

A Strong Man

By Martha McCulloch-Williams. Copy-right, 1905, By Martha McCulloch-Williams.

"Humph! I'd as lieve marry a funeral as Wilton Roy," Granny Bunch said, her short nose in air.

Sunshine laughed aloud. Sunshine was otherwise Anne Trevor, heiress of Way's End, and Granny Bunch was Mrs. Richard Lee. Sunshine was tall and twenty, Granny Bunch was short and stout, with a fresh, rosy face. The two were cronies despite the forty years between them, also despite the fact that Granny Bunch was bent on snatching Sunshine to her mind.

They lived half a mile apart, and Sunshine did the visiting for the most part. She was not yet mistress at Way's End. Her stepmother, Mrs. Trevor, had a life estate there and was as austere as unsocial as Granny Bunch was hospitable. She had also a grudge against Granny in that she, too, had views as to Anne's proper betrothal. Granny was all for marrying Sunshine to her grandson, Richard Lee 3d, whereas Mrs. Trevor held it little short of her stepdaughter's Christian duty to take Wilton Roy, her nephew. He had come with her to Way's End and lived there. He was disfigured, lame and sensible, exactly the husband for such a piece of quicksilver as Anne. The match would be in every way ideal. Wilton had only a modest competence, along with a capacity for handling a fine fortune.

Thus Mrs. Trevor to her inmost self, thus also obscurely, with much wrapping about of fine phrases, to Sunshine. She hated bitterly Richard 3d and did not scruple to say outright that he and his fat old grand mother were rank fortune hunters, laying traps and pitfalls for Anne's unwary feet. Anne's usual answer was to mount her horse and gallop away to her dear Gruffy Bunch. If Richard 3d happened to be there when she arrived, why, so much the better.

He was younger than Sunshine by a whole month and fancied himself madly in love with her. He had been courting her since they were fifteen, with the usual interludes—college escapades and summer flirtations. Sunshine knew all about them, for Granny Bunch was Richard 3d's confidant.

"You mustn't mind, honey," she had said to Sunshine. "Indeed, you ought to be obliged to these other girls—they are taking out such a lot of the foolishness. By the time Dicky is through college he will have come to know himself in a measure. Then he'll find out over again what he knew in the beginning—that there is nobody in the world like Sunshine."

It was Dicky's story—the tale of his latest enthrallment—that had led to Granny Bunch's revilement of Wilton Roy. Sunshine had said demurely she did not understand how men could be so different. Wilton Roy had told her he should never make love to any girl but the one he meant to marry. And then Granny Bunch had exploded. She hated the superior Wilton.

"One couldn't very well marry a funeral—marrying a minister is about the nearest thing to it," Sunshine said reflectively. Granny Bunch eyed her narrowly, then broke into a laugh, saying:

"Honey, you gently fooled me then. Honest now—don't you find him mighty wearing?"

"Not always; he has his uses," Sunshine said. "He says an undisputed thing in such a solemn way and after I have heard him awhile almost anybody else is refreshingly brilliant—even Dicky dear."

"Dicky is no genius—he'll never set the river afire—but he is a man—an athlete, strong as a mule, gentle as a lamb," Granny Bunch retorted.

Sunshine laughed. "Tell him in your letter I send him a kiss—for his grandmother's sake," she said. "Tell him, too, I have named the pup he sent me for him, and ask him if he does not think his namesake deserves a new collar."

"I know he thinks you I shall write him to bring the collar, not send it," Granny Bunch said, eyeing Sunshine lovingly. Sunshine held up her hands, crying:

"What! Take him from his studies for a whole week! You mustn't think of it, Granny! Dicky dear hasn't any too much scholarship now—certainly none to lose."

"A bang for books and lectures and all that fiddle faddle," Granny said stoutly. "The boy is not there to cram his head with such stuff. I only want the place to mold him as it helped to mold his father and grandfather. If I thought it could make a prig of him like—well, somebody I might name—he should leave tomorrow."

"I see you are an obstinate person—likewise opinionated, my dear Mrs. Lee," Sunshine mocked in Mrs. Trevor's own manner.

The two were laughing so heartily they did not hear Wilton Roy ride up to the open hall door and keep chatting madly of things they would not have had him hear for a kingdom. Whether or no he heard, he gave no sign when he came in ten minutes later. But on the way home and all through that evening he beset Sunshine to marry him, pressing her until she was almost driven in sheer weariness to accept.

