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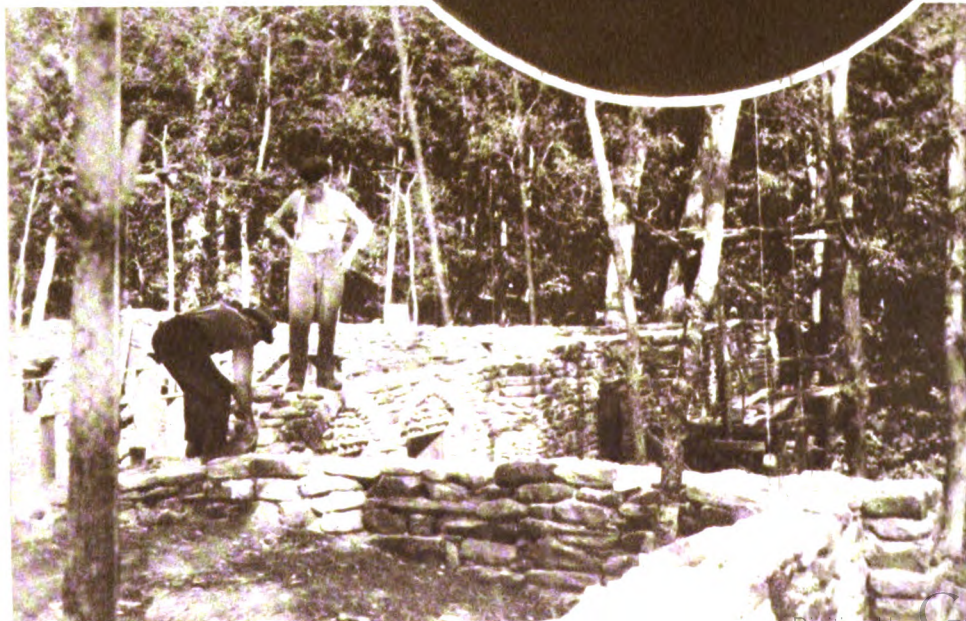
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**THE** "limousine" of the Carolina mountains. A favorite mode of travel in going to the "store."



**TWO YOUNG** mountaineers traveling to town. The ox-cart is still common in this section.



**SEVENTEEN** years ago Mrs. Sloop (in oval), a doctor by profession, went far up into the North Carolina mountains with her husband, also a physician, to practice medicine. In order to raise money to send off to school a destitute girl she asked her friends to send her their cast-off clothing, which she sold to the mountain families. The news of her work spread, until to-day she receives clothes from every state in the Union and conducts sales that amount to \$15,000 annually. With the proceeds she has built a \$90,000 school, and bought a fine farm for the school. Illiteracy is now fast disappearing in her locality. Mrs. Sloop was born at Davidson, North Carolina. (Left) Building the new church at Crossnore.

# No Magician's Trunk Ever Held Such Wonders As These!

"Please send me old clothes," wrote Mary Martin Sloop to her friends; and the first response was a box of mourning garments—But out of those dun-colored dresses came an idea that has resulted in a splendid school, good roads, and other fine things for her isolated mountain community

*By Mildred Harrington*

**I**T WAS early afternoon in midwinter. High up in the Carolina mountains, a young woman sat sewing at a cabin window. Evidently she expected someone, for every few minutes she lifted her eyes from her work to look anxiously up the snow-covered trail that wound higher and higher into the ridge beyond.

You would have wondered from what point a visitor could come. There was not a house in sight, not even a friendly wisp of smoke curling from a distant cabin chimney. Indeed, the young woman's nearest neighbors lived so far away that she could not hear the crowing of their chickens at daybreak, or the lowing of their cows at nightfall. Sometimes days passed when she saw no one but her young doctor husband, who made his scattered rounds on horseback. Frequently there were long winter nights when she had only the howling of wild creatures to keep her company.

But this afternoon she kept looking up the trail.

Presently, she uttered a little cry of relief. They were coming, after all.

Another five minutes, and they were inside, shaking the snow from their scanty garments. An odd-looking group they were—three little girls of eleven or twelve in shapeless brogans much too big for their slender feet.

When the mountain greeting of "Howdy" had been exchanged all around, the hostess counted noses.

"Where is Hepsy?" she demanded.

There was an uneasy silence. Then:

"Hepsy hain't a-comin' ter the sewin' school no more, Mis' Sloop," offered the tallest of the three. "She's a-gwine ter git married, and move tother side the ridge."

The young woman's heart sank. Of the half-dozen girls whom she had persuaded—at the expense of much tact and persistence—to come to her cabin for a weekly sewing lesson, Hepsy was at once the most promising and the most pathetic. At an age when more fortunate children are playing with dolls, Hepsy had assumed the burden of a mountain mother, a burden too heavy for many full-grown women. For three years, this child of thirteen had been mothering her motherless brood of eight younger brothers and sisters. She had cooked, scrubbed, cut and fetched in wood, and tended the

meager cornpatch, while her hard-working father earned an uncertain living for them all by following a one-horse sawmill from one location to another.

