

Sisters

KATHLEEN NORRIS



Copyright © KATHLEEN NORRIS

PETER AND ALIX.

Synopsis.—Doctor Strickland, retired, is living in Mill Valley, near San Francisco. His family consists of his daughters, Alix, 21, and Cherry, 18, and Anne, his niece, 21. Their closest friend is Peter Joyce, a lovable sort of recluse. Martin Lloyd, a visiting mining engineer, wins Cherry, marries her and carries her off to El Nido, a mining town. Peter realizes that he loves Cherry. Justin Little wooes Anne. Cherry comes home for Anne's wedding. Cherry realizes her marriage is a failure. Peter tells Cherry of his "grand passion," without naming the girl. Martin comes for Cherry. Martin and Cherry drift apart. Dr. Strickland dies. Peter returns from a long absence.

CHAPTER X—Continued.

"I can't tell you how surprised I am at Anne," Peter said.

"Well, we all were!" Alix confessed. "But it's just Anne's odd little self-centered way," she added. "It was here, and she wanted it. Well—I let Hong go, and as soon as I can rent this house, I'm going to New York."

"Why New York, my dear girl?"

"Because I believe I can make a living there, singing and teaching and generally struggling with life!" she answered, cheerfully. "Cherry gets most of the money—they are always somewhat in debt, and I imagine that the reason she is able to have a nice apartment and a maid now is because she knows it is coming—and I get the house, and enough money to keep me going—say, a year, in New York."

"Do you want to go, Alix?" he said, affectionately.

"Yes, I think I do," she answered. But her eyes watered. "I do—in a way," she added. "That is, I love my singing, and the thought of making a success is delightful to me. But, of course, it means that I give up everything else. I can't have home life, and—and the valley—for years, four or five anyway, I'll have to give all that up. And I'm twenty-seven, Peter. And I'd always rather hoped that my music was going to be a domestic variety—" She stopped, smiling, but he saw the pain in her eyes. "George Sewall most kindly asked me to mother his small son—" she resumed, casually. "But although he is the dearest—"

"Sewall did!" Peter exclaimed, rather struck. "Great Scott! his father is one of the richest men in San Francisco."

"I know it," Alix agreed. "And he is one of the nicest men," she added. "But, of course, he'll never really love any one but Ursula. And I felt—oh, I felt too tired and alone and depressed to enter upon congratulations and clothes and family dinners with the Sewalls," she ended, a little drearily. "I wanted—I wanted things in the old way—as they were—" she said, her voice thickening.

"I know—I know!" Peter said, sympathetically. And for a while there was silence in the little house, while the rain fell steadily upon the



She Was Now Beside the Old Square Piano.

dark forest without, and soaked branches swished about eaves and windows. "Can you put me up to-night?" he asked, suddenly. He liked her frank pleasure.

"Father! I think Cherry's room was made up fresh last Monday," she told him.

She had risen, as if for good-nights, and was now beside the old square piano, where she had placed the lamp.

"I haven't touched it—since—" she said, sadly, sitting on the stool, and with her eyes still smiling on him,

putting back the linged cover. And a moment later her hands, with the assurance and ease of the adept, drifted into one of the songs of the old days.

"Do you remember the day we put the rose tree back, Peter?" she asked. "When Martin was almost a stranger? And do you remember the day we made biscuits, over by the ocean?"

"I remember all the days," he answered, deeply stirred.

"We didn't see all this, then," Alix mused, still, playing softly. "Anne claiming everything for her husband, you and I here talking of Dad's death, and Cherry married—" She sighed.

"She's not happy?" he questioned quickly.

"She's not unhappy," she told him, with a troubled smile. "It's just one of those marriages that don't ever get anywhere, and don't ever stop," she added. "Martin has faults, he's unreasonable, and he makes enemies. But those aren't faults for which a woman can leave her husband. Oh, Peter," she added, laying a smooth, warm hand on his, and looking into his eyes with her honest eyes, "don't go away again! Stay here in the valley for a week or two, and help me get everything worked out and thought out—I've been so much alone!"

"Dear old Alix!" he said, sitting down on the bench beside her and putting his arm about her. She dropped her head on his shoulder, and so they sat, very still, for a long minute. Alix's hand went to her own shoulder, and her fingers tightened on his, and she breathed deep, contented breaths, like a child.

