

BOYS AND GIRLS

What Makes a Boy Popular.

What makes a boy popular? Surely it is manliness. During the war how many schools and colleges followed popular boys? These young leaders were the manly boys whose hearts could be trusted. The boy who respects his mother has leadership in him. The boy who is careful of his sister is a knight. The boy who will never violate his word, and who will pledge his honor to his own hurt and change not, will have the confidence of his fellows. The boy who will never hurt the feelings of any one will one day find himself possessing any sympathy.

If you want to be a popular boy, be too manly and generous and unselfish to seek to be popular; be the soul of honor; love others better than yourself, and people will give you their hearts, and try to make you happy. This is what makes a boy popular.—'Apples of Gold.'

The Magic Well.

A Native Elik Story.

(The Rev. J. K. MacGregor, D.D., old Calabar, in the 'U. F. Church Review.'

Chapter I.

Far away in the bush, where no white man has ever gone, where the people think that the white man is an evil spirit that is sent to trouble folks who have displeased Abasi, there lies a strange country. In it there is a village near which the farms of the villagers spread out in irregular patches of yam and cassava. Those who have been there bring back awful tales of what they have seen, and still stranger tales of what they have heard. Every sacred day all the things in this country have life. You see your knife, but a few minutes afterwards you may hear it speaking quite plainly with its neighbor, or see it fighting with an enemy. The king of this country is Obou Abasi, and he had two wives, one of whom he loved tenderly, and called Aqua anwan ima—that is, favorite wife; but of the other he thought little, and her he named Ikpri anwan ima—that is, wife of little love. Now Aqua had a son, but Ikpri had none, that was the reason why the king made the distinction in his regard for them.

One day—the memory of living man still knows it—the two women were in the king's yard alone. It was a very sacred day, and the king and all the men had gone to offer special sacrifices. Now in Aqua's house the pot stood full of water, but in Ikpri's house there was no water. When the sun climbed high in the heavens, Aqua went out to the barn to fetch something that she had forgotten, leaving her babe sleeping softly in the house, whilst Ikpri stayed at home. Every little while Ikpri went into Aqua's house and looked with longing, loving eyes on the sleeping child, and wished that she too might be a mother. At last the little one waked up, and cried with such pathetic insistence that Ikpri ran to comfort him, and, finding he was thirsty, gave him some water from his mother's pot to drink.

When Aqua returned home, she at once noticed that some one had been using the water in the pot, and cried out, 'Who has taken the water that I had here?' Ikpri came to her and said, 'Your baby cried, so I gave him to drink from your water-pot; and, see, he sleeps sweetly again.' Thereupon Aqua got into a great rage, and said, 'What is this that you have done? This water is from the well at Idimutan, and I meant to keep it. You must get me some more from this very spring.' Though Ikpri protested strongly against this injustice, all she said was in vain. Her kindness to her rival's child only seemed to make the anger of the cruel woman blaze the more, so that at last, with a sore heart, Ikpri set out on her journey to the magic well of Idimutan.

Chapter II.

The road to the spring was long and dangerous. On sacred days such as that on which this incident happened, it was haunted with all kinds of wild beasts and things,

gifted for that day to speak. The trees that grew along the wayside were gnarled and cruel-looking; the very bush, with its dark-green eyes and never a flower to gladden it, made one's heart quail. Yet it suited well with Ikpri's mood as she was walking along, thinking of her life and all the sadness that it had held for her, with the tragic hopefulness of a childless mother that her desires would be fulfilled, and little recking of any dangers that the road might have in store for her.

Suddenly, as she turned a corner of the winding bush-path, she saw before her two knives, fighting. With beating heart, for she knew not but that they might turn on her, she went on toward them. When she came near, they stopped their fighting and asked in stern, metallic tones what she did there. Ikpri told the story of her ill-requited kindness to her rival's child, and when she ended, wishing her good speed, they stood aside to let her pass.

This encouraged Ikpri to go forward; for when she saw the knives, gloomy tales of that dark road had rushed into her mind, so that only her determination to fetch back the water gave her courage to proceed. But now she was prepared, she thought, for anything she might encounter. She was not amazed then, when in a little while she came up to two ufukeyo (native umbrellas) fighting, nor when they, having heard her story, made way for her. In the same way two quarrelsome bananas gave up the road to her; and all the fighting things she met—beds, tables, stools, cups, pots, etc.—all went out of her way so cheerfully that she felt that Abasi was going to bless this journey to her.

But terror returned when, from the bush, there came a leopard with great gleaming eyes that seemed already to have joy in her death. He demanded that she should give him her hand to eat. With quivering voice Ikpri told him too her tale; and as he heard, the savage gleam of his eyes changed to a glow of sympathy, and he bade her go on, nothing fearing. Many were the wild animals she thus passed in safety, and all were kindly before her sorrow. At last she met an elephant with huge tusks and grim, gray body. Yet though his body was so big, and looked so threatening, his heart was tender. He bade her go on to the well boldly. Then suddenly he asked her if she knew where it was. When Ikpri replied that she had never journeyed to it, the elephant told her where it was, describing the way so carefully that she could not miss it. He added, moreover, that her troubles would not end when she got there, for on a sacred day only those who put their pots into the water in proper fashion ever got good fortune from their visit to the spring. Then he showed her how to dip the pot she carried into the spring so that the magic spell might work no ill on her. With a heart half glad for dangers past, half sad with uncertain hope, Ikpri went on.

