

My Darling Alice



By Mary Wood

BASED ON LETTERS AND LEGENDS
OF AN EASTERN SHORE FARM

1837-1935

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May 2008

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Chestertown, Maryland

Dedicated with love
to the great grandchildren
of Alice Emory Wilmer,
with special thanks to one of them,
Mary McCoy, who designed this book
and to my husband, Howard Wood,
for memories and patience.

>

Penned in an elegant hand, the following was found among the letters:

*May the pleasures of our pleasure loving ancestors be yours, may you
inherit all of their virtues and none of their faults.*

*Affectionately yours,
Amy E. Blanchard*



EVERSLEY

Preface

Eversley Farm, Centreville, Maryland
April 1935

My name is Alice Emory Wilmer, an eighty-year-old woman sitting at an old table in an old house. The house and the farm on which it stands are part of lands which have belonged to Emorys since the first of our name left England for the New World.

Arthur Emory arrived on these shores from Somersetshire, England in 1660 with a wife, Mary, and two children. A land grant from Lord Baltimore, recorded in 1668, awarded him two thousand acres of land across the Chesapeake Bay on Maryland's Eastern Shore between the Chester and Corsica rivers. The portion which fell to me some two hundred years later I named Eversley. It is a farm of 250 acres on White's Cove off the Chester River in Queen Anne's County.

At my age you are constantly remembering. The coal oil lamp on the table by the wall, which we use now only when the electricity fails, is the one our oldest son, young Harry, took with him when he first went away to St. John's College. Hanging on the wall above it is a photograph of his brother, Pere, in his Marine Corps uniform. He was one of three officers left alive in his company after Belleau Wood. Weighing down the papers here on the table is a piece of fossilized wood Van, our middle boy, sent me from Montana. How I treasured it. That stone and a penciled scrawl were all we had of him for many long months after he ran away from home. In a silver frame by my left elbow is my darling Phebe surrounded by her children, and way at the back of the closet behind me, a

shapeless canvas hat—the one my dear husband, Harry, wore when we went out on the river. There are stories of past times behind everything I see, stories that the children and grandchildren are too busy to listen to.

Of what use is the past which lies about me everywhere in this house, cluttering the bookshelves and walls? Why, there's a story behind almost every kitchen utensil piled in the cupboards, dresses put away in the spare room closets, baby clothes wrapped in tissue paper at the back of a bureau drawer, a tarnished silver trophy for a sailing race no one remembers winning.

Once these outgrown clothes and cast-off relics were important, had meaning. Don't they still?

* * * *

On the floor beside my chair is a shiny lard can in which have been placed, to preserve them from mice, silverfish and damp, important family papers, scraps of early deeds. Metes and bounds, courses and distances, fragments of notes in spidery penmanship on fragile paper, rapidly turning brown. Proof that Emorys owned the lands within these nearly illegible boundaries inscribed in fading ink.

... a tract of land lying on the East side of a river running out of the Eastern Bay called Chester River, and on the Northside of a creek on the said River called Corsica Creek, Beginning at a marked Locust tree upon a Point called Coursey's Point, running for Breadth Northwest and by West six hundred seventy and five perches to a marked Oak by the creekside bounding on the west by a line drawn North from the said Oak for length three hundred and twenty perches on the North by a line drawn South East and by East six hundred seventy and five perches until it Intersect a parallel on the South and

Robert Clayton Surveyor

Does one really own land, I wonder? I have lived on "mine" since my father's death in 1880, and I do not know the answer.

Beautiful words, on long sheets of legal paper, beautifully copied down by clerks hired for their clear handwriting:

To have and to hold such tracts, parts of tracts, pieces and parcels of land above described—with every of the appurtenances, rights of ways, privileges and water courses unto the said Alice G. Emory her heirs and assigns forever.

These lands were here before the first white oak was felled by the first Emory. We have scratched its surfaces with hoes, mule-drawn plows, and now, tractors. We have changed the look of it from forests to tobacco fields, from peach orchards to wheat and corn fields and now, soybeans. Horse barns have been built and then been converted to dairies and the dairy to storage shed. My grandfather, General Thomas Emory, built a race track in the front meadow of the manor house, Poplar Grove—no trace of it remains. We owners come and go. The land stays.

* * * *

Before me on the table is a black lacquered box, each side decorated with a painting, in the Japanese style, of a different white bird, wing tips and bill touched with red. Inside the lid two gentleman in kimonos bow to one another from either side of a decorative symbol.

The box contains 99 letters tied in faded pink tape—the kind I once used to bunch asparagus together to sell in Centreville.

These are my love letters. All those years when my husband, Harry Wilmer, was traveling for The McCormick Harvesting Company, his commissions and salary supplementing the meager living the farm provided, these bits of paper are what kept our marriage alive. I lived for each mail. He was rarely able to come home more than once a month. Looking back I do not see how we survived the separation. At the time, his leaving us to go on the road seemed the only way we could bring up our four children and hold on to the farm. Was it worth his enormous sacrifice? Did we succeed “in our great undertakings”?

* * * *

Next to the Japanese chest is a purple tin candy box, which once held Whitman’s chocolates. In it is the Line a Day 5-year diary our daughter, Phebe, received on her 21st birthday in 1910 and faithfully kept until her engagement in 1914. What a delight she was to us, what a good heart she had, still has, how everyone loved her—especially “her yahd fulla beaus” as Joanna called them.

1914—August 21. Aunt Etta came. Sat around all morning and sang. Went for a sail all of us in afternoon. It was perfect. Bo & I sat under silver poplar in the moonlight. 22. All day picnic up river, no breeze. A & I paddled. I sang. We sat under silver poplar again.

23. *Rita went. Dad & Bo went crabbing. We all went for a sail in afternoon. Moonlight paddle with Bo.*

24. *Picked peaches. Splendid sail in afternoon way downriver. Looked at charts, made lists for camping*

Yes—I say to myself leafing these pages, remembering. Yes.

The final bundle of letters are those I wrote to Phebe on her honeymoon with the one she finally picked from the “yahd,” Howard Wood, from a town with the picturesque name of Conshohocken outside of Philadelphia. Joanna christened him her “black-haired boy.” What a comfort he has been to the whole family.

My history, my life is spread before me here. What demon possessed me to dig all this out from the closet shelf where it has been stored for years? The sensible thing would be to pack it all away and leave it for the children to dispose of after I am gone.

But the words call out to me. The Polonius-like letter General Thomas Emory wrote in 1837 to my father, John Register Emory. The letter to my mother, Alice Gray Bourke, presenting her with a chaplet of flowers to wear in her hair, Harry Wilmer’s dear letters which tell so much of what farm life was like in those hard years, as well as of his loyalty and devotion.

Think of the waste if these are bundled up and thrown into the fire! In the hard days, I used to sit at my desk each night and by the light of my coal oil lamp, scratch away at letters until I could not hold my eyes open. Surely now with electric light and a fountain pen, it might not be an impossibility to tell my story—their story—our story.

Chapter 1



ALICE GREY BOURKE EMORY

1857-1864

I

Two pictures hung on the wall of the bedroom my sister Nan and I shared at Poplar Grove. One was of a pretty woman draped in veils, with a smiling baby on her lap. The other, Nan told me, was of our mother, Alice Grey Bourke. When I was very small, I used to get the pictures mixed up and thought I might have been the baby. "Oh, no," said Nan solemnly. "That is the baby Jesus."

Our mother died in 1857 when she was 29 years old, after having borne four children. Edward Bourke Emory (Ned) in 1848, John Register Emory 3rd (Jack) in 1850, Anna Hemsley Emory (Nan) in 1853, and in 1855, me, her last child, her namesake, Alice Grey Emory. I have no memory of her at all.

Our mother looked out at me from beneath her space below the Virgin Mary on the wall through an oval mat set in an antique gilded frame. She had a solemn face, untouched yet by time. She sat next to a table on which rested her left elbow, her hand lightly touching her chin. A familiar pose seen often in portraits of women authors. Circling her wrist was a black bead bracelet. Her face was oval. The eyes large and direct, heavy lidded. There might be the hint of a tilt to the nose, the lips were well shaped. Her hair was parted straight down the middle and lay smooth over the ears. She wore a small ear-bob and a black dress trimmed with bands of velvet braid. Perhaps she was in mourning. The lace cuffs protruding from the sleeves and her lace collar had been touched with white by the photographer to bring out their pattern. There were no rings on her fingers. She seemed to be poised at the threshold of her life, reflective.



ST. MARY'S HALL, GREEN BANK, BURLINGTON

She was the daughter of Edward G. Bourke and Mary A. B. Cox of Bloomfield, a farm on the road which runs from Centreville, the Queen Anne's County seat, to Chestertown in Kent County. Edward Bourke died in 1831. Mother was then three and her sister Mary Edwardine, Aunt Mollie, a year-old baby. L. L. Wright became the guardian of the children.

I have not been lost to the feelings of the sacredness of this office, he wrote Mother in a letter dated 1847. The virtues of your parents, and their confidence in reposing so great a trust in me as the rearing and education of their little ones. Had my heart been altered to stone those feelings ought to have been enough to have made me discharge my duties with fidelity and honor.

Mother was educated at St. Mary's Hall in Burlington, New Jersey. The school was founded in 1837 by Bishop G. W. Doane, the second Episcopal Bishop of New Jersey, and is still in existence. Nan and I found a packet of letters she saved dating from the time she was leaving school and becoming engaged to my father, John Register Emory. Some are from classmates, from her guardian, and one from a Robert Archer whom Nan and I decided might have been a heartbroken, rejected suitor.

The earliest letter is inscribed in an exquisite hand with the finest of pen points and written cross-hatched on the paper. When Nan and I finally deciphered it, we were disappointed to find it a typical school girl letter apologizing for careless writing(!) and commenting on the other girls and studies:

You say that you have no time to write compositions in English, French, Italian etc. every week. I pity you. Have you the same teacher in Italian? If so, I hope he is more agreeable to you than he was to me.

At that time, St. Mary's Senior Class requirements were: Elocution; Grammar, including analysis of English Poetry; Rhetoric; Logic; Algebra; Trigonometry; Astronomy; Chemistry; Natural Philosophy; Christian Ethics; General History; Composition; Sacred Music; Instruction in Latin, Greek, Spanish, Italian, German, Drawing, Painting, Piano, Harp or Guitar, and in Singing, at the discretion of the Rector.

The students from the East Coast came to Philadelphia by schooner and brig, then up the Delaware River by stern wheeler or by stage coach over the mountains and up the Shenandoah Valley. Finally, railroads brought in students from the western states, as well. In 1847, Mother's last year there, the total cost of tuition was around \$400 a year.

In May 1848, responding to a letter from her, Mr. Wright offers his ward some advice:

Whenever you become so interested in a gentleman as to think of an engagement, I would never offer an objection, unless I knew there was a stain upon his honor, or that he had vices of which you were ignorant I implore you to give the subject that consideration which its vast importance to you requires, and not be too hasty to be engaged or to be married afterward Study as thoroughly as you can the character of the man who may compliment you by an avowal of his affections. Try to find out how he is at home—if kind to his parents, and attentive to supply the wants of his brothers and sisters.

I would not for worlds interpose a harm to your young and tender affections, but the parental solicitude causes my heart to heave at the bare possibility that your family's sketches of happiness may never be realized.

Keep your lover always at a respectful distance; never suffer him to be too familiar.

A letter from C. Newbold addressed to Miss Alice G. Bourke at St. Mary's Hall congratulates her on her engagement. *Present my kindest regards to Mr. E. and say to him that I entrust the happiness of my friend to him with great confidence in his will and ability to render it supreme. There is a postscript which Nan and I found very mysterious: Have you concluded which song to sing?*

The rejected suitor, if such he was, sent this note to her at Charles Street in Baltimore.

These flowers convey the language of Beauty, Love and Happiness; allow me on this occasion, the most interesting of your life, to entwine them in a chaplet on your brow: the flowers will fade, but that the sentiments they convey may continue yours through time and eternity is the prayer of your sincere friend, Robert Archer.

By November 27, 1848, she is addressed as Mrs. John Register Emory, Poplar Grove, Centreville, Maryland. Her *Truly Aff. Cousin, Edmd. L. F. Hardcastle* writes from Washington City to thank her for a delightful visit.

Poplar Grove was so agreeable and the time passed swiftly and pleasantly by.

. . . You are of cheerful and happy disposition and these I hope will never desert you . . . I have known married ladies who possessed the faculty of making so many attractions at home, that their husbands seemed loath to leave home on any account. Such women have always struck me as model wives and worthy of imitation by all others.



GENERAL THOMAS EMORY



ANNA MARIA HEMSLEY EMORY

Aff. Cousin Edmund concludes by inviting them to Washington. *It is predicted that the season will be a very gay one. You and Mr. Emory must not fail to be here on the 4th of March to see "old Zack" inaugurated—bring sister Mollie without fail.*

The 1850 census lists:

John R. Emory	30 farmer
Alice G. Emory	21 [wife]
Anna M. H. Emory	63 [mother]
Mary E. Bourke	19 [wife's sister]
Edw. B. Emory	1 1/2 [son]

There is a last letter, the only one in Mother's handwriting:

Baltimore

My dear husband

... I have placed myself in the hands of Dr. [Illegible], Ellen Gilman's dentist who seems to understand what he is about. My time is almost entirely taken up by him—and he says my teeth are in deplorable condition, but he will try to give me as much of his time as will enable me to go to Phila. for a few days the last of next week with my teeth complete except those that are to be extracted which he will do after my return. He says that they will not cost less than 60 or 70 dollars—which is shocking to me, but I feel the necessity so great of saving those I have left, I shall spend as little as possible in other ways.

If we accomplish this visit to Phila.—I should not be able to return home before Tuesday or Thursday next unless you or the children should be taken sick, which should it be the case, I hope you will write at once by the steamboat and direct care of Miss Brice, corner of St. Paul's & Saratoga Sts.

Eddie [Ned] is not very well satisfied at boarding school. He seems anxious to get home. I hope my dear little pussy cat is well. I am almost distracted to see her.

Give a bushel of kisses to my pet baby—& Johnnie & Nan—and a large share for yourself, my dearest husband. I shall be glad when I turn my face homeward.

And that is all, except for the granite slab in the Poplar Grove graveyard, which does not even spell out her full name.

*Alice G., wife of John R. Emory
died Poplar Grove, December 5 1857,
aged 29 years*

Loved and honored in life, mourned and lamented in death

II

There were other portraits looking down at us from the walls of dim high-ceilinged rooms which I remember shuttered against the fierce summer heat of Maryland's Eastern Shore or with drawn curtains to keep out the biting damp of the winter gales sweeping relentlessly up the Chester River from the Chesapeake Bay.

Grandfather's portrait hung over the fireplace in the parlor. His expression was lively. His receding white hair made his face very long, and the two round spots of pink the artist had put on his cheekbones gave him the look, Nan and I thought, of a rather gentlemanly clown. But of course, he was Thomas Emory, "the General," "the Planter," of Poplar Grove in Queen Anne's County, a farm which at that time comprised around two thousand acres. He had been a member of the State Senate in Annapolis and had in 1836 written a series of essays for the Easton Gazette in favor of bringing the railroad to the Eastern Shore. In 1838 he was appointed to a commission which visited England to negotiate, unsuccessfully, a loan for the Eastern Shore Railroad.

His Poplar Grove-bred race horses were "famed throughout the state," and his cows won prizes at the agricultural fair.

"That's not the General, not Thomas, at all," Granmama would mutter, shaking her head each time she noticed the painting.

On the opposite wall was his wife, Granmama, Anna Maria Hemsley of Cloverfields. "Spittin' image of Miz Anna," I overheard Harriet, who cooked, say to Harriety, her daughter, who cleaned. When she said this, they were down on their knees rubbing polish into the parlor floor before waxing it. All ten of the Emory children (there had been eleven, but one died) had contributed toward it for her 70th birthday. I think she disliked it as intensely as the one of her husband, but of course she couldn't say so. I thought it made her look older and sterner than she was, but that the artist had painted her gnarled hands and the muslin ties of the little cap she wore with great skill.

It was hard for Granmama after raising her enormous family to have to begin all over again and bring up four grandchildren.

In reality, it was "Aunt Amy," who had been our mother's nurse at Bloomfield, with the help of her niece, Little Dolly, thirteen years old but not as tall as brother Jack, who did most of the work. They got us into our clothes in the

morning and out of them at night, whether they had to do it or what was harder, teach us to do it ourselves.

All those hooks and eyes and buttons! Little Dolly had a knack for making a game of it. She was a dab with Granmama's ivory-handled button hook. "Now we's going fishin'," she'd say, poking the hooked end through the buttonhole. "We gettin' a bite." She'd slide the hook around the button. "Here he come a buttonfish! Now, see if you can get one good as me." They saw that our faces were washed and our stockings clean. Granmama darned them. Granmama's role was to oversee and instruct. Aunt Amy saw that we were fed, while Granmama supervised our table manners. Little Dolly played games with us, running games that the old ladies were too stiff for. "Drop the Handkerchief," "Kick the Can," "Still Pond No More Moving," and dolls when the boys didn't want to play with us.

She didn't like playing dolls which we couldn't understand. It was Nan who asked her why. Little Dolly's face clouded over. "Playing dolls is for lil children, and I ain't no chile." It was a surprising answer for someone who knew all the best hiding places in the boxwood trees and liked to swing on gates and slide down haystacks. "Well, when you did play with dolls, which one was your favorite?" Nan persisted. "I had a corn husk baby once, but she done got throwed in the fire." Little Dolly turned her back on us and stomped out of the room. It was a few days later that Nan got the idea. She chose one of our dolls, and cut up a scrap of checked gingham to tie up its head—a little bandanna. But somehow it didn't look right, so she sneaked down and got some tea leaves out of the canister and some water out of the kettle, and when she thought the color was dark enough, she wet a cloth and little by little, so it wouldn't get soaked and lumpy turned that old rag doll brown, every bit of her. She dried a nice tan color, just like Little Dolly. Then we dressed her, and this time the little red bandanna looked just right. A few days later we invited Little Dolly to join us in our secret tea party place.

Every once in a while, Nan and I with our dolls, used to slip out to the family graveyard next to the house and play "Grown-up Ladies Going out to Tea." We used Mother's flat tombstone for our table. It was to keep her company. She seemed so lonely all by herself, with only the crusty old warrior, General Thomas, at her feet, along with his son, Robert, whom she had never known. There were some older graves off in the corner, I can't remember whose.

Nan and I would tell Mother all the family news, using the most stilted language, "Have you heard, Mother dear, that Aunt Mollie, was holding hands in the grape arbor with our Uncle Blanchard? Will you have one of these sand tarts, my dear?" Nan would ask, politely offering it to one of the dolls first.

"No, thank you very much. I declare I have no appetite," the doll squeaked in my voice. "I am so very delicate, you know. Perhaps Miss Alice would enjoy one?"

"Oh, to be sure I would," said I quickly snatching the cookie off its hollyhock leaf plate before Nan decided to eat it herself.

"You are aware, are you not," Nan continued in her "lady's" voice, "that Miss Mollie is our dear Mother's sister? Aunt Amy says there's a wedding in the air. She saw a white cat climbing the elm tree—that's a sure sign." And there was a wedding, several years later. Aunt Mollie and Uncle Blanchard's eight children are our double first cousins.

We had our tea table set up and decorated and had seated the new doll at the head of the tombstone by the time Little Dolly showed up. She seemed uneasy, looking over her shoulder into the tangle of bushes growing untended in the corners of the brick wall.

"What y'all doing in this place? This ain't no place for folks what's alive."

"It's our secret place, Little Dolly. We come here to visit our mother. Don't you dare tell a soul." Then Nan put on her grown-up voice. "Won't you help yourself to a cookie, Miss Dolly. I had my cook make some just for you when I heard you were coming to call."

"You mean you sneaked some off'n the plate when Aunt Harriet's back was turned." Little Dolly giggled. With effort, Nan maintained her grown-up voice and dignity.

"And now I wish to introduce you to a new guest. I believe she has come here just to see you."

I still remember how Little Dolly's eyes grew wide and then narrowed as she picked up the doll and shook her. "Ain't you got no manners, child, settin' here when there's grown folks standing. I got to teach you respect for your Momma." Then with the doll held tight on her lap, Little Dolly sat down on the grass and joined the tea party, giving the doll a little slap if she felt her manners were not up to scratch. Oh, the funny things she said about the grownups in the household. I wish I could recall some of them now. There wasn't anything about the Emory family she didn't know.



EDWARD BOURKE EMORY



ANNA HEMSLEY EMORY



ALICE GREY EMORY

I remember that afternoon as a lovely dream. When we heard Little Dolly's name being called by Harriety, she jumped to her feet, hiding her baby in her apron as she ran. "Why, she didn't even say thank you! had a lovely time." I remarked in my grownup voice.

"But she did have one though, didn't she?" Nan asked, and I nodded.

Then we tired of being "ladies" and pulled the heads off wild flowers and stuffed dandelions, buttercups and gray-blue violets into the grooves which spelled out Mother's name in rough gray stone,

Sacred to the memory of Alice G.

* * * *

Granmama tried to teach us lessons at first, but we had her outnumbered, and if we chose to hide or run away from her, there was nothing she could do about it. If she could persuade us to sit in a circle at her feet, she gave us what she liked to call history lessons.

"Does anyone know what Poplar Grove used to be called?" she'd ask, forgetting that she usually started off her classes with this question.

"Brampton, the name of the home place of the Emorys in England," we'd shout.

"Not all at once, dears. And why was the name changed?"

"One of the John Emorys changed it during the 1812 war," said Jack, who was fourth or fifth of that name. "He thought it sounded too English."

"That was our grandfather, the General," Ned burst out.

"Correct, my dearie," said Grandmama. "Now, who can tell us about our gardens here at Poplar Grove?"

Jack's hand shot up again, "They're the oldest in the state."

"Correct, dearie—anything else? Nannie?"

"There are violets and buttercups and lovely gold dandelions in the lawn."

"Dear me, are there? I'll have to speak to Zebulon about that."

"Granmama," asked Ned, "How does anybody *know* all that about the gardens and General Washington taking cuttings from our boxwood to start his garden at Mount Vernon?"

"Well, dear, Grandfather always said it was so. He must have learned it from his father, or perhaps as a very little child no bigger than Alice, he saw his father

give the General cuttings. Mr. Washington frequently crossed the Bay from Annapolis on his way to Philadelphia, you know."

"But wasn't Rock Hall where he landed?"

"Well, perhaps one time he came up *our* river, the Chester, instead, and tied up at our dock in Emory Cove."

"Maybe he spent the night here," said Jack. "That would be famous."

"There's no reason in the world it couldn't have happened," said Granmama, but then, bringing herself back to reality, she added, "However, I think the spare room bed would have been known as 'General Washington's' forevermore—if he *had* slept in it."

Our furniture did seem to have names. Cousin Troop's chair sat in the parlor, though nobody could remember who Cousin Troop was. The *first* John Register Emory's silver tankards were on the sideboard in the dining room. The everyday blue and white plates with the Chinese paintings on them of a little bridge and two birds, were known as his wife, Anne Costin's, wedding china. It was nearly impossible to pick up a spoon to eat your pudding or glance at yourself in the looking glass to be sure your bonnet was straight without getting a little family history.

Grandmother also liked to read to us from the journals General Thomas had kept of the famous trip to England in 1837. The parts where he compared English and American agricultural differences we found boring.

One shilling for a pretty looking but very poor open stone peach raised by the side of a wall and no more to be compared to a Maryland peach than chalk is to cheese . . . their apples are unworthy of the name.

"The zoo, the zoo, read about the animals," one of us would shout as she turned the pages. Eventually the book fell open at that section:

Then you see what is termed the Zoological Gardens, beautiful laid out grounds in trees and shrubbery, kept in the neatest order, with fine houses for the nobler animals, the Elephant, Rhinoceros and Giraffe, some of them kept to a temperature by artificial heat of from 70 to 76 degrees . . . iron cages for the lion and tiger . . . Wire houses heated within brick houses for the paroquets and other rare birds from the tropics . . . pools of water for species of water fowl. I saw a black swan . . . From my own country the favored little quail, doomed here to a life of incarceration. Our quail is quite as good as the English so much esteemed partridge.

At this we'd shout "Hooray" and the lesson would deteriorate into a shouting match of patriotic slogans.

In winter, Ned and Jack went to the one-room school at the end of the Shellbanks' lane. It was one of our farms, an easy walk of just over a mile from the Poplar Grove gate. In summer, they were considered old enough to help the men with farm work.

We girls were still able to escape the demands of the grown-up world. We played hide and seek with Little Dolly among the great twisted branches of the towering box bushes, hunted for soft crabs in the sand along the creek, dug for the gold the pirate Blackbeard was said to have buried somewhere along the Corsica River's shore.

There were endless adventures to be had around the barns. Nan and I dared each other to jump from the hayloft into half-filled wagons that seemed at least a mile below. We'd feel under hens for their eggs at the risk of a squawking peck. We learned from Bob—whom Father called "the best hand around cows I've ever seen"—how to get milk to jet from a cow's tough, rubbery teat, and once we saw a lamb emerge all wet and slippery from his mother. It was disgusting—bloody and shrunken—but in no time she had licked it clean, and it became dear and fuzzy, with the most charming wiggly tail, just like the little lamb in the steel engraving that also hung on the wall of our bedroom.

When I was four years old, one of the most terrible occurrences in my life took place. Years later when I was a grown woman and time had clouded my remembrance and reason said my Father could not have done such a wicked thing, I took the trouble to go into the Courthouse in Centreville, and after searching through the great heavy books, found these words, written out in a clerk's neat but nearly illegible hand.

Queen Anne's County to wit: Be it remembered that on the eleventh day of January eighteen hundred and fifty-eight the following Bill of sale was brought to be recorded to wit:

I John R. Emory of Queen Anne's County in the State of Maryland in consideration of the love and affection which I bear unto my niece Marrianna L. Robinson wife of John M. Robinson do hereby give and grant to the said Marrianna L. Robinson a negro girl

called Dolly Plater aged about thirteen years, slave for life. Witness my hand and seal this first day of January in the year eighteen hundred and fifty eight.

Witness Rob't E. Baynard

J. R. Emory

I copied it out word for word and walked out of the building.

They came back to me then clearly, as I climbed into the buggy and took up the reins, memories of my first experience of the power of some of the grownups around me and the powerlessness of others, memories I had buried deep so long ago. The Negroes who took such loving care of us when we were small children, Aunt Amy, Harriet and her daughter Harriety, Zebulon and the other out-of-door workers, all of them had been slaves, although it was a word I never heard mentioned until the Emancipation at the end of the war.

That long ago morning when Aunt Amy wouldn't speak to us as she went about her duties. I can still remember the way her face turned to stone when we asked where Little Dolly was. We children overheard scrap of words here, a whisper there, but never a word from Aunt Amy.

Cousin Marriana and her new husband, who later became a Judge of the Court of Appeals, had come for a visit, and Little Dolly was given the task of waiting on the bride. She was proud of the honor. "You should see her underdrawers, ruffles, and ribbons you got to iron first and then weave in and out. Nobody in this house done wear nothin' like that. Them things is for Baltimore ladies." Nan and I loved to hear Little Dolly tell us of Cousin Marriana's tortoise shell comb and silver-backed brush, and the fact that she had a little pot of rouge, which she rubbed into her cheeks before going down to dinners. We already knew from Granmama 'nice' ladies didn't do that. Cousin Marriana was very pretty with a tiny waist, and at dinner, her dresses looked as if they might be going to slide down off her shoulders. Of course, we were too young to eat at the table when there was company, but there was a place on the stairs, behind the velvet portiere on the landing from which you got a good peek into the dining room. You just had to be sure you didn't giggle or sneeze.

There was of course no discussion, no warning but the stony face of Aunt Amy. It wasn't until we were standing on the steps waving goodbye that Nan saw Little Dolly. She was sitting up front next to the coachman, head bent, to



JOHN REGISTER EMORY

hide her tears. It wasn't until the horses started off at trot, that there was a loud cry from the steps and Aunt Amy, ran out on to the gravel crying, "My Baby, my Little Dolly. May the Lord protect you from them folks."

Granmama turned on Aunt Amy. "Go to the quarters, until you're sent for." I was shocked to hear our gentle Grandmother speak in that tone to someone she'd worked alongside, without a cross word between them, as long as I could remember, but I realize now it was to hide her away from Father's anger at her unseemly outburst.

* * * *

Shadows and silence were cast by our mother's absence, and these became enmeshed with the disappearance of Little Dolly, which we knew by the sort of instinct children acquire we must not speak of.

Our father's presence on the other hand, was loud, sprang out at us from unexpected places, keeping us off balance and in later years, afraid of him.

Our father, John Register Emory, who was named for *his* grandfather, had been a soldier, a graduate of the United States military academy at West Point. He was retired from the army with the rank of colonel after being wounded in the leg during the Seminole wars. After General Thomas' death in 1842 he took over the management of the farms.

My first clear memory of him must have been when I was about six years old. It was a cold day in early spring, and I was playing out in front of the house with Nan, supervised by Granmama. Suddenly we heard a bugle call and up the lane galloped Father brandishing a sword, followed by a band of mounted soldiers. Father reined his horse in front of Granmama and held up his arm to stop his followers. Suddenly the carriage circle was alive with hooves, switching tails and boots. I ran for safety behind Granmama.

"The Spaniard's Neck Cavalry, at your service, Mother." He said standing in his stirrups and sweeping off his battered old campaign hat.

"Alice, don't be afraid," said Granmama. "It's only some of your uncles and those Emory cousins from Conquest and Concord farms down the neck. I declare, what are you boys up to now?"

"General Goldsborough's orders." Father reached into his pocket and took out a crumpled piece of paper: *In view of the general disquietude field officers of the 6th*

Brigade are ordered to call together Captains and other officers of their regiment for the purpose of filling up vacancies in the several companies.

"Sounds like Robert Goldsborough, always did like to keep things stirred up," she said. "You boys must be thirsty from all that galloping up and down."

"Drilling, Mama, drilling," Father explained patiently.

"Drilling. Come on in the house, and I'll see if I can find some refreshment for you."

"Dismount men," Father roared, then turned to his youngest brother, Uncle Blanchard. "Show them where to hitch the horses and where to wash up." He put his hat on my head. "Learn to ride your pony, and you can join the Spaniard's Neck Cavalry." The hat fell down over my eyes, so I snatched it off and carried it into the house for him.

I had no inkling that the bustling excitement of those comings and goings of Father and his cavalry were about defending us from the villainies of the Unionist soldiers. There were small units of them stationed in Centreville, in Queenstown and some of the other towns in the county. Every now and then we'd overhear grownups talking about their outrageous behavior, but they usually changed the subject quickly when they noticed we had come into the room.

From what I did overhear about those Yankees and their uncouth ways, I got it into my head that this war that Maryland seemed to be teetering on the brink of was between good manners and bad manners. I was sure the Yankee army of Bad Manners would win. The standards of Good Manners were too impossibly high—certainly for a seven-year-old girl.

The Spaniard Neck Cavalry frequently drilled on the race course Grandfather had laid out in front of the house. Families drove over in carriages to watch, and Father would expansively invite everyone—most of whom were relatives—to Poplar Grove for refreshments afterwards. There would be a mahogany-colored ham from the smokehouse, baking powder biscuits and punch in a large silver bowl that was only for the gentlemen. Lemonade in a cut-glass pitcher was for ladies and children. Boots stamped on Harriety's polished floors, spurs jangled. As the afternoon dimmed to evening the ladies thoughts turned to dinnertime, and after thanking Granmama, they herded their children toward the buckboards and buggies. The men stayed on and on. The laughter rose as the level in the silver punch bowl sank, until finally Granmama whispered to us to go out into the pantry and ask Harriet to give us supper. She

was going to retire and would we ask Aunt Amy to bring her "a little something on a tray," when she herded us up the back stairs to bed.

We'd fall asleep to the sound of men's laughter, only to be awakened by Cousin Baynard trying to blow taps on his trumpet, then the sound of hooves thundering down the lane, as the Spaniard's Neck Cavalry finally decided the time had come to go home.

The formation of the Centreville Zuoaves, a Unionist Troop, 90 strong, whose wives and sweethearts had made them the most dashing uniforms of red pantaloons and Navy blue shirts, caused quite a stir. "This fine organization will carry no other banner than the Stars and Stripes," Granmama read out to us from the Centreville Times, scorn in her voice.

But it was not all "playing soldier."

Each day brought to the dinner table another story about the Union troops in Queen Anne's County arresting people and sending them to prisons in the North—people we had known all our lives.

In April, the County Commissioners raised a special levy of \$20,000 and appointed Father and Mr. Earle from Melfield, over on Corsica Neck, to make a trip to Baltimore to buy arms and ammunition to be used in defense of the county. Father told Ned and Jack to meet the four o'clock boat at Indiantown wharf several days later. Nan and I hitched a ride on top of some bags of flour which in Father's absence, Granmama had decided to have shipped over to Baltimore to be sold. Since the April 19th riot in the city, food was becoming scarce across the Bay, and she was sure she would get a good price.

Father was full of his trip. "Had no trouble getting all the powder and shot we needed—1200-some pounds," he told us as he climbed up in the wagon and picked up the reins. "But there wasn't a rifle or a pistol to be had for love or money. The city is in an uproar. Yankee soldiers everywhere, arresting folks right and left, just for the sport of it. My Lord, I am glad to be back on the Shore! Giddupp, you lazy mules, step lively." He told us the powder was to be stored in the courthouse in Centreville, and the Smallwood Rifles were to stand guard over it. "Now, you children are not to breathe a word about this—or I'll skin you alive," We laughed. "I mean it," he roared, "*I'll skin you alive, each and every one of you.*"

During May there were many meetings with various members of the Cavalry in the little farm office off the library. Children were never allowed to step

through its door, but we could see newspapers piled on the desk, spilling over on to the carpet, half-smoked cigars and bottles crowding the tables, before the door was closed.

In June it was rumored that we would soon be having more Northern troops visited upon us, and somehow all but five of the powder kegs were mysteriously conveyed away. Mr. Madison Brown and Mr. John Palmer were arrested for having had a hand in stockpiling these but were subsequently released for lack of evidence.

I remember another of Father's returns from Baltimore. This time he was one of a large party of delegates from Queen Anne's County at a State Conference. Out of this came a resolution recommending that "if a disruption was not to be avoided, Maryland should cast her lot with Virginia and the South."

"Waste of time," Father reported to us as we lingered at the table following his return. He slumped in his chair, letting his dinner cool, while he filled his glass halfway up with whiskey. He was tired from his walk up from the landing at Indiantown where the steamer had let him off. We had been given no warning as to when to expect him home. "The whole city's upside down. It was no use trying to mail a letter."

"Be careful of that decanter, John Register," said Granmama, "One of your father's horses won that as a first prize. At the Agriculture show or was it for a race? I declare my memory is slipping."

"They're in control now, semi-military government all over the whole state. We've been silenced."

"Not our rector," Ned boasted. "Last Sunday in church Mr. Stearns, refused to recite the prayer for thanksgiving for recent Federal Victories."

Ned was fifteen now, and was planning to sail his bateau down into Virginia waters, and join the Confederate army as soon after his sixteenth birthday as possible. He had sworn us all to secrecy.

"I was told by one of the ladies on the altar guild," added Granmama, "that Bishop Whittingham had authorized it to be said in all churches on Sunday April 13th. The Rector is such a meek little man. I do hope he doesn't get himself into any trouble over this."

"The meek shall inherit the earth,' Here's to the Reverend Mr. Stearns, hero of the Confederacy." said Father raising his glass.

"Mr. Stearns is a man of peace." Granmama went on. "He said in his sermon Sunday he thinks it immoral to pray for any action that results in the taking of human life. He feels there are wrongs on both sides."

"And rights? What possible rights can there be on the Yankee side. I hate Yankees," said Jack.

"I do, too," Ned backed him up.

"So do we," Nan and I echoed.

Father glared at us. "You children have no idea what you are talking about, and until you do, I don't want to hear you say one more word about it. Understand?"

When he talked like that I could feel myself draining away, until there was nothing there at all in my chair. "Yessir," I whispered. The others joined in.

"Finish your dinners, dears," said Granmama in her kindest voice. There was no sound but the click of a knife or fork against the china plate.

"John Register, you've let Harriet's nice dinner get cold. I'll send it back and get a hot one for you."

"Let me alone," he snapped. She turned to us and said chattily, "Your dear Uncle William is an officer in the Union army, you know."

"Well, at least I didn't get caught, the way brother did," Suddenly Father was in one of his expansive moods. "Will graduated from the Point, two years before me, class of '38. When he saw the way things were heading, he sat down and wrote the Secretary of War resigning his commission. He'd done right well, made Major by then."

"And Aunt Matilda saw his letter lying on the table in the hall and picked it up and put it in her pocket." said Nan.

"Oh," Father was startled, "Have I already told you this?"

"No, Granmama, in one of her history lessons."

"Well, now, Miss Nan, if you know so much, whatever made your Aunt Matilda do such a thing?"

"Because she was Benjamin Franklin's granddaughter."

"Why should that have anything to do with it?" he challenged. The boys were busy with their food. They were wary of getting into conversations with Father. Granmama was intently studying the painting of her old home, Cloverfields, on the wall behind his head, hoping to hear if one of her students would come up with the correct answer.



WILLIAM HEMSLEY EMORY



MATILDA BACHE EMORY

"Was it because Benjamin Franklin was a Yankee?" I ventured.

"Could be," Father laughed, "Anyway, old William was trapped. War was declared and by then it was too late for him to resign. He was put in charge of the siege of Vicksburg."

"And from what I've heard, he was said to be the only gentleman in the Union army." Granmama added in satisfaction. "Well, I certainly tried to teach all my children good manners."

And that was when I knew in my heart that because of Uncle William's good manners, the Union would not win the war.

Many years later I learned that what we had been taught was a legend. The official account was quite different. It said Major Emory was en route to a new post on the *northern Texas frontier when he met an emissary from certain southerners who . . . offered Emory a commission as Major General in the Confederate service Emory dismissed the agent . . . returned to Washington and was commissioned a Lieutenant Colonel of the 6th Cavalry He was known in the army as "The Tiger."*

His wife, Aunt Tilly was a great friend of Mrs. Jefferson Davis. In fact, they were bridesmaids in each other's weddings, and before hostilities broke out, were inseparable in Washington society, so one might have thought her sentiments would have leant toward the Confederacy.

* * * *

The full truth about our Father hit Nan and me one rainy afternoon in June several years later. Zebulon had just brought a basket of new peas up to the kitchen porch. "First crop of the year! I beat the crows to them this time," he said proudly. "Where you want me to set this down?"

"I ain't got time to fool with no peas," said Harriet. "I got pies to make."

"We'll do it," said Nan. "Come on, Alice, we'll find Granmama and she can read to us or tell us a story, we'll have a pan full by suppertime."

If I can't be lying in a hammock reading, I think I'd rather be shelling peas. The jade pod, the satisfying crack as it springs apart, transformed into a small canoe, the smoothness as your thumb slides along tumbling out the round green pearls which fall into the pan with a soft "plock, plock" is one of June's most satisfying delights.

"Mercy, we'll never get enough for supper if I don't pitch in," Granmama said, declining to read aloud to us.

We drew our chairs in a circle by the library window and set to. Rain made the garden look as if you were dreaming it—gray, misty, perhaps it wasn't really there at all. It wasn't long before Granmama began to reminisce.

"I remember once when I had a basket of butterbeans to hull by dinner-time, and you know they're not easy the way peas are. Your dear Grandfather came in and asked if I was busy. Well, I could see he wanted company, so I invited him to sit a while and visit. It wasn't long before he began to get the fidgets, and I knew he was about to tell me to stop what I was doing and come out to the stable to look at a new colt or something like that. I had this mess of beans to finish, so I asked him if he'd read to me while I got on with my work.

"Now the General had a perfectly beautiful voice. Oh, girls, I wish you could have heard him give the Fourth of July oration on the courthouse square. Do you know what he did? He took down his little volume of William Shakespeare's complete works—you can see it right over yonder on the shelf next to the Life of General Washington—and began to read"

"To thine own self be true," a loud voice interrupted. We jumped and some of my peas rolled on to the carpet. None of us had heard Father who was leaning in the doorway, cross the hall. "Very gratifying, this display of female industry." He came toward us bringing with him the pungent smell of the stable, as well as a sickening odor, which I later identified as whiskey.

He leaned across me and scooped up a large handful of peas rolled them around in his palm, elegant beads of jade. Then he tossed them into his mouth. He wiped the back of his hand across his mustache, then belched. "Excuse me, Mother, excuse me, daughters."

Granmama gazed down at the faded Turkish carpet as if she could not bring herself to look into his face. I glared at him, angry he'd helped himself to my work without asking me. I realized, surprised, he was no longer handsome. White, potato-sprout hairs seemed to wriggle all through his hair and mustache, his eyes were watery gray, like sea nettles. Tears balanced along their reddened lower lids. His skin was mottled and red. He needed both a bath and a shave.

He returned my gaze, winked at me and bowed. "'And it must follow as the night, the day.'" He belched again and roared, "Excuse me, ladies. 'Thou canst not then be false to any man.' The old man there," he pointed to his father's

portrait, "the old general, he wrote me a letter like that, near about a dead copy of that, once. Reckon he thought he was old Polonious."

"John Register, a gentleman does not wear farm boots in the house," said Granmama, still gazing down at the mud he'd brought in. He turned toward her to make another apologetic bow and knocked over the little pie crust tea table by her chair. The head of a china dog that had sat there for as long as I could remember broke off, and the contents of Granmama's sewing basket spilled. Father bent as if to try to pick things up.

"Please," and I'd never heard her speak so icily, "I will ring for Harriety."

He shambled out, mumbling, "And it follows as the night, the day."

There was silence in the room, snip-snip went the clock on the mantle, then the slam of the back door. Granmama jerked the embroidered bell pull which rang somewhere out in the kitchen.

"You know, girls, your Aunt Sarah Hemsley worked this for me one Christmas. I don't believe she was much older than you are now, Nan." When Harriety appeared she showed her what she wanted done, and the three of us resumed shelling the peas. Granmama never mentioned Father's affliction to us.

* * * *

The General Thomas' letter is in the lard can, saved:

*To Lieut. John R. Emory
Sackett's Harbor
State of New York*

. . . [B]e careful whom you let take liberties with you. You should be careful never to give an unintended insult and never to take an intended insult. If at any time you do an unintentional wrong or inflict an unintentional injury it is the part of justice and honour to apologize for it.

There are worthless and cowardly fellows in all communities who seek to build themselves up a reputation of trampling on those likely to bear it, and by bullying. To guard against such fellows it is well to discipline oneself in all the practices & the arts and trickery of dueling, just as you would discipline yourself in the strategy and tactics of infantry. The last it is your business from duty to your country to know, and the first may be necessary for your own safety and the preservation of your honour and character

defensively. When I say this to you, remember that I abhor and detest the resort to duel for light or trifling causes, and never would participate in it if honorably to be avoided. The safest way to go through a duel is to resolve in your own mind that you will do execution, and then get through it with the most perfect indifference and sang-froid. I hope that you never may have occasion to resort to this, as many think, unjustifiable sort of rencontre, but if you do, take care that you so manage it, that others will not be anxious to try you again—

Never do an act you would be ashamed if the whole world knew it, and then you will sleep sound & your moral energy resulting from this consciousness will carry you through almost any sort of trouble & difficulty.

Avoid if possible getting in debt to the smallest extent, it puts men to lying & to resort to a variety of dishonorable acts to release themselves from the importunities of creditors.

After you get fairly under way, if you could manage to lay up a little unknown to your brother officers it would be a great affair for you . . . & it would place you in that position that the little I shall be able to give you some of these days would be of much greater value to you—I shall endeavor to be just to you all & and those who have cost me the least will be entitled and shall receive the most. If you continue to deport yourself as well as you have done I shall leave you, after your mother's death, the one third of Poplar Grove & and if you can manage to lay up enough to buy the others out or marry someone who can enable you to do this, you will have a handsome farm at least.

Robert is still here and if he does not get an office with Easton Bank he is applying for, I do not know what is to become of him. He has brought his pigs so far to a pretty market indeed.

All well and desire their love to you

with yr affectionate Father

Thos. Emory,

*Poplar Grove
Centreville, Maryland
1837*

Poor Father, poor Grandfather. Parents invest so much in their children, have such high hopes and dreams for them. We do all we can to smooth the rock-strewn path that lies ahead, to pass on the lessons we've learned through years of living. They do not hear us. It seems as if the stormy lessons of our experience

are pitched too high for their ears. Each must find his own path. Poor old Polonius, as well. I fold the fragile, flaking sheets and place them carefully in the lard can.

* * * *

The boys, Ned and Jack, saw Father more than we did, working with him around the farm, and they felt the full brunt of his anger, stinging like a whiplash across their shoulders. If they were warned beforehand, they'd sometimes escape to the river in their little bateau. For many years I'd wake up in the night having dreamt I could still hear his voice bellowing at them from the riverbank. "Ned, Jack, get back here right now. You can hear me, dammit! Come back in this minute. I mean it!"

What seemed worse to us, was the tearful remorse following one of his drinking bouts. These he saved for Nan and me.

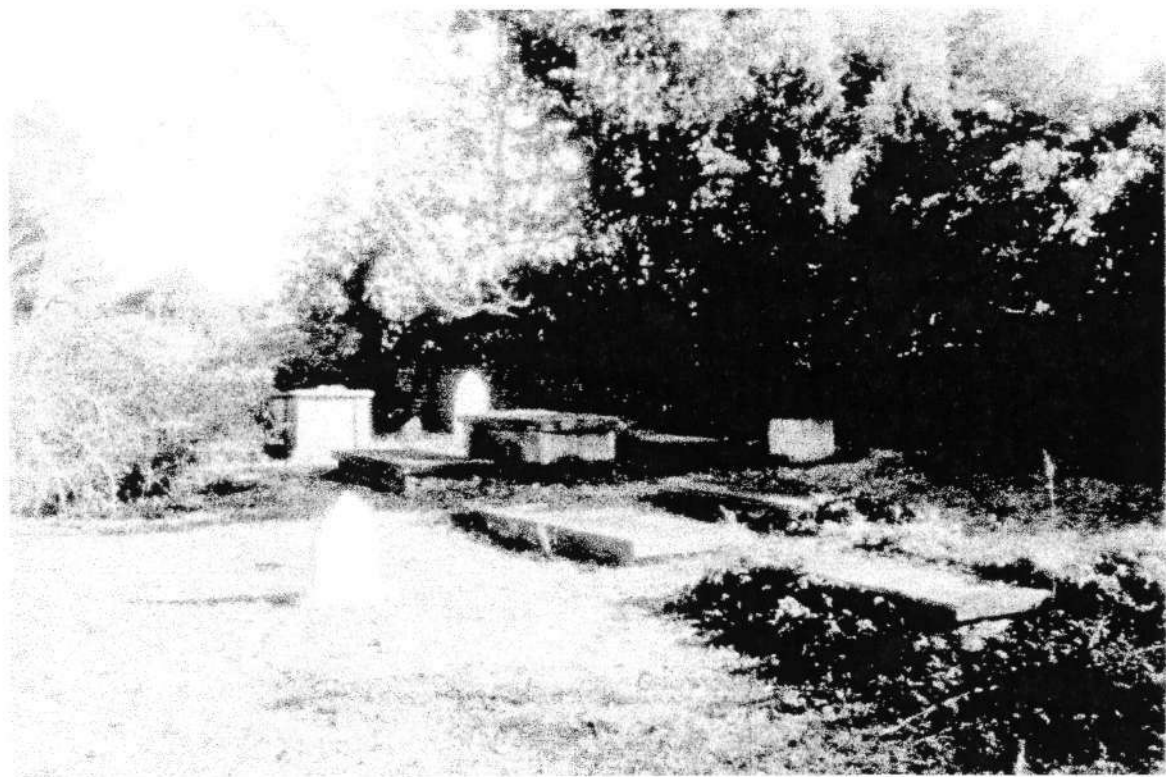
"Oh, you dear girls, you poor little motherless things," he'd whine, grabbing us to him. "You have a failure for a father. They won't take me in the army with this game leg the damn Seminoles gave me. I work day and night on a place I can't even claim for my own. Just a poor white trash overseer, that's all I am, and not able make a go of it like Father did. Poor miserable failure." We'd stand there trapped in a cloud of whiskey fumes, ineffectively patting his shoulders, agreeing silently with everything he said about himself, wishing we had the courage to do so out loud.

Eventually, we perfected the art of disappearing. If we were fortunate, it was into some part of Poplar Grove most usually frequented by the female members of the household, where Father never went—the sewing room, the laundry, the pantry, the cold room where the milk was stored and the butter churned. While there, to occupy ourselves, we learned many of the tasks that went on in those locations—to our great benefit later in life, I must admit, but this necessity had made us shy and scurrying.

And as I've said before, there was also the refuge of the graveyard. We'd sit on the edge of Mother's stone and rub our fingers back and forth across the letters. *Alice G.* —just an initial, not even her last name, and father's name all spelled out. Years later when the stone cutter was working on Father's tomb, I was told there would be no room to add the letters R-E-Y to complete Grey or for the name Bourke unless the whole stone was recut. The family thought it would

be an extravagance. They were right, money was tight then as it has always been. Still it grieves me. How will future generations know who is lying there?

Now, honeysuckle and ivy are thick on the old brick walls, silver-gray lichen crusts the stones making the names hard to read. An enormous linden tree, a broken limb dangling, casts its shadows on the graves and in the fall, the stones are covered with yellow leaves.



POPLAR GROVE GRAVEYARD

Chapter 2



POPLAR GROVE NORTH FACADE

1864

I

In February 1864, Granmama died. She was 87 years old and had been gradually withdrawing herself from us in ways we hardly noticed.

"No, dearie, I think I'll have a little lie down now."

"I don't think I'll come down to dinner tonight."

When we'd rush into her room to tell her the latest farm news, a new colt, a terrible row between Harriety and Zebulon, she would say politely, "How very interesting," and nod off to sleep.

It was on one of those rare and beautiful days of thaw, when you know for sure that spring will be coming once again, when she simply left us. We were in the dining room finishing lunch when Aunt Amy appeared in the doorway.

"She done passed peaceful. Bless the Lord." We filed up the stairs not saying anything and went into her room. She lay on the left side of the double bed she'd brought with her as a bride. It was made from an enormous old Cloverfield walnut tree that had been struck by lightning. I remembered her pointing out several places where the wood was blackened. The right side of the bed had been vacated long ago by her husband, General Thomas.

We stood awkwardly. I felt it was rude to be looking at her while she slept—except she wasn't asleep. I think it was the first time any of us had ever seen a person dead—except for Father. I looked over at him wondering if he was remembering our mother? He stepped over to the bed. I had a feeling if he'd been wearing his old campaign hat he would have taken it off. He stepped up and touched the hand that wore her wedding ring. "Goodbye, Mother." Then he

tiptoed, limping out of the room. Not knowing what else to do we copied him. Then took our places at the table and silently finished our lunch, each of us deep in his own sorrow. Now I had lost two mothers I remember thinking with childish self pity.

How does news travel so fast?

Cousin Agnes Emory, who lived on Concord Farm down Spaniard's Neck, came rattling down the lane in her buggy almost immediately. "Oh, my dears, such a tragedy." She hurried up the steps and crushed Nan and me into the folds of her black dress. It smelled of mildew—obviously she'd taken it out of a wardrobe and hurried into it without taking the time to air it on the clothesline.

"John Register, dear boy. What a loss. You must be brave." Father seemed taken aback. Cousin "Aggy, the baggy," as he called her, had not been a favorite of Granmama's, and it was only at unavoidable family occasions like weddings and funerals that we saw her. What on earth was she doing here? How had she heard so quickly?

"Well," he said, rising from the table his napkin still in his hand, making it plain his meal had been interrupted. "After all, Mother had lived a long life, we couldn't expect her to be with us forever. Of course, we will miss her sorely."

The calm of his reply brought on a flood of tears. Cousin Aggy brought forth a large black bordered handkerchief and held it to her eyes. Then turned her attention to us. "Oh, you poor motherless girls. We must see to your mourning clothes. You can't receive the callers looking like that." She bustled into the hall and began giving ineffectual orders to Aunt Amy and the Harriets, who stood patiently saying "Yes'm" over and over. Ned and Jack mumbling excuses disappeared. We stood in the hallway wondering how on earth to get rid of her.

It was then Father came to the rescue.

