

# THE LADIES' HOME JOURNAL

Vol. XIII, No. 5

PHILADELPHIA, APRIL, 1896

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTIONS, ONE DOLLAR  
SINGLE COPIES, TEN CENTS

COPYRIGHT, 1896, BY THE CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY

ENTERED AT THE PHILADELPHIA POST-OFFICE AS SECOND-CLASS MATTER

## LOUISA MAY ALCOTT'S LETTERS TO FIVE GIRLS

WRITTEN BY HER TWENTY-FOUR YEARS AGO

NOW EDITED AND PRINTED FOR THE FIRST TIME

By Edward W. Bok

[By Special Permission of Miss Alcott's Heirs]

HERE was a delightful disclosure when Louisa M. Alcott's "Life and Letters," by Mrs. Edna D. Cheney, was published a few years ago. Affluent as that extraordinary nature had been felt to be by all who had known her through her books, it was a yet deeper sympathy, a still more fascinating freshness, which she revealed in the free play of her correspondence. Outside of that volume the following are the only letters of Miss Alcott's which have been given to the public.

Nor is the story which attaches itself to the letters of scarcely less interest than the letters. It is the story of twenty-four years ago, when a small girl living in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, read Miss Alcott's "Little Women." The child was much impressed with the book, particularly with that part of the story where the author represents the "March girls" as writing the "Pickwick Portfolio." The thought instantly came to the youthful reader to copy the example of the "March girls," and the idea was laid before her four sisters. By them it was enthusiastically received, and it was not long before the five little girls began their career as journalists. In a few months the first two numbers of their paper were issued, but only in manuscript. Then the father of the youthful editors became interested, bought some type and a small printing press, and in a short time the first printed issue of "Little Things" appeared, edited by Carrie, Maggie, Nellie, Emma and Helen Lukens, the eldest of whom was barely seventeen. The first printed issue consisted of four pages.

It was only natural that the young journalists should wish to send one of the first copies of their paper to Miss Alcott, and so a copy was dispatched to the author of "Little Women," with an explanation of the circumstances which had led to the starting of the enterprise.

In a few days came an acknowledgment from Miss Alcott—the first of this series of letters:

CONCORD, August, 3, 1872.

My Dear Little Women: I will certainly answer your pleasant letter and very gladly subscribe to your paper, although it has not yet arrived. My two little men at once demanded it, and were much impressed by the idea of girls having a printing press and getting out a "truly paper." I admire your pluck and perseverance, and heartily believe in women's right to any branch of labor for which they prove their fitness. Work is such a beautiful and helpful thing and independence so delightful that I wonder there are any lazy people in the world. I hope you preach that doctrine in your paper, not in the rampant Women's Rights fashion, but by showing how much women can do even in attending skillfully and cheerfully to the little things that have such an influence on home-life, and through it upon the world outside. I should like to see that printing office of yours, and the five sisters getting out their paper. Won't you tell me about it, for I find it more interesting than the famous Riverside Printing House, and so do Demi and Daisy, who went to see it the other day? Do you let any one write for your paper but yourselves? Which of you is editor, and don't you have great fun over it? Please present my respects to the father of the five happy girls, and with the best wishes for the success of the paper, believe me very sincerely your friend and fellow-worker,  
LOUISA M. ALCOTT.

It was only to be expected that the young editors should have become perplexed about financial matters, and who was more likely to straighten them out than Miss Alcott? So in a subsequent letter the young editors asked about the prices paid for stories, and, with frankness, their wise counselor replied:

CONCORD, September 4, 1873.

Dear Girls: You ask about little stories. Well, Mr. Ford, of "The Youth's Companion," pays fifty dollars apiece for them, much more than they are worth, of course, but he says he pays for the name, and seems satisfied with his bargain. I write for nothing else except a tale for "The Independent" now and then, which brings one hundred dollars. This winter I shall write for "Scribner's," at their request, as I

have no book on the stocks. For you, I will, if I have time, write a tale or sketch now and then for love, not money, and if the name is of any use you are very welcome to it. I remember the dear little "Pickwick Portfolio" of twenty years ago, and the spirit of an editor stirs within me prompting me to lend a hand to a sister editor. I like to help women help themselves, as that is, in my opinion, the best way to settle the woman question. Whatever we can do and do well we have a right to, and I don't think any one will deny us. So best wishes for the success of "Little Things" and its brave young proprietors. Yours truly,  
LOUISA M. ALCOTT.



