

Sisters

by
KATHLEEN NORRIS



"I was wrong," he said. "But I think you would be sorry to have me face—what I am, facing now. You were always so forgiving, Alix; you would be the first to be sorry."

He put his hand over the tigerish pain that was beginning to reach his heart. His throat felt thick and choked, and still he did not cry. "An hour ago," he said, "if it had been that the least thought of what this meant to you might have reached me an hour ago, it would not have been too late. Alix, one look into your eyes an hour ago might have saved us all. 'Fred,' Peter said aloud, with a bitter groan, clenching tight the hands of the old friend who had crept in to stand beside him, 'Fred, she was here, in all her health and joy and strength only today. And now—'"

"I know—old man—" the other man muttered. He looked anxiously at Peter's terrible face. In the silence the dog whimpered faintly. But when Peter, after an endless five minutes, turned away, it was to speak to his friend in an almost normal voice. "I must go down and see Cherry, Fred. She took her husband to the old house; they were living there."

He can't live," she said in a whisper. "Perhaps not," Peter answered very low. Cherry returned to her somber musing. "We didn't see this end to it, did we?" she said with a pitiful smile after a long while. "Oh, no—no!" Peter said, shutting his eyes and with a faint, negative movement of his head.

"Poor Cherry—if I could spare you all this!" knotting his fingers and feeling for the first time the prick of bitter tears against his eyelids. "Oh, there is nothing you can do," she said faintly and wearily after a while. And she whispered, as if to herself, "Nothing—nothing—nothing!"

CHAPTER XIX.
It was all strange and bewildering, thought Peter. It was not like anything he had ever connected in his thoughts with Alix, yet it was all for her.

The day was warm and still, and the little church was packed with flowers and packed with people. Women were crying, and men were crying, too, rather to his dazed surprise. The organ was straining through the warm, fragrant air, and the old clergyman, whose venerable, leonine head, in its crown of snowy hair, Peter could see clearly, spoke in a voice that was thickened with tears. Strangers, or almost strangers, had been touching Peter's hand respectfully, timidly, had been praising Alix. She had been "good" to this one, "good" to that one, they told him; she had always been so "interested" and so "happy."

Her coffin was buried in flowers, many of them the plain flowers she loved, the gillies and stock and verbenas, and even the sweet, sober wall-flowers that were somehow like herself. But it was the roses that scented the whole world for Alix today, and fresh creamy buds had been placed between the waxen fingers. And still that radiant look of triumphant love lingered on her quiet face, and still the faint ghost of a smile touched the once kindly and merry mouth.

He said good-by to her at the church, the villagers and old friends who had loved her, and Peter and two or three men alone followed her down along the winding road that led to the old cemetery. Cherry was hanging over the bedside of her husband, who still miraculously lingered through hours of pain, but as Peter, responsive to a touch on his arm, crossed the church porch to blindly enter the waiting motor car, he saw, erect and grave, on the front seat, in his decent holiday black, and with his felt hat held in his hands, Kow, claiming his right to stand beside the grave of the mistress he had loved and served so faithfully. The sight of him, in his clumsy black, instead of the usual crisp white, and with a sad and tear-stained face shook Peter strangely, but he did not show a sign of pain.

The twisted low branches of oak trees threw shadows on the grave when they finally reached it, and sheep were cropping the watered grass of the graveyard. The soft autumn sky, the drift of snowy clouds across the blue, the clear shadows on brown grass under the oaks, all these were familiar. But Peter still looked dazedly at his black coat and at the turned earth next to the doctor's headstone, telling himself again that this was for Alix. How often he had seen her sitting there, with her bright face sobered and sweet, as she talked lovingly, eagerly of her father! They had often come here, Peter the more willingly because she was so sensible and happy about it; she would pack lunch, button herself into one of the crisp blue gingham, chatter on the road in her usual fashion. And if, for a few moments, the train of memory fired by the sight of the old doctor's grave became too poignant and tears came, she always soothed herself with that mixture of childish and maternal impetuosity that was so characteristic of her, and that Peter had seen her use to this very father years ago!

