



CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

FIVE LITTLE
PEPPERS GROWN UP

Margaret Sidney

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

Five Little Peppers Grown Up

MARGARET SIDNEY



CONTENTS

1.	POLLY GIVES MUSIC LESSONS.	I
2.	GETTING READY FOR CHRISTMAS.	11
3.	CHRISTMAS AT DUNRAVEN.	21
4.	THE FESTIVITIES.	34
5.	BAD NEWS.	46
6.	OF MANY THINGS.	56
7.	PHRONSIE.	67
8.	POLLY LOOKS OUT FOR CHARLOTTE.	78
9.	POLLY'S RECITAL.	88
10.	PHRONSIE HAS A PLAN.	100
11.	THINGS ARE GETTING MIXED.	107
12.	POLLY TRIES TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT.	117
13.	THE ACCIDENT.	125
14.	JOEL.	136
15.	THE FARMHOUSE HOSPITAL.	145
16.	ON THE BORDERLAND.	155
17.	JASPER.	164
18.	MR. KING ATTENDS TO MATTERS.	174
19.	MOTHER FISHER AND CHARLOTTE.	182
20.	STRAIGHTENING OUT AFFAIRS.	192
21.	POLLY TRIES TO HELP JASPER.	201
22.	MR KING AND POLLY.	211
23.	THAT SETTLES MANY THINGS.	221
24.	HOME!	232



POLLY GIVES MUSIC LESSONS.

“Miss Pepper—Miss Pepper!”
Polly turned quickly, it was such an anxious little cry.
“What? Oh, Amy Loughhead.”

Amy threw herself up against Polly’s gown. “Oh, if I may,” she began, flushing painfully. “You see my brother is coming to-morrow—I’ve a letter—so if you will let me.”

“Let you what?” cried Polly, with a little laugh; “go on, Amy, don’t be afraid.”

“You see it is just this way,” Amy twisted her fingers together, drew her breath hard, and rushed on nervously; “Jack—he’s my brother, you know—promised me—I never told you—if I would only learn to play on the piano, he’d take me to Europe with him next time, and now he’s coming to-morrow, and—andi, oh! what shall I do?”

Amy was far gone now, and she ended with a little howl of distress, that brought two or three of the “Salisbury girls” flying in with astonishment.

“Go back,” said Polly to them all, and they ran off as suddenly as they had popped in, to leave Amy and the music teacher alone.

“Now, Amy,” said Polly kindly, getting down on her knees beside the girl where she had thrown herself on the broad lounge, “you must just understand, dear, that I cannot help you unless you will have self-control and be a little woman yourself.”

“You told me I would be sorry if I didn’t practice,” mourned Amy, dragging her wet little handkerchief between her fingers, “but I didn’t suppose Jack was coming for six months, and I’d have time to catch up, and now—oh dear me!” and she burrowed deeper into Miss Salisbury’s big sofa-pillow.

“Take care!” warned Polly, with a ready hand to rescue the elaborate combination of silk and floss, “it would be a very dreadful thing if this should get spoiled.”

Amy Loughhead brought her wet cheek off suddenly. “There isn’t a single tear on it, Miss Pepper,” she gasped.

“That’s very fortunate,” said Polly, with a relieved breath. “Well, Amy

child, how can I help you?" She sat down now, and drew the girl's hot little hand within her own.

"I can almost play that horrible 'Chopin,'" said Amy irrelevantly; "that is, I could, if—oh Miss Pepper," she broke off suddenly and brought her flushed face very near to the one above her, "could you help me play it—just hear me, you know, and tell me things you did, over again, about it, if I practice all the afternoon? Could you?"

"This evening, do you mean?" asked Polly, a trifle sharply.

"Yes," said Amy faintly, and twisting her handkerchief. "Oh dear me, I know you're so tired. What shall I do?"

"But you don't understand," cried Polly, vexed with herself that she couldn't help her annoyance from being seen. "I shall put some one else out if I give up my evening. I have an engagement, Amy. No, I don't see how I can do it, child; I'm sorry." And then before she knew how, she put both arms around the little figure. "Don't cry, dear, I suppose I must. I'll get out of the other thing. Yes, fly at Chopin, and keep your courage up, and I'll be over at seven. Then to-morrow Brother Jack will say 'How fine!' and off you'll go over the seas!"

Outside, Polly, after enlisting Miss Salisbury's favor for the evening's plan, was hurrying along the pavement, calling herself an hundred foolish names for helping an idle girl out of a scrape. "And to think of losing the only chance to hear D'Albert," she mourned. "Well, it's done now, and can't be helped. Even Jasper when he hears of it, will think me a silly, I suppose. Now to make my peace with Pickering."

