In this day of far reaching invetigation into everything, it has occurred to me that my ancestors are due a little investigating. Surely they are not entirely blameless for the legacy of permanent poverty that has descended even the fourth and fifth generations of all that bear the name of Watson. They were wise in keeping pruned the family tree to that degree of nakedness in order that a descendant with an investigating turn of mind could not stir up even a breeze among its leaves. Presumably cultivating family trees was never one of their virtues. I find few records of my branch of this very large family. This is my first indictment. They should have had the sense to know that some day they might be charged with vices for which they were not responsible and should have seen to it that their virtues at least were recorded. Well, it will be their own fault if in my excavations into their history I unearth things they believed everlastingly concealed in an obscurity which Who's Who and the International Encyclopedia have failed to penetrate.

Since the theory that every tub sits on its own bottom has been upset by investigating committees from Eugenic societies, we have learned that each of us is sitting on the character traits and racial experiences of his ancestors. Naturally this information causes a rise in the value of racial stock, but whether one's ancestors maket is bullish or bearish its the refuge of every tub that would disclaim all responsibility for its leak or prideful glory in its strength.

In adition to the self imposed duty of analyzing the present generation of Watsons, I shall record the results of my search for family characteristics and plant this day new cuttings from the neglected tree which I hope to see take root in this generation and grow to such proportions that future generations will find it a true record of the vices, virtues, failures and achievements of the very remarkable family called Watson.

Posterity has a right to know what it has been given as an inheritance but it will own nothing to me. I'll have no part in it. Men live again in their children and their children's children. I have no children. It is just as if I were not immortal. For my nieces and nephews. I will make this record, incomplete as it must be with the hope that future generations of Watsons may have greater grounds for pride in their immediate ancestors than the present generation has --- for the Watsons, as far as I know, have had no claim to greatness, socially, financially or intellectually, other than an inherited belief in their superiority, a trait I have not yet traced to its source.

If it is true that scientific racial selection can add a cubit to one's stature or take away a cubit, it would seem that wise selection could build a race of physically perfect creatures and that no one should have the right to impose the abnormal on posterity, but who ever heard of parents taking such thought for their children? But who ever heard of parents taking such care and forethought for their children. Children reap the consequences of

indifference and each individual more or less starts life handicapped.

--Omissions indicated. see copy--

In my own case - began with a grievance. For the first three months I wailed night and day but not until I could speak for myself did my parents know the cause. They named me Willie and I never forgave them. When later I discovered the category or other ills to which I had succeeded my resentment at being Will, Willie, Bill, Billy wasn't so concentrated but it was enough to spoil my childhood. I do not think my parents ever realized the injustice done me in so naming me. It was a tragedy. With the idiotic name Willie, the potential grandmother in me warred from the beginning. "Grandmother Willie." My sense of fitness could not stand the strain and somebody has missed a mighty good potential grandmother. I'll say that for myself.

I have never entertained any great predeliction for the name Watson. It's a very old name and ordinatory. Anyone with even slight knowledge of the history of surnames knows that Watson originally meant the son of Watter. Watter was an ancient first name of Teutonic origin that eventually evolved into the surname Watts. Watson is this name with the suffix son, having the same significance in an English name that Mac has at the beginning of a Scottish surname.

The Watsons claim kinship with the English earls of Rockingham whose family name was Watson The earldom became extinct in 1716. The earls were descended from Edward Watson, Esquire, of Lydington, County Rutland, who lived in 1460 and fom whom also were descended many of the name of Watson, presumably some of those who established the family in this county.

One of the first of the names in this county was William Watson, born in England in 1602, settled at Reading, Massachusetts in 1630. He was a representative in the Colonial legislature and a man of some distinction in the colony. Moreover, his family was firmly established in New England. Another Watson, Jacob, came to this country from England with Geneal Wolfe with whom he served at Quebec in 1709. He established a family in Connecticut. The Watsons of New York State use the coat of arms that once belonged to the Earls of Rockingham. The motto is "Mea Gloria Fides."

There are many Watsons of distinction in the encyclopedia. Few names occur more often but the Watson branch to which we belong has not established a line leading directly to any of these. It is from the Virginia Watsons of Buckingham County that we are directly descended and the Virginia family of that name is so numerous it is difficult to trace the branches. No more emphatic statement as to the obscurity of a family can be made than the absence of the name from county annals and the unmarked graves in the cemeteries. No family with any great pride of family name or home, would permit its extinction. So reasoning from the absence of all records, I am

persuaded there are no prominent names in our family, at least within the last 130 years. There are merchants, teacher, ministers, editors, business men, lawyers, but no one who has reached distinction or prominence in his line. But if we are unknown for our virtues so are we unknown for our vices.

General character traits as seen in this family of today and as traditionally understood are all I can record.

I have nothing from which to obtain information of traits of character of these Virginia Watsons, but my memory of what my father told me. His father was Jesse Watson, the youngest of 12 children, born in Buckingham County, Virginia, May 2, 1802. He died in Gibson County, Tennessee, on August 15, 1875. He was tall and slender with light brown hair and eyes. He was also very patient, quiet in manner. A man with few words and little education. In essence, a man of no marked characteristics. He did not drink or use tobacco as was the case with other men of his day. "A man of his word and a good provider" but what possessions he had were lost during the Civil War. His slaves were freed, his tobacco barns burned on information given by his "union" neighbors. He believed that Henry McCall, father of the Huntington McCalls, was responsible. He did not live long enough to accumulate anything after the War. He married Susan McCune, daughter of Agnes Hubbard McCune, who was born in Prince Edward County, Virginia, on April 11, 1806. Her Father was Gordon McCune who, after marrying her Mother, Agnes Hubbard in Irland, came on their bridal trip to America. They settled in

Prince Edward County between 1785 and 1790. Jesse Watson's Father was William Watson, a Baptist Minister. His Mother was Mary Wilkerson, a woman of splendid intellect, who was born in Scotland.

Susan McCune was just opposite in type from her husband. She was short and stout, with straight dark brown hair, snappy borwn eyes, small feet and hands, talked much and very fast, was very courageous and frank, and also hated tobacco, whiskey and lying. She was a member of the Presbyterian Church. Losing her sight from cataracts late in life, an operation did not entirely restore her vision. Possessed of a passion for truth and cleanliness, she remained young and optimistic until her death of old age at 83 in Gibson County, Tennessee, on June 4, 1889. She moved with her husband and children from Prince Edward County, Virginia, to Carroll County, Tennessee, in 1844. Crossing the county and bringing their slaves with them, they cheered when they passed flying flags which read "Vote for Polk for President." Her Grandmother and her daughter rode in a "barouche," a vehicle now obsolete. While camping at Nashville, then a small town, her silver was stolen one night from under the rear seat of the barouche. It was an inheritance from her mother the loss of which she never ceased to lament. The slaves lost their clothing at the same time and place and Jane, the youngest lived to nurse great grandchildren of Susan Watson, to whom she told marvelous tales of tht great adventure across the mountains to a new land they supposed would be flowing with milk and honey, but it was flowing only with thieves, Jane said.

Jane was Mema's nurse when she was a baby.

Sons of Jesse and Susan Watson, Edward, Joseph, John and Marshall. The last died in the battle of Vicksburg in the Civil War when quite young. John died soon after the close of the War, leaving six sons and one daughter. Edward died in 1920, left one son, Aubrey, one daughter, Marial (deceased). Edward was married to Nance Killaugh. Joseph who was my Father was born January 1, 1836, in Prince Edward County, Virginia, and died at Fairlee, Texas, on October 27, 1903.

