

# Sisters

by KATHLEEN NORRIS



and she hated to control herself. She had to economize when poverty possessed neither picturesqueness nor interest. They were always several weeks behind in the payment of domestic bills, and these recurring reminders of money stringency maddened Cherry. Sometimes she summed it up, with angry tears, reminding him that she was still wearing her trowsseau dresses, and had no maid, and never went anywhere—!

But she developed steadily. As she grew skilful in managing her little house, she also grew in the art of managing her husband and herself. She became clever at avoiding causes of disagreement; she listened, nodded, agreed, with a boiling heart, and had the satisfaction of having Martin's viewpoint veer the next day, or the next hour, to meet her own secret conviction. Martin seemed satisfied, and all their little world accepted her as a matter of course. But under it all Cherry knew that something young and irresponsible and confident in her had been killed. She never liked to think of the valley, of the fogs and the spokes of sunlight under the redwood aisles, of Alix and the dogs and the dreamy evenings by the fire. And especially she did not like to think of that eighteenth birthday, and herself thrilling and ecstatic because the strange young man from Mrs. North's had stared at her, in her sticky apron, with his new and disturbing a smile in his eyes.

## CHAPTER V.

So winter passed at the mine and at the brown house under the shoulder of Tamaulipas. Alix still kept her bedroom windows open, but the rain tore in, and Anne protested at the ensuing stains on the pantry ceiling. Cherry's wedding, once satisfactorily over, was a cause of great satisfaction to her sister and cousin. They had stepped back duly, to give her the center of the stage; they had admired and congratulated; had helped her in all hearty generosity. And now that she was gone they enjoyed their own lives again and cast over hers the glamor that novelty and distance never fail to give. Cherry, married and keeping house and managing affairs, was an object of romantic interest. The girls surmised that Cherry must be making friends; that everyone would admire her; that Martin would be rich some day, without doubt.

Cherry wrote regularly, now and then assuring them that she was the same old Cherry. She described her tiny house right at the mine, and the long sheds of the plant, and the bare big building that was the men's boarding house. Martin's associates brought her trout and ducks, she wrote; she and Martin

had driven three hundred miles in the superintendent's car; she was preparing for a card party.

"Think of little old Cherry going off on week-end trips with three men!" Alix would say proudly. "Think of Cherry giving a party!" Anne perhaps would make no comment, but she often felt a pang of envy. Cherry seemed to have everything.

Suddenly, without warning, there was a newcomer in the circle, a sleek-headed brown-haired little man known as Justin Little.

He had been introduced at some party to Anne and Alix; he called; he was presently taking Anne to a lecture. Anne now began to laugh at him and say that he was "too ridiculous," but she did not allow any one else to say so. On the contrary, she told Alix at various times that his mother had been one of the old Maryland Percies, and his great-grandfather was mentioned in a book by Sir Walter Scott, and that one had to respect the man, even if one didn't choose to marry him.

"Marry him!" Alix had echoed in simple amazement. Marry him—what was all this sudden change in the household when a man could no sooner appear than some girl began to talk of marriage? Stupefied, Alix watched the affair progress.

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"I don't imagine it's serious," her father said on an April walk. Peter, tramping beside them, was interested but silent.

"My dear father," the girl protested. "Have you listened to them? They've been contending for weeks that they were just remarkably good friends—that's why she calls him Frenny!" "Ah—I see!" the doctor said mildly, as Peter's wild laugh burst forth.

"But now," Alix pursued, "she's told him that as she cannot be what he wishes, they had better not meet!" "Poor Anne!" the old doctor commented.

"Poor nothing! She's having the time of her life," her cousin said unfeelingly. "She told me today that she was afraid that she had checked one of the most brilliant careers at the bar."

"I had no idea of all this!" the doctor confessed, amazed. "I've seen the young man—noticed him about. Well—well—well! Anne, too."

In June came the blissful hour in which Anne, all blishes and smiles, could come to her uncle with a dutiful message from the respectfully adoring Justin. Their friendship, said Anne, had ripened into something deeper.

"Justin wants to have a frank talk with you, uncle," Anne said, "and of course I'm not to go until you are sure you can spare me and unless you feel that you can trust him utterly!"

Anne's engagement utterer were ranged on the table where Cherry's had stood, and where Cherry had talked of a coffee-colored rajah silk. Anne discussed the merits of a "smart but handsome blue tulle." The wedding was to be in September, not quite a year after Cherry's wedding. Alix wrote her sister pages about it, always ending with the emphatic declaration that Cherry must come down for the wedding.

Cherry was homesick. She dreamed continually of the cool, high valley, the scented aisles of the deep forest, the mountain rearing its rough summit to the pale blue of summer skies.

June passed; July passed; it was hot at the "Emmy Younger." August came in on a furnace breath; Cherry felt headachy, listless and half sick all the time. Martin had said that he could not possibly get away, even for the week of Anne's wedding, but Cherry began to wonder if he would let her go alone.

