

LADY BLANCHE FARM

A Romance of the Commonplace

by Frances Parkinson Keyes

WNU Service
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CHAPTER XIV—Continued

-16-

"Yes, she is real peculiar. Her mother was the same. She'd go a long time without hardly openin' her head, Laura Mannin' would, and then she'd up and take the bit in her teeth—like when she named Algy, and sent Mary off to school. I've always thought Mary some like her mother. But the menfolks do seem to like her—they never show much sense in their selections. Why, I never had an offer till I was most thirty!—Blanche don't seem to pindle none, does she?"

"No, she's actually gained since she's been nursing the baby, and she said the other day she'd never be happier in her life. I can't see what all the girls in this generation. Rosalie King has come to visit Mrs. Weston again, and I can't see that she's changed at all. She doesn't even wear crepe—just plain black—and she says 'she should worry,' that she's 'hung on to her old job and got a raise at that' and that although she can't always buy the 'very latest' to wear, she's got a 'long way from September morn'—whatever she means by that! One of her usual vulgar expressions! And yet Mrs. Weston says she knows Rosalie thought the world of that man she married. She can't have, that's all—not in the way a woman of real refinement would have cared. Why, after Martin died, I refused all nourishment—except what was absolutely necessary, of course, to keep up my strength—and lay in a dark room for weeks and never dreamed of stirring out, even after that, except to go to church and to the cemetery. My heart was buried in the grave. I'm afraid Mary has been putting some of her queer ideas into Blanche's head, for when I asked her a little while ago if hers wasn't, she said no indeed, it was all with Philip!"

"Land! Where does she think Philip is?"

"She said in Heaven. And that Heaven was anywhere, if you could only see it."

Mrs. Elliott arose, and folded her work. "Them kind of notions give me the creeps," she said unobtrusively. "I must be goin'."

Mary was sitting on top of Countess Hill, her chin resting on her hands, looking out over the meadows. She sat very still, watching the changing light. Without understanding why, and in spite of all her grief and weariness, she felt that one of the great hours of her life had come. The beauty and peace and promise of the country suddenly seemed to overcome her as no inanimate things had ever overcome her before. She felt, like an actual presence, the spirit of her puritan forefathers who had turned this valley from a wilderness into a garden, who had lived their simple faith as truly as they had professed it, who had fought and died, when necessary, for an ideal. She turned her head, half expecting to glimpse some heavenly vision, trembling—But there was nothing to be heard, nothing to be seen, only something wonderful to be felt. She bowed her head and prayed.

It was a long time before she lifted it again. When she did, Paul, bare-headed, dressed in khaki, was standing beside her.

She sprang to her feet, shaking all over, entirely unable to speak. He was taller, thinner, paler, infinitely older and graver, all the bloom and softness of his boyish beauty had gone. For a moment she thought—it must be—She shut her eyes, swaying and crying aloud, as she felt herself failing. Then suddenly she was upheld by a strong arm, swung quickly around her shoulder, a firm hand taking both her trembling ones in a warm and steady grasp.

"There, there," Paul was saying, as if he had been speaking to a little child, and patting her arm as he spoke. "It's all right. I didn't mean to frighten you like this. Don't, Mary. Don't cry so. Why, there is nothing to cry about! I'm all right. I'm here!"

"Can't we sit down and talk?" he asked, and drew her down beside him on the big rock, still holding her hand. Then seeing how utterly impossible it was for her to speak, he went on, "I got in on the four o'clock and walked straight up to the farm. I didn't let mother know I was coming, for I thought, if I did, she'd have the minister, or a delegation from the D. A. B. or the Wallacestown band, or maybe all three, at the station to meet me. It never occurred to me that none of my letters from the other side telling her in a general way when to expect me, would have reached her."

"Tell me," said Mary, finding her voice at last.

"There isn't much to tell. You know what happened up to the time I was wounded. And the wound—the first one—didn't amount to anything. I was back at the front in no time. And

then I was—hurt—again, before I was taken prisoner—"

"Go on."

"I was a prisoner several months, you see. I couldn't write then. Even after the armistice was signed, we weren't released right off. And then for a while, I wasn't well—"

"You mean you were starving?"

