

## ALICE'S LETTER.

"Just as your pa think's best, my dear," said Mrs. Kossiter, as she folded her graceful morning robe indolently about her and leaned back among the soft cushions with a languid air.

It was very evident that Mrs. Rossiter was not in a mood for active exertion or remonstrance of any kind. If her pretty daughter, kneeling there on the carpet, with her curly head on her mother's knee, her blue eyes seconding the motion of her coaxing cherry-red mouth, her little hands, so soft and white and delicately shaped, clasped in playful supplication; if she, I say, had proposed a voyage to the South Sea Islands on a mission of charity instead of a pleasure trip to the country, Mrs. Rossiter would scarcely have found the strength of will to oppose her. As it was, the bright face of the kneeling girl grew brighter still, as she sprang up with a musical "Thank you, mamma," and changed her seat on the floor for one on the knee of a portly, pleasant-faced old gentleman, who sat in a lounging-chair before the window, reading.

With a quick movement, as graceful as it was audacious, she pulled his morning paper away from him, and dropped it on the floor, set her pretty little foot upon it firmly.

"What do you say, papa?" she asked.

"Well, what is it, my pet?"

The old gentleman did not seem much out of temper for the liberties she had taken, but, putting his arms about her, drew her toward him and kissed her over and over again. Any one, with half a glance at the pair, would have known that Alice Rossiter was the pride and darling of her father's heart.

"Well, you see, papa, instead of going to Brighton with Helen and Marion, I want to visit Auntie Russell, for a six weeks' rustication. It has been so long since I inhaled a real country breeze, that actually I have forgotten what one is like. Buttercups and daisies would be greater luxuries than jewels to me, and for the life of me I don't believe I could tell to a certainty whether potatoes grow on vines or bushes. Then I overheard Dr. Andrews telling grandma yesterday how shockingly thin and sallow I was getting. He said I needed air and exercise more than physic—that a few weeks in the country, with plenty of romping, pudding and milk, fresh air and a flirtation with a rustic lover, would set me up in roses and dimples for a whole year. Besides, papa—"

"Hush, you rattle-headed pussy cat! Your reasons are forcible ones, and so plenty and well arranged that I think you must have made out a list of them and learned them by heart. But what about Brighton? I don't understand how the belle of its last season—the vain miss who came home again with her giddy little head quite turned with her numerous conquests—can relinquish thus the chance to repeat her triumphs."

Alice curled her scarlet lip disdainfully. Her father smiled. That question was disposed of.

"But Alley, it won't be prudent for you to go alone. What with fence-climbing, hunting for new-laid eggs and similar propensities which would develop themselves in you, I should be in continual fear of sprained wrists, dislocated ankles, a bruised head or a broken neck. You would need some one to keep continual watch over you. We could not spare any of the servants, and as for having a private companion—"

"That was just what I was going to say when you interrupted me," Alice broke in eagerly. "There is Miss Dunbar, Hattie's governess, who could be spared as well as not, and I am sure she would be willing to oblige me."

"Very well, just as you and she can agree. You have my consent to anything reasonable. And now be off, gypsy. Here is something to defray expenses. Pick up that paper under your toes, and don't smother me with kisses, pussy." And, placing a bank-note in her hand, Mr. Rossiter unseated her from his knee, and following her graceful figure for a moment with a glance of pardonable fatherly pride, resumed his reading.

"Dear, sweet, unselfish Ally Rossiter! How from my heart of hearts I thanked her, when she came into my room a few minutes afterward and told me of her success. The day before when she was chatting gayly with me of the coming season at the fashionable watering-place—for I was more her confidant than either of her haughty elder sisters—I had accidentally let fall a wish that I might have a few weeks' vacation from my duties as governess to pass in the coolness and quiet of the country. Ever since the spring I had been longing for the green fields, the singing birds, the smell of the young meadow clover and the sight of the growing corn; for I was born and bred a country maiden, and the old tastes and instincts were strong within me. The hot breath of town stifled me, and so I told her with wistful tears in my eyes. A shadow came over her fair face while I was speaking, and I checked myself involuntarily. I had without meaning it stirred her generous impulsive nature to pity. Blessed darling! She did not know that I saw through her affectionate little stratagem, when she came to me the next morning, and asked me if I should be willing to accompany her on a visit to

her country relatives. Her air was anxious and inquiring, for she preferred to seem soliciting rather than conferring a favor—as though she did not mistrust how my very soul leaped up with delight at her question. At first I refused, confronting her with a knowledge of her self-denial and tender sacrifice; but she adhered so steadily to her resolution, declaring that if I did not accompany her, she would stay at home entirely, that she would not go anywhere if she could not go to Suffolk, coaxing me with kisses, and holding up before me the very picture that I had painted the day before in my yearning sadness, that at last I yielded a half-pleased, half-reluctant but inexpressibly grateful consent.

