



Vol. 6

APRIL, 1929

No. 4

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Published Monthly by THE CONSTRUCTIVE PUBLISHING CORPORATION, Washington and South Aves., Dunellen, N. J.

Editorial and General Offices, MacLadden Building, 1926 Broadway, N. Y.

Charles Mendel, President William Thompson, Secretary

M. L. Wilson, Jr., Advertising Manager, Graybar Building, 420 Lexington Ave., New York, N. Y.

Entered as second class matter April 30th, 1926, at the Post Office at Dunellen, N. J., under the act of March 3rd, 1879. Additional entry at New York, N. Y.

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Price 25c a copy in U. S.—30c in Canada. Subscription price \$2.50 a year in the United States and its possessions; also Cuba, Mexico and Panama. All other countries including

Canada \$4.00 per year.

Chicago Office: 168 North Michigan Blvd., C. H. Shattuck, Manager.

London Agents: Atlas Publishing & Distributing Co., Ltd., 18 Bride Lane, London, E. C.

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PRINTED BY THE ART COLOR PRINTING CO., DUNELLEN, N. J., U. S. A.

Deep  
in the Heart  
of a Great  
Novelist  
Lived  
the Child  
He  
Had Never  
Fathered.  
Could  
Love Bring  
Her Out  
of the  
Infinite  
to  
Cheer His  
Loneliness?



# My DAUGHTER

**A**T nine o'clock on the Saturday before Easter, William Wade Harrington had locked himself in his study. It was now after eleven, almost Easter Day, and no word had come from him during all those hours except a muttered "thank you," when his ancient servant Peters left his dinner on a tray outside his door.

Peters' master was recognized as one of the greatest of American novelists. He was a tall, rather thin man, whose serious and tender eyes burned with a deep glow under a bold and intelligent brow. His black hair was slightly gray at the temples, and he stooped a bit as if hopeless that life's lavish gifts of money and honor could bring him any measure of joy or interest.

Forty years old and lonely, William Wade Harrington viewed his future without zest. Every year, he knew, would add compound interest to his loneliness.

He felt no thrill in a new success, for all his books were successes. He played the piano and sang well; but music was only a temporary surcease in the grinding labor of his compositions. The commercialized theater was a horror to his artistic taste. Life had given and taken, and he was the poorer by it, for no woman gave him her love and care. William Wade hated women.

His hatred for women had grown in progression from distrust to scorn and finally to bitter contempt. Some of his former mates could tell of a disappointing college love-affair, but no word of this ever came from William Wade. If the love-affair ever occurred, it was a carefully guarded secret which became more personal as William Wade labored through his solitary and brooding life.

The heavy mahogany door to the study opened and William Wade came out. His face was pale; he seemed utterly weary.

The bent, white-haired old servant looked up eagerly. "Did you finish, Mister Billy?"

"I can't finish, Peters," sighed William Wade. "I simply stop working on one book and start another." He yawned and stretched his arms. "I'm tired, Peters, tired all the way through."

"You're working too hard, Mister Billy." The old man presumed on his long years of service and friendship. "You ought to have a wife to take care of you."

"None of that, Peters," interrupted William Wade good-naturedly. "Every woman who reads my books knows I hate her sex."

"Oh, no, sir, I can't believe that! You are very severe with them, but I've always felt that every man needs a wife."

"**S**OME men do, probably," admitted William Wade. He was smiling at Peters' insistence. "However, we'll try to get along with Cook and What's-her-name, the maid, eh?" He glanced at the clock. "Nearly midnight! Get my coat, please, Peters. I think I'll take a little walk before I turn in."

William Wade slid into his top-coat and took his hat and cane. "It will be Easter when you return, sir," said the old man as he opened the door. "I wish you a very happy one, sir."

"Easter! Ah, yes, I'd quite forgotten. I wish you a happy one, too, Peters." But the day meant nothing to William Wade. He returned to Peters' original statement. "Don't let your mind dwell on women, my friend. They have a habit of taking everything they get their hands on—even your thoughts."

