Old Stories Done Over---Mary and the Lamb

Both of Them Are Now Five Miles Behind the Parade—What Mary Would Have to Do in Order to Stand in With the Budding Society Princess of Today.

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Of all the punky Recitations ever drawn on a helpless Bunch assembled in the Front Room the one about Mary and the Lamb certainly touches high water mark.

It has come down to us from the Stone Age—has no more Plot than a successful Musical Comedy and the Meter is as unreliable as if it had been installed by the Gas Company.

The verses concerning Mary and her enamoured Pet are a mouldy fragment of has-been Literature. They are no good on Earth, but we have had them in the Cupboard so long that we hate to chuck them out.

Mary is perhaps the best known character in Fiction or Biography. Many a big, full grown Tax Payer with a heavy Beard, who never read a President's Message in his Life, who thinks that Omar Khayyam is the name of a perfumery, who doesn't know whether Thomas W. Lawson lives in Boston or Montana, who never heard of Carlyle until the Indians began to play football, who has a dim and lurking suspicion that Charles Dickens wrote "Alice of Old Vincennes" and who couldn't tell you which Washington was George and which is Booker, can hand out the whole Piece about Mary and the Lamb.

Furthermore, he is carefully inoculating his Offspring with the germs of Mental Degredation.

He is teaching the so-called Poem to little Oliver, with the Front Teeth and the Freckles, and some evening he will have a Friend from the Wholesale House go up to dinner with him and he will sit by the door so that the Victim cannot break away, and then Oliver will stand over by the Center Table and get off the whole Thing at the rate of two hundred words a minute, and his Parents will brag about Oliver will stand over by the Center stead of beating him with a Strap and then locking him in his Room.

Mary and her Lamb seem to fit with the domestic arrangements of every Household the same as Wash Rags and Fly Paper.

They have been universally adopted and sheltered because the story of their Loyal Friendship can be assimilated by any 22-caliber Mortal with a Cerebellum the size of an English Walnut and a Facial Angle of thirty Degrees.

The hopeless Paretic, after he has been tucked away in the Foolish House and measured for a Straight-jacket with Leather Trimmings, still remembers in detail the sweet and simple Story of the Dumb Brute whose Fleece was as white as a Railway Pooling Agreement and who waited outside the School House for Mary to show up.

It seems wrong to jump onto a Classic, but we have stood for the sentimental Live Stock just about long enough.

If the Professors at the University of Chicago have a right to take a Fall out of Shakespeare, we have a right to put a slight Kibosh on the rankest Team that ever did a Turn in the Nursery Vaudeville, viz., Mary and Lamb.

There are plenty of good Acts that can be put into a Bill, for the Kiddies, so why star a combination of Onions?

You take Jack and the Beanstock, Riding Hood and Wolf, Crusoe and Friday, the Boy on the Burning Deck, or even the Captain's Daughter who took her father by the Icy Mitt and gave him a good talking to, and any one of them will guarantee the Little Folks a run for their money. They start something.

If Mary had taken an enterprising Ram to school with her and the Ram had butted the Teacher in the Solar Plexus and then crashed through a Window and started down the Pike, upsetting Policemen? Fat Women and Crippled Old Gentlemen, finally colliding with a can of Dynamite carried by an Irishman with Green Sluggers, thereby blowing up the whole Street and crippling a large number of Innocent Bystanders, the whole Episode would have contained enough Excitement and Real American Humor to justify a full Page of Pictures in three Colors.

Or if it could be pointed out that Mary was the first person in this Country to protect American Wool the story could be given a certain Political Significance.

But the yarn has nothing to commend it. No Criminal Interest, no bearing on Wall Street Operations, no satire on Modern Society, no Dialect—not even a Moral fastened on the end like a whip-cracker.

Yet we keep on using it. About the time the First Born is big enough to begin learning Bridge Whist or finding out how many Cubic Yards of Earth will be taken from the Culebra Cut in the Isthmian Canal the misguided Parents get him penned up in a Corner and make him memorize the whole mess of Drivel about Mary's Little Lamb.

