A Biographical and Critical Study of Ruth McEnery Stuart.

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A BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL STUDY OF

KUTH VONAL Myst STUART

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

Larry Frances Fletcher
L. A., The University of Virginia, 1955
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the author in undertaking the research was to make a biographical and critical study of Ruth McNerdy Stuart to determine whether she deserved the obscurity time has brought her and, if she did not, to help secure a revival of interest in her and her best work.

The author's procedure was to gain information from books, documents, papers, periodicals, interviews. She spent many weeks in New Orleans studying the material in the Tulane Stuart Collections and in interviewing relatives and friends of Mrs. Stuart. She visitedarksdale, Monroe, Shreveport, and several places in Arkansas to interview other friends and connections of Mrs. Stuart. She secured help from books and documents in the Louisiana Library Commission, the L. S. U. Library, the University of Virginia Library, the Northampton Library, the New York Public Library, the Surrogate Court of New York, the Avoyelles Parish Courthouse, the Ouachita Parish Courthouse, the Hempstead County Courthouse. She wrote to many people who had known Mrs. Stuart or her family.

The research proved that from the time of the publication of Mrs. Stuart's first stories in 1888 until her death in 1917 she was one of the most popular and well-loved women ever to live in the United States. For a period of twenty-nine years she was in public favor both as a creative writer and as a reader. Soon after her death in 1917 her name became obscured. She, more than many of her contemporaries, suffered from the reaction against the sentimental era in the years following World War I.
Upon the evidence of Mrs. Stuart's life and works, the biographer concluded that Mrs. Stuart had something of genius in her personality and that, as Joel Chandler Harris pointed out, she came nearer the heart of the Negro than any of her contemporaries. People loved her stories, her poems, her interpretations of her work. New editions of books such as *A Golden Wedding and Other Tales, Sonny, Moriah's Mourning, Plantation Songs, Daddy Do-Funny's Wisdom Jingles* would find readers today. Anthologists should include in their books some of her poems and Negro stories.
CHAPTER I

BACKGROUNDS

Ruth McNerney Stuart was an American writer who was well known throughout the United States from the time of the publication of her first story in 1888 until her death in 1917. She was representative of the genteel tradition and was one of the interpreters of life in the South. Her ancestors—the Rouths, the Stirlings, and the McNerneys—were among the most distinguished families of the lower Mississippi valley.

The Rouths were from Wales and possessed the characteristics of the Celts, including the Celtic flair for letters. For centuries their name has been associated with Oxford University, England, one of the family having been president of Magdalene College. Another, who held a chair of literature in the university, made an interlinear translation of Virgil, a volume still in use.

"The Reminiscences of The Routh Family," written about 1898 by Mrs. Mary Jane Pope Robertson, widow of Colonel Edward White Robertson, tells the story of the family. The ones who came to America were two brothers and a sister. After reaching Virginia, they moved westward to Mississippi.

Jeremiah, Job, and Mary Routh came to Natchez, Mississippi, then Walnut Hills, from Virginia about the year 1776. They moved all their household effects, etc., on flat boats.... Job, being more of a money-making turn, bought his brother's interests and accumulated a large fortune. Uncle Job was noted in his family for thrift and saving almost to penuriousness. Upon one occasion it is told by an eye witness that he lost a penny somewhere in his yard. A search was immediately instituted; every child turned out to
search; and the yard was diligently swept and the joy was great when it was found.... Mr. Job Routh reared a large family, all of whom were prominent and wealthy.

A granddaughter of Job Routh was Sarah Ann Dorsey, a cultured person whose educational advantages were unusual. She studied ancient and modern languages, music, and art and even traveled in Europe. On her return she began to write sentimental novels. Her literary work, however, did not interfere with her duties in her home; she had a reputation as a charming hostess. During the War Between the States, when her home was burned, she fled to Texas to serve as a nurse in a Confederate hospital. After 1875, the year of her husband's death, she made her home at Beauvoir, her estate near Biloxi, Mississippi. There she continued her writing and aided Jefferson Davis in the preparation of his book *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*. Because she felt a strong admiration for Mr. Davis, she bequeathed to him Beauvoir and her three plantations. Although her family shared her sympathy for him, they felt indignant concerning her bequest, for the war had impoverished them. Besides Mrs. Dorsey, another important descendant of Job Routh was his great granddaughter, the wife of Murphy J. Foster, Governor of Louisiana from 1892-1900 and later United States senator.

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Jeremiah Routh, the brother of Job Routh, moved from Natchez to a plantation on Red River. He and his wife, Mary Miller, had a large family, whom they did not live to rear. The children were taken by their Uncle Job and Aunt Mary Routh, who had married Isaac Johnson, a young man sent over to Natchez by a mercantile firm in Liverpool, England. One of the girls, Mary Routh, who became the grandmother of Routh McEnery Stuart, found in her aunt's home the most pleasant influences.

Since Isaac Johnson, her aunt's husband, was well educated, he became the most influential man in the settlement and was appointed the first Alcalde by Charles Grandpre, the Spanish governor, in whose honor he named his oldest son. When a freshet swept away Johnson's Mill on Second Creek, near Natchez, he decided to move to West Feliciana, Louisiana.

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\(^2\)Ibid. The records present some confusion regarding Job Routh. Evidently a son of Jeremiah had the name of his uncle. The Job Routh mentioned in the following account is spoken of as the son of Jeremiah: "In the beginning the site on which Dunleith stands was occupied by a splendid mansion called Routhlands—it being the center of an extensive estate, vast as any old-world earldom. The builder of this palatial home was Job Routh, son of Jeremiah Routh of Wales, who emigrated to America in the seventeen and sixty [sic]. He settled first in Virginia, but came to Natchez country in seventeen seventy-five, and took up a land grant of four thousand acres near the mouth of Cole's Creek. He is said to have been among the first English-speaking settlers to obtain a grant in the Natchez province. His son Job also obtained a grant which included all the lands pertaining to L'langallen, Oakland (the present Routhlands owned by the Winchester family), Richmond, Ashburn, Kenilworth, the Oliver Wilds place and the Dr. F. A. W. Davis property near the Bennerscheidt home.

"Job Routh married Miss Anne Miller, a sister of the Secretary of State for the Spanish government and their home was one of the few mansions ever erected in the city of Natchez: It is thought to have been a contemporary of The Forest, the home of William Dunbar, and Concord, the Spanish Governor's home." Mrs. Edith Hyatt Moore, "Beautiful Dunleith is Second Home to be Constructed on Present Site, Earlier Building was Destroyed by Fire." Natchez (Miss.) Democrat. Pilgrimage Edition, March, 1938, p. 5.
where his son-in-law, John Mills, had settled. "His large estate was conducted by his wife, whose practical good sense, economy, and thrift enabled them to live in luxury. He loved to teach his children to cultivate flowers and fruits, being refined in all his tastes." 3

St. Francisville, Louisiana, in West Feliciana, the "Happy Land" of Audubon, is thus the place where Mary Routh spent her young womanhood. It is a section of Louisiana rich in cultural history, much of which was made by the relatives of Ruth McEnery Stuart's grandmother. For the Johnson family, with whom Mary Routh lived, reflected the high character of their mother and father; and the lives of the twelve children are interesting in the history of the state. One of the most popular governors of Louisiana, Governor Isaac Johnson, whose term was 1846-1850, was the son of Judge Johnson, the eldest child of Mary Routh Johnson and Isaac Johnson. A granddaughter of the same judge was the wife of Robert Wickliffe, governor of Louisiana from 1856-1860. Judges, senators, ambassadors, professors came from these people.

In the refined atmosphere of her new home in St. Francisville, Mary Routh met Sir John Stirling, or Mr. John Stirling as he preferred to call himself in this democratic country, for which he, with a number of his kinsmen, had forsaken his home in Dundee, Scotland. Descended from Sir John Stirling of Gloriat, armor bearer of King James I of Scotland and governor of Dunbarton Castle, Sir John Stirling was the son of Sir

3 Ibid.
Patrick Stirling, "a worthy Scotchman, as his well-worn Bible attested."  

On June 22, 1818, in St. Francisville, Mary Routh and John Stirling were married. To them were born five children, the youngest of whom, Mary Routh Stirling, named for her mother, was a lovely child with dark eyes and dark hair. When she was only a baby, her mother died. His second marriage did not cause John Stirling to neglect his daughter. The principles he instilled into her, she, in turn gave to the children born to her and her husband, James McNenery, an immigrant to this country from Limerick, Ireland.

The McNenerys were Irish gentry whose estates had been confiscated in the time of Oliver Cromwell. On account of economic difficulties the father and mother of James McNenery, Matthew McNenery and Mary O'Neill McNenery, had decided to come to Virginia, in America, with their children—James, Henry, Paul, Donat, and two daughters. One of their sons, the Reverend John McNenery, was a clergyman, a gentleman and a scholar. He was chaplain of the Roman Catholic Church at Tom Abbey, F.G.L. of London and France, and fellow of the Geological Society. According to Miss Sarah Stirling McNenery, his niece, a Devonshire newspaper stated after his death on February 15, 1841, that he had few superiors in geological sciences. His explorations in Kent's Caverns, Torquay, and his work descriptive of these explorations he recorded in an unfinished manuscript, which was mysteriously lost at the time of his death. In such standard

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4The Stirling genealogy, an unpublished document in the possession of Miss Sarah Stirling McNenery, New Orleans.
works as Evans' *Stone Implements* and Volt and Giddon's *Types of Mankind* mention is made of the value to science of his work.

The McEnerys established themselves in Petersburg, Virginia. In sentiment they were "unequivocal aristocrats." After the death of the father and the mother, one of the daughters contracted a marriage that the family felt to be beneath them. The brothers, deeply hurt, decided to bolt altogether and leave for Louisiana. Before their departure there was a long discussion as to what they should do with the chest of silver brought with them from Limerick to America. Since they had been reared with the idea that silver belongs to a home, they decided to leave it with their sister. Long after this, Ruth McEnery Stuart and her sister saw some of the heavy plate in the Baltimore home of the disloyal sister.

James McEnery parted from his brothers when they reached Louisiana. His first home was in New Orleans. During the early part of his married life he lived in Marksville, a town in Avoyelles Parish, in the central part of the state. His three brothers—Henry, Paul, and Donat—settled in Monroe, a city in the northern part of the state. There they became prominent residents, owners of plantations and many slaves, evidence of which can be found in the old *Books of Conveyance* in the Ouachita Parish Courthouse in Monroe. From the year 1835 there occur in these old records many

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5 Interview, Miss Sarah Stirling McEnery, New Orleans, 1933. For this and other information which will be properly noted the author is indebted to Miss McEnery.

6 Ibid.
entries concerning the McEnery brothers and their property. It has been said that the Rouths and the McEnerys owned more slaves than any other two families in the United States.

Henry O'Neill McEnery is the brother who is most intimately related to this story of the life of the daughter of James McEnery. Two of his sons, John and Sam, were governors of the State of Louisiana; the latter died while United States senator from Louisiana. Another of Henry's sons, James McEnery, married as his second wife Mildred Stuart of Arkansas, a frequent visitor in the home of her husband's uncle and aunt, James McEnery and his wife, Mary Routh Stirling McEnery. These visits were later to play an important part in the life of Ruth McEnery Stuart.

James McEnery and his family lived in a gray stucco cottage in Marksville opposite the present Catholic Church. The year of the birth of the McEnerys' daughter Ruth is obscured by conflicting records. It is certain that the day was February 19. Since the date she herself gave

7Letter from A. P. Couvillion, Surveyor, Marksville, La., Feb. 16, 1951. The letter states: "Regarding the information you desire from the archives of the parish--I wish to say that on two different days I made a thorough search of the land sales recorded here beginning from the year 1808 to the present time and this is what I found:

'Mrs. Susan Boyd--wife of John Stirling bought on Dec. 7, 1839 (Book O folio 255) a tract of 4 arpents wide and 1 length of 40 arpents deep near Marksville.'

"From the plat of land which I have made by Haggarly in 1845, marked Jno Stirling, I am certain this last tract is the one opposite the present Catholic Church and Convent--is the tract where it is said Ruth McEnery was born."

8Letter from Ruth McEnery Stuart to Miss Sarah Stirling McEnery, Dansville, New York, Feb. 18, 1905. The letter begins: "I bless the day! February 19th my birthday." Tulane Stuart Collection.
for her marriage license indicates that she was born in 1852, it is likely that this was the year of her birth. She was named Mary Routh McEnery. There were seven other children in the family.

In appearance the McEnery children were attractive. Mary Routh resembled her mother, whose fair complexion, dark hair, and dark eyes she had inherited. Her sister Susie and her brothers had the same characteristics. A younger sister, Sarah, had auburn hair like her father’s.

As a child, Mary Routh McEnery was called “Routh.” She was “adorable and human.” One day when she was five or six years old a schoolteacher, whose house was near that of the McEnerys, invited her, Sarah, and several of their playmates for watermelon. When the melon had been cut and arranged on the back porch, the teacher asked each of the little girls in turn whether she would like to have a piece of melon. Each solemnly declined the invitation, though that was the purpose of all in making the visit. Then the teacher very thoughtfully retired from the porch, leaving her little guests alone. In a few minutes all of the melon had been eaten. Straightway the girls hurried home. Although the teacher never mentioned the incident, the girls were so ashamed of their conduct that they did not even wish to think of the melon.

On another occasion when Routh was on a visit to her aunt in the country, the aunt turned to the little girl and asked that she go to the kitchen to get her a boiled egg. A long time elapsed before Routh returned. When she did, she named her aunt a boiled egg colored with herbs, which she had run over a field to find. To her a “boiled egg” meant an

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9 Interview, Miss Sarah Stirling McEnery, 1933.
Easter egg.

That she was an active child, no one would doubt after reading the stories Routh composed when she was grown. She knew well the child's heart and habits. Her sister\textsuperscript{10} said of their childhood:

"I wish I were skilled in picture-making in a few words, for the long period of our young days together seems full of her deeds of impetuosity and fearlessness and pride. No ditch in the whole locality was too wide for her to attempt a challenged spring over, and no fig tree was too densely populated with wasps or too brittle of limb for her to climb it for the luscious tempters in its topmost branches."\textsuperscript{11}

Although there was certainly no rowdy, hoydenish element in Routh's nature, she was so high spirited that occasionally she acted impulsively. One day she and Sarah Stirling were sent on an errand to deliver a message. Repeated knocking failed to bring anyone to the door. That evening on the steps of the rambling Stuart porch were gathered a neighborly group, including the man at whose home the girls had unsuccessfully called that morning. He was sitting on the steps beneath Routh.

"And why did you not knock?" he inquired after assuring his family he had been at home all day.

"We did!" retorted Routh, as she leaned over and rapped boldly three or four times on his bald head. "We knocked just like this."

One of the colored people, Aunt Fanny, who had been Routh's mother's nurse, was an important member of the family household. The

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid.

McEnery children she embued with her superstitions.

"De day yo' Gran'ma Stirling died a grea' big black cat came a-meanderin' 'long onconcerned payin' no 'tention, tell he came by de front hall do'. Den he gie one look inside and' he say 'Miow' des so!"12

"This [Mrs. Stuart related to the reporter] was always given with telling effect and gave us children the cold 'shivers.'"

"Den," she continued, "we knowed death was on de way. An' Miss' [mistress] she turned whiter's what she was already--an' month f'om dat day she answered de call."13

Another superstition of Aunt Fanny dealt with spilling salt. "Ef you spills salt," she would say, "it's sho' ter make trouble 'less'n you th'ows a pinch of salt in de fire and 'de flames'll quar'l an' fuss. Dat'll take de dispute off yo' hands."14

Religious training was always an important influence in the life of Routh McEnery Stuart. Because there was no Presbyterian church near the McEnery home, the children attended the Episcopal services. Yet they were reared with the understanding that they should be Presbyterians. The teachings of his "well-worn" Bible, which Sir Patrick Stirling, through his son, had handed down to Mrs. McEnery, had not made her sectarian. Her philosophy was "This is right. That is wrong. Do what is right."15


13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Interview, Miss Sarah Stirling McEnery, 1933.
She reared her children to tell the truth, for she had a perfect horror of falsehood. Yet she never called a falsehood a "lie." That word was despicable to her, as to all the refined people of her generation. One of the little boys was a particular problem to his mother. Once after she had reproved him for telling a story, he insisted:

"Me and God calls 'em lies."

Routh was deeply impressed by the religious instruction in her home. Whenever she felt she had done something wrong, she was seized with remorse and sat by one of the spreading feet of the ugly, heavy mahogany center table in the old parlor of her home. Hiding her head with the heavy cloth that covered the table year in and year out, she reflected upon her sins and even said her little prayers. "And the very little girl, after confessing, prayed for wisdom."16

Marksville, in Avoyelles Parish, was a relatively old town when the family of James McEnery lived there. It was Iberville who had given the name of Avoyelles, signifying "People of the Rocks," to the Indians who lived there at the time of his arrival in that part of Louisiana. The Couvillions and many other families that still live in the picturesque and historic little town were there when James McEnery was mayor of Marksville in 1852. Mr. Preston Couvillon, a brilliant ninety-three-year-old patrician whose clear mind and generous industry helped to recapture the past

16"Thoughts of a Very Little Girl," an unidentified printed clipping. Tulane Stuart Collection.
for this story, was a descendant of the first white child born in this parish.

Descendants of the LeMoyen family, the relatives of Iberville and Bienville, live in Avoyelles today. The Overton, Bordelon, Coco, LeBorde, and Couvillion families are among the old-time settlers. The records show that Donat McEnery bought some property on Main Street, Marksville, in 1855; Donat was dead by November of that year. The memories of the Marksville people whose lives reach back into the nineteenth century are filled with stories of the famous woman who spent her childhood days in their town; they were not her contemporaries, yet the generation just preceding theirs told them of her. A towel rack in the home of Dorothy St. Romain, Preston Street, Marksville, is said to have been in the household of James McEnery. It is displayed with pride by its owner and considered a museum piece in the town.

Soon after the turn of the past century, Mr. Tucker Couvillion, a lawyer, gained possession of the property that had once belonged to John Stirling. He wrote to Ruth McEnery Stuart, offering her the opportunity to buy it. When a long time had elapsed and he had not heard from her, he decided she did not wish to buy the house and so had it torn down. Hardly had the work of demolition been completed when a letter with a foreign postmark came from her. She offered Mr. Couvillion three thousand dollars for the place and said she wished to present it as a gift to Marksville for a library!

A Ruth McEnery Stuart Literary Club commemorates the author in
the Marksville High School. In the Parish Library there is a collection of her works.

The exact time of the departure of the McEnerys from Marksville to New Orleans is not certain. One of the old-timers said that Routh remained there until she was nearly thirteen and attended school while the notorious Daniel Webster\(^{17}\) was the master. Her own statement, which appears in a printed clipping, is contrary to such a statement.

There was in our front yard at that time—this was when I was 7 or 8 years old—a number of queen rosebushes. They grew on either side of the walk leading down to the front gate and every morning when father went out it was my custom to pin one of their half-open buds in his buttonhole.

To this day the odor of the queen rose brings back other things that seem quite important in the picture. There is in it, for instance, a certain yellow flowering plant that grew in the same border. That comes to me with equal clearness, although, so far as I can remember, I never gathered a single one of its blossoms while I walked to the gate with father.

We called it the butterfly plant, and I have never seen it since. I should like to meet it again.

My recollection is that there always hovered over it a swarm of yellow-winged butterflies, and that they were so like its flowers that I could scarcely tell them apart.

A real butterfly would seem like only a butterfly flower on a lark.

At that time we lived in a stone's throw of the bank of the Mississippi River, and one of our weekly amusements was to count the steamboats going up the river on Saturday evenings.

We were a few miles above New Orleans, and by the time the boats passed us their lights would be all lit, and they made a brilliant spectacle.

They started from New Orleans wharf at six o'clock in the afternoon, if I remember rightly—or perhaps it was five.

But the point I am coming to is this:

One of the Mississippi steamboats, whose name was the Laurel, had great gloves on the top of the smoke-chimneys.

\(^{17}\)This was not the famous American statesman.
As I recall them, they must have been made of iron wire, or gauze, for we called them bubbles, and in my mind they always seem to be related to the little fellows on the designs of Harper's Magazine. This is the first magazine of my memory. I am always pleased now when I realize my old friends the bubble-boys still blowing away in their old familiar places. I wish the cover were quite as it used to be.\textsuperscript{18}

Since Mr. McEnery was a member of the staff of the old Custom House, the family soon moved into town. They never owned one of the city homes in which they lived. In speaking of this fact, Miss Sarah Stirling McEnery said, "We moved here and there. In those days it was stylish to do that. But I was always sorry, for I wanted a permanent home."\textsuperscript{19}

Routh was educated in New Orleans. To her were given the best opportunities available. At home there were good books to read, for Mr. McEnery was a lover of the best in literature. An admirer of Sir Walter Scott, just as were the other cultured Southerners of his century, he urged his children to read the Scotch author's romances. Routh, Sarah, and one of the boys read a great deal. "We read all the time in one sense of the word," said Miss McEnery. "Yet I don't know any favorite authors that my sister had."

Mrs. Stuart herself told a New York newspaper reporter: "I was never a great reader. I was fonder of people than books. Really, people interested me more than books, though I had my favorite authors as every girl has....still I was not a great reader.

\textsuperscript{18}"Thoughts of a Very Little Girl," an unidentified printed clipping. Tulane Stuart Collection.

\textsuperscript{19}Interview, Miss Sarah Stirling McEnery, 1933.
"I always felt interested in the common people." 20

Miss Sarah Stirling McEnery said that when her mother sent the children on their daily health walk, the democratic Routh always visited "her friends." These were exotic folk—the variegated sort who still make New Orleans possibly the most cosmopolitan city in the United States. Hanging over the balconies enclosed with dainty iron work, bickering in the crowded little fruit and fish stands in the old French Market, and struggling for existence in the ill kept quarters that surround the open courtyards filled with chickens and hay and wagons and pigs on Royal Street were the "Dago" and Creole poor people, who interested the little girl. Then there were the side streets, frequently the destination to which she led her sister Sarah. Living there in tottering tenement houses were the Negroes, their galleries separated from one another in the peculiar New Orleans fashion, with a high partition. Such a setting furnished her later the background for one of her short stories—"A Golden Wedding." The girl talked sympathetically with all the mothers in distress and tried in every way she could to help the little children who were ill. Through this unconscious means she was gathering the experience that was to make her work genuine.

In her own family Routh knew sorrow. One of her sisters, Annie B., died when she was a very little child. It is said that she burned to death.

Girlhood memories of Routh were colored by the fires that raged in New Orleans during the War Between the States. A member of her own

20 Unidentified clipping. Tulane Stuart Collection.
family had an unusual responsibility in the serious period that followed
the fighting. Her Uncle Henry's son, John, who lived in New Orleans, was
elected governor of Louisiana in 1873.

The daughter of John McEnery, Mrs. H. Baumgarten, remembers the
days of her childhood when her cousins Susie, Routh, and Sallie, all young
ladies, used to come to her house on the Mississippi and "bring their
grips" for a visit. The place to which they came was the old family re­
sidence on State and St. Charles, where the John McEnerys lived for fifty
years. "To reach the house, one had to come up by dummy," said Mrs.
Baumgarten. "My father was fond of the girls; he and they were cousins.

"That," she continued, "was a difficult time for young women.
They had an uphill time to get work. If you got a job, that ended you.
You were open to insult. Today, half the women in the country are sup­
porting their families." 21

At the end of his life James McEnery was a paralytic. There were
hard times, therefore, for his family after the War. Unafraid to work
for money, Routh and Sarah became teachers in New Orleans. Possibly
Susie did not. In speaking of her, Mrs. Baumgarten said, "She was a lily
of the field; she did not spin or weave." It was Susie, too, who "kicked"
about the old Prytania Street Presbyterian Church. Some of its members
did withdraw to join the more fashionable Episcopal Church in the Garden
District. Mr. Carlton King recalls that Grace King and her family did that.

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21 Interview, Mrs. H. Baumgarten, New Orleans, 1951.
The Cables and the McEnerys, who sat on pews one family in front of the other, did not.

In the days that the McEnery "girls" taught, an essential part of the training a teacher was to impart was "manners." Mrs. Baumgarten herself recalled the discipline she received in the private school to which her father sent her in the East. Dressed as if for church on Sunday, she would have to come down into the parlor in the middle of the week and sit an hour at a time in just the position a lady must assume.

The same kind of rigour was imposed on the girls who attended Locquet-LeRoy Institute, where Routh McEnery taught. When Mrs. Baumgarten attended school in New Orleans, her cousin Routh taught her.

Locquet-LeRoy was strict. It was formal. The girls were there to learn to be elegant....they got preliminary training for their debut, were taught how to be good dinner guests, how to behave at the French Opera, and how to be polite to a nosey chaperone.\textsuperscript{22}

Little Johnnie McEnery—now Mrs. Baumgarten—was among the "parlor boarders" because "commuting from 'way uptown, St. Charles and State, was too much trouble."\textsuperscript{23} In the much-talked-about controversy of 1951 concerning Ruth McEnery Stuart and the famous old school that closed after Newcomb College was established, it was Mrs. Baumgarten whose memory established the certainty that her cousin's connection with the institute.


\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., p. 14.
was that of a teacher and not of a student.

At the reunion...Mrs. Baumgarten [Governor McNerney's daughter] stated that her cousin Ruth McNerney Stuart had taught penmanship there,... She made graphic gestures with her hands, illustrating the curly capitals and meticulously formed letters of the Spencerian System. "Are you sure," she was asked by Louise Guyol, who knew that little was known about where Ruth went to school—and Jackie said, "Of course; she lived at our house sometimes, and taught right in a little room, right up there." She pointed to the ceiling, left River Side—of the Babst Co.'s office—which used to be the kindergarten of Locquet-LaRoy. Others remembered her and the very room—the first of the little classrooms, on the narrow gallery that ran along the back of the large rooms, and turned at right angles, to run along the line of smaller rooms in the wing.24

In March, 1871, Ruth McNerney Stuart was the only bridesmaid of her friend Julia Nichols when Julia was married to Mr. John Riley.

Eighty-one years later the daughter-in-law of Julia Nichols Riley recalled how throughout her husband's mother's life she spoke with affectionate regard of her very dear friend. "She was always so proud of Routh and spoke of how well she told stories. She said she knew her friend would be a great writer."25

The letter Miss Sarah McNerney wrote to Julia Nichols Riley's son on the occasion of his sister's death recalls the old friendship. From 2421 Chestnut Street in New Orleans on October 25, 1927, Miss McNerney wrote:

My dear Mr. Riley,

If you see my name I feel sure you will to some extent, understand my writing to you at this time. When your dear and lovely


25 Interview, Mrs. Riley, 3919 Octavia Street, New Orleans, Louisiana, January, 1952.
mother was a child and then a young lady our family and hers were neighbors and she and my sister Ruth were great companions. 26

It was during her young womanhood when Routh McEnery was teaching, seeing friends, and visiting her Cousin John's family that she became a good friend of Mildred Stuart McEnery, her Cousin James McEnery's wife.