The old man was insistent. "Easter doesn't seem to be Easter without children, sir. I thought that a wife and perhaps a baby—maybe a little girl—"

William Wade interrupted. "We can laugh about women,



By  
JOHN  
MILLER  
GREGORY

# WHO *Never* EXISTED

Peters," he said seriously, "but don't ever mention a child again, especially a little girl. She would be quite too serious even to jest about."

He lit a cigar and went quickly down the hall toward the elevator, as Peters quietly closed the door.

It was almost midnight when William Wade returned, physically weary from his brisk walk. The fire was low in the grate and he threw on another log and sank into his easy chair. He loved the careless welcome of his room. The great, dark-red rug enfolded him in its soft comfort. The few well-chosen paintings on the wall smiled their friendliness. The lamp on his book-laden table, under its golden, mandarin-skirt shade, made a restful glow; and the wide, cheerful hearth, reddened with the log fire, soothed his tired mind with its restful warmth.

On a tea-wagon Peters had placed a little luncheon: two slices of bread in an electric toaster, a pot of water ready to boil for tea, and a bit of cheese. On the back of William Wade's easy chair, drawn in front of the fire, was his black velvet dressing-gown. His worn slippers were warming on the hearth.

William Wade put his head into his hands. His soul was filled with loneliness. It was always like this after he completed his work. His life seemed so empty, so useless; he dreaded to keep on working for the little it had to offer. But he dreaded more to quit. It seemed so childish writing foolish stories for idle people to read.

The clock struck midnight. He heard a merry laugh and raised his head. He rubbed his eyes and stared.

In the chair opposite him sat a young girl. And such a girl! It seemed to him that all the profusion of youth and beauty and joy had been lavished on her.

"Hello!" she cried. "I thought you'd never raise your

head." Her voice came in joyous gurgles, rushing and cascading like a merry little stream. "Were you sleeping?"

William Wade closed his eyes and shook his head. He pinched himself on the arm, and looked at her again. "No, I'm sure I'm awake. But how did you get in here?"

She laughed gleefully. "Oh, it's such fun! You see, I'm playing hookey."

He couldn't help but laugh with her. "Are you, really?"

"Isn't it delightful! And on Easter, too! Something happened tonight—I don't know what—and I saw a rift in the veil. So I ran through." She laughed again deliciously, with a sound like the soft breath of wind through the woods.

William Wade was amused. He chuckled quietly, wondering what she meant by a rift in the veil. Probably some new slang.

"I HAVE to go back, though," said the girl suddenly. Her face went sorrowful for a moment, but brightened up immediately. "Isn't it great to be here? I'm so happy!"

She ran to the table and took off her hat. The red light from the fire caught in her dull gold curls and surrounded her head like a halo. She was dressed in some filmy material which folded about her like a cloud, and seemed to change its opalescent color in the light like a bubble drifting in the sunshine.

William Wade marveled at her grace. She moved like a spiral of silver smoke and was almost as ethereal.

"Just look at this table!" She flashed him a shocked glance through her happy eyes. "I don't know what I'll do with you; your books and pipes are all over the place." She looked into a vase of flowers and shook her head in mock severity. "There isn't a drop of water for these roses."

William Wade shivered with delight. He'd never been

criticized like that by any woman except his mother. And it pleased him. He liked the way the girl fussed around, putting his table in order and arranging his books. She filled his pipe and held a match as he lighted it, laughing to herself contentedly when he nodded his appreciation. She glided back to her chair and sat down.

"Now," she said, "let's talk."

William Wade came to his senses. It was past midnight and he was alone in his apartment with a beautiful girl. Grudgingly he had to allow her that much. She was even more. She was charming and dainty—and somehow so unaccountably different from other girls of her age he had met. She was a darling! But he asked himself why that should make a fool out of him. He'd put an end to it at once.

