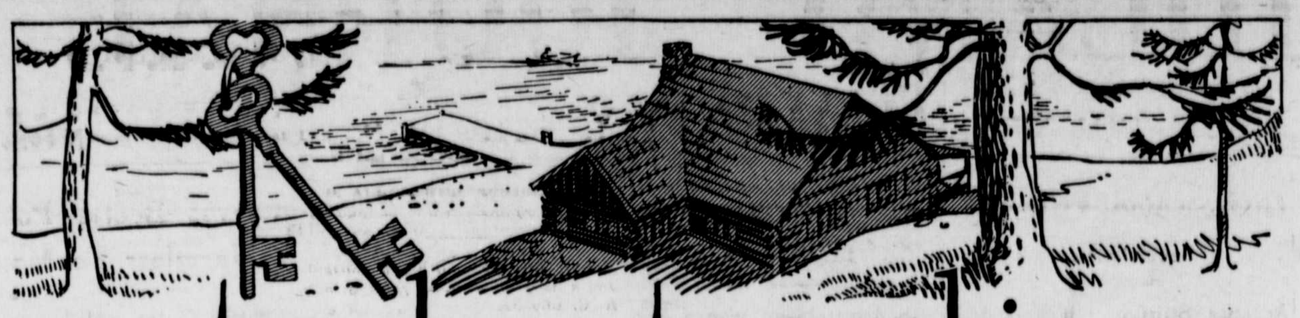

two keys to a cabin

BY LIDA LARRIMORE

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CHAPTER XV—Continued

—22—

"Jerry Conover." Gay's smile deepened. She leaned back against the leather upholstery, looking out across the dance floor where couples circled in a wash of artfully mellowed light.

"You called me up one day and asked me to take you dancing," continued Todd.

"Because he was magnificent in the sky but no use at all on a dance floor. And you took me. As I remember the subject of aviation was never mentioned between us. Not for six months, at least. Yes, all that's true," she added thoughtfully. "We'd have something—"

"A great deal. I'd try not to be too much in evidence. You could consider me a part of the landscape, until—"

"Todd!" she cried in soft protest. She turned to look at him, her eyes shadowed, thoughtful, a half-smile trembling across her lips.

The music had stopped. It began again, a familiar tune. A voice, meltingly tender, sang—

"Red sails in the sunset
Far out on the sea—"

Their eyes met.

"Our tune. You bribed them to play it. When you spoke to the waiter a few minutes ago—"

"All's fair in—" He smiled with a twinkle in his hazel eyes. "Will you dance with me, Gay?"

In silence they walked to the edge of the floor. She slipped into his arms, so accustomed to his dancing technique that her position, her steps, conformed instinctively with his. They circled out across the floor, rhythmically, with practiced ease, moving as though they were one person, her red-brown head close to his blond head, her dress of cream-colored lace, starched to crispness, as fragile as frost-work, a delicate silhouette against the black of his evening clothes.

"That's the way it is with us, Gay," he said after a moment. "No false starts, no stepping on each other's toes, no necessity for apologies."

"I'd rather dance with you than anyone. But life isn't all dancing, Todd."

"Dancing is a symbol. We understand each other."

Her head turned, drew a little away so that she could look at him. His eyes met hers steadily.

"There'd be sailing and dancing," he said gently. "Friends, a home, children, if you want them, friendship. They're good things, Gay."

"Very good things, Todd. But are they enough—for you?"

"I told you, I'm conceited." He smiled.

"You're a darling."

"Will you, Gay?"

"I'll think—I'll try—I'll see" . . .

Gay's evening wrap slipped from her shoulders, fell to the floor. She walked across to the desk between the windows. When you killed a thing, you killed it quickly. She seated herself, selected a sheet of note paper, drew the pen from its holder.

"John, darling" The pen moved steadily across the sheet of cream-colored paper, beneath the engraved address of her mother's apartment.

"We have hurt each other too much and too often. It isn't your fault or mine. I love you. I have tried as you have tried, but trying does no good. I'm going to marry Todd, very soon, by the time you receive this, perhaps, we will have been married. He understands, as you must and will. There can be no peace for either you or me while we continue to fight something that is too big for us, something which we cannot alter or control.

I want peace for you, for myself. You will find it in your work. I will find it, eventually, in the life which Todd and I, together, will create. Don't be bitter or self-reproachful. I don't regret having loved you. You must not regret what has happened. Keep the memories of the happy times we've had and forget the others . . ."

The pen came to a stop. She read what she had written. It seemed adequate. There was nothing to add except her name. She wrote it quickly, folded the sheet of note-paper, enclosed it in an envelope, found a stamp. "Dr. John L. Houghton," Dr. Sargeant's address in Portland. Her writing was clear, each letter distinct and carefully formed. It betrayed no sign of emotion. She was glad of that. There was nothing to indicate hesitancy.

She glanced at the clock on the night stand beside her bed. Better to mail it now than to wait until morning. She rose, stooped, picked up her evening wrap. Standing before the mirror, she slipped it on, secured the fastenings with deliberation and smoothed back her hair. When she turned, she saw the letter, a cream-colored oblong on dark desk pad. She returned to the desk, stood for an instant holding the letter in her hand, then, moving swiftly and quietly, went out of the room.

