

THE LITTLE FOLK.

Jo and Rags.

"What is the matter, little girl?" I asked of a small, ragged figure seated upon the curbstone, partially clothed in faded red calico, with a generous display of bare, brown feet and ankles rom beneath the short, skimpy skirt; the only head-dress Nature's covering of tangled brown curls.

The small face, with its little pathways down the cheeks where the tears had washed away into tiny drifts the accumulated dust of days, is lifted slowly from the scrawny brown hands, and a doleful voice pipes forth, "I—want—Rags."

"Rags! And pray tell me what you will do with them?"

"Taint them; it's nothing but him. Rags is a dog, he is, an' I wants him," sobbed the child, and down goes the tangled head again.

"And where is Rags—dead?" I ventured to inquire.

"No'm, he's lost. I was followin' the old circus percession, and Rags got losted from me in the crowd."

Leaving the sobbing waif, I continued my way down the street. But the forlorn appearance of that child who had "no chance" haunted me until, drawing my thoughts forcibly from such an unpleasant subject, I for the first time noticed the steady "pitty-pat" of small feet at my side. Looking down, I meet the questioning gaze of a small dog, whose dirty white coat, covering the lean little body, is sprinkled with small black freckles denominated "spots." This poor little animal was most certainly not a member of the canine "400."

A brilliant thought struck me as I noticed the similarity of the forlorn aspect of the little spotted dog and the little red calico girl on the curbstone, who sighed, not for purple and fiao liuen, but for Rags. Could this be Rags?

"Rags! here, Rags!" I called softly to the little beast. I was promptly answered by a vigorous wagging of a stumpy tail, and a quick glistening of the bright black eyes.

I hastened back to the curbstone corner, using all the dog language that I could muster in invitation to Rags to follow. And follow he did until within sight of that curbstone, when with one wild yelp of joy, he flew along the ground until there was a sudden collision and a mixture of red calico and white and black dog.

I have never, before or since, seen two happier creatures than were Rags and his mistress at that meeting of the parted. As I witnessed it, the thought occurred to me—Why not invite Rags and Co. to a New Year's dinner?

"What is your name and where do you live?" I asked, interrupting the flow of ungrammatical thanks from the cherry lips of Rags' protector.

"My name is Jo; I live mostly nowhere, ma'am," she replied. "I sleeps at Uncle Bill's when he ain't drunk an' lets me. When he's drunk his wife bosses an' I just keeps clear of the place."

"Jo, you know to-morrow is New Year's Day? Don't you want to come to my home and take dinner with me, and bring Rags, of course?"

Jo gave a contemptuous sniff at her remnant of red calico and snorted, "Me! Looks like it, don't I, now? Rags might go if I was fitten to take him."

"Never mind your clothes. There's no one but me to see you, so wash your face, brush your hair and I'll meet you here at nine o'clock to-morrow, and take you with me."

And so they came on New Year's Day, four years ago, and they are here yet. Jo is now a bright girl of fourteen, standing well in all her classes; and Rags is a plump ball of white and black, waddling un-

disturbed from parlor to garden.

I hear the voice of Jo inquiring, earnestly, "How many raisins must I put in the fruit cake, auntie? You know boys like lots of them." I must go to her assistance, for to-day is a busy day for us, as we are preparing for our annual New Year's dinner for ragged girls and boys, gathered from the highways and curbstones.

HESTER GRAY.

Little Alice's Prayer.

"I don't want to say my prayer," said little Alice. "I'm tired of saying my prayer, mamma."

Mrs. Morris sighed, and scarcely knew what was best to do with her little daughter, whom she had given to God as soon as she was born, and had prayed Him daily to make His own child. And now she was tired of saying her prayers! But she was only four years old; and the mother asked gently: "And does my little Alice feel willing to go to bed without thanking her heavenly Father for taking care of her all day?"

Alice laughed, and kissed her mother on both cheeks, and then on her mouth. This she called a "French kiss." Then she went to her auntie, who was lying sick on the sofa, and auntie whispered: "Who will take care of little Alice to-night when it is all dark in the house?"

Alice dearly loved to be whispered to, and she answered in the same tone: "Mamma will take care of me."

Speak Kindly.

A man was once saved by a very poor boy from drowning. After his restoration he said to him:

"What can I do for you, my boy?"

"Speak a kind word to me sometimes," replied the boy, the tears gushing from his eyes; "I ain't got a mother like some of them."

A kind word! Think of it. This man had it in his power to give that boy money, clothes, playthings, but the little fellow craved nothing so much as a kind word now and then. If the man had ever so little heart, the boy must certainly have had the wish granted. A kind word! You have many such spoken to you daily, and you don't think much of their value; but that poor boy in the village, at whom everybody laughs, would think that he had found a treasury if someone spoke a kind word to him.

