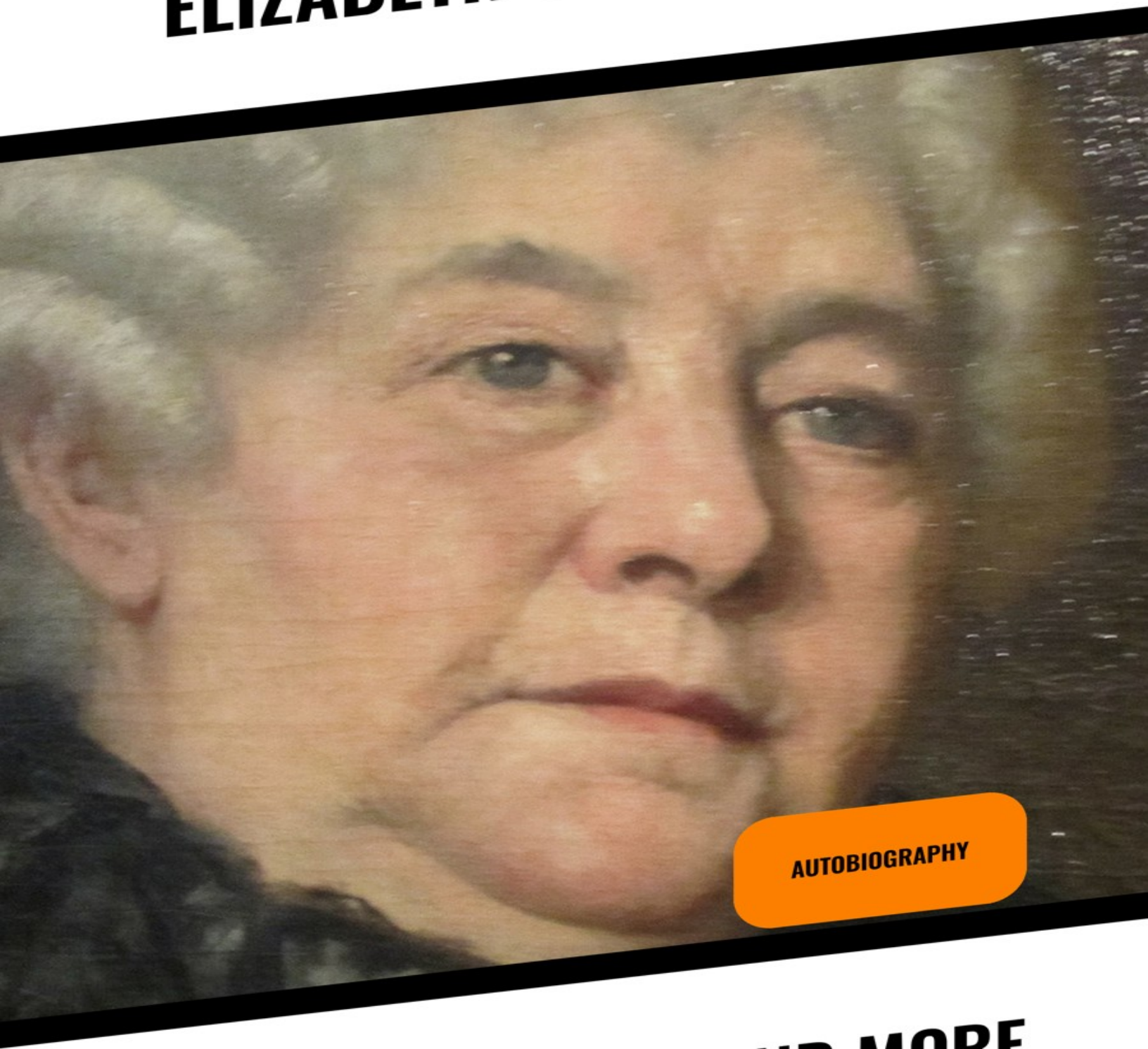
Sharp Ink

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON



AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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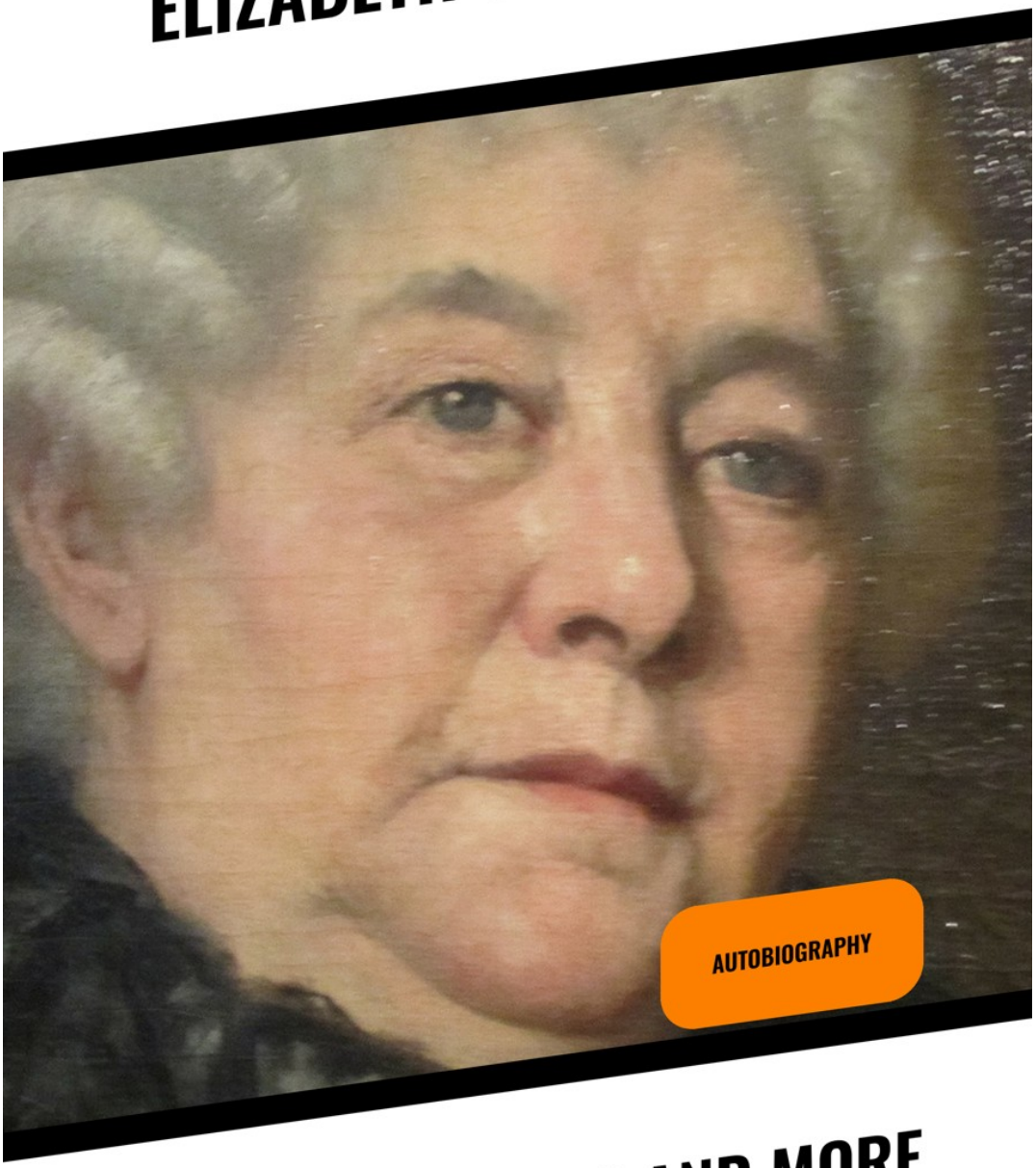

EIGHTY YEARS AND MORE

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Eighty Years and More

Autobiography

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Childhood.

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The psychical growth of a child is not influenced by days and years, but by the impressions passing events make on its mind. What may prove a sudden awakening to one, giving an impulse in a certain direction that may last for years, may make no impression on another. People wonder why the children of the same family differ so widely, though they have had the same domestic discipline, the same school and church teaching, and have grown up under the same influences and with the same environments. As well wonder why lilies and lilacs in the same latitude are not all alike in color and equally fragrant. Children differ as widely as these in the primal elements of their physical and psychical life.

Who can estimate the power of antenatal influences, or the child's surroundings in its earliest years, the effect of some passing word or sight on one, that makes no impression on another? The unhappiness of one child under a certain home discipline is not inconsistent with the content of another under this same discipline. One, yearning for broader freedom, is in a chronic condition of rebellion; the other, more easily satisfied, quietly accepts the situation. Everything is seen from a different standpoint; everything takes its color from the mind of the beholder.

I am moved to recall what I can of my early days, what I thought and felt, that grown people may have a better understanding of children and do more for their happiness

and development. I see so much tyranny exercised over children, even by well-disposed parents, and in so many varied forms,—a tyranny to which these parents are themselves insensible,—that I desire to paint my joys and sorrows in as vivid colors as possible, in the hope that I may do something to defend the weak from the strong. People never dream of all