J.D.E., February, 1928.
Revised, April, 1928.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

My Ancestors

I cannot recall that I know anything about my ancestors beyond my paternal and maternal grandparents. The family name of Ellsworth, while not extremely common, is not an unusual one. I have been told that our branch of the family came from Cambridgeshire, England, during colonial times, and settled in and around Rowley, Massachusetts. Our family went north from there to Bath, Maine. I don't know whether my ancestors had any connection with the town of Ellsworth, Maine. My knowledge begins with the fact that my grandfather, Jeremiah Ellsworth, lived in Bath, Maine. He had a big rambling house with woodshed and stable attached on the principal residence street, High Street I think it was, along with the Morse, the Moses, the Patton, the Sewell families, etc. After his death the house was not kept up as well as the neighboring houses, but it was filled with handsome, old fashioned furniture. My grandmother, Martha Hutchinson Trott Ellsworth, lived there until she died and after that my father's two maiden sisters lived there until they were too old to live alone, when they came to Braintree, Massachusetts, where

my father was then living. Then the place was sold to Galen Moses and added to his estate which adjoined. The house was moved away and the landmark ceased to be. Visiting Bath years afterwards I tried to locate where the house had stood and could not, but might have done so by searching the city records. I did, however, locate in the cemetery the Ellsworth lot and the graves of Jeremiah and Martha Trott Ellsworth and two or three of their children.

Jeremiah Ellsworth died soon after I was born, but I have an idea of him from pictures and descriptions. He was tall and so "lanky" that it is said he could put his foot over his head even when he was an old man. His main occupation seemed to be that of a civil engineer and he located the site of the Saguin Light House off Popham Beach at the mouth of the Kennebec River. For some time he was in the government service as collector of the port. He was, my father said, the first fire chief of Bath. He was also a captain of militia. In some of his various capacities, he used to lay the bouys up and down the Kennebec River. He was always in politics and fond of his toddy, but at the same time quite an aristocrat in appearance and mode of life. He was a great wag and story teller, wrote poetry and was something of a radical in religion.

Martha Trott Ellsworth, my grandmother, was also tall and aristocratic looking and as I recall somewhat austere. She was born in Woolwich, across the river. She was a devout member of the Congregational Church. I think she had five daughters and two sons. Two of the daughters, Caroline and Elizabeth, died in their teens. One daughter married, her first husband being an Otis and the second a Fullerton. Her surviving son, my father's nephew, Ellsworth Fullerton, became a congregational minister, largely, I believe, through my grandmother's influence, as did my father. Two of her daughters, Emily and Frances, never married and lived to old age. Emily studied painting in New York and for a time taught in Providence, Rhode Island. My most vivid memory of my grandmother is that she rapped me under the chin to teach me to keep my tongue in my mouth. Naturally, as a very small boy I had a wholesome respect for her and at the same time thought she was very grand. I went to church with her once and heard for the first time the melancholy song, "Nothing but Leaves, the Spirit Grieves."

My maternal grandparents died before I was born, in fact some years before my parents were married. They lived, until Angelina was born, I think, in New Sharon, Maine, and then removed to Auburn, Maine.

Dr. John Cook, my grandfather, born in Sandwich, New Hampshire, was a small town physician of the old school and, as I gather, a faithful, sincere, self-denying man who was greatly loved. He also was something of an aristocrat and very fine looking. Beyond the fact that he came of a Quaker family of Tamworth, New Hampshire, I have no knowledge that I can recall of the Cook family.

My maternal grandmother's name was Clementine Allen, and came of a well known family of Allens early settled at Martha's Vineyard, having come from England in 1640. One of her relatives, William Allen, married Love Coffin of Nantucket Island. An uncle of my mother was widely known in those early days as "Camp Meeting John Allen." His daughter, Amanda Allen, married a Norton and the singer Lillian Norton, known as Nordica, was my mother's second cousin. The Gowers of New Haven, Connecticut, were also cousins. George and Melville Gower were pioneer traders in the Sandwich Islands and Fred Gower was associated with Alexander Graham Bell in the early development of the telephone. Gower had a concession which gave him the exclusive right to establish telephone service in a certain New England district, and traded it for the right to deliver lectures on the telephone all over the United States. Afterwards he exploited the telephone in France and made quite a bit of money.

It is a coincidence that Madam Nordica and Fred Gower, who were cousins representing different branches of my mother's family, married. Gower is supposed to have lost his life in a balloon trip across the English Channel.

My mother used to tell of an uncle named Allen who was a minister and quite a horse trader, as many were in those days. Trying to sell a rather lazy horse, he got his customer to follow in another buggy and kept the lazy horse going at a fine clip without using a whip. Unseen to the customer, however, he had a stick stuck through a hole in the dashboard which did the trick with the lazy horse and the sale was made.

My grandmother Cook was a spry and competent woman, but so thin, wasted away with a long illness, that she could be carried around in a big wooden bread bowl. I have seen the bread bowl and believe she must have spread over the edges, small as she undoubtedly was.

My maternal grandparents had six children that I can recall. There were three boys, Harrison Allen, Prentice Mellen and John G., and two surviving daughters, Augusta Anna, and Angelina Grimke Clementine, who was my mother, beside a daughter who died as a baby. My Uncle John G. Cook married and had a drug store in Lewiston, Maine, and later in life, after

business reverses, moved to Chicago, Illinois. Harry, the elder brother, was an express messenger and went to California in the gold rush. Mellem became a druggist and gave John his start in the business.

After the death of their parents, my mother, with her sister Augusta, kept house for the two unmarried brothers, Harry and Mellen, in Auburn, Maine, just across the river from Lewiston. Mother married and Mellen having died, Augusta and Harry continued to live in Auburn.

