

Winifred's Best Years.

By ANNE HEILMAN.

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Winifred Lane and Josiah Dent had been lovers since their A B C days. For seventeen years now she had worn the ring he had sold his first colt to buy.

Through it all Josiah had waited patiently, declaring always when Winifred offered him his release that there was but one woman in the world for him, and Winifred had settled down to cheerful performance of daily duty.

The patiently awaited day seemed near at hand on this dull November afternoon. Richard Lane had unexpectedly appeared at his sister's home accompanied by his third wife, and without any unnecessary delay had taken his children to the western town in which he was located.

Miss Lane stood on the front veranda and watched the loaded wagon drive away. "Dick hasn't had any kind of luck with wives so far, but I've a notion this will last," she said aloud as she went slowly indoors.

How still it was! The children's voices seemed to echo through the empty rooms. Winifred's eyes filled with scalding tears.

"Yes," she said in a tone which held both regret and relief, "they're gone for good, and I s'pose I'm free at last. Of course he'll hear," she continued presently. "Maybe he'll be over to-night. I'd better tidy up."

Miss Lane lit the parlor lamp and, after a little hesitation, pinned on her best lace collar. "I'll do no harm even if nobody comes," she argued to herself.

But the clock struck 8 and 9, and no one came. "He hasn't heard yet," she assured herself as she went to bed.

The vigil was repeated the next evening and the next. Winifred became perplexed.

"When Dick married his second, Josiah was here before tea time," she reflected. "But I won't begin to worry until Sunday," she sensibly determined. "Josiah'll be at church, and he'll hear about Dick."

Sunday was ushered in with a drizzling rain, but in the afternoon the sun shone bravely. Miss Lane went to evening service attired in the neat gray dress and bonnet which had been purchased for her brother's second wedding, twelve years ago.

Feeling lonely, she gladly accepted an invitation from the minister's wife to a seat in the front pew. She could not see Josiah, but she felt his presence two pews behind, and his deep voice in the hymns sent thrills of pride to her loving heart.

With pardonable coquetry, she lingered a little going out. A casual glance through the open door assured her that he was waiting in the entry as of old. She had nearly reached him. In another minute she would have slipped her hand within his arm with the fond assurance of ownership when a blond head, surmounted by a bright red turban, came between them.

And Josiah went down the steps with pretty Nettie Scaries clinging to his arm.

Miss Lane walked home through the twilight alone. Lighting the lamp, she went directly to a mirror and gazed long and thoughtfully at the reflection within, comparing it with the girlish prettiness of the face beneath the red turban.

"It isn't to be wondered at," Winifred said, with a sigh, as she stirred the low fire and settled down to retrospection and consideration.

"My best years have gone and I've got dull and uninteresting in all this time."

Emma, she decided. "There ain't a soul in Bloomville knows her address. Dick says she don't look within a dozen years as old as I do, and she's a year older. She always was real tasty. Maybe I can pick up a few hints from her. Looks and dresses and general up-to-dateness makes lots of difference to a man."

All the next day she toiled steadily setting her house in order. And Tuesday morning while waiting for the expressman she penned a note to her recreant lover:

Dearest Josiah—I write to inform you that I am well and expect to spend this winter in the city. I leave today, so I shall not have the pleasure of seeing you before I go. But you will be constantly in my thoughts, and your ring, as always, will be my reminder of our engagement. Yours until death. WINIFRED.

"It will show him that I'm holdin' him fast," meditated Miss Lane as the train sped cityward. "And as I didn't give any address, he won't know where to write. He isn't one to go very far with that Scaries girl until he breaks with me. And he can't break with me until he finds out where to send a letter."

Bloomville was golden with dandelions and white with apple blossoms when Winifred Lane came home to her own. "Not a soul knows I've come," she reflected as she unpacked the new trunk. She sighed suddenly. "Well, by tomorrow I shall know. He's had the winter to consider in, and if he's still set upon it I'll give him up."

Josiah Dent came up the church steps with a look of discontent upon his comely face. In the months that had passed since Winifred's disappearance he had nursed a growing sense of injury.

"Ain't fair," he complained, "keeping a fellow on the fence so. Her best years have been spent for Dick anyhow, and a woman ages faster'n a man. If she'd given me her address, I'd have settled it months ago."

Josiah went up the aisle to his own pew. Above the high back of the minister's pew there arose a white sailor hat, swathed with an airy muslin scarf. Beneath it soft waves of curling hair rippled across a brow from which all traces of care had been resolutely smoothed away.

Josiah, watching with some curiosity until she turned her head slightly, caught the clear profile and noted the soft color in her cheek. It was Winifred! All at once there dawned upon him the truth that immortal youth is not at the mercy of added years and that better than the passing beauty of girlhood is that womanliness which shall outlast the ages.

"I'm glad I didn't know where to write," thought Josiah, with a sense of narrow escape and a growing feeling of anxiety.

Winifred was unaware of his presence until she heard his voice in the closing hymn. As the last notes ceased she turned to him, smiling straight up into his anxious face.

"Well, Josiah," she said, "and Josiah wondered why he had not known before that raiment, whether it be the unbecoming gray of past years or the crisp muslin that seemed to give back to him the love of his early years, was not worthy of a passing thought. It was the old Winifred who smiled up at him out of those clear eyes. Nettie Scaries and the throng about them were alike forgotten. He only thought of the woman before him—the only woman in the world for him—and all Bloomville had its answer to a long winter of speculation and comment as he stooped to kiss her in the crowded church. Winifred Lane's best years were yet to come.

"The March of the Men of Harlech."

