

SISTERS

By KATHLEEN NORRIS

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CHAPTER XV—Continued.

"Martin," she said, impetuously interrupting him. "I've got to talk to you! I've meant to write it—so many times, I've had it in mind ever since I left Red Creek!"

"Shoot!" Martin said, with his favorite look of indulgent amusement. "There are marriages that without any fault on either side are a mistake." Cherry began, "any contributory fault, I mean—"

"Talk United States!" Martin growled, smiling, but on guard. "Well, I think our marriage was one of those!" Cherry said.

"What have you got to kick about?" Martin asked, after a pause. "I'm not kicking!" Cherry answered, with quick resentment. "But I wish I had words to make you realize how I feel about it!"

Martin looked gloomily up at her, and shrugged. "This is a sweet welcome from your wife!" he observed. But as she regarded him with troubled and earnest eyes, perhaps her half-forgotten beauty made an unexpected appeal to him, for he turned toward her and eyed her with a large tolerance. "What's the matter, Cherry?" he asked. "It doesn't seem to me that you've got much to kick about. Haven't I always taken pretty good care of you? Didn't I take the house and move the things in; didn't I leave you a whole month, while I ate at that rotten boarding-house, when your father died; haven't I let you have—how long is it?—seven weeks, by George, with your sister?"

Cherry recognized the tones of his old arraigning voice. He felt himself ill-treated.

"Now you come in for this money," he began. But she interrupted him hotly: "Martin, you know that is not true!"

"Isn't it true that the instant you can take care of yourself you begin to talk about not being happy, and so on?" he asked, without any particular feeling. "You bet you do! Why, I never cared anything about that money, you never heard me speak of it. I always felt that by the time the lawyers and the heirs and the witnesses got through, there wouldn't be much left of it, anyway!"

Too rich in her new position of the woman beloved by Peter to quarrel with Martin in the old unhappy fashion, Cherry laid an appealing hand on his arm.

"I'm sorry to meet you with this sort of thing," she said, simply. "I blame myself now for not writing you just how I've come to feel about it! We must make some arrangement for the future—things can't be as they were!"

"You've had it all your way ever since we were married," he began. "Now you blame me—"

"I don't blame you, Martin!" "Well, what do you want a divorce for, then?"

"I don't even say anything about a divorce," Cherry said, fighting for

time only. "But I can't go back!" she added, with a sudden force and conviction that reached him at last. "Why can't you?"

"Because you don't love me, Martin, and you know it!—I don't love you!"

"Well, but you can't expect the way we felt when we got married to last forever," he said, clumsily. "Do you suppose other men and women talk this way when the—the novelty has worn off?"

"I don't know how they talk. I only know how I feel!" Cherry said, chilled by the old generalization.

Martin, who had stretched his legs to their length, crossed them at the ankles, and shoved his hands deep into his pockets, staring at the racing blue water with somber eyes.

"What do you want?" he asked, heavily. "I want to live my own life!" Cherry answered, after a silence during

which her tortured spirit seemed to cahn the hackneyed phrase. "That stuff!" Martin sneered, under his breath. "Well, all right, I don't care, get your divorce!" he agreed, carelessly. "But I'll have something to say about that, too," he warned her. "You can drag the whole thing up before the courts if you want to—only remember, if you don't like it much, you did it. It never occurred to me even to think of such a thing! I've done my share in this business; you never asked me for anything I could give you that you didn't get; you've never been tied down to housework like other women; you're not raising a family of kids—go ahead, tell every shop-girl in San Francisco all about it, in the papers, and see how much sympathy you get!"

"Oh, you beast!" Cherry said, between her teeth, furious tears in her eyes. The water swam in a blur of blue before her as they rose to go downstairs at Sausalito.

Martin glanced at her with impatience. Her tears never failed to anger him. "Don't cry, for God's sake!" he said, nervously glancing about for possible onlookers. "What do you want me to do? For the Lord's sake don't make a scene until you and I have a chance to talk this over quietly—"

Cherry's thoughts were with Peter. In her soul she felt as if his arm was about her, as if she were pouring out to him the whole troubled story, sure that he would rescue and console her. She had wiped her eyes, and somewhat recovered calm, but she trusted herself only to shrug her shoulder as she preceded Martin to the train.