The night doorman spoke to her at the entrance of the apartment.

"I'm going to mail a letter, William," she said.

"Shall I mail it fo' you?" he asked.

"No, thank you."

"Must be mighty important letter," he said, with a drowsy grin.

"Very important, William." She went out through the door he held open for her into the quiet street. There was a mailbox at the corner. Her high narrow heels clicked on the concrete pavement. The air was balmy and smelled of the river. The sky was sown thickly with stars. The letter made no sound falling into the box, but the click of the lid against the slot when her hand released it startled her as though a shot had been fired through the night.

Walking back to the apartment house, saying good-night to the doorman, going up in the lift, she marveled at her composure. Whenever, during the last three months, she had thought of making a clean break with John, she had anticipated the pain it would give her. Now that she had written and posted the letter, she felt only a sense of relief.

Had she gotten over it without being conscious of the process? she wondered as she prepared for bed. Nothing in the mechanical movements involved in writing and posting the letter had shaken her except the click of the mailbox lid. Her hand, as she brushed her hair, was steady. Her face, in the mirror above the dressing-table, was composed, thin as it had been all spring, the cheek bones accented, shadows under her eyes. No hint of the shattering emotion she had anticipated. She felt more tranquil than she had for months, physically weary, as though she could sleep forever.

She lay beneath a light coverlet in the soft narrow bed, her arms crossed beneath her head, looking up at the disk of light that the bedstand lamp printed upon the ceiling. At some time, during the past three months, had she stopped loving John? No, not that— But had she accepted the inevitable? Had she been recovering all these weeks since she had returned from Maine? Had the decision she had avoided, finally made, brought tranquillity rather than the pain she had anticipated?

She didn't know. She felt sleepy, blissfully released from tension and strain. She turned, pulled the lamp cord. Darkness pressed against her closed eyelids, heavy and soft, blotting out objects, smothering thought, quieting as an opiate, blessedly welcome. Her hand, moving to an accustomed position beneath her cheek felt heavy. She sighed, murmured and was asleep.

CHAPTER XVI

—

Gay dropped down on a bench in Central Park and glanced at her wrist-watch. Ten minutes of two. Kate would have had luncheon without her, wondering where she was. Todd would probably have called. He had said last night . . . She sighed and put it out of her mind, her weary glance returning to the Park. So children rolled hoops again. Why did they combine pink geraniums with those striped green and dark red plants? Where did all the strange-looking people one saw come from? How long did it take a letter mailed at midnight to reach Portland, Maine?

Would he receive it in the late afternoon delivery today? Was there a delivery in the afternoon? Why hadn't she called the post-office this morning when she woke and realized what she had done? Wouldn't there have been time enough, then, to stop the letter? All sorts of red-tape, she supposed, and she hadn't been sure that she wanted it stopped. She wasn't sure now. In spite of the way her heart ached and the faintness which made her so weary, hadn't she done the right thing, the best thing for both herself and John?

There was Todd, of course. But if he was willing to take a chance— Strange how calm she'd been last night, dancing with Todd, half promising to marry him, writing that letter to John and posting it. She'd slept, too, deeply and restfully. It was not until this morning when she woke that she had realized what she had done. This morning—How long would it take a letter mailed a little after midnight to reach Portland, Maine?

The words she had written recurred to her. "We have hurt each other too much and too often." That was true. But the hurts they had given each other were not comparable to the suffering she was enduring now, to what John would suffer when he read her letter. She imagined him tearing it open in the hall of Dr. Sargean't home, eagerly, because he loved her letters, anticipating in the envelope which bore her hand-writing, a momentary release from work which was, to him, uninteresting and exacting. Sitting on the park bench, she tortured herself by watching his expression change, seeing the brightness fade out of his face, his lips quiver with pain, the agony in his eyes . . . "I'm going to marry Todd, very soon, by the time you receive this, perhaps—" But she wasn't going to marry Todd, not very soon, not even as long as John lived and loved her, as long as she loved him with this aching intensity that throbbed with every throbbing beat of her heart. She was not going to marry Todd. That was settled the night she and Kate had arrived at the cabin, when John came in and she had watched his expression change from brusque inquiry to astonishment, to the soft and joyous radiance that had shone in his eyes.

But why shouldn't she marry Todd? She loved him dearly, in quite a different way. But wasn't that

"Go on and pack."

way more lasting? She might hurt Todd but he could not hurt her. There would be children, lovely blond children in DePinna play suits filling her life.

Why shouldn't she marry Todd—

Two children ran toward her. One of them stumbled and caught at her to keep from falling. Dark eyes looked up at her from a thin dark face. Her heart gave a lurch. She smiled and started to speak, but the child raced on, beyond her, out of her reach.

A letter mailed at midnight— She could drive to Portland in ten hours or less. Leaving now, she would be there before midnight. Or she might drive as far as Boston tonight and go on to Portland in the morning. Her heart beat quickly, hopefully. She took a few rapid steps forward.