"My dear Cousin Agnes, I can't tell you how much your call has meant to us all." He put his hand gently under her elbow and slowly, talking all the while, the way I'd seen him talk to one of the colts he was training, guided her out the door, down the porch steps and into her carriage. He put the reins in her hands and gave her horse a quick slap on the rump.

The rest of the neighbors gave us a chance to organize ourselves, air the parlor, and put together from bits and pieces of clothes Aunt Amy discovered in trunks and wardrobes, two mourning outfits. Mine was an outgrown one Aunt Mollie had left behind when she was married, and Nan's had belonged to

Granmama and had to be pinned in at the waist. Only one black bodice turned up. Very out of date with bands of velvet on the sleeves. "I declare, this might have belonged to you all's Momma," Aunt Amy speculated as she hooked Nan up the back. A plain white shirtwaist of mine would do, she decided, if I put a black crepe bow at the neck. "I must remember to put some black dye on the list, for the next trip into town. Then we'll just dip the rest of your regular clothes."

"Oh no." We were horrified.

"Make up your mind to it, you all is nearly young ladies now, and you'll be wearing black for a year."

I had never thought much about what I wore, but wearing nothing but black that year when I was nine began a longing in me for pretty clothes. I was never able to indulge it to any great extent, but I learned to sew, and I taught my daughter to sew, and we both did what we could to look well turned out.

During the next few days neighbors drove up, and Nan and I had to receive them in the parlor. They never came empty-handed, and the cakes and pies hidden under tea towels were received with genuine exclamations of delight. The boys and father came and went, finding a crisis in the barn that demanded their presence when the atmosphere became unbearable.

Fortunately the ladies who called were experienced in this sort of occasion and after murmuring a few consoling words to Nan and me would gossip with each other until Aunt Amy brought in pound cake on a silver tray, which Nan and I handed around, relieved to have something to do.

"I will have another slice, thank you. This is Miss Nannie Blakeford's isn't it? I thought so, it's perfectly delicious, but she always adds just a touch too much vanilla in my opinion. Oh, you poor dear girls, how will you manage with no woman in the house to look after you."

"We have Aunt Amy and the Harriets."

"Yes, of course, but . . . you know what I mean."

We didn't but luckily she didn't stay much longer, so we never found out.

The whole county it seemed turned out for the funeral. The front yard was crowded with horses and carriages. People stood black shoulder to black shoulder around the raw hole in the graveyard that Zebulon, Bob and some of the other men had been digging for several days. They parted to make a path for Granmama's coffin, behind which trailed her large family. Because we had lived

with her, under her roof, the boys, Nan and I were considered to be the closest grandchildren to her and were lined up at the very edge of the grave. There was nowhere to look except into a bottom of cold pebbly dirt where they would soon put her away—out of sight forever, the way they had put our mother. How I envied some of our other cousins whom I could see way at the edge of the crowd, shoving each other playfully. I looked up into the bare branches of the trees against the sky, just as if it was an ordinary day and we were out playing on the lawn. A flight of geese arrowed by, heading for their northern nesting grounds. I shut my eyes as the minister began to say “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust” and pretended to be flying with them.

II

Following the death of Granmama, Father finally became owner of Poplar Grove. He took a renewed interest in managing the farms and spent a great deal of time traveling back and forth to Baltimore attending to business. We children were more or less left on our own, and how we took advantage of this freedom! We dressed as we pleased, ate when we felt like it, took out Father’s horses without permission, and raced them up and down the Land’s End Road, laming one of his prize fillies in the process. I think the only reason that the servants did not walk out—they could have now that emancipation was the law of the land—was that times were so hard that they were afraid of not being able to find work anywhere else.

Then, just before Christmas, Father wrote us from Baltimore saying he had been married on December 16th and that he and his wife would be coming on the steamboat, arriving December 24th to spend Christmas here at Poplar Grove. You can imagine what a tailspin the household went into.

The lady’s name was Isabel Emory. She was one of those Baltimore cousins we’d never seen but were always having held up to us as splendid examples of refinement and worldly success. Her father, the late Thomas Emory, had been a prominent lawyer in the city.

We were told which boat to meet at Indiantown wharf and to be sure to come in the good carriage. We also were instructed to make the spare bedroom ready. It had been Mother’s room and had been closed up ever since her death

nearly ten years before, Father having moved into the adjoining dressing room.

"Lawd, that place ain't fit for no city lady to set her foot in. Come on, you two," said Aunt Amy, who with Harriet and Harriety we had called into the parlor to hear the letter read. "Let's get them brooms sweeping. We got to step lively."

The three women headed toward the back of the house. Aunt Amy stopped as she was going through the swinging pantry door. "Well, you children done got youselfs a new Momma from way over yonder on the Western Shore. Bless Lord, they's gonna be some fireworks at Poplar Grove *this* winter."

She looked back at us standing dazed "Let's see some smiles. A wife, she'll get after Mr. John Register and see he minds hisself. He sure do need *someone* to put sense into him. Nan, Alice, soon as y'all catch your breaths, get on up to the spare room and see what you can do to help us out. Ned, Jack, bring up some kindling and stove wood. We got a chill to get outten the air."

"Let's hope she makes Father happy," said Nan and then after a long pause, "And that *she* is happy here. That will be our job you know."

"We'll have to obey what she says," Jack sounded glum.

"I won't if I don't want to," said Ned.

"A cruel stepmother, just like Snow White had." Tears were flooding my eyes. I was blinking hard so they wouldn't spill over. The others laughed.

"Look here now, children, we got work to do." Harriet was standing in the hall, a broom in one hand, a pail of water in the other.

"We're going to make us a Christmas feast. Jack, run and see if someone can fetch up some oysters from out the creek."

"If we get out early in the morning and Sampson comes with us, with any luck we can bring you back several brace of canvasbacks." Ned offered. "We want to show the lady we country Emorys can set a good table."

We were kept busy all day long, running up and down the stairs to spare Aunt Amy's feet, climbing a ladder to dust the tops of the pictures, or crawling under the enormous four poster bed to brush out the dust balls that had been gathering beneath it undisturbed through the years.

At the end of the day, Nan and I had our reward. In the corner behind the big wardrobe of dark walnut, which had just been wiped down inside and out, ready for the clothes of the room's new occupant, we noticed the humpbacked trunk.

Nan turned the key in the lock. The lid creaked open. There was a layer of yellowed tissue paper, and under it we saw white ruffles, black lace, and a spray

of purple velvet pansies. Beneath it we had a glimpse of gray netting embroidered with strawberries and their leaves, and a gray satin sash.

"Lawd, Lawd," Amy's voice came from over Nan's shoulder. "My dear Miss Alice Grey's pretty dresses. I packed them away with these hands." She looked at her hands in wonder. "Now, you know that new lady don't want to sleep in no room what got another lady's clothes in it. What am I gonna do?"

"Let us take the trunk into our room," said Nan. "It belonged to our . . . Mother." It was hard for her to pronounce a word she'd hardly ever said.

"Yes, it's our *inheritance*," I said importantly. It was a word I had recently discovered in a book and had never had a chance to use.

Chapter 3



POPLAR GROVE SOUTH FACADE

1865-1870

"Damn the price of wheat, damn the Yankees, damn Abe Lincoln and his dagblasted Emancipation Proclamation!" Father would storm. The rages could be brought on by anything at all when he'd been drinking. He was overjoyed that Abraham Lincoln had not received one vote in Queen Anne's County back in the election of 1860.

Although Abraham Lincoln bore the brunt of his rages, I wonder now if underneath, one of the things troubling him was what was to become of his four children who had been born into one world, but who were going to have to learn to live in quite a different one.

"They must be educated, John," our stepmother had begun persuading him nearly as soon as she arrived at Poplar Grove on that cold December day in '64.

Father, who had brought a bottle of champagne with him to celebrate his marriage, and liven up the stormy Bay crossing on the steamer, was more cheerful than we'd seen him in a long while. He made an attempt to pick up his bride and carry her across the threshold. In a good-natured way she rebuffed his attempts and taking his arm, walked with him through the door that Harriety opened as the carriage pulled up.

A city lady, from the feather in her fashionable bonnet, to her high-buttoned, black kid boots. Her traveling cape of heavy worsted was buttoned to the chin with curiously worked buttons of a dull metal. Gray hair, back from the ears, a fan of lines at the outer corners of each eye, the beginnings of a second chin. No magic mirror would have declared this stepmother to be "the fairest one of all." Her face was not beautiful, but it was lively. Her eyes, brown as a calf's, looked

with curiosity and interest at four not very tidy children, three not very trim servant women—all us frightened and shy as deer. On the hall table, Aunt Amy had put branches of holly in a silver vase shaped like a coaching horn. “Another of your grandfather’s trophies,” I could almost hear Granmama saying.

“I was frightened to death your father would drop me, right at the feet of you children and the maids,” our stepmother confessed to us some months later. “I would have been mortified.”

By that time, we children realized that in “Miss Isabel” we had found a champion. She discovered the “Emory” tea service, blackened by years of neglect on a high shelf. With Granmama gone, we never did learn which ancestor was responsible for its presence. Standing on a step ladder, Miss Isabel also found a stack of white china plates, each one decorated with a different flower.

“I wondered where them plates hid theirselves. They the one’s Miss Alice Grey done painted.” Aunt Amy, who had been helping, sounded both embarrassed and falsely surprised. Nan and I began to giggle. She had been so diplomatic toward the new Mrs. Emory, we suspected she might have hidden Mother’s plates to spare her feelings.

“Let us see!” We ran up. “Aunt Mollie told us Mother painted on china, but nobody knew what had happened to it.”

“I’d like to use them for family tea time,” said our stepmother.

It took days of hard rubbing, all of us pitching in, to get the teapot, and all the little accouterments that go to make up a silver service, gleaming. The boys turned out to be dabs at polishing.

“This is easier than stirrups and harness buckles,” said Ned holding up the cream jug critically before going at it again with his rag.

“Or brass cleats and oarlocks,” said Jack, who saw to the boats.

The following week Miss Isabel started serving afternoon tea in the library. We’d sit around and talk about what we’d been doing all day and the times when Father joined us, the talk would somehow turn to the importance of a good education.

“If any of you want an education, you can start in by reading the books in this room. Your grandfather had the best library in the county.” He gestured at shelves that went to the ceiling filled with calf-bound volumes lettered in gold.

My eyes fell on *The Life and Pontificate of Leo X* in four volumes and next to it another four volumes on the *Wars of the French Revolution*. Not exactly the sort of books to appeal to us.

Miss Isabel never disagreed with Father, but within a year Ned was enrolled at the University of Virginia from which he was graduated in 1869 at the age of 21. Jack followed him two years later.

Formal education for girls, however, was not taken as seriously, at least by the man who ruled our world. I suspect that it was to enhance our chances of making "suitable" marriages that Father allowed Miss Isabel to persuade him to enroll Nan and me for two years in the Edgeworth School in Baltimore, which she herself had attended. He grumbled about expenses.

"Sell some more of your timber, my dear," she told him airily.

"But I've already sold lumber from 'Smith's Mistake' to put the boys through the university."

"Well, there's still 'Anne's Portion.' That would be fitting, especially as one of your girls is Anna."

She was good at making him laugh, getting him to see what *she* thought was right *was* right.

So off we went, liberated from our dreary black mourning. The school clothes meant many hours with pins, needles and thread, making over dresses Aunt Amy would dig up out of trunks. In addition, Miss Isabel took us over on the steamboat for a day of shopping in Baltimore, where we bought shoes, gloves, trimmings and yards and yards of fabric to make ourselves two new outfits apiece copied from the latest patterns. One for Sundays, the other for everyday. What country mice we were, and how we flourished in the atmosphere of learning created at Edgeworth.

Miss Edgeworth, our headmistress, at her welcoming lecture to each year's incoming class, heaped scorn on the ideas, then current, that a woman's brain was smaller than a man's and that too much knowledge would tax a girl's strength affecting her health and even her sanity, rendering her unfit for motherhood.

"Let me remind you, young ladies, that despite what you may hear to the contrary, it stands to reason an educated mother is a better mother." At this point in her speech the girls sat straight in their chairs. This was heresy, wasn't it?

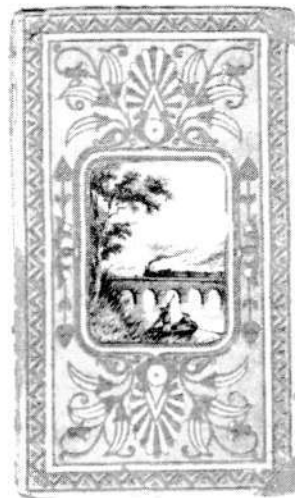
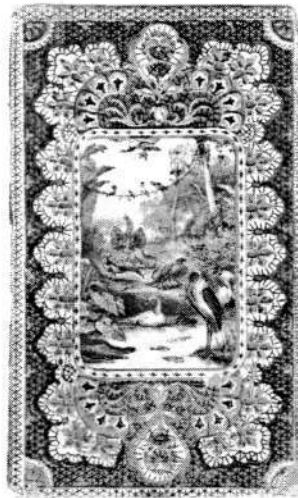
"And furthermore," she rumbled, peering at us through the quizzing glass she wore on a long black ribbon, "I for one do not hold that motherhood is necessarily a woman's primary role in life—any more than *fatherhood* is a man's. To be sure *both* parents have an obligation to the children they bring into the

world, but *women, ladies like yourselves*, as well as gentlemen, also have obligations to the community as a whole. One of those obligations is to work toward the betterment of the world." A heady message, indeed, and one that some of the parents of her students might have considered to be scandalous.

Fortunately, Miss Edgeworth was related to all the best families in the city and had a reputation for insisting on the proper deportment of her pupils.

Nan and I had never been around so many girls our own age, and though some of them we found silly and affected, others remain friends to this day. Among them Phebe Ingersoll from Philadelphia, and from Baltimore, dear Kate Caldwell. We remained close for the rest of our lives.

Nan covered herself with glory by winning first prize in Lexicology, and the following year, 1870, first prize in Bibliotheque. Her rewards were two slender volumes in French. *Histoire Naturelle, Oiseaux, Reptiles, et Poissons*. Their covers were some sort of papier mache, embossed to look like lace, and they were illustrated with fierce woodcuts of the animals.



The teacher of French, drawing and deportment at Miss Edgeworth's was Madame Gillette, a young widow. At first, we were terrified of her. We had never met anyone who was from another country before, and we found her accent hard to understand even when she spoke to us in English.

"*Mesdemoiselles Emory, attention! Vous n'etes pas sur la ferme de votre Pere. You will remember, s'il vous plait, zat you are students at zee most exclusive finishing school for zee most refined young ladies in zee city of Baltimore, and you will conduct yourselves accordingly.*"

As we got to know Madame Gillette better, we found she too was from a farm and was homesick for the countryside. When Miss Isabel learned Mme.

Gillette was looking for somewhere to spend her holidays, she arranged for her to come to Poplar Grove and continue giving us lessons in exchange for room, board and a very modest stipend. This suited everyone so well that Madame G. spent every summer and holiday with us until she felt I was educated sufficiently to meet her rather high standards and until she had saved enough to return to her *belle France*.

Madame enjoyed the rhythms of life on the farm as our stepmother, a born-and-bred Baltimorean, did not. She was not too proud to roll up her sleeves and help at canning time when all the women and all the children were expected to do their part in "putting up" jars of tomatoes, beans and corn from the vegetable patch, as well as apples, peaches and Kieffer pears from the orchard. (Everyone spoke highly of these for their keeping quality, but I have always felt they taste like gravel—no matter how long they are stewed.)

Madame was also willing to pitch in at hog killing, when all hands turned out.

I came across this copy of a letter I wrote to Kate congratulating her on her engagement and forthcoming marriage.

My darling Kate: Such news! What a whirlwind courtship it must have been. The Goldsboroughs are Talbot County "big wigs" as you must have been made aware of by now. A widower, a former member of the House of Delegates and a State Senator—of course, I read every syllable of the announcement in the Easton Gazette and the Sunpapers. They were far more informative than your scribblings about how handsome and kind he is. Gray whiskers, very dashing indeed, but isn't it strange to be marrying someone nearer your father's age than your own?

Oh my dear girl I wish you all the happiness in the world. And how I am looking forward to getting all dressed up in my best bib and tucker and taking the boat to Baltimore to witness the great occasion when you become Mrs. Henry Hollyday Goldsborough. How grand that sounds! Don't forget your old friend, who is about to plunge into our annual hog killing ordeal. How would you like it if I appeared at the wedding reception bearing a "side of ham, or a sack of chittlins" as gifts?

Never fear, Miss Isabel will hold me in check. In fact we have ordered something small and in perfect taste, from Kirk's.

With a heartfelt of love and every good wish for you future happiness,

Alice

I remember that year it turned cold, and we were able to "kill hogs" the following Saturday, but then it came into pour so we could do nothing until Tuesday when we cut them up. Then the work began. I really think we had a special dispensation from on high to keep me well.

We hired on nine or ten men, I call them mechanics, who did all the hogs down in the shed. Madame Gillette and I cut up with our own hands 226 pounds of sausage, while Aunt Kitty and Harriety did the lard. Fortunately, Charlie Fisher is the expert with the sausage chopper. He was so big and strong and his arms were so long that he turned and fed the machine himself. We sold 100 lbs. and have it all packed away. After that the worst was over. Harriet still had lard to dry up. She had been wonderful to manage it all and to cook for so many extra men.

Hog killing was not a one-time thing. It went on year after year, and still goes on. Link sausages were made by loading meat into a machine, which old Charlie Fisher's successor still turns by hand. It is forced through a spout to which lengths of cleaned intestines, called casings, had been attached. We also canned rounds of sausage in glass jars over which boiling lard was poured.

The women gathered at long tables in the shed, slicing, chopping, rendering lard, which meant boiling the fat down in an enormous kettle until it became liquid. When it cooled it became pure and white, almost as fine as the cream city ladies put on their faces at night.

Hams were rubbed with saltpeter, smoked over hickory fires several times to cure them. Encased in cloth bags, they hung from the ceiling in the smokehouse, sometimes for years, until an occasion warranted taking one down and preparing it for the table, a process that took days. Other sides of meat were salted down in barrels.

It is dirty, greasy work, but somehow there was always a holiday air about hog killing. Perhaps it was the knowledge that Christmas was not too far away or perhaps the thought that for the next few nights everyone would feast on fresh delicacies—pork chops! Brains scrambled with eggs was one of Harriet's specialties. The colored folk were the ones supposed to favor chitt'lings, though we children loved their crisp, greasy flavor, too.

It was at hog killing that the hands received their yearly "lay in," which consisted of a pig, a can of lard and bushel baskets of white and sweet potatoes. If there was more I've forgotten what. Those who worked for us regularly "toted" empty milk pails each morning and returned home with them full, of course, each evening.

We'd sing as we sat at the long table set up in the shed, joining our voices first in Lizzie's sweet sad spirituals, *Look down, Look down that Lonesome Road*, followed by Mademoiselle's lively *Frere Jacques* which she taught us to sing as a round. Our hands flew, knives chopped and the piles of meat, the flesh pink, the fat white grew.

In the days following hog killing, there'd be a spell of baking—cakes, pies and cookies—while the lard was fresh. Apple, cherry, peach all from our own trees. For Christmas, mince meat. The recipe card, spotted with food and frayed around the edges, in Granmama's handwriting, came from Cloverfields. The pies were stacked in a pie safe on the back porch and we prayed for a long spell of cold to keep them from spoiling before they were eaten up.

* * * *

Strange now to think of a girl wearing clothes pieced out to last as long as they could, always in a state of being taken in, let out, shortened or lengthened, having the luxury of a French governess. Though we were still The Emorys, though Father still owned more than two thousand acres of rich, productive land, though we still managed not to disgrace Miss Isabel when she introduced us to her friends on visits to the city to see our cousins, we were "po'folk." Almost as "po'" as the Harriets and Bessie and Uncle Zeb in the unpainted frame cabins they'd built themselves on odd scraps of unproductive ground in Michaeltown and Catertown.

These were two nearby settlements which after emancipation had been created from bits and pieces of cut over woodland belonging to the adjacent Hollyday and Emory lands. Small building lots had been sold to the former slaves who had worked those properties.

Poor Emorys had one advantage—or perhaps it was a disadvantage—over the colored people. We were able to borrow money.

Father had put a large mortgage on the place. It hung over the heads of the whole family and each month as the time to make an interest payment approached, there was tension in the air. Father relieved it for himself by drinking more heavily than usual, which increased the strain on the rest of us. Up to this time he had managed to scrape together the necessary money—

sometimes by selling off some timber or sometimes there would be a good wheat crop and he'd be able to put something by. Once he had to take what he could get for one of his best-bred fillies, one he was counting on to use as a brood mare, her blood lines were so good. It was days before he recovered from that.

After each crisis passed, we'd all vow to work harder, spend less, but no matter what, there was never enough money. The debt hung over us like the threatening black sky that foretells one of the Bay's fierce summer squalls. It never broke over our heads in a fury of rain and lightning, nor did it ever seem to dissipate. Storm clouds were part of our horizon.

Repairs were not made to the buildings, needed painting was not done. Except for those around the paddock, the fences were sagging, unwhitewashed. It was no comfort to know that our neighbors and our cousins' farms were suffering, too.

Our grandfather, the General, had once written a letter which was printed in the Easton Gazette, in which he blamed the benign climate and the lush fertility of the Eastern Shore for the

. . . inertness, the indolence and the supineness which has caused our population to retrograde in numbers as our lands have retrograded in quality. No axiom is more true that men work and improve their soil just in the ratio of the difficulty of obtaining subsistence from it.

From time to time when Father had been drinking, he would take out the scrapbook in which Granmama had dutifully pasted all her husband's pronouncements. I can remember looking in from the hallway, seeing him sitting on the parlor sofa with it open on his lap, the light from the coal oil lamp falling over his shoulder. He would sit as if mesmerized then slam the volume shut and stamp out of the house.

Chapter 4



ANNA HEMSLEY EMORY
MRS. WILLIAM TURPIN

1872

Father said, "Expenses be hanged, this is the first Poplar Grove wedding in years." He was pleased at Nan's engagement. William Turpin was a catch. He was the son of Dr. Walter, who had taken care of us all, and his death the year before had saddened the whole county. William, his only son, had inherited the lovely house and farm, Locust Hill, on the outskirts of Centreville. The Hill was one of the few places on the Eastern Shore that was steep enough for coasting, and on the occasion of one of our rare snowstorms, children from all over flocked there to enjoy their rarely used sleds.

November 19, 1872 was the day of Nan's wedding. I'm not sure I ever remember Poplar Grove looking more beautiful than it did that morning. The harvest had been a good one, the granaries were bulging. The teepee-like shocks of corn made me think of the Ozzinee Indian tribes whom legend said Capt. John Smith had observed camping along the river shore at Indiantown. Each tree, triumphantly colored, seemed to be singing notes, chords, arpeggios in yellow, red, orange, gold. Miss Isabel and I had picked chrysanthemums to fill every vase and there were still enough to leave a splash of color in the garden. There were even a few late roses which I was saving to cut at the last minute and add to Nan's bridal bouquet.

Extra hands were hired in from Michaeltown and Catertown to whitewash the sheds and fences, trim the edges of the lane, clip the box bushes, and climb tall ladders to wash the windows from the outside. Their wives and daughters were doing the same from the inside.

I remember working up in one of the small bedrooms on the third floor, readying it for the overflow of guests we expected. Sally Brown, a pillar of Mt.

Zion Church, was up on a stepladder washing the window, when the face of Carter Thompson appeared before her. When he saw her, he grinned from ear to ear. I could only hear Sally.

"Don't give me none of that kinda talk." She blotted him out with a swish of her soapy rag, but he reappeared as she went to polish the panes. "You are one no account, lying, stealing man that I don't waste my time on."

Carter threw back his head laughing, then blotted her out of *his* sight with his rag.

"Go ahead, laugh, fall off that ladder, break your neck, serve you right."

I left before Sally finished the window, hoping their ferocious rubbings wouldn't shatter the glass.

Other women were shining silver, polishing furniture, waxing floors. In the kitchen Harriet presided over workers who were plucking Canada geese and canvasback ducks, and others who were mixing the batter for a three-tiered Lady Baltimore wedding cake. Zebulon and Jack had tonged up a barrel of oysters from the bar outside Emory Creek. Pitchers of cider and bottles of wine from our scuppernong grapes were set out to be mixed into two punches. To toast the bride and groom, Father had ordered two cases of French champagne, which that morning had been delivered, packed in ice, at the Indiantown landing by the Baltimore boat.

"Do you think this would be suitable for me to wear as stepmother of the bride?" Miss Isabel had asked us weeks before. She was trying on a very handsome lavender taffeta gown that we'd never seen before. "Hook me up the back, Alice dear. It will be a miracle if I don't have to let out the waist, after all these years." It was a snug fit. "It will be fine when you're wearing your corset," I said.

"Are you sure it's not too . . . too, *Baltimore*? You know how Centreville ladies are. Respectability over style every time."

"Really?" I asked surprised. The thought had never occurred to me, but then I knew so many more Centreville ladies than Baltimore ones. At Miss Edgeworth's we were pretty much confined to the school grounds except for church on Sunday and dinner at the home of one of the day girls afterwards, if we were lucky enough to be invited.

"Miss Fannie Bowie!" Nan suddenly called out. "Cousin Lollie Hemsley."

"Mrs. Tilghman Larrimore, Dorothea Bordley." I shouted back. We began

calling names out to each other, doubled over with laughter, tears rolling down our cheeks.

"Girls," said Miss Isabel, trying to control herself. "We are having a serious discussion about what I'm to wear in order not to disgrace Nan at her wedding. If you'd rather I wore a white bonnet and a black shawl, I'll do it."

"Mrs. General Goldsborough!" Nan couldn't help adding.

"Hush, dear, you are treading on sacred ground," Miss Isabel smiled, turning this way and that before the long pier glass. "It is a beautiful dress, isn't it? I had it made for the last Bachelor's Cotillion, before the war, when I was chaperone for the youngest of the Bosley girls. My stars, that was twenty years ago. You're sure I won't look kittenish?" She sounded wistful. "The skirts aren't this full nowadays, so I won't wear my hoop They were so pretty when you danced."

I think it was the first time either of us had ever realized that Miss Isabel had lived another life of balls and beautiful clothes, which she gave up when she appeared on the Poplar Grove doorstep that cold December morning. Her reward, a widower afflicted with drink, his four untamed children, and his neglected and not very comfortable ancestral home, at the end of a long, bumpy, unpaved road.

"They'll turn green with jealousy when they see you coming up the aisle," said Nan. "It will give them something to gossip about right up to spring planting, and you've been a dear, good mother to us all." She threw her arms about Miss Isabel's taffeta covered shoulders, kissed her, and from that day on we started calling her Mother.

Even Father had risen to the occasion. He had driven into Centreville and had himself barbered, shaved and his mustache trimmed. He was planning on sporting a dress coat Aunt Amy had produced from a trunk in the attic.

"Must have been one of the General's," he'd said when she had brought it down for him to try on. The fit was good, and he stood admiring himself in the long glass in the library. "Probably had it made in London back in '38 when they sent him over to raise money for the Shore Railroad." He looked at the label on the inside pocket. "*Saville Row, Gen. Thos. Emory*. Can't beat that." He took it off reluctantly. "I'll bet ten dollars on the nose that none of the Turpin men will turn up in a rig fancy as this. Can you do anything about the smell of moth balls, Amy?"

Later that day Ned reported he'd overheard Father down at the horse barn bragging about the coat to Zeb, who was probably his oldest friend. "Wait'll you get an eyeful of me in the General's fancy London coat. That little girl of mine will be proud of her old father." And then, getting into the spirit of the thing, "I'm not gonna touch a drop of likker, not one drop, until I marry her off." And he didn't.

Nan, of course, was beautiful. Aren't all brides? Miss Isabel had seen to it that her dress was ordered from the dressmaker "everyone" in Baltimore went to, Mrs. Walmsley. It was in quite the latest style, the skirt of heavy satin the color of rich cream, with an overskirt of silk draped back in a bustle. As a secret between us, under it she wore a fine linen corset cover, hemstitched, with a blue ribbon insertion, that we'd found among our mother's things—part of our inheritance.

Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue.

I was bridesmaid, in my first grown-up dress. Skirts down, hair up. It felt strange at first, as if I was balancing washing on top of my head the way some of the women in Michaelstown did. But when I caught sight of my grown-up self in the mirror, I decided it was worth the discomfort and all the hairpins.

The bridesmaid's dress was the first dress I had ever owned that was not a hand-me-down from Nan or a Baltimore cousin. It had a lace collar and cuffs and I wore it with a cameo brooch that had been given to Miss Isabel by *her* Godmother on the occasion of her sister's marriage. "I remember how left out I felt when Sister married, the trousseau, the gifts arriving, and then a little box from Kirk's came addressed to *me*. We were sure they must have made a mistake, but in it was this little pin and a note from my Godmother. I've never forgotten that gesture of understanding."

The whole county drove out to Poplar Grove after the ceremony at St. Paul's, a regular parade of carriages, buggies and Durbans.

"Alice, why don't we see more of you?"

"You won't remember me, dear, but I'm your mother's second cousin, Adelaide Bourke. You're the image of her at that age. Such a loss."

"Wish old Doc Turpin was here to see his boy married off. Fine man. Set my Freddy's leg, right on the kitchen table. Let me pay him in oysters."

"My dear, you do yourselves proud way over here on the Shore. *Poplar Grove* ham? Thank you, I will have another slice on a tiny biscuit."

"If Miss Edgeworth, the old dragon, could see us now, skirts down, hair up."

"I hope I'm the one to catch Nan's bouquet. I want to be the next bride."

The old house came alive in a way I'd never seen it before. This atmosphere must have been what Granmama was remembering when she used to say with a little sigh, "Now in the General's time"

And then in a swirl of good-byes and good lucks, kisses and embraces, Nan and William climbed into the waiting carriage and were driven off by Zebulon to the landing at Indiantown to catch the evening steamboat to Baltimore. Some of William's groomsmen suddenly decided to follow, and with a great clatter, they untied their buckboards or their horses and chased the newlyweds down the lane.

An arrow of geese shot across the darkening evening sky. On impulse, I slipped away from the crowd on the front steps, brushing past the boxwood that hid the burying ground from the house. I pulled apart the bridal bouquet Nan had thrown to me and laid half the flowers on the granite slab that said "Alice G. . . . age 29," and the rest on the tomb of Anna Maria Hemsley Emory—Granmama. I felt suddenly alone.

Most of the older folk had driven off by the time I returned to the house. The leftover festivity was being carried on by the younger people—Emory cousins, Hollyday neighbors—most of whom lived on Spaniard's Neck or out Land's End way. One of the Hollyday girls from Readbourne was playing the piano and several people were dancing. Tilghman Carter came up and bowed, a little too deeply. "May I have the pleasure, Miss Alice?" He began to whirl me about the room. After a few moments, he stopped. "What say to a glass of punch?" We walked into the dining room where the hired-in helpers were doing their best to keep the table from looking as if it had been attacked by the Yankee army. I took a bit of ham on a biscuit and ladled a cup of punch from Great Aunt Juliana Hawkins' large silver bowl. I handed it to Tilghman.

Ned and Jack, each with a partner on his arm, joined us.

"Well, we got Nan off our hands in great shakes," laughed Ned.

"You're next, Alice," said Jack, "We'll give you as fine a send off, as long as you don't choose this Tilghman roustabout." They all roared.

"Say, fellows," said Tilghman, "Your sister made a mistake and served me Methodist punch. What I need is some of the Episcopal punch with a real kick to it." By then we were at the other end of the table where we found the Cloverfield punch bowl nearly empty.

"This won't do," said Jack. "Call up the reinforcements."

Ned reached under the table and came up with a bottle, which he emptied into the bowl, Harriety was summoned from the kitchen to bring other ingredients. The boys laughing and splashing mixed and sampled their Episcopalian concoction. The two girls and I wandered away, our departure unnoticed.

"You have the handsomest brothers," sighed Prissy Wright.

"I just love to plan my wedding over and over," said Annie Bourke, "My hope chest is nearly filled with the prettiest things."

"You're engaged? Who is he?" I asked.

"I haven't found anyone . . . yet," and she, too, sighed.

The piano kept on tinkling, though the players changed from time to time. I talked to boys about how fast their horses were, how many ducks they could bring down with one shot, and how adept they were at holding their liquor while doing so. With the girls I discussed various ways to cook fudge, trim hats and curl hair, as well as the dresses of the other girls. I wished they would all go home.

Just then Father appeared from the dining room. I could tell from the way he was holding himself too straight, he'd been assisting with the Episcopalian punch.

"Ten-shun!" he roared. "Everyone line up. I'll show you how we did it at the Point." The guests played along with him, some of the boys grabbing fire tongs and walking sticks and holding them over their shoulders like rifles. "We need a march, Alice, get over to the piano." Numb, I sat down on the stool, thankful that my back was to the parade. All I could think of to play was Marche Militaire, which I did over and over, listening to Father, calling out his orders. "Left face, hup two three four. Halt, at ease. Forward march, two three four." I winced at the embarrassed laughter of the troops following him.

Then I heard, as I had known I would, a crash and Ned's voice. "He's all right. Jack, give me a hand." I turned on the stool in time to see Father sagging between his sons, who step by step were hauling him up the staircase. The seam of the beautiful London coat had split down the back.

Miss Isabel, having seen what was coming and knowing there was nothing she could do to prevent it, had disappeared some time before. I was left to accept the goodbyes and thank yous of the hurriedly departing guests.

The following morning, Miss Isabel, the Harriets and I worked quietly so as not to disturb the gentlemen, sleeping off the effects of their jollity. In spite of the loveliness of Nan's wedding, the story of father's disgrace was sure to be circulating the minute the faithful came out from the eleven o'clock service to gather on the sidewalk in front of St. Paul's Church.

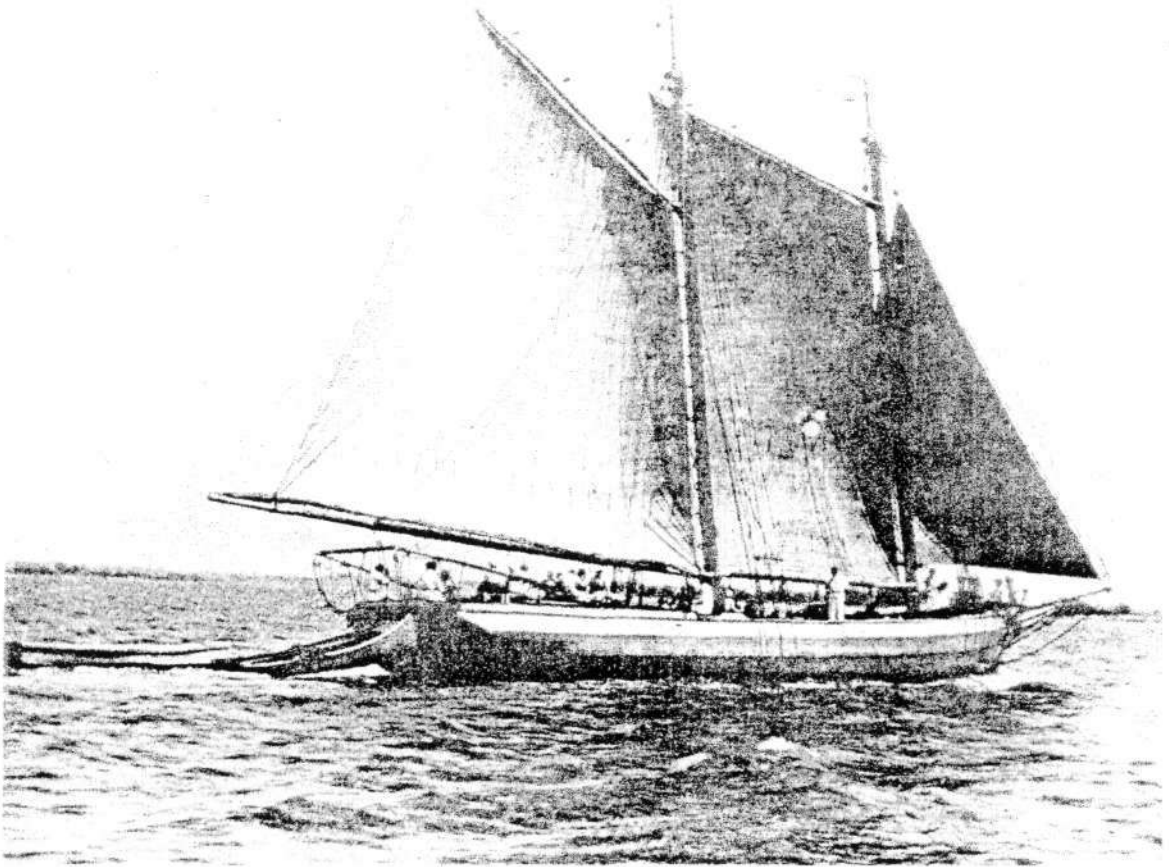
I was in the parlor picking up punch cups from windowsills and tabletops, when I was suddenly overcome with the awareness that Nan had really left Poplar Grove and was embarking on a life of her own. Without her, the weight of past history, the traditions we all had been trained to respect, the unremitting labor required to keep this old place going, suddenly felt stifling.

I longed to follow her, to begin leading a life of *my* own. How could it be done amid the shadowy voices from the past which seemed to whisper from corners of the rooms at Poplar Grove?



POPLAR GROVE GARDEN

Chapter 5



CAPTAIN HARRIS'S SHIP, THE AUSTRALIA, WAS BUILT IN 1862 UNDER BRITISH OWNERSHIP AND BECAME A BLOCKADE RUNNER FROM BERMUDA TO SOUTHERN PORTS DURING THE CIVIL WAR. AFTER BEING CAPTURED BY THE U.S.S. SENECA IN 1863, SHE WAS GIVEN THE NAME AUSTRALIA AND WORKED AS A BAY FREIGHTER.

1870–1879

One evening at supper, Father asked if I would undertake to drive the water barrel out to the hands scything and shocking wheat in the fields. "Just now I can't spare a man, and I've had word we're next on the threshing run. The crew will be coming the end of the week."

"We should get a crop if the weather holds," said Ned.

"You can take old Boney—it's about all he's fit for," Jack offered.

Bonaparte, a gift from Father when he was a yearling colt, had been an early and unsuccessful attempt of Jack's at training the champion racehorse with which he had planned to make his fortune.

It was the hottest July ever. The trees and the tall boxwoods sagged under the weight of the air, which lay along their branches like heavy flannel blankets that had been washed, wrung out and set to dry in the sun. One could imagine steam rising from them. All day the locusts jeered at us, gloating at the discomfort caused by the soaring thermometer. At night the mosquitoes whined around the netting which kept them and whatever vestige of air that might be moving from our beds.

Soon after breakfast, Aunt Amy would close the windows and draw the curtains to shut out the day's fierce heat, as Granmama had instructed her to do many years ago. No one had ever questioned the efficacy of this. The rooms were so dark and airless that after reading a few pages, a headache would begin a silent growl way back in my head like distant thunder warning of a coming squall. Except for the Harriets and Aunt Amy, the house was empty for hour

after stagnant hour. The boys and Father were in the fields by first light. Miss Isabel had gone to Berkeley Springs, West Virginia for her annual visit with a Baltimore cousin. I longed for Nan, now living at Locust Hill in Centreville, seven dust-choked miles away. I wrote notes to her every day saying how much I missed her, then tore them up ashamed of their whining tone.

The following morning, Ned and Jack hoisted the water barrel up on the cart for me, and from then on each morning I filled it at the pump, hitched up Boney and set forth on my rounds.

It was pleasant creaking along under the trees. I wore a large straw hat and opened my parasol when we emerged into the blistering heat of the fields. It took eight or nine men to harvest 40 acres of hay in a day. Our regular hands got a twenty-five per cent increase in pay during haying, but we also had to take on a crew of day workers.

The men stopped working when they saw me coming, wiped the perspiration from their faces with their forearms, and stood in line waiting for their turn at the dipper.

"Mighty nice."

"Thank you, Miss."

Samuel, always the clown, poured a dipper of water over his head then drank long and lustily from another one. He smacked his lips and said, "MMMmmm, I was so thirsty if I'd a put this here dipper on my head my stomach woulda beat my brains out trying to get to it." There was a hearty laugh all round, and the men went back to bundling the sheaves of wheat into shocks.

Later in the week when the threshing crew arrived, it was bedlam. The enormous ungainly machine clanked up the lane, pulled into the field by a team of six mules. The steam engine was fired up with a clatter you could hear all the way up at the big house and seemed to shake the shingles on its roof. Men were feeding the sheaves into its hungry maw, while more men were filling bags with the stream of kernels it disgorged, tying them, loading the wagons and driving them, heavy, to the granary, where still another crew was waiting to unload and stack the bulging sacks.

Harriet recruited women from Michaelstown and Catertown to help her in the kitchen. An enormous breakfast and an equally large noontime dinner had to be produced. I rolled up my sleeves to do my share. The kitchen and summer kitchen throbbed with heat from the cook stoves. Dishes clattered. Hurrying bodies bumped into one another as we carried platters to and fro. By evening

every muscle was screaming "No-no-more," aware the ordeal would have to begin again at dawn the following day.

And then it was over. The threshing crew moved on to the next farm, the extra hands were paid off, and Poplar Grove resumed its regular pace. There was quiet and the satisfaction of knowing we had made a good crop.

Early in August we got a message saying the wheat schooner Australia would soon be coming over from Baltimore, planning to make stops along the Chester River, "weather permitting." It was requested that J. R. Emory, Planter, Poplar Grove Farm, Centreville, inform Captain Harris if we had grain we wanted to ship from Indiantown wharf. We sent word and several days later spotted the schooner's topsails far downriver. Father rounded up Ned, Jack and the men to begin hitching the teams to the wagons and loading the bags of grain.

After getting them off, he drove up to the house in the Durban.

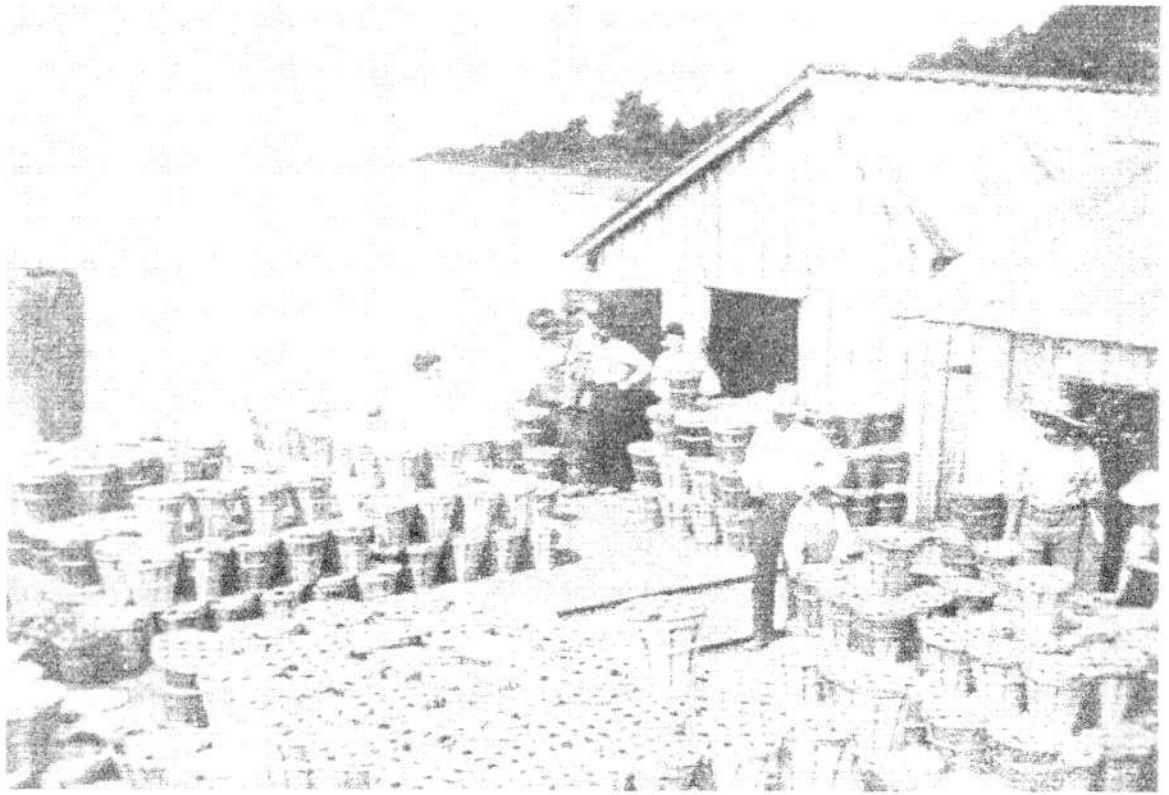
"Come on along with me, Alice. I want to look over this new Captain they've got on Australia. Be sure he knows what he's doing. With any luck, I'll have nearly half a year's income riding on his boat." Harriet and I had been peeling peaches for canning, but Father was raring to go and wouldn't even give me time to change my dress. I managed to cover it with a clean apron and clap my straw hat on the back of my head.

"Yessir, thanks to your grandfather, Indiantown has one of the best wharves on the river. Ten feet of water off the end. There isn't a vessel on the Bay couldn't tie up alongside." He clicked up his horse into a fast trot.

"Look at that fella step out, would you? He's got Clifton Lad's blood in his veins, for sure. Giddyap, boy." We rattled down the dirt lane, fence posts flicking past, turned in at Indiantown and didn't slow down until we rounded a curve and caught sight of the schooner through the seven Lombardy poplars that grew along the river bank.

The wagons were lined up waiting to unload their bags of grain onto a flat car, which could be pushed by hand along a track that ran the length of the dock. From there, they would be loaded into the schooner's hold.

Father and I climbed up on the scratchy burlap sacks and rode out on the next trip. He gestured across the river. "It's so shallow along his shore, poor old



INDIANTOWN LANDING

Dan has to drive his wagons right out into the water, unload them into skiffs which then have to be rowed to the schooner anchored way out." He didn't sound the least sorry for his Kent County neighbor.

A man, a pipe in his teeth, was standing on the schooner's stern directing the stowing of the grain. Wind-roughened face, blue eyes. He reached for a stay and swung himself nimbly up on the dock as he saw us approaching.

"Mr. Emory?" he called. "Cap'n Harris." They shook hands.

"And this is my daughter Alice," Father waved a hand toward me.

Somehow the pipe and the battered Captain's cap disappeared, and he made me a deep old-fashioned bow. "Pleased to meet you, Miss Emory." His hair was burnished copper like the mane of a chestnut horse.

"We'd be pleased if you'd come up to the house for dinner when you're finished loading," I was surprised to hear myself say. The two men fell to talking, and I amused myself by watching a cloud of gulls fighting for scraps of food which the schooner's cook had tossed over the side. When they had stowed the last bag to Captain Harris' satisfaction, the men scrambled to be first on the empty car, joking with the last man off the boat whose fate it was to push them all back. Father, Captain Harris and I followed on foot.

That was the beginning of many visits from Captain Harris. Father hit it off with him in a way he had never been able to with Ned and Jack. The *Australia* stopped at ports all up and down the Bay, and its master was full of news and gossip, which we all enjoyed. It was father's custom at the end of the evening meal to smoke a cigar. As Miss Isabel disliked the smell, he retreated to his office for this ceremony in winter and in summer took himself out into the garden. Captain Harris was invited to join him, though Ned and Jack were not. From time to time I would look out the window and watch the glow from their cigars like two fireflies crossing and recrossing the terraces of grass that led like broad stair-steps away from the house and down to Emory Creek. I sat in the parlor, finding it hard to concentrate on my book, straining to hear Captain Harris' voice.

Father seemed to have taken himself in hand, and I had not seen him the worse for drink since the terrible disgrace following Nan's wedding. On the evenings of Captain Harris' visits, I began to detect, however, a faint aroma of whiskey when the men joined me.

I kept my fingers crossed, for I was becoming more and more aware that these visits to Poplar Grove were really to see me, and I didn't want anything to

spoil my first courtship. It was exciting and flattering that I had caught the interest of such a dashing older man. For the first time I understood why my friend Kate Goldsborough had been attracted. The difficulty was Father so obviously enjoyed his company, too, that the Captain and I had never had a moment alone together.

The next time the Australia docked up the Corsica River in Centreville, the Captain hired a horse and rig and drove out to Poplar Grove for dinner, Father having issued him a standing invitation by then. That evening I was rescued by my brothers, who, quite on their own and without inflicting on me any preliminary teasing, produced a crisis in the stable that demanded immediate attention from Father.

Captain Harris and I were "alone at last" as it says in bad novels, and just as in bad novels, we immediately became stiff and painfully shy. The portraits of my grandparents frowned down on us from their opposite walls. "Say something," I could almost hear Granmama whisper. The coals in the grate shifted. It was November now, weather would soon begin to cut down on trips across the Bay.

"I reckon I won't be getting over this way so often, now that the harvests are in" he burst out. Had he read my mind?

"Also, the weather, winter storms" I said.

"Storms, you can ride out if you know what you're doing and get reefed down in time. It's the ice I hate. Gets a lock on you, and there's nothing you can do but wait it out and near about freeze to death. Course, if you see the signs and know it's coming, you get yourself into home port, go ashore, fire up the stove and laugh at it. Onliest trouble about that is, if the ship's not moving, the money's not coming in, so you don't want for the Bay to be froze over too long." He stood up and began to walk back and forth on the Turkish carpet in front of the stove. Then he stopped directly before my chair and took a deep breath.

"What's that you've been reading?" he asked.

"Why, it's the book everyone's talking about," I answered, "*Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo." He leant over me, picked up *Volume I* from the pile and opened it.

"What's this?" he asked puzzled holding the page out to me.

"Je consens a vivre. Tout n'est pas fini sur la terre, puisqu'on peut encore deraisonner. J'en rends grace aux dieux immortels. Il ment, mais en rit. On affirme, mais on doute. C'est beau. Il est encore ici-bas des humains qui savent joyeusement ouvrir et fermer la boite a surprises du paradoxe."

"What's it all about?"

I began to translate. It was not easy to do unprepared. When reading in French, one gets swept along by the rhythm of the language and forgets the exact English words.

"I consent to live; all is not finished in the world. Since men can still be unreasonable, I return thanks to the immortal gods. Men lie, but they laugh; they affirm, but they doubt. This is grand; there are still in the world human beings who can joyously open and shut the puzzle box of paradox."

"I'm not sure I understand it any better in English."

I agreed laughing, "It's an exciting story of a convict who steals a pair of silver candlesticks. I confess I skip over many of the talky parts."

"But you can read French."

He looked from me to the book and back again, then replaced the book on the table. He put a hand on each arm of my chair and looked down at me. His eyebrows were red-gold, and so were the hairs inside his nostrils.

"Do you think it makes any difference?" he asked.

"What?"

"The fact that you can read books written in French, and I'm not much on reading ones even when they're in plain English. Oh, I can do it—I read charts and sailing directions and the *Sunpapers*, and I write a good hand, but I don't sit down and just *read books* for, for . . . recreation."

"What do you do for recreation?" It was very hard carrying on a conversation at such close range. Very faint, like the memory of a nightmare, I could smell the taint of whiskey on his breath. As if he sensed my uneasiness, he straightened up.

"I whittle boats." He reached into a pocket of his coat and brought out a twist of newspaper which he handed me with a ceremonious bow. I unwrapped it, and there was an exquisite little replica of his schooner, small enough to sit on the palm of my hand. With all of its paper sails set, it strained against an imaginary wind. It was charming in its own right, but even more so because it was a work of delicacy and sensitivity from the hands of a man who set no store by those traits—was not aware that he possessed them. It was my first gift from a man. I was quite overcome. "*Je suis bouleverse*—a very useful expression of thanks." I suddenly remembered Madame saying that to me right in this very room, and I almost used it.

"Why, thank you very much," I smiled. "I used to have a tiny doll who would have enjoyed sailing a ship like this one. I wonder where he got to?"

"Miss Alice, I would like to offer you a real sailor with a real ship, and a snug little house on Spa Creek outside Annapolis, if you'll have him." I think the declaration surprised him as much as it did me.

He pulled me to my feet and held my hands in his. My first proposal! My heart began beating very fast. I could feel the calluses on his palms.