A granddaughter of John Stuart of Kentucky, Mildred was a cousin of the descendants of Sarah Stuart Grayson and Thomas Grayson, some of whose family had already married into the McEnery family in Monroe. Thus her own marriage to James McEnery was a marriage, as it were, of closely connected families. In Southern families before the war, there were many intermarriages between families that had close ties of association or of blood.

It was Mildred Stuart, who, after the death of her husband, decided that she should like to help bring about a further alliance between the Stuarts of Arkansas and the McEnerys of Louisiana. In 1879 she persuaded Routh and Susie to come to see her in Columbus, Arkansas.

26 The letter is in possession of Mrs. Riley, New Orleans.
Mr. Alfred Oden Stuart, Mildred's oldest brother, was a widower fifty-eight years of age when Routh and Susie McEnery came for a visit. He was a large, handsome man, gracious in manner. He had eleven children, some of whom were already grown and married. He was the owner of several plantations and was associated with his son-in-law in a general merchandise store in Washington, his home, a few miles from Columbus. The store—Stuart and Holman—was a successful one. For more than half a century the Stuarts had been in Hempstead County. They were aristocrats and highly regarded.

Mr. Stuart enjoyed the visit of his sister's friends. Almost immediately he fell in love with Routh McEnery. Susie, too, had an admirer—Dr. A. T. Bellar. A little boy in the family remembered even when he was an old man the way in which the doctor's horse reared on its hind legs when Dr. Bellar came to take Miss Susie riding in his buggy.

Although Susie returned to New Orleans, Routh remained to teach in Columbus. Four months after her arrival she married Mr. Stuart at the Stuart home in the town where she was teaching. As late as 1952 there were old-timers in New Orleans who recalled Mrs. McEnery's disappointment that her daughter had not returned to her home for her wedding. The members of Routh's family, all of whom had looked to the vivacious and capable girl for everything, felt that the end of time had come. Miss Sarah, who was attached to her, was brokenhearted and wept, yet she realized that her
feeling was selfish.

It would appear from many of the short biographies of Ruth Mc-
Enery Stuart that she was only nineteen at the time she was married.
One old newspaper article, however, states that she was born in 1849.
Like other Southern ladies, she successfully concealed throughout most
of her life the time of her birth. The marriage license,\(^1\) filed in the
Hempstead County courthouse in Hope today, reveals that she was twenty-
seven and that Mr. Stuart was fifty-eight. Her place of residence she
gave as Columbus.

The wedding, solemnized so far away from New Orleans yet in the
presence of a devoted family whose long association with Routh's own
people made them close to her indeed, was not the marriage of a young
girl. His family realized that Alfred Oden's bride was a mature woman;
however, some of his relatives wondered why he was taking as his fourth
wife one so much younger than he. In the summer of 1951 Mr. R. C. Stuart,
who at the age of six attended the wedding of his uncle and his New Or-
leans bride, related having heard his father say, "I wonder what Ode

\(^1\)State of Arkansas County of Hempstead MARRIAGE LICENSES
TO ANY PERSON AUTHORIZED BY LAW TO SOLEMNIZE MARRIAGE--GREETINGS
You are hereby commanded to solemnize the Rite and Publish the Banns of
Matrimony between--ALFRED O STUART of Washington in the County of Hemp-
stead and State of Arkansas Aged 58 years, and MISS RUTH McENERY of
Columbus in the County of Hempstead and State of Arkansas Aged 27 years,
according to law, and Do You Officially Sign and Return this License, to
the Parties Herein Named. WITNESS my hand and official seal this 5th day
of August 1879. Thomas H Simms, County Clerk. By Henry J. Trimble
Deputy County Clerk.
(SEAL)
County and Probate Court
means by marrying a woman so much younger than he is. Mr. R. C. Stuart spoke of Routh as being thirty or nearly thirty in 1879.

All of the stories about the marriage make one realize that it was Mildred's admiration for her husband's cousin and her feeling that Routh would be an acceptable wife for her brother that determined the choice. After nearly seventy-five years there remains clearly the impression that Mildred made the match.

Mrs. C. C. Spragins was only nine at the time her father married "Miss Routh." Of the wedding she said:

"They were married at Columbus at my aunt's home; I hardly knew anything about it. People did not discuss anything with children then. I think my older sister—Mrs. Holman—was there. I think my Aunt Mildred had got Miss Routh a position in the schools at Columbus. Since she did not have any specific beau, my aunt thought her brother would fall in love with her. She was attractive and smart. Aunt Mildred was very smart, too."

The home to which Mr. Stuart took his wife in 1879 was the family residence in Washington. At the time the big house was more than thirty years old. Two blocks from the downtown area of Washington, it was situated in a large enclosure with beautiful cedars and many pretty flowers. The tall catalpa trees, still standing on the edge of the place today, were planted there by the mother of Rufus and Agustus Garland. Possibly some of the rose bushes were cuttings of the famous green rose brought from Abbotsford to Washington. Almost every home had bushes from

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2 Interview, Mr. R. C. Stuart, Columbus, Arkansas, 1951.

3 Interview, Mrs. C. C. Spragins, Hope, Arkansas, 1951.
the imported plant.

When Routh became Mrs. Alfred Oden Stuart, Washington, the oldest
town in Arkansas, was one of the most distinguished in the South. The
land grants of the early settlers had been signed by John Quincy Adams
and Martin Van Buren. The pioneer settlers included many educated people
of English origin. In 1814 had begun the influx of settlers from Vir­
ginia, Kentucky, and other parts of the South and the East. Among the
early comers were Colonel Abraham Stuart, Elijah Stuart, James M. Stuart,
the mother of these three men, and other members of the Stuart family.
An early record shows that Elijah Stuart served as commissioner for the
county and that James Stuart was the first clerk. The father of Alfred
Oden Stuart, Colonel Abraham Stuart, was known as the wisest man in that
part of the country. When Stephen Austin, then a Federal Judge, held
the first court in the first courthouse in the section, Abraham Stuart
was a member of the Grand Jury.

The old Military Road ran right through Washington. At first a
buffalo trail and later an Indian trail over which DeSoto is said to have
traveled in 1541, the "trail became known as the old Military Road from
its having been cut out, or widened, by the United States troops in
President Jackson's day, when the president was driving the Indians out

4Charlean Moss Williams, *The Old Town Speaks* (Houston, 1951),
p. 4.

5Ibid., no pagination, "Missouri Territorial Court," just after
Foreword.
of the South, and needed a wider trail or road. The military forces that accompanied the Indians had to do the work of opening the road for the cavalcade as it advanced.\(^6\)

"The gateway to Texas," because of the passage of the old Military Road through it, Washington was the place where David Crockett stopped en route to the Alamo. The Bowie knife was fashioned there by James Black under the direction of Colonel Bowie. In the Old Tavern Sam Houston planned the campaign for the freeing of Texas. Many other famous people are associated with the history of the early county seat of Hampstead County.

Stories concerning the illiteracy of Arkansas are somewhat refuted by the history of Washington. Education, refinement, culture, idealism were possessions of the original townspeople. Their children often studied in the East or in Europe. The numerous academies of Washington attested to the emphasis upon education. The town "has given to the Nation one cabinet member, several United States senators and congressmen; to the state two governors ... several chief justices, Supreme Court judges, attorneys general, and a long line of lawyers of note."\(^7\)

Friends of Alfred Oden Stuart to whom he presented his new wife in 1879 included the Eakins, the Carriganas, the Roystons, the Joneses, and the Garlands—all significant in the history of Arkansas or the nation.

Not all of Mr. Stuart's children were living when his fourth wife

\(^6\) Ibid., no pagination, Foreword.

\(^7\) Ibid., p. 4.
came to be mistress of his home. James W. Stuart, his oldest son, aged thirty years, had died in 1872. The older children, even though some of them were married and as old as Routh, welcomed her; the younger ones, too, were fond of her.

Mr. Stuart's sons, however, resented their father's new wife and were never cordial to her. "The boys and she just didn't mix," said Mrs. Spragins. "Miss Routh did not have animosity for them; she knew they did not like her. They would speak and talk, but just were not fond of each other."

Continuing her reminiscences in 1951, Mrs. Spragins told of what a fine-looking person Mrs. Alfred Oden Stuart was. "She was stout and tall, a very handsome woman with beautiful eyes. She carried herself well and dressed beautifully.

"I remember my father's bringing her to our home. There she had many servants, including a good cook and a woman to sew for us. She was bright as a new dollar; she could do anything." Mrs. Spragins said her stepmother's aptitudes became a legend in the family and in the town.

"She could look at something and have it made. The pretty clothes she did plan! The girls appreciated her helping them to have lovely things. Our baby, Vallie, she regarded as her own and often took with her to New Orleans. She dressed the little girl beautifully. A great deal of her time she spent directing the seamstress, who lived in a house in our yard."

In her own family in New Orleans Routh had always taken the initiative. If there were a hat or a bonnet to be trimmed, she did that.
None of her sisters ever had thought of competing with her, for all of them depended on her. Thus she established with her stepdaughters a relationship similar to that which she had with her own sisters.

Her housekeeping was fastidious. Everything around her she kept neat, attractive, and artistic. She was also an excellent cook. The example she set meant a great deal to her husband's daughters.

In addition to Vallie and Elise, Mrs. Stuart's stepdaughters included Mary, the wife of Captain Holman; Florence, Mrs. J. C. Ware; and Mildred Snow, who became Mrs. Nal Williams. The step-sons were Everett Oden, Henry Hopson, Alfred Oden, and Joe. Joe was the son of Mr. Stuart's second wife. In the family Henry Hopson was called "General." Born during the War Between the States, the little boy was being fondled one day when someone said, "He looks like a big General now." Prompted by the remark, Mr. Stuart called his son "General."

General enjoyed taking care of Stirling, the little brother born on November 26, 1882. "Our little brother," said Mrs. Spragins, "had golden hair, brown eyes, and the sweetest face." 8

"I remember Miss Routh's talking about Stirling's name," declared Mr. R. C. Stuart. "It was most beautiful."

Stirling had a happy babyhood in Washington. One who played

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8 Mrs. Spragins did not refer to her half-brother, James Monroe. In the interview with the author in 1951 Mr. R. C. Stuart named the following children of Alfred Oden Stuart: James, Joe, Mary, James Monroe, Florence, Everett Oden, Henry Hopson, Snow, Alfred Oden, Elise, Vallie, Stirling.
with him before he and his mother made the final break with the historic old town was Grandison Delaney Royston, who in 1951 recalled the association. A story still current in Washington deals with the Negro who "looked after" Stirling. The present owner of the Stuart home says that "The Lamentations of Jeremiah Johnson" was inspired in Routh's backyard.

As one looks at the big old house today, so neglected, so obviously in need of restoration, one wishes to transform the place with his mind's eye and recapture the laughter of the little boy, the vitality of the dynamic Stuart household, the devotion of the aging father for his "Sonny," and the mother whose inability to establish congeniality with her stepsons possibly impelled her to bestow too much attention upon her little boy.

One of the reasons the Stuart lads did not like Routh, so it is said, was that she was extravagant. For her their father bought a handsome surrey and employed a man to drive her wherever she wished to go.

Washington, like Natchez and other towns of the South, emphasized the social aspect of life. The people of the town enjoyed beautiful clothes, elaborate parties, and a gracious way of living. An old scrapbook kept by Florence Stuart, a treasured possession today of Mrs. C. C. Spragins, has many newspaper clippings from the Washington Telegraph dealing with the social events from 1879 until 1888, the decade Routh lived in the town.

Of her stepmother Mrs. Spragins said, "She organized a reading club in Washington. It was really the nicest thing there. Just talented people participated. The men came but they never did do anything."
Another who was only a little girl when Mrs. Stuart was president of the D.C.T. (Dear Old Town Club), the club she had organized to meet in the homes of its various members, wrote:

I recall a pink tea given by Mrs. Stuart .... The school girls (including this writer) served at the table. She had us dress in white tarleton with pink caps and aprons: The table decorations were also white and pink, hence the pink tea which was somewhat of an innovation, we thought, but the matrons and youth of the town in those days were lavish with their entertainments, their balls and concerts (and Washington had plenty of talent), their church affairs and their whist parties.

In this sentimental era of society the South was still under the spell of romanticism. Often the society articles in the Telegraph refer to "the beautiful women and the chivalrous men." Headings for articles are "A Brilliant Wedding," "An Elegant Wedding," "Orange Blossoms," and "Hymeneal." The bride is referred to as "one of the loveliest and most admired" or as "beautiful and most accomplished." Symbols of the period were white wedding bells, "wreathes in vernal loveliness," "a beautiful white dove with outstretched wings," or cupids with bows and arrows.

The weddings of Mr. Stuart's daughters were important social occasions. One can tell from the elaborate descriptions of the exquisite dresses that a great part of Mr. Stuart's fortune was devoted to his providing for his girls what the exclusive social circle to which they belonged demanded. How gay the society was! Often a sumptuous wedding

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9The Old Town Speaks, p. 295.
supper was served at midnight after a fashionable late-hour wedding.

The Stuart daughters had excellent educational advantages, too, it seems. The "Florence S." referred to in an article in the old scrapbook now owned by Mrs. Spragins is Florence Stuart. Says the article: "While attending commencement in Charlottesville, Miss Florence S. was the honored recipient of a note from a University gentlemen of remarkable mental powers and erudition—at least we suppose that is why he signed himself, 'Your known friend.'" The article which precedes this in the old scrapbook is an account of a trip by Florence S. and five of her classmates at Wesleyan Female Institute in Staunton in the company of three of their teachers to Jefferson's home and the graduation exercises at the University of Virginia.

Another article in the scrapbook relates the experiences of the girls at the Academy on a visit to Washington, D.C. The many courtesies...

10...the visit to the White House was another pleasant incident. They were invited into the East room and formed a circle. The President came forward and asked for an introduction to each one. The ladies then passed him, he shaking the hand of each young lady. He then selected several and placing himself at the head of the column, led them through the building, explaining every room and its purposes. When they were leaving, he thanked them for the honor they had done him by calling and remarked, 'Young ladies, you must indeed have an excellent President and fine instructors, as I have never seen such excellent deportment in any school,' and it is seldom that such excellent behavior is exhibited as was by the young ladies of the Wesleyan Female Institute on this excursion. It speaks volumes for the management of the school. It speaks for the President and for his lady who guards the young ladies entrusted to her care as she does her own daughters, showing that motherly solicitude about all that makes it in reality a home.

"The evenings were spent in the spacious parlors of the Metropolitan Hotel, entertaining their friends and relatives. Many members of Congress called. There were over sixty Senators and Representatives present at one time, and much attention was paid the fair excursionists. Many mementoes were presented. Senator Garland of Arkansas, sent each young lady of his state an elegant bouquet." From the old scrapbook of Mrs. Spragins.
possibly reflect the esteem of the lawmakers for the parents of the girls.

As one reads in Florence's scrapbook, now in Mrs. Spragins' possession, one recalls what Mrs. Spragins said of Alfred Oden Stuart:

"My father was a successful farmer who lived in town; he had lovely horses and rode back and forth to the country. During the War he stayed at home to raise food for the soldiers instead of going to fight. So many Washington people were in politics, yet my father was not. He was only a plantation owner and furnished material.

"Although he was not in politics, he was interested in politics. The attorneys, the congressmen, the senators were his friends.

"It was he who was instrumental in sending Jones to the U. S. Senate. He found him in a field plowing and said: 'Come get dressed up. We're going to send you to Washington.'"

In 1951 Mrs. Spragins recalled happily a courtesy shown to her by Senator Jones and his family.

"When I was seventeen, I spent a winter in Washington City with Senator Jones's family to attend Cleveland's second inauguration. I stayed from the first of September until after the inauguration.

"Of course I was with Judge Jones's daughter—we were just two country girls.

"When we went to call on the President, he looked at Senator Jones and said, 'I can tell which is your daughter.' He thought it was I."

The attention shown to the young ladies in the Stuart family echoes Mrs. Spragins' words:

"People looked to my father. He did not put much stock in politics except to put good men in office. None of his sons went into politics."

Mr. Stuart was a Presbyterian. "Miss Routh," said Mrs. Spragins, "was a big Presbyterian. My three sisters and I were members of the Episcopal Church."

Mrs. Spragins remembered that Miss Susie, Routh's sister who came
with her to Columbus, often visited in Washington, Arkansas. "She died," she said, "when she was young. She had married and had children. I recall she lived in Tennessee."

Of Mrs. Stuart's mother she commented:

"I was crazy about old Mrs. McEnery. She played checkers and backgammon with me and let me win. She certainly knew how to entertain children and make them happy. I was very fond of her. She was little and sweet looking.

"I never saw Miss Routh's father or brothers. None ever came to visit her up here; I think her father was dead when she married. "Miss Sallie was mighty sweet, too."

The years of Routh's married life were brief yet joyous in spite of the coldness of Mr. Stuart's sons. Not only the aristocrats, but also the humble people of Arkansas interested her. In the countryside surrounding Washington there were hundreds of Negroes to one white person. The town divided Mr. Stuart's plantation. Daily his wife could see the darkies coming and going. As they hitched their mules, sat on her front steps awaiting orders, "restin'" and "foolin' roun' jes' generally," she heard many amusing tales. One old fellow she saw fishing held the worms, his bait, in a safe place under his tongue!

Then besides the Negroes there were the hillbillies, the Southern counterpart of the Yankee backwoodsmen. These illiterates, often rather charming and piquant, endeared themselves to Mrs. Stuart as had the common people of New Orleans. Her interest in them was not idle curiosity; her pictures of them in the books she wrote many years after her contacts with them reveal her affection and sincere regard.

With whomever she was Mrs. Stuart was entertaining. Her conversational ability was astonishing, for she was never at a loss to find a
common subject of interest. Because of her keen sense of humor, her ready wit, and her retentive memory, she was as interesting a raconteur as a story writer. "It was as good as reading a novel to talk with her." That quotation from her old-time acquaintance may not be considered hyperbolic, for the same statement this writer can affirm to be true concerning the animated sister, Miss Sarah.

Her friends in Washington soon came to depend on Mrs. Stuart too. For one neighbor she painted the artistic decorations for her mantel. The Telegraph described this in an elaborate article as a "work of art."

Someone, after Mrs. Stuart's death, sent a copy of the article to Miss Sarah McEnery. It made her laugh a great deal, for while she knew that her sister had studied painting as all the girls in the family had, she realized that she was not a great artist.

Another anecdote of the days in Washington is evidence of Mrs. Stuart's artistic talent. One day as she was watching a boy marbelize a baseboard she decided she should like to do that kind of thing too. Taking the brush that he willingly gave to her, she astonished him with her dexterity.

At the age of sixty-three Alfred Oden Stuart had a stroke of apoplexy. "In two or three days," Mrs. Spragins said, "my father was dead." Concerning Mr. Stuart the Telegraph stated:

After a long period of ill health, Mr. A. O. Stuart departed this life at his home in Washington, on Sunday morning, August 5th, 1883, in the sixty-third year of his age.

Mr. Stuart was one of the strong representative men of this state. His parents were among the earliest pioneers of this section, having removed to this county from Kentucky in 1818. He was born two years
later while his parents were on a visit to that State, and lived here all his life. He was a man of strong character, mentally and physically, and of boundless energy. By these means he accumulated quite a handsome property, being engaged at the time of his death in farming on quite an extensive scale and in the mercantile business here as a member of the firm Stuart and Holman.

His life was such as to command the respect and goodwill of all his fellow-citizens and his death was universally regretted. He was four times married and leaves behind him a large family—a wife and eleven children, three of whom are married. His aged mother still survives, and there are a host of connections bearing the name of one of the most highly respected families in this part of the State. Hempstead county never had a better citizen or one who added more materially to her prosperity, and his name will long be reverenced among us.11

Her sister Sarah was with Routh at the time of Mr. Stuart's death and after the funeral accompanied her and Stirling to New Orleans. With the loss of her husband, Routh felt a need for her own family. Perhaps at first she intended to have only a long visit in Louisiana. As late as December 7, 1887, she was evidently spending some time in Washington, for "Mrs. Ruth Stuart" was included in the Telegraph's account that day of the "wooden wedding" of Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Ware— their fifth wedding anniversary. Mrs. Stuart's gift to Mr. Stuart's daughter and Mr. Ware for the occasion was a "corner easel."

Miss McEnery spoke as if New Orleans became her sister's home immediately after the death of her husband. The overbearing air of her husband's sons did not create an environment conducive to making Routh desire to live in the home with all the family. Soon various ones of the children began to sell their interest in their home to the father of

11 "Mr. A. C. Stuart," the Washington Telegraph, n.d. (The article is included among the clippings of the scrapbook now in the possession of Mrs. Spragins.)
Mr. Elbert L. Smith, whose family took possession of the place. Mrs. Spragins said she herself went to live with her sister Florence, Mrs. Ware.

Continuously before their father died the young men had blamed Routh for the ebbing of his fortune. Although the grand manner had prevailed in the Stuart house during his life, those who knew realized that it was not Mrs. Stuart who was responsible for the losses. Rather it

Ruth McEnery Stuart did not sell her interest in the Stuart home until many years after she had gone to New York to live. On May 4, 1953, Mr. Elbert L. Smith wrote the author as follows:

Residence
5905 "A" St.
Little Rock, Arkansas
Dear Miss Fletcher:

Your request for my contact and acquaintance with Mrs. Ruth McEnery [sic] Stuart I regret to relate was brief and strictly business on a subject we had previously corresponded about. I was in the city for the day and wrote to know if she could conveniently meet me at the office of her attorney to execute a deed and receive the purchase price we had already agreed upon. She met me in down-town at the Park Nat'l Bank, exchanged papers with me, chatted briefly while the notary took her acknowledgment and a cashier certified my check.

She lived, I believe in an Apartment Hotel in Brooklyn, and had one son whose name I don't recall and I seem to remember....

Very sincerely
Elbert Smith

Mrs. Marguerite S. Moses (Mrs. R. L.), a sister of Mr. Smith, wrote the author the following account of the Stuart home from the abstract now in possession of her family:

Mrs. Stuarts [sic] husband bought the old place from a James McDaniels for $3500, paid half cash, gave a note to pay off 1-1-1868 at 10% int. According to the abstract, the land grant from USA to commissioners for location of seat of Justice of Hempstead Co. Ark. was dated 5-10-1827. In May 1829 was laid off in lots & blocks, sold in lots, later was bought from various owners back into Hills 35 & 36 by James McDaniels.

The letter was written in New Boston, Tex., March 22, 1952.
was another member of the family, a member whose personality so endeared him to everyone that Mr. Stuart did not divulge the person's responsibility. Even today the secret is a closely guarded one in the entire Stuart family.

It is certain that not all the fortune was lost, yet a great part of it must have vanished by the time of Mr. Stuart's death. Had it not, it is unlikely that his widow would have been impelled to seek a career. It is possible that she did teach again intermittently after her return to New Orleans. Indeed, it may have been in the 1880's that she was at Loquet-LeRoy. Miss Sallie was the principal of the Chestnut Street Grammar School in New Orleans. At some time Routh taught in the public schools, too.

Stirling occupied a great deal of his mother's time; his clothes she made herself. People would say, "Let me borrow your pattern for that lovely palto," and her answer would be, "Oh, I just made that up!"

Miss Sarah said that when Routh returned to Washington on business Stirling often remained with his grandmother and aunt. Mrs. Stuart was the guest of her friends in Arkansas. During the time she had to be there she began writing about the "common folks." This was not her first experience in writing, for as a young girl she had had many unsigned pieces published in the New Orleans papers. A parody of "The Raven" had been written extemporaneously for the D.O.T. before the death of Mr. Stuart.13

13The parody of "The Raven" by Mrs. Alfred Oden Stuart was given to the author by Mrs. Charlean Loss Williams when she visited Mrs. Williams in Snyder, Arkansas. Mrs. Williams has had the poem through the years and has thought at times of publishing it and some other uncollected works of her community in an anthology of Hempstead County. A copy of the poem is in Appendix A, pp. 273-a, 273-b, 273-c.
The thought of turning to writing became increasingly absorbing. In Washington among her friends were a number of gifted women. Mrs. Sallie Kate Harris Holt, who was to become a writer of Negro dialect stories and poetry, admired Mrs. Stuart. The adopted sister of Augustus H. Garland, who had been educated abroad and was a writer himself, was Routh's contemporary and friend. Her name was Martha Carruth Robertson (Ruth Carr). Doubtless each influenced the other, for each wrote Negro dialect.

The extent of time Routh spent in Washington after her husband's death is difficult to determine. That she did not really regard it as her home is the impression her sister gave. The old scrapbook with so much information about the family reveals that Mr. Stuart's daughters continued to take part in the gay social affairs of Washington and to

14 The following letter is from her son:

Westchester County Publishers, Inc.
Reporter Dispatch Building
White Plains, New York
May 13, 1953

Miss Frances Fletcher
1102 North Vienna
Ruston, Louisiana
Dear Miss Fletcher:-

I have delayed answering your letter to check through some old effects to see if I had anything on Ruth McEmery Stuart, but I cannot find anything. I recall my mother telling me of her, fifty years or more ago. My mother lived in Washington, Ark., and Mrs. Stuart had married into the family.

I recall one quotation which my mother credited to Mrs. Stuart. It was: "We hardly get over being descendants before we begin to be ancestors."

Sincerely yours,
Hugh W. Robertson
attend the opera in the town. One article announces that Modjeska, supported by Mr. Otis Skinner and her own company of players, will appear in Henry VIII "Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings and Saturday matinee during the week commencing February 6." Whether this was in Washington or elsewhere is not stated. Since there are pictures of Emerson, Holmes, Longfellow, William Cullen Bryant, Robert Browning, and other poets as well as articles dealing with American political life and even scientific advancement, there is evidence of intellectual interest among the young ladies. One article states: "Gladstone is Dead." Innumerable poems, many of them very sentimental and others quite humorous, fill the pages.

The sons of Mr. Stuart, it seems, were nearly all born under a fatal star. "All dead a long time," Mrs. Spragins said in referring to them in 1951. Obituary notices of two of them are in the old scrapbook. Everett Oden died of cerebral palsy in Little Rock when he was only thirty-eight; he was unmarried. Henry Hopson—"General"—died in a sanitarium in Texarkana at the age of fifty-seven. Only a widow and his sisters Mrs. C. C. Spragins of Hope, Mrs. Nal Williams of Little Rock, Mrs. J. S. Ragland of Texarkana, and Mrs. R. J. Kennedy of Clarksburg, Texas, and his brothers A. O. Stuart of Hope and J. E. Stuart of Lewisville were listed as his survivors.

None of the family of Alfred Oden Stuart remained permanently in Washington. Long ago the county seat was moved to Hope. Unfortunately, vandals came and stripped the historic courthouse of its records. Today a nephew of the wealthy planter has a drugstore in the little ghost town. Those who are left speak of the history of the town and its former glory.
In a sense Washington is comparable with Natchez in interest. Indeed, there is more of the past untouched there than in the Mississippi town. In the parlor of the beautiful old Trimble home, one of the few places which have been restored, is a watercolor of moonlight on water—a painting of Mrs. Stuart's while she lived in the town that had been the Confederate capitol of Arkansas.

