

Lady Blanche Farm

A ROMANCE OF THE COMMONPLACE

By Frances Parkinson Keyes

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WNU Service

CHAPTER XIII—Continued

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"I don't understand that either, of course. But I do know that some of the things we've always spoken of as 'supernatural' seem to occur much more frequently since the war, or else people are not so ashamed or so afraid to speak about them as they used to be. I believe the body and the spirit are in some way much more closely interwoven than we've realized. That's one reason why we must try so hard to make the one worthy of the other."

"I've always known they were closely interwoven in Philip. Oh, Mary, will—will he be much changed, do you think?"

He was not. He looked, indeed, so serene, so supremely happy, that Blanche, kneeling beside him, burst, for the first time, into healing tears. And the nurse who had taken care of him told her that he had suffered very little.

"It was all so quick," she said. "He simply wouldn't let us send for you, and we really didn't think it was necessary—until it was too late. He said you must be saved all the grief and care you could. He'd just had a letter—"

"He got it in time so that he could read it?" asked Blanche, with such a sudden leap of joy in her voice that Mary wondered instantly what had been in that special letter.

"Oh yes. He was awfully happy over it, that was plain to see, and now that I've met you, Mrs. Starr, I don't wonder he wanted to save a lovely child like you from all the anxiety he could. He didn't suffer much, honestly. And just before he died—but I don't know as I ought to tell you—"

"You must—"

"Something strange happened."

"Yes," said Blanche breathlessly, looking from the nurse to Mary.

"He had been having some trouble with his breathing. He was unconscious for a little while, I thought, and delirious, off and on. Suddenly he opened his eyes and looked toward the foot of the bed, smiling as if he saw something there that pleased him. Then he turned to me and said, 'You did send for my wife, after all, didn't you?' I told him no, that we'd done just as he wanted about everything. He looked kind of puzzled and went on, 'But she's standing there with her arms stretched out, dressed all in white. She looks exactly as she did the last night we had together—the first night I really found her.'"

Blanche laid her cheek against the quiet hand lying on the spread.

"Go on," she said, after a moment.

"I was stupid enough to look there myself, for he kind of startled me. But of course there was nothing. So I shook my head, and said not to worry, that everything was all right. The puzzled expression faded, gradually, and he smiled again. And then he spoke just as if he was talking to someone."

"What did he say?"

"So you've come, little countess. But you mustn't ever come to anyone again. This must be the last time. And I'm not sorry. It's all been so perfect—so perfect, while it lasted.—Do you know what flashed into my mind, I don't know why? There wasn't any real connection!—That line about a 'full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice.'"

That was, blessedly, what it seemed to Blanche. Even in her first grief, she found, after all, the compensation, the "glory of achievement" that she thought she had been denied. She did not ask, she did not need, any longer, to understand. She needed only to feel, and as soon as her mental and physical exhaustion left her, to work.

She worked all the rest of the winter, and the next summer, and every woman in Hamstead worked with her. France, with its thousands of widows, was three thousand miles away, but Blanche was in their midst. Through her they reached out and found those others—

When fall came, she was not working any longer, but the rest of Hamstead, thinking of her, worked harder than ever. For she was lying, very still and happy, in the big four-poster bed in the soft-colored chamber of Carte Blanche, with the golden, downy head of Philip Starr's son against her breast.

CHAPTER XIV

Moses and Algy Manning were coming home from school together. They had, in three years, grown noticeably

taller and thinner. Their faces, as usual, would have been improved by the ministrations of a handkerchief and a wash-cloth. But Gale Hamlin, who had been riding for some hours over roads that not infrequently caused him to strike the top of the car or skid into a ditch, leaned out of the window and hailed them with delight as he caught sight of them.

"Stop a minute, Morrison—Hello, you kids! Climb in here. Going home from school?"

"Yes," replied the two small boys together, accepting his invitation with alacrity, and seating themselves beside him without further waste of words.

"Getting along pretty well?"

"Fine," answered Moses. "Algy's in kindergarten. I'm in the second grade."

"Good for you! Can you write your name yet?"

