

Lady Blanche Farm

A Romance of the
Commonplace

By Frances
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SYNOPSIS

Motoring through Vermont, Philip Starr, young Boston architect, meets Blanche Manning, seventeen, with whom he is immediately enamored. 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 informs her of his desire to win Blanche for his wife. She tells him of an old family superstition concerning the "Blanches" of the Manning family. Paul Manning is inclined to be dissipated. Mary's reproaches for his "conviviality" are badly received by Paul. Gale Hamlin, long a suitor for Mary's hand, visits Hamstead but makes no progress in his love-making. Philip, from records of the Manning family, learns the sorrowful story of the "Countess Blanche," French wife of a Revolutionary hero, Moses Manning, and of the peculiar "curse" she has transmitted to her descendants and the women of Hamstead. The evening of Philip's marriage to Blanche, Paul, under the influence of liquor, bitterly affronts Mary, and tells her their engagement is ended. Mary, at first acutely conscious of her position as a "dited" woman, is greatly comforted by her lifelong friend, Sylvia Gray.

CHAPTER VII—Continued

Silently Mary brought the little white china cup painted with bluebirds to the child. He drained it at a gulp.

"More," he announced cheerfully, handing it back to her.

Mary filled the mug a second time, and as she did so, she could see the rest of the family, in the new automobile, starting for the performance of "The Merchant of Venice" at the annual Chautauqua entertainment at Wallacetown. She knew the play almost by heart, loved every word of it, had never seen it given, and even the little mediocre traveling company that was to play it, could, with her own knowledge of it, have given her a glimpse into fairyland if she could have heard it. And none of the others cared for Shakespeare, or were in the least familiar with him. They were simply going because it was "part of this year's program," because everyone else was going, because Paul welcomed any excuse to drive the car and Violet any excuse to be seen in it, and Jane and Seth any excuse to go to a play which could not, of course, be wicked, since it was "classic." No one had even suggested staying home with the children so that she could go. "Can't I have a piece of candy?" was Algy's next question, as she reached the crib which stood by her bed. "I ben a good boy all day, haven't I, Mary?"

"Yes, dear, pretty good. Where is your bag of lemon drops?"
"In my top bureau drawer. Bring it here, so's I can choose."
The bag was brought and a fragment carefully selected.
"I wish you'd stay with me for a while, Mary. I got a sorter pain in my leg."
"A sharp pain, or an ache?"
"No-o, just a regular pain. I think maybe it would feel better if you rubbed it for a while."

Mary uncovered the plump, brown legs and rubbed them briskly. "I've got to go now and hear Moses' prayers," she said at last, thinking that signs of drowsiness were finally beginning to be evident.

But Moses was not feeling devotional. He was constitutionally irreligious, and now that he attended kindergarten, the morning exercises at school seemed to him more than sufficient for his spiritual needs.

"I ain't a-goin' to say the Lord's prayer tonight," he announced with decision. "I said it this mornin' at school."

"Very well, say 'Now I lay me.'"
"Now I lay me," began Moses with-out much fervor, "down to sleep . . ." when a loud crash and a wail of distress from the next room.

"Oh, Mary, I've dropped my bluebird cup! It's bro-o-ken . . ."
Mary rushed to Algy's side and gathered him, dripping wet, into her arms. On the floor, in a pool of water, lay the beloved mug broken into fragments, while the crib, as well as Algy himself, was deluged by its contents.

"Don't cry, darling! It's a shame, but Mary will buy you another just like it, only prettier, maybe, the next time she goes to Wallacetown. Hush, honey. Let Mary put you in bed with Moses while she gets you dry pajamas and changes your sheets and wipes up all the pieces so you won't cut your dear little feet."

Comfort, fresh linen and more water all having been provided, Moses was urged to continue his devotions.
"I don't see why I should say, 'If I should die before I wake.' I've said it and said it, and I ain't never died at all."
"Well, say just 'God bless' tonight, then."

"God bless Daddy and Mary and Algy," mumbled Moses glibly, "and all my dear friends, and make me a good boy, and bless Cousin Jane and Cousin Violet and Blanche. You needn't bother about Paul, he snatched my woodchuck trap. Amen. . . . Now sing me 'The Sugar Plum Tree,'" he com-

manded, climbing into bed and settling himself on his pillow.

Mary began it bravely enough. But the reference to Paul was too much for her. Before she reached the Chocolate Cat she found she could not go on.

"I'm afraid I can't finish 'The Sugar Plum Tree' tonight, darling," she said abruptly, bending over to kiss him; and in spite of her, some hot tears fell down on his face. Then she fled from the room.