A week from that morning we were on our journey, and Alice entertained me with graphic descriptions of the places and persons I should see. She had not visited there before for years, not since she was a little girl in short frock and trousers; but I knew her memory must be a faithful one, so life-like were the pictures she drew. I could almost see the low, brown farmhouse nestled down in the valley, with the smooth plat of grass-green meadow land in front, and the broad hillside orchard behind; almost see the clinging roses and vines that tangled their scarlet and green beauties over the narrow windows; and the pleasant sitting-room, and its striped carpet, its pretty chintz curtains, the old-fashioned brass candlesticks on the mantel-shelf, the three simple pictures on the wall—one a morning piece, where a fat, red-cheeked widow held a primly-folded handkerchief to her eyes, to catch the pea-like tears that rolled into it; called up, no doubt, by the sight of the very straight, very green weeping-willow that stood guard over a purple tomb, and whose tassels almost brushed the chubby, beet-colored cheeks of the fatherless little boy and girl that clung to her side.

And then she told me of her homely, kind-hearted Aunt Mary—her rough, blunt-spoken Uncle James—her eldest cousin Edgar away at school, and Frank, two years younger, whom she remembered as a wild, mischievous, bright-eyed boy, full of spirit, but generous and impulsive to a fault.

"But, my dear!" she said in conclusion, "I'll wager by this time he is a verdant, gawky, overgrown fellow—a veritable country clown. By the way, Catherine, do you know I mean to try my arts on him? A whole summer without a conquest will be intolerably stupid, and such a triumph would be a novelty in the flirting world, worth scheming for. Imagine a sun-burned, shock-headed youth standing before me, grinning with bashful simplicity, hoisting first one foot and then the other in sheepish embarrassment, and stammering out his ardent love-avowal something after this fashion: 'W-w-will y-y-you have me, Cousin Alice?'"

I laughed in spite of myself at her comical picture, but bade her have a care; for coquettish games were always dangerous ones, and she might be the smitten one after all. She shook her head at me with a merry, skeptical laugh, but made me no reply in words. She did not speak again until we had reached the end of our journey.

The pleasant blue-eyed little woman, who came down to the wooden gate to meet us, was very like the picture she had painted of her; and the motherly way in which she smoothed back the brown curls of her niece and kissed her white forehead, her kindly voice, and above all, the cordial manner in which she clasped my hand at introduction, quite won my heart.

While we were directing the coachman about our baggage, a gentleman and lady on horseback galloped gaily down the valley road, and nodded to Mrs. Russell as they swept past.

"My son Frank," she said, in an explanatory way, as they went by. "We were not expecting you until to-morrow or he would have remained at home this afternoon."

I turned and looked after the retreating pair mentally comparing that tall, elegantly-formed man, carrying his head so proudly, and managing his spirited steed with that graceful, easy skill, which is the beauty of horsemanship, to the shock-headed, bashful youth of Alice's fancy. I think she recalled her own words, too, for her glance followed mine, and the look of pleased surprise that brightened her whole face did not vanish till the dust of their horses' hoofs had settled in the distance.

Deliciously cool and sweet was the little spare chamber assigned to us, and after a bath and a change of apparel, I seated myself by the low, open window, and leaned out through the climbing net-work of roses to enjoy the beautiful freshness of the summer scenery spread out before my gaze. Alice was—I know not where, though a snatch of gay song, warbled in the clearest of voices, or a thrill of merry laughter, occasionally betraying to me her whereabouts. All at once I saw her emerging from the barn—one foot slipperless, a great rent in her frock, her curls tangled with bits of hay, her gay silk apron filled with eggs. She was laughing and singing all in a breath; but as she danced along, her foot slipped on a pebble and she fell. I heard the clash of the eggs in her apron and saw the broken yolks and whites trickling out upon the ground in little rills of gold and pearls. Just as I was going to her assistance, I caught the sound of an amused mirthful laugh by the gate and the next moment Frank Russell was assisting her to rise.