Joseph Anderson Watson inherited the pale blue eyes and light bround hair of his father, the quick wit and repartee, poetic imagination and wonderful memory of his mother. Had only academic education (his intemperance came from mother, Susan McCune) obtained in the public school at Huntington. Nervous and excitable temperment, used much tobacco and drank too much. Was studying medicine when the war came. A farmer, teacher. Learned languages easily. Letters his special ability. Willpower weak. When misfortune overtook him he moved and it followed, so much of his time was spent in seeking new locations far from misfortune. Interested more in the world affairs than in his own affairs. Fine conversationalist. Read Tom Paine, Ingersoll, etc. but was a member of the Baptist Church. It's doctrine, however, he said he wouldn't do. Neither did he believe in prohibition. Not the highest morality, he argued. He could do little with his hands. But his mind was always alert. He was the neighborhood philosopher wherever he lived. His proverbs would fill a book. His vision as to world

affairs was prophetic, but he failed to see much that was immediately at hand. He knew the history of the world and could repeat from memory nearly every poem ever read. He was a financial failure. Died of heart failure in an attack of pneumonia at Commerce, Texas.

Jess and Susan McCune, after the war, moved with daughter Sarah to Rutherford in Gibson County. They died there and are buried near Rutherford. They came to Tennessee in 1844 with 16 slaves, 8 covered wagons filled with household furniture, 30 head of horses, etc. Terrible mountain trip. Jesse too old for Civil War but opposed to secession but loyal to South. Joseph Anderson Watson fought for South, was captured on Island No. 10 north of Memphis. They were carried to Madison, Wisconsin, placed in prison. As an apothecary he had some freedom and he and William Bledsoe escaped. Worked way down Ohio and Mississippi as deckhands on a steamboat. A few days after the escape, prison freed. After leaving boat made their way on over to Huntington, their home. Joseph carried Bledsoe last part of way. Hid at Aunt Mary's for day or __________

The children of Jesse Watson and Susan McCune were not a happy combination of the gifts of each parent, but each was entirely like the father or the mother. It would have been far better otherwise. The daughters, Mary and Martha, were quiet, home keeping women, so

inarticulate that if they possessed decided views about life, religion, politics, they kept them to themselves. Sarah and Emma were loquacious, ardent conversationalists and opinionated. Edward and Marshall were, like Mary and Martha, their father over again. John and Joseph were known for their ready and brilliant wit, there much speaking the mother again. How unfortunate it has always seemed to me that an intelligent person, one who has ideas, will express them. I know that Aunt Mary who married Franklin Priest failed to impress her children who might have been much more forceful in character if their mother had been a positive character. Negative goodness, negative ambition, negative interests. On the other hand my father had amazing resources on all subjects that could intrigue our childish minds and he had a neighborhood fame as a personality with a store of learning, gained not in schools but from reading books and life. He impressed himself on all whom he met. He was a good example to his children of what not to be as well as what to be. He fell so far short of what he desired in his children, of what he admired in others and so painstakingly pointed out to us his failings that it seemed strange any one of his children should be like him. Yet one, Caleb, is very like him and I am conscious in myself of many traits inheired from him.

Physically he was strong. Rather short body, long limbs, that won for him many footraces. No boy or man known to him was his equal as a swimmer. In jumping no one could equal him at the age of 45. He never suffered from headaches or indigestion but in his sleep often suffered a peculiar heart contraction that could only be

relieved by cold water on his head and face. A pail of water was always by his bedside at night. I believe he died in such an attack. He had a chill that day, went to bed in a boarding house or hotel away from home and told the keeper he feared pneumonia. A few hours later he was found dead in bed. Heart failure from pneumonia, physicians said.

My mother, Emily Hilliard Watson, was born in Carroll County, Tennessee, August 9, 1842. Married Joseph Watson at the age of fifteen. Had ten children, seven of whom lived to be grown. Died January 31, 1889, and was buried at Sonora Cemetery near Fairlee, Hunt County, Texas.

Her father was Wrightman Hilliard, born in Wake County near Raleigh, North Carolina in 1800. Her grandfather was also Wrightman Hilliard. Her mother was Delano Jones who was born near Huntsville, Alabama, and came with her husband to Carroll County, Tennessee in 1820. Settled in the Twelfth District. Emily Hilliard had grey eyes, heavy brown hair, slender oval face, small fee and hands, but she was stout, weighed at time of her death at the age of 47, bout 175 pounds. She married too soon for an education but liking to read she became a well informed woman. She possessed unusual common sense and but for her good reasoning the family boat would have been upset more often than it was by my migratory father. She possessed an eye for form and was proficient with the needle. She sang while going about her work. She died almost surely from overwork and lack of proper medical attention, which was not

available. Cancer had its grim hold on her before it was suspected and she lived only a few months.

Her father and her ~~mothing~~ mother died of tuberculosis. One brother of cancer, two brothers of tuberculosis, other sisters of pneumonia, not a good eugenic record from the health standpoint.

These notes are all I can produce from memory but as I have great nieces now who in the future may be interested in family traits, perhaps this information may some day be cherished and if the living generation and the future also add to this it may be valuable yet.

From my many nieces and nephews there has come a clamor to write for them a history of the family. I being that member of the family with an investigating turn of mind, with more time than means, and so skeptical of all facts and possessing a great curiosity as to past and interest in the present with a positive indifference to the future, they believe I am peculiarly fitted to do this.

If this is to be an illuminating record of family history and characteristics, no method could more revealing than the biographical and from my position almost in the middle of the family and having almost reached three score years, I seem particularly suited to do this work.

(NOTE: You will note in the original copy (handwritten tablet) this paragraph was deleted, that is, cross out - Hilda, I think this paragraph shows how far ahead of her time Sister Willie was. This is completely modern psychiatry)

It has been said that whatever one becomes in after years may be determined by the natural instincts and pleasures of childhood but the directive influences existing in the human mind from birth are so often arrested or averted that the full development of the individual's powers rarely occurs and from the child it does not always appear what the man may be, but from my vantage place of middle ground, looking backward two generations, and forward two, I will unroll.

Emerging from a confusion of moving films wherein dreams and realities are so intermingled that I cannot truly say this happened or this did not. I came consciously to the morning of December 22, 1875. It was a gray, cloud-hung, snow-filled day, background of the first clear picture on my memory. I was four years old.

The snow lay deep in drifts about the house, covered the walks, weighted down the limbs of tall cedars and bent low the broad leaves of the magnolia that filled the wide lawn about the rambling old house with its dark basement and its ghostly attic in which my family temporarily dwelt in the edge of town.

From where I stood in my nightgown by the window watching with my Brother Charlie, aged six, the fairy world without, I was

snatched up bodily and ordered by Bett, the family servant, to get on my things and into the dining room quickly if I wanted any breakfast. She had no time to "button nobody's clothes on such a morning."

In the dining room my father was sitting at the table with my brother Elwood, 18, sister, Ellen, 16, Virginia, 12, and bother, Caleb, 2. Mother wasn't there. Everything was strangely quiet.

"Take the buggy," Father said to Elwood, "and bring Mrs. Brown. Your mother is sick." Then he got his coat and hat and went out into the snow toward town. Sister, who was giving Caleb, aged 2, his breakfast got up suddenly and taking him in her arms left the room crying, followed by Virginia. There was something strange in their faces. I ran to my mother's room. There she was, sitting by the fire with a familiar brown, fringed woolen shawl about her shoulders, and she too had been crying. That is how I seem to see her first; some unforgettable thing I saw and felt in her eyes, in her heart, and that was my (mother?). That is the thing I always see (deleted--It was suffering) and I do not think that look ever entirely left her fact again. (deleted--She lived about 12 years longer).

She sent me to Sister's room to have my hair combed. Sister was lying across the bed (deleted--still crying). "We can never have anything," she sobbed, "never be anything but heathen. There are too many of us." When no one was looking I slipped out into the snow.

There are lapses in my memory. The next picture was three mornings later. The snow was not receiving but casual attention; the new baby was also losing interest. I had been yanked, half asleep out of my bed by cries of Christmas Gift! Christmas Gift! The stockings were hanging, a long row of them on the mantle downstairs in mother's room. In my mad efforts to reach by stocking with fewest steps I ran into Bett at the foot of the back stairs. She was crossing the hall with a shovel of burning coals on her way to the kitchen. I met the coals broadside and would have received the broadside of Bett's big hand, but her attention being centered on gathering up the coals, I escaped. It seems strange but my memory of that Christmas morning halts right there. I have often wondered what was in my stocking.

