

OUR FARM HOMES



There are many successful short cuts in work and living, but none in character building.

Where the White Nun Walks

BY E. EVERETT GREEN

It was the tradition at Whiteladies that not only all the daughters but that all the granddaughters should be married from there.

It was a pretty family custom, which must have entailed a good deal of trouble and cost upon our delightful, picturesque, white-headed grand-parents, whom we all adored; but it was the tradition of the house, passed down from generation to generation, and the family gathering, which became frequent as we girls of the rising generation grew up and were asked in marriage, were a source of great happiness to those who took part in them; and a family wedding was a more intimate and interesting event in our family, by consequence, than it generally is in these hurry-scurry days of the twentieth century.

Somewhere when you reached the long beech avenue which led up to Whiteladies, and passed through the wrought iron gates set in the high stone wall which encircled house and gardens and a portion of the park, you seemed to leave the twentieth century behind and almost expected to see cavaliers with love-locks promading the green glades and wide stone terraces, with graceful stately ladies on their arms—powder on their hair, patches on their faces, their looped petticoats and trailing brocades making patches of vivid color against the old stone walls.

The house was all mullioned windows, oriel and unexpected corners and angles. It was very big, covered much ground, yet never overwhelmed you by its size or grandeur. It was like the grandparents themselves—beautiful, stately, mellow, benignant. There was a hush about it which awoke to sweet sounds—the laughter of happy children, the gay calls of girlish voices, the beat of flying feet to the dances in the long ball-room, the lilt of music awakened not by hired professionals but by the skilled fingers of the daughters of the house or their children.

The blare of the motor horn was seldom heard here. The reek of its breath seemed desecration to the sweet fragrance which hung over Whiteladies.

"Isn't it delicious to be here again?" cried one to the other, as we dashed up and down the long corridors and ran to grandmother with a hundred little confidences and a thousand trivial questions, always welcomed, always kindly considered. Grandmother was one of those beautiful persons who was never in a hurry, who always laid down her book or her pen to give you her full attention, who always listened to what you had to say. Her manners were as lovely as her beautiful white hair. Both seem going out of fashion now—replaced by transformations and "snaps."

It was Father who was to be married this time, and she had asked me to be one of the bridesmaids, and I had promised I would, though now I

was getting well chafed for it.

"Three times a bridesmaid, never a bride!" they chanted in my ears, but I did not care. Esther was my favorite cousin, and she was going away to a brilliant life led in foreign courts, and everybody said that her husband would be an ambassador in time. She was making a rather brilliant marriage, and we were all proud of her and her prospective future. Eustace Barrington was very delicate, to us all, and his presents for the bridesmaids were lovely. It was going to be a charming wedding. There were to be eight of us girl cousins in white satin—perfect little ducks they looked; and two tiny toddlers of girls, dressed as the mites were in the days of the Stuarts. You wanted to pick them up and kiss them, they were so bonny!

Then the dressmakers had all been true to time, and nobody was worried or hurried; and the only person yet to arrive was a certain "Tony Talbot," who was to be the best man to Eustace on the eventful day. He had some engagements to keep which would prevent his coming till just the eve of the day; and he was to bring with him a case of family jewels, which were being re-set for Esther, but which Eustace particularly wanted her to have to take away with her on departure.



Officers of the Dominion Grange.

During the time when the Dominion Grange held its annual meeting in 1910, recently, a photograph was secured, from which the above illustration is taken. Reading from left to right they are: First row—Miss E. Thompson, Palmerston; Miss D. Fletcher, Middlemarch. Second row—Miss M. E. Macdonald, Marter; Miss Hattie E. Robinson, St. Thomas (the first wife of the whole Grange). Third row—John Pritchard, Gorrin; Gainskeeper: One of the old-time members; J. A. Carwell, Palmerston; Overseer; W. S. Wardell, St. Thomas; Past Master, and W. E. Leeson, Aymer, Assistant Steward.

