



Sisters

by
KATHLEEN NORRIS

Copyright by
KATHLEEN NORRIS

CHAPTER XIII.

Meanwhile Cherry, in the sick flutter of spirits that had become familiar to her of late, kept her dentist appointment, and at noon looked at a flushed and lovely vision in the dentist's mirror.

She went out into the blazing street; it was one of the hot noontides of the year. At two o'clock a wild wind would spring up and send papers and dust flying, but just now the heat was dry and clear and still.

She was carrying a parasol and she opened it now and walked slowly toward Geary street. She could not even frame in her thoughts the utter blankness of the feeling that swept over her at missing an opportunity to see Peter. She turned and went slowly up past the big shop windows that reflected the burning Plaza, and so came to the cool, great doorway of the St. Francis. Inside was tempered light and much noiseless coming and going, meeting and parting.

Cherry drifted into the big, deep-carpeted waiting room; there were other women there, sunk into the big leather chairs, watching the doors and glancing at the clock. When a man came hastily in the door, one woman rose, there was a significant smile, a murmured greeting, before the two vanished.

In a luxurious chair Cherry waited, Peter certainly would not come in until half-past twelve, perhaps not then. Suddenly, with a spring of her heart against her ribs, she saw Peter's dark head with its touches of iron gray.

Groomed and brushed scrupulously as always, with the little limp, yet as always dignified and erect, he came to stand before her, and she stood up, and their hands met. Flushed and a little confused, she followed him to an inconspicuous table in a corner of the dining room. Then the dreamlike unreality and beauty of their hours together began again.

"Did you expect me to meet you?" she smiled. For answer he looked at her thoughtfully a minute before his own face lighted with a bright smile. "I don't think I thought of your not being here," he confessed. "I was simply moving all morning toward the instant of meeting." He watched her, almost with anxiety, for a moment, then turned his attention to the bill of fare. But Cherry was not hungry, and she paid small attention to the order, or to the food when it came.

Presently they were talking again, in that hunger for self-analysis that is a part of new love. They thrilled at every word, Cherry raising her eyes, shining with eagerness, to his, or Peter watching the little down-dropped face in an agony of adoration. An hour passed, two hours, after awhile they were walking, still with that strange sense of oneness and of solitude, and still as easily as if they had been floating, to the ferry.

Alix met them in Mill Valley with vivid accounts of the day; she had been pondering the brief talk with Anne, and was anxious to have Peter's view of it. Peter was of the opinion that Anne's conduct indicated very clearly that she and Justin realized that their case was lost.

"Then you're fixed for life, Cherry," was Alix's first remark. "Oh, say!" she added, in a burst. "Let's go down to the old house tomorrow, will you? Let's see what it needs, and how much would have to be done to make it fit to live in!"

Cherry flushed, staring steadily at her sister, and Peter, too, was confused, but Alix saw nothing. The next day she carried her point, and took them with her down to the old house. Cherry was pale and fighting tears, as they crossed the porch, and fitted the key in the door. Inside the house the air was close and stale, odors of dry pine walls and of unwarmed rooms. Peter flung up a window, the girls walked aimlessly about, through the familiar, yet shockingly strange, chairs and tables that were all coated thickly with dust.

"It needs everything!" Alix said, after a first quick tour of inspection, eyeing a greater weather streak on the raw plaster of the dining-room wall. "It needs air, cleaning, straightening, flowers—Gosh, how it does need people!"

"I—I can't bear it!" Cherry said softly, in a sick undertone.

Alix, who was rapidly recovering her equilibrium, sprang upstairs without hearing her, but Cherry did not follow. She went to the open front doorway and stood there, leaning against the sill, and gazing sadly out at the shabby, tangled garden that had sheltered all the safety and joy and innocence of her little-girl days.

"Peter," she said, as he came to stand beside her, "I'm so unhappy!" "Cherry, will you end it?" he asked her, huskily.

She gave him a startled look.

"End it?" she faltered.

"Will you—do you think you are

prave enough to give everything else up for me?" he asked.

"Peter!" said Cherry, hardly above a breath.

"Will you go away with me?" Peter went on, feverishly. "That's the only way, now. That's the only way—now. Will you go away?"

"Go away!" Cherry's face was ashen as she moved her tragic and beautiful eyes to his. "Go away where?"

