Autobiography

Part II Life at Home.

5. Drawing, Grandam, & 1867.

(Written 1915, 16.)
1867

A little fonder, a little more grown up, are the records of this most
meaningful year, though still deluged with sermons & with quotations
from books. Seventeen is awfully immature & to be kept in isolation,
but eighteen is considered to be the first flush of youth, & it is rather
strange to see how very little happened.

My New Year text was Ps. 65.7, 8. "Because Thou hast been
my helper, therefore under the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice. My
soul followeth hard after Thee, & Thy right hand upholdeth me."
We turned out early (I rather think before breakfast) on an iron-
hard frosty morning, & heard Mr. Hobart on those words, & he bade us
take them away with us, & bring them back fine, fixed & proved on the
31st Dec. All Jan. we were at Tunbridge Wells, & I have masses of sermon
to record, but nothing much that has remained by me. What I do
not record is that there was a splendid long frost, & much skating on
the beautiful wide lakes. On account of my previous bad ankles I
was not allowed to skate, & this was something of a real trial, & I had
to stand & look on with untold envy at the happy bands of skaters.
All the 9 young Hoares were there, strong & handsome & cheerful, Biddy
she was afterwards Mrs. Hart & Louisa, & the fine twins, Edward & Guppy,
& Joseph. She was a Bishop & got drowned in China, & one or two more, share
with a lovely girl of 12, so nick-named "Sportie." She became Mrs. Shaw, &
Then she came about her daughter coming to Westfield, she appeared old + pitied. She is not long dead, + it seems strange to have seen a life like that right through, from the lovely “Spera” of the ice, with her long fair hair + little Astrahan cap, right on to premature old age.

Another point was I was learning Latin under George’s direction. It was begun at Grant + went on with great diligence in drains, oz balling in the measured Burdon, oz at any odd time. I am sure some insight was given me for as I began to read Virgil, the words seemed to mean much more than they do in English, oz rather as though I got behind all words to the very thing themselves. Now I remember saying over + over, “Arcturus plusiasque Hyades, genninosque Thiones,” + feeling the very presence of the stars; + even better still, “It jam nos humida coelo precipitat, radientque cadentia sidera somnus,” there. Oh there, was the very essence of the desy night, with the sweeping stars setting one by one behind the low dark hill. It was a very private joy, for I explained it to no one at all, though George, who was a very kind teacher was sometimes amused at my love of “old Latin.”

Also poetry became more to me. I had loved Longfellow for years, but now I loved the “Prelude” + “Evangeline,” + the more serious + elusive bits. + I learned them + copied them out, + said them over till they were a part of my being. B. Mi’s verses were much beloved, “Through the Snow on Horse,” “The Man at the Gate,” + others, + Mrs Charles’ “Voice of Xham Life in Song,” was a storehouse of delights. From there I got hold of Spenser’s “Hymn of Heavenly Love,” + learned it all while walking in
Born one verse seemed like a prayer written for me,
A blend well of Love, a Flower of Grace,
A glorious Morning Star, a Lamp of Light
Most lovely Image of Thy Father's face,
Eternal King of Glory, Lord of Might,
Great Lamb of God before all worlds beheld,
How can I. Thee repay for all this good,
Or what can praise that Thy most precious blood?

But I must go on chronologically if I can. In the close
of Jan., old blind Mrs. Barham died, and she was something of a real
loss to me, for one of us arranged to go see her almost every day,
and when it was my turn, I used to try on her things that interested me.
One once she asked for every time, whatever else I said,

"Must I be nothing? Must I nothing do?"

Nothing, my child. Christ has done all for you;
You cannot buy. The price is all too high;
Freely I give. Look unto me and live.

"I will be nothing still"
That Christ above my heaven of heavens may fill,
Yet set me, Lord, a little glowing gem, Upon His diadem,
To shed my rays, among the glories of that Crowned Day,
Though unperceived I still should like to shine.

A tribute glory on that brow divine."

The last week in Jan., we settled in to real home-life, in our charming
and Schoolroom, with solid books to read, such as Wuthering Heights.
I have to learn it wonderful plans for drawing. Then Sisters began to read Isaiah through with me every Sunday, but as we had no commentary of any sort, we could make nothing of any but the spiritual parts. Almost the only residue left in my mind is Is 28:20. "She fed is shorter than a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it." This he deduced as the pastors of a nation giving a doctrine that caused insufficiency rest to the human soul. Again on Is. 44:1. The Lord will have mercy upon Jacob." He said, "The word Jacob is always given to remind us of a most imperfect man, faulty at nearly every point. His one distinguishing point is that he is a man of faith, the man who says "I will not let thee go unless thou bless me." While Sisay represents the presence, independent spirit of the world."

