

Lady Blanche Farm

A Romance of the
Commonplace

By Frances
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SYNOPSIS

Motoring through Vermont, Philip Starr, young Boston architect, meets, in unconventional fashion, Blanche Manning, girl of seventeen, with whom he is immediately enamored. In conversation, he learns something of her family history. It being a long distance to Burlington, Starr's destination, Blanche suggests, the village of Hamstead not boasting a hotel, that he become, for the night, a guest of her cousin, Mary Manning. Mary receives Philip with true Vermont hospitality, and he makes the acquaintance of her cousin Paul, recognized as her fiancé. Starr finds Mary is acquainted with Gale Hamlin, noted Boston architect, in whose office Philip is employed. He informs her of his desire to win Blanche for his wife. She is sympathetic, and tells him of an old family superstition concerning the "Blanches" of the Manning family. Paul Manning is inclined to be dissipated, not realizing Mary's true worth. Mary's reproaches for his undue "conduct" are badly received by Paul, and the girl begins to have misgivings as to the wisdom of the alliance.

CHAPTER IV—Continued

She faced this fact resolutely. Paul did not love her as much as she loved him. Why—why? She almost cried it aloud. He was constantly failing her, not only by his whole idle, selfish life, but by follies such as he had committed the night before. Follies! There is little compromise of language in the speech of the average New Englander; he does not, as one writer has wittily put it, call a spade a silver trowel. The real name for such follies was sin, and Mary said it, even though she flinched in doing so. Sin! and how had she ever failed him—or anyone else—in thought or word or deed?

Mary could not help knowing that there were other men in the village who had been attracted to her, who would have been glad to make it plain that they were more than attracted, if she hadn't made it plain that no one in the world mattered to her except Paul. There was Thomas Gray, for instance, slow and plodding, but hard-working, kind and wholesome. And then—then there had been Gale Hamlin, the great architect, whose name Philip pronounced with an awe amounting almost to veneration. She had never told her family much about Hannah Adams' uncle. Her casual remarks about him had included little mention of his frequent calls at the Adams' house when she visited there, none at all of that last call, paid at the school—when the news of her mother's death had come.

The sharp note of a phoebe bird, singing beside her, brought Mary to the consciousness that she must have been dreaming a long time, and sent her hurrying down the hill, still undecided what she ought to do, but immeasurably, if vaguely, comforted and refreshed. Reaching the house, she slipped out of her wet garments, took a hot bath, dressed again in crisp, clean clothes, and began, a little breathlessly, to get dinner.

She need not have hurried, for everyone else was late, but as she had no means of knowing that they would be, she was both tired and ruffled when, at half-past one, she had a meal ready to serve which would have done credit to an older and more experienced cook. "Violet was the first to appear, and Violet was 'nervous,'" Mary knew it the instant she looked at her.

"Paul isn't coming to dinner," she said tartly. "You hurt his feelings very much this morning. I can't think how you can act so, especially when the poor boy is ill. I should have asked nothing better than to sit beside him the whole morning, bathing his poor aching head, if I'd only been equal to it. But then, of course, there's no love as devoted and self-sacrificing as a mother's! Though I felt the same way towards Martin. I didn't feel towards him at all the way you do to Paul. I couldn't have."

"No, I don't believe you could," said Mary, trying to control the grief and anger that seemed to be struggling for mastery in her voice. "I'm sorry he won't come—I'll take off his plate. Won't you come into the parlor now and meet Mr. Starr?"

While this meeting was taking place, very satisfactorily to both persons concerned in it, Seth Manning was sitting patiently in the family carriage outside the village church, waiting for his cousin, Jane, and his small son, Moses, to come out of Sunday school. Miss Manning, in common with her neighbors, saw nothing irreverent in using aisles and porch for a little informal visiting after the services were over. And as just at this time children's Sunday was looming large ahead of them, there was a good deal to consider.

"I'm just as nervous as I kin be about them new-fangled exercises Miss Weston has chosen," Mrs. Elliott was confiding to Miss Manning. "Of course, seein' she's chairman of the committee on entertainment, none of the rest of us could say a word, but it looks to me as if she'd bit off more'n she can chew. If Sylvia Gray was so's she could be around, I shouldn't worry none, but Land! have you heard? Sylvia's expectin' again, and she's real poorly. She ain't strong enough to have children so fast, I went and told her so the other day and what do you think she said? That she was real pleased, that she only hoped it would

be twins, twin girls, so she'd have two of 'em, right off, to go with the two boys! She does beat everything!"

When at last the assembled family, with the exception of Paul, sat down to a repast by this time slightly overdone, Seth was hampered by the desire to avoid trouble and to please everyone all the time. Violet had come to him just before they sat down, and urged him to omit asking a blessing, for fear that Mr. Starr would think they were old-fashioned. He had agreed with her. But now he qualified before Jane's stern eye.

