

The Inglenook.

A Pink Story.

BY MARY E. ALBRIGHT.

Everything looked dark gray to Claire. It was a gray day in the first place with a cloudy sky and frozen ground; the leaves all gone except a few on the oaks and they were brown. And then Claire was sick with a cough and a sore throat and a miserable hot feeling coming on in the afternoon when the whole world seemed tiresome and uncomfortable.

Worse than all, Margaret was in the hospital. That there was something very serious about this Claire was certain, for more than once she had seen her mother crying and even papa had had tears in his eyes. For herself, the doing without Mamma for several hours each day while she journeyed to and from that unknown hospital, had been harder to bear than any one knew. Yes, this was certainly a gray time for the usually jovial little Claire.

As she lay there in her mother's bed, while kind Mrs. Graham sat beside her knitting, a queer penitent feeling was in her heart. Something had happened three days before—the day that Miss Carter stayed with her. After what seemed hours and hours she heard at last her mother's step and voice. "O Miss Claire!" she was saying in the next room. "You ought to see the dear girl. She is so patient and she looks so sweet with the flush in her cheeks just matching the pink ribbon running through the lace in her gown!"

And then—that sudden unexpected sob that burst out before she could hide her head under the bedclothes! The surprise and trouble in Mamma's face as she ran in and gathered her smallest girl into her arms while Claire wailed: "You love Margaret best! She has pink ribbons in her night-gown and I have only an old blue hair ribbon! And—O dear—I'm sick and I want you, Mamma, so dreadfully!"

Miss Carter had heard it all, but she was lovely. She brought the thermometer, and the fever medicine—and they took off the blue hair ribbon, and put on an old pink one that she had forgotten, while Mamma fed her an orange, and Miss Carter told her a story. And she had felt so ashamed to think that for the first time in her life she had been jealous.

Not once, since then, had Claire complained, or objected, when her mother left her. But to-day there was no sunshine; it was a weary kind of afternoon. Mrs. Graham had read to her until she was tired. There seemed to be nothing further worth hearing—except—well—there was the postman's ring, which she knew by the two quick pulls. A minute after, Ellen appeared, peeping in at the door,

"Three letters for Miss Claire Aldrich," she announced with a broad smile. Claire sat up in bed and took them eagerly. Letters did not come to her so very often. These had an unusual, bunched look.

One of these envelopes was addressed, "Miss Claire Pink Aldrich." Claire opened her eyes wider at this, and a smile crept around the corners of her mouth. Mrs. Graham started a little opening, and Claire poked it wider with her fingers, when—out fell two rolls of beautiful, soft, pink ribbon, one was an inch wide, the other three, and

there were six yards of each! The second envelope disclosed more ribbon, the same shade, but wider still, six yards. Claire looked inquiringly at Mrs. Graham's face, but saw only surprise and admiration.

The third letter! This time the little fingers did all the work. Three cunning handkerchiefs, each with a pink border!

"But there isn't any writing," complained Claire. "Where did everything come from?"

"I can't imagine dear," said Mrs. Graham, sincerely. "It's very mysterious. There's the bell again. I'll go to the head of the stairs."

A minute later she reappeared carrying a good sized package.

"Miss Claire Aldrich. With Care," she read slowly. "Shall I untie it, Dear?"

"No, I will," said Claire with brightening eyes. "I love to untie bundles. O—my—conscience!" (one of Papa's words) as she unwound quantities of tissue paper. "O look! A cup—and a saucer—and a plate, all pink rosebuds and gold on the edges. See what a 'elegant shape. Who can it be, Mrs. Graham? Are they all for me?"

Another ring downstairs was followed closely by the entrance of Miss Carter. "How's the little girl to-day?" then, as she saw the china and ribbon spread out on the bed, a queer look fitted across her face.

"Why, how funny!" she exclaimed, as Claire began pouring out the story. "Somebody got ahead of me. I thought a sick girl ought to have a pretty cup to drink from so—I brought you a pink one. But mine is all pink," unwrapping and placing it on a broad, white space on a bed-spread, "and the other is pink and white, so you can have a change."