"Anywhere!" Peter answered, confusedly. "Anywhere!" He did not meet her look, his own went furtively about the garden. Immediately he seemed to regain self-control. "I'm talking like a fool!" he said, quickly. "I don't know what I'm saying half the time! I'm sorry—I'm sorry, Cherry. Don't mind me. Say that you'll forgive me for what I said!"

He had taken her hands, and they were looking distressedly and soberly at each other when an unexpected noise made them step quickly apart. Cherry's heart beat madly with terror, and Peter flushed deeply.

It was Martin Lloyd's aunt, Mrs. North, their old neighbor, who came about the corner of the house, and approached them smilingly. How much had she seen? Cherry asked herself, in a panic. What were they doing?—what were they saying—as she appeared?—how much had their attitude betrayed them?

Mrs. North was the same loud-laughing, cheerful woman as of old. She kissed Cherry, and was full of queries for Martin.

"Durango? Belle told me something about his going there," she said. "How long you been here, Cherry?" "I've been with Alix and Peter for—for several weeks," Cherry said, uneasily. Her eyes met Peter's, and he conveyed reassurance to her with a look.

"When you going back, dear?" Mrs. North asked, with so shrewd a glance from Cherry's exquisite rose face to Peter's that he felt a fresh pang of suspicion. She had seen something—

"Why, I've been rather—rather kept here by the—law-suit, haven't I, Peter?" Cherry explained. "But I expect to go soon as it is all settled! Here's Alix," she said, gladly, as Alix came downstairs.

"I'll bet you three are having real good times!" Mrs. North said, with a curious look from one to the other.

"You know what I hope," Alix told her. "Is that Cherry and Martin will always keep the old place open now. I don't believe Cherry'll ever love an



"Here's Alix," She Said Gladly as Alix Came Downstairs.

other place as she does the valley—will you, Sis?" Alix ended, eagerly. Cherry met the arm her sister linked around her, half-way, and gave her a troubled smile.

And yet a few moments later, when some quest took Peter suddenly from the group, she watched the shabby corduroy suit, the laced high boots, and the black head touched with gray, disappear in the direction of the kitchen with a tearing pain at her heart. Her father had asked her to wait, wait until she was nineteen! Nineteen had seemed old then. She had felt at nineteen she would have merely delayed the great joy of life for nothing; at nineteen she would be only so much older, so much more desperately bent upon this marriage.

And Peter was there then, was coming and going, advising and teasing her—so near, so accessible, loving her even then, had she not known it! That engagement might as easily—

—and how much more wisely!—have been with Peter; the presents, the gowns, the wedding would have been the same, to her childish egotism; the rest how different! The rest would have been light instead of darkness, joy instead of pain, dignity and de-

velopment and increasing content instead of all the months of restless criticism and doubt and disillusionment. The very scene here, with Mrs. North and Alix, might easily have been, with Cherry as the wife of Peter, Cherry as her sister's hostess, in the mountain cabin—

At the thought her heart suffocated her. She stood dazedly looking out of the old kitchen window, and her senses swam in a sudden spasm of pain.

CHAPTER XIV.

"You and I must go away!" said Peter. "I can't stand it. I love you. I love you so dearly, Cherry. I can't think of anything else any more. It's like a fever—it's like a sickness. I'm never happy, any more, unless my arms are about you. Will you let me take you somewhere, where we can be happy together?"

Cherry turned her confident, childish face toward him; her lashes glittered, and she smiled.

"I love you, Peter!" she said. And the words, sounding softly through the silence of the garden, died away on the warm night air like music.

In the two weeks since the day at the old house they had not chanced to be often alone, and tonight, for the first time, Cherry admitted that she could fight no longer. They talked as lovers, his arm about the soft little clinging figure, her small, firm fingers tight in his own. He had squared about on the great log that was their seat so that his ardent eyes were closer to her; the world held nothing but themselves. It was eight o'clock.

"So this is the thing that was waiting for us all these years, Cherry, ever since the time you and Alix used to dam my brook and climb my oak trees!"

"I never dreamed of it!" Cherry said, with wonder in her tone.

"If we had dreamed of it—" Peter began, and stopped.

"Ah, if we had, it would all be different," Cherry said, with a look of pain. "That's the one thing I can't bear to think of! I cannot go back to Martin. I can't leave you—I can't leave you!"

"Shall we go away?" Peter asked, simply.

"Go where?" she asked.