"Well, I wasn't hungry, anyway!" said Paul, lightly. "But I'm all right now. And I'm home. You won't mind, will you, if I don't tell you more than this, just now? We—the men who've been there—don't like to talk about it much. Won't you say you're glad to see me? All the rest of the family has. Mother had hysterics, of course, but she was awfully glad, just the same. I couldn't help knowing that. And Blanche—well of course Blanche and I both broke down a little. I didn't know, you see, about Phillip—or little Phillip. Well, then I went to the barn and found Cousin Seth. He said I might find you up here."

Now they were sitting on the old boulder, hand in hand, as they had done when they used to rest after picking blackberries—

"You're not strong," she said with a great effort, "and you've had this—this hard climb to reach me. I'm sorry."

For a moment Paul did not answer. Then he took the hand he held, and laid it against his lips.

"No, I'm not strong," he said huskily. "I know that. And I have had to climb—to climb a long way—to reach you. But I'm not sorry. I'm glad."

"Paul! You know I didn't mean it that way!"

"I know you didn't, dear, but I did. For it's true. But please tell me—aren't you glad I'm here, at last?"

"Yes," said Mary, very low indeed. "Then, may I tell you—anything I want to?"

"Yes," she said again, lower still.

"Do you remember what you said to me—that day in Boston—about what loving really means?"

"Yes," said Mary a third time, though it was only a whisper now.

"Well—that's the way I love you. You were right—I didn't then. But I have learned to, since. At first it was just a dreadful physical longing and raging grief because I hadn't got what I wanted. I'd felt so hopeful—so sure—that day I went to you in Boston, that I'd get my week—but all the time the things you'd said about how you loved me, kept hammering themselves into my stupid brain, making me see more and more clearly that, even then, I didn't care for you like that, or it wouldn't be my own disappointment I'd be thinking most about. It would be the way I'd treated you, from the time we were youngsters—taking all your loveliness and goodness for granted—and then throwing it away—"

"Don't, Paul," she said softly. "Don't speak of that, or even remember it any more. I've forgotten all about it."

"I haven't," he said between his teeth. "I never shall. I never can, unless—I can atone for it. I began to forget that I had lost you—and to wonder how—"

"How you could get me back?"

"Not even that—till afterwards. Only how I could make things up to you. Whether there was anything on earth I could do to make me worthy to come to you and say I was sorry, whether you were proud of me or not. That I'd got to change inside. I'd reached that point by the time I got to prison, and then it was weeks and weeks before I could think at all. But when I could—it was what kept me clean—"

"And there wasn't any 'pretty little French peasant,' he said, after a long pause. And in that one simple sentence, Mary understood, though she could not answer, all that he was trying to tell her.

He misinterpreted her silence. He kissed her hand again, dropped it gently, and rose.

"It was wrong of me, maybe, to say all this to you—so soon," he said. "But I saw Mr. Hamlin just before I sailed for home. He told me—that—that you hadn't changed your mind about him, and that he knew you never would. He told me, too, that he knew you'd refused Thomas Gray. Sylvia sent me a message once, by David—I didn't get it until after she died—telling me never to stop fighting for you, if I had to die fighting. I thought for a while, that I was going to die fighting—then in that German prison, I was afraid for a while that I wasn't even going to die fighting—that it was to be starving, rotting. Now I know I'm not going to die at all—not for a good many years. I mean—but I'm going to live fighting. Do you remember, when I was a little chap, how I used to stand in the front yard, whenever I wanted to see you, and simply holler, 'Come over Mary, come over? And you always came! I'm going right on calling for you now, until I've made you come again! I'll go down now, and see mother—I promised her that I wouldn't be long. But we'll see each other, some way, right along, won't we, Mary?"

He was half-way down the hill when he felt her touch on his arm. He turned quickly.

"What is it, dear?" he asked. "Is anything the matter?"

"No—yes—I haven't been honest."

"You haven't been honest!" echoed Paul in astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"I let you go away thinking that I was afraid to let you think anything else, because I knew, though you 'wanted' me so much, you didn't really love me—then, I—I hoped you would, some day. It's nearly killed me ever since to think if you never came back,

you wouldn't know—to remember that I didn't even kiss you good-by. For I wasn't honest. I mean—it was possible—I mean, I did—"

Paul stood for a stupefied moment, staring at her. Then he cried aloud with joy.

"You care now!" he exclaimed. "You have cared all the time!" Then, as he tried, very gently, to take down the trembling hands with which she had suddenly covered her face, he realized that his own were shaking, too.