My Father

Alfred Augustus Ellsworth, my father, born in Bath, Maine, July 12, 1832, was of medium height, rather than tall like Jeremiah Ellsworth, with abundant black hair, which remained abundant after it was gray, and strong features, rather homely, but with a face more than usually attractive. After the usual school education he became a clerk in a Boston dry goods store and like his mother a devoted and active church member, in Park Street Church, then in its heyday. After working as a clerk he, with the aid of friends, among them Mrs. Harriet Damon, went to Bridgeton, Lewiston Academy and Amherst College, graduating in 1858; then to Andover Theological Seminary. He also attended Union Theological Seminary in New York City. I think that during vacations he sold bibles in Ulster

County, New York, taught in Colburn Academy and did evangelical work.

While at Lewiston Academy he met the Cook girls, who sang in the choir and were quite the vogue. The pastor of the church was Reverend James Drummond, for whom I was named. Angelina was the youngest of the family and an extremely popular and pretty girl. She and my father were married on December 2, 1862, and moved to my father's first pastorate, the Congregational Church in Milford, Massachusetts. My Aunt Augusta shortly afterwards joined them there and never marrying, she remained in the household while my parents lived. My brother, George Gower, was born in Milford.

My father was a good preacher and always made strong friends. His chief supporter in Milford was Samuel Walker, a rich shoe manufacturer and banker, although there were many other friends whom I have forgotten. He enlisted for the war but the parish would not release him. Later he went into the Christian Commission and after a little time sent for the family to come South, Aunt Augusta to be a teacher of colored people. With his young wife and her sister, and two small boys, he located at Newbern, North Carolina, to preach in a small church and work among the negroes during that rather lawless period following the Civil War. Naturally, this work was not popular

with the defeated southerners, and he was under attack by the rougher element of "Secesh" as they were called. Added to this the North failed to send the promised supplies and salary. Brickbats were thrown into his church window and I think that all that kept him from serious personal injury was his friendliness and his strong personality.

After several years at Newbern, he moved with his family to Weymouth, Massachusetts, or Weymouth Landing, as his section of the town was called. His church was across a small waterway called Fore River, and he lived in a large double house, with ample grounds overlooking the Weymouth waterfront. At the rear of the house was a deep cutfor the railroad, so my father crossed one bridge to go to church and another to go to the stable which was on the further side of the railroad cut. Two more boys were born here, Alfred Jennison and Samuel Walker, and in 1872 he took his now large family out west to Waterloo, Iowa. The west was at that time the land of promise and I think with his rapidly growing family he thought that was what he wanted. He expected to go to a church in Chicago but the great fire changed this plan.

The Congregational parsonage in Waterloo was a large rather unattractive frame house, with a good sized yard between it and the principal street leading

down town. It was just at the foot of a little hill on which more well to do people were established. The town was young and raw, but there were a sprinkling of people whom my parents found congenial although they probably missed the more cultured atmosphere of New England. But it was possible to keep a cow to give milk for the family, and generally one or two horses, to ride and drive, my father being very fond of horses.

At that time Blackhawk County in which we lived offered some of the best prairie chicken hunting in the country, and there were also ducks, woodcocks and other small game. My father had a two-seated democrat wagon and setting out with three or four friends would often come back with a hundred or so fine prairie chickens, a very welcome addition to the bill of fare. Sometimes when some of his friends from the east came out to hunt in winter, there would be a barrel of frozen game by the back door to be used as needed.

On several occasions my father would show a saddle or buggy horse at the county fair and get a blue or red ribbon. While in Waterloo he wrote several lectures which he delivered in the neighboring towns, the most popular one being entitled, "Over the Counter." For several years he published a weekly paper which he finally gave up as the wet interests proved too strong in their opposition.

After a few years, perhaps four or five, with two daughters, Julia and Fanny, added to the family, he accepted a call to the Brick Congregational Church in Galesburg, Illinois. Galesburg, beside being the site of Knox College, was a larger community and had a larger church and parish. There the family of nine, including my Aunt Augusta, were established in a rather smallish house on Main Street near the center of town but after a year or two, needing more room, moved to the so-called Gulliver house in a better part of town.

This house had been built by a former president of Knox College on a rather grand scale, and while it was an old fashioned, rambling place, and not in very good repair, it gave the family plenty of room. In fact part of it was left unfurnished. The grounds were very large with beautiful trees, and included a large kitchen garden, an orchard and a large fine stable.

The next move was to the Halsey house, another large, and somewhat more modern place on the opposite side of town, on grounds several acres in extent. Why this move was made I don't know, but it was not the last one, for my father bought, at a bargain, a house down town, which was well enough but had nothing particular to recommend it except its

nearness to the church and other centers of activity. My father still kept a horse or two and rode as well as drove, although they were not horses to take blue ribbons. Probably the family by that time was getting pretty expensive. We four boys used to have "scraps" so to shame us my father bought four bowie knives to do our fighting with.

As far as I can judge my parents enjoyed the society of Galesburg but nevertheless they still felt the appeal of the east and in 1883 moved first to Bath, then to Brookline, Massachusetts, and finally, to Braintree, Massachusetts, only a few miles from their former home in Weymouth.

The church at Braintree had been made famous by Dr. Richard Salter Storrs. Like Weymouth, Braintree is a suburb of Boston and that proximity to the city was something my father greatly enjoyed. While here, he was given a vacation abroad and was entertained by Madam Nordica and her mother. He saw many places of which he had read and his recollections gave him great pleasure for years. His pastorate in Braintree was long and successful and he continued a powerful and popular preacher, but as he grew older some members of the parish thought a younger man was needed.

So my father resigned and moved to Quincy, where he bought a house in which he lived with his son,

Dr. Samuel W., until he died, January 10, 1910. He was a very studious man and in his last years found his chief interest in his books. The day before he died he read his Latin and Greek books and the week before gave a brilliant talk at the Men's Club in Braintree. He was, moreover, very sociable, always making acquaintances and holding strong friends.

