

# Mary Mendenhall Hobbs

"Other heights in other lives, God willing," was the prayer of Mary Mendenhall Hobbs' adult life, and because of her prayerful thought and her active interest, many North Carolina girls have been able to reach higher planes of living.

This great woman was born Mary Mendenhall, August 30, 1852, at Jamestown, North Carolina. Her parents, Dr. Nereus Mendenhall and Oriana Wilson Mendenhall, came of good old Quaker stock and gave to their children, strong bodies, intelligent minds, sound common sense, executive ability, religious fervor, and cheerful dispositions. Mary, the eldest daughter, was no exception. She received her full share of these admirable qualities. Dr. Mendenhall gave much care to the education of his children. Long before education of girls was an accepted idea, Dr. Mendenhall was educating his own daughters at home. Before she went away to school, Mary had read four books of Caesar, six of Virgil, Cicero, some Greek, some history, and had covered six books of geometry.

Mary attended the Howland School at Union Springs, New York. After completing the course there, she remained for one year as a teacher in the same school. In later years she wrote of this school, "There things were conducted for the education of women as human beings and not simply as females, and our ideas were stimulated to make the most of ourselves in every way." She also wrote, "It was while I was here in this School that I decided that I would build a school here in North Carolina where girls whose fathers were less able and far less willing to educate their daughters than my own dear father was, might have as good opportunity as I was then having in that lovely school on Cayuga Lake."

For some years her father had been principal of New Garden Boarding School. When Mary came home she was engaged to teach Latin and History in the girls' section of this same school. This was in 1878.

Two years before Mary's re-

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By LOU ROGERS

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turn, Lewis Lyndon Hobbs, a former student at New Garden, returned to teach in his Alma Mater. In 1888 when New Garden Boarding School became Guilford College, Dr. Hobbs became its first president. For 56 years, until the time of his death, Dr. Hobbs was an active force in the growth of the college. Down through the years, his most ardent co-worker was Mary Mendenhall.

After two years of working together for New Garden Boarding School, Lyndon Hobbs and Mary Mendenhall, childhood friends, found that they had many things in common, including an admiration and love for each other; and so, they were married, 1880, in the New Garden Meeting House.

Later, Mrs. Hobbs, in writing of the days when they had first known each other, said, "My own first recollection of him is in the Sabbath school, where he attracted my attention because he recited more verses of 'The Sermon On The Mount' than I did, which fact did not particularly please me at that time."

The marriage of Lyndon Hobbs and Mary Mendenhall only added to their united zeal for the school. Mrs. Hobbs delighted in telling a dream which she had had concerning Dr. Hobbs and his allegiance to the college. In her dream she saw "Dr. Hobbs, enter Heaven, look around, clear his throat and say, 'Well, is there anything I can do here for Guilford College?'"

To this splendid couple were born five children, Walter, Louis, Wilson, Richard and Gertrude. Walter died in 1929. Louis is a doctor in Ridgeway, Pennsylvania. Wilson is Dean Hobbs of the University of North Carolina, and Richard is a member of the University faculty. Gertrude is Mrs. Russell D. Korner of Charlotte. Time has proven that Mrs. Hobbs, in her zeal for the students of Guilford College, did not neg-

★ MARY MENDENHALL Hobbs was the wife of the president of one of the smaller colleges in North Carolina. Neither the size of the college nor the fact that she was wife of the president rather than the head of the institution herself, prevented her from having a lasting influence on the education of women in North Carolina. She was a friend of Charles D. McIver and stimulated his thinking perhaps more than the average North Carolinian has realized. Her contributions to the cause of higher education for women is evaluated in this article by Lou Rogers. Mrs. Hobbs was interested in many phases of North Carolina life and through her writing, her speeches, and her activities help make this State a better place in which to live.

lect the training of her own children.

With marriage and a growing family, Mary M. Hobbs' concern for an educated womanhood grew continuously. Little by little her efforts multiplied until she saw them bearing fruit.

In 1889 Mary Hobbs was Assistant Clerk of The North Carolina Yearly Meeting. Thus, sitting facing the Session, the long awaited "opportunity knocked on her door." Looking into the faces of two bright girls, daughters of a preacher, she said to herself, "I am thankful that my father is not a preacher." Her conscience reproached her, "It is your place to help these girls, because your father is what he is, and saw to it that you had opportunity." The story continues: "It came like a bolt. I had to make an effort. I had no \$10,000 with which to open the way; but I had a voice, and the good old Quaker way is to 'lay your concern before Friends.'" This she did, first before the Women's Meeting and then before the Men's Meeting.

The result was that a Committee on Girls' Aid was appointed. Mrs. Hobbs, Elizabeth