

BEAVERTON ENTERPRISE

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OLD MASTERS

Mr. Average Citizen will cheerfully admit the value of the local fire department. He will be the first to agree that it has a worth beyond price; that the protection it offers life and property is absolutely essential. He will likewise admit that it should naturally be kept to the best standard and have a scientifically trained personnel and the best of apparatus.

But, so far as seeing that this is done, he is usually a total loss. He doesn't know whether water supplies are adequate or inadequate. He doesn't know whether the engines are scientifically built standard products.

This last point is vital. The making of fire engines is at once a science, an art and craft. Fire apparatus might be called upon to perform at maximum efficiency in tropical weather or sub-zero weather. It may be asked to work for 30 hours at a stretch, under the most unfavorable conditions, without faltering. Being expensive, it should last a goodly number of years—and it must fight its last fire as well as it fights its first.

That is what tim tested standard engines do. They are like old masters. There are three makes that have become legendary in the annals of fire fighting—names that the firemen take great pride in having among their equipment. They are fit weapons in man's fight against his ancient enemy—uncontrolled fire.

PREVENTABLE FIRES

In extremely cold weather it is a temptation to force fires in heating systems in order to keep warm. Records of the National Board of Fire Underwriters indicate that over-heated stoves cause numerous fires during winter—thoughtlessness in tending the fires, radiated heat which chars beams placed too close to hot metal, defective or soot-clogged equipment or chimneys.

All these dangers can be eliminated. When attempting to obtain maximum heat from a stove or furnace, it is important to keep close watch over the unit—do not stay away from it too long. If this is done there is little likelihood of overheating.

The second item is urgent. Make an inspection of all smoke pipes and exposed metal parts of heating units that become hot, to ascertain if wood or other burnable material is located too near. Continued proximity to the hot metal may cause fire, particularly if an extra amount of heat is generated—it happens daily. If combustible material cannot be moved to a safe distance, protect it with layers of sheet asbestos.

One more precaution: Do not place hot ashes in wooden boxes or cartons; this is like a slow fuse to gun powder. Put ashes in metal containers.

Fires takes a heavy toll of life every year. Surely each of us should be willing to practice such simple precautions as these to aid the cause of safety.

LADY BLANCHE FARM

A Romance of the Commonplace

by Frances Parkinson Keyes

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THE STORY

CHAPTER I.—Motoring through Vermont, near the village of Hamstead, Philip Starr, young Boston architect, makes the acquaintance, in unconventional fashion, of Blanche Manning, girl of seventeen, with whom he is immediately enamored. From her, in conversation, he learns something of her family history, dating from Revolutionary times. Starr is convalescing from a serious illness, and it being a long distance to Burlington, his destination, Blanche suggests, the small village of Hamstead, a hotel, that she become, for the night, a guest of her cousin, Mary Manning.

CHAPTER II.—Mary receives Philip with true Vermont hospitality, and he makes the acquaintance of her two interesting small brothers, Moses and Algy, to whom she is "mother," the mother being dead, and of Mary's cousin Paul, her fiancé. Mary Starr finds, in acquaintance with Gale Hamlin, noted Boston architect, in whose office Paul is employed, recognizing in Mary a friendly spirit, he informs her of his desire to win Blanche for his wife. She is sympathetic, and tells him of an old family superstition concerning the "Blessed" of the Manning family.

CHAPTER III.—Violet Manning, mother of Blanche and of Paul, with her sister, Jane, spinster, are dubious concerning Philip's worldly and spiritual standing, but await developments.

CHAPTER IV.—Paul Manning, pampered in his home life, is inclined to be dissipated, not realizing Mary's true worth, and taking their future relationship as husband and wife as established, though there is no formal agreement. Mary's reproaches for his undignified "conviviality" are badly received by Paul, and the girl begins to have misgivings as to the wisdom of the alliance. Starr's disclosure of the fact that he is the son of a Congregational minister, and of his financial standing, establish him in the Manning family's eyes.

CHAPTER V.—Gale Hamlin, long a suitor for Mary's hand, having known her since her college days in Boston, visits Hamstead but makes no progress in his wooing. Philip's wedding with Blanche, in the immediate future, is understood.

CHAPTER VI.—Philip, poring over old records of the Manning family, learns the sorrowful story of the "Countess Blanche," French wife of a Revolutionary hero, Moses Manning, and of the peculiar "curse" she has transmitted to her descendants and the women of Hamstead. Mary's sage counsel settles any misgivings he had entertained, and his wedding with Blanche is solemnized. The evening of the marriage Paul, under the influence of liquor, having the girl's unduly, bitterly fronts Mary when she reproaches him for his condition, and tells her their engagement is ended.

CHAPTER VII.

