

Sisters

KATHLEEN NORRIS



CHAPTER II.

Immediately they gathered by the fallen rose vine, all talking and disputing at once. A light rope was tied; an experimental tug broke it like a string, tumbling Alix violently in a sitting position, and precipitating her father into a foamy bed. Anne, who was bargaining with a Chinese fruit vendor frankly interested in their under-taking, had called that she would help them in a second, when behind Alix, who was still sitting on the ground, another voice offered help.

A young man had come into the doctor's garden; work was stopped for a few minutes while they welcomed Martin Lloyd.

He was tall and fair, broad, but with not an ounce of extra weight, with brown eyes always laughing, and a ready friendliness always in evidence. Anne's heart gave a throb of approval as she studied him; Alix flushed furiously, scowled a certain boyish approval; Cherry had not come down.

"Can you help us?" The doctor echoed his question doubtfully. "I don't know that it can be done," he admitted.

"What's that you're eating—an apricot?" Martin said to Anne, in his laughing way. "I was going to say that if it was a peach, you are a cannibal!"

"Oh, help!" Alix ejaculated, with a look of elaborate scorn.

"No, but where were you last night?" Martin added in a lower tone when he and Anne could speak unobtrusively. The happy color flooded her face.

"I have to take care of my family sometimes!" she reminded him demurely. "Wasn't Cherry a good substitute?"

"Cherry's adorable!" he agreed. "Isn't she sweet?" Anne asked enthusiastically. "She's only a little girl, really, but she's a little girl who is going to have a lot of attention some day!" she added, in her most matronly manner.

Martin did not answer, but turning briskly toward the doctor, he devoted himself to the business in hand.

They were all deep in the first untied tug, each person placed carefully by the doctor, and guys for the rope driven at intervals decided by



Laughing and Smothered With Roses, She Crept Into View.

Martin, when there was an interruption for Cherry's arrival on the scene. With characteristic coquetry she did not approach, as the others had, by means of the front porch and the garden path, but crept from the study window into a veritable tunnel of green bloom, and came crawling down

it, as sweet and fragrant, as lovely and as fresh, as the roses themselves. Her bright head was hidden by a blue sunbonnet, assumed, she explained later, because the thorns tangled her hair; but as, laughing and smothered with roses, she crept into view, the sunbonnet slipped back, and the lovely, flushed little face, with tendrils of gold straying across the white forehead, and mischief gleaming in the blue, blue eyes was framed only in loosened pale gold hair.

Years afterward Alix remembered her so, as Martin Lloyd helped her to spring free of the branches, and she stood laughing at their surprise and still clinging to his hand. "The day we raised—the rose tree" had a place of its own in Alix's memory, as a time of carefree fun and content, a time of perfume and sunshine—perhaps the last time of its kind that any one of them was to know.

Cherry looked at Martin daringly as she joined the laborers; her whole being was thrilling to the excitement of his glance; she was hardly conscious of what she was doing or saying. Martin came close to her, in the general confusion.

"How's my little sweetheart this morning?"

Cherry looked up, her throat contracted, she looked down again, unable to speak. She had been waiting for his first word; now that it had come it seemed so far richer and sweeter than her wildest dream.

"How can I see you a minute?" Martin murmured, snapping his big knife shut.

"I have to walk down for the mail—" stammered Cherry, conscious only of Martin and herself.

Both Peter and her father were watching her with an uneasiness and suspicion that had sprung into being full-blown. Both men were asking themselves what they knew of this strange young man who was suddenly a part of their intimate little world.

Peter, in his secret heart, had a vague, dissatisfied feeling that Lloyd was a man who held women, as a class, rather in disrespect, and had probably had his experiences with them, but there was no way of expressing, much less governing his conduct toward Martin by so purely speculative a prejudice. Somewhat appalled, in the sunny garden, struggling with the banksia, Peter decided that this was not much to know of a person who might have the audacity to fall in love with an exquisite and innocent Cherry. After all, she would not be a little girl forever; some man would want to take that little coral-colored head and that delicious little pink-clad person away with him some day, to be his wife—

And suddenly Peter was torn by a stab of pure pain, and he stood puzzled and sick, in the garden bed, wondering what was happening to him.

"Listen—want a drink?" Alix asked, coming out with a tin dipper that spilled a glittering sheet of water down the thirsty nasturtiums. "Rest a few minutes, Peter. Dad wanted a pole, and Mr. Lloyd has gone up into the woods to cut one."

"And where's Cherry?" Peter asked, drinking deep.

"She went along—just up in the woods here!" Alix answered. "They'll be back before you could get there. They've been gone five minutes!"

Five minutes were enough to take Cherry and her lover out of sight of the house, enough to have him put his arm about her, and to have her raise her lips confidently, and yet shyly, again to his. They kissed each other deeply, again and again.

Their talk was incoherent. Cherry was still playing, coquetting and smiling, her words few, and Martin, having her so near, could only repeat the endearing phrases that attempted to express to her his love and fervor.

