

The PRIVATE LIFE OF

*Katharine
Hepburn*

"She Has Met Heartbreak
Face to Face, and May Some Day
Be Our Greatest Actress"—
A Close-up of the Screen's Most-
Talked-About New Star

(Reading time: 14 minutes 45 seconds.)

SHE has loved one man only in all her life—a very tall, broad young man with dark hair and keen eyes and a humorous mouth whom she met while she was still in college.

Sorrow laid its hand upon her youth in the untimely death of her idolized older brother.

Her intellectual New England family, whose members have been in the forefront of every American crusade from the Boston Tea Party to the fight for woman suffrage, made her what she is today.

When she followed her mother's footsteps into the ivy-clad halls of Bryn Mawr, she intended to become a psychologist.

Her creed of life is individualism and work and her goal is clear before her, and she brings to them both the same boyish fervor with which she sold suffrage balloons upon the streets of New York when she was only ten.

Yet to watch her with her young sister Marion, who she claims is the "real genius of the family," is to realize that her soul is as maternal as her mother's—that mother who bore six children to grow up in the fine old Connecticut home with its famous garden.

As vital as Mussolini, as natural as a small boy sitting on a fence, as honest as her own freckles, Katharine Hepburn is not only a great actress and potentially the greatest we have ever had in this country—she is the finest type of girlhood and womanhood that America produces.

By **ADELA
ROGERS
ST. JOHNS**

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But it is difficult to see this real Katharine Hepburn through the tangled tales that wrap her from sight.

She's temperamental. She isn't temperamental—that's just an act to make Hollywood Hepburn-conscious.

She's completely nuts. She isn't—she's shrewd and calculating.

She's a wild woman. She isn't a wild woman—she's merely showing off.

She has \$16,000,000 and gave up a brilliant social life to go on the stage against her family's wishes. She hasn't a penny and she isn't related to the rich and prominent Hepburns at all. She rides in an imported sedan with a uniformed chauffeur and footman—she drives her own old tin rattle-trap. She's noisy and cyclonic—she's high-hat and frozen-faced. She's married—she isn't married. She has two children—she hasn't any. She's eighteen—she's thirty-five. . . .

You can see for yourself that all these things cannot possibly be true. Yet all of them have been broadcast.

"People," said Katharine Hepburn, "have some very funny ideas about me, haven't they?"

We were sitting in the small drawing-room of her New York home. It is a delightful made-over old house on a side street just off Fifth Avenue.

"It's partly your own fault," I answered. "You never tell anybody anything. You can talk more and say less that matters about yourself than anybody in pictures."

"I know," she said. "But—do you like to talk about yourself?" She gave me that wide, little-boy grin of hers. "You're Irish and I'm Scotch. That's the difference. And then, you were born in California and I was born in Connecticut."



"When necessary she can wear clothes with dash."

Left: As she looked just before she entered college.

Right: In her childhood, "a skinny, freckled youngster."

We talked about the difference between New England and the Far West. Then she tried to sell me on golf. Her enthusiasm was delightful. It filled the room.

Katharine Hepburn is never neutral nor indifferent nor casual about anything. Her eyes, which are very light blue, a strange turquoise blue, are always terribly alive. Her words tumble over each other breathlessly, she has so much to say. But she is a good listener too.

We had a violent argument about a book which I liked and she didn't. It was such fun that we both decided to read the book again. The name of a motion-picture star I don't admire came up and I spoke my mind freely. When I had finished, Katharine roared with laughter.

"YOU either like a person a lot or you just don't like them at all," she said. "I'm like that myself. But, do you know, I don't believe it's *people* we like or dislike. I think we admire or detest certain traits of character. I admire courage more than anything. And I despise double-crossing." She gave me a quick frank look and said, "I hope you like me."

There was something very shy and sweet and honest in having a girl with the world at her feet say that.

Since Katharine Hepburn swept to fame in eighteen months, the number of people who claim to have discovered her outranks the number of Follies girls in Hollywood.

Only one person discovered Katharine Hepburn. No portrait of her could be complete without George Cukor, who is today the best motion-picture director in Hollywood and who made such outstanding triumphs as *Dinner at Eight* and *Little Women*.

I was walking along the RKO lot one day after lunch when I was accosted by a large dark



gentleman who seemed on the verge of spontaneous combustion.

"It's too terrible!" said George Cukor. "It's fantastic! Nothing on earth can make me do it."

"What's wrong?" I said.

He explained volubly that after testing hundreds of girls for the great part of the daughter in Bill of Divorcement, the powers that be in the studio had decided to cast for it a pretty little blonde ingénue. "She's a lovely girl," he said. "She'd make a great Little Eva. But if she plays Sidney one of us will never live through the picture."

He broke down and went away weeping and shuddering in all his two hundred pounds.

A few days later he burst into my office.

"I've just seen a test of the girl I want for Bill of Divorcement," he said. "She's too marvelous! She'll be greater than Garbo! Nobody wants her but me, so come and help me fight for her. You don't need to see the test. It's a foul test anyhow. She looks like a boa constrictor on a fast. But she's great!"