She turned down the avenue running out from the street that had the honor to contain "Miss Salisbury's Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies," and met face to face, suddenly, a young man, about whose joy at meeting her, there could be no doubt.

"Oh, Polly!" he cried, "here, let me take that detestable thing!" trying to get the music-roll out of her hand.

"Take care how you talk against this," cried Polly, hugging it closer. "Indeed you shall not touch it, till you are glad that I am a music teacher. Oh, I must tell you—I was on my way to your house because I was afraid you wouldn't understand a note. I can't go to-night."

"Can't go to-night?" repeated Pickering, in his astonishment forgetting all his manners. "Why, Polly Pepper, what do you mean?"

"Why, I must give it up," cried Polly nervously; "don't ask me—or perhaps I ought to tell you, Pickering, then you'll see I can't help myself."



“WHY, POLLY PEPPER, WHAT DO YOU MEAN?”

And Polly rapidly unfolded her plan for the evening, omitting all details as to Amy's careless waste of her lessons despite all efforts to make her practice. At the end of the recital, Pickering Dodge came to a full pause on the sidewalk, regardless of all passers-by, and turned a glowering face on Polly, who was forced to stand still also, and look at him.

"What idiocy!" he exclaimed, "to give up D'Albert for that ignoramus! Polly, are you losing your senses?"

"I don't know," said poor Polly, who had lost the first flush of enthusiasm over her plan, and to whom nothing now seemed so delightful as the sight and sound of D'Albert and his wonderful melody. "Well, it's done, so don't tempt me to feel badly, Pickering."

"Indeed, and it's not done," said Pickering angrily; "you made the engagement, Polly. I never knew you to break one before," he added stingingly.

The tears flew into Polly's brown eyes, and every bit of color deserted her round cheek. "Don't call it that, Pickering," she implored, putting out her hand.

"I shall call it just what it is," declared Pickering, in his stiffest fashion. "It's a broken engagement, Polly Pepper, nothing more nor less."

"Then," said Polly, all her tears dried, "I must go with you, if you hold me to it." She raised her head, and looked him full in the eyes. "I will be ready," and she moved off with her most superb air, without deigning a good-by.

"Oh, Polly," cried Pickering, starting forward to overtake her, "see here, if you very much wish it, why, of course, Polly—Polly, do look around!"

"What do you wish to say?" asked Polly, not looking around as he gained her side.

"Why, of course," cried Pickering, his words stumbling over each other, "if you can't go, I'll—I'll give it up, and stay at home."

"And why should you stay at home?" cried Polly, suddenly giving him a glimpse of her face; "you've lovely seats; do ask Alexia."

"Alexia!" exclaimed Pickering angrily. "Indeed I will not. I don't want any one if I can't have you, Polly." He was really miserable now, and needed comfort, so she turned around and administered it as only Polly could.

By the time the talk was over, she hurried off with a radiant face, and Pickering with an expression only one remove from that of absolute gloom, retraced his steps to lay one of "the lovely seats" for the D'Albert concert, before Miss Rhys, for her acceptance.

Phronsie came slowly down the hall to meet Polly as usual; this day

with one of her company white gowns on. Polly always knew when these were donned that something unusual was to be expected from the daily routine of the household.

“Are you really and truly home, Polly?” asked Phronsie, taking the music-roll to tuck it under her own arm.

“Yes, Pet;” Polly set a kiss on the red lips. “And I am as hungry as a beaver, Phronsie.”

“So you must be,” said Phronsie, with a little sigh, “for you were so long in coming home. Well, do hurry now, Polly.” This last as Polly was skipping over the stairs to her own room to freshen up a bit. Then Phronsie turned into the dining-room to be quite sure that the butler had made the belated luncheon as fine as Polly could desire it.

“She didn’t ask why I had on this gown,” mused Phronsie, softly disposing again the flowers at Polly’s plate, “and it’s funny, I think, for Polly always sees everything;” and she began to look troubled at once.

“This is just as splendid as it can be,” cried Polly, coming in, and picking up one of the roses at her plate. “Phronsie, you are just a dear to have everything so nice,” and she fastened it at her belt. “Why, dear me! You’ve a fine gown on! What is going to happen?”

“And you didn’t see it,” said Phronsie, a bit reproachfully, as she gently smoothed the front breadth of mull.

“Forgive me, dear,” begged Polly. “Well, what is it, Pet? Do tell me; for I’m dying of curiosity, as the Salisbury girls say.”