"Why, why . . ." I wanted to throw my arms around his neck and kiss him, but with Granmama's painted eyes looking down at me, I held back. "Why, yes," I said, "I think I would like to have him." And then the kissing began in earnest, and it was as delightful as the novels say, and we laughed and said silly things to one another, and by the time he had to leave, I felt I had known him forever. He was my closest friend, closer even than Nan. Therefore I had no hesitation in saying to him as he made his way to the door.

"I will promise to marry you, if you will promise to give up drinking." He stopped as if I had slapped his face. I could see a range of expressions play across it, flashes of lightning in a nighttime squall. Surprise, astonishment, hurt pride, and finally insult. He stood very stiff and tall, and in the voice I had heard him use only when giving an order to one of his crew, said, "You ask too much of a man, Miss Emory," and left the room. I never saw him again.

Yes, my heart was broken. Yes, I moped around the house. It went on for months. Finally Miss Isabel, the all-seeing, deciding she could no longer stand it, invited me to join her on a visit to the Baltimore cousins, and yes, I moped and sighed my way through the rounds of morning calls and afternoon tea parties, and then on the way home on the steamboat, I met Colonel Budd S. Ford.

When I say that, I mean I met him for the first time as a grown woman. I held out my hand, looked him in the eye and said, "How do you do?" He was years older than me, fifteen, I learned later. At other encounters, at church or at a party, none of which he could recall, as he confessed to me, he'd seen an awkward young thing, eyes down, who bobbed him a curtsy and vanished to the garden or wherever the young people were gathered, as soon as possible. Now I studied his tall imposing frame, solid under the well-cut Navy blue Captain's uniform. His eyes were large, brown as chocolates, and sad. There was just a touch of gray in his sideburns, and squinting into the sun had caused wrinkles to fan out from the corner of his eyes.

"I do very well, indeed, thank you," he replied returning his gold-braided

Captain's hat to his head. "Are you ladies comfortable?" He asked Miss Isabel. "Quite, thank you," she looked up from the knitting she carried with her everywhere. "I especially enjoy the crossings when I can catch the Chester and have the luck to find my own special corner seat by the window unoccupied. I'm out of the wind yet can look out and enjoy the scenery."

"I was hoping you ladies would join me in a stroll around the deck. If they don't need me on the bridge, I like to get in a constitutional."

"You go, Alice dear. I no longer enjoy being buffeted about by wind. I hope you will excuse me, Colonel Ford."

He bowed to Miss Isabel and held open the heavily varnished door with its brilliantly shined knob, so I could precede him on deck.

There was a brisk wind blowing. I tied my bonnet on more firmly and concentrated on controlling my skirts. This wind could pick them up and blow them over my head if I didn't pay attention. As I trotted along beside him, Colonel Ford pointed out the various craft we passed.

"Those big schooners—most of them are New England built—come into Baltimore to fill up with coal, now that the B & O Railroad has extended its line clear to the mines in Western Maryland. This is a booming port. Look, there's a six-master over there—I've heard tell they've built a seven master, but I haven't seen her."

"I've never understood how they could fill these ships up with ice and bring it here without it melting."

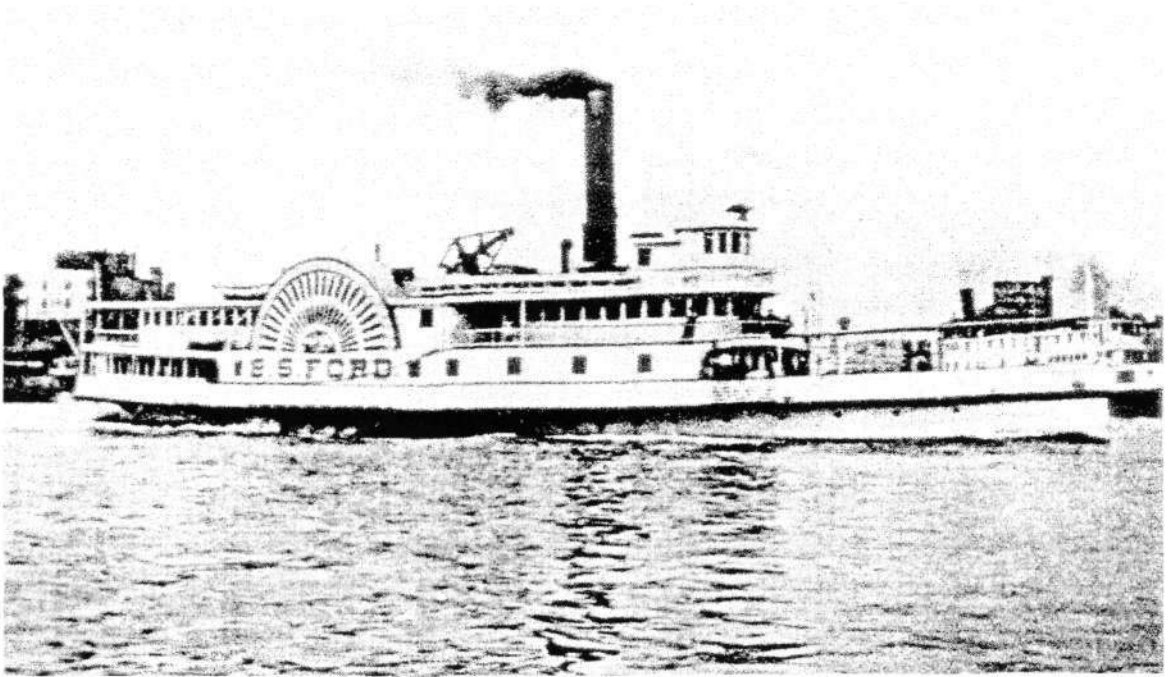
"Not much call for ice now that artificial plants are opening up."

"They'll never beat the real thing, according to my father. He says it will taste strange."

"No stranger than ice I've seen brought up out of the holds of some of these ships—especially ones that fill up with coal for the return trip and don't do a careful job of cleaning out their holds before turning around, filled up with ice and coming on down again."

We took a few more turns, and then stopped near one of the sidewheels. There was a fascination in watching the water spill out over the ledge of each paddle, over and over again. I was conscious that he was watching me.

"I know your father," he said. "In fact, I beat him in the primary for House of Delegates. We both ran on the Independent ticket. That was in '69. Do you remember that?"



THE B. S. FORD OPERATED ON THE CHESTER RIVER FOR 46 YEARS.

"Goodness, no, I was only 14 years old. Politics was one of the last things I wanted to hear Papa talk about. It got him so worked up."

"You know, my wife passed away several years back."

"No, I didn't, I am so sorry."

"I'm left with two little girls to raise, Catherine and Emily."

"How do you manage, having to be away so much?"

"They stay with their grandmother up in Cecil County. My wife's people are from up that way. She's buried there."

"They must miss you."

"Do you think children notice? I certainly miss them, but their grandmother is devoted. They lack for nothing."

"They lack for a mother," I said rather fiercely and then began to tell him about Nan and me growing up at Poplar Grove—wondering as the words came pouring out how I had reached such a degree of intimacy with this man, this stranger.

We took another turn around the deck. "I have so enjoyed meeting you, Miss Emory. I'm not ashore very often, but when I can arrange to be, I wonder if you would permit me to call? We're almost neighbors, you know. My farm is upriver on Southeast Creek."

Before I had a chance to answer, he escorted me to the door of the passenger salon and held it open for me to step over the bulkhead.

"This has been a most enjoyable encounter. Good-bye. My respects to your mother."

"She's my stepmother," I said, wondering as soon as the words were out why I had pronounced them. I had long since given up making any distinction with regard to Miss Isabel.

Colonel Ford lost no time in paying his call. Father grumbled a bit when he was informed who was coming and arranged to be busy at the barn. I did enjoy the attentions paid to me by an extremely successful and prosperous businessman.

He had left home at age fourteen, he told me, and found work as a clerk in a wholesale drugstore in Ohio. When he finally gave in to his mother's entreaties to return home, he became a clerk on the steamer *Arrow*.

"It's strange how life on the water gets into you. I wasn't born with webbed feet as they say a real Eastern Shoreman is, but I took to it. Served under Captain



POPLAR GROVE BOATHOUSE

Young. That was back in '59. Then when he was transferred to the *Chester*, I took his place as Captain."

That day we had set out to walk down the tree-lined alley that leads from the boxwood gardens to Emory Cove, but when two people have a lot to say to one another, the progress is slow. We were standing at the entrance to the graveyard.

"My sister and I used to come out here with our dolls sometimes and have tea parties on our mother's grave. We'd tell her all the family gossip. I suspect Granmama would have said it was unhealthy if she'd known. Perhaps it was, but somehow it comforted us."

We turned in and walked about reading the stones. It was October and yellow leaves twirled slowly down from a deep blue sky. A flight of geese, sounding like a pack of foxhounds in full cry, flew overhead. Colonel Ford stood for a long moment looking down at Mother's stone. Then he took my arm.

"Show me this boathouse of yours." The field to our right was being ploughed for its winter cover, and one of the men trudged along behind the mules, a swirl of seagulls following him alert for worms and insects.

"Emily and I married in 1862," he said. "Emily Hendricks she was, from this county, though her folks came from Cecil and have gone back there now. I gave up my seafaring and took up farming, bought quite a bit of land here and there in the second district. The girls came along, and then . . . she passed away. We had five years together."

The only sounds were the cries of the seagulls, the shrilling of crickets, and the shuffle of the fallen leaves as we walked through them.

"I keep thinking about Catherine and Emma," I said.

"Would you like to meet them?" I felt as I used to when Nan and I stood at the edge of the hayloft daring one another to jump down into the wagon below.

"Yes," I said, "I would."

The boathouse is a delightful place. Roofed over so it always offers protection from the weather. There's a bench, and a shed in which to keep oars, sails, crab nets and decoys. A skiff was pulled up into the marsh grass. Ned and Jack's bateau swung at a mooring. Gold and red, the oaks and gums on the creek banks walled out the rest of the world.

We sat on the bench, which over the years had been used as a proving ground for sharp new penknives. I read father's initials, J.R.E., and a very faint one that seemed to begin with a T—grandfather's?

Colonel Ford rose, walked to the edge of the wharf, and stood gazing out at the narrow opening in the creek through which you could see the Chester River.

"I've just been elected one of the directors of the bank we've been forming in Centreville."

"Congratulations. I think Father was involved in trying to get it started a few years ago, but things seemed to come to a halt."

"Yes, we worked together on trying to get subscribers to put up money. He and I had some go rounds."

"You're not the only one. Father's not an easy person."

"I'm not an easy person, either. Ever since Emily passed away, I feel myself being pulled in too many different directions—there's politics, the bank, the farms, and the steamboat company. The girls get left out somehow. You know the *Chester* sank up at Booker's Wharf."

"I know. I loved the old *Chester*, but she's running again, isn't she?"

"Yes, and now the company is having a new side-wheeler built up in Wilmington, and I spend half my life on the train, it seems, checking up on Harlan and Hollingsworth, the outfit who is building her. It does give me a chance to stop off and see the girls, but I wonder if they really know who I am."

"Of course, they do. But they need to be with you."

He turned facing me. "I need to be with *you*," he said very slowly and solemnly. "It is here with you that I find peace. Alice, will you marry me?"

"I would like to meet your daughters before I give you my answer, but I am deeply honored."

Hand in hand, we walked in silence back to the house.

I talked long and deeply with Miss Isabel about what it was like to be a stepmother. "Hard," she said, "Very hard. You must never for a moment forget you are not their mother, and yet you must love them as if they were your own children."

"Dear Mother," I said and kissed her.

On a day of cold rain a week later, the two little girls were driven up to our door by their father in a closed carriage. They were timid as mice, dressed identically in little round hats, tight fitting woolen jackets over Scotch plaid skirts that reached to the tops of their high button shoes. I don't know what their grandmother had told them to expect, but they looked at me and at their father, too, with wary eyes.

I had brought down from the attic some of the toys we had played with. A rocking horse, rather moth-eaten, whose stirrup gave way when we finally persuaded Emily to climb on its back, so she took a tumble before she'd even rocked once. There was a puzzle with half the pieces missing, and my dear old rag doll, Jennie, who looked limp and forlorn after years of being packed away in a chest.

"Let me hold her," said Catherine.

"No, I want her," Emily pouted. "Why don't you have two dolls?"

"There were two, but my sister took the other with her when she went off and got married. Now she has a little daughter of her own, Alice—named for me—who is playing with it, her own Mother's doll." I could have bitten off my tongue.

"We haven't got a mother," said Catherine.

"Yes, we do, too. She's in Heaven, and we can't see her." Emily declared.

"God sees her. Grandfather says so, and he's a preacher so he knows."

Catherine was very firm.

I could feel Budd Ford's discomfort across the room. What could I do?

"Well, my mother is in Heaven, too. Perhaps they've met. Perhaps they are looking down at us right this minute and saying, 'See how nicely our little girls are playing.'"

"But you're not a little girl."

"No, but I was the last time my mother saw me. Would you like to go out in the kitchen and learn how to make fudge?"

We all tied on aprons, even their father, which was what finally broke the ice and made his daughters laugh. Lumpy and crumbly, no fudge ever tasted better.

That night I wrote a note to Budd Ford accepting his proposal.

I reveled in my new status of an engaged girl, a time in one's life when one is indulged and encouraged to think about frivolities such as new clothes and new curtains. I enjoyed visiting Budd Ford's white frame house which had a wonderful sweeping view of Southeast Creek where it joins the river. He was giving me carte blanche as to furnishings. I was as busy as an inchworm, measuring for curtains, furniture covers and bookshelves for the parlor. As an engagement present, Budd gave me a handsome set of the works of William Thackeray in green cloth, the title stamped in gold letters on the spine—I pick one now from the shelf here at Eversley. *Henry Esmond* and on the flyleaf, *Alice G.*

Emory from B.S.F., July 1879. These volumes were to be the beginning of our library.

The wedding was planned for the following June. My wedding dress was ordered from Mrs. Walmsley of Baltimore, which necessitated many trips across the Bay for fittings. I traveled of course on one of the ships of the Chester River Steamboat Company fleet, arranging my fittings for the days when Colonel Ford would be on duty. The steamer would stop at the Indiantown wharf on signal at around eight in the morning and, weather and tides permitting, would arrive in Baltimore about 1 p.m. Of course, the real purpose of the Chester River Steamboat Company was to transport from the farms in Kent and Queen Anne's Counties general cargo such as grain, fruit, and tomatoes for the city markets, and not simply to convenience the young Miss Emory whose head was spinning with important decisions. Should the dress have a ruffle of lace outlining the décolletage? Would the boned, tight fitting bodice be fastened with tiny silk crocheted buttons? Were skirts draped upward toward the back in a bustle effect still in fashion? The answer to all these weighty questions was yes, and the result was a dress both becoming and handsome beyond my wildest dreams.

It was in late spring of 1879 that Budd Ford announced that he had decided to take a few days holiday at the seashore and invited me to join him, along with Ned and his bride, Henrietta Tilghman Tilghman. (Her parents had christened her with the two names so that she would never lose the Tilghman name even when she married.) They were an old married couple of a year, who were to come along as chaperones. In those days, reaching Ocean City necessitated several changes of trains. We set off early in a festive mood. There were just the three of us in the end. Some crisis on the farm had at the last minute kept Ned at home.

It was late in the afternoon when we arrived. The beach was nearly deserted. Etta and Budd were eager to go in for a swim, but I elected to watch from the shore.

* * * *

CHESTERTOWN GAZETTE

Ocean City — 1879

Death of B. S. Ford

The intelligence which reached here Monday morning of the death of Colonel B. S. Ford was a sad surprise to his numerous friends and in fact to the entire community. Colonel Ford and Mrs. E. B. Emory were in bathing in Ocean City on the eve of Sunday last, and it is supposed that the Colonel must have had an attack of heart disease.

Mrs. E. B. Emory and Colonel Ford started into the water in the late afternoon when no others were bathing. They had been in but a very few minutes when a strong undertow of the flood tide swept them out.

Mrs. Emory says Colonel Ford turned to her and exclaimed, "Oh, how my heart beats," and then cried, "Help!" Private Orendorff of K. Co. 5th Regiment quickly ran to the spot, tore down a plank and threw it in the water. Mrs. Emory then seized the plank and kept her head above water. In the meantime William Potts of Berlin hearing of the occurrence ran from the Seaside Hotel and hastily throwing off his clothes sprang into the angry waves. At a glance he saw that Mrs. Emory was temporarily safe so he cried out, "Hold on to the plank until I come," and started for Colonel Ford whom he seized in the back with one hand and swam with the other.

During all this time the beach was lined with people and many were endeavoring to extend aid. Robert Henry of Ocean City, Mr. Pitts, John Brady of Washington and others succeeded in bringing him to shore.

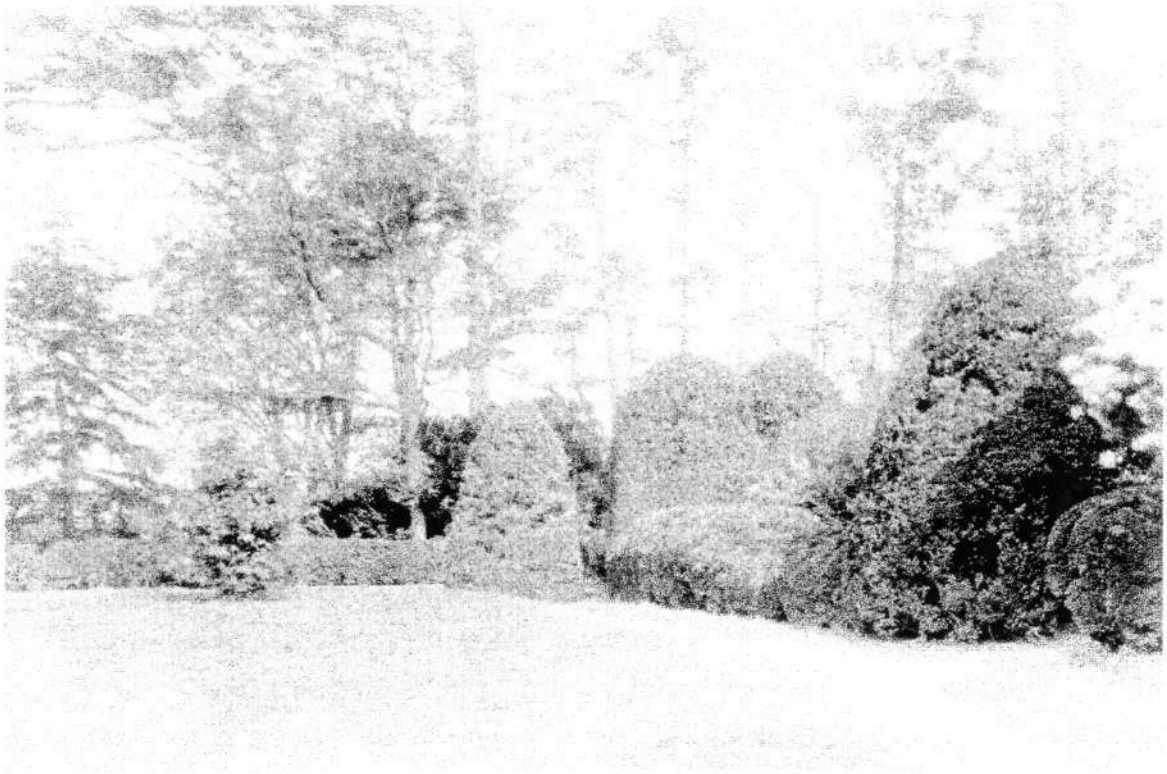
It was found impossible to resuscitate Colonel Ford and every physician unites in the opinion he died of heart failure.

Miss Alice Emory, sister of Edward B. Emory of Queen Anne's County, husband of the lady who was rescued, was engaged to Colonel Ford, and she witnessed the trying spectacle from the beach. The body was sent to North East, Cecil County.

* * * *

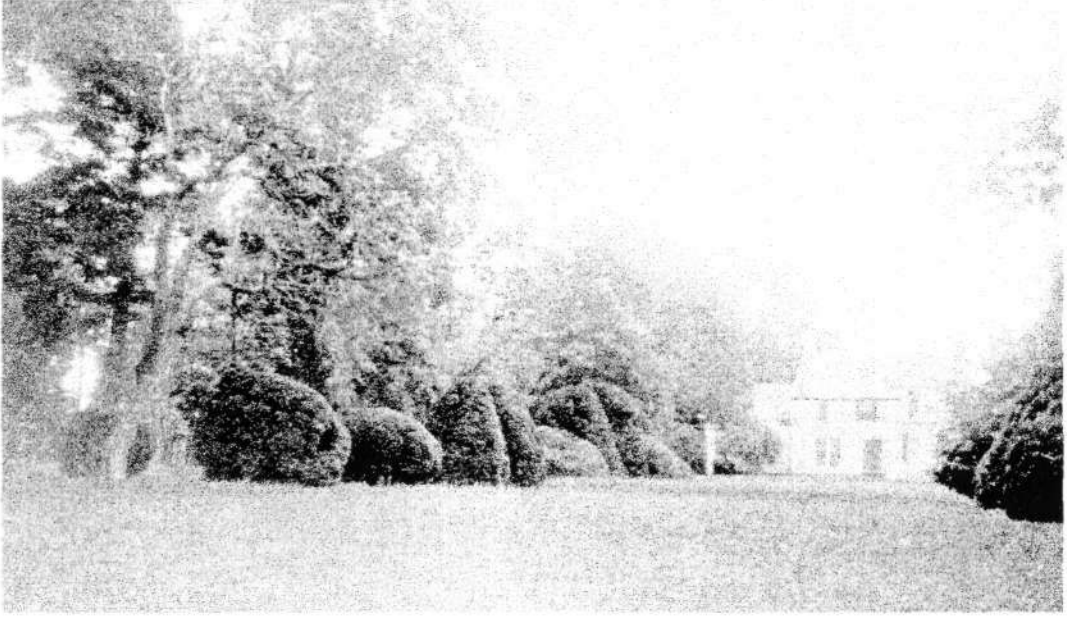
The Chester River Steamboat Company presented me with an enormous testimonial framed in heavy black oak. Formal sentiments of loss were printed out in Gothic script. Carefully inked cracks surrounded the Captain's name, indicating heartbreak, I assumed. I hid the monstrosity in the attic.

Condolences poured over me like rain, but I had turned to stone, unable to feel or think.



POPLAR GROVE GARDEN

Chapter 6



VIEW FROM THE GARDEN TOWARD POPLAR GROVE

1880-1882

I

Being in love had clothed me in an "armor of light." Living in the glow of its golden polish, I had been only dimly aware of what was taking place around me. I floated through the days, counting the minutes until I would be with my dear one again, my head awhirl with delicious plans for our future together.

Now that the entrance to that future had been barred with the grim finality of a portcullis crashing down, I found myself encased in an armor of darkness. The only light that penetrated came through the slits in the helmet covering my face. I moved through each day as if my limbs were really clad in metal. All my strength was expended in going through the outward motions of dressing and sitting at table fork in hand, unable to taste what I put in my mouth. I fell into bed each night exhausted from the effort, unable to sleep. How long I would have remained in that state, I do not know.

One day Miss Isabel, who had been a blurred presence at the edge of my vision, sat down beside me on the horsehair sofa in the parlor. She put her hand on my shoulder.

"Alice," she spoke loudly, as if I was far away, "Alice, listen to me. Your father is dying. You realize that don't you?"

The visor snapped up. My eyes focused on her. How hollow her cheeks had become, a limp strand of white had escaped from the neat knot that had always kept her hair smoothed back from her face. A faded blue calico apron covered her from neck to hem.

"Dying?" I had noticed but not wondered why Father no longer came to the table.

"I need your help nursing him, and he needs the comfort of a daughter at his side. Nan has her hands full. I don't feel I can ask her."

"Nan? She's not here. She's married. She's at Locust Hill."

"I know that," Miss Isabel was trying to keep her exasperation under control, "and she's run ragged with those four little Turpins. Wild as Indians."

"Dying? Where have I been?"

"Grieving your dead, my dear. We all must have time for that. But now I need to have you *here*, at home . . . and your father needs you."

I stood up shakily. Greaves, gauntlets, breastplate fell away. The mourning dress I was wearing for one man and would soon be wearing for another would have to suffice as my only protection from the world.

* * * *

At his request, Miss Isabel had set up Father's sick room in a corner of the library. Ned, Jack and Zeb had carried down the bed he'd slept in during the years that he was a widower. It was of heavy black wood, its finish dull and crackled.

Aunt Amy gave it a good rubbing with polish. "But I can't bring up no shine," she said in disgust.

Father sat wrapped in a shawl by the fire supervising the operation.

"Wait, you've got the head where the foot should be. No, not that way. The other end—any fool can see it goes there!" A chorus of "Yessirs" came from the work crew, who went ahead with what they were doing.

When the last bolt was in place, the horsehair mattress was brought in from the line where Harriet had been beating it. Clean sheets were put on by Aunt Amy, and Ned and I helped Father back into bed.

"Hard work," he lay against the pillows exhausted. "Thank you all very much." Those uncharacteristic words were what convinced me that he must indeed be mortally ill.

Several days later Father asked to have the General's portrait brought in from the parlor and hung where he could see it from his bed.

As I went to and fro past his open door, I thought I could hear him talking to it. Once I heard him laugh.

"Well, you may have had more children and read more books. Your horses have won more races, and your farms made more money, but don't you forget, I've damn well had to *pay* my help. And I've managed to live to be 62 years old, got *you* beat by a couple of years."

He was a surprisingly docile patient and seemed to enjoy my company.

"Read to me," he said one morning, waving his hand at the General's books which covered the walls.

"What would you like?" I asked, walking over to the shelves.

"Something with a good story to it."

All I could reach from where I stood were *The Life of George Washington* by John Marshall, *The Life & Pontificate of Leo X* in four volumes, *A Life of Patrick Henry* by William Wirt. *The Works of Dr. Benjamin Franklin*, with a delightful steel engraving of the old gentleman as frontispiece, four volumes on the *Wars of the French Revolution* by Edward Baines, 1823, all marked on the flyleaf "Thos. Emory, Poplar Grove," in Grandfather's hand.

I took down Benjamin Franklin and began. It was hard going as the type was small and the letter "s" was printed like an "f."

From the bofom of poverty and obfcurity, in which I drew my firft breath and fpent my earlieft years, I have raifed myfelf to a ftate of opulence and to fome degree of celebrity in the world.

I kept forgetting and mispronouncing and getting the giggles.

"I don't see the humor—this is very dry," Father complained sleepily, and a few minutes later he dropped off.

Next time, I decided, I'd bring down the copy of Thackeray, inscribed to me by my dear Budd Ford. *The Virginians* would keep him awake.

One morning Miss Isabel, who had attended to Father's business affairs ever since their marriage, took the boys and me into the little sewing room off the winter parlor where she did the farm accounts.

"Your father has not made a will, and nothing I say can convince him to do so. You children must be the ones to take this up with him. I cannot do it. In spite of everything, I am an outsider." A tear slid down her cheek. It was the first time since I'd known her that I'd seen her give way. "I'll leave you to talk this over among yourselves," she said, slipping out and closing the door behind her.

"I can't do it," Ned burst out. "I know it is important, and I know I'm the oldest, and it is my duty, but . . . but I just can't talk to him about something like this."

"Nor I." Jack turned his back on us, looking out across the grass terraces to the creek "You don't know what it was like out there in the fields, Alice, working with him all those years. You don't know how he made us feel—*nothing* we did was right. He treated us worse than he did the men when they were slaves and even worse than that after emancipation when he knew *they* could walk out and we couldn't."

He had his hands behind his back, his right hand crunching the fist of his left. "I can't see myself going to him hat in hand."

"He's an old man and sick," I said. "Seeing him like that, I have forgiven him, but I can't go ask him to write a will, either. It seems like begging."

"Nan's the one to do it," said Ned. "Belongs to a new family now, can run back to Locust Hill if he gets in one of his rages. She wouldn't seem to be asking him for anything. She's got Will Turpin supporting her and the children. She's less dependent than any of us."

I thought of Nan, who had recently confided to me that she was sick again in the mornings which she feared meant a fifth child would soon join young Walter and his three little sisters. "William is hoping for another boy." Her eyes had black smudges under them, and they did not smile, though her lips did, as she whispered her news. Her world was far removed from us here at Poplar Grove.

"Yes," I agreed. "Nan would be the one."

It took several days to make all the arrangements necessary for Nan to get away from her flock. Miss Isabel traveled in to Centreville to lend a hand to whomever was to be left in charge of "the wild Indians," and Nan rode back in the carriage.

We gave her a chance to rest and then served a bang-up lunch courtesy of the Harriets. One of our hams, a cornmeal pudding and apple sauce we'd put up last fall. The boys were there, of course. Ned had left Etta home, and it was like the long ago days before Father had remarried, when *we* were the "wild Indians." Ned decided to break open one of Father's bottles of sherry. "To give Nan courage" was his excuse and we were very lively remembering the times when, as Aunt Amy said as she cleared away the plates, "You was turrible chilren, just turrible. I never *did* think I'd learn you any sense." We threw back our heads and laughed, topping one another's stories, until a roar—"What's going on out there?" from the library—silenced us.

Nan stood up, easing her skirt down over her thickening waist. "I can't remember the last time I was able to sit at the table and eat a meal without

having to go and see to one or the other of the children. They are dears, every one of them, but I have enjoyed being able to eat my luncheon without having to give lessons in table manners and general deportment at the same time." Then she marched herself down the hall, paused at the library door, winked at us, and went in, closing it firmly behind her.

We sat silently half expecting another roar, but we could hear nothing. I suspect that if the boys had not been there I would have tiptoed up and put my ear to the door. Ned took out a pencil and a small notebook and began scribbling in it. Jack got up and paced from one window to the next. I was about to go and fetch my mending basket when the door opened and Nan beckoned.

Father was sitting in the big chair next to the fire, wrapped in his military cloak, a shawl across his knees. He pointed to four wooden chairs with padded seats, that sat around the mahogany card table in the corner, and directed the boys to pull them over. They set them in a line before Father, and as I took mine, I felt like an unruly pupil about to be reprimanded by the teacher.

"So," he burst out in the loud voice that had so terrified us when we were children and still did if we were honest. "You sent your sister in here to the lion's den to find out if I had made a will? Well, I haven't—and I'm not planning to."

"Look at him," he pointed his bony wax-white hand at the portrait of General Thomas, "up there on the wall smiling down on us so benevolently. *He* wrote a will pages long. Arranged for everything, thought of everything and everyone."

"I came back to Poplar Grove after he died, invalided out of the army—damn those Seminoles." Out of habit, he clutched at his bad leg which I hadn't heard him complain of for years. "From that day to this, I've made these farms my life, but do you realize that until your grandmother died, I was no better off than one of the slaves? I didn't have an acre of ground to call my own until I was 40 years old. Then just like that I had to borrow money to buy out your Uncles William and Blanchard. His *blessed will* had left the property to your grandmother for life and then to the three of us. So when I finally became the rightful owner of this place, the place I'd given my life to keep running, I was staggering under an enormous debt."

"I had no idea, Father," said Ned.

"Of course, you had no idea," he snapped. "One doesn't discuss one's private affairs with children. No," Father continued, "I am not planning to write

a will. It will be the responsibility of you children to dispose of my property after I am gone.

"But that is not to say I have not been giving the matter some thought. Jack, you're nearest, hand me that large brown envelope there on the table next to the bed."

Jack, in his eagerness to escape from the confines of the straight little chair, nearly knocked it over.

"Now," said Father, pulling out some sheets of letter paper. I thought of a magician about to perform a sleight of hand.

"Now, I have been known in my day as a sporting man. How many of you children have inherited this questionable trait I do not know, perhaps we will soon find out. I refuse to make a will, but in order to have things settled and prevent future quarreling among you, I make you this proposition. A pen, someone." I brought him pen, inkwell and a blotter from the desk, and put them on the small candle stand next to his chair.

"Now," he said again as he wrote something on the first sheet and folded it, "I am putting down the names of each of my farms, Shellbanks, Indiantown, Poplar Grove, Wye Farm." He scratched with a flourish on another sheet and folded it. When he was finished, he spread them out in a fan. "Will you take the gamble of drawing one of these papers? On it will be the name of the farm that will be yours when I die."

"What an idea!" exclaimed Nan, "I never heard of such a thing in my life. I can't imagine what the Turpins would say to such an outlandish notion!"

"Well, you may be a Turpin in name now, but you've got Emory blood in your veins, my girl," Father taunted. "Afraid to take a chance?"

"I'd like to consult with my husband first."

"Well, he's not here. You were the one who tiptoed in all very tactful and hinted around, asking delicately what *arrangements* I'd made for the future." Father raised the folded papers and waved them at her, "Here they are—my arrangements."

"Those farms are more or less the same size," said Ned, "Three hundred some acres each. Poplar Grove and Wye have good houses. The other two have more riverfront land."

"Wye yields the best crops. It's always been a money maker," Jack added.

"That's part of the gamble." Father shook the papers again, tempting us.

"Make up your minds." We looked at each other and shrugged. It had been a signal between us all those years ago when he'd come in the house roaring drunk.

"Youngest goes first," said Ned. I reached out my hand.

"Now, don't open those papers until I say so, and if you're not satisfied I don't want to hear a word about it. In fact, I don't want to hear anything about it ever again. After you've chosen, a lawyer can fix it all up so it'll be legal."

As we each drew, there was a tight silence in the room cut into pieces by the ticking of the clock.

"Help me back into bed, Nan. Then all of you take your inheritance and git." He struggled to his feet, waving us away.

It was icy in the hallway as we stood outside the library door waiting for Nan. She joined us a few minutes later looking very white and drawn. We went into the parlor and took seats as close to the fire as we could, holding our papers in our hands. Jack poked up the fire and threw on another log. Sparks like tiny winter fireflies flew up the chimney.

"Ready?" he asked, "One, two, three."

"Poplar Grove," read Ned.

"Indiantown," said Jack.

"Wye Farm," Nan.

"Shellbanks, along with Anne's Portion and Smith's Mistake," said I.

I suspect that we all thought Nan was the one who had the least need of the money-making farm, but we held our tongues. It had been the luck of the draw.

"I feel the need of some more of that sherry. Being an heiress has made me weak at the knees," she said.

"What a good idea!" Ned hurried out to get the decanter. I suspected he was already thinking of himself as Lord of the Manor. "Wait till Etta hears about this."

We had become quite silly by the time Aunt Amy came in and said, "It's fixing to snow, Zeb says, and you, Miss Nan, better stop your foolishness with these no account brothers and sister of yours and get along back to them children up to Locust Hill. Zeb got the carriage hitched up. He says to hurry so's he won't have to get out the sleigh instead. I got a hot brick for your feet."

The boys and I stood shivering in the doorway watching until Nan was out of sight. Any minute now, snow would begin to spill from the swollen gray sky to cover our lands: Poplar Grove, Indiantown, Shellbanks and Wye Farm. A snowy winter was good for the fields.

Father died two weeks later.

II

Shellbanks adjoined Indiantown, the dividing line a small stream known as the Sheep Branch. Its waterfront was White's Cove, a pretty, sheltered anchorage off the Chester. Across the county road were the two additional pieces, Anne's Portion and Smith's Mistake, which brought my total acreage to 320.

The house, sheltered by an enormous silver maple tree, was small and very old, but with pleasing outlines. It was, however, in deplorable condition, having been rented for some years to its former owner, one Mr. Mummey. His habit, when in his cups, where he spent a good deal of his time, was to shoot holes in the doors!

To be the owner of my own land was the source of the greatest satisfaction and pride. At first I made arrangements with Ned for it to be farmed as part of Poplar Grove, with its portion of the profits to be paid over to me.

However, as the date of the wedding that was *not* to be approached, I became aware of the sympathetic looks cast in my direction, the whispered conversations that stopped as I drew near, and I awoke to the unavoidable fact that I must come to some decision about my future. Having twice had my foot upon the threshold, as it were, I found myself resisting the idea of stepping back and quietly resuming my role as daughter of the house, still subject to the authority of my stepmother and now my brother, who had become head of the family.

My education, thanks to the Poplar Grove library, the Edgeworth School and Madame, was probably as good as that of the young men who had graduated from Washington College in Chestertown and were qualified to teach, but I had no certificate or degree. Perhaps I could give piano lessons to the very young, but the number of prospective pupils Centreville might produce would be as limited as pearls in Chester River oysters.

Early one morning after a troubled night, I slipped out of Poplar Grove just as the rooster began his crowing. Down the farm lane I tramped, my worries as to my future course still whirling unresolved in my head. I was halfway there before I became aware that my feet were leading me to my farm. I knew what I would do.

You can imagine the objections that were raised, along with eyebrows, when the Centreville ladies gathered on the brick sidewalk outside St. Paul's after the Sunday morning service or met for tea at one another's houses.

"That young Miss Emory, a single woman, living alone, farming!"

"What can her stepmother, *such* a refined woman, be thinking of to permit it?"

"She's not so young as all that, twenty-five. An old maid!"

"More like a young widow, I'd say. You haven't forgotten her tragic loss?"

"True, but it doesn't look quite respectable to my way of thinking."

"I've heard that Mrs. Emory will be moving back to Baltimore, now that she's widowed."

"They say she's very well connected over there."

"Those *Baltimore* Emorys have been extremely successful, I understand."

"Well, no one can say she hasn't done her duty by the Poplar Grove branch she married into. How she put up with Mr. Emory these past years, I do not know. I'll never forget what happened at that lovely wedding of Nan's."

"One shouldn't speak ill of the dead. By the way, have you heard Nan's expecting?"

"Not again! Poor little thing, you'd think Will Turpin would be more *understanding*. After all, his father was a doctor."

* * * *

I hired old Jonas from Michaeltown to work for me and his granddaughter to do the cooking. She had a heavy hand with pastry, and her fried chicken was either burnt or still pink at the joints, but I was too busy out of doors to bother with what went on in the kitchen.

Then one day Dick Gee, the milkman, drove up with a young girl. "I hears you need a woman, and I'se come to work for you, Missy," she said climbing down from the wagon. Her name was Joanna Gee.

Those early years were hard ones. The first thing I did was rename the farm Eversley, after the country home of Charles Kingsley, the English author whose historical tales of adventure I admired: *Hereward the Wake*, *Westward Ho!* and the wonderful allegory for children, *Water Babies*.

Both the farm and the house had been disgracefully neglected. But the habit of hard work had always been a friend to me. Shoulder to shoulder, Joanna and I

scrubbed and whitewashed, cut away vines that threatened to pull down the walls, killed black snakes, swept away spiders and the evidence of generations of mice. We plugged up Mr. Mummey's bullet holes in the doors, painted them and all the woodwork white, and hauled away wagon loads in the Durban, to dump on the trash pile in the woods.

In Maryland, if a man dies without a will, his widow is entitled to one third of his estate. It was worked out with the lawyer that Miss Isabel would sign deeds to each of us for our properties containing an exception which was that we each pay her \$238.50 a year as long as she lived. There was also to be an auction of all the farm equipment and livestock, as well as the contents of the house in order for her to get her fair share of the rest of Father's property.

I had been given odds and ends of furniture from Poplar Grove to set me up in housekeeping.

Here are the things I bid in at the sale:

1 small mahogany table	.50
bedstead and bedding	20.00
velvet chair	3.00
picture	1.00
set of books	15.00
1 picture <i>Castle of Shalome</i>	.75

How I hated that bitterly cold day. The strangers and what was worse, the neighbors, among them the Emory relatives from down Spaniard's Point, tramping through the rooms, fingering our belongings, and carrying off with them things which had always been part of the house. Ned and Jack bought back a lot, as did William Turpin for use at Wye Farm. Nan's condition spared her from the melancholy of having to be present as our childhood home disintegrated before our eyes. I was glad that many of the Poplar Grove pieces found a home in Nan's house.

My two-year-old horse was exempted, but it was an odd feeling to be bidding on the bed I had slept in from girlhood. I had always admired the chair known as Cousin Troop's for its graceful oval back and a picture we children called *The Swimming Cows*, a steel engraving of long-horned Highland cattle standing at a storm-lashed water's edge. The other picture was a charming sketch in colored chalk of the Castle of Chillon, done by dear Madame Gillette.

The auctioneer kept calling it the *Castle of Shalome*, but how could he have been expected to know of Lord Byron's poem? I bought as many books from Grandfather's library as I felt I could afford. Have I ever read any of these books? I don't remember. Novels were my delight, my weakness—Walter Scott, Charles Kingsley, George Elliot, and in later years the Jalna books of Mazo de La Roche. All I know is calf-bound books with gold-tooled backs were what I spent my fifteen dollars on, instead of china, tableware or linens, and how beautiful they've looked all these years on the bookshelf in the Eversley parlor.

That winter things were in good enough case to set up my beautiful new Wheeler and Wilson sewing machine. I had bought it with my egg money in order to make my trousseau and had not had the heart to look at it since the day when Colonel Ford and my heart were lost at sea. There was still pink thread on the bobbin from a shirtwaist I had begun and had put away unfinished. I never wore that color again. In fact, it was several years before I wore any color.

I filled another bobbin with white thread and began to treadle the miles of white muslin needed to make curtains for the windows. Eversley was becoming a home.



ALICE EMORY (WILMER)
c. 1883

Chapter 7



LANDSDOWNE

1884-1896

From the day she jumped down from Dick Gee's milk wagon, Joanna had been what Granmama Emory used to call a "whole host."

When I was a child, I imagined bands of angels, the sleeves of their white robes rolled up, invisibly helping at hog killing time or feeding threshing crews.

Our "host" at Eversley consisted of a wiry young woman, who stood straight and tall, with skin the deep burnished red-brown of a horse chestnut. The terms "pitch in," "turn to" had been coined for her.

With Joanna's help, I got the house well in hand and the farm beginning to run fairly smoothly. I think we had made two crops by the time Harry Wilmer's high-stepping bay mare came bowling up the lane pulling a pretty little rig that had wheels with yellow spokes.

The Wilmers had been in Queen Anne's County almost as long as the Emorys. Their lands had been over near Hope, a small village to the east of Centreville. Their brick manor house, Landsdowne, in my opinion surpassed Poplar Grove in graceful proportions, though lacking the massive old trees and boxwood gardens that set off the Emory family home. Landsdowne unfortunately was no longer in the Wilmer family. Harry's father had been bankrupted due to his generosity to numerous less fortunate relatives during those dark lean years following the war. Sometimes there were as many as twelve under his roof. Landsdowne had to be sold at auction to satisfy Mr. Wilmer's creditors.

Harry Wilmer did not dwell on the loss of his inheritance, he had a serene outlook on life, a fine sense of humor, unflinching good manners, and never once did I hear a coarse expression pass his lips.

He was a tall, well set up figure of a man. "Had a good belt on him," Joanna said, a high compliment. His hair was the near bronze color of wheat when it is ready to harvest, and his eyes as blue as the waters of the Chester reflecting a cloudless sky.

He liked to show off his smart rig, and we'd go driving up Land's End Road, paying calls on the Hollydays at Readbourne or down Spaniard's Neck to see the Emory cousins at Concord and Conquest. I enjoyed clipping along the hard-packed oyster shell roads, the carefree sense of freedom and speed as the fence posts flew past, though the outings took me away from my chores. "I'm glad," Harry would say. "You work too hard."

I really never thought I would fall in love again after the dashing of my school girl crush on Captain Harris and the tragedy of Budd Ford, but there was something about Harry Wilmer's strength and sincerity, his idealism, his goodness and his good looks, that gradually eroded my defenses. When he asked me to be his wife, called me "my darling Alice" for the first time, I accepted him with all my heart.

We set the wedding date for after the wheat harvest: July 12, 1883.

Of course, Joanna knew what was going on, though I'd said nothing to her. She put on a splendid act of being surprised when I came into the kitchen one morning and asked her if I thought we could manage a wedding supper.

"Weddin' supper? Weddin' supper? Now, why would two old farm women like us want to be foolin' with some fancy cookin' like that? We ain't got no bride around here!"

"We do, Jo, we do," I said and threw my arms around her neck and began spinning her around.

"You mean you got him?" she gasped when I set her down.

"No, he got me!" and we both began to laugh until we had to wipe our eyes on our aprons.

* * * *

I invited Etta, Ned's wife, to tea shortly after this. She was a spunky little thing with a cloud of golden hair and a beautiful speaking voice. We had become good friends. I ushered her into the parlor, where I almost never sat, but which seemed proper for this occasion. I had unpacked my wedding dress and had spread it out on one of the chairs.

"You're not going to wear this, are you?" Etta recoiled from it, frightened by the memories it brought back.

"Don't worry, Joanna can get it looking good as new."

"Oh, Alice dear, if it's a question of money, please let me buy you another dress," she begged.

"Of course it's a question of money," I answered more sharply than I intended. "But it's also a question of good common sense. I'll never have the chance of wearing anything quite so handsome again. I'm not superstitious and don't you be for me."

If I do say so, we did Eversley proud, Joanna and I. Friends and cousins from up and down the neck called to admire my trousseau and the gifts. The day before the wedding, they congregated on the front porch bringing pails overflowing with flowers from their gardens and proceeded to decorate the house. They wove garlands of greenery to drape the door frames. Mantles, tables, window sills had vases spilling over. It was a wonderful summer for roses, and their scent was everywhere.

Ned hired in extra hands, some to help park the carriages, others to help Joanna. She put them to work in the kitchen, while she, wearing the new white apron and kerchief I had run up for her on my machine, stayed out front passing trays to the guests.

"I never saw so many dressed up white folks in my life, but was they having any fun at our party?" she asked me when Harry and I got back from our wedding trip to the Western Shore. "Late in the evenin' after you and Mr. Wilmer done drove off to Indiantown to catch the Baltimore boat, some of the younger gentlemen—they'd been hangin' round the punch bowl Mr. Ned done brought over from Poplar Grove—"

"The Episcopalian punch!" I laughed.

"They commenced to sing—" she sighed, "That is, if you can call white folks singing, *singing*. It's a shame they is too proud to take lessons from colored folks. We could learn them a few things about enjoyin' themselves and about singing."

* * * *

I was 29 when our first baby arrived in 1884—the same age as my mother when she died. My sister, Nan, would die, aged 35, leaving eight children

behind, the year before my fourth and last child was born.

“And the woman what cooks up to Locust Hill told me that Miz Turpin’s ghost come right in the room where that governess, Miss Boykin, was sleepin’ cryin’ ‘Take care of my baby,’” Joanna told me one evening soon after Nan had been laid to rest, surrounded by all those Turpins in the cemetery at the foot of the Locust Hill garden.

“Joanna, you know I do not want to hear ignorant superstitious talk like that—especially about my only sister,” and I burst into tears, much to my shame. I do not believe in giving way. Perhaps it was because I was carrying Phebe, our youngest, our only daughter.

“That’s all right, Miss Alice. You go on up and rest yourself until dinner. These are hard times for a woman. Nobody talk about it, but us women know we got to walk through the valley of the shadow for nine long months with no way of knowing what goin’ to happen—except pain. Chilren takes from your body, they takes from your mind, and they takes from your time. Mighty lucky for them they is so sweet.”

* * * *

1884, Harry Bond Wilmer, Jr.

1885, Chew Van Bibber Wilmer

1886, Pere Wilmer

A tumble of boys, so close together, they were almost like a litter of puppies. Hungry, wriggling, searching, scrambling, screaming for something to suck on, chew on, gnaw. I felt a kinship with the fresh cows in the barn, as mindless as they, but I could not stand idly in a pasture ruminating. Humans needed to be clothed and cleaned up after—oh, the mountains of washing—the miles of diapers flapping on the clothesline or damp and sagging indoors in bad weather. The flannel bands, the woolen socks. Awakening instantly at the tiny tentative whimpering in the night, I lay praying with more fervor than I have ever prayed in church that it would not grow into a full blown scream. When it did not subside, I would feel a sharp stab of pure hatred as I groped for my bedroom slippers which lasted until I held the warm wet body against mine.

On July 29, 1889, our daughter was born. I named her Phebe Ingersoll after my dear friend from Edgeworth school.

Now the care and education of children absorbed most of my time and attention, and I was grateful that Harry was able to take over the management of the farm.

"Like to wear yourself out the kinda chilren you raising, Miss Alice," Jo teased me once several years later. "You might think they was pure bred Jersey calves you was getting ready to show at the County Fair. So clean, hair brushed, stockings pulled up—and the reading you put them through, me, too—whether we's setting picking crabs or hulling beans—it's that David Copperfield or them King Arthur knights!"

By then, I was running "Eversley Academy for three males and one female." Pere named it that. Each morning as soon as the breakfast things were cleared away, the four pupils would take their places at the dining room table and begin their studies.

On many evenings we gathered around the piano singing from the Methodist Hymnal. Although Emorys are Episcopalian, there is no doubt the Methodist hymns are more rousing. Often Joanna joined us, and at the end of "Throw Out the Lifeline," young Harry's favorite, she'd lead off with "We are Climbing Jacob's Ladder." Joanna's deep alto and Phebe's clear soprano carried the tune, while the boys harmonized in and out, up and down the melody. "You chilren sing near as good as colored folks," Joanna announced with satisfaction. She had been their teacher.

On one level things were going well. The dairy provided us with milk, and we made butter to sell. We raised hogs for their meat and had a few for the market. They were Van's special project. There was a large enough flock of White Leghorns so we had eggs to sell in town, and there was always an old hen no longer laying to provide Sunday dinner. At Christmas and Thanksgiving, our turkeys brought in welcome cash. There was a flourishing peach orchard then—all the farms had peach orchards—it was one of the main cash crops on the Shore. We put up enough vegetables from the garden, fruit from the trees and blackberries from the hedgerows to get us through the winter.

By now, the house was tight and comfortable with a parlor, dining room and office on the ground floor, not to mention Joanna's kitchen with its big range and water pumped right into the sink. What a joy it was not to have to struggle with carrying sloshing pails from the well in the kitchen yard. She was proud of her kingdom and kept it spotless.

Harry and I had a room at the top of the stairs with a handsome cherry bedroom suite. It had a garland of carved wooden roses across the head of the bed and around the mirror of the marble-topped dresser. It was his wedding present to me. Just before young Harry was born, he added a little rocking crib adorned with wooden roses to match.

Phebe had the room behind ours. Jo and I hung up pink-striped wallpaper: her Christmas present, along with a dressing table from Poplar Grove. Its age-clouded mirror swung between two fluted columns that had wooden flames shooting from their tops.

The boy's room was across the hall.

A well run farm, a pleasant home, a loving family, and money worries.

Night after night, Harry and I sat in the office going over bills and farm accounts.

"With prices so low, what we take in simply isn't enough." He would rub his hand across his eyes. It hurt my heart to see him so discouraged.

"I try every way I know to keep expenses down."

"It's the interest on the loans. No sooner do we pay one off than we have to borrow again—money to put in a new crop and the yearly payment to your mother which will hang over us until she dies."

"I feel as if we are too heavy a burden for you to have to bear."

My hand was on the table, clenched like a fist. He laid his hand over it. "Never, my darling girl." My fingers loosened until they lay straight on the table under the warmth of his palm. Married all these years, with three big strapping sons and a lively girl, and still being called his "darling!"

Chapter 8

Hotel Hannover
 Arch. 1875
 Philadelphia, Pa. Dec. 25, 1900

FRANK J. HEWLETT & CO. PROPRIETORS

My darling Alice,
 I suppose you will
 come what surprised
 receive a letter from
 here - I hope you
 my organization but
 yesterday - as I see
 from how you
 it continued
 I hope will
 through matter
 of my salary
 which will

CLARK'S HOTEL AND DRIVING PARK.
 - SYLVESTER CLARK, PROP. -

New City, N. Y. Oct. 9, 1899.

My darling Alice,
 I am still at the Hotel
 small & very dingy - as I helped
 to be home with you today -
 The New R.R. line makes one
 of the coal business and it does
 not arrive until the following morning
 to take business in - and it would
 look as if it would cause at any
 time. I hope it will be done
 tomorrow that I can
 and reach Philadelphia
 as I must go to
 Philadelphia 4 hours
 at my side
 to be a relief
 and that I can

HOTEL NEWTON.
 S. B. JOHNSON, PROPRIETOR.

NEWTON, N. S. Jan 17, 1900.

My darling Alice,
 your lovely Sunday
 letter I received today -
 If I saw you I would of course
 and see your mother - as I
 think it would really do you
 both good - you is a
 I would wish mother & you
 should stay with her as long
 as you can - you know
 I will see you this
 week my home is only
 the 1st of February
 as they you know
 to ask you for
 you know about
 and I will see
 it certainly the

GRIFFIN HOUSE.
 HENRY L. GRIFFIN, PROPRIETOR.