He sat up and scowled. "Did Peters let you in here?"

"Oh, no, I just came."

"Peters is getting old and foolish. You're quite sure you two aren't working some trick on me? Peters has the absurd idea I should marry."

She laughed aloud joyfully. "Oh, my, no! I don't want to marry you."

"WELL, that's some relief, anyway. But I can't imagine what you are doing here." He rose with determination. "I'm really very sorry, but I must ask you to go. It's frightfully late, and I'm tired out."

His tone brought a look of pain to her eyes. "Oh, you don't mean that?"

"I certainly do," replied William Wade. "I can't understand why I let you stay here at all."

The pain grew deeper in her eyes, like a long enduring one. "But I've waited so long to see you," she pleaded.

William Wade was exasperated. "My dear young lady, don't you see you are seriously compromising yourself by being in my apartment at this hour of the morning?"

"But this is my only chance." Much to his disgust, she began to cry.

He regarded her in disapproval, and the absurdity of the whole situation came over him. He was angry with himself; angry with her. He should have turned her out immediately, he thought, instead of talking nonsense with her. And now she was weeping!

"Couldn't you come to see me some other time if it's so important?" he asked irritably. "I've told you I'm tired. I've worked over eighteen hours today."

"And I've waited over eighteen years," she said wearily.

"You'll pardon me," he went on, "but I detest women."

"Oh, but you won't after you know me." Her smile came back. "I haven't much time, and it's the most important thing in the world for you to love me."

"Love you!" he exclaimed in amazement. "The idea! That's absurd."

"Oh, no, it isn't." She laughed again. "You'll find out."

"Don't talk nonsense." He was silent for a moment. The girl was decidedly appealing. He was sorry he couldn't despise her for it. No woman had any business being so attractive. He determined he would take no chances with her.

"See here," he said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a few minutes; but you must cut it short. I'll call Peters. He's my man and, if you don't mind, I'd rather have him here."

She laughed lightly. "It won't do any good. Peters couldn't see me. You see I can only appear to you and one other."

He felt flattered. "Thank you," he said, mollified, and leaned forward. "You know you're very unusual. You said something about getting through a rift which I didn't understand. And now you say you can only appear to me and one other. Who is that other?"

"She who was to have been my mother," she said simply.

"Just what do you mean?" his interest now was very personal. He wanted to know more about her, to dissolve the mystery with which she seemed surrounded. "You're not a ghost, are you?" he asked, laughing.

"Oh, no," she replied, "for they, at least, have lived." "There you go again!" He spoke harshly. "Who the devil are you, and why do you say such odd things?"

"S-h-h-h-h!" Smilingly she wagged a reproving finger at him. "You mustn't get angry."

"Well, don't be silly," he growled. "It's darned inconsiderate at this time of night. If you were my daughter, I'd send you off to bed."

"Your daughter!" She jumped up and clapped her hands. Her voice filled with a bright new note, like a suppressed little cry of victory.

"But, of course," he went on, "my daughter wouldn't be in a stranger's apartment at this hour of the morning."

She laughed gaily. "Oh, you never can tell."

"Don't be absurd," he said, smiling in embarrassment: "I never had a daughter."

"Then you don't know what you've missed. I'll show you!"

She was out of her seat, her eyes shining with happiness. Her joy was contagious. William Wade smiled. He felt a strange exultation in her youth and beauty. He laughed aloud at her antics.

She ran around the room with the lightness of a feather in a breeze. She made him take off his coat and slip into his dressing-gown; then pushed him into his easy chair while she piled pillows in it to make him comfortable. She cut the toast into four little squares and put melted cheese on top of them exactly as he liked it, and boiled the water for tea. All the time a cataract of sparkling observation fell from her lips in a constant stream of girlish nonsense.