Soon she came to the spring. There was no mistaking it. There was the great tree with orchids nestling on it. There were the ferns and crotons and great waving arums. Timidly she stole forward with a prayer on her lips that Abasi might favor her enterprise. Lo! as the lip of her pot touched the water, there came from it a nymph more sweet than sweetest thought, who asked her why she came to this well on a sacred day looking so sad. Once more Ikpri told her story, and as she spoke the nymph's face grew gravely kind with sympathetic sorrow. Holding out two sticks to Ikpri when the tale was finished, she said, 'Take these two wish-sticks, and all things that you wish in love and for your happiness you shall have.' As the sticks touched Ikpri's hand, they became as small as a ball of fofofo, and at the nymph's command she swallowed them. Then she took her pot from the well, full of clear water and rich with rarest pearls. Abasi had indeed heard her prayer and answered it not according to her words, but with the rich reward he gives his favored ones.

Chapter III.

When she arrived at home Ikpri set down her pot, and from her mouth there fell the

wishing-sticks, which grew at once to their former size. 'Aqua,' she cried, 'come, let me give you the water that I owe you.' At sight of the pearls, Aqua's jealousy and hatred increased, and hot envy seized her. 'Whence came these?' she asked sharply; and Ikpri told the story simply, not narrating all her adventures, but saying that when she took her pot from the well, behold, they were there. 'Tell me the way to this well,' demanded Aqua, 'for I must have some pearls too. The fool who brought me this potful had taken all the pearls from it ere giving it to me.' So Ikpri showed her the way, and Aqua, snatching up her pot, set out on the road full of greedy hope.

Aqua saw not the terrible beauty of the bush-path along which she trod. Her thoughts were set on the pearls she lusted for, and the determination to win them banished from her mind every thought, even of the babe at home that Ikpri now was soothing once again. When the knives, startled at the sight of the second woman coming towards them on the same day, asked her in tones subdued by memory of Ikpri's sad story whither she went, she answered curiously, bidding them be quiet, as old rusty things, and let her pass at once. Silently they stood aside, but the fierce light that glinted from them boded no good to Aqua. The umbrellas she scolded, and the bananas hurried from her when she threatened to eat them. All the things that Ikpri had passed in safety she met, and all in silence cleared from her path. When the leopard asked her if she too wished to go to the well, she answered ungraciously, 'Take your ugly bright eyes away, and let me hurry on.' Saying, 'Beware how you walk, for you shall yet see worse things than my cruel eyes,' he sprang into the bush and she saw him no more at that time. At her command to remove his 'short legs and small eyes,' the elephant too made off, having warned her that dangers she knew not of lay before her.

At last she arrived at the well. No fear was in her heart, for the lust of gain had cast out all fear. Into the clear, flowing water she plunged her pot, and, as before, the nymph appeared. Not now, however, was her face gentle. Her beauty was that of anger as she asked in cold, unfeeling tones, 'What do you wish?' 'It is not your concern, but mine,' retorted Aqua, scarce deigning to glance at the lady of the well. Then, saying in a voice of stern and awful pity, 'Take heed. Thy doom is coming on thee,' the nymph too, vanished, and Aqua was left alone.

In anxious haste that hardly marked the words, Aqua drew her pot from the spring, but no pearls were in it. Enraged, she dashed her pot to the ground, and over her, from head to foot, on arms, on body, and on legs, the magic water splashed. Alas! wherever a drop of the water fell, there came a loathsome, scaly, leprous spot. For a moment she stood rooted to the spot in agony, then, uttering a cry of despairing rage, she set off home, terrible wrath against Ikpri burning more fiercely than ever before in her heart. She thought the road would never end, for as she passed each spot where she had met an animal or thing she saw it once again. But now each face beamed with satisfied malice as the leprous woman tottered past. It seemed to her she walked through rows of demons that smiled with pleasure at their scorners' plight, and not a sign of pity did one of them give.

At last she reached the way that led to the village, but she dared not go down it. That meant instant death for a leper. Through the bush around the town she walked disconsolate, but her foot never again crossed the threshold of the house where her baby was. Nursed by Ikpri, the young prince grew; but he did not reach the throne, for the first war that spoke to him of glory brought him death. Ikpri lived long and well and heard her son praised as the wisest king the town had ever known—for, of course, her first wish had been for a boy; and when he was born she wished that he might rule, a great and good king; and this wish being 'in love and for her happiness' was amply fulfilled.

At nights, as long as Aqua lived, her awful cries of disappointed rage were