In the summer of 1887, the year that is the last date which connects Mrs. Stuart with Washington, she and Miss Sarah went to a resort in North Carolina. Among the people whom they met, according to Miss Sarah, was the "lovely, gentle" Charles Dudley Warner, who was with them on hiking trips and social occasions arranged by the guests.

After her return to her home Mrs. Stuart, in 1888, wrote an anonymous letter to Mr. Warner and mailed it in Washington, Arkansas. In it she asked his criticism of two stories, "Uncle Mingo's Speculations" and "Lamentations of Jeremiah Johnson," the latter of which had been inspired by the colored boy who took care of Stirling in Washington. The editor of Harper's immediately recognized the talent of the author. Miss Sarah said he wrote:

"I didn't go to bed last night until I had read both of your stories. One I have kept for Harper's; the other I have sent to The Princeton Review."

Almost immediately The Princeton Review, edited by Professor Sloane, published "Uncle Mingo's Speculations." This was followed very soon by "Lamentations of Jeremiah Johnson," published in Harper's.

At the time of the acceptance of Routh's stories the McEnerys
were living in a fine old house on Prytania Street in New Orleans. In
the Prytania Street Presbyterian Church they had many friends, among whom
were the Cables, people they had known and been intimate with for more
than two decades, and also the family of Mrs. John S. Kendall. 15

When the news came that the stories were to be published, the
McEnerys and Mrs. Kendall's family had cottages at the old Camp Grounds
near Biloxi. Good friends, they had gone there for a change from the
city. "A change for the worse is better than no change at all," they
thought, according to Mrs. Kendall. When Routh received the letter, she
rushed over to a window of Mrs. Kendall's mother's cottage and exclaimed,
"Miss Florence, I've just sold my first story!" Mrs. Kendall added,
"Everyone was asked to rejoice with her."

In recalling the past, Mrs. Kendall said:

"My mother was very fond of Mrs. McEnery—a little old lady who
was very orthodox, very religious. I remember her being at my
mother's for the women's prayer meeting.
"Miss Routh had a nice position in local society. She was always
courteous to me, I being a small person then.
"Really, Miss Sallie—a very fine person—was more intellectual
than Miss Routh. She was principal of the Chestnut Street Grammar
School, you know. Later she wrote a few poems of her own—either
in Scribner's or Century.
"Miss Susie married Thomas Lee Calloway; I remember going to
her wedding.
"I don't recall that any of Miss Routh's brothers ever married.
All of the McEnerys were very charming people.
"Harry—so the story went—was quite wild. Mr. Charley was not
so expansive, yet he did not come to church so much. Then there
were Mr. Frank and Mr. Jim. Mr. Jim was as charming a man as Miss
Sallie was a lady—that is saying everything.

15 Interview, Professor and Mrs. John S. Kendall, New Orleans, 1952.
"When I was old enough to help at the church, I taught Stirling in my Sunday school class. He was lovely—spoiled by all.

"Think of all those older people to spoil him. The boy would have temper tantrums that were so violent his family would have to bring tubs of water to try to quiet him."

In the time when Mrs. Stuart's first recognition as a writer came, she was an intimate friend of Mollie E. Moore Davis, whose salon she frequented.

"Every Friday during the month of February," said Mrs. Ernest Lee Jancke, "my mother had open house at our home on Royal Street, the old house of Edward Livingston. Always some of her friends received with her. Often Mrs. Stuart did.

"Many popular and famous people came to our home. Mother had a great many friends among the actors—Cris Skinner and his wife Care and Coquelon.

"Then there were Colonel David Brainard, who made the arctic trip with Greeley; Eugene Field—he visited us quite a number of times; Charles Dudley Warner, a handsome man who looked somewhat like Santa Claus; Robert Louis Stevenson; and George R. Cable."

Mrs. Jancke recalled that in her mother's day nobody could have too big a party. "My mother's Tuesday afternoon musicales were delightful," she said. She spoke with pride of her father, Major Davis, for thirty-two years editor of the Times-Picayune. It was he who sponsored Dorothy Dix, the journalist, who was also a friend of Mrs. Davis and Mrs. Stuart.

Katherine Nobles, another New Orleans writer, a well-known journalist, was a friend of Routh's. Miss May C. Nobles spoke fondly of "Miss Sarah and Miss Routh," who, according to Miss Nobles, "used to

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16 Interview, Mrs. Ernest Lee Jancke, New Orleans, 1952.

17 The author visited Miss Nobles in the spring of 1952. In the Nobles home in New Orleans she saw a large picture of Katherine Nobles and heard of her friendship with the McEnerys.
visit my dear sister Katherine." She permitted the author to copy two letters Bouth had written to Katherine.

The Nobles were also friends of Mrs. Davis. It was Katherine Nobles who in 1896 wrote an excellent sketch of Mrs. Stuart. A copy of the article, possibly published in a small magazine called The New Cycle, was sent to the author of this volume with the following note:

Sorry that I cannot tell you in what publication this was published as it was pasted in an old scrap book left me by my mother Mrs. Charles J. Allain who was Alice Eugenie Haggerty. Mother died when she was 35, in 1897. She had several articles published in Harpers Magazine and a monthly magazine called 'The Writer' [sic]. She was a contemporary of Mollie Moore Davis and together with Mrs. Reuben Bush, Mrs. Aiken formed the Geographics and the Woman's Club, both literary clubs. I am sure that Mrs. Stuart must have belonged.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Frederic R. Swigart
Elise Allain Swigart
3305 St. Charles Ave. Apt. 6
N. C., La.

The era in which Routh was a friend of the Davises was the time Charles Gayarré, Lafcadio Hearn, and Grace King were well known in literary circles in New Orleans. That she knew Grace King is certain, yet there was no true congeniality between the two. "Airy" and inclined to be haughty, Miss King was of an entirely different disposition from Mrs. Stuart's. It seems evident, however, that each had some admiration for the other. Gayarré was a devoted friend of Grace King and even willed to her his beautiful imported French furniture. The author has found no record of

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18 The material from Mrs. Swigart was forwarded to the author by Mrs. Edward S. Hathaway on March 23, 1952. Mrs. Hathaway had made the contact with Mrs. Swigart for her.
his knowing Routh.

In the beautiful old King home down in the Garden District of New Orleans today Mr. Carlton King, the heir of Grace King, tells of the visit Lafcadio Hearn paid his aunt. After Hearn left, he said Miss King lived in a house as big as a cathedral with pictures all over the walls. The Kings still point out the small chair on the edge of which Hearn sat while he made the call.

There seem to be no little stories current in New Orleans to recall Hearn's meeting Routh, yet it is likely that he did. He knew many of her friends and mingled in literary groups. Hearn's biographer, Elizabeth Bisland, was a friend of Mrs. Stuart. Another friend was Mary Austin, who, Mrs. Kendall recalled, was "under her wing."

An especial friend of the McEnery sisters was the wife of Judge Lynn Boyd Watkins. "Our y'other auntie," the Watkins children said of Miss Sarah. Today one of that family is Mrs. R. S. Hecht of 16 Audubon Place, New Orleans. Mrs. Hecht treasures the memory of the old family association and has in her excellent Louisiana collection a number of autographed volumes of her mother's distinguished friend.

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19 Interview, Mr. Carlton King, New Orleans, 1954.

20 Interview, Mrs. R. S. Hecht, New Orleans, 1952.
A descendant of friends of Routh's is Mr. Austin Reese, whom Mrs. Stuart spoke of in connection with her own Sonny. Mr. Reese said that one of his relatives never married but remained a lifelong admirer of Mrs. Stuart. Remembering the many stories he had heard as he grew up, Mr. Reese declared:

"She was always just a McKenry."

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21 A friendship of more than one generation existed between the McKenrys and the family of Mr. Reese. A cordial note that alluded to Mr. Reese—then a little boy—Mrs. Stuart sent in the copy of Sonny she presented to Louise P. Reese. Mr. Reese kindly let the author copy the note, as follows:

126 East 27th St., N.Y.
Dec. 13, '96

My Dear Friend,

Remembering that through three generations there has been a beloved "Sonny" in your home, I think perhaps there may be something in this little bit that will appeal to you.

Will you have it with the writer's love?

Ruth McKenry Stuart
In 1888 Mrs. Stuart went to live in New York in order to be nearer her publishers. She decided that her pen name should be Ruth McKenry Stuart. The "Mary" in her name she had dropped when she was a girl. Being afraid that people would pronounce "Routh" as if it were "Rowth," she omitted the "o" in the word and called herself "Ruth."

Because she could not at first afford an apartment in New York, she had to board. She had left Stirling in New Orleans with her family. The people in the house where she lived esteemed her just as her friends did. She was never too busy to talk with anyone who came in to see her. Thus she was often interrupted, for people, when treated with such consideration by a person of genial nature, will thoughtlessly take advantage of kindness.

It was kindness that had enabled her since the time she was very young to enrich herself by the lives of other people. Graciousness, one of her most charming characteristics, had endeared her to all her servants. Even the humble old fellow who in her Southern home had awakened her at early morning with shuffling step as he came to build her fire knew and loved her for this quality. "Good morning, James," she always

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1 In the summer of 1851 Mr. R. C. Stuart, who remembered his uncle's wife, said in his interview with the author at his home in Columbus, Arkansas, "Aunt Routh was a very charming woman. Her servants were the biggest fools in the world about her."
greeted him cheerily. "Make a good fire. I hope you are happy this morning."²

In her home Ruth had been not only kind to the Negroes but very observant of them. Mrs. Baungarten recalled her telling of a big bare-footed Negro woman she had seen in Arkansas stirring a large pot of boiling syrup. "Oh, that looks so black, Auntie," said Mrs. Stuart.

"Yas'n," replied Auntie, "it is—but it is sweet. Oh, God!"

Mrs. Baungarten said that as her cousin talked she recaptured the intonation and the swaying of the Negro woman—a most laughable enactment.

From the first publication of Ruth McEnery Stuart's works in periodicals, it was recognized that she was recapturing the Southern plantation Negro as few others ever had. She easily found publishers for her stories. Indeed, had there not been such a demand for what she wrote, she might have developed greater craft in composition. In 1893 Harper and Brothers published a collection of her work in a volume entitled A Golden Wedding, and Other Tales. It included eleven short stories and two short poems in dialect. In addition to the nine narratives interpreting the "darky," there were "Camellia Riccardo," a romance dealing with the Italian element of New Orleans, and "The Woman's Exchange of Simpkinsville," an interpretation of life among the "hillbillies" of Arkansas. Thus nearly every aspect of life Ruth McEnery

²Miss Sarah Stirling McEnery told the author this when she visited her in New Orleans in 1933. "Thus," said Miss Sarah, "came about a friendship with James and all the other servants that caused her fire to burn the brightest, her hearth to be the cleanest, and her wishes to be held the most important on the lot."
Stuart attempted to deal with in the twenty-nine years of her literary career was represented in this volume. A review of the stories reveals her sympathy for the lowly, her interest in nature, and her flowery style.

In dealing with her material Ruth McNerney Stuart was nearly always a genuine representative of the sentimental tradition. The style of the romanticist is evident in the first sentence of "A Golden Wedding." "It was Christmas Eve in New Orleans and the air was fragrant with the mingled perfume of sweet olive, violets, and roses, while lace curtains floating in and out of the second-story windows, caught and wafted into sunny chambers a hint of orange blossoms lured into untimely bloom by the treacherous wooing of a Southern December."  

The story is a derivation of the Pyramus and Thisbe tale. Through a hole in the partition separating Br'er Thormson's side of the porch from that of Sis Garrett in the old tenement house "back of town" the smoke of his pipe mingled with hers. "Smoke got sociable ways, ain't it?" said she, as she watched the misty cloud. "I puffs and' you puffs, an' time de partition gives 'em a chance, de two smokes look like dee des nachelly goes togedder."  

Although life is full of coincidences, it is almost too much to

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4Ibid.
5Ibid., pp. 6-7.
ask the reader to believe that on Christmas the old man and the old woman, lonely neighbors in the New Orleans hovel, learn that they are husband and wife, separated since their youth. Yet even more unlikely is their discovery at their "golden wedding," the ceremony reuniting them, their long-lost son, "... a black man of fifty or thereabout.... He slipped to the front, as if to address the congregation, hesitated, cleared his throat, swallowed, essayed to speak, but failed to command his voice, and finally, turning suddenly, approached the old woman Cicely, and with a voice broken with a sob, said, "Mammy, heah little Joe."

Mrs. Stuart's idealization of the marriage of the two old Negroes and her introduction of their son almost in the manner of "the cult of the child" relate the story to the prevailing sentimental school.

An element of humor is introduced into the story by the old Negro woman's insistence upon the propriety of the closed door between the apartments in the cabin until the "golden wedding" has been celebrated in the church. Delightfully like the Negroes in speech, in attitude, and in behavior, the characters in the story come alive.

One of Ruth McEnery Stuart's most democratic and generous acts was her participation in an otherwise all-Negro presentation of "A Golden Wedding." The following news account tells the story:

A large audience greeted the production of Mrs. Ruth McEnery Stuart's "Golden Wedding," by the students of Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, at the Broad Street Theater yesterday.

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6 Ibid., p. 37.

7 Herbert Ross Brown, The Sentimental Novel in America 1789-1860 (Durham, 1940), passim.
afternoon. The piece was given under the direction of Mrs. Stuart, and was participated in by twenty-seven of the students. It deals with the reunion and marriage of an old negro couple and their son, after years of separation, and was set in three acts. The scenery was particularly quaint and natural. An address was made before the play by Talcott Williams, who gave a brief history of the institute, which is situated in Hampton, Virginia. Mr. Williams explained that the entertainment was given for the benefit of the fund of the school, and said that he knew of no worthier charity for the training of colored youth. He then introduced Mrs. Stuart, who recited several pieces in negro dialect. The acts selections were given by a chorus of twenty-five voices and the "Jerusalem Orchestra," which takes its name from a large jawbone which, when struck with a stick, provided a wind accompaniment to several banjos and harmonicas, which comprised the orchestra. Similar entertainment will be given in New York, Boston, and other Eastern cities.

Not so dramatic as "A Golden Wedding" are some of the other stories of the 1893 volume. "The Widder Johnsing," one of the best of the group, is not idealistic or sentimental; indeed, it is a masterful psychological study of a Negress who outwits "the young girl converts of recent date, never slow to respond to any invitation which led to the chancel." Eliza Ann's "congratulators" stand "in mute dismay" when it is announced that she is to be "joined in the holy estate of matrimony to the Reverend Julius Caesar Langford." The author adds, "... it is a shame to have to write it but they actually did turn their backs and refuse to speak to her."
Though no guests were bidden to share it, the wedding supper in the little cabin that night was no mean affair, and when Langford, with a chuckling, half-embarrassed new-proprietary air drew the cork from the beer-bottle beside his plate, Lize Ann said, "Hit do me good ter see how you relishes dat beer."
But she did not mention that it was the last bottle, and maybe it was just as well.13

Eliza had won her man with her Sunday night suppers. Her method of attracting him to her house the first evening of his visit, her unrestrained enjoyment of her success as shown by her rolling with laughter on the floor after his departure, and her convincing verve make the story one of the best of the lot.

Even the opening situation, the wake of Jake Johnson, is so true to the life of the old-time Negroes that it is spirited comedy. There is nothing malicious or even unkind in the author's faithful portrayal of the Negro behaviour. With changing times and customs, the picture will soon be only a matter of historical interest.

Something of the irony of "The Widder Johnsing" is lacking in "Jessekiah Brown's Courtship," yet the romance of the "fat, bow-legged fellow of forty years or thereabouts" is highly laughable to the reader removed by sixty-one years from the time the story appeared in the collection. A bachelor who is deprived of "connubial bliss" only by his inability to determine "the identical woman he wished to marry,"14 Jessekiah Brown "decided that he could never decide."15

13Ibid.
14Ibid., p. 189.
15Ibid., p. 195.
Realizing that a man who could not decide what he was going to shoot would come home with an empty game bag every time, he had an inspiration. "I gwine bull' me a--gwine bull' me a--gwine bull'--' and he fell to meditating again. 16

The seat he builds by the levee, his consternation in finding Fat Ann sitting in it, and the denouement in his learning that "Miss Betty" has sat in it earlier and is thus entitled first to his attentions are the materials of a merry comedy. Somewhat more of the sentimental is mingled into this story than there is in the romance of The Widder Johnsing, but there is not enough to spoil the fun.

A ludicrous scene is enacted when Jessekiah appears to be "tooken wid a fit" 17 on finding Fat Ann in the seat.

The girl, misinterpreting the groan as an indication of serious disaster, hurried to his aid. Somehow, in attempting the steep declivity, her foot slipped.

Whether, sliding like an irresistible avalanche, she carried Ki into the water with her, or whether she rolled clear over him, and he fell in in his efforts to rescue her, it is hard to say. Certain it is, however, that when after some time they reappeared arm in arm over the brow of the levee, both bore marks of a recent baptism. 18

Another of the lively stories about Negroes is "Christmas Gifts," the setting of which is Sucrier plantation in the days before the war. Though too full of the stereotyped plantation owner, Colonel Slack, his

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., p. 203.
18 Ibid.
"pretty, dainty wife," and the marriage of his daughter Louise to a wealthy next-door planter, the story presents a picture of unrestrained passion in the jungle behavior of a young Negro woman named Lucinda. Just after Lucinda was married on Christmas, Colonel Slack sent her as a "Christmas gift" to Louise. Texas, another Negress, tried to comfort the bride.

Approaching Lucinda, she regarded her with admiration. "Dat's a quality collar you got on, Cindy. An' law bless my soul, ef de gal ain't got on hoops! You gwine lead de style on dis planta-" Texas never finished her sentence.

Trembling with fury, Lucinda snatched the collar from her neck and tore it into bits; then, making a dive at her skirts, she ripped them into shreds in her frantic effort to destroy the hoop-skirt.

Dragging the gilt pendant from her ears, tearing the flesh as she did so, she threw them upon the floor, and stamped upon them, one after another, into the open fire. No vestige of a gift from the hand that had betrayed her would she spare.

When Lucinda learned that her husband was to be a Christmas gift, too, she was as unrestrained in expressing her joy as she had been in showing her anger. The author has succeeded in making her seem alive. Invaluable in the story of the plantation darkies is the Christmas morning picture of the Negroes dancing under the trees and receiving their Christmas gifts from their master.

The theme of loyalty is developed in "Uncle Mingo's Speculations," "Queen Anne," "Crazy Abe," and "Blink." In the first three there is a

19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., pp. 145-146.
21 Ibid., p. 150.
22 The author has been told many times of her own great-grandfather's Christmas morning eggnog parties for his slaves. The narrator, her great aunt, has told her of the joyousness of the darkies on that day.
story teller who chances upon a Negro and through the colored person hears of a devoted friend of the past or of a deceased relative. In "Uncle Mingo's 'Speculations!'" the friend is Mingo's dead master. In "Queen Anne" the friend is "my room-mate at college, my chum, my best-beloved boy friend...."23 The loved one who is "recaptured" through the old Negro in "Crazy Abe" is the narrator's deceased father.

Coincidence and sentimentality mar these stories somewhat, yet each is a portrait gallery of memorable colored folks. Uncle Mingo, though idealized, is so convincing one readily understands Charles Dudley Warner's immediate acceptance of the story about him. Crazy Abe, a dreamer like Uncle Mingo, does not sleep outside his mistress' door to protect her, yet he lives in hallucinations in a past peopled with loved ones whose conduct toward him is different from that of the overseer. A pathetic narrative is "Queen Anne." The reader's interest is centered upon the ingenuous child, who, despite her golden qualities, is primitive. A sober seriousness permeates "Blink," a Christmas story in which youth and courage transcend defeat.

One of the best of the Negro stories is "The Lamentations of Jeremiah Johnson." The reader will remember that it was inspired by the colored lad who "looked after" Stirling in the Stuarts' back yard in Washington.

Priscilla and Antony had lost nine girls before Lamentations was born.

23Stuart, op. cit., p. 254.
Priscilla glanced toward the row of graves and heaved a deep sigh. Then, slowly turning to her husband, she opened the door of a safe at her side, and taking from it a plate of cold bacon and greens and reseating herself with it on her lap, she began to eat them, raising the dark green shreds with her fingers into the air above her head, and slowly lowering them into her capacious mouth. Priscilla was of the earth, earthy. She had mourned heartily and boisterously over each of her nine bereavements, but her bosom was not the home of sorrow, and when grief fell into it, it was as an acid falling into an alkali. The effect was effervescent, and when once the bubbling ceased, the same acid could not stir it again. 24

On the contrary, Antony, Priscilla’s husband, after the death of his ninth child, came to the “conclusion dat nine am de fatal figgur.” 25 Therefore, on the evening of the birth of his son, he “made a public profession of religion, and, in the language of Brother Williamson, the officiating minister, ‘cornsecrated hisself and all o’ him to do service de Lord!’” 26

Lamentations was twelve years old when the story begins. For a year his father had been dead. In all his life the child had never had any clothes except his dead sister’s dresses. And so it came about on day of his vacation that temptation entered his mind—temptation in the form of a pair of the Judge’s trousers which lay bleaching on the ass. The scene that ensued is one of hilarious comedy and genuine gro psychology.

What finally brought about a change in Lamentation’s wayward

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24 Ibid., p. 51.
25 Ibid., p. 48.
26 Ibid., p. 52.
avior is a high point in the narrative. From that time Jeremiah de-
doped into a man most loved among the people, a champion of small boys.

Ruth McNerly Stuart's ear was attuned to all the harmonies of
and. The musical quality, the rich softness of the Italian speech she
captured in the story of "Camellia Riccardo." The old French market--
at quaint, picturesque, and most romantic spot of New Orleans--is the
background of the love story. Local color, as in most of the Negro
ories, is possibly more significant than the romance itself.

The last story in the 1893 volume, "The Woman's Exchange of
pkinsville," is significant as a predecessor of In Simpkinsville and
many monologues concerning Sonny. Herbert Spencer 27 said that it was
eter than any fiction he had seen done since George Eliot; he con-
ered it one of the best short stories he had ever read. However, "The
an's Exchange of Simpkinsville" and "Camellia Riccardo" were somewhat
looked by the critics of 1893. Most interest was focused upon the
ro stories in A Golden Wedding, and Other Tales.

The Critic for June 10, 1893, said: "She is not at all inferior
Miss Grace King in her reproductions of Negro character and comedy
inconsistency." 28

Under "Stories from the South" in the Republic, published in St.
s, Missouri, April 2, 1893, is the following evaluation:

27 The Interior, Chicago, Nov. 16, 1899. Tulane Stuart Collection.
28 The Critic, June 10, 1893. Tulane Stuart Collection.
The very breath and essence of the old life are there; the quaint phraseology, the queer mixture of faith and superstition, the light-hearted fun and the touch of pathetic sadness so strangely intermingled in the 'befo' de wa' darky. Such stories should be cherished and studied by the new generation—unworthy descendants of worthy ancestry, if they would know the faithful, loving, true nature of those who bore the badge of slavery, but only in name as it were. Where can the negro of today find such friends to help him when his half-savage nature, inherited from far-back barbarians—vents itself in passionate anger, as Lucindy found in her "kind old marster" and "young mistis" when she had her "wil' cat" fit on her?29

She was in the vanguard of Southern writers who conquered the conquerors with her picture of life in Dixie. It was not novel in human experience for vanquished people to possess culture, manners, and a way of life that appealed to the victors. Like Joel Chandler Harris, George Washington Cable, Thomas Nelson Page, Kate Chopin, she belonged to the New South movement. In the main her work represents the rapprochement it was necessary for the South to make. The aristocré will never be forgotten so long as the works of any of these writers are read. The wealthy plantation owner, the faithful darky have become a myth in American literature. Mrs. Stuart contributed to the development of the legend.

She did not comprehend the tragic implications in the fusion of the races as did Cable and Kate Chopin. There are the people of mixed blood in her stories, yet they are Negroes. In her South these people "knew their place." Her attitudes are similar to those of Thomas Nelson Page, for both he and she focused their gaze on the glory that had been and the remnant of it that was left in the character of the Southern

29"Stories from the South," Republic, St. Louis, Missouri, April 2, 1893. Tulane Stuart Collection.
gentleman and his faithful slave. She was more interested in the "idio-
syncratic or grotesque" in local characters than was Joel Chandler
Harris. Though her irony is not so deep as his in describing the Negro,
she succeeds in conveying more than surface meanings in picturing him.
She records his speech faithfully.

30 Robert E. Spiller, Willard Thorp, T. H. Johnson, H. S. Conley,
editors, Literary History of The United States, 1 vol. (New York, 1953),
860.
CHAPTER IV

NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Two volumes published in 1894, Carlotta's Intended and The Story of Babette, both novelettes, were well received throughout the entire country. Each story has its setting in New Orleans and is redolent of local color. In Carlotta's Intended the reader gains an impression of life among the Italian people of the Crescent City. In the second there is an insight into the manners and customs of the refined Creoles in the French Quarter.

A well-sustained narrative and superior character depiction distinguish Carlotta's Intended. The love of the one-legged cobbler for Carlotta is convincing, for he is convincing. The gaiety of the Irishman

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1 One of the earliest letters of Mrs. Stuart to her sister, Miss Sarah Stirling McEnery, in the Ruth McEnery Stuart Collection at Tulane tells of her life while she was establishing herself in New York and shows her delight in the favorable criticism of Carlotta's Intended.

Thurs morning 1894

My dear Sis,

Shall I begin a page to you with a five minutes limit--this judging from the rattle of the breakfast dishes--Kef' st bell! and a vigor 'tis, too! Stirling & I only boarders--Table to ourselves, & "she" the housewife, opens the door o' this room where I sit within 6 or 8 ft. of her, and rings the brazen summons for all her good strong muscle is worth! Isn't it funny! But I must answer it.

Friday 1:10--and now, dinner is 10 minutes overdue & I'm writing in reply to yr. note wh. I've just read. I am so sorry, Sister, for I am very much improved. Do not realize that I could have let a long silence occur. Here's the bell! Lordy, but it doesn't ask one to dinner. It dares him not to come.

After dinner

The mail bringing yours brot also a lovely letter from R. H. Stoddard (the pack) enclosing a clipping from last Saturday's Mail and Express reviewing my Carlotta's Intended. He wrote the review which is perfectly dazzling! in its fine praises. "You have an ear and beautiful gift &c &c!" He says in this review the book is equal to any recent book of short

57
does give a "humorous turn to common place things" and endears him to the most diffident reader. The pathos of the final chapter strikes a more genuine chord than such an ending does in many a sentimental story.

Much of the humor of Carlotta’s Intended is centered in the quaint and excellently recaptured dialect, yet there is too much of it. The New York Times for July, 1894, while praising "the delicate charm" of Ruth McEnery Stuart’s stories, "their saving grace," states that the "field of dialect fiction has been greatly overworked lately. We have been getting too much broken language in our story-books. This writer, too, carries her fondness for the crudities of speech and the peculiarities of mongrel dialects to the extreme."^3

Astonishing to the reader of 1954 is a comment in this same review of Carlotta’s Intended in the New York Times concerning the Italians in the story: "If we willingly accept these dagoes as people whose ambitions and heartaches are worth knowing about and sympathizing with—and that is hard for Northern readers, to whom the Italian immigrant is occasionally picturesque, perhaps, but decidedly unsavory—and so become stories and superior to most in its quality of humor. "Mrs. S. understands what only great humorists understand, that pathos and humor are inseparable."