"Write my name!" exclaimed Moses, with injured pride. "I kin write poems!"

Gale Hamlin coughed. "No, really?" he asked politely. "If you can, fame and fortune await you. Unfortunately, there are so many young gentlemen who only think they can. They can't, really."

"I'll show you," said Moses, who did not understand the greater part of this speech but felt it, on the whole, unimportant whether he did or not. Removing the cover from his dinner-pail, and depositing on the seat beside him two apple cores, half a doughnut, a package of gum, a yard or so of twine, a jackknife and a Second Reader, he finally pulled out a piece of blue paper on the outside of which was written in large letters, "Two Polmes. By M. Manning," and handed them to the doubting Thomas in triumph.

"There was a bee and—" read Gale, "He sat on a tree and
He herd a sound
And he made a bownd
At the sound.
So that's all so call."

"Go on," said Moses, without false modesty.

"There was a workman
Who carried a can
And his name was Smiller
And he went to the miller
And sat on a pillar
And that's all ther was herd
Of Mr. Smiller."

"You should try the Atlantic Monthly," said Gale, folding and returning the paper. "But if that isn't appreciative, there are several other magazines. I will give you a list, if you like, or I will undertake to place these for you myself, for a small commission."

"I guess so," said Moses, feeling again that he was missing the point somewhere. "I showed 'em to Mary and she laughed and told me to take 'em to school and let my teacher see 'em."

"How is Mary?" Gale asked.

"Well, she looks kinder peaked. Was you thinkin' of comin' to say good-by to her?"

"Something of that sort. Why?"

"Because," replied Moses, "I wouldn't, if I was you. Thomas Gray tried it, and he wasn't suited at all. With the way she said good-by, I mean."

"Moses and I were under the sofa, playing lion, only Mary and Thomas didn't know it," said Algy, in an illuminating aside.

"She shook hands, nice and polite, like she's taught us to do it," continued Moses. "I don't know what more was wanted. But there was something. He said so."

"Twice," volunteered Algy.

"And then he said, 'Mary, isn't there any chance for me at all?' and she said, 'No, I'm sorry, but there isn't.'"

"And Thomas," continued the faithful chorus, "said, 'Wasn't there ever any chance for anyone except Paul?' and Mary stiffened up and said, 'Paul threw his chance away.'"

"What happened next?" asked Gale, feeling very much as if he had been eavesdropping himself.

"Thomas spoke right up as if he was kinder mad. 'Well,' he said, 'are you goin' on rememberin' that all the rest of your life, 'stead of that he tried good and hard and plenty to find it again?'"

"Ah!" remarked Gale.

"And then Mary told him she couldn't discuss it with him. He was home just for a few hours, before he went to France. That was most a year ago. No one's tried it on her since."

"Suppose," said Gale, producing a crisp dollar bill, "that you boys go to

Wallacetown with Morrison and have a spree? You might enjoy it and I—er—wouldn't run the risk of having any lions under the sofa while I was there!"

Mary was very glad to see Gale Hamlin, and she did not attempt to disguise the fact. He told her a good deal of Boston news that pleased and interested her, while he drank the tea and ate the cookies that she brought him, before he asked her any questions. "How is Mrs. Starr? I want to see her, too!"

"Oh, she's wonderful! So well, and so busy, and so happy with the baby! He's the loveliest little creature! Cousin Jane worships him, too. You must see him before you go. He isn't like a Manning at all—he's the image of his father."

"I am very glad she has him. Does



Mary Flared Instantly. "Men Are Not Fair to Women."

she have good news of her brother, too?"

"She doesn't have any."

Gale did not answer immediately.

"I'm sorry if I've made a stupid mistake," he said at last. "You didn't mention any bad news, the last time you were in Boston."

"No—I don't often talk about Paul."

"So I have observed," remarked Gale dryly.

Mary flared instantly. "Men are not fair to women," she said bitterly.

"I'm sorry to say that's often true. But it's no reason why women shouldn't be fair to men. Two wrongs never made a right, you know."

"Are you trying to tell me what is right for me to do?"