"Mary," he said brokenly. "I won't. If you really don't want me to. But if you do—you won't make me wait any longer, will you? I've starved for you, too—"

"You won't ever have to starve again," said Mary with a great sob, and took down her hands herself.

It was very late that evening, when Jane Manning, remembering that she had not "set back her chairs" against a possible storm—though there was not a cloud in the sky—went out on her piazza to "make sure everything was all right" for the night. She stopped in the middle of her pleasant task and stood stock-still. The moon shone very clear and bright and on the wide granite doorstep of her cousin's house opposite, she could see two persons—a man and a girl—standing very close together, their arms around each other. Then the man bent his head, and it was a long, long time before he lifted it again.

"Good night, sweetheart," she heard him say at last, and then saw him turn and come down the walk, his young face lighted with a radiance that did not seem to come wholly from the moon.

"Great Glory!" ejaculated Cousin Jane aloud, and without conscious profanity.

Paul heard her, stopped for a minute, and then walked rapidly toward her.

"Is that you, Cousin Jane," he called, "fixing up the piazza? Here, let me help you!" When complete order was restored, he blocked her entrance into the house for a minute, standing with his back against the door.

"Mary is going to marry me," he said, his voice ringing like a hallicuh-jah, "right off. We're going away for a few weeks—till I get stronger, and she gets rested—to some quiet place by the sea—and then we're coming back here to Lady Blanche farm—coming home together. Oh, God, how happy I am!"

"I dunno! I blame ye," said Cousin Jane.

His mother's house was dark, and Paul did not feel sorry. In the morning, of course, she must be told, and Mary's father—but tonight!—How ever, when he noticed a faint light shining from the upper windows of Cartie Blanche, he went close to the little building and called—

"Blanche! May I come up?"

"Yes—I've been hoping you would."

She was sitting in a low rocker, nursing her baby. He crossed the room softly, and sat down on a foot-stool beside her.

"Mary's going to marry you," she whispered.

"How did you know?"

"How could I help knowing, looking at you? I've seen that look in a man's face before."

"Oh, you poor little thing!"

"Hush! Don't speak that way! I don't feel like that about it! And I'm so thankful—so happy—that I've seen it in yours, too."

They sat for a long time together, after the sleeping baby had been laid back in his cradle. And meanwhile, the woman who had never had a lover went slowly up to her room, and sitting down in the old chair, took up the Bible that lay near it, to read in it, as always, before she went to bed. It fell open at the last chapter of Proverbs:

"Who can find a virtuous woman," read Cousin Jane, "for her price is far above rubies. . . . Her children arise up also and call her blessed. Her husband also, and he praiseth her. Give her the fruit of her hands and let her own works praise her in the gates."

The Bible slipped from her lap, unnoticed, and Cousin Jane sat for a long time with happy tears rolling down her cheeks.

"I suppose that woman in the Bible may have had her faults," she said aloud at last, "same as Mary has. I shouldn't be a mite surprised if she had a tongue and a temper and a backbone and didn't forgive and forget very easy, though Solomon doesn't mention it. Seems to me there's some likeness between the two. Mary's been faithful to the trust her dear mother left her and denied herself to do for her father and her little brothers. She's been strong and wise enough to say 'no' to a rich man she didn't love and turn the poor, weak, shiftless boy she did love into a fine creature that needn't be afraid to look his Maker in the face. And she hasn't shirked or nagged or complained or boasted while she's been doin' it. She's kept herself sweet and lovely through it all. There may be better jobs for women to do than things like them, but if there is, I never heard of 'em, any more than Solomon seems to hev. We've been worryin' considerable lately about the little countess' curse, and I don't deny that it seems the Almighty gives strange powers to human beings sometimes, even after they're dead. But for all that, I guess His blessin' is more powerful than anything else, jus' the same. And I guess, too, that as long as Mary stays here, that blessin' will rest on Lady Blanche farm in the future, same as it has in the past."

(THE END.)

Easy-to-Make Smart Accessories

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



IN MATTER of adorning, flattering accessories the present fashion program is nothing less than exciting. Did one ever see a more fascinating array of knick-knacks and furbelows made of organdie, pique, linen and other like washable weaves as add the "touch that tells" to our costumes these days!

