

Literature.

FARM WOMEN

BY MRS. FORRESTER.

CHAPTER VIII.

DEPART.

The September weather was bright and full of sunshine, and the young guests at Endor Vale made the most of it. They played croquet all the morning, rode all the afternoon, and danced all the evening on those days when the gentlemen were not shooting, and some of those days were very frequent, although the sport was unexceptionable. Francis Clayton and Miss Eyre were the only members of the party who did not join in the afternoon's amusement—the former was no horseman, and disliked riding, and Winifred had no habit. The rest were all accomplished equestrians. Miss Clayton had often felt a pang of chagrin as she watched the young gentlemen gallop down the park avenue—no envy, or any bitter feeling, only a longing to be one of them. But she always accompanied Lady Grace on her drives with a pleased acquiescence, and the elderly lady noticed and approved; and being full of kind thoughtfulness for the pleasure and happiness of others, she had secretly sent instructions to the dressmaker to give Winifred's exact measure to the tailor, and to have a dark blue habit sent down without delay. One morning Winifred found in her room a brown-paper parcel directed to her, which on opening proved to be a riding habit. A paper in Lady Grace's handwriting was pinned to it, on which "With my kind love," was written. Without a moment's hesitation she ran to seek her generous hostess, and after some little search found her in the conservatory, picking the dead leaves of the plants, while her nephew dutifully held the basket. "O Lady Grace!" she exclaimed, "how can I thank you for such a handsome present?" "Does it fit you, my dear?" her ladyship asked, with a pleased smile. "I did not wait to try it; but it is sure to fit."

"You can go that way!" shouted Francis Clayton, nearly breathless. "The gate is locked." "But Fee held on her way, and in a moment Cheveux Doree had cleared the gate, and Fee, pulling her up short, stood still, half turning to look at her companion. Colonel d'Aguiar and Francis Clayton reined in their horses. "After you!" said the former, a slight smile playing around his mouth. "Francis Clayton's gentle voice with rage—almost furious enough to forget his cowardice and try the leap, but not quite. With a bitter oath he turned aside, and in the next moment Colonel d'Aguiar and Miss Alton were riding side by side through the long avenue. Francis Clayton uttered a string of imprecations, he turned away, that might have filled the breast of a London coster-monger with envy. "That decides it," he hissed between his teeth. "I'll marry her now, if it's more to me than you do now. I seek to revenge the insult of her cursed impudence to-day." (To be continued.)

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