

L.M. ALCOTT



**AN OLD-FASHIONED  
GIRL**

Луиза Мэй Олкотт  
**An Old-Fashioned Girl**

«РИПОЛ Классик»

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## Содержание

Preface	6
Chapter 1	7
Chapter 2	15
Chapter 3	22
Chapter 4	30
Chapter 5	37
Chapter 6	46
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	47

# **Louisa May Alcott**

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## Preface

As a preface is the only place where an author can with propriety explain a purpose or apologize for shortcomings, I venture to avail myself of the privilege to make a statement for the benefit of my readers.

As the first part of “An Old-Fashioned Girl” was written in 1869, the demand for a sequel, in beseeching little letters that made refusal impossible, rendered it necessary to carry my heroine boldly forward some six or seven years into the future. The domestic nature of the story makes this audacious proceeding possible; while the lively fancies of my young readers will supply all deficiencies, and overlook all discrepancies.

This explanation will, I trust, relieve those well-regulated minds, who cannot conceive of such literary lawlessness, from the bewilderment which they suffered when the same experiment was tried in a former book.

The “Old-Fashioned Girl” is not intended as a perfect model, but as a possible improvement upon the Girl of the Period, who seems sorrowfully ignorant or ashamed of the good old fashions which make woman truly beautiful and honored, and, through her, render home what it should be – a happy place, where parents and children, brothers and sisters, learn to love and know and help one another.

If the history of Polly’s girlish experiences suggests a hint or insinuates a lesson, I shall feel that, in spite of many obstacles, I have not entirely neglected my duty toward the little men and women, for whom it is an honor and a pleasure to write, since in them I have always found my kindest patrons, gentlest critics, warmest friends.

*L. M. A.*

## Chapter 1

### Polly Arrives

"It's time to go to the station, Tom."

"Come on, then."

"Oh, I'm not going; it's too wet. Shouldn't have a crimp left if I went out such a day as this; and I want to look nice when Polly comes."

"You don't expect me to go and bring home a strange girl alone, do you?" And Tom looked as much alarmed as if his sister had proposed to him to escort the wild woman of Australia.

"Of course I do. It's your place to go and get her; and if you wasn't a bear, you'd like it."

"Well, I call that mean! I supposed I'd got to go; but you said you'd go, too. Catch me bothering about your friends another time! No, *sir!*" And Tom rose from the sofa with an air of indignant resolution, the impressive effect of which was somewhat damaged by a tousled head, and the hunched appearance of his garments generally.

"Now, don't be cross; and I'll get mamma to let you have that horrid Ned Miller, that you are so fond of, come and make you a visit after Polly's gone," said Fanny, hoping to soothe his ruffled feelings.

"How long is she going to stay?" demanded Tom, making his toilet by a promiscuous shake.

"A month or two, maybe. She's ever so nice; and I shall keep her as long as she's happy."

"She won't stay long then, if I can help it," muttered Tom, who regarded girls as a very unnecessary portion of creation. Boys of fourteen are apt to think so, and perhaps it is a wise arrangement; for, being fond of turning somersaults, they have an opportunity of indulging in a good one, metaphorically speaking, when, three or four years later, they become the abject slaves of "those bothering girls."

"Look here! How am I going to know the creature? I never saw her, and she never saw me. You'll have to come too, Fan," he added, pausing on his way to the door, arrested by the awful idea that he might have to address several strange girls before he got the right one.

"You'll find her easy enough; she'll probably be standing round looking for us. I dare say she'll know *you*, though I'm not there, because I've described you to her."

"Guess she won't, then;" and Tom gave a hasty smooth to his curly pate and a glance at the mirror, feeling sure that his sister hadn't done him justice. Sisters never do, as "we fellows" know too well.

"Do go along, or you'll be too late; and then, what *will* Polly think of me?" cried Fanny, with the impatient poke which is peculiarly aggravating to masculine dignity.

"She'll think you cared more about your frizzles than your friends, and she'll be about right, too."

Feeling that he said rather a neat and cutting thing, Tom sauntered leisurely away, perfectly conscious that it *was* late, but bent on not being hurried while in sight, though he ran himself off his legs to make up for it afterward.

"If I was the President, I'd make a law to shut up all boys till they were grown; for they certainly are the most provoking toads in the world," said Fanny, as she watched the slouchy figure of her brother strolling down the street. She might have changed her mind, however, if she had followed him, for as soon as he turned the corner, his whole aspect altered; his hands came out of his pockets, he stopped whistling, buttoned his jacket, gave his cap a pull, and went off at a great pace.

The train was just in when he reached the station, panting like a racehorse, and as red as a lobster with the wind and the run.

“Suppose she’ll wear a topknot and a thingumbob, like everyone else; and however shall I know her? Too bad of Fan to make me come alone!” thought Tom, as he stood watching the crowd stream through the depot, and feeling rather daunted at the array of young ladies who passed. As none of them seemed looking for anyone, he did not accost them, but eyed each new batch with the air of a martyr. “That’s her,” he said to himself, as he presently caught sight of a girl in gorgeous array, standing with her hands folded, and a very small hat perched on the top of a very large “chig-non,” as Tom pronounced it. “I suppose I’ve got to speak to her, so here goes;” and, nerving himself to the task, Tom slowly approached the damsel, who looked as if the wind had blown her clothes into rags, such a flapping of sashes, scallops, ruffles, curls, and feathers was there.

“I say, if you please, is your name Polly Milton?” meekly asked Tom, pausing before the breezy stranger.

“No, it isn’t,” answered the young lady, with a cool stare that utterly quenched him.

“Where in thunder is she?” growled Tom, walking off in high dudgeon. The quick tap of feet behind him made him turn in time to see a fresh-faced little girl running down the long station, and looking as if she rather liked it. As she smiled, and waved her bag at him, he stopped and waited for her, saying to himself, “Hullo! I wonder if that’s Polly?”

Up came the little girl, with her hand out, and a half-shy, half-merry look in her blue eyes, as she said, inquiringly, “This is Tom, isn’t it?”

“Yes. How did you know?” and Tom got over the ordeal of hand-shaking without thinking of it, he was so surprised.

“Oh, Fan told me you’d got curly hair, and a funny nose, and kept whistling, and wore a gray cap pulled over your eyes; so I knew you directly.” And Polly nodded at him in the most friendly manner, having politely refrained from calling the hair “red,” the nose “a pug,” and the cap “old” – all of which facts Fanny had carefully impressed upon her memory.

“Where are your trunks?” asked Tom, as he was reminded of his duty by her handing him the bag, which he had not offered to take.

“Father told me not to wait for anyone, else I’d lose my chance of a hack; so I gave my check to a man, and there he is with my trunk;” and Polly walked off after her one modest piece of baggage, followed by Tom, who felt a trifle depressed by his own remissness in polite attentions.

“She isn’t a bit of a young lady, thank goodness! Fan didn’t tell me she was pretty. Don’t look like city girls, nor act like ’em, neither,” he thought, trudging in the rear, and eyeing with favor the brown curls bobbing along in front.

As the carriage drove off, Polly gave a little bounce on the springy seat, and laughed like a delighted child. “I do like to ride in these nice hacks, and see all the fine things, and have a good time, don’t you?” she said, composing herself the next minute, as if it suddenly occurred to her that she was going a-visiting.

“Not much,” said Tom, not minding what he said, for the fact that he was shut up with the strange girl suddenly oppressed his soul.

“How’s Fan? Why didn’t she come, too?” asked Polly, trying to look demure, while her eyes danced in spite of her.

“Afraid of spoiling her crinkles;” and Tom smiled, for this base betrayal of confidence made him feel his own man again.

“You and I don’t mind dampness. I’m much obliged to you for coming to take care of me.”

It was kind of Polly to say that, and Tom felt it; for his red crop was a tender point, and to be associated with Polly’s pretty brown curls seemed to lessen its coppery glow. Then he hadn’t done anything for her but carry the bag a few steps; yet, she thanked him. He felt grateful, and in a burst of confidence, offered a handful of peanuts, for his pockets were always supplied with this agreeable delicacy, and he might be traced anywhere by the trail of shells he left behind him.

As soon as he had done it, he remembered that Fanny considered them vulgar, and felt that he had disgraced his family. So he stuck his head out of the window, and kept it there so long, that Polly asked if anything was the matter. “Pooh! who cares for a countrified little thing like her,” said Tom manfully to himself; and then the spirit of mischief entered in and took possession of him.

“He’s pretty drunk; but I guess he can hold his horses,” replied this evil-minded boy, with an air of calm resignation.

“Is the man tipsy? Oh, dear! Let’s get out! Are the horses bad? It’s very steep here; do you think it’s safe?” cried poor Polly, making a cocked hat of her little beaver, by thrusting it out of the half-open window on her side.

“There’s plenty of folks to pick us up if anything happens; but perhaps it would be safer if *I* got out and sat with the man;” and Tom quite beamed with the brilliancy of this sudden mode of relief.

“Oh, do, if you ain’t afraid! Mother would be so anxious if anything *should* happen to me, so far away!” cried Polly, much distressed.

“Don’t you be worried. I’ll manage the old chap, and the horses too;” and opening the door, Tom vanished aloft, leaving poor victimized Polly to quake inside, while he placidly revelled in freedom and peanuts outside, with the staid old driver.

Fanny came flying down to meet her “darling Polly,” as Tom presented her, with the graceful remark, “I’ve got her!” and the air of a dauntless hunter, producing the trophies of his skill. Polly was instantly whisked upstairs; and having danced a double-shuffle on the doormat, Tom retired to the dining room, to restore exhausted nature with half a dozen cookies.



“Ain’t you tired to death? Don’t you want to lie down?” said Fanny, sitting on the side of the bed in Polly’s room, and chattering hard, while she examined everything her friend had on.

“Not a bit. I had a nice time coming, and no trouble, except the tipsy coachman; but Tom got out and kept him in order, so I wasn’t much frightened,” answered innocent Polly, taking off her rough-and-ready coat, and the plain hat without a bit of a feather.

“Fiddlestick! He wasn’t tipsy; and Tom only did it to get out of the way. He can’t bear girls,” said Fanny, with a superior air.

“Can’t he? Why, I thought he was very pleasant and kind!” and Polly opened her eyes with a surprised expression.

“He’s an awful boy, my dear; and if you have anything to do with him, he’ll torment you to death. Boys are *all* horrid; but he’s the horridest one I ever saw.”

Fanny went to a fashionable school, where the young ladies were so busy with their French, German, and Italian, that there was no time for good English. Feeling her confidence much shaken in the youth, Polly privately resolved to let him alone, and changed the conversation, by saying, as she looked admiringly about the large, handsome room, “How splendid it is! I never slept in a bed with curtains before, or had such a fine toilet-table as this.”

“I’m glad you like it; but don’t, for mercy sake, say such things before the other girls!” replied Fanny, wishing Polly would wear earrings, as everyone else did.

“Why not?” asked the country mouse of the city mouse, wondering what harm there was in liking other people’s pretty things, and saying so.

“Oh, they laugh at everything the least bit odd, and that isn’t pleasant.” Fanny didn’t say “countrified,” but she meant it, and Polly felt uncomfortable. So she shook out her little black-silk apron with a thoughtful face, and resolved not to allude to her own home, if she could help it.

“I’m so poorly, mamma says I needn’t go to school regularly, while you are here – only two or three times a week, just to keep up my music and French. You can go too, if you like; papa said so. Do, it’s such fun!” cried Fanny, quite surprising her friend by this unexpected fondness for school.

“I should be afraid, if all the girls dress as finely as you do, and know as much,” said Polly, beginning to feel shy at the thought.

“La, child! you needn’t mind that. I’ll take care of you, and fix you up, so you won’t look odd.”

“Am I odd?” asked Polly, struck by the word, and hoping it didn’t mean anything very bad.

“You are a dear, and ever so much prettier than you were last summer, only you’ve been brought up differently from us; so your ways ain’t like ours, you see,” began Fanny, finding it rather hard to explain.

“How different?” asked Polly again, for she liked to understand things.

“Well, you dress like a little girl, for one thing.”

“I *am* a little girl; so why shouldn’t I?” and Polly looked at her simple blue merino frock, stout boots, and short hair, with a puzzled air.

“You are fourteen; and *we* consider ourselves young ladies at that age,” continued Fanny, surveying, with complacency, the pile of hair on the top of her head, with a fringe of fuzz round her forehead, and a wavy lock streaming down her back; likewise, her scarlet-and-black suit, with its big sash, little *pannier*, bright buttons, points, rosettes – and, heaven knows what. There was a locket on her neck, earrings tinkling in her ears, watch and chain at her belt, and several rings on a pair of hands that would have been improved by soap and water.

Polly’s eye went from one little figure to the other, and she thought that Fanny looked the oddest of the two; for Polly lived in a quiet country town, and knew very little of city fashions. She was rather impressed by the elegance about her, never having seen Fanny’s home before, as they got acquainted while Fanny paid a visit to a friend who lived near Polly. But she didn’t let the contrast between herself and Fan trouble her; for in a minute she laughed and said, contentedly, “My mother likes me to dress

simply, and I don't mind. I shouldn't know what to do rigged up as you are. Don't you ever forget to lift your sash and fix those puffy things when you sit down?"

Before Fanny could answer, a scream from below made both listen. "It's only Maud; she fusses all day long," began Fanny; and the words were hardly out of her mouth, when the door was thrown open, and a little girl, of six or seven, came roaring in. She stopped at sight of Polly, stared a minute, then took up her roar just where she left it, and cast herself into Fanny's lap, exclaiming wrathfully, "Tom's laughing at me! Make him stop!"

"What did you do to set him going? Don't scream so, you'll frighten Polly!" and Fan gave the cherub a shake, which produced an explanation.

"I only said we had cold cream at the party, last night, and he laughed!"

"Ice cream, child!" and Fanny followed Tom's reprehensible example.

"I don't care! It *was* cold; and I warmed mine at the register, and then it was nice; only, Willy Bliss spilt it on my new Gabwille!" and Maud wailed again over her accumulated woes.

"Do go to Katy! You're as cross as a little bear today!" said Fanny, pushing her away.

"Katy don't amoose me; and I must be amoused, 'cause I'm fractious; mamma said I was!" sobbed Maud, evidently laboring under the delusion that fractiousness was some interesting malady.