that is going on in the little heads of the young, for few adults are given to introspection, and those who are incapable of recalling their own feelings under restraint and disappointment can have no appreciation of the sufferings of children who can neither describe nor analyze what they feel. In defending themselves against injustice they are as helpless as dumb animals. What is insignificant to their elders is often to them a source of great joy or sorrow.

With several generations of vigorous, enterprising ancestors behind me, I commenced the struggle of life under favorable circumstances on the 12th day of November, 1815, the same year that my father, Daniel Cady, a distinguished lawyer and judge in the State of New York, was elected to Congress. Perhaps the excitement of a political campaign, in which my mother took the deepest interest, may have had an influence on my prenatal life and given me the strong desire that I have always felt to participate in the rights and duties of government.

My father was a man of firm character and unimpeachable integrity, and yet sensitive and modest to a painful degree. There were but two places in which he felt at ease—in the courthouse and at his own fireside. Though gentle and tender, he had such a dignified repose and reserve of manner that, as children, we regarded him with fear rather than affection.

My mother, Margaret Livingston, a tall, queenly looking woman, was courageous, self-reliant, and at her ease under all circumstances and in all places. She was the daughter of Colonel James Livingston, who took an active part in the War of the Revolution.

Colonel Livingston was stationed at West Point when Arnold made the attempt to betray that stronghold into the hands of the enemy. In the absence of General Washington and his superior officer, he took the responsibility of firing into the *Vulture*, a suspicious looking British vessel that lay at anchor near the opposite bank of the Hudson River. It was a fatal shot for André, the British spy, with whom Arnold was then consummating his treason. Hit between wind and water, the vessel spread her sails and hastened down the river, leaving André, with his papers, to be captured while Arnold made his escape through the lines, before his treason was suspected.