"You darling! Do you know how I love you? You darling—you little exquisite beauty! Do you love me—do you love me?" Martin murmured, and Cherry answered breathlessly:

"You know I do—but you know I do!"

Presently he selected the sapling redwood, and brought it down with two blows of his ax. The girl seated herself beside him, helped him strip the trunk, their hands constantly touching, the man once or twice delaying her for one more snatched and laughing kiss. And Martin said that he was going to make her the happiest wife a man ever had.

Dragging the stripped tree, they ran down the sharp hill to the house just as Anne came out to announce luncheon. Peter was wandering off in the woods nearby, but came at Alix's shrill yell of summons, and looked relieved when he saw Cherry and Martin not even talking to each other. They had been gone only ten minutes.

It was a happy meal for everyone, and after it they had attacked the rose bush again, with aching muscles now, and in the first real summer heat. It was three o'clock before, with a great crackling, and the scream of a twisted branch, and a general panting and heaving on the part of the workers, at last the feathery mass had risen a foot—two feet—into the air, had stood tottering like a wall of bloom, and finally, with a downward rush, had settled to its old place on the roof. Hong was pressed into service

A Hero of Faith

By REV. J. R. SCHAEFFER
Director of Evening Classes, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago.

TEXT.—By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.—Heb. 11:4.

God has his heroes. His Book recounts their wondrous exploits. They are heroes of faith.

The first of them is Abel, the second-born of earth.

We ask, "What great deed hath he wrought?" The Book says, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh."

Here there is nothing, apparently, of brave daring, of courageous abandon, of sublime heroism. Why then should such a simple deed be carved in the imperishable granite of God's Word?

The most perfect picture ever conceived of life and all its hallowed relationships is found in the opening chapters of Genesis. But the charm of that life was dispelled by the blighting invasion of sin. Sinful nature, sinful environment and sinful atmosphere was the bequest of Adam and Eve to their countless posterity, yet God did not abandon His disobedient children. He loved them. His love furnished an antidote for their sin. Before they left Paradise the gospel of salvation was proclaimed, redemption offered and righteousness provided.

There is every reason to believe that the guilty parents of the race accepted the divine plan of salvation when they put on the robes of substitution God brought to them. Wonderful indeed must this all have been to them.

Oh, how could they sin in the midst of love and light and liberty! They did, and deserved sin's inevitable consequence, death; but God, whose grace was greater than all their sin, brought salvation ere they suffered the consequences of disobedience.

Their life outside began very naturally, I should say—just life as it has continued to the present. They set up their home, as near the gate of the Garden as possible, doubtless hope filling their hearts of getting back again.

Children were born into that home, two boys. Cain seemed so much the child of promise that his mother named him "Gotten." Before the second-born was welcomed she had learned that he was not the promised Seed of the woman, who was to bring deliverance from sin's curse. When her second son was born she called his name "Abel," meaning "vanity," which seemed to be a confirmation of her disappointment in her first-born.

The boys grew up. Father and mother told them of Paradise with its dark tragedy and also of its glorious hope in the God-given promise and the way of eternal life. The time of personal responsibility came when they must, like father and mother, believe God or reject His way. A choice was demanded because sin had become personal. What would they do? God had said an offering alone could meet the need.

Both brought an offering. Cain's was one of human reasoning. He considered it better than the one God had taught his father and mother to bring. It was more beautiful, the work of his brain and hands. No life had been forfeited to provide it. But alas, it was the rejection of God's way, the preference of his own. Therefore it had in it the essence of sin, for sin, is self-will, self-pleasing, self-exaltation.

God rejected Cain's offering and Cain was wrath. He was denied his own way.

Abel brought the very best lamb of the flock, just as he had been taught. He believed God. He responded by doing what God asked him to do. By faith he offered his sacrifice. This, in the face of the attitude of his older brother, was heroism indeed. When any man in loyalty to God dares to run counter to popular opinion or to defy the consensus of human reason, it requires a heroism that exceeds that of the battlefield and, in God's sight, crowns him with glory and honor such as this world knows not.

God accepted Abel's offering. Even so God accepted Christ's death. He was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification.

Oh, can you not see what value God puts upon the blood, even from the beginning, for He has declared that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." There is only one way of salvation—through the blood of Calvary's Lamb. There is only one title to heaven—not morality or good works, or personal virtue, or self-sacrifice, or death for another, but that title which is the inheritance of the saints in light through faith in the Son of God.

The Mystery of Godliness
Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.—1 Timothy 3:16.

God's Glory Above the Heavens.
O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.—Psalms 8:1.

ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTICE.
Having qualified as administrator upon the estate of the late Albert Whitfield, late of Orange county, North Carolina, notice is hereby given to all persons indebted to said estate to settle same at once and all persons having claims against said estate will present them to the undersigned properly authenticated on or before July 9, 1922 or this notice will be plead in bar their recovery. This July 9, 1921.

T. J. WHITEFIELD, Adm'r.

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