"Come down and have dinner; that will amuse you;" and Fanny got up, pluming herself as a bird does before its flight.

Polly hoped the "dreadful boy" would not be present; but he was, and stared at her all dinnertime, in a most trying manner. Mr. Shaw, a busy-looking gentleman, said, "How do you do, my dear? Hope you'll enjoy yourself;" and then appeared to forget her entirely. Mrs. Shaw, a pale, nervous woman, greeted her little guest kindly, and took care that she wanted for nothing. Madam Shaw, a quiet old lady, with an imposing cap, exclaimed on seeing Polly, "Bless my heart! the image of her mother – a sweet woman – how is she, dear?" and kept peering at the newcomer over her glasses, till, between Madam and Tom, poor Polly lost her appetite.

Fanny chatted like a magpie, and Maud fidgeted, till Tom proposed to put her under the big dish-cover, which produced such an explosion, that the young lady was borne screaming away, by the much-enduring Katy. It was altogether an uncomfortable dinner, and Polly was very glad when it was over. They all went about their own affairs, and after doing the honors of the house, Fan was called to the dressmaker, leaving Polly to amuse herself in the great drawing room.

Polly was glad to be alone for a few minutes; and, having examined all the pretty things about her, began to walk up and down over the soft, flowery carpet, humming to herself, as the daylight faded, and only the ruddy glow of the fire filled the room. Presently Madam came slowly in, and sat down in her armchair, saying, "That's a fine old tune; sing it to me, my dear. I haven't heard it this many a day."

Polly didn't like to sing before strangers, for she had had no teaching but such as her busy mother could give her; but she had been taught the utmost respect for old people, and having no reason for refusing, she directly went to the piano, and did as she was bid.

"That's the sort of music it's a pleasure to hear. Sing some more, dear," said Madam, in her gentle way, when she had done.

Pleased with this praise, Polly sang away in a fresh little voice, that went straight to the listener's heart and nestled there. The sweet old tunes that one is never tired of were all Polly's store; and her favorites were Scotch airs, such as, "Yellow-Haired Laddie," "Jock o' Hazeldean," "Down among the Heather," and "Birks of Aberfeldie." The more she sung, the better she did it; and when she wound up with "A Health to King Charlie," the room quite rung with the stirring music made by the big piano and the little maid.

"By George, that's a jolly tune! Sing it again, please," cried Tom's voice; and there was Tom's red head bobbing up over the high back of the chair where he had hidden himself.

It gave Polly quite a turn, for she thought no one was hearing her but the old lady dozing by the fire. "I can't sing any more; I'm tired," she said, and walked away to Madam in the other room. The red head vanished like a meteor, for Polly's tone had been decidedly cool.

The old lady put out her hand, and drawing Polly to her knee, looked into her face with such kind eyes, that Polly forgot the impressive cap, and smiled at her confidingly; for she saw that her simple music had pleased her listener, and she felt glad to know it.

"You mustn't mind my staring, dear," said Madam, softly pinching her rosy cheek. "I haven't seen a little girl for so long, it does my old eyes good to look at you."

Polly thought that a very odd speech, and couldn't help saying, "Aren't Fan and Maud little girls, too?"

"Oh, dear, no! Not what *I* call little girls. Fan has been a young lady this two years, and Maud is a spoiled baby. Your mother's a very sensible woman, my child."

"What a very queer old lady!" thought Polly; but she said "Yes'm" respectfully, and looked at the fire.

"You don't understand what I mean, do you?" asked Madam, still holding her by the chin.

"No'm; not quite."

"Well, dear, I'll tell you. In my day, children of fourteen and fifteen didn't dress in the height of the fashion; go to parties, as nearly like those of grown people as it's possible to make them; lead idle, giddy, unhealthy lives, and get *blasé* at twenty. We were little folks till eighteen or so; worked and studied, dressed and played, like children; honored our parents; and our days were much longer in the land than now, it seems to me."

The old lady appeared to forget Polly at the end of her speech; for she sat patting the plump little hand that lay in her own, and looking up at a faded picture of an old gentleman with a ruffled shirt and a queue.

"Was he your father, Madam?"

"Yes, dear; my honored father. I did up his frills to the day of his death; and the first money I ever earned was five dollars which he offered as a prize to whichever of his six girls would lay the handsomest darn in his silk stockings."

"How proud you must have been!" cried Polly, leaning on the old lady's knee with an interested face.

"Yes; and we all learned to make bread, and cook, and wore little chintz gowns, and were as gay and hearty as kittens. All lived to be grandmothers and fathers; and I'm the last – seventy, next birthday, my dear, and not worn out yet; though daughter Shaw is an invalid at forty."

"That's the way I was brought up, and that's why Fan calls me old-fashioned, I suppose. Tell more about your papa, please; I like it," said Polly.

"Say 'father.' We never called him papa; and if one of my brothers had addressed him as 'governor,' as boys do now, I really think he'd have him cut off with a shilling."

Madam raised her voice in saying this, and nodded significantly; but a mild snore from the other room seemed to assure her that it was a waste of shot to fire in that direction.

Before she could continue, in came Fanny with the joyful news that Clara Bird had invited them both to go to the theatre with her that very evening, and would call for them at seven o'clock. Polly was so excited by this sudden plunge into the dissipations of city life, that she flew about like a distracted butterfly, and hardly knew what happened, till she found herself seated before the great green curtain in the brilliant theatre. Old Mr. Bird sat on one side, Fanny on the other, and both let her alone, for which she was very grateful, as her whole attention was so absorbed in the scene around her, that she couldn't talk.

Polly had never been much to the theatre; and the few plays she had seen were the good old fairy tales, dramatized to suit young beholders – lively, bright, and full of the harmless nonsense which brings the laugh without the blush. That night she saw one of the new spectacles which have lately

become the rage, and run for hundreds of nights, dazzling, exciting, and demoralizing the spectator by every allurement French ingenuity can invent, and American prodigality execute. Never mind what its name was, it was very gorgeous, very vulgar, and very fashionable; so, of course, it was much admired, and everyone went to see it. At first, Polly thought she had got into fairyland, and saw only the sparkling creatures who danced and sung in a world of light and beauty; but, presently, she began to listen to the songs and conversation, and then the illusion vanished; for the lovely phantoms sang Negro melodies, talked slang, and were a disgrace to the good old-fashioned elves whom she knew and loved so well.

Our little girl was too innocent to understand half the jokes, and often wondered what people were laughing at; but, as the first enchantment subsided, Polly began to feel uncomfortable, to be sure her mother wouldn't like to have her there, and to wish she hadn't come. Somehow, things seemed to get worse and worse, as the play went on; for our small spectator was being rapidly enlightened by the gossip going on all about her, as well as by her own quick eyes and girlish instincts. When four-and-twenty girls, dressed as jockeys, came prancing on to the stage, cracking their whips, stamping the heels of their topboots, and winking at the audience, Polly did not think it at all funny, but looked disgusted, and was glad when they were gone; but when another set appeared in a costume consisting of gauze wings, and a bit of gold fringe round the waist, poor unfashionable Polly didn't know what to do; for she felt both frightened and indignant, and sat with her eyes on her playbill, and her cheeks getting hotter and hotter every minute.

"What are you blushing so for?" asked Fanny, as the painted sylphs vanished.

"I'm so ashamed of those girls," whispered Polly, taking a long breath of relief.

"You little goose – it's just the way it was done in Paris, and the dancing is splendid. It seems queer at first; but you'll get used to it, as I did."

"I'll never come again," said Polly, decidedly; for her innocent nature rebelled against the spectacle, which, as yet, gave her more pain than pleasure. She did not know how easy it was to "get used to it," as Fanny did; and it was well for her that the temptation was not often offered. She could not explain the feeling; but she was glad when the play was done, and they were safe at home, where kind grandma was waiting to see them comfortably into bed.

"Did you have a good time, dear?" she asked, looking at Polly's feverish cheeks and excited eyes.

"I don't wish to be rude, but I didn't," answered Polly. "Some of it was splendid; but a good deal of it made me want to go under the seat. People seemed to like it, but *I* don't think it was proper."

As Polly freed her mind, and emphasized her opinion with a decided rap of the boot she had just taken off, Fanny laughed, and said, while she pirouetted about the room, like Mademoiselle Therese, "Polly was shocked, grandma. Her eyes were as big as saucers, her face as red as my sash, and once I thought she was going to cry. Some of it *was* rather queer; but, of course, it was proper, or all our set wouldn't go. I heard Mrs. Smythe Perkins say, 'It was charming; so like dear Paris;' and she has lived abroad; so, of course, she knows what is what."

"I don't care if she has. I know it *wasn't* proper for little girls to see, or I shouldn't have been so ashamed!" cried sturdy Polly, perplexed, but not convinced, even by Mrs. Smythe Perkins.

"I think you are right, my dear; but you have lived in the country, and haven't yet learned that modesty has gone out of fashion." And with a goodnight kiss, grandma left Polly to dream dreadfully of dancing in jockey costume, on a great stage; while Tom played a big drum in the orchestra; and the audience all wore the faces of her father and mother, looking sorrowfully at her, with eyes like saucers, and faces as red as Fanny's sash.

## Chapter 2

### New Fashions

"I'm going to school this morning; so come up and get ready," said Fanny, a day or two after, as she left the late breakfast-table.

"You look very nice; what have you got to do?" asked Polly, following her into the hall.

"Prink half an hour, and put on her wad," answered the irreverent Tom, whose preparations for school consisted in flinging his cap on to his head, and strapping up several big books, that looked as if they were sometimes used as weapons of defence.

"What is a wad?" asked Polly, while Fanny marched up without deigning any reply.

"Somebody's hair on the top of her head in the place where it ought not to be;" and Tom went whistling away with an air of sublime indifference as to the state of his own "curly pow."

"Why must you be so fine to go to school?" asked Polly, watching Fan arrange the little frizzles on her forehead, and settle the various streamers and festoons belonging to her dress.

"All the girls do; and it's proper, for you never know who you may meet. I'm going to walk, after my lessons, so I wish you'd wear your best hat and sack," answered Fanny, trying to stick her own hat on at an angle which defied all the laws of gravitation.

"I will, if you don't think this is nice enough. I like the other best, because it has a feather; but this is warmer, so I wear it every day." And Polly ran into her own room, to prink also, fearing that her friend might be ashamed of her plain costume. "Won't your hands be cold in kid gloves?" she said, as they went down the snowy street, with a north wind blowing in their faces.

"Yes, horrid cold; but my muff is so big, I won't carry it. Mamma won't have it cut up, and my ermine one must be kept for best;" and Fanny smoothed her Bismark kids with an injured air.

"I suppose my gray squirrel is ever so much too big; but it's nice and cosy, and you may warm your hands in it if you want to," said Polly, surveying her new woollen gloves with a dissatisfied look, though she had thought them quite elegant before.

"Perhaps I will, by and by. Now, Polly, don't you be shy. I'll only introduce two or three of the girls; and you needn't mind old Monsieur a bit, or read if you don't want to. We shall be in the anteroom; so you'll only see about a dozen, and they will be so busy, they won't mind you much."

"I guess I won't read, but sit and look on. I like to watch people, everything is so new and queer here."

But Polly did feel and look very shy, when she was ushered into a room full of young ladies, as they seemed to her, all very much dressed, all talking together, and all turning to examine the newcomer with a cool stare which seemed to be as much the fashion as eyeglasses. They nodded affably when Fanny introduced her, said something civil, and made room for her at the table round which they sat waiting for Monsieur. Several of the more frolicsome were imitating the Grecian Bend, some were putting their heads together over little notes, nearly all were eating confectionery, and the entire twelve chattered like magpies. Being politely supplied with caramels, Polly sat looking and listening, feeling very young and countrified among these elegant young ladies.

"Girls, do you know that Carrie has gone abroad? There has been so much talk, her father couldn't bear it, and took the whole family off. Isn't that gay?" said one lively damsel, who had just come in.

"I should think they'd better go. My mamma says, if I'd been going to that school, she'd have taken me straight away," answered another girl, with an important air.

"Carrie ran away with an Italian music teacher, and it got into the papers, and made a great stir," explained the first speaker to Polly, who looked mystified.

"How dreadful!" cried Polly.

“*I* think it was fun. She was only sixteen, and he was perfectly splendid; and she has plenty of money, and everyone talked about it; and when she went anywhere, people looked, you know, and she liked it; but her papa is an old poke, so he’s sent them all away. It’s too bad, for she was the jolliest thing I ever knew.”

Polly had nothing to say to lively Miss Belle; but Fanny observed, “I like to read about such things; but it’s so inconvenient to have it happen right here, because it makes it harder for us. I wish you could have heard my papa go on. He threatened to send a maid to school with me every day, as they do in New York, to be sure I come all right. Did you ever?”

“That’s because it came out that Carrie used to forge excuses in her mamma’s name, and go promenading with her Oreste, when they thought her safe at school. Oh, wasn’t she a sly minx?” cried Belle, as if she rather admired the trick.

“I think a little fun is all right; and there’s no need of making a talk, if, now and then, someone does run off like Carrie. Boys do as they like; and *I* don’t see why girls need to be kept so dreadfully close. I’d like to see anybody watching and guarding me!” added another dashing young lady.

“It would take a policeman to do that, Trix, or a little man in a tall hat,” said Fanny, slyly, which caused a general laugh, and made Beatrice toss her head coquettishly.

“Oh, have you read ‘The Phantom Bride’? It’s perfectly thrilling! There’s a regular rush for it at the library; but some prefer ‘Breaking a Butterfly.’ Which do you like best?” asked a pale girl of Polly in one of the momentary lulls which occurred.

“I haven’t read either.”

“You must, then. I adore Guy Livingston’s books, and Yates’s. ‘Ouida’s’ are my delight, only they are so long, I get worn out before I’m through.”

“I haven’t read anything but one of the Muhlbach novels since I came. I like those, because there is history in them,” said Polly, glad to have a word to say for herself.

“Those are well enough for improving reading; but I like real exciting novels; don’t you?”

Polly was spared the mortification of owning that she had never read any, by the appearance of Monsieur, a gray-headed old Frenchman, who went through his task with the resigned air of one who was used to being the victim of giggling schoolgirls. The young ladies gabbled over the lesson, wrote an exercise, and read a little French history. But it did not seem to make much impression upon them, though Monsieur was very ready to explain; and Polly quite blushed for her friend, when, on being asked what famous Frenchman fought in our Revolution, she answered Lamartine, instead of Lafayette.

