

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

THE MINISTER'S CAT.

By Annie Hamilton Doanell.

Sylvia, because her new dress buttoned with so many buttons, or because it took Elsie so long to make the great pink bow on one side of her head stand up straight enough, was late. It was her first party—her very first.

"Good-bye, Venus O'Milo!" she said to the beloved cat on the minister's doorstep. Sylvia was the minister's little girl. "Good-bye, an' think o' me when far away. Honest an' true, Venus O'Milo, I'm a little scared."

The party was around two corners, at Mrs. Tewksbury's. Mrs. Tewksbury came to the door.

"You dear little Sylvy!" she cried, welcomingly. "I'm so glad you've come! They've begun a game, but you shall play, too, unless you'd rather sit in my lap and look on and get acquainted."

"Oh, yes, you're welcome!" stammered scared little Sylvia, remembering Elsie's cautions to be polite. "I mean I'd rather."

The players sat in two rows opposite each other. They were laughing gaily.

"The minister's cat is a fierce cat," Virginia Day was saying, as Sylvia went in.

"The minister's cat's a furious cat!" cried the little boy opposite Virginia.

"The minister's cat is a 'fraid cat!" piped a clear little voice, and then everybody laughed like everything—everybody but Sylvia.

"The minister's cat is a funny cat."

"The minister's cat is a foreign cat."

"The minister's cat is a foolish cat."

"The minister's cat is a fussy cat."

Everybody said something dreadful about the minister's cat. Sylvia's lip began to tremble. She felt lumpy in her throat. Still they went on:

"The minister's cat is a fighting cat."

"The minister's cat is a feline cat!" and everybody shouted again.

Sylvia slid out of Mrs. Tewksbury's lap and started toward the door. The lump was getting so much lumpier she did not dare to speak. She had one object in view—to get back to the minister's doorstep and—ah! hug Venus O'Milo. She would call her beautiful, beautiful names; she would say the minister's cat was a darling cat, a precious cat, a dear, lovely, comfortable cat! Venus O'Milo should not be abused!

"Why, Sylvy dear—Sylvy!" Mrs. Tewksbury hurried after her in great concern. "Why, you're crying, you little sweetheart!" she said.

"Yes, thank you. I—I'm going home an' hug the m-minister's cat. I wouldn't have come if I'd known everybody'd be unpolite to her. I love her."

Then Mrs. Tewksbury understood. She did not laugh at all, but took Sylvia up in her lap again and explained.

"It's only a game, dear! The minister's cat' is just the name of it, and it doesn't mean any special cat in the world. First, everybody tries to think of something to say about it that begins with 'a,' then 'b,' 'c,' 'd,' and so on. It's great fun. It just happened that all the 'f' things were 'unpolite,' sweetheart, but nobody meant your cat. Don't you see?"

Sylvia saw plainly, and all her troubles vanished in a flash. The lump disappeared and she began to laugh. She slipped her hand into the big, kind one, and trotted happily back to the shouting children. One voice rose above all the rest, and what do you suppose

"The minister's cat is a first-rate cat!" it was saying?

HOW GIRLS CAN HELP MOTHERS

Every girl, if she be not thoroughly selfish, is anxious to lift some of the burden of household management from her mother's shoulders on to her own; but, unfortunately, many girls wait to be asked to do things instead of being constantly on the lookout for little duties which they are capable of doing.

If you would be of any real use in the home, you must be quick to notice what is wanted—the room that needs dusting, the flowers that need rearranging, the curtain which has lost a ring, and is therefore drooping. And then you must not only be willing to do what is needed but willing to do it pleasantly, without making people feel that you are being martyred.

It is almost useless to take up any household duties unless you do them regularly. If you do a thing one day and not the next, you can never be depended on, and if some one else has to be constantly reminding you of and supervising your work, it probably gives that person more trouble than doing it herself would cause.

Have a definite day and a definite time for all you do. The flower vases will need attention every other day, the silver must be cleaned once a week, and there should be one day kept for mending and putting away household linen. Begin, too, directly after breakfast and keep on steadily till your work is done.

If you begin by sitting down "just for a minute" with a book, or think you will "just arrange the trimming" on your new hat, the morning will be half gone before you know where you are.