"What carelessness! Six new laid eggs everlastingly ruined! How shall we remedy such a loss?" he said in a merry, mocking voice. "This is my

cousin Alice, I am sure. Even if I had not been anticipating your arrival, I should have known this face among a thousand. You are very little changed—so little, indeed, that I dare greet you just as I used to years ago," and stooping he kissed her blushing cheek gallantly.

They came into the house together, chatting like old friends, and pretty soon Alice came up to change her dress for tea. She lingered longer than usual at her glass and I smiled, in spite of myself, at the painstaking care which she manifested in dressing. That evening as we sat together in the porch, Alice asked her aunt, with a mischievous glance at Frank, who the young lady might be whom we had seen on horseback that afternoon.

"Oh, she was Annie Carter," was the reply, "I expect in a year from now you will be able to call her cousin. She has been engaged to my son this long while." And the old lady smiled good-naturedly over her knitting.

I saw a shadow come over Alice's face—very faint, but still a shadow—and noticing that, a sudden pain struck coldly to my heart—as instinctive fear of what the next few weeks would bring about. Frank was smiling, but there was not the slightest visible embarrassment in his manner, as he composedly pulled off handful after handful of leaves, and rolled them up into balls to pelt the big Newfoundland dog lying at his feet.

The events of the next two months (for our visit had been indefinitely prolonged) were but a realization of the prophetic dread that fell like a cloud over my spirit the first night of my stay in that house. Alice Rossiter's heart was singularly simple in its affectionateness and child-like confidence, and I noticed with a feeling akin to pity the mastery which her fascinating cousin was gaining over it. They were inseparable companions. There were morning rambles on the river banks—long promenades under the summer moonlight—that white, magnetic flame in which Cupid so often dips his arrows. Now Alice would want wild flowers for a wreath; only Frank could show her where the finest grew. Again it was moss for a basket, or water lilies for her favorite vase; only Frank could procure them for her. Once she sprained her ankle in descending a hill. Frank brought her home in his arms and I could but notice how tenderly he held her—how closely her white face nestled down against his breast, as though it would never ask to rise. A day or two after she was stung by a malicious bee. Frank must bandage the white, swollen arm, and then, (did he realize what he was doing, do you think?) cover the smarting wound with kisses, saying, with an audacious look into the half-averted eyes, that he knew as well as the bees where sweets were to be found. Annie Carter seemed to be forgotten, or, if I remembered, to be held in secondary consideration to his guest. With growing pain I witnessed their evident liking for each other's society—their intimacy, ripening every day into something more deep and tender. I could not interfere or warn them—the matter was too delicate for my skill to manage, and yet who could fail to know what the result would be? One heart must bleed, whether Alice's or that of the fickle Frank's betrothed I could not say. My selfish love would have chosen the latter.

One night we sat together, Alice and I, by our chamber window. Her chair was drawn up close to mine, and she half leaned against me, her head lying on my bosom, her arms clasped loosely across my shoulders. We had been very silent, neither of us speaking for nearly an hour, and I was wondering what had brought such a pensive shade to Alice's face, when she spoke abruptly. Her question gave me the clew to the long reverie she had been indulging in.

"You saw Miss Carter yesterday did you not, Catherine?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Am I as pretty as she is?" she asked.

"A thousand times prettier, my darling," said I. "Why, her face is no more to be compared with yours than a wax flower is to those roses in your hair—fresh, dewy, and sweet with perfume."

"Do you think so?" said Alice. "I am glad, though I don't know that I ever cared much for being pretty until lately. I suppose Frank likes—loves her very much—don't you?"

There was something more than a careless curiosity to hear my opinion in that question. Had I answered her frankly, I should have given a decided negative. But, with a nature like hers, I dared run no unnecessary risk. I would not encourage the latent hope that I saw slumbering in her heart.

"Of course," I answered.

She sighed—a long, dismal sigh, that smote my heart to the quick. Just then we heard voices underneath the window. Her ear was quicker than mine, for she lifted herself up eagerly, bent her head a moment, as if to listen, and then I saw a quick color like the flush of a rose, ripple into her cheek. We leaned together out of the window. Beneath us were Frank Russell and Annie Carter, pacing backward and forward on the grassy lawn, her hand on his arm—his handsome face bent down, till his dark locks almost brushed her forehead.