ALL ROOMS
 STEAM
 HEATED.

AND
 ALL MODERN
 APPLIANCES,
 COFFIN
 SINKS,
 TUBS,
 PLEASANT
 SURROUNDING
 SCENES.

FREE BATHS
 ETC.

LOCATED
 ONE BLOCK
 FROM DEPOT
 IN CENTER
 OF VILLAGE.

FREE BUS
 TO AND
 FROM ALL
 TRAINS.

Yonkers, N. Y. "FIRST CLASS LIVERY ATTACHED" - Rate \$2.00 Per Day

Riverhead, Long Island, N. Y.

My darling Alice, Jan 16, 1900
 I did not think
 you last night - for I was
 at a friend's - as I was
 and I was very
 home to look to the
 It is almost
 of business
 Harry Wilmer

1475 Wilmer

IF NOT RELEASED IN TEN DAYS
 RETURN TO
 McCORMICK HARVESTING MACHINE CO.
 L. R. CONROY, General Agent,
 124 MARKET ST., PHILADELPHIA, PA.

APR 8 1900

Mrs. 1475 Wilmer,
 Centerville,
 Queen Anne Co.,
 Maryland

HARRY WILMER'S LETTERS

1935

There are 99 letters, a pack not much bigger and not as heavy as a pound of the butter we used to churn, wrap and sell. My fingers, clumsy and stiff, tugged at the knotted, faded pink tape that bound them. I carried them into the dining room, then as if dealing out a game of solitaire, one by one I spread the envelopes on the table. The two-cent stamps with Washington's profile were still bright pink.

I think of Harry moistening them with his tongue, placing each stamp carefully in the right-hand corner of the envelope, then banging down his fist. The stamps have remained where he put them nearly forty years ago.

*If not delivered in ten days, return to
McCormick Harvesting Machine Co.
S.R. Conroy, General agent
1814 Market St. Philadelphia, Pa.*

New York, Jan 11/1898

My darling Alice,

I write you hurriedly today, and I will drop you a few lines tonight to tell you where to catch me by wire should any of you get sick. I will be at Babylon tomorrow—East Moriches Thursday—Bridgehampton Friday—Riverhead Saturday—you can write me at Riverhead until Saturday, after that Trenton Hotel, N.Y.

*Yours in haste and lovingly
H.B. Wilmer*

Up and down that miserable Long Island, on and off the dirty, unreliable railway cars, sleeping where he could find a bed, calling on farmers in all weathers

I will be driving all the week and I dispise [sic] to drive in rain or snow, but there is no rest for the weary traveller. I long to see you all.

My darling Alice,

I suppose you have commenced to think I have disappeared as I have not written you since Sunday as I have been situated so that it seemed impossible to find the time or the place to write—this minute I have a pen that I can scarcely write with at all

And here the ink has faded out.

I will not be able to reach N.Y. tomorrow in time to catch the train down—as I have an engagement, and it is a very important one or I would come. When a man has charge of a territory as I have it is hard to tell when he can get away, as it seems to me someone is always writing to me to come.

Newton, N.J. Jan 11, 1900

My darling Alice,

I hope to reach New York tomorrow night when I feel sure one of your lovely letters will be waiting for me.

I arrived here at 9 pm. in a driving rain and hail storm. It commenced about three there—and has kept up continuously—so far I feel no bad effects—yet I have made up my mind not to write you a long letter, get to bed and rest—as I had a miserable bed last night.

O that I could be with you all the time where I would have comfort.

Memories come back to me buried like the city of Troy beneath years of ordinary living. Nowadays my heart does not twist with pain if there is no letter in the mailbox at the end of the lane. Now if a crop fails, it is a disappointment, not a tragedy. Illnesses now, have been reduced to my stiffening joints and temperamental digestion, and are no longer unknown terrors lurking beyond the shadows cast by coal oil lamps in a lonely house. Our dear doctor son, Harry, is only a telephone call away. And the debts that hung over us always, the interest payments that were forever due, have long since been paid off.

Two old women rattle around, fussing over an old house. I was born into a world of privilege, Jo into a world of slavery—the conditions changed. We are survivors of the change, links in a chain.

I recall an evening—was it spring '96, '97? Warm enough to sit out on the porch and listen to the peepers singing in the marsh. The children were in bed. I had my mending basket in my lap and Harry a folder of papers, but we had neglected to bring a lamp, so we rocked in dark idleness for a while, not even talking, feeling the peace of the farm sleeping and safe at least for one more day.

"I think they will all be a great comfort to us." His voice was mild.

"Harry's improving in his lessons."

"Let him go on driving. It won't hurt that colt, and it gives the boy a great amount of pleasure and comfort."

"I worry about Van. He simply will not apply himself to his studies."

"Mothers worry about all their children," he laughed. "I don't despair for Van. He is a boy of character, and I'll bet on him making money."

"Without an education?"

"He'll pick up what he needs one way or another. Pere's our scholar. I believe he's ambitious." There was another long pause, and then as I knew he would, he said, "As for our dear little girl, Phebe is always bright in everything." There was another long pause. "We really have the nicest children anywhere. It pays to talk to them as you have done, after all." He stood, stretched and yawned with a nearly lion-like roar.

"That is one of the loveliest compliments I have ever received. Thank you, my dearest husband."

The screen door banged behind us as we went inside. Harry latched it, then blew out the hall lamp, and in the dark we tiptoed up the staircase to our

bedroom. From the first of May when the bugs began battling themselves against the netting at the windows, until frost, we always got ready for bed in the dark. The creak of the springs as we lowered ourselves on to the mattress, the cool feel of the sheets, the sigh of wonder and thankfulness that these hours belonged to no one but ourselves were blessings.

I remember a quite different evening, June of that same year, at the end of the sort of Eastern Shore day one tries to forget when the only bearable moment comes at the breakfast table. Before the plates are cleared away we are engulfed in a miasma of humidity, which we are doomed to drag ourselves through as we try to go about our work. The touch of clothing against the skin is unbearable, which is why I have invented kimonos of the thinnest cloth I can find to wear around the house. The brain has simmered to mush, the butter has melted in its dish, and dispositions have turned sour as the milk before a thunderstorm.

Luncheon was over. The children and I had spent the morning on our knees in the strawberry patch, fighting flies with one hand while picking berries with the other. As a reward, I had sent them down to the river to wade and splash until I rang the big bell which could be heard all over the farm. This afternoon we would sit around the porch table hulling the berries. I had taken *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* from the bookshelf to read aloud and then sat resting for a few minutes in Cousin Troop's chair waving a palm leaf fan before my face, too languid to turn the pages and pick out which tale to read.

I heard the creak of the pump on the kitchen porch, and a few minutes later Harry came in the back way. He'd combed his hair in neat damp ridges like a newly ploughed field. When it dried it would be the color of ripe wheat.

"It's terrible out there today. Like a fool, I walked down to the mailbox." He took a handful of letters out of his hip pocket and tossed them into my lap. In his other hand, he held a copy of the weekly paper. "What do you think of this?" He began to read. I was turning over the letters, bills mostly, except for a nice fat envelope with a Baltimore postmark from Kate Goldsborough. I set it aside to enjoy later.

"The McCormick Harvesting Company offers a Golden Opportunity for an eager, ambitious young man. One of America's largest manufacturers of farm machinery is seeking sales representatives. We are expanding into new territory in the Eastern part of the country. If you have a farming background, are a self

starter, honest, well mannered and hard working, we believe we can offer you the chance of a lifetime. Ample salary, generous commissions, travel expenses paid. Please reply, J. R. Conroy, and the address."

"What do you think?" He sat down across from me, elbows on his knees. "Harry Wilmer, you have the bluest eyes of any man alive, and your tanned farmer's face and sun-reddened neck set them off to a fare-thee-well—I don't know what to think."

"Well," he relaxed back against the sofa cushions. "I can hear those little wheels spinning around in your head from here. I'll just set a while and read the balance of the paper until they've come to some conclusion. It won't take me away from the men too long." He turned back to the front page. All I could see were his broad strong fingers at the edges of the sheet. There was something about his easy attitude that began to irritate me beyond bearing. I burst out.

"I think it is the most foolish nonsense I've ever heard of. You've got your own farm to manage, right here, and it can't do without you—and neither can we."

"Seems like you and Jo did right well on your own, thank you, as I remember being told more than once when we were courting." He laughed.

"Things are different now. We have four children to feed, and clothe—remember Harry, Van, Pere and Phebe?" I teased.

"And educate." His tone was serious, and I was reminded suddenly of Miss Isabel and Father, and the conversations that seemed to go on forever at Poplar Grove about our education.

"I've been studying and studying on it. This farm is a beautiful piece of property, and it means the world to you, having come down from your father, and his father before him and back and back. I appreciate your feelings, having seen Landsdowne go out of the Wilmer family. It near about broke my father's heart when he was forced to declare bankruptcy and sell out."

"Wilmer's heart is too soft, that's what I remember hearing my father say. 'Can't say no to anyone. Let those poor relatives eat him out of house and home.'" The remembered ugly words came out of my mouth uncontrolled.

"He did what he thought was right," Harry said simply. "Those were still the days when if a man had a large handsome house like Landsdowne, set in the middle of a fertile farm, a dairy herd, a yard full of chickens, horses, mules, and some hogs in the pen, he was a rich man. How could Father not make a home for Cousin Tilly, a widow who'd lost her only son at Antietam, and his poor little

Aunt Beattie who wasn't quite right, and others from time to time who were down on their luck? The only thing was, little by little the bank owned it all. A loan of a couple of hundred until the wheat check, a thousand for this, and a little bit more to tide him over until"

"I know, my dearest. The 'until' that never came. I don't know what made me speak in that hateful way to you."

I crossed over and sat next to him, put my hand on his knee. I could feel its heat through the rough cloth of his trousers. I drew away and stood up. It was too hot to be that close to *anyone*.

"You're afraid, as I am, though we've never spoken of it that the same thing could happen to us. I'm sure Mr. Wilmer never mentioned such an impossibility to your dear mother. He never would have wanted to trouble the life she had always lived with the brutal reality of business matters. Miss Isabel on the other hand knew everything that was happening at Poplar Grove, but Father refused to listen. He too wanted to believe things were as they had always been."

Harry rose and faced me. "We don't belong to those old times. We have a different sort of marriage. I count it as one of my greatest blessings having you as my comrade. I would be delighted to stay here at our sweet little home and spend the balance of my life with you, but . . . as things are now and with our children to educate that can not be. We'll talk this through. I must get back to work." As befits a comrade, he touched me lightly on the shoulder and went down the porch steps toward the barn. I stood watching the swing of his shoulders, then went and rang the farm bell summoning the children back to work.

So the talks began again. The ledgers were studied once more. We discussed the pros, then the cons, all our choices seemed equally impossible. But the bills which arrived in each mail, the notices that an interest payment was due on a loan kept up their relentless pressure. I could feel my defenses beginning to crack.

"Who remembers Miss Favisham?" Harry asked one night as we sat around the supper table.

"Is she one of those real old Baltimore ladies, friends of Grandmother Isabel's?" Phebe asked.

"I can't tell one of them from another. Didn't she board at Poplar Grove last summer?" said Van.

"Guess again."

Pere observed his father carefully. "You're trying to trick us, Dad."

His father was studying the large engraving of the Washington family on the porch at Mount Vernon hanging on the opposite wall and trying not to smile. Phebe began to bounce in her chair. "I know, I know!"

He looked at her. "Who was Miss Favisham?"

"In that book—you know the one about Pip? Mother read it when we were hulling beans last summer."

"No, it was when we were picking crabs." said Pere.

"Who remembers what she did?"

"Oh, it was terrible, living all those years in a room full of cobwebs, just sitting there in her old rotting wedding dress. I hated that part. It scared me," said Phebe.

"Nothing to be afraid of. Just a silly old woman," Young Harry declared, "Trying to bring back something that was gone. She should have just got up out of her chair, picked up a broom and swept all that old stuff away."

"She should have lit out and started a new life for herself far away." Van burst out, surprising me.

"But she couldn't, you see. She couldn't just leave all those memories of a time when she was happy?" Phebe argued.

"Why not?" her father asked her. "She certainly wasn't happy when Pip found her."

"She was trapped like the flies in the cobwebs in her room." said Pere.

Was all this for my benefit? I looked at Harry, he was helping himself to a second piece of shortcake. He smiled down the table at me. "My, you and Jo do know how to feed a hungry man."

"Don't any of you remember the name of the book or the author?" I asked in mock exasperation.

"The book was called *Great Expectations*, and the author was that Charles Dickens fella," pronounced Jo as she came in to clear away the dishes.

In the end, Harry wrote to Mr. Conroy, took the train to Philadelphia to be interviewed by him, and after another agonizing week decided to accept the position. There would be a regular salary, \$ 89.00 a month, and a commission on each piece of equipment that he sold. His traveling expenses would be reimbursed by the company upon his submission of an account. The company would only pay for him to come home one weekend a month. The terms seemed very harsh to me.



HARRY BOND WILMER



ALICE EMORY WILMER

"Don't forget, my dearest, even though outwardly we still live like them, we are no longer 'Southern Gentry.' We have joined the working class. I have a boss now from whom I must take orders. Let's hope he's not as cruel a one as Mother Nature has been from time to time, when I was a proud and independent farmer."

"You'll always be proud and independent," I said.

"We'll see, we'll just have to wait and see."

For the children's sake, we tried to make it sound as if Dad was setting forth on an adventure to seek his fortune,

"Like . . . like Dick Whittington and his cat," said Phebe. "Why not take one of the barn cats with you for company, Dad?"

All the train traveling he would be doing sounded exciting to them, but it broke my heart to see him dressed in his Sunday suit, carrying his father's old battered valise, as he swung up into the train at the Centreville depot. For the first time since I'd known him, he seemed vulnerable. He stood on the platform, leaning out waving to us, getting smaller and smaller.

Right from the very beginning there were complications about the money:

New York, 4/8/99

My own darling wife—

I got to see Mr. Conroy at last—and he told me he had sent my salary yesterday which you will receive today—just one day too late for the Wright & McKenney note—which is too provoking for anything.

Did we not agree I was to send you \$25 the 1st? I thought you said \$25 would see you through until you could get my salary. I do despise the system of bookkeeping the McCormick Co. have—for a man can never keep all of his salary intact as it should be . . .

I expect to get back to Riverhead today when I hope to get a letter from you saying you have received my salary all OK.

I would have sent you the \$3.33 but I really have not had the money until the past few days and I really have been afraid to relieve myself of a cent until I get some more

money—which I will get next week. I really seem to have quite a time here recently keeping in money. Conroy would be away from the office or would put off sending it for several days. I do not know which.

I was looking anxiously for the 19th when I expect to reach you. I am so far away from New York now, I think the company would object to paying my expenses home. I am trying to be as careful as possible

I always send in my expense sheet promptly, it is not that keeps my salary back.

I was sorry there was so much delay in getting my salary—it could not be helped as Miss Grove had to leave everything unsettled.

I never met Mr. Conroy, or Miss Grove the company bookkeeper. In my imagination, Mr. Conroy became a stingy, demanding Ebenezer Scrooge, and Miss Grove one of the fluttery, scatterbrained Dickens women, so amusing to read about, but who in real life create irritation and frustration at every turn.

You will get my salary in a day or so. I can not say the exact day but I think it will go out tomorrow.

I only lost last month 5 days, that means \$12 and Mr. Conroy will take out \$12.50.

Harry's departure split my life in two the way his ax could split a chestnut rail. One half of me kept going as it had been, teaching the children, supervising the life of the farm, and overseeing the work of the hired men. They nearly worried me to death, and I read now how I must have passed this along to Harry:

Morristown, N. J. Jan. 9, 1900

My own darling Alice—

. . . I told Pere to see McFarland and them about the trees. I hope old Chance has moved the blades for your comfort. I only wish it had been so I could have remained during January—for I really think it would have done us both good, and this beautiful weather I could have had all the rails mauled if I could have devoted myself to them a full week. I feel greatly relieved that you have the farm in hand—for Harry is large enough to attend to all the thrashing which will be a load off you. He surely is a fine boy. I pray he may continue, if so you will have a great comfort for your diligent work in training him.

I hope the men will make a good job trimming and get through the work—as I know you will be nervous until they finish. I hope Chance will keep on as he has commenced—if so we will have some little comfort in farming—for I can not stand seeing you completely worn out.

I hope the men will make good headway getting rails, by all means have the wood hauled out of the low places. I would rack it up near the road and you could soon get it out, could put on good loads, you would make time.

During the all too rare and always busy times when Harry was home he absolutely forbade any mention of the company, so it was only through his occasional remarks in the letters that I learned anything of his daily life.

Newton, N.J. May 22, 1900

My own darling Alice,

I am again at this miserable noisy place and I fear it will be impossible for me to get away until Saturday. It is getting very hard for me to get off for Sunday—as I am so anxious to get in a large amount of machines—and it is impossible to get agents to work without I keep with them.

I fear I will not get home March 3rd, as I fear Mr. Conroy will be home from Chicago about that time and will have his annual supper. I wished it was over for I dispise [sic] it.

I dispise these holidays in New York, they are like Sundays to me. I wish the old Banquet was abandoned for it is no good in any way that I can see

Feb. 28, 1900

. . . The wind blew here 82 miles per hour from two to three pm. I found it fearful cold Monday and Tuesday, and last night I spent one of the most uncomfortable nights of my life as it was so cold and no fire—had I not had plenty of bed clothes I surely would have gotten up. Of course I can not keep risking my health in the business I am in. I have a nice warm room tonight and I will thaw out.

I will not buy winter underwear now without I can get a bargain as I would not be able to wear it more than 30 days—and we can not have any worse winds than we have had this week

I am keeping very well. Have some little indigestion which is natural when a person is eating all kinds of cooking.

My darling Alice,

It is now 4 pm and I am set to the making out reports on agents. Yet I cannot let a Sunday go by without writing you. This is a very gloomy day—had I not had so much work, could not have helped but have the blues.

How our marriage survived our separation was a question that I often ask myself looking back on it. Several times Harry mentioned a friend called Stubbs, whose marriage evidently did not.

Feb. 11, 1900

Stubbs is in Trenton today—poor fellow I pity him—as he goes along aimlessly. I only wish he could get something that would give him a good salary—as it takes him a lot to live, indeed he does not know the value of money.

Feb. 13, 1900

I had quite a talk with Stubbs—and it seems he has sent his girl to Phila. He went to Trenton Sunday—I suppose to meet her—yet I can not tell a thing about it as I did not ask him—and he was not at all communicative. I guess he will talk it all out to me some other time—poor fellow. I many times pity [sic] him—for he could not give up this woman after being with her so long—indeed he told me today why his wife and he grew apart. It is a sad story. I have said all I ever intend.

Mr. Hazell and I have just returned from a long walk—he said as we came back he supposed our wives were wondering what we were doing—and he would like them to be able to look at our loneliness.

Did we wives half appreciate what those men went through to provide for us and their children, I wonder now? Reading Harry's letters all at once like this, I am struck by his homesickness, his loneliness and his longing for the physical comfort we gave to one another. It is a recurring theme, often hidden amid discussion of more mundane matters. Even he was tempted, as he was honest enough to express in this letter:

While I am what you call a Moral Man—I find infidelity (which is born in man) creeping into my mind to harass me many times. I want each day to learn to appreciate our many blessing—and one of the greatest is having you as my Comrade.

New York, March 24, 1898

My own darling wife,

Your lovely and much appreciated letter I received this morning upon my arrival
am—like yourself more completely drawn to you during and after each visit to you—Which
I am pleased to say I can call home in the full acceptance [sic] of the word. I am glad to hear
you could arrange Jup's note—it is quite sad to know that he has given himself up to drink.

Trenton Hotel, N.Y. April 24, 1898

My own darling Alice,

. . . O that there was a Sunday train running anywhere close to you—for I would
have had the satisfaction of having you in my arms today

I only wish we could all be close together somewhere—I don't care where—for it is a
miserable strain being separated as we all are I am longing to get you in my arms

N.Y. Dec. 22, 1897

My darling Alice,

The time has almost run out for me to take the train which will be a delightful
moment—and more so when I get you in my arms.

Somehow we survived the years, kept just ahead of our debts:

I will send you \$23 tomorrow by registered letter or check—one of the two—that it
may reach you Saturday. I will make out my expense account promptly and request them
to send it to you by the 1st, then you will be able to get through the month. My salary
this month will be \$86.

I am sorry you have to use the heifer money [they had just been sold] as I hoped you would be able to use that on yourself. It seems there is always urgent demands on us.

Enclosed you will find an express order for \$25—I wished I could make it that many hundred

Illness was another of the great shadowy figures that lurked in the corners of our minds: the expenses it could run up and the very real chance of colds, headaches and stomach upsets becoming dangerous. Eversley was seven miles down a dirt road from any medical help. Mostly we relied on common sense, bed rest and a few home remedies.

I am delighted to hear Joanna is so much better. I know you are as good a doctor as I want—and I would give a good deal to have you tonight—as you can imagine how I feel away from you.

I feel very miserable about your health—as that indigestion should be stopped as soon as possible. When I go to a Dr. you will go with me—for I consider I am now in as good health as you are—only that I am more complaining.

It would make us much more miserable to be without my salary—and of course the only thing to do is to stick with it. I am much better now than I have been in months.

The indigestion has departed—yet I feel miserable with my knees tonight—I guess I am extravagant as usual—they do not really pain me—yet there is a stiffness when I get up—and they feel uncomfortable when I am sitting, but it wears off when I move around. I know you suffer much more than I do—for I have noticed your movements when you have been sitting for some time

It is true you are your own boss—but you really do not take as much care of yourself as I do—for something is always driving you—it matters not how much I charge you to be careful.

I am delighted to hear you brought Van out so well. I felt sure you could do it. I think you had better study medicine and stick your shingle out.

Bridgehampton, N.Y. March 14, 1900

My darling Alice,

I worked today until 4 pm. when I became so chilled I had to stop. I feel sure I must have the Grippe—for I ache in every joint I think I can stand it for if it is possible I must make my March salary—that you may have enough to pull you through

I notice here an envelope in a different hand postmarked Baltimore. It was from my stepmother, Miss Isabel:

I cannot tell you, dear Alice, how much I appreciate your anxiety for me. I shall be delighted to have your society on Monday for as long as you can stay. I now go out every day, (except such weather as today). Should there be a threatening of a freeze I will consider the visit only postponed to more propitious weather. The Van Bibber girls have been very attentive to me—all my friends. I think a week's companionship will do me good, & one of rest will benefit you. Alice Turpin [my dear sister Anna's child] may spend a night with me on her way to N. Carolina but that will not interfere with you, as I can take her into my bed for a night. It is all uncertain. I am sure the children will be all right. The boys have improved so much. Love to them & Phoebe [sic]. I want to have this mailed at once. So goodbye. Hoping to see you Monday.

Yr. loving Mother

(Mrs. John Emory)

I knew it was my duty to make the trip, and although the arrangements to get away were tedious, I felt they were in a good cause, and I must confess I needed a change of scenery.

New York, Jan 28, 1900

My darling Alice,

... I think you made a very wise decision not going over on the Gratitude [steamboat] Friday—for it blew a gale—and there was thick ice—that is enough to stop a boat.

I am delighted to hear you had such a pleasant visit—and have seen so many of your old friends—for it will take you out of your monotonous life—and you could not but enjoy your mother. You should have spent more money than \$1.50. I fear you walked everywhere.

Though it had been several years since I had seen my stepmother, we had corresponded regularly. Her handwriting seemed as strong as ever. News of friends, her Baltimore doings and many astute observations on the affairs of the day both domestic and foreign filled her letters. Complaints of illness were reduced to a sentence scribbled in the margin.

It was therefore a shock when in answer to my knock, the door of her house on Charles street was opened by a tiny old woman, nearly hunchbacked.

"Come in, my dear, out of the cold," she said in Miss Isabel's voice. "The trip across the Bay must have been wild. Come in by the fire and thaw out."

An ornate iron stove, with an isinglass window through which you could see the flames, dominated the tiny parlor, and the room seemed to throb with heat. Even when I had shed my outer things, I found the atmosphere stifling.

"Would you like me to put on another log?" she asked. Her voice seemed almost as hesitant as a young girl's.

"Thank you, no. I'm quite comfortable," I lied.

"Alice, dear girl, you are looking splendidly. I want to hear about everything. First tell me all about the children."

I had hardly begun when the doorbell rang. She began to struggle out of her chair.

"That will be the girls,"

"I'll let them in, don't you move."

The Van Bibber twins, Miss Lily and Miss Bessie, I was never sure which was which, stood on the doorstep. Their cheeks and noses rosy with the cold. There were hugs and kisses all round. Hats were unpinned, scarves unwound, coats unbuttoned and overshoes unbuckled amid a great chatter. By the time we were ready to enter the parlor, we found it empty.

"Oh, she's naughty," cried one V.B.

"I'm coming to help you, Miss Isabel. You shouldn't be carrying that heavy tray," said the other V.B. I started to follow but was restrained, "There's not room in her kitchen for more than two."

We seated ourselves and in a moment Miss Lily, or else Miss Bessie, appeared carrying an enormous tea tray, upon which sat what I always thought of as the "Western Shore" silver service. Miss Isabel had brought it to Poplar Grove as a bride and carried it away as a widow. She must have spent all week polishing it. The hostess appeared holding a round silver tray carefully in both hands, with a circle of her own special sugar cookies resting on a crocheted doily.

With appropriate murmurs that she shouldn't have gone to all that trouble, we tucked into our tea, and the cookies disappeared as quickly as if we'd been girls in our teens. Idle chatter with women is a luxury for me. It flows along amiably going where it will. Each participant has her say when she feels inclined. There are interruptions and laughter, and ideas bubble over the way peaches do when you're making jam. When I talk with children, I am teaching, explaining, correcting. Talk with men always seems to be about something and one assumes an air of respectful listening—that is, after courting days are through.

During my visit, I did what I could to help Miss Isabel, but she was determined to maintain her independence. I found that reading aloud was what would keep her sitting in her chair, though the pale fingers with their knobby joints were busy crocheting yet another lacy covering for a horizontal surface. What a waste of thread, I couldn't help thinking. Thread costs money. It should be used to hold pieces of cloth together—an apron, a boy's shirt, a child's dress, underdrawers and the "best" nightgown I had brought with me.

When the weather moderated, we paid a few calls and went to church on Sunday. I could feel the restfulness of such a quiet, well-ordered life soaking into my bones and doing me good. But as the week went by I began to feel restless. All this comfort was beginning to cloy like too much thick Jersey cream poured

on a baked custard made from rich Jersey milk and six eggs.

As we sat in the parlor the night before my departure, Miss Isabel suddenly spoke. "I'm glad I did it."

"Did what?" I asked

"Finally said yes when your father asked me to marry him. We were neither of us in love with one another though neither of us ever admitted it. Your poor young mother was his first and only love, though by the time he proposed to me he had acquired quite a reputation as a ladies man, as well as one who overindulged too heavily in spirits from time to time."

"Why on earth then? I cannot imagine living on terms of . . . of intimacy with a man I did not love."

"Count yourself among the blessed, my child," she reached out and laid her hand on mine. The contrast was like setting porcelain tea cup on a crockery saucer.

"Gambling is an Emory weakness, and it ran in both of our bloods. He needed someone to run his household and raise his children."

"But you—I have often wondered what made you give up your comfortable life in the city?"

"Your father could be very charming when he wanted to be, and he was good looking. He would give me and several other ladies quite a dash when he'd come over from the Shore on business. I enjoyed the attention. He had a reputation as a man about town. I only had the reputation of an old maid. I couldn't have been more surprised when he proposed."

"I can't imagine Father as a suitor."

"I don't think any child can think of a parent in that role, but he was a first rate one, though he didn't manage to capture my heart. So I turned him down."

"But . . . ?"

"Instead of taking his refusal like a gentleman and leaving, he got angry. He roared, 'Do you really want to spend the rest of your life being a proper Baltimorean, paying calls on the equally proper friends you've known since school, drinking tea, and doing good works? Never getting mud on your shoes? Do you really want to wear gloves for the rest of your life every time you step out of the house?'"

"'You're just afraid,' he taunted me, 'to break out of your little circle all of whom are in the Blue Book. Come over to the Shore with me. Come live at Poplar Grove where there's room to turn around. The house and the farm are your Emory heritage, too, you know. Don't waste your charity on orphans you don't know in some home you will never see. I can supply you with a lively batch of

them, colts and fillies, who could use some breaking in."

"So I began to think of it as an adventure, instead of a proposal and eventually accepted his challenge."

"My idea of adventure would be getting away from the Shore. I'd like to climb a Scottish mountain or tramp the Yorkshire moors. Explore London."

"Those English novels you always had your head in!" she teased.

"So was it an adventure? It seems to me you had a great deal to put up with. Penury, Father's weakness, and all of us, not to mention the work you had to do to keep the old place rattling along."

"There was always something that had to be fixed up or propped up, depending on whether there was any money. You can't imagine, child, what a relief it is to live in cozy little house like this one and not own it! If anything goes wrong, I send for the landlord."

"As you well know, we still are carrying on the Emory tradition of constant repairs to keep a roof over our heads. I thank my lucky stars that I drew Eversley as my lot and not Poplar Grove."

"It must be a fearful struggle for Ned and Etta, poor dears. Well, I did my part, now it is time for your generation to bear the burden." She began to nod, and very soon we bid one another goodnight and went to bed.

That visit was the last time I saw Miss Isabel. She died the following June. I am ashamed to confess that my first thought was that we were relieved of the duty of those annual payments—her widow's mite. I was touched by Harry's sorrow.

New York, June 12, 1900

My darling Alice,

I just this minute received your Sunday's letter, and it distresses me to hear of your dear Mother's death—and had I known of her death in time I would surely have gone to Balto and shown her the last tribute of respect in this life . . . Indeed I can not write much about how I feel—for it takes me back to the death of my dear Mother—and it makes my heart ache . . . I longed to be with you when your Mother was buried.

I should not be low spirited I suppose—But I really never have been able to fully

rally since dear Mama's death, and my general health is nothing—and of course that makes me feel I am standing on dangerous ground.

I know I have your sympathy in a way—but I fully know you do not understand why I should be depressed when I have a family of my own. Yet the mother that nursed me into life was near and dear to me—yet she did not make me love you and the children less.

I love you for loving my sisters—as they have a claim of affection upon me—and I am always ready and willing to give them a word of affection that may be a little help in their pathway through life. I do not think that I have ever shown you a lack of love, and there is no one that could influence me from my wife and children—if they had that desire, but my sisters are free from that.

At the age of 45 I had become an orphan again.

It had been many years since I had read through these love letters. That is what they are, though so many of them deal with business matters and train schedules. I am ashamed at how I seem to have been continually hounding him for money. I had forgotten how desperate things were during those years.

Did I realize then what an exceptional man I had married? I was in love with him. I think my sentiments and indeed my passions can be inferred through the fading ink of his words. But what does it mean to be "in love"?

Now, in my eighties I hear sentimental trashy songs "crooned" on the radio about being "in love." In my opinion, what they are singing about, if you can call such whinings singing, is merely a symptom of an adolescent affliction like a bad complexion. Just the other day Phebe telephoned to tell me her oldest boy has fallen "in love" with a young thing he met in Maine this summer. No doubt he'll soon outgrow it.

Loving, that is an altogether different matter. Harry always signed himself, "Your loving husband," and that is what he was. His loving was in long hours spent on trains, by letters written in hotel bedrooms, bone tired from the day's labors. His loving was sending the money he worked so hard to earn, directly to me, keeping but a pittance for himself. His loving was advice about farm matters:

If I were you I would not attempt to mend the washes until the very last thing before

plowing . . . as there will be some heavy rains and should you just begin and one of them was to come it would wash all out.

His loving was an abiding interest in the children, a gentlemanly graciousness in manner and in speech. Loving was also his faithfulness to our marriage vows, as well as in the all too few treasured moments of pleasure we had to ourselves—perhaps our greatest comfort of all.

I wonder what my replies to his letters would read like now? Were they really a “great comfort” as he keeps repeating? Or were they full of complaints of how hard I was working? Was I always begging for more money than he was able to send me? Did I only share my worries over the children’s health and not write him of the small joys I experienced daily.

I still experience these joys as I look across a newly ploughed field or see the hedgerows neatly trimmed. A coat of new white wash on a shed, the purring sound hens make on their nests, the river a singing blue and the air like wine in a Northwest clear-up bring me untold delight. I love the smell of honeysuckle, miserable destructive pest though it is. When the spring air sings with the gentle fragrance of the lilac hedge Phebe planted, the flowers heavy as grape clusters, I am intoxicated.

Though I have tried to work this land in a loving way, I am also “in love” with it. Eversley is my adolescent affliction, one I have never outgrown.

Chapter 9



THE STEVENS SCHOOL, GERMANTOWN, PHILADELPHIA

1899-1902

Left with the farm and the children to manage, I thanked the stars for Joanna, over and over again. I believe she loved my children as much as I did, and sometimes I suspect they loved "Ma" more than they did Mother. When they called her—"Maa!"—I thought of lambs bleating. I was always pushing them, to improve their minds, not to waste the precious minutes, to study harder, to make something of themselves and to help me make something of the farm.

Poverty, even the genteel poverty which afflicted us and our acquaintances, is a great leveler, but that is no reason to permit it to become increasingly less genteel. There is no excuse for uncouth, uncivilized behavior. I remember to this day one young fellow who had his face nearly in the soup as he spooned it noisily into his mouth. Another, an Emory cousin, a grown man who surely should have known better, licked his finger after removing a drop of cream from the pitcher's lip. Most unforgivable of all—some of these *relatives seemed to be forgetting how to speak the English language correctly!* The language of the King James Bible, Shakespeare, Sir Walter Scott, and Charles Kingsley was becoming soft and entangled with the colloquialisms of "The Land of It'll Do." Slurred consonants and vowel sounds twine around the proper pronunciation of words, choking and distorting them the way honeysuckle twists and deforms the growth of a shrub. Dialect was creeping into the children's speech. Some visitors found it charming. I found it sloppy.

Many of their young cousins were growing up wild, untended, becoming part of the fecund, untidy countryside that surrounds us here on the Shore, where, if you don't pull out a honeysuckle shoot the moment you see it, never mind how sweet the blossoms smell, you'll soon find it smothering everything.

Perhaps I should have said their parents were *allowing* them to become this way.

Harry and I had determined that our children would receive the very best educations they could absorb. They would be able to hold their heads up anywhere. They must not settle complacently for being *Emorys of Poplar Grove* or *Wilmers of the lost Landsdowne*. They must be taught that the world does not end at the boundary lines of Queen Anne's County, the banks of the Chesapeake Bay, nor for that matter at the shores of the Atlantic Ocean.

But life at Eversley was not all grim duty. Music was one of our delights. Phebe was the only one who learned to play the piano well enough to master some of my Beethoven *Bagatelles*, but all the children became proficient at sight-reading, and as they all had pleasing voices, their singing was a delight. Phebe studied voice seriously for a few years after we moved to the house in Germantown in Philadelphia.

I remember one evening—Phebe might have been about ten—when we were sitting around the piano singing hymns as we did on Sundays.

*Throw out the lifelines,
Throw out the lifelines
Someone is sinking tonight —*

"Can't you just see it?" Harry interrupted. "The sky black, a squall blowing up quick and fierce."

"Quickly, fiercely," I interjected.

"The wind gusting before they had a chance to reef. Then she's knocked over nearly flat, green water pouring into the cockpit, and some poor sucker is washed over the side. His boots begin filling up with water and down he's going, and then his Captain throws a line right to him."

"Hope he remembered to put a loop in it," said Pere.

"Well, of course, he would if he was God." Phebe sounded indignant.

"What's God got to do with it?"

"Every song in the hymnal has something to do with God," she answered.

"I'll bet you a nickel I can find one that hasn't." Van reached in his pocket

"Take you up on it," said Harry.

"Boys—betting on a Sunday!" I admonished, but I was amused. By then Phebe had handed each of her brothers a hymnal, and they were all sitting cross-legged on the floor flipping the pages, humming the opening lines, then turning in disgust to the next page.

Suddenly Phebe closed her book and begin to sing in a clear, true voice,

*Now the day is over
Night is drawing nigh
Shadows of the evening
Steal across the sky.*

"There!"

From his corner Pere began:

*Jesus give the weary
Calm and sweet repose
With Thy tenderest blessing
May our eyelids close.*

"Oh, Pooh, I always forget that verse," said Phebe.

I turned to the piano and began to sing and play:

*Grant to little children
visions bright of Thee*

Harry and Van boomed out, harmonizing:

*Guard the sailors tossing
On the bright blue sea*

"Probably the same fellows from the other hymn."

"I knows one," said Jo, who had crept into the room and seated herself in her favorite straight-backed chair near the door. She began in her rich deep contralto:

*I'm going to lay down my sword and shield
Down by the riverside—
Down by the riverside—*

We joined in and sang it all the way through.

Ain't going to study war no more.

When the spiritual ended Van crossed over to Ma and handed her the 5-cent piece. "Why, thank you , honey. I'll put this in the plate Sunday, out to Mt. Zion. Won't tell the preacher, I won it gambling."

Later, as the children got older I encouraged them to invite their friends to dancing parties. We'd roll back the carpet in the parlor if it was winter or in summer, push back the porch rockers. I'd play the piano. At the end of the evening, Jo would bring in lemonade and some of her famous sugar cookies.

And then of course there was always the river, the Chester, "our" river, curling like a big letter J from where it leaves the Bay at Love Point to where it disappears into the swamps beyond Crumpton. Water attracts children the way a new crop of peas attracts crows.

At first paddling along its marshy edge, swimming and catching crabs in their nets was sufficient, but it wasn't long before the boys fell in love with boats. They resurrected an old wreck rotting in the marsh, which sank almost as soon as it was launched. Undaunted they began to save for another, better boat. Though the ones they could afford ended up being more trouble to keep afloat than they were worth, finally, with thanks to their father's generosity, the Wilmer family acquired a bateau named the *Eleanora*.

The *Eleanora* increased their range. Every inlet and creek must be explored, friends must be invited to share these adventures. Sailing picnics, moonlight sails, overnight camping cruises were the thing. There was a memorable occasion when they persuaded Harry, myself and Joanna out on their boat. There are, tucked away somewhere, photographs to prove it, Harry in a white Panama hat, Ma, her head tied up in a kerchief, and me in an old straw with a veil. Sometime after that, a Chesapeake log canoe, *Reba Main*, joined the Eversley fleet.

It was not lost on my friends in Baltimore and Annapolis that hidden away on a remote farm in Queen Anne's County, across the Bay, were three of the handsomest, most charming and well-mannered young men to be found; the answer to a hostess's prayer. Invitations began to crowd the mailbox at the end of the lane.

A call would go out for clean shirts, valises would be packed and off they'd go to the wharf at Indiantown, and run up the flag to catch the next Bay steamboat. Soon Phebe was grown up enough to be included on these expeditions. Then it was Eversley's turn to repay the hospitality. From that time on, I began to feel Jo and I were running a boarding house, and we still are to this day.

I had brought it on myself. It had been one of my goals to have my children able to mingle comfortably with their Baltimore cousins and with my close city friends like the Van Bibbers and dearest Kate Goldsborough, whose daughter Margaret we so hoped would catch the eye of one of my boys. Alas, it was not to be. Many of the young people the children met during those carefree years

remained friends for life. I knew that it was not possible to tell our children *whom* to marry, but it was within my power to see that they knew young people of the sort one hoped they *might* marry.

Harry was the first child to leave the nest when he went off to St. John's College in Annapolis. It was a terrible wrench for the whole family to see him go, and hard for him too.

I still have his first letters home. Written in pencil, the penmanship careful, the capital letters done with flourishes, the punctuation erratic, the spelling not quite up to snuff, but how I treasured them.

St John's College

March 31, 1896

My own Dear Mother:

I am just dieing [sic] to see you. Since I have thought over it I do want to spend the Easter with you so badly I thought of coming home Saturday what do you think of it? We get a little homesick at night. It is so hot in town here. I saw Wilmer last night he has on long pants. My eyes are beginning to hurt me now.

St. John's College

October 20, 1898

My darling Dad:

I received your lovely letter yesterday and am ashamed I have not answered it sooner, but I have been so busy. I have been having a mighty nice time I can tell you, I have not gotten one demerit yet and I have not been kept in for missing any lessons and I think I am doing very well to see some of the boys around here the way they are being kept in.

I hope you will come to Baltimore because I have got so much to tell you of my experiences. I am trying to take every advantage I can of the money that you and darling Mother are spending for me, and if it is in my power and God gives me strength to do it I will repay it in being what you want.

St. John's College
January 30, 1899

My own darling Mother—

I received all of your nice letters and that composition of Phebe's was fine. I read it to Ted and he thought it was fine for a small girl her age— [Phebe was ten years old at the time] but you must remember that she has the head of a grown-up woman.

There is going to be a hop next Monday. It is a uniform affair. Who do you think I am going to take? I am going to take Miss Katherine Hodges Johnny's oldest sister. She is about 19 or 20. What do you think of your old boy going to a hop it was quite a surprise to me when Miss Handy asked us.

Miss Hodges must have been very hard up for a "beau." I suppose the hostess arranged it.

Harry was a conscientious student, attending special lectures at the Naval Academy, to which the battalion marched en masse. He had severe eye strain and headaches which made it impossible to study after dark. He made countless friends which he would bring home with him as often as they could manage to get time off. You can imagine the delight and pride our whole family took when at the end of his schooling at St. John's, Harry won a scholarship to the University of Pennsylvania Medical School.

Pere was promised an appointment to the Naval Academy if he could pass the entrance examinations. Two out of my three boys' educational futures assured, I was beginning to breath more easily.

It was a cold morning in September 1899. I'll never forget if I live to be a hundred. Pere suddenly appeared at my side at the breakfast table and handed me a letter.

Dearest, darling Mother:

By the time you receive this I will be on my way to Baltimore. Do not worry about me. I have been saving up and have enough money to keep me until I can find work. I would like to work on a cattle ranch way out in Montana, if I can get that far. There's always someone looking for a strong farm boy who can put in a good day's work and

knows enough to take his cap off in the house and say 'Yes Ma'am and Nossir,' just the way you've taught us.

My letter to Dad is all written and I'll mail it in Baltimore. Dad will understand. After all he had to leave the farm in order to make a living. Any wages I can send home will be welcome, I'm sure.

Please don't worry about me. I'll write when I find a place.

Your loving son,

Van B. Wilmer

"Heading West to seek his fortune—fourteen years old!" My voice was shaking as I held the letter out in front of Joanna. Phebe began to cry.

"He'll make out just fine, Mother," said Pere in his soothing voice. "Hey, Shug, come on down and clean out the hen house with me. I sure could use a helper." Phebe, flattered, dried her tears. It was the sight of their two sturdy little backs trudging toward the barn, that made my tears spill over and run down my cheeks.

"He's left me, run away. Oh, Joanna, what have I done wrong?" I wept. "I have worked so hard to make a good life for them."

Joanna looked at me coldly. It was one of the few time she'd ever seen me give way. "You ain't done nothing wrong."

"But why? Why? After all I've tried to do for him—for all of them?"

"You ever study them fishhawks got a nest on one of them tall pilings out in the river? From the minutes they eggs is laid, old momma and poppa bird don't never let them out their sight. When they hatch, one is always on the nest and the other one catching fish. Never rests till he got a big shiny, wiggling fish in his claws for dinner. Then one day one of them little birds stands up on his two feet, flaps his little wings, keeps at it, and before you know it, he fly away. The time done come." She turned and carried the empty cereal dishes out to the pantry.

It nearly killed me. Now I am able to say, "Well, bless him, the spunky little fellow." He found work on railroads and on cattle ranches, and every now and then would send some money home or ask for some to be sent to him. We kept in touch, and I took pride in his spirit of independence, though I never ceased to worry as to how he would be able to make out in the long run without a college education. In later years, from time to time he would come home and work on the farm for me, but he had acquired a restless foot and would soon set off again.

It was several years after this that we made the decision to close the Eversley house during the winter months and rent a house in Germantown, a pleasant town at the edge of Philadelphia. It became a place where Harry could come to get away from the press of his studies at medical school. The location also meant his father did not have so far to travel to see us.

Her father and I had decided Phebe must not be denied the educational opportunities offered to the boys and applied to the Stevens School in Germantown, which had an excellent reputation. We were fortunate that Dr. Dripps, the headmaster, recognized in our youngest, the same qualities we did, and admitted her to Stevens.

It was arranged that in exchange for Phebe's tuition, I would take a position without pay at the school, teaching music and French conversation to the girls, and acting as House mother and chaperone to them.

Having been "monarch of all I surveyed" for so long, I found the school and its regulations confining. Worst of all, before I had a clear understanding of my duties, I found myself virtually in charge. I wrote to Harry who was down at Eversley recovering from a severe sick spell and making arrangements with a tenant to oversee things during the winter.

211 W. Chelton Ave.
Germantown, Philadelphia
February 7th, 1902

My dearest Harry

I have not heard one line from you since last Monday and I am most uneasy. It makes me feel so unsettled when so long a time passes and I do not hear, besides I have been in such a complicated position here that I need to grasp hold of the greatest comfort I have, which is you.

I am just imagining you sick at home with Jo in attendance and not myself. I have been in such a whirl and not having heard from you I don't know what I have told you and what not.

The operation was performed yesterday. Dr. Dripps telephoned last night that it had been of the most serious nature but successful and the Doctors had every hope that she would recover—but of course Harry that means a long time for me here—perhaps a month unless some other arrangement is made. I am only too thankful to be able in a small measure to repay the dear good lady for her great kindness to Phebe, for you can hardly realize what a Mother she is to her—and you must be proud when you realize that

there is not one point in which our little maid has not come up to the mark.—Dr. Dripps will be home in a day or two and then we may know something definite as to the time to be looked forward to.

Do write to me. I feel like crying as each mail comes in and nothing from you—Now dear boy write me please.

Try, if you come to Phila., to come here after nine o'clock p.m. as I read to the girls from 7:30 to 9—but of course, if you can't arrange that—any time in the day will do, or I mean come between those hours—as I can easily give up the reading if necessary—To tell the truth they are an ill conditioned lot of characters. I hope you will come to Phila—a talk with you would do more for me than anything else to settle my nerves and make me feel I am not floating in an uncertain sort of atmosphere.

You can imagine that the suddenness of it all has made things difficult—and if I had had a couple of days here with Mrs. Dripps to take my bearings I would have been more confident about the work.—Now dearest boy take care of the farm for me and know that I can attend to the notes and finances when I get your check—I have not received your check yet but I am sending today the \$40 from Middleton's note which I had reserved for Delun so I can meet notes due now and hoping I will get yours by the 14th when I will have to send Delun money.

Well I have to keep my eyes and ears too wide open to write any more. Give my best love to Jo and tell her I am sleeping with Phebe but the truth is I do not see much more of her than I do of the rest—but I will tomorrow and Sunday and I hope I will soon settle down to a normal condition.

Devotedly yours
Alice

I suppose the operation is without doubt a cancer.

211 W. Chelton
Germantown, Philadelphia
February 21, 1902

My darling Harry

Could you not make it up here some Saturday night late and spend Sunday afternoon or perhaps get to Wilmington Saturday and come out here on a Sunday train? But you know best. I am at leisure all Sunday afternoon and we could easily avoid Bible class for there is plenty of room in the house —Mr. Harry.

About the calves—Old Miller is hard to deal with and you can do just as well with Ferguson in fact, and more satisfactory. I calculated they would be at their best by March 1st—6 weeks. They came middle of Jan. but I want you to be the judge of course of price. I want to get all I can as I am depending on them for Harry's board. Let me know when you deposit the money. I am reduced to 2.00 since I have to take Phebe in town to get a pair of shoes as I returned the ones bought at Christmas to Slesinger—

The Postman will soon be here, goodbye, write when you can, but don't make it a burden when you are inconveniently situated. Try to write me all about the new agent. I could have met you in town and spent time after dinner today if I could have been sure you would get to Broad St. Station early enough to make it worth while—

Lovingly always, Alice

Seeing Phebe enjoying her studies and developing friendships with the girls, more than compensated for any homesickness I had for the Shore and for Eversley. I also enjoyed my association with the faculty of Stevens school—cultivated, scholarly women. Another great joy was the opportunity to attend concerts of the Philadelphia orchestra, as chaperone to the girls. All I had known of orchestral music until then were the scratchy noises issuing from the gramophone's horn.

I suppose it was the years I had spent more or less culturally marooned on a riverbank in the "Land of It'll Do," as well as my constant state of penury that made me find the complacency of many of the Stevens students disturbing. These girls accepted the opportunities offered by the school as no more than their God-given right. They taxed their brains only enough to be able to get a passing mark on the examinations and spent their free time gossiping or pouring over magazines which displayed the latest fashions. What they truly enjoyed about the trips the school arranged to Philadelphia for concerts, museums and theatres was the chance to indulge in an ice cream soda afterwards at the new very elegant soda fountain on Chestnut Street. Stevens taught me that frivolity and idleness were not the exclusive province of the offspring of defeated and dispossessed Southern gentry.

Chapter 10



Phebe Ingersoll Wilmer

1907-1914

I

Phebe was often able to get permission from Stevens School to have Sunday dinner with us at the Greene Street house. One morning during her senior year, she brought home a message she'd found in her mailbox from the school secretary.

Miss Phebe Ingersoll Wilmer

Will you please present yourself at Dr. Dripps office at one-thirty p.m. this coming Tuesday.

"I've never had a summons to the 'great man's' inner sanctum. Have I broken some rule?" She wondered.

"Well, have you?" I asked.

"Not that I know of. Of course, I did wander around in the graveyard with Herbert Welsh after church last Sunday. Only for a few minutes before we had to line up for the walk back to school."

"Speaking to boys, when not under the eagle eye of one of the school chaperones, like me, is a Stevens taboo."

Having grown up with three brothers and their friends, Phebe could never understand why the girls were always being warned to beware of boys. They seemed like ordinary human beings to her, I'm thankful to say. Her brothers teased her unmercifully, and the ones who weren't brothers tended to get mushy from time to time, she confessed to me once, "But I've never found it hard to break them of that habit," she said nonchalantly.

"My heart was galloping in my chest," she told us describing the interview, the following week.

"Dr. Dripps didn't say a word, just waved me to a chair. There was no sound in the room except the wall clock which ticked 'Tut-tut' disapprovingly.

"'Well, well-well.' He looked up from a folder he'd been studying. 'This contains the examination results and reports on your work during your years here at Stevens.' He laid his hand on it possessively. 'I find it commendable. In fact, it has been unanimously recommended by your teachers that you sit for the entrance examinations to Bryn Mawr College.'

"'Me? College?'

"'You sound surprised. Surely you must have been aware all these years that you were doing excellent work?'

"'But college is something I never even imagined for myself.'"

"'Start imagining it now,' he said, then he handed me a letter addressed to you and Dad.

"'This contains my official recommendation. And let me offer my sincerest congratulations, Phebe. It has been a pleasure to have you as a student at Stevens. We will miss you.'

"He rose to his feet, reached over and shook my hand. I've been in a daze ever since."

Stevens made a great fuss over graduation. It was a tradition for the seniors to wear white dresses they had made themselves in sewing class. It was a project which took the whole year and was designed to teach the girls everything about dressmaking from cutting out a pattern, to making buttonholes and setting in sleeves. It was a breeze for Phebe as I had had her sewing ever since her feet could reach the pedals of the Wheeler and Wilson. Her dress had been finished by November—in fact, she wore it disguised by a red ribbon sash to a Christmas party. But some of the other girls had never so much as threaded a needle, and each class was torture for them. Phebe helped them as much as she dared. Annabelle Parkhurst, one of the New York girls, offered to pay her to finish her dress for her.

"I turned her down, Mother," she told me later, "though I would have loved to have had the money, because I thought it wouldn't be honest. Making the dress was supposed to be teaching her how to sew and she wouldn't learn if I did it for her.

“But I’ll never sew another stitch after I get out of here,” she pouted, she was really put out,” Phebe went on. “The maid does the mending, and Mother’s clever little seamstress down on 14th Street will make my dresses. Of course, if I marry a man who’s rich enough, he’ll take me to Paris for my clothes. Come on, Phebe, be a sport. Look here’s the ten dollars.’

“That tenner did look lovely, but I just laughed, and said ‘*Oo-la-la, comme tu sera elegante,*’ rolling my ‘R’s’ the way you taught us, Mother.”