He had a thrifty habit, but in common with ministers, generally had many demands on his charity and generosity, and frequently was cramped financially. I believe he thought his western experience was a mistake and that he would have had more important churches if he had remained in the east. In my opinion this would have been the case, but after all he had a happy life and with the able help of my mother launched upon the world a family of six healthy young people, which is no small accomplishment. That he lived a useful life there is no question. As a young minister he reflected the somewhat narrow views of the time as to smoking, dancing, card playing and drinking, but as he grew older he became more liberal in his standards, or perhaps I should say was mellowed by foreign travel and four apparently incorrigible sons, and was tolerant of the more liberal and logical modern attitude. He even liked to play a game of whist himself and I am sure it did not do him a bit of harm either here or hereafter. In spite of my

resistance, he gave me some literary training and an interest in books and good writing. Throughout the period of my knowledge of him he was a frequent sufferer from dyspeptic pains, and while this gave him an impatient tendency, particularly when boistrously disturbed during sermon-writing, he was never a complainer, and in fact was a good deal of a wag like his father.

One of his best stories can hardly be written because it depended so much upon the tone and manner of delivery. Near Bath on the Kennebec River there was, in his day, an Indian burying ground. Passing this in a boat, if you said in slow, deep tone, "Indian, Indian, what did you die for?," repeating it solemnly three times, you would hear in even deeper and more sepulchral tones, the Indian say, "nothing at all, nothing at all, nothing at all." If he could tell this story so that the listeners would express the disbelief that any reply came from the burying ground he would be immensely pleased and he was often immensely pleased.

My Mother

Angelina Grimke Clementine Cook Ellsworth, my mother, was born in the period when slavery was being agitated and her first two names were taken from an anti-slavery heroine, Angelina Grimke. Clementine was the name of her mother. She was fine

looking all her life and in her youth extremely pretty. She was rather below medium height and inclined to stoutness. She was taught by her mother and tutored by a cousin and went to Lewiston Academy, headed by Professor Sewell. Starting with only a moderate education and not studying Latin and Greek as did her sister Augusta, who could read at the age of three, she nevertheless became unusually well read and well educated. Her papers and talks before societies and clubs would put many a college graduate to shame. At sixty she took up the study of Italian and got a good working knowledge of that language and quite late in life she spent years studying the history and quality of the best art the world has produced. She also modelled in clay delightful figurines and could sketch, paint and carve cleverly.

My mother was a gracious hostess and a popular guest with a sympathetic way of meeting people. She was a rare conversationalist, with a charm of manner which no one failed to appreciate. She was also a good housewife and to my notion one of the best cooks I ever knew. It goes without saying that she was a hard worker, with little money to do with and never, probably, with competent help. It was no small task in such circumstances to bring up four boys and two girls, keep the house in shape, perform the various

duties of a minister's wife, and with all this continue her own intellectual development.

About the time we lived in the Gulliver house in Galesburg my brother and I got in the way of staying out nights. My father would lock the doors at ten o'clock and if we were not in we were out for the night. I remember sleeping in a cold woodshed on several occasions rather than wake up the household. I also remember my mother stealing down and quietly unlocking the door when she heard me coming up the gravel walk after the proscribed hour.

Further back when we lived in Weymouth my mother learned to do up white starched shirts exquisitely well because no one else seemed to do them to my father's satisfaction. At the time she whittled out for me the best little wooden boats I ever saw.

My mother was very fond of music and in her younger days sang alto in choruses, choirs and so forth. She was always fond of her cousin, Mrs. Norton, Nordica's mother, and after Mrs. Norton's death, mother in a measure took her place and travelled abroad with Nordica on two occasions in 1883 and 1891, starting, if need be, on a few hours' notice when her own children were old enough to spare her. On such occasions my Aunt Augusta took charge of the household. At a dinner given to Nordica in Rome my mother had a long

conversation with a Roman senator, which I think influenced her to study Italian, although her love for Italian art also had something to do with it. As contrasted with this, the amount of mending she did for her large family was astounding.

In her later years she would have enjoyed a little more personal luxury but the habits of thrift were strong and the gifts of money from her children she put away for a rainy day and never spent on herself.

From my mother, as well as my father, we children had a goodly heritage because of their fine characters, good heads, and unselfish lives. I have always been proud of my origin, and I think that this family pride has influenced me more than anything else which I received from my parents.

Because my mother was born on the 29th of February she only had a real birthday once in four years which seemed to me to keep her young. At any rate she never lost her high courage and her interest in life.

My Childhood Days

I was born in Milford, Massachusetts, on October 14, 1863. I have been told I was just a normal, husky baby. My brother, George Gower Ellsworth, was born about two years later, and soon after that my father took the family to Newbern, North Carolina. While there I had a wasting

illness and was given up to die. I could not eat anything and my father in desperation said, "Try him with some salt codfish. If he is going to die any way it can't hurt him." Strangely enough this food seemed to be acceptable and I began to get better. About the same time, out of childish curiosity I went to the medicine chest and took a big drink from the ammonia bottle. Again I survived only by the skin of my teeth,as you might say, for the skin was all off my throat. But my robustness was gone and I was for many years a sickly child. To carry these incidents through, I was again given up to die when I was perhaps twelve years old, having had in quick succession in one summer, measles, whooping cough and pneumonia. But for the third time I pulled through.

Newbern was the scene of my first recollections. I remember dimly the back yard of our rather poor southern home, a visit to a curious kind of a shop, and the sight of stacks of peanut vines on a nearby farm. I also remember being carried in my aunt's lap as she was riding horseback - on a side saddle in those days.