I saw Alice's eyelids droop to crush back the tears she would not have me see, and instinctively I put my arm about her and drew her away from the window. I could feel her heart beating stormily under her bodice, and when, with a long, low, sobbing cry, she threw herself into my arms and buried her face convulsively in my bosom, I

knew she was conscious that her secret had passed into my possession.

The next day and the next passed dimly enough, but I saw, with a sensation of relief, that Alice shunned Frank's attentions. Once roused to a sense of her danger, the evil was half remedied I thought.

On the afternoon of the third day I went out for the solitary ramble I was accustomed to take after dinner. I walked down to the river, and, to my surprise, as I neared my favorite seat—a little clearing among the willows that thickly skirted the bank—I saw Ally's white sun-bonnet lying on the grass, and a little further on, herself thrown down on the ground, her arms crossed on the cool grass, and her face buried in them. Her very attitude was one of hopeless passionate grief, and I should have known she was weeping, even if I had not heard her stifled sobs.

While I stood hesitating, undecided, whether to go forward and speak with her, or leave her to conquer her sorrow alone, Frank Russell came out from among the willows opposite me. He, too, noticed the weeping girl, and, springing quickly forward, knelt by her side. Evidently he did not know what to say to comfort her, for he only smoothed her hair silently, apparently unconscious of my close proximity. For once, Alley's heart misled her. She thought the intruder was myself.

"Do not blame me, Catherine," she said, "I cannot help it—indeed I cannot. He was so good—so handsome—so kind to me, that I was loving him before I thought of the consequences. We will go away from here to-morrow,—will we not, dear, good Catharine?—where I shall never see Frank again. Oh, my heart will break!" she sobbed out, in broken accents, without lifting her head.

My heart leaped to my throat with a suffocating bound. I would have died rather than that my beautiful, sensitive darling should so unconsciously have opened her heart to the man who, of all persons, ought to be blinded to its secrets. It would kill her when she knew what she had done.

But I was unprepared for the revelation of the next few minutes. Not till I noticed the sudden start that Frank Russell gave, the flush that came over his face, the tenderness that leaped into his hazel eyes; not till I saw him gather her up in his arms, with passionate caresses, pouring a vehement story of love into her ears—love that had not dared to hope, and that, but for that unexpected revelation, would never have found utterance—did I realize that Ally, after all, was to be happier than I had dared to wish she might be.

But I was startled when I saw her struggle from his embrace with a frightened cry, looking alternately from him to me, as if trying to comprehend her humiliating mistake—a hot face of mortification blazing across her face, her blue eyes darkened by a look of pitiful distress.

"No, no! don't come near me, Frank Russell," she almost screamed, when he would have taken her hands. "I see how it is—what have I said—what have I done—what you would say to me to save my pride. But do not mock me so! Let me bear this disgrace as my punishment—only respect my secret, for its own sake. Come, Catherine, let us go!" and she staggered towards me with both hands pressed hard over her burning face.

Moved by her suffering—her shame—scarcely knowing what I did, in my great pity for her humiliation, I said bitter, harsh things to Frank Russell, taunting him with fickleness, meanness, falsity, and concluding by bidding him to seek Miss Carter, and rehearse the part he had been playing. He listened in indignant surprise, but at that name a new light seemed to break across his mind.

"Miss Carter," said he. "Is it possible that you have labored under such a mistake as that? She has been engaged to my brother Edgar for these two years."

The next moment Alice was in his arms, sobbing, laughing and blushing all at once.

I left them together by the river, but not until I had whispered maliciously to Alice;

"W-w-will y-y-you have m-me-me, Cousin Alice?"

## The Opium Habit in America.

Dr. W. A. Hammond's paper before New York State Medical Association.

In 1850 the total quantity of opium consumed in the United States was about 20,000 pounds. In 1880 it had increased to 533,450 pounds. In 1868 it is estimated that there were from 80,000 to 100,000 victims of the opium habit in this country; now they number over 500,000. The growth of the habit has been rapid within the last few years, owing to the invention of the hypodermic syringe, which has become a favorite method of administering the drug. More females than males are addicted to the use of the drug—the ratio being about three to one—women being subject to a larger number of painful ailments than men. From the time of the publication of De Quincey's Confessions of an English Opium Eater, in 1821, until within a few years, the medical faculty had overlooked or ignored the serious consequences of the opium habit, and the people generally had come to look upon it as a comparatively harmless vice. It is now commanding more attention. The cure of the habit is a sudden reduction in the quantity of opium indulged in, not an immediate and total cessation of its use, which would be injurious, but a reduction in quantity covering a week or two weeks, and accompanied with stimulants of a different kind.

