



## THE LITTLE LONE MERMAID.

SHE was rather a lonely little Mermaid, for she had no brothers or sisters, and being a Princess she was not allowed to play with any one who was not of high birth, and it so happened that scarcely any of the nobility who attended the Court had any little children. Her Father and Mother, the Mer-King and Queen, lived in a splendid palace, built of coral and mother-of-pearl, surrounded by lovely gardens, where grew the choicest and most beautiful sea-flowers; and the little Princess was most carefully educated, and always went about attended by a guard of honor of four soldier-crabs, and two great sword-fish, who protected her from every danger.

She was taught to manage her slender silvery tail with the most courtly grace; she could play upon the sea-harp, and sing the most beautiful sea-songs, in the sweetest voice. She knew how to manage her flashing mirror, when all the Court rose through the clear, green waters; to sit on the rocks in the moonlight, and to comb her golden locks with a diamond comb, in the most ravishing manner. But yet she was not a happy little Mermaid. She wanted something, though she knew not what it was—some one to play with, she thought it was; some one to talk to.

“Oh, nonsense!” said her Mother, the Mer-Queen, when she complained sometimes of being dull. “Princesses must never be dull.”

“I wish I wasn’t a Princess,” said the little Mermaid, sadly. She would have cried if she had been an earth-maiden, but the sea-maidens have no tears. Once they learn to weep they are no longer mermaids, but become daughters of the sky, and are one step higher on the silver stairs.

*THE LITTLE LONE MERMAID.*

"For shame, Princess!" answered her Mother, severely. "I am quite astonished at you! Go and practise your new tune, and let me hear no more complaints." And the Mer-Queen swam away into her own apartments, to look over the Court jewels, and count up her pearls, which was her chief amusement.

But to tell people they must not be dull, and yet do nothing to cheer them, seldom does much good. The little Princess went and practised as she was bidden, but she still felt very sad; and when she had finished she did not know what to do. So she thought she would go up and see if the little earth-children were digging on the sands, and playing by the seashore, as they often did. The Princess was very fond of watching them, and often longed to join in their chatter and their play; but though she would swim quite close to them, and call to them, they never seemed to see



or hear her. There was one little girl she was particularly interested in. The others called her Neeta, and the Princess often wished she could make her see her, and talk to her. Once she fancied Neeta did notice her, for she looked so hard at the spot where she, the Princess, was, but at last little Neeta turned away, and only said to the other children: "I thought I saw a great fish there!" "Fancy, thinking me a fish!" said the Princess, half offended, and yet she longed to play with Neeta.

But this morning it so happened that no children were to be seen, and the poor little Princess turned away disappointed. Just then, however, something white flew past her on the wind, and dropped into the sea. At first she thought it was a bird, but in a moment she stretched out her hand, and grasped it, for it was no sea-gull; no, it was a child's hat. She looked

*THE LITTLE LONE MERMAID.*

at it curiously, and then a sudden desire to try it on seized her, and swimming to the shore, she was soon seated on a rock, and putting it on her golden curls, while she gazed in her mirror to see the effect.

Oh! Oh!! Oh!!!

The Princess turned round at the cry, and there was little Neeta, who had come running down to try and save her hat, standing close by, and gazing at her with round eyes of wonder and awe. "Is it your hat?" she asked.

"Yes," said Neeta, almost too frightened to speak. "Oh, please, will you give it me back?"

"Oh, let me keep it," begged the Princess; "I have never had a hat before, and I *do* so like it."

"But Nurse will be so cross," stammered Neeta. "She — she told me not to go out; but I did so want to see the big waves. And they will all be so cross."

"Will they?" said the Princess. "Why?"

"They'll say I was disobedient and careless," replied Neeta, gathering courage. "They are so cross, you can't think."

Then a great idea flashed into the Princess's mind. "If they are so cross," she said, "do come with me. I won't be cross, and I do so want some one to play with. And you shall have all my pretty things, and we will have such games, and be so happy."

"But how can I come?" pouted Neeta; "the water will drown me."

"No, no, it won't, not if you look in my mirror; you will be just what you wish. Oh, do, do come!"