When we left Newbern we came by steamer around Cape Hatteras, but I have heard so much of the trials of that voyage that I probably remember the description rather than the actual experience.

I do remember, possibly on our arrival in Boston, looking out of a hotel window at the grimy city snow. The disillusioning effect of that snow stuck by me for a long time.

When we lived at Weymouth I was old enough to appreciate what was going on and to definitely remember things. The big French-roofed mansion, of which we occupied a half, is still clear in my mind. The other half was occupied by two sisters named Loud. One of them died while we were there and I remember how she looked in her coffin. The trains used to go puffing by in the deep cut between the house and the barn, which we reached over a wooden bridge. The locomotives had the large flaring smokestacks, and may have burned wood. The barn itself was burned while we were there, probably because we children played with matches contrary to orders. The schooners which came up to the nearby docks were of unfailing interest. My next door boy playmate was Arthur Pratt who at last accounts still lived in the same place.

There was a rather steep driveway down to the street. Stella Luce, a relative or friend somewhat older than I, ran with me down this drive so fast that I fell and ground my face in the gravel.

My brothers, Alfred Jennison, on July 26, 1868, and Samuel Walker Ellsworth, on March 29, 1870,

were born in the Loud house but I must have been sent away. Samuel Walker, for whom my youngest brother was named, visited us there and brought a lot of Christmas presents. Mr. and Mrs. Damon, friends from Worcester, Massachusetts, came also and brought me a small, simple steam engine. Some one put a silver teapot on the stove and melted away the base.

Occasionally my mother's paternal relatives, Hannah Gilman and her sister Dora, would visit us and do dressmaking. While at Weymouth I was taken to Boston Common and saw my first Punch and Judy show, and went to a restaurant to have ice cream. I remember the iron chairs. I believe it was while living in Weymouth that I was taken to visit my grandmother in Bath. My Aunt Emily tried to teach me painting without success. While in Bath, perhaps on a later occasion, my brother George and I were playing beside the river and waded out on a runway at high tide. Afterwards I saw this runway at low water and shivered to think how near in our ignorance, we came to stepping off into water at least two fathoms deep.

I remember going to my first party and I can remember the name of the people who gave it as being Ambler. They had what seemed to me a very fine place and after nearly fifty years, Mrs. Dr. Welch, the daughter of the house was still living in it.

It must have been along this time that I was taken to visit my Uncle John Cook in Lewiston. He then lived over his drug store which was near a fire engine house. The noise made by that engine when responding to an alarm of fire used to terrify me. It seemed to get on my nerves although I knew what it was and that it would not harm me.

As already stated my father in 1872 moved to Waterloo, Iowa, and we all made the long, slow journey in ordinary day coaches. When we got to Chicago, the smouldering embers of the great fire were still smoking. The railroad depot from which we were to leave had been burned down, and a pine board shed had been hurriedly put up to take its place. On the train going west were refugees from the fire, carrying in bags and bundles, clothing, silverware and the few valuables they had saved.

At Waterloo our home was a fairly large square frame house, painted a dismal brown, without piazzas or attractive grounds. In winter I missed the big evergreen trees we had in the east. Samuel Walker visited us there and took George and me down town to buy us a present. He told us we could have one good sled to belong to us jointly or two cheap sleds. We chose individual cheap sleds which were of a rather girlish type, and never had a really good sled.

Francis Murphy, the reformed saloon keeper, came to town to lecture on temperence. He visited our house and gave us candy. I seem to recall that on that occasion we chose one good box rather than two lesser ones. The Leavitts, Allens, Burnhams and Foreys all lived on the crest of the slope above our house. John Leavitt was the head of the banking house of Leavitt and Johnson and I used to play with his children Roger and Lucy. Allen was a lawyer and he had a son Harry and a daughter Harriet somewhat older than I but in the crowd. Hiram Burnham had one daughter and so did Forey, the druggist.

Across the street on our level lived the Logan boy, and on the high ground not very far away lived another druggist by the name of Churchill, the son Arthur being quite a chum. Bert Johnson was about my own age but lived in another part of town.

The public school, presided over by Professor Von Cullom, was several blocks away on our street. Part of the time I went to school but more of the time was kept at home and taught by my father and aunt. Not only did I have measles, whooping cough and pneumonia one after the other, leaving me in poor health, but I was painfully bashful with children of my own age, and would run away and hide behind the wood-pile if a group of them passed the yard.

At an early age my chores included taking care of the horses, which I liked to do, and I used

to play games riding bareback with a few boy chums. I think I was thrown off some thirty times before I lost count. The well curb stood in the middle of the yard, having a wooden bucket drawn up by turning a crank. In winter the well curb and the approach to it would be thickly covered with ice, and watering the stock was no easy job.

Being out of school so much and shut out of play except on horseback, I had a great deal of time on my hands which I spent with men who were working at their trades. In this way I learned a smattering of blacksmithing, of harness making, and tin working. I was fond of doing odd jobs around the butcher shop, and running the sausage machine.

Bill Whitney kept a livery stable and was an odd stick. Once he was in front of the house in a wagon drawn by a skinny horse.

I said, "Mr. Whitney, why don't you feed your horse?"

"What for?", said Bill.

"Because he is thin. I can see his ribs."

"Oh no," said Bill, "He's not thin. He's a Democrat horse and the fat is all on the inside."

It was many years before I understood the significance of this political joke.

Another time Bill Whitney gave me some advice. He said that once as a boy he had two apples, one large, fair apple and one little, scrubby one. He decided to keep the large, fair apple for the last, but while he was eating the little one, another boy came along and demanded the mate to the apple he was eating. After that, Bill told me, he always ate the large, fair apple first.

Of course, only a few of my memories of Waterloo can be given and these chiefly for local color and sidelights on my early experiences.