Phronsie stood up on tiptoe, and achieved Polly’s ear.

“Who do you think is coming to-night?” she whispered impressively.

“To-night? Oh, dear me! I can’t possibly guess,” said Polly, beginning to think that this one evening of all the year held supreme moments for her. “Who is it, Phronsie? do tell me quickly.”

“Well,” said Phronsie, drawing off to see the surprised delight sure to come on Polly’s face, “it’s Jasper himself.”

“Not Jasper?” exclaimed Polly, quite gone with joy. “Oh, Phronsie Pepper, you can’t mean that?”

“But I do,” said Phronsie, forgetting her age, to hop up and down on the rug, “we’ve a letter while you were at the school, and I wasn’t to tell you suddenly, so I put on one of my nice gowns, so you would know.”

“But how could I possibly suppose that Jasper would come now,” cried Polly, seizing Phronsie’s hands to execute one of the old-time dances. “Now I almost know he is going to stay over Christmas.”



PHRONSIE CAME SLOWLY DOWN THE HALL.

"He is—he is!" cried Phronsie in a little scream; "you've guessed it, Polly. And Mamsie said—she's gone down town with Grandpapa; he's going to get tickets for the concert to-night, so that you can all go together, even if you can't sit together, and she said that"—

"Oh, Phronsie!" exclaimed Polly in dismay and she stood quite still.

"Aren't you glad?" asked Phronsie, her joy suddenly hushed.

"And I've done it myself—spoiled all this loveliness," cried Polly passionately, little white lines coming around her mouth, "and Jasper here!"

"Oh, Polly, Polly!" Phronsie clasped her gown imploringly, "don't, Polly."

"I just won't go to the school," declared Polly at white heat; "I don't care for the concert, but I'll send a note over to say that I am detained at home."

"What is it, Polly?" begged Phronsie, all sorts of dreadful surmises seizing her, "do tell me, Polly, won't you?"

"It's—nothing; you wouldn't understand, child," said Polly quickly. "There, don't ask."

Phronsie crept away in a grieved fashion, to be presently folded into Polly's warm arms. "I'm bad to-day, Phronsie dear. There, Pet, now you are all right, aren't you?" as she hugged her close.

"I am, if you are, Polly," said Phronsie doubtfully.

"Well, I'm all right now," said Polly, her brow clearing; "the bad has gone at last, I hope, to stay away, Phronsie. Now I must hurry and eat this nice luncheon you've fixed for me;" and she sprang toward the table.

"Don't you want to write a note first?" asked Phronsie, wondering at Polly's strange mood, and following her to the table-edge, "you said so."

"No; I've given it up," said Polly, sitting down and beginning on her chop and toast. "Bless you, dear, you've given me an orchid," glancing down between her mouthfuls to the bouquet at her plate; "you should have saved them all for Jasper."

"Turner said I might have it," said Phronsie triumphantly, "and I knew you'd give it to Jasper, so it's all right."

"It surely shall do double duty," said Polly merrily, with a tender glance for the orchid. "Well, how's Baby?"

"He is very nice," said Phronsie, with a grown-up air, "and didn't cry a bit for Mamsie. And now if you are really all right, Polly, I'll go up to the nursery and look at him."

"So I would," said Polly approvingly. "Yes, I'm all right; see, I'm on my chop No. 2."

Phronsie smiled with great satisfaction at this, and went off. At a quarter of seven, Polly, in a storm of remonstrance from all but one, hurried off to help poor Amy Loughead through her Slough of Despond.

Jasper alone, just arrived for dinner, was the only one who remained silent when the storm of disapproval broke forth over Polly and her doings. After the first astonished exclamation, he had absolutely refused to say anything save "Polly knows best."

"I don't know how to thank you," said Polly out in the wide hall, where he hurried to meet her, as she ran downstairs with her plainest walking things on, "for I don't believe they would have let me go. I never saw Mamsie feel so, Jasper." And now Polly could not keep the tears back.

"She'll see it all right to-morrow," said Jasper soothingly.

He put his hand out and grasped hers, as in the old days in the little brown house, and Polly answered through her tears, "I know, Jasper."

And then the maid appearing, who was to accompany her to Miss Salisbury's, Polly came out from her tears, and said, "I'm ready, Barbara."

"You are not needed, Barbara," said Jasper, reaching up for his top-coat from the oaken rack.

"What are you going to do?" gasped Polly, her hand on the door-knob, and glancing back.

"Walk over with you to that center of culture and wisdom," said Jasper coolly, close beside her now, his hat in his hand.