He remembered her, a tall, awkward girl, with a volume of Dickens slipping from her lap as she sat on a haycock by the fire, teasing her father, scolding and reproaching him. Blazing red on her high cheekbones, untidy black hair, quick tongue and ready laugh; that was the Alix of the old days, when he had criticized and patronized her, and told her that she should be more like Anne and little Cherry!

He remembered being delegated, one day, to take her into town to the dentist, and that upon discovering that the dentist was not in his office, he had taken her to the circus instead. She had been about thirteen, and had eaten too many peanuts, he thought, and had lost a petticoat in full sight of the grandstand. But how grateful and happy she had been!

Cherry came to the door to say "Doctor" on a burst of tears. The physicians departed at once to the study, and Peter was immediately summoned to assist them in handling the big frame of the patient. Martin was thoroughly conscious now; his face chalk white. Cherry, kneeling, knelt beside the bed, her frightened eyes moving from face to face.

There was a brief consultation, then Cherry and Peter were banished. Peter watched her with a confused sense that the whole frightful day had been a dream. Once she looked up and met his eyes.

"Dear little old blue petticoat!" he said. "Dear little old madcap Alix!" There was silence, the silence of inattention, about him. He came to himself with a start. He was up on



This Was Alix's Grave, Newly Covered With Flowers.

the hills, in the cemetery—this was Alix's grave, newly covered with willing masses of flowers, and he was keeping everybody waiting. He murmured an apology; the waiting men were all kindness and sympathy.

(To be Continued.)

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL Sunday School Lesson

(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D. D., Teacher of English Bible in the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.) Copyright, 1922, Western Newspaper Union.

LESSON FOR FEBRUARY 12

ELISHA AND THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN

LESSON TEXT—II Kings 4:3-7. GOLDEN TEXT—Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.—John 5:25. REFERENCE MATERIAL—John 11:1-46.

PRIMARY TOPIC—Elisha Brings a Boy to Life.

JUNIOR TOPIC—How Elisha Brought a Boy to Life.

INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—Elisha Helping in a Home.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—Our Ministry of Comfort and Help.

- 1. The Shunammite's Hospitality to Elisha (vv. 8-11). 1. Its occasion (v. 8). A wealthy woman of Shunem, observing that Elisha passed continually by her house in his journeys, was moved with compassion toward him. She determined according to her ability to supply his needs. 2. Its nature (vv. 8-11). "She constrained him to eat bread" (vv. 8, 9). As a result of her earnest courtesy, as often as he passed by her house he turned in to eat bread. She received a prophet in the name of a prophet. 2. Elisha Endeavors to Repay Her Kindness (vv. 12-17). 1. He offers to ask a favor from the king or head of the army (v. 13). This offer implies that Elisha had influence at the royal court. The woman's reply shows her truly to be a great woman. She did not desire to change the calm and quiet of her home for a place even in the royal court. Her answer also shows that her motive in extending generosity to the prophet was entirely unselfish, purely because he was God's prophet. 2. Elisha announces the giving of a son to her (vv. 16, 17). Through inquiry of Gehazi it was discovered that this woman was childless. So the prophet made known to her that in about a year from that time she should experience the joy of a mother. 3. The Coming of Sorrow to the Shunammite's Home (vv. 18-21). The child which brought joy to her home was suddenly taken away. How many homes are like this! Scarcely do we begin to enjoy life until death enters and snatches away some loved one. The cause of his death was probably sunstroke, for the heat of the sun at harvest time in this country is very intense. When the boy complained of his head, the father sent him home to his mother. By noon the child died, and the mother laid him upon the bed of the man of God. Faith prompted her to do this. She did not make preparation for burial, but for restoration to life (Heb. 11:35). 4. The Mother Goes to Elisha (vv. 22-28). When one is in trouble or sorrow the best place to go is to the man of God who is able to give counsel and comfort. Happy is the one who in the days of prosperity and sunshine has so related himself to God and His prophets that he can have help and sympathy in time of trouble. 1. She took hold of Elisha's feet (v. 27). This was the eastern way of enforcing a petition. She passed by Gehazi. She would not be content with the servant when the master could be reached. 2. She chided the prophet (v. 28). "Did I desire a son?" This implies that it would have been better not to have had a child than to have lost him so soon. 3. The Child Restored (vv. 29-37). 1. Gehazi's fruitless errand (vv. 29-31). He hurried away and placed the prophet's staff upon the child's face, but it did not revive. Perhaps the fault lay in Gehazi—his lack of faith. The woman seemed to perceive his lack; she would not trust him. She would not go until Elisha was willing to go along. This fruitless errand of Gehazi shows the worthlessness of the forms of religion when used by those who have no faith in them. 2. Elisha's efficient service (vv. 32-37). He went to the house where the dead child was. (1) He prayed (v. 33). He knew that no one but God could help, so he closed the door, shutting all others out. Our service to men should be preceded by prayer. (2) He stretched himself upon the child (v. 34). He brought his warm body into touch with the cold body of the child. God blesses and saves through the warm touch of those who are in touch with Him. After we pray we should get into actual touch with those dead in trespasses and sin. God's method of saving the world is through the ministry of saved men and women.