There came into the family a book containing the dialogue of a Punch and Judy show with directions for making the dramatis personnae. We all took a hand in preparing the show, my mother carving out of wood the heads of the most difficult characters, such as Punch himself and the Ghost. A tall, square, wooden frame covered with turkey red, housed the unseen performer and had a shelf to serve as a stage for the puppets. I worked the figures and gave the dialogue with the aid of a tin and tape contraption which produced the necessary shrill tones, and George, in the costume of a medieval actor, took up the collection when we played on a street corner.

The tin wedding of my parents occurred in Waterloo and furnished tin horns and lanterns for us children.

One time at the county fair a banker with long side whiskers who lived on the other side of the river, took a prize for his four gray horses driven to an open carriage in which were his wife and a beautiful little girl, with the usual blonde curls. I not only admired the horses but in my bashful way the girl, who appeared to me like a princess. Much to my surprise I was taken to a party at the banker's house, where we played wedding and I was married to the "princess." Some thirty-five years afterwards I was visiting a friend in New Orleans and told this incident to the aged aunt of my hostess, who, I found, had once lived in Waterloo. She proved to be Mrs. Farwell, the banker's wife and told me that her niece, the "princess," was happily married somewhere in the northwest with a nice family of children. As far as I can remember, this was my first love affair.

One day when men were cutting ice on the Cedar River and I was nosing around, I stepped in an open cut that was so covered with straw that I did not see it. Fortunately for me the ice cutters saw me in time, fished me out and sent me home with my wet clothes frozen like boards.

Bert Johnson introduced me to the mischief of Hallowe'en, Arthur Churchill taught me how to catch pigeons in steel traps and Will Somers helped me trap ground squirrels and gophers for whose scalps a bounty

was paid by the county. But I was afraid of the dark and hated to go into the hay loft at night to feed the horses. Finally I took myself in hand and thought out all the things which might happen to me, such as bears, robbers, etc., and decided that after all I could only be killed, and because of this conclusion I ceased to be afraid.

About that time there was a shortage of fuel and a plethora of corn, so we burned nice yellow corn in an "air tight" stove in the dining room and for cooking in the kitchen. There were tame Indians camped round about who were great beggars. On several occasions when the family were gathered around the stove, two or three Indians would be found standing close to us, having entered so silently that their appearance was a complete surprise.

About this time I caught my first fish, a sunfish, in the Cedar River and had my first gun, a single barrel, muzzle loader, given me by my father. So I was getting out of my childhood when we left Waterloo, with the addition to the family of my sisters, Julia and Fanny, who were born there.

My Youth

Galesburg was an older and more finished city than Waterloo and my first recollection was of our stopping at the Union Hotel on City Square until we could get into our new home.

I was still considered too sickly to go to school and was taught by my Aunt Augusta and by several tutors, among them Professor Bangs, whose wife had charge of the girls' hall connected with Knox College. In spite of my tutors I did not study and consequently learned very little.

I spent a great deal of time at an iron foundry trying to be a moulder, and at a friendly blacksmith's where I made myself some lineman's spurs for climbing telegraph poles. When we moved to the Gulliver house I borrowed a democrat wagon and helped move my father's books and light household goods. Beside taking care of the horse and milking the cow, we boys had the job of sawing and splitting wood, but usually we were so dilatory with this work that professional help was called in. Near us was a shop where they made wooden cisterns and I would work there by the hour while my own work was left neglected. The Swedish carpenter took an interest in me and showed me how to make a bed, washstand, chairs and so forth, so that I furnished one of the vacant rooms with my own handiwork. At a reception my parents gave, my mother welcomed a slim girl, and it was some time before she recognized the familiar clothes which I had borrowed from my aunt.

On my own account I made a sled which looked like the real thing, but which was not properly braced,

and collapsed ignominiously when my father tested it with his foot. As Julia says, I also made a pair of wooden skates for her.

Also I was much interested in simple chemical experiments, and another man showed me how to make a pair of scales for weighing the materials for these experiments.

My chief playmates were Josiah Babcock, Loyal (Pickle) Smith, Harry Johnson and John Phillips. Being still extremely bashful and sensitive, I nevertheless wanted to do as other boys did, and take a girl home from a party. Once I got my courage up to ask one girl in an awkward way and when she refused me, in desperation I asked all the girls and they all refused. After that setback my ambition left me for a long time.

I used to ride a lot, and even learned to ride standing on the horse's back, but while driving I had several runaways which must have been a drain on the family funds. My mother got used to seeing a horse come galloping home with an empty saddle.

Finally I was entered in Knox Academy to prepare for college, and finished the three year Academy course.

At the Academy I was greatly embarrassed by my clothes which were generally made over from my father's as was natural in a large family living on a minister's modest income. Just the opposite in

the matter of clothes was George Colton, afterwards Governor of Porto Rico. I also came to know S. S. McClure, Dr. Eastman, a Sioux Indian, and a Greek named Anistosios Zerephernethees.

One vacation I tried to sell tornado, cyclone and wind storm insurance to farmers with indifferent success. A Mr. Bowman employed me for this work, and I used on my trips an Indian pony much the worse for wear.

I think my next job was that of printer's devil in the office of the Weekly Plaindealer. Here I learned to set type, though slowly, and do odd jobs around the shop. My pay was $2.00 a week. My father thought I would get some education in a printing office, and I think I did.

Another summer I worked in an insurance office for Lake Sanborn, making collections, writing out policies and sometimes signing them for Lake as I could imitate his signature. Mr. Mitchell, Sanborn's brother-in-law, occupied the same office, as treasurer of the gas company and I did things for him also.

