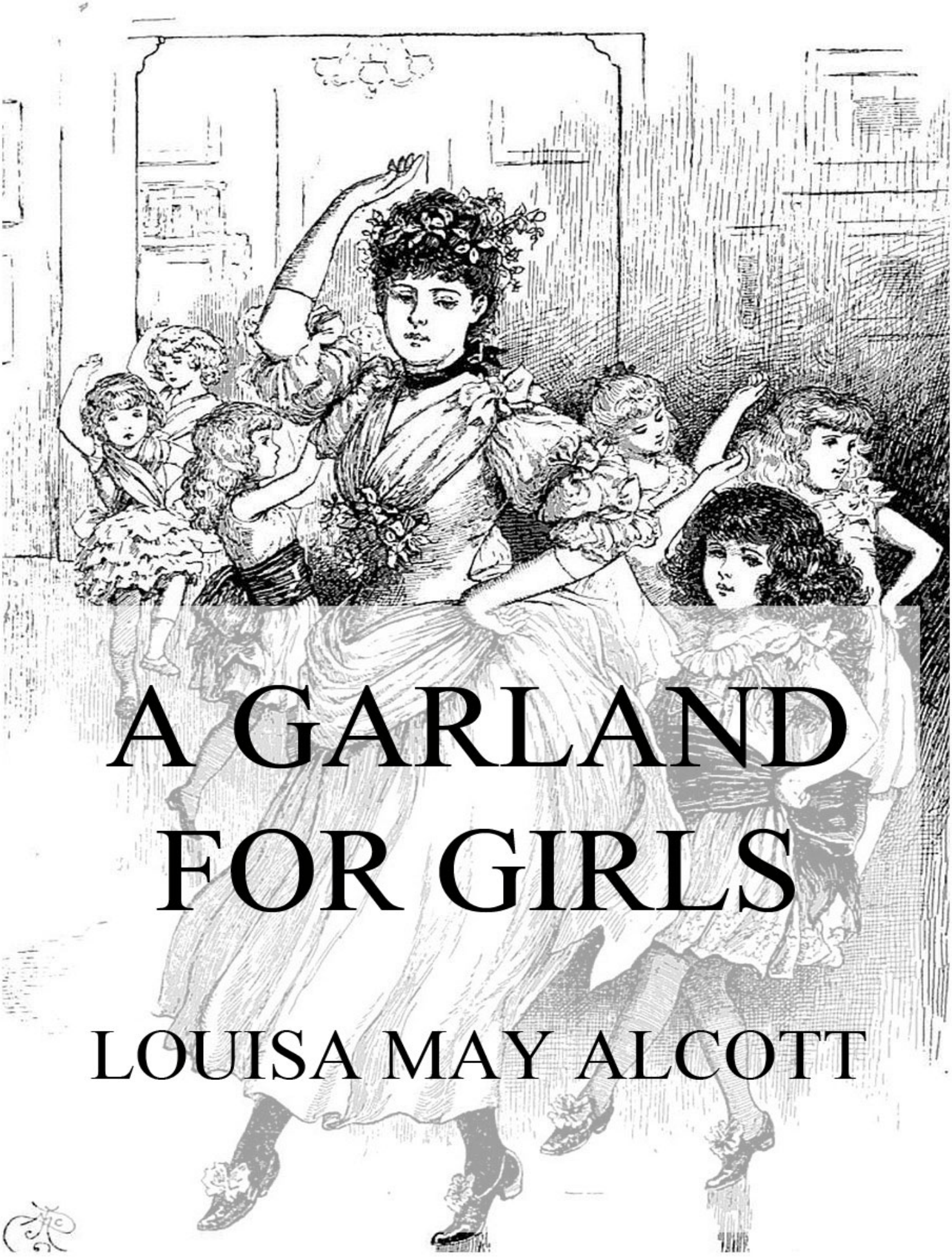

A GARLAND FOR GIRLS

LOUISA MAY ALCOTT

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www.jazzybee-verlag.de
admin@jazzybee-verlag.de

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PREFACE

These stories were written for my own amusement during a period of enforced seclusion. The flowers which were my solace and pleasure suggested titles for the tales and gave an interest to the work.

If my girls find a little beauty or sunshine in these common blossoms, their old friend will not have made her Garland in vain.

