

Rose in Bloom

by

Louisa May Alcott

Web-Books.Com

Rose in Bloom

Preface.....	3
1. Coming Home.....	4
2. Old Friends With New Faces.....	17
3. Miss Campbell.....	27
4. Thorns Among The Roses.....	34
5. Prince Charming.....	39
6. Polishing Mac.....	48
7. Phebe.....	59
8. Breakers Ahead.....	71
9. New Year's Calls.....	76
10. The Sad And Sober Part.....	85
11. Small Temptations.....	91
12. At Kitty's Ball.....	100
13. Both Sides.....	110
14. Aunt Clara's Plan.....	118
15. Alas For Charlie!.....	123
16. Good Works.....	130
17. Among The Haycocks.....	137
18. Which Was It?.....	146
19. Behind The Fountain.....	157
20. What Mac Did.....	161
21. How Phebe Earned Her Welcome.....	167
22. Short And Sweet.....	172

Preface

As authors may be supposed to know better than anyone else what they intended to do when writing a book, I beg leave to say that there is no moral to this story. Rose is not designed for a model girl, and the Sequel was simply written in fulfillment of a promise, hoping to afford some amusement, and perhaps here and there a helpful hint, to other roses getting ready to bloom.

L. M. Alcott
September 1876

1. Coming Home

Three young men stood together on a wharf one bright October day awaiting the arrival of an ocean steamer with an impatience which found a vent in lively skirmishes with a small lad, who pervaded the premises like a will-o'-the-wisp and afforded much amusement to the other groups assembled there.

"They are the Campbells, waiting for their cousin, who has been abroad several years with her uncle, the doctor," whispered one lady to another as the handsomest of the young men touched his hat to her as he passed, lugging the boy, whom he had just rescued from a little expedition down among the piles.

"Which is that?" asked the stranger.

"Prince Charlie, as he's called a fine fellow, the most promising of the seven, but a little fast, people say," answered the first speaker with a shake of the head.

"Are the others his brothers?"

"No, cousins. The elder is Archie, a most exemplary young man. He has just gone into business with the merchant uncle and bids fair to be an honor to his family. The other, with the eyeglasses and no gloves, is Mac, the odd one, just out of college."

"And the boy?"

"Oh, he is Jamie, the youngest brother of Archibald, and the pet of the whole family. Mercy on us he'll be in if they don't hold on to him!"

The ladies' chat came to a sudden end just there, for by the time Jamie had been fished out of a hogshead, the steamer hove in sight and everything else was forgotten. As it swung slowly around to enter the dock, a boyish voice shouted, "There she is! I see her and Uncle and Phebe! Hooray for Cousin Rose!" And three small cheers were given with a will by Jamie as he stood on a post waving his arms like a windmill while his brother held onto the tail of his jacket.

Yes, there they were Uncle Alec swinging his hat like a boy, with Phebe smiling and nodding on one side and Rose kissing both hands delightedly on the other as she recognized familiar faces and heard familiar voices welcoming her home.

"Bless her dear heart, she's bonnier than ever! Looks like a Madonna doesn't she? with that blue cloak round her, and her bright hair flying in the wind!" said Charlie excitedly as they watched the group upon the deck with eager eyes.

"Madonnas don't wear hats like that. Rose hasn't changed much, but Phebe has. Why, she's a regular beauty!" answered Archie, staring with all his might at the dark-eyed young woman with the brilliant color and glossy black braids shining in the sun.

"Dear old Uncle! Doesn't it seem good to have him back?" was all Mac said, but he was not looking at "dear old uncle" as he made the fervent remark, for he saw only the slender blond girl nearby and stretched out his hands to meet hers, forgetful of the green water tumbling between them.