When the wedding at Whiteladies took place, the down-house in the park was allotted to the bridegroom and his immediate supporters. Practically they belonged to the house party, but the convention of the house occupying a different abode was thus observed.

And now the eve of the wedding day had come. We had decorated the church, we had made the bride's bouquet and our own with the help of the head gardener. Bought flowers were taboed at Whiteladies, and how much more fragrant and delicious were the graceful nosegays made and designed by loving hands, and interwoven, as it were, by kind wishes and bright hopes! The house was full from end to end, the echoes seemed all awake and astir. It had been hard to get the children to bed. Yet there was no confusion or undue hurry perceptible. Dinner was served with all the quiet, simple ceremony which belonged to the house, and at the long table only one empty place indicated the non-arrival of to-morrow's best man.

"It is all right," Eustace told us. "He may be late; but he will be here. I have a wire at five o'clock. It is the jeweller who has run things a bit close. But Tony will be here some time to-night. You can always trust him when he says a thing. I'm sorry, though, that he could not come before to make your acquaintance. He is a nice fellow. You would have liked him."

It was a warm, still, autumn night when we girls—the bridesmaids—adjourned by common consent out upon one of the terraces, where the full moonlight made wavering lights and shadows, and squares of light from open windows lay yellow on the grey flags. We were laughing together over matters past, present and future, when somebody exclaimed:

"Anybody going to look for the White Nun to-night?"

Now there was a legend at Whiteladies concerning a certain long grass-grown walk about a quarter of a mile from the house, and near to the ruined chapel which marked the site of an old monastic foundation. Probably the present house had been built up out of the material of the ancient nunnery which had been swept away by Henry's Cromwell. And, of course, there were traditions of ghostly happenings in and about the place, though

these were not very definite or well authenticated. But the tradition of a White Nun, who walked to and fro in the grass-grown avenue beneath the yew trees, was firmly believed through the countryside; and it was always whispered that the most likely time to see this shoddy visitor was upon the eve of some family "happening"—whether the occasion might be a birth, or a death, or a marriage.

So it had become amongst the girls of the house something of a point of honor for one of their number (you must not go in couples—the Nun had never been seen except by a solitary watcher) to go forth alone in the dark



Sturdy Boys Who Would Like to be Farmers.

The big boy standing and the boy seated have both been assigned to homes since the photograph was taken. The two on the left are six and nine, and the two on the right are nine and seven years of age. They are all Protestants. There are in the same children's shelter, a Roman Catholic orphan boy born August 17, 1915, and three Protestants. They are about one year old, the other two being strong, six, six and eight years of age. Those interested write direct to Mr. Amos Tovey, 251, Queen St., Guelph.

to the place where the White Nun walked, and give her a chance of showing herself, and the watcher a chance to cover herself with glory by having seen her.

Truth to tell, these vigils had not been very successful. Once Ada had come tearing back as white as a ghost, declaring that the Nun was sitting on a stone and moaning. But alas!—inquiry and investigation proved the Nun to be nothing more romantic than a dun-colored Jersey cow who had been unwell, and isolated from the herd, had escaped into the grounds and was very sorry for herself on many counts!

However, it so happened that Ada married within the year. And Ellen, who went ghost-seeking at her marriage, was a bride some fifteen months later. It had been Esther who had gone to look for the Nun last year at Lucinda's wedding, and so tradition was growing that whoever dared make the venture was to win a husband before very long.

"Then Maude shall go!" cried Judith's merry voice. "Look here, you others. It's quite time our dear Maude went to look for the White Nun. And since she's going to dare to be a bridesmaid to-morrow for the third time, it's only right and proper that she should take the antidote as far as is possible, and go ghost-hunting to-night! Perhaps the Nun keeps her hands up her wide sleeves, and drops their microbes about broadcast! Anyhow, we'll send Maude! I bet she's in a mortal funk! I was going to volunteer for the service, but I'll wait for my chance on the eve of her wedding. I don't bet that it will be within a year from now."

(Continued next week.)