Neeta hesitated. She thought how cross every one had been lately, and what a scolding she would get when she went home. And it would be lovely to see the bottom of the sea, and be able to tell them all about it at home. She hesitated; but when the Princess looked entreatingly at her, and held out her mirror, she peeped in it — and in a moment, lo! she was diving through the cool, green waters, her hand locked in that of the Princess; and she had no frock on, and no legs, only a lovely silvery tail, like a fish.

And what fun they had! The Princess showed Neeta all the Palace, and the gardens, and the heaps of pearls and precious stones, and the wonderful fishes and sea creatures gliding through the waters. And then there were wonderful corals, and sea flowers, and sea fruits (they had sea grapes

*THE LITTLE LONE MERMAID.*

and sea melons for luncheon), and she sang her all her sweetest songs, and they played no end of games, and there were no lessons and no tasks ; and yet, and yet, after a while Neeta began to feel miserable; and nothing the Princess could do would cheer her.

"I want to go home," said Neeta, one day. "I want to see the others."

"Why?" asked the Princess.

"Why?" answered Neeta, impatiently.

"Why? of course, because I love them."

"What is love?" said the Princess.

Neeta stared. Then she pondered.

"Love," she said at last. "It is — it is — oh, I don't know how to say it ; but it makes you ache, and yet it makes you glad. It is something here," and she touched her breast. "Something that sometimes makes you sing, and sometimes makes you cry. But you know."

"No, I don't!" said the Princess.

"Mermaidens are not like that; but if you go I shall be all alone again. I shall have no one to play with or to talk to. Oh, do stay!"

But Neeta began to sob and cry, for she was not a proper Mermaid, but had a child's heart; and when the Princess saw her grief, something awoke in her own breast, — a strange ache and pain such as she had never felt before.

"Come," she said at last. "Come, we will go up to the shore, and you shall have your wish."

Then they rose, hand in hand, through the still waters, and when they reached the rocks the little Princess held out her mirror to Neeta.

And Neeta, gazing in it, was once more a little girl; and, with a cry of joy, she sprang up the sands, ran towards home, not even staying to say good-by.

"Oh, stay — wait — promise me you will come back sometimes!" cried the little Mermaid. "Oh! I am all alone, and you have so many to play with."

But Neeta never listened or turned; she had forgotten all about the Princess, in her hurry to reach home. Then it seemed to the little Mermaid that something broke in her breast, and then something that smarted gushed



*THE LITTLE LONE MERMAID.*



in her eyes, for she had never felt warmth before; and then she burst into tears of sorrow for the loss of her little playmate.

“Where am I! Where am I?” cried the little Mermaid.

“You are our comrade, our new little comrade,” said a sweet voice, and then she saw around her a fair company of tender faces and floating forms; “and we are the children of Sunshine and Cloud — of Love and Tears.”

*M. A. Hoyer.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the two main characters.

Princess

Neeta

Summarize the story.

Beginning

Middle

End

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Alphabetize the following ten words from the story, then find each word in the word search puzzle.

- mermaid 1
- nobility 2
- splendid 3
- complained 4
- astonished 5
- particularly 6
- frightened 7
- hesitated 8
- precious 9
- comrade 10

W I F K C Y V P T T A Y K T L C H Z F T  
C O M P L A I N E D L S T X M J V D R O  
A N M N H G R Z Z R I D T N J J N Y I R  
B Y I M W I F E A A F D W O Q Q N P G U  
S M K Y T T L L K A N Y N A N A X P H T  
U Z A M N S U C O M R A D E W I A Z T D  
O J O I N C Y T I L I B O N L H S D E V  
I H N U I A D M B G T A M V E P O H N J  
C J O T N I J A A D O O J S M U S H E H  
E P R Z A C R D K G I D I S L S L T D D  
R A Z M K T G L G M A T I M R D A G Z S  
P G R C D M L H Q C A N O O I Y B U S A  
O E H H H Y V U K T U X Y D M U Z N G X  
M M O U Q N V U E B Z Q D C B D U Z D Y  
M V X V J P P D X X E S P D S P M C L V