When she finished, she sat on a pillow at his feet and laughingly removed his shoes, replacing them with his wide, comfortable slippers. She made him stretch out his legs and put pillows under them and giggled at the sight. Then she looked up at him, eager for approval.

"Right?" she asked lightly.

"Right!" he echoed happily.

With a contented little sigh she leaned against the arm of his chair and lifted a face marvelous in its happiness.

He bent over and looked into her glowing eyes in the light from the fire, and drew in his breath sharply at some almost forgotten memory.

"What made you so happy when I spoke of my daughter?" he asked.

"Oh, I wanted you to know. Don't you know now?" she asked eagerly.

William Wade's soul rose above the earth. He forgot his hatreds and was lost in the memory of a lovely aching. He spoke in a hushed voice, as if he were afraid she might laugh at him. "She isn't really alive," he said softly. "You see she is only the daughter I dream about," he tried to explain.

THE girl's face shown with tenderness. Her cheeks vied with the glowing coals in warmth. "What is her name?" she asked.

"I call her Margaret."

"That's my name."

"Margaret!"

"Yes, just Margaret. I haven't any other name. Not yet."

He smiled at her childish answer. "I've always wanted a daughter," he said pensively.

Breathlessly she echoed: "A daughter!"

"Sometimes I think of her as if she were really here."

"Oh, yes, I know. Do you want her very much?"

"More than anything else in the world."

The girl's breath caught in a tiny sob of happiness. "Tell me some more about her," she whispered. Tell me about her mother."

"Her name was Margaret, too. Many years ago I loved her dearly. We were very young then, and I asked her to marry me. But there was another fellow."

"Oh!" said the girl, and laid her face against his hand.

"He was a poet, and she must have loved his beautiful

thoughts. I became jealous, I suppose, and quarreled with her."

"Did she marry him?"

"Yes. They live in Maine, where everything is lovely. The lakes at sunrise are blue as a baby's eyes, and the mountains brood tenderly in a purple haze at evening. Then sometimes, at night, God raises his hand and writes in wonderful colors a message in the northern sky. I'm sure it is a message for her, because she is very poor."

"Poor? You mean she has no money?"

He smiled. "Yes, that's what I mean. I saw her on the street in Portland once. Her gown was shabby and there were scuffs on her little boy's shoes."

"Ah, but you couldn't tell by their clothing. Did you look into her eyes?"

His face brightened. "Her eyes were rich in happiness—as filled with peace as those of the Madonna."

The girl clapped her hands with joy. "Oh, I knew she must be happy. I always wanted her to be happy."

William Wade looked at her curiously, but let her remark pass. For a while they sat staring into the fire and each was dreaming. He spoke again tenderly.

"Do you know you are very beautiful?"

"Oh, I'm glad to hear you say that."

"You remind me of someone I must have known somewhere, I can't remember who it was. It must have been long ago."

SHE got to her knees and leaned over so that the fire could shine full in her face. "Think! Oh, please, think hard!"

He looked deep into her eyes; then shook his head. "I'm sorry, but I can't remember. But you are beautiful."

She released her breath in a disappointed little sigh. "I wanted you to remember. You see," she went on, "I can't tell you. It must come from yourself. Then everything will be easy."

He laughed softly. "You are so odd and mysterious. I wish you'd tell me who you are."

Something like pain passed over her face. "I wish I could! Oh, how I wish I could!"

The clock struck the half hour, and the girl started. "How the time flies here," she said.

"It does everywhere," he laughed.

"Oh, no, it doesn't," she contradicted demurely. "With us who are waiting to get through, it drags very slowly." She sighed. "It's so irksome to wait." Her head came up quickly. "But let's not be depressed. Play for me, will you?"

He sat at the piano and played exquisitely an insinuating little waltz, a dreamy, lovely minuet which he thought she would like. He was wholly delighted in her now. His heart beat with an old new happiness. He looked over his shoulder and saw her dancing around the room with the lightness of a butterfly, wholly unconscious of her grace.