Later that same day I again pick up the thread. There was a family gathering in my mother's room to name the baby. He was the tenth Watson to arrive in our family and no name awaited him.

"I know," exclaimed`Charlie. "Let's put out one of his eyes and call him Fenner." The doctor who brought him was named Fenner and had but one eye. However, the baby was named Frank Hilliard and was allowed to retain both eyes.

My mother than was 34 years old. Whether subsconsciously or not from that time on I seemed to know that when my father was particularly jolly my mother's eyes were oftenest filled with tears and the older children became strangely quiet.

A few months later I remember a party at our house. The only one I ever remember. Several school girls were spending the week

with Sister, and Elwood brought some boys home from college. At the party they wore masks and dresses made of paper, and I did not know whether they were real people or fairies. It was difficult always for me at that age to separate the real from the unreal. I possessed a cultivated imagination, a faculty that was fast becoming a ________________ we had in which to live. At this, the close of that year, it became necessary to move to a rented farm about 12 miles in the country. Another old rambling house at the end of a long avenue of trees and surrounded by falling fences and decaying orchards. That Christmas each stocking contained an apple, an orange, and a few sticks of candy. There was less furniture now. The old square piano and a few necessary pieces were placed in the farm house, once quite an estate, left to decay after the war.

I was always conscious of a fervent attachment to the soil of old homes with the (or their?) broken, stunted shrubs and neglected orchards. There is something humanizing in the very sods about a place that once was the scene of a cultivated life. There is a kind of sanctity too about old furniture and rare old china with its rich associates. A piece of china in our family rarely outlived the infancy of one child, and the few pieces of furniture, knocked, scratched, and broken in many moving vans, were not considered worth selling or moving -- at the end of that year when misfortune in the form of bad crops and increasing expenses -- spread its wings. Father's sporting blood was never stirred to give battle on the ground. He would move. Never yet had he stood still and let

misfortune overtake him. He had that to his credit, that it always caught him on the move.

True to his restless, migratory nature, he announced one day that we would leave for the west in one week. Visions of a new world blotted out everything past and present. The little children had never been on a train, never been anywhere, not even to church or to Sunday School. Here begins a continuity of events that are indelibly impressed on my memory. No piecing together now, no more doubts as to what is and what isn't real.

The Watsons were at last going to migrate. Not just move from one home to another in the same (county?) but were going into a far country. The former yearly shifts didn't count. This was to be an exodus. The Egypt of our discontent should know us no more.

"I just can't believe it," Charlie said. "It just don't look like we could be going to ride on a train."

"Yes we are." cried Caleb, "We're going to ride and ride to the other side of the very world 'itself'."

The excitement was intense. Elwood, Sister and Virginia were not as stimulated by the promise of a long journey to a new land, pictured in letters from a friend of father who had settled there several years before, as a land of heart's desire. But the hopelessness of the situation on the farm made any move desirable.

Mother was always busy, but now everyone worked. Every child had to be dressed for a long trip. I remember how late at night they sewed and how good we tried to be. At last the day came. Dressed in my new plaid woolen dress and a fur cap, I remember so

well, I could hardly wait to start, that I might wear them, my beautiful new things! The first all-new things I ever had.

Each incident of that journey has its place, but at the railroad town where we left the train, tired and hungry after days of constant travel over wastes of parched earth that had dulled our enthusiasm and brought forebodings to the expectant hearts of the older ones, there occurred a silent tragedy, unsuspected even by mother.

In the little tavern where we were waiting for the stage by which we were to complete our journey, I saw a vision that almost took my breath. A girl about my age with golden curls, tied back with a bow of red ribbon on top of her head, and falling in clusters about her shoulders, and wearing a red sash and red shoes, danced and skipped about the halls and before a long bench on which sat in staff-array against the wall, Charlie Caleb, Frank and I, four little dull-colored country children, awed by her splendor and ease. I was acutely conscious of the difference between us and when she boldly sidled up to me and asked my name I was too embarrassed to speak. "Her name's Willie," stammered Charlie, who was always coming to my rescue.

Willie! Ha! That's a boy's name and your hair is short like a boy's, and you wear a fur cap like a boy." With that thrust she skipped away, having wrecked forever all possible joy in the new cap. My world was upset. Returning soon with a candy rooster, a gorgeous thing, the like of which I had never seen, and which she dangled in tantalizing nearness until its proximity overcoming my

timidity, I asked her to let me see it. She only laughed and, saying she had lots of things like it, she ran away to join a man who took her on his lap and kissed her. I couldn't remember ever being kissed since I was a baby. Frank was the only one in our family still small enough for that -- but I winked back the tears and squeezed hard the little moist hand of my two-year-old baby brother sitting by me.

I had always disliked my name, but from that day I hated it and my straight, dark brown, shingled hair. The round fur cap that had been my joy became a crown of thorns, and strange to say the next day when we were leaving the stage at Lampassos, that cap could not be found. I arrived there bareheaded, and it was years before I owned another hat. We had travelled all night and far into the day by stage, the four little ones with Father and Mother in one coach, drawn by four horses with a driver high outside, and followed by another coach in which the older children rode with strangers. We stopped only for coffee and change of horses, rattling over rocks and ridges while most of the time asleep.

NOTES ADDED BY UNCLE CHARLIE: Left Bells, Tennessee, December 20, 1878, and went on train to Round Rock, Texas, then the fartherest railroad point. Thence by stage coach to Lampassos, and then on 20 miles northeast where Joseph Anderson Watson bought (or contracted from the state) some school land. The family stayed until August 9, 1879. Came back to Tennessee in 1880. Bank to Texas in 1884. Mama married.

Lampassos was a little board-constructed frontier village but its one hotel provided too expensive for our purse. The trip had cost more than expected and when Father had made the payment on his new, raw, wheat land, purchased before coming through his friend, Tom Exum, he found he had almost nothing left, and the land was only one dollar per acre.

By invitation of the Exums, Father, Elwood, Sister and Virginia, after purchasing a wagon and team, drove out about twenty miles to the Exum ranch, leaving Mother and the children in a little two-room rented shack until such time as the new ranch required to be ready for occupation. It lay adjoining the Exum ranch, a few miles away.

When they left us crowded in that little shack -- its only furniture two new wooden beds, an unpainted table, a few chairs and a stove, I seemed to sense the utter desolation closing about us; the injured, bewildered look on the faces of my sisters, the grim determined look of Mother, and Elwood's restless irritation. The failure of a hope that had sustained them thus far tinged with a blacker shade the already dark outlook, when they learned that the ranch house, so nobly described by Tom Exum, consisted of a prospector's lone, one-room cabin, and not a fence on the entire 640 acres. But Tom Exum offered to lend father money for development purposes. He was wise. Labor was scarce, neighbors more so, and he was providing human companionship for his own dissatisfied wife and daughters whose associates were ranch hands and cattlemen.

There had always been about our house as much as a half-pint bottle of a red liquid from which Father drew inspiration, enabling him to make the best of any situation, but this was a time when the bottle seemed empty.

Through the Exums, a class in piano study had been secured for sister in Lampassos, and she would return to the town, boarding at the hotel when we left after Christmas. Sister was a frail, tender-looking girl as white and ineffectual in a struggling world as a lily. Her hair was yellow and fluffed timidly about her face. Her hands were small and white; her blue eyes appealingly innocent. She was afraid of the dark, afraid of poverty, afraid of work, afraid of life, of everything. Father had always impressed upon her with endless insistence the importance of making a good appearance. He wanted her to be a paragon of learning and good manners, and she had always more clothes than all the rest of us together, so that even in our dire poverty, compared to the natives in that frontier town, she looked "like a million dollars" as she walked down the one plank walk.

They did not return from Exums before Christmas. Alone in that bare shack Mother and the four of us waited. A letter stated they would come the twenty-sixth, leaving sister at the hotel and taking the rest of us to the ranch.

The day before Christmas a beautiful young lady passing our gate saw us clumped in the open doorway. She hesitated, glanced at the one, curtainless window, and at the obviously recent look about the place.