The hour was soon over; and when Fan had taken a music lesson in another room, while Polly looked on, it was time for recess. The younger girls walked up and down the court, arm in arm, eating bread and butter; others stayed in the schoolroom to read and gossip; but Belle, Trix, and Fanny went to lunch at a fashionable ice cream saloon nearby, and Polly meekly followed, not daring to hint at the gingerbread grandma had put in her pocket for luncheon. So the honest, brown cookies crumbled away in obscurity, while Polly tried to satisfy her hearty appetite on one ice and three macaroons.

The girls seemed in great spirits, particularly after they were joined by a short gentleman with such a young face that Polly would have called him a boy, if he had not worn a tall beaver. Escorted by this impressive youth, Fanny left her unfortunate friends to return to school, and went to walk, as she called a slow promenade down the most crowded streets. Polly discreetly fell behind, and amused herself looking into shopwindows, till Fanny, mindful of her manners, even at such an interesting time, took her into a picture gallery, and bade her enjoy the works of art while they rested. Obedient Polly went through the room several times, apparently examining the pictures with the interest of a connoisseur, and trying not to hear the mild prattle of the pair on the round seat. But she couldn’t help wondering what Fan found so absorbing in an account of a recent German, and why she need promise so solemnly not to forget the concert that afternoon.

When Fanny rose at last, Polly's tired face reproached her; and taking a hasty leave of the small gentleman, she turned homeward, saying, confidentially, as she put one hand in Polly's muff, "Now, my dear, you mustn't say a word about Frank Moore, or papa will take my head off. *I* don't care a bit for him, and he likes Trix; only they have quarrelled, and he wants to make her mad by flirting a little with me. I scolded him well, and he promised to make up with her. We all go to the afternoon concerts, and have a gay time, and Belle and Trix are to be there today; so just keep quiet, and everything will be all right."

"I'm afraid it won't," began Polly, who, not being used to secrets, found it very hard to keep even a small one.

"Don't worry, child. It's none of our business; so we can go and enjoy the music, and if other people flirt, it won't be our fault," said Fanny, impatiently.

"Of course not; but, then, if your father don't like you to do so, ought you to go?"

"I tell mamma, and she don't care. Papa is fussy, and grandma makes a stir about every blessed thing I do. You will hold your tongue, won't you?"

"Yes; I truly will; I never tell tales." And Polly kept her word, feeling sure Fan didn't mean to deceive her father, since she told her mother everything.

"Who are you going with?" asked Mrs. Shaw, when Fanny mentioned that it was concert day, just before three o'clock.

"Only Polly; she likes music, and it was so stormy I couldn't go last week, you know," answered Fan; adding, as they left the house again, "If anyone meets us on the way, I can't help it, can I?"

"You can tell them not to, can't you?"

"That's rude. Dear me! Here's Belle's brother Gus – he always goes. *Is* my hair all right, and my hat?"

Before Polly could answer, Mr. Gus joined them as a matter of course, and Polly soon found herself trotting on behind, feeling that things were not "all right," though she didn't know how to mend them. Being fond of music, she ignorantly supposed that everyone else went for that alone, and was much disturbed by the whispering that went on among the young people round her. Belle and Trix were there in full dress; and, in the pauses between different pieces, Messrs. Frank and Gus, with several other "splendid fellows," regaled the young ladies with college gossip, and bits of news full of interest, to judge from the close attention paid to their eloquent remarks. Polly regarded these noble beings with awe, and they recognized her existence with the condescension of their sex; but they evidently considered her only "a quiet little thing," and finding her not up to society talk, blandly ignored the pretty child, and devoted themselves to the young ladies. Fortunately for Polly, she forgot all about them in her enjoyment of the fine music, which she felt rather than understood, and sat listening with such a happy face, that several true music-lovers watched her smilingly, for her heart gave a blithe welcome to the melody which put the little instrument in tune. It was dusk when they went out, and Polly was much relieved to find the carriage waiting for them, because playing third fiddle was not to her taste, and she had had enough of it for one day.

"I'm glad those men are gone; they did worry me so talking, when I wanted to hear," said Polly, as they rolled away.

"Which did you like best?" asked Fanny, with a languid air of superiority.

"The plain one, who didn't say much; he picked up my muff when it tumbled down, and took care of me in the crowd; the others didn't mind anything about me."

"They thought you were a little girl, I suppose."

"My mother says a real gentleman is as polite to a little girl as to a woman; so I like Mr. Sydney best, because he was kind to me."

"What a sharp child you are, Polly. I shouldn't have thought you'd mind things like that," said Fanny, beginning to understand that there may be a good deal of womanliness even in a little girl.

“I’m used to good manners, though I do live in the country,” replied Polly, rather warmly, for she didn’t like to be patronized even by her friends.

“Grandma says your mother is a perfect lady, and you are just like her; so don’t get in a passion with those poor fellows, and I’ll see that they behave better next time. Tom has no manners at all, and you don’t complain of him,” added Fan, with a laugh.

“I don’t care if he hasn’t; he’s a boy, and acts like one, and I can get on with him a great deal better than I can with those men.”

Fanny was just going to take Polly to task for saying “those men” in such a disrespectful tone, when both were startled by a smothered “Cock-a-doodle-doo!” from under the opposite seat.

“It’s Tom!” cried Fanny; and with the words out tumbled that incorrigible boy, red in the face, and breathless with suppressed laughter. Seating himself, he surveyed the girls as if well satisfied with the success of his prank, and waiting to be congratulated upon it. “Did you hear what we were saying?” demanded Fanny, uneasily.

“Oh, didn’t I, every word?” And Tom exulted over them visibly.

“Did you ever see such a provoking toad, Polly? Now, I suppose you’ll go and tell papa a great story.”

“P’r’aps I shall, and p’r’aps I shan’t. How Polly did hop when I crowed! I heard her squeal, and saw her cuddle up her feet.”

“And you heard us praise your manners, didn’t you?” asked Polly, slyly.

“Yes, and you liked ‘em; so I won’t tell on *you*,” said Tom, with a reassuring nod.

“There’s nothing to tell.”

“Ain’t there, though? What do you suppose the governor will say to you girls going on so with those dandies? I saw you.”

“What has the Governor of Massachusetts to do with us?” asked Polly, trying to look as if she meant what she said.

“Pooh! you know who I mean; so you needn’t try to catch me up, as grandma does.”

“Tom, I’ll make a bargain with you,” cried Fanny, eagerly. “It wasn’t my fault that Gus and Frank were there, and I couldn’t help their speaking to me. I do as well as I can, and papa needn’t be angry; for I behave ever so much better than some of the girls. Don’t I, Polly?”

“Bargain?” observed Tom, with an eye to business.

“If you won’t go and make a fuss, telling what you’d no right to hear – it was so mean to hide and listen; I should think you’d be ashamed of it! – I’ll help you tease for your velocipede, and won’t say a word against it, when mamma and granny beg papa not to let you have it.”

“Will you?” and Tom paused to consider the offer in all its bearings.

“Yes, and Polly will help; won’t you?”

“I’d rather not have anything to do with it; but I’ll be quiet, and not do any harm.”

“Why won’t you?” asked Tom, curiously.

“Because it seems like deceiving.”

“Well, papa needn’t be so fussy,” said Fan, petulantly.

“After hearing about that Carrie, and the rest, I don’t wonder he *is* fussy. Why don’t you tell right out, and not do it any more, if he don’t want you to?” said Polly, persuasively.

“Do you go and tell your father and mother everything right out?”

“Yes, I do; and it saves ever so much trouble.”

“Ain’t you afraid of them?”

“Of course I’m not. It’s hard to tell sometimes; but it’s *so* comfortable when it’s over.”

“Let’s!” was Tom’s brief advice.

“Mercy me! What a fuss about nothing!” said Fanny, ready to cry with vexation.

“Tisn’t nothing. You know you are forbidden to go gallivanting round with those chaps, and that’s the reason you’re in a pucker now. I *won’t* make any bargain, and I *will* tell,” returned Tom, seized with a sudden fit of moral firmness.

“Will you if I promise never, never to do so any more?” asked Fanny, meekly; for when Thomas took matters into his own hands, his sister usually submitted in spite of herself.

“I’ll think about it; and if you behave, maybe I won’t do it at all. I can watch you better than papa can; so, if you try it again, it’s all up with you, miss,” said Tom, finding it impossible to resist the pleasure of tyrannizing a little when he got the chance.

“She won’t; don’t plague her any more, and she will be good to you when you get into scrapes,” answered Polly, with her arm round Fan.

“I never do; and if I did, I shouldn’t ask a girl to help me out.”

“Why not? *I’d* ask you in a minute, if I was in trouble,” said Polly, in her confiding way.

“Would you? Well, I’d put you through, as sure as my name’s Tom Shaw. Now, then, don’t slip, Polly,” and Mr. Thomas helped them out with unusual politeness, for that friendly little speech gratified him. He felt that one person appreciated him; and it had a good effect upon manners and temper made rough and belligerent by constant snubbing and opposition.

After tea that evening, Fanny proposed that Polly should show her how to make molasses candy, as it was cook’s holiday, and the coast would be clear. Hoping to propitiate her tormentor, Fan invited Tom to join in the revel, and Polly begged that Maud might sit up and see the fun; so all four descended to the big kitchen, armed with aprons, hammers, spoons, and pans, and Polly assumed command of the forces. Tom was set to cracking nuts, and Maud to picking out the meats, for the candy was to be “tip-top.” Fan waited on Polly cook, who hovered over the kettle of boiling molasses till her face was the color of a peony. “Now, put in the nuts,” she said at last; and Tom emptied his plate into the foamy syrup, while the others watched with deep interest the mysterious concoction of this well-beloved sweetmeat. “I pour it into the buttered pan, you see, and it cools, and *then* we can eat it,” explained Polly, suiting the action to the word.

“Why, it’s all full of shells!” exclaimed Maud, peering into the pan.

“Oh, thunder! I must have put ’em in by mistake, and ate up the meats without thinking,” said Tom, trying to conceal his naughty satisfaction, as the girls hung over the pan with faces full of disappointment and despair.

“You did it on purpose, you horrid boy! I’ll never let you have anything to do with my fun again!” cried Fan, in a passion, trying to catch and shake him, while he dodged and chuckled in high glee.

Maud began to wail over her lost delight, and Polly gravely poked at the mess, which was quite spoilt. But her attention was speedily diverted by the squabble going on in the corner; for Fanny, forgetful of her young-ladyism and her sixteen years, had boxed Tom’s ears, and Tom, resenting the insult, had forcibly seated her in the coal-hod, where he held her with one hand while he returned the compliment with the other. Both were very angry, and kept twitting one another with every aggravation they could invent, as they scolded and scuffled, presenting a most unlovely spectacle.

Polly was not a model girl by any means, and had her little pets and tempers like the rest of us; but she didn’t fight, scream, and squabble with her brothers and sisters in this disgraceful way, and was much surprised to see her elegant friend in such a passion. “Oh, don’t! Please, don’t! You’ll hurt her, Tom! Let him go, Fanny! It’s no matter about the candy; we can make some more!” cried Polly, trying to part them, and looking so distressed, that they stopped ashamed, and in a minute sorry that she should see such a display of temper.

“I ain’t going to be hustled round; so you’d better let me alone, Fan,” said Tom, drawing off with a threatening wag of the head, adding, in a different tone, “I only put the shells in for fun, Polly. You cook another kettleful, and I’ll pick you some meats all fair. Will you?”

“It’s pretty hot work, and it’s a pity to waste things; but I’ll try again, if you want me to,” said Polly, with a patient sigh, for her arms were tired and her face uncomfortably hot.

“We don’t want you; get away!” said Maud, shaking a sticky spoon at him.

“Keep quiet, crybaby. I’m going to stay and help; mayn’t I, Polly?”

“Bears like sweet things, so you want some candy, I guess. Where is the molasses? We’ve used up all there was in the jug,” said Polly, good-naturedly, beginning again.

“Down cellar; I’ll get it;” and taking the lamp and jug, Tom departed, bent on doing his duty now like a saint.

The moment his light vanished, Fanny bolted the door, saying, spitefully, “Now, we are safe from any more tricks. Let him thump and call, it only serves him right; and when the candy is done, we’ll let the rascal out.”

“How can we make it without molasses?” asked Polly, thinking that would settle the matter.

“There’s plenty in the storeroom. No; you shan’t let him up till I’m ready. He’s got to learn that I’m not to be shaken by a little chit like him. Make your candy, and let him alone, or I’ll go and tell papa, and then Tom will get a lecture.”

Polly thought it wasn’t fair; but Maud clamored for her candy, and finding she could do nothing to appease Fan, Polly devoted her mind to her cookery till the nuts were safely in, and a nice panful set in the yard to cool. A few bangs at the locked door, a few threats of vengeance from the prisoner such as setting the house on fire, drinking up the wine, and smashing the jelly-pots, and then all was so quiet that the girls forgot him in the exciting crisis of their work.

“He can’t possibly get out anywhere, and as soon as we’ve cut up the candy, we’ll unbolt the door and run. Come and get a nice dish to put it in,” said Fan, when Polly proposed to go halves with Tom, lest he should come bursting in somehow, and seize the whole.

When they came down with the dish in which to set forth their treat, and opened the back door to find it, imagine their dismay on discovering that it was gone – pan, candy, and all – utterly and mysteriously gone!

A general lament arose, when a careful rummage left no hopes; for the fates had evidently decreed that candy was not to prosper on this unpropitious night.

“The hot pan has melted and sunk in the snow, perhaps,” said Fanny, digging into the drift where it was left.

“Those old cats have got it, I guess,” suggested Maud, too much overwhelmed by this second blow to howl as usual.

“The gate isn’t locked, and some beggar has stolen it. I hope it will do him good,” added Polly, returning from her exploring expedition.

“If Tom *could* get out, I should think he’d carried it off; but not being a rat, he can’t go through the bits of windows; so it wasn’t him,” said Fanny, disconsolately, for she began to think this double loss a punishment for letting angry passions rise.

“Let’s open the door and tell him about it,” proposed Polly.

“He’ll crow over us. No; we’ll open it and go to bed, and he can come out when he likes. Provoking boy! If he hadn’t plagued us so, we should have had a nice time.”

