

OMAHA LETTER.

The S Ranch, Wyoming.
August 28, 1901.

Dear Eleanor:

If there is one thing above another which a summer outing will show you, it is that you never do the things you plan to do, and the utter futility of planning at all.

I brought books galore up here, and numerous pieces of fancy work to do, and odds and ends of sewing to finish.

Not one book is read, no fancy work the richer for a single stitch, and the odds and ends are untouched.

I think if it were not for the fact that Mother is really a rather superior person she would feel inclined to go about with her head pretty well up in the air, saying, "I told you so!" You know she really did not want to come out here very much, but we overruled her a trifle high-handedly.

Well, we do not any of us like it so very much, save Rob, and although Papa tries to make out he likes it exceedingly, "Methinks he doth protest too much."

Turn a family in on itself this way, with neighbors and a postoffice seven miles distant, and I don't know what is to prevent its becoming monotonous.

Gertrude and her friend are the most maddening members of the dilettante, I ever came across.

They flatly refuse to go off on long tramps, or climb, or to go fishing. They do not intend to go home all scratched and burnt up, so they inform me.

That may be natural enough. Perhaps if I had a "bo" I would feel equally concerned about my hands and complexion.

The girls go off occasionally, well swathed, and do a little very amateurish sketching, and bring home painful-looking canvases.

Gertrude brought a sketch back one day and showed it to Papa. He adjusted his eye-glasses carefully, looked at it up-side-down, and then said heartily, "Excellent! daughter, excellent! Mountain sheep, aren't they?"

Gertrude simply took it away, rather forcibly, saying, "The idea, Papa!"

I had quite a nice trip yesterday which has left its mark in the shape of more sore muscles than I supposed I was owner of.

Rob was possessed with a desire to go up the trail, to a place where Jim said there was fine fishing, and Jim said he would take him, and "Oh! please, please, Mother, couldn't he go?"

Mother would not consider it for a moment unless I would go with them. "Jim" lifted his hat with a bow worthy of a Chesterfield and said "he thought Miss Mayfair might enjoy it, if she did not mind something of a climb." I did mind it, but Rob threw himself on me in an ecstasy of pleading which I had not the heart to resist.

There was a great skirmishing around to fix up the poles and tackle, and Phoebe fixed up enough lunch, it seemed to me, for a small army.

"You g'long, Miss Pennelly," said Phoebe, when I remonstrated about the load I was to carry; "You's liable to eat dat bull thing yo'sef, 'cordin' to the way you's been eatin'."

That was unanswerable, so I took my book and the basket, and we started. Rob was joy, sunshine and laughter incarnate. He was so unspeakably happy.

Jim said: "Go easy, little man; you will tire yourself out; it is a good long way to the pool."

"Oh, no; I won't, Jim. I never get tired when they let me do the things I want to. It's only when mama says 'no.' That makes me sick to my stomach."

Refreshing candor of youth! The trail wound gently up the slope, sometimes leading straight through the icy-cold water, sometimes around a narrow

rocky ledge that jutted over the restless, tossing waters of the river on its hasty downward way.

The sunshine fell in occasional trembling mosaics on rock and water. Some places the trees were knit together into such a close cover that no sunshine reached in, and the arms of the forest seemed to fold us in a cold embrace.

The pool was a round basin-like sheet of water, which looked like a huge emerald, and in whose depths shining fish darted or lay in jeweled beauty.

Jim found a mossy spot where I could sit in cool comfort with my book.

"Don't worry about Rob, Miss Mayfair, if we get out of sight. I will take care of him."

I heard him giving Rob instructions about not talking or calling in loud tones, and telling him in such a man-to-man style that I was quite sure he would have no trouble in managing the lad.

Oh! how vast and still it was! With a vastness and stillness that seemed to mock my very thoughts.

It seems puerile to say that these things mock at humanity. "These things"—these great, sorrowful pines. These rugged, uplifted rocks and pure, sparkling waters from some great riven heart, mock at nothing, even the poorest thought of God. They may be sorrowful over us, in our unworthy struggling, but I think if they could reach out their great, strong arms they fain would draw unto themselves all the bruised, the sorrowful, the world-hurt and give them balm.

I had turned but one leaf of my book when the snapping of twigs and a boy's gay laughter warned me that time had galloped withal, and the fishermen were returning, if not with fish, surely with appetites.

"Pen, Pen! look at our dandy fish! And I caught two of 'em, didn't I, Jim?"

His cheeks were veritable roses of fire, his cap off, and great rings of moist gold hair curled on his forehead.

The string of fish being duly admired, Jim went to leave them in the water while I opened and spread out our luncheon. Phoebe had not overestimated our capacity. Sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs went down with a relish which would be an inestimable blessing if it would only last.

Think with what a comparative indifference one could contemplate the possible inferiority of one's dinner with an appetite like that.

After we had finished Rob crept over and laid his head into my lap, and very soon the "Rock-a-by lady from Hush-a-by street, came stealing—came creeping."

I do not recollect just how it came about, but come about some way it did, and Jim was telling me his story with deep, deep breath, and sudden pauses.

He was obliged to come out here during his last year in college. That sounds a simple, bold statement, but it meant complete Calvary for him.

He built the cross and nailed thereon, in agony of soul, his hopes and all the fair promise of his life.

It meant the renunciation of career, honor, possible wealth. It meant the tearing out of his life the "one fair woman under the sun."

"But," I said, pityingly, "if she loved you, as you her, wouldn't she have come here and been with you? Surely anything would be better than life-long separation."

He threw his arm out as if to ward aside the blow, and a look of helpless desperation filled his eyes.

This, then, was "sorrow's crown of sorrow." She had not cared enough.

We went home rather sorrowfully. Poor little Rob was tired out and dragged heavily. Poor big Jim was remorseful. "I should not have told you all my troubles, Miss Mayfair. I am really ashamed."

"Don't, don't, I beg you, regret what

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