L.M. ALCOTT.

SEPTEMBER, 1887.

MAY FLOWERS

Being Boston girls, of course they got up a club for mental improvement, and, as they were all descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers, they called it the Mayflower Club. A very good name, and the six young girls who were members of it made a very pretty posy when they met together, once a week, to sew, and read well-chosen books. At the first meeting of the season, after being separated all summer, there was a good deal of gossip to be attended to before the question, “What shall we read?” came up for serious discussion.

Anna Winslow, as president, began by proposing “Happy Dodd;” but a chorus of “I've read it!” made her turn to her list for another title.

“'Prisoners of Poverty' is all about workingwomen, very true and very sad; but Mamma said it might do us good to know something of the hard times other girls have,” said Anna, soberly; for she was a thoughtful creature, very anxious to do her duty in all ways.

“I'd rather not know about sad things, since I can't help to make them any better,” answered Ella Carver, softly patting the apple blossoms she was embroidering on a bit of blue satin.

“But we might help if we really tried, I suppose; you know how much Happy Dodd did when she once began, and she was only a poor little girl without half the means of doing good which we have,” said Anna, glad to discuss the matter, for she had a little plan in her head and wanted to prepare a way for proposing it.

“Yes, I'm always saying that I have more than my share of fun and comfort and pretty things, and that I ought and will share them with some one. But I don't do it; and now and then, when I hear about real poverty, or dreadful sickness, I feel so wicked it quite upsets me. If I knew HOW to begin, I really would. But dirty little children don't come in my way, nor tipsy women to be reformed, nor nice lame girls to sing and pray with, as it all happens in books,” cried Marion Warren, with such a remorseful expression on her merry round face that her mates laughed with one accord.

“I know something that I COULD do if I only had the courage to begin it. But Papa would shake his head unbelievingly, and Mamma worry about its being proper, and it would interfere with my music, and everything nice that I especially wanted to go to would be sure to come on whatever day I set for my good work, and I should get discouraged or ashamed, and not half do it, so I don't begin, but I know I ought.” And Elizabeth Alden rolled her large eyes from one friend to another, as if appealing to them to goad her to this duty by counsel and encouragement of some sort.

“Well, I suppose it's right, but I do perfectly hate to go poking round among poor folks, smelling bad smells, seeing dreadful sights, hearing woful tales, and running the risk of catching fever, and diphtheria, and horrid things. I don't pretend to like charity, but say right out I'm a silly, selfish wretch, and want to enjoy every minute, and not worry about other people. Isn't it shameful?”

Maggie Bradford looked such a sweet little sinner as she boldly made this sad confession, that no one could scold her, though Ida Standish, her bosom friend, shook her head, and Anna said, with a sigh: “I'm afraid we all feel very much as Maggie does, though we don't own it so honestly. Last spring, when I was ill and thought I might die, I was so ashamed of my idle, frivolous winter, that I felt as if I'd give all I had to be able to live it over and do better.

Much is not expected of a girl of eighteen, I know; but oh! there were heaps of kind little things I MIGHT have done if I hadn't thought only of myself. I resolved if I lived I'd try at least to be less selfish, and make some one happier for my being in the world. I tell you, girls, it's rather solemn when you lie expecting to die, and your sins come up before you, even though they are very small ones. I never shall forget it, and after my lovely summer I mean to be a better girl, and lead a better life if I can."

Anna was so much in earnest that her words, straight out of a very innocent and contrite heart, touched her hearers deeply, and put them into the right mood to embrace her proposition. No one spoke for a moment, then Maggie said quietly,—

"I know what it is. I felt very much so when the horses ran away, and for fifteen minutes I sat clinging to Mamma, expecting to be killed. Every unkind, undutiful word I'd ever said to her came back to me, and was worse to bear than the fear of sudden death. It scared a great deal of naughtiness out of me, and dear Mamma and I have been more to each other ever since."

"Let us begin with 'The Prisoners of Poverty,' and perhaps it will show us something to do," said Lizzie. "But I must say I never felt as if shop-girls needed much help; they generally seem so contented with themselves, and so pert or patronizing to us, that I don't pity them a bit, though it must be a hard life."