For some time now, it had been rumored that Hepsy was to be married. The prospective husband was a young moonshiner with an ugly reputation for drunkenness and brutality. The doctor's wife shuddered when she thought what the child's life would be tied to such a man.

At that time, the state statute said that a girl couldn't be married until she was fourteen. But the mountaineer got around this by declaring, as soon as the child had passed her thirteenth birthday, that she had "turned into fourteen."

What was worse, the girls were trained to feel that they were "old maids" at sixteen. Indeed, one handsome blue-eyed sixteen-year-old had said to the doctor's wife only a few days before, "I see no peace at home because I hain't got a man, an' I'd rather be dead than single at twenty!"

**A**LL during the sewing lesson that afternoon, and for days afterward, young Mrs. Sloop racked her brains for a way out for Hepsy. Finally, the thought occurred to her that if she could send Hepsy away to school the child's problem would be solved. She watched her chance, and waylaid Hepsy's father on one of his weekly visits to his family. He protested that he couldn't get along without the girl. Mrs. Sloop pointed out that if Hepsy got married he would *have* to get along without her. And she clinched her argument by offering to put up the money to send the child to school.

Eventually, he was convinced. Hepsy could go to Banner Elk—a good secondary school on the other side of the mountain—at the beginning of the spring term, which was only a month away.

The first step was gained. But now Mrs. Sloop had to face an even tougher problem. She had talked very glibly of school and expenses; but where was she to get the money for these things? The doctor's fees were of necessity small; more often than not, his services went for nothing. But Mary Martin Sloop was not the sort to put her hand to the plow, and then turn back when the field proved a little rockier than she had expected.

She didn't have the money herself; she would get it from somebody who did have

it. There was a comfortably fixed family friend in the town of Davidson, North Carolina, where she had grown up. She wrote him about Hepsy. In no time at all, a letter came back saying that he would gladly pay the child's tuition and board.

**N**OW for clothes! This time, Mrs. Sloop wrote to some cousins who were small women. She asked them to send her any cast-off clothing they might have on hand. Her heart beat high when she got word, a week later, that a trunk had arrived at the express station fourteen miles down the mountain. It took a whole day and two mules to haul it in a wagon over the deep-rutted roads. Indeed, at almost every step of the way, the wagon bed scraped against the frozen mud. At last, however, the precious trunk stood on the floor of the Sloop cabin.

Mary Sloop's hands trembled with eagerness as she tugged at the fastenings of that trunk. It was a big one, and it was chock-full. Why, it must hold enough to outfit half a dozen girls! Finally, the last rope was off and the lid was up. When the doctor's wife saw what was inside, she put her head down on her arms and cried like a child who has been cheated of its Christmas present. *Every dress in the trunk was solid black mourning!*

Talk about your white elephants—here was a black one. But, strangely enough, if Mary Sloop could have looked one year into the future she would have shouted with joy over the chance—or was it chance?—that had brought this particular black elephant to her door.

No magician's trunk has ever held marvels comparable with those Mary Martin Sloop got out of this battered old carrier of mourning garments. For out of it came an idea that has built, in the heart of the Carolina mountains, where one-teacher schools are still frequent, a ninety-thousand-dollar institution in which teachers who are specialists give first-class high-school education and vocational training to anyone who wants it enough to come and get it. Furthermore, out of this trunk came an idea that has resulted in the purchase of ninety-two acres of the most beautiful country in the Blue Ridge section, in the building of good roads for a people who were isolated by bad ones, and in the blotting out of illiteracy for miles around. (Continued on page 74)

# No Magician's Trunk Ever Held Such Wonders as These!

(Continued from page 37)

The story of how the Sloops came to live in the mountains is a romantic one.

Mary Martin was born and brought up in the little town of Davidson, North Carolina, where her father was a professor in Davidson College.

"From the time I could talk," Mrs. Sloop told me, "I had a passion for teaching. When I was seven, I used to gather around me on our back porch on Sunday afternoons the colored children in the neighborhood. I started with our cook's youngsters; but my zeal soon extended to other quarters.

"These Sunday afternoon classes of mine were great events in the lives of the little darkies. It was the one time of the week when their hair—on other days tightly wrapped in strings—was 'unwropped,' and stood out in all its fuzzy glory. They were good pupils and listened attentively to all my teachings. Indeed, they were responsible for my early choice of a career. Before I was fifteen, I had definitely made up my mind that I was going to be a missionary. And the field I chose was Africa!"

LATER, when she was a student in Davidson College, one of Mary Martin's classmates was a young man named Eustace Sloop, who had grown up within eleven miles of her home. The two got to be good friends. Eustace became a teacher in a boys' preparatory school, but in a few years decided that he wanted to be a physician. Long before this, Mary had concluded that a knowledge of medicine would be a great help in her mission work and she, too, planned to be a doctor.