Wilton was a good strategist; he did not fall into the two elderly women's mistake of rumping down all possible rivals. Indeed, he ignored rivalry and talked of his love and long devotion.

He had never talked so well, and there was a ring in his voice that impressed her.

As if Fate were on his side, the morning was rainy. The day wearing on brought a deluge that shut in Way's End and utterly forbade stirring abroad. The rain held three days—a regular autumn froebet. How Anne got through them she never understood. Wilton pleaded manfully and Mrs. Trevor deliberately left her alone whenever she ventured into the big parlor, the library, the long halls or the inclosed back piazza. Anne did not know it, but Wilton had said to his aunt:

"I have got to clinch things at once. Mrs. Lee is teaching Anne to laugh at me. If I let that happen I am lost. As for the boy, he don't count."

All through the last day Sunshine felt a numb fear of herself. She seemed to be losing volition, to move and speak automatically. It was only by a supreme effort of will she kept to the shelter of her solitude. Wilton did not call her audibly, but she felt invisible, inaudible forces drawing her to him. To escape them she hung out of the open window, heedless of the pouring rain. In the dash of it, the cool splashing, she found strength to resist the eerie influences. By and by, when the influences began to tug harder than ever, she ran away from them, rushed downstairs, caught up her hat and mackintosh and stole out to the stables.

They were deserted; groom and coachman were dozing in the hayloft. With trembling fingers she flung the saddle upon Beauty, her pet mare, loosed Dick from his kennel, then clambered up and dashed away, the puppy barking madly at Beauty's heels. The rain still poured, but Sunshine was bent upon seeking refuge with Granny Bunch. She rode headlong, bending low over Beauty's neck and staging. The wind was roaring, but she had no fear of it, nor of the water when she came to the brook. She saw it running bank full, turbid and crested with drift. But Beauty knew the ford by the landmark trees on the other side. It should not be more than breast deep anywhere, although the current was swift and strong.

Beauty snorted and pawed as they went in, but after the third step made way beautifully. Halfway across Sunshine flung up her head, laughing aloud, saying: "I'm safe, safe! Maybe I've been bewitched. Indeed, I think so. But witchcraft and witches can't cross running water. I'm so happy! Happy as a freed bird."

She heard above the tumbling water a hoarse shout. In spite of herself she checked Beauty and listened intently. It came again. Wilton was crying to her: "Come back! Back! Come! You belong to me! Come!"

She sat quivering all through for the space of a breath, then turned her horse half about, moving a little upstream. Beauty was contrary. She plunged willfully forward, lost her footing, scrambled wildly, then went down, head over ears, in swimming water. The ford had a gravel bottom, and the treacherous current had swept out great holes in it, leaving a quicksand in between.

They came up together ten feet off, the mare snorting and swimming gallantly. She had struck what should have been bottom, but was in truth holding sand. As she floundered herself free Sunshine became suddenly cold. Wilton, she knew, could not swim a stroke, and before he could fetch help the water, still rising, would have made an end of Beauty and her rider. The mare could swim until she struck shoal water, but there the quicksand would hold her. Quickly the girl slipped out of her cumbering rain cloak, flung away hat and gloves and resolved to try her slight strength against the raging stream. Just as she was slipping down from the saddle Dicky cried to her from the other bank: "Down! Go down! I'll meet you—on the big bending sycamore!"

"Stay where you are!" Wilton shouted behind her. "I—I am going for help!" But before his cry had fairly died away Beauty's head was downstream, with Sunshine holding it easily yet strongly above the racing waves. It was a hundred yards to the big sycamore, leaning far over the water, with a great horny branch almost parallel with its face.

Dicky scrambled out on the branch, locked his legs about it and hung, head down, to grasp Sunshine and raise her high enough to grip the big bough. "Hold tight! I'll have you—up—in—a minute!" he panted, writhing up himself.

Once she was safe he kissed her over and over, saying: "Sunshine! Sunshine! Suppose Granny had not sent for me! I never should have known real sunshine again."

"Suppose, rather, you had not been a strong man," Sunshine said, hiding her eyes in his breast. Then, with a quick revulsion: "Did you bring Dicky the collar? If you did you can have anything you please in return for it."

"Thank you. I have all I want just now," Dicky said masterfully, helping her toward the tree trunk.

An American Learns English.