"Good morning," she called brightly. "I wonder if one of you, the oldest, could go with me to help decorate the Christmas tree a the church?" If one could? Why, the whole bunch was aching to go. We had never seen a Christmas tree, never been to church. We vanished in a body to the rear room for permission from Mother. In company with the beautiful lady, Charlie proudly walked out the gate, and longing consumed the rest of us. When he returned! What did a Christmas tree look like? What did HE do? He explained, with the assurance of an eye-witness, that a Christmas tree was a dead tree with no leaves until he and "a few other boys" handed up pieces of cedar which they tied on the limbs until it looked like a green tree. Then they put trimmings on it and candles and everybody would get a present off it that night and we would too.

"No," said Mother. "There won't be gifts for us because no one knows us. Not even our names."

"Oh, yes they do," explained Charlie. "I told that lady about me and Willie and Caleb and FRank and she said be sure to come tonight and something would be on that tree for every one of us."

"Then you may go," Mother said. She knew how limply the stockings would hang that night on the bare wall above the stove.

Promptly at seven o'clock, four little stiffly-starched, excited strangers piloted by the experienced Charlie, proudly proclaiming, "Shucks, you couldn't lose me in this town," found there way to a seat in the middle of a church gleaming with a hundred candles and sparkling toys. The tree was ablaze with colored lights and tinsel, surpassing in gorgeous beauty anything we

had ever imagined. We sat perfectly still, too overcome with timidity and emotion to speak.

Next to me sat a young man, and directly there came in a beautiful little girl dressed in white with laces and ribbons on her dress and sat down by him, her mother following. The girl stood up on the seat and laughed and clapped her hands while the music was playing. What would I have given to be able to do that before everybody. King G's horses couldn't have moved one of us from our seats or made us speak. A careless observer might have thought us indifferent.

When the gifts were being cut down from the tree, the suspense was almost unbearable. When a doll came down my heart almost burst. I would close my eyes until a name was called. If it should be for me. Finally Caleb's name was called and only after much diligence was he located, for our presence was not proclaimed. Only after an agony of waiting did the man by me suspect from the utter joy in our faces that the right boy was found but when the top was placed in his hands not a sound or a movement was made. The little girl's name was called many times; her arms were full, and still nothing for me. A little doll's cradle seemed to cause much merriment in the house and the young man by me looked foolish when it was given to him. Everybody laughed again. He gave it to the little girl whose arms were so full. Oh, why didn't he see me! At last Charlie got a knife and Frank a red ball. The tree was almost empty. Only one more doll. Surely it would be for me. I held my breath. Then everybody laughed again again and the young man

flushed. "Here," he said to the little girl who had three beautiful dolls. "You can have it." He did not see my empty little hands, nor the heroic effort I was making not to cry. Then at last I heard as from afar, "Willie Watson." I could not have moved or looked up to have saved my life. "Here," called Charlie, at last growing courageous in my behalf. A small toy pistol, a BOY's toy, was placed in my hand.

That was the last straw. They might as well have shot me. Nothing but a passionate love for them as brothers kept me from hating the three boys with whom I sat. I left the church choking back the sobs that broke the minute we found ourselves alone on the street.

"You can spin my tone -- once, " cautiously consoled Caleb. and "You can roll my ball," offered Frank. "You can cut with my knife, too," said Charlie, "And if it had two blades, I'd let you cut with both of them." But I didn't want to spin and roll and cut with boys' things. I wanted above all things to look like a girl, to dress like a girls, and play with girls' things.

Mother asked me that night to find Rose, my old rag doll and put her by my stocking. Perhaps Santa Claus, she said would bring her a dress with ribbons and lace on it. Years later she told me how late she sewed that night and that sister's summer hat never looked the same again. Anyway, she said, no hat had a moral right to so much lace and ribbon.

The day following Christmas the wagon came from the ranch. We left the town, and after a few days at the Exums, we drove over,

late one afternoon to the new home. It lay in a valley surrounded by low ridges, and a gap in the ridge to the west made by the creek on the bank of which stood our house, in a flood of sunshine that spread like a golden stream across the valley. The man driving the wagon stopped on the ridge top before descending and pointed out the place where a wonderful white mare, the wildest and the most beautiful creature ever seen by man, was finally entrapped but killed after an offer of thousands of dollars from the circus men for her capture alive. Wild horses and wild bulls came often into the valley, creating havoc among the cattle and the settlers. Father had already fenced a portion of his land and had penned several wild horses. Any horse without a brand and properly advertised became the property of the captor after a given time. The house sat just at the foot of an overhanging ridge and about fifty feet from the rock bed of a shallow creek. Often at night, the driver said, wolves and panthers would come up there and next morning a calf would be missing. Having introduced us so pleasantly to our new home, he drove on.

The large one-room cabin was built years earlier of logs brought from a distance, for there was only a low-growing mesquite around there. It had an adobe chimney that filled almost one end of it and a hard-baked dirt floor as hard as concrete. This was the living room, dining room and kitchen. A tent containing three bedrooms was constructed of heavy canvas on a framework of wood, and floors of boards. There was a canopy-covered porch. A chicken

house was built of poles, and a garden enclosed. Two men were employed and the work of preparing the land for cultivation began.

Elwood was my hero. Looking back over those years I am filled with admiration of his devotion to us. Grown, he might have left home and lived his own life, but he refused to desert the ship. He was tall, well-made, and with a personality that, joined to his better education, placed him in a class above the average young man. The slightest attention from him made puppets of us all. He was always kind to me.

"See that crag across the valley, yonder?" he said to me one day. "If you will not speak a word, mind you, not one word, we will see its shadow in the deep water of Blue Hole in thirty minutes." Quivering with fear-filled anticipation, I clung with both arms around his slender body as the horses hoofs scattered the pebbles along the rocky trail. When we reached that famed place of mysterious happenings he stood me on the transparent rock that formed the brink of that bottomless hole and pointed out the crag mirrored in its blue surface and told me a wonderful tale.

Another time when the sun had dropped over the ridge sending a long streamer of light in a path across the valley, he was lifting me up for a "ride to where the sun sets," there dashed up beside us Lorita Exum on her great black stallion. She was excited and cried, "You must come with me, Elwood, quick!" All the time looking back as if pursued by some terror. He dropped me to the ground, and as they turned off on a trail that led around Oar Top Mountain. She called back, "Don't say you have seen me. Don't." In about twenty

minutes a man, riding like mad drew up his horse before me and asked if Miss Exum was there. I managed to say no, and after looking about scanning the open spaces he turned back the way he came. That night I heard Elwood and Virginia talking on the tent porch. He said Lorita's father wanted her to marry Gosnold who was a rich man but uneducated and uncouth. Lorita had sworn he should never have a chance to ask her. When there was no other way she out rode him on her famous horse. Once she had spent the night on the top of Oar Top Mountain and dared him to follow. Her father and Gosnold thought she stopped at Baltots ranch, but she would stop at nothing, she said, to escape Gosnold. Not even Blue Hole.

"She is in love with you," Virginia suggested.

"Sha," he said.

Near Blue Hole lived old man Mouldin, part priest and part doctor, who ministered to the people of the valley in any capacity the occasion demanded. Once when Frank had croup Elwood was sent to bring him, but the wings of death were hovering over our home when he came. Frank was blue and stiff. Every breath seemed the last. Doctor Mouldin put him in a tub of hot coffee, gave him blue stone, but he lived. Uncle Charlie and Aunt Ellen remembered that it was Aunt Ellen, not the Doctor who pulled Frank through. After the doctor had given up, Aunt Ellen made a steam tent of a blanket, a tub of boiling water into which was placed some home medicine, and sat with Frank in this steamy heat, at times even breathing into his mouth to keep him alive.

"How long have you lived here, doctor?" Father asked when Frank was again breathing naturally. "Long time," Doctor Mouldin replied. "But the country ain't what it once was. These damn railroads and towns have ruined it. I am thinking of going west." It was one hundred miles to a railroad.