"If he doesn't, I shall be sick!" she fretted to herself, in a certain burning noontime, toward the middle of August. Martin, who had been playing poker the night before, was sleeping late this morning. Coming home at three o'clock dazed with close air and clear smoke, he had awakened his wife to tell her that he would be "dead" in the morning, and Cherry had accordingly crept about her dressing noisefully, had darkened the bedroom and eaten her own breakfast without the clatter of a dish. Now she was sitting by the window, panting in the noon heat. She was thinking, as it chanced, of the big forest at home and of a certain day—just one of their happy days—only a year ago, when she had lain for a dreamy hour on the soft forest floor, staring up idly through the laced fanlike branches, and she thought of her father, with his mild voice and ready smile; and some emotion, almost like fear, came over her. For the first time she asked herself, in honest bewilderment, why she had married.

The heat deepened and strengthened and increased as the burning day wore on. Martha waked up, hot and headachy, and having further distressed herself with strong coffee and eggs, departed into the dusty, motionless furnace out-of-doors. The far brown hills shimmered and swam, the "Emmy Younger" looked its barest, its ugliest, its least attractive self.

There was a shadow in the doorway; she looked up surprised. For a minute the tall figure in striped linen and the smiling face under the flowery hat seemed those of a stranger. Then Cherry cried out and laughed, and in another instant was crying in Alix's arms.

Alix cried, too, but it was with a great rush of pity and tenderness for Cherry. Alix had not young love and novelty to soften the outlines of the "Emmy Younger" and she felt, as she frankly wrote later to her father, "at last convinced that there is a hell!" The heat and bareness and ugliness of the mine might have been overlooked, but this poor little house of Cherry's, this wood stove draining white ashes, this tin sink with its pump, and the bathroom with neither faucets nor drain, almost bewildered Alix with their discomfort.

Even more bewildering was the change in Cherry. There was a certain hardening that impressed Alix at once. There was a weary sort of patience, a disillusioned concession to the drabness of married life.

But she allowed the younger sister to see nothing of this. Indeed, Cherry so brightened under the stimulus of Alix's companionship that Martin told her that she was more like her old self than she had been for months. Joyously she divided her responsibilities with Alix, explaining the difficulties of marketing and housekeeping, and joyously Alix assumed them. Her vitality infected the whole household.

She gave them spirited accounts of Anne's affair. "He's a nice little academic fellow," she said of Justin Little. "If he had a flatiron in each hand he'd probably weigh close to a hundred pounds! He's a—well, a sort of damp-looking youth, if you know what I mean! I always want to take a crash towel and dry him off!" "Fancy Anne with a sirloin like that!" Cherry said, with a proud look at her own man's fine height. "He sounds awful to me."

"He's not, really. Only it seems that he belongs to the oldest family in America, or something, and is the only descendant—"

"Money?" Cherry asked, interestedly. "No, I don't think money, exactly. At least I know he is getting a hundred a month in his uncle's law office, and Dad thinks they ought to wait until they have a little more. She'll have something, you know," Alix added, after a moment's thought.

"Your cousin?" Martin asked. "Well, her father went into the fire-extinguisher thing with Dad," Alix elucidated, "and evidently she and Justin have had deep, soulful thoughts about it. Anyway, the other day she said—you know her way, Cherry—'Tell me, Uncle, frankly and honestly, may Justin and I draw out my share for that little home that is going to mean so much to us—'"

"I can hear her!" giggled Cherry. "Dad immediately said that she could, of course," Alix went on. "He was adorable about it. He said, 'It will do more than build you a little home, my dear!'"

"We'll get a slice of that some time," Cherry said thoughtfully, glancing at her husband. "I don't mean when Dad dies, either," she added, in quick affection. "I mean that he might build us a little home some day in Mill Valley."

"See, how he'd love it!" Alix said, enthusiastically. "I married Cherry for her money," Martin confessed. "As a matter of fact," Cherry contradicted him, vivaciously, animated even by the thought of a change and a home, "we have never even spoken of it before, have we, Mart?"

"I never heard of it before," he admitted, smiling, as he knocked the ashes from his pipe. "But it's pleasant to know that Cherry will come in for a nest-egg some day!"

Presently the visitor boldly suggested that she and Cherry should both go home together for the wedding, and Martin agreed good-naturedly.

"But, Mart, how'll you get along?" his wife asked anxiously. She had fumed and fussed and pattered and rattled over the care of these four rooms for so long that it seemed unbelievable that her place might be vacated even for a day.

"Oh, I'll get along fine!" he answered indifferently. So, on the last day of August, in the cream-colored silk and the expensive hat again, yet looking, Alix thought, strangely unlike the bride that had been Cherry, she and her sister happily departed for cooler regions. Martin took them to the train, kissed his sister-in-law gaily and then his wife affectionately. "Be a good little girl, Babe," he said, "and write me!"