The lot in life of the girl who has been jilted is probably not very pleasant anywhere, but there is no place on earth where it is quite as hard as in a small country village. But Mary went about her usual occupations, after Blanche's wedding and the storm that followed it, with her head held high, and her back straighter than ever. She got, of course, no credit for this. It was set down against her that she had never really cared for Paul, after all, or she "would feel it more." Almost in the same breath she was accused by some one else—or even by the same person—of having worn her heart upon her sleeve, for all to see.

If village gossip was hard to bear, however, the family attitude was worse. Cousin Jane had a good deal to say about the inevitable fate of girls who ran after men who didn't want them, instead of attending their plain Christian duty. Seth said very little, but his silent, dejected attitude made his daughter feel more than any unkind words could have done, that he felt she had disgraced him almost beyond utterance. As for Violet, she became so violently "nervous" about the whole affair, that Mary dreaded to see her more than all the others put together. She never guessed that Paul was also suffering from his mother's "nerves."

"If you had the slightest consideration for me, you never would have let it happen," she lamented over and over again to her son. "My life is so full of grief and trouble that it takes a good deal of fortitude to bear it. Here is Blanche married—"

"You were tickled to death over that," muttered Paul.

"Paul! How can you be so vulgar! I tried to be cheerful, of course. But no one knows how I miss her. And Mary's money would have come in very handy, too."

"I didn't know Mary had any money."

"She will have, as soon as she's twenty-one, and that's very soon now. Laura had a little property of her own, and she left it all to Mary. I don't know as Mary knows it herself, but of course Seth will tell her soon, now."

But this was not the way Violet talked to Mary. She dwelt on the fact that the girl had not made herself "attractive enough" to Paul, that she was always neglecting to change her dress and tidy her hair, that she didn't join with him in those little pleasures that all young men like to "share with their fiancées."

"But Paul didn't expect to share them with me!" flared Mary, stung beyond endurance. "He didn't even want to! And I guess if you did all the cooking and cleaning and washing

and ironing for four people, and took care of two children into the bargain, you wouldn't always look as nice as you do! Don't you suppose I've longed to be comfortable and rested—and pretty whenever Paul saw me? I guess I'm just as human as any other girl, and I guess I know the way to do things just as well as you do."

"Well, I should manage to do them then, and to look well at the same time!" retorted Violet. "That's every woman's duty to herself."

"What about her duty to her family, if the two conflict?"

"Mercy, Mary, what a temper you have! No wonder Paul couldn't stand it! I'm sure I do my duty to my family, if any woman ever did, but I keep myself up, too. If you had more system about your housework you could get it done all right—it's all in the way you do it."

Violet felt that she had come out ahead in this tilt. Nevertheless, it "used her up" to have Mary so shockingly impertinent to her, as she said to Jane in telling her about it afterwards, and she did not attack her in this same way again. Instead, she brought Blanche's letters and read them to her. And listening to these accounts of Blanche's happiness was, to Mary, like having salt rubbed in a raw wound.

Blanche was blissful, Philip was perfect, they were divinely happy, no two persons had ever loved each other so much before. And so on. Places and pastimes that had always been mere names, conjuring up visions of delight, to be sure, but never within the reach of "anyone we know" were a matter of course to Blanche. Not that Mary begrudged her that—she had, from the beginning, rejoiced wholeheartedly in her cousin's happiness. But didn't she deserve a little happiness, too? Mary was thoroughly human and she was very intelligent. She would have known how to squeeze not only enjoyment, but education, out of every drop of pleasure that she could have had. But this was not the worst of it. The man whom Blanche loved, wanted to lavish all these good things on her, while the man whom she, Mary, loved, had neglected and ignored her, and finally insulted her and cast her from him. Mary listened to Blanche's letters in silence, or said merely, "I'm glad she's having such a good time." In a low voice, but when Violet left her alone again, she always sat for a time clenching and unclenching her hands, dry little sobs of agony rising in her throat.

But hardest of all—harder than facing the village gossip, harder than facing Violet's complacency—was facing her own bruised pride, her own accusing conscience. Long ago—she knew it only too well—she should have told Paul that unless he mended his ways their engagement must end. She had evaded an issue which she should have met. She had been a coward. Because she feared losing Paul, she had compromised with right, and now she had lost him after all. She felt that she deserved her unhappiness, and this was more bitter than anything else except the way in which she had lost him. The thought of the words Paul had spoken to her in the hall that night after Blanche's wedding, the memory of his heavy breath and violent kisses, branded her with shame. She was cheapened, degraded in her own eyes, that any man should have dared to behave so to her, and that was infinitely worse than being cheapened and degraded in the eyes of her family. Had she, after all, deserved that, too?