ONE OF THE LAST, AND MOST ACCEPTABLE, OF MISS ALCOTT'S PORTRAITS

P. S. I did not like the suicide in "Work," but as much of that chapter was true I let it stand as a warning to several people who need it to my knowledge, and to many whom I do not know. I have already had letters from strangers thanking me for it, so I am not sorry it went in. One must have both the dark and the light side to paint life truly. I send you the last style of photograph I have, not very good, but you can't make a Venus out of a tired old lady.

UPON receiving the photograph of their valued friend the youthful editors felt that their portraits should be sent in return, and within a few days came the reply:

CONCORD, September 20, 1873.

Dear Sisters: I waited till the five were all here before I sent my thanks for them. They make a very pretty little "landscape," as Jo used to say, all in a group on my table, and I am glad to show such a posy of bright, enterprising girls. Long may they wave! My Marmee, though very feeble now, was much pleased at your message, and said, in her motherly way, as she looked at the five faces, "Little dears, I wish I could see 'em all and do something for 'em." Perhaps some of these summers we may see a band of pilgrims coming up to our door, and then the three old "March girls" and the five young L— ditto will sit in a bunch and spin yarns. Play we do. Of one thing let me, an old scribbler, warn you: Don't write with steel pens or you will get what is called "writer's cramp," and lose the use of your thumb, as I have. I have to wobble around with two fingers while my absurd thumb is folded under and no good for pen work, though all right for other things. Look at my wild scribbles and use cork pen-holders or gold pens, and don't write fourteen hours at a stretch, as I used to do. I'm glad there is ironing and preserving to rest the busy brains with good wholesome work. I believe in it so heartily that I sweep my eight rooms twice a week, iron and scrub round for health sake, as I have found it better medicine than any doctor ever gave me. Keep the bodies strong and healthy and the nerves won't get out of order or the spirits turn blue. Old ladies will advise. With many thanks and best love, I am yours truly,  
L. M. A.

P. S. You may like to know that my Polish boy, Laddie (or Laurie), has turned up in New York alive and well with a wife and "little two daughters," as he says in his funny English. He is coming to see me, and I expect to find my romantic boy a stout papa, the glory all gone. Isn't it sad?

As I can't give or lend you the dear old original, I send you a picture of Marmee, taken some ten or fifteen years ago. She is much changed now, wears caps and is old and broken sadly.

MERRILY did the exchange of letters keep up. A more delightfully characteristic letter than this one it would be hard to imagine:

BOSTON, October 2, 1873.

Dear Girls: I am writing a story, but it is not about you, however, for I did not know enough to do it. I shall like anything you may choose to send me about your paper and yourselves, as I may like to use it some time. I shall not go West this fall as I am not well enough to travel. My father has already started, but I am in my winter den, 17 Beacon Street, Boston, spinning away at "The Ant Hill" or "Rose and the Rest"—haven't decided which the name shall be. I'm afraid it will be a dull story, for my head is not in it a bit and my bones ache like fun most of the time. However, as I wrote "Little Women" with one arm in a sling, my head tied up and one foot in misery, perhaps pain has a good effect upon my works. \*I sympathize with the disappointment of your friends on seeing my picture, for I remember I was so upset when I saw Frederika Bremer, whose books I loved, that my sister, Nan, and I went into the closet and cried, though we were great girls of sixteen and eighteen. Why people will think "Jo" small when she is described as tall, I don't see; and why insist that she must be young when she is said to be thirty at the end of the book? After seeing the photograph it is hardly necessary to say that "Jo" and L. M. A. are not one, and that the latter is a tired-out old lady of forty-two with nothing left of her youth but a yard or more of chestnut hair that won't turn gray, though it is time it did. Yes, I got your letter about the paper, and though I was sorry to lose the little sheet, I think you are wise to give it up. As you are in the business I'll tell you that I'm going to write "Youth's Companion" a serial of six chapters this winter. A temperance tale, so if you have any facts to contribute, pray do so. With love to all the sisters, I am, as ever, your friend,  
L. M. A.

If you come to Boston do not forget to call upon me.

ILLNESS and the death of her mother came into Miss Alcott's life, and although the sisters wrote to their kind friend, only a few brief lines came at irregular intervals. Then she wrote her mother's memoir, and for a longer time the correspondence was interrupted. The little paper had been given up by the sisters, one of whom had died, and this latter fact, when written to Miss Alcott, immediately brought forth a reply:

BOSTON, January 14, 1884.