During the confusion that reigned for a moment as the steamer settled to her moorings, Rose looked down into the four faces upturned to hers and seemed to read in them something that both pleased and pained her. It was only a glance, and her own eyes were full, but through the mist of happy tears she received the

impression that Archie was about the same, that Mac had decidedly improved, and that something was amiss with Charlie. There was no time for observation, however, for in a moment the shoreward rush began, and before she could grasp her traveling bag, Jamie was clinging to her like an ecstatic young bear. She was with difficulty released from his embrace to fall into the gentler ones of the elder cousins, who took advantage of the general excitement to welcome both blooming girls with affectionate impartiality. Then the wanderers were borne ashore in a triumphal procession, while Jamie danced rapturous jigs before them even on the gangway.

Archie remained to help his uncle get the luggage through the Custom House, and the others escorted the damsels home. No sooner were they shut up in a carriage, however, than a new and curious constraint seemed to fall upon the young people, for they realized, all at once, that their former playmates were men and women now. Fortunately, Jamie was quite free from this feeling of restraint and, sitting bodkinwise between the ladies, took all sorts of liberties with them and their belongings.

"Well, my mannikin, what do you think of us?" asked Rose, to break an awkward pause.

"You've both grown so pretty, I can't decide which I like best. Phebe is the biggest and brightest-looking, and I was always fond of Phebe, but somehow you are so kind of sweet and precious, I really think I must hug you again," and the small youth did it tempestuously.

"If you love me best, I shall not mind a bit about your thinking Phebe the handsomest, because she is. Isn't she, boys?" asked Rose, with a mischievous look at the gentlemen opposite, whose faces expressed a respectful admiration which much amused her.

"I'm so dazzled by the brilliancy and beauty that has suddenly burst upon me, I have no words to express my emotions," answered Charlie, gallantly dodging the dangerous question.

"I can't say yet, for I have not had time to look at anyone. I will now, if you don't mind." And, to the great amusement of the rest, Mac gravely adjusted his eyeglasses and took an observation.

"Well?" said Phebe, smiling and blushing under his honest stare, yet seeming not to resent it as she did the lordly sort of approval which made her answer the glance of Charlie's audacious blue eyes with a flash of her black ones.

"I think if you were my sister, I should be very proud of you, because your face shows what I admire more than its beauty truth and courage, Phebe," answered Mac with a little bow full of such genuine respect that surprise and pleasure brought a sudden dew to quench the fire of the girl's eyes and soothe the sensitive pride of the girl's heart.

Rose clapped her hands just as she used to do when anything delighted her, and beamed at Mac approvingly as she said: "Now that's a criticism worth having, and we are much obliged. I was sure you'd admire my Phebe when you knew her, but I didn't believe you would be wise enough to see it at once, and you have gone up many pegs in my estimation, I assure you."

"I was always fond of mineralogy you remember, and I've been tapping round a good deal lately, so I've learned to know precious metals when I see them," Mac said with his shrewd smile.

"That is the latest hobby, then? Your letters have amused us immensely, for each one had a new theory or experiment, and the latest was always the best. I thought Uncle would have died of laughter over the vegetarian mania it was so funny to imagine you living on bread and milk, baked apples, and potatoes roasted in your own fire," continued Rose, changing the subject again.

"This old chap was the laughingstock of his class. They called him Don Quixote, and the way he went at windmills of all sorts was a sight to see," put in Charlie, evidently feeling that Mac had been patted on the head quite as much as was good for him.

"But in spite of that the Don got through college with all the honors. Oh, wasn't I proud when Aunt Jane wrote to us about it and didn't she rejoice that her boy kept at the head of his class and won the medal!" cried Rose, shaking Mac by both hands in a way that caused Charlie to wish "the old chap" had been left behind with Dr. Alec.

"Oh, come, that's all Mother's nonsense. I began earlier than the other fellows and liked it better, so I don't deserve any praise. Prince is right, though. I did make a regular jack of myself, but on the whole I'm not sure that my wild oats weren't better than some I've seen sowed. Anyway, they didn't cost much, and I'm none the worse for them," said Mac placidly.

"I know what 'wild oats' means. I heard Uncle Mac say Charlie was sowing 'em too fast, and I asked Mama, so she told me. And I know that he was suspelled or expended, I don't remember which, but it was something bad, and Aunt Clara cried," added Jamie all in one breath, for he possessed a fatal gift of making malapropos remarks, which caused him to be a terror to his family.

