

The Free Press' Short Story

A QUESTION OF CREDIT

By HOPE DARINO

"I'll see you," Professor Nicholson said, just then filling the place of registrar at Eastern States College, looked reflectively into the faded face of the girl who stood before him.

"Doreen Myers, graduate of the Washburn High School. Why, you are my wonder girl of the series of university lectures I gave the teachers three years ago. A series on American Literature of the Nineteenth Century."

"Doreen gave her charming smile. 'But I didn't dream you would remember me.' 'I never knew before a high school senior who ranked first among a score of teachers and club women. What's this?' scowling at the tabulated sheet of paper she had laid before him.

"The girl explained. After finishing high school she had taken a year's work at a state normal school in a town where an aunt lived. She was then at home a year, on account of her mother's ill health. 'That year I did correspondence work enough so I can gain my life certificate in a year here, all but one credit. For that I must take one more subject than is usually allowed. I've permission to do it, as that card shows.'

"Yes, but Miss Myers, you have no credit here for the series of lectures you did with me. That gives you one, and I'll put it down. Let me see, the last half of the school year of 1928-29."

"But Professor Nicholson, I did not—' 'Oh, yes, you did. You covered yourself with glory. I've always used you as an example of what can be done in a child's early years by a careful supervision of his or her reading. Now I am sorry I'll not have you in English this semester, but I'll arrange for next. There you are. I've added that credit to your card, and you will not need to take the course in psychology that you asked permission to take."

"Professor Nicholson, you have forgotten. I did not—' 'Oh, I know, child. I've a good mind to give you two credits for—' 'You know my teacher in high—' 'Martha Smith, Doreen's roommate and an old friend, stood at the girl's side. She now interrupted Doreen to whisper, 'For land's sake, don't argue with him. He is giving you an extra credit.'

"Doreen. 'Let us sit out on the veranda a few minutes and plan your extra work,' he proposed. 'I will give you two half hours each week. We will clean up whatever is not plain in the work you have gone over and take a look at the lessons just ahead. You know I supplied in that subject all last year, so I can be as strict and exacting as Doctor Barnes himself.'

"Doreen laughed gravely. The lively companionship, the talk of future festivities, and Professor Nicholson's praise had gone to her head. She was not going to waste precious hours on psychology. 'What is this, Doreen?' asked the young man.

"Dick, it is something wonderful. I'll not have to make an extra credit." She told of her interview with Professor Nicholson. The light was bright enough on the veranda to show the puzzled expression on Streeter's face. 'You don't know the professor. English literature is his hobby, and he loves to ride it. Because you responded so wonderfully to his teaching, and that because of the reading you had done with your parents, he has used you as a sort of an example. He has forgotten that you didn't write for a credit after the course.'

"It was an affirmative, not a question. Doreen tossed her head. 'But he says I have one, Dick. Martha thinks he gave it to me because—well, because—' 'Because you were so smart. Nicholson might have been willing to do that, but Eastern States doesn't do things that way. I am not sure a credit would have been granted to a high school girl. There is one thing I am sure of, Doreen, and that is you have no such credit on these books.'

"Well, the professor marked it on my record, and gave the card his ok, acting for the registrar. It is all right, Dick. I am not going to bother with psychology, as I'll have credits enough to finish next June."

"Pardon me for insisting, Doreen, but I know how much depends on your finishing them. I'll go with you to the office to-morrow, call Nicholson in, and see if it is as you think."

"Doreen was vexed. She must get her certificate in June, but Richard did not need to taunt her with that. A position in the school of her home town, to be vacant then, had been promised her. In her mother's semi-invalid condition her company and her salary would help greatly at home. She was sure of graduating, however.

"But Martha! You said—you told me to take it."

Martha was at the top of the stairs. She looked back, to say a little scornfully, 'Come on. It's done, and it's worth it.'

Doreen ascended the steps so slowly that by the time she was inside the building, Martha was hastening along the hall. Their first morning classes were not on the same floor. Doreen topped up another flight of stairs, aware of a sense of weariness and loss. Once inside the classroom she sat down and bent her head over a book, not looking up until the teacher of the class was in his place.

Fortunately for Doreen she was not called upon that morning for recitation. As soon as the class was dismissed, she made her way out of the building. For the next hour she had no recitation. Consoling only of a passing need to be alone she hastened along the path that led from the college grounds. Passing the chapel she tried the inside door. It opened under her hand, and she entered a hall that gave entrance to the auditorium at the rear.

Doreen walked forward to the pulpit stairs. Dropping on her knees she murmured a broken prayer. It was Martha's name at the word right that had shocked her into an understanding of the situation. After a little this rose, sat down in a pew and communed with herself.

"I am to blame for—Martha's attitude of mind. Carelessly she urged me to take the credit. Had I refused as I should have done, because it was not mine, she would have known that I was not—well, not a thief. I've hurt her moral sense and lost Dick's respect. Then, by not taking that extra class, I've lost my chance to finish here this year. Oh, how did I ever make such a muddle of things?"