There was no time for another word, for Alix suddenly took possession of them. She had had time to bring the car all the six miles to Sausalito, and meant to drive them direct to the valley from there.

She greeted Martin affectionately, although even while she did so her eyes went with a quick, worried look to Cherry. They had been quarreling, of course—it was too bad, Alix thought, but her own course was clear. Until she could take her cue from them, she must treat them both with cheerful unconsciousness of the storm.

They reached the valley and Martin was magnanimous about the delayed lunch. Anything would do for him, he said; he was taking a couple of days' holiday, and everything went. Kow was chopping wood after lunch, and he sauntered out to the block with suggestions; Alix, laying a fire for the evening, simply because she liked to do that sort of work, was favored with directions. Finally Martin pushed her aside.

"Here, let me do that," he said. "You'd have a fine fire here, at that rate!"

Later he went down to the old house with them, to spend there an hour that was trying to both women. It was almost in order now; Cherry had pleased her simple fancy in the matter of hangings and papering, and the effect was fresh and good. "Girls going to rent this?" Martin asked.

"Unless you and Cherry come live here," Alix said boldly. He smiled tolerantly. "Why should we?"

"Well, why shouldn't you?" "Loading, eh?" "No, not loading. But you could transfer your work to San Francisco, couldn't you?"

Martin smiled a deep, wise, long-enduring smile. "Oh, you'd get me a job, I suppose?" he asked. "I love the way you women try to run things," he added, "but I guess I'll paddle my own canoe for a while longer!"

"There is no earthly reason why you shouldn't live here," Alix said pleasantly. "There is no earthly reason why we should!" Martin returned. He was annoyed by a suspicion that Alix and Cherry had arranged between them to make this plan the alternative to a divorce. "To tell you the honest truth, I don't like Mill Valley!"

Alix tasted despair. Small hope of preserving this particular relationship. He was, as Cherry had said, "impossible."

"Well, we must try to make you like Mill Valley better!" she said with resolute good-nature. "Of course, it means a lot to Cherry and to me to be near each other!"

"That may be true, too," Martin agreed, taking the front seat again for the drive home.

Alix was surprised at Cherry's passivity and silence, but Cherry was wrapped in a sick and nervous dream, unable either to interpret the present or face the future with any courage. Before luncheon he had followed her into her room and had put his arm about her. But she had quietly shaken him off, with the nervous murmur: "Please—no, don't kiss me, Martin!"

Stung, Martin had immediately dropped his arm, had shrugged his shoulders indifferently and laughed scornfully. Now he remarked to Alix, with some bravado: "You girls still sleeping out?"

"Oh, always—we all do!" Alix had answered readily. "Peter has an extra bunk on his porch; Cherry and I have my porch. But you can be out or in, as you choose!"

Martin ventured an answer that made Cherry's eyes glint angrily and brought a quick, embarrassed flush to Alix's face. Alix did not enjoy a certain type of joking, and she did not concede Martin even the ghost of a smile. He immediately sobered and remarked that he himself liked to be indoors at night. His suitcase was accordingly taken into the pleasant little wood-smelling room next to Peter's, where the autumn sunlight, scented with the dry sweetness of mountain shrubs, was streaming.

He began to play solitaire, on the porch table, at five, and Kow had to disturb him to set it for dinner at seven. Alix was watering the garden, Cherry was dressing. It was an exquisite hour of long shadows and brilliant lights.

Kow had put a tureen of soup on the table, and Alix had returned with damp, clean hands and trimly brushed hair, for supper, when Peter came up through the garden. Cherry had rambled off in the direction of the barn a few moments before, but Martin had followed her and brought her back, remarking that she had had no idea of the time and was idly watching Antone milking. She slipped into her place after they were all eating, and hardly raised her eyes throughout the meal. If Alix addressed her she fluttered the white lids as if it were an absolute agony to look up; to Peter she did not speak at all. But to Martin she sent an occasional answer, and when the conversation lagged, as it was apt to do in this company, she nervously filled it with random remarks infinitely less reassuring than silence.