The best part of the story is that these intriguing trifles, which carry such an unmistakable air of feminine charm, are so inexpensive they are within the reach of all, and if one can sew even a little, or crochet, one can dress with the aid of these embellishing little fantasies, which are so easily made, to look like "a million" at a cost next to nothing.

The new organdie blouses are adorable. The model at the top in the picture is especially attractive, being styled after a unique pattern which stresses a novel high giraffe effect done in tucks, together with the fact that it is handmade, gives it an exclusiveness all its own. Why not copy this dainty blouse? In running the tucks be sure to use the best of thread. Take infinitely fine stitches for best results. By the way, it's fashion-wise to wear your light gray or string-colored suit either a navy or brown organdie blouse. In handmaking these you can get thread an exact match which does not fade with laundering.

The capelet centered to the right in the group is a "darling." It also is made of organdie, white of course, for white organdie fixings are so crisp and immaculate they freshen up even the most jaded gown. One of these dainty little schulike organdie capes ought to be included in every up-to-date wardrobe. They are positively fetching worn with flowery chiffons or over pastel crepe frocks. The cunningest sort of patterns are easily available. If you are clever at making rolled hems (it's no trick at all after you know how) finish the edges in that way, for it adds greatly to the appearance of the cape to be so daintily hemmed.

About the most thrilling item brought out this season is the little jacket made either of pique or linen. All the young girls, the debutantes, their sisters, will be wearing some type or other of these linen or pique jackets before long. The model in the picture, to the left, intrigues because of its young looking lines and its smart detail. It has the fashionable round, collarless neck. The fastening is made decorative by nine buttons and "eye" buttonholes down the front. This is the simplest type of button-hole to make. Crochet the little hat of mercerized cotton.

Speaking of crochet note the gloves the figure to the left below in the group is wearing. This resourceful young woman converts a pair of ordinary white fabric gloves into a high-style item by working an insert of hand crochet over the back of the hand and adding deep flaring crocheted cuffs (using mercerized cotton). One could secure directions for crocheting at any fancywork department. The rippling collar which she wears is made of pique, the points so dovetailed as to achieve a sprightly flare. The other collar and cuff set is easily made of pique which is quilted with six-cord, number sixty thread, thus giving it a honeycomb effect. Its little bowties are especially attractive.

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PLENTY OF VARIETY FOUND IN NECKLINE

How much attention are you paying to your neckline? It's all very well to concentrate on the hemline and the waistline provided you do not neglect the neck's best line. And if you like variety you'll have plenty of it this year. We'll start with the country neckline and work toward town.

The musician and artist bow tie combined with a Buster Brown collar is A-1 for the wide-open spaces. Also the silk scarf of bandanna wrapped around the throat and tied in a careless sort of fashion with the ends kicking around like a tomboy. The stock collar and riding suit when you're feeling horse, and the knitted straight scarf looped over in front and fastened with a novelty pin are the other happy ways of drawing the country neckline.

Those Mesh Pocketbooks Can Be Dug Out of Trunks

Speaking of mesh—you might as well begin looking for that gold and silver mesh pocketbook you packed away several years ago, because they are going to see fashionable daylight again in the summer. With them will come another cluster of "do-dads" on a ring—compact, lipstick, perfume and rouge—things that are too heavy to carry inside on account of breaking the delicate and precious metal links. They can be carried separately, or attached to the side of the purse.

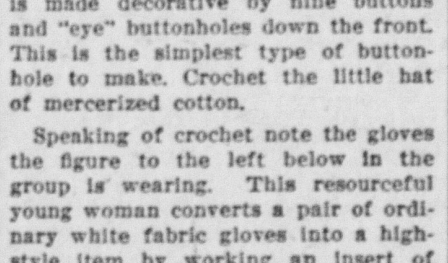
Hats for Spring

Straw hats are marching out of Paris millinery salons, an army of them, and designed to wear from the crack of dawn until the hour of onion soup in the early morning. They are extremely varied in shape and in straw.

