

For the Children

Only a Dandelion.

BY JAMES M. HUBBARD.

"O CHARLIE! How could you do that? My one flower!"

"I didn't mean any harm, aunty. Anyway, 'twas only a dandelion." And the boy went whistling on his way to school, switching off the heads of the dandelions by the wayside with a stick he had in his hand.

Aunty Jones wiped away a tear and began to pick up a stitch which she had dropped in a stocking she was knitting. She had an accident when she was a little girl, and was so lame that she never walked farther than from her room to the kitchen. She knitted, sewed and did mending for her living, sitting all the time at the front window of her room in her nephew's farmhouse. She had been watching the dandelion whose head Charlie had switched off ever since it came up, for it happened to be the only one in the little patch of grass between the house and the road, and she loved it. And now, just as it was coming into flower, it was gone.

At the opening of school that morning the teacher read the passage in the Bible containing the Golden Rule, and said a few words as to how it should be obeyed.

"You mustn't do anything," she said, "if you can help it to make any one else unhappy. If you ever do anything to anybody that you wouldn't like to have them do to you, why make it up to them somehow, and right off."

The children always liked these little talks of their teacher, because they were so simple. When she stopped, Charlie said to himself, "I wonder if teacher saw me switch off Aunty Jones's dandelion, and so talked as she did?"

When school was over, he set out for home with the other boys and girls, but had not gone far when the sight of a dandelion brought back to his mind the thoughtless act of the morning and the teacher's talk. Then, all of a sudden, it came over him that he might dig up a dandelion and plant it in the place of the one he had killed. So he stopped and began to loosen the earth round a particularly fine one just going to blossom.

"What are you doing, Charlie?" said one of the boys, for they all had stopped and were watching him. When he told them, several said, "I'll dig one, too!"

"Look here, boys," cried out Nellie Upson, "why wouldn't it be a good idea to make a little bed in front of Aunty Jones's window (everybody called her aunty, you see), and plant some garden flowers in it? I've got some pansies I'll bring."

"I've got some lilies and golden-glow," said Emma Jackson.

"I've got some sweet-william," said Frank Brown.

That afternoon a merry band of boys and girls were hard at work making a little bed in aunty's grass patch, and when they had finished they were surprised to see how pretty it was.

But my story does not end here. The little flower-bed made the farmhouse look nicer, and everybody noticed it. The children had had such a good time making the bed that they jumped at the teacher's suggestion that they should make beds like it in each other's front yards where there were none. And now in Brookdale, every yard has its nicely cared-for flower-bed, where a little while ago there were only grass and weeds; and all that made this wonderful change was a dandelion. — *Youth's Companion.*

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