"How long do we stay here?" Martin cautiously asked his wife after dinner. "Stay here?" she echoed, at a loss. "Yes," he answered, decidedly. "I can stand a little of it, but I don't think much of this sort of life! I thought maybe we could all go into town for dinner and the theater tomorrow or Saturday. But on Monday we'll have to beat it."

"Monday?" Cherry's heart bounded. "Martin, isn't it a mistake to go on pretending—" she began bitterly. But Peter's voice, in the drawing room, interrupted her. "I'll let you know—we'll talk about it!" she had time to say, hurriedly, before he came out to them. He flung himself into a chair.

CHAPTER XVI.

The evening dragged. Alix had suggested bridge, but Martin did not play bridge. So she went to the piano, and began to ramble through various songs.

Cherry and Peter, left at the table, did not speak to each other; Peter leaned back in his chair, with a cigarette; Cherry dreamily pushed to and fro the little anagram wooden block letters.

But presently her heart gave a great plunge, and although she did not alter her different attitude, or raise her eyes, her white hand moved with directed impulse, and Peter's casual glance fell upon the word "Alone."

When he laid his finished cigarette in the tray, it was to finger the letters himself, in turn, and Cherry realized with a great thrill of relief that he was answering her. Carelessly, and obliterating one word before he began another, he formed the question: "My office tomorrow?"

"Martin always with me," Cherry spelled back. She did not glance at Peter, but at Martin, who was watching the fire, and at Alix, whose back was toward the room.

"Come on, have another game!" Peter asked, generally, while he spelled quickly: "Will arrange sailing first possible day."

Alix, humming with her song, said: "Wait a few minutes!" and Martin glanced up to say, "No, I'm no good at that thing!"

Then Cherry and Peter were unobserved again, and she spelled "Mart goes Monday. Plans to take me."

Peter had reached for a magazine; he whirled through the pages, and yawned. Then he began to play with the anagrams again.

"Can you get away without him?" he spelled. "How?" Cherry instantly asked. And as Peter's hands went on building a little bridge of wooden letters, she went on: "Alix to train, Martin with me to city, impossible."

"Give him the slip," Peter spelled. And after a pause he added, "Life or death?"

"Difficult to evade," Cherry spelled, wiping the words away one by one. "Must wait—" Peter began. Alix, ending her song on a crash of chords, came to the table, interrupting him. Cherry was now lazily reading a magazine; Peter had built a little pen of tiny blocks.

"I'll go you!" Alix said, with spirit. But the game was rather a languid one, nevertheless, and when it was over they gathered yawning about the mantel, ready to disperse for the night.

"And tomorrow night we dine in

town and go to the Orpheum?" Alix asked, for the plan had been suggested at dinner-time.

"I'll blow you girls to any show you like," Martin offered.

Remarking that he was tired, Peter went to his room. Cherry, with only a general good-night, also disappeared, to find Alix arranging beds and pillows on their sleeping porch.

"Oh, Alix—I'm so worried—I'm so sick with worry!" Cherry whispered. "He won't listen to me. He won't hear of a divorce!"

"I know!" Alix said, distressedly. "But what shall I do—I can't go with him!" Cherry protested.

"What shall I do?" Cherry pleaded again. "Why, I don't see what else you can do, but go with him!" Alix said, in a troubled voice. "You are his wife. For better or worse, for richer or poorer, till death—"

It was said so kindly, with Alix's simple and embarrassed fashion of giving advice, that poor Cherry could not resent it. She could only bow her head desolately upon her knees, as she sat, child-fashion, in her bed, and cry.

"A nice mess I've made of my life!" she sobbed. "I've made a nice mess



"A Nice Mess I've Made of My Life!" She Sobbed.

of it! I wish—oh, my God, how I wish I was dead!"