On General Washington's return to West Point, he sent for my grandfather and reprimanded him for acting in so important a matter without orders, thereby making himself liable to court-martial; but, after fully impressing the young officer with the danger of such self-sufficiency on ordinary occasions, he admitted that a most fortunate shot had been sent into the *Vulture*, "for," he said, "we are in no condition just now to defend ourselves against the British forces in New York, and the capture of this spy has saved us."

My mother had the military idea of government, but her children, like their grandfather, were disposed to assume the responsibility of their own actions; thus the ancestral traits in mother and children modified, in a measure, the dangerous tendencies in each.

Our parents were as kind, indulgent, and considerate as the Puritan ideas of those days permitted, but fear, rather

than love, of God and parents alike, predominated. Add to this our timidity in our intercourse with servants and teachers, our dread of the ever present devil, and the reader will see that, under such conditions, nothing but strong self-will and a good share of hope and mirthfulness could have saved an ordinary child from becoming a mere nullity.

The first event engraved on my memory was the birth of a sister when I was four years old. It was a cold morning in January when the brawny Scotch nurse carried me to see the little stranger, whose advent was a matter of intense interest to me for many weeks after. The large, pleasant room with the white curtains and bright wood fire on the hearth, where panada, catnip, and all kinds of little messes which we were allowed to taste were kept warm, was the center of attraction for the older children. I heard so many friends remark, "What a pity it is she's a girl!" that I felt a kind of compassion for the little baby. True, our family consisted of five girls and only one boy, but I did not understand at that time that girls were considered an inferior order of beings.

To form some idea of my surroundings at this time, imagine a two-story white frame house with a hall through the middle, rooms on either side, and a large back building with grounds on the side and rear, which joined the garden of our good Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Simon Hosack, of whom I shall have more to say in another chapter. Our favorite resorts in the house were the garret and cellar. In the former were barrels of hickory nuts, and, on a long shelf, large cakes of maple sugar and all kinds of dried herbs and sweet flag; spinning wheels, a number of small white cotton bags filled with bundles, marked in ink, "silk," "cotton," "flannel," "calico," etc., as well as ancient masculine and

feminine costumes. Here we would crack the nuts, nibble the sharp edges of the maple sugar, chew some favorite herb, play ball with the bags, whirl the old spinning wheels, dress up in our ancestors' clothes, and take a bird's-eye view of the surrounding country from an enticing scuttle hole. This was forbidden ground; but, nevertheless, we often went there on the sly, which only made the little escapades more enjoyable.

The cellar of our house was filled, in winter, with barrels of apples, vegetables, salt meats, cider, butter, pounding barrels, washtubs, etc., offering admirable nooks for playing hide and seek. Two tallow candles threw a faint light over the scene on certain occasions. This cellar was on a level with a large kitchen where we played blind man's buff and other games when the day's work was done. These two rooms are the center of many of the merriest memories of my childhood days.

I can recall three colored men, Abraham, Peter, and Jacob, who acted as menservants in our youth. In turn they would sometimes play on the banjo for us to dance, taking real enjoyment in our games. They are all at rest now with "Old Uncle Ned in the place where the good niggers go." Our nurses, Lockey Danford, Polly Bell, Mary Dunn, and Cornelia Nickeloy—peace to their ashes—were the only shadows on the gayety of these winter evenings; for their chief delight was to hurry us off to bed, that they might receive their beaux or make short calls in the neighborhood. My memory of them is mingled with no sentiment of gratitude or affection. In expressing their opinion of us in after years, they said we were a very troublesome, obstinate, disobedient set of children. I have no doubt we were in constant rebellion against their petty tyranny. Abraham,

Peter, and Jacob viewed us in a different light, and I have the most pleasant recollections of their kind services.

In the winter, outside the house, we had the snow with which to build statues and make forts, and huge piles of wood covered with ice, which we called the Alps, so difficult were they of ascent and descent. There we would climb up and down by the hour, if not interrupted, which, however, was generally the case. It always seemed to me that, in the height of our enthusiasm, we were invariably summoned to some disagreeable duty, which would appear to show that thus early I keenly enjoyed outdoor life. Theodore Tilton has thus described the place where I was born: "Birthplace is secondary parentage, and transmits character. Johnstown was more famous half a century ago than since; for then, though small, it was a marked intellectual center; and now, though large, it is an unmarked manufacturing town. Before the birth of Elizabeth Cady it was the vice-ducal seat of Sir William Johnson, the famous English negotiator with the Indians. During her girlhood it was an arena for the intellectual wrestlings of Kent, Tompkins, Spencer, Elisha Williams, and Abraham Van Vechten, who, as lawyers, were among the chiefest of their time. It is now devoted mainly to the fabrication of steel springs and buckskin gloves. So, like Wordsworth's early star, it has faded into the light of common day. But Johnstown retains one of its ancient splendors—a glory still fresh as at the foundation of the world. Standing on its hills, one looks off upon a country of enameled meadow lands, that melt away southward toward the Mohawk, and northward to the base of those grand mountains which are 'God's monument over the grave of John Brown.'"

Harold Frederic's novel, "In the Valley," contains many descriptions of this region that are true to nature, as I

remember the Mohawk Valley, for I first knew it not so many years after the scenes which he lays there. Before I was old enough to take in the glory of this scenery and its classic associations, Johnstown was to me a gloomy-looking town. The middle of the streets was paved with large cobblestones, over which the farmer's wagons rattled from morning till night, while the sidewalks were paved with very small cobblestones, over which we carefully picked our way, so that free and graceful walking was out of the question. The streets were lined with solemn poplar trees, from which small yellow worms were continually dangling down. Next to the Prince of Darkness, I feared these worms. They were harmless, but the sight of one made me tremble. So many people shared in this feeling that the poplars were all cut down and elms planted in their stead. The Johnstown academy and churches were large square buildings, painted white, surrounded by these same sombre poplars, each edifice having a doleful bell which seemed to be ever tolling for school, funerals, church, or prayer meetings. Next to the worms, those clanging bells filled me with the utmost dread; they seemed like so many warnings of an eternal future. Visions of the Inferno were strongly impressed on my childish imagination. It was thought, in those days, that firm faith in hell and the devil was the greatest help to virtue. It certainly made me very unhappy whenever my mind dwelt on such teachings, and I have always had my doubts of the virtue that is based on the fear of punishment.