"Somebody ought to wire Mrs. Grundy, collect," she said, after awhile.

"We will defy Mrs. Grundy, my dear," Peter said, kissing the top of a soft brown braid, "by trotting off hand in hand tomorrow and getting ourselves married. Why, Alix, he gave us his consent years ago—don't you remember?"

"He did wish it!" she said, and burst into tears.

"I seem to be doing things in a slightly irregular manner," she said to him the next day, when they had gotten breakfast together, and were basking in the sunlight of the upper deck of the ferryboat, on their way to the city. "I spend the night before my marriage alone—in a small country house hidden in the woods—with my betrothed, and propose to buy my trousseau immediately after the ceremony!"

Her voice fell to a dreamy note, and she watched the gulls, wheeling in the sunshine, with thoughtful, smiling eyes. The man glanced at her once or twice, in the silence that followed, with something like hesitation, or compunction, in his look.

"Look, here, Alix—let's talk. I want to ask you something. There's never been anything—anything to tell you—or your father, if he was here," Peter said, flushed and a trifle awkward. "I'm not that kind of a man. But there has been that one thing—that one woman—"

"Flushed, too, she was looking at him with bright, intelligent eyes.

"But I thought she never even knew—"

"No, she never did!"

Alix looked back at the gulls.

"Oh, well, then—" she said, indifferently.

"Alix, would you like to know about her?" Peter said bravely. "Her name—and everything?"

"Oh, no, please, I'd much rather not!" she intercepted him hastily, and after a pause she added, "Our marriage isn't the usual marriage, in that way. I mean I'm not jealous, and I'm not going to cry my eyes out because there was another woman—is another woman, who meant more to you, or might have! I'm going into it with my eyes open, Peter. I know you love me, and I love you, and we both like the same things, and that's enough."

Three weeks later he remembered the moment, and asked her again. They were in the valley house now, and a bitter storm was whirling over the mountain. Peter's little cabin rocked to the gale, but they were warm and comfortable beside the fire; the room was lamp-lighted, scented by Alix's sweet single violets, white and purple, spilling themselves from a glass bowl, and by Peter's pipe, and by the good scent of green bay burning. The Joyses had had a happy day, had climbed the hills under a lowering sky, had come home to dry clothes and do cooking, for Kow was away, and had finally shared an epicurean meal beside the fire.

Peter was wrapped in deep content; the companionship of this normal, pretty woman, her quick words and quick laugh, her music, her glancing, bright interest in anything and everything, was the richest experience of his life. She had said that she would

change nothing in his home, but her clever white fingers had changed everything. There was order now, there was charming fussing and dusting, there were flowers in bowls, and books set straight, and there was just the different little angle to piano and desk and chairs and tables that made the cabin a home at last. She wanted bricks for a path; he had laughed at her fervent, "Do give me a whole carload of bricks for Christmas, Peter!" She wanted bulbs to pot. He had lazily suggested that they open the town house while carpenters and painters remade the cabin, but she had protested hotly, "Oh, do let's keep it just as it always was!" Smiling, he gave her her way.

CHAPTER XI.

Cherry had a flat now in Red Creek "Park." It differed from an apartment because it had no elevator, no janitor, no steam heat. These things were neither known nor needed in the crude mining town; the flat building itself was considered a rather questionable innovation. It was a wooden building, three stories high, with bay windows. Cherry had watched this building going up, and had thought it everything desirable. She liked the clean kitchen, all fresh white woodwork, tiles, and nickelplate, and she liked the big closets and the gas-log. She had worried herself almost sick with fear that she would not get this wonderful place, and finally paid twenty-five dollars for the first month's rent with a fast-beating heart. She had the center floor.

But after the excitement of moving in died away, she hated the place. She had enough money to hire a maid



Alix Met Her Sister at the Ferry.

now, and she had a succession of slatternly, independent young women in her kitchen, but she found her freedom strangely flat.

Now and then a play, straight from "a triumphant year on Broadway" came to town for one night; then Martin took his wife, and they bowed to half the men and women in the house, lamenting as they streamed out into the sharp night air that Red Creek did not see more such productions.