Unbolting the cellar door, the girls announced to the invisible captive that they were through, and then departed much depressed. Halfway up the second flight, they all stopped as suddenly as if they had seen a ghost; for looking over the banisters was Tom’s face, croaky but triumphant, and in either hand a junk of candy, which he waved above them as he vanished, with the tantalizing remark, “Don’t you wish you had some?”

“How in the world did he get out?” cried Fanny, steadying herself after a start that nearly sent all three tumbling downstairs.

“Coal-hole!” answered a spectral voice from the gloom above.

“Good gracious! He must have poked up the cover, climbed into the street, stole the candy, and sneaked in at the shed window while we were looking for it.”

“Cats got it, didn’t they?” jeered the voice in a tone that made Polly sit down and laugh till she couldn’t laugh any longer.

“Just give Maud a bit, she’s so disappointed. Fan and I are sick of it, and so will you be, if you eat it all,” called Polly, when she got her breath.

“Go to bed, Maudie, and look under your pillow when you get there,” was the oracular reply that came down to them, as Tom’s door closed after a jubilant solo on the tin pan.

The girls went to bed tired out; and Maud slumbered placidly, hugging the sticky bundle, found where molasses candy is not often discovered. Polly was very tired, and soon fell asleep; but Fanny, who slept with her, lay awake longer than usual, thinking about her troubles, for her head ached, and the dissatisfaction that follows anger would not let her rest with the tranquillity that made the rosy face in the little round nightcap such a pleasant sight to see as it lay beside her. The gas was turned down, but Fanny saw a figure in a gray wrapper creep by her door, and presently return, pausing to look in. “Who is it?” she cried, so loud that Polly woke.

“Only me, dear,” answered grandma’s mild voice. “Poor Tom has got a dreadful toothache, and I came down to find some creosote for him. He told me not to tell you; but I can’t find the bottle, and don’t want to disturb mamma.”

“It’s in my closet. Old Tom will pay for his trick this time,” said Fanny, in a satisfied tone.

“I thought he’d get enough of our candy,” laughed Polly; and then they fell asleep, leaving Tom to the delights of toothache and the tender mercies of kind old grandma.

## Chapter 3

### Polly's Troubles

Polly soon found that she was in a new world, a world where the manners and customs were so different from the simple ways at home, that she felt like a stranger in a strange land, and often wished that she had not come. In the first place, she had nothing to do but lounge and gossip, read novels, parade the streets, and dress; and before a week was gone, she was as heartily sick of all this, as a healthy person would be who attempted to live on confectionery. Fanny liked it, because she was used to it, and had never known anything better; but Polly had, and often felt like a little wood-bird shut up in a gilded cage. Nevertheless, she was much impressed by the luxuries all about her, enjoyed them, wished she owned them, and wondered why the Shaws were not a happier family. She was not wise enough to know where the trouble lay; she did not attempt to say which of the two lives was the right one; she only knew which she liked best, and supposed it was merely another of her "old-fashioned" ways.

Fanny's friends did not interest her much; she was rather afraid of them, they seemed so much older and wiser than herself, even those younger in years. They talked about things of which she knew nothing, and when Fanny tried to explain, she didn't find them interesting; indeed, some of them rather shocked and puzzled her; so the girls let her alone, being civil when they met, but evidently feeling that she was too "odd" to belong to their set. Then she turned to Maud for companionship, for her own little sister was excellent company, and Polly loved her dearly. But Miss Maud was much absorbed in her own affairs, for she belonged to a "set" also; and these mites of five and six had their "musicals," their parties, receptions, and promenades, as well as their elders; and the chief idea of their little lives seemed to be to ape the fashionable follies they should have been too innocent to understand. Maud had her tiny card case, and paid calls, "like mamma and Fan"; her box of dainty gloves, her jewel drawer, her crimping pins, as fine and fanciful a wardrobe as a Paris doll, and a French maid to dress her. Polly couldn't get on with her at first, for Maud didn't seem like a child, and often corrected Polly in her conversation and manners, though little mademoiselle's own were anything but perfect. Now and then, when Maud felt poorly, or had a "fwactious" turn, for she had "nerves" as well as mamma, she would go to Polly to be "amused," for her gentle ways and kind forbearance soothed the little fine lady better than anything else. Polly enjoyed these times, and told stories, played games, or went out walking, just as Maud liked, slowly and surely winning the child's heart, and relieving the whole house of the young tyrant who ruled it.

Tom soon got over staring at Polly, and at first did not take much notice of her, for, in his opinion, "girls didn't amount to much, anyway"; and, considering the style of girl he knew most about, Polly quite agreed with him. He occasionally refreshed himself by teasing her, to see how she'd stand it, and caused Polly much anguish of spirit, for she never knew where he would take her next. He bounced out at her from behind doors, booed at her in dark entries, clutched her feet as she went upstairs, startled her by shrill whistles right in her ear, or sudden tweaks of the hair as he passed her in the street; and as sure as there was company to dinner, he fixed his round eyes on her, and never took them off till she was reduced to a piteous state of confusion and distress. She used to beg him not to plague her; but he said he did it for her good; she was too shy, and needed toughening like the other girls. In vain she protested that she didn't want to be like the other girls in that respect; he only laughed in her face, stuck his red hair straight up all over his head, and glared at her, till she fled in dismay.

Yet Polly rather liked Tom, for she soon saw that he was neglected, hustled out of the way, and left to get on pretty much by himself. She often wondered why his mother didn't pet him as she did the girls; why his father ordered him about as if he was a born rebel, and took so little interest in his only son. Fanny considered him a bear, and was ashamed of him, but never tried to polish him

up a bit; and Maud and he lived together like a cat and dog who did not belong to a “happy family.” Grandma was the only one who stood by poor old Tom; and Polly more than once discovered him doing something kind for Madam, and seeming very much ashamed when it was found out. He wasn’t respectful at all; he called her “the old lady,” and told her he “wouldn’t be fussed over”; but when anything was the matter, he always went to “the old lady,” and was very grateful for the “fussing.” Polly liked him for this, and often wanted to speak of it; but she had a feeling that it wouldn’t do, for in praising their affection, she was reproaching others with neglect; so she held her tongue, and thought about it all the more.

Grandma was rather neglected, too, and perhaps that is the reason why Tom and she were such good friends. She was even more old-fashioned than Polly; but people didn’t seem to mind it so much in her, as her day was supposed to be over, and nothing was expected of her but to keep out of everybody’s way, and to be handsomely dressed when she appeared “before people.” Grandma led a quiet, solitary life up in her own rooms, full of old furniture, pictures, books, and relics of a past for which no one cared but herself. Her son went up every evening for a little call, was very kind to her, and saw that she wanted nothing money could buy; but he was a busy man, so intent on getting rich that he had no time to enjoy what he already possessed. Madam never complained, interfered, or suggested; but there was a sad sort of quietude about her, a wistful look in her faded eyes, as if she wanted something which money could not buy, and when children were near, she hovered about them, evidently longing to cuddle and caress them as only grandmothers can. Polly felt this; and, as she missed the home-petting, gladly showed that she liked to see the quiet old face brighten as she entered the solitary room, where few children came, except the phantoms of little sons and daughters, who, to the motherly heart that loved them, never faded or grew up. Polly wished the children would be kinder to grandma; but it was not for her to tell them so, although it troubled her a good deal, and she could only try to make up for it by being as dutiful and affectionate as if their grandma was her own.



Another thing that disturbed Polly was the want of exercise. To dress up and parade certain streets for an hour every day, to stand talking in doorways, or drive out in a fine carriage, was not the sort of exercise she liked, and Fan would take no other. Indeed, she was so shocked, when Polly, one day, proposed a run down the mall, that her friend never dared suggest such a thing again. At home, Polly ran and rode, coasted and skated, jumped rope and raked hay, worked in her garden and rowed her boat; so no wonder she longed for something more lively than a daily promenade with a flock of giddy girls, who tilted along in high-heeled boots, and costumes which made Polly ashamed to be seen with some of them. So she used to slip out alone sometimes, when Fanny was absorbed in novels, company, or millinery, and get fine brisk walks round the park, on the unfashionable side, where the babies took their airings; or she went inside, to watch the boys coasting, and to wish she could coast too, as she did at home. She never went far, and always came back rosy and gay.

One afternoon, just before dinner, she felt so tired of doing nothing, that she slipped out for a run. It had been a dull day; but the sun was visible now, setting brightly below the clouds. It was cold but still, and Polly trotted down the smooth, snow-covered mall, humming to herself, and trying not to feel homesick. The coasters were at it with all their might, and she watched them, till her longing to join the fun grew irresistible. On the hill, some little girls were playing with their sleds – real little girls, in warm hoods and coats, rubber boots and mittens – and Polly felt drawn toward them in spite of her fear of Fan.

“I want to go down, but I darsn’t, it’s so steep,” said one of these “common children,” as Maud called them.

“If you’ll lend me your sled, and sit in my lap, I’ll take you down all nice,” answered Polly, in a confidential tone.

The little girls took a look at her, seemed satisfied, and accepted her offer. Polly looked carefully round to see that no fashionable eye beheld the awful deed, and finding all safe, settled her freight, and spun away downhill, feeling all over the delightful excitement of swift motion which makes coasting such a favorite pastime with the more sensible portion of the child-world. One after another, she took the little girls down the hill and dragged them up again, while they regarded her in the light of a gray-coated angel, descended for their express benefit. Polly was just finishing off with one delicious “go” all by herself, when she heard a familiar whistle behind her, and before she could get off, up came Tom, looking as much astonished as if he had found her mounted on an elephant.

“Hullo, Polly! What’ll Fan say to you?” was his polished salutation.

“Don’t know, and don’t care. Coasting is no harm; I like it, and I’m going to do it, now I’ve got a chance; so clear the lul-la!” And away went independent Polly, with her hair blowing in the wind, and an expression of genuine enjoyment, which a very red nose didn’t damage in the least.

“Good for you, Polly!” And casting himself upon his sled, with the most reckless disregard for his ribs, off whizzed Tom after her, and came alongside just as she reined up “General Grant” on the broad path below. “Oh, won’t you get it when we go home?” cried the young gentleman, even before he changed his graceful attitude.

“I shan’t, if you don’t go and tell; but of course you will,” added Polly, sitting still, while an anxious expression began to steal over her happy face.

“I just won’t, then,” returned Tom, with the natural perversity of his tribe.

“If they ask me, I shall tell, of course; if they don’t ask, I think there’s no harm in keeping still. I shouldn’t have done it, if I hadn’t known my mother was willing; but I don’t wish to trouble your mother by telling of it. Do you think it was very dreadful of me?” asked Polly, looking at him.

“I think it was downright jolly; and I won’t tell, if you don’t want me to. Now, come up and have another,” said Tom, heartily.

“Just one more; the little girls want to go, and this is their sled.”

“Let ‘em take it, ‘tisin’t good for much; and you come on mine. Mazeppa’s a stunner; you see if he isn’t.”

So Polly tucked herself up in front, Tom hung on behind in some mysterious manner, and Mazeppa proved that he fully merited his master’s sincere if inelegant praise. They got on capitally now, for Tom was in his proper sphere, and showed his best side, being civil and gay in the bluff boy-fashion that was natural to him; while Polly forgot to be shy, and liked this sort of “toughening” much better than the other. They laughed and talked, and kept taking “just one more,” till the sunshine was all gone, and the clocks struck dinnertime.

“We shall be late; let’s run,” said Polly, as they came into the path after the last coast.

“You just sit still, and I’ll get you home in a jiffy;” and before she could unpack herself, Tom trotted off with her at a fine pace.

“Here’s a pair of cheeks! I wish you’d get a color like this, Fanny,” said Mr. Shaw, as Polly came into the dining room after smoothing her hair.

“Your nose is as red as that cranberry sauce,” answered Fan, coming out of the big chair where she had been curled up for an hour or two, deep in “Lady Audley’s Secret.”

“So it is,” said Polly, shutting one eye to look at the offending feature. “Never mind; I’ve had a good time, anyway,” she added, giving a little prance in her chair.

“I don’t see much fun in these cold runs you are so fond of taking,” said Fanny, with a yawn and a shiver.

“Perhaps you would if you tried it;” and Polly laughed as she glanced at Tom.

“Did you go alone, dear?” asked grandma, patting the rosy cheek beside her.

“Yes’m; but I met Tom, and we came home together.” Polly’s eyes twinkled when she said that, and Tom choked in his soup.

“Thomas, leave the table!” commanded Mr. Shaw, as his incorrigible son gurgled and gasped behind his napkin.

“Please, don’t send him away, sir. I made him laugh,” said Polly, penitently.

“What’s the joke?” asked Fanny, waking up at last.

“I shouldn’t think you’d make him laugh, when he’s always making you cwy,” observed Maud, who had just come in.

“What have you been doing now, sir?” demanded Mr. Shaw, as Tom emerged, red and solemn, from his brief obscurity.

“Nothing but coast,” he said, gruffly, for papa was always lecturing him, and letting the girls do just as they liked.

“So’s Polly; I saw her. Me and Blanche were coming home just now, and we saw her and Tom widing down the hill on his sled, and then he dwagged her ever so far!” cried Maud, with her mouth full.

“You didn’t?” and Fanny dropped her fork with a scandalized face.

“Yes, I did, and liked it ever so much,” answered Polly, looking anxious but resolute.

“*Did* anyone see you?” cried Fanny.

“Only some little girls, and Tom.”

“It was horridly improper; and Tom ought to have told you so, if you didn’t know any better. I should be mortified to death if any of my friends saw you,” added Fan, much disturbed.

“Now, don’t you scold. It’s no harm, and Polly shall coast if she wants to; mayn’t she, grandma?” cried Tom, gallantly coming to the rescue, and securing a powerful ally.

“My mother lets me; and if I don’t go among the boys, I can’t see what harm there is in it,” said Polly, before Madam could speak.

“People do many things in the country that are not proper here,” began Mrs. Shaw, in her reproving tone.

“Let the child do it if she likes, and take Maud with her. I should be glad to have one hearty girl in my house,” interrupted Mr. Shaw, and that was the end of it.

“Thank you, sir,” said Polly, gratefully, and nodded at Tom, who telegraphed back “All right!” and fell upon his dinner with the appetite of a young wolf.

“Oh, you sly-boots! You’re getting up a flirtation with Tom, are you?” whispered Fanny to her friend, as if much amused.