"I think we can't do MUCH in that direction, except set an example of good manners when we go shopping. I wanted to propose that we each choose some small charity for this winter, and do it faithfully. That will teach us how to do more by and by, and we can help one another with our experiences, perhaps, or amuse with our failures. What do you say?" asked Anna, surveying her five friends with a persuasive smile.

"What COULD we do?"

“People will call us goody-goody.”

“I haven't the least idea how to go to work.”

“Don't believe Mamma will let me.”

“We'd better change our names from May Flowers to sisters of charity, and wear meek black bonnets and flapping cloaks.”

Anna received these replies with great composure, and waited for the meeting to come to order, well knowing that the girls would have their fun and outcry first, and then set to work in good earnest.

“I think it's a lovely idea, and I'll carry out my plan. But I won't tell what it is yet; you'd all shout, and say I couldn't do it, but if you were trying also, that would keep me up to the mark,” said Lizzie, with a decided snap of her scissors, as she trimmed the edges of a plush case for her beloved music.

“Suppose we all keep our attempts secret, and not let our right hand know what the left hand does? It's such fun to mystify people, and then no one can laugh at us. If we fail, we can say nothing; if we succeed, we can tell of it and get our reward. I'd like that way, and will look round at once for some especially horrid boot-black, ungrateful old woman, or ugly child, and devote myself to him, her, or it with the patience of a saint,” cried Maggie, caught by the idea of doing good in secret and being found out by accident.

The other girls agreed, after some discussion, and then Anna took the floor again.

“I propose that we each work in our own way till next May, then, at our last meeting, report what we have done, truly and honestly, and plan something better for next year. Is it a vote?”

It evidently was a unanimous vote, for five gold thimbles went up, and five blooming faces smiled as the five girlish voices cried, “Aye!”

“Very well, now let us decide what to read, and begin at once. I think the 'Prisoners' a good book, and we shall doubtless get some hints from it.”

So they began, and for an hour one pleasant voice after the other read aloud those sad, true stories of workingwomen and their hard lives, showing these gay young creatures what their pretty clothes cost the real makers of them, and how much injustice, suffering, and wasted strength went into them. It was very sober reading, but most absorbing; for the crochet needles went slower and slower, the lace-work lay idle, and a great tear shone like a drop of dew on the apple blossoms as Ella listened to “Rose's Story.” They skipped the statistics, and dipped here and there as each took her turn; but when the two hours were over, and it was time for the club to adjourn, all the members were deeply interested in that pathetic book, and more in earnest than before; for this glimpse into other lives showed them how much help was needed, and made them anxious to lend a hand.

“We can't do much, being 'only girls,'” said Anna; “but if each does one small chore somewhere it will pave the way for better work; so we will all try, at least, though it seems like so many ants trying to move a mountain.”

“Well, ants build nests higher than a man's head in Africa; you remember the picture of them in our old geographies? And we can do as much, I'm sure, if each tugs her pebble or straw faithfully. I shall shoulder mine to-morrow if Mamma is willing,” answered Lizzie, shutting up her work-bag as if she had her resolution inside and was afraid it might evaporate before she got home.

“I shall stand on the Common, and proclaim aloud, 'Here's a nice young missionary, in want of a job! Charity for sale cheap! Who'll buy? who'll buy?'” said Maggie, with a resigned expression, and a sanctimonious twang to her voice.

“I shall wait and see what comes to me, since I don't know what I'm fit for;” and Marion gazed out of the window as if expecting to see some interesting pauper waiting for her to appear.

“I shall ask Miss Bliss for advice; she knows all about the poor, and will give me a good start,” added prudent Ida, who resolved to do nothing rashly lest she should fail.

“I shall probably have a class of dirty little girls, and teach them how to sew, as I can't do anything else. They won't learn much, but steal, and break, and mess, and be a dreadful trial, and I shall get laughed at and wish I hadn't done it. Still I shall try it, and sacrifice my fancy-work to the cause of virtue,” said Ella, carefully putting away her satin glove-case with a fond glance at the delicate flowers she so loved to embroider.

“I have no plans, but want to do so much! I shall have to wait till I discover what is best. After to-day we won't speak of our work, or it won't be a secret any longer. In May we will report. Good luck to all, and good-by till next Saturday.”

With these farewell words from their president the girls departed, with great plans and new ideas simmering in their young heads and hearts.

