'Christian Herald'.)

'Lucy,' said her mother, 'is a filler of chinks.' The visiting friend looked up inquiringly. 'By chinks,' the mother explained, 'I mean the little gaps and rifts and rents that nobody else notices, that never are observed when all goes well, that somebody suffers from if they are overlooked, and that make up a sum total of very humble service. Mildred is clever and Margaret is musical. Lucy has no extraordinary talent that I know of, but she is the comfort of our lives.'

The friend thought it worth while to watch the quiet little Lucy, a girl so modest and unobtrusive that she was often rather overlooked. She found that Lucy was always doing what others left undone. The weather was very hot, the family was large, and people were coming and going constantly. One sultry afternoon when everybody was looking for a cool place, and one was in the hammock with a book, and another in the shadiest corner of the veranda with a pretence of knitting in her hands, Lucy had disappeared. She came in sight after a while, with a glass pitcher of lemonade, and a tinkle of ice that was pleasant to hear, and when somebody asked where she had been, she answered, 'I've been giving Betty a lift with the towels and napkins. There were dozens to iron, and the poor girl looks tired out. The heat in the kitchen reminded me that lemonade would be nice, so I made it for Betty, and then thought of you, out here, feeling the heat.'

'You didn't feel it yourself, I suppose?' said her aunt Laura.

'No, I've been too busy, Auntie, and I really do not mind heat so very much.'

'Grandmother grows harder to live with every day,' complained one of the young people. 'Nothing suits her, and she's so restless and uneasy, and so irritable. I hope when I am old, if I live to be eighty as she is, that I'll be a reasonable being. Most old people are so queer and crabbed.'

No wonder that grandmother was restless. She had led an active life and been a personage, one whose advice had been asked and taken, one who had managed her own household, and had gone where she pleased and when she desired, without dictation from any one. Now she was an inmate of her son's house; her world was bounded by the four walls of her room. There were servants in the kitchen and new ways of doing almost everything, ways that seemed to her extravagant and wasteful. Among the people who were her son's friends she felt herself lonely and out of her sphere. She was discontented and cross and knew herself both, with a pang of conscience that smote her heart.

'I cannot imagine what more I could do for John's mother than I do,' declared John's wife. 'She has a large, sunny room, her own furniture, and nothing to do but fold her hands in front of her.'

Little Lucy slipped silently away, not once, but often, in the morning, in the afternoon, and after a while in the twilight, to sit with her grandmother. The two had much in common.

Both were very simple-hearted and plain, caring for externals only, as they tended to convenience and comfort. Both were fond of outdoor life. Grandmother could not have a garden in the city, but Lucy managed to fill her window-boxes with geraniums and other vivid-colored plants. Lucy bought a canary, and hung its cage in the old lady's window, and whenever grandmother wanted to call on an old friend, the young girl managed to have

an errand in the same part of town, so that she wanted to have company as she went on the errand.

The days passed more easily for the lonely, elderly woman after Lucy, the filler of chinks, took her in her gentle care.

So it was everywhere. Lucy was not a genius, nor brilliant, nor very beautiful, but she was well beloved, for she was a filler of chinks.

The Tree and the Snow.

'Too heavy upon me lies the snow,'

To the sky said the restless tree;

'The burden upon the ground I'll throw;

Too heavy it lies on me.'

The tree its burden cast to the ground,

And its arms tossed light and free,

While Nature with icy fetter bound

Each other forest tree.

Some warm days came, then a fierce cold wind

On the forest began to blow,

And ruined buds it left behind—

Except on the boughs of snow.

Spring came, and the Western wind blew free,

The green woods blossomed, but lo,

All barren and blossomless stood the tree,

That shook from its boughs the snow.

—From the German.

A Mystery.

Harold Ames was proud and happy when Mr. Jones, the great newspaper agent, took him on as one of his boys. Not a moment late was he with any of the papers, and the wages were a quarter more than in his last place. Every one of those quarters should be put aside to buy mother the new dress she needed. Harold's mother was a widow, and he was her only child.