Moses lay for a long time wide-eyed and pondering. He loved Mary as he loved no one else in the world, and Mary, plainly, was very unhappy. He tried to think of recent misdeeds that he himself had committed, but his slate was fairly clean. Then he remembered that once before, early in the summer, he had caught her crying, and when he had pressed her, she had said she was worried over Paul. Mary never mentioned Paul now—still that might be the trouble, just the same. It was too bad that Mary should cry over him, particularly when he deserved it so little, but if no one else would comfort her Moses would. He sought about in his mind for the quickest and best means to this end.

Moses always slept with a small Canton-flannel dog named Spotty, to which he had been devoted from infancy. It had gone through numerous vicissitudes. More than once it had fallen in the brook, but Mary had always fished it out, and dried it in the oven. And one night he had ripped it open and devoured most of its lining—an experiment which had proved very disastrous to both. But Spotty still survived. Moses made a sudden resolve.

He hugged Spotty and kissed what remained of his nose. He gulped as he did it. Never, since he could re-



"But He's White Clean Through, for All That, Believe Me!"

member, had he gone to sleep without first laying his head on the cherished toy. Then he picked it up and pattered into Mary's room.

It was as he had expected. Mary was lying on her bed, weeping. Moses held out his hand.

"Don't cry any more, please, Mary," he said softly. "I've brought Spotty to sleep with you."

It was then that Mary realized that she had found a second source of comfort in Moses. Most of her unhappiness had been caused by selfishness. Moses was willing to make, for her, what was to him a tremendous sacrifice. She drew the child, with his little, Canton-flannel dog still in his hand, into bed with her and cried without restraint, holding him in her arms. Moses lay solemn and silent, asking no questions, making no overtures. But she could feel his sympathy in every curve of his warm little body. Gradually she relaxed, a sense of peace, of compensation, of contentment, stole over her. She fell asleep, her cheek against her little brother's. Things never seemed half so hard again.

CHAPTER VIII

Meanwhile, Paul, instead of rejoicing in his longed-for liberty, was finding it utterly "dull, flat, stale and unprofitable."

In the first place, living at close quarters with his mother's "nerves," unrelieved by Blanche's sunny presence or the ready escape to Mary's house which had always been open to him, was not a pleasant experience, as has already been hinted. But this was by no means all. For a day or two after his sister's wedding he was really ill. As soon as he was sufficiently recovered, however, he made his way, feeling very blithe and unshackled, to call on Rosalie.

"I'm right in the midst of packing," she announced, "I haven't much time to spare. I'm going back to New York on the midnight."

Paul strove to express his regret. "Don't you go getting fresh with me!" said Miss King, crisply. "I'm not that kind and you needn't forget it, little one. . . . Why didn't you tell me you was engaged to that good-looking cousin of yours? My, but she's a looker!"

"I'm not engaged to her," said Paul shortly.

"Oh, she's thrown you over, has she?" jeered Rosalie. "Well, I should think she would. She can do a lot better than you, Little Boy Blue, even if you behaved yourself instead of hitting it up all summer like you've been doing. That Mr. Hamlin from

Boston is sweet on her all right, and he's some swell, believe me!"

"It was me that broke the engagement," said Paul, stiffly and ungrammatically.

Rosalie stared at him speechlessly for a moment. But only for a moment.

"So that's the kind of a bird you are, is it?" she inquired with immeasurable scorn. "Well, I've heard a lot about 'ancestors' since I struck this burg, and I don't deny that you've got something to be proud of along that line. The men that came up here—to say nothing of the women that came with 'em—and just got settled when the Revolutionary war broke out, and were willing and glad to strike out again and fight for their country, were sure all wool and a yard wide and then some. But I guess if they could look up or down now, as the case may be, and see their descendants wearing out the seats of their trousers sitting on the post office steps and saying what they'd do if they was President, or standing on the curbstone in Wallacetown thinking they're having the h— of a time because they've got a couple too many drinks inside of them and are talking to some skirt they wouldn't introduce to their mother—I guess them old captains and judges and governors would think the good old stock had run down to a pretty poor line of goods! I got a fellow in New York—floor walker on the eighth—who doesn't know who his father was, let alone any great-grands! But he's white clean through for all that, believe me! If he could have your chance, my! what he'd have done with it! A good home and money for an education and a lady for a sweet-heart! And you've turned up your ugly nose at all of them—while he's had to climb out of the gutter on his way to decency without a soul to help him. But he's got there, all right. I've written Steve that if he still wants a girl who's been fool enough to play round all summer with a stupid rube that was another girl's beau, he can have her, and he's telegraphed back prepaid that he'd be waiting in the Grand Central right by the gate on Thursday."