"Go anywhere!" he answered. "We have money enough; we can leave Alix rich—she will still have her cabin and her dogs and the life she loves. But there are other things, Cherry; there are little cabins in Hawaii, there are Canadian villages—Cherry, there are thousands of places in the south of France where we might live for years and never be questioned, and never be annoyed."

"France!" she whispered, and the downcast face he was watching so eagerly was thoughtful. "How could we go," she breathed. "You first, and then I? To meet somewhere?"

"We would have to go together," he decided swiftly. "Every one must know, dear; you realize that?"

Wide-eyed she was staring at him as if spell-bound by some new hope; now she shrugged her shoulders in careless disdain.

"That isn't of any consequence!"

"You don't feel it so!" He sat down beside her, and again they locked hands.

"Not that part," she answered, simply. "I mind—Alix," she added, thoughtfully.

"Yes, I mind Alix!" he admitted. "But the injury is done to Alix now," Cherry said, slowly. "Now it is too late to go back! You and I couldn't—we couldn't deceive Alix here, Peter," Cherry added, and as she turned to him he saw her thin white blouse move suddenly with the quick rising of her heart. "That—that would be too horrible! But I could take this love of ours away, leave everything else behind, simply—simply recognize," stammered Cherry, her lips beginning to tremble, "that it is bigger than ourselves, that we can't help it, Peter. I'd fight it if I could," she added, piteously. "To go away if I didn't know that no power on earth could keep me from coming back!"

She buried her head on his shoulder, and he put his arm about her, and there was utter silence over the great brooding mountains, and in the valley brimming with soft moonshine, and in the garden.

"I believe that even Alix will understand," Peter said after awhile. "She loves you and me better than any one else in the world; she is not only everything that is generous, but she isn't selfish, she is the bestest and the most sensible person I ever knew. I know—of course I know it's rotten," he broke off in sudden despair. "but what I'm trying to say is that Alix, of all people I know, is the one that will make the least fuss about it—"

Cherry was staring raptly before her; now she grasped his hand and said breathlessly:

"Oh, Peter, are we talking about it? Are we talking about our going away, and belonging to each other?"

"What else?" he said, quick tears in his eyes.

"Oh, but I've been so unhappy, I've been so starved!" she whispered. "I thought I wanted people—cities—I thought I wanted to go on the stage. But it was only you I wanted. Oh, Peter, what a life it will be! The littlest cottage, the simplest life, and perhaps a bench or woods to walk in—and always talking, reading, always together. Isn't there some way we can get away, disappear as if we had never been?"

"Cherry!" he said, kneeling before her in the wet grass. "You know what it means!"

"It means you!" she answered, after a silence. She had laid her hands softly about his neck, and her shining eyes were close to his.

"It's so beautiful—it's so wonderful—to love this way," she said, in her innocent, little-girl voice, "that it seems to me the only thing in the world! I'd come to you, Peter, if it meant shame and death and horror. It doesn't mean that, it only means a man and a woman settling down somewhere in the south of France, a big quiet man who limps a little, and a little yellow-headed woman in blue smocks and silly-looking hats—"

"It means life, of course!" he interrupted her. "The hour that makes you mine, Cherry, will be the exquisite hour of my whole life!"

They were silent for a while, and below them the white moonlight deepened and brightened and swam like an enchantment.

"There will be no coming back, Cherry."

"Oh, I know that!"

"There can't ever be—there mustn't be—you've thought of that?" he said, uncertainly. In the curious, unreal light that flooded the world, he saw her turn, and caught the gleam of her surprised eyes.

"You mean children—a child?" she said, surprisedly. "Why not, Peter?" she added, tightening her fingers, "what could be more wonderful than that we should have a child? Can you imagine a happier environment for a child than that little sunny, woody beach cottage; can't you see the little figure—the two or three little figures!—scampering ahead of us through the country roads, or around the fire? Oh, I can," said Cherry, her extraordinary voice rich and sweet

with longing, "I can! That would be motherhood, Peter, that wouldn't be like having a baby whose father one didn't—couldn't love, marriage or no marriage!"

And as he watched, amazed at the change that love had brought to quiet, little inarticulate Cherry, she added, earnestly:

"Alix will forgive us; you'll see she will! Alix—I know her!—will only be sorry for me. She'll only think me mad to disgrace the good name of Strickland; she'll think we're both crazy. Perhaps she'll plunge into the orphanage work, or perhaps she'll go on here, gardening, playing with Buck, raising ducks—she says herself that she has never known what love means—says it really meaning it, yet as if the whole subject was a joke—a weakness!"