Claire drew a long breath.

"Well, I never did!" she said decidedly. "Thank you so much, Miss Carter, and—well, Ellen, what is it now?"

"I do know what it is," said Ellen vaguely, "but it's a package a messenger boy brought for Miss Claire Aldrich. There's a note inside, he says. So I just brought it right up."

"Dear me," murmured Mrs. Graham anxiously, noting the bright eyes and flushed cheeks of her little charge. "I wish her mother'd come. The child's had about all she can stand."

"O, I can stand it," observed Claire sagely, as she untied the last knot. "A whole roll of paper napkins, all bordered with the sweetest little roses. And here's a letter. Now I'll know who sent them."

She opened the envelope, and poured earnestly over a typewritten note, then read aloud as follows.

"My dear Friend: If I were you, and were to have an afternoon tea, I think I should call a pink afternoon tea—I mean afternoon pink tea. I should want a pink sash, on which would be hung a pink bordered handkerchief. Then I should want in my hair a pink bow. I should want to serve pink orangeade in a pink cup; ice-cream in a pink saucer, and cake in a pink plate. Then I should want pink napkins. Don't you think I am a?"—Claire coughed—"C-o-n-n-o-i-s-s-e-u-t—What's that, Miss Carter?"

The lady laughed a little. "Connoisseur. It means one who knows all about a thing."

"Go on, dear."

"A conny-sewer—on afternoon teas?"

"Very truly yours,

"PETER SMITH."

"Peter Smith!" mused Claire. "I don't seem to remember him. Do you know him Mrs. Graham—do you, Miss Carter?"

Miss Carter looked a little confused. The rose before her a picture of a certain business office, wherein was wont to sit a genial, great-hearted man, a friend of hers. She remembered a certain visit she had had with him a day or two before.

"I don't think I know any one of that name," she answered quietly. "Now dear, you are tired. You mustn't sit up or talk a bit more. We'll go out and let you rest till your mother comes. You can show her your presents after the gas is lighted."

They went out together, and Claire lay there alone in the gathering twilight, thinking over all her surprises, and wondering and guessing about Peter Smith. Summing up the evidence, she decided that he must be rich, and good, and generous; that he must understand little girls and be fond of them. "And that's just the kind of man I like," she concluded. "I do hope I'll see him sometime."

The front door opened and closed in the hall below. Claire turned involuntarily; her eyes fell upon the window opposite. What had happened to the gray day? Through the branches of the oaks, behind the few rustling, brown leaves, she could see the sky, all rosy and glorious with most beautiful pink color she had ever imagined. She lay and drank it in delightedly. The door opened, and her mother came softly in. For an instant Claire thought of the pink ribbons, the china, the afternoon tea; but the spell of the sunset was upon her.

"Mamma, look!" she exclaimed. "Look at the sky."

Her mother turned to the window and gazed with her hands clasped. Her eyes were full of joy and tears. She walked over to the bed, bent down and laid her cheek against Claire's.

"God gave it to us," she said, "after so many dreary days. But they're gone now, for—O Darling, listen! Margaret, our Margaret is out of danger. She is going to get well!"

"What a lovely day this has been after all," sighed Claire as she was dropping to sleep. "I know one thing anyway. After this, as long as I live, pink shall be my favorite color!"—Congregationalist.

The Ethics of Visiting.

"I never expect to pay another visit, it I can help it," said a city woman. "I have graduated from that sort of thing long ago. Whenever I go I always go to a hotel, where I can have my own hours and my own times and all the extra service I may need. I do not want guests in my own house and I have done with being a guest in anybody else's."

Some of the women who listened assented to this new and independent doctrine. "It tires me dreadfully to make a visit," said one; "and the last guest-room I was in was so elaborately neat that I couldn't take an afternoon nap for fear of disarranging the bed. One afternoon when I couldn't hold out any longer I slept on the floor. You needn't laugh!—if you had seen the guest-room you would have understood that it was no joke to live up to it."

"Well," said the third, "I love to have company staying in my house and I love to visit, too, when I have the time. And I hate hotels. They're a great deal more comfortable than most homes, in a way, and yet