



WILLIAM LAD

The turn of the century was a turning point in Margaret's life. She was twenty, and while she luxuriated in being a guest of Amelia, she knew she couldn't stay forever, she had to find a job.

In 1900, only three kinds of jobs were open to women—teaching, nursing, and typing. Two years of high school or their equivalent were considered enough preparation for teaching, so Margaret got a job at a kindergarten in New Jersey. Assigned to a class made up mainly of the children of new immigrants, she found that her pupils didn't seem to understand a word she said. At the end of each day she was so tired she dragged herself back to her boardinghouse, threw herself down on the bed, and woke up a few hours later only to undress and go back to sleep. Two terms of this were enough.

She would try nursing. As a child she had dreamt of becoming a doctor, hoping to fulfill her father's desire that she "leave the world better than she found it." But with so little education, nursing seemed the most she could hope for in the medical field. She went back to Amelia's and learned that a small hospital in White Plains was looking for nurse-probationers, which meant women who would serve a trial period before the authorities decided whether or not they were fit to enter nursing school. Margaret was delighted to be accepted as a probationer.

The hospital was a large old mansion with five pleasant rooms for

patients and several for the staff. There were, however, no conveniences of any kind, water had to be brought in pitcher by pitcher from a well and bedpans were emptied in an outhouse. Still, it was a haven for Maggie, as it offered room, board, and a small salary.

But hospital work proved even more exhausting than teaching. "The girls say I am very thin and have lost my red cheeks," Margaret wrote Mary on December 29, 1900. "But at least there's only a short time to go until we get a New Year's vacation."

The regular hospital routine interested her very little, she was intrigued only by midwifery. In her textbook the chapter on birth is the only one underlined. However, even midwifery, she found, had its problems. She complained to Mary that "just keeping myself in comfortable shoes takes most of my salary." Worse, she seemed to have caught the dread tuberculosis from her mother and ran a fever of 100 degrees almost every day. The hospital doctors thought the infection was centered in the glands on one side of her neck, and in June 1901, she underwent neck surgery. Afterward, she felt much better, still she was told she would always be more or less troubled, unless she gave up living near New York where tuberculosis was rife. Mary got another letter:

So you see I am having a fight. If I can only get through the three years of nursing school (if I am accepted), I can go out and nurse in the West. Colorado for instance. The supervisor does not want me to give up the profession for anything, and lets me go out for a walk in the fresh air for three or four hours every afternoon, though this makes the other girls furious, since they have only one hour off at most.

During the summer vacation she planned to spend a few weeks with Corey in Buffalo and to stop on the way back for a brief visit in Corning. But at the last minute she told Corey he couldn't come along to Corning to meet her father as he had asked. She didn't say, of course, that her reason was that she was ashamed of her home. He got so angry that soon afterward he stopped seeing her altogether. This was especially hard on Margaret, because Ethel, the favored younger sister had, at seventeen, eloped after a wild drinking party with a handsome local boy, Jack Byrne.

At a party for the hospital staff, Margaret was introduced to the ar-

chitect William Sanger, a tall dark-haired man with burning black eyes and a thin set mouth turned down like an eagle's, he had drawn up plans for a new home for one of the doctors and had come up from New York to White Plains to get them approved

Margaret thought Sanger mildly attractive, with him it was another story A bachelor of twenty-nine, he had seldom gone out with girls because he had been too busy studying and working to support himself, his widowed mother, and his sister He studied nights at the Art Students League of New York or the Architectural School of Cooper Union Days, he worked for a glassmaker who designed stained-glass windows Now he had his first job as a draftsman with the famous New York architectural firm of McKim, Mead and White, he was working on the plans for Grand Central Station and the Woolworth building The job did not pay much, but it was an excellent start

The slim young redhaired girl grabbed at his heart When he discovered that she had to go back on duty right after the party, he went to the hospital waiting room and sat there waiting for an opportunity to talk with her again When Margaret appeared he begged her for a date on the next morning She agreed Dazed and content, William sat down again and waited until her duty was over and she appeared

On that first date, he seemed bewitched, giving in to her every whim, lunching and dining at restaurants far too expensive for his slim purse Before he left he made a date for the following Sunday In the weeks that followed he sent flowers every day, enclosing with them long ardent notes urging her to marry him as soon as he was financially secure

Margaret would promise nothing She was delighted by his wooing, but she was torn between marriage and nursing school Bill was undaunted Every Sunday he continued to hurry to White Plains with flowers, candy, and small gifts of jewelry On their walks together, he told her romantic stories about his English-born father, Edward, who had run off to sea at an early age, worked on an Australian sheep farm, and fallen in love with William's mother on a trip to Germany Edward Sanger had made a great deal of money, then lost it in several unsuccessful schemes When he died, he left almost nothing William, only twelve, had had to give up his dream of becoming a violinist and take the first job he could find Now, for the first time in his life, he wanted to break away, marry, and have a place of his own

All of this impressed Margaret greatly Here, obviously, was a man

who was poor but responsible. This time she took him home, realizing that now she did not have to be ashamed of her background. She also hinted that he might soon consider himself engaged.