They had it done to them when they were Young, and the only way they can catch even is by Stinging the New Generation.

After they get it all dinged into him, a Line at a time, so that he can hold onto a Chair, and, after swallowing his Palate two or three times, reel it off without a Hitch, what have they put into his youthful System to be carried around throughout a Long Life?

He has learned that there was a Girl named Mary who was supposed to be the owner of a Lamb. No doubt her Parents gave it to her—let her blow about her Proprietorship, and tie Ribbons on it and sprinkle it with Florida water, and then when it came time to make a shipment of Sheep, Father sold that Lamb along with the others and Mary never got in on the Divide.

Probably if she asked about it they conned her by telling her that the Money was in the Bank.

One day the Lamb followed her up to the School. The presence of the lamb afforded Amusement to the other Children, so the Teacher chased it out, but it hung around until Recess and then hunted up Mary. Some of the children wanted to know why the lamb was so stuck on Mary, and the Teacher, who knew everything in the World that is worth knowing, made a Reply which is supposed to be the Acme of Profound Wisdom and Sagacity. The Teacher, after giving some Thought to the Subject, expressed the Opinion that the Lamb thought very well of Mary because Mary was fond of the Lamb.

That is the end of the story. It starts out as if something was going to happen, and then it blows up.

As a Narrative it is not only Innocuous, but it is misleading.

Mary is supposed to be a Typical American Girl. If she wanted a Pet, do you suppose she would let anyone palm off a $4 Lamb on her? Not on your happy childhood days!

She would demand a registered Boston Terrier worth $150, and when she took that to School with her Teacher would get on top of the desk.

If the Youth of our Land must put in many precious Hours finding out about Mary, why not give them something hot off the Bat, covering the actual Facts of the case?

Why not say that Mary had a 1907 Motor Car, which she was learning to run herself; tell how Father had to mortgage the Store in order to buy the Machine and what the Neighbors said about the Family going without Meat in order to buy Gasoline?

If you would interest the flippy Grammar School Girls of today, who begin Debutting into Society while they still wear their Hair down the Back, tell them about Mary having a crackerjack of a Saddle Horse and going out in the Park and meeting a handsome College Boy, and wanting to elope with him, until her Pa had to sit up at night with a Shot Gun across his Knees.

Why not let Mary have something that the ambitious Maiden of the New Century really wants?

What could Mary, living in a Flat, do with a Lamb? In the first place the Janitor wouldn't let her have one.

Revise the Narrative and have it start out by saying that Mary had a full set of Gray Squirrel Furs, a pair of Roller Skates, some Boxing Gloves, a set of Golf Clubs, a large Photograph of John Drew, a five-pound box of Candy and a Baby Grand Piano, and immediately you would interest every sweet-faced Lassie over eight years of age who is on to her Job.

It may be that when the Verses were written, about 200 years ago, the average Mary thought she was doing pretty well if she owned a Lamb. But nowadays Mary has everything that Father can get for her on Credit, and any time that he fails to come up there is a Riot.

"Mary had a little lamb!" The sophisticated Marie of the present Hurrah Period will not look at a Lamb after she has passed the age of three. She wants six or eight Roosevelt Bears, each about the size of a Newfoundland Dog, and she keeps them propped up in her Room merely as Ornaments.

Even if Mary had a Lamb it couldn't follow her to School, because she rides on the Trolley.

If the Children must memorize a lot of Untruthful Verses regarding Mary and some kind of an Animal, why not rig up a corking good Lie—one that will appeal to the Juvenile Imagination?

Why not say that Mary had a trained Snake 32 feet long that she stole out of a Menagerie?

The Snake is very devoted to her because she feeds it a Maltese Kitten every day.

One day Mary is walking in her father's magnificent Private Park that cost over $1,000,000, when she is attacked by a handsome Brigand with a long Mustache and a Black Cloak, who wishes to kidnap her and hold her for a Ransom, after taking away from her the $16,000 worth of Precious Stones she is wearing on her Person at the time.