A girl who has brothers, may spare her mother all those tiresome little jobs which boys are always requesting to have done for them, if she will only do them kindly. But a boy will not come and ask his sister to repair frayed-out buttonholes, and to make him paste for his photograph album, if she snaps and says he is always bothering. It is not easy work, but it is quite possible for the daughter at home to make sunshine.—Philadelphia Ledger.

THE LOST DOLL.

I once had a sweet little doll, dears,
The prettiest doll in the world;
Her cheeks were so red and so white,
dears,

And her hair was so charmingly curled.
But I lost my poor little doll, dears,
As I played on the beach one day;
And I cried for her more than a week,
dears,

But I could not find where she lay.

I found my poor little doll, dears,
As I played on the beach one day;
Folks say she is terribly changed, dears;
For her paint is all washed away,
And her arm's trodden off by the cows,
dears,

And her hair's not the least bit curled;
Yet, for old time's sake, she is still,
dears,
The prettiest doll in the world.

—From Kingsley's Water Babies.

Mrs. Hersey was unhappy over the stern severity of her new photographs. "Norah," she said to her pretty maid, "do you think this photograph looks like me?" Norah's warm Irish heart came to the rescue. "Shure," Mrs. Hersey, dear," she replied quickly, "if you looked like that would I ever have two afternoons a week?"

"Health brings wealth," but this is another of those rules that will not work both ways.

True humility does good and is silent.

A SUDDEN DECISION.

A day in late autumn was drawing to a close. Already shadows thrown from the rough stone fire place in Widow Murdoch's two-roomed cottage began to dance and flicker upon the low white-washed walls.

This little cottage was perched upon the southern slope of the Grampians, and on bright days its occupants could look over the whole northern slope of Perthshire. But many of the days were not bright, and this special day had been gloomy both within and without. Mrs. Murdoch lay upon a bed, worn and wasted with sickness. Close beside her sat her daughter Isabel, holding her mother's hand and often stooping to leave a kiss upon it. Once she left more than a kiss, for hot tears broke from under her eyelids and fell upon the hands she was caressing.

Then for the first time the stillness of half an hour was broken, and Mrs. Murdoch said, chiding, softly, "Noo, Isabel, you are greetin' again! I have asked ye no to do that. Put up a bit prayer; it surely will compose your mind."

Isabel bowed her head till her face was buried in her mother's pillow, and instead of becoming quieter, sobs as well as tears gave evidence of her sorrow.

"Oh, lass, lass, dinna grieve sae sairly. I thought I'm sure that you had wear up better ner this."

When Isabel became quieter, the mother said, "I have had it intil my mind the hail day to speak to you about Willie Thompson, an' what better time can I have than noo? Ane can aye speak better o' some things when the darkness is on. I will no see your blushes gin you blush, an' you will no see how hard it is upon me to press a point that you are, maybe, loath to consider. Isabel, do you no think it time that Willie had a bit o' encouragement?"

Isabel was silent, and the mother continued: "Willie has been like a son to me for many years, and it has been for your sake. I dinna want to judge you harshly, my bairn, but it is no like you to under-value gude in any ane; yet you gie him no proof that he is appreciated. When I am awa'—"

Here Isabel found her voice, and cried, "Dinna speak o' it, mither!"

"Ay, I maun, an' you maun be reasonable. That is a gude lass. When I am awa', as I was sayin', I wad like you to be in Willie's care. I wad fain see you wedded to him before I gie hence. You surely nanna dislike him?"

"No, mither, but dinna want to break wi' the auld life. You an' I have been sae happy here together! We neede but our twa selves, an' maybe a neighbor drappin' in whiles. I wad fain live on as we hae done."

"That I weel ken wunna be. I am auld, Isabel, an' your father has waited upon the ither side amais as long as you have been in the world. Weel on to thirty years, it is, an' Willie, whom I maun think is your ither sel, has waited sixteen years for you. Ay, sixteen years it is comin' the winter, sin' I have seen the luvie glint in his een when they hae rested upon you. Isabel, it is no wise, and maybe it is no fair."

"You are weary noo, mither, speak nae mair about it. I maun rise up an' mak' a light, for the darkness has come upon us."

She lighted the lamp and stirred the fire, and taking up some custom-work that was almost due, she seated herself at her little sewing-table near her mother's bed. Every few minutes she cast a glance upon that pale face and the closed eyes, feeling that soon they might close to open no more.

But the mother was not sleepy, and