Five weeks had Harry kept his place, and five quarters rattled in his money-box—the rest of the money he always handed over to his mother to buy his food and clothes—when a terrible trial befell the boy. Subscribers complained that their papers were not left regularly, and one man even sent word that, though paid for, his paper had not come for a whole week past. Of course Harry was sent for and reprimanded, but he could only say earnestly: 'Please, sir, I always did leave the papers at every house.' And the answer was, 'Don't make matters worse by telling a lie.' He was not dismissed, but was to have a week's grace.

Poor Harry! Tears of indignation welled into his eyes. As to the missing papers, he knew nothing about them. It was a mystery, and it was a mystery that continued. He left the papers regularly in Mortimer street, yet again people called at the office and said they had never got them. At the end of the week the boy was called up and dismissed. In vain Harry's mother pleaded for her child, a good boy, with a good character for honesty wherever he had been in a place: it was no use.

Harry was sobbing bitterly at home when Mr. S., the photographer round the corner, came and knocked at the door to ask Mrs. Ames to send his wash home a little earlier. He was surprised to see Harry in tears, and asked the reason. Mrs. Ames explained.

'Look here,' the young man said, 'I'm fond of mysteries. I'll take the boy.' And the photographer laughed. 'Cheer up,' he said to Harry. 'Come and work for me, and we'll find out this riddle.' He knew Harry—knew him for a good boy.

A few days later Mr. S. called at the newspaper office. 'Papers gone regularly since you dismissed young Ames?' he asked.

'Not a bit of it. Worse complaints than ever,' was the reply.

'Ah, a mystery,' said Mr. S., and went away.

Next day he got up very early and walked up and down Mortimer street. Harry's successor was dropping the morning paper on every doorstep. Mr. S. leaned against the portico of No. 1 and waited, keeping an eye on the whole street. Then he went home chuckling and staring hard at No. 8, where the door stood open to air the house. You could do that in this quiet street. He asked Harry if No. 8 had ever complained of his paper coming irregularly, but Harry shook his head.

'No. 8 was too ill,' he said. 'They thought he was dying all last week. The girl told me so.'

'Do they keep a cat?' he asked.

Harry stared. 'They keep a dog,' he said, 'a jolly one; it can do heaps of tricks.'

'It is too clever by half,' said Mr. S. 'Come with me, my boy. You and I will go and ask how No. 8 is.' Harry wondered, but got his cap and followed. To this question the girl answered joyfully that her employer was a great deal better,—out of danger.

'Can he read the papers yet?' asked Mr. S.

'Well, now, how odd!' said the girl. 'I was just going to get it for him when you rang. Rover takes it always off the doorstep and lays it in his little smoking-room; but this two weeks past we've none of us thought of the paper or even gone into the room, we've been so dreadfully anxious about poor Mr. Orr.'

'May I see the smoking room?' asked the photographer.

'Certainly, sir,' said the girl, surprised.

But when Harry, Mr. S. and Sarah entered the room, there was still a greater surprise; for the floor was littered with papers, yet folded, carried in from various doorsteps by the busy Rover.

'And we all too upset to notice it!' said Sarah. 'Well, I never. Rover, you're a thief! This will be news for your master.'

'The mystery is discovered,' said the photographer. 'Could I ask as a favor that this room be left as it is for Mr. Jones of the newspaper office to see? I think your employer will not object when he hears that a boy has been accused of taking the papers.'

'Certainly, sir,' said Sarah.

The agent was taken to No. 8. He found there all the missing papers, and Rover was kind enough to make things clear by bringing in another stolen paper during the visit.

'You are entirely cleared, my lad,' he said.

'We must have you back. This is a queer affair.' And he patted Rover on the head.

'Thank you, but I can't spare my boy: he suits me,' said the photographer.

'Well, then, we must give Ames a present; for he has suffered unjustly.'

'I don't want anything, sir; I'm only too glad to be cleared.'

'The boys said you were saving up money for some purpose; perhaps I could help you to that.'

'Oh, nothing, sir, for me; but I did want to get mother a dress.'

'Ah, yes. I won't keep you now. Good-bye, Mr. S. You have done us a valuable service by clearing up this little affair.'

That evening a knock came to the Ames's door, and a parcel was left, directed to Harry's mother. It contained a beautiful dark dress 'from Rover.'—'Working Boy.'

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