Mary shrieks for Assistance, and the faithful Boa Constrictor, asleep in the Conservatory, hearing her terrified Cries, pushes up a Window and crawls out just as the Villain is dragging the Beautiful Girl toward a Closed Carriage.

The brave Snake throws himself upon the Miscreant and squeezes him to death, while Mary returns calmly to her own Apartment.

This is pipey, of course, but if you must hand the children any Story, for goodness sake give them something good and shivery.

Cut out the W. D. Howells' kind of plain, old-fashioned Realism and give them the Romantic School.

Play up the Conspiracy Gag and feature the Deadly Encounter. That's what the Children want. They don't care a Continental whether Mary had a Lamb or not. They want to read about somebody being killed in the Moonlight.

Mary was all right when she first started on her Travels with an incipient Sheep Ranch trailing along behind her, but unless she gets a Wiggle on herself she will have a rough Finish.

The Magazines have taught us to love the Wild Animals.

Kipling and Ernest Seton-come-again-Thompson take the Urchin by the hand and lead him among the Bengal Tigers and the snarling Grizzlies.

The bleating Lamb would soon be a Dead Card were it not for the lingering Prejudice of Parents who were brought up in the Country.

It is all right with Mint Sauce, but it is hard to take as Fiction.

THE SCOTTISH POET BURNS AND HIS HEROINES

J. M. Sloan in the Reader.

The wisest man the warl' e'er saw,
He dearly lov'd the lasses, O.

Thus sang Burns. This poet is ever a big theme. Posterity seems to make him bigger every year, and the students break him up into sections. Books have been written on his philosophy of nature and of man, upon his attitude towards theology and the kirks, upon his doctors; and here is one of 200 pages on his women. The meritorious industry of the late Mr. Robert Ford has catalogued 35 females whose praises Burns celebrated in his songs. He died at the age of 37.

NOT IN LOVE WITH ALL.

If the love of woman be the hallmark of wisdom, Burns must have been the greatest among philosophers. "My heart," so he wrote of himself, "was completely tinder, and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or another." Poverty and hardship, the "unceasing toil of a galley slave" in the "cheerless gloom of a hermit," made flirtation his chief of amusements, and love and poetry the allied resources of his highest enjoyment. He was not in love with all the ladies whom his muse made immortal, nor did he discover fit heroines of song in all the women he might love. His 35 women need to be grouped. There are, to begin with, the lasses—about whose charms he made verses in his adolescence. His fancy took wings to itself in his teens in the melody, ever soft and enchanting, of his early songs. The girl at work by his side in the harvest field is his "handsome Nell" in rhyme. He elaborates with deft apprentice artistry his song of similes in praise of the "lass of Cessnock banks"—a servant-girl of superior education and manifestly clever, by whom the young poet was jilted. Mary Morison arrests his searching eye in the village of Mauchline, and forthwith her charms are idealized in a love-song—to Hazlitt perfect—which contains this incomparable suggestion of the isolating power of the lover's fancy:

Yestreen, when to the trembling string
The dance gaed thro' the lighted ha',
To thee my fancy took its wing,
I sat but neither heard nor saw;
Tho' this was fair, and that was braw,
And yon the toast of a' the town,
I sigh'd and said among them a',
"Ye are na Mary Morison."

Some heroines in song for Burns were ladies known at a distance, his patrons, who condescended upon the poet and exciseman from social heights to him inaccessible. They were not all his friends. Nor did he introduce in his songs the most excellent Mrs. Dunlop, a lady of rank and culture, who was one of his earliest patrons among the Scottish aristocracy.

THE TRAGEDY OF PEGGY.

Probably Burns' reverence for the character of Mrs. Dunlop was all too deep for lyric expression. Peggy Kennedy was introduced to him by his lawyer in Mauchline, Gavin Hamilton. This beautiful girl, born in the purple of her county, was wickedly betrayed by the son of a local laird, an ungallant "Colonel" in the army. Burns was fascinated by this Peggy, and translated her tragedy of romance into his songs of "Bonnie Doon" in imagery and tones of melting pathos:

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd the rose
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree;
And my fause lover stole the rose,
But, ah! he left the thorn wi' me.