PASTOR HOLDS ON.

Negro Congregation in Washington Rowing Over Minister.

The Florida Avenue Baptist church, colored, at the corner of Bohrer street and Florida avenue, northwest, which was the scene of a fatal riot on January 13, in which William Brush, a parishioner, received wounds resulting in his death two days later, became a center of interest again yesterday, says the Washington Herald of Monday. This time the Rev. William A. Taylor, the storm center, who is alleged by certain members of his flock to have been responsible for the riot, came out victor, the congregation voting 500 to 2 to retain him as pastor.

The fight was a bloodless one and occurred during the first capacity meeting in the little church since the court proceedings, begun by seven members of the church to oust the pastor, were instituted on January 24. The real test was to have taken place on January 28, but the blizzard and the Knickerbocker theatre disaster reduced the attendance to such an extent that it was impossible to reach a decision.

Rumors in circulation last Saturday were to the effect that opponents to the pastor were ready to forcibly oust him yesterday if he persisted in preaching. However, the usual orderliness prevailed, although the atmosphere was tense. This was due to the enthusiasm of the pro-Taylor element rather than to fear of what the anti-Taylor element might do. Standing squarely on the platform, and surrounded by huge bouquets of flowers sent by his admirers, the pastor shouted his defiance to that portion of his flock whom he accused of trying to either rule or ruin him. He dared his opponents to stand up and make themselves known. When he uttered this challenge only two men stood up and announced that they wanted the pastor to resign right away.

Then the pastor called on his friends to rise and approximately 500 people stood up and these looked around and frowned on the two opponents of the pastor. Not only did Rev. Taylor force the dissenting members of his flock into the open by challenging them from the pulpit, but he fought them all through his sermon by making repeated reference to them. He took the persecution of the prophet Elijah by King Ahab as his Biblical weapon and gave his opponents an oratorical lashing that aroused his congregation to such expressions of approval that at times it was impossible to hear him. Accused of gross mismanagement of the affairs of the church, and with inciting the riot, and ignoring repeated demands from an active minority for his resignation, Rev. Taylor devoted the entire services yesterday to restoring order in his church.

The result of the vote, taken after the sermon, showed that out of a total congregation of 1,200 less than forty members are out and out opposed to retaining him in the pulpit. The vote also showed that only two of the opposition party attended the services. A few others stood outside the church or gathered in little groups on the corner and chatted among themselves.

The Eighth precinct, a few doors away, sent no policemen to the services as it was considered that the pastor would be able to handle the situation. The services began and ended without the slightest disorder. The congregation was composed of intelligent, self-respecting colored people and with the exception of loud expressions of approval at the pastor's topic and his references to his opponents' tactics the services were not interrupted by a single discordant note.

The Blind Man Looks Out.—A blind man, on going out on a dark night, asked a non-blind man: "Give me a lantern?" "What's that for?" You can't see anyhow." "Yes, but it is for the benefit of those who can see, and therefore might bump into me."

788,354. This gain then is more than ten per cent of the actual population. Of the total, a little more than 10 per cent are infants of five years or less. Two per cent or in actual figures, 1,141,935, are babes of one year or less, and there were more boys than girls born in 1920 by about 26,000.

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