“What!” and Polly looked so surprised and indignant, that Fanny was ashamed of herself, and changed the subject by telling her mother she needed some new gloves.

Polly was very quiet after that, and the minute dinner was over, she left the room to go and have a quiet “think” about the whole matter. Before she got halfway upstairs, she saw Tom coming after, and immediately sat down to guard her feet. He laughed, and said, as he perched himself on the post of the banisters, “I won’t grab you, honor bright. I just wanted to say, if you’ll come out tomorrow some time, we’ll have a good coast.”

“No,” said Polly, “I can’t come.”

“Why not? Are you mad? I didn’t tell.” And Tom looked amazed at the change which had come over her.

“No; you kept your word, and stood by me like a good boy. I’m not mad, either; but I don’t mean to coast any more. Your mother don’t like it.”

“That isn’t the reason, *I* know. You nodded to me after she’d freed her mind, and you meant to go then. Come, now, what is it?”

“I shan’t tell you; but I’m not going,” was Polly’s determined answer.

“Well, I did think you had more sense than most girls; but you haven’t, and I wouldn’t give a sixpence for you.”

“That’s polite,” said Polly, getting ruffled.

“Well, I hate cowards.”

“I ain’t a coward.”

“Yes, you are. You’re afraid of what folks will say; ain’t you, now?”

Polly knew she was, and held her peace, though she longed to speak; but how could she?

“Ah, I knew you’d back out.” And Tom walked away with an air of scorn that cut Polly to the heart.

“It’s too bad! Just as he was growing kind to me, and I was going to have a good time, it’s all spoilt by Fan’s nonsense. Mrs. Shaw don’t like it, nor grandma either, I dare say. There’ll be a fuss if I go, and Fan will plague me; so I’ll give it up, and let Tom think I’m afraid. Oh, dear! I never did see such ridiculous people.”

Polly shut her door hard, and felt ready to cry with vexation, that her pleasure should be spoilt by such a silly idea; for, of all the silly freaks of this fast age, that of little people playing at love is about the silliest. Polly had been taught that it was a very serious and sacred thing; and, according to her notions, it was far more improper to flirt with one boy than to coast with a dozen. She had been much amazed, only the day before, to hear Maud say to her mother, “Mamma, must I have a beau? The girls all do, and say I ought to have Fweddy Lovell; but I don’t like him as well as Hawry Fiske.”

“Oh, yes; I’d have a little sweetheart, dear, it’s so cunning,” answered Mrs. Shaw. And Maud announced soon after that she was engaged to “Fweddy, ’cause Hawry slapped her” when she proposed the match.

Polly laughed with the rest at the time; but when she thought of it afterward, and wondered what her own mother would have said, if little Kitty had put such a question, she didn’t find it cunning or funny, but ridiculous and unnatural. She felt so now about herself; and when her first petulance was over, resolved to give up coasting and everything else, rather than have any nonsense with Tom, who, thanks to his neglected education, was as ignorant as herself of the charms of this new amusement for schoolchildren. So Polly tried to console herself by jumping rope in the backyard, and playing

tag with Maud in the drying room, where she likewise gave lessons in “nas-gim-nics,” as Maud called it, which did that little person good. Fanny came up sometimes to teach them a new dancing step, and more than once was betrayed into a game of romps, for which she was none the worse. But Tom turned a cold shoulder to Polly, and made it evident, by his cavalier manner, that he really didn’t think her “worth a sixpence.”

Another thing that troubled Polly was her clothes, for, though no one said anything, she knew they were very plain; and now and then she wished that her blue and mouse colored merinos were rather more trimmed, her sashes had bigger bows, and her little ruffles more lace on them. She sighed for a locket, and, for the first time in her life, thought seriously of turning up her pretty curls and putting on a “wad.” She kept these discontents to herself, however, after she had written to ask her mother if she might have her best dress altered like Fanny’s, and received this reply:

“No, dear; the dress is proper and becoming as it is, and the old fashion of simplicity the best for all of us. I don’t want my Polly to be loved for her clothes, but for herself; so wear the plain frocks mother took such pleasure in making for you, and let the *panniers* go. The least of us have some influence in this big world; and perhaps my little girl can do some good by showing others that a contented heart and a happy face are better ornaments than any Paris can give her. You want a locket, deary; so I send one that my mother gave me years ago. You will find father’s face on one side, mine on the other; and when things trouble you, just look at your talisman, and I think the sunshine will come back again.”

Of course it did, for the best of all magic was shut up in the quaint little case that Polly wore inside her frock, and kissed so tenderly each night and morning. The thought that, insignificant as she was, she yet might do some good, made her very careful of her acts and words, and so anxious to keep heart contented and face happy, that she forgot her clothes, and made others do the same. She did not know it, but that good old fashion of simplicity made the plain gowns pretty, and the grace of unconsciousness beautified their little wearer with the charm that makes girlhood sweetest to those who truly love and reverence it. One temptation Polly had already yielded to before the letter came, and repented heartily of afterward.

“Polly, I wish you’d let me call you Marie,” said Fanny one day, as they were shopping together.

“You may call me Mary, if you like; but I won’t have any *ie* put on to my name. I’m Polly at home, and I’m fond of being called so; but Marie is Frenchified and silly.”

“I spell my own name with an *ie*, and so do all the girls.”

“And what a jumble of Netties, Nellies, Hatties, and Sallies there is. How ‘Pollie’ would look spelt so!”

“Well, never mind; that wasn’t what I began to say. There’s one thing you must have, and that is, bronze boots,” said Fan, impressively.

“Why must I, when I’ve got enough without?”

“Because it’s the fashion to have them, and you can’t be finished off properly without. I’m going to get a pair, and so must you.”

“Don’t they cost a great deal?”

“Eight or nine dollars, I believe. I have mine charged; but it don’t matter if you haven’t got the money. I can lend you some.”

“I’ve got ten dollars to do what I like with; but I meant to get some presents for the children.” And Polly took out her purse in an undecided way.

“You can make presents easy enough. Grandma knows all sorts of nice contrivances. They’ll do just as well; and then you can get your boots.”

“Well; I’ll look at them,” said Polly, following Fanny into the store, feeling rather rich and important to be shopping in this elegant manner.

“Aren’t they lovely? Your foot is perfectly divine in that boot, Polly. Get them for my party; you’ll dance like a fairy,” whispered Fan.

Polly surveyed the dainty, shining boot with the scalloped top, the jaunty heel, and the delicate toe, thought her foot did look very well in it, and after a little pause, said she would have them. It was all very delightful till she got home, and was alone; then, on looking into her purse, she saw one dollar and the list of things she meant to get for mother and the children. How mean the dollar looked all alone! And how long the list grew when there was nothing to buy the articles.

“I can’t make skates for Ned, nor a desk for Will; and those are what they have set their hearts upon. Father’s book and mother’s collar are impossible now; and I’m a selfish thing to go and spend all my money for myself. How could I do it?” And Polly eyed the new boots reproachfully, as they stood in the first position as if ready for the party. “They *are* lovely; but I don’t believe they will feel good, for I shall be thinking about my lost presents all the time,” sighed Polly, pushing the enticing boots out of sight. “I’ll go and ask grandma what I can do; for if I’ve got to make something for everyone, I must begin right away, or I shan’t get done;” and off she bustled, glad to forget her remorse in hard work.

Grandma proved equal to the emergency, and planned something for everyone, supplying materials, taste, and skill in the most delightful manner. Polly felt much comforted; but while she began to knit a pretty pair of white bed-socks, to be tied with rose-colored ribbons, for her mother, she thought some very sober thoughts upon the subject of temptation; and if anyone had asked her just then what made her sigh, as if something lay heavy on her conscience, she would have answered, “Bronze boots.”

## Chapter 4

### Little Things

“It’s so wainy, I can’t go out, and evwybody is so cwoss they won’t play with me,” said Maud, when Polly found her fretting on the stairs, and paused to ask the cause of her wails.

“I’ll play with you; only don’t scream and wake your mother. What shall we play?”

“I don’t know; I’m tired of evwything, ’cause my toys are all bwocken, and my dolls are all sick but Clawa,” moaned Maud, giving a jerk to the Paris doll which she held upside down by one leg in the most unmaternal manner.

“I’m going to dress a dolly for my little sister; wouldn’t you like to see me do it?” asked Polly, persuasively, hoping to beguile the cross child and finish her own work at the same time.

“No, I shouldn’t, ’cause she’ll look nicer than my Clawa. Her clothes won’t come off; and Tom spoilt ’em playing ball with her in the yard.”

“Wouldn’t you like to rip these clothes off, and have me show you how to make some new ones, so you can dress and undress Clara as much as you like?”

“Yes; I love to cut.” And Maud’s face brightened; for destructiveness is one of the earliest traits of childhood, and ripping was Maud’s delight.

Establishing themselves in the deserted dining room, the children fell to work; and when Fanny discovered them, Maud was laughing with all her heart at poor Clara, who, denuded of her finery, was cutting up all sorts of capers in the hands of her merry little mistress.

“I should think you’d be ashamed to play with dolls, Polly. I haven’t touched one this ever so long,” said Fanny, looking down with a superior air.

“I ain’t ashamed, for it keeps Maud happy, and will please my sister Kitty; and I think sewing is better than prinking or reading silly novels, so, now.” And Polly stitched away with a resolute air, for she and Fanny had had a little tiff, because Polly wouldn’t let her friend do up her hair “like other folks,” and bore her ears.

“Don’t be cross, dear, but come and do something nice, it’s so dull today,” said Fanny, anxious to be friends again, for it was doubly dull without Polly.

“Can’t; I’m busy.”

“You always *are* busy. I never saw such a girl. What in the world do you find to do all the time?” asked Fanny, watching with interest the set of the little red merino frock Polly was putting on to her doll.

“Lots of things; but I like to be lazy sometimes as much as you do; just lie on the sofa, and read fairy stories, or think about nothing. Would you have a white muslin apron or a black silk?” added Polly, surveying her work with satisfaction.

“Muslin, with pockets and tiny blue bows. I’ll show you how.” And forgetting her late contempt for dolls, down sat Fanny, soon getting as much absorbed as either of the others.

The dull day brightened wonderfully after that, and the time flew pleasantly, as tongues and needles went together. Grandma peeped in, and smiled at the busy group, saying, “Sew away, my dears; dollies are safe companions, and needlework an accomplishment that’s sadly neglected nowadays. Small stitches, Maud; neat buttonholes, Fan; cut carefully, Polly, and don’t waste your cloth. Take pains; and the best needlewoman shall have a pretty bit of white satin for a doll’s bonnet.”

Fanny exerted herself, and won the prize, for Polly helped Maud, and neglected her own work; but she didn’t care much, for Mr. Shaw said, looking at the three bright faces at the tea table, “I guess Polly has been making sunshine for you today.”

“No, indeed, sir, I haven’t done anything, only dress Maud’s doll.”

And Polly didn't think she *had* done much; but it was one of the little things which are always waiting to be done in this world of ours, where rainy days come so often, where spirits get out of tune, and duty won't go hand in hand with pleasure. Little things of this sort are especially good work for little people; a kind little thought, an unselfish little act, a cheery little word, are so sweet and comfortable, that no one can fail to feel their beauty and love the giver, no matter how small they are. Mothers do a deal of this sort of thing, unseen, unthanked, but felt and remembered long afterward, and never lost, for this is the simple magic that binds hearts together, and keeps home happy. Polly had learned this secret. She loved to do the "little things" that others did not see, or were too busy to stop for; and while doing them, without a thought of thanks, she made sunshine for herself as well as others. There was so much love in her own home, that she quickly felt the want of it in Fanny's, and puzzled herself to find out why these people were not kind and patient to one another. She did not try to settle the question, but did her best to love and serve and bear with each; and the good will, the gentle heart, the helpful ways and simple manners of our Polly made her dear to everyone, for these virtues, even in a little child, are lovely and attractive.

Mr. Shaw was very kind to her, for he liked her modest, respectful manners; and Polly was so grateful for his many favors, that she soon forgot her fear, and showed her affection in all sorts of confiding little ways, which pleased him extremely. She used to walk across the park with him when he went to his office in the morning, talking busily all the way, and saying "Good-by" with a nod and a smile when they parted at the great gate. At first, Mr. Shaw did not care much about it; but soon he missed her if she didn't come, and found that something fresh and pleasant seemed to brighten all his day, if a small, gray-coated figure, with an intelligent face, a merry voice, and a little hand slipped confidingly into his, went with him through the wintry park. Coming home late, he liked to see a curly, brown head watching at the window; to find his slippers ready, his paper in its place, and a pair of willing feet, eager to wait upon him. "I wish my Fanny was more like her," he often said to himself, as he watched the girls while they thought him deep in politics or the state of the money market. Poor Mr. Shaw had been so busy getting rich, that he had not found time to teach his children to love him; he was more at leisure now, and as his boy and girls grew up, he missed something. Polly was unconsciously showing him what it was, and making child-love so sweet, that he felt he could not do without it any more, yet didn't quite know how to win the confidence of the children, who had always found him busy, indifferent, and absentminded.

As the girls were going to bed one night, Polly kissed grandma, as usual, and Fanny laughed at her, saying, "What a baby you are! We are too old for such things now."

"I don't think people *ever* are too old to kiss their fathers and mothers," was the quick answer.

"Right, my little Polly;" and Mr. Shaw stretched out his hand to her with such a kindly look, that Fanny stared surprised, and then said, shyly, "I thought you didn't care about it, father."

"I do, my dear." And Mr. Shaw put out the other hand to Fanny, who gave him a daughterly kiss, quite forgetting everything but the tender feeling that sprung up in her heart at the renewal of the childish custom which we never need outgrow.

Mrs. Shaw was a nervous, fussy invalid, who wanted something every five minutes; so Polly found plenty of small things to do for her, and did them so cheerfully, that the poor lady loved to have the quiet, helpful child near, to wait upon her, read to her, run errands, or hand the seven different shawls which were continually being put on or off.

Grandma, too, was glad to find willing hands and feet to serve her; and Polly passed many happy hours in the quaint rooms, learning all sorts of pretty arts, and listening to pleasant chat, never dreaming how much sunshine she brought to the solitary old lady.

