

LITTLE FOLKS

Jessie.

(By Sydney Dayre, in 'Presbyterian Review'.)

'A visit to grandfather's. Jessie had never been there in her life, and it may be imagined with how much pleasure she had looked forward to it. There were aunts and uncles and cousins there—everything which goes to make up the delight of a visit in the country.

A very kind fuss was made over the little lassie and her mother on their arrival. Jessie liked everybody she saw, but more than all, her cousin George, a boy three or four years older than herself. There were no little girls except Kitty, almost a baby.

'But I don't care for that,' said Jessie to herself. 'I like to play with boys.'

Very soon, though, she began to wonder whether her cousin liked to play with girls. After his first greeting he stood off at one side, gazing curiously at her. Then he disappeared and Jessie saw little more of him that day.

In fact he kept on disappearing in a way that was very annoying. Jessie tried her best to keep trace of him, or to lead him into spending some of his time with her. She was soon obliged to conclude that he purposely kept out of her way.

One morning she was wandering about a grove near the house when from the further side she heard merry shouts and laughter. Hurrying that way she saw a little stream and in the stream a boy and a girl were wading. And the boy was her cousin George.

What a time they were having, sure enough. The little girl splashed George, and George splashed back until her curls were covered with shining drops. Then they turned to look for a little boat they had set sailing, and then they saw Jessie.

The little girl waded out of the water, picked up her shoes and ran away. George also left the water but stayed on the bank to put on his shoes and stockings. Jessie sat down beside him.

'Who's that little girl?' she asked.

'She belongs to the man that ploughs for grandfather,' said George. 'She's the jolliest sort of a little piece.'

'Why do you like to play with her and not with me.'



'O—who said I did?' said George. 'I know you do. You keep going away from me all the time. I think it's real—' Jessie burst into tears.

George by this time had on his shoes and looked as if he, too, wanted to run away. But Jessie held him.

'You must tell me,' she said. George looked a little frightened.

'You're not going to scream, are you?' he asked.

'No. Who said I screamed? Tell me,' she insisted.

'I will, if only you won't. Cousin Jack, that visited at your house, said so. He said you screamed whenever things didn't go as you wanted. And that if you were very, very angry you—kicked and threw yourself down.'

'Well,' said Jessie, a bright flush rising to her cheeks, 'I think it was ever so mean for a boy to talk so about a girl.'

'I think so too,' said George penitent at having said so much. 'And I think it's mean for me to tell you.

you made me. I was afraid

you'd scream if I didn't. And say, he added in strong desire to make things better if he could, 'he said you were a real nice little girl every other way. He said you had nice curls and blue eyes—and you have.'

Jessie was not comforted. With a half sob she turned towards the house. George gazed at her sideways as if still fearing an eruption of screams, then, setting his lips as if determined to brave everything, walked home with her.

The next morning Jessie stood on the piazza dressed in her white frock with blue ribbons. So sweet and dainty a little lassie that it would be difficult to imagine frowns and pouts in the place of the dimples on the pretty face. She was ready for an all-day frolic, a drive to a lake where she was to meet a party of young cousins.

'Disappointment, my little girl,' said Uncle Horace, coming round from the stables. 'One of the horses is lame and we can't go.' An angry color mounted to Jessie's cheeks.