

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott  
Turgenev Wallage Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel  
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Lichtenberg Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lenz Hambrecht Doyle Gjellerup  
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma Verne Hägele Hauptmann Humboldt  
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier  
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder  
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Bebel Proust  
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke George  
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot  
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy  
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius  
Chamberlain Schiller Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates  
Brentano Strachwitz Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow  
Lons Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius  
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil  
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus  
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus  
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke  
Nestroy Marie de France  
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht  
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntatz  
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving  
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# **Peggy-Alone**

Mary Agnes Byrne

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**TO  
MY SISTER TRESS**



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# PEGGY-ALONE

## CHAPTER I

### PEGGY-ALONE

"Down, Prince!"

High above the shrill exclamations of surprise and terror came that thin silvery command which the dog, great black fellow that he was, obeyed at once, and his flight in pursuit of those daring petticoats which had intruded on his master's orchard was brought to an ignominious end.

"Girls, say, girls, don't be frightened! He won't bite!"

One of the children had already scaled the wall, dropping her apron of apples on the way. She stood ready to help the second down, while the third and largest, who had kept in the rear between the smaller ones and their pursuer, waiting to see them safely over ere hastening her own steps, on hearing those friendly words paused and looked back.

Some distance away, under the apple trees on the grassy terrace, stood a little girl dressed all in white; a wreath of green ivy-vines crowded her glossy curls which fell to her waist and framed her thin face; one tiny hand was raised in a beckoning gesture and the other was placed firmly on the head of the dog.

Leading him, she approached the girl who waited in mute surprise.

"Do tell them not to go. They needn't be afraid of Prince now!"

"She says not to be afraid," hallooed the largest girl, whereupon the fugitives came back and seated themselves upon the wall overlooking the scene.

The girl with the dog had come forward. She stood looking half shyly, but with evident good-will, from the little maids on the wall to their friend who had turned after recalling the others, and came back a few steps to meet her.

"What are their names?" inquired the stranger.

"This is Ivy Bonner," the other said in a formal tone, pointing to her thinner companion, who swung her feet on the outside of the wall and, though she sat only half-facing them, seemed to see everything that went on. "And this is my sister Nettie," she continued, indicating the chubby, flaxen-haired party whose ruddy cheeks and great staring blue eyes reminded one of an over-grown doll-baby.

As each name was pronounced its owner gave a ceremonious little bow such as is always used in make-believe introductions, and the newcomer bowed gravely to each in acknowledgment. Then she turned again to the largest girl.

"And yours?"

"I am Laura — Laura Lee."

"What's hers?" called Ivy, who felt that there was something lacking in the ceremony.

"Oh, my name's Alene Dawson," was the answer, and then, turning to Laura, she added with a somewhat rueful laugh, "but Uncle sometimes calls me Peggy-Alone."

"Why does he call you such a funny name?"

"Why, you see I'm so much by myself, now that mother and father went away and left me here with Uncle Fred. I get lonesome all by myself!"

"I should think you would!" cried Laura compassionately.

"Let's sit down," suggested Alene. They did so, side by side, on the grass, while Prince reclined lazily beside them.

"Do you live in the Big House?" inquired Laura, glancing toward a building which stood far up on the level ground overlooking the terraced hill; a substantial house whose gray stone walls and square tower were partly hid with vines. It was the most pretentious habitation in the town and occupied the most beautiful site. Laura and her friends regarded it somewhat as a fairy palace, around which they wove many fanciful romances.

"I'm a-visiting there now but when Uncle goes down town and the maids are all at work I don't know what to do with myself; and

when I saw you all here among the trees I just hurried down, I was so glad to see a crowd of girls, but naughty Prince ran ahead and scared you away! What were you playing?"

"We weren't playing; we were just picking apples."

Alene looked horrified.

"You see, Mr. Dawson allows us to come in and take all we want," explained Laura hurriedly, while a shrill voice from the wall cried:

"We weren't *stealing*!"

"I never thought that!"

"Well, she looked as if she did," commented Ivy.

"I looked surprised because – well – to think you would eat such green apples."

This statement brought forth a ripple of amusement from the two critics and Alene with reddened cheeks turned to the girl at her side.

"Well, they are dangerous, aren't they?"