George and I used to go hunting, principally for quail and wild pigeons, which were very numerous. One time when my father was along we took the bridle off the horse to feed him without unhitching him from the two-seated carriage. The horse was frightened by a shot and started to bolt with me hanging to his neck. Of course I was soon dragged under his

feet and the carriage went over me. My father, who saw the occurrence, said he thought I was a goner that time, but I wasn't very badly hurt.

About that time I went to visit my mother's cousin, Addison Pierce, in Chicago and had my first meal in a dining car. With him and his wife and daughters I went to their camp on Geneva Lake near Kaye's Park, where I learned to swim. With a boy named Harry Eaton, a neighbor of the Pierce's, I got into all kinds of mischief, ending with the wrecking of our rowboat which had a sail up when a storm struck us. Addison Pierce was glad enough to get rid of me.

In Galesburg two sisters named Smollenger kept a millinery shop and were friends of my family. I paid some attention to Sidney, the younger one who was, nevertheless, older than I. One time we were riding horseback in the evening when her horse was frightened by fireworks. She fell over to the right of the side saddle and hung head down with her foot caught in the stirrup. By good fortune I managed to stop her horse before she was hurt.

There was another girl, Nellie Watkins, whom I admired from a distance. She was the niece of Mrs. Mitchell who asked me one Saturday to visit a painting class where Nellie was. Somehow I embarrassed Nellie so that she sat down on her palette which caused much talk and ended that affair.

Among the boys I was not very popular, either, and stood around on the edge of things, not being much good. One larger boy named Elmer Sargent, used to bully me on every occasion, nearly drowning me in the waterworks pond by twisting the plank to which I was clinging before I had learned to swim.

During the summer of 1880 my father had a visit from Rev. E. P. Tenney, who was president of Colorado College at Colorado Springs. As was usual with visiting ministers when the family was shown off, he looked at me and said, "So this is the sickly one?" But he did more, he persuaded my father to send me to Colorado College for health and education. I may say that he made good as regards to health, for the outdoor life at that high altitude and under those sunny skies made me as healthy as anyone.

In September I was on my way west about as green a tenderfoot as ever was, except that I knew horses and guns. I was supposed to help earn my way by teaching in the preparatory school, but I was as little interested in teaching as I was in studying. On every occasion I would neglect both to break ponies, hunt or explore the mountains around Pike's peak.

As I steadily refused to go to faculty meeting least I be exposed, I lost my job of teaching before the year was up and eked out my small expenses by doing chores and all sorts of odd jobs. While I was on a trip into the mountains my mother came

out to visit me, and waited for days not knowing where I was nor when I would return. But my mother had had so many experiences of that kind that she stood it bravely.

Of course I had many adventures, and what seemed like hairbreadth escapes, but through it all I got a foundation of health which has ever since stood me in good stead.

At this period I was impatient of routine and always wanted to do some new thing. One night I reasoned things out for myself and began the effort which has since continued, to take things more philosophically, and make the best of any situation in which I found myself. Perhaps, as I look back, I carried this too far in after life.

One summer I hired out to drive a stage to the Seven Lakes Hotel kept by an old man from Newburyport, Massachusetts, named Dr. Smith. He sent me up ahead with a load of potatoes and a pair of skinny horses. The potatoes were to feed the horses as well as myself. After many vicissitudes I dug my way through the snow into the Seven Lakes Valley, at an altitude of perhaps 10,000 feet, and chopped through a foot of ice to get water for my team. When I got back to Colorado Springs, Smith had given my job to one of his wife's relations and I never drove a stage nor got a cent.

Another summer I joined a cow outfit, and helped drive 3,000 head of Texas cattle up through Ute Pass into the White River country. Still another summer I went with Ben Lowe to Aspen to help him start a paper, and also worked for the Gould boys in a logging camp. But that excursion though full of adventures, was not profitable.

After nearly four years of making Colorado College my headquarters, I left without graduating, to run a little weekly paper in Coal Creek, Colorado. I could set type after a fashion and do simple job work and had done some newspaper work on the Colorado Springs Gazette. The Coal Creek Enterprise was owned by a man named Sweeney, the local railroad manager, who wanted the paper for political purposes but wanted me to take the responsibility. It was a four page sheet with "patent inside," that is, the inside came ready printed, and the office was over Mark Griffith's saloon.

The town was simply a coal mining camp with innumerable saloons and a jumble of unpainted houses and stores, grimed with coal dust. Three miles down the valley at the oil camp was the town of Florence. I was hailed by other newspapers as the youngest editor in the state, and I certainly was the least competent.

I was not only editor, but I was the whole force except on publication days when I had an assistant to help me print the edition on an old Washington hand press.

I boarded with some miners and a livery stable hand at Mrs. Fugate's, and was like a cat in a strange garret. But I had railroad passes which would take me all over the state if I had the time to travel and money to pay hotel bills. I did make a few trips to Denver, Leadville, Pueblo and several times to Colorado Springs, where I used to call at the Kerr house until Nellie and I had a misunderstanding.

After a year at Coal Creek I pulled up stakes and went to Denver to work on a real newspaper. Although I wore cowboy boots and hat, the Rocky Mountain News gave me a job as a reporter and during the next few years I worked also for the Evening World, the Times and the Republican. These were live daily papers and gave me a real newspaper experience. My first job paid $12.00 a week and my last $25.00.

It was exciting work in those days and I loved it, probably because I was young. While in Denver I went to Canon City to report the lynching of Witherall, and to Salida to the hanging of an Italian murderer. At Police headquarters there was a two horse patrol wagon geared to turn sharp corners at full speed. Nevertheless, it skidded and capsized going to a fire and I was the only occupant

who was not injured. In Denver I wrote my first telephone story when there was a fire in the central office.

James McCarthy, who was commonly known by his pen name, "Fitz-Mac," took an interest in me and was very helpful. He advised me if I hadn't got well up in the newspaper business by the time I was thirty, to get out of it, if I had to sell popcorn on the streets. As I did not get up into the managing editor class, I followed his advice and made my first move to get out of the business soon after I was thirty.

