

THE GOLDEN RULE.

"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

Mary and James were children of poor parents. They lived just in the borders of a forest in a little cottage. Their parents were kind, but worked all day to earn food and clothes for their children, so that Mary and James were never taught much that was useful, and did as they pleased: and they sometimes showed themselves very selfish and unkind to each other. Mary loved to go into the woods and gather the flowers that grew there, and hear the birds sing, and to watch the sunlight dancing between the leaves; and sometimes, as she sat on the ground, or hunted for nuts, she thought she heard some one speaking to her, but she found it was only her thoughts. These thoughts were often about James and her plays with him, and they seemed to tell her she had been very selfish.

One day during the chesnut harvest, Mary and James had been out to gather the nuts. Mary had filled her basket first, and would not help James, but sat down on a stone, and looked first at the grass, then up to the sky, and tried to sling like the birds. Her thoughts began to ask, who made the grass, and planted the trees, and who made the beautiful nuts. Some one had told her it was God; but she had not learned much of God, and so did not understand much about His love and goodness; but she said, "Why does He give me so much that is beautiful; I can pick whole handfuls of flowers, and yet there are as many more in the woods for James; and I can feed the grass to Brindle, and yet find just as much; and the sky always looks beautiful and bright. Oh! I wish I was like God, then I would make everything beautiful."

James was a little boy, and was very tired trying to fill his basket with chestnuts, and he heard Mary's wish just as he was wishing she would help him. "Do you suppose anybody can be like God, and not help other people that are tired?" he said. Then Mary's thoughts began to answer, and she did not sit selfishly looking at James, but sprang up and helped him, so that the basket was soon filled. But just as they were ready to go home, Mary accidentally spilled all her nuts. She began to cry, and James laughed at her; that made her cry the more, and he said he would run away and get home first. But his selfish thoughts were not his only thoughts. When he remembered what Mary had said about God's love, he thought of what he had heard about Jesus, and how He loved little children, and how good and bright spirits loved them, and tried to make them good; but he was tired, and it is not quite as easy to be good when one is tired, and the selfish thoughts are the strongest then, so he lay down on the grass and heard Mary cry without offering to help her. Just then a little bird flew on to a branch of a tree and sang its song,—chick a dee dee,—and he thought of the little bird that built its nest by the cottage door, and how he would find the worms for his mate, when it could not leave its nest; and then he thought of his father and mother, both hard at work for Mary and him; and he remembered what Mary had said about God, and the story of the angels that loved to help people; and he said, "I will be like them as much as I can." So he sprang up, and helped Mary instead of lying on the grass.

Do you understand that James and Mary each had selfish thoughts, and each had loving, good thoughts, and that, so long as they let the selfish thoughts govern them, they were unkind, and did not try to help each other; but when they let the good thoughts govern them, they were ready to be kind to each other, and grew happy? When they obeyed the rule, doing unto others as they would have others do unto them, they were blessed.

Now, the next time you are selfish and unkind, will you try and remember Mary and James and think as they did of God's love, and of the love of the angels, and try to let your kind feelings govern you, that you may grow more and more like them?