“Thanks to Mlle. Gillette.”

I must say Annabelle looked a perfect fright in the graduation march, her bodice seams were all lumpy, and part of the dust ruffle came off the skirt and trailed behind her. I felt badly, in a way, that my dear honest child hadn’t helped her out.

We had a party to celebrate the great occasion at the Greene Street house. Phebe invited special friends from Stevens. Harry brought out some fellow students from medical school, and it ended up as the parties did down at Eversley with my playing the piano for dancing, and singing.

It wasn’t until the following morning that her father and I had a chance to sit down with our girl to discuss Dr. Dripp’s letter. We were as overcome as Phebe had been. After our congratulations, Dad was the first to speak.

“Our Shug, a college girl. I never would have thought of such a thing! But you’re too pretty, honey, to be one of those Bluestockings.” Harry smiled at her.

“Come, Dad, you’re not so old fashioned as to have swallowed that old myth,” Phebe retorted.

“There was a theory current when I was at Edgeworth,” I said, “that too much learning would render young women unfit to be wives and mothers. Of course, Miss Edgeworth had nothing but contempt for that notion. But she was only referring to a high school education. Whether or not she would have approved of college, I don’t know.”

“Look at your mother. She never went to college.” Harry got up and began to walk back and forth between the piano and the davenport, a sure sign he was agitated. “Yet she reads everything she can get her hands on. She manages the farm, keeps its records. Has been a school teacher to you children, as well as a nurse to us all when we’re sick. She plays the piano, and enjoys high-brow

concerts when she can get to them. She can hitch up a horse, climb in the buggy and drive out to oversee the threshing with as sharp an eye as any man. (Though I've never seen an overseer yet with a parasol and wearing gloves.) She can chop the head off a chicken in the morning and run up a new party dress for you in the afternoon . . . besides being the best looking woman I know."

"Thank the parasol and gloves for that." He put his hand on my shoulder. I reached up and covered it with mine. "Now, my dear old boy, Let's hear what our girl has to say on the subject."

Phebe spoke slowly. "I don't honestly know. All my thoughts have been concentrated on passing the final exams and graduating, that is when I wasn't being silly and thinking about parties and beaux."

"Well, I'm relieved to hear it," Harry said. "That's what a young girl should be thinking about."

"But," she went on, "I'd like to take the exams just to see whether I could pass them."

So it was agreed, and Dr. Dripps made the arrangements. She spent the ensuing weeks studying whenever she could find the time. June is not a good month for study. The world outside the windows calls. There were roses to pick, weeds to pull, peas to shell. Invitations crowded our mailbox. June is known as the "little season" in Philadelphia. There were dances nearly every night, luncheons and teas in the afternoons in honor of girls who would be making their debuts that winter. Phebe wasn't one of them, of course, but many were friends and classmates and she was invited to nearly everything.

"I'm a Cinderella whose sisters are neither cruel nor ugly," she joked to me once, "and they want to share with me the whirl they are enjoying. Your sewing machine is the magic wand."

"And how we've made it hum," I added.

Phebe sat for the exams in the great Gothic hall at the college, after having walked from Bryn Mawr station after a complicated train journey which involved going into the city and changing to the Main Line of the P&W (Poor and Wiggly).

Weeks later the letter announcing she had passed the entrance exams arrived:

We are pleased to announce that Miss Phebe Ingersoll Wilmer is accepted at Bryn Mawr College beginning in the fall term.

Although her marks on the examination were commendable, they were not at a level high enough to make it possible for us to offer her a scholarship.

Therefore

Were all of us in a quandary—to rejoice or to repine.

I spent long hours in the farm office at Eversley, covering sheets of lined paper with columns of figures. When I was in Germantown, I had long talks with Harry or with his father on the weekends he was able to come home.

Phebe must have known she was the subject of our discussions, though none of us said anything to her. I wonder why? Perhaps we felt the conclusions we were being forced to come to would hurt and disappoint her, and we could not bear to face that.

Finally one morning, I summoned her to my room in the Germantown house.

“Close the door, dear.”

Phebe laughed. “That’s signal that one of ‘Mother’s talks’ is to follow.” She yawned. She had been to a dance the night before with Harry and Sandy Randall, a fellow medical student. I was sure she longed to be back in bed, but nobody slept late in our house unless they were sick.

I handed her a basket of stockings to mend. She searched for a needle and pulled a thread as nearly matching as she could find from the flat skein, dropped the darning egg down into the toe, and set to.

“Your father and I have been ambitious for our children,” I began.

“You have?” she widened her eyes innocently.

“Now, Phebe,” I said. “But I am ashamed to admit that our ambitions did not include higher education for our dear Shug.”

“Nobody you know has a daughter even thinking of college, and nobody I know is thinking about it either,” said Phebe. “The girls who are debutantes are thinking about dresses, their coming out parties and boys.”

“And what about the girls like you who aren’t debutantes?”

“Dresses, boys, and if we’ll be asked to any of the parties. Except for Maude Stovell, she’s thinking about her career.”

“Oh, Maude.” Although she is one of Phebe’s closest friends, I tend to dismiss her because she’s plain and serious-minded, and I can’t quite place her. It is important for Southerners to know where people fit. Maude is from New

England, and now that she has graduated from Stevens, she boards with a lady just down the street and is studying to pass the entrance exams to the University. She hopes to become a doctor.

"In spite of Maude and her ambitions, I am afraid that in the world we live in formal education isn't considered as necessary for a woman as it is for a man. There's no doubt in your father's and my minds that you will marry and be taken care of." I began running my eyes down a list of figures Harry and I had spent hours going over. "It would be a most wonderful luxury if we could provide such an opportunity for you. However, I'm sorry to have to say that the way we are situated, it is all your father and I can do to provide the necessities."

I thought back to how my father had sold the lumber off his woodlots to pay for his sons' educations and how my stepmother had persuaded him to sell another lot to send his girls to the Edgeworth School. But that was before the Poplar Grove holdings had been divided. There had been a great deal more land back then.

I put my glasses on top of my head and rubbed a hand across my eyes. "To tell the truth, dear child, I'm a selfish woman," I confessed. "I'd been looking forward to having you with me during this time before you marry."

"My thoughts haven't been quite so silly as I said, a minute ago, Mother." Phebe neatly bit off the thread she'd been using and slid the darning egg down the length of the stocking. "I have been thinking I might be able to go into business selling jams and jellies and my famous green tomato pickle. I could make them at Eversley during the summer and sell them around Philadelphia in the winter. My headquarters would be Germantown where I could run both the house and the business."

I was ashamed at the utter delight and relief I felt transforming me. I could not find the right words. I could only shake my head admiringly. "Blood will tell. You are an Emory, a soldier."

Phebe got up, patted my shoulder and left the room, carefully shutting my door behind.

I wanted to go to her, comfort her but I could not. It was better to leave her alone to say good-bye to her dreams.

II

A Line a Day

1910-1914

1910

JUNE

[Eversley]

29. *I am 21 today & Edith Huston sent me this book. Dad, Mother & I went to Antoinette Emory's wedding. I wore my new blue organdy dress, and I went in the morning to take cake & roses. I don't feel any older than yesterday.*

30. *Working hard to get ready for the houseparty & trying to finish my bathing suit. Frightfully hot.*

This is Phebe's first entry. The little book's green leather cover, is dry and cracking now, but its gold-edged pages are still bright. *A Line-a-Day*, a five-year diary with a space not more than an inch deep for each year's entry, there were five to a page. And she kept it faithfully. Where did she find the time?

JULY

[Eversley]

1. *Made cake for houseparty and then drove to Centreville to meet Dorothy Wood & Taney Wilcox at the train. [They were two members of a group of friends living in Wawa outside Philadelphia, known as the Wawa crowd] Terribly hot still & could hardly sleep at night.*

2. *Taney marking the tennis court. Dorothy lying in hammock with ice bag to her eye. Something bit her last night. We all went to Centreville to meet Van, Herbert Welsh, Tilly & Sandy Randall at the depot. I drove Sandy out with me.*

3. *Houseparty on full force & everybody as foolish & funny as can be. Tried to sail in morning & there was no breeze, so we drifted around & read stories to each other. Boys went swimming. Dorothy & I stayed at home. Sang in evening.*

4. *A little cooler this morning. We all walked over to the woods after a stake for the boat,*

then the boys put it in. We went for a sail & all the boys dived overboard. Dorothy & Taney drove Sandy to the Centreville train while we all went swimming.

5. Houseparty left on early train. Dad & I took them up. I took Tilly. Came home & sewed hard on pink organdy dress and ate some of the 14 lbs of candy.

6. Much cooler and we made good progress with the sewing today. Finished pink dress & almost finished blue. Two shirtwaists cut out.

7. Hot again. Finished blue lawn & blue percale. Big thunderstorm gust in evening. Letters from Tilly, Dolly, Van.

8. Almost through the sewing & it is hotter than blazes.

9. Packing today & doing horrid little odd jobs. Ironing and it is hotter than ever. [Irons were heated on the coal or wood stove.]

[Germantown]

11. Left home 7:41. Went to Phila. with Sam White. Van & Taney met me. Then went to dress. Arthur met me & he, Van, Taney & I had lunch at Kugler's. Arthur came to supper. All went to Maude's Stovell's. [By now Maude had been discouraged from trying to study medicine and was in training as a nurse at Germantown Hospital.]

12. Arthur came in afternoon. Sang after supper, then A. & I went for a walk. Came back to find Ned Emory. [My brother Ned's son from Poplar Grove.]

15. Read aloud and lay around, wrote letters Arthur came at 3 o'clock. Talked to him till he went to play tennis with Ned & Van. Van stayed for dinner—all sat outdoors afterward.

16. Mended hoses, washed porch. Ned came home to lunch, went to club with him. Met Arthur, played tennis. Awful storm at night. A. & I sat on Brock's porch.

17. A. to dinner. Went for drive from 3 to 6:30. My last night with A.

18. Went to town to meet Dad, & Mother came too. Shopped, then went home to lunch with Esther. Packed trunk, got ticket. Mr. Hopkins came in the evening. We all sat in the hall & told perfect stories. Arthur called up.

I'd forgotten all about Arthur. What on earth was his last name? I think he lived just outside Centreville on the Corsica.

This section tells of her visit with Rita Outerbridge in Garden City, L.I. where Phebe learned to ride a bicycle. There were dances in the evenings and lots of new men whose names she carefully listed. She wore her pink dress. I do

remember it. The skirt was floaty—very pretty—but the dickens to get to hang just so. She and I had a real struggle to get it right.

AUGUST

20. *Back at Eversley. Bo came. Looked handsome in new gray suit. Moonlight sail beautiful.*

I do remember Bo's last name: Jackson. That visit of his lasted ten days during which time they sat under the silver poplar in the evenings or went for moonlight paddles on the river. Several boys and girls came down from the city, including Arthur. He accompanied Phebe on the weekly trip to get our newly washed clothes. As this entailed a very pleasant drive along a winding tree-shaded lane, it was a chore that was eagerly sought by boys who wanted a chance to spend some time tête à tête with Phebe. Our laundress was Etta Wilson, who lived in a tiny unpainted house on the Burrisville road. She was a young woman then with children peeking at us from behind her skirts or clinging to her ankles. She had a pump in the yard where she filled the washtubs and stove wood piled next to the door to heat the water. She spread the wet laundry on the bushes to dry and did the ironing on a board propped on two chair backs with heavy flat irons kept hot on the top of the stove. Beneath the newspapers with which she covered the basket, the newly washed clothes were spotless, elegantly folded, and pressed with a skill and a patience that did up each ruffle, each tuck, each collar and cuff to perfection I have never seen equaled. We still take the laundry to her.

29. *We took them to train. Played tennis, picked crabs, talked. Bo & I talked and read in evening.*

30. *Preserved peaches & Bo cut grass in the morning. Lay in hammock & read & I took a nap while Bo cut more grass. Read at night.*

31. *Cut flowers. Bo cut dead limbs & cut grass. We paddled over to Kent County, sat under a tree—came back here. We decided not to see each other for a year.*

SEPTEMBER

16. Took Mother to train for Phila. Couldn't get anybody to pick tomatoes. Picked tomatoes and got load ready. Painted runabout wheels.
16. Went to town with 16 bags of tomatoes. Dick also took a load. Cleaned pantry—awfully tired—read "Middlemarch."
- 22/23. Cut up tomatoes for pickle. Cleaned parlor, dining room, gasolined beds. Mother cleaned her room., then we lay down and read "Middlemarch."
26. Got up at 6 o'clock, did all work before breakfast. Put hasp on door, picked apples, wrote letters, fixed horse covers, cleaned out canoe. Made mint jelly.
27. Painted trough & canoe—made mint jelly, yesterday's didn't turn out. Got letters from Sandy, Harry, Lloyd. Cut down hollyhocks & sunflowers.
28. Went to town. Called on McKenneys, saw Nan Deaver & Henry D.—Afternoon finished painting—bailed out Eleanora. Darned some stockings.
29. Culled tomatoes, sewed on pink organdy dress—peeled pears & then preserved them—5 1/2 gal. jars—hailed hollyhocks away—Went to barn.
30. Painted buckets, tubs & screens. Pared apples. Got dandy letter from Edith Houston. Helen Robins is engaged! Walked over ploughed field this evening.

OCTOBER

1. Cleaned parlor, dining room, fixed flowers, painted buckets—Dad came—pressed black hat. Lay down about 5 o'clock and read "Felix Holt." Heard that Taney Willcox is to be assistant to Sec. of Pennsylvania Railroad.
2. Packed my trunk for Dad to take. Took Dad to train. Most glorious October day. Read "Felix Holt" in evening.
3. Trimmed my black hat, then fixed Mother's. Finished pink organdy dress. Walked to mailbox at the end of the lane, darned stockings in evening.
4. Packed Etta's trunk [Etta Emory was Ned's sister from Poplar Grove], fixed up jelly glasses, washed my collars, patched my clothes
5. Finished trunk, cleaned parlor, got lots of lovely flowers to bring up here. Came to Phila. in afternoon.

We had rented a new house in Germantown, and there was a lot to do getting it fixed up. Phebe had a terrible time hiring maids. She wasn't used to being boss, and the women weren't used to our comings and goings. There were

always extra people for meals or staying the night. The fact that Phebe was home alone or that there were just two for a meal is worthy of an entry in the diary.

NOVEMBER

[Germantown]

4. *Harry has ordered a Ford car!!*
13. *Had a bad fit of blues. Wanted Bo painfully all day.*
18. *Automobile came! Chickens and barrels came from home.*
19. *Played with automobile. Unpacked barrels and preserves. Dad came.*
27. *Two cooks, Uncle J. & Sandy. Row with Mary, supposed to be the cook.*
29. *Grand row with Mary. I hope she will improve.*

DECEMBER

1. *Bought a flat iron!! Went to town with Miss Macracken and got the four dollars I made. First in my whole life.*
28. *Dolly came to lunch. Mother read, talked in afternoon. Sewed up kimono. Started "Wuthering Heights." Went to Pepper's Ball, Harry, Mrs. McK & I. I had supper & many perfect dances with Bo. A lovely bunch of sweet peas. White satin dress.*
30. *Cleaned house. Went to Philadelphia Orchestra in afternoon. Landry soloist, violin.*

1911

JANUARY

11. *Sewed, fixed red dress to wear to Cinderella [a series of subscription dances]. Went with Ned Clark who came in his machine. Supper with Charlie, Ed, Jack Wister, etc. Wonderful dance.*

She was in bed with the Grippe the next day. She had violets from her cousin Lloyd Emory of Poplar Grove, whom we called Bunny in those days. He was studying engineering at the University. Sweet peas from Maude and an enormous bouquet from Mrs. McKean and . . .

17. *A beautiful box of pink and white roses and maiden hair fern when I woke up. From Bo as there is no card.*

FEBRUARY

7. Went to town, got chiffon cloth to drape white satin dress with green. Second rehearsal for "Trial by Jury." Mother awfully worried over boys.
8. Rita came over. Pere, Mother, Rita & I talked in afternoon. Van, Rita & I went to dinner at Walbridge's before Cinderella. Danced in Cotillion with Bill Watkins—best one yet.
10. Worked on dress part of morning—spelling with Lloyd. Maude & Aunt Etta [Henrietta Tilghman Tilghman Emory from Poplar Grove, mother of Etta and Lloyd] helped me featherstitch my dress.

MARCH

1. Stayed round with mother while she packed. She is too nervous & upset over going down to the farm. Family conference till 1 o'clock.
3. Went in town with Mother. She went down on 3 o'clock train.
13. Miss M. & I went to town to see trouser skirt exhibited at Wanamaker's. Jack Wister sent me flowers.
21. Emily Fox's theatre party to see Ethel Barrymore. Sandy came up for it, stayed all night.
24. Box Killarney roses came—no card. Bo to supper.

APRIL

- 3rd. Etta & I alone for supper.
- 9th. Tried running the car for the first time.

MAY

19. Went to lunch with Arthur, had a lovely time. Then Maude & I went to Eastern Shore. Lloyd & Arthur saw us off. Parlor car seats, candy, fans & flowers.
[Eversley]
20. Mother not a bit well—awfully depressed. Maude & I put up curtains. Mother read "Molly Make-Believe."—Place simply dried up, looks like August. Van well.
21. Dad came down for Sunday. Talked & sat round. Van, Maude & I went swimming. Whip-poor-wills, stars & country, delicious.
22. Talked with Mother. Maude went on early train. Painted cooler, covered cushions in parlor. Lay down & talked with Mother.
25. Mother is so depressed about the peaches, & Van being here with no future & so many debts. It is pretty bleak, but I think she has cheered up since I came.

On re-reading this journal so full of accounts of parties and beaux, I notice that an underlying theme is my constant worry about the farm and its future. The dark side of our bright coin, which in her youthful optimism I thought Phebe hardly noticed. We continued our habit of reading aloud, at the moment it was Booth Tarkington's *Gentleman from Indiana*. We made cakes and gingerbread, picked bouquets of flowers—roses, laurel, sryringa, dahlias—and got ready for yet another houseparty.

28. Jack & I drove to Poplar Grove. He was crazy about the box vistas.

29. Waited round for Van. Then started to sail to the Hermitage, breeze freshened. Jack & I read "Quest of the Rose." Got to Hermitage about 1:45. Anchored, put up awning & had lunch. Then Mother, Harry & Jack went ashore in little canoe. J. came back for us. Then we went in. Miss Sue & Miss Woodall were sweet. Place was lovely. Left there at 4:30. Fresh breeze. Got to Indiantown at six. Went swimming. Had supper at 8:30. Went to bed early.

Miss Sue Williams lived at the Hermitage, a beautiful old estate on Tilghman Creek just our side of Queenstown. She was a great friend of the family. Miss Sue had remodeled the old house, home to generations of Tilghmans, in the Italianate style, which made it very imposing. The large square rooms had high ceilings. Portraits of long dead Tilghmans hung on the walls. There was fine straw matting on the floors and French doors opening out onto a wide verandah. Rocking on one of her green-painted chairs and looking out over her boxwood terraces to a glimpse of Tilghman Creek was about the coolest thing you could do on a hot summer day. The Hermitage was a pleasant destination for a long day's sail, and the ladies, Miss Sue and Miss Woodall, were unfailingly hospitable to us, no matter how sun-baked and bedraggled we were as we walked up from the shore.

JUNE

[Germantown]

5. I went to call on Mrs. McCall, a close friend of Mother's. She said: "I think your mother should give up the farm at all costs. It is draining her dry, both physically and financially."

I told her Mother had been under the weather a lot lately, but without the farm, I could not imagine what she would do.

Mrs. McCall went on, "The burden she carries around on her shoulders are making an old woman of her."

When I pointed out she was after all 59, Mrs. Mc. said she thought she was older, and needs to take life a little more easily. She made me promise to write Mother.

I wished Mrs. McCall hadn't brought all this to the surface. It was not my childrens' place to advise me on financial and farm affairs.

8. Mother came up for school commencement. Mother read Owen Wister's new book to us, "Members of the Family," most interesting.

9. Planned houseparty for next week. Called them up. Priestman came with notices of farms for sale. Mother & I read them.

10. Mother & I went to see real estate men about farms. Going to see some on Monday & Tuesday.

12. Mother & I went to see farms around Lansdale with real estate man.

That was the last mention of the matter recorded in the diary. I recall trudging through barnyards, looking into sheds, discussing the yields the farmer got in his fields, and comparing everything we were shown unfavorably with Eversley.

It was during this same period Phebe's diary records:

11. Arthur came out to tea in afternoon. Awfully hot. A & I talked.

12. Arthur stayed until 11 o'clock, was most trying. I think it will all have to end.

16. Wrote to Arthur. I'm going to end it all.

22. Got a letter from Mother telling me she has given the letter to Arthur. Maude came to lunch.

29. One year today since I got this book. I'm 22. Jack Wister brought me home from

Hannah's in the car at 6:30 am.—me in evening dress and cape—he in khaki trousers and blue gingham shirt. It was funny. Sandy stayed until 12 o'clock. He expects to settle in Phila. [Sandy Randall was one of the Annapolis crowd and a close friend of Harry's, as well as one of what Joanna called "Miss Shug's yah'd fulla beaus." Jack Wister was another.]

AUGUST

[Eversley]

4. Got everything ready to go camping but it poured. Maude & I walked up from mailbox barefooted. Afternoon walked over to Indiantown & watched seine haulers—got fish from them.

5. Weeded garden. Made cakes. All went to Indiantown, met Sandy stayed for supper. Went sailing—Sandy & I.

6. Sandy & I drove for clothes. Then paddled out and towed behind the big canoe. Sailed in afternoon over to Indiantown. Then S. & I got little canoe. Most marvelous moonlight sail I ever saw. Sandy & I in bow & he asked me to marry him. I am to tell him tomorrow.

7. Started off on camping trip. Mother, Dad, the boys, Lloyd, Sandy & I. Calm. Paddled with Lloyd. After lunch went swimming with Sandy. Breeze came up, got down to Hermitage. Had supper there, sailed home by moonlight. Mother, Dad, Pere, Lloyd went home, and Harry, Van, Sandy, and I sailed over to Shippen Creek, and spent the night on the boat. Great fun. Got to bed at 2:30. Sandy & I went back to old standing until tomorrow night.

8. Waked with sun in my eyes—gorgeous day, got up 7 took swim. Boys followed suit. Then we got breakfast on the boat over coal oil stove. Had cantaloupes, Spanish omelet, hotcakes, coffee. Delicious. Dead calm, so Harry & Sandy did stunts in canoe. I took pictures & paddled & played. At 5 o'clock went canoeing with Sandy & we had it all out. I told him I don't love him. He was a dear.

SEPTEMBER

23. Marketed, preserved a basket of peaches

26. Had supper by myself.

Phebe's preserving business was beginning to pick up. Sandy seems to have resurfaced and took her to see the "Balkan Princess." Nearly every entry during

October has a reference to him. On the 18th, Phebe went chestnutting in the woods. To think there are no chestnut trees now.

Jack Wister's name has appeared all along in the diary. He and Phebe shared a great interest in plants and flowers. He went on to become a renowned landscape architect, director of the Scott Horticultural Foundation at Swathmore College and of the Tyler Arboretum at Lima, Pennsylvania, as well as the author of many books and articles on gardening. He helped Phebe plan the gardens she made at Indiantown and at Aloha, as well as the one at Eversley.

NOVEMBER

[Germantown]

1. Jack came in the evening & we had a lovely time. Talked politics, theater & trouble forcing flowers.

[Eversley]

17. Cleaned house and got ready for houseparty. Helen Parker, Taney Willcox & Harry came first, then Sandy. Laughed so much I was hoarse all next day.

18. Rained all morning then cleared off & we went shooting. I got a rabbit, first one. I did feel badly Evening had duck and all good things.

[Germantown]

23. Got out here about 3:30. Got supper found about 11 invitations.

24. Sandy sent me lovely lilies of the valley

25. Sandy & I went to Army-Navy game, score 3-0 favor of Navy.

1912

FEBRUARY

18. Helen & Harry are engaged. Mother has enough to set her wild.

19. Midnight session with Mother & Harry about Helen.

21. Poured rain. I was blue as indigo. Everybody getting engaged and I'm left out of it. A huge bunch of violets from Sandy made me feel better.

22. Dolly's party. Sandy met me. Got back at 9 o'clock. Sandy brought me home. We had an awful time because he thought I ignored him, & I didn't and I cried.

23. Got note from Sandy begging me to forgive him. It is so awful & I'm dead tired of it all.

24. Telephone from Sandy asking if I can see him this evening. Opera with Elsie Abbot.

Mary Garden wonderful. Lovely lilies of the valley from Sandy which I wore. We had a very nice talk and straightened things up.

25. Walking party of the Wrights. The lilies of the valley made quite a sensation.

MARCH

22. Went in town with Hannah Wister to hear arguments for & against suffrage at City Hall.

25. Sewed all day. Helen & Anne Parker came out for afternoon tea. Dad came in. Jack in evening & brought his apple tree to graft, also lovely sweet peas.

APRIL

[Eversley]

15. Left for Eversley. Helen, Taney, Lloyd saw me off. Box of candy from T. Flowers from Lloyd. Van met me, everything is lovely. I adore it all.

17. Still raining & I read more. Chickens hatching in incubator, cowslips in bloom, violets, leaves coming out

19. First good day since I came down & everything is absolutely beautiful. Van & I met Mother & Dad. I cut hollyhocks & violets, planted roses.

21. Letter from Sandy. Rained. Bill Deacon, Jun Bonds [from Michaeltown] both working on lawn & garden. Set out rest of roses. Set incubator. Took care of chickens.

24. All of us cut, tied & packed 100 bunches of lilacs and took to train at 2 o'clock.

25. Cleaning parlor. More gardening & sewing. Chickens doing well. Most beautiful day & moonlight & whip-poor-wills. I love it all.

27. Van & I went to work & got Chateau ready for lilacs. Cut & packed 110 bunches.

29. Took lilacs to train early. Got up at six o'clock.

30. Day for Harry & Helen's engagement to be announced. Great excitement.

MAY

1. Scraped paint off row boat—awful job. Cut 100 bunches of lilacs, packed them.

2. Took lilacs to early train. Sewed—planted dahlias. Paddled out & watched sunset. Perfect. Went to bed early.

4. Fixed flowers & other things. Went to town in time to meet Jack. Lovely day & everything looked lovely. J. brought chrysanthemums & other things. We planted them, then J. & I paddled across river & up Jarrett's Creek.

5. Got up early. J., Van & I sailed big boat [Reba Main] to Centreville to be painted. After dinner J. & I talked & went for a walk in woods, got caught in shower. He & Van talked fruit & politics.

10. Put nets in windows. Went for a delicious paddle in canoe. Perfectly calm & a beautiful sunset.

12. Taney & I talked all morning. [He had arrived by train the day before.] Got money from lilacs Sat. Came to \$41.00

14. Finished dress & ruffles & cleaned house. Chickens hatching in incubator. Went to Hermitage to spend the night with Miss Sue & Miss Woodville. They were dear.

15. Raining. Went to look at cows with Miss Sue. She has two beauties straight from Jersey, England.

18. Sewed some. Chickens doing pretty well, got 50 but 10 died.

19. Hannah Wister & I painted rowboat & Eleanora [the Bateau]. Van & Hannah went up to town to sail [log canoe, Reba Main] back. She is beautifully painted.

JULY

1. Drove Aunt Kate up to Centreville. Drove over hay field, picked blackberries & flowers for fireplace. Ma, Mother & I went picking raspberries in meadow.

I can see the three of us now, baskets over our arms, armored against the fierce sun by wide-brimmed straw hats, sleeves rolled down to protect against thorns. The raspberries grew wild in the hedgerows, the berries hanging in clusters glowing like rubies against gray-green leaves. When an indolent breeze would wander up from the river, the leaves turned their backs and became almost silver. The long protective shoots the plants send out I imagined to be fairy-tale dragons guarding a treasure. You had to duck under them to reach the berries. It was easy to see how Hansel and Gretel could have been lured farther and farther from the path. The trumpet vine was in full bloom, and orange blossoms were entangled amid the berries. The birds were hushed by the heat. Queen Anne's lace nodded its lace-doily flowers, and stars of blue chicory flowers bloomed in the hedgerows.

"Oh, I must pick some of these for the house," Phebe called.

"Don't go dipping and swooping, child. We has come for the berries. Might not find them here tomorrow if the deer get hungry. Keep picking and think about raspberry jam on your bread this winter." said Ma, her fingers darting in among the leaves, nimble as sparrows.

[Germantown]

8. Dad in bed with bad knee. I sewed all morning. I lay down in afternoon. Sandy came out to supper—fixed my foot, nearly killed me. We had a very serious talk. I wish he'd forget me.

12. Taney & I went home to Eversley. Big box of candy from Taney.

[Eversley]

13. Fixed screen on back door. Taney & I went swimming & went to pump in morning. We packed trunks. Moved Taney up from chateau. [The "chateau" was a frame shack out back beyond the pump and next to the woodpile. This was where the boys camped out when we had an overflow of house guests. I can't recall which one of them gave it its pretentious name.]

14. Taney & I went to church—he to his & me to mine. Went swimming.

19. Made ginger cake. Dolly & Betty couldn't come for Sunday. The arbor came & we uncrated it & got it partly up. It is awfully pretty. Swimming.

20. Crabbing. I went to sleep on the wharf. Taney worked on arbor. Mother & I picked crabs. I fixed flowers. T. & I went swimming. Tilly & Dad came down. Tilly brought candy.

21. Tilly, Taney, Van & I went for a wonderful sail, until a big storm came up—water spout on the river. After it was over we went swimming.

22. Taney & I drove Dad & Tilly to town. Letter from Jack. Finished arbor—pulled weeds. Taney edged walk. Taney & I went swimming off little canoe. Lots of fun. Schooner taking wheat at Indiantown Wharf.

23. Painted arbor. I didn't feel well. Preserved huckleberries. T. & I went for moonlight paddle.

24. Crabbing. Rained all day. I took nap in afternoon. Taney worked on trellis for roses at the chateau. I made cornbread for supper. I sang in evening.

25. Sat & sewed at chateau with Taney. We went for a paddle—looked at new bungalow on Shippen Creek. Painted canoes in afternoon. Sat in arbor & looked at moon.

26. Stayed in bed till 10 o'clock. Lay in hammock while Taney built trellis for little room door. Took a nap & went to river with Taney while he painted names on canoes.

27. Mother getting off to Phila. After they all left Taney & I shampooed each other's hair. Lovely moonlight paddle.

28. Sailed to Hermitage, becalmed, stayed for dinner & supper. Came home at night. Got here at 12 o'clock.

29. Took Taney to early train. Came back & took washing out. Mickey [a horse] ran off & left me while I got out to pick goldenrod, & I had a chase back to the house by myself.

Letter from Taney mailed at Townsend, Del.! [One of the first stops on the train heading north.] Weeded roses, dahlias, etc. cleaned room.

AUGUST

16. *Fixed flowers & got things ready for the Agricultural Party. Mr. Lippincott & Taney came. Meeting in afternoon most successful 23 people. Mr. L. told me to take up flower growing for money. Supper was good & all of them had a good time.*

17. *Mr. L. went on early train. Taney read to me while I sewed. It rained all afternoon. T & I went for a walk & mail. Went swimming, after supper lay in hammock & talked & sang.*

18. *Taney & I went to Catholic church . . . girl fainted. I never had been before & don't like it. Came home & Van & I sailed up to cousin Ned Emory's, spent afternoon with him & Cousin Julia. [They, along with Cousin Belle Emory, lived at Piney Grove, about two miles downriver from Chestertown.] Got home at 9 o'clock, had supper. Taney & I had a talk. He is such a dear & I hate to hurt him. Promised to be friends.*

What whirl of moonlight and roses Phebe lived in back then. Her admirers were such dears, so lovely to her, but I kept wishing that the moment of decision would never come. She was fond of the whole "yahd full" and might easily have said "Yes" to Taney if it hadn't been the difference in religion. He was a Roman Catholic. Our dear girl, I am happy to confess was not adventurous enough to jump that hurdle.

20. *Preserved peaches—Got a lovely letter from Jack. Went to town early in morning & got new coal oil on the new stove.*

22. *Dad building roof on cow shed.*

23. *Cleaned bed, parlor. Mother made curtains for my room while I cut out two skirts & a kimono for her. Beautiful moonlight.*

24. *Mother & I went crabbing. Made cake, fixed flowers, picked crabs. Rita came on evening train. We talked till late at night. She looks badly & is worried to death over her engagement.*

25. *Mother read "Lady Baltimore" aloud all day. It is the most delicious book. I enjoyed*

every word. Had a long argument about girls smoking. Van & Rita went moonlight paddling.

26. Practiced, talked to Rita. Preserved peaches on new stove & I love it. Rita & Mother had a long talk. Poor child she is up against hard lines. She & I went swimming.

27. Did peach pickle & peach preserves. Sewed some. Rita & I went to Centreville to get Dad at station. Van & I went swimming.

29. Finished peach pickles, grape jam—11 jars, apple jelly. Maude & I made muffins for supper . . . Rita looking better.

30. Maude, Rita, & I drove out for clothes. Van took them to train. Was sorry to see them go.

SEPTEMBER

1. Preserved yellow tomatoes & it was a horrible job. Mother read "Financing the Farmers & The Harvester." Went swimming.

2. Lime boat came & Mother & I rushed around trying to get horses & men to haul it tonight.

[Germantown]

9. Mary, Letitia, Jack & I came up on 7:40. I hated to leave Bay Head. Got home to find Helen & Etta stewing around. No cook & everything in a mess. I cleaned all afternoon & got supper. Telephone from Taney & Sandy—told them not to come.

17. Miss Laura came to see me & ordered 1 doz. jars peaches.

18. Raining. At home all morning. Jack & I started at 1:30 for Riverton, N.J., & it cleared off beautifully so we had a perfect trip. Saw acres of flowers. Got back at 6:30. J. stayed for supper. Maude came over.

19. Went to town to get peaches for Miss Laura's preserves. Jack & Hannah accepted with pleasure for camping trip next week.

20. Preserved peaches & only got 8 1/2 jars.

21. Preserved more peaches & burnt them!

23. Went to town with Rita on her way to N.Y. Met Mother, Harry, Helen. Helen came out with us, her father, Mr. Parker & Anne for supper. Dad came in and both fathers had a great time.

27. Got breakfast as Carrie was late—cleaned second story. Packed trunk, brandied peaches for Rita—took five too. Going home tomorrow. Sandy this evening.

[Eversley]

28. Took 7:25 home with Hannah & Jack. Van met us. Beautiful day. After lunch we walked round garden. Then Jack & I got out things for camping & after supper J., H. & I took long moonlight walk.

29. After breakfast we got everything together for camping & got off. Sailed down to the Middleton's on the Corsica to see M.S. but she was gone. They gave us apples. We left there & went to Poplar Grove cove for supper. H. & I canoed while boys got boat fixed. Supper after dark & looked like rain, but cleared beautifully afterward & moon came out. Cold.

30. Got up at 7. Boys built fire then H. & I went ashore to get breakfast. Beautiful weather. Had fried tomatoes & hot cakes for breakfast, coffee. Van & H. talked while Jack & I washed dishes. Got off about 11 o'clock & sailed up to Skillet's Point. Fine breeze going up—Landed at 4 o'clock & we got supper. H. & I had two fires. Made cream of tomato soup! Baked potatoes & baked apples. Paddled up to Chestertown by moonlight.

OCTOBER

1. Real Oct. day—fine & snippy. After breakfast Jack & I washed dishes, H. & Van got things ready on boat. Had smashing breeze going down & everything was sparkling. Got home in time for lunch. Afternoon Van & Jack hauled tomatoes. J., H. & I took a walk by moonlight. H. went to bed & J. & I played hooky.

Phebe and I went on an "official state visit" to Tulip Hill across the Bay on the West River, where the Parkers, Helen's family, came from Denver, Colorado for the summers. It is the most beautiful house, and they entertained us like royalty.

7. Came home on 11 o'clock boat. Glad to get back but we both enjoyed every minute of our visit. Roses & violets delicious. There is nothing up to home & roses after all.

9. Drove out to Etta's with the clothes. Then to Poplar Grove & dug up periwinkle roots, planting them by the lilies in the back yard.

10. Packed my trunk, picked violets, roses & dahlias to take with me. Van bought a horse & mule colt.

[Germantown]

11. Phila. on morning train. Harry gone to Tulip Hill to see about the Parker's coachman who is drunk.

13. Lloyd & I alone for dinner. Harry came bringing Bob with him, the coachman.

14. Harry & I alone for supper.

17. Cleaned, got supper, fixed preserves for Nancy. Arthur came out to supper, brought me some gloves. He was as nice as could be.

18. Helen arrived from Tulip Hill with the coachman Bob's four children. Mrs. Burke & Mrs. Tillinghast for tea.

19. Helen & I dressed children & gave them breakfast, then they, Harry & Bob went to N.Y. I cleaned up.

22. Rita came, has broken off with Bill, poor child. We went to Nancy's bridesmaid's party. Lovely presents. Teddy Stover here when we came back.

29. Sewed most of the day. Getting an awful cold. Jack came to supper. We took a lovely walk. Mr. Wood came while we were gone.

NOVEMBER

1. Went to a Roosevelt meeting to hear Mr. Pinchot with Mother & Jack. Most interesting.

3. Mother sick in bed with a bad cold. Went for a walk with Sandy. Went to bed early. Dad doesn't look well, but is better now. He went to Sandy as a patient.

4. I made brown velvet hat.

6. Violets from Teddy S. first thing. Still have fever. Had to give up chrysanthemum show with Jack. E.C.H. came in afternoon & as I was no better she went to the Opera party in my place. I got up for supper. It was Emily Parker's birthday & we had cake. They went off to the opera, I went back to bed.

7. Got up & fixed preserves for Mrs. McCall, then felt worse & went back to bed & Harry sent for Dr. Gummey. Lovely violets & gardenia from Sandy. Felt pretty miserable all day.

8. Had to give up Robin Hood with Mr. Barker as Dr. G. said I'd have to stay in bed till Sat. Lovely red roses from Taney—two dozen gorgeous ones. Daddy came in & was a good deal worried over my being sick. Much better.

9. Went to church. Teddy Stover for dinner & walk in afternoon. Forbes Calhoun, Jimmie Dickens came & Hannah came over for afternoon tea. H. stayed for supper & Mr. Howard Wood came afterward.

[Eversley]

21. Sandy took me in to early train for home. Mother met me. Perfect day. Clover seed bailer going. We drove out to Land's End. Gorgeous moonlight.

22. Telephone from Harry saying Dad is ill. Mother went up on afternoon train. I took her up. Went to Locust Hill to see Turpins. Got home about dark. Van & I drove out to Michaeltown. Telephone from Mother that Dad is pretty sick & I'd better go up.

23. Morning train up. Sandy & Taney met me. Came right out. Dad looking awfully weak. Fainted up at Avondale—awful attack—came home all by himself. Will probably have to stay quiet always. Mother perfectly splendid as always.

24. Straightened around house. Dad seems brighter. Sandy for dinner. Dr. Cameron, Sandy & Harry all examined Dad. He is pretty weak.

It is a terrible moment when one realizes that one is, after all, mortal. We all sat in the parlor in Germantown, the scene of so many laughter-filled times. For the first time as I looked at the boys' serious faces I realized that underneath their banter, Harry's brotherly teasing of Phebe, and Sandy's never ending flirtation with her, these were grown men, highly trained doctors. The new generation ready to step in.

"What shall we do?" Phebe asked

"Mother knows. Dad always said she should have hung out her shingle." Harry tried with a little laugh to lighten the atmosphere.

Dr. Cameron was a heart specialist from the hospital, a doctor whom we had never met. He scribbled on a prescription pad and handed it to me. I read it and nodded.

"Three drops in water, three times a day. Plenty of rest and a light diet." My face was like a mask. I did not want the children to read what was going on behind it.

"Thank you very much, Dr. Cameron." I shook his hand, then nodded to Sandy and Harry. The three men repaired to Harry's office where I could hear the murmur of their voices behind the door. If Phebe had not been present I would have put my ear to it.

"Keep on as you have been," I said and climbed the stairs to our bedroom where my dearest Harry lay.

26. Cleaned Tilly's room & bookcases. Dad better —Went down the street.

27. Dad about the same. Ned Brockie brought me violets to wear to the dance.

28. Thanksgiving day. Went to lunch at the Bellevue with Ned B. & 12 other people & Cornell vs. Penn game afterward. Sandy & Aunt Sprague here to dinner.

29. Housecleaned Tilly's rooms nearly all day—perfectly exhausted. Went to bed early.

30. Stayed in bed—Mother made me—until 10. Went to Army-Navy game with Sandy. Navy won 6-0. Van here for over Sunday.

DECEMBER

2. Got breakfast for Mother & Van to make early train to Centreville. Fixed Dad's breakfast, also nurse's & Harry's. Read "Romance of Billy Goat Bill" aloud to Dad. Taney for supper.
3. Fixed everything for Dad—read aloud a good deal.
5. Read to Dad. Sewed some & later in afternoon went over to say goodbye to Hannah. She sails tomorrow for Europe.
6. Went with Knoxes to launching of Washington Irving at N.Y. Shipbuilding Co. Had lunch there, very interesting time.
7. Went to late church & missed it altogether. Dad not so well. Very miserable all day & quite sick with indigestion at night.
9. Dad better. Telephone from Mother. Sewed hard on dressing sacque & started pink satin dress. Nice letter from Jack.
10. Dad improving. Aunt Etta gone. Rather under the weather myself.
14. Mother not very well. Ned Brockie asked to come & I said no, then Jack asked me to take a walk & we did & we got supper together—Lots of fun.
15. Sewed on pink dress. Dad not so well, another indigestion attack. Tilly asked me for Charity Ball.
16. Mother prescribed for Dad & he is better. Arthur came & we took a walk.
18. Sewed on black dress & it is lovely—finished it & am going to wear it to the Charity. Sandy for supper.
19. Dad better. Taney came out to dinner & I went to the Charity Ball with him & Tilly. Wore black dress & Taney gave me some yellow roses. Lots of fun. Spent night with Dorothy Wood.
23. Dad seems to be better & is sitting up a while every day. Finished Rita's sacque. Went shopping with Van & Harry.
24. Made cakes etc. nearly all day—then Van & I went to get little Xmas tree & called on Mrs. McCall. Trimmed tree at 12 o'clock. Harry, Van & I—all sorts of presents. Ned. B. stopped by with a lovely bunch of violets.
25. Harry, Ned & I went to hospital to sing Xmas carols. Beautiful morning. After breakfast, boiler burst in the middle of things. We wrapped it up & went to Miss M. for dinner. Nancy & Geo. L. came & Ned in afternoon.
26. The Christmas was perfectly lovely & we did all enjoy it. Taney sent me a tea basket. Mr. Butler some perfect fruit. Edith Houston a Japanese Kimono. Sandy a picture—& loads of other things. Dad still better. Ma here. The first dancing class met.

27. I started marmalade for Miss Laura. Went to bed early. Marvelous bunch of violets from Charlie B.

28. Made marmalade. Getting a bad cold.

29. Mother not well. Mother had awful fainting attack, scared Harry & me to death.

31. Mother in bed. Better but pretty weak. Jack came at night & brought me samples of all kinds of apples. Has heard nothing of the city forestry job.

1913

JANUARY

8. Harry went to Washington, found Pere is ordered to Philippine Islands in Feb. Got letter from Rita asking me to go to Bermuda with her. Pere on duty. Helen came over.

9. Cleaned, fixed marmalade jars. Pere, Van & I went to the dancing class. Lots of fun, but I was dead tired.

FEBRUARY

1. Made cake. Sandy came out took walk & took me to theatre, Ethel C's theatre party. Saw "Kismet." Wonderful.

3. Awful day. Stayed at home. Mother went to town to dentist. Arthur came out for dinner & spent night. We had rather a serious talk & he was nice but as intense as ever.

4. Mr. Wood came in evening.

Phebe had been wondering whether she would see Howard Wood again. He was older than most of her young men and already established as assistant to the Treasurer of his family's business, The Alan Wood Steel Company. He was rather shy and formal as I remember. Phebe's mind was on her trip to Bermuda with Rita, and her father, Mr. Outerbridge, "Daddy."

MARCH

4. New York—Landed at 4:30. Ned met us. 1 1/2 hours for customs. Charlie B. came to dinner & Ned. Violets for both of us from Ned. C.B. & I talked until 12. Daddy's trunk lost.

5. Went to see Etta. Awfully slummy place but a nice little apartment. Orchids, lilies of



Howard Wood, Jr.

the valley from Charlie B. & roses for Rita. C. took us to train. Taney met us & brought me over. Arthur & Taney both here for dinner. Dad looks well. Mother not here.

[Germantown]

8. *Harry sick with grippe. Dr. Gummey came. I was busy nursing him & answering telephone etc. Aunt Etta went & Mother came in evening. Mother looks tired out.*

9. *Harry still ill but better. Mrs. White, Maude, Mr. Eberlin, Ned. B. for tea. Ned & I walked up from Wayne, had very serious talk. Sandy at night.*

18 *Cut up fruit for marmalade while Mother read.*

19. *Sewed. Arthur in afternoon, long talk with him & another decision not to see each other. He was here for dinner.*

20. *Rained. Mother read. I made 37 glasses of marmalade.*

21. *Sewed, cleaned, fixed up marmalade to send to Miss Laura. Jack called up to say he is sending some lilacs. Van came—he & I talked Bermuda. Mother sick at thought of farm.*

24. *Mother depressed to death over leaving. I was too. Mask & Wig with Taney at night. Poor little Mother, awake till I came home.*

25. *Mother read to us. She left at 2:15. Lloyd came out to lunch—he looks very well & had a fine trip. Cleaned bookcases & closets in Harry's office. Read to Dad at night.*

26. *Read to Dad, sewed some.*

31. *Read to Dad & electioneered for Harry's appointment to G't'n hospital.*

APRIL

3. *Flowers from Bo Jackson, big box of flowers.*

6. *Mother in bed. Went motoring with Mr. Wood all afternoon.*

10. *Packed trunk. Dad & I got off for Eversley on afternoon train. Taney met us at Broad Street with candy. Van met us at Centreville & we had a nice trip down.*

[Eversley]

11. *Jack's lilacs here & Bill Deaton & I planted them, beauties.*

10 *Rained all afternoon. I planted roses & ivy.*

13. *Made cake—still raining—planted things from Germantown. Golden glow, etc. Cut lilacs in afternoon.*

14. *We shipped 137 bunches. The frost has almost killed the crop.*

15. *Planted seeds in hot bed—read aloud to Dad. Raining still—Letter from Jack.*

17. *Clear. Cut lilacs & got off the last of them only 30 bunches. The crop is a failure. Wonderful day. Went to town.*

18. *Blew a gale all day. I cleaned, washed hair & made cake. Taney coming Sunday.*

19. *Still blowing. Laid out garden. Planted outside seed bed. Went to town for Taney.*

20. Cold & blowy. Van, Taney & I walked over to the little farm. Had lunch, then T. & I went to Indiantown. Caught a wild duck. Had a long talk in the arbor by moonlight. He is a wonder, but I wish they'd stay friends.

21. Taney stayed over & we sat down at the river & talked. Afternoon we picked kale, then went to train for Mother. She seems in very good spirits.

22. Took Taney to early train. He was very blue over leaving.

23. Gardened all day. Planted violets & cowslips round my little garden.

24. Sewed a plaid dress & almost finished it. Had an awful time over it. Mother & I went to town.

[Germantown]

25. Sewed till time to get ready for train. Came up by myself. Taney met me at Wilmington. Sandy at W. Phila. Lloyd, Helen, Tilly, Harry & Pere all here.

27. Unpacked trunk. Sandy came to dinner. Harry left for Bryn Mawr. Then Mr. Wood came & Ned & Doc. Later in evening Taney came back to supper. Sandy still here & Jack came over.

30. Helen & I went downtown, got new shoes. Slept all afternoon. Arthur came to supper, brought lovely roses.

MAY

1. Sewed some. Lay down in afternoon. Mother & Dad came in evening. Mother brought huge bunches of lilies of the valley from Eversley.

2. Cleaned—went to hospital to see Maude. She is still very ill. Went motoring with Arthur over to Villanova. Stopped to see Helen & Emily. Mother with us. Very nice but hot.

3. Went to town, got two hats. Telephone from Jack to come to supper. Went to Jack's. Met Mrs. Haines, his sister. She is a peach. Jack brought me home. We got ice cream—had a funny time.

4. Went to church. Dad went but felt badly & came back home. Hannah drove me home. Went motoring with Mr. Wood out to Paoli, lovely country. He came back to supper.

5. Mother, Helen & I went to town & got Helen a lovely hat. Mother & Dad went home. I went to circus with Jack—good fun. Walked home & got ice cream.

6. Sewed all morning. Went to see Mrs. McCall afternoon. Maude very ill still. Sandy came for dinner & we took a walk.

7. Helen & I went to town & got her a dress. I met Arthur—had lunch. Went to Haddenfield in his car. I ran it. Jack, Helen & I came home. Pere came up from Balto.

8. Cleaned. Painted all afternoon on Harry's room.

9. Hannah left early. I sewed & in afternoon Aunt Do came & was too dear for anything.

Mr. Wood called in evening. Wanted me to go to Valley Forge on Sunday.

10. Met Dolly at 11:04 for Wawa. Helen, Ned Brockie, Ned Bixby & Pere. Danced in evening. Learned to do the Tango.

11. Played tennis. Harry came out. Taney over, lots of fun. Tea at Keatings in afternoon. Helen, Harry, Ned, Pere & I came in on 7:29.

12. Paper hanger doing Harry's room. Went motoring with Mr. Dale, tea at Huntington Valley Club. Birthday party for Harry. Reg, Emily, George for supper. Mrs. D. brought me a beautiful little pin from Paris.

13. Played tennis with Helen. Motoring with Arthur. Ran the car again. Long talk & he was nice. Went to bed fairly early. Note from Mr. Wood.

14. Tennis, marmalade, matting in Harry's room. Received at the Wright's tea. Wore pink dress & white & black hat. Lots of fun. Went to hospital to see Maude for a minute, very weak. Taney for supper & long walk afterward.

15. Made 15 glasses of marmalade. Cleaned. Went to hospital. E.T.K. & I went to dinner & to hear Gilbert & Sullivan sung by the Savoy, with Percy Roberts & Miss Wakeman. Nice party.

18. Went to church. Walked over to hospital to see Maude. Dr. Currie brought me home. Walked in afternoon

19. Sewed. Jack came over to supper. I was tired to death—& it wasn't much fun. Jack came in the new car.

21. Emlin's wedding. Went with Edith H. Quaker ceremony—very solemn. Reception after, great fun. Came home. Arthur came & we went for a ride in the car. He isn't coming any more. Sandy came out.

22. Sewed on black dress for Helen. She helped me in afternoon & we finished it. Went to see Maude. Went to the Gummeys to dinner. Helen & Harry & I. Danced after. Mr. Wood called & I was out.

23. Harry & Helen left for Eastern Shore in the car, raining! Let Dick go & sewed all day. Got supper. Taney & Pere here for supper & the night.

24. Finished white linen dress, made cake. Went to see Maude. Went to bed early. Still raining.

26. Went down street, packed, went to see Maude, went to town & got jars. Motored with Ed Clark in evening & had a very nice time.

27. Went home on morning train. Sandy took me in & we had breakfast at Broad St. Mother met me & in afternoon we planted flowers.

[Eversley]

29. Mother up again. Place looked lovely.

30. Stayed in bed all morning. Afternoon preserved strawberries.

31. Went for clothes with Walter, he is a nice boy.

JUNE

1. Sailing & sailing again in afternoon—beautiful day. Sewed in morning, cut out two dresses

AUGUST

[Eversley]

9. Made cake, picked crabs ,etc. Harry & Howard Wood arrived in Mr. W's motor. Also Mr. H. Keating for over Sunday—Big box of candy from H. Wood, swim, & a lovely moonlight sail.

10. Awfully hot. We all sailed in morning up river. Afternoon Mr. W. & I were caught in storm in the car & drenched. In evening we went up to Centreville.

11. Got up early to see Harry & H. Wood off at 5:30 for Phila. Sewed, gardened—a glorious day.

12. Sewed all day, put another batch of pickles in the cellar. Mother talked to me. I am desperate about the whole situation. Letter from Etta.