Perhaps I may be pardoned a word devoted to my appearance in those days. I have been told that I was a plump little girl, with very fair skin, rosy cheeks, good features, dark-brown hair, and laughing blue eyes. A student in my father's office, the late Henry Bayard of Delaware (an uncle of our recent Ambassador to the Court of St. James's,

Thomas F. Bayard), told me one day, after conning my features carefully, that I had one defect which he could remedy. "Your eyebrows should be darker and heavier," said he, "and if you will let me shave them once or twice, you will be much improved." I consented, and, slight as my eyebrows were, they seemed to have had some expression, for the loss of them had a most singular effect on my appearance. Everybody, including even the operator, laughed at my odd-looking face, and I was in the depths of humiliation during the period while my eyebrows were growing out again. It is scarcely necessary for me to add that I never allowed the young man to repeat the experiment, although strongly urged to do so.

I cannot recall how or when I conquered the alphabet, words in three letters, the multiplication table, the points of the compass, the chicken pox, whooping cough, measles, and scarlet fever. All these unhappy incidents of childhood left but little impression on my mind. I have, however, most pleasant memories of the good spinster, Maria Yost, who patiently taught three generations of children the rudiments of the English language, and introduced us to the pictures in "Murray's Spelling-book," where Old Father Time, with his scythe, and the farmer stoning the boys in his apple trees, gave rise in my mind to many serious reflections. Miss Yost was plump and rosy, with fair hair, and had a merry twinkle in her blue eyes, and she took us by very easy stages through the old-fashioned school-books. The interesting Readers children now have were unknown sixty years ago. We did not reach the temple of knowledge by the flowery paths of ease in which our descendants now walk.

I still have a perfect vision of myself and sisters, as we stood up in the classes, with our toes at the cracks in the floor, all dressed alike in bright red flannel, black alpaca

aprons, and, around the neck, a starched ruffle that, through a lack of skill on the part of either the laundress or the nurse who sewed them in, proved a constant source of discomfort to us. I have since seen full-grown men, under slighter provocation than we endured, jerk off a collar, tear it in two, and throw it to the winds, chased by the most soul-harrowing expletives. But we were sternly rebuked for complaining, and if we ventured to introduce our little fingers between the delicate skin and the irritating linen, our hands were slapped and the ruffle readjusted a degree closer. Our Sunday dresses were relieved with a black sprig and white aprons. We had red cloaks, red hoods, red mittens, and red stockings. For one's self to be all in red six months of the year was bad enough, but to have this costume multiplied by three was indeed monotonous. I had such an aversion to that color that I used to rebel regularly at the beginning of each season when new dresses were purchased, until we finally passed into an exquisite shade of blue. No words could do justice to my dislike of those red dresses. My grandfather's detestation of the British redcoats must have descended to me. My childhood's antipathy to wearing red enabled me later to comprehend the feelings of a little niece, who hated everything pea green, because she had once heard the saying, "neat but not gaudy, as the devil said when he painted his tail pea green." So when a friend brought her a cravat of that color she threw it on the floor and burst into tears, saying, "I could not wear that, for it is the color of the devil's tail." I sympathized with the child and had it changed for the hue she liked. Although we cannot always understand the ground for children's preferences, it is often well to heed them.

I am told that I was pensively looking out of the nursery window one day, when Mary Dunn, the Scotch nurse, who

was something of a philosopher, and a stern Presbyterian, said: "Child, what are you thinking about; are you planning some new form of mischief?" "No, Mary," I replied, "I was wondering why it was that everything we like to do is a sin, and that everything we dislike is commanded by God or someone on earth. I am so tired of that everlasting no! no! no! At school, at home, everywhere it is *no*! Even at church all the commandments begin 'Thou shalt not.' I suppose God will say 'no' to all we like in the next world, just as you do here." Mary was dreadfully shocked at my dissatisfaction with the things of time and prospective eternity, and exhorted me to cultivate the virtues of obedience and humility.

I well remember the despair I felt in those years, as I took in the whole situation, over the constant cribbing and crippling of a child's life. I suppose I found fit language in which to express my thoughts, for Mary Dunn told me, years after, how our discussion roused my sister Margaret, who was an attentive listener. I must have set forth our wrongs in clear, unmistakable terms; for Margaret exclaimed one day, "I tell you what to do. Hereafter let us act as we choose, without asking." "Then," said I, "we shall be punished." "Suppose we are," said she, "we shall have had our fun at any rate, and that is better than to mind the everlasting 'no' and not have any fun at all." Her logic seemed unanswerable, so together we gradually acted on her suggestions. Having less imagination than I, she took a common-sense view of life and suffered nothing from anticipation of troubles, while my sorrows were intensified fourfold by innumerable apprehensions of possible exigencies.

Our nursery, a large room over a back building, had three barred windows reaching nearly to the floor. Two of these

opened on a gently slanting roof over a veranda. In our night robes, on warm summer evenings we could, by dint of skillful twisting and compressing, get out between the bars, and there, snugly braced against the house, we would sit and enjoy the moon and stars and what sounds might reach us from the streets, while the nurse, gossiping at the back door, imagined we were safely asleep.

