

## Elsie's Aptitude

(By Isabella M. Andrews, in 'Youth's Companion'.)

Pretty Kitty Kenyon, with a bag of books in one hand and a box of candy in the other, ran through the halls of one of the 'overflow' dormitories of Finlay College one bright October day, gave a peculiar knock at several carefully selected doors, tossed among the peaceful occupants a bombshell in the startling announcement, 'Council of War in Sparrow's Nest, two o'clock, sharp!' and vanished amid a shower of questions, exclamations, reproaches, and appeals for candy.

It was half-past one then, and two o'clock saw half a dozen girls, respectfully curious over Elsie Sparrows' reddened eyes, assembled for the council, Kitty presiding with great dignity.

'You have been called together, ladies,' she began, impressively, 'for purposes of consultation and aid in a most trying case. Oh, girls,' she went on, and this was as long as Kitty's dignity usually lasted, 'Elsie's father has lost all his money, and she thinks she will have to leave college! Now, the question is, Aren't any of us bright enough to think of any way she can earn some money and stay?'

There were cries of sympathy and distress all around the room, and Elsie, with tears flowing again, and Mary and Mabel and Edith and Alice and Kitty and Gertrude all besieging her with questions and commiseration, began to feel some consolation for her troubles in the importance they brought her.

'It isn't as if I could do anything great and glorious to help things out at home,' she said, at length. 'If I could, I wouldn't mind leaving college so much; but Grace is at home, and mamma is going to send our old Ellen away—and she's been with us ever since I can remember, and mamma and Grace are going to get on alone. So I'm not really needed. Mamma and papa hate dreadfully to take me out of college when I'm so nearly through, but mamma says they don't feel as if they could spare the money for my expenses this year, though it seems to me that my leaving now only postpones the time when I could help myself, and so help them—unless I could get a school now, which is unlikely; and my tuition paid through the first half, too!'

'No tuition will be refunded after a student has actually entered college,' said Gertrude Miller, gloomily, quoting from the catalogue. 'Each student will provide herself with four sheets, two pairs of pillow-cases, six towels, one napkin-ring, etc.' I hope your things will be refunded to you, Elsie.'

'She isn't gone yet,' said Kitty, hopefully. 'Go on, Elsie. Real ladies will not interrupt. All others requested not to.'

'Well, girls, you can imagine I was perfectly crushed when the letter came,' continued Elsie, obediently, 'and I had no idea of doing anything but packing my trunk and going home—'

'And leave us!' 'And leave the class of '95!' 'Oh, Elsie!' chorused the various sopranos, regardless of Kitty's threatening eye.

'But Kitty said, couldn't I stay if I could pay my own expenses, and I said I supposed I could, if I could write a book or marry a lord, which would be better. But she thought those were both impracticable; and, if I can only stay and graduate, I know I can teach next year. So that's what Kitty called you in for.'



LITTLE RUSSIANS.

'What?' came the soprano chorus.

'Why, to see how she could pay her own expenses, of course,' explained Kitty, briskly. 'Aren't we always reading about some wonderful creature that takes herself or himself through college by tutoring, or typewriting, or sawing wood, or some such way? Can't we fight it out on this line? Aren't we just as good as girls in a book or a newspaper paragraph? There must be something Elsie can do. All we need is to find it out.'

'I read once of a girl that went through Vassar by mending and sewing for other girls,' suggested Mabel Ransom, hesitatingly.

Even Elsie joined in the general laugh, and said, 'That's very helpful to a poor incompetent who can barely sew on a shoe-button, and who quails in abject despair before a three-cornered tear. Try again, somebody. My spirits are sinking every minute, and what I'm really thinking of is the exact location of my trunk key.'

'Well, is there anything you can do, Elsie?' persisted Mabel, undauntedly. 'Because—'

'That isn't the way to begin,' exclaimed Kitty, with sudden inspiration. 'Let's take all the occupations we can possibly think of in alphabetical order, and see which one she fits. Of course there is something she can do, Mabel. Don't be so discouraging. A stands for architect—at least it did on my blocks. Elsie, can you build?'

'I did decide to be a carpenter once when I was a little girl,' said Elsie, rather forlornly, 'and I made a chicken-coop, but it wouldn't hold chickens, and I gave it up. Try B.'

'B,' meditated Kitty. 'B' stands for—' 'Boating,' 'Banking,' came one or two faint voices.

'Begging,' added Elsie, ironically, shaking her head at each. And Kitty, though she saw her plan, which had seemed so feasible a moment ago, in danger of ignominious failure, went courageously on. 'C,' she announced, persuasively. 'What begins with C, girls?'

'Carpentering, just disposed of,' answered Elsie, promptly, 'china-painting, candles, castors, curry, clerking cycling personal conducting, chicken-raising. Anything else, girls? Pass on, Kitty. I can't make or do any of those.'

'Dancing,' suggested Alice Tyrrell, hopefully. 'You could teach that, Elsie, couldn't you?'

'Certainly,' returned Elsie, 'if I knew of anybody that wanted to learn; but as all the girls know as much about it as I do, if not more, and as there are two classes for children in town, I'm afraid the field is full.'

'My mind won't work alphabetically,' said Edith Caldwell. 'I haven't thought of anything but singing and sweeping and teaching and tinkering and painting and tutoring and weaving and fruit-raising, and other thing at the tail-end of the alphabet. I