He changed into an improvisation, a soft, ethereal melody which sang in his heart. She stopped by the table and idly fingered a book as she listened. A photograph hidden in its pages fell to the floor. With a little cry of joy she picked it up.

William Wade sang in a low voice an old love song. She

stood with the photograph pressed to her heart. His voice faltered; the notes, broken, died with a sob. He turned on the bench and buried his face in his hands.

The girl was all compassion. "That was the song I used to sing to Margaret," he said, as he lifted his face and tried to smile.

"Yes, I know."

He seemed not to notice her odd reply.

"Do you still love her?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, I shall always love her."

She held out the photograph. It was the picture of a young girl in a summer dress and a large hat, and the face was as beautiful as a pure white soul. "Is this she?" asked the girl.

William Wade got up quickly. "Give me that!" he demanded almost angrily. "Where did you get it?"

She did not reply. Instead, she said: "She is very lovely."

William Wade paid no attention. Not even Peters would dare touch that book. It had been a gift from Margaret; he kept it as a sort of shrine for his love. He grew unreasonably angry with the girl; all her charm seemed to leave her.

"See here," he said bitterly, "I think you've bewitched me." He stalked heavily across the floor and threw open the door, and when she saw that he was really angry, her face went white.

"Oh, I'm so sorry——" she began.

Shortly he interrupted her. "I've had quite enough of this. You must go."

"OH, please don't send me back—like this," she wailed. Her eyes filled with tears. "You don't know what you're doing." She sank to the floor—a woe-begone, helpless little figure.

"I'm sorry," he replied, "but all this is impossible. Somehow I don't understand it, but it has gone quite far enough." He put out his hand to lift her, but she drew away and struggled to

her feet. "You mustn't touch me if you feel like that," she said.

William Wade was determined now. "I do," he told her. "You must see it's impossible for you to stay here."

"Oh, if I could only tell you!" she wailed. "If you would only help me! It isn't fair to me—I want to live, too."

"My dear, I don't know what you're talking about."

Her eyes filled with a new hope. "But you will know if you keep thinking—when you hear what has happened. If you'd help me, I'd love you so! Don't keep me out! Please, oh, please don't keep me out!"

"My dear girl," he said quietly, "I think you must be a little insane." He opened the door wider. "Now you must go."

Without a word the girl took her hat from the table and slowly went out. William Wade closed the door behind her.

He started to breathe in relief, but it came in a sigh of regret. His anger cooled. The room all at once seemed empty. He threw himself into his chair but it was uncomfortable. He had never known it to feel like that before. He felt a little chill go up his spine and noticed the fire was out. Only the dull gray ashes were left. He remembered how charming the girl looked in the red glow, leaning back against his

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## An Easter Miracle

Here is the actual experience of a well-known novelist whose name is thinly disguised under the pseudonym of William Wade Harrington. A part of the weird happenings may have been due to a dream or an hallucination—but how can you explain the strange message that followed the apparition?

Was Harrington's mind mysteriously attuned with that of the woman he had loved hopelessly for twenty years? Did their combined psychic powers serve to materialize a creature that had never lived on earth?

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chair. It came like a sudden stab through his heart.

He picked up his cup of tea and a bit of toast; but the tea was cold and the toast was hard. He put them down in disgust. Even the roses, which she had arranged for him, seemed to droop with disappointment now that she had gone; they had glowed with such color when she was there.

He looked at the photograph of Margaret which he still held in his hand, and suddenly it came to him who the girl was. She was Margaret's daughter! There was the same mass of red gold hair; the same dimples in her cheeks; the twinkling gray eyes. He could almost hear her little laugh, which rose so joyously and honestly.

He had never known that Margaret had a daughter. But why not? Why hadn't he thought of it? What would Margaret think of him for turning her out like that?

He rushed to the door and threw it open. "Margaret!" he cried. "Margaret!"

