

THE CHASE OF THE GINGERBREAD MAN

By Ella M. White

ONCE, when a baker in Fairyville
Was making cakes, as bakers will,
He made, and put by itself in a pan,
A dear little, queer little gingerbread man.

By-and-by, when the cakes were brown,
He opened the oven; when nimbly down
Hopped the queer little man, and blinking his eyes,
Called out to the baker, who stared in surprise:
"Run, run! fast as you can!
Can't catch me, little gingerbread man!"

The baker ran, his wife ran, too,
And puss started up with a brave "Meow, meow!"
Old Rover ran with a gruff "Bow-wow!"
Followed by Brindle, the staid old cow.
The horse broke out of the barn with a neigh,
But he heard the echo from far away:
"Run, run! fast as you can!
Can't catch me, little gingerbread man!"

Man and woman, horse and cow,
Dog and cat were after him now,
But none could run as fast as he,
And over his shoulder he called in glee:
"Run, run! fast as you can!
Can't catch me, little gingerbread man!"

But a wolf crept out of the woods at last,
And wolves, he knew, could run so fast,
Yet he hurried on, and bravely cried,
Just as the wolf bounded up by his side:
"Run, run! fast as you can!
Can't catch me, little gingerbread man!"

The great gray wolf took a bite, just one,
The gingerbread man was one-fourth gone.
A second bite took him up to the waist,
Just half was gone and 'twas only a taste.
Still another bite took him up to the throat,
And now three-fourths was gone, you'll note.
Then he swallowed the head, as away he ran,
And that was the last of the gingerbread man.



DRAWN BY H. C. IRELAND

MAY ALCOTT LOUISA ALCOTT MR. ALCOTT

MRS. ALCOTT

ANNA ALCOTT

"MAY, IN THE HIGHEST SPIRITS, WOULD SWOOP TO
THE STOOL, AND ALL WOULD FALL TO DANCING."

WHEN LOUISA ALCOTT WAS A GIRL

By Edward W. Emerson

[The son of Ralph Waldo Emerson, himself a boy when Louisa Alcott was a girl, tells here of the frolics and romps of the young people of Concord. His recital takes us into the girl life of Miss Alcott, shows the atmosphere in which she was brought up, and points out the healthy lesson of how the most joyous merrymakings of young people can be had simply.—The Editor.]

IN THE year 1840 a remarkable family moved to Concord; high-minded, cultivated, exceedingly poor, despised by most persons, welcomed by one or two; apparently so ill fitted to fight the world's fight that failure was sure. Yet they won, in the end, respect, recognition, success, and their name is honorably associated with that of the town.

The head of that family, Amos Bronson Alcott, began life as a peddler, but a call came so strongly to him, like that which Jesus gave to certain poor fishers to become teachers of a better life than they found, that he felt justified in obeying the Master's command to them: "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

The Alcotts' Humble Home in Concord

MR. ALCOTT began to teach in a better sense than the schools of New England then recognized. He appealed to the intellect, the conscience, the imagination, discovering for himself methods that advanced teachers strive to introduce to-day, held to these at a loss, and finally had his Boston school wrecked and was himself almost mobbed for being in advance of his day. In his school, and later, on a day of public shame, he bravely espoused, even at the risk of influence and of life, the cause of the poor slaves.

It is of his family that I am to tell here, but their extraordinary nurture and home surroundings must be known to rightly value their interesting personalities and their life together. From that life the best of lessons may be read, which may be helpful alike to those who in their youth had trials and opportunities like theirs, and to those who have every advantage which they had not. In the glimpses that I shall give of this family this point is best worth heeding: that with beliefs, tastes and aims differing so widely as to make domestic harmony seem impossible, courage, respect for each other and love won the day, and kept father, mother and children a united family, and if with suffering, also with happiness. After the loss of his school Mr. Alcott brought his noble