"I'm trying to tell you what is wrong. It would be wicked if you never married."

"Wicked!"

"For you—not for every woman."

"Why for me especially?"

"You ought to guess. And I've seen you with men—I know how much charm you have, no matter how you try to hide it and how much power, no matter how little you choose to use it. And I've seen you with children—your patience and your wisdom and your loving kindness. Philip Starr has done wonderful things for the place—and the woman—he loved—by his death. But they're nothing to what you can do for the place and the man you may love—by your life—if you only will."

The girl rose suddenly and turned away from him. Gale crossed to her quickly, and put his hand on her shoulder.

"So you refused Thomas Gray?" he asked quietly.

"Yes. There was never any question of Thomas."

"Or of me?"

"Yes, there was some question of you. I thought you knew that."

"Will—could you answer it any differently now?"

"No."

"Or ever, do you think?"

"No. I—I'm sure I never could."

"Then how are you going to answer Paul when he comes home?"

"Paul isn't ever coming home," said Mary steadily—so steadily, in fact, that a man who knew her less well than Gale Hamlin did would have been completely deceived by her tone.

"What happened, Mary?" he asked gently. "Please tell me."

"He was wounded last May," she said in a hard voice. "Not seriously. Cousin Violet had a letter written by Paul himself in the hospital, saying the wound was just a scratch—that

he'd be out again for the next 'big scrap.'"

"Yes."

"He was. He was at Belleau Wood and Chateau-Thierry. Then he was listed as 'Prisoner or Missing.' We haven't heard since. That was nine months ago."

"Yes."

"There were very few marines taken prisoner. We thought, after the armistice was signed, we'd have some word."

"And you haven't?"

"No—not a syllable. We hope—I hope, anyway—that he was killed. It would be much less horrible—than the other." Then with a swift change of tone, she exclaimed, "Don't you ever read the Casualty lists yourself? Oh, I believe you knew all the time!"

"Yes—I did. But I wanted you to tell me yourself. I've been waiting, ever since last summer, to see if you wouldn't. I wanted to know just how you felt about it."

"Do you know now?"

"I think I do—Mary, don't you ever bend?"

"Bend?"

"Yes—because if you don't, I'm afraid some day you're going to break. You did, very nearly, you know, once before. You remember the old fable—'I have been doing what I could.'"

Gale went on, as Mary did not answer, "to locate your cousin ever since I found out the situation. But, so far, I haven't discovered anything. Now, however, I'm starting for Europe myself—almost immediately. Until now, it has seemed as if I could be most useful here. I am glad that at last there appear to be ways in which I can help over there—reconstruction, investigation—I don't need to tell you—There, my dear, there—"

He waited patiently for the storm to pass, stroking very gently the soft hair about the hidden face. He waited, it seemed to him, endlessly. For Mary was weeping with the abandonment, the utter hopelessness, that marks the ultimate despair of those strong souls whose fortitude enables them to restrain their grief until it reaches its culmination, and the shattering of whose spirit is all the more tragic because it is so sudden. Gale Hamlin's heart twisted in his breast at the sight of her unrestrained and the thought of her agony. He knew he was powerless to help her except by surrounding her with the sense of his infinite compassion. It was a long time before she raised her head, and as she did so, still far from composed, the door was flung unceremoniously open and Algy and Moses entered noisily.

"The dollar's all spent," announced Moses.

"Well," said Gale, with a slight sigh, "it lasted just about long enough. I rather wish, though, I had given you a dollar and a half! Will you take me over and introduce me to your new little cousin?"

Mrs. Elliott, who was "passing the afternoon" with Violet, saw him walk down the cobblestone path with a small boy on either side of him, from her point of vantage in the North Parlor window. Violet did not receive her callers in the kitchen, like Mrs. Gray. She did not consider it "select" to do so.

"Look here, Violet," called Mrs. Elliott excitedly, "if there ain't Mr. Hamlin comin' down Seth's front walk! He don't take 'no' for an answer very easy, does he?"