This sort of endorsement is the best encouragement a writer ever gets, and makes me hope for equally worthy work. Don’t let me tire you with talk about my book. It is as if I said Stirling has cut a wisdom tooth or some such report.


interested in the growth of Pat's love for the little Carlotta di Carlo, we are presently confronted by the Mafia, and for no reason.\textsuperscript{4}

It is not unlikely that Ruth McEnery Stuart felt somewhat the same attitude toward the Italians. In \textit{The Story of Babette} Babette infers from what she is told of herself that she is the daughter of Italians.

Each word he had spoken had fallen like lead upon the heart of the poor lonely girl who had demanded the whole truth, thinking herself prepared to know the worst. But now that she had heard it, she realized that it was far more humiliating than anything she had feared.

It was a bitter discovery.\textsuperscript{5}

Throughout \textit{The Story of Babette} there is strong expression of class distinction. Thinking she had learned the truth concerning herself, Babette declared: "My poor parents were working people. I have been proud of my family—of my blood—hating unrefinement, and I ...."

The incidents of the dramatic story are initiated on Canal Street during the parade of Comus on Mardi Gras night. The abandon of the crowds, the familiar scenes along the street, the blaze of light, the parade itself—all are vividly recaptured. Later writers have attempted to portray the gala scene. Probably only Lyle Saxon in \textit{Fabulous New Orleans} has succeeded so well as Ruth McEnery Stuart.

The author uses graceful French phrases and musical names. She was familiar with the manners, the hauteur, the charm of the Creole. For one who loves New Orleans, \textit{The Story of Babette}, even with its melodramatic

\textsuperscript{4}loc. cit.

\textsuperscript{5}Ruth McEnery Stuart, \textit{The Story of Babette} (New York, 1894), p. 163
incidents, is a favorite book. The narrative of the little Creole girl shares with Chita the universal appeal in the story of a lost child. Like Hearn's novelette, it portrays the author's love for the beauty of south Louisiana.

On December 15, 1894, there appeared in the New York World a statement concerning both of the long stories Ruth McEnery Stuart published that year:

She will never write a sweeter story than "Carlotta's Intended," but her "Story of Babette" is just as sweet, just as tender and just as fascinating. It is a long story, and in it she shows that she has the same sustained power in a novel as in her shorter tales.

The very quality for which the contemporary reader would condemn The Story of Babette is the one praised by the Independent of New York on May 30, 1895: "If any person has ever written a sweeter, purer, or more entertaining story than this Story of Babette, we have yet to read it."

The appeal of the sentimental is further shown by another evaluation: "The characters are original, vividly painted and individually attractive, and the portraiture of home life, 'glad, sad and sweet,' is deeply penetrating and true. Such literature helps us sanctify the imagination, and deepen the channels of the domestic sentiment through which only a pure national life can flow."

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7 This, too, is in the notebook of clippings.
8 Watchman, Boston, Dec. 27, 1894. Tulane Stuart Collection.
In 1895 *Sonny, A Christmas Guest*, appeared with the simple dedication:

"To
my Son
Stirling McKnary Stuart."

The book, cast in the form of a series of monologues, is intensely subjective. The father of Sonny is a projection of Alfred Oden Stuart without his literacy. The dialect is typical of the ignorant people whom the author had known during her life in Washington.

Interest in dialect had continued in this country since the time of Royall Tyler. Certainly such writers as James Russell Lowell had popularized it. The monologue, too, was associated with dialect, with a brand of humor that was distinctly American, and with the garrulous backwoodsmen.⁹

The sketches concerning Sonny are related by Deuteronomy Jones to the doctor. The stories are linked by a chronological arrangement of events starting from the night of Sonny's birth and extending to the week after his wedding. They also suggest the continuity of the Jones family and of life itself. Marriage is idealized as in other sentimental stories of Mrs. Stuart; the theme touches upon "the cult of the child." As in real life, the father of Sonny is much older than his mother. In the story the two have been married seventeen years before the child is born. On the Christmas night he comes into the world his father experiences a kaleidoscopic shifting of emotions—fear, love, pride, generosity, hope,

and wonder. "A Christmas Guest" is the only one of the monologues which is spoken as the events occur.  

The second monologue, "The Boy," is very humorous. The little child who had tarried so long in coming learns quickly his importance in the household. Now that society has outgrown the use of the dictionary for the baby's high chair, the sketch deals with an epoch not to be forgotten among American manners and customs. However, the spirit of Jones—"Give him anything that he wants"—is not far different from that of many twentieth-century fathers who indulge the desires of their child. Who, even today, has not seen such tantrums as Sonny's!  

Sonny was reared strictly by his natural impulses—even in his religion. What the incident of "Bippie in the coal hole" is to Silas Warner, "Sonny's Christenin'" is to this story. The two are comparable in their sparkling humor. When he was three, Sonny selected his own church, the Episcopal. His devoted parents took him to services at all the churches to allow him to find his preference. He cried at the Baptist baptizing; the Methodists provoked him. At the solemn Presbyterian service one Sunday the preacher "preached a mighty powerful discourse on the doctrine o' lost infants not 'lected to salvation—'an' Sonny? Why he slept

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10 Annually "A Christmas Guest" is read at the Christmas meeting of the Literary Club in Hope, Arkansas.

11 In one of the autographed copies of Sonny, A Christmas Guest which Mrs. Stuart sent to New Orleans she wrote: "I need not tell you that I should not like to be understood as advocating just such bringing up of our sons as this but I have taken a little pleasure in trying to develop a character. This the doctrine of love in spite of all."

12 The reader may recall what was said by Mrs. Kendall concerning the tantrums of Stirling.
right thoo' it.\textsuperscript{13} But at the service of the Episcopal church on Easter Sunday, when the child had seen the candles, "he thess clapped his little hands, an' time the folks commenced answerin' back he was tickled all to death, an' started answerin' hisself--on'y, of co'se, he answered sort o' hit an' miss."\textsuperscript{14}

It was after Sonny had made his choice that there was an attempt to vaccinate the child. Every person on the place and every animal was vaccinated for his pleasure; still he was perverse. Then his toe became infected. The distressed parents sent for the Episcopal minister, but Sonny took his fate into his own hands. Hadn't he before? That is why the baptismal water for him came from the rain of heaven, and Sonny--It is too good to tell. Possibly Mark Twain read this monologue; possibly it was one of the reasons Ruth McEnery Stuart was his especial friend. Sonny's charm as a child was his whimsicality.

There are not many children who have had Sonny's educational advantages, for in his "Schoolin'\textsuperscript{15} days he was enrolled in three schools. That was expensive, yet wasn't Sonny worth three children? Each morning he went to the teacher who suited his fancy at that particular time. Sometimes he changed from one to the other before the day was over, as on the occasion of the chimney episode. When one of his regular classrooms

\textsuperscript{13}Ruth McEnery Stuart, \textit{Sonny}, \textit{A Christmas Guest}, New York, 1896, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.
did not appeal to the little boy, his mother laid everything aside at home and taught him herself. But after such an ordeal (of course it was that for her because Sonny had learned enough to contradict her methods), she always talked in her sleep.16

A review of Sonny in Interior for January 14, 1897, doubtless expresses the general sentiment concerning it:

16 Pasted in the notebook of clippings concerning Mrs. Stuart in the collection at Tulane is an envelope with the following letter to the author:

Hamilton, Mass.
Aug. 25, 1897

Mrs. Ruth McEnery Stuart,

Dear Madam:

"Sonny's Schoolin'" was the perfection of an educational story! How we wish that we, as editors of the Kindergarten Review, had been born earlier and had known of their being such an article before you sent it to the lucky firm of Harper Brothers!

We would have done without new dresses, denied ourselves butter and bread, and even encroached on our editorial salary for the sake of having that delightful story in our magazine, where it could have given such beautiful proof that things educational can reach the acme of attraction and interest.

Now we should rejoice extremely in something Christmas-y from you if we can possibly get it, and if you have anything of that delightful nature in your head. Failing something Xmas-y, perhaps we could be content with a more general story or account,—nothing heavy or essay-like, that is more obtainable from those in the professional ranks.

Won't you kindly consider it? We have only a small allowance with which to pay for articles as yet; but we would like to hear from you as to whether you could write something for us and as to what price you would need to have for at least 2500 words.

We should like something bright and thoroughly good for our opening pages.

Yours very truly
Laura E. Parkson
for the Editors of
Kindergarten Review
"Sonny," by Mrs. Stuart, is one of the treats of the hour. It owes no debt to "Tommy" as most, if not all, the chapters describing Sonny's youth, had been written and published before Tommy came wafting over the arid planes of Hardy and Howells and Meredith (to say nothing of lesser), "trailing clouds of glory" as he came, and bringing the breath of heaven to parched men. "Sonny" is not like Tommy either, but the same spirit is there in both books, the same half-step of childhood between smiles and tears, the same purity even in naughtiness, the same quickness to forgive and be forgiven, the same largeness of expectation and the same absence of dread. "Sonny" is the spoiled child of elderly parents in Arkansas, their only child .... Sonny is not so imaginative as Tommy. He turns to nature for enjoyment where Tommy turns to romance. Sonny is a lover of living things, as Tommy is of fantasies ... Sonny is far and away the best thing she has done, good as her other work is. ... Perhaps one had need be a parent before the whole beauty of the little book can come home to his heart; but one must needs only have a heart to appreciate some of the appealingness, and it is to be hoped that Sonny will be among the most widely read books of this season.17

Mrs. Stuart lived in a New York apartment house with her own Sonny and Miss Sarah Stirling. The refinement of the writer was nowhere better shown than in her own home. Reporters who interviewed her were always impressed by the daintiness and good taste displayed in her apartment, to which came old friends from the South and many new ones from the North. A correspondent of the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Times wrote on April 29, 1898:

The nearest approach to a Southern home that is possible in a New York apartment house may be found in the comfortable and attractive manage of Mrs. Ruth McEnery Stuart, out on Fifty-sixth Street. There are quaint bits of furniture, artistic alcoves, crazy corners and comfortable couches. The motive of her own bedroom is an ancient high-posted mahogany bed, and presiding over the kitchen is a genuine old-fashioned Southern "darkey." Like all Southerners, Mrs. Stuart thoroughly understands the beautiful art of entertaining, and during the season her at

17 Interior, January 14, 1897. Tulane Stuart Collection.
homes are much patronized. She is a famous tea maker and when seated behind her steaming kettle she dispenses that subtle, delicate humor which is the chief charm of her writings with as lavish a generosity as she does her hospitality. Mrs. Stuart is happily possessed of a beautifully modulated sweet, low voice ... and in reading from her own writings gives most charmingly the drawling vowels, the quaint crotchets and quavers of the Southern dialect, whose infinite variety and exquisite detail she knows so well how to delineate with all the humor and pathos of the simple life stories she tells.18

Even as far away as Los Angeles Ruth McNerly Stuart's fame as a cook was known. The Times, published there on Feb. 6, 1898, spoke of her as one of the best cooks, if not the best, cook in America. It said: "She has made money, as well as a wide reputation, from her books, but her pride is much sooner touched by reference to her soups than to her romances. When wearied with the pen she can always find solace in mixing a salad or compounding a gumbo, and shows veritable genius in all that relates to sauces and savories. In the kitchen her sense of humor expands .... and hearing her then, the listener realizes what a remarkable gift this Louisiana woman possesses."19

Another newspaper wrote of her:

"Her literary associations are principally among what is known as the "Harper Set," and she is definitely enrolled as what the magazine people call a "Harper pet." She is a slender, dark-eyed, middle-aged widow, has one child, a son, is a very bright talker, and full of generous interest in other people's work."20

18 Pennsylvania Times, April 29, 1898. Tulane Stuart Collection.
19 Los Angeles Times, Feb. 6, 1898. Tulane Stuart Collection.
For a while Mrs. Stuart was substitute editor of *Harper's Bazaar*. Many magazines circulated over the entire nation published her stories and poems—*Harper's*, *Century*, *Outlook*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *The Delineator*, *The Ladies Home Journal*, *The North American*, *Literary Digest*, and innumerable others. When one surveys the long lists of her works in the old *Readers' Guides*, and then realizes that many of the things she wrote are not even tabulated in these, he is amazed at her productivity. How was she able to do so much? There seems to have been no end to her compositions, yet many were only for popular consumption. It was during this period that *Harper's*, viewing the success of *Punch* in England, established a department called "The Editor's Drawer."*21* Hardly a volume was published without some of Mrs. Stuart's humorous pieces.

Ruth McEnery Stuart, like the other literary comedians of her day, was not restricted to printed works alone as a medium for spreading her fame:

Like motion picture actors and actresses of today, who make "appearances in person" before enthusiastic audiences, humorists went into every part of the land and appeared on lecture platforms. Started in 1825 as a part of the lyceum system, the popular lecture, which before the war had "spread throughout the country from Boston to Detroit and Maine to Florida" and which after the war was exploited by such enterprising leaders as Williams, Paul, and Redpath, proved a boon to many humorists.*22*

Mrs. Stuart's letters and the innumerable newspaper clippings

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from 1893 until the end of her life are proof that she read her works in many cities throughout the East, the North, the South, and even the West. Sometimes she spoke before a large audience; at other times she gave "parlor readings" to smaller groups. In 1895, when for three years she had been reinforcing her income in this manner, she said:

"So far as I know there are only three women who are doing this: Mrs. Custer, Mrs. Kate Douglas Wiggins, and myself. ... I have simply read my stories and have been much more successful that I ever thought of being. ..."

In 1895 Mrs. Stuart gave readings for approximately three weeks in Chicago. Eugene Field, writing of her under "Sharps and Flats" in the Chicago Record for March 19, 1895, said:

Chicago is just at present entertaining a distinguished visitor—Mrs. Ruth McEnery Stuart, one of the best of American short-story writers. The lady's work is remarkable for its humanity, its naturalness, its tenderness and the delicacy and pervasiveness of its humor. Mrs. Stuart's negro dialect comes nearer to perfection than that of any other contemporaneous writer, and presumably so because when she addresses herself to negro dialect this writer not only speaks but also thinks in dialect.

An incident that occurred during the Chicago visit gave Ruth McEnery Stuart an opportunity to express her feeling about dialect. When a reviewer who had an antipathy for it was talking with her, she exclaimed: "I fancy I dislike dialect just as much as you do, and that


24 Chicago Record, March 19, 1895. Tulane Stuart Collection.
is why I am emboldened to ask your advice. Now what am I to do? I de-
est dialect, and yet the people I write about talk just that way."

An article concerning Mrs. Stuart in the Maury Democrat, signed by Trotwood, is altogether enthusiastic:

A rare treat is in store for the lovers of Southern literature when Mrs. Ruth McEnery Stuart reads here on the 4th of December. Mrs. Stuart is not only an author of natural reputation, but is a humorist and reader as well and is in great demand throughout the country, giving as she does in her own interpretation of that life in the South today which, in her books, has made her famous.

It is a word of superegotism on my own part to say anything of Mrs. Stuart's work to anyone who has read "Sonny," or "The Widder Johnsing," but perhaps a hasty expression of my own opinions may not be altogether inappropriate when I affirm that in my opinion Mrs. Stuart out-ranks all Southern humorists and as interpreter of Negro character today in the far South is the truest and most original one that has yet appeared.

Page's negroes are all in the past, taken from hearsay and often from supposition; Harris' are often mythical, though intensely real; but Mrs. Stuart's actually live and walk before us today with a trueness, a reality, a humor and a pathos which has greatly made her the greatest interpreter of negro character that has yet appeared.

Ruth McEnery Stuart visited the Cables when she read in Northamp-
ton, Massachusetts. Another time she read in Whittier's birthplace. Often she was with her friends, the Popes, when she read in Boston. At Radcliffe, the Waldorf Astoria, in New Orleans, in Atlanta, in Denver--she read over the entire country.

25 Record, Chicago, April 2, 1895. Tulane Stuart Collection.

26 The clipping is in the Ruth McEnery Stuart Collection at Tulane.
CHAPTER V
YEARS OF HARD WORK

The strain of rising morning after morning at five o'clock to go to her desk to write, of traveling to every part of the United States for her readings, of being gracious to people wherever she went, and of directing her adolescent son, Ruth McEnery Stuart endured even with gaiety most of the time. An iron will drove her on—an iron will and possibly the exhilaration of success. Such a mood the following letter reveals:

126 East 207th St. N. Y.
Nov. 27, '96

Dear W. Cable

Did you know I was going to read in Northampton on Saturday evening December fifth at Miss Cooper's School?

But the object of this is to tell you that Miss J.W. Dickerson of 89 Madstone St., Phila gave me 50¢ at Onteora—yes, she did, and dat's three monts ago, an' I don't ker ef it is. I done spent 'er money, too long ago to talk about—but she gimme dat for an' considerin' de fac' dat I got a 'ones' face and I done persuaded 'er dat I gwine pass it on to you—caze you got a 'ones' name an' she ain't see yo' face nor read no conterdict in it—an' I tol' 'er dat ef she'd sen on dat remount, you'd sen' her yo' "Letter" book—wha' done riz in price sence den an' ac' turncoat for a whole endurin' year. Howsomer, I spect ef she see dishere new Symposium, she'll see day got as much agin A.B.C. in de entitlement an' she wan't keer ef you pester her fur one mo' 'fo' bits or else ac' lowdown an' stop de paper on 'er half way throo de year.

Of co'se I leaved all dat manners an' behavior to you an' when I come on ter yo' town nex' week I gwine gie you her money.

She's mighty anxious for a paper wha' got my picture in it an' a' (Shorter Catechism) about me—ef you got one or two on hand

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leff over. Pass my love aroun' de place, please sir, when all de family is at home.

I sign my name
Ruth McE St. 1

Many times Mrs. Stuart was tired. In her letters she speaks repeatedly of fatigue. "I have not been up to the mark since I came into this beautiful place," she wrote Mrs. Candace Wheeler from Onteora Park, Tannersville, New York, Sept. 6, 1898. "The awful day in N & the fatigue of the blazing-hot trip here following so soon quite used me up, and I have looked like a wraith ever since and have not yet been up to the work here."

To her friends the Drs. Pope in Boston Mrs. Stuart always revealed her true feelings. The correspondence with them extended from 1897 through 1912. Almost all of the letters, now deposited in the Ruth McEnery Stuart collection at Tulane, are written on tiny, dainty linen paper. Their appearance is neat, for Mrs. Stuart's handwriting was as legible as printing. Every inch of space is utilized; often the end of the letter is written lengthwise or crosswise on the margin of the first page. Postscripts are numerous. The initial letter in the series illustrates the style and spirit of the group and alludes to an often-mentioned topic—her not being well.

My dear Friends,

Thank you so much for your sweet letters. I'm coming to you on Tuesday night some time or Wednesday morning. I'll write you exactly so you'll know who's a-ringin' of your bell! You needn't

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1 The letter is in the Tulane Stuart Collection.
come to meet me—plenty o' hacks around. I want to take in as much as possible of the grand spirit as it pervades Gotham on that day. But I "machelly 'spize processions" and don't want to walk or sit up even to see it when I have my tiny own—and I won't.

It was sweet of you to want me back again and I'm not sure I'll be a much better guest than I was before. I may have to lie abed o' morning as I did before to be good for the day's demands. I have been ill again—so ill I had to telegraph to cancel an engagement the last week—Wednesday 21 and am only a "poor critter" yet. On Wednesday you know I am to read at Sander's Theater at the big affair for the college [Radcliffe] and on Thursday the New England Women's Press Association are to give me a recognition. Mrs. May Alden Ward is president. Do you know her?

A letter to Mrs. Bondmot Kester said:

I am not ill but I have had absolutely no rest for a fortnight until now and I believe that, in my first flop, the home pillow is the place for me. From it I can scold and be disagreeable which prerogative I have been exercising all this holy Sabbath day and don't like myself this morning at all. Still I am going in a humor to hear some 'harp music' at Mrs. Riggs where so she writes I am to have the chagrin of hearing some of my own verses read or recited and shall see myself as others see me? Perhaps I am flattering myself. She didn't say "chagrin." I do.

Ruth McEnery Stuart learned to conceal chagrin. She had to in dealing with many kinds of hostesses and singular dispositions. An unusual experience revealing her sense of comedy and her tact is shown in this personal narrative:

I arrived at my destination in a town where I was an entire stranger, somewhat late for a dinner party which the president of the club for which I was to read was kindly giving in my honor. The train was an hour or so behind time so that when I arrived at the house my hostess met me with apologies to say that, as we should have little more than time to drive to the club-house, she felt it best to have the guests begin dinner and she had followed me to my room to escort me down. And while she deftly aided me in getting rid of my hat and some of the train-grit which lay upon my person, I soon discovered that something more than an ordinary "situation" was disturbing her mind. I didn't mind being on the ragged edge of a time-limit. I commended her for not waiting dinner for me. I could dress hastily when my trunk should be brought up. I was not too tired—or too cold—or, the fact was,
I was feeling very well and quite equal to that which lay before me—as I knew it. But I did not know it all. It was an embarrassing story to tell, and a difficult one, but with a desperate plunge, as one taking a fatal leap, my hostess finally said:

"Mrs. Stuart, we are having a terrible experience here tonight. I hardly know what to say to you. I must tell you, and yet I hardly dare. It is so embarrassing!"

Of course, I urged her to let me know the worst, suggested that it might not be so bad as she thought, and thus encouraged, she gave me the story.

Insisting that she did not in the least know how to begin, she said: "You see, our town is divided, as to its women, into two factions: that represented by the club for which you are to read is one, and the other, for reasons too many and too local to explain, is most unfriendly to us. The disgruntled minority is led by a lady who feels greatly aggrieved because of a fancied slight from our club, as a club. She is a woman of wealth and individuality and, I am sorry to say, a person of somewhat lawless temper. When she learned that you were coming to read for us she declared that she would embarrass us so that we would regret it. She has bought up all the seats in the front rows and has publicly announced that she intends to walk into the hall tonight with enough negroes to fill these seats.

I never saw anyone more troubled than my kind hostess as she thus with bated breath explained the cause of all the trepidation. When she had done, I asked quietly, "And is that all?"

"Why—why, yes—that's all—but isn't it terrible?" she panted.

"Why, no," I smiled, actually relieved. "If that's all, don't worry. We'll manage that. Come, let's go down to dinner."

And now, real tears came to the eyes of my hostess. "Mrs. Stuart, I feel as if I could hug you," she said. "Why, you see, we knew you were a Southern woman—and we didn't know what prejudices you might have—we were afraid you might just simply refuse to appear ...." 2

To Mrs. Stuart it seemed that the "guest-lady" of the plumes who led the line of Negroes into the hall was slightly nervous—that her "'nerve' had become plural ...." 3 The Southern reader was discerning.


3 Ibid.
Her sister Susie said that though she was keenly alive to the ridiculous and had such a gift of epigrammatic utterance as few possess she was never personal in her witticisms even in the privacy of her own home circle. "My sister," declared Mrs. Calloway, "always had a way of seeing the funny side of things and reproducing it in a convincingly droll way. As a family, we are appreciative of the humorous, so she always had a sympathetic audience. In fact, although she was a leader, we all reinforced her more or less."  

"Impending poverty" had brought Ruth McEnery Stuart to writing and to giving readings. It was necessity that motivated the capitalization of her sense of humor. "When the time came when I found I must make money, I did not know which way to turn. Like the majority of Southern women, I had been brought up to enjoy life, and take no thought of its serious complexities, but when the problem confronted me, I knew that I must rise to the emergency, as so many have done before and since ...."  

Her only inspiration—as Mrs. Stuart confessed—was hard work. A reviewer said of her creative work: "She seems to understand that humor is never so keen as when closely allied to pathos." Some of her "work" as time went on was specifically designed for readings. For

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4 An unidentified newspaper clipping. Tulane Stuart Collection.
6 Ibid.
instance, there is a good deal of difference between the length of most
of the stories in A Golden Wedding and Other Tales and those in Solomon
Crow's Christmas Pockets and Other Tales published in New York in 1896
by Harper & Brothers. The little anthology has eight sketches, many of
them very short. Nearly every story in the group is written from the
maternal point of view. In each the author shows keen knowledge of the
heart of a child.

"Solomon Crow's Christmas Pockets" is a picturesque characteriza-
tion of a little boy called Solomon because, when he was born, he looked
so wise, and Crow, because he was so black. In the little ten-year-old
Negro there is a transformation from dishonesty to honesty because of the
influence of a stern man and his gentle wife. The charm of the story is
the sympathetic manner in which the little boy is presented.

Other stories in the volume are of uneven merit. "The Two Tims,"
a study of a little Negro boy and his grandfather, deals with a relation-
ship Mrs. Stuart used so often that she stereotyped it. "Duke's Christ-
mas," another narrative with similar characters, has a great deal of ap-
peal, although it is melodramatic. Too much of Little Women is evident
in "The Frey's Christmas Party." The Negro woman in "Old Easter" be-
longs among the lovable and quaint freaks of literature.

"Quackalina," a bestiary, is in the tradition of Aesop and Joel
Chandler Harris. It could be made into a delightful movie and should be
in the literature of American children. The scene in which Sir Sooty
Drake examines the tongue of his little wife is so much like a similar
scene in the Nun's Priest's tale that the reader feels the author possibly had Chaucer's story in mind.

In Simpkinsville, published by Harper's in 1897, was not a favorite of William Dean Howells. However, an earlier story in the Simpkinsville saga, "The Woman's Exchange of Simpkinsville" was praised by Herbert Spencer as better than any fiction he had seen done since George Eliot.

The Simpkinsville stories are an effort to portray the life of the Arkansas hillbilly; they are comparable to Margaret Deland's depiction of life in Old Chester. Neither writer is so harshly realistic as Sinclair Lewis in his Main Street, nor does either try to interpret the whole of America in terms of one town. Instead, local color in the manner of Bret Harte is the aim of each of these women; and they see their subjects through rose-colored glasses. Although the narratives are very obviously "made," the reader cannot help admiring the neatness and skill of the technique. One can "see the wheels go round" yet enjoy the precision of the operation.

"An Arkansas Prophet" is a description of a picturesque and uncanny old Negro who communed with nature, peered into the future, and proved himself "semper fidelis." The portrait has human interest because it is cast into narrative form and rises to a sharp climax. Vice pursues virtue, yet the story is somewhat more than melodrama. The turn

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7 The article is entered under "General Comment" in the notebook of newspaper clippings in the Tulane Stuart Collection. It is entitled "The Southern States in Recent American Literature," London, England.

8 The Interior, Chicago, Nov. 16, 1899. Tulane Stuart Collection.
of events is well prepared for; no words are wasted on a conclusion. The last sentence—"I ain't never fired her but once-t"\(^9\) is economical in expression and emphatic. The author handles a delicate theme in a refined manner.

