

A HANDFUL OF EARTH.

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"A handful of earth! Dirt! Surely we are not asked to listen to a story about anything so common as dirt! Dirt sticks to our hands and faces, and we are made to wash it off. It clings to our shoes. It gets onto our clothes, it blows into the house, and makes the furniture dirty, and people have to be continually rubbing and brushing, sweeping, and dusting to get rid of it. We should be very glad never to hear of it again."



Fig. 2. A handful of earth—in its place.

I fancy I hear many boys and girls saying this when they see the title of this story of mine. But stay! I said *Earth*, and what you say is about *Dirt*. Earth is very good in *its place*, but *out of its place*, it is dirt. It is out of its place when it is on your hands or shoes or clothes. Then it annoys you and you call it bad names. There are other things besides earth that sometimes get out of place and are called bad names. I have heard it said that *boys and girls* are all very well in their place, which seems to hint that

they are sometimes out of their place. I have known boys, and girls too, make visits to a neighboring orchard. The owner of the orchard was a mean old fellow, and when he saw the children in his orchard he would say, "Plague on those youngsters: They're at it again." And he would send someone, or go himself, to drive them out, just as you would brush the dust off your hands. But the fathers and mothers of those same intruders thought they were pretty good children, and were proud of them. So with this handful of earth. In its place, that is, in the garden or field, it is of untold value.

Earth is so common and unlovely while "birds and butterflies and flowers" are so bright and beautiful, that all our interest is naturally drawn to these. But we should know that although the soil has no life or beauty in itself, yet it *supports* life, and enables other things to be useful and beautiful.

THE SOIL AND THE ROCK.—Take from the field some fine dry earth. Place a good sized pinch of it on a piece of smooth white paper, and place under this a newspaper or a piece of thick cloth. Tip the whole so as to give it a little slope. Then tap this paper with the finger, and you will begin to see parts of the soil begin to draw away from the other parts. Keep at this, and you will find some of the soil rounding up in little heaps, while the rest scatters over the paper. Roll your pencil forwards and