By the sylvan banks of the Ayr River the poet caught a glimpse of female beauty in Miss Alexander, a laird's daughter, and she passed into "The Lass of Ballachmyle" of his minstrelsy. Patronage bestowed upon him by the Duchess of Gordon accounts for the song of—"Gordon Castle." When a visitor at Ochtertyre, in Perthshire, he made the lovely Euphemia Murray his artist's model for the song—"Blythe, Blythe, and Merry Was She." Burns had met a young English lady in Nithsdale, who was only 4 feet 2 inches in stature. This Deborah Davies inspired one of his tenderest lyrics—"Bonnie Wee Thing." In praise of her qualities the poet dropped into epigram:

Ask why God made the gem so small
And why so huge the granite?
Because God meant mankind should set
The higher value on it.

HIS SELECTION OF HEROINES.

Burns selected the heroines of his songs, also, from among friends of his family. "Chloris," the flame of many songs of his second, or Dumfries, period belongs to this class. Her name was Jean Lorimer—"lassie wi' the lint-white locks." Her father was innkeeper and farmer in one at Craigieburn, near Moffat, the scene of the carousal glorified in the drinking song—"Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Maut." She eloped to Gretna Green with a scoundrel who deserted her soon afterwards, and left her, a beauty in social ruin. Burns was deeply touched by the misfortunes of "Chloris," who was his model for the humorous song—"Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad." There is a statement in one of the poet's letters that "Chloris" never was anything to him more than his "friend in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love." Another flame of this type was Jessie Lewars, sister of Burns' colleague in the excise service, who soothed the brow that was wrung with anguish in the poet's last years, and by her sympathy and tenderness helped him through his tragic death. To her, whose love for Burns seems to have been pure as the sunlight she watched lowering upon his deathbed, he dedicated the last of his finished songs:

Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear,
Though are sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,
And soft as their parting tear—Jessie.

ANOTHER CLASS.

To another class belong "Clarinda," "Highland Mary," and "Bonnie Jean." In Mrs. McLehose, his "Clarinda," the heroic in love was mixed with much coarse clay of calculating selfishness. This lady of good family, beautiful, cultivated, and having a weakness for making rhymes, contrived to meet Burns in Edinburgh, when he was the lion of the social hour. At the age of seventeen, she had made an unfortunate marriage. For several years, when she met Burns, she had been separated from her husband, who was resident in Jamaica. Infatuation followed, but in a few months the infatuation for "Clarinda" lifted from Burns. His earlier flame resumed her place as "mistress of his soul." Yet he never could wholly forget this Edinburgh bluestocking, and when toasting the ladies he was often overheard muttering the significant name—"Mrs. M.!" For all "Clarinda's" tricks of cant and hypocrisy, it was her image that struck from the lyre of Burns two of his best songs—"My Nannie's Awa'" and "Ae Fond Kiss." In four lines of the song in praise of this one fond kiss, Scott discovered "the secret of a thousand love tales":

Had we never lov'd sae kindly,
Had we never lov'd sae blindly,
Never met—or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

DEATH OF HIGHLAND MARY.

In distress, Burns—who knew no continuous prosperity—sought solace in woman's love. At Mauchline in 1786 he signed a secret bond of marriage to Jean Armour, the daughter of the village stonemason. Jean's father intervened, persuaded her to burn the compact of marriage, and cease all communications with the plowman poet. Burns was in agony. Wrath with one he loved worked like madness in his brain. A new love must heal the wounds of the old. The same qualities which he had lost in Jean Armour he immediately found in Mary Campbell, a dairymaid in the district. He resolved to marry his "Highland Mary" and emigrate with her to the West Indies. But this was not to be. In the interval Mary died of a fever in Greenock. By inference of charity may this peasant girl best be known from the two songs—"Highland Mary" and "To Mary in Heaven"—which in their melody of tragic pathos are hardly surpassed by any among the sweetest songs that tell of saddest thought.

BONNIE JEAN.