**H**IS voice broke with compassion. Near his door, huddled against the wall, stood the girl. Her face was buried her arms; her hat lay neglected at her feet. She was weeping passionately and, oh, so piteously.

With a little sob of happiness he was at her side. "Oh, my dear, I'm glad you didn't go."

She raised her face quickly and a radiant smile broke through her tears. "Oh, you're going to let me come back?"

He led her into the room and over to his big chair, and sank on a pillow beside it. "The room was so cold without you," he whispered. "Even the flowers died, and when you went, something in my heart seemed to have died, too. Oh, my dear, you have awakened a love that I thought was dead."

Her face radiated an unearthly joy. "If you only mean that! You must mean it! You do, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, I do," he repeated.

She smiled again, as she did when he first saw her. "Now, it will be so easy to make you understand, since your love still lives. My time is almost up and I shall have to go, but now that you want me, I shall always be near you."

"But I don't want you to go," he protested.

"Oh, but I have to. You see, I'm not a real girl at all," she said simply. "I'm just the beauty that lives in Margaret's soul." She laughed at the amazed expression on his face. "But if you had married her," she went on, "I would have been your daughter. I've never been born at all except in your mind."

"I think I understand," he said softly. "That's what you meant by getting through? It's like a veil, I suppose, and the unborn children are waiting to be let through."

"Yes, something like that. And we are so helpless unless you really want us."

"It's easy to understand now," said William Wade reverently.

The clock struck one.

The girl arose and the smile on her face was the most beautiful he had ever seen.

"My time is up," she said regretfully. "But you mustn't

be sad. I shall always be near you." She seemed to float in the air near him. "Happy Easter, Father!"

His heart caught with an exquisite pain. "Would—would you mind saying that again?" he asked.

Her laugh seemed like some far-away music. "Happy Easter, Father!"

"Happy Easter—daughter!"

She was gone. But this time it was different. He could not see her, but her presence played like a sunbeam through his heart. His loneliness had left him. He could almost hear her laugh; hear her soft voice calling, "Father!" Oh, he was glad he was alive! He was glad there was work to do. So much work and someone to do it for.

From a great distance someone was speaking to him. He passed his hand across his face, trying to get the sight of the girl from his eyes. Peters was handing him a telegram, his face anxious.

"What's the matter, Mister Billy? I heard you talking to yourself."

"It's all right, Peters; it's quite all right." He laughed aloud. "I was talking to a girl, Peters. A glorious girl, too. I wish you could have seen her."

Peters smiled indulgently. "Is there an answer to the message, sir?"

William Wade tore open the envelope and drew out the telegram. He read it aloud with hushed wonder in his voice:

*James died at midnight. Will you, my best friend,  
come at once.*

MARGARET.

For a while he stood motionless; then into his eyes flowed a love he had suppressed for twenty years. Back into his heart danced the smiling, dimpled girl with twinkling eyes and red-gold hair. She was free! She was asking him to come!

"Yes, Peters, there's an answer. Wire this message and mark it 'Rush': 'Mrs. James Raymond Walling, South Casco, Maine. Coming.'"

"I would like to sign it 'Billikins,'" said William Wade to himself.

"Billikins!" exclaimed Peters, amazed.

Out of a haze came William Wade. "No, no, Peters. Of course not. Pack immediately, please."

Into Peters' eyes came a fond look. "Is it the girl, Mister Billy?"

William Wade smiled. "I hope so, Peters."

**A** YEAR after the marriage of Margaret Walling and William Wade Harrington a square envelope was placed on my desk. In it was a card on which was engraved, "Mr. and Mrs. William Wade Harrington," and in the left upper corner a smaller card was attached by a bow of white ribbon. It was a tiny replica of the other, except that the engraving was "Miss Margaret Wade Harrington," and beneath, in the left corner, "Born Easter Day, 1927." On the back of the larger card William Wade had scrawled: "Peters *knew* it was to be a girl."