Dear M—: I have not forgotten my five sisters, and was glad to hear from them again, though sincerely grieved to learn that one of the dear group had gone. I know how hard it is to spare these dear sisters, having lost two, and how empty the world seems for a long time. But faith, submission and work sustain, cheer and help so much that after the first sharpness of the loss is over, we often find a very sweet and precious tie still binds us even more tenderly together than when the visible presence was here. Beth and May are always mine, although twenty-five years have passed since we laid the poor shadow of one under the pines at Concord, and the dust of the other sleeps far away in Paris. Both are young and bright, and live so always in my mind, for the pain and the parting, the years and the sea are all as nothing, and I see them safe with Marmee waiting for the rest to come. May's blooming baby, which she gave me with all of her lovely pictures, is a great comfort to me, and promises to be as full of courage, talent and nobility as her gifted mother. I am so busy helping little Louisa May Nieriker live her own sweet story that I find no time to write others, and am settling down to be a cozy old granny with my specs and knitting. My dear old father, now eighty-four, is quite helpless and feeble in mind, but serene and happy as a child, suffering little, but waiting cheerfully to slip away in God's good time after a long and blameless life.

You speak of "breaking away"; if it can be dutifully and wisely done, I think girls should see a little of the world, try their own powers, and keep well and cheerful, mind



MARMEE

\*One of the "little girls," writing in explanation to me of this paragraph, says: "I do not know what we girls had the presumption to say to prompt this from Miss Alcott. But, of course, we were very young and inexperienced."—EDITOR.



The portrait of Miss Alcott which so disappointed her young correspondents [See letter dated October 2, 1873]

THE YOUNG MAN ENTERING LIFE

By Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, D. D.

**A** YOUNG man needs to enter life equipped for rough weather. However much of calm may prevail on land it usually blows out at sea. The most serious question the novice can ask of himself is how he is going to keep from being a cast-away. I am not using that term with any reference to his being lost hereafter, but with reference to his being wrecked here. I am not preaching, but only stating a commonplace when I say that a man who submits to the current always goes down-stream. Nobody ever drifts up-stream. Running water never stops till it gets to the bottom, unless something dams it. Likewise a drifting boat never stops till it reaches the sea, unless it founders, runs aground or drops anchor. A considerable part of a young man's preliminary interest will, therefore, need to concern itself with anchorages. If he lived in a world where everything was fixed, and if his life brought him into no connection with drafts and currents, then he would have only to remain languidly and unconcernedly where he is, sublimely reliant upon his own *vis inertiae*. On the contrary, everything is afloat. We are all loaded with responsiveness and harnessed up with gravitations. Everything is magnetic needle, and everything else magnetic pole endlessly plucking at that needle. Life without this arrangement would be death, but life with it is all the time on the edge of disaster and continually getting over the edge. If we could decide that certain currents should produce no pressure upon us, and if, then, result would wait on our decision, the problem would be freed from a good many of its uncomfortable elements. But the captain at sea has to take things just as they come. Deciding not to have his boat retarded by the Gulf stream when he is coming down the coast does not expedite him, nor does a decision not to be obstructed by the northeast wind when he is sailing up the coast. And resolutions on land are just as useless as they are at sea. Resolution is facing in a certain direction, but it is not getting there, and does not necessarily imply any ability to get there.

**O**NE of the most expensive and disastrous mistakes a young man ever makes is in supposing that a decision, a resolution, contains in itself the means of working its own execution, and that something beside power will suffice to overcome power. I am not moralizing at all, but simply handling one or two of the facts of personal life in the same blunt way in which I would talk about the working of a water-wheel or of a steam engine. The art of living is not a matter of resolution, but it is a genius for playing off successfully favorable energies against those which are adverse, meeting energies with energies, only with energies that are a little bigger, very much as the engineer beats the gravity of the train by the push at the piston. So that the man who is anxious not to be taken off his feet must make it an important part of his equipment to get in the range of opposite forces that will hold him erect and keep him in safe water. Young men of parts often conclude that the principle just stated does not apply to themselves, for the reason that they are personally so weighty as to be inherently equal to any emergency. Perhaps, on the contrary, their weightiness only aggravates the difficulty. Increasing the weight of a rolling boulder not only diminishes but accelerates the speed of its descent. One needs to be a great man in order to be able to become a great wreck. It requires a great deal more counter energy to recover a rowboat that is sliding down the Niagara rapids than it does to recover a cockleshell. The more there is in a man the more substance there is for untoward attractions to fasten themselves upon. One needs only to know something about the laws and forces that prevail in the physical world to appreciate this, for in these matters the physical and the personal kingdoms are only opposite sides of the same thing; and whether it is a man or a steamship the bigger the bulk the greater the momentum of the drift downward. It requires no great amount of thinking, then, to understand that if we are under the pull of one set of influences operating to drag us on to shallows or breakers, our only refuge is in getting in under the mastery of another set, and, if possible, a stronger set.