"Dod." said Father when the doctor had gone. "Dod" was one of the Scotch words he often used, a term his Scotch father also frequently used.

That spring and summer there was no rain, not a drop, not even a cloud. The creek dried up and drinking water had to be hauled from a great distance. Not a sprig of green could be found in garden or field. In July a man came over the ridge from the North, crying that the prairie was afire. Stopping only for a drink of water, he galloped on to warn the people across the creek, and on toward the south. I had been borrowed for a few days by a Mrs. Ballot, who lived on a ranch about three miles south of us, and whose husband was away on a trip. When she heard the cry, "Prairie fire" she quickly jumped into her saddle and whirled away to give orders to the men on the place, and riding back by the house she grabbed me up behind her and dashed across the plain. She was frightened. When we were in sight of our ranch she put me down, "You can make it now," she said. "Go straight to the house." and she turned back. When I touched the ground I was so shaken from the ride I lay still a minute and when I stood up the grass was so tall I wasn't sure which way to go and wandered a while, completely lost in the tall, dead grass, but following a cow trail by the creek, I

soon came into sight of the house, and in the commotion, incident to the alarming new of the approaching fire no one asked how I got home. I was not then over seven years old.

Barrels of water were placed about the premises, and tow sacks were laid ready to be used. The men were plowing around the fences and had set a back fire at places, which was not permitted to burn much. Father fearing in the dry condition and such tall grass, it would start a worse conflagration than the one coming which he still hoped would be stayed before reaching us. By afternoon a great black bank hung over the north ridge and before bedtime when we went up the ridge to scan the outlook there was a great red line reaching across the north from east to west. A watch was kept that night; not until noon the next day did it come, roaring like a mighty storm over the ridge and swept down on us. The children were ordered to stay in the log house, but even Charlie was called into service to keep the sacks wet and ready, for Mother, Virginia, Father, and Elwood and the two hired men were fighting to keep the tent and the fence from catching. No one thought the flames would cross the rocky creek bed where no vegetation grew, but the sparks from the flying grass, borne by the rising wind, crossed with lightning speed. The men burned their hands, their eyebrows, their faces were black and swollen, and Mother and Virginia were hardly recognizable, so red and blackened were their faces and hands.

Several ranch houses south of us and many cattle were destroyed, but we lost nothing but a few fence posts and the already dead garden and field stuff. The gates of the cattle pens on our

place had been opened days before and the hourses driven south. The teams and milk cows were all we had to protect. Unwisely, Father had been led to believe in the agricultural possibilities of the country. Next morning the bare ridges, plains and fields were covered with a thick black coat of ashes. Desolation lay upon the land.

I cannot altogether regret the experience of that portion of my life. There was a strange and haunting beauty about that valley, something too in the constant danger and excitement that has made all the rest of my life seem tame. We explored the caves along the ridges and once were met by two gleaming eyes of a wild cat when we threatened her lair. A deer caught Caleb's blouse on the tip of his antler and pawed him in the back; then dropping him abruptly he --- on down the ravine. A wild bull, chased by men with guns, barely missed us as we were picking up pecans along the crows' trail on top of North Ridge where in their passage between wooded ravines the crows had dropped these nuts. We gathered periwinkle, bleached by the long hot summer suns, and colored pebbles, and with flour paste made wonderful mosaics. We learned to know the Wolf's howl and the cry of many wild things. Such constant danger developed our watchfulness and keenness of perception, and we acquired facility in bearing hardships.

On the first day of August, 1879, we left Mesquite Valley in two covered wagons having sold the ranch to Jim Exum, who was now glad to buy us out for he saw in Elwood's presence there was a

menace to his plans for Lorita. It was, however, to no avail. In September Gosnold and Lorita were killed in a cyclone.

Followed now for us days of enchantment; sleeping under the stars at night and by day waking to ever-changing scenes; with breakfast spread on the ground by rocky streams at dawn and traveling always east toward the rising sun. Then one day we reached the Brazos, whose treacherous waters almost proved the Red Sea of our destruction, but with closed eyes and quivering hearts, we clung together while the struggling horses and swaying wagons drifted and plunged across the rising current of the made red stream. Had we been Israelites we would have set up a stone on the east bank of that river and called the name of it Ebenezer.

For weeks now we had been on the road, pushing restlessly forward with the hope of finding within the fences of civilization a soil wherein we might write the homebuilder's message of permanency. The no-fence country held no glamour of romance for Father. Throughout his life he was subconsciously influenced by the experiences of his ancestors. His Father, while not having been a gentleman of leisure, had enjoyed for quite a period of his life the management of a large estate in Virginia, owned by his brother Wilkerson. There the real hardships were borne by negro slaves. Retirement on a well-stocked plantation would have expressed Father's conception of the ideal life, but eating being a necessity and the heavens raining no manna, he sought a fertile soil that would grow bread.

It happened one day that we met on the road a traveller who proved to be a cousin of Mother. Through him we learned that Mother's Aunt Martha Hilliard who had married Lt. Wylie B. Merrill in Tennessee in 1828, was living nearby. We were made welcome at her house and in three days set up housekeeping again in a real house built by the Merrills in 1829 when they first settled there. Great Aunt Martha, a widow now, was making her home with one of her seven sons, and the house, scene of so many hardships and dangers, now unoccupied, became our temporary home. The stories she told us of those first seething years spent in terror of Indians and wolves, in that very house, fixed the place forever in my memory.

Her husband belonged to the Home Guards, as did all the settlers, subject to call at a moment's notice, for protection against Indians. The settlements were scattered but when danger from Indians threatened the families were taken to a fort about fifty miles away until the settlements were safe again.

When her third child was three months old they were living in this house, only one large room then, and isolated from the little group of houses --- the nearest settlement. Everything was quiet in the country, no Indians nearer than the Indian Territory, and her husband had gone to the fort on business, expecting to return in two days, but on the second morning there dashed up to her door a rider, saying he had been sent to warn her and the other settlers that the Indians had crossed Red River and were headed that way; she was to take the children in the wagon and go at once with the other settlers to the fort, while here husband and the other guards

marched against the advancing horde. When the man had gone she stood dazed by the thought that she had that morning let the wagon and team to a man who'd gone to a distant creek bottom for wood, and there was whistling around the corner of the house. From a blue bank in the north a sharpedged wind that would freeze her and the children before they could reach the settlement, five miles away, even if she could carry three babies in the face of it. It would mean certain death on the way. Thoughts, plans rushed like lightning through her brain. The other settlers would think she had one, not knowing of her husband's absence. The isolation of their home was complete. Driven by desperation she began to work, to give the place the appearance of being unoccupied. She opened the gates and rove the stock a mile away to a clump of bushes on a creek bank, killed all the chickens and hid them under a brush pile, removed yard and garden gates from their hinges, nailed up the shutters to windows and cooked meat and bread which she placed under the bedding piled on the floor, stopped the clock, and set a bucket of water nearby. She dared not risk the creaking of the bedsteads. Then she barred and nailed the door, put out every spark of fire and took down the ever-loaded gun. By that time the wind had ceased and snow began falling. All the afternoon it fell, completely removing any trace of life about the place. With gun in hand she watched through a crack the way toward the north, praying she might keep the restless children from crying but fear was a powerful silencer and when night fell they lay stretched in sleep and she sat, every nerve aquiver, listening for sound that would announce the Indians

coming. At midnight the snow ceased and the stars came out. About four o'clock she heard a distant murmur. It drew nearer, closer still. Then there was a yell that signified the Indians discovery of the house.