By this time George was dashing across the studio lawn, dragging me behind him.

"Take my word for it, darling. Just say you think she's great. Start raving. Don't go too strong—just say she'll be better in the part than Katharine Cornell—"

We were tearing up the studio stairs.

"I can't yell about her."

I said in gasps, "unless I know who the hell she is."

"Katharine Hepburn!" George shouted.

That was the first time, upon a hot afternoon in 1932, that I ever heard the name.

Well, I did my bit of yelling, to which nobody paid the slightest attention. They didn't want her. They said she was awful. For it took months to learn to photograph Hepburn, it took the greatest care to record her voice properly, and so the test wasn't very good.

Bring that gal out from New York, when Hollywood was full of fine experienced young actresses? George, they said, had gone cuckoo.

And when they finally yielded to George's wailings and sent a wire to her agent, Leland Hayward, and found out that this unknown young woman wanted fifteen hundred dollars a week, David Selznick, then head of RKO, simply collapsed.

BUT Cukor went on making everybody's life miserable. He nagged Mr. Selznick until in sheer desperation, and also because he had enormous faith in Cukor, David sent for Miss Katharine Hepburn.

And Miss Katharine Hepburn was simply furious and didn't want to come to Hollywood one little bit. She loved the stage, where, after four years of discouragements, she had made her first and only hit in *Warrior's Husband*. And she didn't want to leave her husband. But she finally gave in—it was only for three weeks, and that was a lot of money.

Having won the first battle, Cukor's troubles weren't over by any means. As long as I live I will never forget the first day she appeared on the lot. Everybody was in the commissary at lunch when she walked in with Mr. Cukor. Several executives nearly fainted. Mr. Selznick swallowed a chicken wing whole. We beheld a tall skinny

girl entirely covered with freckles and wearing the most appalling and incredible clothes I have ever seen in all my life. They looked like something Lee Tracy would design for the Mexican army to go ski-jumping in. Yet you could tell that they were supposed to be the last word.

George Cukor looked across at us. He was a little pale, but still in the ring. He didn't eat any lunch.

I was present at the first—and last—bout between him and his protégée.

The scene was in the wardrobe department of RKO. Miss Hepburn had arrived only that day, but she had to be on the set the next morning. Therefore it was necessary to get her clothes with all possible speed. But one dress after another was rejected by the young lady from New York. She just didn't like any of 'em.

GEORGE sat back and looked and listened. Finally, when the designer had reached the desperation point, he spoke: "Do you like that rig you've got on?"

"I certainly do," she said coolly. "It was created specially for me by one of the finest houses in Paris."

"Well," said Mr. Cukor, "I think it stinks. I think it's the worst-looking thing I ever saw on any woman in my whole life. I think anybody who would wear it outside the bathroom doesn't know what clothes are. Now what do you think of that?"

There was a moment of tense silence—and then she began to laugh. She laughed

so hard she finally sat down on the floor. Eventually everybody was in hysterics—she has that kind of laugh. "You win!" she said. "Pick out the clothes you want."

"And what's more," said he, "you need a haircut."

As they came out of the barber shop Kate Hepburn looked up at him and said very quietly, "And by the way, I've a steel splinter in my eye—got it on the train. Do you think you could find me a doctor?"

She had waited until the work was done, enduring considerable pain, before she mentioned that.

From that day forward she and Cukor became devoted friends. Katharine Hepburn gives him all credit for her swift success. And indeed she should. But it's very nice to hear her do it every chance she gets. Stars sometimes forget.

The truth is that Katharine knows nothing about clothes and cares less, though when necessary she can wear them with dash and elegance. You see, for one thing, she is a Bryn Mawr girl. I have known a good many Bryn Mawr girls who cared just as little for clothes. They don't go in for fashionable attire. I shouldn't be at all surprised if those faded overalls that were called "part of Miss Hepburn's act" in Hollywood had come with her from the campus.

Katharine Hepburn during her four college years was absorbed in psychology. Her ambition was to become a psychologist.

Then suddenly her childish wish to be an actress crystallized. The first person she told about this was her psychology prof.

"Nothing will help you more in acting," he told her, "than a knowledge of psychology. You will have a foundation that will enable you to understand every feeling and make it real."

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With George Cukor, the director who discovered her, when *Little Women* and her success were in the making.

But in spite of all that, Katharine Hepburn fell in love with Ludlow Ogden Smith, who lived just a few miles away in Philadelphia and belonged to one of that city's oldest and most prominent families.

They met during her junior year, at a dance. The following summer Luddy visited the Hepburns in their summer place at Fenwick, Connecticut. In Katharine's senior year they were much together, and on December 12, 1928, just six months after her graduation, they were married at the Hepburn home in Hartford.

Already she had decided upon her career. And her husband understood and approved. He was fair enough to see that she must carry on where her restless energy, her ambition, her whole training led her.

In a way, Ludlow Ogden Smith is as definite a personality as his famous wife. For all his quietness and his easy good manners, anybody would think several times before calling him "Katharine Hepburn's husband"—and then decide against it.

