

THE LITTLE FOLK.

A LUCKY STONE.

"I wish I were of some use in the world, but I never shall be, I'm only a stupid white stone that is kicked about by every passing foot; I wonder what I was made for?" sighed a round white pebble that lay in a gravel path beside the river.

Almost as the pebble spoke a boy's small brown hand caught it up at random, while a passionate childish voice exclaimed "They may say and do as they like, they both hate me, but I don't care, I won't care any more than this stone does," and the boy hurled the stone with all his force into the middle of the river.

It fell into the deepest part, and a silvery ring of light appeared on the water where it had fallen, then another, and another, in ever-widening circles, till the last one spread quite to the bank of the river on each side. The boy stood watching the circles with an angry frown on his handsome face, and his small fists tightly clenched in the pockets of his knickerbockers. "They are all against me," he muttered, "and it is a shame—a shame!"

A girl, two or three years older than the boy, had been watching the rings on the water also, though an alder-bush concealed her from his view, she had a fishing rod in her hand.

"Your stone has disturbed my fish," she remarked as she came forward, smiling, "but you seem unhappy, can I help you?"

The little fellow turned his flushed face aside, inclined to resent being spoken to, but he was very lonely, and this young lady had a pleasant face, and such a kind voice that he changed his mind. People did not often speak kindly to him.

"I am unhappy," he blurted out, dashing the tears from his eyes, "no one here is kind to me, I get rowed and punished whatever I do or say."

"What is your name? and who is it that is unkind to you?" questioned the girl. "Please come and sit beside me on the bank, and tell me all about it. My name is Mary." Taking the boy's hand she pulled him down beside her and very soon drew all his little story from him.

Gerald Gordon was an orphan, recently come from Australia to live with his guardian, an old gentleman who lived with a maiden sister in the house across the river. The old people were unaccustomed to children. They had been very unwilling to receive the son of their old friend into their home, but felt at the same time that duty obliged them to do so—his presence upset their quiet and precise habits of life, and he soon discovered, as children will, that he was unwelcome, and misunderstood.

As he himself said, everything he did or say appeared to be wrong in their eyes. At home in Australia everyone had loved him; his pretty young mother most devotedly of all, and the child naturally felt the change bitterly. Indeed, the lack of love in his small world was rapidly making him really as sullen and unamiable as his guardian believed him to be.

"Poor Gerald?" said Mary, laying her arm round the boy's shoulder when he had finished, "I am more sorry for you than I can express, but Mr. and Miss Duncan are not really such disagreeable; it is only that they have grown old living all alone, and they are unused to children and do not understand them. You must try and not annoy them in so many little ways, as I fear you do, and not take their scoldings so much to heart. They are so good to the poor that I am sure they do not mean to be unkind to a little boy like you.

"I wish you lived with us," sighed Gerald. "I should never feel so wicked and so unhappy as I do if I had someone to be kind to me. I used not to be such a bad boy with mother, but somehow I do not care to try to be good here, it's all of no use."

"Poor Gerald," repeated Mary, "but I live close by, in that house on the hill, and you shall come and see me whenever you like. Come fishing to-morrow.

will you?"

Gerald joyfully assented, and from that day forward a new and happier life commenced for the lonely little lad, who became almost the shadow of the tall, bright-faced girl who had constituted herself his friend and protector.

"See, Mary, there is a fish!" exclaimed Gerald one afternoon, as he stood on the river bank beside his friend. "It rose at the very spot where that stone I threw went down, on the day I first saw you! What a lucky stone that was to be sure, for you would not have spoken to me had I not vented my anger and misery by throwing it. I remember standing here watching the rings it made in the water, and the last one had just touched the edge of the river when you came from behind the bush. I think," continued the boy thoughtfully, "that those rings are somehow going on still, you took them up by speaking so kindly to me, and your kindness has gone on making wider and wider rings of happiness in my life ever since."

Meanwhile the fish dropped down to the bed of the river, where a round white pebble lay shining.

"Ha, my friend! it is you at last," he said. "I have often wished I could find and thank you for dropping into the river and warning me away as you did. You saved my life. A boy up yonder has also to thank you for bringing about some happy change in his life; he called you 'a lucky stone.' Certainly it does not often fall to the lot of a pebble to be of so much use in the world as you have been."

IS IT WORTH THE WHILE.

"Pshaw: I do not care whether they like me or not!" was what a young girl said, partly to herself and partly to her friend, as a group of girls passed by with only careless nods.

And yet it was this very apparent feeling of indifference, this unconcerned manner, which had caused the half dislike and the avoidance on the part of the other girls.

In all social life it is the cheerful girl—not necessarily the gay one—the cheerful girl, who has a pleasant word, a kindly smile, or a moment to spare for each, who is the most liked and the most popular.

"A good listener is always in demand," says some one. Why? Simply because a good listener is one who is willing to listen with apparent and kindly interest to the words of her companion.

Sympathy on any matter is the bond which will unite many otherwise uncongenial natures.

Shakespeare said, "How much better it is to weep at joy than to joy at weeping."

"Well," says the indifferent girl again, with a weary tone to her voice, "what is the use of trying to make so many people like you by appearing to take an interest in them? Is it worth while to try and make people like me?"

Let us consider a moment.

From a moral and unselfish standpoint, you will concede that the Golden Rule should be employed in this, as well as other instances, and that since you would like others to consider your interests and pleasure on all occasions, you ought to do likewise unto them.

From a selfish standpoint, it is to your advantage to have as many people as possible like you. You cannot tell when a passing complimentary word from some one will carry a good impression to another and bring you untold benefit.

Influence counts for much in this world, and even if you think that some people have no special influence or power to ever aid you, it is still better to have their good will than their ill will.

Once more, from a sympathetic standpoint, should you try to please everyone. Into most of our lives more rain than sunshine comes, more darkness than brightness; and if, by a little effort on our part, even though it must be forced, sometimes, by reason of our sad or dejected feelings, we can send one little ray of light across another's path, it is well worth the while.