I do not know that there was much profit for the long time these reading spent, but I liked to hear dear father’s full sonorous voice reading aloud those wonderful chapters, and certainly it drew us nearer together, and now and then during a drive, or on one of the long Sunday walks to Shinwol Church, we had some good discourse.

One cannot but observe that a strong influence Father had during these 2 or 3 years. I am now speaking of, with long letters copied out, visits to Hadley here and there, reference to his opinions, and many other details coming forward. Besides personal affection, this is, I think, in great measure due to his being our chief, and almost only, outlet into the life and labor of the Evangelical world. This was perhaps at its own best during the sixties, and he was in with the central workers, the glory of it all
spread out a few days into our secluded lives. On my birthday he wrote,

"Each Sunday afternoon now I take a service in the Consumption Hospital. Next Sunday it will be one. 55.1. They are dying, they are dying! One or two may recover, but 100 are marked for death, as far as man can judge. All but those are not saved. Oh for the living coal from the altar! I feel the deepest imaginable interest in them, as if after I have spoken I could not tear myself away. And if one is there brought in think of the glory of that! It gives greater power and power than when speaking to men who seem to have a long life before them. So you are 18 today. When I think of you and myself at 18, of what a poor, stupid creature I was, I wonder at the Grace of God that I am what I am now.

I consider you have nine years to the good, a disciplined and regulated mind as well, and I advise you to treasure up wisdom and wisdom, and when you will be ready to pour it out to others." Only a week later Harry writes very sadly to say that two of his poor dying men killed a friend outside to procures them drink, and being found drunk themselves and mortally cutting others, they had to be expelled, and his kind heart laments over them.

At the middle of April Gary and I went to London for about a fortnight (just 3 Sundays) under the care of Mr. Jeffs. I conclude there were draughts away, but those are not mentioned, and only the Sundays gave news to our being there. Surely it was rather a strange bit of liberty suddenly given? We were very free, very good looking, and utterly inexperienced, and knew no one at all in London, we never went out in the evening at all, except to church, and we wandered about by ourselves. The British Museum saw us pencil in hand copying antiquities & Greek
designs, + we were often in the National Gallery, + we studied the Royal Academy files, + limbs ached, + we knew every painter's style by heart. It was a good training in Art seeing us more practically without guidance, + also a good training in History, for this was the time that we fell in love with Westminster Abbey. To see Chatham stand there as it speaking, to see our saints + heroes, Wilberforce, Board, Blunt, Fox, to see the tablets, put up by Stanley to Wesley, to wonder round among the poets, to sit still amid their nobly humming resonance, + think of their spirits all round me; indeed it seemed almost too much joy + honour, + I remember standing on the steps above Trafalgar Square + looking at the towers from thence, + feeling a glow of patriotism + pride that I had never known before. The greater part of a tree is not the leaves but the wood, + the greater part of England is stored up in unassailable deathless memory.

As for the sermons, on Easter Sunday we heard one from Sir Smith. Bayley that was extraordinarily good, + has remained with me through life. It was on the 3 commands at the grave of Lazarus: (1) Roll away the stone, (2) Lazarus, come forth, (3) Love him + let him go. He pointed out that only the central command was a miracle, + that both before + after man, has much to do. A dead soul has to be raised to life; do not begin with expecting the life-giving word, but patiently roll away the heavy stone. Drink, bad companions, ignorance, foolish reading, evil habits, inconsistent examples, lust + see where your stone lies, + roll it away. Then, in one second Christ can do what you could not do though you toiled through eternity. But your work is not yet over; our Lord has committed a real duty to his Church, + teaching + pastoral care are needed. The
above upstanding buttercups that it looked like the field of the cloth of gold! All this was renewed year by year, + I rejoiced exceedingly in the vivid green of the young leaves of the oaks, + the graceful copper-bell lying like a spray of coral-pink against the green background. But it was reading this year, most diligent reading, that did the great pleasure. I had been Stanley’s Life of Arnold, some 8 months before, + now ended it, + when I read how the cruel “Angina Pectoris” seized him, I cried as though I had lost a friend. He as he stood there, commented one of course by “Tom Brown’s School Days,” was a real companion-spirit + friend to me. This book laid down, I began at once on Coleridge’s “Aids to Reflection,” + to this day the memory is perfectly clear of sitting in the octagonal summer-house at the Shaw in the exquisite solitude of the trees, + reading this sentence, “Morality is the body of which faith in Christ is the soul.” This apparently simple remark poured a flood of light into my mind, seared + bewildered with the discussions about the natural man + the spiritual man, seemed to condemn “Morality,” i.e. the simple human virtues, the innate tendencies toward honesty + kindness, as being the most subtle + therefore the worst enemy of the true religious life.