13. Picked peaches. Mother & I pared peaches, & I put up brandied & preserves. Letter from Davy.

14. Pared more peaches, put up peaches for pies, pickles & marmalade. Drove down to Mr. Cecil's with Dad. Letter from Jack.

15. Fixed flowers. Dad put down stakes for dahlias & cosmos. Cleaned chateau. Went to meet Jack. Linen coat made over looked well. Jack brought me roses for arbor. Went canoeing.

16. Jack & I planted roses. I finished pickles then we went crabbing & canoeing. Afternoon patched canoe & went swimming. Walk in evening. Sat under poplar tree & talked.

17. Mother, Dad, Van, Jack & I sailed up to Cousin Ned's. Saw the whole place & were thrilled, lovely sail up & Cousin Ned towed us back. Moonlight lovely.

18. Van took Jack up to town. I picked peaches & put up 12 quarts & 4 pints.

20. Sewed on Mother's dress. She is getting ready to go to Phila. Letter from Woody asking me to go to Phila. with him.

21. Mother went to Phila. Put up pie peaches all day—also some Heath peaches of ours. Went down to Mr. Cecil's in afternoon. Says peaches will wait till next week.

22. Dad went crabbing. I sewed on Maude's dress. Boiled pickle & put up more pie peaches, cleaned parlor & picked crabs, big storm at night.

23. Made cake, fixed flowers—boiled pickle vinegar & cleaned chateau. Howard W. came in the car. Went swimming. After supper went for a walk & sat in arbor. He asked me to marry him & I said no.

24. Howard helped me with pickles, then he, Van & I went for a sail. No breeze.

[Germantown]

25. Started at 6:30 for Phila. in the car. H. & I had a marvelous trip up. Perfectly beautiful & he gave me a lesson on running the car. Got to G't'n about 12. Howard came over to supper. Mother was there and the boys. Got news of Mrs. Wister's death.

26. Sandy is living with Harry & making himself most disagreeable. I put net in windows. Went to baseball game with Taney & he came back to dinner. Wrote to Jack about Mrs. Wister's death. It is awful—left a little baby.

27. Mother & I came down on afternoon train & I went to Chestertown for the Fair. Cousin Ned met me.

[Eversley]

28. Crazy about all the family at Cousin Ned's and the children are dear. Went in the motorboat races—afternoon we went to the fair & saw horse races & all the usual things. A huge crowd.

29. Cousin Ned brought me to Indiantown in his motorboat. Lloyd who is here for a day or two met me & Mother met me too. Went to Mr. Cecil's, got peaches & put some up. McKenney party in evening, got home at 3:15 a.m.

30. Lovely letter from Jack about his sister—also one from Howard. Did peaches all day. Only had three hours sleep last night. Drove up to town. Went to call on Catherine Conger & met Ned Brockie at train. He was very nice.

31. Van, Ned & I sailed down to the Cornell's. Alexina Ferguson, Sam White, Worthington Bordley, & Conger were there off river. Stayed to supper on account of the storm.

SEPTEMBER

1. Ned & I paddled over to Shippen Creek & talked. He is going into a new job with great possibilities. I took him up to train in afternoon. Drove down to Mr. Cecil and got more peaches.

2. Mother & I went up to town—stormed so we couldn't get home till late. Preserved in afternoon.

3. Made marmalade, Heath preserves, brandied peaches. Awful day's work. Letter from Howard.

4. Mother sick in bed. I read & sewed. She was better in afternoon. Dad & I went up to town to get grapes & sweet corn.
5. Mother still in bed but better. I made grape juice, did brandied peaches over & preserved yellow tomatoes. Another order from a friend of Davy's. Wrote Howard to come on 14th.
6. Fixed flowers & made cake & preserved tomatoes—got 14 jars in all. Washed Mother & Van's hair. Sewed.
7. Terribly hot. Nobody here for Sunday for once, so am catching up loose ends. Van & I sailed over to Jarrett's cove. Took all the neighborhood sailing & got back later for supper. Jack & Alice Turpin here.
8. Mother & I took clothes out. I finished Maude's dress & sliced tomatoes for pickle.
9. Made pickle 12 pts., 3 1/2 pts & 11 qts. pears. Also started mint jelly.
10. 4 qts. pears, 12 glasses mint jelly and 6 qts pickles. Letters from Howard. H. is coming on Saturday.
11. Went to town, after yellow tomatoes. Could not get them. Went crabbing with Mother. Cut up tomatoes for pickle.
12. Got Chateau fixed for Harriet to clean. Went after tomatoes, started pickle. Went to Annie May's for red peppers & finished pickle. Grapes came & made grape jam.
13. Made grape jelly. 16 glasses. Also cooked mint jelly over again. Very good. Fixed flowers & made cake. Howard & Dad came in machine very late. H. & I went rowing.
14. Tried to go sailing but halyards broke, so Howard & I paddled all of morning. Afternoon sat round, then fixed car for trip back. Dad went back with him.
15. Peeled yellow tomatoes, put up 12 pts. & 6 qts of them—took all day. Perfectly dead at night. Long letter from Rita about the York Harbor trip.
16. In bed nearly all day, slept all morning. Wrote letters in afternoon—seven in all.
17. Made chow chow, 10 pts. Very good. Took all morning. Aunt Etta came—looks dreadfully. Lay down in afternoon.
18. Cleared up chateau, labeled all jars. Letter from Howard asking Pere & me to dinner on Sunday.

[Germantown]

19. Mother & I went to Phila. Shopped before we went out. Each got a hat at Lit's. Jim Cheston came in evening.
20. Mother & Harry left by motor for Eversley—a bad day—Howard took me motoring to Valley Forge, came back to supper & was sweet. Sandy there.
21. Went to early church. Howard & Eddie Waters, a Harvard friend of his, came over for Pere & me. Went back to Camp Discharge for dinner. Met H's sister and husband, Rachel & Billy Read. Had a lovely time & went swimming. Howard back to G't'n for supper.

22. Started marmalade. Edith Houston came, went to town

23. Edith Kneeder came to lunch, left early. Went motoring with Howard. To the theatre with Taney.

24. E.C.H. was to come to lunch but didn't. Made marmalade. Dolly came. E. came & we all went to Ethel Jones' tea. Dolly spent night.

25. Huge box of roses from Howard. Hannah came to lunch—left soon after. Got supper, nobody but Tilly at home.

26. Jack brought plants over. E.C.H. came down. Mother came. Howard to lunch & we came down to Eversley in his car. A fine trip. Got here at 9 o'clock.

[Eversley]

27. Got ready for camping but didn't get off till afternoon & the breeze died. Dad, Van, Harry, Howard & I camped in Langford's Bay.

28. Lovely day & no breeze, got breakfast on shore then Harry, Howard & Dad went off to get oysters & Van & I cleaned up. Got home about 4. Howard & I went swimming. He talked again at night of marriage. We are to try probation engagement.

29. Went to town with Howard. Late afternoon he & Harry & I went off for the night, camping in the Reba Main. That night I promised to marry him & we told Harry. H. is a darling.

30. Waked up early & Howard & I went swimming. Had a perfect day talking & drifting down the river. H. & I motored up to Centreville & that night Mother came down & Howard talked to Dad & Mother.

OCTOBER

[Germantown]

1. Howard & I went back to Phila. Struck an awful storm, but even that was fun & we had a heavenly trip up. He came over at night, but we were both pretty tired.

[Eversley]

2. I came down on morning train. I feel as if it was all a dream, but a nice one.

3. Stayed in bed. Quite an attack of indigestion, couldn't even think.

4. Got up but still a bit wobbly, put brandy to peaches. Labeled some & made chow-chow. Mail brought a darling letter from Howard & a beautiful pin from Rachel & Billy Read.

5. Wrote letters. Cousin Ned & Cousin Julia Emory came to dinner. Still feel rocky & can't think much. Talked plans with Mother.

6. Met Pere in town. Got two darling letters from H. Pere & I sailed over to Quaker Neck for oysters. P. is the best. Just one week tonight since Howard & I became engaged. Letter from Howard's brother Alan.

7. *Made some progress in packing preserves, cut up marmalade. Pere, Mother & I discussed wedding plans! Engagement ring came from H. It's awful & has to go back. [I can't for the life of me understand this. It must refer to the ring's size.]*
8. *Labeled jars. Pere & I went to lunch at Holton's. Met mailman. Lovely bunch of lilies of valley from Howard & a letter from him & one from Helen MacLeod [an older sister of Howard's]. Pere went up. I got boxes.*
9. *Packed preserves, labeled, wrapped & fixed them up all day. Heavenly luncheon set from Marian [H's younger sister] & a dear letter from H.*
10. *Finished packing preserves & made marmalade. Packed & wrote letters.*
11. *Cleaned, made cake. Took boxes up to town. Letter from H. Washed hair. Howard & Dad came at 4:30. So glad to see him! Sat on porch & had a wonderful talk.*
12. *Cleared off. H., Van & I went for a sail. Dinner, then Howard & I went up to Phila. Glorious moonlight. Arrived at Camp Discharge at 10:10. Marian, & Cousin Mollie Dewees were there. [She had taken care of the family, and run Camp Discharge following their mother, Mary Biddle Wood's, death.]*
13. *Marian took me up to see Rachel and Elizabeth, wife of brother Alan Wood, then she & cousin Mollie stayed. Went to town to meet Howard to get ring. H. brought me home to Germantown & went. Telephone from Edith & Dolly. Jack came & I told him, also Lloyd.*
14. *Stayed in bed. Mother here. Wrote 30 notes. Marian, Rachel, Cousin Mollie, Helen, E.C.H. all came in afternoon. Howard came at night & mailed notes. Yellow chrysanthemums from Eddie Waters.*
15. *Letters from Jack, Taney, Lloyd, Ned B. Jack came over to bring corn. Little while later gorgeous pink roses—9 doz. from him. Lovely letter from E. Waters. H. came for dinner.*
16. *Mother & I went to town, took ring to be marked. Lovely sapphire & diamonds. Howard came in afternoon. Supper at Camp Discharge. I spent night. Mother & Pere, Harry & Helen for supper. Helen MacLeod there. Alan too.*
17. *All the family lovely. Marian & I walked over place. Laid out garden. Then went to Rachel's. Lunch at Nancy's with Howard. Went to see Aunt Mary. H. & I told everybody about engagement.*
18. *Rushed wildly to finish dress for Lillian Wood's wedding. Mother, Harry & I went over. Howard was there. Reception was great fun. Met all the family. H. came back to supper. Engagement announced.*
19. *H. & I went to early church. He left for Sunday school which he teaches at Calvary Church in Conshohocken. Came back for Mother, Pere & me for dinner at Camp Discharge. Rained All the family there. H. brought us home & stayed for supper.*

20. Letters every day—lovely ones. Rita came. Lunch at Bellevue, met Howard. Tea at Ritz with Lloyd etc. H. & I went to the Wright's for dinner, Rita there. Home early. He is such a darling.

21. E. Kneedler came. Rita after lunch. Went to see Maude. H. for supper, Rita. Lovely roses from Cliffy Payson, another Harvard classmate of H.W.'s & his wife. H. went pretty early.

22. Mother & I went to town with Rita. Had picture taken. Lunch at Bellevue. Howard came just for supper.

23. Mother left. Marian, Jean Todd, Cousin Mollie in morning. Afternoon, Maude, Mrs. T. Wood, Mrs. R. Morgan, Mrs. Walker, Ethel Clark. Got supper. Had lovely evening.

24. Raining hard. Went to town to dentist & got proofs of pictures. Howard came over to take E. Clark, Harry, Pere & me to Rachel's. Ran over mounted policeman. Took to hospital. Arrived at Rachel's, spent night.

25. Howard to breakfast. Rachel & I talked. Lunch at Camp D. Aunt Hannah Williams [a sister of Howard's late mother, Mary Biddle Wood], gave us a lovely clock. Marion, Pere, Clem Wood [another brother of H's], Cousin Mollie., H., & I—dinner & theatre.

26. Church with M., Clem, Cousin M. Riding with Howard, Pere etc. H. & I went to look at building site [for their new house] and decided it is lovely—dinner. Played tennis.

[Eversley]

27. Came down to Eversley early train. I was stiff from riding & tired & low spirited. Went to sleep all afternoon.

28. Still awfully stiff & gloomy. Hate to be that way. Sewed some. Went to town with Mother. Letter from H.

29. Sewed. I have depressed Dad & Mother to death. Letter from H.

30. Town with Mother. Letter from Howard, perfectly sweet. Sewed.

31. Cleaned, sewed. Dad not very well. Cuff buttons from Howard—in memory of the 28th.

NOVEMBER

1. Made cake, cleaned, 10 p.m. Howard, Marian, Clem, Pere came. So glad to see him all the clouds gone.

2. Walked round, sailed. Afternoon H. & I went for walk. Called on Cousin Lottie. After supper sat in chateau with a big fire. It was perfect.

[Germantown]

3. Clem, Marian, H. & I went up. Good trip up. Lunch at Camp D. M. & I took nap.

Went for a ride, & I got home at 5:30 .To bed early. Dress from Mrs. Smith.

4. Cleaned up house. Home to lunch & played to Harry. Howard came to supper.

5. To town, dentist, shopping. Sewed. Telephone from Mother that Dad was sick. Harry & I left G't'n at 11: 50 p.m. arrived here at 3 o'clock to find him better.

6. Slept three hours. Dad much better. Took afternoon train. Howard met me at West Phila.—was darling.

7. Town—had suit fitted. Dad & Harry came. Got supper. Howard came. Went to see Maude. He left at 10 o'clock.

8. Town to have picture taken. Later Dad & I went to Camp Discharge for lunch. H. & I motored down. Lovely trip. Stopped at Piney Grove. Arrived 7:30. Perfect evening. The best yet.

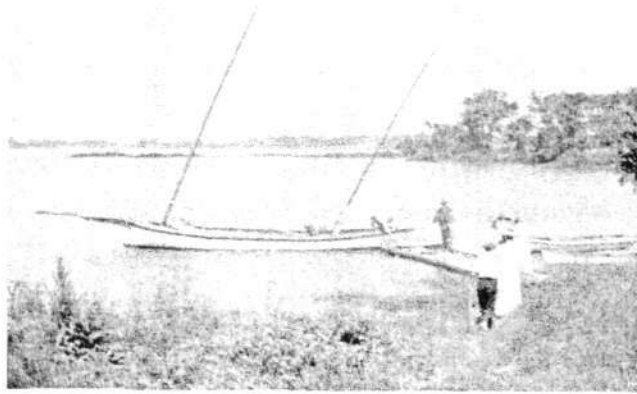
[Eversley]

9. Raining. H. & I went to fix car. Then had church at home, then a paddle & a walk & a perfect time in the chateau. H & Mother went up at 4. Van & I went to get float off marsh.

10. Wrote to Howard. Sewed all day.

This is the last entry in the diary. My dear husband Harry Wilmer died on December 31st of that year. He is buried at the Chesterfield cemetery in Centreville.

Howard and Phebe were married a year later from the house in Germantown. The photographs of our wedding show me still in deep mourning, wearing a widow's bonnet and long black veil.



A Sailing Trip on the Reba Main

Chapter 11



PHEBE WILMER WOOD, ALICE EMORY WILMER
AND HOWARD WOOD

1914

Eversley Farm

Wednesday, October 1st, 1914

My dear "Howard,"

In the excitement of this most important event, I let Phebe go away this morning without the family mileage and without knowing what money she had with her, so though I realize how willing you would be to take care of her necessary, I thought it best to let Lloyd meet her at the gate and remind her that she had no ticket with her. I was afraid that the dear little soul might be walking in such a dream that she would never think about not having it and so find herself in an embarrassment after she left you. I remembered it after you got out the front gate, but you both probably thought the frantic waving was only intended to speed you on your way.

I seemed somehow to be tongue-tied last night but I know you can appreciate that Phebe's choice of a husband is among the things nearest my heart. If you will have the absolute confidence in her that she deserves, she will return it as she has done to us with the same trust and devotion.

It simply took my breath when I heard of her decision for I did not believe she would marry at all. If she continues to feel the happiness in you that she seems now to have, it will be a very great burden lifted from my heart, for I will feel that she has someone to love her and to care for her after my journey is done.

Have patience with her little girlish irresponsibilities for the solid gold is all there.

We have as a family had to follow the policy of laughing through life else we might have cried more than was necessary, and sometimes I think we must seem to be very shallow and light minded, but it has helped us over many rough places, and I have always

felt this—the first duty after sincerity—was being agreeable, for there is no use in making the world rougher than it is—even for people in whom you have no special interest.

Phebe seems to have been considering this more seriously than I realized, but the reason I have asked that there be no hasty action is because I want her to have plenty of daylight—to think it all over, in the new light of her acceptance of you—

You and your work must be considered and therefore I only ask for it to be an open question for a short time. For what is more harassing than uncertainty in such a case?

I can only pray that everything will work out for the best—and thus I can have the comfort of you and the dependability and honestness of purpose which I believe to belong to you.

With a prayer for God's blessing on you both.

I am faithfully yours,

Alice E. Wilmer

What a whirlwind we were all caught up in. Back and forth between Eversley and Germantown, letters coming, letters arriving. The excitement had me under the weather for a few days, but I rallied, I had to.

I learned Phebe and Howard planned to build a house on his 53-acre portion of the Wood property, Camp Discharge. It was so named because that was where Union troops were mustered out following the War between the States. It is across the Schuylkill River from the town of Conshohocken where the Alan Wood Steel Company mill is located. This company has grown from the smithy James Wood, who emigrated from Dublin, started in 1792. It is now a large and prosperous steel works with nine furnaces which have a capacity of manufacturing 250,000 tons of steel a year.

The Wood family resided at 1016 Spruce Street in Philadelphia, but Howard's father had also built himself a country house with stables for their horses and fine stone barns for the cows. It was, however, a gentleman's estate—not a working farm.

It was borne in upon me that my dear little country girl was marrying into a family of considerable means, and I worried about how she would fare in such an atmosphere.

On the last day of the year, December 31st, 1913, my dear Harry departed

this life at the age of 60. After all those years of traveling for McCormick Harvesting, he had been looking forward to retirement, to spending the rest of his days at Eversley in the company of his family.

Although I have enjoyed recounting important moments in my life while writing this memoir, I find my hand simply has not the strength to pick up a pen and dip it into the inkwell when I think of detailing the particulars of his death. The reader will have to depend on his or her own memories of deep sorrow and loss to understand the dark, lackluster days we all lived through. It was particularly hard on Phebe who had been riding high on the wings of love with expectations of a wonderful future lying in wait, to be plunged into the depths of sorrow. My heart ached for her, for all my children, and for myself.

The Emorys had the reputation of being military men, heroes, if you like. They had done brave deeds and had medals to prove it. Harry Wilmer's quieter courage in enduring bitter financial reverses, I feel, took a more refined form of bravery. He made a success of the life of a traveling salesman—butt of so many coarse jokes. He had the respect and esteem of his family and of those who knew him well. His gift of making us laugh at our misfortunes, his unfailing kindness and courtesy to children as well as to strangers, gained him our admiration as well as our love.

Not that he was lacking in physical courage. I will never forget the time he was charged by the bull, Barney. I heard him shout for one of the men. Running from the house to see what was going on, I watched Harry reach out as the animal thundered up to him. He grabbed the ring in its nose, and wrestled it to a skidding, plunging, snorting halt. It was done with the cool skill of a matador. He was able to hold on until Bill Deaton ran up waving a pitchfork and chased the brute away.

For days after his funeral, between receiving calls from well-meaning relatives and friends, each one bearing a pound cake, that traditional panacea for sorrow, I paced the fields of Eversley. The weather was bitter cold, the wind tore at my black widow's garments. Young Harry walked beside me trying to persuade me to come indoors and rest. Dimly it registered in a remote corner of my consciousness what a kind and considerate doctor he had become, as well as a loving son. They were all wonderful. Phebe saw to it that the house was fit for the unending stream of visitors. The stiff funereal flowers, were reassembled by her talented hands into charming bouquets that *did* cheer our mourning household. Pere was given leave for a few days, and Van saw to the farm. Jo, of

course, as always, was whole host. It was like those long ago days after Harry first left the Shore to go with McCormick, when we all pitched in together. I would be happy for a few seconds reliving those times, and then plunge once again into despair when I realized that now there was never going to be another letter or visit from Dad to look forward to.

The McCormick Harvesting Company allotted me a small widow's pension, but it was only a fraction of the money Harry's salary and commissions had contributed to the farm and household expenses. There was a stilted letter of condolence from Mr. Conroy, who had been the bane of Harry's existence for all those years.

It was at this very moment I learned from a local carpenter whom Harry had engaged some time previously to give him an estimate, the truth of the old saying, to misquote, "It never rains, but the roof leaks." I was at my wits end. Generous as the local merchants were at giving credit, Eversley was already overextended. There were three loans outstanding to Mr. Hiram Dudley, the Baltimore commission merchant, who had moved over from the Western Shore. He was buying up farms all over the county whose owners had become indebted to him. I vowed he would not get his hands on mine.

Phebe's wedding, of course, had to be postponed because we were in mourning, but plans went forward for their house. Howard engaged a prominent architect by the name of Windsor Hastings. It seemed to me that Howard and Phebe were putty in the hands of this rather formidable personage, who had definite ideas about the style in which they should live. He drew up a plan which included an enormous dining room for the dinner parties he envisioned them giving, a huge pantry and kitchen, with servants rooms above. Phebe confessed to me she found it overwhelming. Her dream house was a small bungalow, surrounded by a white picket fence, covered with climbing roses. The Three Bears, in one of her childhood picture books, had lived in a house along those lines, as I recall.

Like most men, Howard had limited ideas on the subject of houses. If pressed he might have come up with a cross between the rustic comforts of a log fishing camp and the solid granite respectability of Calvary Episcopal Church in Conshohocken, where despite their Quaker origins, the Wood family worshipped. I seem to remember being told that an early ancestor of Howard's

had been "read out of Meeting" for wearing a bonnet trimmed with too many ruffles. The only female Woods I ever encountered favored well-cut tweeds and shoes with sensible heels, even when dressed up to go to the Friday afternoon concerts of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Quakers are fine people, but it has been my observation that they are inclined to value the sensible, the solid, the durable over lightness, balance and color.

The house Phebe and Howard finally got was a three-storied gray stone Pennsylvania "farmhouse." There was a white-columned portico entrance, balancing porches at either end, and an ell at the back for the kitchen and its "Myrmidons." Opposite the front door on the other side of the wide entrance hall was another door with a glass window through which you could see the garden. There was a fireplace along one wall of this hall, a whim of Phebe's I could never see the sense of. I don't ever remember seeing it lit. The living and dining rooms which opened off the hallway were beautifully paneled with delicately carved mantelpieces. All woodwork was white so the effect was light and airy. There were six bedrooms!

Sometime during this period, Howard began to withdraw into himself. He would rarely speak unless spoken to, and then his replies were monosyllabic, often curt. He seemed like a sleepwalker, not really present, staring into space. Phebe urged him to go to a doctor Harry recommended. The diagnosis was severe depression. How could this have happened, I wondered, to a young man standing on the threshold of happiness? Phebe was alternately hurt and puzzled, but did her best to cheer him. A regimen of outdoor exercise was prescribed, and it was suggested by Harry that Howard spend time at Eversley, working on the farm whenever he felt up to it. He came down accompanied by a young man as nurse/companion. They stayed next door at the chateau and took their meals with us. The young nurse made himself agreeable, though his grammar left something to be desired. We all made an effort to include Howard in the conversation, but mostly he sat like a graven image.

My heart ached for my dear girl. What was she getting herself into? It was so strange. Except for the dullness in his eyes, to all outward appearances, Howard looked like a healthy man, but inwardly Once I'd left a rag doll in the rain.

We hung it on the line, and its outside dried, but the stuffing had congealed into sodden cotton lumps. Howard reminded me of that doll. He worked mechanically alongside the other men getting in the hay. Most days he and the companion took out the rowboat and while the latter trolled, Howard dutifully pulled on the oars. He ate what was put before him but with no evidence of enjoyment.

"Bless his bones," Jo said to me. "It hurts my heart to see my black-haired boy so sad."

Eversley, April 12, 1914

Tuesday morning 6:30 a.m.

My beloved Phebe;

I am thankful for the cool change on your account as well as mine. Howard seems to be getting along as well as usual. Was very cheerful yesterday and ate his supper especially, with good appetite. I had the little broiler chicken for him. He ate up every scrap of what I gave him and finished up with junket and the cream from her Jersey cows that Miss Sue gave us. We watered all your flowers, while H. sat in the arbor.

Van goes to Centreville and takes H's scales to return—If you can will you buy two yards of yellow lawn to make a bag for my blanket? Please take care of yourself my beloved child. Give a great deal of love to the boys for me. Ask Harry to send me a collar for Jack and we will not let him wear it hunting. He has lost pounds but hunts in the asparagus bed when nothing else is in hand—

Devotedly, Mother

Tell Harry not to forget his father's picture for Miss Sue. She is watching the mail for it.

I felt the weight of Howard's gloom to be nearly unbearable. It was on the tip of my tongue several times to suggest to Phebe that she reconsider her promise to be his wife. The vow "in sickness and in health" is, after all, binding only *after* marriage.

Then little by little the clouds began to break away. One bright morning Howard came in from the Chateau, smiled tentatively and said, "Good morning." He looked as if he had just emerged from a root cellar and seemed

dazzled by the light. A few days later he paid off the nurse and sent him back to Philadelphia on the same train our dear girl came down on. The next day he and Phebe spent on the river. When they returned it was obvious from their relaxed and happy manner, that, in the words of Mr. Browning, "God was in his Heaven and all was right with the world."

All was right with their world, but in my case it was quite the opposite.

The worry over the roof had me at my wit's end. It was then I came across an article in the *Queen Anne's County Observer* about the Hermitage. I really don't know where the paper finds its reporters. This piece was hideously gushy and overwritten. Nevertheless it gave me the insane idea of approaching my friend Sue Williams. She had inherited the Hermitage from her father Dr. Otho Williams who was connected with the Tilghman family, to whom the land and manor house had belonged originally, certainly as far back as Poplar Grove had belonged to the Emory's.

Sue Williams was wealthy and had a reputation in the county for generosity. She had transformed the Hermitage into a show place. She'd built magnificent new barns to house a prize-winning Jersey herd. The house was enlarged and remodeled in the latest Italianate fashion, very handsome. I myself prefer simplicity.

Was it possible to approach a friend in a straightforward businesslike way and ask for the loan of a substantial amount of money? All the rules of propriety shouted "unthinkable." Women were considered to be too delicate, refined or ignorant to be able to discuss financial matters. Sue and I were refined, but delicate and ignorant we were not. Would I be forfeiting her friendship? That was the most important consideration. She was one of the few women of my acquaintance whose interests ranged, as did mine, far beyond the confines of parlor and kitchen.

She was an absolute fund of information on the latest scientific developments in agriculture for one thing, but even more interesting, to this country woman, was the fact that she had traveled widely and mingled with people of importance wherever she found herself. Her observations about her forays into the world outside the borders of Queen Anne's County were as intelligent, witty and pungent as Jonathan Swift's were about the travels of Gulliver.

I have rarely had such a hard time making up my mind about a course of

action, but finally gaining courage enough to take the plunge, I dropped her a note asking if I might call on her on a matter of business.

In due course I received a reply naming a convenient day and suggesting that if I could manage to get myself to Centreville, I could travel the rest of the way in her motorcar which always came in to pick up supplies on that day. She would also undertake to have her driver return me to town. All went according to plan and I found myself bumping and rattling down Tilghman Neck to the Hermitage at a terrifying speed. What noisy, foul smelling vehicles motor cars were in those days!

I repaired the trip's damage in the Hermitage's handsome bathroom. A faucet gushed hot water at the twist of a wrist! Would the time ever come, I wondered, when Eversley would have such a luxury? Think of not having to heat water on the stove or carry heavy water jugs up and down the stairs. Imagine no chamber pots to carry outside to empty in the privy!

Miss Sue was a handsome woman. She must have been very pretty as a girl. She wore a large-brimmed hat and carried a parasol to protect her from the sun. I was equally equipped. After a warm greeting she said, "Come take a tour around the barns. I've just bought a pretty little Jersey, I want your opinion on. She has the astonishing registered name of *Eminent Lady's Honeymoon*. We call her Honey."

As we strolled down the gravel path leading to the farm buildings, I caught glimpses of the river through the trees. The vista is not unlike Poplar Grove's, though the boxwood is smaller than ours.

"Alice, my dear," Sue began, "your dear boy, Harry, has just sent me the nicest photograph of his father. He was a fine man, charming manners and a twinkle in his eye. Harry Wilmer knew how to make a party go. Intelligent as well. I liked him very much." She offered me her condolences which I accepted. Speaking of my loss is very difficult, but on the other hand it is impossible not to acknowledge it. Sue waved her hand dismissively changing the subject as we approached the stable.

Gossip in Centreville is that it had been built at a cost of \$10,000 and was a copy of one where King Alphonso of Spain kept his prize horses.

"You'd rather see the cows wouldn't you?" Before I could answer she said, "I hope McCormick Harvesting has done the decent thing by you, after all the years Harry put in with them."

"They're giving me a small pension. I'll manage. I always have."

Just then, Mr. English, Sue's farm manager, appeared at the wide open doorway to the barn, followed by several herdsman who began to parade cows before us.

"I'm sure you will, you're a good farmer, but my dear, you must promise me that if there is anything on earth I can do to help, you will not hesitate to call on me." She stabbed the point of her parasol hard into the hoof trodden earth of the pound for emphasis.

It is, of course, what people always say at such times, almost as empty a social phrase as "How do you do?" when the last thing any of us wants to know is how someone *is* doing. It was also my opening if I had the courage to seize it.

The Jerseys were circling round us, lovely creatures with their curried fawn-colored coats, curving horns and chocolate eyes fringed by long lashes.

"Allow me to introduce *Fairy Lad's Goldenrod* and *Naples Regina*," said Sue, "and this beauty bears the impressive title of *Maryland's Colonial Eastern Shore*. What is it you've nicknamed her, Tom?" she called to the Negro leading the animal. He stopped, took off his cap and ran his hand along the cow's neck. "This here is 'Loney,' ma'am. Prettiest cow in the herd, and the milkingest, too, ain't you, Loney?"

As he led her back to the barn, Sue said under her breath, "Well hung udder."

"Sue," I took a deep breath and plunged. "if you and I were businessmen, and I wanted to see you on a business matter, I'd ask you to step around to my office, or I'd come to yours and put a proposal to you in a perfectly straightforward way. Unfortunately, custom does not give that liberty to two women who are friends."

"What on earth are you trying to say, Alice?" she interrupted. "You and I don't put much stock in frills and formality, we're a pair of old farmers."

"Prize animals," Mr. English bustled up. I thanked him for the trouble he had taken in getting the herd shined and polished for us. "It's a pleasure, Mrs. Wilmer, showing 'em to someone like yourself who appreciates fine livestock. Now, some of Miss Sue's guests from the Western Shore—if you'll excuse my saying so Ma'am—don't seem to know which end is the milk and which end the moo." He threw back his head and roared with laughter, in which I joined. Sue smiled slightly. I imagine she's heard the joke often. "I feed a mixture of bran,

linseed oil and cotton seed meal," he rattled on, escorting us toward the barn. "My herd, I mean the Hermitage's herd, averages 8,000 lbs. of butterfat a year, leading the state test!"

He ushered us inside, "Swinging stanchions for up to 50 head," he waved his hand. "Freshwater drinking troughs. Notice the concrete floors, can't be beat for easy cleaning."

"Mr. English, I find the commandment 'Thou shalt not covet' a hard one to keep after a visit to the Hermitage barns," I said as Sue and I turned and raising our parasol's against the sun, headed back toward the house.

"You said just the right thing to English, Alice," said Sue, "His enthusiasm can be a little tedious, but what a wonderful manager. None of this would be possible without him."

We were seating ourselves on rocking chairs on the verandah that ran along the front of the house.

A maid stepped through the French door carrying a silver tray with a pitcher of ice tea and glasses.

"Now," said Sue handing me my glass, "what was this business you wanted to discuss before we fell into the clutches of Mr. English?"

My heart began beating very fast. "The roof at Eversley must be repaired. I can't go to the bank. I'm overextended there. If I could borrow enough from you for a new roof, I'd pay back what I could each month, with whatever interest you thought fair." There I'd got it out, I swallowed some tea, and set the glass on the wide wooden arm of the rocker, holding it tight so my hand wouldn't shake.

"Why, certainly," she said simply, "I will have my lawyer in Baltimore make the necessary arrangements. He'll send the papers over to you." It was as if I'd asked for the loan of a handkerchief. She asked me questions regarding the estimates of cost I had received from the lumber company.

"A word of advice," she continued, "if you're doing this, you must do it right, Alice. I suggest you use these new asbestos shingles. They are fireproof, and you won't have to worry about sparks from your chimney."

As I began to thank her, she cut me off abruptly and changed the subject. Sue inquired about the children and told me of her concerns as to how she should dispose of the Hermitage, as she had no direct heirs.

The motor car had been parked in the shade of the silver maple, and when it

was time for me to leave, Sue sent someone for the driver. He cranked up the machine and came around the circle. I settled into the back seat pulling my motoring veil over my face. Sue waved from the top of the steps, calling "asbestos," as the car sputtered off.

A check arrived in the mail within the week. Encouraged by this boost, urged on by Harry who got together with the other children and that dear Howard, who made a most handsome contribution, I began to plan some other much needed improvements to Eversley—central heating and a bathroom.

I sent Sue my first payment in the amount agreed upon and by return mail, received a most astonishing reply. I have kept the letter in the drawer of my night table, along with my prayer book and other treasures that are dear to me.

*The Hermitage
Centreville, Maryland*

My dear Alice:

I received your letter upon my return to the farm after a visit to Baltimore where I spent all my time cooped up in the musty offices of lawyers and bankers. It is good to sit here looking out at the Chester, and listening to the insects proclaiming it will be another hot day. I hope it will bring a thunderstorm. The crops need rain badly.

My banker informed me that an investment on which I had taken a "flyer" has brought in a handsome windfall. As a consequence, I have decided that it would give me pleasure to cancel the loan to you.

I know we agreed that this was to be a business arrangement between two old farmers, and that you would never have accepted the money on any other terms. I ask you to look at the matter from my point of view. Through no fault or merit of our own, we were both born into wealthy families. Through no fault or merit of our own, my father prospered, yours did not.

I would be the last to deny the comforts and advantages of wealth, but they tend to shelter one from many of life's realities. I have made the Hermitage into a showplace. I suppose I could do even more to enhance it, stuff more and more beautiful furniture into the elegantly proportioned rooms, fill the pantry shelves with more fine china and cut glass. I suppose I could buy more jewelry, to adorn my person, but I find my very good string of pearls and my diamond brooch sufficient.

The farm has been put into first rate condition and needs no major expenditures at

the moment. My means are sufficient for what travel and entertainment I desire. I find my interest in both is waning.

What I want is to do real things with my wherewithal. What could be more real than fixing a leaking roof?

It will be hard for your pride to accept this. Don't think of it as charity to you, but as an award for hard work, an independent spirit and courage. Soldiers are constantly receiving medals. No doubt your Emory ancestors have drawers full of them. The Eversley roof is your medal, and a far more sensible one than a bit of ribbon and bronze.

I don't want any further discussion of this matter.

Sincerely, your friend,

Susan Williams

I had grown up, as I suppose most people have, with the admonition well drilled into me that "It is more blessed to give than to receive." I had been taught that giving was a duty as well as a blessing. I was accustomed to *give* of my time, my hospitality, the farm's bounty, and from time to time, what money I could spare. Until I read Sue's letter, it had never occurred to me, how difficult it is to become a *receiver*.

All my upbringing had taught me that I must not be beholden. It was not in my temperament to become a fawning sycophant in exchange for help. Had I become a self-seeking beggar?

I drifted into an uneasy sleep that night awakening just as the rooster began to crow. As I dressed, I looked through my bedroom window down into the kitchen yard and the hen house and two sheds Jo called the *upmust* and *lowmust* beyond it. I thought of all the life that she and I had put into transforming what had been the filthy neglected quarters of an uneducated, drunken farmer, into a well-kept home and a thrifty farm. Eversley had demanded a great deal of us both, and had rewarded us both. It would not be right to allow false pride to put the home we had made at risk. I must swallow that pride and accept Sue Williams' gift.

I went downstairs to the dining room and took my usual place at the head of the table. It was rare to be the only one sitting there. The children were beginning their own lives and careers in other places. What was an old widow woman

doing spending other people's money to enlarge and enhance a place simply for her own pleasure? What good was Eversley? Was I selfish to hang on to it? The sun slanted through the lattices that screened the kitchen porch. Before long, Frank and Sidney appeared in the doorway as they did each morning waiting for my orders for the day.

"Beautiful mawnin', Miss Alice," said Sidney, the optimist.

"If we don't git rain soon them beans gonna burn up," said Frank, the pessimist. I laid out their day's work, as Joanna came in from the kitchen.

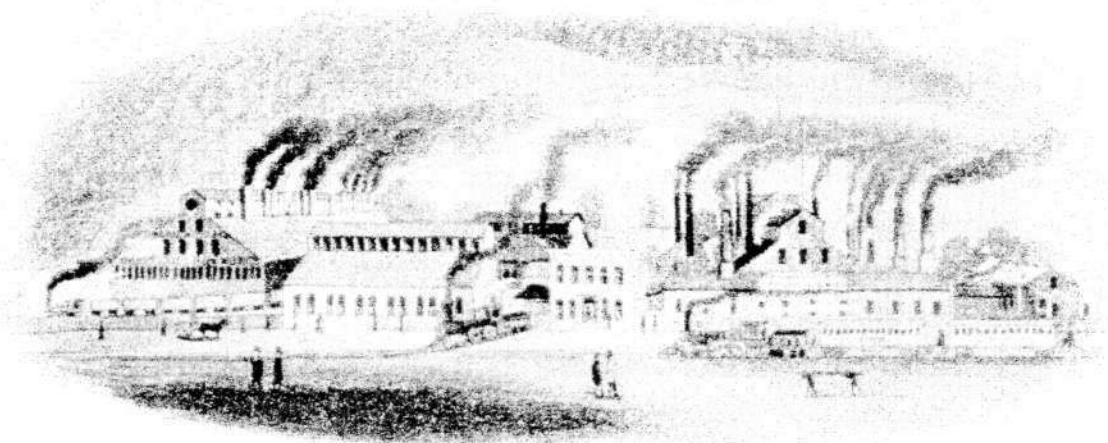
"The Lord done give us a real pretty day," she said setting down a plate of her rolls covered by a napkin.

"Frank says we need rain."

"Oh, him," she said with scorn. "That man just don't know *how* to be a grateful receiver." The pantry door swung closed behind her.

A grateful receiver! Joanna's wisdom rang through me. I must accept Sue's gift in the spirit in which it was offered. Accept it with my head held high and gratitude in my heart.

After breakfast I went to my desk and wrote thanking Sue Williams and inviting her to come to tea the following week.



ALAN WOOD STEEL COMPANY
SCHUYLKILL IRON WORKS

Chapter 12



ALICE EMORY WILMER AND PHEBE WILMER WOOD AT PHEBE'S WEDDING

1914-1915

Public Ledger

Philadelphia, November 10, 1914

A quiet wedding will take place today at 4 o'clock in St. Luke's church, Germantown, when Miss Phebe Ingersoll Wilmer, daughter of Mrs. Harry Bond Wilmer of Centreville, Md., will become the bride of Howard Wood, Jr.

Those Society reporters who pester you so over the telephone may call it a quiet wedding, but let me tell you it didn't seem so to me. I was determined to have things "just so" for my dear girl's day, and that takes work. I wanted to do her proud, so the house had been cleaned from top to bottom. We had splurged on florist's flowers to make the rooms look festive, and of course, we had extra food in the larder to be able to offer something to those who might stop by. Because we were still in mourning for my darling Harry, there was no reception.

The bride will be given in marriage by her brother, Dr. Harry B. Wilmer.

Turning to see her coming down the aisle on the arm of her brother, dear as he is, was a moment when I missed their father so intensely I nearly gave way.

The bride will wear a cream-colored faille silk gown trimmed with cream-colored silk net. The skirt is made on plain lines and ends in a pointed train. The bridal veil is of tulle fastened with orange blossoms. Lilies of the Valley and white Killarney roses form the bouquet.

I did not think the wedding dress at all becoming. The new draped look does nothing for a girl's figure. I was hoping perhaps Phebe could have worn the beautiful dress made for my wedding. That boned-fitted jacket showed off a girl's waist. But girls today don't lace themselves in the way we did and very sensible, too, though as a result, they have no waists.

The maid of honor, Miss Gertrude Outerbridge, will be gowned in white charmeuse, made with a V-neck and trimmed with chiffon. A touch of color is given by an Alice blue velvet girdle and a black velvet hat, trimmed with a single pink rose. She will carry a shower bouquet of "My Maryland" roses.

Rita looked most distinguished. She has a stately carriage, unusual in one so young.

Mr. Wood will have as his best man Clement B. Wood and the ushers will be Eldridge Morgan, Edward A. Waters, Van Bibber Wilmer, Percival Dove of Andover, Mass, Clifford Payson of Boston and Alan Wood 3rd. Owing to a recent death in the bride's family there will be no reception. After an extended trip Mr. and Mrs. Wood will live at the Wood summer home near Conshohocken until their new home in Lower Merion is completed.

And dear Van! He held his end up splendidly in the midst of all those New England friends of Howard's with their degrees from Harvard College. He was a true Maryland gentleman and a gracious host.

"But weren't it a lucky day for us all when Mr. Howard Wood—*my* black-haired boy—was the one Miss Phebe chose?" Joanna bragged as we worked to get the house ready. "He's one rich man that ain't going to have *no* trouble getting into heaven no matter what the Bible say, generous as he is. I always favored him. Picked him out right off from out of her yahd fulla beaus. But I didn't know he was no big Yankee businessman, whose grandfather built hisself a steel factory."

She had breezed through the rooms, rubbing up the furniture, pushing the carpet sweeper in a high good humor. I had worked along beside her, but my spirits were more subdued. Already I was missing my dear girl.

Though exhausted, I could not resist sending off a letter the night of the wedding.

To Mrs. Howard Wood Jr.
Potter Hotel
Santa Barbara, California

Nov. 10, 1914
Germantown, Philadelphia

My dearest Baby and my dear New Boy—

It is just 9:45 and Harry has gone to bed as he may have to go out on a house call. I have made him sleep in his own bed and we have the door wide open—Clem brought me home in good shape and stayed to supper. We had a wild discussion afterwards about which arm a man should give when walking with a lady and taking her in to dinner etc. Clem and Harry on one side. Pere and myself on the other. We called up the N. American, and afterwards Rita, but nobody was convinced except in their own opinion.

[Van had had to hurry right back to Eversley after the ceremony as he was supervising the enormous renovations we were undertaking.]

Van telephoned me and says the main building of the house is all stuccoed and they are putting up the back porch, and that they have plastered inside the 3rd story. The window is cut in my room and looks well. I think this is all I have to tell except that I love you so dearly that I can hardly express it—and that you will never be out of my thoughts. I will try only to think of the pleasant things and will also try to mind what Howard says and not work too hard. God bless both of you and keep you safe until we meet again,

*Devotedly,
Mother*

Tuesday Nov. 11th, 1914

My beloved Baby—

Another day has passed and I am thinking of you speeding along now past Chicago—I hope you are resting after the six hours in Chicago—I wrote you last night and now I shall tell you how today has passed. I have not been out at all. Rita has been down and spent the morning with me.

[Friends kept dropping by all day to see Phebe's wedding presents, and also to keep me from getting down in the dumps, I suspect.]

Marian Wood could not get Bailey's man until Friday morning. [Bailey, Banks and Biddle was one of the most reputable stores in Philadelphia for jewelry, silver and fine china.] They will come and pack Friday morning and get the silver away

Friday afternoon, and the furniture will be taken Saturday morning and china hauled over to Camp Discharge. I will stay until Saturday afternoon train and see it off and the room straightened up again. Van telephoned me that it is bitterly cold and uncomfortable at Eversley and begs me to stay here as long as I can—so that it is best for me to have a reason to do so.

We had a fine supper party tonight—Marian, Jean, Biddle, Clem, Billy, Rachel, Pere, Harry and self—Jo outdid herself with the chicken etc.

Mrs. Howard Wood Jr.
Moana Hotel
Honolulu

Sunday Nov. 15, 1914

My darling baby—

You should now be at Santa Barbara and I wonder what my children are doing today. I hope you are having the very best and happiest time, and along with it plenty and plenty of rest, so that you can enjoy every bit of it.

We have a rainy day at last! Began coming down sometime in the night and has been an old-fashioned pour all day. The furniture men from Norristown got here at 6:30 a.m.! I dressed in a jiffy and saw they were moving boxes and barrels etc. The dressing table came and I think will please you. The standards are lovely and just what you wanted. Everything went over and I sent the linen too because I thought you might want it when you first get to Camp Discharge. Besides this house is so unprotected. We kept the big mahogany Grandfather's clock because the clock man felt that it would be best not to move it in a furniture van—and I thought you could take it in the car. I got things cleaned up and everything back in its old state by lunch.

After office hours if you please, I went with Harry to the G'twn Theatre and saw a movie. He wanted to go very much and I really enjoyed it after the first senseless picture was through with and the story began.

Today I went to early church and thought of my dear girl and boy and prayed very earnestly that all the blessings possible would come to you both. We have all just had supper and I am back at my dear children's letter. Harry has been perfectly lovely and has taken the best care of me. Insists on sleeping with me at night, though I think I would sleep all right—certainly as long as I am here, and there will be so many interesting developments at Eversley that I shall have plenty to write you about.

Just think you have been Mrs. Wood a week yesterday. I suppose you will be entirely accustomed to the sound by the time we see you again.

God bless you both,
Devotedly,
Mother

Mrs. Henry Hollyday Goldsborough
The Albion
900 Cathedral Street
Baltimore, Maryland

Friday, Nov. 13th

Dearest Alice—

I am still living over my visit with you, and all the pleasure it brought me. Just think what I would have missed if I hadn't come! It is all over now, and Phebe has begun married life with the best husband you could wish for, and will have every comfort on earth. So you must try and live in her happiness, and be truly thankful she will be near you.

I arrived home in fine condition, and Margaret [her daughter] followed Tuesday. We talk of nothing else but the wedding! I can't tell you how happy I was to be there, and, as for the Wood family, they, one and all, appealed to me. Isn't Marion splendid?, and what an attractive face Rachel has, and Clem's face shows what a substantial man he is—in fact they are just the kind of family for Phebe to be appreciated.

I am so glad I saw Phebe's new home. What a delight it will be to them to furnish it, and won't they have the most beautiful things in it?

Have you ever known such an autumn? The weather seemed made for Phebe—and if the old saying is true "Happy is the bride that the sun shines on," Phebe will be showered with happiness. Many times I thought of dear Mr. Wilmer. How proud he would have been of his beautiful daughter on her wedding day! Radiant in her beauty and just the same darling child she always has been. O! if he could have been spared to see that wonderful day! and given her his blessing—God willed otherwise and one must accept and bow to his will, and though now we see through a glass darkly—the time will come when our eyes will be opened and we shall know why this sorrow had to come. No one can tell you how relieved I was to have you bear up so bravely through it all. And now you are at "Eversley" with a thousand things to attend to and before you realize it P.& H. will be back and you will be together for a happy Xmas.

I want you to come for a visit and see my apartment here at the Albion. My guest room is comfortable and you will have your own private bath!

Won't we do some talking? Margaret told me she was just seated in the train to go out to Merion when who should walk in but Helen Parker, so they sat together. H. was going out to her sister's. It is certainly a year of weddings. I am glad Harry's comes in 1915. You didn't tell me if I should mention to anyone that the time has been fixed, so unless I hear I will be a "know nothing" when questions are asked.

I would adore to be at "Eversley" this a.m. and see how much has been done since I saw it in September. The weather has been so perfect for so many, many weeks—I am sure much has been accomplished. Wouldn't I love to be sitting on the new porch this gorgeous morning and looking at the lovely river and drinking in the pure air?

Phebe has a job before her when she acknowledges all those hundreds of presents—but she needn't hurry. Agnes Whiting, who was married Oct. 19th has just (today) thanked M.—almost a month—although I do think that rather late.

With my dearest love and thanks for allowing us to be part of that beautiful occasion,

Love as always,

Kate

*Mrs. Howard Wood Jr.
Moana Hotel
Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands*

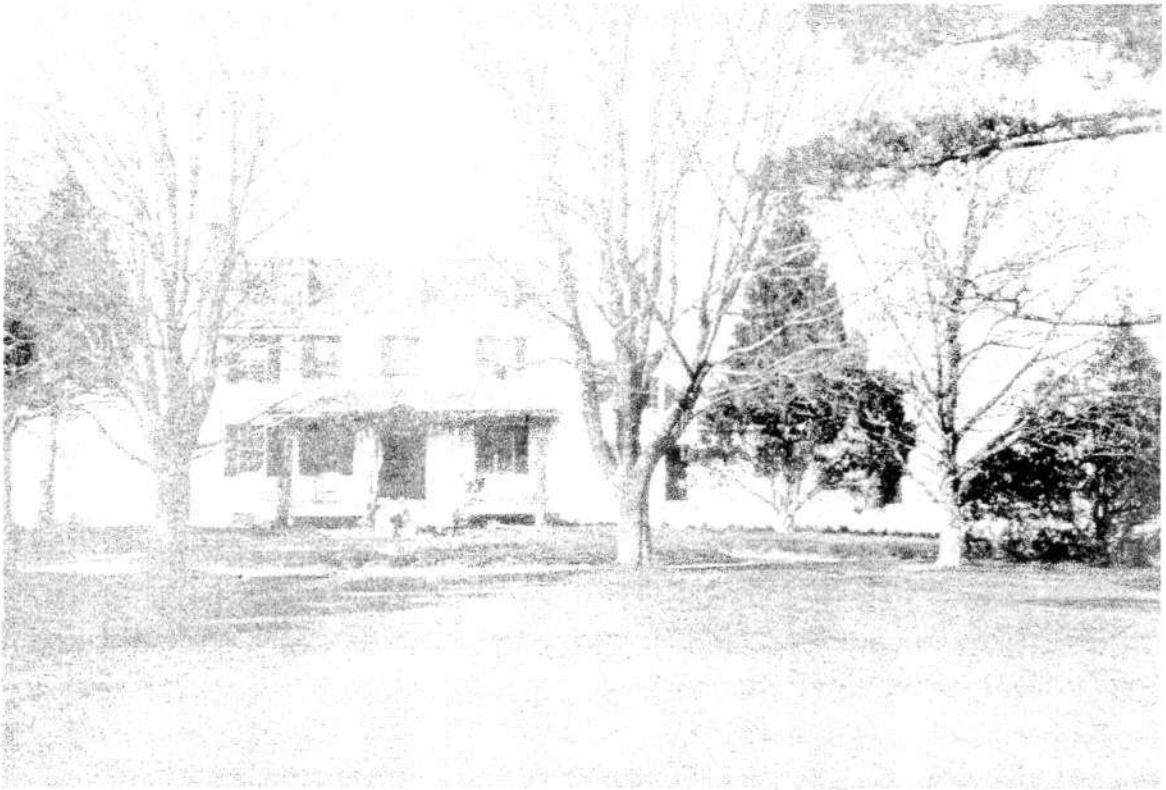
Eversley, Nov. 24th

My darling Phebe:

The house seems to get bigger and bigger and further from the end as it grows colder and later. We are today stuccoing the summer kitchen which is I am afraid rather unsightly as to proportion. I am already planning for trellises and Silver Moon roses to hide it and when the cherry tree grows it will help the cause. As far as proportions go it seems to get more and more desperate. They are putting a little ornamentation on the dormer. I cannot tell whether it is right or not. It looks squinched to me, but it is so cold I am losing my own sense of proportion.

I am getting petrified at the amount there is to do and the time they will take and don't know what it will cost.

The house looks like a Hotel it is so stretched out but it is as a whole perfectly lovely—irregular and rambling and though in detail it is not all right—in general effect



EVERSLEY

it is lovely. Don't make the mistake of not having the transom glass over your living room glass doors. Mine are too short and would have looked much better for having them.