Tom was Polly's rock ahead for a long time, because he was always breaking out in a new place, and one never knew where to find him. He tormented yet amused her; was kind one day, and a bear the next; at times she fancied he was never going to be bad again, and the next thing she knew he was deep in mischief, and hooted at the idea of repentance and reformation. Polly gave him up as

a hard case; but was so in the habit of helping anyone who seemed in trouble, that she was good to him simply because she couldn't help it.

"What's the matter? Is your lesson too hard for you?" she asked one evening, as a groan made her look across the table to where Tom sat scowling over a pile of dilapidated books, with his hands in his hair, as if his head was in danger of flying asunder with the tremendous effort he was making.

"Hard! Guess it is. What in thunder do I care about the old Carthaginians? Regulus wasn't bad; but I'm sick of him!" And Tom dealt "Harkness's Latin Reader" a thump, which expressed his feelings better than words.

"I like Latin, and used to get on well when I studied it with Jimmy. Perhaps I can help you a little bit," said Polly, as Tom wiped his hot face and refreshed himself with a peanut.

"You? Pooh! Girls' Latin don't amount to much, anyway," was the grateful reply.

But Polly was used to him now, and, nothing daunted, took a look at the grimy page in the middle of which Tom had stuck. She read it so well, that the young gentleman stopped munching to regard her with respectful astonishment, and when she stopped, he said, suspiciously, "You are a sly one, Polly, to study up so you can show off before me. But it won't do, ma'am; turn over a dozen pages, and try again."

Polly obeyed, and did even better than before, saying, as she looked up, with a laugh, "I've been through the whole book; so you won't catch me that way, Tom."

"I say, how came you to know such a lot?" asked Tom, much impressed.

"I studied with Jimmy, and kept up with him, for father let us be together in all our lessons. It was so nice, and we learned so fast!"

"Tell about Jimmy. He's your brother, isn't he?"

"Yes; but he's dead, you know. I'll tell about him some other time; you ought to study now, and perhaps I can help you," said Polly, with a little quiver of the lips.

"Shouldn't wonder if you could." And Tom spread the book between them with a grave and businesslike air, for he felt that Polly had got the better of him, and it behooved him to do his best for the honor of his sex. He went at the lesson with a will, and soon floundered out of his difficulties, for Polly gave him a lift here and there, and they went on swimmingly, till they came to some rules to be learned. Polly had forgotten them, so they both committed them to memory – Tom, with hands in his pockets, rocked to and fro, muttering rapidly, while Polly twisted the little curl on her forehead and stared at the wall, gabbling with all her might.

"Done!" cried Tom, presently.

"Done!" echoed Polly; and then they heard each other recite till both were perfect.

"That's pretty good fun," said Tom, joyfully, tossing poor Harkness away, and feeling that the pleasant excitement of companionship could lend a charm even to Latin Grammar.

"Now, ma'am, we'll take a turn at *algibbera*. I like that as much as I hate Latin."

Polly accepted the invitation, and soon owned that Tom could beat her here. This fact restored his equanimity; but he didn't crow over her, far from it; for he helped her with a paternal patience that made her eyes twinkle with suppressed fun, as he soberly explained and illustrated, unconsciously imitating Dominie Deane, till Polly found it difficult to keep from laughing in his face.

"You may have another go at it any time you like," generously remarked Tom, as he shied the Algebra after the Latin Reader.

"I'll come every evening, then. I'd like to, for I haven't studied a bit since I came. You shall try and make me like algebra, and I'll try and make you like Latin; will you?"

"Oh, I'd like it well enough, if there was anyone to explain it to me. Old Deane puts us through double-quick, and don't give a fellow time to ask questions when we read."

"Ask your father; he knows."

"Don't believe he does; shouldn't dare to bother him, if he did."

"Why not?"

“He’d pull my ears, and call me a ‘stupid,’ or tell me not to worry him.”

“I don’t think he would. He’s very kind to me, and I ask lots of questions.”

“He likes you better than he does me.”

“Now, Tom! It’s wrong of you to say so. Of course he loves you ever so much more than he does me,” cried Polly, reprovingly.

“Why don’t he show it, then?” muttered Tom, with a half-wistful, half-defiant glance toward the library door, which stood ajar.

“You act so, how can he?” asked Polly, after a pause, in which she put Tom’s question to herself, and could find no better reply than the one she gave him.

“Why don’t he give me my velocipede? He said, if I did well at school for a month, I should have it; and I’ve been pegging away like fury for most six weeks, and he don’t do a thing about it. The girls get their duds, because they tease. I won’t do that, anyway; but you don’t catch me studying myself to death, and no pay for it.”

“It is too bad; but you ought to do it because it’s right, and never mind being paid,” began Polly, trying to be moral, but secretly sympathizing heartily with poor Tom.

“Don’t you preach, Polly. If the governor took any notice of me, and cared how I got on, I wouldn’t mind the presents so much; but he don’t care a hang, and never even asked if I did well last declamation day, when I’d gone and learned ‘The Battle of Lake Regillus,’ because he said he liked it.”

“Oh, Tom! Did you say that? It’s splendid! Jim and I used to say Horatius together, and it was *such* fun. Do speak your piece to me, I do so like ‘Macaulay’s Lays.’”

“It’s dreadful long,” began Tom; but his face brightened, for Polly’s interest soothed his injured feelings, and he was glad to prove his elocutionary powers. He began without much spirit; but soon the martial ring of the lines fired him, and before he knew it, he was on his legs thundering away in grand style, while Polly listened with kindling face and absorbed attention. Tom did declaim well, for he quite forgot himself, and delivered the stirring ballad with an energy that made Polly flush and tingle with admiration and delight, and quite electrified a second listener, who had heard all that went on, and watched the little scene from behind his newspaper.

As Tom paused, breathless, and Polly clapped her hands enthusiastically, the sound was loudly echoed from behind him. Both whirled round, and there was Mr. Shaw, standing in the doorway, applauding with all his might.

Tom looked much abashed, and said not a word; but Polly ran to Mr. Shaw, and danced before him, saying, eagerly, “Wasn’t it splendid? Didn’t he do it well? Mayn’t he have his velocipede now?”

“Capital, Tom; you’ll be an orator yet. Learn another piece like that, and I’ll come and hear you speak it. Are you ready for your velocipede, hey?”

Polly was right; and Tom owned that “the governor” *was* kind, did like him, and hadn’t entirely forgotten his promise. The boy turned red with pleasure, and picked at the buttons on his jacket, while listening to this unexpected praise; but when he spoke, he looked straight up in his father’s face, while his own shone with pleasure, as he answered, all in one breath, “Thankee, sir. I’ll do it, sir. Guess I am, sir!”

“Very good; then look out for your new horse tomorrow, sir.” And Mr. Shaw stroked the fuzzy red head with a kind hand, feeling a fatherly pleasure in the conviction that there *was* something in his boy after all.

Tom got his velocipede next day, named it Black Auster, in memory of the horse in “The Battle of Lake Regillus,” and came to grief as soon as he began to ride his new steed.

“Come out and see me go it,” whispered Tom to Polly, after three days’ practice in the street, for he had already learned to ride in the rink.

Polly and Maud willingly went, and watched his struggles with deep interest, till he got an upset, which nearly put an end to his velocipeding forever.

“Hi, there! Auster’s coming!” shouted Tom, as he came rattling down the long, steep street outside the park.

They stepped aside, and he whizzed by, arms and legs going like mad, with the general appearance of a runaway engine. It would have been a triumphant descent, if a big dog had not bounced suddenly through one of the openings, and sent the whole concern helter-skelter into the gutter. Polly laughed as she ran to view the ruin, for Tom lay flat on his back with the velocipede atop of him, while the big dog barked wildly, and his master scolded him for his awkwardness. But when she saw Tom’s face, Polly was frightened, for the color had all gone out of it, his eyes looked strange and dizzy, and drops of blood began to trickle from a great cut on his forehead. The man saw it, too, and had him up in a minute; but he couldn’t stand, and stared about him in a dazed sort of way, as he sat on the curbstone, while Polly held her handkerchief to his forehead, and pathetically begged to know if he was killed.

“Don’t scare mother – I’m all right. Got upset, didn’t I?” he asked, presently, eyeing the prostrate velocipede with more anxiety about its damages than his own.

“I knew you’d hurt yourself with that horrid thing. Just let it be, and come home, for your head bleeds dreadfully, and everybody is looking at us,” whispered Polly, trying to tie the little handkerchief over the ugly cut.

“Come on, then. Jove! How queer my head feels! Give us a boost, please. Stop howling, Maud, and come home. You bring the machine, and I’ll pay you, Pat.” As he spoke, Tom slowly picked himself up, and steadying himself by Polly’s shoulder, issued his commands, and the procession fell into line. First, the big dog, barking at intervals; then the good-natured Irishman, trundling “that devil of a whirligig,” as he disrespectfully called the idolized velocipede; then the wounded hero, supported by the faithful Polly; and Maud brought up the rear in tears, bearing Tom’s cap.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Shaw was out driving with grandma, and Fanny was making calls; so that there was no one but Polly to stand by Tom, for the parlormaid turned faint at the sight of blood, and the chambermaid lost her wits in the flurry. It was a bad cut, and must be sewed up at once, the doctor said, as soon as he came. “Somebody must hold his head,” he added, as he threaded his queer little needle.

“I’ll keep still, but if anybody must hold me, let Polly. You ain’t afraid, are you?” asked Tom, with an imploring look, for he didn’t like the idea of being sewed a bit.

Polly was just going to shrink away, saying, “Oh, I can’t!” when she remembered that Tom once called her a coward.

Here was a chance to prove that she wasn’t; besides, poor Tom had no one else to help him; so she came up to the sofa where he lay, and nodded reassuringly, as she put a soft little hand on either side of the damaged head.

“You are a trump, Polly,” whispered Tom. Then he set his teeth, clenched his hands, lay quite still, and bore it like a man. It was all over in a minute or two, and when he had had a glass of wine, and was nicely settled on his bed, he felt pretty comfortable, in spite of the pain in his head; and being ordered to keep quiet, he said, “Thank you ever so much, Polly,” and watched her with a grateful face as she crept away.

He had to keep the house for a week, and laid about looking very interesting with a great black patch on his forehead. Everyone petted him; for the doctor said, that if the blow had been an inch nearer the temple, it would have been fatal, and the thought of losing him so suddenly made bluff old Tom very precious all at once. His father asked him how he was a dozen times a day; his mother talked continually of “that dear boy’s narrow escape”; and grandma cockered him up with every delicacy she could invent; and the girls waited on him like devoted slaves. This new treatment had an excellent effect; for when neglected Tom got over his first amazement at this change of base, he blossomed out delightfully, as sick people do sometimes, and surprised his family by being unexpectedly patient, grateful, and amiable. Nobody ever knew how much good it did him; for boys

seldom have confidences of this sort except with their mothers, and Mrs. Shaw had never found the key to her son's heart. But a little seed was sowed then that took root, and though it grew very slowly, it came to something in the end. Perhaps Polly helped it a little. Evening was his hardest time, for want of exercise made him as restless and nervous as it was possible for a hearty lad to be on such a short notice. He couldn't sleep, so the girls amused him – Fanny played and read aloud; Polly sung, and told stories; and did the latter so well, that it got to be a regular thing for her to begin as soon as twilight came, and Tom was settled in his favorite place on grandma's sofa.

"Fire away, Polly," said the young sultan, one evening, as his little Scheherazade sat down in her low chair, after stirring up the fire till the room was bright and cosy.

"I don't feel like stories tonight, Tom. I've told all I know, and can't make up any more," answered Polly, leaning her head on her hand with a sorrowful look that Tom had never seen before. He watched her a minute, and then asked, curiously, "What were you thinking about, just now, when you sat staring at the fire, and getting soberer and soberer every minute?"

"I was thinking about Jimmy."

"Would you mind telling about him? You know, you said you would some time; but don't, if you'd rather not," said Tom, lowering his rough voice respectfully.

"I like to talk about him; but there isn't much to tell," began Polly, grateful for his interest. "Sitting here with you reminded me of the way I used to sit with him when he was sick. We used to have such happy times, and it's so pleasant to think about them now."

"He was awfully good, wasn't he?"

"No, he wasn't; but he tried to be, and mother says that is half the battle. We used to get tired of trying; but we kept making resolutions, and working hard to keep 'em. I don't think I got on much; but Jimmy did, and everyone loved him."

"Didn't you ever squabble, as we do?"

"Yes, indeed, sometimes; but we couldn't stay mad, and always made it up again as soon as we could. Jimmy used to come round first, and say, 'All serene, Polly,' so kind and jolly, that I couldn't help laughing and being friends right away."

"Did he not know a lot?"

"Yes, I think he did, for he liked to study, and wanted to get on, so he could help father. People used to call him a fine boy, and I felt so proud to hear it; but they didn't know half how wise he was, because he didn't show off a bit. I suppose sisters always are grand of their brothers; but I don't believe many girls had as much right to be as I had."

"Most girls don't care two pins about their brothers; so that shows you don't know much about it."

"Well, they ought to, if they don't; and they would if the boys were as kind to them as Jimmy was to me."

"Why, what did he do?"

"Loved me dearly, and wasn't ashamed to show it," cried Polly, with a sob in her voice, that made her answer very eloquent.

"What made him die, Polly?" asked Tom, soberly, after a little pause.

"He got hurt coasting, last winter; but he never told which boy did it, and he only lived a week. I helped take care of him; and he was so patient, I used to wonder at him, for he was in dreadful pain all the time. He gave me his books, and his dog, and his speckled hens, and his big knife, and said, 'Good-by, Polly' – and kissed me the last thing – and then – O Jimmy! Jimmy! If he only could come back!"

Poor Polly's eyes had been getting fuller and fuller, her lips trembling more and more, as she went on; and when she came to that "good-by," she couldn't get any further, but covered up her face, and cried as if her heart would break. Tom was full of sympathy, but didn't know how to show it; so he sat shaking up the camphor bottle, and trying to think of something proper and comfortable to say, when Fanny came to the rescue, and cuddled Polly in her arms, with soothing little pats and whispers

and kisses, till the tears stopped, and Polly said, she “didn’t mean to, and wouldn’t any more. I’ve been thinking about my dear boy all the evening, for Tom reminds me of him,” she added, with a sigh.

“Me? How can I, when I ain’t a bit like him?” cried Tom, amazed.

“But you are in some ways.”