"For-what-we-are-about-to-receive-make-us-duly-thankful," he gulped, all in one breath, and was immediately conscious that now he had offended both his cousins, one by asking the blessing at all, and the other by his manner of doing it.

"Lemme give you some chicken, Mr. Starr," he said hastily, "which do you favor, light or dark?"

Before Philip could answer, Cousin Jane also asked a question.

"I suppose you're not a church member?" she said with dark conviction.

Philip smiled. "Oh, yes," he said. "My father was a Congregational minister. I hadn't told you that before, had I? . . . Dark, please, Mr. Manning."

"A Congregational minister!" exclaimed Cousin Jane in amazement, while the others sat staring at him in speechless relief at his tact in intro-



The Slow Drive Home Was Permeated With Magic.

ducing so exemplary a relative into their ruffled midst. "Why, I understood Mary to say that one of your grandfathers . . ."

"—Was an Irish immigrant. Yes, he was—North of Ireland Protestant. Plumber, after he got to this country. Made lots of money when he got started to plumb—just hit the first wave in the fashion for bathrooms. He only had one child, and there was plenty of money to let him travel and study and prepare for the ministry—which was what he wanted to do—those queer freaks of heredity come sometimes, you know. He was minister for years of one of the largest Congregational churches in Massachusetts—until he died, in fact. He was an awfully good sort for a fellow to have for a father. My mother came from Brookline. She was another only child. And I'm another," ended Philip, less cheerfully.

"Do you mean to say," asked Blanche, with unconcealed envy, "that you haven't a cousin in the world?"

"Not one. Nor parents nor grandparents. It isn't much fun."

"Blanche wouldn't agree with you," said Cousin Jane. But her mind was still too busy with Philip's unexpected and gratifying disclosures to dwell long on the shortcomings of Blanche.

"How come you not to go to church this morning, then?"

"Extenuating circumstances," answered Philip promptly, glancing at Blanche.

Cousin Jane's next remark was interrupted by a terrific clattering and banging in the room above them. Mary arose hastily, in the act of serving stewed tomatoes.

"That's only Algy," she said by way of explanation to Philip, "waking up from his nap. I'll go and dress him and bring him down."

When Algy, still pink and warm with sleep, was settled in his high chair, the ice cream was being served, and the fresh, feathery sponge cake passed about. Both were delicious. There was a comfortable silence as everyone began to eat with renewed appreciation of Mary's talents as a cook.

CHAPTER V

On Monday morning it was still raining—raining much too hard to attempt the unknown roads to Burlington. There was, Blanche added, to be one of Hamstead's infrequent dances in the town hall that evening. It was stupid for her tagging along with Paul and Mary, even when they were on good terms, and anyone could see that Paul was having one of his grouches. (Paul's "grouches" corresponded to his mother's "nerves.") And none of the boys in the village seemed to realize that she was old enough to be asked to go to parties by herself now. . . .

"Well, thank the Lord for that," said Philip plausibly. "I'll stay, of course."

In the afternoon it cleared, and he went to Violet, hesitating a little, and asked if he might invite Blanche to go for a little ride with him.

"Why, of course," she said delighted-

ly. "Take one of the roads out to West Hamstead. They're very pretty and quiet. I know our fine Vermont air is going to do you lots of good. You look better already than when you came."

"I feel better," said Philip. "Thanks awfully for letting me take Blanche. I'll take good care of her."

The route which Violet had suggested was one which could easily be covered in two hours, with the old family horse, but no one seemed to think it worth a comment when Philip and Blanche, leaving the house a little before three, reappeared late for a six o'clock supper. They had come to a little lake—Silver pond, Blanche called it—and found an old water-logged rowboat lying neglected beside it. They bailed out the water in it with a tin can, found providentially near at hand. They they rowed about the lake for a time, and finally climbed a hill back of it, where they sat and admired the view.

Philip had been laughing, off and on, all the afternoon, from sheer joy, and when Blanche told one of her little stories, with perfect artlessness, he laughed more than ever.

"It seems so absolutely peaceful here," he said. "Let's not hurry away."

"Well, we needn't, of course," replied Blanche, "if it wasn't for the dance."

"Oh yes, the dance! Will you give me every other one?"

"I think that's rather many, perhaps, don't you?" asked Blanche, flushing a little.

"Oh, no, not at all! I wouldn't dream of asking for less. It isn't done."