"My own life has been so darned nasty," Alix mused, in a cautious undertone, sitting, fully dressed, on the side of her own bed, and studying her sister with pitying eyes. "I've often wondered if I could buck up and get through with it if some of that sort of thing had come to me! I don't know, of course, but it seems to me that I'd say: 'Who loses his life shall gain it!' and I'd stand anything—people and places I hated, loneliness and poverty—the whole bag of tricks! I think I would, I mean I'd read the Bible and Shakespeare, and enjoy my meals, and have a garden—"

Her voice sank. "I know it's terribly hard for you, Cherry!" she ended, suddenly pitiful.

Cherry had stopped crying, dried her eyes, and had reached resolutely for the book that was waiting on the little shelf above the porch bed.

"You're bigger than I am," she said, quietly. "Or else I'm so made that I suffer more! I wish I could face the music. But I can't do anything. I'm sorry. One knows of unhappy marriages, everywhere, without quite fancying just what a horrible tragedy an unhappy marriage is! Don't mind me, Alix."

Alix was conscious, as she went out to speak to Kow about breakfast, and to give a final glance at fires and lights, that this was one of the times when girls needed a wise mother, or a father, who could decide, blame, and advise.

Coming back from the kitchen, with a pitcher of hot water, she saw Martin, in a welter of evening papers, staring at the last pink ashes of the wood fire. Upon seeing her he got up, and with a cautious glance toward the bedroom doors he said:

"Look here a minute! Can they hear us?" Alix set down her pitcher of water, and came to stand beside him.

"Hear us—Peter and Cherry? No, Cherry's out on our porch, and Peter's porch is even farther away. Why?"

"Take a look, will you?" he said. "I want to speak to you!"

Alix, mystified, duly went to glance at Cherry, reading now in a little funnel of yellow light, and then crossed to enter Peter's room. His porch was dark, but she could see the outline of the tall figure lying across the bed.

"Asleep?" she asked. "Nope!" he answered. "Well, don't go to sleep without pulling a rug over you!" she commanded. "Good-night, Pete!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Books of a Year.

The total number of books published in the United States during last year amounted to 8,422, a decline of more than 2,000 as compared with the year of 1916. When classified there was shown an increase in fiction, poetry, geography, amusements, biography and juveniles, and a decline in agriculture, history, medicine, business, social and religious. There was a general increase in the cost of books during the year.

Only Two Specimens.

There are two kinds of men—those who do what their wives tell them, and those who never marry.—Smart Set.

NEGRO MAKES TORCH OF SELF

Saturates Clothes With Kerosene in Cell, Applies Match and Is Horribly Burned.

New York.—A human bonfire sent thrills of terror through the Tombs prison. Sylvester Crockett, a Negro, intent on cheating the law and life, and Sing Sing, devised and carried out one of the most gruesome schemes to end it all. In his cell at the Tombs, he first drenched clothing and his body from head to toe with kerosene and then wound a noose made out of a handkerchief and after tying it so



He Was a Human Torch.

tightly around his neck that it stopped his breath, applied a match to his oil-saturated clothing. Within a second he was a human torch, the flames scorching the cell and the fumes spreading throughout the jail. He was horribly burned before attendants could extinguish the blaze, and died in terrible agony.

The prisoner was to have been taken to Sing Sing to begin a five years' sentence for an attack on a policeman.

When Deputy Warden MacManus, aided by keepers, had put out the flames, Crockett was a sight that made even the hardened Tombs guards shudder. Except for shreds of coat and pants that had been pasted to the body by the liquid fire, there was not a bit of clothing left on the man. Every bit of hair had been burned. Even his face seemed to have been soaked in oil, for the sight of one eye was literally burned out and where the eyebrows had been there were holes from which hung greenish shreds of skin.

The prisoner had been left in the cell pending arrangements for his being finger-printed, photographed and measured. In his cell stood a can of kerosene used to clean ink from the hands of prisoners after being finger printed.

Crockett made not a single outcry while he was burning.

Rattlesnake Trees Man; Waits for Assistance

Monticello, N. Y.—Friends of H. E. Barnum of Bridgeville, near Monticello, were informed that Barnum was attacked and treed by a rattlesnake which made a lunge at him, but only succeeded in puncturing one of his shoes. Barnum was on his way to Denton Falls when the rattlesnake crossed his path, only a yard away. He leaped for a branch of a tree as the snake struck. It struck again, but Barnum had pulled himself up far enough to get out of range. With Barnum safe in the crotch of the tree and the snake on guard below, he shouted for help, and J. B. Durman killed the reptile with a club.