"Do you want to go on the box again?" demanded Prince with a warning frown.

"No, I don't."

"Then hold your tongue."

"Well, Mac needn't kick me, for I was only..." began the culprit, innocently trying to make a bad matter worse.

"That will do," interrupted Charlie sternly, and James subsided, a crushed boy, consoling himself with Rose's new watch for the indignities he suffered at the hands of the "old fellows" as he vengefully called his elders.

Mac and Charlie immediately began to talk as hard as their tongues could wag, bringing up all sorts of pleasant subjects so successfully that peals of laughter made passersby look after the merry load with sympathetic smiles.

An avalanche of aunts fell upon Rose as soon as she reached home, and for the rest of the day the old house buzzed like a beehive. Evening found the whole tribe collected in the drawing rooms, with the exception of Aunt Peace, whose place was empty now.

Naturally enough, the elders settled into one group after a while, and the young fellows clustered about the girls like butterflies around two attractive flowers. Dr. Alec was the central figure in one room and Rose in the other, for the little girl, whom they had all loved and petted, had bloomed into a woman, and two years

of absence had wrought a curious change in the relative positions of the cousins, especially the three elder ones, who eyed her with a mixture of boyish affection and manly admiration that was both new and pleasant.

Something sweet yet spirited about her charmed them and piqued their curiosity, for she was not quite like other girls, and rather startled them now and then by some independent little speech or act which made them look at one another with a sly smile, as if reminded that Rose was "Uncle's girl."

Let us listen, as in duty bound, to what the elders are saying first, for they are already building castles in air for the boys and girls to inhabit.

"Dear child how nice it is to see her safely back, so well and happy and like her sweet little self!" said Aunt Plenty, folding her hands as if giving thanks for a great happiness.

"I shouldn't wonder if you found that you'd brought a firebrand into the family, Alec. Two, in fact, for Phebe is a fine girl, and the lads have found it out already if I'm not mistaken," added Uncle Mac, with a nod toward the other room.

All eyes followed his, and a highly suggestive tableau presented itself to the paternal and maternal audience in the back parlor.

Rose and Phebe, sitting side by side on the sofa, had evidently assumed at once the places which they were destined to fill by right of youth, sex, and beauty, for Phebe had long since ceased to be the maid and become the friend, and Rose meant to have that fact established at once.

Jamie occupied the rug, on which Will and Geordie stood at ease, showing their uniforms to the best advantage, for they were now in a great school, where military drill was the delight of their souls. Steve posed gracefully in an armchair, with Mac lounging over the back of it, while Archie leaned on one corner of the low chimneypiece, looking down at Phebe as she listened to his chat with smiling lips and cheeks almost as rich in color as the carnations in her belt.

But Charlie was particularly effective, although he sat upon a music stool, that most trying position for any man not gifted with grace in the management of his legs. Fortunately Prince was, and had fallen into an easy attitude, with one arm over the back of the sofa, his handsome head bent a little, as he monopolized Rose, with a devoted air and a very becoming expression of contentment on his face.

Aunt Clara smiled as if well pleased; Aunt Jessie looked thoughtful; Aunt Jane's keen eyes went from dapper Steve to broad-shouldered Mac with an anxious glance; Mrs. Myra murmured something about her "blessed Caroline"; and Aunt Plenty said warmly, "Bless the dears! Anyone might be proud of such a bonny flock of bairns as that."

"I am all ready to play chaperon as soon as you please, Alec, for I suppose the dear girl will come out at once, as she did not before you went away. My services won't be wanted long, I fancy, for with her many advantages she will be carried off in her first season or I'm much mistaken," said Mrs. Clara, with significant nods and smiles.