"O, Jasper!" exclaimed Polly in dismay, her face growing quite pale, "don't; you'll be late for the concert. Barbara, Barbara!" Polly looked past him to summon the departing maid.

"Barbara is a good girl, and understands the duty of obedience," said Jasper laughingly. "There's no help for it, Polly; you must accept my escort," and he opened the door.

"But Grandpapa! he will be terribly disappointed not to have you go to the concert with him," cried Polly, getting down the steps with a dreadful weight at her heart.

"I made it all right with father," said Jasper, "as soon as I heard of your plan; and Mr. Alstyne is on his way over to take my place; at least he ought to be in response to my note. Don't worry, Polly; come."

"Oh! what perfectly elegant seats," exclaimed Alexia Rhys, waving her big ostrich fan contentedly, and sweeping the audience with a long gaze. "Everybody is here to-night, Pickering."

"That's not so," said Pickering savagely, and bestowing a thump on

his unoffending opera hat, already reduced to the smallest possible bulk.

"Don't spoil it," advised Alexia coolly, with a sidelong gaze at his face. "Well, of course I mean everybody except Polly; and I'm sure, Pickering, it isn't my fault that she didn't come; Polly always was queer about some things."

Pickering did not answer, but bestowed his glance on the programme in his hand.

"And now she is queerer than ever," said Alexia, glad to think that the dainty blue affair on her head, she called a bonnet, was already doing its work, as she heard a lady in the seat back of them, question if it were not one of the newest of Madame Marchaud's creations. So she sat more erect, and played nonchalantly with her fan. "Yes, and it's all because of those dreadfully horrid music lessons."

Pickering coughed, and rattled his programme ominously, which Alexia pretended not to hear.

"Why Mr. King lets her do it, I can't see," she went on.

"Do stop," said Pickering shortly, and casting a nervous glance back of her shoulder.

"Never mind if they do hear," said Alexia sweetly, "all the better; then they'll know we don't approve of her doing so, at any rate."

"I do approve," said Pickering, his face flaming, "if she wants to; and we've got to, any way, because we can't help ourselves. I do wish, Alexia, you wouldn't discuss our friends in this public way."

"And I don't think it is a very sweet thing to invite a girl to a concert, and then get up a fight," said Alexia, back at him.

"Goodness—who's fighting?" exclaimed Pickering under his breath.

"You are—I wish you could see your face; it's as black as a thunder cloud," said Alexia, with the consciousness that her own was as calm as a June morning. "And I'm sure if you don't want to attract people to our conversation, you might at least look a little pleasanter."

Pickering threw two or three nervous glances on either side, to prove her words, and was by no means reassured to see the countenance of Billy Harlow, one of his young business friends, across the aisle, suffused with an attempt to appear as if he hadn't been a witness to the little by-play.

"Well, I'm morally certain I won't trouble you with another invitation to a concert," he said, too furious to quite know his own words.

"You needn't," said Alexia, swinging her fan with an even hand, and still smiling sweetly, this time including in it Billy, who had no girl with

him. "I really could endure life at home better than this bliss." And then D'Albert came on the stage, and it was the proper thing to keep quiet, so the hostilities died down.

Going out of the Opera House, Billy Harlow ran up to the two. "Lovely time you've had," he said on Alexia's side, and with a little grimace.

"Haven't I?" said Alexia back again, with the air of a martyr. Pickering stalking along by her side, had the air of a man who didn't care what was being said about him.

"Just look at him now," said Alexia softly, "isn't he sweet? And fancy my bearing it for two hours. I don't think any other girl in our set, could."

"Why didn't Miss Pepper come this evening?" asked Mr. Harlow curiously; "Pickering said he'd asked her."

"Oh! she gave it up to help some girl," said Alexia carelessly. "She's the music teacher at Miss Salisbury's school, you know."

"Oh! is she?" asked Mr. Harlow innocently, forgetting to mention the daily interviews he sustained with his sisters Kitty and Grace who were "Salisbury girls," on Miss Pepper's movements.

"And at the last minute he asked me to take her place," said Alexia with perfect frankness, "and I was goose enough to do it."

"Isn't Miss Pepper going to give a Recital pretty soon?" asked Mr. Harlow, incidentally, as they worked their way along to the entrance.

"Yes, she is," said Alexia sharply, "at the Exeter—we can't stop her; she says she's proud to do it, and it shows the girls' wonderful ability; and all that sort of thing—and—and—oh dear me! after she's once done that, she'll always be 'Miss Pepper the music teacher.' Isn't it horrid!"

"I believe that is our carriage," said Pickering stiffly, and without so much as a half-glance at Billy. "Come, Alexia."