Watch pleats! Already in Paris they are enjoying a big vogue. Many of the most successful evening gowns, especially those of monotone pastel chiflon, have skirts which are fine accordion or knife-pleated the whole way round. In the Lanvin gown to the left in this sketch pleats are discretely and effectively treated. The idea of using wide pleats for the capelet in contrast to the finely pleated flounce on the skirt is very original and daring. And bows! It is impossible to overdo the bow fad. Fashion is "saying it" with bows every hour in the day and the night for evening frocks fairly revel in bow trimmings. The big bow which fastens the little capelet on the Lanvin gown is one way of interpreting the bow movement, while the conspicuous green velvet bows which distinguish the Patou evening gown of pink satin sketched to the right gives an entirely different impression of how bows and bows are being employed in the most "fetching" of the season's modes.

MARKS AND PLEATS

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



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OUR CHILDREN

By ANGELO PATRI

TRUTH TELLING

"WHAT'S this I hear about you telling lies in school, John Thomas?"

"I'm not telling lies in school. When she asked me did I hand in my homework I said Yes. I knew I could have it on her desk by noon and I would have only had an extra assembly and that cut our study hour and so she said I told a lie. Maybe I did but it wasn't anything to make such a fuss about. I'll bet she tells more than I do if it comes down to it."

"Now, John Thomas, don't begin putting blame on other people because you're caught in the wrong. We have always taught you to tell the truth, haven't we?"

John Thomas mumbled something that might be taken for assent by one anxious to have it so.

"Then why don't you stick to our teaching? Why can't you be truthful about a little thing like homework?"

"It's no little thing when you have to stay in after hours and write something a thousand times. Makes me sick. Does she tell the truth all the time? I'll say she doesn't. Nobody does. But if I try to help myself out of a tight place I'm a liar. I'm not any worse than anybody else I know and you know it."

"I told you, John Thomas, that it won't help any for you to put blame upon other people for your mistakes. You've got to own them and pay for them."

"Well, I did. I had to stay after school and write for an hour and then I had to go to the office and listen to a lecture about telling the truth and then I came home and had to listen to another. Makes me sick. As if everybody told the truth but me."

"Who do you know that doesn't tell the truth? Say what's on your mind."

"Why Ma, you couldn't get along for a day if you told the truth as you want me to. Doctor Mullins told Aunt Katie that she would be all right in a day or so when he knew she was going to die. Uncle Clark—"

"That's enough of such talk, John Thomas. The minute any of those people slipped off the truth standard you lost respect for them. You stick to the truth no matter what anybody says and you will be better off. Every time you tell a lie somebody knows you are afraid."

"I'm not afraid. What do I care?"

"You cared so much that you told a lie about nothing at all."

Right then John Thomas looked as though a new idea had come to him. If a good example follows the precept there is a fair chance of his getting acquainted with truth all over again.

PROJECTED EMOTIONS

GROWNUP people are too much given to crediting children with emotions they do not have. This wears them out and does the children no good. A mother met me with tears streaming down her cheeks.

"I cannot tell my son this. You must change his marks. It will break his heart to find that he only got an eighty when he expected to get over ninety."

"Doesn't he know his marks? How did you get them before he did?"

"I know how sensitive he is so I went to the teacher and asked for his mark and she gave it to me. I am so disappointed. I know he will be heartbroken. You must change this mark."

Marks cannot be changed. If they can they are useless. I explained this to the weeping mother. "Your boy doesn't seem to me to be the sort that would suffer because he got an eighty-seven instead of a ninety-seven. I'll call him and tell him about this, if you don't mind."

"O, no, no, don't do that. I couldn't bear to see him suffer as I know he is going to do. Please change his mark."

When I saw the lad I asked him what he got in biology. "Not so bad. I got eighty-seven. I wanted a better mark but I left out half of the seventh. I didn't see it. Guess I was too excited. And I didn't reduce the equation in the last one. I'll do better next time. I won't be so scared about it." He went off smiling. He had none of the emotion his mother had saddled upon him. It was her own that she was projecting toward her boy, suffering when no suffering was necessary.

People do that often. Youth and childhood, as well, are not so stiff in their emotional joints as you are. They can adapt and adjust and begin anew when you couldn't. Their emotions have not the roots yours have as a general thing. Such wounds as they receive are easier healed than your own. Don't accent the emotions you feel.

Haven't you seen a happy child begin to cry after one look at its mother's face? Haven't you seen a cheerful child become suddenly downcast and even sullen after a glance at his mother's countenance? I have. Emotions are easily transferred to children. They have enough of their own without any of yours added. And they must be protected from your own overstimulated moods. Why not let the children have their emotions first hand? They get along better with them if you do.

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