I am anxious about how Ma will hold out and I am sure we cannot get through the painting of the house this fall. It will have to wait for spring. I have got Charlie sweeping the steps down. You have never seen so much lime on the floors and furniture in any place in your life. I think the plasterers have done more to dishearten us than anything else. The stucco looks fine outside and is a beautiful gray color, but it will be prettier white, I think. It is cracking a great deal but they say that can be filled in with wash. I know you are going to be delighted with the house when it is finished.

I am wondering what you are doing in that land of balmy breezes—and I am so glad at what you say about the good care Howard takes of you. You must do the same for him, dear boy, and there is no greater satisfaction than that blessed mutual love and consideration.

Van is going up to Phila. on Thanksgiving Day to have his eyes attended to and Ma and I will hold the fort along with Charlie until he has a good rest and gets them done properly.

Phebe note this that Mr. and Mrs. John Perry have sent you half a dozen pearl handled fruit knives—something the shape of mine—so write a note when you can, to Readbourne.

I am glad you are getting along with your notes.

The glass doors are in and third story well underway. I expect to move up in your room tomorrow or the next day—We had a lovely visit from Harry and we three went in the Ford to the Hermitage, and as we came home we stopped and saw the Cornells at Piney Point Farm and had a great visit to them.

Mrs. Howard Wood Jr.

Palace Hotel

San Francisco, Cal.

Eversley, Nov. 27, 1914

My blessed child—

It was desperately cold down here until the day before Thanksgiving when it moderated and on Thanksgiving it was as balmy as spring—Van went up to Phila. Thanksgiving morning to have his eyes operated on, and he has just phoned me a few minutes ago that he is all right and that it had been well done. He took gas and so Dr. Williams had full time to attend to it. He hopes to come back Sunday night or Monday morning at latest—

Jo and I are holding things down. I went to bed at quarter to seven, as I was pretty tired and thought I might be more comfortable. I am writing this in bed as I thought it

was better for me. I had a bad cold yesterday but the spraying machine worked wonders and I am better of it tonight.

You cannot imagine the confusion and upset of this house The nursery is a scene of desolation all the castoffs and everything sitting crank-sided. The men are scraping in the kitchen stairs and Van's room (new one).

It looks like a zoo—I just think it best to tear everything up at once and get it straight for next Spring. The parlor paper is ruined and of course the dining room is. The plumber is here, and bathroom things set up and they look as if they meant comfort.

I telephoned Mrs. Phillips yesterday and asked her as the day was so mild if she could come over to see me as I was all alone. She said she had a dinner at 2 o'clock but would try to come today. I thought I saw their sail by Quaker Neck and thought they were coming, but it turned out to be another boat—and they did not get here.

Here it is Monday night the 30th. The 3rd story rooms I think will please you more than you have expected. Today Heinz put in the brass locks and the knobs make a great show. Harriet and I cleaned your room and I move up tomorrow. The weather since the day before Thanksgiving is as balmy as Spring and while we have expected rain every day it clears—The office floor is done and windows painted. It is a dear little room and the bath room is going to provide us with everything convenient. Everything is going well, but I am paralyzed when I think of the cost, and yet there is no way I suppose but to take it to a finish.

We are having all the house scraped, by that I mean old whitewash and dining room paper. I think I had better have parlor also as that room is a wreck too. How it will be papered I do not know.

Ma is doing wonderfully and she is like her old self with me. She is really thrilled with the house and if only it does not get too cold, I think she really will hold out, but the cold knocks us both when we have to go hard.

I hope you will let Gen'l Carter know as soon as you get there. He will be so delighted to see you. Do you remember the summers when they boarded with Aunt Etta at Poplar Grove and Gen'l Carter used to wonder if ever a man could be found good enough for you?

Eversley

Dec. 1st, 1914

Here I am; with all the furniture up here, on the third floor, and the Victrola and my trunk! (which is packed with linen) and Ma is across the hall in Harry's room.—All the

surplus things stored away in the North Room—and the rest of the house given over to the Vandals. Two painters come tonight and tomorrow. Mr. Spreat comes with a bricklayer to get the furnace installed. I do not think the house will get done this winter. Today has been wonderful again. A light misty rain in the morning, clearing off to a summer day—Van has gone into town to get some building paper to put under the floors,—and the coal arrived and had to be landed at Indiantown wharf. I came up here in my room and tried playing the “Vick” but it seemed very empty after all, and made me think too much about my baby, so I made up my mind to write a little instead, and now I am going to darn stockings.

I don't feel as if we will ever get back in the kitchen again and have a normal life in any degree. Goodnight dear—I wonder what you are doing today?

Thursday, Dec. 3rd

This has been a wild day of work. We have 10 men and Mr. Spreat makes 11—4 carpenters, 1 bricklayer, 2 painters, 1 laborer and plumber, 1 tinner for 2 air spouts. They have painted dormers, both two coats, and they begin to look lovely and white. Mr. Spreat put the columns in and the house looks really like a mansion instead of a cottage as I expected it to. I got the parlor cleaned out and turned up a great many letters and old bills.

And now it is Dec. 7th & Monday.

A dreadful N.E. storm of howling wind and pouring rain has been upon us since Saturday midday. We killed hogs Saturday and they are still hanging out—and we cannot get a chance to cut them up. Tonight it is coming in worse than ever—and with no signs of abating. If it is not clear tomorrow morning we will have to cut up the hogs in the barn for we cannot let them go longer. I am living in your room—West—and am comfortable except for the smell of paint. But the worst of it is that Van has gone to the Wharf and now has gone on into Centreville starting at four o'clock so it will be black as pitch when he comes back.

Harry and Pere hope to come down next Saturday and take a look at the house. Everything except the room I am in looks like chaos. Something torn up in every inch. The kitchen department is evolving slowly but surely, and will be equal to any city kitchen that was ever made. Got a brand new range which looks well after all, and it cooks all right—I am very well satisfied with it as far as looks go. Wesley Ayers and old John have been scraping the whitewash off my room and parlor all day. They are all just

stopping work and running up and down like horses!! They think they have the whole place with me up here. Bath room is installed. Boiler connected up and steam fitters come tomorrow—so I hope by the last of the week we will have heat started. I think the bath room fittings are rather poor and stingy looking and I'm sorry we did not try someone else after the disagreeable experience with the clerk. Perhaps Cook & Homer's would have been better. The porcelain is very blue and spigots are small and stingy.

Phebe, be sure to write Miss Sue Williams while you are away even if you do not write to me.

I received from Mr. Cooper the pictures of the wedding. The one of you alone is a real joy and the two of you and Ma together are excellent. You and Howard taken together I do not like at all. Howard's especially does not do him justice. The group is only fair of you and Howard, good of Clem and Rita and poor of Harry. I wrote Mr. Cooper and asked him if he would have them printed and let me pay for them—I want them for Aunt Mollie, Aunt Kate and Miss Sue and thought if you choose to take them you could send them for Christmas. I would like Miss Phebe McCall to have one—Goodnight, best love and kisses to you both. Devotedly,

Muddy

I will send this off tomorrow
to greet you when you arrive.

Dec. 8th

Mrs. Howard Wood Jr.

El Toan

Grand Canyon, Arizona

(Eversley)

Fri. Dec. 11th, 1914

Well, I must tell you about the house and just what we are doing.

The steam fitter came back yesterday and has all the radiators connected up. I do not think the best was done on the deal. The hall radiator is 45 inches high and looks exactly like the one in the Cheltenham Station. It is an eye sore in the hall. The others do very well—except the bath room. They did not calculate when they put up the closet and so the radiator will not be squarely in the middle of the room and it is going to look awkward.

The weather has been very wet lately on the stucco and I think Mr. Spreat has been very slow about getting the Dri-wal which is the white coloring in it, and I am not one bit sure it is going to be a success. The kitchen will be a howling success I think and will be lovely.

The little room and kitchen and Ma's room are all natural wood finish with doors painted as nearly that as possible, and the wainscot looks fine. The little room has 7 doors in it and a radiator big enough for a hotel. We hope to get furnace started next Wednesday.

I cannot tell how much they will get through with, but I am hoping that Ma and I can get off on Dec. 21st, Monday. I am sure we cannot get off before that, but I will be looking for my baby on Xmas eve.

I am wondering what the extra cost will be above the \$5700 and of course I cannot help being very nervous about it. It seems to me it must be a great deal more. Mr. Spreat took up the entire front hall floor and put new joists under it and laid new floor. Did I tell you that we had a good flow of water in the bath room, but I think the tub faucets are very stingy and mean. The toilet is very good and the lavatory very good. The painters are good and making things look well. The columns are all up and look quite Jeffersonian in the architecture. Now I think that is all—until you can come and see which I hope will be very soon. There is only one decent place in all the house and that is my room, which is your West room. That looks very completed and with the little wood stove is a warm place to come to.

I am loving you, my baby, a great-great-deal and thinking of you all I dare to, but I do not dare to think much about your not being here all the time or I should not be able to keep up my spirits. All those changes seem like a dream and the best thing is to keep busy.

If only we can make this farm pay a living I will be very thankful, but all this building on somebody else's money makes me feel as if were riding in a bubble! Harry and Pere hope to come down tomorrow night as they are very anxious to see what has been done.

Sunday, Dec. 13th

I am writing you again so you may receive it if you are at Grand Canyon on the 18th. Harry says it only takes 4 days so I am trying it again. He brought me down your letter from Moana Hotel last night when he came. Just think of you going to a tea-party with Mrs. Carter at Honolulu! With old Poplar Grove just over a mile from here and desolate and deserted—I am so delighted you are having such a lovely time and Harry says that Howard sent him a card with the Surf riding and said you had been doing it in the morning!

No, I am still here and in the midst of another desperate North Easter. We are all getting desperately worn out and worried. I about expense and working to such a

disadvantage and I hope that we can close out most of the things down here the end of the week—but the closets and steps will not be up—nor pantry finished. I am more than dubious about the stucco work for I think it was put on too late and has had entirely too much wind and water in it, but it may stand all right. Things are howling around here to night. I hope to go up to Germantown next Monday but cannot tell yet.

I can hardly realize that in 10 more days I will see you, my beloved baby—Harry says there are 8 more presents for you up at 6019. I am awfully anxious to know how "Aloha" is getting on. I wrote Marian the other day and hope she will tell me. I know how keen you must be to see all that has been done.

Meanwhile across the Atlantic Ocean more than a million young men had killed one another, and there seems to be no end to the senseless slaughter. How I prayed that this country would not become involved. In the light of this cataclysm, perhaps my concerns over the house and the farm, seem trivial in the extreme, but what can one do other than live the life one is given to live, and do the work one is given to do?

Palace Hotel
San Francisco

Mrs. H.B. Wilmer
6019 Germantown Ave.
Philadelphia, Pa.

Wednes. Dec. 16, '14

Dear Mother Wilmer,

I have just perpetrated a postal card from the Santa Cruz grove of big trees where we are now waiting for the train to take us back to San Francisco. I carried this paper all day in pocket, so please excuse its being crumpled. also I am sitting by an open fire and writing on a magazine so that gives me an excuse for extra poor writing.

I read all your nice long letters to Phebe and me and feel that I owe you a letter for all the sweet messages and news I've had from you. We have had a trip as nearly ideal as I can imagine and everything has gone our way. True it is pouring rain today but that does not affect the grandeur of these trees. They are from 4000 to 5000 years old and run from 250 to 300 ft. high with trunks from 20 to 26 feet at the base. One tree is burnt hollow so that

you can stand in it, in fact 75 people have gotten in it at once. Gen'l Fremont used it as a cabin in 1846. This is the next best thing to going to the Yosemite big trees.

I imagine Phebe has told you all about our stay at Honolulu, so I won't try to dilate on that, but I think it would have done you good to see how General and Mrs. Carter delighted in having Phebe come to see them. They certainly adopted us and made our stay very pleasant. We hated to leave but now that we are turned homeward we are counting the days till we see you all.

We have thought many times of you in your desolation at Eversley and hoped you were keeping well through all that confusion. I am sorry it has turned rainy and then cold, but hope there was an interval to permit you to get through the hog killing.

I was here nearly twelve years ago and little thought that one day I would be back with such a dear wife, but if I had, the dream couldn't have been better than the reality. You should have seen her pleasure and enthusiasm at it all.

We had a good lunch at the little "Club House," washing our hands beforehand behind a bar. (I am writing in the train now.) We had abalone shell fish for lunch, you know it grows about as big in diameter as a breakfast plate and the shells take a high polish on the inside. You see them on sale at newsstands. The meat in them has to be pounded thoroughly before it is cooked, but it is good and tastes like scallops.

Last evening we called on Mr. and Mrs. Selfridge, an elderly couple who have been lovely to Alan and me when we have been West. Father and Uncle Al knew Mr. Selfridge through business dealings and were very fond of him. I was mighty glad to see him again and we had a good talk. I hope he will come see us when he is east again to see his sons.

We took our dinner at the "Poodle Dog," a French restaurant of doubtful reputation. We had the public dining room to ourselves at that hour but got very good food.

Our ship didn't get in till 1:30, but I managed to have a short call on an old gentleman named Watkins, manager of an iron and steel firm who have bought of us since 1870. He spoke very well of our iron, and showed me a flattering letter he had just written recommending "Alan Wood's genuine iron" for pipe to one of his customers. Phebe was turned loose for an hour in San Francisco and I found she had bought a new spraying apparatus for me. Then we took an auto and saw the Exposition buildings. The main tower and court are magnificent and the coloring wonderful. Please give my love to all the boys and keep a lot yourself,

from your very happy boy,

Howard



ALOHA

To Mrs. Henry Hollyday Goldsborough
The Albion
900 Cathedral St.
Baltimore, Maryland

Eversley
January 12, 1915

Dearest Kate,

Just a line to let you know how things are getting on.

The Eversley renovations are keeping me occupied. Phebe and Howard returned from their wedding trip before Christmas and are staying at Camp Discharge until their house is ready to move into. They are naming the house "Aloha." A beautiful Hawaiian word meaning "Welcome." I am sure it will prove to be a welcoming house through the years.

One of the six bedrooms is being reserved for a baby due to make its appearance in October!

To think I will be a grandmother.

I am so looking forward my visit with you, and will come over on the afternoon steamer. Don't bother to meet me, I can take the street car. My, won't we have alot to discuss.

Mrs. Henry Hollyday Goldsborough
The Albion
900 Cathedral Street
Baltimore, Maryland

Sunday Jan. 24, 1915

Mrs. Howard Wood Jr.
Camp Discharge
Conshohocken, Penna.

My beloved Baby

Aunt Kate is just lovely and so glad to see me and I am just falling in line and talking to everybody as well as I can. We went over to Emmanuel Church to hear Dr. Birkhead preach on Billy Sunday. He gave a very dignified, broadminded, earnest talk on the subject, and much that he said about his impressions of the meeting corroborated

Pere's ideas of the intensity, unusualness and yet earnestness of the man who was determined to reach the people by any means in his power.

When we parted I begged you to promise not to go hear him, but after all circumstances alter cases and if you all really want to go it would perhaps be all right if you could do it without too much exertion. If you had to stand in line it seems to me you surely should not, but I hate to be too sweeping in my objections because I do not know that you might have bought seats.

Now Phebe, I cannot divest myself of the opinion that you ought to have bought that lovely little black dress for \$25.00 You may think I am possessed but it is terribly hard I think in these days to really get anything modern without being a freak, and if by chance you fall on a dress like the evening dress you bought that is modern yet becoming it is best to get it if possible. And you want to dress well. We were so hurried that of course I cannot feel entirely certain of first impressions—but when you got that dress on, you looked perfectly charming. Young, stylish and yet refined. Your wardrobe is in need of just such a dress if you want to dress well and not only in a simple country style. That dress you could wear to a luncheon or you could wear it for a Sunday dinner or an afternoon tea, and with the black and white toque it was most becoming.

As you are now wearing black and white half mourning, it is no use to confine yourself to the dull black of crepe de chine and my experience is that in ready made clothes you can never combine all that you want of material and style. I would just love to return you the \$25.00 this month and you could give it to me later on when I will need it for the house. I have everything I need for comfort and looks with this good looking Dress coat. You could wear that dress to teas and luncheons and look stylish and becoming. The back of the dress with the flat coat effect is the most becoming line to your figure and makes you look slimmer and unusually well and relieves all this sloppy effect of the present day. In fact the dress is dressy and becoming in the same way that the turban hat you bought at Allin's is, to you.

Well I got here comfortably and Aunt Kate got a letter from Margaret this morning and I one from Harry enclosing \$10.00, so you see I can well spare yours if you care for the dress. I want you to get this and then get a pretty spring dress later on and you would have this to help out.

We are going round in a few minutes to see the Aunts and I shall telephone Miss Sue from there. You looked splendidly in the coat when you came in to Broad St. and I do not believe you will ever repent that deal. It is going to be on you every day. It is by far the most attractive of the ones we saw. I am terribly anxious for you to get a desirable set of

clothes and I am entirely satisfied with the hat and coat and evening dress, and I know when my baby looks her best.

My very best love to Howard. Tell him I am perfectly willing to trust him with my baby—for I feel as if he loves her almost as much as I do.

Devotedly, with love

Mother

Mrs. Henry Hollyday Goldsborough

The Albion

900 Cathedral Street

Baltimore, Maryland

Monday January, 25th, 1915

My darling Baby—

You have been the very best child in the world to write me such dear letters and I feel as if I was in close touch with you. I still want you to realize the importance of care so I am enclosing Aunt Etta's letter received this morning.

Phebe, tell Van I have just called up Dudley and the corn is sold, .77 for the best corn and .50 for the rotten, and I have asked him to send the check to 6019 Gtwn. Ave. and hold his account until the other crop comes up in March.

I am enclosing Dr. Birckhead's sermon on "Billy Sunday" as I thought Howard might like to read it. Dr. B. was a Balto. man and had Pierpont Morgan's church in N.Y., left there and came to Emmanuel. He is of the "manly Christian" type and a most unaffected preacher. I liked what he said about habitual religion as connected with the Episcopal church for it was a good description and certainly appeals to many. I also like his breadth of view as to denomination. I was very glad to hear him and to feel that he belongs to the Church which by tradition and taste is ours.

I am going to Miss Sue's to lunch and at 5:30 to the Van Bibbers to tea to meet Helen Baltzell. Shades of our ancestors what changes there be!!

So you see I am very gay—God bless you and Howard.

10 P.M.

I have just gotten in after lunch with Miss Sue and dinner with the Miss Van Bibbers. Had a beautiful time with both and Miss Mary told me to tell you she approves

of the way my daughter dresses me! She said I was a perfect fashion plate! I wore the crepe de chine waist.

Mrs. Howard Wood Jr.
Conshohocken, Pa.

Eversley
Monday, March 29th

I can't remember what I wrote last. The days have been full. I intended to write a long letter yesterday but Van and I worked all day long as it was the only day he could give me. On Saturday I put down the new white matting in my room although I said some time ago I would never put down another myself! I also rubbed up my old walnut bureau which looks very handsome indeed against the buff wallpaper. Yesterday Van painted Ma's room and the Boy's room, and I cleaned out and rubbed up the old parlor desk for my room which looks very pretty also with wallpaper. My old wardrobe is a beauty in its new white dress, and my room presently is absolutely satisfactory in its cheerful cleanliness. It does look something like a hospital room it is true, but it is pretty and I can hardly wait to show it to you.

Do tell me what you wore to the party. Pere told me everyone was charmed with you. Also I am delighted with the thought of the lavender linen embroidered.

As I sit here the steamboat is going down the river to Cliffs and it is a beautiful view from my desk. The cement steps are finished in the "lanai" and Mr. Pierpont is working in little room and making gateposts for dairy lattice gate! We are to have a new gate there: The painters are on the stairs and the staircase will be a beauty!! What do you think of that? So much for good painting.

I am so glad my baby is not feeling badly. I would love to get one look at you and I could see just how well you are—but I think you have gained much experience and know how to take care of yourself. If your legs are all right plenty of exercise is good for you—moderate dancing might not hurt for a while. Walking is good. Much standing, sudden jumps are not good. I am getting along very well. I have escaped acute indigestion so far—and of course am sore in the knees and my foot is uneasy as far as the instep. Since I got Jo's comfortable bed, I am using it in my room until I get yours down. I cannot get a comfortable spring for a wooden bed but the cheapest iron bedstead is a delight.

I got the flower seed, but I am afraid we will really have nothing left in the garden unless fences can go up soon. We are making a go in there this week and hope to have them up by the end of it.

Mrs. Howard Wood Jr
Conshohocken, Pa.

March 31, 1915

My beloved baby

I am writing this in bed. I have had a good night's sleep, and decided to stay in bed and in my room most of the day. Last night my ailments culminated in the horrid vertigo feeling and I could not lie down without everything whirling round, I took a black pill and this morning I think it is passing off. I will try what a day off my feet will do, and hope that I will not have a prolonged spell of it as I had that winter with Mrs. McKean. There is nothing like a morning in bed now and then to help when one has long days and an early breakfast.

I am so glad you were so comfortable with Howard and the open fire and I wish I could have been there to hang around with you through the middle of the day. It would have done me good though no doubt for you the absolute rest was better with no restless spirit around you.

This morning I have an open fire for it is still very cold here—not clear. The lilac leaves are making progress notwithstanding. I have my bed turned around against the wall and I think I will like it much better except in extremely hot weather. I can see the fire this way and look out the windows too. Everything in my room is absolutely satisfactory as I would like to have it. Nothing Wanting! The larger house gives me a chance to keep it cleared out—and it looks cool and clean. I know you will like it. I keep the window shades clear up to the top, such a change! You will approve of that. I have to pull them down in the afternoon but the ash tree breaks the sky and I like to see the top of it. I still have Ma's bed and blankets and it is the most comfortable bed I have had for many a day. I hope yours is as comfortable. I never had a chance to try it.

If everything is all right to leave I may go up if Harry comes in the Dodge or the little car, but I do not want him to bring it out for that. I cannot leave if things are in a critical stage here, but I am hoping sincerely that Saturday will see things through. Van and I got the West room, 3rd story, nearly done and we have only to arrange the furniture. The steps have been stained so that we cannot use bath room or front staircase so you can imagine what a comfort it is in having the back. The man is to come for the paper on Friday—and the pattern called "June Morning" is going to make a perfect room of "Aloha." I have the sample stuck up on the mantelpiece and can thoroughly see the effect. You cannot imagine how unsuitable the brilliant paper was in there because it destroys the window views. The porch floors are being painted and all the dogs are tied and howling.

Ma slept in her room for the first time last night and is delighted with it. I must lie down again so goodbye. Thank you for calling me up last night. Although I was depressed, it helped me to hear your voice precious, precious child.

Eversley, Friday

*Mrs. Howard Wood Jr.
Conshohocken, Pa.*

April 1st, 1915

My precious girl,

The box came yesterday by parcel post. Everything in splendid condition and we will enjoy it. Van ate some strawberries for his supper and will eat some more for dinner today. I am spared because I am still giddy headed—

I do hope and trust my baby is feeling stronger. Have you taken any of that pink tonic? It is a wonderful help in such an attack as yours to get back on your feet again. It will not hurt your condition in the least and when you have the complication of your stomach it is a great help to take something of the kind for a short time. Even a few meals will help after the Calomel.

It still keeps desperately chilly down here as far as the outdoors go, but in the house it is comfortable. I have had my fire going this morning and it still works. We were all straight for the paperhanger tomorrow and lo and behold I opened the paper Mrs. Van Winkle sent and there are only 12 pieces with a note that 2 more would have to follow from N.Y. They have not come as yet, so I may have to call off the paperhanger and I had a hard time to persuade him to come Friday. There is another chance today.

I wish and wish you could come down for Easter, but I know how you are situated and after all the house is still very unfinished as to curtains, shades etc. It would be fine to have you though anytime I could get you.

I would give a great deal to look in on you today or at least telephone you if only it was not quite as far and expensive. I would like to be where I could talk with you every day—but I am getting on all right and still have plenty to do to keep me interested. Presently the weather will be getting warmer, and I will be out more comfortably. You will be shocked at your garden but the fence is going up and it will soon be in order.

Eversley

Wednesday, April 7th

My precious child—

In the first place let me thank you for the check which will help me so much on John Wanamaker's bill this month.

Van is cutting the yellow sedge off the lawn and Geo. is digging borders round the front lawn. I would give a great great deal to have you with me quietly today for things are comparatively restful as everything has been decided for the day. The boys are looking forward to coming down Saturday. Can you buy 1/2 doz grapefruit and some lettuce? Harry promises a shad and I hope it will be a Reading Terminal one. It is the most perfect Spring day. All the windows around are open and you can see just how lovely the place is. The storm broke a great many cedar boughs and I am cleaning them up. With Geo. I planted 2 "American Beauty" roses on summer kitchen, 1 "Christmas Night" on the porch, 1 "My Maryland" on the porch, 1 "Aviateur Bluriot"—yellow, on gable end which I do not like much for I think they ought to be red there, and 1 "Banksian" white, which is a present from Duer.

I am worried my baby has so many stomach attacks for it does not seem so much nausea common to the condition as gastritis. You are right to rest when you feel them coming on. I wish and wish I could be with you these days. This week hope the family comes out. I cannot wait to see the house—Aloha—with tiles and white coat.

Eversley

Monday, April 15

My darling Phebe

I sent you a short letter written yesterday morning thinking that Charlie would take Mr. W— in to the train. Fortunately we found there was no train as we could not have gotten into Centreville on account of snow drifts. I am wondering how things are at Camp Discharge, but probably you are not as badly off in the hills as we are in the plains?

Charlie took Mr. W— in this morning in the farm wagon and telephoned back that he had had a hard time but got in and that a buggy could not get along. This letter is particularly to tell you how much we all enjoyed your box. Van has nearly eaten up all the cheese. The lettuce has been eaten to the last leaf or will be at lunch time. We had the asparagus for dinner yesterday and tomatoes Sat. night and Sunday night. They were

especially delicious and so much better than the usual ones. They must have been hot house. We have had grapefruit every morning. If you all come in the car and stop at G'tn will you bring the basket of silver, although I am pretty sure you will meet in town so Howard can get off from there. If however it is the slightest inconvenience, we have plenty of things to get along.

I am desperately tired out today and I think when they get off I will just go right to bed—but then Charlie will arrive and I will have to get up so it is not much aid to lie down.

I am longing to see you my baby and just feel as if I am living in a tension expecting something, but there seems so many little things to do. Van's help is great and he has turned in and gotten a lot of things done to help me work outside, I hate to call him in. However after I get a nap and another night's rest I think I will feel better again. I long to hear about Aloha and how things are progressing and all that you are doing. Do not forget that my best black dress is in Marian's bureau. A button hook and a hair brush also a bottle of Alkalol in the medicine chest in M's bathroom. Do keep my foot tub for Aloha and the 10 candlepower globe. You could put my black dress in your closet or bring it down with you. I am too sleepy to write more and must go and get lunch ready.

To: Phebe W. Wood

ALAN WOOD IRON AND STEEL COMPANY
MANUFACTURERS OF STEEL & IRON, BILLETS, SHEETS, & PLATES
GENERAL OFFICES, MORRIS BUILDING
PHILADELPHIA

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

May 4, 1915

Mrs. Howard Wood Jr.
Eversley, Centreville, Maryland

Dear Darling Girl,

I have been watching the weather more or less and hope you have not had any more rain than we got up here. All your plans for stopping and digging flowers must have been upset however.

I have had all too quiet a day as far as work goes and spent a good bit of time reading up the Workmen's compensation proposed draft for enacting into law, and it is dry

reading. However, if an act is passed as is probable, we will have to take up the question of insurance and it does not hurt to study the matter ahead.

I miss thee already darling, but I know the void will be worse this evening, though I realize how much thee wants to be with and help thy mother. This rainy day trip reminds forcibly of my ride down with Marion last spring and I simply can't refrain from telling thee again that I never can be thankful enough to thee for loving me all through that wretched spell of mine.

Honestly I couldn't understand it then or in fact now, but thee was "true as steel" when I needed it. God bless thee darling, and may I never cause thee such worry again!

Please give my love to all & with all my heart to thee,

I am Thy own, Howard

Aug. 6, 1915

Eversley, Friday

My beloved Child—

I think Van is absolutely at sea as to what he can do in life and I am just as much at sea as to what I ought to advise him to do.

I am sending you a ham by express. If it is too big for the ham boiler let Frank [Frank Austin, handyman/chauffeur] take it to Conshohocken and have it cut in two. I will try to have some little ones for you another year.

You were a great comfort to me baby and helped me by your presence to keep from breaking down entirely those first few days. My heart has gotten in its old rampage but it would have been far worse and I can manage to keep busy as long as I do not feel sick. I will weather it through until time makes it easier, but every time I look at Van I feel like I could not keep steady.

It is still raining. The corn trying to rise but as Van says we cannot expect more than half a crop and to be thankful if we get more. Charlie is just outside the window and he is saying corn will come up right smart if this weather would stop. So it is better than total failure. Ma is doing splendidly and longing for the time to wash your little Petsy's napkins when she finally arrives.

Aug. 16th
Eversley, Sunday Night

I could come for two weeks before the birth of the baby and then back here for a week in September to do some preserving. I do want to be with you when you need me.

Van has gone across the river tonight to see "the Baby." I do not care much for that intimacy though I do not think there is one thing in it except to have somewhere to go. I will tell him about your asking him for next Sunday—though I think he would rather come later. Did the ham arrive and did the table reach you? I am crazy to see you and wish you could come down here with me.

We think we did very well with the wheat and I really think by Van's going up with it with Capt. Harris and Frank Dudley—Captain Harris jollied the old inspector until he graded it No. 2 red wheat which was more than we ever expected and it was sold at \$1.18 1/2. An hour later it fell down as nobody wanted wheat at \$1.14. Van went to Dudley and was much interested he just happened to strike the early morning when it had not slumped. The day before it was \$1.22—but we were lucky. The corn is recovering greatly and the wet weather is helping grass and fallow making, so we can't complain

I am not getting on very fast, but have covered all the pillows in the house, made 2 petticoats, almost 3 prs. drawers and hope to get into the shirtwaists and dresses

Aug. 22, 1915

I have cleaned house all day and I could not forbear to decorate also although it takes tremendous lot of time, but the flowers are again in their glory. Roses, asters, sunflower, petunias and wild flowers. I have dining room hearth with that gorgeous purple tall flower, with goldenrod. Roses everywhere, dahlias and asters.

I wish I had you down here for 2 weeks. Never was the place lovelier and it is all in beautiful order. All the weeds are pulled up everywhere, the grass cut and looking its best. It seems a shame that no one is here to see it. I miss the dear old Saturday evenings when I was waiting for Dad to come home. It all seems so empty and so pathetically beautiful, but I am keeping very busy and am very well. I keep hoping all my old love of the place will come back when it looks so lovely—and yet without you all it is like a last year's bird's nest.

Baltimore

My beloved children Both—

We arrived here after a most restful and lovely trip of two days journeying. I hated to leave my Baby, but realized that Howard would not be long away and so made up my mind to make the best of every minute. I wrote you at Wilmington. Until we got there the road was very rough and made my "tummy" fully realize why Phebe could take no chances with "little Petsy" turning somersaults as my insides were doing. No doubt though the Chalmers Six would hold me down better, but still it is best for my child to take no chances.

I can't remember much between Wilmington and Elkton, but after Elkton the roads were so smooth that the little Dodge just flew along singing a little tune and never faltered for the whole 214 miles until we got back here at four ten p.m. Thursday. The country grew more hilly as we got nearer to Balto.

We had a perfect view of the North East River as we went along. When we got near Havre de Grace racetrack we felt very sporty indeed as all the "horsy spirit" seemed to rise when we looked at the grandstand with all the flags flying and the Susquehanna stretched all around to make a lovely background. However the river was at the back and no doubt cut no figure with the people in the grandstand. Two long passenger trains passed us going out to get the people.

The goldenrod was the most wonderful show perfectly gorgeous and almost acres sometimes with stretches along the roadside. We passed an entirely burned car and it was a sad sight to see. I should hate to think of the gallant Ford coming to such a plight! As we ran along down we seemed to feel the influence of the Bay and rejoiced in the cool freshness of the air, and although we ran through the whole hot afternoon we were perfectly comfortable with the top up. Another accident was a great big Hudson car run into a railing in a sudden turn and a good deal disabled. The road had a great many curves, but is as smooth as a table and a great deal of woods along so that it is perfectly lovely.

I forgot to tell you that we ran almost all the way from Phila. to Wilmington without a horn, which was out of commission. At W. Harry bought one which Helen calls a Klaxonette. It makes the most unearthly noise and you may imagine that Harry rejoiced in sounding it in and out of place. We pulled into Balto. on what Harry called "on schedule" at 6 o'clock and then we began to feel the heat. We found the little Aunts most glad to have us. [The "little Aunts," Issie and Mollie, were my dear Harry's sisters. They ran a boarding house in Baltimore.] We had a delicious supper of fried chicken and rolls and good iced tea which was a pleasant contrast to our garlick flavored lunch at the DuPont Hotel in Wilmington. Harry and Helen had a room across the street and so had I, but I bravely determined to take my chances in the old couch in the Aunt's room

because it was my only chance to really see them intimately. I saw my finish, then and there, but strange to say after a little new thought I made good with my palm leaf and got to sleep and slept well until six o'clock. We were all three in a row, Mollie on a cot, with a mosquito net over us, but of course the Aunts made me sleep next to the window. I hung out of bed feet and hands, but somehow had a night that rested me.

After we got supper Harry and Helen took Jack Wray and Issie for a drive in the Park and poor Jack did enjoy the outing and Harry so much. He is desperately pathetic but just clings to his home there and the dear little ladies make him as comfortable as he can be made. His family have done everything they can but he is dreadfully opposed to going to a Hospital or anywhere else. They all sent their best to you both.

We left there with "bells on" at 10 a.m. sharp and had the most delightful ride here. The woods were on the right side every time for me, and we found the road more interesting because we were more familiar with it. We got to Elkton at 1 p.m. and took dinner at the "Howard House" not very prepossessing, but a clean, "Steamboat" dinner of roast beef, over done, and old vegetables, but everything clean and a delicious apple pie.

We had a straight run on perfectly smooth roads until we got to Brown's Corner and struck the dirt road home. At Chestertown we passed a big touring car with the biggest, coarsest, most sunburned women I have ever laid my eyes on. Their faces were really like tanned leather and again I register a protest against would be athletic women. I think they had come from perhaps Maine with the top down! Such is the idea of enjoyment which we can be educated up to!

When we got home we found Van walking up the road from the barn as usual—looking rather heavy eyed and thin but just as dear and sweet as ever. He must have had a very sharp attack. Was three days in the house and it reminded me of my old spells from overwork. He will probably pull through all right, as I have, if only he does not strain himself with the heavy lifting which I never had to do.

The place looks as well as I ever saw it, everything cleaned up. Although it is very dry the new alfalfa is a wonderful start. Very few weeds and looking beautifully green and regular. The schooner with the lime came this morning to the Indiantown wharf and we have been loading and spreading all day, and I pray the good that it will do the land will be worth it. I am writing this in the end of the verandah and since I began Helen & Harry have had a sail and have come back to lunch and I am out here again. It is getting so I never get inside.

Tell Howard I have his goggles safe and sound, but it was so pleasant the two days of our ride that my eyes never suffered at all, and I would never have known I had been out, they feel so comfortable.

There are all kinds of oyster boats on the river and down by Cliffs a regular fleet. Unless I hear that you need me sooner I will be back on Wednesday morning train. I wish I could be there for Howard's party and to see all the family and to help my baby fix the flowers etc. but I hope Etta will do that and that she will not be any drain.

*God bless you both,
Devotedly, Mother*

*Aloha,
Conshohocken, Penna*

My dearest Kate:

My namesake, little Alice Grey Wood, was born October 13, 1915. There was great rejoicing at the arrival of a dear little girl. The start of a new generation. Mother and baby fine and send their love to their dear Great Aunt. I am too busy being a Grandmother to write more.

*Much love,
Alice*

I went up to Aloha as soon as I could arrange to get away to be with Phebe and help her with the new baby. She is the prettiest little thing I ever saw, but fusses a lot. I suspect she is having digestive troubles, and I know one or two little tricks which I think would comfort her and relieve her distress, but Phebe's obstetrician is the one "everybody" goes to, and his nurse, Miss Holloway, is the one "everybody" has to get in order to get the baby started on the right path, and I was given to understand that she was in charge. I knew we were headed for trouble and decided I must get back to Eversley before there was a major blow-up.

While at Aloha I tried to make the evenings relaxing and pleasant times for Phebe and Howard and had begun the old habit of reading aloud, which had seen us through so many difficult times at Eversley. We had begun reading Trollope all over again, from a beautiful illustrated set, bound in green, which was Howard's wedding present to his bride. But no matter how interested we were in what was happening in Barchester, as it neared the hour of Alice Grey's ten o'clock feeding, tension began to fill the air.

When it was nearly time for the baby to wake up, my attention wandered from the book. I stumbled and lost my place as I imagined her in her bassinet down the hall.

One by one she will flex her tiny fingers, push her fist toward her mouth and begin to suck. Does she dream she is floating on a river of milk, in a little log canoe? After all, she is an Eastern Shore child. No matter that if she could see out her window, she'd find herself shut in by these Pennsylvania hills.

When she opens her eyes she will begin to cry. First little kitten mewling noises, and then those angry piercing wails that tear at our hearts. They hurt us physically. I have tried going to the farthest corner of the house, but still I hear them.

Last night they penetrated even the masculine fastness of Howard's study. He was working on a report for the steel mill, and he came upstairs into their bedroom where Phebe was stretched out on the chaise longue as I sat in the wing chair trying to read.

"Phebe, dear, does thee hear the baby?"

"Yes, of course, but Miss Holloway says she should not be picked up until just before the next feeding."

"But that's a half hour away. Couldn't we bring her in here and play with her? It can't be good for a little mite like that to lie there by herself crying for all that time?"

"I know, dear, I know, but the books say—Miss Holloway says—a schedule is best."

"Blast Miss Holloway, whose baby is it I'd like to know?" It was the first time I had seen Howard angry.

"Calm thyself, dear. We want to do what's best for the child, and the latest medical opinion is"

"I'll bet thy brother Harry wouldn't go along with any such nonsense." He stormed out of the room, his dear Quaker instincts kept him from slamming the door.

It was taking all my self-control to remain quiet and not rush to pick up little Alice Grey, but I knew that any outward breach between me and Miss Holloway would upset Phebe, and the whole purpose of my being at Aloha was to keep things running smoothly in the house so she could get her rest.

"How different things are from the way you imagine them," she sighed. "I had pictured married life with my husband as I had always wanted life at Eversley to be. Dad living at home and no ever-present worry over money."

"Your grand and beautiful new house is a far cry from an old Eastern Shore farmhouse in spite of our new improvements, and 'Aloha' takes more people than dear old Ma to keep it going," I answered.

"The people I hire all seem to have worked in fashionable Main Line establishments, and I feel they can see right through my 'Mrs. Wood' facade to my inexperience." The baby's crying was reaching a level of desperation. Phebe glanced at her watch.

"Nonsense! You've managed Eversley and both Germantown houses for the past several years. You know a great deal more about housekeeping than the average Main Line bride."

In spite of her attention being focused on the screams that were flowing through the house like molten lava, Phebe smiled.

"That's not the sort of thing you can come right out and say to a cook who is twice your size, twice your age and whose references seem to include half the names in the Social Register."

I know I'm right about how to handle this child. I'd go in, pick up that poor little baby and get her quiet in a trice. If only we can all hold out until Miss Holloway and all her scientific theories leave, and the new nursemaid comes. Then my girl will be in charge again.

Come on, Phebe, you can do it, I wish under my breath. Alice Grey is your child; Aloha is your house. Show these Yankees what we Emorys are made of. Phebe did not get up, but lay rigid, her hands gripping the fringe of the light blanket over her knees.

In the morning, I packed my bag and had one of the men who works for them drive me to the station. I knew it would be just a matter of time before my girl would turn to me.

November 23, 1915—Tuesday
Eversley

My dear Girl,

I cannot spare the time to even write a letter because there is a great deal going on today, corn shelling and packing a barrel for Harry to get off tomorrow. I want to thank you for telephoning me and to tell you that I was sorry to seem so depressed. This is no time to depress you and yet when one is heartsick and weary it is hard to keep it from those we love and who love us.

There is much here to worry over, and I will write you when I have time and later. It is the old story of discouragement and not being able to make both ends meet and Van, poor fellow, has no more hope that he can do what I felt could not be done—and he realizes now the same drag I have felt and knows that we are up against a “dead end” with no way out.

It is such an old story to me that it is a nightmare. Nobody can help it and we have got to fight out some way. I must stop now and if you do not hear you will know there is nothing pleasant to say—and until we can make some plans it is no use harping on it.

Van has a nervous cough and I have a nervous heart but the cloud may lift and enable us to keep going. I am thankful you are feeling better and I pray that everything is going well with you and yours—I hope you will really tell me, as I do you. With me it is the same old problem which I can only run away from for short spells.

Eversley

Nov. 25th, Thanksgiving Day

Van and I have just gotten home from the Hermitage where we had a nice day. Miss Erick was there, Miss Woodville and Sue Horner. I wished that you might have some of the cream. I think that Miss Sue is planning to give Alice Grey a full grown heifer bred to a registered Jersey bull, so I am afraid Howard is in for the business of real blooded stock.

Today I received a nice hot water bag from my dear thoughtful little girl. Thank you very much, my dear. It is a great relief to Ma to have it in case Van should get sick. Ma is sitting up in my room beside the lamp and myself knitting on a pair of wool socks for Van!! It is going to take something to keep her in wool. It is the perfect thing for her to knit and keeps her contented in the evening.

You have never seen anything like the flies down here. I have to keep my front shutters closed when the sun is shining in the house. They collect in the windows like bees. Today I went away leaving the front shutter closed and when I came back the North window was full. How they get in I do not know. In the back windows there are thousands of wasps which we are planning to scald tomorrow.

Dear Phebe, how are you getting on with the “scientific” method with Alice Grey? I am afraid it is a relief that I’m gone—I hate to think so and yet I think it is better that I am. Of course I do not think it will do the child any permanent injury, but it seems to me that forcing a newborn baby to adhere to such a strict schedule is an awful waste of the

satisfaction and pleasure a mother has in her child and I cannot see any permanent good it will do—If (by almost a miracle!) it causes the child to give you a good sleep at night it is worth the trial, but it seems a trial of all a mother's natural sensibilities to go through these early months when gentleness and care seem the natural portion of such helpless little things. I am anxious to see if the results promised can be accomplished any better by the heroic treatment of the present day efficiency system than by a Condemned so-called Motherly system.

What I am anxious about is how you are getting on yourself—and whether you are really gaining your strength? I think perhaps if the present system would only keep Mothers from the habit of watchfulness and all absorbing love and give them a little more of the Spartan feeling it would be easier for the Mothers and often a relief to the children.

Mrs. Phebe, would you like me to send you any dressed ducks by parcel post? I did not sell them when Van sold the rest of the poultry because I thought you might like them at what you would have to pay for dressed ducks up there. If not, I can sell them here. The reason I say at the price there, is because it would not pay me to keep them and send each unless I get more for them. Now I have to make every penny tell of marketable things, for I do not see at all how we will get through the winter and meet some running expenses.

We are face to face with it once more and it is all a desperate problem. Van complicates it all still more for we both feel that we do not know what to depend on.

Ask Howard if he is fully decided that he wants the cow from the Hermitage herd? She will have to be tested down here. Skippie was wrong and the Steamboat Co. will not accept her. It will cost \$10.00 and the freight will be \$9.58 and the certificate goes with the cow. It seems a desperate lot of expense and rates are higher since the P.R.R. got control of our railroad. A horse used to be shipped for \$8.00. These are the figures as they have given them to me. I wish I could pay it but it is impossible—This seems the final word. The cow will be better off to get to you and be cared for this Winter and will be in better shape in the Spring. It is after eleven and I must go to bed.

P.S. My dissipation was too much for me and for the second time this week I did not close my eyes till daybreak. The whole situation here is as desperate as it used to be when your father just went away. Miss Sue's heifer will not be ready to go to you until Spring—and then it will be 9 mos. before she is any good to you. Read Howard what I say and let him finally decide whether he really wants to take Miss Sue's heifer and then we can get the cow off as soon as we hear and have her tested.

Goodbye dear child. The weather is Indian summer and most beautiful.

Saturday 27th Nov. 1915

Beloved little girl—

I sent my letters to the box as usual, and Mr. Falkins took it into his head to come to the box from the other end of the route at 12 o'clock, so they never got off, and so it will seem a long time until you hear. If you hear irregularly you must not think it is want of love or unreasonable depression. I hate to tell you my troubles because you have a great deal of anxiety now to bear of your own.—not feeling very strong and with the new responsibility of a young baby, and with the difference of opinions of your advisors, of which you always have to choose for yourself (as I did) what was best suited for your own judgement and circumstances. All this makes it seem a very inopportune time for me to add even a featherweight extra, but it is the price we pay for love, and I cannot bear to seem just unreasonable and dissatisfied.

The time has come once more when my judgement again asserts that we cannot make good in this farming and unless we have something outside of it, the position here is untenable.

It is agony to decide to sell the farm with all that it means to all of us—I can look back and feel that we should have cut loose long ago and sunk or swum in the world. I should never have allowed Van to come back here. We are now absolutely face to face with the fact that this farm must pay for itself, with debts and added luxuries that require money and time to keep them going.

We have got to take up the methods of making money that I have always said were the only things that would pay—and now the conditions are so much worse, whether to sell or take care of the number of acres that we own? Truck farming has to be eliminated for there is nothing to that, and now chickens and dairy seem all there is. This means constant and close staying on the spot for several years. Then if it succeeded we might be able to get someone who would be able to relieve Van a little. Now for us, it is to run all of it ourselves on what we have got as equipment.

We cannot make money out of hogs. Feed is too high and the droughts prevent our making green crops. We have proved this to our satisfaction. It is a side issue which is a help but no profit for us when gone into extensively. The whole thing comes down to the fact that both Van and myself must give our whole attention to the problem.—As Miss Woodville says it is a roof now as long as we can keep it. Even the most energetic of the better class is giving it up. My cousin Mary Davidson is beaten and one by one they are giving up or else going down to the level of the tenant class.

I have not time to write for I ought to be going out, but all I want you to understand is that while I try to put it out of my mind yet this is a time when I have to face it because

it is a question how I can possibly finance the place even if we want to keep on and try other things, or if we want to sell it which cannot be done in a few days. It is only the same story that I knew would have to be told. Only all the improvements and outside help has kept us going and now they have added a burden of responsibility—for the present, which will come up. The repairs to house were needed badly enough but it also left me with an \$800 debt, now reduced to six, and we spent hundreds of dollars on farm labor and the expenses it entailed to care for the men. All well worth it if we could see our way clear to an income from the place—

This is just to explain why I cannot be happy and cheerful,

Lovingly, Mother

Let me know if you want ducks and a turkey. If you do I will send them along so we can get rid of the feed. The turkey can wait until Xmas if desired as we can turn him out.

Another P.S.

I know I ought not and so it is hard to write, but I must tell you how interested I was about the new German nurse. I wish she were not coming until Miss H. leaves, and you could start her in yourself. System, dear Phebe, is necessary but it must be adapted to the individual child and not laid down in one big "Mill" regulations such as hospitals and public schools are run on. I pray that Lena may prove a systematic German mother with some of Froebel's ideas and not either too much so called hospital science or militarism. You know I have no fancy for spoiled children but I believe in tenderness and an early training in loving gentleness and human sympathy. You have been a more satisfactory child than ever Mary Read can be. Given a good disposition Van is a better man for the human love and sympathy of the family he was born into.

I was talking to Mrs. Perry this morning. She said she thanked Heaven when her trained nurse left and her old black Mammy came to care for Patterson. She brought with her the comfort required by child and family. Let Lena help you with the motherly atmosphere as well as in all things systematic for the child. What the child desires most is food and humanity over the scientific atmosphere.

We killed 17 hogs today and ought to have a good lot of pork. Will you let me know about how much sausage you will want and I think I remember that some is to be cased.

I should not think you could get away with much more than 15 lbs. with your small family. I am trying to get three lb. buckets to pack in.

I have a turkey hen and a gobbler to sell. Which would you rather have, or can you use both? Do not take the hen unless you need her for I can sell it. I think gobbler will be best for Christmas as it is bigger. I am glad you were wise about not overdoing the night of the theatre party. Take it without rush and it does you a world of good. I hope Howard is well and has gotten rid of the sinusitis.

You ask me how I feel? I do not sleep very well and have lots of indigestion, but am on my feet and do not have to go to bed. Your hot water bottle has saved me twice.

I did not sleep much last night and so I must not write any more but go to bed before I get wide awake.

Will you Phebe send me my shell spectacle case I have to send them on to the oculist.

RICHARD G. WOOD, PRESIDENT

W.W. LUKENS, SEC'Y & ASS'T TREAS.

JONATHAN R. JONES, VICE PRES. & TREAS.

HOWARD WOOD, JR., ASS'T SEC'Y

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ALAN WOOD IRON & STEEL COMPANY

MANUFACTURERS OF STEEL & IRON, BILLETS, SHEETS & PLATES

GENERAL OFFICES, MORRIS BUILDING

PHILADELPHIA

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Dec. 2, 1915

Dear Mother Wilmer,

Phebe read me your letters and I am sorry to learn that you and Van are worried about the farm. I know it is a real worry and must be discouraging, but I want to tell you that I can afford to help you out and will be only too glad to be able to do so.

We all know that money success is not the most important thing and you all have done so much for me that any help I can give in that line is a small consideration compared with what money can't give.

I got Phebe to talk to me last evening about the farm. It appears to me that if Van is going to continue he ought to have some capital and try a specialty, whether hogs, dairy, poultry or whatever might seem most promising. I could and would be willing to let him have some capital—several thousand dollars—which he need not worry about meeting. It does seem to Phebe and me that he ought not to struggle along without a boost, it is too long a climb. I do not want to urge any venture on you, only if you and Van think that

what you need is capital to give you a chance. I am willing to let you have it and you needn't be worrying about paying it back. The question is "will it be a fair business risk?" That is for you to decide. Any money put in a business is risked of course, and if the returns appear adequate for the risk taken, we can try it.

The subject is a big one and I do hope you will let me feel I have a share in it, for you know I can't help having both your and Van's welfare deeply at heart. He is too good to be wasted on a hopeless task, and you have done so much that you ought not to be too deeply in the harness.

I don't pretend to know what could be made to pay in the way of farming in the East and haven't seen great successes except Mr. George Wood's out in Wawa, around this part of the country. You do see people getting along in Jersey, though it is hard to tell how well. However, people are often willing to tell you what they have found profitable and investigation might lead to something. I mean that knowing people trying various lines of farming you can find out from them how they are making out, just as Mr. George Wood mentioned how much his dairy made in one month. (interruption)

*Well, I must be catching my train now, so I'll say goodbye
with a great deal of love
Howard*

*Eversley
Monday Dec. 5th*

My beloved Child—

I cannot let another day go by without a letter from me for I have sent you only postals. We had the sausage ground at Bramble by electricity, but sad to say it is too coarse and I had Charlie putting it through a second time today. This will delay our getting through today. Ma made a quick drying up of the lard and used both stoves so she has turned out 7 cans full and nearly another—almost 375 lbs. The summer kitchen has meant everything to us and the comfortable house has saved both Ma and me from being ill.

I shall send sausage and lard—1 can by freight—unless I hear to the contrary. I think the express on 100 lbs. would be at least \$1.00 and you would have to haul it anyway.

I want to get a quiet day to write to Howard. I can never express how much I appreciate his feeling towards us and his desire to help. It is a serious question and I want to lay the whole matter before him—all the circumstances, and it will be an added

kindness if he will not mind giving it his attention. I dislike to put my problems before him but after all I cannot consider his not knowing all the circumstances when he is proving himself to be even more than a son—a son and a friend.

I have suffered more for Van than for myself for he has a longer life to live and mistakes now cannot mean as much to me as to him. He is so good and straight. He has talked to me about his feeling about the bond salesman business and though he is not the only person who has felt that way it is pathetic to think of what he suffered. He says he would start out in the street with a list and could not manage to see more than a few people because it made him absolutely sick to approach them. I cannot help feeling that the association with the Wilshires meant much to him, but it was at the cost of a heavy price of discouragement with the world, and a detrimental idea of his own efficiency.

I am wondering whether Miss Holloway is leaving and whether Lena has come, and how you are feeling yourself? I pray the little baby is all right and don't let her take cold—it is the most serious thing you have to face. It will be time enough to harden her when she is older and has more vitality. Her cozy, quiet well ventilated room is a safer place—and no experiment a proved fact. Do tell me how your milk is and whether you can still keep on.