## FARM AND GARDEN.

Milk cows should always be fed ground feed.

Feed carrots to color the milk and make the butter yellow.

Grooming the cows is a work which always brings a good return.

The pear delights in a deep, rich, warm loam, with a clay subsoil.

Iowa walks off with the best prize for butter at the New Orleans exposition.

Neither phosphoric acid nor potash leave the soil except as they are taken up by plants.

"Cracklings" as food for poultry will answer an excellent purpose in supplying animal food.

Treat the cows kindly. Harsh treatment will make them hold their milk, and dry themselves up.

It is said and well proved that the more quiet sheep are kept the more quickly they will fatten.

Watch that lice do not infest the dairy stock. They often come, no one can tell how, nor whence.

Remember the harnesses and tools of all kinds, and put them in thorough repair for the spring campaign.

A little good feed, mixed with a good deal of thoughtful attention, is what makes the flock do its best.

The wool trade of St. Louis aggregated about 12,500,000 pounds in 1884, against 18,868,729 pounds in 1883.

Do not allow the poultry to stand around in the snow, but give it a dry place to run under in the day time.

Incoming cows should have a limited diet of dry hay, with a little bran, for a few weeks previous to calving.

No field on the farm is so unfairly treated as that containing the orchard. The chief cause of orchards "running out" is an exhausted soil.

Reports show that the number of sheep in Great Britain has suffered a great reduction in the past ten years, something over 5,000,000 head.

In driving the cows, never hurry them; as when their udders are full of milk, or they are heavy with calf, it is very likely to do them permanent injury.

The cherry grows best in a rich, warm, sandy loam. If a mulch of leaves, straw or brush is put around them they will be very much benefited by it.

John Splan, a noted horseman, says a quart of oatmeal in a pail of water will freshen a horse after hard driving, and prepare his stomach for more solid food.

The best treatment for an orchard, after it comes into bearing, is to make a hog pasture of it. If clover is sown, and the pigs allowed to feed upon it, the soil will improve—and so will the pigs.

## Worse Than Firearms.

The editor of an Omaha paper, in commenting on several cases in that city where children died from the effects of taking cough-syrup containing morphia, remarks that opiates, poisons and narcotics are more dangerous than firearms. Mothers should note this and furthermore that different Boards of Health, after making careful analyses have certified that the only purely vegetable preparation of this kind, and one that is in every way harmless, prompt and effective, is Red Star Cough Cure. Mayor Latrobe of Baltimore, and the Commissioner of Health, have publicly endorsed this valuable discovery.

It is a well-known fact that sheep love bright fine hay, and will eat it cleaner and do better on it than on the coarse hay; while cattle seem to relish the coarse hay and foders even better than the very fine. It would not be much trouble to feed accordingly.

If you are keeping cows for the dairy, or to give milk and make butter, keep only the kind that will give the greatest quantity of your speciality—butter cows, if it is butter; and if it is milk, then keep cows of one of the milk breeds, says the Pittsburg Stockman.

The Orange County Farmer says: "The sugar beet is preferred among the roots for sheep, being most palatable and containing the most solid nutritious matter." However, sweet turnips are preferred by many practical sheep feeders, among whom are leading Englishmen.

Give to the cows none but the best and purest food. With no other stock it is so essential, for the reason that it has been fully demonstrated by competent authorities that the milk is a very prolific source of transmitting disease germs from impure food, and especially from impure water.

Meadows and pastures need refreshing with new seed as well as with manure at intervals. The seed should be sown with each dressing of compost. Repeated cutting and pasturing weakens the grass and destroys some of it, and the thick, healthy sod is only kept up by occasional reseeded.

The receipts of wool at Chicago last year were 41,693,606 pounds, against 40,222,625 pounds for the year 1883, and for the year 1882, 36,660,990 pounds, which shows an increase in the sales of nearly 1,500,000 pounds over the year 1884, and over 5,000,000 pounds over the amount received in 1882.

The commissioner of education places the number of medical students in this country in 1873 at 8,681; in 1883 we had 15,151. The medical schools during this period increased from 94 to 134.

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