Rosalie having departed without further delay to smooth things out with Steve, that episode seemed to be closed, and Paul felt that he had reason to hope that it would be a long time before anyone made him so thoroughly uncomfortable again. But he was mistaken. The next person to treat him harshly was Doctor Noble. Meeting the boy one day on the road, down which Paul was wandering somewhat aimlessly, David brought his motor to a stop and hailed him.

"Just the person I've been hoping to see," he remarked pleasantly. "I wanted to speak to you about your fiancée. I'm worried about her. I don't think she's looking at all well."

"If you mean my cousin, Mary Manning," said Paul with forced dignity, "she isn't my fiancée."

"Oh," said David still pleasantly.

"Well—of course that must be a great disappointment to you, but perhaps it's all for the best. Of course your tastes wouldn't be particularly congenial. Mary has such a fine mind. . . . Well, I must pass along the good news to Thomas Gray the next time I see him, if he hasn't heard it already. I believe he thought, with considerable regret, that you had the right of way in that quarter."

Paul glared. People seemed bent on reminding him that Mary was not, after all, in the least dependent upon him for masculine attentions. It hurt his pride.

"The war news isn't very good, is it?" went on David with an abrupt change of subject. "Ever thought of enlisting in the Foreign Legion?"

"Lord, no!" Paul exclaimed. "Why should I?"

"Why, you're exactly the sort of chap for it! No ties of any kind, independent income, fine constitution—"

"Farmers can't be spared," quoted Paul hurriedly, recalling statistics he had happened to read in some newspaper. "It takes five men in the field to keep one at the front. And I've got heart trouble," he went on, growing very red and writhing more and more at David's pleasant voice.

"Hard luck! But are you sure? Been examined lately? Well, come up to the house some evening and let me look you over. Some evening soon. I'm going across myself, very shortly, as a member of one of the Harvard medical units. We'll be connected with the British army. Jacqueline's going to take up some branch of Red Cross work—nursing, probably. It isn't as if—we had any children," ended David a little wistfully. "I'm sure Austin Gray would have done something long ago if it hadn't been for Sylvia. Naturally any man that's fortunate enough to get a family like that makes it his first consideration as long as he can. Well, good-by."

Paul began to feel very sorry for himself. Public opinion, which he had at first thought to be wholly on his side, seemed to be gradually, but none the less surely, swinging the other way. If the older women still chattered against Mary, the younger ones spoke differently, and none of them would have anything to do with him. He led an unappreciated existence, after twenty-one petted years. As for the men, he thought they were actually beginning to go out of their way to be disagreeable to him and pleasant to Mary. He found himself virtually ostracized in Hamstead, and neither White Water nor Wallacetown, though he tried them both, seemed to furnish either lasting stimulation or lasting solace. He discovered, as many another man has discovered with resentment, the deadly dullness with which dissipation is permeated.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Tulle and Flower Bridal Ensembles

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



MAKE way for the Easter bride—she comes! Pretty as a picture, too, for never has a springtime bride had more lovely array at her disposal than that which present-day style creators are placing at her command.

Now that the wedding preparations are on you can feel romance in the very air. You note it in the billowy masses of tulle which are floating in frothy whiteness across the horizon of busy workrooms.

One problem confronting the forthcoming bride is as to whether her nuptial veil shall be daintily modern or quaintly picturesque, or perhaps just discreetly conventional. The trend this spring leans in the direction of novelty. For a real thrill we refer Miss Bride-to-be, who has gone utterly modern in her ideas, to the picture herewith. The unusualness of this headdress stamps it as a decidedly up-to-the-moment creation. These trim or visor flares of tulle are very new and chic.

The little wreath of orange blossoms about the crown—adorable! The tiny muff which the bride carries which is also fashioned of orange blossoms, what more enchanting in the way of flowery adornment could a springtime bride long for! Wondering about the material for the gown? The answer is white dull crepe with peu d'ange lace for the bodice and the sleeves.

Of course, no self-esteeming bridesmaid is going to allow the bride to totally eclipse her. At least, the maid of honor smiling at the bride in the picture, has seen to it that she share

in the glory. Her gown is of pink lace in that lusterless chalky finish which is so satisfying to the eye. Her love-of-a-chapeau is of pink malines with pink satin rose petals entwining it, her generously large muff being fashioned of the same—a symphony in pink is she.