She stood over the sleeping children, the gun lifted. As they drew nearer their cries suddenly ceased and then was only the crackling sound made by many steps in the snow crust that had frozen over in the increased cold of the night. The steps passed around the house, halting, listening. She thought she could hear their breathing. If one of the children should awaken, should cry out! It seemed to her that an army had passed, but it could not have been many minutes. Seemingly convinced that the place was uninhabited, the Indians began to talk and the sound of their voices receded to a place about fifty yards from the house where they began preparation for breakfast. A cry from the calf, returning home, was stiffled from a blow from a tomahawk. The Indians made merry over a fire and the smell of roasting meat came through the cabin cracks. She remained standing, her numb arm cramped and almost useless from the cold, nor dared to take a step for fear the creaking floor would announce to a possible lurking foe the presence of life in the cabin. Just as the sun arose the sounds ceased entirely. It might be a trap, so she remained immovable. Hours passed, the children awoke. She stiffled their cries with food and emboldened by the silence without, peeped through a crack. Hanging to a limb of a bois d'arc tree was what was left of the calf, and mooing plaintively nearby stood the cow. The Indians had gone. That night

her husband returned. The Guards had met the Indians. Aunt Martha's hair so snowy white now, began to gray that night, she said. Friendly Indians from the "Territory" as it was called, sometimes passed our house but I never saw one without a chill of horror.

In that house I had a most serious attack of pneumonia which came near taking me away from the family. When I was again conscious and life was promised by the doctor if I would be good, I did not promise readily. There were a few things in life without which I hardly cared to live and that seemed a good time to enter a plea. Having convinced the doctor that the repression of some desire was interfering with my convalescence, he drew from me a confession. I wanted my hair to be let grow like a girls. I wanted a red ribbon and -- and a candy rooster. The latter I regret to say could not be found.

NOTE: original copy here has an incomplete sentence which has been struck out. It reads, "but a candy heart was substituted and around that heart a world of joy that"

I got the ribbon for which I had no use, and in the matter of hair, I never obtained my desire, the opinion obtaining at my birth that I was a boy. (Lived in that house one year.)

NOTE: Uncle Charlie says when we got back to Tennessee sometime around Christmas holidays, we went to Uncle A. C. White's, stayed

several months then Martha Mi__________ house about 9 miles south of Honey Grove, 3 miles north of Ladonia, which is 25 miles west of Paris.

In 1881 we were again in Tennessee, in the same old rattling house, minus now the piano, the four posters and the sentiment. Virginia (now 17), Sister, Elwood and Father now were teaching in the county schools. At home Mother read to us Dickens and many other tales. When Father was there he told us tales from history. Not Cinderella, Goldilocks, and Bluebeard, but Napoleon, Caesar and Alexander were our family tales. I read everything I could find, much without understanding. It was from the pages of the Courier-Journal and Leslie's magazine I learned to read. We did not go to school, to church, or anywhere. There were lean years.

My most painful memory of a single event, is the time that Caleb lost a finger in a corn shucker. He was away from home and was taken to Jackson for medical attention. I almost died that night. It was necessary to have a doctor with me. Next morning Charlie and Frank and I picked up every piece of glass and sharp-edged thing on the place and for weeks I could not bear a knife in my sight.

The afternoon they brought him home, we had gathered wild violets from the fence corners and stood crying with them clenched in our hands around the bed where he lay so white and still, sick from ether, and I remember how he tried to comfort us. "don't cry," he said, "It will soon grow back again." We believed for many

months it would grow back again, but that belief, like many others of that time, grew fainter as the years passed. There was always something touching in the affection we bore for each other, although we had many battling differences. Caleb was a great tease. He called me out in the yard one day and there hanging from a high limb, far out of reach, dangled my dolls, targets for his arrow-shooting. They were rag dolls and all bore girls' names.

A year or two passed. Then in the later part of 1883 in the spirit of Father's dream came a memory of a place near the Merrills in Texas which now he felt calling to him. The family finances were improving. A few more years might find us again in a home of our own, but Mother read the unmistakable handwriting on the wall. Father now was growing restless. The least misfortune now would turn his eyes toward the west. It came in Sister's marriage, to which he refused his consent. In a week we were again on the road. We were not to call her name; never to write to her.

NOTE: original copy stuck out and underlined, my interpretation -- Sister Willie's Father objected to Sister Ellen's marriage only because Dr. Godwin was 15 years her senior and was in ill health. He was clearly a great gentleman, however, and possibly Grandfather Watson was embittered at losing his "favorite child - delicate, dainty and pretty." See original.

Virginia remained that year in Tennessee.

One cold December day he reached a station in Texas, the nearest railway station to the place we hoped to purchase - and finding it unsold, Father bought it and we moved in before the Camps vacated. They were cattle people moving to the "Territory." There were several cowboys, among them, rough swearers who sang rowdy songs, and told tales of great cattle drives and round-ups that fairly thrilled us. They spoke of God as the Old Man.

NOTE: This the place near Commerce. Railroads at Greenville and Honey Grove.

Here I think this family experienced the first feeling of home permanence. The soil was fertile, the distance to a railroad not over twenty-five miles and a church and a school within four miles of us. The house was a five-room, unpainted farm house, set down in the edge of a field and facing a long stretch of prairie, then being fenced. Fence cutters were giving the big land owners who were fencing grazing land much trouble. Most every one carried a gun. Our relatives, the Merrills, big land owners, had fenced much land and feared to sit before an open window after dark. At least one man was killed every Saturday at the little town nearest us, as a result of fence feuds. Lurking in every dark spot were possible enemies, and life was held of little value.

In October, Virginia came from Tennessee to assist Elwood in teaching school about three and one half miles from home, and they stood examination for teachers' certificates at the county seat,

Greenville. After that trip to Greenville Virginia began receiving through the mail books, magazines, candy and fruits. Every week the mail brought her a package but no name was ever found. The mystery continued all that winter. She knew no one who might have sent the things.

It was there at Durham, a little frame school building on the prairie, that my school education began. To reach the school we had to cross a thousand acre fenced pasture, sometimes bent over to hide ourselves in the tall grass from the long-horned steers that lifted their menacing heads at any noise; and at the least ripple in the tall grass would break toward us. I always cross that pasture with bated breath, and I often crossed it breaking ahead of me with a long stick, the tall ice covered grass that had fallen overlapping and concealing the foot path.

One day while at school a deep snow fell and at four o'clock when school closed snow was coming in swirls of wind, heaping up in drifts and making any attempt to reach home that night abut impossible. Elwood went home. The boys did not go to school that day and Virginia and I begged lodging from a family living about one-fourth of a mile from the school. He slept in a lean-to room attached to the main and only real room of the house and snow drifted through the cracks in the roof all night, so that the cover was frozen stiff next morning. The owner of that place was a wealthy cattleman. Two hired men slept in the kitchen. After that night they tried to visit Virginia. She might have married a dozen times that year. She was a delicately pretty girl. I remember how

she looked the time she went with Elwood to Greenville for her certificate. She wore a full brown cashmere skirt with wide hem and three broad tucks above, a full brown velvet jacket and a brown velvet turban with a bunch of violets pinned on it. She had the pointed chin and fair complexion of the Hilliards, Mother's brown hair and eyes, and Father's poetical nature. She was the most artistic member of the family and most talented. That spring when school closed the county judge came out and brought a fried of his, Tom Ball from Greenville. When Virginia was in Greenville she had made a purchase in Mr. Ball's store and when she left he had followed her saying to his brother that he had found the girl he intended to marry. When she left the office of the county judge at the court house Mr. Ball was waiting in the hall and when in. From the register he learned her name, age, parents, ancestry, and everything he wished to know about her. Then in May he came with the judge and met her. That explained the coming of mysterious packages all that winter. The next fall they were married and lived in McKinney, Texas. The following July she died on her birthday (age 23). One of the sweetest spirits that ever lived. That was the first death I had known. I had never been to a funeral, or seen one dead. Nothing, not even Mother's death a year later, 1888, ever hurt me like that. Nothing can ever again grieve me so. As the experiences of the far west dulled all the rest of my life, the shock of Virginia's death lessened all the pain of after life.

I taught in her place the year she married. I was only fourteen, but having stood the best examination, the place was given

to me anyway. I knew nothing but history and Latin, which Father had drilled into me always. I was naturally a good reader and speller, but teachers were not easily obtained at that time and I suppose I did as well as any older one they might have found. I received forty dollars per month.