“Wish I was; but I can’t be, for he was good, you know.”

“So are you, when you choose. Hasn’t he been good and patient, and don’t we all like to pet him when he’s clever, Fan?” said Polly, whose heart was still aching for her brother, and ready for his sake to find virtues even in tormenting Tom.

“Yes; I don’t know the boy lately; but he’ll be as bad as ever when he’s well,” returned Fanny, who hadn’t much faith in sickbed repentances.

“Much you know about it,” growled Tom, lying down again, for he had sat bolt upright when Polly made the astounding declaration that *he* was like the well-beloved Jimmy. That simple little history had made a deep impression on Tom, and the tearful ending touched the tender spot that most boys hide so carefully. It is very pleasant to be loved and admired, very sweet to think we shall be missed and mourned when we die; and Tom was seized with a sudden desire to imitate this boy, who hadn’t done anything wonderful, yet was so dear to his sister, that she cried for him a whole year after he was dead; so studious and clever, the people called him “a fine fellow”; and so anxious to be good, that he kept on trying, till he was better even than Polly, whom Tom privately considered a model of virtue, as girls go.

“I just wish I had a sister like you,” he broke out, all of a sudden.

“And I just wish I had a brother like Jim,” cried Fanny, for she felt the reproach in Tom’s words, and knew she deserved it.

“I shouldn’t think you’d envy anybody, for you’ve got one another,” said Polly, with such a wistful look, that it suddenly set Tom and Fanny to wondering why they didn’t have better times together, and enjoy themselves, as Polly and Jim did.

“Fan don’t care for anybody but herself,” said Tom.

“Tom is such a bear,” retorted Fanny.

“I wouldn’t say such things, for if anything should happen to either of you, the other one would feel so sorry. Every cross word I ever said to Jimmy comes back now, and makes me wish I hadn’t.”

Two great tears rolled down Polly’s cheeks, and were quietly wiped away; but I think they watered that sweet sentiment, called fraternal love, which till now had been neglected in the hearts of this brother and sister. They didn’t say anything then, or make any plans, or confess any faults; but when they parted for the night, Fanny gave the wounded head a gentle pat (Tom never would have forgiven her if she had kissed him), and said, in a whisper, “I hope you’ll have a good sleep, Tommy, dear.”

And Tom nodded back at her, with a hearty “Same to you, Fan.”

That was all; but it meant a good deal for the voices were kind, and the eyes met full of that affection which makes words of little consequence. Polly saw it; and though she didn’t know that she had made the sunshine, it shone back upon her so pleasantly, that she fell happily asleep, though her Jimmy wasn’t there to say “good-night.”

## Chapter 5

### Scrapes

After being unusually good, children are apt to turn short round and refresh themselves by acting like Sancho. For a week after Tom's mishap, the young folks were quite angelic, so much so that grandma said she was afraid "something was going to happen to them." The dear old lady needn't have felt anxious, for such excessive virtue doesn't last long enough to lead to translation, except with little prigs in the goody storybooks; and no sooner was Tom on his legs again, when the whole party went astray, and much tribulation was the consequence.

It all began with "Polly's stupidity," as Fan said afterward. Just as Polly ran down to meet Mr. Shaw one evening, and was helping him off with his coat, the bell rang, and a fine bouquet of hothouse flowers was left in Polly's hands, for she never could learn city ways, and opened the door herself.

"Hey! What's this? My little Polly is beginning early, after all," said Mr. Shaw, laughing, as he watched the girl's face dimple and flush, as she smelt the lovely nosegay, and glanced at a note half hidden in the heliotrope.



Now, if Polly hadn't been "stupid," as Fan said, she would have had her wits about her, and let it pass; but, you see, Polly was an honest little soul, and it never occurred to her that there was any need of concealment, so she answered in her straightforward way, "Oh, they ain't for me, sir; they are for Fan; from Mr. Frank, I guess. She'll be so pleased."

"That puppy sends her things of this sort, does he?" And Mr. Shaw looked far from pleased as he pulled out the note, and coolly opened it.

Polly had her doubts about Fan's approval of that "sort of thing," but dared not say a word, and stood thinking how she used to show her father the funny valentines the boys sent her, and how they laughed over them together. But Mr. Shaw did not laugh when he had read the sentimental verses accompanying the bouquet, and his face quite scared Polly, as he asked, angrily, "How long has this nonsense been going on?"

"Indeed, sir, I don't know. Fan doesn't mean any harm. I wish I hadn't said anything!" stammered Polly, remembering the promise given to Fanny the day of the concert. She had forgotten all about it, and had become accustomed to see the "big boys," as she called Mr. Frank and his friends, with the girls on all occasions. Now, it suddenly occurred to her that Mr. Shaw didn't like such amusements, and had forbidden Fan to indulge in them. "Oh, dear! How mad she will be. Well, I can't help it. Girls shouldn't have secrets from their fathers, then there wouldn't be any fuss," thought Polly, as she watched Mr. Shaw twist up the pink note and poke it back among the flowers which he took from her, saying, shortly, "Send Fanny to me in the library."

"Now you've done it, you stupid thing!" cried Fanny, both angry and dismayed, when Polly delivered the message.

"Why, what else *could* I do?" asked Polly, much disturbed.

"Let him think the bouquet was for you; then there'd have been no trouble."

"But that would have been doing a lie, which is most as bad as telling one."

"Don't be a goose. You've got me into a scrape, and you ought to help me out."

"I will if I can; but I won't tell lies for anybody!" cried Polly, getting excited.

"Nobody wants you to. Just hold your tongue, and let me manage."

"Then I'd better not go down," began Polly, when a stern voice from below called, like Bluebeard, "Are you coming down?"

"Yes, sir," answered a meek voice; and Fanny clutched Polly, whispering, "You *must* come; I'm frightened out of my wits when he speaks like that. Stand by me, Polly; there's a dear."

"I will," whispered "sister Ann"; and down they went with fluttering hearts.

Mr. Shaw stood on the rug, looking rather grim; the bouquet lay on the table, and beside it a note directed to "Frank Moore, Esq.," in a very decided hand, with a fierce-looking flourish after the "Esq." Pointing to this impressive epistle, Mr. Shaw said, knitting his black eyebrows as he looked at Fanny, "I'm going to put a stop to this nonsense at once; and if I see any more of it, I'll send you to school in a Canadian convent."

This awful threat quite took Polly's breath away; but Fanny had heard it before, and having a temper of her own, said, pertly, "I'm sure I haven't done anything so very dreadful. I can't help it if the boys send me philopena presents, as they do to the other girls."

"There was nothing about philopenas in the note. But that's not the question. I forbid you to have anything to do with this Moore. He's not a boy, but a fast fellow, and I won't have him about. You knew this, and yet disobeyed me."

"I hardly ever see him," began Fanny.

"Is that true?" asked Mr. Shaw, turning suddenly to Polly.

"Oh, please, sir, don't ask me. I promised I wouldn't – that is – Fanny will tell you," cried Polly, quite red with distress at the predicament she was in.

“No matter about your promise; tell me all you know of this absurd affair. It will do Fanny more good than harm.” And Mr. Shaw sat down looking more amiable, for Polly’s dismay touched him.

“May I?” she whispered to Fanny.

“I don’t care,” answered Fan, looking both angry and ashamed, as she stood sullenly tying knots in her handkerchief.

So Polly told, with much reluctance and much questioning, all she knew of the walks, the lunches, the meetings, and the notes. It wasn’t much, and evidently less serious than Mr. Shaw expected; for, as he listened, his eyebrows smoothed themselves out, and more than once his lips twitched as if he wanted to laugh, for, after all, it *was* rather comical to see how the young people aped their elders, playing the new-fashioned game, quite unconscious of its real beauty, power, and sacredness.

“Oh, please, sir, don’t blame Fan much, for she truly isn’t half as silly as Trix and the other girls. She wouldn’t go sleigh-riding, though Mr. Frank teased, and she wanted to ever so much. She’s sorry, I know, and won’t forget what you say any more, if you’ll forgive her this once,” cried Polly, very earnestly, when the foolish little story was told.

“I don’t see how I can help it, when you plead so well for her. Come here, Fan, and mind this one thing; drop all this nonsense, and attend to your books, or off you go; and Canada is no joke in wintertime, let me tell you.”

As he spoke, Mr. Shaw stroked his sulky daughter’s cheek, hoping to see some sign of regret; but Fanny felt injured, and wouldn’t show that she was sorry, so she only said, pettishly, “I suppose I can have my flowers, now the fuss is over.”

“They are going straight back where they came from, with a line from me, which will keep that puppy from ever sending you any more.” Ringing the bell, Mr. Shaw despatched the unfortunate posy, and then turned to Polly, saying, kindly but gravely, “Set this silly child of mine a good example, and do your best for her, won’t you?”

“Me? What can I do, sir?” asked Polly, looking ready, but quite ignorant how to begin.

“Make her as like yourself as possible, my dear; nothing would please me better. Now go, and let us hear no more of this folly.”

They went without a word, and Mr. Shaw heard no more of the affair; but poor Polly did, for Fan scolded her, till Polly thought seriously of packing up and going home next day. I really haven’t the heart to relate the dreadful lectures she got, the snubs she suffered, or the cold shoulders turned upon her for several days after this. Polly’s heart was full, but she told no one, and bore her trouble silently, feeling her friend’s ingratitude and injustice deeply.

Tom found out what the matter was, and sided with Polly, which proceeding led to scrape number two.

“Where’s Fan?” asked the young gentleman, strolling into his sister’s room, where Polly lay on the sofa, trying to forget her troubles in an interesting book.

“Downstairs, seeing company.”

“Why didn’t you go, too?”

“I don’t like Trix, and I don’t know her fine New York friends.”

“Don’t want to, neither, why don’t you say?”

“Not polite.”

“Who cares? I say, Polly, come and have some fun.”

“I’d rather read.”

“That isn’t polite.”

Polly laughed, and turned a page. Tom whistled a minute, then sighed deeply, and put his hand to his forehead, which the black plaster still adorned.

“Does your head ache?” asked Polly.

“Awfully.”

“Better lie down, then.”

“Can’t; I’m fidgety, and want to be amooosed, as Pug says.”

“Just wait till I finish my chapter, and then I’ll come,” said pitiful Polly.

“All right,” returned the perjured boy, who had discovered that a broken head was sometimes more useful than a whole one, and exulting in his base stratagem, he roved about the room, till Fan’s bureau arrested him. It was covered with all sorts of finery, for she had dressed in a hurry, and left everything topsy-turvy. A well-conducted boy would have let things alone, or a moral brother would have put things to rights; being neither, Tom rummaged to his heart’s content, till Fan’s drawers looked as if someone had been making hay in them. He tried the effect of earrings, ribbons, and collars; wound up the watch, though it wasn’t time; burnt his inquisitive nose with smelling salts; deluged his grimy handkerchief with Fan’s best cologne; anointed his curly crop with her hair-oil; powdered his face with her violet-powder; and finished off by pinning on a bunch of false ringlets, which Fanny tried to keep a profound secret. The ravages committed by this bad boy are beyond the power of language to describe, as he revelled in the interesting drawers, boxes, and cases, which held his sister’s treasures.

When the curls had been put on, with much pricking of fingers, and a blue ribbon added, *à la* Fan, he surveyed himself with satisfaction, and considered the effect so fine, that he was inspired to try a still greater metamorphosis. The dress Fan had taken off lay on a chair, and into it got Tom, chuckling with suppressed laughter, for Polly was absorbed, and the bed-curtains hid his iniquity. Fan’s best velvet jacket and hat, ermine muff, and a sofa-pillow for *pannier*, finished off the costume, and tripping along with elbows out, Tom appeared before the amazed Polly just as the chapter ended. She enjoyed the joke so heartily, that Tom forgot consequences, and proposed going down into the parlor to surprise the girls.

“Goodness, no! Fanny never would forgive us if you showed her curls and things to those people. There are gentlemen among them, and it wouldn’t be proper,” said Polly, alarmed at the idea.

“All the more fun. Fan hasn’t treated you well, and it will serve her right if you introduce me as your dear friend, Miss Shaw. Come on, it will be a jolly lark.”

“I wouldn’t for the world; it would be so mean. Take ’em off, Tom, and I’ll play anything else you like.”

“I ain’t going to dress up for nothing; I look so lovely, someone must admire me. Take me down, Polly, and see if they don’t call me ’a sweet creature.”

Tom looked so unutterably ridiculous as he tossed his curls and pranced, that Polly went off into another gale of merriment; but even while she laughed, she resolved not to let him mortify his sister.

“Now, then, get out of the way if you won’t come; I’m going down,” said Tom.

“No, you’re not.”

“How will you help it, Miss Prim?”

“So.” And Polly locked the door, put the key in her pocket, and nodded at him defiantly.

Tom was a pepper-pot as to temper, and anything like opposition always had a bad effect. Forgetting his costume, he strode up to Polly, saying, with a threatening wag of the head, “None of that. I won’t stand it.”

“Promise not to plague Fan, and I’ll let you out.”

“Won’t promise anything. Give me that key, or I’ll make you.”

“Now, Tom, don’t be savage. I only want to keep you out of a scrape, for Fan will be raging if you go. Take off her things, and I’ll give up.”

Tom vouchsafed no reply, but marched to the other door, which was fast, as Polly knew, looked out of the three-story window, and finding no escape possible, came back with a wrathful face. “Will you give me that key?”

“No, I won’t,” said Polly, valiantly.

“I’m stronger than you are; so you’d better hand over.”

“I know you are; but it’s cowardly for a great boy like you to rob a girl.”

“I don’t want to hurt you; but, by George! I won’t stand this!”

Tom paused as Polly spoke, evidently ashamed of himself; but his temper was up, and he wouldn’t give in. If Polly had cried a little just here, he would have yielded; unfortunately she giggled, for Tom’s fierce attitude was such a funny contrast to his dress that she couldn’t help it. That settled the matter. No girl that ever lived should giggle at him, much less lock him up like a small child. Without a word, he made a grab at Polly’s arm, for the hand holding the key was still in her pocket. With her other hand she clutched her frock, and for a minute held on stoutly. But Tom’s strong fingers were irresistible; rip went the pocket, out came the hand, and with a cry of pain from Polly, the key fell on the floor.