EDITOR'S NOTE—The third of a series of articles by Dr. Parkhurst addressed to young men, which began in the JOURNAL of February, 1896, and will continue throughout the year.

**W**HEN calculating the prospects of a young man, and the likelihood of his being able to go through life without being taken off his feet, I always want to know whether he stands for anything in particular. A written sentence may be mere words or it may mean something. So a young man may be only a mixture of body and soul or he may mean something (that combination of body and soul may stand as the expression of an idea). He may be some truth incarnate, so that when you meet him you feel that you are encountering that truth, and when he talks to you you have somehow the notion that truth is addressing you and arguing itself out with you. We none of us have to look far to find such men. There may be a certain stringency and aggressiveness about them sometimes that makes them uncomfortable, a kind of directness about them that makes them inevitable, but there is no mistaking their meaning. They are an idea become flesh, a doctrine, a theory, dressed in human apparel. The feature in the case of interest to us just now is that a man so conditioned is not likely to lose his way nor to founder. The point is not that he has mastered the idea, but that the idea has mastered him, and in that way counteracts the influences operating to pull him in other ways. All of that is illustrated in the case of a young man in my congregation, in regard to whom his father said to me the other day: "John is perfectly possessed with the prohibition idea; I cannot tell whether he will make anything out of it or not, but I have the satisfaction of knowing that so long as that idea keeps its hold upon him he will never go astray nor get into any mischief." That gives the whole philosophy of the matter in a single sentence.

**T**HERE are a great many meaningless men in the community, and what that means is that while they have the intelligence to understand an idea, and the heart to feel it, yet the idea never gets so close to them as to have its reality tremendously experienced by them. We do not win our strength and stability by mastering ideas, but by being mastered by them, held in their grip. A man never really knows what there is in him, how much he can do or how much he can withstand till he gets fairly in under just such governance. I am convinced that there is nowhere nearly the amount of difference between people in point of personal calibre that is ordinarily supposed. It is not so much a difference in personal capacities and energies as it is a difference in the degree in which those energies become packed upon one another and reduced to solidity. Even on a cold day one can pick up a sunbeam and burn a hole through white oak with it if the lens is in good order with which the beam is focused. It is second only to the power of Pentecost to come so close to a truth or to a situation as to have that situation actually touch us and burn its way down into the sensitive nerve of our being. The trouble with people, nine out of ten of them, is that they stand on insulators and watch the play of the lightning through drawn shutters, and never stand out and let the electric storm play in their own bosoms. It is by an inward experience of the storm that men can be held fast in the midst of the storm. Nerve varies directly as the square of the distance that there is between us and the reality we are handling.

**S**TILL more apparent does the working of this principle become when for the word idea I substitute the word purpose. Purpose at once suggests the notion that the person whom it actuates is in motion toward an end; and a person moving toward an end, like a rifle-ball toward a target, is less easily managed and directed than when he is standing still. Indeed the more rapid its motion the more difficult it is to change its direction, and the less effect influences that happen to lie along its route will have upon it. Now what momentum is in the rifle-ball, purpose is in a man—it tends to hold him steadily to the track he is on; and the more vigorous the rush of intention with which he is following that track the more it will take to retard him or derail him. Hence the more intense and engrossing a man's purpose—if it is a purpose of good—the safer he is, and if he has no purpose of the kind he is not safe at all. Without it he is spoil for any and every diverting influence that may happen to light upon him, and of such diverting influences the air is all the time full.