In all those dreadful weeks, Mary found only two sources of comfort, besides the walks she took up Countess hill to gain solitude, and the prayers she managed, with shaken faith, to say. The first of these sources was Sylvia Gray. She was extremely fond of Mary, and usually saw a good deal of her, but she was not well enough to do that now. The neighborly visiting back and forth had been to a certain degree interrupted. But one afternoon, Sylvia phoned that she was "having a pretty good day," and that she wished Mary would bring her sewing and come over to supper.

It was, as usual, hard for Mary to break away from her family, but she spread out an appetizing cold supper on the table, covered it carefully, left the kettle boiling for Seth's evening cup of tea, and took the two little boys to the barn for their father to watch while he was milking. Seth did not altogether approve of this arrangement, but as usual, he said little, and she promised to be back early. She stopped a minute at the Old Gray homestead, where Mrs. Gray was sitting on her back porch, feeling instinctively that this kindly woman had spoken of her less harshly than most of her neighbors, and that she did not need to shun her; then went down the shady road that led to the little brick cottage where Sylvia and Austin lived. She found her lying in the hammock on her deep and sheltered piazza, looking, as always, supremely lovely, but also very frail. The expression on Sylvia's face shook Mary for the first time from the thought of her own troubles.

"Sylvia! You're—you're not a bit well, are you?"

"I'm perfectly all right. But I'm afraid I shall be tempted to pinch the twins, very gently, of course, sometimes, to make up for all the trouble they've caused me. Just think, they'll be the first twins in Hamstead since the Countess Blanche's—only mine are going to be both girls!"

Mary shivered a little. "Why do you keep talking about having twins?" she asked. "You'll have just one, another boy."

"You wait and see! But I didn't send for you to talk about twins. I've got a new scheme, and I want to see what you think of it. Now that David

and Jacqueline have built that splendid cottage hospital, I think we've gone a long step forward in Hamstead. But after all, that only looks out for the people when they're sick or convalescent. I want to build something that will look out for them when they're well."

Mary dropped her sewing. "What do you mean?" she asked excitedly.

"Hamstead's the loveliest place in the world to live in," went on Sylvia, without apparent connection, "—that is, I think so. But I can imagine that I wouldn't have, when I was younger—especially if I'd been a boy. There isn't much to do."

"I see," said Mary, beginning to think that she did.

"And so, as long as there isn't, most boys try to find something. And what they find isn't always very good for them."

How much this kind, wise woman saw and understood and forgave! No wonder Austin worshipped her!

"I can't understand, myself," Sylvia went on, "why more parents don't send their boys away to good, really first-class schools and colleges. They don't seem to realize what a difference it would make, just at the age when it's perfectly natural and normal for a boy or girl to crave excitement and pleasure and activity and change. I'm a pretty good Episcopalian, but I believe just as many boys' souls have been saved by gymnasiums as by churches! And I want that nice new cousin of yours to start in on some plans for one as soon as he gets home from his wedding trip. I want it made suitable to use for dances, and want a billiard room, and a kitchen, and a swimming pool in it, too. I want..."

"Oh, Sylvia, no one in the world would have thought of this but you!"

"Did you ever hear," went on Sylvia again without apparent connection, "how wild Austin was when he was young?"

"—yes, I have—"

"That was before I knew him. But he was twenty-seven when I came here. If I'd grown up with him, loving him all the time—as of course I should have, for I loved him as much as I possibly could from the first moment I ever set eyes on him and never could help showing it—I suppose it would have hurt me dreadfully—to have him wild, I mean. I suppose I would have either mistaken immaturity for viciousness and condemned him when he had really done nothing to condemn, or excused viciousness for immaturity and forgiven him when he should, some way, have been punished. Either would have been equally bad, and equally likely to happen. We don't judge clearly when we're unhappy. Of course it hurts Austin and me, a little, now, to think that he ever—slipped up at all. He and I have talked this plan over a good deal. He thinks it ought to help the fellows in Hamstead, some, anyway. Do you remember that poem by Coventry Patmore that Ruskin quotes,

"Ah, wasteful woman, she who may On her own sweet self set the price, Knowing man cannot choose but pay— How she has cheapened Paradise! How given for naught the priceless gift, How spoiled the bread and spilt the wine, Which, spent with due respective thrift, Had made brutes men and men divine!"

"Isn't that what we're all tempted to do when we love a man—to walk straight into his arms, without knowing whether his arms are ready for us?"

"Or worthy?"

"If they're really ready, they will be worthy. That's just the point."

"I see," said Mary, very low indeed.

"And then," continued Sylvia, "Austin had ideals, always, even if he didn't live up to them. There's a tremendous difference between that and not having any ideals, not being able to see them yourself, and not having anyone care for you enough to give them to you. Austin's got a wonderful mother."

"So have your boys," said Mary, sobs rising in her throat.

"There was no more direct allusion to her trouble than that."