Higgins and Sanger got along famously, as Higgins was delighted to find that Sanger held radical views like his own. In fact, Sanger went even further. Not only was he against all organized religion, he was an active member of both the Socialist Party and an anarchist group. He was also painting pictures on weekends, hoping to give up architecture and become his "own man." The two men talked eagerly into the small hours.

Still, Margaret hesitated about marriage. Back at the hospital she wrote Mary telling her how "the William lad" wrote her every day, telephoned her often, took her out regularly, and promised her both a diamond and a gold watch. Yet, she was not prepared to marry now.

If I could get two or three good (private maternity) cases it would start me off nicely, and then too I must get some clothing made. I hate long engagements myself but I would rather finish training, and when I think of all the hard work, the bitter tears I shed night after night for the training, the lonesome nights I passed waiting for some old tramp to die, then when it is finished without a laurel to get married—then I want to stop it all. I would love one year of private nursing and get some money, and then if anyone wants me, all right. But the Lad does not care about waiting longer than six months.

Then, flirting with marriage again

There is so much to think of—bridesmaids, the time, the place, the dress, the trip and everything. I suppose it had better take place at home. Have we a *house* or a *barn*? I am dying to meet his people. I wonder if this excitement will pass.

Margaret also sent Mary one of William's love letters

I don't know how you can stand on your feet all night, dearest. I don't see how you can stand it, you are truly heroic. You are giving up the best time of your life in your present professional vocation and I thank God that I came, that our souls met and that you

will give up this strenuous life in very short order if it is in my power to do so I'm laying tracks for a lot of work—for a home with you as Presiding Queen dearest, a real home with love the necessary household utensil to shed its light upon our life We shall have it, of course we shall

Yet she was as torn as ever In June 1902, still a probationer, she wrote Mary wondering if she'd be admitted to nurses' training school A few weeks later she was wondering no more "I have been accepted for the three-year course and no doubt shall be such an angel at the end of that time I shall fly heavenward" When William heard this, he was downcast until he hit on a new tack He would ask Mary to persuade Margaret to give up the thought of nursing once and for all and marry him immediately

At the last minute, he didn't wait for Mary's answer He decided to take the bull by the horns On his next Sunday date with Margaret, he hired a horse and buggy from a New York livery stable, got a marriage license, arranged for a minister and two witnesses, and drove to White Plains where Margaret was waiting on the hospital porch But the horse proved unmanageable and would not stop He had to keep driving around and around until he managed to toss a note to her explaining the situation Then keep driving until she was able to toss a note back saying she couldn't have gone out with him anyway, an emergency had arisen and she would have to take her time off the following day instead

He had no choice but to drive back to the stable and order a better horse for Monday

On Monday the horse behaved, and Margaret cheerfully got in beside him But when he told her about the license in his pocket and the waiting minister, she became livid, she would marry him, yes, but in her own good time William didn't listen, he literally carried her off On August 18, 1902, with a Reverend Norris performing the ceremony in his parlor, Margaret Higgins and William Sanger were married, with the bride getting as hearty a kiss as one ever got

But outside again, she insisted he drive her back to the hospital immediately, and there, she ran up the steps and slammed the door, leaving him nonplussed Immediately, she wrote Mary

That beast of a man William took me out for a drive last Mon-

day and drove me to a minister's residence and married me I wept with anger and would not look at him for it was so unexpected I had an old blue dress on, and I looked horrid Now the only thing is to make the best of it No one can know of it—only our family—but he wants to furnish an apartment and live here in the city until he can build a home for us in the country He is the loveliest of men but I am mad at him He is collecting (plaster) casts, furniture, old rugs, silver, etc for our home and is happy to think he outdid Corey and two doctors Good night dear Mary I am very sorry to have had this thing occur but yet I am very, very happy

She also wrote Nan

Here I am no longer a Higgins That man of mine simply carried me off I vow I will not live with such a beast of a man

Then, wavering

He is so happy and so am I He sends me flowers—flowers—books—and now jewelry—a marquis ring today (turquoise) and yet I won't go out He stands waiting on the corner every day after three o'clock

I am sure I could not have a better husband—he is my ideal in many ways but I wanted to wait

Soon William was writing Mary

It was a tremendously serious affair to get married at the time we did, without the knowledge of the authorities at home, but to be candid, to me it was a question of getting married then or never

As for the hospital arrangement I can say that when we were married I did not think the diploma question would loom up in such prodigious proportions But since then I have persuaded Margaret to change her mind and she will send in her resignation in the next few days

We shall be located in the city for the present, but eventually intend to settle down permanently in New Rochelle, one of New

York's most delightful suburban towns Now my dear Mary the deed is done, and it can be jotted down in the family Bible that we are happy, Margaret and I—and will remain so

Michael Higgins was not told about the wedding until the couple went up to Corning for Labor Day, after Margaret had relented and gone to live with Sanger several weeks before Whatever her reservations, he promised her devotion, leisure, and a beautiful home, and these were among her most cherished dreams