Some time in the spring of 1889, I was unjustly accused by the editor of the Republican, Bill Stapleton, of having taken a bribe from Chief of Police Brady, and we had high words. Stapleton insisted I was fired and I insisted I was resigning, so we parted, though in later years became very good friends.

Back to Boston

So in 1889 after three years in Denver I decided to start back east, largely because my parents had moved back to Massachusetts, and I had not seen them for a number of years. My first stop was Omaha where I got a few odd jobs on the newspapers and saw Charlie George whom we had known in Galesburg. Then I went to Chicago and saw the Cooks, Pierces and the Waterloo Beldens, and from there to Boston and home to Braintree. My arrival produced some

interest as I was distinctly the most reckless adventurer of the Ellsworth family.

The parsonage was not large but room was made for me and I went to Boston to get a job, finally landing as a reporter on the Herald. My sisters had grown out of all recognition and my brothers seemed to me to have matured more than I. The four of us brothers used to tramp the country over Sunday afternoons, about the only time when we were all together. George was with the Old Colony Railroad, Fred with the Providence Railroad and Sam was a freshman in Harvard. This was in 1889.

My work on the Herald was much the same as it had been on the Denver papers and I was beginning to be fed up with crowds and the same old fires and murders. After a year or so I decided to try my luck in New York which was the mecca for newspaper men. Sam McClure, whom I had known at Knox, got me a job as copy reader on the New York Herald at $35.00 a week, but I threw that up for the chance to go with a new paper, the Recorder, where I could learn the city as a reporter. Hoy, the city editor, offered only $15.00 a week but promised to raise me rapidly and kept his promise. I really felt that I was doing pretty well on the Recorder, but when I went home on a visit and again saw Mabel Morrison, whom had always been in my mind, I decided that it

would be wise to be at hand or I would surely lose out. The Boston Herald offered me a fairly good job and I took it on the spot and resigned from the Recorder by mail. My most interesting assignment in New York was to the encampment of the National Guard at Peekskill, which lasted nine weeks. During that time Pat Gilmore, Cappa, and all the famous bandmasters of the day were each in camp for a week with their respective regiments.

During my second employment on the Boston Herald I did a great many special articles which I enjoyed. One series entitled, "Old Boston Picturesque," was a lot of fun. When the Spanish War came along and there were rumors of long, low, rakish craft off the New England Coast, the Herald chartered a small steam yacht and sent me out with an engineer and a pilot, to get news. Of course the long, low, rakish craft referred to were finally bottled up in Santiago Harbor, without coming north, but the scout boat was useful in keeping track of our own fleet and acted finally as a volunteer dispatch boat for the North Atlantic Squadron, while picking up such news as was possible for the Herald.

When Cevera's fleet was destroyed off the Cuban Coast, and the prisoners of war were brought to the Portsmouth Navy Yard, I had charge of the Herald forces there, and was a witness to that

strange landing of defeated Spanish sailors, many of them almost naked.

Later, when the S. S. Portland was lost with all on board off Provincetown, because of my war time knowledge of Cape Cod, I was put in charge of the Herald gang which reported the aftermath and tried to reconstruct the story. For weeks the identification of the dead as they were washed ashore was a daily occurrence.

One of my biggest specials in the Herald was a signed article, several pages long, describing the naval battles of the Spanish War, based on interviews with the participants.

Meanwhile I had married Mabel Silsby Morrison, daughter of Robert Elmer Morrison and Sally Gregg Morrison. Her father was a woolen manufacturer, but he was a natural musician of great talent, and was organist in the Braintree church where my father preached.

Of course this marriage was not as easy as it sounds. There were plenty of other suitors who were not without attraction for the young lady, while their better prospects and the fact that none of them had my wild western reputation, made them more acceptable to the Morrison family. But somehow I won out, partly, perhaps, on account of my absence

in New York, which taught me how hard it would be to live without her.

Finally, after a long engagement, during which Mabel attended Radcliffe College, we had a beautiful wedding with all the Morrisons friendly, with all of the Ellsworths and everybody there, and went on a wedding trip to Nantucket Island, a glorious place. At that time I was getting $30.00 a week at the Herald, but as we rented a house at $25.00 a month we got by with some economy.

When the first baby, Elizabeth, was born we needed more money and I did more or less free lance work outside of my regular newspaper job.

The first great sorrow was the death of Mabel's father, Elmer Morrison, not so long after our daughter Elizabeth's birth. Under the changed conditions we decided to give up the Wales Cottage, after two happy years, and live with Mabel's mother in her roomy home by the pond. Then there came a second baby, Elmer Morrison Ellsworth, who was born under the Morrison roof.

While we were living in the Morrison home I became associated with Herman D. Umbstatter in the ownership of the Black Cat Magazine and the management of a patent medicine called Puritana. Eventually the business of the Black Cat, which started in fine shape, began to slow down and Umbstatter and I agreed

that there was not enough in it for two of us, so I sold out my share and stayed with George Durgin of the Puritana Company until he sold out.

About this time I was appointed New England correspondent of the New York Herald which meant my working till 3:00 A.M. practically every night. As a result I was not able to get to Braintree oftener than once a week and so we moved to Savin Hill in Dorchester, Massachusetts, which was only about three miles from the office and had an all night street car line.

We took half of the Hoag house, which was quite comfortable, but the Hoags were Quakers and rather hard to live with. This house was directly across the street from Dorchester Bay and handy for boating and bathing.