"You must settle all those matters with Rose. I am no longer captain, only first mate now, you know," answered Dr. Alec, adding soberly, half to himself, half to his brother, "I wonder people are in such haste to 'bring out' their daughters, as

it's called. To me there is something almost pathetic in the sight of a young girl standing on the threshold of the world, so innocent and hopeful, so ignorant of all that lies before her, and usually so ill prepared to meet the ups and downs of life. We do our duty better by the boys, but the poor little women are seldom provided with any armor worth having, and sooner or later they are sure to need it, for every one must fight her own battle, and only the brave and strong can win."

"You can't reproach yourself with neglect of that sort, Alec, for you have done your duty faithfully by George's girl, and I envy you the pride and happiness of having such a daughter, for she is that to you," answered old Mac, unexpectedly betraying the paternal sort of tenderness men seldom feel for their sons.

"I've tried, Mac, and I am both proud and happy, but with every year my anxiety seems to increase. I've done my best to fit Rose for what may come, as far as I can foresee it, but now she must stand alone, and all my care is powerless to keep her heart from aching, her life from being saddened by mistakes, or thwarted by the acts of others. I can only stand ready to share her joy and sorrow and watch her shape her life."

"Why, Alec, what is the child going to do that you need look so solemn?" exclaimed Mrs. Clara, who seemed to have assumed a sort of right to Rose already.

"Hark! And let her tell you herself," answered Dr. Alec, as Rose's voice was heard saying very earnestly, "Now, you have all told your plans for the future, why don't you ask us ours?"

"Because we know that there is only one thing for a pretty girl to do break a dozen or so hearts before she finds one to suit, then marry and settle," answered Charlie, as if no other reply was possible.

"That may be the case with many, but not with us, for Phebe and I believe that it is as much a right and a duty for women to do something with their lives as for men, and we are not going to be satisfied with such frivolous parts as you give us," cried Rose with kindling eyes. "I mean what I say, and you cannot laugh me down. Would you be contented to be told to enjoy yourself for a little while, then marry and do nothing more till you die?" she added, turning to Archie.

"Of course not that is only a part of a man's life," he answered decidedly.

"A very precious and lovely part, but not all," continued Rose. "Neither should it be for a woman, for we've got minds and souls as well as hearts; ambition and talents as well as beauty and accomplishments; and we want to live and learn as well as love and be loved. I'm sick of being told that is all a woman is fit for! I won't have anything to do with love till I prove that I am something besides a housekeeper and baby-tender!"

"Heaven preserve us! Here's woman's rights with a vengeance!" cried Charlie, starting up with mock horror, while the others regarded Rose with mingled surprise and amusement, evidently fancying it all a girlish outbreak.

"Ah, you needn't pretend to be shocked you will be in earnest presently, for this is only the beginning of my strong-mindedness," continued Rose, nothing daunted by the smiles of good-natured incredulity or derision on the faces of her cousins.

"I have made up my mind not to be cheated out of the real things that make one good and happy and, just because I'm a rich girl, fold my hands and drift as so

many do. I haven't lived with Phebe all these years in vain. I know what courage and self-reliance can do for one, and I sometimes wish I hadn't a penny in the world so that I could go and earn my bread with her, and be as brave and independent as she will be pretty soon."

It was evident that Rose was in earnest now, for as she spoke she turned to her friend with such respect as well as love in her face that the look told better than any words how heartily the rich girl appreciated the virtues hard experience had given the poor girl, and how eagerly she desired to earn what all her fortune could not buy for her.

Something in the glance exchanged between the friends impressed the young men in spite of their prejudices, and it was in a perfectly serious tone that Archie said, "I fancy you'll find your hands full, Cousin, if you want work, for I've heard people say that wealth has its troubles and trials as well as poverty."

"I know it, and I'm going to try and fill my place well. I've got some capital little plans all made, and have begun to study my profession already," answered Rose with an energetic nod.

"Could I ask what it is to be?" inquired Charlie in a tone of awe.

"Guess!" and Rose looked up at him with an expression half-earnest, half-merry.

"Well, I should say that you were fitted for a beauty and a belle, but as that is evidently not to your taste, I am afraid you are going to study medicine and be a doctor. Won't your patients have a heavenly time though? It will be easy dying with an angel to poison them."