When school closed, Elwood entered the cotton business with Uncle Abb White in Tennessee, and in August I pulled out a battered old trunk and announced that I was going to school. I knew there was no money, but I just had to go. In the few books I had read I learned how splendidly worthwhile life might be; the dreams, the hopes, the struggles of men were sometimes realized, and from the ugliness of my life I chose to escape.

The desire to go go school was so intense that I would see nothing else. I had no normal interest in the life of the people about us. Our library was now only a single shelf of much-worn books, mostly test books and a battered copy each of Shakespeare, Byron, Dickens, Boswell's Life of Johnson, Rasselas, Prince of Abysinna, Confuscius, Voltaire, and the Age of Reason. The latter bore expressive testimony to the use it had received. It saddens me now, their doubtful value to the young, but I do not discount the value of the lectures we received around the fireside. Father's method of teaching was original. An incident will illustrate. Frank remarked one day that he "had went" to the woodpile the last time until Caleb did a few chores. That night Father wrote on the blackboard, "have went," and calling us about him said: "The next time I hear that expression I'll use my switch in this country. I

can't stand it, and I won't." He had an unforgettable way of stimulating inquiry, but he had not rules.

To this day I know nothing about grammar and to this day also the Age of Reason has its place on my own personal bookshelf. Father always insisted that the highest morality never resulted from prohibition - and that the practice of moral law was the best religion for man. On the subject of religion he maintained the last word had not been spoken. It is not surprising that I had only the vaguest idea of creeds. It did not understand the plan of salvation as taught by the Christian Church when I was eighteen, and when I did understand it, I did not believe it. I don't believe now, that it is anything but a man concerned belief. I have heard him say that the doctrines of the Church won't do, won't do. But While I had little religious training (justice, mercy and honesty and temperance were things he urged us to consider). There was never a home of better children.

As a child I never heard anyone in our family swear and we were almost prudishly particular in the use of clean words. Charlie, Caleb and Frank grew to men before they knew they could smoke. They were clean in habit, gentle in manner and as refined as any woman. Frank has never smoked, Caleb and Charlie learned after leaving home. But they were not forbidden at home to drink or smoke, to dance or to play cards.

My Preparation for school consisted in making over some of Virginia's things that had been given me and Mother made me two new gingham dresses. That is all I remember that I had, but I do

remember how tired she was while making them and how she regretted having me leave home so poorly dressed. My clothes had always been cut from coast offs, but I did not mercifully realize how I looked. I only realized that at last I was going to school where there were more girls of my own age. I imagined nothing could be more satisfying than association with girls. I was now 15 and still disliked boys. There were men and boys, rude cowboys and older cattlemen, farm boys who often sat on our front porch. It was difficult for any girl to escape marrying, there were so few women there, but I felt humiliated that they should presume to try to see me. I refused to be seen when they came around. I still played dolls and packed away my last faithful old Amelia, mother of all my dolls, when I packed my trunk for the great adventure. I think now my great horror of the boys I knew was they might try to keep me there, also I felt so superior to them. They were satisfied illiterates and were not in my world. I must be the complete snob. It wasn't so much an estimate of myself. It was an over-estimate of that self I was aspiring to become.

The morning I left home, the dawn was just breaking when I got into the wagon. Father and I sat on the spring seats in front and my half filled, rope-tied battered old trunk with "Miss Willie Watson" proclaimed in large letters it owner and destination, rattling in the rear of the wagon. The boys (her brothers) fondly hung around me and ~~Martha~~ Mother stood on the porch wiping her eyes. The old house still stood in its nakedness, not a flower, a shrub or a tree to identify it with the soil, we could not spare enough water

for plants, but it had been home longer than any other place I had ever known and the only one that has now more permanency in my mind than a passing figure in a film. It was utterly ugly. The effort to grow a few fruit trees and __________ had failed. Endless droughts had brought dispair, not a sprig of grass in the yard, not a green thing.

The sun was just rising as we turned out of the big gate onto the road. I looked back. There was Mother's drooping figure with her face buried in her apron. Her last struggle was ___________, an effort to keep from showing any feeling. We drove about seven (7) miles to where there was a railroad station and heard the train whistle as we approached. Cousin B. Merrill was there and knowing the conductor he had the train held until I could climb on without a ticket and my unchecked trunk was thrown into the baggage car. Father called to me to pay fare to Paris and then purchase a ticked and check my trunk. The last thing I heard was, "If a girl fifteen hasn't sense enough to find her way to school, it won't do her any good to go any way." How like him, he made me feel, we ourselves were alone responsible for what we become.

While I was not the only person getting on the train at Ladonia my hurried entrance wasn't unnoticed by the scattered groups on the day coach, who welcomed any break on the tiresome journey. I was flushed by the attention my entrance had provoked and was trying to look unconsciously out the window when I was accosted by a young man who stood before me holding out his hand.

"You remember me don't you, Miss Willie." I shook my head but took the card which read L. D. Vaughn, Dallas, Texas. The name ment nothing to me and among the men that I knew was there a man dressed so perfectly as this handsome man of the world.

I took his hand timidly and he sat down by me.

"Don't you remember meeting me at your Cousin Merrills. He told me to look out for you at Paris and see that you make your train alright." I could not place him. However, I was glad some one was to look after me at Paris and I drew an easy breath but I lost it again when the conductor came by and said that I'd have a long wait at Paris and had better go to a hotel. I knew of the wait and had only intended to stay at the station until my train came, but when the conductor passed on Mr. Vaughn explained that as I would have to change stations anyway it would be best to go to the hotel. I do not think it possible now that anyone can understand my p______________ at so simple a statement, but I had only a few dollars above my ticket price and no hotels or bus line had been included. I could not offer any objection to the plan without the embarrassing disclosure of my lack of money but being a discerning man he sensed my trouble for he hastened to explain that the transfer company made no charge for the bus and the hotel parlors were free. AT this I was relieved somewhat but was possessed of misgivings as to how to act when I reached the hotel. The familiarity and ease with which Mr. Vaughn found his way to the bus and to the hotel filled me with admiration. When we left the bus I

saw him hand the driver something "Just a tip" he explained. Should I have given him something also I wondered.

Upstairs in the hotel we sat in a grand parlor, a long room with beautifully curtained windows and deep soft carpet, there were more mirrors than I had seen in all my life. Mr. Vaughn talked awhile and after failing to persuade me to have lunch with him said he would go up town but would be back in time to see me to my train.

I saw no one, the long halls seemed dark and endless. I had no idea how to leave the hotel, we had entered at a side entrance and had gone directly to the parlor. I did not know where the office was, if I knew hotels had offices. I was turned around, confused and sat there in foreboding silence afraid almost to move. Suppose Vaughn should not come back! How could I find my way out and to the station. Yet I dreaded his coming, he made me feel so ill at ease. My effort to bring into the conversation things I knew met with no response and some of the things he said I did not understand. I ate my lunch from a box in my bag and waited, ages it seemed. About six o'clock Mr. Vaughn came in. He drew his chair up as close to mine as he could. "Why should you go on tonight? There is to be a good show here this evening and there is an early train in the morning that will get you to Jackson about as soon. Lets stay over and see this show."

I had never seen a show. Nothing could have given me greater pleasure, but I knew I could not afford a ticket to a show much less the hotel bill. I wished he would not suggest things.