Then things got rather difficult between me and the New York Herald management, chiefly because they were tending towards yellow journalism which their correspondent newspaper, the Boston Herald, did not care about, and for which I was not fitted. As a result of differences for which I was partly to blame because I was not sympathetic with the policy of wringing sensational interviews from people in trouble, I resigned with nothing in sight to do and no capital saved up. The following eight or ten months were certainly hard both for Mabel and myself.

I had almost no income and many debts. We moved across the street to the fine old Morse house which we got rent free by boarding the brothers of the owner, Miss Mary Minns Morse.

During that summer of non-employment, Fanny Goulding Ellsworth was born in the Morse house, Dr. Sam Ellsworth and Lizzie Frances Sherman, the trained nurse, officiating.

Eventually I got a small job on the Boston Herald which served as a stepping stone to a place with the Publicity Bureau, which was being launched by George Vail Sheppard Michaelis and Herbert Small, formerly of Small and Maynard, publishers. With the Publicity Bureau my advancement was steady and in two or three years we were able to pay our debts and save money. First we moved back across the street to the Clausen house next the Hoag house and later to another nearby house on the bank of the Bay owned by Laura Tolman. This was the most commodious and in some respects, the most attractive home we ever had, and fine for the children. In due time they all learned to swim and we had a sailing dory with a red sail, the Nydia, which was made fool proof and unsinkable with air tanks under the gunnels.

About that time I was very much away from home travelling 30,000 or 40,000 miles a year in the interest of the American Telephone and Telegraph

Company for which the Publicity Bureau did publicity work. I also helped to open offices of Michaelis and Kilsworth in New York and Chicago. My telephone contacts were chiefly with Frederick P. Fish, then president, and two members of his staff, Walter Allen and Frank A. Pickernell.

When Theodore N. Vail became president of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company in 1907 he shortly decided to do without the Publicity Bureau although I think he believed the work of the Bureau had been useful to the Bell Companies. About the same time I split with Michaelis because I would not risk all my savings under his management. F. A. Pickernell, Casper Yost, president of the Nebraska Telephone Company, and Charles S. Gleed, president of the Missouri and Kansas Telephone Company, all urged upon Mr. Vail my employment directly by the A. T. and T. Co. and I went on the staff in February, 1908. I was given the title of Special Agent and told to find my own job, reporting to E. J. Hall, a vice-president.

I gradually was given charge of the advertising and publicity of the company and, in an advisory way, of the advertising and publicity of the Associated Bell Companies.

Shortly thereafter the headquarters of the company were moved to 15 Dey Street, New York City, and

after a year or so, in 1910, I also moved to New York, making my home in Bronxville.

The Move to New York

For nearly two years while we still lived in Savin Hill I went to New York every week. It was during one of these weekly visits that my father died. All of our relatives and most of our friends were in and around Boston, Elmer was preparing for Harvard in the Boston Latin School, and the prospect of pulling up stakes and moving the family seemed difficult.

But we agreed it was the thing to do, and in the early summer Mabel came over with little Fanny prepared to spend a month in home hunting. The very first day she visited a house in a part of Bronxville called Meadowdale. She had asked a gateman at the Grand Central Station where there was a good place to live with children, and on his advice had gone to Bronxville and picked out an old English style of cottage draped with wild roses, which seemed very attractive. That night after dinner we went back to Bronxville and I signed the lease. We never had reason to regret this sudden selection.

Elizabeth continued at the Quincy Mansion School until she graduated. Elmer continued his preparation at Barnard School in New York City, and

in due time graduated from Harvard. Fanny prepared in the Bronxville and Mount Vernon public schools and then went through Sweet Briar College in Virginia.

Mr. Vail bought the Gould interest in the Western Union Telegraph Company which gave him virtual control. For a year I handled that company's advertising also, and then Sam Williams was taken in by the Western Union for that work and I reported to Union N. Bethel, a vice-president of the A. T. and T. Co. A year later N. C. Kingsbury was made one of our vice-presidents and I reported to him.

When Kingsbury died I reported to Vice-President E. S. Wilson for a short time and then was transferred to President H. B. Thayer and finally to Executive-Vice Walter S. Gifford and stayed with him when he became president in January, 1925. In January, 1927, Arthur Page of the World's Work came in to take charge of advertising and publicity, and I remained as Assistant to the President.

Meanwhile, in 1915 I had bought a partly completed house in Sagamore Park, in Bronxville, not far from Meadowdale but on higher ground. This house was built according to our plans and while small, has proved satisfactory in every way, particularly through the landscape gardening which Mabel has supervised. Shortly after we had moved into this house my mother died.

In 1917 Elmer graduated from Harvard, got a commission as Second Lieutenant at Plattsburg, married Amo Umbstatter, the daughter of my old friend, and was assigned to Camp Devon. When the war was over he went to Porto Rico, and after Amo's death married Margarita Domenech, becoming a planter.

Elizabeth went west with the Lovich family and finally settled in Seattle. Fanny, after graduating from Sweet Briar College, worked for the State Charity Aid Association, made two trips to Europe with her mother and finally married Robert H. Scannell, a Princeton man, and an architect in Bronxville. The first grandchild, Edith Scannell, was born in Bronxville in February, 1927. Edith's brother, James Robert Scannell, was born in Bronxville, March 24, 1928.

It is hard to say much about myself in later years. As a child I look at myself as a different person and can write quite impartially, but as a man I am too much myself to write fairly. About 1911 I made a hurried trip to London and Paris, when I was recovering from neuritis, but I always had a sort of romantic interest in the tropics. So just before Christmas in 1919 Mabel, Fanny and I, accompanied by Mr. Vail, took ship to Porto Rico to visit Elmer and Amo. As a result I decided to take my vacation in winter, and each year visit some part of the West Indies or the South American Coast.

Up to date I have enjoyed life more, I believe, than most men do. I have had many blessings for which I hope I am duly grateful.

James D Ellsworth
April 20, 1928