It seemed a vast undertaking; but where there is a will there is always a way, and soon it was evident that each had found “a little chore” to do for sweet charity's sake. Not a word was said at the weekly meetings, but the artless faces betrayed all shades of hope, discouragement, pride, and doubt, as their various attempts seemed likely to succeed or fail. Much curiosity was felt, and a few accidental words, hints, or meetings in queer places, were very exciting, though nothing was discovered.

Marion was often seen in a North End car, and Lizzie in a South End car, with a bag of books and papers. Ella haunted a certain shop where fancy articles were sold, and Ida always brought plain sewing to the club. Maggie

seemed very busy at home, and Anna was found writing industriously several times when one of her friends called. All seemed very happy, and rather important when outsiders questioned them about their affairs. But they had their pleasures as usual, and seemed to enjoy them with an added relish, as if they realized as never before how many blessings they possessed, and were grateful for them.

So the winter passed, and slowly something new and pleasant seemed to come into the lives of these young girls. The listless, discontented look some of them used to wear passed away; a sweet earnestness and a cheerful activity made them charming, though they did not know it, and wondered when people said, “That set of girls are growing up beautifully; they will make fine women by and by.” The mayflowers were budding under the snow, and as spring came on the fresh perfume began to steal out, the rosy faces to brighten, and the last year's dead leaves to fall away, leaving the young plants green and strong.

On the 15th of May the club met for the last time that season, as some left town early, and all were full of spring work and summer plans. Every member was in her place at an unusually early hour that day, and each wore an air of mingled anxiety, expectation, and satisfaction, pleasant to behold. Anna called them to order with three raps of her thimble and a beaming smile.

“We need not choose a book for our reading to-day, as each of us is to contribute an original history of her winter's work. I know it will be very interesting, and I hope more instructive, than some of the novels we have read. Who shall begin?”

“You! you!” was the unanimous answer; for all loved and respected her very much, and felt that their presiding officer should open the ball.

Anna colored modestly, but surprised her friends by the composure with which she related her little story, quite as if used to public speaking.

“You know I told you last November that I should have to look about for something that I COULD do. I did look a long time, and was rather in despair, when my task came to me in the most unexpected way. Our winter work was being done, so I had a good deal of shopping on my hands, and found it less a bore than usual, because I liked to watch the shop-girls, and wish I dared ask some of them if I could help them. I went often to get trimmings and buttons at Cotton's, and had a good deal to do with the two girls at that counter. They were very obliging and patient about matching some jet ornaments for Mamma, and I found out that their names were Mary and Maria Porter. I liked them, for they were very neat and plain in their dress,—not like some, who seem to think that if their waists are small, and their hair dressed in the fashion, it is no matter how soiled their collars are, nor how untidy their nails. Well, one day when I went for certain kinds of buttons which were to be made for us, Maria, the younger one, who took the order, was not there. I asked for her, and Mary said she was at home with a lame knee. I was so sorry, and ventured to put a few questions in a friendly way. Mary seemed glad to tell her troubles, and I found that 'Ria,' as she called her sister, had been suffering for a long time, but did not complain for fear of losing her place. No stools are allowed at Cotton's, so the poor girls stand nearly all day, or rest a minute now and then on a half-opened drawer. I'd seen Maria doing it, and wondered why some one did not make a stir about seats in this place, as they have in other stores and got stools for the shop women. I didn't dare to speak to the gentlemen, but I gave Mary the Jack roses I wore in my breast, and asked if I might take some books or flowers to poor Maria. It was lovely to see her sad face light up and hear her thank me when I went to see her, for she was very lonely without her sister, and discouraged about her place. She did not lose it entirely, but had to work at home, for her lame knee will be a long time in getting well. I begged

Mamma and Mrs. Ailingham to speak to Mr. Cotton for her; so she got the mending of the jet and bead work to do, and buttons to cover, and things of that sort. Mary takes them to and fro, and Maria feels so happy not to be idle. We also got stools, for all the other girls in that shop. Mrs. Allingham is so rich and kind she can do anything, and now it's such a comfort to see those tired things resting when off duty that I often go in and enjoy the sight."

Anna paused as cries of "Good! good!" interrupted her tale; but she did not add the prettiest part of it, and tell how the faces of the young women behind the counters brightened when she came in, nor how gladly all served the young lady who showed them what a true gentlewoman was.