I have a confused memory of being often under punishment for what, in those days, were called "tantrums." I suppose they were really justifiable acts of rebellion against the tyranny of those in authority. I have often listened since, with real satisfaction, to what some of our friends had to say of the high-handed manner in which sister Margaret and I defied all the transient orders and strict rules laid down for our guidance. If we had observed them we might as well have been embalmed as mummies, for all the pleasure and freedom we should have had in our childhood. As very little was then done for the amusement of children, happy were those who *conscientiously* took the liberty of amusing themselves.

One charming feature of our village was a stream of water, called the Cayadutta, which ran through the north end, in which it was our delight to walk on the broad slate stones when the water was low, in order to pick up pretty pebbles. These joys were also forbidden, though indulged in as opportunity afforded, especially as sister Margaret's philosophy was found to work successfully and we had finally risen above our infantile fear of punishment.

Much of my freedom at this time was due to this sister, who afterward became the wife of Colonel Duncan McMartin of Iowa. I can see her now, hat in hand, her long curls flying in the wind, her nose slightly retroussé, her large dark eyes flashing with glee, and her small straight mouth so

expressive of determination. Though two years my junior, she was larger and stronger than I and more fearless and self-reliant. She was always ready to start when any pleasure offered, and, if I hesitated, she would give me a jerk and say, emphatically: "Oh, come along!" and away we went.

About this time we entered the Johnstown Academy, where we made the acquaintance of the daughters of the hotel keeper and the county sheriff. They were a few years my senior, but, as I was ahead of them in all my studies, the difference of age was somewhat equalized and we became fast friends. This acquaintance opened to us two new sources of enjoyment—the freedom of the hotel during "court week" (a great event in village life) and the exploration of the county jail. Our Scotch nurse had told us so many thrilling tales of castles, prisons, and dungeons in the Old World that, to see the great keys and iron doors, the handcuffs and chains, and the prisoners in their cells seemed like a veritable visit to Mary's native land. We made frequent visits to the jail and became deeply concerned about the fate of the prisoners, who were greatly pleased with our expressions of sympathy and our gifts of cake and candy. In time we became interested in the trials and sentences of prisoners, and would go to the courthouse and listen to the proceedings. Sometimes we would slip into the hotel where the judges and lawyers dined, and help our little friend wait on table. The rushing of servants to and fro, the calling of guests, the scolding of servants in the kitchen, the banging of doors, the general hubbub, the noise and clatter, were all idealized by me into one of those royal festivals Mary so often described. To be allowed to carry plates of bread and butter, pie and cheese I counted a high privilege. But more especially I enjoyed listening to the conversations

in regard to the probable fate of our friends the prisoners in the jail. On one occasion I projected a few remarks into a conversation between two lawyers, when one of them turned abruptly to me and said, "Child, you'd better attend to your business; bring me a glass of water." I replied indignantly, "I am not a servant; I am here for fun."

In all these escapades we were followed by Peter, black as coal and six feet in height. It seems to me now that his chief business was to discover our whereabouts, get us home to dinner, and take us back to school. Fortunately he was overflowing with curiosity and not averse to lingering a while where anything of interest was to be seen or heard, and, as we were deemed perfectly safe under his care, no questions were asked when we got to the house, if we had been with him. He had a long head and, through his diplomacy, we escaped much disagreeable surveillance. Peter was very fond of attending court. All the lawyers knew him, and wherever Peter went, the three little girls in his charge went, too. Thus, with constant visits to the jail, courthouse, and my father's office, I gleaned some idea of the danger of violating the law.

The great events of the year were the Christmas holidays, the Fourth of July, and "general training," as the review of the county militia was then called. The winter gala days are associated, in my memory, with hanging up stockings and with turkeys, mince pies, sweet cider, and sleighrides by moonlight. My earliest recollections of those happy days, when schools were closed, books laid aside, and unusual liberties allowed, center in that large cellar kitchen to which I have already referred. There we spent many winter evenings in uninterrupted enjoyment. A large fireplace with huge logs shed warmth and cheerfulness around. In one corner sat Peter sawing his violin, while our

youthful neighbors danced with us and played blindman's buff almost every evening during the vacation. The most interesting character in this game was a black boy called Jacob (Peter's lieutenant), who made things lively for us by always keeping one eye open—a wise precaution to guard himself from danger, and to keep us on the jump. Hickory nuts, sweet cider, and *olie-koeks* (a Dutch name for a fried cake with raisins inside) were our refreshments when there came a lull in the fun.

As St. Nicholas was supposed to come down the chimney, our stockings were pinned on a broomstick, laid across two chairs in front of the fireplace. We retired on Christmas Eve with the most pleasing anticipations of what would be in our stockings next morning. The thermometer in that latitude was often twenty degrees below zero, yet, bright and early, we would run downstairs in our bare feet over the cold floors to carry stockings, broom, etc., to the nursery. The gorgeous presents that St. Nicholas now distributes show that he, too, has been growing up with the country. The boys and girls of 1897 will laugh when they hear of the contents of our stockings in 1823. There was a little paper of candy, one of raisins, another, of nuts, a red apple, an *olie-koek*, and a bright silver quarter of a dollar in the toe. If a child had been guilty of any erratic performances during the year, which was often my case, a long stick would protrude from the stocking; if particularly good, an illustrated catechism or the New Testament would appear, showing that the St. Nicholas of that time held decided views on discipline and ethics.