Also I now fell in with dear Ben’s poems. His prose writings had been read aloud one by one as they came out a few years before, + greatly prized, but these verses were quite new. Not so spiritual, not so exacting as the ever-beloved A.S.W., there was something open + sunny + confiding about them that I liked very much. “New Year’s Day,” “To one at Rest,” “The Caged Bird,” + a few others, I atom
I wasn't afraid of saying over the last few verses of the "Caged Bird," for quite a good many years, the "Yet his sun this bright departing, leaves him caged and desolate," While our Sun, in glory rising, bursts the cage, and shall not set, breaks the bars, unveils the spiritual, sets us free to gape and soar, free for tireless song and service, "is the day that dies no more"

All this was beautiful food for the young and growing soul, it then I was not married with religion, because when I was alone my thoughts, except for the beloved Latin, almost always turned that way. WJ Gatty's "Parables from Nature" had always been sweet to me, especially the one daily with the Dragon-fly Grub. I used to stand + look up between the trees to the clear blue overhead, then I was 13 years old + say, "Upward, upward, upward, through the clear brown water," + imagine the new life bursting its disarming breast coming out into a glorious existence, beyond the air in infinite space. But one of the many treasures of our new Schoolroom was a bell-glass aquarium + there we kept the creatures themselves + saw them emerge. The thought of that blind, ugly form, talking about + feeding among the water-snakes + boat-men, but all the while nourishing within a beautiful, powerful, vigorous life that should one day find its native element + clash, its pearly wings in the open sunshine, was to me a picture of a true Christian's life in the world, vivid beyond expression. Like the others, yet oh, so unlike. "It does not yet appear what we shall be." This lesson was impressed by our accidently killing a dragon-fly, thus. The Larva always crawled out of the...
water a few hours before it burst and effected the great transformation, - we
and to leave the lid of the glass, that it might fly away, but this time
it was left on. Henry, our only nephew, a most intelligent child though
only 3½ years old, was missing round the room; he stopped before the
aquarium. "Here comes the fish, calling, calling up the stick! - here he
comes, up + up the stick." I ought to have understood, + to have left the
lid off, but I didn't; + there in the morning was the old hand still clinging
to the stick, + a glorious creature in blue + green mail lying down on
the surface of the water. My remorse was great, + was intensified by Henry
seeming to think it was his fault, + saying over + over again, "Baby didn't
mean to kill poor Jagger-fly." This incident taught the whole lesson in to me,
+ I think that beautiful dragon-fly did not die in vain.

Quite intentionally I am missing out the records of the poor people that
they are struggling on page after page, about Mrs Martin + Marianne, Old Spike +
his daughter Patience who died of consumption, drowned old Squibben with his
quaint, charming, aristocratic-looking wife who could not read, + the boy Willy
Bishop sent home to die. All through this summer comes "people siting"
again + again, with all the things he said shewing the light leaning on his
simple mind, till he died in peace when the winter drew on. Some of the
accounts are sweet enough, + kept up a background of compassion + of true
evangelistic work, but somehow not one of them touched my heart as they
evidently did those of my sisters.