"I hope that isn't all?" said Maggie, eagerly.

"Only a little more. I know you will laugh when I tell you that I've been reading papers to a class of shop-girls at the Union once a week all winter."

A murmur of awe and admiration greeted this deeply interesting statement; for, true to the traditions of the modern Athens in which they lived, the girls all felt the highest respect for "papers" on any subject, it being the fashion for ladies, old and young, to read and discuss every subject, from pottery to Pantheism, at the various clubs all over the city.

"It came about very naturally," continued Anna, as if anxious to explain her seeming audacity. "I used to go to see Molly and Ria, and heard all about their life and its few pleasures, and learned to like them more and more. They had only each other in the world, lived in two rooms, worked all day, and in the way of amusement or instruction had only what they found at the Union in the evening. I went with them a few times, and saw how useful and pleasant it was, and wanted to help, as other kind girls only a little older than I did. Eva Randal read a letter from a friend in Russia one time, and the girls enjoyed it very

much. That reminded me of my brother George's lively journals, written when he was abroad. You remember how we used to laugh over them when he sent them home? Well, when I was begged to give them an evening, I resolved to try one of those amusing journal-letters, and chose the best,—all about how George and a friend went to the different places Dickens describes in some of his funny books. I wish you could have seen how those dear girls enjoyed it, and laughed till they cried over the dismay of the boys, when they knocked at a door in Kingsgate Street, and asked if Mrs. Gamp lived there. It was actually a barber's shop, and a little man, very like Poll Sweedlepipes, told them 'Mrs. Britton was the nuss as lived there now.' It upset those rascals to come so near the truth, and they ran away because they couldn't keep sober."

The members of the club indulged in a general smile as they recalled the immortal Sairey with "the bottle on the mankle-shelf," the "cowcuber," and the wooden pippins. Then Anna continued, with an air of calm satisfaction, quite sure now of her audience and herself,—

"It was a great success. So I went on, and when the journals were done, I used to read other things, and picked up books for their library, and helped in any way I could, while learning to know them better and give them confidence in me. They are proud and shy, just as we should be but if you REALLY want to be friends and don't mind rebuffs now and then, they come to trust and like you, and there is so much to do for them one never need sit idle any more. I won't give names, as they don't like it, nor tell how I tried to serve them, but it is very sweet and good for me to have found this work, and to know that each year I can do it better and better. So I feel encouraged and am very glad I began, as I hope you all are. Now, who comes next?"

As Anna ended, the needles dropped and ten soft hands gave her a hearty round of applause; for all felt that she had done well, and chosen a task especially fitted to her

powers, as she had money, time, tact, and the winning manners that make friends everywhere.

Beaming with pleasure at their approval, but feeling that they made too much of her small success, Anna called the club to order by saying, “Ella looks as if she were anxious to tell her experiences, so perhaps we had better ask her to hold forth next.”

“Hear! hear!” cried the girls; and, nothing loath, Ella promptly began, with twinkling eyes and a demure smile, for HER story ended romantically.

“If you are interested in shop-girls, Miss President and ladies, you will like to know that *I* am one, at least a silent partner and co-worker in a small fancy store at the West End.”

“No!” exclaimed the amazed club with one voice; and, satisfied with this sensational beginning Ella went on.

“I really am, and you have bought some of my fancy-work. Isn't that a good joke? You needn't stare so, for I actually made that needle-book, Anna, and my partner knit Lizzie's new cloud. This is the way it all happened. I didn't wish to waste any time, but one can't rush into the street and collar shabby little girls, and say, 'Come along and learn to sew,' without a struggle, so I thought I'd go and ask Mrs. Brown how to begin. Her branch of the Associated Charities is in Laurel Street, not far from our house, you know; and the very day after our last meeting I posted off to get my 'chore.' I expected to have to fit work for poor needlewomen, or go to see some dreadful sick creature, or wash dirty little Pats, and was bracing up my mind for whatever might come, as I toiled up the hill in a gale of wind. Suddenly my hat flew off and went gayly skipping away, to the great delight of some black imps, who only grinned and cheered me on as I trotted after it with wild grabs and wrathful dodges. I got it at last out of a puddle, and there I was in a nice mess. The elastic was broken, feather wet, and the poor thing all mud and dirt. I didn't