"Now, Charlie, that's base of you, when you know how well women have succeeded in this profession and what a comfort Dr. Mary Kirk was to dear Aunt Peace. I did want to study medicine, but Uncle thought it wouldn't do to have so many M.D.'s in one family, since Mac thinks of trying it. Besides, I seem to have other work put into my hands that I am better fitted for."

"You are fitted for anything that is generous and good, and I'll stand by you, no matter what you've chosen," cried Mac heartily, for this was a new style of talk from a girl's lips, and he liked it immensely.

"Philanthropy is a generous, good, and beautiful profession, and I've chosen it for mine because I have much to give. I'm only the steward of the fortune Papa left me, and I think, if I use it wisely for the happiness of others, it will be more blest than if I keep it all for myself."

Very sweetly and simply was this said, but it was curious to see how differently the various hearers received it.

Charlie shot a quick look at his mother, who exclaimed, as if in spite of herself, "Now, Alec, are you going to let that girl squander a fine fortune on all sorts of charitable nonsense and wild schemes for the prevention of pauperism and crime?"

" 'They who give to the poor lend to the Lord,' and practical Christianity is the kind He loves the best," was all Dr. Alec answered, but it silenced the aunts and caused even prudent Uncle Mac to think with sudden satisfaction of certain secret investments he had made which paid him no interest but the thanks of the poor.

Archie and Mac looked well pleased and promised their advice and assistance with the enthusiasm of generous young hearts. Steve shook his head, but said nothing, and the lads on the rug at once proposed founding a hospital for invalid dogs and horses, white mice, and wounded heroes.

"Don't you think that will be a better way for a woman to spend her life than in dancing, dressing, and husband-hunting, Charlie?" asked Rose, observing his silence and anxious for his approval.

"Very pretty for a little while, and very effective too, for I don't know anything more captivating than a sweet girl in a meek little bonnet going on charitable errands and glorifying poor people's houses with a delightful mixture of beauty and benevolence. Fortunately, the dear souls soon tire of it, but it's heavenly while it lasts."

Charlie spoke in a tone of mingled admiration and contempt, and smiled a superior sort of smile, as if he understood all the innocent delusions as well as the artful devices of the sex and expected nothing more from them. It both surprised and grieved Rose, for it did not sound like the Charlie she had left two years ago. But she only said, with a reproachful look and a proud little gesture of head and hand, as if she put the subject aside since it was not treated with respect: "I am sorry you have so low an opinion of women. There was a time when you believed in them sincerely."

"I do still, upon my word I do! They haven't a more devoted admirer and slave in the world than I am. Just try me and see," cried Charlie, gallantly kissing his hand to the sex in general.

But Rose was not appeased, and gave a disdainful shrug as she answered with a look in her eyes that his lordship did not like, "Thank you. I don't want admirers or slaves, but friends and helpers. I've lived so long with a wise, good man that I am rather hard to suit, perhaps, but I don't intend to lower my standard, and anyone who cares for my regard must at least try to live up to it."

"Whew! Here's a wrathful dove! Come and smooth her ruffled plumage, Mac. I'll dodge before I do further mischief," and Charlie strolled away into the other room, privately lamenting that Uncle Alec had spoiled a fine girl by making her strong-minded.

He wished himself back again in five minutes, for Mac said something that produced a gale of laughter, and when he took a look over his shoulder the "wrathful dove" was cooing so peacefully and pleasantly he was sorely tempted to return and share the fun. But Charlie had been spoiled by too much indulgence, and it was hard for him to own himself in the wrong even when he knew it. He always got what he wanted sooner or later, and having long ago made up his mind that Rose and her fortune were to be his, he was secretly displeased at the new plans and beliefs of the young lady, but flattered himself that they would soon be changed when she saw how unfashionable and inconvenient they were.

Musing over the delightful future he had laid out, he made himself comfortable in the sofa corner near his mother till the appearance of a slight refection caused both groups to melt into one. Aunt Plenty believed in eating and drinking, so the

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