During the day we would take a drive over the snow-clad hills and valleys in a long red lumber sleigh. All the children it could hold made the forests echo with their songs and laughter. The sleigh bells and Peter's fine tenor voice added

to the chorus seemed to chant, as we passed, "Merry Christmas" to the farmers' children and to all we met on the highway.

Returning home, we were allowed, as a great Christmas treat, to watch all Peter's preparations for dinner. Attired in a white apron and turban, holding in his hand a tin candlestick the size of a dinner plate, containing a tallow candle, with stately step he marched into the spacious cellar, with Jacob and three little girls dressed in red flannel at his heels. As the farmers paid the interest on their mortgages in barrels of pork, headcheese, poultry, eggs, and cider, the cellars were well crowded for the winter, making the master of an establishment quite indifferent to all questions of finance. We heard nothing in those days of greenbacks, silver coinage, or a gold basis. Laden with vegetables, butter, eggs, and a magnificent turkey, Peter and his followers returned to the kitchen. There, seated on a big ironing table, we watched the dressing and roasting of the bird in a tin oven in front of the fire. Jacob peeled the vegetables, we all sang, and Peter told us marvelous stories. For tea he made flapjacks, baked in a pan with a long handle, which he turned by throwing the cake up and skillfully catching it descending.

Peter was a devout Episcopalian and took great pleasure in helping the young people decorate the church. He would take us with him and show us how to make evergreen wreaths. Like Mary's lamb, where'er he went we were sure to go. His love for us was unbounded and fully returned. He was the only being, visible or invisible, of whom we had no fear. We would go to divine service with Peter, Christmas morning and sit with him by the door, in what was called "the negro pew." He was the only colored member of the church and, after all the other communicants had taken the

sacrament, he went alone to the altar. Dressed in a new suit of blue with gilt buttons, he looked like a prince, as, with head erect, he walked up the aisle, the grandest specimen of manhood in the whole congregation; and yet so strong was prejudice against color in 1823 that no one would kneel beside him. On leaving us, on one of these occasions, Peter told us all to sit still until he returned; but, no sooner had he started, than the youngest of us slowly followed after him and seated herself close beside him. As he came back, holding the child by the hand, what a lesson it must have been to that prejudiced congregation! The first time we entered the church together the sexton opened a white man's pew for us, telling Peter to leave the Judge's children there. "Oh," he said, "they will not stay there without me." But, as he could not enter, we instinctively followed him to the negro pew.

Our next great fête was on the anniversary of the birthday of our Republic. The festivities were numerous and protracted, beginning then, as now, at midnight with bonfires and cannon; while the day was ushered in with the ringing of bells, tremendous cannonading, and a continuous popping of fire-crackers and torpedoes. Then a procession of soldiers and citizens marched through the town, an oration was delivered, the Declaration of Independence read, and a great dinner given in the open air under the trees in the grounds of the old courthouse. Each toast was announced with the booming of cannon. On these occasions Peter was in his element, and showed us whatever he considered worth seeing; but I cannot say that I enjoyed very much either "general training" or the Fourth of July, for, in addition to my fear of cannon and torpedoes, my sympathies were deeply touched by the sadness of our cook, whose drunken father always cut antics in the streets on gala days, the

central figure in all the sports of the boys, much to the mortification of his worthy daughter. She wept bitterly over her father's public exhibition of himself, and told me in what a condition he would come home to his family at night. I would gladly have stayed in with her all day, but the fear of being called a coward compelled me to go through those trying ordeals. As my nerves were all on the surface, no words can describe what I suffered with those explosions, great and small, and my fears lest King George and his minions should reappear among us. I thought that, if he had done all the dreadful things stated in the Declaration of '76, he might come again, burn our houses, and drive us all into the street. Sir William Johnson's mansion of solid masonry, gloomy and threatening, still stood in our neighborhood. I had seen the marks of the Indian's tomahawk on the balustrades and heard of the bloody deeds there enacted. For all the calamities of the nation I believed King George responsible. At home and at school we were educated to hate the English. When we remember that, every Fourth of July, the Declaration was read with emphasis, and the orator of the day rounded all his glowing periods with denunciations of the mother country, we need not wonder at the national hatred of everything English. Our patriotism in those early days was measured by our dislike of Great Britain.

In September occurred the great event, the review of the county militia, popularly called "Training Day." Then everybody went to the race course to see the troops and buy what the farmers had brought in their wagons. There was a peculiar kind of gingerbread and molasses candy to which we were treated on those occasions, associated in my mind to this day with military reviews and standing armies.

Other pleasures were, roaming in the forests and sailing on the mill pond. One day, when there were no boys at hand and several girls were impatiently waiting for a sail on a raft, my sister and I volunteered to man the expedition. We always acted on the assumption that what we had seen done, we could do. Accordingly we all jumped on the raft, loosened it from its moorings, and away we went with the current. Navigation on that mill pond was performed with long poles, but, unfortunately, we could not lift the poles, and we soon saw we were drifting toward the dam. But we had the presence of mind to sit down and hold fast to the raft. Fortunately, we went over right side up and gracefully glided down the stream, until rescued by the ever watchful Peter. I did not hear the last of that voyage for a long time. I was called the captain of the expedition, and one of the boys wrote a composition, which he read in school, describing the adventure and emphasizing the ignorance of the laws of navigation shown by the officers in command. I shed tears many times over that performance.

Chapter II.
School Days.