care much, as it was my old one,—dressed for my work, you see. But I couldn't go home bareheaded, and I didn't know a soul in that neighborhood. I turned to step into a grocery store at the corner, to borrow a brush or buy a sheet of paper to wear, for I looked like a lunatic with my battered hat and my hair in a perfect mop. Luckily I spied a woman's fancy shop on the other corner, and rushed in there to hide myself, for the brats hooted and people stared. It was a very small shop, and behind the counter sat a tall, thin, washed-out-looking woman, making a baby's hood. She looked poor and blue and rather sour, but took pity on me; and while she sewed the cord, dried the feather, and brushed off the dirt, I warmed myself and looked about to see what I could buy in return for her trouble.

"A few children's aprons hung in the little window, with some knit lace, balls, and old-fashioned garters, two or three dolls, and a very poor display of small wares. In a show-case, however, on the table that was the counter, I found some really pretty things, made of plush, silk, and ribbon, with a good deal of taste. So I said I'd buy a needle-book, and a gay ball, and a pair of distracting baby's shoes, made to look like little open-work socks with pink ankle-ties, so cunning and dainty, I was glad to get them for Cousin Clara's baby. The woman seemed pleased, though she had a grim way of talking, and never smiled once. I observed that she handled my hat as if used to such work, and evidently liked to do it. I thanked her for repairing damages so quickly and well, and she said, with my hat on her hand, as if she hated to part with it, 'I'm used to millineryin' and never should have give it up, if I didn't have my folks to see to. I took this shop, hopin' to make things go, as such a place was needed round here, but mother broke down, and is a sight of care; so I couldn't leave her, and doctors is expensive, and times hard, and I had to drop my trade, and fall back on pins and needles, and so on.'"

Ella was a capital mimic, and imitated the nasal tones of the Vermont woman to the life, with a doleful pucker of her own blooming face, which gave such a truthful picture of poor Miss Almira Miller that those who had seen her recognized it at once, and laughed gayly.

“Just as I was murmuring a few words of regret at her bad luck,” continued Ella, “a sharp voice called out from a back room, 'Almiry! Almiry! come here.' It sounded very like a cross parrot, but it was the old lady, and while I put on my hat I heard her asking who was in the shop, and what we were 'gabbin' about.' Her daughter told her, and the old soul demanded to 'see the gal;' so I went in, being ready for fun as usual. It was a little, dark, dismal place, but as neat as a pin, and in the bed sat a regular Grandma Smallweed smoking a pipe, with a big cap, a snuff-box, and a red cotton handkerchief. She was a tiny, dried-up thing, brown as a berry, with eyes like black beads, a nose and chin that nearly met, and hands like birds' claws. But such a fierce, lively, curious, blunt old lady you never saw, and I didn't know what would be the end of me when she began to question, then to scold, and finally to demand that 'folks should come and trade to Almiry's shop after promisin' they would, and she havin' took a lease of the place on account of them lies.' I wanted to laugh, but dared not do it, so just let her croak, for the daughter had to go to her customers. The old lady's tirade informed me that they came from Vermont, had 'been wal on 't till father died and the farm was sold.' Then it seems the women came to Boston and got on pretty well till 'a stroke of numb-palsy,' whatever that is, made the mother helpless and kept Almiry at home to care for her. I can't tell you how funny and yet how sad it was to see the poor old soul, so full of energy and yet so helpless, and the daughter so discouraged with her pathetic little shop and no customers to speak of. I did not know what to say till 'Grammer Miller,' as the children call her, happened to say, when she took up her knitting after

the lecture, 'If folks who go spendin' money reckless on redic'lus toys for Christmas only knew what nice things, useful and fancy, me and Almiry could make ef we had the goods, they'd jest come round this corner and buy 'em, and keep me out of a Old Woman's Home and that good, hard-workin' gal of mine out of a 'sylum; for go there she will ef she don't get a boost somehow, with rent and firin' and vittles all on her shoulders, and me only able to wag them knittin'-needles.'

"'I will buy things here, and tell all my friends about it, and I have a drawer full of pretty bits of silk and velvet and plush, that I will give Miss Miller for her work, if she will let me.' I added that, for I saw that Almiry was rather proud, and hid her troubles under a grim look.