A little later she sprang to her feet. There was just one course she could follow. That was at once to explain her false position to all who were in any way concerned in it. Breathing a little prayer for help, she went out into the still air where snowflakes were leisurely floating earthward.

At four o'clock that afternoon Doreen entered the office of the college president. By the telephone she had summoned to that room both Professor Nicholson and Richard Streeter. Also she had asked Martha to meet her there. These four were all in the room when she entered.

Doreen smiled crookedly. 'Help me, all of you, not to make this meeting melo-dramatic. May I tell my story at once, Doctor Barnes?' turned to the president. He bowed assent. At once she began, telling first of her interview with Professor Nicholson. 'I cancelled the extra class I had been allowed to join, although—I know there could be no extra credit due me as I did not write the theme following the series of university extension lectures I took under you, Professor Nicholson,' she ended.

"What? Why, yes, you did. You were my star pupil." "That was why you assumed that I would have the record of those lectures here?" asked Doctor Barnes. He drew the huge folio to him, and after a minute's search, reported, 'You are right, Miss Myers. While your name is given as one who took the course of lectures, there is no record of a theme submitted by you. That settles the matter of a credit. You are to blame, Professor Nicholson.'

The matter was discussed for a few minutes. Doreen had brought her registration card, and a new one was made out. No one spoke of the fact that

Doreen, taking the usual amount of work, would lack a credit at commencement.

"Yes, I am to blame. Why didn't you tell me, Dick?" asked the professor. Before Richard could speak, Doreen said, 'He did tell me. And I knew I had not written it. I—I am sorry.'

She was leaving the room when Doctor Barnes held out his hand to her. 'You made the amende honorable, Miss Myers. I am not surprised that you let the matter drift. If right wins in the end we may return thanks to God that we have won over temptation.'

The next minute she was out of doors with Richard at her side. Already twilight was falling on the scene. In a voice hoarse with suppressed sobs the girl said, 'Dick, you will always despise me for—'

"None of that, Doreen. You fought the good fight and won. It made an impression on that frivolous roommate of yours, too. And, Doreen, we will put in that needed subject next semester."

"All along I've been planning for it and for your awakening. There is to be a course in psychology that will be even more helpful in your work at Washburn than this one would have been. I am to spend my holiday vacation at home, and we shall get a good start on it then."

TRUE ENOUGH!

The teacher had been giving a lesson on modern inventions to his class. "Can any of you boys," he said, "tell me of anything of importance which did not exist fifty years ago?" "No," exclaimed one of them.



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SLATS' DIARY OLIVER N. WARREN

Sunday: I & Pa & Ma was out a riding in the otto & a place man nearly created Pa for sum thing he done rong. The place man ask Pa why he done it & Pa sed he gues it was becos the driver went to sleep in the back seat. Just then Ma awks up & what she sed to Pa when we driv on I will not repeat.

Monday: The newspaper yestaday sed the banks have a offie lotta money & no boddie will borry it. I sopus they have no hurd about me. I will speat a soshal lons if the yare so kene thata-way.

Tuesday: I am enformed that the U.S. govt. is to spend thirtsen thousand & 450 \$ a minnet dooring the next fiscal yr. All I have to say is that Unkal Stam must have a lotta Janes & Elys to by loe green for same.

Wednesday: Are class was ast by the teacher did we bleive they otto change the styles of boys & girls garments this spring. Blister spoke up & replide & sed he thot they otto be sum change in the pockets of boys pants. It took time but when the point were seen evryboddie laft & all agreed it were a purty wise crack.

Thursday: Janes stenograpy & tiperitling aint a getting no better fast. She was told to rite sum thing about Ely winning a award at the Cooking skool & here are the result of the effort—Miss Ely Jones were awarded the blue ribbon 1st prize on her homade sweet likias.

Friday: Ma was to her club this p. m. of 1 of them and at super she sed they discut Husbends who talk in thare sleep & what to do about same. To cure it she meant. Pa got hiself in bad by up & saying I remedy is to let them talk while awake. Just a little, he sed, but Ma gos soita huffy about what he sed enyhow.

Saturday: Well, I didden hafta go to school this a.m. but I got no very grate benefit out of it after all. I had to go down in the basemint & clean out the ferns & shovel some coal and etc. All of witch led up to the terifikist ear & neck warshen I was ever the cheef mourner at. At 1 time I even want it were a school day but that were before it were over with.

OH, THOSE ANTS A school teacher asked the pupils to write a short essay and to choose their own subjects. A little girl went in the following:

"My subject is 'Ants'. Ants is of two kinds, insects and lady uncles. 'Sometimes they live in holes and sometimes they crawl into the sugar bole, and sometimes they live with their married sisters. 'That is all I know about ants."



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