"Now you're laughing at me again!" Had any man, Philip wondered, ever found a girl so unspoiled, so utterly delicious? It was difficult for him to refrain from taking her into his arms then and there; and though somehow he managed to steel himself against doing this, he reached out for the little hand that lay lightly on the extremely narrow strip of wood that separated him from Blanche, and locked his hard, lean fingers with her soft pink ones. Nothing that he had ever experienced in his life had awakened in him such a feeling of ecstasy.

What tremendous—what undeserved—luck had been with him when he decided to take that swim!

"I am so glad you agree with me about the dances," he said, at last, rising reluctantly.

"But I didn't agree! Philip, how can you?"

Philip! She had already begun to forget to call him Mr. Starr. He had never known before what a wonderful name Philip was. The slow drive home was permeated with magic. Without knowing when or how he had begun to do so, Philip found that he was holding both Blanche's hands; he felt her golden head sink gently on his shoulder and rest there quiescent. The deepening dusk, enfolding them, seemed pregnant with the promise of still closer companionship, of more ardent embraces. But the prelude to these was perfect and complete in itself.

Neither the return to the farm, nor the family supper, nor the departure for the party to which Blanche had looked forward to eagerly, dispelled Philip's illusion of enchantment. Of course he got his dances. Many of the alternate ones he danced with Mary.

All on the Lady Blanche farm were sorry when Philip said good-by by bright and early Tuesday morning. Blanche, to whom he had suggested a short walk through the orchard, lifted brimming eyes to his. He stooped and kissed the tears away from her lashes. Then he laid his cheek against hers.

"This isn't really good-by, you know," he whispered; and added softly, "sweetheart!"

Violet's farewell was likewise accompanied by tears, as well as by little pats and cooling sounds. Mary packed a delicious lunch, and laid a neatly folded road map with Philip's route clearly marked in red pencil, on top of his suitcase.

The day after his departure, the station agent called up Violet to tell her that there was a big box addressed to her, and marked perishable, express paid, waiting there. And, when it was promptly brought home by Seth and opened with some excitement, it was found to contain four five-pound boxes of candy, all exactly alike, but elaborately tied up with different colored ribbons. And under each bow of ribbon was slipped a card which read, "With kindest regards, and many thanks for my wonderful visit, from Philip Starr."

As Jane Manning had never had a suitor, this was the first box of candy that had ever been given to her. She tried to conceal her pleased surprise as long as she was with the others. Then she carried the box home, very carefully, and put it on her bedside table, near her Bible. It did not occur to her to open it. She drew up her rocker, and sat for a long time looking at it.

"No one but him would ever have remembered me," she said aloud, "at all, let alone send me candy, at my age, and all tied up with red ribbon! . . . That nice boy!" she ended abruptly, and blew her nose hard.

The excitement aroused by the boxes of candy and the pleasant "bread-and-butter" letters which followed in their wake had hardly subsided when something even more thrilling happened. A beautiful limousine, beside which Philip's little runabout could no more have stood comparison than could Cinderella's pumpkin with the fairy coach into which it was turned, driven by a slim young chauffeur, very smart in a uniform to match the car's upholstery, drew up in front of Seth Manning's door, and a tall, distinguished-looking man of early middle age got out and asked for Mary.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Season of Daring Color Schemes

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



WHATEVER you do, be colorful. Evidently this is the message which fashion aims to convey for the coming months. It's like seeing things through multi-colored glasses to look at the gay spring clothes which are out on style parade. No kaleidoscope could do better than designers of this day and age are doing in this matter of producing unexpected yet wistfully beautiful color effects.

You get the idea first of all from the new tailored suits, so many of which combine plaids, checks or stripes with bright monotores. For instance, an ensemble is apt to be worked out with a Tartan plaid wool in green, vivid blue and orange combining with a plain blue diagonal weave. Other equally as intriguing contrasts could be recited by the hundreds.

The new giddily striped and plaided taffetas, likewise scarf-prints, are working wonders in the way of contributing vital color to street clothes. If it isn't a giant-sized bow of plaid taffeta tied at the throat then, perchance, the blouse is of gay taffeta with the coat lining saying ditto or possibly all three will flaunt their colorful-scheme before your eyes. Then there are the new smart tweed travel suits of the swagger variety which take on a refreshing this-season's aspect because of their alliance with fancy checks. Sometimes it is the skirt which is of the check. Then again it is the jacket or cape which pose checks over the tweed skirt.

As to skirt and sweater schemes, they fairly hit the eye with their riot of color.

When it comes to simple daytime frocks of wearable type, most every costume is worked out in multi-color or bi-color ways. The illustration tells the story in part as to how some of the color problems are solved. At most every turn the eye is greeted with a blouse of plaid or a bow or a girdle of some such. The model to the left conveys the idea. Navy with white is almost outrivalling black with white for spring. The costume centered is done in navy and white. Black with turquoise is the color combination for the model pictured to the right.