The situation in "Seeds" is the drollest one Mrs. Stuart invented. Elijah Tomkins, widower, obligated by his wife's dying request to place a rose each day upon her grave, was determined to keep his promise and at the same time to avoid the derision of Simpkinsville, which had no mercy upon men who displayed affection for the dead. That is the reason he went to the cemetery in the dawn of each morning to bury his bud! In the fourth week of his trial something happened. Mrs. Stuart is at her best in narrating this; it is the psychological interest that is predominant. The widow and the widower, unsophisticated and simple, are redolent of the country flowers and the jasmine hedge. Rarely does a woman have more common sense, and deeper sympathy, than the widow Christian. The story is worth reading just to hear her say, "We all have our trials, Mr. Tomkins, an' when yore buds seem no' than you can bear, why just remember that I've got my beer bottles."\(^10\) Her philosophy is homely. One cannot appreciate her without liking what she says, for she is one of the most pleasant and most convincing individuals in Southern literature.


The reader may infer from a provocative footnote that the incidents which compose "Weeds" are from real life. However, Ruth McEnery Stuart once told a reporter that her characters were all drawn from inspiration.

"I have found," she explained, "that in writing stories, facts or bits taken from life intact hamper instead of helping me. There is always a question as to the real incident's fitting naturally into a new situation. I always fancy I can see the stitches around the patch. Besides, is it not true that the real incident that suggests itself for use is apt to be attractive for its exceptional characters? Hence it is not true to life. It was noticeable in life for this very reason. When it is put into a story, since it cannot be taken with its entire commonplace setting, it loses its realistic value; it's out of drawing and false."[11]

The stories "The Dividing Fence" and "The Middle Hall," its sequel, are the least interesting and the least artistic work in the volume In Simpkinsville. The plot of each is labored, sentimental, and far from meritorious, yet the characterization is very good. The first is the story of two families that lived side by side with a stoop between them. Finally Mrs. Carroll's husband died and then Mr. Bradfield's wife. After two years he was courting her, but by using figures of speech that showed what good business it would be for them to marry.

A third character, Elder Billins, was also interested in Mrs. Carroll. Although he had a prayer-meeting voice and slit his boots over his bunions, he was a serious obstacle to the next-door neighbor.

Mrs. Carroll's problem was solved, as many problems are solved, by time. On the evening Elder Billins came to propose, the illness of

Mr. Bradfield's little girl showed the child's dead mother's friend where her duty lay. The pain of the answer she should have to give the Elder he did not have to suffer in this world because in going to get the doctor for the sick child he had a heart attack himself and died.

The somewhat lush style of Ruth McEnery Stuart is another serious flaw in "The Dividing Fence" and "The Middle Hall." Sensitive to nature and often artistic in her depiction of it, Mrs. Stuart has many references to the beauties of the world which the most discriminating reader would not wish to forego. Sometimes she is too sentimentally symbolic in her description of nature; she is in these stories.

The writer did not consider herself a romanticist. "I don't call myself names at all," she said. "I leave that for others to do. But seriously I should not call myself a romanticist. I can't say that the truth is entire realism, as this term is generally understood. Realism, if it means fidelity to life, must, of course, always be the aim of all good workers."^12

A part of life in the South before the twentieth century that Mrs. Stuart understood especially well was the household in which a brother included his maiden sister as a member of his family. The brother-sister ties of genteel people she knew, of course, very well from her own family. The sentiment of the brother of Miss Jemima in "Miss Jemima's Valentine" reminds the reader of James M. Barrie's devotion to

^12 Ibid.
his sister. Somewhat like the later story "A Note in Scarlet," the his-
tory of Miss Jemima lacks something of its artistry. As in "A Note in
Scarlet," revolt is the inciting force. To a modern woman, Miss Jemima
and the sentimental trappings of the valentine affair are difficult to
accept. That there were women who doubtless acted as she did and an age
that found the bread of the spirit in valentines "profusely decorated
with love symbols," one must remember. A sentence filled with acceptable
restraint states, "There was a little, quiet, middle-aged wedding in the
church on Easter Sunday."13

Much more convincing than the valentine story is "A Slender Ro-
mance," one of the best pieces the author ever wrote. Since she had been
reared in the Presbyterian Church, Ruth McEnery Stuart knew the stiffness
and inaccessible quality peculiar to the old maids and old bachelors of
that denomination. In the literature of love stories that never quite
materialized and thus lasted much longer than those that came to fruition
"A Slender Romance" is a little classic. It gives a view into an aspect
of life almost foreign to a century lacking in reserve, yet it is an
authentic picture.

Even more distinguished than the story of Deacon Hatfield and
Miss Euphemia is "The Unlived Life of Little Mary Ellen." The there is
the effect of disillusionment upon a sensitive girl. The disgrace of

13 Ruth McEnery Stuart, "Miss Jemima's Valentine," In Simpkins-
her being deserted at the altar created in Mary Ellen a peculiar mental attitude. Thinking she was married, the shocked girl wondered why her husband never came. At Christmas when a magnificent doll addressed to her niece Mary Ellen was brought to her by mistake, she felt her prayers for a baby had been answered. The two old servants, her brother, the doctor, and all her friends were drawn into the web of her fate. Even the mischievous young fellows who whistled gayly to tease Brother Billins became still as she drove her shabby buggy through the streets of Simpsonsville, holding the doll upon her lap. Certainly the story is to be remembered for the restraint with which Ruth McEnery Stuart handles the material. Edwin Lewis Stephens placed it first among her work. The reader suspects that one of the reasons some of Mrs. Stuart's stories were better than others was that she worked harder on them. Miss Sarah Stirling McEnery said that by the time breakfast was served her sister had been working each morning for two or three hours. Unquestionably she "burned her candle at both ends." A letter written to the Drs. Pope from the Antlers Hotel in Colorado Springs, Colorado, on July 11, 1898, gives a glimpse into her manner of life:

My dear friends,

You see I'm still in the far west. This beautiful, beautiful country! I wish I could say the magic word that would bring you both here and let you spend the days remaining to me here with me. Then we'd go back to Cohasset.

My ticket to return is good until the 17th, and there is some agitation as to having it extended a little if I will stay, and, with such air to fill my tired lungs I feel almost as if I ought

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not to decline to stay if I can remain .... I have had for the past two days my first real rest in years. I have just slept and done as I feel inclined ... and it has been a refreshing experience, but I hope to show the advantages of it more after I get home than I do now—I feel the altitude a little so that I can't exercise so much as at home.

Mrs. Stuart told of having been asked to read in Colorado Springs, so that her vacation was not to be just a vacation. A passage of the letter reveals her devotion for Stirling. When one considers what was lurking in the future for the lad, the lines seem ominous:

I am feeling a little peculiar about my boy's not writing to me. He was with you when you wrote Dr. Emily, and of course he had my address, and of course he will write, but he sometimes forgets that he is my onlyest all, that I get lonely when my letters do not come. I should be pleased to know he had gone on a fishing trip with your nephew, if the way were open. It would be a good experience for him. I suppose he has gone to join his Aunt by this time. He is a dear boy, good hearted, and loving, but life is all playtime for him yet. I feel anxious for him sometimes. I want him to see things more seriously. I hope he was an agreeable guest and it was dear of you to ask him to stop over.

Instead of having her ticket extended as she had thought she might do, Mrs. Stuart returned to New York, where on July 21 she wrote to thank her friends for lending Stirling five dollars during her absence. He had met her the day before and at the very time of her writing "Flourishing a dust cloth with a will." Mrs. Stuart assured the doctors that he would soon express for himself his appreciation of their kindness to him. But she added, "he is only a three-months old baby in some respects." Then, referring to her plans for his education, she mentioned West Point, the "decision of the family." To prepare him, she said she intended to send him that fall to Colonel Hull.

15 The letter is in the Tulane Stuart Collection.
In her September letter to her friends in Boston Ruth McEnery Stuart spoke of her hobby, mycology, an interest she shared with them. She expressed disappointment because the copy of her Gibson book was imperfect and called herself an "impecunious mycologist." An outing in the woods on which she had found a "procerus" had given her pleasure.

However, there was not enough relaxation for the industrious writer. In 1898 her stories appeared in three new volumes—Moriah's Mourning and Other Half-Hour Sketches, The Second Wooing of Salina Sue, and Holly and Pizen. The Negro and the hillbilly are the subjects of the author's study. Crispness and terseness of expression characterize the stories in the first two books, both well written. The stories of Holly and Pizen have merit, too.

To some readers "Moriah's Mourning" represents the climax of Ruth McEnery Stuart's work. In a letter written in 1936 to the author of this volume, Colonel J. Fair Hardin, one of the outstanding collectors of Louisiana material and an able critic, said he thought it Mrs. Stuart's best story. It is also a favorite of this author, who suggests that it should be included in some textbook. Moriah's own analysis of her conduct reveals that her motivating force was a desire for motherhood. How she attained the ambition which nature had failed to satisfy is the story of her scheming to win Pete and his children. Her "cot'n," begun at the end of the first month after the death of her Numa, for whom she had dyed her clothes black—even to the skin—was a surprise to all her friends.
William Dean Howells said he had read *In Simpkinsville* without expectation of the pleasure awaiting him in *Moriah’s Mourning*, "which," he commented, "I found a truly delicious morsel. In the first the widow and widowers are mostly white, and in the last they are mostly black; and coloured bereavement, when varied with potential matrimony, has greater elements of cheerfulness." A number of the Negro stories in the 1898 volume will surely endure. Each is a portrait gallery of individuals with pictures of their manners, social occasions, home life, and religious views. The future historian of the Southern Negro will find in the fiction authentic social documentation.

Similar to "Moriah's Mourning" is "Nearest of Kin," for when Sister Sophy Sophia's funeral sermon was finally preached after her long-un sunk grave had settled, chief among the mourners were her husband's new wife and little six-months' old girl. As soon as Tamar had married Pompey, she put on mourning for his deceased wife. "Dey tell me," she averred, "a 'oman is got a right to go in mo'nin' for her husband's kin anyway; but of co'se, come down to it, she warn't no blood-kin to Pompey nohow. Howsoever, eve'ybody knows a widder or a widderer is inti tled to wear all de mo'nin' dey is; and his wife, why she's intitled to a equal sheer in it, if she choose to seize her rights. I'd 'a' put it on befo' de weddin', 'cep'n I didn't have no title to it, an' it wouldn't 'a' been as comfort to her nowadays."

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16 The article, referred to earlier in this chapter, is in the notebook of clippings in the Tulane Stuart Collection.

"Apollo Belvedere" is also typical of the colored people. How Apollo Belvedere, whose name compensated for his physical short-comings, outwitted in romance "Pete Peters, a handsome griff with just enough Indian in his blood to give him an air of distinction, and a French-talking mulatto who had come up from New Orleans to repair the machinery in the sugar-house"\(^{18}\) is unforgettable comedy.

In "The Second Wooing of Salina Sue" the darkies are the author's only interest. The story tells of the upheaval which ensued from the preaching of the Reverend Saul Saunders of the Buckeye Conference. Those who since "before the s'render" had lived in married happiness without the benefit of clergy were suddenly made aware of their dereliction and forced to mend their lives by appearing in due ceremony at the church door.

But not so Salina Sue, the buxom mother of the yardful of cross-eyed Steve's children. Salina said when she'd study about getting married, she'd get somebody. Thus Steve was "left out." The trials of the sincere little Negro man approached tragedy. The romance which came about in spite of Salina's perversity ended in a wedding, with orange blossoms. Attending Salina and Steve was their daughter. "Yes'm," said Salina, "she gwine stan' up wid us, an' she's tickled all but to death over it. She's purty nigh fifteen, I s'pec' an' hit'll be jes de same as comin' out in s'ciety."\(^{19}\)


\(^{19}\)Ruth McEnery Stuart, "The Second Wooing of Salina Sue," Harper's Monthly, XC VIII (December, 1898), 60.
"Holly and Pizen" tells of an old healer of diseases, Uncle Riah. Because of his power over the Negroes on the plantation, he daily practiced his profession with all the skill of a psychoanalyst. Through power of insight, his mind's eye, a God-given gift which had been accompanied by a body of "exceptional robustousness," Uncle Riah divined the cause of every ailment, which he then invited into his own body. The cured patient departed rejoicing and promising to bring the struggling doctor just the delicacies his disease required.

The comedy of Uncle Riah, with its keen insight into the Negro, has an idealized setting. Possibly sentimental, yet a seasoned story one does not put out of his mind, "Holly and Pizen" will be loved as long as people read Christmas stories. Uncle Riah has been compared with Uncle Remus. "And when you think a little," wrote the Los Angeles, California, Times for January 20, 1900, "he is as keen an observer of human nature—a prophet reader of it I should have said as any of the philosophers of earth in his own particular time."

Of the Simpkinsville sketches in Holly and Pizen "A Note of Scarlet" is most worthy of review. The heroine, Miss Melissa Ann Moore, knitted green mats until she decided to revolt. Then she bought some red zephyr! On the following Sunday morning she didn't feel that she could sit through a sermon. Without being too unrestrained the author has pictured nature as only one sensitive to its beauty can do. The

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20 The article is in the notebook of clippings in the Tulane Stuart Collection.
black-satin-backed bugs that went through their dance-figures for Miss Melissa, the beautiful transparent winged things, the opening dogwood, and the stately spruce trees filled to dripping with odorous sap provided a background for her fishing trip.

The second half of the story is an anticlimax. It would be pleasant to read the outing of the old maid without having to hear the culmination of her autumnal romance. Having read one of the Simpkinsville stories of bachelors and maids, one has read almost all. "A Note of Scarlet" should be republished, yet with Part II omitted.

The hard work of 1898 depleted Ruth McEnery Stuart. On January 5, 1899, she wrote the Popes in Boston of a wretched cold that had left her only "half strong." At the time she was visiting in Hampton, Virginia, and was planning to go the next day to Williamsburg.

From Covington, Louisiana, Mrs. Stuart wrote her friends on Dec. 2, 1900, to thank them for sending her some scissors for which she had asked. She had come down from New York with her sister Susie and Susie's daughter, Lee Calloway. Of course, she was trying to rest. Soon she was again in New York, publishing Napoleon Jackson: The Gentleman of the Plush Rocker and giving readings in Boston.

Her new book, reviewed favorably as the "Apotheosis of Laziness," deals with a family situation which at length a midnight court pondered. Since Napoleon Jackson was the son of an African prince and Hoodoo Jane, who had marked him for rest, Granny Shoshane declared he "ain't got no
workin' blood in him."\textsuperscript{21} "I's a family man, sir,"\textsuperscript{22} he told the census taker. Though Napoleon sat in his chair immaculately dressed while Rose Ann washed, Granny proved he was not "good for nothing." When Rose Ann had finished her appeal for her husband, the judge himself was abashed. In the case of laziness versus the strenuous life, laziness had won.

The daily scene in Rose Ann's yard was one in which the light touch prevailed. Passersby were attracted to join the happy group as Rose Ann washed and sang and the pickaninnies tumbled merrily about their father in his handsome chair. Particularly well done is the dancing scene, which interrupts the washing. A picture of a society that is rapidly vanishing, Napoleon Jackson is memorable among American Negro stories.

A story that has more sentimental substance than Napoleon Jackson is George Washington Jones: A Christmas Gift That Went A-Begging. It was published first as a volume in 1903, but it had appeared in print several years earlier. The narrative of the little Negro boy is almost a fairy story. In a realistic world such events as are depicted could hardly take place. Mrs. Stuart was always inclined to idealize the South and romanticize the relations between the master and his slaves and the continuation of that relationship in succeeding generations. Something of the spirit of the thing she liked so much to present was

\textsuperscript{21}Ruth McEnery Stuart, Napoleon Jackson: The Gentleman of the Plush Rocker (New York, 1901), 1902, p. 43.

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid.
true—the chivalry inculcated into many of the colored people, the Cavalier manners numbers of them possessed, their loyalty.

Though chance plays too conspicuous a roll in the fate of George Washington Jones, the little Negro himself is a real flesh-and-blood child. An evidence of the taste of Mrs. Stuart's day is found in the review of the book in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle for Nov. 28, 1903. "That is the gift of the gods to a writer who has divined in the little blackamoor the very charm which Thackeray limned in those he saw. To Mrs. Stuart this little work is merely a 'holiday throwoff.' The quality, however, is in it which is in all her inimitable portrayals of the 'undying race,' of whose best traits she is the best interpreter among the story tellers of her time."23

In The River's Children: an Idyll of the Mississippi a great deal of melodrama is mingled with real feeling for the mighty river, the luxuriance and rankness of Brake Island, and the local color of New Orleans and the South. The main characters in the novelette are a Creole, Harold LeDue, Agnes, his wife, their daughter, and the two faithful old Negroes who cared for the beautiful little blonde girl after her mother's death during the War Between the States. The writing has somewhat more restraint and compression than that of many who have used similar material. Of course, what romanticist does not enjoy reading this kind of story? Who is not touched by the "ghosts along the Mississippi" and intrigued by stories of what has happened to them?

23 Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Nov. 28, 1903, Tulane Stuart Collection.
Pictures of bayous, of the Negroes singing as they rowed while the sun sank low, the startling "presentment of the white house illuminated with festoons of Chinese lanterns, which extended across its entire width and down to the landing," the folk dancing in the clearing beyond the broad back gallery, and love making reinforced by the poems of Moore—all are components of the narrative.

The reunion of Harold LeDue, long after the war, with Aunt Hannah, Uncle Israel, and his little daughter was the work of chance. The old darkies had not strayed away from the Mississippi. The Auntie says, "All we river children, we boun' to stay by her, same as toddlin' babies hangs by a mammy's skirts." Having fulfilled her obligation to her white people, Auntie renewed her baptism in the river. That night it claimed her and Uncle Israel.

The epilogue, third section, seems hardly so justifiable as the prologue with its excellently sketched picture of the river flaunting itself and the Creoles fighting it, fearing it, praying to it.

In stating that Mrs. Stuart perhaps cared more for The River's Children than for any of her other books, the New York Times was hardly accurate. A more suitable review appeared in the St. Louis Democrat:

"That there is an undertone of pathos in it, born perhaps of the murmuring water, adds to the tender beauty and interest of the story not a little."
An undertone of pathos existed in Ruth McEnery Stuart's own life in the feeling that she must continue to write quantitatively. Even her fun she sought too strenuously. Social pleasures could not cure Mrs. Stuart's tired nerves. On June 30, 1904, she was writing to her friends: "You have never seen me so near nervous prostration, I am sure. I have got to drop things and try to be as God intended me to be."

Her good sense directed her to leave the city for the summer and go to a "quiet place," where she could rest. From Onteora on October 4, 1904, she wrote a cheery, bright note to the doctors.

In February of the following year she had to spend several weeks at the Jackson Health Resort, Dansville, New York. A gay note on February 18, refers to the next day--her birthday--and also shows her devotion to her sister and to Stirling.
CHAPTER VI

A BEREAVED MOTHER

A marker in the McEnery lot in the Metairie Cemetery in New Orleans states that Stirling McEnery Stuart died April 21, 1905. In the notebook of newspaper clippings kept by his mother and his Aunt Sarah and now in the Ruth McEnery Stuart collection in the Tulane Library in New Orleans there are no newspaper notices of his death. Many articles of a later time than the date of his death refer to Mrs. Stuart’s bereavement. Every friend and relative of hers with whom this author has talked spoke of the loss of her son as a tragedy from which the mother never recovered. The sorrow is evident, too, in many of the letters of the ensuing years.

The date of the fatal accident is lost in time, yet it was certainly soon after the letter Ruth McEnery Stuart wrote from the Jackson Health Resort on February 23, 1905. Miss Sarah Stirling McEnery in 1933 told this author the story:

"We were living in Flushing at the time and Stirling had gone out for the evening with some of his friends. Upon returning home he found that the butler had forgotten to put the key in its accustomed secret place. To wait outside until his mother should return home for the evening was impossible. The snow was deep; it was very cold. He knew that if he could just reach the upper window he could get inside to warmth. In attempting to climb to it, he fell and broke his neck."

In speaking of her half-brother's death, Mrs. C. C. Spragins at her home in Hope recalled the event with sorrow. She showed this author a picture of Stirling made a short time before the accident and remarked herself upon his handsomeness. Her story of what happened is similar in every detail to Miss Sarah’s.
"He and his friends had been out the night he fell. His mother wrote of his being in the hospital and of the beautiful flowers that were sent to him. He would have the nurse take them all over the hospital to others."

Then she spoke of how daring young men frequently are and said she had often talked with her son and grandsons about Stirling and had even extracted from her grandsons a promise never to climb to an upper story of a house.

Mr. C. C. Stuart, in discussing the Stuarts with this author in the summer of 1951, spoke frankly of his family; yet he made no reference to what Ruth McEnery Stuart in her letters to her Boston friends, whose brother, Colonel Pope, assisted her in settling her affairs after Stirling's death, referred to as a "crude and lying charge."¹ One can only conclude that Stirling fell because he was too recklessly daring.

For Ruth McEnery Stuart and Miss Sarah only infinite sorrow followed the accident—weeks of waiting and hoping and fighting until the inevitable end. A note written on Monday, April 10, 1905, at the Flushing Institute, Long Island, N. Y., gives a glimpse into the mother's experience:

Dear Friends:

Em's letter just rec'd and I hastily send you a line. I came in to change my clothes and rest a little.

¹ The "crude and lying charge statement" might have referred to rumors that might have been circulated among some of her contemporaries that Stirling had been drinking immediately before the accident occurred. The phrase is from the letter Ruth McEnery Stuart wrote the Drs. Pope from the Flushing Institute, Flushing, Long Island, on Tuesday, August 27, 1903. This and the other letters to the Drs. Pope are in the Tulane Stuart Collection.
He holds his own bravely—no more hemorrhages for several days.

I saw Dr. LeF. on Saturday. He still opposes surgery and advised my getting the surgeon's standpoint, so as to be satisfied and fully advised, so I saw Dr. Lewis Stirson, one of the best, and Dr. Bloodgood is a surgeon. He said he would not advise operation but thought as there was some definite pressure upon the spinal nerves I ought to call in a nerve specialist. He recommends Dr. Ballon, who was out of town and who seems not to be so very well known. Certainly he is not distinguished. So your old lady put on her thinking cap and said if we have a nerve specialist, why not the very best? So she wrote a personal letter to Dr. W. Mitchell and he is to be here tomorrow—Tues. morn. He is old, but his faculties are clear and sharp and his genius and rich experience will be invaluable. I am sure you approve of this.

Bless you, dear friends, for your loving support in our tribulation. The Boy is a marvel. Some one said to him yesterday as he lay on the pillow, looking pretty tired out but smiling, 'It must be pretty tiresome—lying here in one position,' to which he replied, 'It would be—if I stayed here, but I don't. I go off to the woods.' So with the wings of imagination and the courage of a hero he is fighting his pitiful battle.

We get so many reports of osteopathy—nearly every day some one. If we get him fairly well, we may let them look him over.

We know you love us and think of us, dear friends—and we are much blessed that the sunshine of our dear boy's heart illumines his sick room.

Love to you all, Miss Leonora, Ella—all. A dear letter from the Col—which I'll answer soon. So full of great heartedness and sympathy.

We will keep you aware of the general condition. No letter means patiently waiting.

Ruth

The period of "patiently waiting" ended eleven days later. From all over the world came letters of condolence—letters filling two "pillowcases" as Ruth McEnery Stuart expressed it. "Always," said Mrs. Judith Hyams Douglas, one of her most intimate friends in New Orleans, "it was her intention to answer these, but she could never bring herself to the heartbreaking task. It was not energy she lacked, nor the will, but the anguish attendant in dwelling upon the tragic sorrow was more than she could bear."²

²Interview, Mrs. Judith Hyams Douglas, New Orleans, 1933.
For several years after the death of her only child Ruth McKerny Stuart exerted little effort to write or to give readings. An account of the fifteen months following April 21, 1905, can almost be made by her letters to the Popes. The first, written to Colonel Pope on June 24, 1905, is evidence of his helpfulness in a problem almost as heartbreak­ing as the loss of Stirling.

Dear Colonel Pope,

I have been intending to drop you a line of appreciation and thanks for your kind effort in our behalf. We wanted those people, who are trying to do a great wrong, to know the truth of the integrity of our dear one and of ourselves and the testimony of such as you goes a long way. You see, they are all strangers. I sent you our thanks but must give you this personal word.

We do hope you are taking good care of the valuable man whose kind eyes look into your face from the mirror.

We hear that you have not been quite strong and that won't do. How fortunate you are, dear Col. Pope, in having the wise and affectionate counsel of two such women as the matchless twin sisters. They have so much experience of life, all stored and kept warm by sympathy and insight. They were a tower of strength to us in our great sorrow—which only deepens as the days go on. God help us.

I have had a most kind and sympathetic letter from your wife, Mrs. Pope, which I have wished to answer now but I have not her address. I'll get it though, and in the meantime, express our appreciation for us, please.

Ever sincerely yr. friend,
Ruth McKerny Stuart.

The following letter Ruth McKerny Stuart wrote to let her friends know the outcome of the Colonel's intercession.

Flushing Institute
Flushing, L. I.
Tuesday, Aug. 27, 1905

Dear Friends,

You will be glad to know that the Columbian has at last paid over their cheque in full and we owe the result chiefly to your good brother's "wiping up the floor with them" as they deserved.

In their answers, recently sent in, they had repeated every crude and lying charge—that was after getting Col. Pope's letter—but they saw it was a forlorn hope—after their young men, or men, met him in this affair.
It is no use to think of it again. It is done and over, Thank God. And tell the Colonel for us that while we dote on his Justice, we are mighty glad his mother had a boy baby his time!

I am so glad to know of Robert's doing so well .... I continue so strengthless that I am thinking of returning to Danville for a month or two. This Col difficulty has taken my life out of me nearly. I did not realize how much it meant until it was over, and I collapsed, with poor heart action, for several days—not in bed, but on it.

We think of you all the time ....

Despair only deepened. The letter of October 12, 1905, is very different from the gay one of October 14, 1904. To aggravate her worries, her tenant, to whom she had sublet her apartment, had moved, leaving everything badly abused and paying no rent.

...when I am done, I'll get away to rest--just where I do not know—but probably for a month or so to Danville—and then God knows where—I may go to Italy or the Mexican Gulf!

Sister is still at Onteora. She had a complete breakdown, & had taken an out-of-doors rest cure and is feeling stronger. She walks now, a mile or so daily, 'hopes to come home pretty strong. Her address is "Pennroyal, Onteora, Laurenceville, N. Y.—c/o Mrs. Candace Wheeler." She will be so glad of a word from you.

Love and love to you, dear Friends. The tie strengthens as time passes. God keep us all—but life is hard.

Lovingly,

Ruth

My boy—my boy—my boy!
This my heart's cry and thus far time has not helped.

At Delmonico's in New York on December 5, 1905, five days late, there was the famous seventieth birthday party for Mark Twain. "At Twain's own table were Kate Douglas Riggs, who wrote Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, Twain, the Rev. 'Joe' Twichell of Hartford (Twain's closest friend), Poet Bliss Carmen, Ruth McEnery Stuart, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, who specialized in short stories of New England, Editor Henry Lills Alden of Harper's, Henry H. Robers, Standard Oil Millionaire who straightened
out Twain's finances after he went bankrupt. Many other distinguished guests were present—"almost every literary celebrity of the day." Dressed in a sober color, Ruth McEnery Stuart submerged her grief somewhat to take part in a joyous occasion for another American humorist.