PIRATE BIRD STEALS RING

New York Policeman Rescues Engagement Emblem From Pigeon's Nest.

New York.—A pirate pigeon has been added to the dark lexicon of crime.

Rebecca Bernstein wears her engagement ring around her neck. She placed the shining symbol on a window sill in her Harlem apartment, and a pigeon, flying to the casement, picked up the ribbon and ring and darted away.

A policeman climbed a fire escape to the bird's nest, found the stolen jewelry and then reported the deed to the station house.

Girl Held for Slaying of Father.

Bardstown, Ky.—A warrant has been issued for Allie Vance, fourteen years old, daughter of Charles Vance, who was shot and killed in his bed. The girl and her mother testified that just before his death Vance chastised his daughter because she persisted in receiving the attentions of a young man.

DAIRY FACTS

COW TESTING IS IMPORTANT

Much Progress Has Been Made in Replacing Inferior Bulls With High-Class Animals.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

Numerous examples of the valuable work being done by cow-testing associations are contained in reports of testers of these organizations sent to the western office of the dairy division of the United States Department of Agriculture.

According to the reports, marked progress has been made in replacing inferior bulls with high-class purebred animals. Six of the testing associations—of which three are in Idaho, two in Colorado and one in Washington—have reached the 100 per cent purebred bull mark, having eliminated all scrub sires from their herds. Another 100 per cent association was added to the list in January, and several others are getting near this mark.

The Petaluma (Cal.) association has only two scrub bulls left. The dairy department of the local farm bureau of the county in which the association is located has a plan for an annual purebred bull sale, the first of which was held several months ago. Young bulls out of 400-pound dams and older proved bulls are consigned to this sale by breeders and by dairymen wishing to dispose of bulls which they have used as long as they can in their own herds. The sale was the means of introducing 25 purebred bulls into the county, and the association hopes by this means to eliminate all scrub bulls from the county and to keep the dairymen supplied with good bulls in the future. Through these sales it also hopes to open a market for proved bulls, and so keep these bulls in service in the county for many years.

The tester of the Skagit Valley (Wash.) association reports that the last scrub bull has been "discharged from service." He also says that one farmer increased his production by 12 pounds of fat per cow on 25 cows from November to December by better care and feeding, and adds that this is an easy way of getting 300 pounds of fat more a month without milking any more cows.

The head tester for the Los Angeles (Cal.) association reports an increased



Only Purebred Bulls of Known Breeding Should Be Used in Bull Associations.

production by the 3,000 cows in the association for December, 1920, as compared with December, 1919, he says, means an increase of more than \$30,000 a month.

One herd of 30 cows in Orange County (California) increased its production from 19 pounds of fat per cow in September to 36 pounds in December, largely as a result of the association. This increase of 510 pounds of fat a month is more than some 30-cow herds are giving at this season, he reports. Another herd in this association increased from an average of 27 pounds per cow to 41 in six months. One dairymen in the association culled 13 animals from a 45-cow herd, and by so doing decreased his production only 12 gallons a day but saved over \$60 a month.

The tester of the Ada association in Idaho reports that every cow in the organization has been tested for tuberculosis. Every herd in this association is headed by a purebred bull and 25 per cent of all cows are purebred.

REDUCE MILK FLOW OF COWS

Serious Injury May Be Avoided by Drying Up Animal Some Time Before Calving.

Many a good dairy cow is seriously injured through poor handling before calving. The best milkers have a long period of milking. If not discouraged, they will give milk in worth-while quantities right up to calving. All too often they are encouraged, rather than having anything done toward reducing the flow. The consequence is not only a stunted calf, but a freshened cow that will never give more than three-fourths the milk she would were she given a six weeks' rest. It is an easy matter to dry up a cow. Simply skip a milking. Milk again, then skip two milkings. Milk again, and then forget about her. At the same time, omit all grain from the ration for a few days. There is seldom any further trouble.