The effect of these plays was to make Cherry long vaguely for the stage; she really did not enjoy them for themselves. But they helped her to visualize Eastern cities, lighted streets, restaurants full of lights and music, beautiful women fitly gowned. After one of these performances she would not leave her flat for several days, but would sit dreaming over the thought of herself in the heroine's role.

One day she had a letter from Alix; it gave her a headache, she hardly knew why. She began to dream of her own home, of the warm, sweet little valley whose breezes were like wine, of Tamaipas wreathed in fog, and of the ridges where buttercups and poppies powdered a child's shoes with gold and silver dust. She began to hunger for home. Nothing that Red Creek could offer shook her yearning for the remembered sweetness and beauty of the redwoods, and the great shade of the mountain. She wanted to spend a whole summer with Alix.

She was athirst for home, for old scenes and old friends and old emotions! She had only to hint to Alix to receive a love letter containing a fervent invitation. So it was settled. With a sort of feverish brevity Cherry completed her arrangements; Martin was to use his own judgment in the matter of boarding or keeping the flat. Some of their household goods were stored; Cherry told him that she would come down in September and manage all the details of settling afresh, but she knew that her secret hope was that she might never see Red Creek again.

Alix met her sister at the ferry in San Francisco on a soft May morning. She was an oddly developed Alix, trim and tall, prettily gowned and veiled, laughing and crying with joy at seeing Cherry again. Peter, she explained between kisses, had had to go to Los Angeles three days ago, had been expected home last night, and was not even aware yet that Cherry was definitely arriving.

"Of course, he knew that you were coming, but not exactly when," Alix said, as she guided the newcomer along the familiar ferry place on to the big bay steamer for Mill Valley. Cherry drew back to exclaim, to marvel, to exult, at all the well-remembered sights and sounds and smells.

"Oh, Alix—Market street!" she exclaimed. "And that smell of leather tanning, and that smell of bay water and of coffee! And look—that's a cable-car!"

"We'll come over to San Francisco soon, and you'll see the new hotels," Alix promised when they were seated on the upper deck, with the blue waters of the bay moving softly past them. Cherry's happy eyes followed a wheeling gull; she felt as if the world was suddenly sunshiny and simple and glorious again. "But now, I thought the best thing was to get you home," Alix went on, "and get you rested."

"I can't get used to the idea of you and Peter—married!" Cherry smiled. "We're well used to it," Alix declared, smiling, too. But a little sigh stabbed through the smile a second later. Cherry's exquisite eyes grew sympathetic; she suspected from the letter Alix had written that they would be no nursery needed in the mountain cabin for a while, and she knew that to baby-leave Alix this would be a bitter cross.

Sausalito, fragrant with acacia and rose blooms, rose steeply into the bright sunshine beyond the marshes skirting the bay glittering in light. Cherry's eager eyes missed nothing, and when they left the train at Mill Valley, and the mountain air enveloped them in a rush of its clear softness and purity she was in ecstasies.

She gave an exclamation of delight when they reached the cabin. It was a picture of peaceful beauty in the summer noon. There were still buttercups and poppies in the fields, and in the garden thousands of roses were growing riotously, flinging their long arms up against the slope of the low brown roof, and hanging in festoons from the low branches of the oaks. Beyond the house the mountain rose; from the porch Cherry could look down upon the familiar valley, and the rivers winding like strips of blue ribbon through the marshes, and the far bay, and San Francisco beyond.

Inside were shady rooms, bowls of flowers, plain little white curtains stirring in the summer breeze, peace and simplicity everywhere. Cherry smiled at the immaculately clad Chinese stirring something in a yellow bowl in a spotless kitchen whose windows showed manzanita and wild lilac and madrone trees; smiled at the big, smoked fireplace where sunlight fell on piled logs down the chimney's great mouth; smiled as she went to and fro on journeys of investigation. But the smile quivered into tears when she came to her own room, just such a room as little Charity Strickland had had, only a few years ago, with white hangings and unpainted wood, fresh air streaming through it, and redwoods outside.

Cherry stumbled into the airy, dark, sweet little bedroom, and somehow undressed and crept between the cool sheets of the bed that stood near Alix's on the wide sleeping porch. Her last thought was for the heavenly redwoods so close to her; she slept, indeed, for almost twelve unbroken hours.

"Oh, Sis, I do feel so deliciously lazy and happy and rested—and everything!" said Cherry, as she settled herself at the porch table where service for one was spread.

