

MY SON'S WIFE

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My Son's Wife by Rose Porter

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ROSE PORTER

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CHAPTER I

IT seems but yesterday the girl, for whose sake I write the following pages, was a wee bairn. But, despite the seeming, that time dates back to long ago; and now the child is a young woman, and she asks me, her old grandmother, for a wedding gift!

The gift she asks is the story of her mother's early years. At first I inclined to refuse the request, but on second thought I decided to grant it. For "seeing the threads of Providence have many a time a semblance of ravelling," it occurs to me that it may help my granddaughter, and other young creatures like her, if I trace out one here and one there of the threads that were inwrought into the pattern of her mother's life, that thus they may see "how well woven the web was into which the Almighty Hand had run them."

I will find this task less difficult because

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during her girlhood, and the early years of her married life, my son's wife, Bona, kept a diary, and through it I have discovered many things. Nevertheless, as I begin the narrative I realize of all the women I have ever known, and they have been many, for the years of my life will soon number the allotted threescore and ten, my son's wife would be the one most apt to declare that there was nothing in her seemingly uneventful history worth recording, for "the happiest women, like the happiest nations, have no history." I do not, however, share this opinion, for it is not the circumstances of our lives that are of value, but the character that is formed by them. And to my way of thinking there was never a sweeter, more helpful life than Bona's, nor one richer in useful hints for those who have come, as her daughter has, to the place

"Where the brook and river meet,
Womanhood and childhood fleet."

This is the place, too, from whence, according to the language of metaphor, in all true, earnest lives, the onward path begins to lead "up hill all the way." Yes, we must

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climb, if we would reach at last the blessed summit of the Mount of Transfiguration. And what matters it if the path is now and then narrow and rough if it leads *there!* What matters the steep ascent if, like my son's wife, we sing as we climb:

" Yet a little while,
Yet a little way,
Saints shall reap, and rest, and smile,
All the day
Up! let's trudge another mile."

But I must not linger to moralize. That is something Bona never does. She is one of those who *lives* rather than *talks* her religion, and the great power of her influence is its genuineness. She is all through what she seems. When I saw Bona for the first time she was a child, and then came a stretch of years during which we did not meet, and then my son Edward brought her to Greenville as his bride, and again I was straightway impressed by her simplicity and integrity of character. From the hour of arrival I began to love her, and to regard her not merely as my son's wife, but as my dear daughter Bona.

Recalling the early glimpse I had of her

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in childhood I remember a fair-haired, laughing little maiden, with cheeks red as roses, and eyes—well, I never saw the like of them, such sweet, honest brown eyes. When they were cast down her face had a grave, thoughtful look, but when she lifted them it was like the shining of stars in the sky. Indeed, then and all through her life Bona's eyes have been her chief claim to beauty. In color, as I said, they are brown, and shaded by the longest lashes I have ever seen. But it is in their expression the wonderful charm exists. It is that one observes, rather than beauty of color or shape. And this is as it should be, for as Victor Hugo writes: "There is one thing which bears more resemblance to our true selves than our face, and that is our expression; and there is yet another thing which resembles us more than this, and that is our smile." And Bona's smile is simply Bona, and her soul speaks through it.

It is not only her personal appearance I remember when I saw her in childhood; I recollect, also, how she played all the long, sunny morning, and how as she played she sang for very joy like the birds, just as she does now in later life, and then, as now,