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When I was eleven years old, two events occurred which changed considerably the current of my life. My only brother, who had just graduated from Union College, came home to die. A young man of great talent and promise, he was the pride of my father's heart. We early felt that this son filled a larger place in our father's affections and future plans than the five daughters together. Well do I remember how tenderly he watched my brother in his last illness, the sighs and tears he gave vent to as he slowly walked up and down the hall, and, when the last sad moment came, and we were all assembled to say farewell in the silent chamber of death, how broken were his utterances as he knelt and prayed for comfort and support. I still recall, too, going into the large darkened parlor to see my brother, and finding the casket, mirrors, and pictures all draped in white, and my father seated by his side, pale and immovable. As he took no notice of me, after standing a long while, I climbed upon his knee, when he mechanically put his arm about me and, with my head resting against his beating heart, we both sat in silence, he thinking of the wreck of all his hopes in the loss of a dear son, and I wondering what could be said or done to fill the void in his breast. At length he heaved a deep sigh and said: "Oh, my daughter, I wish you were a boy!" Throwing my arms about his neck, I replied: "I will try to be all my brother was."

Then and there I resolved that I would not give so much time as heretofore to play, but would study and strive to be at the head of all my classes and thus delight my father's heart. All that day and far into the night I pondered the problem of boyhood. I thought that the chief thing to be done in order to equal boys was to be learned and courageous. So I decided to study Greek and learn to manage a horse. Having formed this conclusion I fell asleep. My resolutions, unlike many such made at night, did not vanish with the coming light. I arose early and hastened to put them into execution. They were resolutions never to be forgotten—destined to mold my character anew. As soon as I was dressed I hastened to our good pastor, Rev. Simon Hosack, who was always early at work in his garden.

"Doctor," said I, "which do you like best, boys or girls?"

"Why, girls, to be sure; I would not give you for all the boys in Christendom."

"My father," I replied, "prefers boys; he wishes I was one, and I intend to be as near like one as possible. I am going to ride on horseback and study Greek. Will you give me a Greek lesson now, doctor? I want to begin at once."

"Yes, child," said he, throwing down his hoe, "come into my library and we will begin without delay."

He entered fully into the feeling of suffering and sorrow which took possession of me when I discovered that a girl weighed less in the scale of being than a boy, and he praised my determination to prove the contrary. The old grammar which he had studied in the University of Glasgow was soon in my hands, and the Greek article was learned before breakfast.

Then came the sad pageantry of death, the weeping of friends, the dark rooms, the ghostly stillness, the exhortation to the living to prepare for death, the solemn

prayer, the mournful chant, the funeral cortège, the solemn, tolling bell, the burial. How I suffered during those sad days! What strange undefined fears of the unknown took possession of me! For months afterward, at the twilight hour, I went with my father to the new-made grave. Near it stood two tall poplar trees, against one of which I leaned, while my father threw himself on the grave, with outstretched arms, as if to embrace his child. At last the frosts and storms of November came and threw a chilling barrier between the living and the dead, and we went there no more.

During all this time I kept up my lessons at the parsonage and made rapid progress. I surprised even my teacher, who thought me capable of doing anything. I learned to drive, and to leap a fence and ditch on horseback. I taxed every power, hoping some day to hear my father say: "Well, a girl is as good as a boy, after all." But he never said it. When the doctor came over to spend the evening with us, I would whisper in his ear: "Tell my father how fast I get on," and he would tell him, and was lavish in his praises. But my father only paced the room, sighed, and showed that he wished I were a boy; and I, not knowing why he felt thus, would hide my tears of vexation on the doctor's shoulder.

Soon after this I began to study Latin, Greek, and mathematics with a class of boys in the Academy, many of whom were much older than I. For three years one boy kept his place at the head of the class, and I always stood next. Two prizes were offered in Greek. I strove for one and took the second. How well I remember my joy in receiving that prize. There was no sentiment of ambition, rivalry, or triumph over my companions, nor feeling of satisfaction in receiving this honor in the presence of those assembled on

the day of the exhibition. One thought alone filled my mind. "Now," said I, "my father will be satisfied with me." So, as soon as we were dismissed, I ran down the hill, rushed breathless into his office, laid the new Greek Testament, which was my prize, on his table and exclaimed: "There, I got it!" He took up the book, asked me some questions about the class, the teachers, the spectators, and, evidently pleased, handed it back to me. Then, while I stood looking and waiting for him to say something which would show that he recognized the equality of the daughter with the son, he kissed me on the forehead and exclaimed, with a sigh, "Ah, you should have been a boy!"

My joy was turned to sadness. I ran to my good doctor. He chased my bitter tears away, and soothed me with unbounded praises and visions of future success. He was then confined to the house with his last illness. He asked me that day if I would like to have, when he was gone, the old lexicon, Testament, and grammar that we had so often thumbed together. "Yes, but I would rather have you stay," I replied, "for what can I do when you are gone?" "Oh," said he tenderly, "I shall not be gone; my spirit will still be with you, watching you in all life's struggles." Noble, generous friend! He had but little on earth to bequeath to anyone, but when the last scene in his life was ended, and his will was opened, sure enough there was a clause saying: "My Greek lexicon, Testament, and grammar, and four volumes of Scott's commentaries, I will to Elizabeth Cady." I never look at these books without a feeling of thankfulness that in childhood I was blessed with such a friend and teacher.