"Don't mind those kids, they giggle at 'most anything. You see we are used to eating them and they are not injurious if you eat 'em with salt," explained Laura, though not very clearly.

"She's to take the kids and the apples with a little salt!" cried Ivy.

"Just try one!"

Alene sank her teeth rather gingerly into the rounded green cheek of the proffered apple.

"It's rather sour!" she said, trying to repress a grimace but unable to keep the tears from her eyes.

Laura took from her apron pocket a tiny glass saltcellar and shook some of its contents lightly over the next bite which Alene heroically swallowed.

"It's not so very bad," she murmured. So intent was she on accepting Laura's intended kindness graciously that she envied the ease with which Ivy and Nettie disposed of the apples, biting off great mouthfuls and chewing them, core and all, with evident enjoyment.

Laura forgot to eat any herself, being content to watch Alene's performance and never dreaming what a task it was for her.

"Say, Laura!" came a voice in a loud, hissing tone intended for a whisper; "she's got lace on her petticoat."

"And silk stockings and slippers!"

"Hush—'tisn't polite to whisper before comp'ny," admonished Laura.

"I don't mind the little thing," said Alene in a confidential aside to Laura, regardless of the fact that the "little thing" was nearly as large as herself.

"But she acts years and years older," was Laura's inward comment. "I guess she's used to 'sociating with grown folks."

"I don't like to wear lace-trimmed things, either," continued Alene.

"Why, I think they're lovely," said Laura, tenderly fingering one of the flounces which billowed like waves against her own blue print.

"But you don't have to wear them and be 'called down' by your governess every minute for fear they'll get torn or dirty!"

"Have you a governess?" inquired Laura in a tone of awe.

"Yes, but she took sick just after mother went away and had to go to the hospital. You see mother expected her to come here and take care of me. Uncle hasn't told mother 'cause he don't want to spoil their trip and he thinks it won't hurt me to learn to take care of myself. It's the first time I ever went round without a nurse or someone tagging after me, telling me to do this or not to do that—it's lovely to be free, girls!"

"Give me liberty or give me death!" said Laura in a tragic tone, and Alene squeezed her hand.

"Oh, Laura, it's so nice to talk with someone who understands! But in spite of being so free, I get so *lonely!*"

Laura's eyes shone with sudden comprehension.

"Oh, you poor little lonely baby," she said to herself, and then aloud,

"Alene, I wish you could join the Happy-Go-Luckys."

"The Happy-Go-Luckys? What are they?"

"A kind of *club*—you know."

"A club," said Alene, in such a doubtful tone that Laura took a sudden fit of laughter.

"Oh, Alene, you're so funny! It's not a club to *hit* with, but just us—a crowd of girls—to go together for fun and to do things."

"Oh, Laura! Would you really let me join, if Uncle will allow?"

"I'd love to, but we have some rules and bylaws—to be eligible the candidate's age must be at least twelve!" Laura from long practice was able to repeat the big words glibly.

"And I won't be twelve till July the seventeenth! Oh, Laura!"

"That's not so far off!"

"But what'll become of me till then? I'll die of loneliness!"

"I was going to say that July seventeenth is so near, and you seem so much older, that we'll have a special election, and—well, we'll stretch the rules to let you in."

Alene gave a sigh of relief.

"As I'm not so very large, you won't have to stretch them very far," she said, encouragingly.

"If she's little, she's old, like Andy Daly's pig!" Again came that sibilant whisper.

"Alene, don't mind her!"

"But why does she say that?"

"It's an old Irish saying. You see, Andy Daly took his pig to market and they objected to its size—'If it's little, it's old' said Andy Daly; and so they say, 'If it's little, it's old, like Andy Daly's pig!'"

Alene laughed and called over to the whisperer:

"If I'm little, I'm old enough to be a Happy-Go-Lucky—so there!"

## CHAPTER II

### UNCLE FRED

"Where is Peggy-Alone, Prince?" inquired Mr. Frederick Dawson.

The dog had come bounding over the grass to meet him at the Tower House gate, strange to say unaccompanied by the little girl who was usually the first to greet him each evening on his return from the office.

With Prince barking and snapping at his hand, the young man hurried along the path and into the great hall.

"Yes, Prince, I know she's hiding somewhere, to jump out and scare her poor old Uncle and set his nerves all a-tremble! It was thoughtful of you to give me warning!" he said aloud. He hung up his hat, keeping a sharp lookout for the delinquent but she was nowhere in sight; no dancing footsteps were heard coming from any part of the house.