Yet it was one of Kate Hepburn's greatest fears when she first became a great star—that fear of what it might do to her marriage.

By profession Ludlow Smith is a broker, but he is more. Men who know him well say he is something of a statistical wizard in finance, with an amazing grasp of world economic conditions. In his own world he is an important figure, and he takes great joy in his work, which is the reason he will never go to Hollywood.

Between these two, throughout the years of their married life, has existed a perfect understanding and comradeship. Katharine shoots a 76 on the golf course, but he can beat her. They have roamed about the world together. "I like him better than any one else I know," Katharine once said to a close friend. "It's very important to like the man you're in love with. And he loves all my family just as well as I do."

Whether this marriage can survive their long separations, whether it will weather the new problems that must come from Katharine Hepburn's extraordinary success, no one can tell. Certainly it is not easy to conduct a marriage at such long range, to be happy three thousand miles apart, to keep a close union when two people are both vitally absorbed and keenly ambitious concerning their own very different careers.

THIS much is certain: Katharine Hepburn is today interested in her work above everything else.

And second to that comes her family—that family which always has and always will mean so much to her.

The Hepburns were a unit—and it was a family run entirely for the children.

Katharine Hepburn's mother and father are remarkable people. Dr. Thomas N. Hepburn is a Virginian who moved early to New England, where for thirty years he has been a physician and surgeon in Hartford. He is a very well known surgeon, but the people of Hartford will tell you that the tall quiet man is something more than that. He is the sort of doctor who brings comfort by his very presence.

He adored his small daughter Kate. He talked with her as man to man even when she was only a leggy skinny freckled youngster with a million questions on her eager tongue. He answered them all with infinite wisdom and patience; he confided in her often because she was so swiftly sympathetic.

That is one reason why Katharine Hepburn saves her money today, why she doesn't go in for glamour and glitter. It isn't the easiest thing in the world to bring up a family of six children on a doctor's earnings, even if he is a successful doctor. Especially when those six children must be sent to the finest schools and to Harvard and Bryn Mawr.

And Katharine feels that it is right that some day her father should retire. Probably she will have a hard time making him do it, but that is one of her goals.

Katharine Houghton Hepburn, her mother, is a cousin of that Houghton who was American ambassador to England not so long ago.

A graduate of Bryn Mawr herself, member of a fine old Boston family, Mrs. Hepburn has always been a real leader in the crusades to win better conditions for workingwomen, to protect the health of poor children, to lift educational standards.

When she was a little girl, Kate often went with her mother on these pilgrimages. She knew Margaret Sanger and she used to sit on Emma Goldman's knee and hear her plead for decent conditions among the factory workers. She heard her mother and Charlotte Perkins Gilman planning the campaign to give women the right to vote. And she met and adored Isadora Duncan.

SO it was only natural that Katharine should grow up to admire women who *did* things.

There was never the slightest objection in the family when Katharine announced that she was going on the stage. Everybody was delighted. They gathered about and helped her pack when she got her first job in a stock company in Boston. And during the four hard years in New York they were always behind her.

Today, the moment the famous Katharine Hepburn lands in New York, she makes a bee line for Hartford, and there is much rejoicing and endless conversation in the Hepburn household.

But there is one place vacant in it now.

The idol of Katharine's childhood was her older brother Tom. There was a very special love between them. The family understood that. To Tom and Tom only the girl confided her innermost thoughts and secrets. Their devotion was the shining star of her youth.

Tom died suddenly when she was still in her teens.

We went to see Little Women with Damon Runyon and his beautiful wife. When Katharine Hepburn, as Jo, held her beloved little sister, Beth, and knew that she was soon to lose her forever, I looked up and saw that Damon's eyes were wet with tears—and around New York Mr. Runyon is considered a very hard-boiled gentleman indeed.

As we went out he said, "I don't know why that got me. But there was something real about that girl's grief." He was right. There was a poignancy in those scenes that was almost unbearable.

Perhaps it welled from that deep inner place in Katharine Hepburn's heart that still bleeds for Tom. In his loss she met heartbreak face to face.

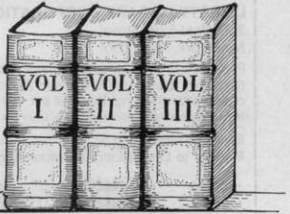
Her work is all-important to her. To it she gives the best of herself.

Some day—and it won't be so distant, I believe—Katharine Hepburn will be our greatest actress—perhaps as great as Duse. And I have never said that about any actress before in my life.

THE END

A New Puzzle Feature

By F. Gregory Hartswick



A collector had a rare set of books in three volumes, which stood on his shelf as shown in our illustration.

One day he found that a bookworm had bored a hole straight from the first page of Volume I to the last page of Volume III. Now, the covers of the books were each $\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch thick, and the paper in each book was exactly 3 inches in thickness. The question is, how far did the worm travel? No, no, you're quite wrong! And there isn't any trick about the length of the worm, either. It's a perfectly straight question, with a perfectly straight answer.

(Answers will be found on page 66)