But John would have had the letter by then. Would he? She wasn't sure. And to go dashing up there would be a concession. He had not come to her here. They had parted, after the time she had spent in his mother's home, not entirely reconciled, a distance between them which both recognized but which neither had made an effort to close. If he loved her, and wanted her— He hadn't been able to leave, of course. But now that Dr. Sargeant had returned— Gay's chin lifted above the scarf knotted at her throat under the jacket of her dark flannel suit. She wouldn't humble herself to return to Maine. She wouldn't—

Why shouldn't she? Was it pride, false-pride, the wilful arrogance she had fought against, that was restraining her? Was it pride that, last night, had compelled her to half promise Todd she would marry him, to write the letter to John? Pretty stupid to let pride rob you of the thing you wanted more than anything in the world. Pretty stupid and obstinate to let something beautiful slip through your fingers because you were accustomed to having your own wilful way—

She did not know when she made the decision. She was hardly aware that she had until she found herself running through the park to the nearest point at which she might hope to hail a cab, a tall beautiful girl in a dark tailored suit and a small bright hat, running along a paved walk beneath sun dappled foliage, running brethlessly, excitedly, to a cab, to Maine, to John.

Kate came out from the dining-room as Gay burst into the hall of the apartment.

"Where have you been?" she asked. "I waited luncheon for an hour. You're out of breath. Have you been running?"

"Yes, I've been running. We mustn't lose any time."

Kate dropped down on a love-seat in the hall. "What do you mean?" she asked.

"We're driving to Maine." Gay tugged at her arm. "Come! Pack what you must but not much."

"I'm not going to Maine. I'm going to stay right here and finish Anthony Adverse if it takes the rest of my life."

"Don't be silly. We're going to Maine."

"I went to Maine with you once and you know what happened."

"All right, then. I'll go alone."

"Wait a minute." Kate quickly caught Gay's arm as she turned. "What is this all about? You're the most head-long young lady I've ever known."

"I've got to go, Kate. I wrote John a letter last night breaking it off, telling him I was going to marry Todd."

"And now you want to beat the letter to Maine?"

"If I can. Anyway, I'm going, I told Suki to call the garage and have my car sent around. I must pack."

"Oh, Gay! And I've only my Pullman case here!" Kate wailed. "It's as big as a trunk."

"What does that have to do with my going to Maine?"

"Well, you don't think I'd trust you to go alone, do you?"

"Will you go with me?" Gay caught Kate's hand and gave it a squeeze. "Kate, you are a lamb."

"Nonsense!" Kate pulled her hand away. "Go on and pack."

"It's nice, isn't it?" Kate said as Gay turned the car into the street on which Dr. Sargeant lived. "They're elms, aren't they? Did you ever see so many, so tall?"

"It's nice now." Gay's eyes strained ahead for the square frame house which she had remembered was painted yellow. "When I was here in March it was pretty bleak. There was a blizzard."

"That must have been jolly." Kate regarded Gay's profile. "Aren't you glad I made you stay at that Inn last night? You look fresh and rested, though I still don't care for that hat."

"The house was yellow," Gay murmured, slackening the speed of the car.

"I don't see any yellow houses. Are you sure this is the right street?"

"I've written the address a good many times. Oh!" Gay gave a little cry. "There are Nat and Skippy. This is the house. They've had it painted white."

She drew in at the curb, pulled the brake, shut off the motor. "Hello, Admiral Byrd?" she called.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Consumption of Cheese Shows Upward Trend

Americans are eating more cheese, says the bureau of agricultural economics. The upward trend in consumption has been especially noticeable during the past seven or eight years.

In depression years, from 1929 to 1932, the per capita consumption of cheese dropped slightly. Since then the trend has been sharply upward and last year it was 25 per cent greater than in 1930.

During the past five years the use of cheese has averaged 5.34 pounds per person, compared with 4.59 pounds in the 1925-29 period. In 1910-14 it averaged 4.28 pounds and in 1900-1904 the average was 4.04 pounds per person.

This upward trend in the use of cheese, the bureau points out, has been in contrast with the trends in consumption of many other staple food products. Consumption of butter during the past five years was about the same as in the pre-war years of 1910-14, but considerably less than in 1900-1904. In the past 40 years the trend in per capita consumption of meats has been downward.

By types, consumption of American or cheddar cheese has shown the greatest increase. From 1930 to 1937 the increase was 33 per cent. This cheese is the principal type produced in the United States, making up over 71 per cent of the total in recent years. The second largest increase—32 per cent—has been in the consumption of cream or neufchatel cheese. Consumption of Swiss cheese has increased 23 per cent since 1930.

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Cathedral on Tour

The oddest cathedral in the world is probably a movable affair planned by the Rt. Rev. Henry Wise Hobson, youngest Protestant Episcopal bishop in America. It bears the name of St. Paul's Wayside cathedral, and contains a bishop's chair, altar, library and cinema equipment. The "cathedral" stands on a trailer and tours the country.

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