With Highland Mary in her grave in the kirkyard of Greenock, and "Clarinda's" kisses grown insipid, Burns recovered "Bonnie Jean" Armour, in defiance of her protesting parents. His love for her is reflected in the song—"Of a' the Airts":

There's not a bonnie flower that springs
By fountain, shaw, or green;
There's no a bonnie bird that sings
But minds me o' my Jean.

"If I have not got polite tattle, modish manners, and fashionable dress," wrote Burns of his wife, "I am not sickened and disgusted with the multiform curse of boarding-school affectations; and I have got the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the country." Jean worshiped her poet.' Not less the heroine as widow than as wife, Jean Armour survived Burns for 38 years, happy in the refulgence of her poet's fame. Burns, said Jean to Hew Ainslie, was "aye gudenatured, and kind baith to the bairns and to me."—J. M. Sloan, in The Reader.

SOME CORONATION SUPERSTITIONS

INCIDENTS AT CROWNING OF KINGS THAT WERE CONSIDERED ILL OMENS.

The several coronations which have taken place within the last few years have brought into mind not only the curious customs with which tradition surrounds such ceremonies, but the many superstitions and omens which attend the various functions. In the past every minute detail carried meaning, and every slightest mishap in the elaborate proceedings bespoke disaster.

An unfortunate incident happened at the crowning of William the Conqueror. After the coronation oath, in which the new monarch promised to protect the church and to execute judgment and mercy, the archbishop put the question to the assembled crowd:

"Will ye have this prince to be your king?"

A clamorous response of assent startled the Norman garrison. They believed the English had revolted, and took up their swords and torches. They set houses on fire, the flames spread, there was a general alarm.

The English, hearing of the plunder, rushed out of the church. The bishops and clergy who remained were in such confusion that they could hardly go through with the act of crowning. William heard the tumult, but could not conjecture the cause, and sat trembling at the foot of the altar. No great mischief was done by the fire, but the occurrence laid the foundation of a long enmity between the English and Normans.

The day of Henry V.'s coronation, "being Passion Sundale, was a sore and tempestuous day, with wind, snow and sleet, so that men greatlie marvelled thereat, making divers interpretations what the same might signifie."

An incident attending the crowning of Charles Stuart was ominous. The royal barge drifted from its mooring place and stuck in the mud of the Thames. Other occurrences were unpropitious. The sermon sounded like a funeral oration, an earthquake shock was felt during the service, and the herald made a slip in his announcement, proclaiming him "the dubitable," instead of the "indubitable heir."

When George III. was installed on the throne, Lord Effingham, master of ceremonies, forgot to provide the sword of state and the chair and canopy for the banquet. The articles had to be improvised and the ceremonies were delayed for hours. When the King complained of the negligence he received the reply from Effingham:

"It is true, sir, that there has been some neglect, but I have taken care that the next coronation shall be regulated in the exactest manner possible."

As George was moving down the Abbey with the royal circlet on his head, the great diamond fell out, and was found only after much trouble. There were not wanting in after days those who saw in the mishap the foreshadowing of the falling away of the thirteen colonies.

It is well to remember, in reading of these gloomy predictions of doom, that such indients are seldom thought of until an untoward incident has occurred. Then the superstitious mind seeks some occurrence to serve the purpose of an omen, a thing not hard to find, since almost every occasion is attended by some unfortunate accident.—Nineteenth Century and After.

A WISE FATHER.

A certain New York actor who keeps a home at Central Park West sent his wife off one evening last summer to a function that both had been invited to attend while he prepared to spend a quiet evening among his books.

The wife returned to find the house remarkably quiet, indeed. She had left the children playing about, but now they were nowhere to be seen.

She demanded to be told what had become of them, and the husband explained with a leer that, as they had made a good deal of noise, he had put them to bed without waiting for her or calling a maid.

"I hope they gave you no trouble," she said.

"No," he replied, "with the exception of the one in the cot here. He objected a good deal to my undressing him and putting him to bed."

The wife went to inspect the cot.

"Why," she exclaimed. "That's little Johnny Green, from next door."—The Billboard.

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