But, alas, for human plans! During her sophomore year, her mother became desperately ill, and for twelve years thereafter was an invalid requiring constant attention. Few—and least of all the tenderly-cared-for invalid—suspected the wrench it cost the young girl quietly to put aside her cherished ambition.

After her mother's death—in the meantime, she had lost her father also—she was eager to throw herself at once into work that would help her forget. She enrolled in the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, and four years later was graduated.

Meanwhile, young Eustace Sloop's college and medical training had been spread over a good many years. This was because he had been obliged to teach one term in order to be able to study the next. Thus, he took the State Board examination only a year before Mary Martin did. In the list of those who passed, his name stood third, his percentage being 93.3 per cent. The following year, when Miss Martin got her report, it read: "Third on list; grade 93.3 per cent!"

"It did look as if we were pretty evenly matched, didn't it?" asked Mrs. Sloop, with a smile.

Mary Martin's application to the Mission Board had been in some time

when the ultimatum came: "We are not sending any more white women to Africa. Only trained colored women can stand the terrible climate and conditions."

This was a crushing blow. However, Mary Martin had already met enough hard blows to lend her fortitude in meeting one more. "All right," she told them; "I'll go to China." But here another disappointment slapped her in the face. It was the most cruel of all. Mary Martin was in her early thirties. The Mission Board said, "It will take years to learn the Chinese language sufficiently to be of service. You are too old. We must take young people just out of college."

"That hurt," said Mrs. Sloop simply; "but I could see the sense in it. Besides, there was no use in whining. I had my diploma from the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, and I had my license; I could still use both. After taking another year in general hospital work, I went to Agnes Scott College, in Georgia. Here I was resident physician for a year.

"When I was a child my father built the first summer home at Blowing Rock, now a famous resort in the Carolina mountains. It was his custom to ride much over the country on horseback. I remembered hearing him say often that our mountain folk were among the finest in the world. 'All they need,' he would say, 'is a chance.'

"When Doctor Sloop was trying to fix upon a place to 'locate,' I suggested that if he wanted to do something worth while, he could go Plumtree, a mountain community where a school for boys had been started, and teach the students athletics in his free time. After my year as a college physician, I decided to join him. He met me at my father's summer home in Blowing Rock, where we were married. I shall never forget our wedding day. It was sluicing rain. Immediately after the ceremony, we got on our horses and rode off in the downpour.

"WE SPENT three more years in Plumtree. Then we concluded that we could accomplish more satisfying results if my husband gave all his time to practicing medicine. With this idea in view we moved to Crossnore, North Carolina, which was twenty-eight miles away.

"Our idea was to live among the people, doctor them, and gradually win their confidence, for we had made up our minds to spend the balance of our lives right there. "We built a tiny cottage at Crossnore and moved in. This was fourteen years ago.

"From that day to this we have been strictly on our own. My husband has earned our living by the practice of his profession. We are not—and never have been—the representatives of any organization.

"On our first Sunday in Crossnore, we went to Sunday-school. Gathered in a

dark little hut at the crossroads on that bleak December day were sixty-four men, women, and children. They had come literally to study the Bible. The parents had little learning—not many of them could read. But, with the true pioneer spirit, they were determined to keep alive the cause of right.

"Until recently," Mrs. Sloop went on, "when the State gave the mountaineers good roads, practically their only connection with the outside world was with lumbermen, some of whom paid very little for their timber. Then cattle dealers came, and drove good bargains for their cattle. Naturally, the mountain folk were suspicious of 'outsiders.'

"It was some time before we were accepted as a part of the community; but gradually the healing art won its way. Even the most ungracious could not hold out long against the doctor who set their broken bones, and saved their babies from strangling to death with diphtheria.

"FREQUENTLY, when the doctor was away—and he was often gone several days at a time—I did the prescribing. I have had burly moonshiners wake me up in the dead of night to dress their wounds. I always assisted the doctor in operations of course, and many times after a major operation I cared for the patient a month or more."

"You don't mean," I protested, "that you stayed in your cabin alone with those men coming and going at all hours?"

"Why not?" replied Mrs. Sloop. "I could not have been safer guarded by a whole regiment. I have had men with notches on their guns tenderly nurse my baby while I doctored one of their wounded comrades. They knew I was against whisky from the word go, and they never came into my house when they were drinking. The mountaineer has his faults, but, according to his lights, he shoots square.

"When we first came," she continued, "the little dilapidated one-room shack in which we held Sunday-school did duty besides as a church, schoolhouse, and magistrate's court. This, with a tiny crossroads store and a few cabins, made up the village of Crossnore."

Mrs. Sloop hadn't been long in her new home when she hit upon the idea of a sewing club as a means of making friends with the girls and young women in the neighborhood. Which brings us back to Hepsy and the trunk full of mourning clothes.

But let Mrs. Sloop tell you the rest of the story, as she told it to me a few weeks ago when I visited her at Crossnore.

"IN MY eagerness to find something besides black clothes," she said, "I had tumbled up the garments in the trunk. While I was straightening them out, a mountain woman came in to see the doctor on an errand for a sick neighbor.