There is an American in London who is rapidly learning English. He used to ring the bell and call curty for "mulligan." Assiduous and willing at-

Wilton brought him everything you can think of from the "peage" to packets of cigarettes, but never the exact thing he wanted. At last the most intelligent of the young men put the right question and got the answer. "Oh, yes," he said and brought gum. In America when you want to stick things together you ask for muelage, and when you want something to chew you demand gum; so called, by limitation, we presume, because it is "stickjaw."—London Chronicle.

The Egyptian's Lesson.
Some years ago an Englishman was coming down the river Nile, in Egypt, on a large boat loaded with grain, and the birds came off from every village and ate the grain piled on the deck. The Englishman asked the Egyptian captain of the boat, "Who owns this grain?" The Egyptian captain said, "I own it." Then the Englishman asked, "Why let the birds eat up the grain?" The Egyptian asked the Englishman, "Who made the birds?" The Englishman answered, "God." The Egyptian asked whether grain was a food which God intended birds to eat. The Englishman said it was. The Egyptian said, "Can the birds sow and raise the grain for themselves?" The Englishman said, "They cannot." Then said the Egyptian: "Let them eat. God has provided enough for both them and us."

NAPOLEON'S RETREAT.

That Fateful and Fatal Journey Back From Moscow.

The main facts of the French retreat from the rules of the great Russian city of Moscow are as follows: Napoleon had entered Russia June 24. He found the country through which his route lay devastated and abandoned as he advanced, with no enemy to make a stand against him. He had to leave large bodies of troops along his line of march and to detach forces to threaten St. Petersburg and other cities. At the battle of Borodino, Sept. 7, one of the bloodiest in history, the losses probably aggregated 40,000 on each side. The loss to Napoleon, who could get no re-enforcements, was fatal.

But still he pressed on and entered Moscow, Sept. 14, to find himself robbed of the fruits of his victory by the terrible conflagration which broke out two days later. Yet Napoleon lingered in Moscow until Oct. 19. Then he marched southward to Kaluga, hoping to make his way through a rich and unexhausted country. But he was forced to follow the path he had blazed on the way to Moscow. At first the weather was fine and only moderately severe. Then came rain, snow and cold. The winter set in earlier than usual. Swarms of Cossacks surrounded the Frenchmen, harassing them at every chance. The invaders, worn out, were thrown into disorder.

The remainder of the retreat of Napoleon's army has no parallel in history for the various sufferings and horrors undergone. In November, by the time he had reached the Berezina, his army had dwindled to 12,000 men. In the retreat from Moscow alone 60,000 had been lost. In the whole campaign some historians have estimated that 125,000 had been slain, 132,000 died of fatigue and hunger and cold and 193,000 were made prisoners. Napoleon was now re-enforced by 18,000 men, and he made his way across the Berezina, thus escaping total ruin and captivity.

It was a miserable throng which, on the evening of Dec. 6, like a crowd of beggars tottered into Vilna, the old capital of Lithuania. In all nearly 500,000 soldiers had perished from cold and bullets and hardships or had disappeared.

Why Horses Stumble.

Many horses stumble and are whipped therefor because persons having them in keeping are careless in "hitching them up." The most frequent and common error in clothing a horse is the placing of the breechen, or hold back strap, at the proper height on the horse's hind legs. In fact, every third horse is hitched wrong in this respect. The breechen should be so buckled that it will not slip up under the horse's tail and never so that it will when the horse is going down hill or holding against a load slip nearly down to his hocks. The latter position deprives the horse of the free use of his hind legs, causes his feet to cross alternately, lifts his hind feet, if not his whole hind parts, nearly off the ground and throws the weight of the load and of the horse himself on to his front feet, the result being badly "sprung" knees, frequent unavoidable stumbling, with the generally attending whipping, jerking of the reins and curses of the fool driver.

How Monkeys Sleep.

"Do you know," said the monkey man at a zoo, "that few people ever saw a monkey asleep? I suppose that there are people who imagine that they never do sleep, as they are usually alert in the presence of visitors." It was in the afternoon, and the drowsy air had exerted its influence upon a sleepy mustached monkey, and the delegate had a good view of the sleeping beast. He lay up on his shelf upon his back, with his arms thrown carelessly about, but the pretty feature was the position of the long tail. It was curled about the body, and just under the head it made a double curl, and upon this soft roll rested the monkey's head—a pillow fit for a king. "When alone they always use their tails for pillows," said the keeper, "but if two or more sleep at the same time they huddle close together, resting their heads upon one another."

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