

the faculty voted most worthy by all standards of scholarship and manhood. Uncle Morris dearly loves to orate, and he had just got so far when the undergraduate student body rose as one boy and shouted:

"Billiken—oh you Billiken boy!"

While the chapel rocked with one cheer after another I leaned back in my seat and felt so happy and comfortable that things had come out just as I had planned. It had all been so delightfully easy, just to enlist Uncle Morris, work the unsuspecting faculty, draw a check that my bank account could never feel, and have William for so glorious years all to myself.

And it was at that satisfied moment that life woke me up.

William was on his feet, and in the best and simplest way possible he was declining the honor done him by the vote of the faculty.

"It is great to have had all of you," and then he bowed to Uncle Morris and then waved his hand delightedly at the seething body of undergraduates, "offer it to me; but for the next two years I have got contract with an old white plow mule and a garden hoe out in the Harpeth alley. Send some other fellow down to the Rialto, and pray for August rain and the December frost for my potatoes."

And he sat down amid a riot of remonstrances, while I sat cold and white. I had forgot that farm mortgage and the other woman who had a claim on William. I hated her! A hot rage sent the blood to my cheeks, and I hardly knew what was happening until I felt that something wonderful had quieted that storming, protesting house.

WHEN I saw her! She was tall and straight and strong and deep-bosomed, with the most wonderful head set on her broad shoulders. White curls were flying out under her little red net, and a lean, stiff lavender print dress billowed about her in yards and yards of ruffles. She carried a great bunch of lilacs that must have come from her own garden and that made the bouquets of hothouse roses and orchids that were waiting for presentation seem inadequate. But her wonderful, blue eyes and wide, beautiful mouth, that was curved out into one of William's own smiles, were what had seized her audience the minute she rose to her feet. There was no mistaking her identity, and she had to raise her hand, gloved in gorgeous black lace mitts of thirty years before, to still the uproar of greeting.

"Friends," she said, with a tender flash that took hold of a separate heartstring from every human being in the chapel. That was a mighty fine speech that my own William made you a few minutes ago, and I am right down astonished at his wisdom. The love of God in it I knew he had, for I put that into him myself by a liberal use of the good Book backed up by the rod if necessary; but his learning does astonish me, especially as it leaves him so stupid in the end. No, wait a minute, I'll attend to you later." And she waved William, who had started toward the back to his place on the platform, while the undergraduate body again cheered with appreciation.

"It is true I have had to put in a few years peeling potatoes mighty close, and making out the meal sack good to pay for all this education that you good gentlemen," with a glance at the astonished and delighted faculty, "have been trying to get into his thick, country-bumpkin head; but I'm not satisfied with your job. William Henry Millbrook thinks that another Sarah Ann Millbrook is going to blow him to hold back from such a chance as you have offered him this day. The whole world there across the big waters is a-suffering in a cruel war, and out-reaching pitiful hands for us to come open our peaceful and fruitful valleys to help them by food for their starvation and by word of God's comfort for their broken hearts.

"I'd go if I could; but I can stay at home and send William on the money to offer him, of which I know he'll not spend a penny on foolish trapesing around, to help them that needs; and after I

pay the interest on the debt I put on the house I'll have a barrel of flour and maybe one of potatoes to ship for him to give out for me. My back is still strong enough to carry a seed basket to some purpose. I ask you to excuse me for interrupting this meeting, as I know St. Paul says no woman oughter do; but I can get William's clothes patched up and him ready to go in about two weeks from now, and I want him to take a God's blessing from all of you with him."

And in a silence like that which had followed William's valedictory his mother sat down and placed her bunch of lilacs on her broad lap.

I CAN'T describe the scene that followed.

I only heard Uncle Morris subscribe three thousand dollars to the fund for William to take, and the board of directors add two to make it five, while the students emptied their pockets into their hats.

Then my vision came. I had loved William for a few weeks under summer skies and rose-bowered arbors; but this woman had toiled for him and with him through long, hard years in a way that had made him what he is. I could see her trudging down the long furrows after the plow with her seed basket, and then sitting in the twilight with the Book across her knee and the red head against her arm. What right had I in him? Could I ever earn one? Two women, I saw, must make a man's life. Would I ever be worthy to be joined with her even in

love of him? I felt I never could, and my head drooped, and my eyes blinded with tears, so that I failed to realize that the benediction had been asked.