"Cherry, you're prettier than ever!" Alix said, eyeing the white hands so busy with blue china, and the bright head dappled with shade and sunshine coming through the green rose vine.

"Am I?" Cherry said, pleased. "I thought myself that I looked nice this morning," she added, innocently. "But it is really because the air of this place agrees with me, it makes my skin feel right and my eyes feel right; it makes me feel normal and smoothed out somehow!"

"Oh, there's no place in the world like it!" Alix agreed, rubbing some dried mud from the back of her hand with the trowel. "If Martin continues to migrate every little while, I wish you could have a little house here. Then for part of the time, at least, we could be together."

"The old house," Cherry said, dreamily.

"Well, why not?" Alix echoed, eagerly. "It's in pretty bad shape, after being empty so long, but it would make a darling home again! Would Martin object?"

Cherry filled her coffee cup a second time, gave Kow an appreciative smile as he put a hot French loaf before her, and said, indifferently:

"Martin has a constitutional objection to whatever pleases me, and would find some objection to any plan that gave me pleasure!" Her tone was light, but there was a bitter twitch to her lips as she spoke.

"Oh, Cherry!" Alix said, distressed. "However, I'm not going to talk about Martin!" the younger sister decreed, gaily. "I'm too utterly and absolutely happy!"

There was a worried little cloud on Alix's forehead, but it lighted steadily, as the happy morning wore on, and half an hour later, when she and Cherry were sailing a frog on a shingle, on the busy little stream that poured down the hill near the cabin, both were laughing like children again.

She was youth incarnate, palpitating, flushed, unspoiled.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Changes Come With Years. A young girl should always remember to the credit of her mother's judgment that "father" has changed considerably since he was a young man and "mother" married him.—Leavenworth Times.

The AMERICAN LEGION

(Copy for this Department supplied by the American Legion News Service.)

HOLDS UNIQUE WAR RECORD

Editor of Legion Publication Left Post and Marched to the Front
A. W. O. L.

Walter T. Neubert, editor of the Service Star, official publication of the American Legion of Montana, has what is believed to be the most unique war record of any man who served in the A. E. F.



He was sergeant instructor in France, but his desire to get into the front-line fighting caused him to voluntarily desert the army. He left his post and marched to the front A. W. O. L. He went through the St. Mihiel drive and was in the thick of the Argonne fighting when an order was issued for his arrest. Neubert didn't mind the arrest but he hated to quit fighting. A court-martial followed and he was reduced to a private. Later, following the armistice, he was sent to Coblenz as linotype operator on the Amnroc News.

Neubert is president of the Great Falls (Mont.) Typographical union, and is adjutant of the Great Falls post of the American Legion.

LEGION HERO WITH ONE LEG

Detroit Member of Organization Displays Makeup of True Soldier During Fire.

Once a hero, always a hero, is what Detroit is saying of Leo Fuhrman, World war veteran, who lost a leg in France, but who nevertheless saved the life of a stranger in a burning building recently, while able-bodied spectators stood about wringing their hands.

Fuhrman, a member of the Charles A. Learned post of the American Legion, lost his left leg at the thigh while serving as a machine gunner with the Thirty-second division of the A. E. F. Early one morning he was awakened by shouts and soon learned that a near-by house was on fire.

Garbed in a dressing gown he made his way to the burning house and found a crowd of spectators awaiting the fire department. Fears were expressed for the safety of occupants in the house, and as no one volunteered to enter, the Legionnaire broke open a window and went in. He returned dragging Aaron Pruitt, whom he found overcome on a bed.

"Any soldier would have done the same thing," declared the hero.

IN MIDST OF SHELL SHOWER

Husky Seattle Legion Member Was Wounded Twelve Times Within Half Minute.

The weathering of three years rough and tumble as a American tackle on the Yale football team conditioned Charles H. Paul, Seattle, Wash., for one of the World war's most unusual experiences.



Paul, then a first lieutenant in the Three Hundred and Sixty-fourth infantry, Ninety-first division, was wounded in 12 different spots in half a minute during the Argonne struggle. One high explosive shell burst near him, hurling him about 15 feet distant. He had just landed when a second shell exploded almost under him, tossing him back to where he started from. He thought it over for several months in army hospitals.

