

STONES IN THEIR POCKETS.

LILIAN and May were going to drive in the park with Grandma West. Grandma was such a stern, dignified old lady, that our two little maids were rather afraid of her. She always seemed to know if the seams of their stocking legs were crooked, or the hooks in the wrong eyes at the back of their dresses, and her talk—when she did talk—was full of “musts” and “must nots.”

But in spite of these drawbacks, it was nice to be tucked up under the beautiful bear-skin robe, in the shining Victoria, and whisked along by the clipped bays. And when the old lady was thinking about something else, Lillian and May had merry little whispering chats, that Grandma could not hear—at least they thought she could not.

“There is Ada Forbes, Lil,” whispered May; “she is in the Brown’s carriage. I wouldn’t hint for drives, like Ada does, not if I never stepped into a carriage.”

“How does she hint?”

“O! she is always talking to Anna now nice it must be to drive every afternoon, and that sort of thing. I think she is a very mean spirited girl.”

“Maybe she is,” answered Lillian, regretfully, “but she brings such nice caramels to school in her lunch basket. O, May, I see Nellie Gaines riding a bicycle, don’t she ride well?”

May twisted her short neck almost off, but the glancing wheel was gone, she had missed seeing Nelly.

“O, never mind,” said Lillian, “I don’t think girls look nice on bicycles anyhow, do you? I think they look like tom-boys, and Nelly is just as stuck up as anything about doing something that the rest of us can’t do?”

“Miss Lillian,” cried Grandma sharply, “how many more stones have you and May in your pockets?”

“Ma’am! What Grandma?” exclaimed the little girls, facing about in some alarm.

“Each of you threw a stone just now at the passers-by. I saw you, heard you rather; now feel in your pockets instantly, and see if you have any more to throw.”

Two little fur-topped mits dived into two short pockets, and fished up two small handkerchiefs; one embroidered with “L” and one with “M.” That was all.

They knew Grandma must be poking fun at them, by the way she snapped her faded old blue eyes, but what did she mean?

“Once upon a time,” said Grandma, “a ring of little girls sat on a school-room floor playing checks; you call it jack-stones now, but it was the same game, only we played it then with small marbles. It was a rainy day, and one of the little girls who generally sat in that ring was absent. ‘I don’t care if Kate is away,’ said one, ‘I don’t believe she plays fair,’ ‘And she thinks she can beat us all,’ said another,

“‘She likes to show her gold ring when she plays,’ added a third speaker, and so each girl in the ring tried to find a stone to throw at the absent one. The rain passed, many sunshiny days followed, the girls sat time and again playing checks on that school-room floor; but Kate never came again. She died, and we followed her little coffin to the grave, weeping to think we would never see her again, and sorrying most of all for the stones we had cast at her now she could never speak to defend herself again. I never hear little girls say unkind things now-a-days, that I don’t want to beg them to empty these cruel little stones out of their pockets, lest they be sorry for sixty years, as I have been.”

Lillian and May sat as quiet as two little mice under the bear-skin; they knew now what Grandma meant by throwing stones. She had heard what they were saying about Ada and Nelly. And how queer to think that Grandma had ever been a little girl, sitting on a school-room floor and playing jack-stones?

The next morning our two little maids watched the school-room door anxiously, till Ada came in, followed presently by Nelly. Then they gave a little sigh of relief, and looked at one another.

“They’re not going to die like Kate, anyhow,” whispered Lillian, “but don’t let’s carry any more stones in our pockets, what do you say, May?”—*Scel.*