"I hope she isn't sick," he soliloquized, beginning to feel uneasy. "She's getting pale and listless. The poor little thing must be lonely here all day with no one but the servants. I wish she knew some children to play with! Confounded luck for the governess to fall sick and leave me as a sort of head nurse!" His grumbling anxious thoughts ended in an abrupt exclamation.

"Hello, there!"

Through the open door of the library he saw a little white-robed maid, seated in a great leather revolving chair, with her eyes fixed upon an object on the table beside her. If she noticed the young man's entrance or heard his voice she gave no sign, nor did she pay any attention to Prince, who led the way into the room, and strove with a great show of canine solicitude, in merry barks and gambols, to attract his young mistress' attention.

"Alene!" her Uncle said sharply, but the silence remained unbroken.

Half alarmed, he came forward and shook her by the shoulder.

"For heaven's sake, child, is anything the matter?"

Still she made no reply; she kept gazing, gazing in one direction as though fascinated.

Following her glance, he saw the fragments of a fancy Mexican tobacco-jar, which he had shown to her only the day before.

"Alene, I'm ashamed of you!" he cried in an angry tone. "Has the breaking of this jar brought you to such a state as this? Why, anyone would think—I'd swear it was the truth myself were anyone else in question—yes, they would think me an ogre who ate little girls who chanced to break something!" Turning away, he paced the floor with rapid steps backward and forward. The longer he walked, the faster he went, and higher the angry red glowed in his cheeks.

For a time Alene kept her unaccountable position. Presently her eyes strayed sidewise toward her agitated companion, who, intent on his own angry mutterings, was unaware of her inspection. The gleam of mirth that overspread her countenance was quickly banished; she rose and stood beside her chair and then crossed the floor to his side.

A little hand stole into his, a pair of blue eyes gazed contritely upward.

"Oh, Uncle, you said it was a present and I felt so badly! You aren't angry?"

"Ain't I? Do I look as if I'd beat a child?"

Suddenly his angry mood passed away, and he threw himself into a chair, in a paroxysm of laughter.

"Oh, Polly-Wog, what shall I do to make you pay up for this?"

"The jar? Did it cost so awfully much?"

"The jar you gave me when I came in, I thought you were in a trance! I had a wild notion to lose no time in bringing the doctor!"

She glanced ruefully at the broken vase.

"I was just wondering if it could be pieced together again—"

"Before the ogre got back?"

Alene perched herself on the arm of his chair with one arm around his shoulders.

"You're more like a fairy godmother—father, I mean."

"How did the terrible accident occur?"

"I picked it up to admire it and my hand got sort o' dizzy and let it fall."

"And you didn't think of running away and pretending you knew nothing about it, or blaming it on the maid?"

"Now, Uncle Fred—as if I'd be so dishonorable!"

"Well, I might, if I had such an ogre for an uncle as yours appears to be! I shouldn't fancy being ground to sausages!"

"Like Andy Daly's pig was, I guess! I must tell you about him, but there's something else to ask you first—something very important! Since you're the good fairy, you ought to grant me three wishes but I'll let you off with one."

"I'll not insist on granting the three until I hear Number One—Here goes! One, two, three—"

"Can I—may I—join the Happy-Go-Luckys?" implored Alene in an impressive voice, with clasped hands.

"The Happy-Go-Luckys! You're sure you don't mean the Ku Klux Klan? Hark, there's Kizzie coming to announce dinner. Come along and you can tell me all about it while we eat."

She took his arm with a mock fine-lady air, and walked beside him with mincing steps across the hall to the dining-room.

It was a square apartment with windows opening upon a green vista of gardens, now shut away by latticed blinds, through which the fresh spring air found way.

The bay window was filled with immense potted palms; another window led to a balcony where baskets with myrtle and other vines hung round like a heavy green curtain. The room was finished in light colored woodwork. A square rug in a pattern of tiny green and white tiles partly covered the polished floor; in the center stood a cosy round table, whose snowy napery and old silver and china

were lit by a bronze lamp with an ornamental shade that resembled a gorgeous peony.

Seated opposite her Uncle, Alene, in her eagerness to relate her afternoon's adventure, almost forgot to touch the tempting dishes which Kizzie, the maid, served so deftly.