"Oh, I will—I will!" Cherry looked after him smilingly from the car window. "He really is an old dear!" she told Alix.

## CHAPTER VI.

But when at the end of the long day they reached the valley, and when her father came innocently into the garden and stood staring vaguely at her for a moment—for her visit and

the day of Alix's return had been kept a secret—her first act was to burst into tears. She clung to the fatherly shoulders as if she were a storm-beaten bird safely home again, and although she immediately laughed at herself and told the sympathetically watching Peter and Alix that she didn't know what was the matter with her, it was only to interrupt the words with fresh tears.

Tears of joy, she told them, laughing at the moisture in her father's eyes. She had a special joyous word for Hong; she laughed and teased and questioned Anne, when Anne and Justin came back from an afternoon concert in the city, with an interest and enthusiasm most gratifying to both.

After dinner she had her old place on the arm of her father's porch chair; Alix, with Buck's smooth head in her lap, sat on the porch step beside Peter, and the lovers murmured from the darkness of the hammock under the shadow of the rose vine. It was happy talk in the sweet evening coolness; everybody seemed harmonious and in sympathy tonight.

## IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL Sunday School Lesson

(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D. D., Teacher of English Bible in the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)  
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### LESSON FOR SEPTEMBER 11

#### PAUL IN ATHENS.

LESSON TEXT—Acts 17:16-34.  
GOLDEN TEXT—In him we live, and move, and have our being—Acts 17:28.  
REFERENCE MATERIAL—Luke 4:18-20.  
PRIMARY TOPIC—Paul Telling the People about God.  
JUNIOR TOPIC—Paul in Athens.  
INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—In a Famous Greek City.  
YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—Paul in a Center of Learning. Being Driven from Berea, Paul Fled to Athens.

#### I. The Idolatry of the Athenians (v. 16).

Athens was the intellectual metropolis of the world at that time, the home of the world's great eloquence and philosophy. Paul's spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

#### II. The Parties Concerned (vv. 17-21).

True to his usual custom Paul went into the Jewish synagogue and entered into earnest argument with the Jews. From them he turned to such as were found in the market place. Here he came into touch with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. The former were atheistic materialists. They denied the doctrine of Creation. They gave themselves up to sensual indulgences since they had no idea of future judgment. The latter were pantheists. When they heard the preaching of Paul they desired to know what new doctrine he preached, so they invited him to the Areopagus where he might speak to them of his new doctrine. They inquired as to what this "babbling" might say. The word "babbling" means literally "seed-picker."

#### III. Paul's Address on Mars' Hill (vv. 22-31).

1. The introduction (vv. 22, 23). He did not accuse them of "superstition" as the A. V. would make it, but as in the Am. R. V. he introduces his discourse in a courteous and conciliatory manner, stating that he perceived that they were very religious. This he explained by stating that as he was viewing their city he beheld an altar with an inscription "To the Unknown God." This was his point of contact. He proceeds at once to connect it with the idea of the living God, implying that this altar had been erected to denote heathenism and idolatry.

#### 2. The body of his discourse (vv. 24-31).

(1) A declaration concerning God (vv. 24, 25). (a) He created the material universe (v. 24). This was a direct blow at the philosophy of both the Epicureans and the Stoics. He did not attempt to prove the existence of God; it needs no proof. The Bible everywhere assumes the existence of a divine being. (b) His spirituality and immensity (vv. 24, 25). He is not served with "men's hands as though he needed anything," neither is He confined by any sort of religious temple. Being essentially spiritual He demands heart-service, and being transcendent above all He is not confined to earthly temples. (c) His active providence (v. 25). He gives existence, bestows needed gifts, and as sovereign directs all things.

(2) Declaration concerning man (vv. 26-31). (a) His common origin (v. 26). This was a blow at the foolish Athenian pride which supposed that they were superior to all other people. This proposition he proved from their own literature (see v. 28). If men are the offspring of God and bear His likeness it is utterly folly to make images as the senseless idols were. (b) Nations have their place by the sovereign purpose of God (v. 26). The position and mission of each nation is of God's appointment. (c) Men should seek God (v. 26). His goodness and grace in supplying all our needs, and ordering even the affairs of the nations should move men to see and seek God, for He is indeed very near to every one; so near that our existence and movements are all under His control (v. 27). (d) Pressing obligation to repent (vv. 30, 31). This was his supreme message. Though God had formerly passed over idolatry He now calls to all men to repent. The solemn reason for such action is the coming day of judgment, the credential of which is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The judgment of God of an unbelieving world is as sure as this fact. Men will be judged on the basis of their attitude toward Jesus Christ.

#### IV. Result of Paul's Preaching (vv. 32-34).

- 1. Some mocked (v. 32).
- 2. Some procrustinated (v. 32).
- 3. Some believed (v. 34).

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