What does stir my soul, to its depths is the death of our old governness
Miss Armstrong, the "Grandma" I have mentioned before, a strange +
rather gifted woman. From that I now know, I conclude she died of cancer, though the word was never mentioned. She was evidently much suffering & I fear great poverty, & the worse for her in London, I remember we thought her rather dirty. I loved her better than the others did, for while they remembered her by her excellent & amusing way of teaching French verbs, I had later & more solemn & generous memories of the time when I was a little girl of 16 & which I have already related. Let me here transcribe the entry of 11 July 1867, when I was eighteen: "Mother had a letter this morning from poor old Grandma to say that she is now very ill. I believe it is an internal abscess of some kind, & the doctor tells her she has only a short time to live. I never thought of this! Mother has just invited her here to Oakfield, but she sends her love to all her "dear loved darlings," & says it is too late, & that she feels she will never see any of us again. She has had about as hard & sorrowful a life as one can imagine, & she does not seem sad to go, but only pensive & very humble & submissive. She says the sins of her life seem very offensive & awful, & she cannot feel any direct sense of pardon & inward peace, though she trusts in Christ alone. She earnestly begs us all to pray..."
for her soul, & that she may have the consciousness of our Father's blessing before she dies. I will pray for her, I will. She was very kind to me then we were so long alone, together in 1861. One of her thoughts she put into my mind which I believe I shall never forget. One evening I remember very well, we were sitting by the Schoolroom window watching the full moon rise behind the oaks, trees, clear and still and perfect. We were both silent a long time, both our thoughts being lifted off this world, mine in vague longings and aspirations after I knew not what, hers I doubt not in some more clear anticipations. I remember wishing she would speak, & at last she did, & told me something of the longing of her heart about the world to come. The words she used were "the power of an endless life," & I have kept them as something precious & mysterious ever since. Oh how soon will those depths be unveiled to her? I have read Horace's Elegy since those days, & it seems to me glad to be waiting for the moment when the prison-house is broken up & the soul is set free for the "endless life" to exert its inherent power in growing & expanding through all eternity." Again, 19th July. "Grandam is getting weaker, & her sufferings greater every day. Her Movements has been to see her, & she says his reading & prayer comforted her very much. I asked Brother if I might write to her, & now I have done so, reminding her of our nice time together, & telling her that though I am very sorry for her suffering, I cannot be sorry that the time is so near when the Power of an Endless Life will be set
free to grow in her soul for ever and ever.” Again on 23rd July came the touching reply.

“My very precious Constance, from your infancy you have been to me a Child of Love, but your last beautifully touching note hasawned you more closely than ever in my heart. Highly, deeply I value your prayers, that I may really know and feel Jesus my Saviour.

We know, though you do not, my life-long sins against Him and my fellow creatures, but I desire faith to cast all my guilt upon Jesus. You, dearly loved one, little know me. For unspeakably precious is the gift to you of a Christian mother, and how far more precious is the grace that has brought you thus early to the bosom of your Saviour! May He bless your prayers in my behalf, and please, my dear Child, we shall meet in His presence, and as you beautifully remark, go on growing and expanding out of that fulness of glory which must ever flow from God in Christ to His Church. Infinity, Eternity, can be but understood by us here, but we may in some measure grasp the truth that God is Love, that is a marvellous thing.

My bodily sufferings increase, but I want to be willing to suffer all as nothing to what I deserve, as nothing compared with my mercies. The agonies of the Cross teach a lesson of loving, thankful submission. Continue your prayers for me, darling Constance, and believe in the fond love of your old friend, Grandam.”

The effect of this heart-searching letter on me seemed to have been only a shock. My sole comment on it is, “All this for me?”
My prayers blest? I brought early to my Saviour? Oh save me, save me! I feel irretrievably ungrateful." I think this a startling out of conventionality that is rather curious.

Sweet Mother was very kind to the poor sufferers. She was not a good one for the direct Evangelical work of "saving a soul," but there was a noble Christian tone in her goodness. Then Grandmama sent us her few tiny possessions, a Tunbridge ware box for "My darling Mrs. Maynard," two gold seals in a bundle, "one for each of my blood circles," with a little purse extra for me. There came no sleep, either morphia, or then no food, and on 14 Aug. she died. On the last days of consciousness a friend wrote that "She was tranquill and filled to the full with peace." On the 16th Aug. I recorded that again I saw the full moon rise in splendour, and that all my thoughts have gone after her emancipated spirit.

I have dwelt on this at length, because it seems to me to be "a human document" amid much that is little worth. I turn over the pages with a kind of irritation, because I am always trying to like what I ought to like, with a sort of timid conventional feeling. E.g. I am always mentioning members of my family who are away, as if that was a sorrow, + I remember clearly it was not so. I always felt happier with a few, to be "alone with Mother," or to plan a thing "just you + I together," as a treat. It is silly to go on as if separations were a grief! I was open enough about Symphony, I liked
Literature! I owe him a most precious thing: sufficient knowledge of the basis, motive, and language of science, to make practically every department interesting, and to inspire a long desire to know more. Every Sunday unless it was a real storm, father walked the two miles to Slimwell church, and every Sunday one of us little girls trotted beside him. This year Mr. Hooselt left for East Tisted in Hampshire, and for a parting present I painted the interior of his church. The artistic inspiration had laid hold on me not long before, but the dark beams and soda were very well done, but it was spoiled by the painted window in the chancel which was ugly in itself, which I had not the skill to manage.

Dear Mr. Hooselt died in extreme old age at Clifton, about 1907.

