

**NANCY BLAKE
LETTERS TO A
WESTERN COUSIN**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649198078

Nancy Blake letters to a western cousin by Ruth Natalie Cromwell

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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RUTH NATALIE CROMWELL

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Ruth N Cromwell

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

New York:
SINCLAIR TOUSEY, 121 NASSAU STREET.
1864.

B.c.

NANCY BLAKE LETTERS
TO A
WESTERN COUSIN.

I.

HER ARRIVAL IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

Dear Cousin, I have arrived in this wonderful city,
And, true to my word, I send you this ditty;
But were I to write 'till as blind as our Bill,
Who carries each morning the bag to the mill,
I never could tell the half to be seen—
The houses, the shops, with the people between.
I never could tell of the beauty and size
Of the great shop windows that dazzled my eyes.
I never could tell, for it's not to be told,
How the cart wheels rattled, how the carriages roll'd,

How the streets were filled with the rich and the proud,
Sure never was seen such a wonderful crowd.
Yet, which were the *ton* would have puzzled the brain
Of a head much wiser than mine to explain.
Like grandmama's peacocks, who spread themselves so,
Each one of them seemed to be dressed for a show.
Such satins, such silks, such beautiful laces,
You never got time to look at their faces.
While my thoughts flew back to home and to you—
While the old house clock was striking two—
We arrived at my aunt's in Fifth avenue.
Now, my uncle McAyres, I've heard grandmama say,
Was a tailor, who lived in a very small way.
Much mending he did, with clothes ready made,
Of every description, fashion and shade,
Till that terrible day, which the world well knows,
That valorous day, when the North arose,
For the "Flag" had been struck by Southern foes.
Now, my uncle McAyres was a loyal man,
And his loyal soul was fill'd with a plan—

To serve his country, with a thankful heart,
In his humble way he would act his part.
So they worked and worked, for the need was sore ;
All day they worked in my uncle's store,
And made coats for the men that went to the war
By what strange chance I never can tell,
For the coats turned out not quite so well
As the people had hoped, but just in a day
My uncle grew rich in some wonderful way.
While President Lincoln, extending his hand,
Called out in a voice that was heard in the land—
Called out to the people, the loyal and true,
To go forth and fight for the red, white and blue.
In that perilous hour, thro' weakness and shame,
Whatever befell us 'twas ever the same,
Richer and richer my uncle became.
So when he had got both honor and gold
He bought him a house, as I have been told,
Where the quality live, all in a row—
Such wonderful houses, la ! what a show.

Indeed, I could scarcely believe my own eyes,
And I thought to myself, as I looked at the size,
If this be the house of my uncle McCayres,
O, what must be that of the Parson's and Mayor's ?
So while I was thinking I knocked at the door,
But I might have knocked on 'till my knuckles were sore,
Had not the driver so kindly revealed
The knob at the side, so nicely concealed,
When I gave it a pull, and it opened so quick,
Dear-a-me, it was almost as good as a trick ;
When I asked of the help if aunt Betsy was in
(He was black as a coal, though neat as a pin),
He replied, with a smile and a bow so polite,
(It couldn't have been better had he been ever so white),
" That Mrs. McCayres was in, he believed,
But as it was earlier than she ever received,
If I'd walk in the parlor, and wait for a while,
He would take up my name ;" and so with a smile
He left me alone, where I wondered a bit
Whether to stand or whether to sit,

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Where everything seemed so fine and so frail,
For all the world like an Arabian tale;
But what it was like you never would know,
So if you'll listen awhile I'll endeavor to show.

* * * *

There's our back-yard, with all its posies,
Holly-hocks and yellow roses—
Of which we have a dreadful sight—
'Tis not so full, nor half so bright
As my aunt's carpet, while each chair
Is quite as grand, I do declare.
And glasses, too, la! what a heap,
'Twas funny just to take a peep,
All shining bright as little lakes,
Or pretty ponds for ducks and drakes.
And some were square, and some were tall,
And all were hanging on the wall;
And pictures, like you see in books,
With houses, trees and little brooks,
But not, it seemed, with country looks;

But then the frames were all so fine,
And like as any gold did shine.
And some were Claude's, my aunt has said,
And that's what makes the sky so red ;
So this, I think, is the reason, too,
That makes the grass so dreadful blue.
While in a corner, by themselves,
All nicely piled on little shelves,
Were china boys and china cups,
And little dogs with little pups,
And many things, piled up so high,
You couldn't count them should you try ;
And figures, too, all on a post,
Each one as white as any ghost.
Some all alone, some in a row,
Without a stitch from top to toe.
I've often heard our parson say
That city folks would go astray,
And so I thought, without delay,
I'll speak my mind to aunt McAyres—
My notion on such like affairs.