Also a graduate of Harvard law school, Paul is junior partner in one of Seattle's legal corporations. He is commander of Rainier-Noble post of the American Legion, Seattle.

Legion Man Sets the Pace. Ageratum, architrave, chamfer, cleistogamous, elohim, gambit, gulpe, intaglio, metacarpal, miltosis, nads, pomology, rocco, Simony. How many of the above words can you define? Michael Nolan, 43-year-old mental wizard, who has been classed with the world's "best minds" defined all of them in less than one minute.

Nolan is a charter member of Rainier-Noble post of the American Legion at Seattle. Nolan, who has been a lumberjack and a sailor, is a student in the engineering department of the federal board of vocational training at the University of Washington. He was shellshocked in France. He broke into fame when he established a new record in the army "alpha" test with a perfect score of 212 points in thirteen minutes. The best previous score in the psychology test was 207 points in seventeen minutes, made by a Yale professor.

THIS YOUNG MOTHER

Tells Childless Women What Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound Did for Her

Millston, Wis.—"I want to give you a word of praise for your wonderful medicine. We are very fond of children and for a considerable time after we married I feared I would not have any owing to my weak condition. I began taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and now I have a nice strong healthy baby girl. I can honestly say that I did not suffer much more when my baby was born than I used to suffer with my periods before I took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound years ago. I give all the credit to your medicine and shall always recommend it very highly."—Mrs. R. H. JANSSEN, Millston, Wisconsin.



How can women who are weak and sickly expect or hope to become mothers of healthy children? Their first duty is to themselves. They should overcome the derangement or debility that is dragging them down, and strengthen the entire system, as did Mrs. Janssen, by taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and then they will be in a position to give their children the blessing of a good constitution.

Ladies Let Cuticura Keep Your Skin Fresh and Young
Soap 25c, Ointment 25 and 50c, Talcum 25c.

KREMOLA A WONDERFUL FACE FLEASH. Remove Tan, Freckles, Pimples, etc. Preparing COMPANY, 2075 Michigan Ave., Chicago.

In Boston. Lady Visitor (to boy's mother)—"Can't little James recite some of the verse he learns at school?" Boston Jamie—No. Poetry according to my way of thinking, is without logical coherence and therefore devoid of interest, but I shall, if you desire, state some of the formulas of higher mathematics.

A Feeling of Security

You naturally feel secure when you know that the medicine you are about to take is absolutely pure and contains no harmful or habit producing drugs.

Such a medicine is Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root, kidney, liver and bladder remedy. The same standard of purity, strength and excellence is maintained in every bottle of Swamp-Root.

It is scientifically compounded from vegetable herbs.

It is not a stimulant and is taken in teaspoonful doses.

It is not recommended for everything.

It is nature's great helper in relieving and overcoming kidney, liver and bladder troubles.

A sworn statement of purity is with every bottle of Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root.

If you need a medicine, you should have the best. On sale at all drug stores in bottles of two sizes, medium and large.

However, if you wish first to try 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.

Might Prejudice Her Case. "Just a word," said the lawyer to his fair client.

"Yes?"

"If your husband asks for the custody of the poodle don't try to win the sympathy of the court by weeping and calling the—er—little animal your 'precious darling.'"

"Why not?"

"The judge is the father of ten children, and he's proud of it."

Red Cross Ball Blue should be used in every home. It makes clothes white as snow and never injures the fabric. All good grocers, 5c.—Advertisement.

Motorists are likely to think they get "exercise" enough tinkering with their machines.

In a country town everybody knows a joke on everybody else, and never forgets it.

W. N. U. OMAHA, NO. 38—1921.

So far no stories have been written about the insurance on the Afghanistan princess's nose, which contains a famous jewel.

If Mexico has enough money to pay off its obligations to foreigners incurred by revolutions, Villa must be practicing quite a bit of self-restraint.

Nearly everything has its drawbacks. If there is no breeze there is suffering from the heat, and if there is a good breeze it blows everything off the desk.

Four years in prison for two German officers who fired on a hospital ship is almost as severe treatment as if they had stolen a tire.

Those who can't afford to visit Paris this summer can console themselves with the recollection that it's hotter over there than it is here.

Now that Japan has been assured no one will place a bomb under her chairs at the disarmament conference, she is willing to bring in the other foot and sit down.