I must not be too much irritated with my old Greenbholes for in a dim smothered-down sort of way I really did feel these things ought, thought it was difficult, but perhaps hardly right, to confide them to paper. This summer, I began reading William Law for myself, and making long extracts. The others did not take to him as I did, but I enjoyed "The Way to Divine Knowledge," the long-sided conversations between Theophilus, Academicus, Humanus, and Rusticus, each supporting their several characters. Still better did I love the "Dialogue between an Enlightened Soul and an Unenlightened Soul," the latter being described as dressed in a little defiled coat of vanity, a saying which pleased me very much. He also told of the great Sun of unalterable Love standing in the sky, pouring down his beams on the poor little seed hidden in the cold damp earth, leading it upward.
This autumn I was taken out to see one of the great South African Liners, & for at least two days we stopped at Portsmouth, & went over some battleships in the harbor. It was just the transition time from wood to iron, and it was considered a wonderful thing to be shown over two of the first "turret-ships", as they were then called, the Warrior & the Royal Sovereign, & we looked at them with profound awe, as also at the noble three-deckers still to be seen. But it was the men that impressed me; brought up not to know any young men at all, the call of the young blood still responded even to a cricket-match, & this, this was more. There was nothing the least personal, but the sudden sight of a world of men at their duties, a great force, that made me feel something poor & feeble, like a fly on a pane of glass, while they were out in the bright world of heroism & danger & glory. I looked at the fine athletic forms with a sort of reverence. What is this sort of thing always going on in the world? Why was I not there to see? possibly to help? Oh no, it was too grand for that. All I wrote was, "It was like a new world to me, to stand there on the middle deck, to hear orders sharply given, to see hundreds of active sailors at their various duties. It was very wonderful." After a little more wonder, the supreme thought that was always close behind the me penetrating every other, suddenly asks its abrupt & cogent questions, & I ask with a kind of wail, "Are we really such a little little flock? Is it true what Cooper says that only quite a few..."
"Torsake the wrong, with humbly lifted eyes
Ask wealth from Heaven, and gain a real prize.
Out of all those splendid men, just the picked best and noblest of
England's working-classes, are the greater part to be lost, but
for some? How can I look at them and think so? Yet I suppose
it is true." Then I proceed to console myself in the only way
possible to this creed: the being sent early to sea, the lack of
opportunity, the use made of the "very little," & above all, that
my compassion was a poor, dim, unworthy thing beside
the love of God binding over us them. I exclaim, "too wrong is
the accusation." I knew thee what thou art: an hard man!" He
is not, He is not." This too was a real experience.

The other thing was Prayer. I slept with Dora, & two
or three times I got her peaceably to sleep, & then prayed
by my little bed till midnight or past. The times I note are
Sept. 8: 9 ½ & Oct. 30. But I think there were others too.

Looking back, I think I was a Christian at nine years old, as
far as a bundle of immaturities can be a Christian. At twelve
(I imagine during the time alone with Grandam) I climbed up
a Portugal Laurel. Free & thought, "I still not come down till
I am a real, real Christian." I sat there, hiding my face & praying
& looking up through the leaves to the blue sky, for a long time.
At thirteen I sat up in bed & said over & over "Here am I;
Send me!" & thought how I would love to be a "Prophet of the
Sorites."
But through everything, Belstead & I drank + everything, it was always the lack of real concentrated prayer that held me back, + now for a few weeks I felt as though I might be laying hold of the end of the thread.

In Oct. I seem to have gone for a short time to Sympneys, + to have had great dealings with Conoin, Mrs. about what is means by "the crucifixion of the natural man," but it is all rather tangled + not much worth recording.

Before Christmas I had begun to instruct Harriet Boxall, a girl both deaf + blind, with whom I took much trouble for 2 or 3 years. She was charmed to be noticed, + was wonderfully quick at learning "blind." But I fear her heart was not touched, for when some 3 years later she had to be sent to the Workhouse, she was as violently naughty as she knew how to be. Also a new group appeared at Slimwell, "Old Portsmouth," + Lasson + Mrs. Ellis, a far down Brook Lane, old David Williams, his daughter, Selah people + very interesting.

Finally comes one of those retrospects that somehow it annoys me to read, full of laments over the past, + "Oh that it had been more + + full of foolish ungrounded hopes that all may now be quite different, "Oh that throughout next year I may be more + +. I was learning a great deal of theology by this time, + laying up stores of some really good things, + yet practical life seems to be dry through + through with a sort of full aspiration that is surely not right, + ought to have been conquered by some practical test of courage + endurance."