And have you heard about the cunning ruffled tulle muffs many bridesmaids will be carrying this spring? They are in delectable pastel tones, either monotone or in rainbow tints. In fact, in the opinion of some, muffs of tulle are newer than those of flowers, for the bride as well as her attendants. The happy thought in this connection is that the prospective bride may, if she choose, be entirely relieved of the trying ordeal of working out in detail with her dressmaker, or whoever has her trousseau in hand, the matter of these perfectly lovely tulle fantasies, for all leading specialty departments and shops carry the most captivating ensembles of this sort and in every conceivable color scheme. And so, whereas in olden days the hurried, flurried bride-to-be must needs spend weary days in conference with those who were planning a "picture wedding" for her, nowadays all one has to do is to ask to be shown the latest in hats, veils and muff accessories. The beautiful ensembles which the dealer will bring forth will be a revelation—the entire plan worked out to a nicety and inexpensively, often at less cost than could be worked out at home.

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SMART THREE-PIECE

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



This stunning three-piece traveling suit is in green and white. The three-tiered bag is new. The hat is related to the costume in that it is created of novelty straw which is woven in green and white check to correspond with the motif of the tweed. Two distinct fashion trends are here emphasized, that of the color-matched hat which may, as in this instance, be of a different medium or as is often the case the hat is of the same twed or weave as the suit. The other style point accentuated is the "act of the jacket and skirt being supplemented with a cape which may be worn or not at one's own pleasure, which makes it extremely practical.

DRESS PRINTS USE ANCIENT PATTERNS

Dame Fashion constantly borrows from the past along with all the rest of the world. Now it's the smartest of the new spring fabrics which simulate in the most modern of weaves the patterns dear to the hearts of our feminine ancestors several generations ago. There's the herringbone linen which looks like wool, to name just one of the many spring fancies which hark back to the days of crinoline and hoops for inspiration in design.

Particularly popular with women these days are the new prints, many of which employ the small figuring so popular in our grandmothers' day. These vie for favor with the chalky prints seen frequently in variously colored plaids combined with white.

Egyptian Motif Is Seen

in Latest Paris Styles

Fashions with an Egyptian leaning have suddenly appeared in Paris. For some reason—unaccountable to the stylists—many of the newest spring modes appearing in the French capital seem to have come from some Egyptian origin. Oriental colors and designs are noticeable in the printed silks, in handbags, in decorative scarfs—in any phase of fashion which calls for pattern or combinations of color. In jewelry especially is this new tendency in evidence.

One of the most frequently seen indications of the Egyptian is in color schemes—bright green jade and turquoise used against backgrounds of yellowish gold.

Sports Costume

Boldly striped black and white tweed makes a stunning sport suit. The skirt is divided, but you never would guess it because it is all cut in gores and flares out in just the right places to make it alluring. There is a little close fitting jacket that goes with it.

"Know How," the Secret of Dress

Most women don't know how to dress, they tell us at Teachers' college in New York.

"The majority of women today," says Professor Locke of the college household arts department, "do not know how to dress properly or how to get the greatest value and satisfaction from the money they spend for clothing." And the professor proceeds to tell us how to do it:

"There are two things to be considered when a woman dresses.

"First, she should dress to make the most of her physical appearance and bring out her best points. Second, she should dress to bring out the best traits of her personality. The two are quite different things. The first has to do with physical characteristics, such as the shape of the face, nose, lips, the size and shape of the hips, while the second has to do with charm and grace.

"In bringing out either the physical appearance or personality, one has several tools to work with. These are line, color, size, shape, and proportion of the masses which go to make up the costume, and the texture of the materials. There are certain fundamental principles in the use of each of these which are necessary for anyone to know in order to dress effectively. They are practically the same rules and principles that any artist would use in creating an effect in any medium."

"That is all good advice, and we can profit from it. But it seems to me the professor has omitted to mention the one great obstacle to becoming dressing on the part of many women. And that is Fashion.

When the style arbiters in Paris launch a new sleeve or a new shoulder or a new skirt their concern is not with the special problem of Mrs. Smith's surplus weight or Mrs. Jones' round shoulder—that is what Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones, if they are wise, will consider primarily when they buy clothes. More often, however, they allow such terms as "the very latest," "the smartest thing" to make them oblivious to the individual phase of their dressing problem.

Smart dressing and becoming dressing are not incompatible. But for those of us who do not have model figure and coloring, it does present a problem. How to get clothes that become us, that express our own personality, and that are yet in good taste and in the mode. It can be done—for any and all of us—but it takes time and thought—particularly on abbreviated incomes.

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