

EDITOR'S NOTE: THE PEN STAFF will publish one of the winning literary manuscripts in the annual English contest as sponsored by the American Church Institute for Negroes,

in each issue. This short story received the second prize of twenty-five dollars in the 1942 contest.

—THE EDITOR.

THE YOKE

By FRANCIS MAYO

"Jeffrey Thompson: born 1880; died 1938. Requiescat in pace." Thus reads my epitaph; but one significant word which I feel should follow my name has been omitted. My tombstone should read "Jeffrey Thompson—murderer," for I killed the one thing I loved and cherished most in life. It's true I employed neither knife, nor gun, nor poison, nor any other of the divers conventional instruments of death; yet none of these could have proved more effective in ending the life of my little Marcia than the gradual cumulative method I deftly utilized. Marcia was the dear little wife I worshipped who was ever trying to "cultivate" and "civilize" her tall clumsy husband. To a degree she was successful, for my English among other things improved greatly through her constant efforts. But the extreme frustration of Marcia over her failure to alter my character and habits in many other respects proved to be tragic.

I first met Marcia Hughes when she came to Daverston College as a freshman, and I promptly fell turbulently in love with her. She was petite being a scant sixty inches in height, though well rounded and dimpled in the most desirable places. She seemed to have a boundless store of energy and was forever scurrying here and there on her

sturdy well-developed legs. Her charming contagious smile fully compensated for her lack of physical beauty and I believe it was her smile which caused me to determine that she must some day be my very own. Fortunately, I, too, was a freshman and my joy was inexplicable when I discovered that she was in practically all of my classes. Like many other of the males, I began to approach Marcia, but I, like the many others, received a courteous but cool "brush-off." It was evident that Miss Hughes wished to devote all of her time and energy to academic pursuits at which she seemed quite adept. Soon her academic proclivities caused her to be elected to various responsible positions in organizations on the campus and with her increasing duties, she gave still less attention to the men. However, she borrowed my pencil in English class one day and after flashing her beautiful smile murmured a pleasant "Thank you." My hopes soared.

Our sophomore year at Daverston saw a deepened interest in curricular activities for Marcia and deepened interest in Marcia for me. I suffered physically when I saw her succumb to the pleas of Harvey Davis, one of the handsome swains on the campus. Fervently I began to wish that I were Harvey's five feet seven instead of my six feet two. To me it was obvious that