"No," said Violet, "and Mary doesn't say 'yes' very easily, either. I can't think what that girl's made of. She used to be always laughing and singing, but now-a-days she's so glum—except with the children—that you can hardly get a word out of her, and you can't ask her the most trivial question that she doesn't lose her temper. And she's never shown the slightest feeling about Paul!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Mascot for Happiness

The swastika is credited with being the oldest as well as the most powerful mascot in existence. The sign has been found on ancient rock carvings in India, China, Japan and elsewhere, and on stone implements belonging to the very earliest races of mankind. The belief that it attracted good fortune arose from the fact that it was used by the ancients as the emblem of the sun. All the ancient races worshipped the sun, and the emblem was supposed to attract to the person who wore it, a big share of the sun's favor. The name swastika is Sanskrit, and means "happiness."

POULTRY

FORCED PULLET IS NOT BEST PRODUCER

Should Have Time to Develop Necessary Stamina.

"Pullets should be given every opportunity to develop normally without being forced, in order that they may have the body vigor to withstand a long and continuous period of heavy egg production," says O. C. Ufford, extension poultryman for the Colorado agricultural college.

"It is not good practice," he adds, "to force growth by the use of a heavy protein diet over the entire growing period."

"Birds that have received such a diet will start laying a month or three weeks earlier than the normal maturing period for the breed, but they will not have the body growth that enables them to stand up under heavy egg production over a long period of time."

For pullets on a summer range, a growing mash of ground grains containing 10 per cent meat scraps and 5 per cent bone meal, is suggested. This may be kept before them all the time in outdoor hoppers. The hoppers should be so constructed that very little mash can be wasted, and the hoppers should never be allowed to go empty, it is stated.

This growing mash may be kept before the pullets until they are three or four months old, depending on their development. Then, in order to prevent too rapid development, the percentage of meat scraps may be greatly reduced by adding ground oats or barley, corn meal or bran to the growing mash mixture. Reduction of the animal food allows the pullets to grow and develop without stimulating the growth of the egg-producing organs.

"This method of handling pullets enables them to put on body weight and fat, and when they come into winter production they will be able to produce steadily because of their vigor and vitality," Ufford explains.

Too Much Sunshine Is Not Good for Chickens

While sunshine is necessary in the development of chicks, one should not overlook the fact that during the hot summer months protection from the hot sun is absolutely necessary. One reason why late hatched chicks fail to thrive is because of failure to keep them supplied with shade. Chicks that are compelled to remain in a close, hot coop in the heat of summer because of no other protection are not getting the best possible treatment. The air under shade trees is fresher and cooler; there is less danger from mites and they are closer to green food and insect life.

If summer shade is not provided by trees and bushes the next best thing to do is to plant patches of sunflowers or corn. It is of course necessary to keep the chicks away from it until it gets a fair start. After the plants have grown to a sufficient height, chickens can run in them with practically no injury to the crop. In fact, there is no objection to growing a crop of chickens and corn on the same piece of ground. This can be easily done by erecting temporary fences and confining the chicks to a portion of the yard or it may mean the removal of the chickens to new yards more suitable for summer growth. On the farm this latter method can usually be employed.—Missouri Farmer.

Feather Pulling

The feather-pulling habit is usually caused by overcrowding. Another cause is the taste of blood, which may result from accident or disease. When hens, and especially roosters taste blood they become part cannibal. Feather pulling is the natural result for the birds soon find that there is a drop of blood at the bottom of the quill they pull, and they have been known to practically eat a weak member of the flock alive. The best remedy is to kill the cannibals and segregate the victims as soon as it is seen that they cannot protect themselves. Out of door exercise and change of feed will do much to stop the trouble.—Montreal Herald.

Curing Scaly Leg

The shanks and upper surfaces of the toes of fowls are protected by horny overlapping scales. A little mite, called by scientists sarcoptes mutans, has a habit of burrowing under these scales, causing an irritation and making the feet sore. Its presence is detected by the loosening of the scales and accumulation of crusty matter under them. The condition is corrected by dipping the feet in a mixture of linseed and kerosene oils, equal parts, or by anointing with vaseline.