There is no record of the convivial dinner in either the extant letters or the clippings at Tulane. Not until a Dec. 27, 1905, "thank you" for beautiful black and white scarves from the Popes is there any further record. The author spoke of the Christmas season which had ... much to sweeten it--much love and sweet memories which we are trying to love and not to dread.

How we missed our bonny Boy in it all, no one can know--but where he is we shall every [sic] be are long--all of us, dear friend--and it ought not to be too sorrowful.

With the new year Mrs. Stuart made a futile effort to write again. Not for nearly three more years was she to accomplish very much.

220 West 59th Street
N Y Tuesday, Jan 14, 1906

Dear Friends,

I haven't forgotten the Boy's picture but we have been waiting for the full order to come--not yet arrived. The several of each sitting were soon exhausted in the family excepting one or two not quite up to the mark. They take a long time to finish them up.

I had a strong impulse to run up to you for a few days last week. I felt so restless and depressed and my sleep was so broken and my heart went out to you. I felt as if it would do me good just to be with you a little while--selfish, yes, I own it, but I'm having a hard time.

Well, before I could say the final word to myself, my teeth set up a cry, and when I talked, instead of pearls, great chunks of gold fell out of my mouth--and I had to hie me to my dentist, and I've been going there once and twice a day since and am to keep it up

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3 "Mark Twain Film," Life, May-June, 1944, p. 96.
4 Ibid.
several days longer. It seems to me I never seem to be beset with trials but something unforeseen drops out of the sky.

But I won't write you an unqualified wail. We are hoping to be comfortably settled somewhere within the next few days. ...I think I'll run over to Atlantic City Wed. afternoon or Thursday and take a survey of things there. If I can find a good sunny room overlooking the sea, I'll be glad—in a place, of course, where I can be quiet and get to work. There are plenty of hotels there with brass bands for dinner. The Hotel—Sanitarium there, Galen Hall, has been enlarged and improved. I'll look it over again. Dear love to you all.

Your
Heart-broken
Ruth

On February 27, 1906, Mrs. Stuart was again at the Jackson Health Resort, where she had been the year before. The "blessed" Colonel Pope had come down from Boston to see her. Whether his visit was to help her with further details of her business or to try to assist her regain her grip upon life, she did not say. In the letter she did mention owning 3,000 shares in Brown and Brown.

I'd sell my 3,000 shares for what they cost me if I could today. How do you feel about yours? But we are not worrying, are we? Dear love to all. I am reduced to scraps of my season's supply of paper—but you won't mind—and I am dead tired, as this letter may be like a bit of crazy patch-work. I often long to see you and I think of the days you sat and watched with us a year ago.5

Nearly three months later Ruth wrote her friends from New York.

220 W. 59, N. Y.
May 22nd 1906

Dear Friends

Just a line to tell you I'm "home" again and fairly improved—am trying to rent my apartment and to go abroad for a few months—to try to get hold of life.

5Ruth McEnery Stuart to the Drs. Pope. The letter was written February 27, 1906, at the Jackson Health Resort, New York. Tulane Stuart Collection.
The Sorrow seems to grow with time and I am only a vessel of tears—but I must not talk about it. I am hoping to rent for a year or more though this season is unfavorable for long leases. I need a stretch of ease with few cares—or I suppose I do. I need something and the thousand calls upon my time and patience and sympathy and purse in this greedy city are somewhat disastrous.

Evidently there had been little reason for any sort of financial strain since Mrs. Stuart's early days in New York. In the decade from 1895 to 1905, when she was working as hard as probably few women have ever worked, many newspaper articles referred to her prosperity and her being one of the best-paid writers of the country. Once when she was on a visit to New Orleans a paper had the bad taste to speak of her as the best-paid woman writer of the city. Even today among old timers one finds a "whiff" of the envy of her one of the New Orleans writers had. That person was so unmagnanimous as to initiate a movement to raise funds for her in her last days, for, so the rumor says, she wished to show that Ruth McEnery Stuart had failed. Mrs. Stuart's friends put an end to the solicitation.

Certainly the continuous illnesses of Mrs. Stuart shared in the steady depletion of her purse. Need one who has read her letters ask why she was unable to read anywhere or do much writing?

220 West 59th Street
NY June 15, 1906

Dear Friends,

I have been hoping to join my dear friend Mrs. Clements tonight on the midnight train to Boston and I thought to be sending you a telegram about now but instead I must write that I must be quiet for some days longer. I find myself exhausted after every effort and have to take to my bed—not ill but strengthless. I am improving slowly and if I get any sort of uplift, I shall see you very soon, supposing that it is convenient to you, dear friends, when I am able to go.
I have been disappointed in getting the woman who always comes to help me out with my wardrobe—mending, renovating, &c, and I am obliged to see to this & to do one or two things easily done—when I am myself but thus far impossible.

There is something about the fatal blow which is misleading. I suppose we are numbed, stunned, and only as we come gradually back, every returning bit of vitality attuned to pain, do we know how hopeless is recovery. This is my mental condition and it is akin to insanity. Still I hope to get the mastery and to live and work—but it will be as another woman not the merry-hearted Ruth whom you knew. I still laugh and tell a funny story on occasion—but the pendulum swings back to sorrow and tears. God help me.

Dear love to you all. I'll write again in a day or so.

Lovingly

Ruth

Sister sends love from Onteora.

Preparations for her departure abroad occupied much of Ruth Mc-Enery Stuart's time during June. At length, on July 4, she was ready to go.

Just dear love and "au revoir" darling friends.

I go with a sad heart and reluctant spirit—so ill-tuned to pleasure—not against my will or judgment. As I know I am most fortunate in this opportunity to enjoy companionship and protection of choice friends and I shall do my best to be strong.

The day in Flushing—although I spent it calmly enough—has made me suffer much, bringing all the realism of the tragedy back to me.

We decided after all to leave things as they are until autumn and I shall take option on a very suitable plot on the hillside—a green slope where one day we shall sleep together. Strange that we should not be able to escape the nature thought of the body as so expressing us as to be forever precious. I know how you feel about cremation and I may come to it, some day—but not yet. Nature's gradual method of assimilation seems gentler to me.
In January, 1907, Ruth McEnery Stuart resumed her social life in New York. In a typewritten letter to the Popes written on the thirtieth of January she spoke of Miss Sarah's being away from her, "trying to straighten out tangles." Humorously she referred to her mother's having said "during her last years that she preferred Ruth's typewritten letters, because she could read them off, almost without her glasses, like open-print newspapers."

In the same spirit of gaiety she wrote of having gone to the Old Guards' Ball with Mr. and Mrs. Colgate. "Of course we were in simple dress only to look on, and it was worth the effort .... the midnight military parade being very fine and imposing. I had just declined to join a party at Carnegie Hall, with a chafing-dish supper afterward, when Mrs. Colgate telephoned me, to see if I had got home. I am sending regret for everything of this sort for this week and am determined, if it is in me, to write and send off a story before I go to Philadelphia. I got a very nice letter from Mr. Alden day before yesterday asking me to hurry up and send in something there and saying some things which made me feel that I must prove worthy of the faith they have in me for good work."¹

Mrs. Stuart expended enormous effort to make herself resume

¹ The letter was written by Mrs. Stuart to the Drs. Pope from 105 East 18 Street, New York, January 30, 1907. Tulane Stuart Collection.
writing. At her desk her thoughts always returned to the spring of 1905. However, a new tenderness was developing to supplant the unmitigated grief. "Last evening," she wrote, "the boy who was with my darling Stirling the night he met his death came and spent three hours with me—talking about the boy and ... well, he loved him, and it is all a mystery. ..."

"But never mind. A rich widower is coming to see me today and I may do something sudden."

"But don't lose any sleep over this contingency!!!!"2

More than once in the years just after 1905 Ruth McEnery Stuart referred to "a very nice man," a "rich widower," a "gentleman." Whether it was always the same person, it is impossible to tell. Since the New Orleans friend— a man who "always loved her"—never married, it was surely not he. Once she mentioned the person's age—"about forty"—an interesting detail, for she herself at the time was fifty-five. One should remember, though, that she appeared to be younger than she was and that she carefully concealed the number of years she had lived. Soon after her arrival in New York, a paper referred to her as "middle aged."3 Nearly twenty-five years later, at the time of her death, she was described as "scarcely of middle age."4

2 Ibid.
As one reads the old letters in the collection at Tulane, one almost wishes Ruth McEnery Stuart might have become absorbed in the love of some acceptable man. For more than three years after the death of Stirling she wrote her notes to her friends on plain white paper with a fine black border. Yet there was more than the outward evidence of a great loss.

Mrs. Kendall recalled that Mrs. Stuart visited in New Orleans some time between 1905 and 1907 and that she read for the public in the basement of the new Prytania Street Presbyterian Church. Among the selections were "The Second Wooing of Salina Sue" and "The Widder Johnsing." When she came to the passage "De corpse is now prepared ter receive 'is frien's,'" everyone was convulsed with laughter. "Both her voice and her manner," said Mrs. Kendall, "were lovely."

At this period the McEnerys were living in a dark brown house on St. Andrews next door to a raised cottage. It was very tastefully furnished. Although Mrs. McEnery had died in 1904, a number of her children were still living in the home that was considered the "family" residence. Indeed, Ruth McEnery Stuart regarded it as her "real" home. The close tie with her brothers and sisters, especially Sarah and Susie, was one of the major reasons that her affections were never engaged by her "admirer" or "admirers." During the long period she spent with her family in 1907-1908, she sent a number of letters to her friends in Boston. In January, 1908, she wrote them of the "changeable" weather. "Do I like it? I abhor it!

5 Interview, Mrs. Kendall, New Orleans, 1952.

There is no comfort anywhere excepting out in the open and that, barring
the scurrying wind, is really heavenly—so mild and balmy and full of the
sweetish warmth of a lenient sun. .."

In February Mrs. Candace Wheeler, a distinguished Eastern artist,
visited the McEmerys and was entertained by them and other prominent people
in New Orleans.

Of course, our society people have her when they can get her. We
had a little reception here for her yesterday and today we went with
her to another—tomorrow there is something else and Thursday another
reception and so it goes. But she is going to slip out of a lot of
things now and try to nose around in the picturesque quarters of New
Orleans. We had a lovely time in the French Market the other day
and her artistic sense was thoroughly delighted with the color and
quaintness and picturesque features of this and its most interesting
location. We shall probably go with her and her niece, Candace
Thurber, to the Mexican Gulf coast in a few days. There is, by the
way, a new delightful sanitarium at Biloxi now—Dr. Folks Sanitar­
ium—built on the beach of beautiful blue waters with the pine for­
esta to landward. It is dark to be finely kept. You will be glad
to know, dear friends, that I am working along at my desk.7

After eleven days on the Gulf Coast Mrs. Stuart returned to New
Orleans with Mrs. Wheeler and Candace Thurber. "They expect to be here
until after Mardi Gras," she wrote on February twenty-third, "and our
people are keeping them going. Mrs. Wheeler delivered an address at the
Sophie Newcomb College last week, and will read her paper at the Quarante
Club and she is as full of appreciation of everything as we four are!"8

In the Crescent City on April 23, 1908, Ruth McEmery Stuart

7The letter was written to the Drs. Pope from 1435 St. Andrews
Street, New Orleans, Feb. 4, 1908. Tulane Stuart Collection.

8The letter was written to "Gustie" Pope from 1435 St. Andrews
Street, New Orleans, Feb. 23, 1908. Tulane Stuart Collection.
herself was presented in a program of readings at Newcomb Hall. The newspaper notice of the occasion, a copy of which is in the collection dedicated to her at Tulane, described the program as a "Brilliant social and literary event," at which Mrs. Stuart chose to give selections from *In Simpkinsville*, *Carlotta's Intended*, *Babette*, and a monologue. The stimulation from contact with the public as a reader and the wonder of spring in Louisiana, impressive as it always was to her, helped to restore her creative activity.

On her boat trip back to New York Mrs. Stuart seldom left her cabin. Again she was working as strenuously as of old. At the end of May when she wrote to bid the doctors bon voyage as they departed for a trip abroad, she told them, "I promised my dear Mrs. Candace Wheeler this winter that I'd throw off my black as soon as I could, but the time isn't yet if it ever will be. Not that I coddle sentiment of this sort at all—or that I believe in it in any particular way. I never wore any heavy crepe or heavy gloom—but somehow, I feel that color has gone out, for me—at least—I feel so yet—and these things are best left to settle themselves."9

In the autumn she resumed a busy schedule of readings and at last began to publish her works. On November the ninth she wrote the doctors, "But I began this to say that I am to be in Boston on the 5th as, no doubt Miss Reed has told you, dear friends, and to be with you, as you

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9The letter was written by Mrs. Stuart from the Florence, 105 18th Street, N. Y., May 30, 1908. Tulane Stuart Collection.
say, if it is entirely convenient, and if not, don't hesitate to say so. I am to read for the Bradford Academy again in the wk following—I suggested Tuesday or Wednesday & have not had time for reply, yet. Also, I read in Springfield that wk—probably Thursday—or possibly Wednesday."

_Harper's_ for November, 1908, contained "American Thanksgiving," one of the first of Mrs. Stuart's published pieces since the death of Stirling. On November the twenty-sixth, the "Boy's birthday," she herself stuffed a turkey and had a party in his memory. In the letter in which she speaks of his birthday she alludes to a bachelor with whom she had an appointment to dine at the Arts Club. Masculine companionship did not divert her from her career; there was to be no second marriage. Instead, when peace had again come to her, there appeared for the first time in six years a new book by her—_Aunt Amity's Silver Wedding_. Some of the stories are comparable to the best ones in _A Golden Wedding_, her early volume. Another distinction of the book is its dedication, "To my brother, James A. McEnery."

The reason Aunt Amity remembered the date of her wedding was that it had occurred on April Fool's, only a few months after Miss Bettie Peabody's of St. James Parish to Mr. Stanley. Thus a short time after the silver wedding anniversary at Judge Stanley's, the most-talked-about social event in three parishes for many months, Amity announced that she and Frank were going to "give one." There was one singular condition attached to the celebration. Although it was Amity's silver anniversary, it was her husband, Frank's, wooden because he had been her consort only
five years. Everyone knew this—everyone except "the Methodist bishop of the African circuit, a noted stranger who was in the neighborhood at the time."

As the bishop made each reference to the initial year of the marriage, "the sensitive spectator might have realized a slight atmospheric disturbance; but it was not serious. Manners are manners, even on a sugar plantation in the Louisiana bottom-lands, and a function of high form could not be broken by fortune of etiquette." After the silvery oration there appeared an uninvited guest—Solon, who twenty-five years before had shared "the wedding" with Amity.

"You don't reckon I'se jest on a pleasure trip, does you?" he asked. "No, I came on business. I didn't git no invite—an' I didn't need none. A man don't have to git invited to his own silver weddin'."11

How Amity and Frank defended their till against the avariciousness of the stocky black man is the prelude of Frank's inspiration to make the fiddle talk.

...the woman was in high glee and, springing forward, she seized the fiddle and put it into her man's hands while she caught up her flounces and danced down the center of the room, declaring that she "hadn't had so much fun since she was a baby!"

It seemed a simple childish impulse of triumphant glee, but there was something so fine in it, so above the common in its reckless abandon, that the people moved back involuntarily, giving her the floor.12

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11 Ibid., pp. 35-36.
12 Ibid., p. 49.
A well-constructed story of Negro life and customs and manners, this comedy, which in places borders on pathos, is hilarious. The malapropisms, the gaiety, the love of ceremony, the high spirits, the aping of the whites, the turbulent emotions are not just described—they are a living reality. Four portraits are finely chiseled, that of Aunt Amity, of course, being the best.

"Petty Larceny" is saved from the rankest sentimentality only by the portrait of the Negro Phil and the author’s understanding of the ironic reason the darkies are guilty of petit larceny. Like Frank in the story of Aunt Amity, Phil, too, is a fiddler. In such a good story depicting the heart of the Negro the reader regrets the sweetpea blossoms and the first robin, almost stage props of the cupid and love-darts era.

"The Hair of the Dog" is another "little boy" story, one of Mrs. Stuart’s most delightful. It is the presentation of a little Negro liar—a child whose imagination seemed unfettered. As the habit grew, Levi was threatened with unsavory distinction in more ways than one. The boy who saw large objects suddenly appear was soon gaining a reputation for making small ones as mysteriously disappear, as if by a sort of magic. The "curing" of Levi is told with discernment and tenderness and a "light touch" even surpassing the effect achieved in Sonny.

"Thanksgiving on Crawfish Bayou" depicts the emotions of a savage in civilization. Since only a small portion at the end tells of Thanksgiving, a more appropriate title might be "The Biography of June Free Randolph." If the Negro is at last robbed of the primitive vitality
with which his race has been endowed, the story of June Free will be illuminating history. A magnificent character, June Free, like Napoleon Jackson, is of royal African descent. The lyrical element is also comparable to that in the story of the gentleman of the plush rocker.

The songs show Ruth McEnery Stuart remarkably capable of recapturing the rhythm, the spirit, and phrasing of the Negroes in their spontaneous outbursts and point toward a new trend in her creative activity.

There is humor in the story; a laughable passage is Jane’s declamation against marriage. "What I do, yer? Ain't I warned yer against marryin'? I tell you, sister, I wouldn't marry no man alive. No, honey. My chillen is mine! Dey ain't no man dat dare lay a han' on one o' 'em! Yas, Lord, an' I gwine stay a ole maid an' tek keer o' my chillen." 13

Jane's behavior on the day the slaves were freed and the author's commentary on conceptions of the Negro on that occasion are not stereotyped Negro-story material. Excellent, too, are the descriptions of Henry's funeral, the Thanksgiving dinner, and Jane's ascent to her heavenly "mansion-bed." 14

His "heavenly mansion bed" was trying to claim one of Ruth McEnery Stuart's devoted friends—Colonel Pope. On November 29, 1908, Mrs. Stuart, in acknowledging the doctors' remembering Stirling's birthday, sent her love to the colonel. "I hate to think," she wrote, "of him as being less

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13 Ibid., p. 174.
14 Ibid., p. 227.
than his old enthusiastic self." The letter of December 10, 1908, reveals her effort to reciprocate the thoughtfulness of her friends in her period of waiting.

In her home at this time Mrs. Stuart had an art student, a twenty year old lad. Possibly she needed the money from his board. It is unquestionable that she gained a great deal from his company. "I found my dear boy at home and Marguerite sitting with him at the evening lamp—all so cozy and content—and everything has gone on delightfully while (sic) was away."15

Another section of the letter deals directly with finances. She had received a cheque from the Folk Lore people—"without a word! This," she declared, "is unusual and is either an accident—the usual courteous tone of appreciation and thanks having been dropped out—or—" Fearing that she had offended them, she entreated her friends "to conciliate" them for her.

On March 27, 1909, Ruth McEnery Stuart wrote the doctors from the Dansville Health Resort of being "deep in work, trying to conclude my book." Although she had not accomplished her aim, she was correcting page proofs of a story and making plans to go to the South for a long visit. Only recently she had had several poems accepted. Again she referred to the "dear ill brother" of her friends.

As in the December letter she had told of attending a number of

15 The letter was written at 220 West 59th Street, N. Y., Sunday, Dec. 10, 1908. It was addressed to the Drs. Pope. Tulane Stuart Collection.
luncheons and going to a tea honoring Gertrude Atherton, so in this she wrote of a costume frolic. The letter in the Tulane collection states:

I'm going as a Voudou Queen & will do Mrs. Davis' "Throwing the Worrys" ...glad of quite informal fun in the early evenings. I am under promise to do an episode for the Westchester pageant in wh. Libbie Custer is so interested with the Lawrences & it is a formidable task—I don't know how I am to come out, but Libbie & my friends wanted me in it & I am glad to be. Only I am not sure of my ability in this direction. I have the last Episode Wash Irving, after his return from his foreign ministry receiving homage &c &c--Toasts &c &c Ye Gods!

There is no other letter until Dec. 27, 1909, when in her Christmas note Mrs. Stuart told her friends she was beginning to thin out her belongings, selling some of the larger, heavier pieces, so that when she was ready to move to a smaller place she would not have "to sacrifice them." She wrote, "I hope to rent these rooms ere long, for a few months, and then I'll probably ship for the land of winter sunsaine, & finish my book. I am very well but a little too tired. It is pretty severe in NY now--& the streets like guarded ice! ... Love to the dear brother Ruth--"

If her finances were not in such a good condition as they once had been when her friends said she had traveled with seven trunks of clothes, yet her activities were not extremely curtailed. An atmosphere of cheerfulness pervades the letter from the Hotel St. Albans on Feb. 25, 1910, as the following excerpt from the old letter at Tulane shows:

Just a hurried line, for I am hard pressed this overful day. You see where I am. I have rented the apartment till May 3rd (& possibly a little later) and am here for a turn before going South to N. O.
I loved your letter, Gustie dear, & you know only being snowed under with work has prevented my answering this long. However, we need not even explain anything, we friends who understand so well.

I am very well and getting work done right along, which is one joy unalloyed left me.

I am wondering if you have seen Kate Riggs "Rebecca" now playing in Boston.................................

I am staying here to see some vaudeville folk, for one thing--about singing my songs, but don't speak of that, please.

In the middle of March she was still at the Hotel, but getting ready to sail to New Orleans. It seems she had been doing a great deal of writing again and was using much energy in reading for groups:

You see I am still here but getting ready to sail on Sat--Southern Pacific Steamer for N. O. direct.

I'll have only about five weeks there as I must be back here first wk. in May--but the change & the Southern spring outdoorings will make me over, I feel sure, and I really need it, for, altho' I am very well, I am tired.

I've been working with considerable strain for a long time. I read to a club here on Friday--only members about 200--and had a good time but next day I was wet rag and this shows me I need rest.16

In 1910 the author published Sonny's Father, the concluding work in her Simpkinsville stories and a valuable record of a changing social system. A New Orleans paper published during her visit an article dealing with her interest in many contemporary problems--women's suffrage, juvenile courts, and the adoption of children from the asylums by private families. The paper stated that she talked of these subjects "enthusiastically with a breeziness and charm that are always her characteristics."17

16 Mrs. Stuart wrote the letter to her Boston friends from the Dansville Health Resort, Dansville, New York, on March 27, 1909. Tulane Stuart Collection.

17 The source of the clipping is not stated in the old notebook of newspaper clippings, yet it is obviously a New Orleans paper published in the spring of 1909. Tulane Stuart Collection.
Sonny's Father deals with these and many other forward-looking ideas of the first decade of the twentieth century.

The garrulous old hillbilly is as devoted to his family as is Willa Cather's Neighbour Rosicky. Like the almanacs, which are among the older Americana, he is full of proverbs. Many of his rambling commentaries are worth remembering just for themselves. For example, his remark about the automobile was concluded with the salient statement: "Still I can't see any great good comin' to mankind th'ough lightnin' speed. I ain't any too much in favor of electrocution for the guilty, much less for the innocent, on our highways." 18

"I allus like to see young girls tricked out a little keerful," he avowed. "It speaks well for the young man of a place—shows they're popular." 19 When he was called a "woman's righter," Deuteronomy Jones answered, "That name seems to 've stood a long time—to be fixed in the sand. I ricollec' when it first come how we all hated it. I was a young man then an' ef my wife had 'a' mentioned sech a thing ez goin' ez a delegate anywheres, I'd 'a' looked for her to grow a beard nex' thing, an' I'd 'a' kep' 'er hid." 20

Jones said he thought women should not vote. "I ain't never been

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19 Ibid., p. 63.
20 Ibid., p. 80.
able to see anything appetizing in the picture o' women at the polls. But appetite ain't principle, of co' se.\textsuperscript{21} The student of Ruth McEnery Stuart's own life feels that she doubtless was not opposed to suffrage; she liked being well informed and felt her sex had serious public obligations to perform. In her tours as a reader she probably encountered many of the singular creatures whom Jones was referring to when he spoke of a woman delegate rigged out in a dress made by a man dressmaker; "an' he voted," said he, "an' she didn't. An' maybe it's right she shouldn't. I'm shore I don't know." The freaks who assumed masculine attire or attire similar to the masculine to win the right for women to vote must have been worthy of the facetiousness of old men; certainly such women were very different from Ruth McEnery Stuart, one of the best-known women in public life in this country from 1895 until her death twenty-two years later. Kate Chopin, another Louisianian, called Mrs. Stuart "a womanly woman.\textsuperscript{22}

Jones is a mine of observation even about such topics as pajamas versus "long, unbleached, wife-made\textsuperscript{23} night shirts. "Pajamas," he declared, "seem a little too fantastic to me, like ez ef, ef I was to go to bed in 'em, I'd expect to dream about jockeys or circus-riders. They wouldn't conduce to reposefulness—not in my case.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., pp. 80-81.

\textsuperscript{22}The article about Mrs. Stuart was published by Kate Chopin in a St. Louis newspaper on Feb. 17, 1897. Tulane Stuart Collection.


\textsuperscript{24}Ibid.
Of course Jones is a mouthpiece of the author's own ideas about children, and many of his ideas are superior. "I like child'en to grow up with the responsibility of dependent life about 'em; an' the more service it requires of 'em the better," he told the doctor. His encouraging Sonny's children to express themselves, his fondness for them, his own love for the beautiful out-of-doors, and his manner of inculcating his love into the children remind one of Stirling and his stories of children and nature. The little boy who told his grandfather, "Daddy says that even one o' these thin-wing mosquito hawks could tell us beautiful things, ef we had fine enough hearing to listen," and who imagined being a bird and flying through the forest is reminiscent of Stirling himself. The monologue in which the grandfather tells of his little grandson and birds ought to be read by every child.

During Christmas of 1910 Mrs. Stuart gave much attention to jingles of Daddy Do-Funny, the verses she hoped would make some money for her. On Christmas Day she was at 2024 Coliseum Street in New Orleans, from which she wrote the following message to Mrs. Wheeler:

Just a line, Dear friend, to send our love and all wishes out of our sunshine into yours this perfect Day.

Christmas always seems overladen these days and we almost dread it in prospect with its haunts and its merciless demands but each year, before the Day is done, we agree that it is sweet and precious. So many winged thoughts from so many directions fly in to us and our own quest—into our thoughts the lonely byways, from the poor lonely and forgotten—is so rich in compensations.

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Ibid., p. 113.
It's worth a lot of trouble just to sit still at home when the Day comes and receive the few visits of several old-fashioned negroes who come in to pay their respects—knowing, of course, that they are expected and that some gift comparable with their starched and courte-
sying dignity will await them—bless their old hearts.

It is so good to be here with Sister Sarah and I only wish you were of our circle today. The sunshine stopped taking any account of itself and just let go and filled the earth for us.

Of course, Dearie, we are not all sunshine within and our lonely chambers need all the holly wreaths we may have there to hallow them and our thoughts are much the dear friends so recently come into my class, tho' darling Carrie and the other two. It is all such a mystery—such a mystery.