wife (a sister of Samuel May, justly called one of the Heralds of Freedom) and his four little daughters to Concord. He gardened, let himself out for day's work to farmers, and gave conversations as opportunity offered. Because of poverty, and also of his brave attempt, in a world not bred to Golden Age methods, to revive that blameless life, and live on the herb of the soil and the fruit of the tree, with water from the spring; and clothe the body in linen wrought from the blue-flowered flax, not murdering, robbing nor enslaving the animals, nor yet becoming partners in human slavery by the use of sugar, spice and cotton—all stimulants whatever were also forborne—their housekeeping was not easy for the wife to manage, and alarmingly frugal for a cold zone. The conditions of family life were hard. As a compensation its simplicity saved time for purposes that were worth while. Mrs. Alcott made it a rule to rise early enough in the morning to get through all the work in the forenoon, so that after dinner was cleared away she should have a long afternoon to devote to her children. She meant that life should be rich enough in the gifts that the woods, the flowers, the skies, stories and games and poems had for them to make up for what they had not, so that poverty should not darken their young lives. She was not only loving and sympathetic, but she had a well-stored, fertile mind. From her they learned to depend on themselves for good times, and their imaginations were quickened.

Louisa Alcott's Gifts Were Early Disclosed

LOUISA when very young used to tell fairy stories to my sister in the woods, and later wrote others and sent them to her. These were gathered in her first book, "Flower Fables." A great taste for acting and skill in devising and producing wonderful romantic plays soon showed itself. Love, despair, witchcraft, villainy, fairy intervention, triumphant right, held sway in turn. In those days a red scarf, a long cloak, a big hat with a plume stolen from a bonnet, a paper-knife dagger, a scrap of tinsel from a button-card, a little gold paper for Royalty, tissue paper stretched on wire hoops for fairy wings, produced superb effects. Sheets pinned on the

clothesline, a clotheshorse, a sarsenet-cambrie curtain, a few little pine trees in stands, supplemented by proper common-sense in the audience, would give castles, enchanted forests, caves and ladies' bowers. Barns, because of their well-known possibilities for desperate but safe leaps from beams, and the advantages for disappearance offered by mangers, were the first theatres. The zeal of the mother in helping on her children's little plans appears in a touching sentence in a story of Louisa's, where she describes the preparation for a school masquerade such as we had later. The fathers might grudge expense, "But the mothers, whose interest in their children's pleasure is a sort of evergreen that no frost of time can kill, sewed spangles by the bushel, made wildernesses of tissue-paper blossom as the rose, kept tempers sweet, stomachs full, and domestic machinery working smoothly through it all by that maternal magic which makes them the human Providences of this naughty world."

The Friends and Companions of the Alcott Girls

FROM tragedy and melodrama the girls were led to comedy by the delights of Dickens, and thereafter they especially shone in dramatized bits of his work. As they grew up they fully appreciated the humorous side of the strange specimens, communists, anti-money and anti-marriage men, sun-believers and the like, who came to their door and tarried for a time, for Mr. Alcott had a most catholic hospitality. It was especially at Fruitlands, a Golden Age community of philosophers that wilted at winter's first frost (by no means golden, however, for poor Mrs. Alcott), that these pilgrims gathered. Thence the family, with fortune at lowest ebb, returned to Concord, but left it in 1848 and lived for a time in Boston, and then in Walpole, New Hampshire; but Anna and Louisa tried their fortunes as teachers in Syracuse and Boston, and so saw something of the world.

In the autumn of 1857 the Alcotts returned to Concord, but in sadness, for Lizzie, the good girl of whom one of her playmates lately spoke to me as "all conscience," was fading away after an attack of scarlet fever in Walpole, where her mother had gone to the aid of a poor family afflicted with the dreadful sickness, to see that the children were not neglected. The loss of their daughter, the following spring, was, as has been well said, "the result of one of those generous acts which the Alcotts performed as constantly and as inevitably as most persons perform acts of self-interest."

At that time Mr. Sanborn's school had lately been established in Concord, which brought to town a bright