Van is going to Chestertown this morning for Dr. Jarman. There is a bitter North wind blowing but he is anxious to get him down here and the cow off. Hope there is no more bad weather, I have still many things to do here.

"Aloha"

Conshohocken, PA

Dec. 14, 1915

My own dear Mother Wilmer,

I read your wonderful letter this evening and I must drop you a line before going to bed to tell you once more that I think you are about as far from being a failure as I can imagine. You have only to look around at where some people with plenty of means land their children to see how remarkably well yours have done in what counts most.

I am not going to dilate on their virtues, for you know that everybody appreciates what fine characters they have, everybody of course who has the opportunity to know them. I count myself very much blessed to be one of the family and I am so thankful to be of service after all that the dear family has done for me.

I won't attempt to go into details now for it is growing late and anyhow the subject is too big, but I thank you for confiding in me and I pray that we all may come to the best solution by working it out together.

Please don't say again that your days of usefulness are over, for you don't know what your love and advice mean to us all, to say nothing of all that you can do for Phebe to help her in her new responsibilities.

Phebe is well I am thankful to say and Alice Grey is gaining almost too fast. She certainly is coming on wonderfully.

I got a sleigh today, bells too—and it looks like real winter for a while.

*With a heart full of love
to you & Van,
yours ever, Howard*

Chapter 13



Alice Wilmer at Aloha

1935

I

The memories I have been reliving in these pages have washed over me in wave after wave. I am as worn out in brain, body and spirit as if I had been battling real storms. And there are still years to go before I catch up with myself, here in the present, 1935.

So much of my education has been obtained from reading novels that I had unconsciously assumed that real life was plotted more or less the way it was between the covers of a book. In fiction, there are exciting occasions, when the story rushes to a climax, alternating with quieter sections which give both protagonist and reader a chance to catch their breath and reflect on the meaning of the events that had been hurtling them along.

In life, I have discovered, there is no such let up. No sooner do we weather one storm and shake out the reefs in our sails, than as quickly as they do on the Bay in August, clouds begin once more to build, ominous and purple-black on the horizon. And we must reef down again and sail into the teeth of another gale. Many times, as in Chesapeake squalls, we are not given the luxury of a warning.

Two of the goals toward which I had set my course had been reached. My children had all been given the opportunity for educations, whether or not they took the best advantage of their chances. Harry and I launched them on their life's voyages—fine upstanding men and women. Little by little, through years of careful stewardship, Eversley became a well-kept, well-run farm, though never,

in spite of unceasing labor, one that produced more than a pittance in profits. Farming, I realize, is a calling not unlike the ministry. No farmer really expects to get rich but rather to live well. Although it hurts deeply to admit it, Eversley would not have been possible without the help of those who did not live off its lands. My dear husband's salary from McCormick Harvesting, Miss Sue's generosity at a time of crisis, the continuing help of Howard and Phebe, and later when his practice was established, my son Harry are what kept it afloat.

By now the outside world had penetrated the small circle of our family.

I hold a black-bordered envelope, my mourning stationery, on which I had written these words—Wilmer Weddings—how many years ago? In it are 2 newspaper clippings from the society columns of the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, dated 1915, and one dated 1919 from the *Daily Chronicle*, Demerara, British Guyana. The newsprint is brittle and brown as I unfold them carefully, reading of Harry's wedding to Helen Parker in Rosemont, Pennsylvania.

Helen wore a tulle overskirt embroidered in silver over her wedding dress. Rather ornate as I remember, but she carried it off well. She knew how to wear clothes. My "farm" boys did me proud in their swallowtail coats and pinstriped trousers. Van was Harry's best man, Pere and Lloyd Emory ushers, as well as Howard, and some of the medical students. Doctors now, they had made our Germantown house ring with their songs and laughter and had nearly eaten us out of house and home.

Thank heavens for the food the farm provided.

Here is another clipping—gushily written, in an over familiar breezy style:

'Heb' Morgan, Mrs. J. Nelson Purviance, a widow for a number of years, some weeks ago announced her engagement to Pere Wilmer, and everybody is very happy for her, as Pere is a dandy fellow.

Now I ask you?

Heb was a dear girl and very good to my boy. He has put her through a lot over the years.

In December 1919, Van married. He had finally left the farm and taken a position as clerk with the Demerara Bauxite company in British Guyana,

through the good offices of Lloyd Emory, who had been down there in South America doing an engineering study. There was a large British Colony—tennis parties, cricket matches and so many dances Van felt he had to have a tailcoat made from tropical-weight cloth. What extravagance! His bride was Ethel Fleming, daughter of a planter. Her game of tennis was good enough so that she was chosen to play in a match with the Prince of Wales when he made a visit to the colony!

Mr. Lloyd Emory of Centreville, Maryland U.S.A. was best man. The bride carried a sheaf of red patience roses trimmed with red streamers, the Demerara Daily Chronicle reported.

That would have raised eyebrows if it had been a Philadelphia wedding. *The honeymoon will be spent at Plantation Diamond, home of the bride's family.*

Van brought Ethel back to America, and they lived in various places around Philadelphia as Van's fortunes rose and fell, at one period finding shelter at Aloha under the generous wings of Phebe and Howard.

How did it happen? A world of relative peace, and then with the firing of a bullet from an assassin's gun in a faraway country, a world shattered beyond recognition.

Harry joined a University of Pennsylvania Medical Unit and then was transferred to a British unit in France. Helen went overseas as a nurse in an American hospital in Brittany. She showed such skill as a technician that she was sent to Paris to head the Rockefeller laboratory there. They were able to see one another twice during the time they were in France.

Pere had entered the Naval Academy from St. John's, but did not graduate. "Scholastic Deficiency" were the wounding words on his report. He was transferred to the Advanced Base School in Philadelphia. When America got into the war, he joined the Marine Corps, and was in the thick of the fighting. After the Battle of Belleau Wood, he was one of three officers left alive in his battalion. The experience changed him greatly. He developed an extremely painful tic douloureux which stayed with him through the years. Heb said he sometimes walked the floors all night. He was also afflicted from time to time with the Emory predilection toward strong drink. Thank heavens for Heb's patience and loyalty during those periods. He is still a sweet and gentle person, with a

beautiful deep speaking voice, his soft consonants formed in the mellow air of the shore.

Van's war service was on the farm. His eyes kept him out of the military. It was a far less exciting and glamorous career than that of his brothers, though his sacrifices were many. He stuck with me till the end, and then lit out for South America.

Little Alice Grey was no more than two months old when Phebe found she was expecting again. The baby was far from settled and cried continually. She could digest nothing and her tiny stomach seemed tied in knots.

I remember thinking that April of 1917 that the rain would never stop. The daffodils were beaten into the mud time and again. I'd pick them up out of it, and have to wash each petal before putting them into a vase. It was appropriate weather for the state of the war-torn world, and now America was in it. My heart ached for President Wilson and the heavy burden that lay across his shoulders.

One gray morning the telephone rang—two longs and a short. It was Phebe.

"Howard and I would like to come down tomorrow for the weekend, if it won't be too much for you and Ma."

"Dear child, you know you are always welcome here."

"Would you mind if we brought the baby?"

"Of course not. I'm longing to see that precious child," I said, though I was thinking that a nurse might be somewhat hard to fit in to our way of life here on the farm. City people seem to be unhappy without pavements and shops.

"Miss Hollaway packed up and left yesterday. I feel the need to see you."

"Come ahead," I said with more enthusiasm, "If you're sure a five-hour drive isn't too much for the baby or for you."

"Motoring puts Alice Grey right to sleep. As for me, when I get to Eversley I'll let you and Ma spoil me."

"Indeed we will."

Howard's handsome motor car was splattered with mud by the time they pulled up in the circle the following afternoon.

"Let me have a good look at you," I said holding my dear girl at arm's length. She was in her fourth month now and had begun to show. Her young eyes were dulled by sleepless nights and anxious days. I had become

accustomed, though grudgingly, to the battered old face looking back at me from the mirror each morning as I pinned up my hair. It stabbed my heart to see worry starting its track across the forehead and shadows beginning to flatten the rounded cheeks of my child. We hugged. She was solid and warm and strong. Howard came in carrying a basket which he set carefully on the dining room table.

"Come see your namesake," he said taking off his motoring cap and kissing my cheek. I peered in and was greeted by a contorted red face which emitted an ear-shattering howl. Instinctively my hands scooped up the wriggling bundle of blanket, and I lifted the baby to my shoulder.

"There," I said. "You're here now, at Eversley, and I am your grandmother. We have the same name, Alice Grey." My ear was deafened by her screams, I shifted her to the other shoulder. "I think maybe you'd like to go up to your room and have a change. Then your mother and I will decide what to give you for supper. But first I want you to meet Mammy." I shouldered open the swinging pantry door, and there was Jo in the apron she wears when she knows company's coming.

"I declare," she said, beaming at the little howling banshee, who was now working her tiny fists like a prize fighter. "Miss Shug, Mr. Howard, you gotta child with a fine pair of lungs." She touched one of the baby's hands. It uncurled and its small fingers clamped around her thumb. Slowly the screams began to die.

"Would you look at that?" Howard was awed. "I wish you'd teach me how to do that, then we'd all get some sleep."

"I always suspected Ma could perform magic. Now I know it." said Phebe going over and hugging her.

"Miss Alice got all the bad shouted out at her. Baby had no more left by the time she seen me. Now, you all get outn my kitchen—I got to cook your supper."

Phebe and I had a talk about the baby's diet as we unpacked and put away the piles of flannel bands, flannel shirts and petticoats, knitted caps and sacques, and of course, mountains of diapers.

"Nothing seems to be right." Phebe was tucking a rubber sheet over the mattress of the crib I'd had hauled down from the attic. "A formula of milk and barley water resulted in more gas and incessant crying. Other combinations have been tried—no success. She's now on Eskay's food and doing a little better. I confess I'm nearly at my wit's end and feel pulled in every direction—especially when I think about the new baby. When we heard that the German woman we

were counting on couldn't come, Howard wanted me to hire another nurse, but Alice Grey seems to demand a special kind of care."

The object of this conversation was lying contentedly on the bed admiring her knitted booties waving in the air before her.

Peaceful moments like that one were to be few and far between. Everyone in the household took it in turns trying to soothe the child, everyone failed. Jo was never able to repeat the magic of her first encounter, and shaking her head sadly, looking for a silver lining, kept repeating compliments about the baby's lung power. Alice Grey did seem quieter when she was alone with Jo and me, though she was still far from a well and happy child.

By Sunday morning, the lane was a sea of mud. Howard had walked down to inspect it with an eye to getting his motor out. He was quiet and depressed when he came back. "It's a morass. I can't help thinking of our men in France, living in muck like that, trapped in those trenches." Howard's eyesight would have prevented his enlisting, even if his position in the steel company had not been considered essential to the war effort. He felt weighed down with guilt at not "doing his part." Knowing his tendency to depression, Phebe had her hands full, she admitted to me, keeping him on an even keel.

As it was impossible to drive in to Centreville, we had our church in the parlor. I took my usual chair by the fireplace. A fan of pleated newspaper hid its blackened gaping maw. Joanna sat by the door, and the other two sat on the sofa. Howard and I read the prayers. The Collect for Peace had a special poignancy.

O God who art the author of peace and lover of concord Defend us thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies, that we surely trusting in thy defense, may not fear the power of any adversaries.

I could not stop myself from thinking of German churches where prayers like this were surely repeated. What of households who had good reason to fear the power of adversaries, whose sons had been killed, whose homes had been bombed?

"Can Thee play 'Onward Christian Soldiers'?" Howard asked Phebe. He always asks for it. I suspect it is the only tune he knows. She went to the piano. We turned the pages of our hymnals, and when Phebe struck a chord we sang loudly, trying to cheer ourselves with the spirited melody. I cannot speak for the others, but I was attempting to ignore the words: "Onward into battle—On to victory." Whose victory I wondered? Who decides? God? Or very possibly, the

Devil? I preferred Joanna's spiritual, with the refrain, "Ain't gonna study war no more," and I asked her to start it for us.

"Gonna lay down my sword and shield," she began in her strong contralto, and we all joined in. "'Down by the riverside, down by the riverside.'" I could glimpse the Chester through the parlor window, a gray reflection of the lowering sky, and imagined if its banks were strewn with all the swords and shields that had ever been brandished in causes that were "just." They'd make walls along both the Kent and Queen Anne's County shores that would reach higher than the buzzards soar. "Ain't gonna study war no more." Down the staircase rolled the sound of the baby's crying. Phebe got up from the piano bench and went up to her. Thank heaven, there was no more of the agonizing clock watching, the waiting for the "scientific" time to pick her up.

At lunch, we had a roast chicken. Vanilla ice cream, which Howard had churned, with the last of the peaches we'd put up this past summer. They tasted of August sunlight.

Howard decided that they should leave very early the next morning in the hope that the nighttime drop in temperature would have hardened the muck into something he could maneuver his car through.

There followed a discussion of what this would do to the baby's schedule, and suddenly I heard myself saying,

"Why not leave her here with me?"

"We can't do that," said Phebe. The room was heavy with the idea. I could hear the mantle clock ticking.

"You know," Howard said slowly. "It just might be the solution. Thee would be able to get some rest, and I think the baby seems a little more contented since she's been here than she was at home."

"It's too much to ask of Mother."

"Nonsense," I broke in. "Taking care of new babies—Jo and I are old hands at that. We brought up the four of you. You've tried the best modern methods offer, why not give my old-fashioned ways a chance?"

"We can't just turn over our child, Howard."

"It's not as if we were sending her to an orphanage. Thy mother's a gifted nurse . . . I know what being down here under her care did for me. Why don't we try it out?"

"If the baby's condition doesn't improve, or if her care is too much for me, you can take her home." I assured them.

"I'll have to go over the doctor's written instructions with you word for word."

"Of course," I said, "Darling, I know how you must be feeling. It takes courage to make such a sacrifice. But I'm convinced this scheme will work in the long run."

Phebe and I went over the sheets of notes the doctor had given her. They were complicated, and I was not sure what good it would do to inspect and analyze each bowel movement or record each minute weight gain, loss or change in body temperature, but I vowed to do my best.

It was with a heavy heart that my dear girl kissed *her* dear girl good-bye the next morning. I prayed I had done the wise thing.

The baby's stay was to last six months. Though there were spells of sleepless nights, there were long intervals when she slept well. She grew stronger in every way and seemed to be less nervous in spite of cutting stomach and eye teeth.

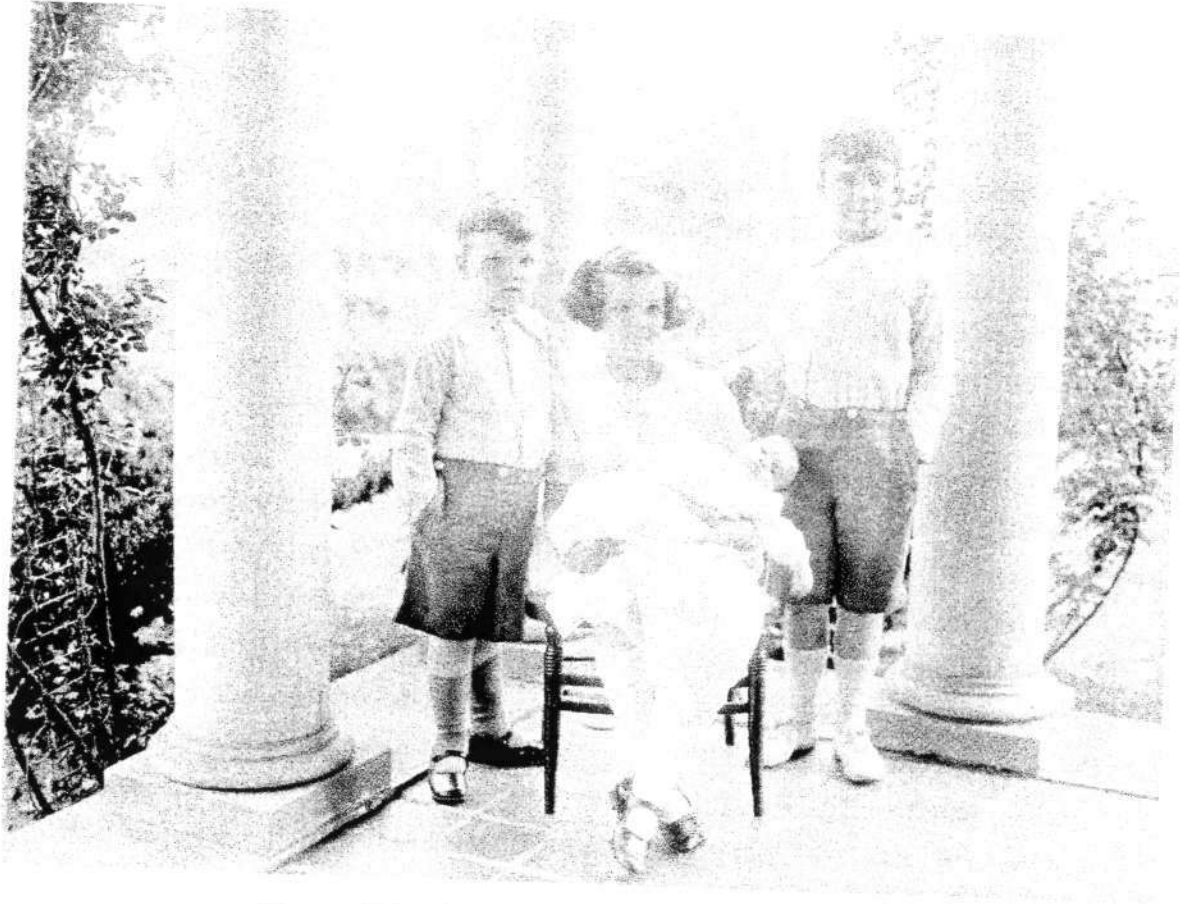
Alice Grey kept having ups and downs, and having to be subjected to all sorts of diets. Eventually though, she outgrew most of the childhood complaints. Whether or not the intense care I lavished on her made a difference, I have never been certain. It did forge a strong bond between us, and gave Phebe the rest she needed to give birth to a fine strong son in September, whom they named Howard after his father. Harry Wilmer Wood arrived two years later, and then in 1923 a little black-haired girl, Phebe. The Wood family was complete.

II

Meanwhile, Dr. Harry and Helen added a new Henry Bond Wilmer, the image of his father, and Elise, blonde and blue-eyed like her mother.

Confusion, clutter, constant comings and goings. Crab nets and boat cushions, checkerboards. Sails to be mended, scraped knees to bandage, and always hungry mouths to feed. Jo turned out her famous pocketbook rolls by the million, frazzled apples by the bushel, and on Sundays, ice cream, the children taking it in turns to crank the freezer. Their reward was licking the paddle.

Howard and his boys built a swimming float and anchored it in White's Cove out from the dock away from the underwater grass, so thick you could scarcely row through it. They'd take my garden rakes down to try and clear a channel and then of course, forget to bring them back. One time Dr. Harry thought up an ingenious scheme of attaching the blade of a mower to some



Harry, Alice Grey, Phebe and Howard Wood

ropes and with the help of every able-bodied man on the farm dragging it along the bottom. It kept getting clogged, and the experiment was declared a failure.

The Wood boys set themselves up in the crabbing business. Every morning they'd row out to the float, tie baited lines all round it, and slowly inch the crabs up until they were in range of the net. They'd stay down there all morning until we rang the farm bell for lunch. The afternoons were spent on the porch picking the crabs while Phebe or I read aloud. We got through the whole of *Nicholas Nickleby* one summer, and *The Old Curiosity Shop* another. Two Barnegat Bay sneak boxes, the *Lucky Boy* and the *Alice*, were added to our fleet, which increased the boys' range. They were becoming real Eastern Shore water rats, just like their uncles.

It was in 1918, I believe that Anna Mae and Royden Powell—newlyweds—came to live in a little house Howard had built slightly away from the barns. Royden was to take over the management of the farm, under my direction, of course. I was beginning to feel the weight of my sixty-three years by then, and I must admit it was a comfort having them there.

We hired two boys from an orphanage in Baltimore to help with the farm work, Albert Glennon and William Gibson. They boarded with the Powells, did odd jobs as they were needed, brambling to keep the fence rows clear, for one. I can see Albert now, sitting on a three-legged milking stool, his head against the cow's flank, singing, "Jest Molly 'n me, 'n baby makes three, ah'm happy in ma blue heaven." Albert later moved to Germantown and became chauffeur and handyman for the Wilmers.

William Gibson often drove me around in the little Ford sedan. He was a pale young fellow with neatly combed hair as yellow-white as corn silk. Polite and respectful, he handled the car well and kept it spic and span. Hardly ever said a word to me or anybody else, as it turned out.

I'll never forget—I was sitting on the porch with my sewing basket on the table beside the rocking chair, darning my stockings. It is a task I despise. I'd far rather pick up a book when I have a minute or two to get off my feet. From where I sat I could see across the field to the log canoe, *Reba Main*, at her mooring, framed between the trees. The song of a mockingbird floated down from the old silver maple by the fence. Suddenly, the peace was broken by the clatter of the tractor.

"Mrs. Wilmer, Mrs. Wilmer!" It was Royden calling. He came around the corner of the verandah, pulling off his cap. His sun-reddened face looked pale and drawn. He had not turned off the tractor engine.

"It's terrible, Mrs. Wilmer, just terrible."

"What's happened?" I stood up and the stockings fell out of my lap. I heard the darning egg roll across the floor.

"It's William, ma'am. He's shot hisself."

I felt as if the breath had been knocked out of me. "Ring the doctor."

"Too late for him, Ma'am."

I went inside, cranked the telephone furiously and told Miss Nellie at the exchange what had happened. She'd know what had to be done. Then I put on my straw hat and went down the steps to where Royden stood nervously pulling the leaves off one of the boxwoods. The tractor engine kept up its infernal clatter.

"Will you get the car and drive me over?" I asked

"You don't want to go down there, Mrs. Wilmer."

"No, I don't, but I am going, and please turn off that tractor engine, you're wasting gasoline."

He turned the key and went around the side of the house to what Jo had named the *upmost* shed where the car was kept. The *lowmost* housed farm implements and the dump wagon that Frank hitched old Snowflake to. Just as we were about to pull away, Joanna slipped into the back seat. How did she know?

There was a small group standing by the shed. Sidney and Frank on one side of the door, Anna Mae holding their little boy, Royden, Jr., by one hand and patting Albert Glennon on the shoulder with the other. Her cheeks were very pink, her blue eyes watery with tears she was not allowing herself to shed.

Albert stepped toward me. His tears streamed down his face. "We was pals, Mrs. Wilmer, me and William. He never said nothin' about feeling so bad he'd go and do this. We was pals."

William's body had been covered by a sheet. Anna Mae must have taken it down from the line next to her kitchen door, where others were blowing in the breeze. A bloodstain was spreading in the vicinity of his head. One of his hands was not covered. It lay palm up, the fingers slightly curled. I knelt down beside it and took it in mine. It was still warm.

"God bless you, William Gibson. Rest in Peace." I said. From behind me, I could hear Joanna begin to hum, "'Swing Low Sweet Chariot, coming for to carry me home.'" Sidney and Frank removed their hats, and began to sing under their breaths with her. Then Frank, who was a preacher out at Mt. Zion and had a resounding bass voice, suddenly let loose, "'A band of angels coming after me,

coming for to carry me home.' They'll find a home for you William. You was a good boy, William."

"A-men," sang Sidney and Jo.

"I called our preacher, Royden," Anna Mae spoke in a choked voice. "His wife said he'd be along directly."

We all became aware of the bellowing coming from the direction of the dairy barn.

"I guess we've done about all we can do for now." Royden put his hat on the back of his head. "We got to see to the milking. Them cows got to be milked come Hell (excuse me Mrs. Wilmer) or high water."

"The rest of you go on about your chores. I'll stay here with William," I said.

Anna Mae brought me a kitchen chair and a palm-leafed fan. I can't recall now what went through my mind during the long vigil beside that poor lonely boy.

We could trace no family, and he was buried with nobody in attendance but our family, the Powells and Albert in a corner of the cemetery in Centreville. I tried to find his grave that Christmas, when I went in to put a holly wreath on my Harry's, but got lost. Sidney drove me home with the smaller wreath in the back of the car. Somehow it didn't seem right to add it to our decorations at Eversley, so I tied bits of suet on it and hung it in a tree outside the kitchen window for the birds.

III

Wheat, hay, pasture, corn, wheat, hay, pasture, corn. The crops rotated in the fields. The earth rotated around the sun. The cows were milked twice a day, summer, autumn, winter, spring, 365 days, 365 days, 365 days.

Summer: fans, mosquito netting, baskets of tomatoes, peaches, beans to scald, to pack in sterilized Ball jars. Yellow, gold, green, red—for the pantry shelves in winter. Children, sunburns, mosquito bites, bathing suits on the line. Books face down on chairs, books on the stairs, books under the hammock and under the beds. *Treasure Island, Dr. Dolittle, Robin Hood, Ivanhoe, The Black Arrow*. Mountains of laundry to be hauled out to Etta, gallons of milk to be carried up from the dairy in pails. "We're running a boarding house," I'd say to Jo. "Confusion, confusion, confusion." I'd long for quieter days, knowing I'd be

lonely and at loose ends if I had them. And the cows were let out of the pasture into the pound, and into the barn to be milked twice a day, every day, 365 days a year.

Autumn: Shocks like the round huts of the Ozzinie Indians, ears of corn in the granary for the cows, horses, mules. Corn for the chickens cranked by hand in the wooden sheller. Geese drifting down softly as snow to graze on the spilled grain in the fields. Harry bringing friends from the city—eating breakfast before dawn, to sit in the cold blind on the river. Canvasbacks for dinner, if they were lucky, and oysters dug up from the shore.

Winter: I was spending my winters now with Phebe at Aloha. Howard was away at a sanitarium some of those years. Van and Ethel were living there in others. We thrilled at Lindbergh's flight. We thanked the lord for our Maryland hedgerows, reading of the dust storms and those poor farmers driven from their land. Ethel liked to liven things up with arguments at the dinner table. "Can you imagine that uppity little madman, Gandhi, appearing at Buckingham Palace before King George and Queen Mary in a loin cloth and shawl? The impudence! He knows better. He was educated at Oxford, wasn't he?" After dinner, she and Van would take on the children for fierce ping-pong games. Van drove them to their various schools in the morning. The telephone never stopped ringing, people came and went—confusion, confusion. Back home in the icy barn, the cows were being milked, steam rising from the pail. Twice a day, 365 days a year.

Spring: Is there any place on earth where it comes more beautifully than on the Eastern Shore? It arrives at least three weeks earlier than it does in Philadelphia. At the earliest opportunity, I'd head for home. The woods would be misted with pinks and palest greens. It was like living next to the Forest of Arden. You could imagine Rosalind dressed in a boy's jerkin slipping between the tree trunks. Later, shadbush, dogwood and redbud sprinkled them with color. Wheat-carpeted fields with sharp, young green. Snow drops and crocus spangled the grass, daffodils began to point their finger-shaped leaves toward the sky. You could hear frogs chiming in the marsh. The minute the fields were dry enough, farmers hitched mules and horses to the plough and from sun up to sun down you could see them moving back and forth followed by whirling clouds of gulls, hunting worms in the rich chocolate wake of the furrows. The only thing more beautiful than a freshly ploughed field is one when the wheat has turned silver and ripples in the wind. Then the color bursts of yellow

daffodils, red tulips, apple blossoms, pink flowering cherry and finally, lilacs. At Eversley we had deep purple Persian and French ones, gifts from Jack Wister to make a hedge for Phebe's garden, and white ones growing behind the house down at the chateau. Spring is the time to get seeds in the ground for summer's vegetables, when it all begins again. Circles, confusion and always the desperate bellows from the barnyard twice a day at milking time. 365 days a year.

IV

Young Howard spent two weeks with me one June. He must have been 12 or 13. I can't remember now the reason for the visit. I was somewhat apprehensive, a lively, active boy his age and a 73-year-old woman. I hadn't had one of my grandchildren alone since the time when Alice Grey had come down as a baby.

"What will he find to do, Jo?" I asked one morning as we got his room on the third floor ready.

"Get Sidney to learn him how to drive the pickup."

"But he's way too young—couldn't get a license."

"It's a long lane out to the county road," she said.

It turned out to be the perfect solution. Most mornings, Sidney would take Howard along on town trips, letting him run the car as far as the mailbox. They'd pick up my order at the American store or the A.&P. The nearly identical groceries stood side by side on Commerce Street. I was still dealing at the A.&P. later I stopped, as did most people around town, when they refused to honor our checks in 1933 after President Roosevelt ordered all the banks closed.

Howard and I would meet again at lunch time. There seemed to be no lack of conversation. He was growing into a good-looking young man with his thick black hair, peaked eyebrows, high cheekbones, a real Wood face. Although he never called them to my attention, I could tell he was proud of his first long trousers.

"Thank you for letting Sidney teach me to drive the pick-up," he said one morning at breakfast. Jo had set a stack of pancakes in front of him, and he was drowning them in honey.

"How are you getting on?"

"Sidney won't let me crank her up—says I haven't got enough muscle in my arm yet," He raised a fist, bent his elbow and felt his biceps through his sleeve,

then frowned. "I'll get some by next year. I set the spark, that's the lever on the left, a few notches down from zero, and then when the engine gets runnin' good—"

"Running well."

"Running well, I get behind the wheel, push the throttle down—it's the lever on the right—and off we go!"

"Just be sure you don't get going too fast."

"Don't worry, Sidney keeps his eye on the speedometer. You know, Granny I could teach you. It's not too hard once you get the hang of it."

"Thank you very much," I said, "but due to my advanced years, I think I will decline your offer."

"But, Granny, you're not old. At least, you don't seem old to me."

Indeed having a companionable twelve-year-old around took a great many of my accumulated years from my shoulders, but I knew they were there somewhere, like winter clothes packed away in mothballs, and I'd be putting them on again when the lonely cold set in again. Meanwhile, I enjoyed the long summer days and my grandson.

After lunch, I lay down. I had introduced Howard to the historical novels of Winston Churchill. Adventure, romance, American history. He devoured them as I had. I'd get up from my rest, put on one of the long white kimonos I made for myself from the thinnest material I could find, and discover Howard sprawled on the parlor sofa. His nose was in the book, and his feet in sneakers that were, to put it mildly, a disgrace, resting directly on a sofa cushion. When he heard me he sat up.

"All I ask," I said, "is that you put something under your feet." I picked up a section of the Sun paper from the coal scuttle on the hearth and spread it on the cushion.

Why hadn't I scolded Howard? My own children would never have been allowed to get away with such a breach of decorum. Miss Sue Williams had told me that finding him sprawled on the sofa with his feet up was the reason she decided *not* to will the Hermitage to Richard Tilghman. Perhaps my years have worn down the standards I had once thought so important to maintain.

In the afternoon, Howard would disappear to the farm to follow around after Sidney and help him with his chores, or if there was a breeze, he'd be likely to take the catboat, *Lucky Chub*, out. Once or twice, he was able to persuade Sidney to drive him up to Booker's Wharf for a swim.

In the evenings after dinner, we'd move out to the screened-in portion of the porch and sit down in the high-backed rockers. One evening, just as we got seated the phone rang. Howard sprang up.

"That's not our ring," I said.

"I forgot." He sat down again. "When the phone rings at home, it's always for us."

"You have a private line. There are thirteen people on this one. When there's a call, everyone stops and counts. Eversley's ring is two long, one short."

"I know. Have you ever listened in?"

"I consider that as sneaky as steaming open a private letter," I replied sanctimoniously.

"But isn't that just what some old cousin or other did when she didn't want her husband to join the Confederate army?"

"That was my Uncle William's wife, Matilda Bache. If the story's true, she just put the letter in her pocket so that it wouldn't be mailed. He was resigning his commission in the United States Army, so he could join General Lee."

"Wasn't that sneaky of her?"

Granmama had drilled respect for our elders into us. I didn't know how to answer Howard. "I'm not sure it ever happened. Of course you can't help overhearing snatches when you pick up the receiver to make a call. But if you hear people talking it's only courteous to hang right up. There's someone on our line though who just keeps the receiver off. You can always hear the clock ticking in their parlor.

"Did I ever tell you," I continued, fanning myself, "about the time I was on the telephone when suddenly Cousin Lillian Emory's voice cut in and said politely, 'Cousin Alice, would you please get off the line? My house is on fire, and I need to call the fire company.'"

We both laughed. It was unkind, but Lillian's delicacy is so excessive it verges on the comic. I think she does it to compensate for Frank who seems to take pride in *not* living up to his Emory name and in my opinion, goes out of his way to cultivate an uncouth manner and appearance. The loss of Concord was a terrible blow to them. Its ruins stood like a black skeleton for years, casting a pall across the field that runs down to their beach. A locust-shaded bank, a curve of sand shaped like a new moon—on a sunny summer day the effect is quite Polynesian.

The weather changed toward the end of Howard's second week. One morning, we woke to a suffocating gray world where not even the topmost

leaves of the silver maple quivered. I made my bed, put on my kimono, and took my place at the breakfast table. I was already drenched in perspiration. Living though this day would be a test of character. I began to fail it when Howard stumbled into the room, tucking in his shirttails.

"How one pair of sneakers thundering down the stairs can make as much noise as the boots of the entire Spaniard Neck Cavalry, I will never know."

"Gee whiz—I'm sorry."

"And please, don't say 'Gee Whiz.' It sounds so mannish."

He looked at me out of the corner of his eye then began to eat his cornflakes. There was no sound but the click of his spoon against the bowl.

Finally he asked, "What's so bad about being mannish? I'm a boy." There was no sassiness, he simply wanted to know. His curiosity was one of his endearing qualities, but I fervently wished I didn't have to satisfy it on a day like this one.

"I want you to grow up to be manly, not mannish. There's a difference."

"What is it?"

"After you finish your breakfast, look it up in the dictionary. Have one of Mammy's rolls." I passed him the napkin-covered basket. He snatched up three.

"One at a time. No, don't put those back, just remember another time, not to be greedy."

I was at my desk paying bills, my kimono sticking to my back, when Howard came in carrying the big Webster. He sat tailor-fashion on the floor, and set the open dictionary before him. "Here it is: 'Manly, adverb—1. In a manly manner'—that doesn't explain anything."

"Go on," I said.

"'Courageously, with valor or energy. 2. Like a human being; humanely.'"

"Now, what does Mr. Webster have to say about mannish?"

"'Mannish—Chiefly contemptuous; aping manhood.' Listen to this," he laughed, "I can just hear you or mother, 'O what a mannish room.' Somebody said that in 1884, but it doesn't tell who."

"Good work, now do you understand the difference?"

"Not exactly. Sidney says he's going to Centreville. Can I go with him?" He was scrambling to his feet, his thoughts turned to the joys of maneuvering the pick-up down the bumpy lane one more time.

"Run along." I turned the electric fan so I was straight in its path.

Dessert that night was strawberries that Jo and I had braved the humidity

PUBLIC SALE

OF A

VALUABLE

FARM

Sold October 7, 1885

CHESTER RIVER,

Queen Anne's Co., Md.

As shown by virtue of a Deed of Trust and the undersigned will sell to the highest bidder at the Court House-door, in Queen Anne's County, Md., on

Monday, the 28th Day of July, 1885,

at 10 o'clock, A. M., and 2 and 4 o'clock P. M.,

THE MOST VALUABLE FARM

situate on Chester River, called

'RIVERSIDE'

—OR—

'INDIANTOWN,'

whereon John R. Emory now resides, adjoining on one side the "Poplar Grove" farm of R. B. Emory and on the other side the "Shellbanks" farm of Mrs. Alice G. Wilmer, with a river front on Chester River of 1 1/2 miles in length, and a wharf on the public road from Landend to Johnnycake Neck, or Booker's Wharf.

This is one of the handsomest water situations on Chester River. Steamboats to and from Baltimore pass here daily, as well as numerous other bay and river vessels and craft. Immediately in front are some of the finest oyster beds and bars in the world—the resort in oyster fishing season of oyster canoes and vessels. Fish, crabs, terrapin and wild fowl are abundant in their season.

The farm is about 7 miles from Centreville, county town of Queen Anne's County, and Railroad depot of the Queen Anne's and Kent Rail Road, where passengers and freight cars run daily to and from Centreville, New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore, and within four to five hours run by steamboat of Baltimore.

There is a Wharf on the place for shipment and delivery of freight and passengers, with sufficient depth of water for steamboats and other vessels.

The farm is divided into five fields, under first-class plank and chestnut fencing, with oak and cedar posts, &c. About

7,500 WILT Peach Trees



300 OTHER TREES

of about 2 years old, on 34 ACRES OF VALUABLE LAND

34 ACRES

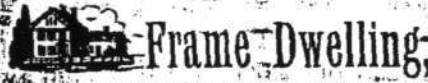
2 ROADS, and 13 PERCHES of Land, DIVIDED INTO FIVE FIELDS.

WOODLAND: 72 ACRES,

2 ROADS & 11 PERCHES, all set in Valuable Chestnut and other Timber.

IMPROVEMENTS:

A FINE TWO-STORY



Frame Dwelling, with BACK BUILDING, on a elevation overlooking the River, and with an extensive and beautiful water view; near it a LARGE STABLE for Horses and Carriages, LOFT FOR BLADES AND HAY, JOE HOUSE, MEAT HOUSE, LARGE WHEAT AND CORN BARN, a large Building for stabling Horses, storage of Fodder, Building for storage of Machinery and also Shedding for Cattle.

2 Good Tenant Houses

ON ARABLE LAND, and

Tenant House on Wood Land,

2 1/2 ACRES IN ASPARAGUS,

1 Acre in Gooseberries, 100 Pear Trees

Also Small Fruits for use of family.

Running Water in every field, and quantities of Locust and Cedar Posts, School House, Churches and Blacksmith Shops within a mile or so.

Soil a light loam, with good clay subsoil, producing grain and grasses, and specially adapted to the peach and other fruits.

Seldom is such an opportunity offered for the purchase of a Home, or for an investment.

TERMS OF SALE:

One-fifth of purchase money in cash on day of sale, or at 60, to 90 days, on note, with approved security, interest added and payable in Bank; one-fifth at one year farm day of sale, one-fifth at two years from day of sale, and two-fifths in four years, from day of sale, bearing interest from the 1st day of January next, and secured by bonds or notes of purchaser, with approved security.

Crops of this year reserved; taxes of this year paid by Trustees. Purchaser to have

Notice of the 1885 Sale of Indiantown Farm

and picked in the morning, and Jo and Howard had hulled on the porch that afternoon, while I read *Ivanhoe* aloud. In the cut glass bowl from Landsdowne given to us as a wedding present by Mollie and Isabel Wilmer, Harry's sisters, the berries glowed rich and red. They were food for princes, pirates, pashas—and farmers.

"I think I've figured it out," Howard announced as he poured cream into his bowl.

"Mannish: showoffs, bullies, toughs and wind-bags, loud mouths and slobs—"

"Overbearing and know-it-all," I added, "And manly?"

"Well, *Ivanhoe* and King Arthur—not Lancelot. Robin Hood. My father and the Uncles, they don't need to brag. They can figure things out and then just go ahead and do the job. Sidney, too, that's what he does."

"Well done," I said. "Now, just don't forget."

In 1929 Phebe and Howard bought Indiantown from Ned Emory. The farm had been my brother Jack's inheritance following Father's death in 1880. Jack had married Anna Gibson, of "Woodlawn." They built themselves a house with a fine view of the river. It was in the new "Victorian" style with high ceilings, and tall four-paned windows. There was nothing from Poplar Grove, everything was new. "This is the very latest," Anna kept repeating as she showed me around, pointing out that the doors and mouldings had been stained to resemble oak and varnished. There was a tan wallpaper in the parlor with a border at the ceiling of dark red overblown roses. She'd hung bead portieres in the open doorways.

Jack built a large stable for carriages and horses and had the fencing, and outbuildings put in order. He also set out an additional 800 peach trees, doubling the size of the orchard.

In 1885, the insurance company with whom he had taken out an enormous mortgage foreclosed on him. His whole property was put up for sale at Public Auction that summer. Poor Jack, like so many, after four short years, was forced to move to Baltimore to make a living. In 1925, he came back to be buried. His grave is in the Chesterfield cemetery.

Indiantown was bid in at the sale by Uncle Blanchard Emory's widow, Ned Emory's mother. Ned and his wife, Sue, converted the former peach cannery

down by the wharf into a summer camp. It was the scene of many good times. Jack and Anna's grand house was closed and began to deteriorate. It ended up as a hay barracks. Potatoes were stored in the cellar.

Phebe and Howard and their tribe have been enjoying the camp and are making plans to build a real summer "cottage" in the near future.

The first arrow of geese arced over Eversley today, September 10th, the birthday of my oldest grandson, Howard. Soon the farmer's year will end. I sit writing on a sun-ripened afternoon, listening to the cheery monotony of crickets, counting my blessings.

Speaking of blessings, I have asked myself times without number, what I would have done without Joanna? We have worked side by side for many years, since the days when we were both young and eager to get started with our lives, "our careers," as Jo would say. We learned from one another. Sometimes I was Robinson Crusoe and she Friday, at other times the roles were reversed. We had both of us been trained to observe the outward forms of behavior the world around us required. She was "Joanna" to me, I was "Miss Alice" to her. She listened politely to my orders, never disagreeing. Then she would carry them out to the letter, ignore them completely, or go about things in her own way. To the outward eye, I am mistress of the house, but both Joanna and I know who the real mistress is. This does not hold true for the farm, let me hasten to add.

She is my oldest friend and has shared my joys and my sorrows. It weighs heavily on me that I have not been able to be as much a part of her life as she has been of mine. There is *nothing* about me or my family she does not know, from the sort of underwear we put on in the morning to the person we vote for when we drive to Centreville to mark our secret ballots. Joanna lives another life in the mysterious world of the Negro. It is a world I can only catch glimpses of.

I feel I see what Joanna and the people who work here permit me to see. There is a barrier thrown up by Negroes to protect themselves against the wrongs done them by people whose skin is the color of mine, whose name was mine. They are still suffering from the effects of these wrongs. I respect their desire for a measure of privacy in lives so given over to the lives of others. I do not pry. I know my place as they know theirs.



Alice and Joanna

No matter what stumbling blocks the inequalities of the world have tried to pile between us, Joanna and I are two sides of the same coin. I am the George Washington face, educated in the English tradition, a landowner, gentlewoman farmer. Turn the coin over and there is Joanna, the American Eagle, a scrawny, tough old bird, with the know-how to survive against all odds, a creature of courage and determination. Both are needed to make a silver dollar. Both of us were needed to create the life I made for myself and my family—a successful one on the whole, I would say. I pray that Joanna feels that her life here at Eversley with all of us has also been a successful one. Her devotion has been appreciated deeply by our family and I think every member of it has let her know it.

It grows chilly in the evening now. After dinner, I light a fire in the parlor. When the dishes are done, Joanna joins me. We get out our knitting. Sometimes we listen to the radio, sometimes I read aloud. Often we talk.

“Joanna,” I asked her one night, “would you say that on the whole you’ve had a successful life?”

She was in the middle of casting on stitches, counting under her breath. When she was finished, she turned toward me frowning.

“That ain’t no kind of question to ax me.” She went back to her knitting. The room was quiet except for the humming of the fire.

“I don’t know you could call a woman with the years I got on me, that has to get up and go to work every day, successful.” Another silence.

“And yet . . . spent my life, studying you all, and you was interesting.”

I didn’t know how to respond to that. I had begun rereading Sir Walter Scott again, and I picked up the volume by my chair.

“Harp of the North farewell . . . Hark as my lingering footsteps slow retire. Do you mind the reading?” I asked.

“The words don’t bother me none, go in and out of my head like music.”

My eyes tire easily. I soon closed the book.

“Colored girls have opportunities now I would never have imagined, white girls, too, come to think of it. Will they be as strong as you and I have been, Jo? Or will all this freedom make them silly and selfish . . . foolish?”

“The Lord didn’t give *us* time nor strength just to waste life.” She said.

“That’s one thing you can say about you and me.” She went on, “We squeezed every drop we could out of everything we had.”

"It was hard sledding. I was so determined to make something of the land. Emory land. Look at this." I handed Jo a piece of brown paper I had found way in the back of a desk drawer. I had put it in an envelope I was using as a bookmark.

"Some silverfish done got his teeth into this," she said. She puzzled over it for a minute. "The writing on what's left is so fancy I can't read what it say." She handed it back to me.

Sell, alien and confirm unto the said John Register Emory, his Heirs and Assigns for ever, ALL that part of a tract of land called Brampton, Situated lying and being - - - - by Deed acknowledged and Enrol'd, bearing date the twenty seventh day of March one thousand seven hundred and fifty nine, Esteemed and computed to be one hundred and twenty six acres of land - - - -

"Brampton was what they called Poplar Grove way back then," I explained.

"All I know is that Eversley was one sorry looking piece of land when we first come here." Jo said. Then the words burst out of her.

"You sacrificed your strength, your peace of mind, your health to keep the farm running and get them children educated. You even sacrificed Mr. Wilmer, that good man, sent him out to earn money you needed. You sacrificed the children too, come to think of it, pushed them to make something of themselves. Sometimes I study what they would have been like if they'd jest been left to grow like my children *had* to be left."

"Sacrificed the children? Oh, no, you've got it wrong, Jo," I said.

"Well, maybe the farm weren't worth all the worry and work we put into it," she continued, "but the children sure turned out to be fine people, and they still goes along with our dreams about Eversley, helps us out all the time. Especially my black-haired boy, Mr. Howard Wood (except his hair ain't black no more) that I picked out for Miss Shug."

"And your career, Jo, that you used to talk about, I'm sorry you never had a chance for that." I was suddenly sorrowing for those two young girls so full of 'vinegar and spit.'

"I didn't so much choose it, after all," she rocked back and forth. "It just sort of reached out and grabbed aholt of me. My career was to go alongside of you, Miss Alice, help you do the work. Like they is in the army. You was the General. I was the Captain. I made it possible for you, and I got a lotta learnin' out of it, too.

Nowadays," she answered slowly, thinking hard, "maybe what I done with my life wouldn't be considered no career And maybe come to think of it, it wasn't—but it was what I did, and I done it with all my might. I guess I might say after all, I done had a successful life, but I don't like to put my mouth on it." She reached out rapped the table next to me three times, then grinned, "Though at my age, there ain't much left that bad luck hasn't already done to me."

"I think sometimes, Joanna, if you and I had had the opportunities that my granddaughters, Alice Grey, young Phebe Wood and Elise Wilmer, will have—college and beyond if they want it—and your granddaughters, too, why, if we'd lived at a time when there were the opportunities there are for girls nowadays, there's no telling how high we could have flown!" I said.

Joanna laughed.

"Too late for flyin' now. We's just two old scrawny black and white Plymouth Rock stewing hens, but the devil ain't catch us and chop our heads off for his Sunday dinner yet, and we still got a right pretty garden to peck in." She waved her hand out toward where the farm lay asleep all around us, "and a nice warm place to roost at night."

I began laughing till I had to take off my specs and wipe my eyes. "A pair of old stewing hens too tough for the pot! My ambition when I was a girl was a bit higher than that. I wanted to make something of myself."

"I think you done it, Miss Alice." Jo had rolled up her knitting and was stuffing it in her bag. "You done it real good."

"Did I?" I got up out of the rocker and walked to the window, all I could see was the reflected room with Jo and me in it looking back at ourselves.

Eversley, 1935

Finale



ALICE EMORY WILMER

None of them want to be the generation that lost it all.

Christopher Tilghman

Mason's Retreat

Alice Emory Wilmer died in July 1936. A few days after her funeral, I had a telephone call from her grandson, Howard Wood, inviting me to come to Eversley. We had met the summer before in Maine and had been seeing one another as often as we could manage. Not easy, as I was living in Virginia and his bases were home in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania and college at Harvard.

I accepted with delight, though I remember that on top of the normal trepidation one feels at visiting people who could very well turn out to be one's future in-laws was the feeling that I was intruding at a time of mourning. I was afraid of being surrounded by sobbing relatives dressed in black. At that time, I doubt if I had ever been to a funeral.

I had never heard of Maryland's Eastern Shore, either. Having to take a ferry to reach it added to my feeling that I was entering a very different world, as indeed I was. Here, the land was flat, the horizons wide. I was used to the rolling Blue Ridge mountains. Here, there were countless rivers and creeks. We were always rattling across wooden bridges. At home, there was one river, the Shenandoah. Here, most roads were still dirt; in Clarke County by that time most roads had been blacktopped.

Stepping into Eversley was like stepping into the world of Louisa May Alcott. As the reader already knows, Alice Wilmer paid a great deal of attention to the look of her house, and the result was charming but from another time. Steel engravings hung on the walls, the parlor furniture was wicker painted black. The cushions were faded cretonne in a floral pattern. The bathtub had feet,

and every room had a coal oil lamp on standby because the new electricity was apt to fail in thunderstorms.

Mrs. Wood, Alice's "dear Phebe," was gracious and charming. She had a squarish face and curly brown hair beginning to go gray. Her mourning was unobtrusive, black skirt, white shirtwaist with a black bow at the neck. After a bountiful supper complete with "Mammy's" rolls, she read aloud to us. The book was *The Enchanted Voyage* by Robert Nathan. It is the story of a carpenter who builds a sailboat in his backyard—miles from the sea. One day, a wind comes up as he's testing the sails, and the boat takes off and away he goes, having adventures along the way. The story seemed so appropriate in this setting of water and boats. Howard took me sailing, of course, and we drove the wash to Etta's, parking in the shadows of winding Coon Box Road on the way home.

Eversley was left to Alice's son, Harry. He had by now a large practice. A pioneer in the field of allergies, he was head of the hospital at Abington, Pennsylvania. He died of a heart attack in 1943. Howard and I were married by then, and Uncle Harry's was the first family funeral I was ever part of. I remember going with Mrs. Wood to the funeral department of one of the big department stores in Philadelphia. "I must have a good looking black hat for Harry," she said. Amid the displays of black stockings, gloves and dresses, were evening gowns of heavily draped chiffon in bland pastels. I wondered why they were there, until it came over me with a chill that they were what a well-turned-out woman's body was supposed to wear in her coffin.

Harry's widow, Helen, lived at Eversley until it became too much for her. She sold it in 1953 to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Merlier, a hard-working young couple, with children the ages of our two. They sold the farm to Mrs. Helen Jennings who used the barns and pastures for the race horses she bred. It now belongs to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Gale. They have added a brick wing out back where the upmost and the lowmust sheds were and put in a swimming pool. The barns and outbuildings are well-painted, the hedgerows clipped.

Just before the outbreak of World War II, Phebe had to decide whether the house Jack Emory had built after he inherited Indiantown should have a new roof or be demolished. It had been used to store hay. Against all advice, she decided on the roof and then thinking the house might be worth restoring, went at it with a will. There are keys in a drawer somewhere with a tag in Mr. Wood's handwriting saying "Phebe's Folly."

In 1946 Howard and I bought the house and 5 acres from Indiantown Farm and have lived in it for 54 years.

Our oldest son, Robin, bought "The Cottage" after the death of his grandmother and lived in it with his family until he sold it to his cousin Mary McCoy, daughter of Phebe Wood, granddaughter of Phebe Wilmer. Our youngest son, James, and family have been living in a tenant house near the Indiantown barn. Alice Grey Wood and her husband, Ned Read, fixed up another small tenant house. Indiantown Farm has become a family partnership. The Emory ties with Emory land still hold.

In the summer of 1998, Lloyd Emory, owner of Poplar Grove, died. He had never married and hoping to keep the farm in the family, left it to our son, James, Lloyd's second cousin once removed.

The old brick manor house had been closed for several years, abandoned to dampness, cobwebs and mice. The outbuildings were filled with rusting machinery. Abandoned cars stood drowned in weeds.

The ancient boxwoods which bordered what had been the lawn were bent, roped with honeysuckle and poison ivy vines. You could no longer see the river from the grass terraces, now a rough weed-choked pasture. Broken limbs littered the bases of the enormous trees.

Alice Emory felt freed when she escaped Poplar Grove and made her own life at Eversley. Now her great grandson finds himself faced with challenges as daunting as those encountered by his earliest ancestors.

Mary Wood
Indiantown North
Chestertown, Maryland
August 3, 1999