“It’s your own fault if you’re hurt. I didn’t mean to,” muttered Tom, as he hastily departed, leaving Polly to groan over her sprained wrist. He went down, but not into the parlor, for somehow the joke seemed to have lost its relish; so he made the girls in the kitchen laugh, and then crept up the back way, hoping to make it all right with Polly. But she had gone to grandma’s room, for, though the old lady was out, it seemed a refuge. He had just time to get things in order, when Fanny came up, crosser than ever; for Trix had been telling her of all sorts of fun in which she might have had a share, if Polly had held her tongue.

“Where is she?” asked Fan, wishing to vent her vexation on her friend.

“Moping in her room, I suppose,” replied Tom, who was discovered reading studiously.

Now, while this had been happening, Maud had been getting into hot water also; for when her maid left her, to see a friend below, Miss Maud paraded into Polly’s room, and solaced herself with mischief. In an evil hour Polly had let her play boat in her big trunk, which stood empty. Since then Polly had stored some of her most private treasures in the upper tray, so that she might feel sure they were safe from all eyes. She had forgotten to lock the trunk, and when Maud raised the lid to begin her voyage, several objects of interest met her eyes. She was deep in her researches when Fan came in and looked over her shoulder, feeling too cross with Polly to chide Maud.

As Polly had no money for presents, she had exerted her ingenuity to devise all sorts of gifts, hoping by quantity to atone for any shortcomings in quality. Some of her attempts were successful, others were failures; but she kept them all, fine or funny, knowing the children at home would enjoy anything new. Some of Maud’s cast-off toys had been neatly mended for Kitty; some of Fan’s old ribbons and laces were converted into dolls’ finery; and Tom’s little figures, whittled out of wood in idle minutes, were laid away to show Will what could be done with a knife.

“What rubbish!” said Fanny.

“Queer girl, isn’t she?” added Tom, who had followed to see what was going on.

“Don’t you laugh at Polly’s things. She makes nicer dolls than you, Fan; and she can wite and dwar ever so much better than Tom,” cried Maud.

“How do you know? I never saw her draw,” said Tom.

“Here’s a book with lots of pictures in it. I can’t wead the witing; but the pictures are so funny.”

Eager to display her friend’s accomplishments, Maud pulled out a fat little book, marked “Polly’s Journal,” and spread it in her lap.

“Only the pictures; no harm in taking a look at ’em,” said Tom.

“Just one peep,” answered Fanny; and the next minute both were laughing at a droll sketch of Tom in the gutter, with the big dog howling over him, and the velocipede running away. Very rough and faulty, but so funny, that it was evident Polly’s sense of humor was strong. A few pages farther back came Fanny and Mr. Frank, caricatured; then grandma, carefully done; Tom reciting his battle-piece; Mr. Shaw and Polly in the park; Maud being borne away by Katy; and all the schoolgirls turned into ridicule with an unsparing hand.

“Sly little puss, to make fun of us behind our backs,” said Fan, rather nettled by Polly’s quiet retaliation for many slights from herself and friends.

“She does draw well,” said Tom, looking critically at the sketch of a boy with a pleasant face, round whom Polly had drawn rays like the sun, and under which was written, “My dear Jimmy.”

“You wouldn’t admire her, if you knew what she wrote here about you,” said Fanny, whose eyes had strayed to the written page opposite, and lingered there long enough to read something that excited her curiosity.

“What is it?” asked Tom, forgetting his honorable resolves for a minute.

“She says, ‘I try to like Tom, and when he is pleasant we do very well; but he don’t stay so long. He gets cross and rough, and disrespectful to his father and mother, and plagues us girls, and is so horrid I almost hate him. It’s very wrong, but I can’t help it.’ How do you like that?” asked Fanny.

“Go ahead, and see how she comes down on you, ma’am,” retorted Tom, who had read on a bit.

“Does she?” And Fanny continued, rapidly: “As for Fan, I don’t think we can be friends any more; for she told her father a lie, and won’t forgive me for not doing so too. I used to think her a very fine girl; but I don’t now. If she would be as she was when I first knew her, I should love her just the same; but she isn’t kind to me; and though she is always talking about politeness, I don’t think it *is* polite to treat company as she does me. She thinks I am odd and countrified, and I dare say I am; but I shouldn’t laugh at a girl’s clothes because she was poor, or keep her out of the way because she didn’t do just as other girls do here. I see her make fun of me, and I can’t feel as I did; and I’d go home, only it would seem ungrateful to Mr. Shaw and grandma, and I do love them dearly.”

“I say, Fan, you’ve got it now. Shut the book and come away,” cried Tom, enjoying this broadside immensely, but feeling guilty, as well he might.

“Just one bit more,” whispered Fanny, turning on a page or two, and stopping at a leaf that was blurred here and there, as if tears had dropped on it.

“Sunday morning, early. Nobody is up to spoil my quiet time, and I must write my journal, for I’ve been so bad lately, I couldn’t bear to do it. I’m glad my visit is most done, for things worry me here, and there isn’t anyone to help me get right when I get wrong. I used to envy Fanny; but I don’t now, for her father and mother don’t take care of her as mine do of me. She is afraid of her father, and makes her mother do as she likes. I’m glad I came though, for I see money don’t give people everything; but I’d like a little all the same, for it is *so* comfortable to buy nice things. I read over my journal just now, and I’m afraid it’s not a good one; for I have said all sorts of things about the people here, and it isn’t kind. I should tear it out, only I promised to keep my diary, and I want to talk over things that puzzle me with mother. I see now that it is my fault a good deal; for I haven’t been half as patient and pleasant as I ought to be. I will truly try for the rest of the time, and be as good and grateful as I can; for I want them to like me, though I’m only ‘an old-fashioned country girl.’”

That last sentence made Fanny shut the book, with a face full of self-reproach; for she had said those words herself, in a fit of petulance, and Polly had made no answer, though her eyes filled and her cheeks burned. Fan opened her lips to say something; but not a sound followed, for there stood Polly looking at them with an expression they had never seen before.

“What are you doing with my things?” she demanded, in a low tone, while her eyes kindled and her color changed.

“Maud showed us a book she found, and we were just looking at the pictures,” began Fanny, dropping it as if it burnt her fingers.

“And reading my journal, and laughing at my presents, and then putting the blame on Maud. It’s the meanest thing I ever saw; and I’ll never forgive you as long as I live!”

Polly said this all in one indignant breath, and then as if afraid of saying too much, ran out of the room with such a look of mingled contempt, grief, and anger, that the three culprits stood dumb with shame. Tom hadn’t even a whistle at his command; Maud was so scared at gentle Polly’s outbreak, that she sat as still as a mouse; while Fanny, conscience-stricken, laid back the poor little presents with a respectful hand, for somehow the thought of Polly’s poverty came over her as it never had done before; and these odds and ends, so carefully treasured up for those at home, touched Fanny,

and grew beautiful in her eyes. As she laid by the little book, the confessions in it reproached her more sharply than any words Polly could have spoken; for she *had* laughed at her friend, *had* slighted her sometimes, and been unforgiving for an innocent offence. The last page, where Polly took the blame on herself, and promised to “truly try” to be more kind and patient, went to Fanny’s heart, melting all the coldness away, and she could only lay her head on the trunk, sobbing, “It wasn’t Polly’s fault; it was all mine.”

Tom, still red with shame at being caught in such a scrape, left Fanny to her tears, and went manfully away to find the injured Polly, and confess his manifold transgressions. But Polly couldn’t be found. He searched high and low in every room, yet no sign of the girl appeared, and Tom began to get anxious. “She can’t have run away home, can she?” he said to himself, as he paused before the hat-tree. There was the little round hat, and Tom gave it a remorseful smooth, remembering how many times he had tweaked it half off, or poked it over poor Polly’s eyes. “Maybe she’s gone down to the office, to tell pa. ’Tisn’t a bit like her, though. Anyway, I’ll take a look round the corner.”

Eager to get his boots, Tom pulled open the door of a dark closet under the stairs, and nearly tumbled over backward with surprise; for there, on the floor, with her head pillowed on a pair of rubbers, lay Polly in an attitude of despair. This mournful spectacle sent Tom’s penitent speech straight out of his head, and with an astonished “Hullo!” he stood and stared in impressive silence. Polly wasn’t crying, and lay so still, that Tom began to think she might be in a fit or a faint, and bent anxiously down to inspect the pathetic bunch. A glimpse of wet eyelashes, a round cheek redder than usual, and lips parted by quick breathing, relieved his mind upon that point; so, taking courage, he sat down on the bootjack, and begged pardon like a man.

Now, Polly was very angry, and I think she had a right to be; but she was not resentful, and after the first flash was over, she soon began to feel better about it. It wasn’t easy to forgive; but, as she listened to Tom’s honest voice, getting gruff with remorse now and then, she couldn’t harden her heart against him, or refuse to make up when he so frankly owned that it “was confounded mean to read her book that way.” She liked his coming and begging pardon at once; it was a handsome thing to do; she appreciated it, and forgave him in her heart some time before she did with her lips; for, to tell the truth, Polly had a spice of girlish malice, and rather liked to see domineering Tom eat humble pie, just enough to do him good, you know. She felt that atonement was proper, and considered it no more than just that Fan should drench a handkerchief or two with repentant tears, and that Tom should sit on a very uncomfortable seat and call himself hard names for five or ten minutes before she relented.

“Come, now, do say a word to a fellow. I’m getting the worst of it, anyway; for there’s Fan, crying her eyes out upstairs, and here are you stowed away in a dark closet as dumb as a fish, and nobody but me to bring you both round. I’d have cut over to the Smythes and got ma home to fix things, only it looked like backing out of the scrape; so I didn’t,” said Tom, as a last appeal.

Polly was glad to hear that Fan was crying. It would do her good; but she couldn’t help softening to Tom, who did seem in a predicament between two weeping damsels. A little smile began to dimple the cheek that wasn’t hidden, and then a hand came slowly out from under the curly head, and was stretched toward him silently. Tom was just going to give it a hearty shake, when he saw a red mark on the wrist, and knew what made it. His face changed, and he took the chubby hand so gently, that Polly peeped to see what it meant.

“Will you forgive that, too?” he asked, in a whisper, stroking the red wrist.

“Yes; it don’t hurt much now.” And Polly drew her hand away, sorry he had seen it.

“I was a beast, that’s what I was!” said Tom, in a tone of great disgust; and just at that awkward minute down tumbled his father’s old beaver over his head and face, putting a comical quencher on his self-reproaches.

Of course, neither could help laughing at that; and when he emerged, Polly was sitting up, looking as much better for her shower as he did for his momentary eclipse.

“Fan feels dreadfully. Will you kiss and be friends, if I trot her down?” asked Tom, remembering his fellow-sinner.

“I’ll go to her.” And Polly whisked out of the closet as suddenly as she had whisked in, leaving Tom sitting on the bootjack, with a radiant countenance.

How the girls made it up no one ever knew; but after much talking and crying, kissing and laughing, the breach was healed, and peace declared. A slight haze still lingered in the air after the storm, for Fanny was very humble and tender that evening; Tom a trifle pensive, but distressingly polite, and Polly magnanimously friendly to everyone; for generous natures like to forgive, and Polly enjoyed the petting after the insult, like a very human girl.

As she was brushing her hair at bedtime there came a tap on her door, and, opening it, she beheld nothing but a tall black bottle, with a strip of red flannel tied round it like a cravat, and a cocked-hat note on the cork. Inside were these lines, written in a sprawling hand with very black ink:

DEAR POLLY – Opydilldock is first-rate for sprains. You put a lot on the flannel and do up your wrist, and I guess it will be all right in the morning. Will you come a sleigh-ride tomorrow? I’m awful sorry I hurt you.

*TOM.*

## Chapter 6

### Grandma

“Where’s Polly?” asked Fan one snowy afternoon, as she came into the dining room where Tom was reposing on the sofa with his boots in the air, absorbed in one of those delightful books in which boys are cast away on desert islands, where every known fruit, vegetable and flower is in its prime all the year round; or, lost in boundless forests, where the young heroes have thrilling adventures, kill impossible beasts, and, when the author’s invention gives out, suddenly find their way home, laden with tiger skins, tame buffaloes and other pleasing trophies of their prowess.

“Dun no,” was Tom’s brief reply, for he was just escaping from an alligator of the largest size.

“Do put down that stupid book, and let’s do something,” said Fanny, after a listless stroll round the room.

“Hi, they’ve got him!” was the only answer vouchsafed by the absorbed reader.

“Where’s Polly?” asked Maud, joining the party with her hands full of paper dolls all suffering for ball-dresses.

“Do get along, and don’t bother me,” cried Tom, exasperated at the interruption.

“Then tell us where she is. I’m sure you know, for she was down here a little while ago,” said Fanny.

“Up in grandma’s room, maybe.”

“Provoking thing! You knew it all the time, and didn’t tell, just to plague us,” scolded Maud.

But Tom was now under water stabbing his alligator, and took no notice of the indignant departure of the young ladies.

“Polly’s always poking up in grandma’s room. I don’t see what fun there is in it,” said Fanny as they went upstairs.

“Polly’s a verwy queer girl, and gwandma pets her a gweat deal more than she does me,” observed Maud, with an injured air.

“Let’s peek and see what they are doing,” whispered Fan, pausing at the half-open door.

Grandma was sitting before a quaint old cabinet, the doors of which stood wide open, showing glimpses of the faded relics treasured there. On a stool, at the old lady’s feet, sat Polly, looking up with intent face and eager eyes, quite absorbed in the history of a high-heeled brocade shoe which lay in her lap.

“Well, my dear,” grandma was saying, “she had it on the very day that Uncle Joe came in as she sat at work, and said, ‘Dolly, we must be married at once.’ ‘Very well, Joe,’ says Aunt Dolly, and down she went to the parlor, where the minister was waiting, never stopping to change the dimity dress she wore, and was actually married with her scissors and pin-ball at her side, and her thimble on. That was in war times, 1812, my dear, and Uncle Joe was in the army, so he had to go, and he took that very little pin-ball with him. Here it is, with the mark of a bullet through it, for he always said his Dolly’s cushion saved his life.”

“How interesting that is!” cried Polly, as she examined the faded cushion with the hole in it.

“Why, grandma, you never told me that story,” said Fanny, hurrying in, finding the prospect was a pleasant one for a stormy afternoon.

“You never asked me to tell you anything, my dear, so I kept my old stories to myself,” answered grandma, quietly.

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