

itia, if she were
own inferences.
that experience
h would have
hension of Ne-
er his kiss was
rds would fol-
reamy ecstasy
of her mother,
she would not
ughter, was in
a Letitia.
; and how fair
oked from her
e-white range
Neville's words

Avilion,
any snow,

their lives be

close to her
first day. Ne-
t, and she was
him alone af-
the bluffs. The
ure he would
er courage to
even stepped
y, which com-
d. The third
ient and just
was beyond
epelled him?
his embrace.
e of the boys
ed from him.
was indiffer-
such an idea
ntil then—
too reserved,
to say during
she and Le-
hold linen to
hint at this
too, had oc-
nig, at uncon-
Letitia was
in fault, and
repair her er-
ked casually

e was off to
lesly, and he
oped to send
ed, a quarter
use—"with
s."

He had returned then. He could delay a visit no longer. Letitia waited for him at home, and was rewarded by hearing of him from the boys, who met him frequently about the streets and at their father's store. Letitia could, at last, no longer avoid the conclusion that he was purposely keeping away from the cottage. And the day of his departure was fast approaching. Letitia's way out of the difficulty was a very simple and straightforward one. If he feared to come to her after what had passed between them, she would write and ask him to come. It was a daring thought, but, when once conceived, was promptly and courageously carried out. The note, when it was finally written, was a very innocent one. She wrote, "My dear Mr. Neville," instead of "Dear Mr. Neville," and she concluded by adding "always" to the "yours sincerely" of the first rough draft. The significance of the note lay in the fact that it was a message from her, and not from her mother. She said that she had been hoping each day to see him, and had not gone out much because she feared to miss him. She was glad he had enjoyed the shooting, and they would all be at home as usual on Sunday afternoon.

Letitia expected the answer to be given in person, and the sight of "Miss Roy" on an envelop, in his handwriting, sent the blood rushing to her cheeks and even caused her limbs to tremble. Mrs. Roy checked all remark from Edgar, who brought the letter from the post-office and was inclined to chaff his sister, by telling him she wanted him to bring a hammer and nails at once to the chicken-house and to fasten up some netting that had been blown down by the wind. She carried him off with her in a whirlwind of words, and Letitia was left alone to open her letter. "Dear Miss Roy," it began. "Not my dear," noted Letitia, swiftly.

I was of course pleased to receive your letter, and I regret a preengagement for Sunday afternoon. I am sorry, too, that I should inadvertently have detained you so much at home. It did not occur to me that you might be expecting me, and I have been unusually busy with the preparations for the voyage. I need not say that I hope to call more than once upon Mrs. Roy and you before I leave.

I am very truly yours,
CHARLES NEVILLE.

Letitia was stunned. She read the letter a second time and then a third. What did it mean? Had she been dreaming? Had Neville really kissed her? Had he looked at her with eyes of love, or had she been altogether mistaken? Thought, just then, was impossible. She was too much stunned even to feel pain. She folded the letter very carefully, replaced it in the envelop, and put it into her pocket. She

tried to recall what she was doing when Edgar gave it to her. Her knitting lay on the table, and she mechanically took it up for a few minutes. Then she remembered that her mother and Edgar had gone to the poultry-yard, and she went out to them. Anything was better than the memories which began, like lightning-flashes, to dart through her mind.

VI.

LOVE is said to be stronger than pride. If so, it must be the tried and faithful love of years, and not the fancy that is kindled by mutual admiration, and nourished to maturity by pleasure, but has not had time allowed it to strike deep root into the heart. Letitia's love for Neville was straggled almost at its birth, or she believed that it was. She could no longer think of him with any self-respect. His image was broken. He was identified with the keenest humiliation she had known, and she insisted to herself, whatever the truth may have been, that he no longer had any place in her heart. She counted the days until the departure of the *Stronghold*, but it was to rejoice, with nevertheless a fierce pang of despairing regret for what might have been, as one day after another passed, now only too slowly, away. Every afternoon she found an errand that took her out for some hours; and so it came about that she missed Neville both times that he called at the cottage. Mrs. Roy gave her his message of regret without comment. The smile that Letitia summoned was the wan ghost of the past. The curves of her full lips, the dimples, the small white teeth, were there, but the bright spirit that illumined them had fled.

If Letitia denied her love, Neville was under no such delusion with regard to his own feelings. They grew in alarming strength after he had despatched his letter, which he had sent off in momentary petulance at being called to account. His British independence resented the slightest hint of capture. But his temper quickly changed, and more than once he was tempted to recall his note. However, he had deliberately cut himself loose from the chains which had threatened to bind him, and what was done could not, he knew, be undone. Fortunately for his peace of mind, his judgment still fortified him whenever he reflected dispassionately upon the whole affair. But there were moments when so to reflect was impossible, and then the barrier he had put between himself and Letitia was his only safeguard. He dared not trust himself, to say farewell to her in words, but neither could he leave Alberta without looking upon her face once more, that face that had been so passionately kissed when last he had seen it.