I can truly say, after an experience of seventy years, that all the cares and anxieties, the trials and disappointments of my whole life, are light, when balanced with my sufferings in childhood and youth from the theological dogmas which I

sincerely believed, and the gloom connected with everything associated with the name of religion, the church, the parsonage, the graveyard, and the solemn, tolling bell. Everything connected with death was then rendered inexpressibly dolorous. The body, covered with a black pall, was borne on the shoulders of men; the mourners were in crape and walked with bowed heads, while the neighbors who had tears to shed, did so copiously and summoned up their saddest facial expressions. At the grave came the sober warnings to the living and sometimes frightful prophesies as to the state of the dead. All this pageantry of woe and visions of the unknown land beyond the tomb, often haunted my midnight dreams and shadowed the sunshine of my days. The parsonage, with its bare walls and floors, its shriveled mistress and her blind sister, more like ghostly shadows than human flesh and blood; the two black servants, racked with rheumatism and odoriferous with a pungent oil they used in the vain hope of making their weary limbs more supple; the aged parson buried in his library in the midst of musty books and papers—all this only added to the gloom of my surroundings. The church, which was bare, with no furnace to warm us, no organ to gladden our hearts, no choir to lead our songs of praise in harmony, was sadly lacking in all attractions for the youthful mind. The preacher, shut up in an octagonal box high above our heads, gave us sermons over an hour long, and the chorister, in a similar box below him, intoned line after line of David's Psalms, while, like a flock of sheep at the heels of their shepherd, the congregation, without regard to time or tune, straggled after their leader.

Years later, the introduction of stoves, a violoncello, Wesley's hymns, and a choir split the church in twain. These old Scotch Presbyterians were opposed to all innovations

that would afford their people paths of flowery ease on the road to Heaven. So, when the thermometer was twenty degrees below zero on the Johnstown Hills, four hundred feet above the Mohawk Valley, we trudged along through the snow, foot-stoves in hand, to the cold hospitalities of the "Lord's House," there to be chilled to the very core by listening to sermons on "predestination," "justification by faith," and "eternal damnation."

To be restless, or to fall asleep under such solemn circumstances was a sure evidence of total depravity, and of the machinations of the devil striving to turn one's heart from God and his ordinances. As I was guilty of these shortcomings and many more, I early believed myself a veritable child of the Evil One, and suffered endless fears lest he should come some night and claim me as his own. To me he was a personal, ever-present reality, crouching in a dark corner of the nursery. Ah! how many times I have stolen out of bed, and sat shivering on the stairs, where the hall lamp and the sound of voices from the parlor would, in a measure, mitigate my terror. Thanks to a vigorous constitution and overflowing animal spirits, I was able to endure for years the strain of these depressing influences, until my reasoning powers and common sense triumphed at last over my imagination. The memory of my own suffering has prevented me from ever shadowing one young soul with any of the superstitions of the Christian religion. But there have been many changes, even in my native town, since those dark days. Our old church was turned into a mitten factory, and the pleasant hum of machinery and the glad faces of men and women have chased the evil spirits to their hiding places. One finds at Johnstown now, beautiful churches, ornamented cemeteries, and cheerful men and

women, quite emancipated from the nonsense and terrors of the old theologies.

An important event in our family circle was the marriage of my oldest sister, Tryphena, to Edward Bayard of Wilmington, Delaware. He was a graduate of Union College, a classmate of my brother, and frequently visited at my father's house. At the end of his college course, he came with his brother Henry to study law in Johnstown. A quiet, retired little village was thought to be a good place in which to sequester young men bent on completing their education, as they were there safe from the temptations and distracting influences of large cities. In addition to this consideration, my father's reputation made his office a desirable resort for students, who, furthermore, not only improved their opportunities by reading Blackstone, Kent, and Story, but also by making love to the Judge's daughters. We thus had the advantage of many pleasant acquaintances from the leading families in the country, and, in this way, it was that four of the sisters eventually selected most worthy husbands.

Though only twenty-one years of age when married, Edward Bayard was a tall, fully developed man, remarkably fine looking, with cultivated literary taste and a profound knowledge of human nature. Warm and affectionate, generous to a fault in giving and serving, he was soon a great favorite in the family, and gradually filled the void made in all our hearts by the loss of the brother and son.

My father was so fully occupied with the duties of his profession, which often called him from home, and my mother so weary with the cares of a large family, having had ten children, though only five survived at this time, that they were quite willing to shift their burdens to younger shoulders. Our eldest sister and her husband, therefore,

soon became our counselors and advisers. They selected our clothing, books, schools, acquaintances, and directed our reading and amusements. Thus the reins of domestic government, little by little, passed into their hands, and the family arrangements were in a manner greatly improved in favor of greater liberty for the children.

The advent of Edward and Henry Bayard was an inestimable blessing to us. With them came an era of picnics, birthday parties, and endless amusements; the buying of pictures, fairy books, musical instruments and ponies, and frequent excursions with parties on horseback. Fresh from college, they made our lessons in Latin, Greek, and mathematics so easy that we studied with real pleasure and had more leisure for play. Henry Bayard's chief pleasures were walking, riding, and playing all manner of games, from jack-straws to chess, with the three younger sisters, and we have often said that the three years he passed in Johnstown were the most delightful of our girlhood.

Immediately after the death of my brother, a journey was planned to visit our grandmother Cady, who lived in Canaan, Columbia County, about twenty miles from Albany. My two younger sisters and myself had never been outside of our own county before, and the very thought of a journey roused our enthusiasm to the highest pitch. On a bright day in September we started, packed in two carriages. We were wild with delight as we drove down the Mohawk Valley, with its beautiful river and its many bridges and ferryboats. When we reached Schenectady, the first city we had ever seen, we stopped to dine at the old Given's Hotel, where we broke loose from all the moorings of propriety on beholding the paper on the dining-room wall, illustrating in brilliant colors the great events in sacred history. There were the