In military music the march occupies a prominent position and has been employed not only to stimulate courage, but also from about the middle of the seventeenth century to insure the orderly advance of troops. One of the earliest instances of rhythmic march is the Welsh war strain, "The March of the Men of Harlech," which is supposed to have originated during the siege of Harlech castle in 1468. In England the military march was of somewhat later development. Sir John Hawkins in his "History of Music" tells us that its characteristic was dignity and gravity, in which respect it differed greatly from the French, which was brisk and alert, and apropos of this subject the same author quotes a witty reply of an Elizabethan soldier to the French Marshal Bliron's remark that "the English march, being beaten by the drum, is slow, heavy and sluggish." "That may be true," he said, "but slow as it is it has traversed your master's country from one end to the other." — Chambers' Journal.

The Tragedies of Paris.

From 1,000 to 2,500 bodies are received in the morgue in Paris every year. These represent suicides and murders and not the deaths that occur in the ordinary course of events. And of these self-slaughters nearly half are drownings, which means that every day at least two persons jump into the Seine; two poor wretches who have failed to find life worth living. In the months of October and November suicides by drowning in Paris are double what they are the remainder of the year. The prospect of having to suffer the hardships of another winter, begging about in the cold and sleeping out in the snow, is too much for many a fate-cursed wanderer. An interesting fact revealed by the suicide statistics of Paris is that women show a decided dislike to drowning as a means of violent death. Four times as many men as women are fished out of the Seine. The records show that asphyxiation is the favorite way with the weaker sex for "shuffling off this mortal coil" when it has ceased to be bearable.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Lesson I.—Third Quarter, For July 7, 1907.

THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Text of the Lesson, Ex. xvi, 1-15, Memory Verse, 4—Golden Text, John vi, 51—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

[Copyright, 1907, by American Press Association.] The history of Israel in the wilderness on their way to the promised land, while literally true, is also typical of the life of the believer from the day of his redemption till he enters into the rest and joy and fullness which are his in Christ Jesus. This all believers might do very quickly, but as a rule many are slow to enter in, and some never do. Read I Cor. x, 11, and context and Heb. III, 12, to IV, 11, and give heed to the Spirit's testimony concerning Israel's disobedient and to His warnings to us not to fall into the same sins. In poetry Canaan is often taken to represent heaven and Jordan death, but this is not the teaching of Scripture, as there are no foes to overcome nor fighting to be done in heaven. The Passover plainly teaches redemption by the blood of the Lamb; the overthrow of Pharaoh's hosts in the Red sea suggests our complete separation from the world, the world crucified to us and we to it (Gal. vi, 14), while Jordan, with its memorial leap in the bed of the river and another on the Canaan side, speaks of death to self, crucified, buried and risen with Christ (Gal. II, 20; Rom. vi, 6-11; Col. III, 1-3).

Last week's lesson was all victory and praise, but the first unpleasant thing, the waters of Marah, set them all murmuring. How like them we are. See how by a tree the waters are made sweet, and consider how the lost ax was recovered by a piece of a tree also (II Kings vi, 6). The lost restored and the bitter made pleasant by a tree—what can it mean but Himself, the tree of life of Eden and Revelation, the green tree of Luke xxiii, 31? Obedience to Him brings health to body and soul and gives us Ehim instead of Marah (Ex. xv, 23-27).

How short lived was their peace! Just a few days farther on their journey and again they murmur because there is nothing to eat (xvi, 2). Did our Lord have this in mind when He said: "Take no anxious thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink (Matt. vi, 25). "Seek not ye what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink. Live not in careful suspense. . . . Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things" (Luke xii, 29, 30, margin). No doubt, for it was He who said to Moses, "I will rain bread from heaven for you" (verse 4), who afterward said of Himself, "I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven" (John vi, 51).

He gave them flesh also, for in the evening the quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning when the dew was gone the ground was covered with manna, which they gathered, some more, some less, every man according to his eating (verses 12-18). This bread from heaven with which He fed them, so suggestive of Himself, the True Bread, had to be gathered every day, the portion of a day in His day (verse 4, margin). In connection with this last phrase see II Kings xxv, 30; Jer. III, 34, margin, and be sure that the same Lord is appointing your portion of all things needful every day, and He would have you without fail gather your portion from His Word every day, for "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (Deut. viii, 3; Matt. iv, 4). He would have us eat His Word with rejoicing and esteem it more than our daily food (Jer. xv, 16; Job xxiii, 12).

We must also accept all the events of life as His best portion for us and never murmur, for all our murmurings are not against people or circumstances, but against God Himself, and He hears every murmur (verses 8-12). Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. Be content with such things as ye have, for He hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (I Tim. vi, 8; Heb. xiii, 5).

The manna was not to be gathered fresh every day and not kept over, yet here in some disobedient (verse 20). They were to keep holy the Sabbath day and on the sixth day gather enough for two days, being assured that that would keep, yet herein some transgressed also and went out to gather it on the seventh day, but found none (verses 27-30). A golden pot was to be filled and kept for future generations to see how God provided for their fathers. This pot of manna, with Aaron's rod that budded, was at one time kept in the ark (which Moses afterward made), with the tables containing the Ten Commandments (Heb. ix, 4). It is not for us to question the commands of God, but meekly receive His Word, hold it fast and cheerfully obey it. He who redeemed us will certainly care for us (Rom. viii, 32), and it is our part joyfully to trust Him. Hidden manna is one of the things promised to the overcomer (Rev. ii, 17). May we some day know the full significance of it! We may if we will. The manna tasted like honey (verse 31). David may have had this in mind when he wrote that the Word of God was sweeter than honey or the honeycomb (Ps. cxix, 10).

All the dealings of God with Israel were intended to make them know Him as the Lord their God, that through them others might know Him also (verse 12; Josh. iv, 24). It is the same with us.

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