

"A PURITAN WIFE"

By Jane Phelps

CHAPTER LIII

Grace had laid off her mourning. "I hate black! It keeps me depressed," she said, and no one around here knows or cares about conventions. Then I have a lot of stunning clothes I had made before the accident. They'll be all out of style if I don't wear them now."

"One can grieve just as truly in colors as in black," Ann replied. Although she had been shocked by Grace's tone more than her words.

They were sitting on the porch. Little Jack snuggled against Grace.

"Jackie, come here, Nora's got something for you!" they heard as Nora appeared around the corner of the house.

"Run along to your dragon, Jackie!" Grace laughed unpleasantly. Then to Ann: "That girl certainly loves me."

"She was hurt because of what you said about her brother's picture. She loved him very dearly, and has told me that he gave her all the happiness she ever had until she left home. Her father was a drunken brute; used to beat her mother. She believes that caused her brother's deformity."

"No one has any right to have such a horrible thing as that photographed and keep it where people can see it."

"It is her room, Grace. I should not have taken you in there."

"What a queer girl you are Ann. Sometimes I wonder if you have a bit of real red blood in your whole body. I'd have thrown that thing into the fire or made her keep it out of sight."

With the laying off of her mourn-

ing, Grace seemed also to have laid aside her new attitude, and now she sought opportunity to be with Dick, almost as patiently as before. That she was unsuccessful in a measure was due to the fact that Ann now spent more time with him; that because Nora had proved so willing and efficient, she could leave the house and Jack without feeling she was neglecting anything that added to the comfort of her little household.

The hours she had spent out of doors had done her good. She was tanned, had grown a little stouter, her eyes were bright.

"Nature's own cure!" Dick told Grace, calling attention to how well she looked. "I told her before we were married that she would be all right here in the valley; but she worked too hard before we got Nora."

Ann threw him a grateful, loving glance, not lost on Grace, who said, a spice of malice in her tone:

"Ann would look very well if she had any style, but print dresses look so queer nowadays."

"They are the only sensible clothes for a rancher's wife, Grace. Even if I could afford others—which I can't!"

"Poor lucky! Are you so poor?" Grace turned to Dick with a comical look of sympathy, but he flushed as he answered:

"Land poor, Grace! We won't be so always though if our crops turn out as they did last year. Ann can have what she wants then."

"Clothes don't worry me Dick. We must get out of debt and the house fixed before we think of clothes." Ann returned quietly, yet wondering if Grace had any object in drawing Dick's attention to her clothes. Grace herself was gowned in a smart sport suit, and looked, as usual, very attractive.

But that night as they sat on the porch, Dick said:

"I didn't you better buy yourself some new clothes. Ann. I hate to have anyone think I can't afford them."

Ann wished he had said he wanted her to have them because he loved her, and loved to see her look smart and stylish. Instead of saying he hated to have people think he couldn't afford them. He was so sensitive to what people thought of him. To criticism of any kind.

Ann laughed at him; told him as long as she was neat and dainty style made no difference on a ranch. That she thought it would look out of place for her to dress as Grace did.

"She is idle," Ann told him. "Has nothing to do but dress up and run about. Then, too, she has money. I would look foolish if I tried to ape her."

Ann had spoken lightly, but she realized she was at a disadvantage when Grace was around; that now it had been brought to his attention, Dick might compare her unfavorably with Grace. But the ranch, their home, came first, and although Grace flashed her new costumes upon them, costumes that added to her fascination, Ann felt she was doing right to save money instead of spending it for adorning herself.

Occasionally when Ann was busy in the house Grace would join Dick. One afternoon when Jack and Nora came back soon after Grace appeared, and going into the house said to Ann:

"Why don't you go out with Mr. Holden?"

"I'm busy, Nora. I want to finish this garment for Jack. He needs it. He grows so fast I can hardly keep him covered."

"Let me do that, and you go out with your husband."

Tomorrow—Grace Wins a Bet.

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PRISCILLA E. HORNBECK, deceased. Notice is hereby given that the undersigned was on the 2nd day of May, 1923, by an order of the above entitled court duly appointed administratrix of the estate of Priscilla E. Hornbeck, deceased, and all persons having claims against said estate are hereby notified and required to present the same properly verified with vouchers attached on or before six months from the date of this notice to my attorney John T. Long, Rooms 17 and 18 Perkins Building, Roseburg, Oregon, dated and first published May 15th, 1923.

CORA M. LUTHE, Administratrix of the estate of Priscilla E. Hornbeck, deceased.

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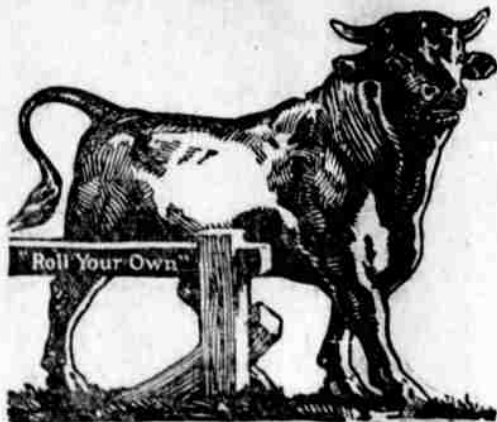
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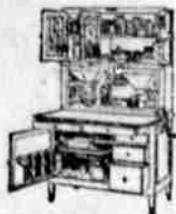
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