"No," I told him. I had to go on right then, it must be nearly train time too, but he continued to insist and offered with inducements. He had two tickets to the show and the hotel proprietor was a friend of his and would not charge anything for one nights stay. Ignorant as I seemed and was, I thought that unlikely, and got up and taking my bag started towards the door. It came before me in a flash what Father had said, "Don't pay any attention to strangers and watch your pocket book." Should I trust this man even though he was a friend of the Merrills. No mature experienced person can conceive of the terror I felt. It was my money he intended to rob me. He thought I had a purse full of money and intended to rob me. I almost ran to the door but he followed and would have taken my bag but I jerked it back and looked at him with such suspicion and fear that he made no further effort to take it and by the time we reached the street, the bus man was calling for train! When we got to the station he asked me to give him my purse and he would get my ticket for me. I informed him very grandly that I could get my own ticket which I did by following the crowds to the ticket office. Now if he snatched my bag he would get little. There was only two dollars left. "You are not afraid of me, are you little girl?" he asked while he stood by my side. As we started to walk on the platform for the train was puffing up to the station. "I have only been trying to be kind to you." His arm pressed my shoulder, he is trying to get my purse I thought then run away in the crowd. I pushed away from him as far as the crowd permitted

holding grimly to my slender purse and bag but I could not escape him. "We could have a good time if you'd stay," he promised. By this time I was too frightened to reply. Oh if he only were not going on that train. What would I do if he did! The train stopped, I managed to shake off his hand on my elbow and scrambled onto the train along and to the first seat. He was not following, thank goodness. When I looked out of the window there he stood. "Well since you are so unkind, I won't go any farther with you, Miss Haughtiness," he said. "You'll make it allright believe me. I'll say you will. I was only kidding, I never saw you or your Cousin Merrills before but your name on your trunk was plain enough and I heard what your Father said to you. Good luck to you kid." and he waved his cap merrily - as the train moved off. What an escape! Of course, it was my purse he was after. What a day it had been, excitement kept me going. Now too tired and sleepy to sit up longer I huddled in a corner of the red plush seat in that dirty day coach and slept spasmodically until the night was passed. In Memphis I bought my breakfast and when I reached Jackson that afternoon I had $1.40. Two days on the train and cost $.60.

It requires more imagination than I believe any of you have to appreciate the utter desolation that came over me in Memphis when I spent part of the day. Having to transfer to another station brought its terrors. The crowds frightened me. Imagine an awkward frightened country girl just off a lonely prairie, one who had never, even in company of her own family, been in a city before

trying to find her way about, afraid almost to ask any questions. New York, a number of years later when I went for the first time as chaperone for a party of Va school girls, possessed none of the hidden dangers that terrified me that day. It was a great experience and like other events in my life it was expected the fear of cities never again possessed me.

At this time, age fifteen, my ignorance of the most ordinary facts of life was appalling. This I attribute partly to the isolation in which I had lived and my lack of association with girls of my own age. My Mother left life to teach me as it had taught her. Perhaps if I had known any girl intimately my disillusionment those first few days in school would not have been so tragic. It was fortunate for me that I was never supersensitive and that real slights often passed unobserved, so earnest was I, so terrible in earnest about studies.

I was the butt of many a joke, no doubt; a sense of humor was never one of my virtues and my vanity at that time, I am now persuaded, was immeasurable. Girls, girls in whose honor I had created pyramids of worship all these years were no better than boys. I paid them less and less attention and gave my time entirely to study.

After a few weeks I was favored by the attention of several girls who wanted to see my problems in mathematics. At first I was pleased at the recognition but it became a bother, and I managed to keep them from seeing mine. When one day I was called to the office

by one of the teachers of math who was also my Latin teacher. He had been informed he said that I was using a key to geometry. "It will be very easy to find out," I replied "You may in class give me some original work and as I probably have a Latin key too, I demand that in class tomorrow you take up all books and have each of us read from a book you provide." He objected, but I insisted on taking up the matter with the president if he didn't, so reluctantly he consented. As most of the Latin books have translations between the lines, the dumbfounded class failed to read the lesson that day. That finished me with that class and with that teacher. He never did forgive me. He found it much easier letting the class copy and read translations they made good grades, their parents were pleased and the teacher popular.

Among the few really studious there were girls who were friendly and by spring I had acquired something of manner and dress more in keeping with the school and as my grades were good I was an honor pupil form the beginning.

I did not spend the summer vacation at home but with other relatives in Tennessee. It cost less. When school opened in September I was to all appearances in no way different from the hundreds of other girls enrolled for that year. I was elected president of the primary society in the school and was leading my class when my Mother who had been ill when I left home became so much worse I had to go home.

NOTE: Joe Watson bought Bradford Camps place - 160 acres in 1885. Where they were living when Emily (_________ mother) died.

It was hardly a year and a half since I left home. Now the newness and strangeness of that first journey was almost forgotten in the grief that accompanied me on that wearisome journey. Oh! Why had I left her to do all the work alone when she was physically unable to do it? Why had they not called me home sooner. Regret - I will not write the story of that week that followed.

It was one miserably cold January day that we drove through the snow and wind to the little cemetery at Sonora and there we left her. She deserved better of life than she received. It wasn't right that so little of comfort and joy had been hers who was by nature endowed with so bright a spirit. I resented her death.

M________'s (Ellen) husband, Dr. Godwin's health had become so bad they had gone to Las Animas, Colorado, to his brother's sheep ranch (Hardy Godwin) hoping that the climate would improve his health. Mema said the house was a mud house with dirt floors and they had a Chinese cook. She was the only white woman for miles around (50 miles). People mostly Mexican. She decided she should visit her mother who was in very poor health. She took Mary and a colored boy named Jack (about 12 years old) to Texas to visit. While there she found she was expecting her second child and decided to stay in Texas until after his birth. Frank was born January 28, 1889. Her mother died a few weeks later. She returned to Colorado part way by stage coach stopping in Ft. Worth but ______ - I resented the hardships of her life which she had accepted so uncomplaining. The poverty of life.

I could write on and on of other experiences of each member of the family - of my own especially, but as none of us have possessed ideals which we have expressed in living or in art there is nothing else - why?

In September 1889, I went back to school and graduated the following June 1890 after which I spent ten years teaching. Walking along a street in Charlottesville, Virginia, one day, when I was teaching at Alber___________ College, it came over me that I had accomplished nothing in life. Always I was expecting to find some ideal work some situation that would be "LIFE." The glamor of the future that had sustained me all these bleak years, dimmed. When was I to begin to live? Always I had been cheered by the hope that life for me held something beautiful and the day would come when all the years of preparation, the meager hungry years of doing without would end and I would begin living in earnest. I walked far out to the end of the street and sat down under a tree by a rocky little stream (that crept softly ___________), the ______________ that flowed at the foot of Monticello., and faced the truth. I was twenty-nine years old (29), life was still calling as poignantly as when I was nineteen. For the first time I realized that it was an (________________________________) always calling, always offering what it would yield only to the courageous few who knew no fear. I could not compel it. The fault was in me. I had spent too much time getting ready to live. I must begin to live right now. When visiting my Father the previous summer at his home in Texas where he was living with his second wife and their two children [Rosalind

(Mrs. O. B. Hopwood, Talco, Texas) and Margie (Mrs. Floyd Cato, Blackoak, Arkansas)]. He asked me why I did not marry one of the several men who had offered themselves. When I had finished giving my objections to each he had said. "have you ever thought what any man that marries you will have to overlook?" I had not. It came upon me like a revelation how little I had to offer any man.

It was with a meek and contrite heart that I left my Father, and sitting there on the bank of the R__________ River that day I made a decision. It has been my great weakness, inability to decide and then this tide was then at flood. Two issues were before me. Left ________ art teacher with whom I studied drawing after school hours, spent her summers in Europe. She had a sister, a portrait painter who lived in Paris and had a summer villa near Rome who had invited Miss L___________ to bring two friends for a months stay at Rome that summer. She had asked me. I had saved that year about enough to pay for the trip but if I went I felt that it meant teaching the rest of my life. If I did not go, I would marry. I felt sure that if I desired it I could still marry Will Townes to whom I had been engaged until just before going to Charlottesville when I broke the engagement. If I did not marry him, I would never marry. While I had been all my life absorbed in the future, I was letting the immediate, the actual life slip by me. I had so hated the ugly starved life of my youth - I could not with pleasure think of marrying a man unable to make a beautiful home but that hope had passed. I was not definitely in love with Will but, I liked him

better than anyone else I knew and it would mean a home and I was very lonely. Will won. I have never regretted Rome, never, never for one moment and my home is not beautiful. It does not express my ideals, but it is a happy home, an abiding place I love.

I have not written of each member of the family. You who are living will begin where I leave off. A life unfinished which you when the years have upon you may interpret and add to this then for the benefit of others who come later and who may add something accomplished.