"I believe she will forgive us, for she is the most generous woman in the world," Peter said, slowly. "Any way—we can't stop now! We can't stop now! There is the steamer line that goes to Los Angeles," he mused.

"Yes—I believe that is the solution," he added, with a brightening face. "Nobody you know goes there on it; it leaves daily at eleven, and gets into Los Angeles the following morning. From there we can get a drawing-room to New Orleans; that's only a day and a half more; and we can keep to ourselves if by any unlucky chance there should be any one we know on the train—"

"Which isn't likely!"

"Which isn't likely! Then at New Orleans we go either to the Zone, or to South America, or to any one of the thousand places—New York, if we like, by water. By that time we will be lost as completely as if we had dropped into the sea. I'll see about reservations—the thing is, you're too pretty to go quite unnoticed!" he added rusefully.

He saw a smile flicker on her face in the moonlight, but when she spoke, it was with almost tearful gravity:

"You arrange it, Peter, and somehow I'll go. I'll write Alix—I'll tell her that where she's sane, I'm mad, and where she's strong, I'm weak! And we'll weather it, dear, and we'll find ourselves somewhere, alone, with all the golden, beautiful future before us. But, Peter, until this part of it's over we mustn't be alone again—you mustn't kiss me again! Will you promise me?"

As stirred as she was, he gathered her little fingers together, and kissed them.

"I'll promise anything! Only trust me for a few days more, and we will be away from it all. And now you put it all out of your mind, and run in and go to bed. You're exhausted, and if Alix gets the eight o'clock train she will be here in a few minutes."

"Good night!" she breathed, and he saw the white gown flicker against the soft light on the lawn, and saw the black shadow creeping by it, before she mounted the porch steps, and was gone.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Her Shining Eyes Were Close.

with longing, "I can! That would be motherhood, Peter, that wouldn't be like having a baby whose father one didn't—couldn't love, marriage or no marriage!"

And as he watched, amazed at the change that love had brought to quiet, little inarticulate Cherry, she added, earnestly:

"Alix will forgive us; you'll see she will! Alix—I know her!—will only be sorry for me. She'll only think me mad to disgrace the good name of Strickland; she'll think we're both crazy. Perhaps she'll plunge into the orphanage work, or perhaps she'll go on here, gardening, playing with Buck, raising ducks—she says herself that she has never known what love means—says it really meaning it, yet as if the whole subject was a joke—a weakness!"

"I believe she will forgive us, for she is the most generous woman in the world," Peter said, slowly. "Any way—we can't stop now! We can't stop now! There is the steamer line that goes to Los Angeles," he mused.

"Yes—I believe that is the solution," he added, with a brightening face. "Nobody you know goes there on it; it leaves daily at eleven, and gets into Los Angeles the following morning. From there we can get a drawing-room to New Orleans; that's only a day and a half more; and we can keep to ourselves if by any unlucky chance there should be any one we know on the train—"

"Which isn't likely!"

"Which isn't likely! Then at New Orleans we go either to the Zone, or to South America, or to any one of the thousand places—New York, if we like, by water. By that time we will be lost as completely as if we had dropped into the sea. I'll see about reservations—the thing is, you're too pretty to go quite unnoticed!" he added rusefully.

He saw a smile flicker on her face in the moonlight, but when she spoke, it was with almost tearful gravity:

"You arrange it, Peter, and somehow I'll go. I'll write Alix—I'll tell her that where she's sane, I'm mad, and where she's strong, I'm weak! And we'll weather it, dear, and we'll find ourselves somewhere, alone, with all the golden, beautiful future before us. But, Peter, until this part of it's over we mustn't be alone again—you mustn't kiss me again! Will you promise me?"

As stirred as she was, he gathered her little fingers together, and kissed them.

"I'll promise anything! Only trust me for a few days more, and we will be away from it all. And now you put it all out of your mind, and run in and go to bed. You're exhausted, and if Alix gets the eight o'clock train she will be here in a few minutes."

"Good night!" she breathed, and he saw the white gown flicker against the soft light on the lawn, and saw the black shadow creeping by it, before she mounted the porch steps, and was gone.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

What to Take for CONSTIPATION

Take a good dose of **Carter's Little Liver Pills**—then take 2 or 3 for a few nights after. They cleanse your system of all waste matter and **Regulate Your Bowels**. Mild—as easy to take as sugar. *Genuine bear signature—Bart Wood*
Small Pill. Small Dose. Small Price.