Mrs. Stuart was still in New Orleans in the middle of February. During this year she was to lose her brother "Mr. Jim," possibly the mainstay in the McEnery household. Although there are no direct refer-
ences to him either in the Christmas letter or the one written in Feb-
ruary, her visit this winter was for some reason a rather long one. It even had much of the old gaiety, as this letter to Mrs. Wheeler indicates:

Dearest Friend,

I have here on my desk a letter begun to you days ago and inter-
rupted and now, instead of carrying it along, I'll begin afresh and send you special and tenderest love because, breaking your rule of perfect health and when that happens to such as you, it ought to be an occasion for confections and roses and gilt-edged valentines.

I wish, instead of writing you this evening, I could slip on my mandarin coat and run in upon you—and, maybe, make you forget the dear lame foot.

We often speak of you, Dear, as we go about among our friends and recall your dear visit and how we might be having it all over again.

Today our book club met at Mrs. Clapp's and tonight your poor Ruth, who can't quite turn down the world, even though she does mainly eschew the flesh and the other party, is going to a recep-
tion where the world and his wife will elbow high-class sable—
a party given to the pretty Mrs. Blane who is bringing out her daughter—the lovely little girl whom you recall at Cateoro, and who was a wee thing in short skirts about day before yesterday.

Mrs. Rogers, whom you must remember, is wintering in Mexico and we miss her a good deal. Last week we had a beautiful luncheon at Mrs. Johnston's. Do you remember?
— and so it goes. Although I am really keeping out of a lot of things. We have been wishing dear Dora were here and yet hardly knowing whether it is a good year for her to come or not. There have been so many exhibitions this season—and a good many important people away. But we'd love to have her with us on our "at home" days and have her meet our friends—and to give her a special day.26

From New York in the summer of 1911 Mrs. Stuart wrote Miss Sarah of a project that had sentiment for each of them. Possibly the mother was directed only by a pride in her son's accomplishment in publishing his story posthumously. It is not unlikely that financial need, too, entered into her submission of it to the papers. The letter is a significant one in the Tulane Stuart Collection.

July 22

Dear Sis,

Yr. good long letter of the 19th just here. Jean Franklin was here—came at 11 & had just gone, at about 5!!! But she's a mighty nice woman—as clean as the morning, and so happy in her big, devoted, good & certainly talented boy.

I sent one of my Boy's stories, "The Match" wh. I renamed "A Safety Match" to a Sunday Magazine Syndicate, unsigned, and they took it & I had them write my dear one's full name across the title page, so it will appear &c, in perhaps 25 Sunday Newspapers simultaneously.

Isn't it nice to have it go this way? The first time it is offered! Now I'll get something in Shape—

I told Mrs. McK. & she said with eager haste "And didn't it have your name on it?" wh. I tho't nasty tho' she didn't mean it so. I didn't have my name on it tho' I had to say: "Care Mrs. S--this address."

I went with Mrs. McK's yeat. to dine at the Cosmopolitan Club, meeting the Posworths there, & we had a very pleasant evening.

I'll try just about once for the Shep plaid suit, Sis, but I need such grade of dress myself and have inquired at L. and Taylor's, Atkins--Masons--there seems nothing. Thursday at 10-11 I'll run in

26 The letter was written by Mrs. Stuart from 2024 Coliseum Street, New Orleans, La., Wed., Feb. 15, 1911, to Mrs. Candace Wheeler, Thomasville, Georgia. Tulane Stuart Collection.
M's & to Sach's & possibly do the block in 24th St. to Fifth Ave.
wh. now means a half doz. of the old 23rd E. people.

I'm about sure to store my things this next week & to be out o
this, but mail will be delivered, all the same if I don't sail--I
may go to Anna's wedding & thence to Black Island off R. Island
Coast--a sea swept bit and quiet.

The trip abroad was realized later in the summer. A long letter
from the SS Furnessia, Anchor Line, was written on August 3, 1911, "mid­
ocean bet. N. Y. and Glasgow," and was mailed to Miss S. S. McEnery, 2029
Coliseum Street, N. O., La., U. S. A." The letter, now at Tulane, was re­
addressed in red ink to Miss Sallie at "Fletcher, North Carolina, near
Ashville." The curiosity of the people aboard the ship concerning Mrs.
Stuart indicates that she was still a well-known public figure.

On her return to the United States she published The Haunted
Photograph in October, 1911. The critic who reviewed the book for the
Cleveland, Ohio, Plain Dealer for November 18 designated "The Haunted
Photograph" as the best story in the collection because of its original­
ity of conception. "Even Frank Stockton could have done no better,"
stated the article, "in the bizarre as applied to lowly life. The other
tales are just as good in their own way--we recommend 'The Afterglow' as
a contrast."

The characters of "The Haunted Photograph" are similar to the
Simpkinsville type, although the setting is apparently near Pineville,
the home of the insane asylum in the hills of North Louisiana. Mrs.
Morris is more like the numerous "old maids" of whom Ruth McEnery Stuart

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27 Cleveland, Ohio, Plain Dealer, Nov. 18. Tulane Stuart Collection.
wrote than she is a widow. The "resplendent note" in her home was the photograph of the cheap summer hotel at which her husband Morris had been the steward. "One had only to see the rapt face of its owner as she sat in her weeds before the picture which she tearfully pronounced 'a strikin' likeness,' to sympathize with the townsfolk who looked askance at the bereaved woman, even while they bore with her delusion, feeling sure that her sudden sorrow had set her mind agog." In her cherished photograph the widow sought solace after the fire, which had made her a widow. She found her companionship in it.

Her delusion led her one day to hear her husband flapping the window-pane from within the window with a towel. For a moment she thought he was beckoning to her, and she was beginning to experience terror with shortness of breath and other premonitions of sudden death when she discovered that he was merely killing flies. Nervously she fanned herself with the asbestos mat which she had seized from the stove beside her and "staggered out to a seat under the mulberries ...." What finally diminished her comfort entirely was the discovery of her cat on a ladder before the picture hissing at it. Of course she realized then! Kitty had seen more in the picture than she had been able to.

When the "combly-featured wench" appeared actually in the flesh, when she had ridden the train down "Miss Morris, to borry your reci-pe

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29 Ibid., p. 10.
for angel cake—, the shock released the widow from consciousness for a while.

It was not long after this incident that the widow confided to a friend that she was coming to depend upon Morris for advice in her business.

"Standing as he does, in that hotel door—between two worlds, as you might say—why he sees both ways, and oftentimes he’ll detect an event on the way to happening, an’ if it don’t move too fast, why I can hustle an’ get the better things." It was as if she had a private wire for advance information—and she declared herself comforted if not entirely happy.

Indeed, a certain ineffable light, such as we sometimes see in the eyes of those newly in love, came to shine from the face of the widow who did not hesitate to affirm, looking into space as she said it.

"Takin’ all things into consideration, I can truly say that I have never been so truly and ideelly married as since my widowhood." And she smarted as she added,

"Marriage, the earthly way, is vicissitudinous, for everybody knows that anything is likely to happen to a man at large." 31

At her demise at the age of thirty-seven the widow’s picture was raffled for a dollar a chance to pay for her funeral in the "hotel-fire general grave." 32

"Whence and whether" shows discernment concerning the presence of pathos in humble life. Sally Ann, a Negro woman who could not have played any role in life save that of the "sassiest gal along the river," 33 became the wife of six-toed Steven Salisbury when he heard that she had given birth to "a bouncing six-toe boy." 34 As soon as he knew what had

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30 Ibid., p. 19.
31 Ibid., p. 25.
32 Ibid., p. 29.
33 Ibid., p. 37.
34 Ibid., p. 46.
happened, Steve "hitched up his gig and drove three miles for the minister of Seven Springs Chapel, carried him over to Sassie's cabin and 'made things right for the boy—and his mammy.'"35

In addition to his physical distinction, Six Toe Steve was recognized on the plantation for his Daisy Stretcher, a device he had contrived himself for straightening hair. Since Steve was somewhat prosperous, he would have taken his wife and babe home with him had they been free. To make more money for his son, he opened a branch "studio" ten miles away and began dividing his time equally between his two places. When Sally Ann became such a problem that her owner realized he couldn't sell her or give her away, his daughter suggested that he "just turn Sally Ann over to Steve."36

For a time things went fairly well at the Salisbury cabin. Susie was pleased as a child with the novelty of everything and, although herself somewhat down at the heel, she was stylish and fussy to a degree and her free taste which ran to ornament soon transformed Steve's house from a bare man-kept place into an abode of femininity in action.37

After Sallie Ann became the operator of the "Daisy Stretcher" in the home station one of the most constant frequenters of "The Parlors" was "Choctaw Charley." Although Charley was a stolid fellow, he fell under the spell of Sally Ann. One day when he was sitting beside her and wondering why the bow over one of her ears was red and the other one

35 Ibid., p. 47.
36 Ibid., p. 56.
37 Ibid.
blue he realized it was getting late—so late that he must go.

"Set still, man! I'll see dat it don't git no later!" And with the words she kicked her red slippers across the room and stopped the clock.

A woman like this may be shocking, but she is not dull. Still, even as he sat under her spell, the surface of Choctaw Charley's imperturbable nature remained calm. He simply stayed—and stayed—sitting for hours—sometimes upon the long green sofa and practicing his reticence upon her while Sassie played around him. He was much younger than Steve—better looking, athletic, strong, afraid of nothing—and he was always there, clean, sober, low of voice.

When Charley's baby was three and Steve recognized her resemblance to the Indian one day when he saw her with Charley, he confronted his wife's paramour with a demanding question:

"How much'll you pay me for her, Charley?" A grunt was the only reply. A short, ugly "Huh!"

And Steve spoke again:

"I done asked you a question, Choctaw Charley. I say what'll you gimme for her?"

"You gwine sell yo' wife, Steve?"

"No," the man thundered, "I gwine git my divoce'mint papers out'n de co't house—an' den I gwine sell my slave."

But before the exchange could be made, Sally Ann was in another world. The accident that cost her life grew out of her turbulent nature; her passionate emotions had altered several lives. Despite the sentimental periphery of this story of colored people, there is real vitality in Sally Ann, Steve, and Charley. Sally herself is a picturesque study, a better example of a Negress and a coquette than is the Kidder Johnnie, yet she hardly equals her as a woman. Every detail shows why she is "shocking" but never "dull."

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38 Ibid., p. 67.

39 Ibid., p. 75.
"The month of June" sentimental note is too evident in "A Case in Diplomacy," one of the less important stories in The Haunted Photograph. Like Samuel Richardson, Marse Robert wrote amatory epistles for illiterate young plantation lovers. Although he is somewhat like a stock character, Joshua, the Negro lover, is individualized and very alive.

More in the mood of the first stories in the book than that of "A Case in Diplomacy" is "Afterglow," a monologue which might have been spoken by Ruth McEnery Stuart herself. When the reader remembers the references to the "bachelor" in the author's letters, he can hardly fail to wonder to what extent Mrs. Stuart was being subjective. Several of the experiences of Mary Randolph were taken right out of the author's life—the husband with whom she had long ago been so gay and happy, the child, the artist's career. The loneliness of the "jilted woman" makes one conscious of the sadness in a life bereft of companionship. In the rich and flamboyant figures of speech there is every evidence of the unrestraint of sentimentality. Related to this story is the poem "Companionship." Echoes of a possibly unfulfilled "late romance" are in many of the letters of 1911-1912. Yet Ruth McEnery Stuart was always so close to her own family that doubtless there was not much opportunity for her to have an October love. She was to center her emotions henceforth upon her devoted friends and relatives and the exhilaration of creative work.
The latter years of Ruth McNeroy Stuart's life were ones in which she achieved wide recognition for her creative work in poetry. In addition to Daddy Do-Funny's Wisdom Jingles, published in 1913, there was another volume, Plantation Songs, which appeared in 1916. Each book contained many poems that had been published formerly in some magazine. However, not nearly all the poems were incorporated in these collections. Dozens of them remain uncollected. Often there is no record of the presence of a poem in a magazine, for the table of contents may not include a Daddy Do-Funny jingle or a plantation song. The Readers' Guide does not list many of the periodicals for which Ruth McNeroy Stuart wrote. Only by good fortune did the author of this biography learn from Professor Arlin Turner of the two poems by her which Cable published in 1896 in The Letter, the publication of the Home Culture Clubs of Northampton, Massachusetts.¹

Possibly the oldest extant work of Mrs. Stuart is her "Parody of 'The Raven,'" a copy of which is in the appendix of this volume.² An unpublished poem, it was written for her literary club in Washington, Arkansas.

¹Professor Turner found "The Blue Pitcher's Complaint" in The Letter for February 1, 1896, and "Lady, A Monologue of the Cow Pen" in the issue for May 1, 1896.

²Manuscript poem in possession of Mrs. Charlean Moss Williams, Snyder, Arkansas.
The notebooks of Mrs. Stuart at Tulane are filled with both published and unpublished verses. Since many of the published ones are written in long hand in the journals, the only check one has to determine whether a particular work has been published is to find it in a magazine. One could hardly be certain concerning many of the little works since there is no index including all the nineteenth-century magazines.

The poems fall into several groups--nonsense verse; the dialect pieces, many of which are romances or philosophy, poems about children or plantation songs; poems for various occasions, a number of which are religious in tone or patriotic; and finally a group of sonnets, some of which Mrs. Stuart wrote with Albert Bigelow Paine, Mark Twain's biographer.

The first group, those that stem from a trend of the latter days of the nineteenth century, certainly owe a debt to Lewis Carroll. A number of these little poems were possibly never published. In one of the notebooks, written in Mrs. Stuart's hand, is "One, Two--Howdy Do!" a little piece this author has never found in print. A Negro dialect piece, it was written for children.

One Two--Howdy Do!
One, two
"Howdy do!"
Three, four,
"Come in de do'!"
Five, six,
"How's yo' rheumatix?"
Seven, eight,
"Watch my gait."
Nine, ten,
"Hobble in again!"
Ef yo keep on hobblin' to a friendly do',
You might git up to a hundred an' maybe mo'!
In another section of the journal is "'To Fra Rymbelica' Oliver Herford with compliments of Daphne Day." Opposite this is "'Rymbelicitis' by Daphne Day." Then follows in the manuscript in the Ruth McEnery Stuart collection at Tulane the poem "Rymbelicitis." As readers of Century well know, Oliver Herford popularized the rymbel—a combination of the jingle and the rondel. The poem consists of ten, twenty, or thirty lines and is sometimes called the tent-twenty-third. It is indeed an expression of a facetious facet of a century that was possibly gayer in its beginning than it has often been since.3

Related to "Rymbelicitis," obviously, is "Rymbel," which appears in the author's hand in one of the journals in the Ruth McEnery Stuart collection at Tulane.4 Hardly to be catalogued in any department other than "nonsense poetry" is "Did You Ever?" also in the author's penmanship in the journals.5

Similar to the eccentric note of much of the nonsense work already mentioned is Gobolinks, a volume which Ruth McEnery Stuart and Albert Bigelow Paine published together in 1896. The curious little figures formed from ink splotches are captioned with jingles characterizing each of them. The idea originated with Ruth McEnery Stuart. Her collaborator, Albert Bigelow Paine, made the gnomes and demoniacal figures "with tentacles and proboscises and horns and arms and an occasional leg"6—entomological

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3 For the text of "Rymbelicitis" see appendix, pp. 250-52.
4 For the text of "Rymbel" see appendix, pp. 253-54.
5 For the text of "Did You Ever?" see appendix, p. 255.
or crustacean monsters for whom the poet wrote the jolly rhymes so obvously related to Jabberwocks of Lewis Carroll. **Gobolinks** introduced a game for children. Said the *Times Herald* of Chicago for December 13, 1896:

> It is a game which may be viewed at first with distrust by careful mothers since it necessitates smudging with ink. Now, as most children need no invitation to smudge not only paper—as directions for this game signify—but smudge themselves with great alacrity and joy, the book may not be hailed with spontaneous pleasure by the guardians of the young or laundresses in the family employ. Gobolinks, however, is played by smudging paper without touching the ink to the fingers. This will seem a barbarous way of curtailing pleasure to the children, and they will not like it, at first, but the pictures they make are amusing; and they will not, of course, wait until the ink is dry, before elaborating the drawings. So it will be seen there are compensations. There is a book full of smudgings, with directions for making them. A drop of ink is dropped on a sheet of paper and the paper folded in halves. "Jet black ink should be used." This is agreeable news to the little ones, who like their work to be undeniable and make the most show for the outlay.*

**"Remarkable Ruth McEnery Stuart"** the Chicago paper called the author for the ingeniousness of her compositions in **Gobolinks**. The nonsense quality of the jingles for the shadow pictures carried over into the second group of Mrs. Stuart's poems—the dialect ones. Yet in these, particularly in the "Daddy Do-Funny" rhymes, nonsense is very real sense. A person could hardly be certain how many "Daddy Do-Funny" poems there are. In the author's own handwriting in her notebooks there are dozens of them. Throughout her writing career she published many of the epigrams in various magazines. Although many, too, were collected in the

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volume that bears the old Negro philosopher's name, there seemed to be no end of them. Without question Daddy Do-Funny is a relative of Uncle Remus. His sayings belong in the category of American proverbs.

In the "Foreword" to her successful collection Mrs. Stuart pays a tribute to the old men like Daddy who, fully a half century after emancipation, were still to be found on many of the larger plantations of the South.

It is something even if one is bent double and may never again behold the light of day to be able to reach back into a dim and forgotten past and to say, "I remember," especially when the meaning recalls days of brilliance and importance.

But Daddy's place among the gentle Knights and Ladies of the Rocking-chair was far and away above such as these whose thoughts, alert though they were and loyal, travelled forever backwards to the sweet but worn fields of memory where every pleasure is a recognition and fashions do not change—a restful retreat for dreamers whose days of activity are done.⁹

At Evergreen Annex on Crepe Myrtle Plantation Daddy was not only a seer but also "a social factor on the place. Wherever his chair was set, there were children gathered together, both black and white, eager listeners to his quaint pictorial recitals."¹⁰ His "wisdoms," as Daddy assured the children, he kept in his old "toofholes." He explained, "Ev'rybody knows dat Gord A'mighty ain't never is set but one live wisdom—toof in a man's mouf—an' dat comes late an' goes early."¹¹

¹⁰Ibid., p. 3.
¹¹Ibid.
And then he added with a mischievous smile:
"You-all smarty undergrowth you ain't chawed life yit. You jes 'speramintin' wid yo' milk toofs. Now's yo' havin' time, chillen, but to have an' to lose, dat's life!
"Study wisdom now an' minch on it good wif yo'ng baby toofs an' hol' fas' to it, so's it'll meller down ripe, time de caverns opens for it. But look out! I know a lot o' ole vacant wisdom caves for rent behin' dis crepe myrtle hedge--so, I say, watch and pray! Pray for insight an' 'outsight!' An' even so, dey's some wisdoms so fine you can't see 'em tel you nearin' Home an' livin' on de far side o' life!"

To a changing South and a nation unfamiliar with the old hard times that made such ancient men as Daddy grateful even for the wrappers of their dead wives, the quaint philosopher sitting in the rain in his eccentric garb may appear only a ludicrous figure.

Among the creatures celebrated by the seer were the 'possum, the giraffe, the porcupine, the blind mole, the fox, the terrapin, the alligator, the chipmunk, the Berkshire hog, the aristocratic chicken, the mosquito, the rat, the ant, the canary, the butterfly, the frizzled chicken, the wren, the incubator chicken, the grubworm, the rattlesnake, the bat, the parrot, the chimney swallow, the rooster, the gray squirrel, the peacock, the Dominick hen, the turkey gobbler, the white chicken, the yellow pup, the screech owl, the doodle-bug, the mammy alligator, the eagle, the fox and the tortoise, the runt pig, the Nannie goat, the caterpillar, the guinea hen, the black cat, the game cock, the measuring worm, the zebra, the mosquito, the owl, the gander, the duck, the sis chick, the dog, and the black sheep.

\[12\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
A realistic and unblurred view of life is etched with acerbity in every one of the wisdom jingles. The disgust one experiences as he encounters a thief or even suspiciously avaricious qualities is triumphantly expressed in "The Rat."

Brer Rat in de corn-bin overfed an' underworked, an' now he's dead;
He craved to live lak a bloated chief, an' now he ain't nothin' but a ol' dead thief.
An' he ain't by 'isself in dat, in dat--
An' he ain't by 'isself in dat.13

A biting satire of parsimony is entitled "Ants."

Dem ants is sho got savin' ways,
An' even de scripture 'lows 'em praise:
But day hoa'd for deyselves from day to day,
An' day stings any man what gits in de way--
An' day ain't no new corporation in dat--
No, day ain't by deyselves in dat.14

Innumerable wisdom jingles deal with the vegetable kingdom—the chestnut, the dandelion, the thistle, the mushroom, the persimmon, the fig, and the cauliflower. Mud pies, the wili o' the wisp, the Chinese, and jack o' lanterns comprise still another group of the corn jingles.

Notable illustrations of philosophic ideas are found in "De Persimmon," "De Fig," and "The Heathen Chinese." "De Persimmon" grew out of knowledge of the Southland and an analogy between the delectable autumn fruit and human beings:


Is you little gals, growin' into women,
Ever tasted a snappy young persimon?
It takes a hard frost to make it sweet,
An' it's old and swiveled 'fo it's
fit to eat
But it ain't by itself in dat,
in dat--
But it ain't by itself in dat!15

Another favorite Southern product, the fig, is inspiration for a
subtle sally on saccharinity, often a Southern failing, often a human
failing.

De fig dat's "sweet enough to eat!"
Is sweet enough, but not too sweet;
But de honey-lip fig in de
blazin' light
Is a battle-ground whar de
varmints fight!
An' it ain't by itself in dat, in dat--
An' it ain't by itself in dat!16

In "The Heathen Chinese" is reflected a criticism of "Christian
America."

Dat bias-eyed, cross-roads laundry-man
Day 'portin' back to de missionary lan'
Dey calls him here to Christ, he say,
An' he ax me "Whar yo' Jesu' stay?"
An' he ain't by 'issel,
perplexed like dat...
No, he ain't by 'issel in dat.17

Every jingle is just as trenchant as the ones cited. Among the
author's contemporaries the jingles were quoted gleefully. Her step-
daughter's husband--Mr. C. C. Spragins--wove one into his conversation

16Ibid.
as he talked with the author of this research in 1951. It is said that among the school children in New Orleans no volume of poetry is more popular even today than is *Daddy Do-Funny's Wisdom Jingles*.

In addition to Daddy Do-Funny's rhymes are many dialect poems about animals. One of the best of these is "Uncle Ephe's Advice to Brer Rabbit," a copy of which is in a journal in the collection at Tulane, but without a source. "Stars and Dimples" is about Ol' Sis Cow, who becomes a symbol of modernity. "The Paradise-bird" is a humorous retelling of the Garden of Eden story. Somewhat reminiscent of Collin's "Ode to Evening" is the plantation song "When de Sun Swings Low." It is unfair, of course, to suggest a comparison with the eighteenth-century classic. One might say, however, that they have a similar tone.

The dialect poems about children and for children have so much of the author's own heart in them that they are unforgettable. Certainly sentimentality captures a passage now and then, yet the emotion nearly always rings true. Love of children was to Mrs. Stuart not an affectation. A mother deprived of her "junior man" is the author of the poem which has that title—a poem that deserves to be preserved.

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18 For the text of "Uncle Ephe's Advice to Brer Rabbit" see appendix, pp. 247-48.
"How Many Moons" is written from a little child's point of view. It, too, merits preservation, in spite of the iambic tetrameter couplets and singsong rhythm. The theme of "Beauty-Land," subtitled "A Lullaby," is the loyalty and dependability of the "nigger mammy." It is gracefully developed in a little sleepy-time song redolent of somnolence, a song that preserves an age which preceded the one of the so-called "baby-sitters." "Twinkle, Twinkle!" illustrated with two children looking at a star, depicts a child's conception of the evening star. It shows a genuine understanding of a child. "Why," which also reflects the thoughts of a little child, is a particularly good example of the dialect poems for children:

WHY?

"How come?" an' "Why?" an' "What's de use?"
Is handy words for a lame excuse,
But dey's mighty few words, ef you swing 'em right,
But'11 open doors an' let in light.

"How come mammy-nuss must wash my face?"
"Oh, why does high shoes have to lace?"
"What is de use of bonnet or hat?"
Dey's some nice chillen dat talks like dat.
Mos' little folks is full o' "whys?"
All disp'oportioned to day size,
But I knows one, I's proud to say,
Dat swings his "whys" de other way:


25 Stuart, "Twinkle, Twinkle!," St. Nicholas, XLI (August, 1912), 916. For the text of the poem see appendix, pp. 265-66.

26 Stuart, "Why," St. Nicholas, ...XVII, 695.
"How come mammy-nuss so good to me?"
"What makes a bird sing in a tree?"
"How big must I make my balloon
When we go sailin' roun' de moon?"
Now "whys" like dese ain't onpolite,
An' mammy she always answers right;
So when his "whys" is all explained,
De junior's bathed, an' dressed—an' trained.

Not to be overlooked in the group of verses dealing with children is the Daddy-Do-Funny rhyme celebrating the picaninnies fishing for doodle-bugs:

Catching Doodle-Bugs
Little picaninnies, fishin'
in de doodle-bug holes,
Wid a "spit for luck" an'
straws for poles,
Show pyore delight in de
fisherman's aim
All dis p'opo'—croned to de game.
An' day ain't by deyselves
in dat, in dat—
An' day ain't by deyselves in dat.

Written in Mrs. Stuart's hand in one of the journals is "Manny's Dancing Lesson," which this author has not found in print. It is a commentary on ingrained snobbishness.

A whole group of the Negro dialect pieces are romances, most of which were published with illustrations in the widely-read magazines of the nineties and the early years of the twentieth century. Among these


28 Stuart, Journal, Tulane Stuart Collection. For the text of the poem see appendix, p. 349.

"Lucindy" is a Negro lover's tribute to a fascinating coquette. More graceful and certainly more rhythmical are "Jes Her Way," "Tiger Lilies," and "My Brown Rose." No footnote will ever be needed to explain "secon'--handed clo'es" in Jes Her Way," yet it is unlikely that a generation or two hence will have a clear understanding of the economic background of the narrative or even the fire of the Negro character so vividly depicted by Mrs. Stuart.

Without commentary concerning a racial problem Mrs. Stuart depicts the "yaller" Negro in "Tiger Lilies," a concise poetic story with excellent characterization. The speaker, the sweetheart of "Tiger Lily," seems to feel no bitterness for the poverty he notices.

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30 Ibid., pp. 57-61.
31 Ibid., pp. 55-56.
32 Ibid., pp. 51-52.
33 Ibid., pp. 64-67.
37 Ibid., pp. 53-54.
"My Brown Rose" recalls the sentimentality of "Middle Hall," in which flowers are used symbolically to suggest romance. There is finesse, however, in the little composition and a pleasant portraiture.

The very rhythm of a Negro dance is recaptured in "Come Along, Miss Nancy"; this gay plantation song makes light of the size of Miss Nancy's shoes--"number 'leven"—but praises her neatness. Although the singer recognizes poverty, he reflects the kindly treatment of his "white Folks."

The Negro lover Triflin'-Sam is the singer in the plantation song entitled "The Fortune-Teller." His "lily-o-de-valley," as described by him, has an occult faculty and a flair for fascinating. Still her craftiness has not helped her to rise above the impoverished setting that is her home. This song is incorporated in the appendix of the volume.