Her usually pale cheeks glowed and her eyes beamed brightly while she told of her new friends and the club.

Mr. Dawson listened with flattering attention.

"You may, you shall, you must, join the Happy-Go-Luckys! As a society for the prevention of loneliness to Peggy-Alone or any other forlorn little girl, it strikes me as a good thing," he declared.

"Oh, Uncle, you're a dear old thing!"

"An article of *virtu* as it were. Be careful how you handle me!"

Alene gave him a reproachful look.

"There, don't start that deadly stare again! I'm not insinuating anything!"

His air of alarm amused Alene. She laughed merrily. Her joy over his permission to join the Happy-Go-Luckys banished from her Uncle's mind any doubts he may have had of her mother's approval. However, he knew something of Alene's new friends, being personally acquainted with Mr. Lee, whose work as a riverman allowed him little time at home, while Mrs. Bonner was a widow who kept a small boarding house; both families, though poor, were highly respectable.

"Since I'm left in charge of Alene, I'll use my own judgment, which tells me that it's the very thing for her. She looks improved already and I'll not let any snobbish question deprive her of happiness." Which settled the matter there and then for all concerned.

\* \* \* \* \*

"What's the matter now, Alene, that you pucker your brows over that ponderous tome?"

It was after supper, and Uncle Fred, seated in an easy chair beside the reading table in the library, was lazily puffing a pipe.

A stand near by held a large dictionary over whose pages Alene's head was bent.

Glancing up with a puzzled expression, she said: "I don't quite understand; this book says it means 'plain,' and I'm sure lots of children are quite ugly long before they are that age, and I don't think the girls are plain—Laura has lovely eyes and I never heard I was. Am I ugly, Uncle?"

"Well, one wouldn't pick you out in a crowd when all the lights were out, for a fright—"

"Oh, Uncle Fred, do be sober a minute!"

"Alene, I'm ashamed of you to hint that your guardian is ever anything else!"

"I mean grave!"

"A 'most potent, reverend and grave' old fellow am I!"

"Why, sometimes, Uncle Fred, you act as if you weren't any more than nine," said Alene, returning to the book with an air of tolerant resignation that amused the young man. He crossed to her side.

"Tell me what you are hunting; perhaps I can help you."

Alene ignored his air of exaggerated solemnity.

"You see, Laura said one must be twelve years old to be legible—to the Club, you know."

"Then if I'm not too old, I'm old enough to belong! But if I were you, I'd quit the L's and try something else very like it, with an E before," suggested Uncle Fred.

"Eligible, of course—how stupid of me!"

On the way upstairs that night Alene paused and gave way to a fit of laughter.

"What's the fun now?" called Uncle Fred from his cosy position by the table.

"It seems so funny to think that I," here came a series of mirthful sounds, "to think that you would think that I was afraid of you."

Uncle Fred's chair was overturned by his energetic uprising in pursuit of the little tease, who heeded the warning and was safely out of sight on the landing, with one parting giggle as the door of her room was shut with a resounding clap.

## CHAPTER III

### GUMDROPS

"Not a red gum drop was cast!" cried Laura as she jumped lightly from the garden wall and joined Alene, who for some time had been pacing the orchard impatiently with Prince jumping beside her.

Alene's look of pleased anticipation changed to dismay.

"I'm so sorry!"

"What for?"

"Why, Uncle Fred would have given me money to buy some, if I knew you wanted them!"

Laura's laugh rang out merrily.

"Why, Alene, it's *votes!* We don't buy them like 'lectioneers do—we get enough to give each member one red and one white gumdrop. Those who are for a candidate put in a white and those against her a red!"

Alene danced with joy.

"Then I'm elected!"

"You are now a member of the Happy-Go-Luckys and your name is duly inscribed on the books!" said Laura, in her judicial tone.

"And they all put in the white drops! How lovely of them!"

"Yes, all but Ivy; she put hers in her mouth to taste it, and before she knew, it was gone!"

"Dear me, and what did she do then?"

"She whispered it to me at the last minute, just after I got out the little mustard box where we cast our votes, and so I allowed her to put in a button instead. After it was over, some of us wanted to save the gumdrops for the first meeting you attended, but those greedy youngsters had devoured 'em all but two which I managed to keep."

Laura pressed into Alene's hand a small tinsel-paper package.