Seven hundred British subjects are born at sea each year.

The Old School of Medicine. De Gush—"What would you prescribe for the ills of the world today?" De Crush—"Mosaic tablets."—Wayside Tales.

ASPIRIN

Name "Bayer" on Genuine

It's a poor patent medicine that can't get itself imitated.

WHY DRUGGISTS RECOMMEND SWAMP-ROOT

For many years druggists have watched with much interest the remarkable record maintained by Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root, the great kidney, liver and bladder medicine.

It is a physician's prescription. Swamp-Root is a strengthening medicine. It helps the kidneys, liver and bladder do the work nature intended they should do.

Swamp-Root has stood the test of years. It is sold by all druggists on its merit and it should help you. No other kidney medicine has so many friends.

Be sure to get Swamp-Root and start treatment at once.

However, if you wish first to test this great preparation send ten cents to Dr. Kilmer & Co., Binghamton, N. Y., for a sample bottle. When writing be sure and mention this paper.—Advertisement.

"SHOW" HAD HER APPROVAL

Small Girl Enjoyed It and Was Not at All Backward in Telling the World.

"Sister" is six, and her delight in Indianapolis. Last summer Ola took her when she went to see Stuart Walker's "Peg o' My Heart." Sister squirmed and giggled and whispered that "this isn't a real show" until Ola declared "never again."

But shortly afterward she and her husband had to take "Sister" along when they went to see the premiere of "Abe Martin" at English's. First, they cautioned her:

"For goodness' sake, be still." Imagine their surprise, amusement and also embarrassment when after a lively ensemble, "Sister," who had been shrieking in glee, clapped her hands, and while the whole audience turned to see, shrieked:

"Oh, Ola, this is a real show 'cause its got pretty girls and they sing and dance."—Indianapolis News.

OBJECTION WOULD NOT LAST

Suitor More Than Willing to Remove Cause for Prospective Father-in-Law's Ill Will.

The two lovers were talking over their troubles, particularly the parental objections offered to their marriage. "But," said the youth, "I can't for the life of me see why your father should place any obstacle in the way of our marriage."

"Well," explained the girl after some reflection, "I think it stands this way: Father, you know, is always boasting of his lineage. He is forever saying that his ancestors were gentlemen of leisure like himself, and that you have to work for a living."

"Well," continued the suitor, "tell him that I don't expect to after we are married."

Thought He Was Dying

"Stirring times in our neighborhood last night."

"What happened?"

"The Blitherbys played jazz records until after midnight, so Mr. Grumpson rose from his bed and began to sing, by way of starting a little competition."

"I suppose the Blitherbys took the hint?"

"No, indeed. They sent for an ambulance."

Equipped for Fight

Miss Gushington—Do you believe that when poverty comes in at the door love flies out the window?

Mr. Hardfax—Sure! Didn't you ever notice the wings on Cupid?

Three crops a year can be grown in the Panama canal zone.

Do you discriminate at the dining table—or are you thoughtless?

In thousands of homes, a "line" is drawn at the breakfast table. Tea or coffee is served for "grown-ups" and Postum for children. But some parents do not discriminate. Caffeine and tannin, the injurious contents of coffee and tea, seriously retard the development of the delicate nerve tissues in children.

Consequently, instead of rich, satisfying Postum, children are over-stimulated by the drugs in tea and coffee; and so may grow up irritable and nervous. Any doctor can tell you that this is a great evil and should be corrected.

Although some parents feel a certain justification for the personal indulgence in coffee, yet the harm to them may be equally serious. It may take a little while longer for the drugs in coffee and tea to affect

an older person, but in many cases the nervous system and allied bodily functions will become weakened. The surest way to avoid such possibilities is to quit coffee entirely and drink Postum instead. The change permits you to get sound, restful sleep.

Postum is the well-known, meal-time beverage. Like thousands of others you will like it because, in flavor, it is much like a high-grade coffee.

Do away with the distinction at the table. Serve delicious Postum, piping hot, to all the family. One week's trial and it is likely that you'll never return to tea and coffee.

Postum comes in two forms: Instant Postum (in tins) made instantly in the cup by the addition of boiling water. Postum Cereal (in packages of larger bulk, for those who prefer to make the drink while the meal is being prepared) made by boiling for 20 minutes.

Postum for Health

"There's a Reason"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)