No one but Sylvia in all Hamstead would have been clever enough to see that nothing would comfort Mary so much as to be able to think a little more gently of Paul. Indeed, no one else considered that she deserved comfort or that this would be a legitimate means of giving it to her if she had. But this comfort, great though it was, did not last indefinitely. After that talk with Sylvia, Mary found that she got through the days very well. But the nights seemed to grow harder and harder. Formerly, she had gone straight to sleep when she went to

bed, because she was so tired. Now she was so utterly weary, mentally and spiritually as well as physically, that she could not sleep. And when she could not sleep, she cried—cried so violently that each morning found her more and more spent. Her overwrought nerves, seeking some means of relief, found only this one, and they were, just then, stronger than her will-power. And at last something snapped, suddenly, and she broke down openly in the middle of the bedtime songs that she always sang to her little brothers.

She had had a long hard day, and it seemed as if evening and the chance to rest would never come. When, on top of everything else, the small boys showed no disposition to settle down promptly for the night, she began to feel as if her self-control were slipping from her like a cast-off garment.

"I want a drink of water," announced Algy, bouncing up and down on his mattress.

Silently Mary brought the little white china cup painted with bluebirds to the child. He drained it in a gulp.

"More," he announced cheerfully, handing it back to her.

Mary filled the mug a second time, and as she did so, she could see the rest of the family, in the new automobile, starting for the performance of "The Merchant of Venice" at the annual Chautauqua entertainment at Wallacetown. She knew the play almost by heart, loved every word of it, had never seen it given, and even the little mediocre traveling company that was to play it, could, with her own knowledge of it, have given her a glimpse into fairyland if she could have heard it. And none of the others cared for Shakespeare, or were in the least familiar with him. They were simply going because it was "part of this year's program," because everyone else was going, because Paul welcomed any excuse to drive the car and Violet any excuse to be seen in it, and Jane and Seth any excuse to go to a play which could not, of course, be wicked, since it was "classic." No one had even suggested staying home with the children so that she could go.

"Can't I have a piece of candy?" was Algy's next question, as she reached the crib which stood by her bed. "I ben a good boy all day, haven't I, Mary?"

"Yes, dear, pretty good. Where is your bag of lemon drops?"

"In my top bureau drawer. Bring it here, so's I can choose."

The bag was brought and a fragment carefully selected.

"I wish you'd stay with me for a while, Mary. I got a sorter pain in my leg."

"A sharp pain, or an ache?"

"No-o, just a regular pain. I think maybe it would feel better if you rubbed it for a while."

Mary uncovered the plump, brown legs and rubbed them briskly. "I've got to go now and hear Moses' prayers," she said at last, thinking that signs of drowsiness were finally beginning to be evident.

But Moses was not feeling devotional. He was constitutionally irreligious, and now that he attended kindergarten, the morning exercises at school seemed to him more than sufficient for his spiritual needs.

"I ain't a-goin' to say the Lord's prayer tonight," he announced with decision. "I said it this mornin' at school."

"Very well, say 'Now I lay me.'"

"Now I lay me," began Moses without much fervor, "down to sleep..." when a loud crash and a wail of distress from the next room.

"Oh, Mary, I've dropped my bluebird cup! It's bro-o-ken..."

Mary rushed to Algy's side and gathered him, dripping wet, into her arms. On the floor, in a pool of water, lay the beloved mug broken into fragments, while the crib, as well as Algy himself, was deluged by its contents.

"Don't cry, darling! It's a shame, but Mary will buy you another just like it, only prettier, maybe, the next time she goes to Wallacetown. Hush, honey. Let Mary put you in bed with Moses while she gets you dry pajamas and changes your sheets and wipes up all the pieces so you won't cut your dear little feet."

Comfort, fresh linen and more water all having been provided, Moses was urged to continue his devotions.

"I don't see why I should say, 'If I should die before I wake.' I've said it and said it, and I ain't never died at all."

"Well, say just 'God bless tonight, then.'"

"God bless Daddy and Mary and Algy," mumbled Moses glibly, "and all my dear friends, and make me a good boy, and bless Cousin Jane and Cousin Violet and Blanche. You needn't bother about Paul, he snitched my wood-chuck trap. Amen. . . . Now sing me 'The Sugar Plum Tree.'" he commanded, climbing into bed and settling himself on his pillow.

Mary began it bravely enough. But the reference to Paul was too much for her. Before she reached the Chocolate Cat she found she could not go on.

"I'm afraid I can't finish 'The Sugar Plum Tree' tonight, darling," she said abruptly, bending over to kiss him; and in spite of her, some hot tears fell down on his face. Then she fled from the room.

Moses lay for a long time wide-eyed and pondering. He loved Mary as he loved no one else in the world, and Mary, plainly, was very unhappy. He tried to think of recent misdeeds that he himself had committed, but his slate was fairly clean. Then he remembered that once before, early in the summer, he had caught her crying and when he had pressed her, she had said she was worried over Paul.

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