ARCHIE'S SWEETHEART, AND OTHER STORIES, PP. 1-231

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ELLEN MULLEY

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Archie's Sweetheart,

And other Stories.

BY

ELLEN MULLEY.

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1877.

TO

MY FATHER AND MOTHER

THIS VOLUME

IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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ARCHIE'S SWEETHEART.

MARCH may have come in like a lion, but its exit was scarcely being made after the fashion of a lamb, unless, indeed, it was a lamb of a more than ordinary frisky and playful disposition, which, after all, may have been the case.

On the platform of the little station at Silvermouth, that overlooks the sea, where a few stray figures—feminine chiefly—are awaiting the arrival of the down express, the proverbial animal is frisky and playful to an extent that is positively exasperating. Hats, feathers, and hair—to say nothing of ankles, so exposed is the situation—make but bad weather of it; while their fair owners, rosy cheek'd and laughing, dive and clutch wildly at the refractory garments, vainly striving to

make one pair of hands serve where a good half-dozen would be scarcely equal to the emergency. But the train is in at last, and the hands, for the most part, have other work before them, and the March wind, for the next five minutes or so, works its own sweet will, unchecked and unheeded. One of the fair ones just mentioned has made a dash at a carriage door, and is already assisting a rather stout and decidedly fussy old lady to alight.

"Now, Aunty, you're sure this is all?" she asks, as the stout lady, safely landed at last, stands surrounded by a confusion of packages, evidencing to the eyes of the initiated a shopping expedition to the neighbouring town of Silverton.

"Yes, my dear, I think so—that is—let me see—one, two, three," counts the old lady—attempting a bewildered inventory of her disgorged cargo—"and the two you have,

six—no, five. Kate how many parcels *have* you got? Katherine, I say!"

But Katherine's attention, just at that moment, was elsewhere. A middle-aged, comfortable-looking woman, with her charge—a small boy in a grey knickerbocker suit—had been the old lady's travelling companions, and Kate, Samaritan like, had extended her help in their direction. And what with the apparently exhaustless stock of wraps and baskets to be disinterred from under the cushioned seats, the small hand that was not to be parted with, and the ferocious attacks of the wind on every garment the woman wore, there was a need of someone to the rescue. Suddenly, over her head went the woman's long tweed cloak, and the little hand was for the first time released. By dint of much battling, the flapping folds were got down at last, but only to reveal to the wearer the startling fact that her charge was gone. At