Formal modes likewise yield to the mania of color which is taking possession of the fashionable world. At Paris restaurants and night clubs a great deal of white is being worn with bright-colored velvet jackets or perhaps a white gown will have vivid red velvet straps which develop into a huge bow at the back. Patou creates an enchanting formal which involves a tri-color of pale lime green, dark olive and a touch of ripe raspberry.

Even the newest lace gowns are worked with the idea that two colors are better than one.

As to millinery, in its realm bi-color and tri-color schemes are running rampant. Not only are colors worked together in the making of the hat, but plaided and striped ribbons are among the season's smartest trimmings.

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JACKET OF FELT

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



It seems that Alpine playgrounds are lending inspiration for present-day fashions. You can detect in the smart about-town costume here pictured the influence of the brief little double-breasted waist-depth jackets which Tyrolean men wear when mountain climbing. Then too the jaunty beret with its perky tuft of colorful felt at its top crown looks as if the original of its kind may have been worn by some gay mountaineer, in the picturesque Alps. This beret and sleeveless jacket are of pastel blue felt, worn with a tailor-finished knitted frock.

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Wide Shoulders

Frocks, coats and suits launched by Maggie Rouff show widened accented shoulders tapering to a slender normal waist with such broadening effects as tiny pockets at the hip line.

Hats Low in Back

Coming down are hats in the back. Says Orry Kelly, Hollywood designer, who also looks for deeper crowns in the near future.

RETURN OF FRINGE AND CAPES HAILED

When fringe is "out," it is very, very much out, but when it is in, we are once more reminded of that little girl with the curl. At the moment, fringe is just different enough to set one a flutter over the idea of wearing it, particularly if it happens to be one's first fringed frock.

They do say that shawls are on their way back, and while there is no law that says shawls must be fringed, so many of them are that, when one gets to dreaming about those castles in Spain, one is bound to conjure up fringed shawls as well as fringed dresses. Yet the arrangement of the little shawl—or would you call it a cape?—could hardly be described as dashing, an adjective one usually associates with anything of Spanish inspiration. These shoulder shawls are for a Spanish woman when she is not carrying a rose in her teeth or being fascinating according to the old Spanish custom. But when she takes off that cape, she gets right back into character!

Stripes and Checks Due for Run of Popularity

It'll be pretty difficult for you to dodge the responsibility of getting checks this spring (any but rubber) and also stripes as the season goes along. While we could give you bushels of statistics covering the names of ultra-chic women who are buying checks and stripes, we won't in humanity's name, burden you. Let it suffice that Lucile Paray in her mid-season collection in Paris emphatically showed her approval, and that Jupiter in heaven is going through Virgo, which means stripes and checks will be good until September of next year, at least.

Fabrics With Cire Finish Have Brightest Prospects

Fabrics are still dull, so that the occasional appearance of lustrous materials for spring wear attract more attention than in other seasons. Just now it is fabrics with cire finish which appear to have bright prospects for the immediate future.

The cire idea is not altogether new, of course. Cire satins were used in considerable quantity last summer for dress trimmings and little jackets and reappeared in evening gowns and formal afternoon wear last fall.

ARABS LIBERAL IN IDEAS OF DIVORCE

In the Oara mountains of southern Arabia divorce is supremely easy for the man, as throughout all Arabia. He has only to tire of his wife and say so in the usual formula and she must go home to her father, with a parting gift of half a cow. Divorce by the woman is also easy, though financially more onerous, for she must return to him half the marriage price, which may amount to ten cows. Both are immediately free to marry again. Divorce does not require a qadhi's sanction, so marriage and divorces are frequent. A man may by religious law have four wives at any one time, but the general rule is one, or at most two. If a woman has borne her husband children, he is usually unwilling to divorce her, but when he marries again, inevitably a young girl, it is customary for him to pacify the older woman with a gift equivalent to the new bride's marriage price. Thus women acquire wealth; indeed the independent possession of property by man and wife is regarded in a favorable light.

"How many children have you got, Instahall?" I asked of one of my Oara escorts.

"Three," he said, "a girl and two boys."

"From the same wife?"

"No, the girl is old and is the woman of Fadhallah here. Her mother I divorced."

"Why?" I asked.

"She bore me nothing (that is, no sons). But it was she who asked for the divorce."

"And did you claim half your girl-lap (wedding price) back?"

"More, I gave six cows for her, and demanded and got eight for her divorce."

He laughed. "Wallah! I was a fool, for she married Bir Zaid and bore him four sons."—From "Arabia Felix," by Bertram Thomas.



How to train BABY'S BOWELS

Babies, bottle-fed or breast-fed, with any tendency to be constipated, would thrive if they received daily half a teaspoonful of this old family doctor's prescription for the bowels.

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