"That pleased the old lady, and, lowering her voice, she said, with a motherly sort of look in her beady eyes: 'Seein' as you are so friendly, I'll tell you what frets me most, a layin' here, a burden to my darter. She kep' company with Nathan Baxter, a master carpenter up to Westminster where we lived, and ef father hadn't a died suddin' they'd a ben married. They waited a number o' years, workin' to their trades, and we was hopin' all would turn out wal, when troubles come, and here we be. Nathan's got his own folks to see to, and Almiry won't add to HIS load with hern, nor leave me; so she give him back his ring, and jest buckled to all alone. She don't say a word, but it's wearin' her to a shadder, and I can't do a thing to help, but make a few pinballs, knit garters, and kiver holders. Ef she got a start in business it would cheer her up a sight, and give her a kind of a hopeful prospeck, for old folks can't live forever, and Nathan is a waitin', faithful and true.'

"That just finished me, for I am romantic, and do enjoy love stories with all my heart, even if the lovers are only a skinny spinster and a master carpenter. So I just resolved to see what I could do for poor Almiry and the peppery old lady. I didn't promise anything but my bits, and, taking the

things I bought, went home to talk it over with Mamma. I found she had often got pins and tape, and such small wares, at the little shop, and found it very convenient, though she knew nothing about the Millers. She was willing I should help if I could, but advised going slowly, and seeing what they could do first. We did not dare to treat them like beggars, and send them money and clothes, and tea and sugar, as we do the Irish, for they were evidently respectable people, and proud as poor. So I took my bundle of odds and ends, and Mamma added some nice large pieces of dresses we had done with, and gave a fine order for aprons and holders and balls for our church fair.

“It would have done your hearts good, girls, to see those poor old faces light up as I showed my scraps, and asked if the work would be ready by Christmas. Grammer fairly swam in the gay colors I strewed over her bed, and enjoyed them like a child, while Almiry tried to be grim, but had to give it up, as she began at once to cut out aprons, and dropped tears all over the muslin when her back was turned to me. I didn't know a washed-out old maid COULD be so pathetic.”

Ella stopped to give a regretful sigh over her past blindness, while her hearers made a sympathetic murmur; for young hearts are very tender, and take an innocent interest in lovers' sorrows, no matter how humble.

“Well, that was the beginning of it. I got so absorbed in making things go well that I didn't look any further, but just 'buckled to' with Miss Miller and helped run that little shop. No one knew me in that street, so I slipped in and out, and did what I liked. The old lady and I got to be great friends; though she often pecked and croaked like a cross raven, and was very wearing. I kept her busy with her 'pin-balls and knittin'-work, and supplied Almiry with pretty materials for the various things I found she could make. You wouldn't believe what dainty bows those long fingers could tie, what ravishing doll's hats she would make out of

a scrap of silk and lace, or the ingenious things she concocted with cones and shells and fans and baskets. I love such work, and used to go and help her often, for I wanted her window and shop to be full for Christmas, and lure in plenty of customers. Our new toys and the little cases of sewing silk sold well, and people began to come more, after I lent Almiry some money to lay in a stock of better goods. Papa enjoyed my business venture immensely, and was never tired of joking about it. He actually went and bought balls for four small black boys who were gluing their noses to the window one day, spellbound by the orange, red, and blue treasures displayed there. He liked my partner's looks, though he teased me by saying that we'd better add lemonade to our stock, as poor, dear Almiry's acid face would make lemons unnecessary, and sugar and water were cheap.

"Well, Christmas came, and we did a great business, for Mamma came and sent others, and our fancy things were as pretty and cheaper than those at the art stores, so they went well, and the Millers were cheered up, and I felt encouraged, and we took a fresh start after the holidays. One of my gifts at New Year was my own glove-case,—you remember the apple-blossom thing I began last autumn? I put it in our window to fill up, and Mamma bought it, and gave it to me full of elegant gloves, with a sweet note, and Papa sent a check to 'Miller, Warren & Co.' I was so pleased and proud I could hardly help telling you all. But the best joke was the day you girls came in and bought our goods, and I peeped at you through the crack of the door, being in the back room dying with laughter to see you look round, and praise our 'nice assortment of useful and pretty articles.'"

"That's all very well, and we can bear to be laughed at if you succeeded, Miss. But I don't believe you did, for no Millers are there now. Have you taken a palatial store on Boylston Street for this year, intending to run it alone?