Over by the window behind the rostrum I stood, and was just about to give up William and life in general in one great conflagration of agony, when big, strong, purple-print arms inclosed me, and the rich voice, with a mother note I had not heard since my own mother's voice was stilled, crooned above my head, which was pressed down on the lawn kerchief and into the bunch of lilacs.

"I knew you, honey bunch, from the way you looked at William and from his letters about you which match out so nice. My, I'm mighty glad he'll have such a fine, traveled girl like you to go with him to foreign parts! Country boys are always skittish of boats and languages and things like that, and I know you will take the best of care of him."

"Oh, I'm not worthy of him! I—I'm not worthy of you!" I gasped, pressing still closer against the soft, wide breast.

"Don't let him know you feel that way, child. All women do; but it isn't good for their men. I felt just that way about his father; but I never told him until William could walk alone, and he never got done joking me about it to the day of his death. Those humble squeams a woman sprouts about not being worthy of the man she loves are about the only life-preservers the poor creatures have got. Dear, dear! but I am glad I put that hay in by the help of all the neighbors and

came to the graduating, when I told William I couldn't! You and William would have been a great loss to the poor Belgians and such if I had stayed at home. I think you had better take charge of getting all the clothing on account of knowing better the sister needs of women and children, and let William parcel out the foodstuffs that the money buys."

"Yes, I will," I answered bravely, as the last even small desire for that selfish bridal saunter around the world with William vanished and left me with my head up and in the blessed state for assuming the vows of a missionary whether I could fulfil them or not. I was prayerful but humble.

"Don't you think it would be better if you went with us?" I asked timidly, still clinging to the strong arm and the lilacs.

"No; I'd better stay at home and till the ground for as many things to send as I can. I will get two good weeks' plowing out of William before you go, even if you do have to take along a jar of sweet cream in the ship to doctor up the back of his neck. My! but we'll have to begin right away to get ready to go and—"

"YES, she's going back home with us, isn't she, mother?" William's voice protruded itself into what was beginning to be a council of war. He had finished receiving his ovation and his interview with the faculty and the directors, and had come back to hunt for us. "Your Uncle Morris has offered to drive us all back to Cloverbend in his car. Please, sweetest, please! Mother, make her come home with us for a few days. I must talk with her. I can't go without her, and I—"

"Dearie me, William, do you think for a minute I would trust you to go without Susan? A man is but a broken kite without his wife to tail along after him for steadying purposes. We settled that long ago. You and her uncle and a few more of your good and kind friends get together and come down in that ottermobile; but as for me, I prefer to jog back behind old White, and I'll take Susan along with me. We have much to talk about. We'll get there by moon-up. I prepared for as much company as I could get to go home with me, as I always do when I go to meetings. And don't you touch one single apple pie till I get there, sir!"

"What did I promise you?" William asked me, as he gave his mother a kiss which somehow slid off on to the back of my neck also, as it was so close on her shoulder.

FATHER, Uncle Morris, one director, two seniors, and a freshman did go home with William—home to an old farmhouse down in Harpeth Valley that was long and low, with vines over the gables, doves in the vines, and peace and poverty back of its wide threshold.

And the moon was glorious down by the milk-house, and so light that William succeeded in skimming almost a whole layer of cream from one of the crocks with his wedge of pie so skilfully that the remaining portion spread out and concealed the deed.

William was so like ten years as he licked around the corners of the pie to keep it from dripping that I had another awful what his mother calls squeam of fear about him and—me.

"William," I ventured, clinging desperately to the arm that was not devoted to balancing the pie, "how will you ever—that is, me too—do without your mother on—on this dreadful bridal trip?"

Having finished the steal, William took me in his arms, curled his long fingers about my chin, and tilted my head back so he could let the moonlight down to the very depths of my eyes, in which he could only see himself reflected.

"Dear," he said tenderly in his benediction voice, "God gives every man's life into the keeping of two women, and he couldn't do without either. He must have both. We'll come back to her, and then I'll have the two of you."

"Yes, us both," I answered devoutly.



"Oh, I'm not worthy of him! I—I'm not worthy of you!"