**I**T seems to me very much as though our moral and religious teachers are not as cognizant of the peculiarity of human nature in this particular as they ought to be, and as would be much to the advantage of young people. I urge upon such ones the necessity of forsaking their evil ways and being good. There is an ethical flavor about all such mode of representation that passes easy muster with the conscience, but without interesting much the people to whom it is addressed and without doing much for them. If you appeal to a man to jump the Hudson River he will listen to you with a show of respect if your appeal is cleverly put, but, nevertheless, you will not get him across the river. No one ever gets anywhere except as he avails of some means of transport. So if our young people are to be drawn out from the midst of the clutch of small and tainted passions and motives it will have to be done by their being lassoed by the noose of a large and dominating intention. To have a magnificent purpose, and to be thoroughly wedded to that purpose, is three-quarters of salvation. It is sad to reflect how much motiveless insipidity there is around among us that is steadily resolving itself into ethical rot for no other reason than that it has never been awakened into vigor and electrified into effect by the touch of a supreme purpose. The capabilities of these people are equal to the capabilities of other people, but no living nerve of keen design perforates those capabilities in a way to save them from relaxing into moral putrefaction. Set over against these the case of Moses seeking the emancipation of the Hebrews, and so monopolized by his scheme that he said he was willing to be blotted out of God's book of remembrance if his dear countrymen could not be delivered; or the case of St. Paul so devoted to the cause of saving his people that he declared he would rather be damned than not have his efforts succeed. How much effect would the small temptations, that existed in those old days just as plentifully and divertingly as they do in our days, have to swing either the prophet of Sinai or the apostle of Tarsus and Damascus out into the petty and tainted world of selfish and mean desire? I have not illustrated by Moses and St. Paul because they are Bible characters, but because every one knows enough of them to feel the cogency of the illustration. It would have been morally impossible for either of those heroes of faith and of service to have become in any way degenerate, because they were held fast under the inspiration of a sublime endeavor.

**A**ND there is one other influence essential to the maintenance, in a young man, of an erect life, and that is, the stimulus and governance that come from the personal inspirations of a life that is larger than his own. As already seen, we get a great deal from an idea, and still more from a purpose, but real inspiration never proceeds from anything that is of the neuter gender, and St. Paul stated it in a way that the world has never forgotten when he said I know whom (not what, but whom) I have believed. I do not quote him here because the fact he was expressing was a religious one, but because he states in so terse a way that it was personal pressure, and not something impersonal, that made out the material of his own strength and fixity. John Stuart Blackie uttered the same truth at a different level of experience when he wrote: "To have felt the thrill of a fervid humanity shoot through your veins at the touch of a Chalmers, a Macleod, or a Bunsen, is to a young man of fine susceptibility worth more than all the wisdom of the Greeks, all the learning of the Germans, and all the sagacity of the Scotch." Any young man is not only unfortunate, but in danger, who is not related to some great overshadowing soul in something the same way in which the original Apostles were related to the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Such souls are to us in the nature of a personal baptism. They not only fill us, they sweeten us and steady us. They become life and impulse within us. They lift us into ranges of experience and possibilities of effect that are otherwise denied us. That was all expressed in the famous tribute that Garfield paid to Mark Hopkins. It is not what such kingly spirits say to us, nor what they do before us, but what by some sort of Pentecostal process they are able to become within us that constitutes the real service they render. I had a good many professors in college who taught me things, but hardly more than one that so made himself over to me as to leave me richer and safer than he found me. The others may have done something toward making me a mathematical or a linguistic expert, but there was one who was to me a personal inspiration, and who did for me and for my classmates on human ground what was done for spirit-baptized disciples in the olden time, when they were able to think with a wisdom and walk with a steadfastness begotten in them by the powers above.

C. H. Parkhurst.



INFANCY

What does it mean to the mother who cannot nurse her own babe? Without NESTLÉ'S FOOD it means anxiety, worry, the health, perhaps the life of her baby. Those mothers who use NESTLÉ'S FOOD tell of healthy, strong, vigorous children—ask some of them—their experience is worth more to you than our tale of facts.

Nestlé's Food is prepared with water only. Scarlet Fever, Tuberculosis, Typhoid Fever and other deadly disease germs are conveyed in cow's milk. Our "Book for Mothers," full of valuable hints to mothers, and a sample can of Nestlé's Food, free.

THOS. LEEMING & CO., 73 Warren St., New York  
SOLE AGENTS FOR

NESTLÉ'S FOOD



Hawthorne Tissue

An entirely new wash-fabric with delicate corded effects and mohair finish. About the weight of grass-linens, cool and light, they are the most desirable and fashionable goods for summer gowns.

ABERFOYLE MFG. CO.

Higgins & Seiter  
Fine China Rich @ Glass

"BUY CHINA and GLASS RIGHT"

By importing direct from all the leading factories of the world, availing ourselves of every possible discount, and being under moderate rent, we can, and do sell High-Class China, etc., at least 25 per cent. less than any other house in the United States. Our Illustrated Catalogue, No. 6-G, will help to prove it.

Send for it, FREE

50 & 52 West 22nd St. NEW YORK  
170 Bellevue Ave. NEWPORT R. I.