Love lyrics are scattered throughout many of Mrs. Stuart's stories. One of the loveliest of these, "Oh Love's My Meat," appears in Napoleon Jackson and is reprinted in Plantation Songs.

A dialect poem dealing with the etiquette and ethics of a lady is "Dat's De Way By Lady' Do," which has never before been reprinted.

It ain't how many eyes you got,
'Less needles could see an' potatoes, too;
An' "hookin' a' eye," as like as not,
Would be classed as a sin dat no lady 'd do.

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38 Ibid., pp. 62-62.
But it's keepin' yo' eyes turned
to des de right,
An' to 'des de wrong jes' shattin'
'em tight--
Lookin' out for ways to be polite--
Dat's de way my lady 'd do!
It ain't how many ears you got
Dat makes you listen an' learn an' do;
Else a hill o'corn in a garden plot
Would be 'way ahead o' me an' you;
But it's shottin' yo' ears to
heartless speech,
An' listenin', whilst de teachers teach,
An' strivin' to practice o'n to preach--
Dat's de way my lady'll do!
It ain't how many tongues you got,
'Les shoes would talk an' wagons, too;
An' all de bells would gabble a lot,
An' tattle an' brag de long day th'ough.
But it's gyardin' yo' tongue
f'om talk dat's wrong,
An' passin' a helpful word along,
An' maybe singin' a hopeful song--
Dat's de way my lady'll do!

In the romantic vein is "The Dansante," a French dialect poem
also written in Mrs. Stuart's hand in *The Journal.*

The Dansante
(Song) an Interpretation
by
Daphne Day
Ah, my favorite haunt
Is the *The Dansant*
with ma *Belle Petite*
of the nimble feet,
With her *j'e ne sais quoi*
While we dance *comme ca*
Tra-la-la, la, la!
' Tra, la, la, la!
Piquant and fair
And debonairc,
Her flying knees
Mine chase and tease
With mock sang froid
While we trot *comme ca,*
Tra, la, la, la, la!
Tra, la, la, la!
Now in, now out,
And roundabout,
Knees come to time
In amorous rhyme,
Regardez toi
Comme ca, comme ca
Tra, la-la, la, la
Tra, la, la, la.
Now cold, now hot
We trot, we trot,
Till ma Belle Petite
Of the nimble feet
Et moi, pauvre moi,
S'amour, Francois
Hélas!--------ah, la!
La, la, la, la-------- ——?

The poems for various seasons or occasions, a number of which are religious or patriotic in tone, comprise such a large body of Mrs. Stuart's work that one could hardly include all of them. Three were written in celebration of a particular time of the year—"April Dreaming," "April," and "October." Although the first of the April poems is filled with euphonious words and names of appropriate flowers, there is a greater zest in the second, which has the subtitle "On the Lower Mississippi:"

Ol' Jack Frost he sneaks, a-creepin',
While Sis' Snow she's dwindled, sleepin';
April's blinkin' yonder, weepin',
Wid a rainbow 'g'inst her hair,
So day mus' be seen somewhere.

Heavy fogs lays on de river
'Har de greenin' willers shiver
Tell gray blankets wrop an' kiver

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41 Ibid., p. 9.
All de trimblin' branches, bare—
An' no sign o' seen nowhere.

Bright new gingham in de churches,
Schoolmarms trimmin' limber birches,
Ol' man diggin' bait for pyerches,
Hummin', "Fishes sho to bite,
Ef dis sun don't shine too bright."

Boys an' gals all out a-co'tin',
Lots o' fun an' music floatin'
Out amongst de rafts an' boatin';
Oh, dey's plenty sunshine there
Whether skies is dark or clair!

"October" not only depicts the colorfulness of the autumn but derives its interest from the description of the robin inebriated by eating the late chinaberry. The tone of the long poem is evident from its first two stanzas:

The Autumn god swears he was sober,
Tho' purple his cheek as the vines,
While he toasts "Octo-to-to-to-ber"
In queer apple juice and new wine.

The cider mills whir on the hillside,
While Robin, half-drunk in the tree,
Throws madrigals over the millside,
Ecstatic in rollicking spree;
His red vest distended with berries
Distilled in the spirit of greed,
His pomp as a gay janissary's—
He chants a convivial creed."

A number of beautiful Negro spirituals, reverent, melancholy, and deeply sincere, are included in Plantation Songs. Among these are "Washerwoman's Hymn," "Oh, Shoutin's Mighty Sweet," "O By Soul, You Must Be

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44 Ibid., pp. 72-73.
"Walkin' in Yo' Sleep,"45 "Oh, de Lord He Walked de Water,"46 and "Oh, Heaben's Mighty Close."47 In her composition of these songs the author comes very near the heart of the Negro. "Washerwoman's Hymn" preserves for posterity an aspect of Negro life that generations to come with modern conveniences should never forget. The sub-title "The Lord Walked in the Garden" makes one realize the thoughts the washerwoman had as she washed all day. And doubtless they are the thoughts she had as often as she ironed shirts and dresses all night long until the day broke.

He walked in de gyarden in de cool o' de day—
O Lord, whar kin dat gyarden be?
  I'd turn my weary foots dat way
  An' pray thee cool de day for me.
Lord, Lord, walkin' in de gyarden,
Open de gate to me!
I'd nuver be afecd o' de flamin' sword,
Ef I could walk wi' Thee.

He walked in de gyarden in de cool o' de day;
He sa'ntered 'mong de shrubbey;
He nuver turned aroun' to look dat way—
I wusht He'd watched dat apple-tree—
Lord, Lord, trouble in de gyarden!
  Ev'ry-bod-y knows
  Dat sins begins wid needles an' pins
  An' de scan'rous need o' clo'es.

He walked in de gyarden in de cool o' de day—
My bleachin'-grass ain't fitten' for Thee;
But dat Bible gyarden's so far away,
So, Lord, come bless my fiel' for me!
Lord, Lord, come into my gyarden!
  Ev'ry-bod-y knows

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45 Ibid., pp. 77-79.
46 Ibid., pp. 80-81.
47 Ibid., p. 82.
How Eve's mistake when she listened to de snake
Still keeps me washin' clo'es.

He walked in de gyarden in de cool o' de day—
Ef I could stand an' see Him pass,
Wid de eye o' faith, as de scripture saith,
I'd shout heah on my bleachin'-grass.
Lord, Lord, my little gyarden
Ain't no place for Thee;
But come an' shine wid a light divine
An' fix my faith for me!
Glo-ry, glo-ry, hallelujah!

Peter, James, an' John,
Behol' de Light—an' de raiment white!
Ye' vision's passin' on!

Like Mrs. Stuart's stories, her poems often show her love for Christmas. "Bethlehem,"48 "De Star in de East,"49 and "Mary"50 were all collected in Plantation Songs. An especial dignity of tone permeates "Bethlehem."

Oh, Bethlehem, starred Bethlehem,
Bright with the coronation gem
Upon thy brow through history,
Whose eyes have seen the mystery,
Hail brow and eyes and diadem—
Hail, Bethlehem!

Dear Bethlehem, old Bethlehem,
'Twas thine the tide of time to stem.
The world was tired; its grizzled fold,
Hope-weary, heard the centuries' stroke
When cry of birth arrested them
From Bethlehem.

Hence, Bethlehem, young Bethlehem,
Thine ancient days thou mayst contemn

48 Ibid., pp. 95-96.
49 Ibid., pp. 70-71.
50 Ibid., pp. 93-94.
While all the cycles since engage
To celebrate thy youthful age—
Earth's years are young; she counteth them
   From Bethlehem.

Oh, Bethlehem, Queen Bethlehem,
Of hallowed lap and diadem,
Thy Kohinoor, it is a star;
Thy hands are white as lilies are;
Thy song is sorrow's requiem,
   Queen Bethlehem.

The last two stanzas of "Mary" beautifully recapture the meaning of the supernatural story:

A mother-maid lies white within,
God's circle round her hair.
Dumb kneeling brutes the wonder see;
A star attests the mystery,
While sage and shepherd reverently
Bring praise and incense rare.

A virgin-mother-queen's in state,
Her ermine robe her hair.
The stable dim a palace is;
Its moss-trimmed troughs are chalices;
There lips whereon no malice is
   Drink to the royal heir.

In the notebook and possibly not published anywhere is a fourth Christmas poem—"Bethl' em Star."

Twinkle, twinkle, Bethl' em Star!
Angels wonder what you are,
Up above our world so high
Like a beacon in our sky.

When Life's blazing sun is set,
And Death's brow with dew is wet,
Then your clear and kindly light
Leads lone souls through else dark night.

And when Faith is sound asleep
Oft you through Life's windows peep,
And you'll never shut your eye
Till God's son is in the sky.
Twinkle, then, oh, Bethl'ém Star,
Through all time and space afar,
And, when e'er we fall asleep
Be on guard, our souls to keep.

Not a Christmas poem in the sense in which the preceding ones are, yet truly a Christmas poem in a modern sense is "To the Red Cross Stamp." In one of the journals in the Tulane Library the following statement from the Brooklyn Daily Eagle is copied in pen and pasted in the manuscript:

On this page today will be found a Red Cross poem written for the Eagle by Mrs. Ruth McEnery Stuart, the accomplished and very original story writer and poet. It charmingly voices the sentiment and the opportunity the Red Cross Christmas stamp expresses and to which it lovingly appeals.

A printed copy of the poem follows a picture of the American National Red Cross stamp for 1908.51

Related to the poems with a religious theme are "Companionship,"52 "Confession,"53 "Consecration,"54 and "Compensation."55 The first of these, an Italian sonnet, treats love spiritually.

Beside a winter sea, I held her hand;  
The sun, low sunken in a molten glare,  
Revealed a flitting radiance in her hair  
When darkness fell; then turned we to the land;  
Reluctantly we climbed the oozing sand

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51 For the text of "To the Red Cross Stamp" see appendix, p. 256.
With tightened grasp, and, loving,
sooned to care
That moaning waves' complaining stilled as there
Against the din of earth's incessant band.
O vast eternity, thou roaring sea
Which through both day and darkness
called on--
O noisy time which babblest constantly
In earthly clamorings from sun to sun--
What if, hushed by ye twain, they silenced be,
If two may fare together--walk as one?

"Confession" is in lighter vein. Published first in a periodical, it was included in Daddy Do-Funny's Wisdom Jingles. The value of catharsis is wittily stated:

Dat whale wha' gulped Bre'er Jonah down
Was bleeed to swim close-t to do groun'!
Ontel he riz up an' confessed
He'd swallowed mo'n he could digest.
But you ain't by yo' self,
Bre'er whale, in dat--
No, you ain't by yo' self in dat!

"Consecration," the expression of a religious ideal, is more genuine in its sentiment than in its artistry, as is evidenced by the last stanza.

I'd be the dark, earth's confidence
to own;
The venerable darkness, first to hear
God's spoken word, and, trembling,
disappear;
The first His clemency to know-to wear,
In equal reign with Light, a star-gemmed crown.

I'd be the silence, rather than the song--
The stillness which abides when it is sung;
And, better than the sun, its moons among,
I'd be the azure space in which are flung
All constellations which to God belong.
I'd be that last abstraction which abides,
Diffused, invisible, through time and space--
Which thinks the roses--holds the
stars in place--
Which shines in radiance from a
mother's face,
And, shy as opal flame, illumes the bride's.

I'd be the stir of life within the clod
When it conceives the image of a flower;
I'd be the throbbing secret of the bower;
Yes, I'd be Love--my nothingness
all power:
But wait! How dare one say,
"I would be God!"

"Compensation" is the sub-title of a poem whose name is "The Mosaic Law." It is the second section of a longer work entitled "The Cycle." The composition that precedes it is "Nature's Rhythm," a striking excerpt from which is the following:

Two living wires, spiraled desires--
A heedless interlock--
The marvel's done--the "two as one"--
Unhurried ticks Life's clock.

Its pendulum, with slow hundrum,
Swinging mid grime and rust,
A thresher is of destinies,
In grains of living dust.

There's quickening mold in
mummy-fold;
Not e'er our "dead" are dead;
We free in clod a germ of God
With each "destroying" tread.

_____
56 Ibid., pp. 106-111.
So goes the tide—a man, a bride—
In heaven 'tis sun and moon
Which alternate to re-create
The midnight and the moon.\textsuperscript{57}

Against this background is juxtaposed "Compensation."

What saith the law, in formal awe?
"An eye for an eye—no more
Nor less, forsooth, then tooth for tooth;"
Cool justice keeps the score.

Praise Father God who quicked the clod,
Praise Mother Earth, for birth,
Man, son of both, and nothing loath,
Seize Heaven with holy mirth.

This gift divine, Thy countersign
Is e'en a royal dole;
Thou, else, as sod, by "breath of God!"
A living, laughing soul.

Then laugh, oh, laugh, mirth's chalice quaff
Thou master at Life's feast;
The tinkling cup is his to sup
Who dominates the beast.

Yet rue, oh, rue, the balance true,
For laughter sways to tears;
High hopes, soul-born in man's forst morn,
Found complement in fears.

From joy to pain, from boon to bane,
From youth to whitened hair,
The swing's the same, whate'er its name;
Life's gamut all is there.

Crawled, in the wake of God, the snake
In Eden's primal dell;
'Gainst faith all fair looms
black despair;
Even Heaven bespeaks a hell.

\textsuperscript{57}Ibid., p. 107.
"The Gospel" or "Emancipation" completes "The Cycle." It pictures man freed by the Christmas gift of the Bethlehem star—a favorite theme of Mrs. Stuart.

Philosophic in tone, too, is "Beware the Leaven," a didactic little piece with an especially quotable first stanza:

Extrem abasement oft is vanity;
'Tis conscious selfhood begs to be effaced;
Proud ego would be formally erased,
As if it mattered how were atoms placed.
Beware the leaven of the Pharisee.

"The Sea of Peace," "The Gentling Years," "Sitting Blind by the Sea," "Brotherhood," and "Life's Arraignment" are other songs of life and love. It is evident that World War I motivated some of these. Not any of the group, however, is stirringly patriotic; of course, America became involved in the war only a few weeks before Mrs. Stuart's death. "We Speak as Others" proclaims the author's sentiment concerning suffrage for women at a time when she feels they should have a right to express their votes for peace.

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58 Ibid., p. 92.

59 The poem appears written on a typed sheet of paper in one of the journals in the Tulane Stuart Collection. The author's name is given and her address—1312 First Street, New Orleans. Since the spirited poem was possibly never published, a copy of it has been placed in the appendix, P. 270-73.
Like the nonsense poetry is "Ye Merry Peacemakers," which, according to the author, is "Just for Fun." Less vehement than "Ye Speak as Mothers," this rollicking lyric seems almost too light hearted to one who looks back over the twentieth century from the fifth decade of it. The spirit of mischief would hardly have been appropriate had America already entered the war. The last stanza of the somewhat long poem indicates the nature of it:

We'll plunge beneath each submarine,  
and learn its bottom fast;  
Play leapfrog with the Zeppelins in the air,  
For, as we'll be invisible, there'll be no need for tact,  
Though, of course, as neutral nations, we'll be fair.  
Still, if they're too iniquitous,  
We'll make ourselves ubiquitous,  
And flabbergast, with windy, noisy stunt,  
All vessels of hostility,  
Until, in awed humility,  
They'll hoist their truce and sue for peace at once.⁶⁰

The sonnets Mrs. Stuart wrote in collaboration with Albert Bigelow Paine make the main body of a final group of her poems. There are two sequences, one entitled "God's Music" and another "The Narrow Isle." Two sonnets comprise the first; three, the second. All are

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⁶¹ The author has found this sequence only in one of Mrs. Stuart's journals in the Tulane Stuart Collection. For the text of the poems see the appendix, p. 239-40.

⁶² This sequence is also in one of Mrs. Stuart's journals in the collection; the sonnets were published as follows: The title of I became "Shut In"; that of II, "After-Glow." "The Fort of Missing Ships" was given as a sub-title of "Sea Voices." In the order in which they are listed, the poems were in *Harper's Weekly*, XLIII (1899), 297, 468. For the text of the poems see the appendix, pp. 414-42.
written according to the Italian pattern. Although the diction is some-
what hackneyed, there is dignity of tone mingled with sincerity of emotion
in them. Lines worthy of commendation are the eighth and the fourteenth of
the second sonnet of "God's Music."

In the second cycle the sestet of the first poem has several meri-
torious verses. However, the sonnet that is most successful in its imagery
is "The Port of Missing Ships." Whether all of the sonnets Mrs. Stuart
and Paine wrote were ever published is doubtful. Their efforts, with the
exception of "The Port of Missing Ships," may almost be called "finger
exercises."

Although Mrs. Stuart wrote poetry almost voluminously, she seemed
to place no high value upon her compositions. Certainly she did not re-
gard Gobolinks seriously. Her Daddy Lo-Funny's Wisdom Jingles she must
have loved. That she thought her accomplishment in the jingles equal to
her work in the short story, indeed is unlikely. What her feeling was for
Plantation Songs the writer wishes she knew. The serious poems in the
little anthology are much less memorable than are the humorous ones and
those in dialect. The author of this critique prefers the Negro love
songs and spirituals.

In addition to her poems, Mrs. Stuart's epigrams, proverbs, and
notes in the unpublished journals at Tulane reflect her wit and philoso-
phy, her flair for concise statement. 63

63 For excerpts from the unpublished journals in the Tulane Stuart
Collection see appendix, pp. 221-26.
CHAPTER IX

THE LAST YEARS

In the extant letters there are no references to Ruth McNeny Stuart's experience in Europe in 1911. A travel article published in that year, "Browsing about the Ibsen Country," appeared several weeks before the author sailed for Europe. Clearly then it deals with her earlier trip. The fine tribute to Ibsen, whom Mrs. Stuart admired, portrays the Norwegian people as she found them to be. "It is a common thing," the author wrote, "to hear, both here and in Scandinavia, 'Bjornsterne has written for Norway, but Ibsen has written for the world.' Bjornsterne has not startled the world into listening, it is true, and yet the reader who will follow him along the quieter ways of workday life—the same life over which Ibsen raves—will presently find his arm in the writer's, and he will know the sturdy Norwegian of the crags and fiords as his friend and brother." A portrait of a child—the granddaughter of both Ibsen and Bjornsterne, for Bjornsterne's daughter married Ibsen's son—portrays her as somewhat symbolic of the nature of the people presented by the two great Norwegians:

She was a wee fairy of about five, at the time I had the mixed pleasure of observing her at close range. It was aboard ship, the hot day when we came up from Hanko Bad ....

The little boats which run between Christiania and the "resorts" along the fiord seem almost inadequate, for the sea is ever more or less rough, and they pitch and roll absurdly. When the decks are

1Ruth McNeny Stuart, "Browsing about the Ibsen Country," Harper's Bazaar, XLV (July, 1911), 313.
crowded, as they were on the day I recall, one can hardly put away a sense of danger.

Imagine, if you will, in this situation a little girl of five (?), a perfect little fairy in appearance with the temperament of a cyclone. ..... Imagine her determining to romp, at all hazards, and flitting in and out between the passengers until she had reached such a state of mad ecstasy that she would mount a chair or camp stool, and leap toward the water, almost over the railing, straining the detaining hand and the forbearance of a youth who was apparently a friend of the family, until some of the more nervous among those present went below stairs, lest they should have to witness a tragedy. ..... 

I love children, but there are times--
My arms fairly ached to enfold and soothe her!

I think the mother of the child was present, and, possibly this was a deterrent, so far as discipline was concerned. It would take an outsider to handle an Ibsen-Bjornsterne combination, and I can well see that he might prefer not to have either side looking on. I should like to hear further of this fair all-spirit incarnation who looked as if the wind might blow her away, and behaved as if she meant always to have it blow her away.²

That Mrs. Stuart had read Ibsen is apparent from her familiarity with characters in his plays.

Of course, from first to last I was on a stillhunt for Ibsen types. And after a while I began discovering them. Such as Nora and Hedda Gabler and George Tesman it was a simple matter to select from the people in the restaurations, chiefly. Even Peer Gynt's old mother, Ase, I found here, but oftener I saw her about the market-place. But, look where I would, I could find no flesh-and-blood embodiment of Peer himself, although he was oftenest of them all before me, but suspended in midair, a sort of astral presentation, like the intangible concept of the poet. For, of all Ibsen's creations, he seems to me at once the most clear-cut and the most elusive.³

A "toothsome" bit of gossip that "floated" to Mrs. Stuart "over a copy of the London Times, in whiffs of tobacco smoke, in the reading-room at the hotel in Christiania,"⁴ concerned Ibsen:

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²Ibid.
³Ibid., p. 338.
⁴Ibid.
"Oh, yes, the old man used to sit there every day, in that chair by the window, facing Carl Johana Cade, reading his newspaper and sipping his beer. In the evening he preferred the cafe below stairs and his drink was beer again, but strengthened by a generous admixture of *aqua vitae*. He rarely spoke, never easily or idly, but I remember one occasion when he became so excited over a discussion of a local scandal in which an erring wife had eloped with her betrayer that he suddenly burst forth in fierce denunciation of the woman. Thereupon a bystander objected: 'Why, I am surprised at this from you, Mr. Ibsen, you who have given us Nora. She left husband and children.'

"'Yes, so she did!'" thundered the great man, "but she *WENT ALONE!!!*" striking the table a resounding blow with his fist as he spoke."

In Mrs. Stuart's own library, now a part of the Ruth McEnery Stuart collection at Tulane, there is a copy of *Hedda Gabler*. Just inside the book is written:

Ruth McEnery Stuart  
Christiania,  
Norway,  
Sept. 1906.

It is almost a coincidence that the travel article concerning the first European trip should have appeared in the year the author made the second journey to the continent. On the trip in 1911 she centered her thoughts upon the British Isles.

In the autumn of that year occurred the death of the beloved brother, "Mr. Jim." His marker in the family plot in Metairie Cemetery in New Orleans states:

James A. McEnery  
Died Nov. 14, 1911  
Faithful, Loyal

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5 Ibid.
It is singular that among the nine graves of the members of the family his only bears an epitaph. The two chiseled adjectives suggest what the biographer has been told of his character. Strangely, he left no will. 6

A letter 7 from Mrs. Stuart, postmarked New Orleans, to her friends—obviously the Drs. Pope in Boston—indicates that she had arrived on November 16, two days after her brother's death, and that she and Miss Sally had spent a quiet winter, yet one with a good deal of activity. The tone of the letter is a pleasant, almost gay one, with Mrs. Stuart expressing a genuine feeling for the correspondents.

The subsequent letter 8 begins with "Our dear Friends" and is possibly also to the Drs. Pope. If it is, it is the last one in the correspondence of Mrs. Stuart and the Drs. Pope on file at Tulane. The warmth of feeling of the Southern lady for her Boston friends is a rich human element in her life.

We are so sorry and so disappointed that you are not coming. If you had come any time up to now and so far as we can see, sometime ahead, we should have had a sweet sunny room for you and the visit would have been our delight as you know. If it had happened that we had no room there's a mighty fine boarding-house next us here—the back fence coming to one side—and telephone in both houses—and we should have been practically together but this was to be considered only in case—? You understand.

6. R. Vega, Dy. Clk., Civil District Court, for the Parish of Orleans, New Orleans, 16, La., Dec. 15th, 1904, in a letter to Miss Frances Fletcher, Dep't. of English and Foreign Languages, Ruston, Louisiana.

7. The letter, now in the Ruth McEnery Stuart collection at Tulane, is written in Mrs. Stuart's hand. It is headed "2024 Coliseum Street, New Orleans, La., Feb. 17th, 1912." A copy is in the appendix of this volume.

8. The letter was written by Mrs. Stuart at 2024 Coliseum Street, New Orleans, La., on March 9th, '12. Tulane Stuart Collection.
We had planned a number of things—you know, we can't give a party this winter—not even a small party—but we could have two or three dropping in for tea &c—but we could go to all the nooks and corners of this nooky old town and do all the unconventional things we chose.

It does seem, dear friends, that you have been tried beyond all reason in the tax put upon your endurance by the law's delays. Nevermind, it's all in the day's work. We've come into the storm region of life, all of us, and must not expect sunrise effects on the western horizon—excepting by reflection!

How's that for a youthful curl from my gray head?

We are so sorry you're not coming! Did Sister Sally write you that we got the Dickens book-plates and do appreciate them? You are a generous team of dear little ponies. I always think of you in harness together, bless you!

Well, I'm writing this, hoping for the first mail to take it. All love to you again.

Yo devoted friend
Ruth

I wrote Annie Alden just as soon as I had your letter, not telling her, of course, that Mary Wilkins Freeman had written you. I do feel such sympathy for her.

A number of the poems already referred to appeared in magazines between 1912 and 1916. Especially favorably received were the Daddy Do-Funny Jingles in Century and St. Nicholas, the poems about children, such as "Twinkle, Twinkle," "Junior Man," and "Brother Mingo Millenium's Ordination." "Brotherhood" and "Sea of Peace" were among the last published works of the author in periodicals.

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In 1913 Mrs. H. Baumgarten, the cousin whom Mrs. Stuart had taught at Locquet-LeRoy, and Mrs. Baumgarten's little daughter Mary visited Mrs. Stuart in New York. The Southern writer was living at that time, according to Mrs. Baumgarten, at the rooming house of a Mrs. Danvers. The visit was a pleasant one, with the renewal of old memories, and it gave Mrs. Stuart an opportunity to know another lovely child in her family. From the author the little girl received a copy of *Daddy Do-Funny's Wisdom Jingles* with the inscription:

To Mary B  
From a lover of all dear children  
Oct., 1913

A long letter\(^{15}\) to Miss Sallie is another record of Ruth McEnery Stuart's life in 1913. Although it begins with a reference to the illness of Harry—certainly Henry Cairnes McEnery who died on April 4, 1915, the letter is overflowing with fascinating details of a literary experience, the author's views of several of her contemporaries, evidence of her old gaiety of spirit and enjoyment of success and beautiful clothes, and even a chatty discussion of *Life* for March 27, 1913, and her fears that the world is progressing toward indecency. Parts of the letter seem somewhat garbled.

349 West 58th Street  
NY Mch. 30th, 13

Dear Sis,  
Such a dearth of letters! I have been so anxious—my heart in my throat about dear Harry.

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\(^{14}\) In a conversation with the biographer in New Orleans on Oct. 21, 1951.

\(^{15}\) The letter is in the Ruth McEnery Stuart collection at Tulane.
It is a pitiful situation, but not one to sum up, for the only way to deal with it is to take it a day at a time. So we pass this crisis and achieve the otherwise impossible.

But don't forget that if it comes to it, I'm there with you, hot weather or cold, and its all right. When I said I didn't know how I could stand it I was not in the least referring to any suffering from heat—but I meant only to express dread of being prostrated, but--

Since I've been here I have rather turned from a long stay in D--I only feel better out than I do there--I do--though, of course, that's all in the healing. But I think if I give up wholly to rest til I am more strong I'll be wise & shorten the stay.

And, by the way, I had a love of a time at the "Symposium of Poets" on Friday evening at the Century Club Brooklyn. You'd have been pleased at my royal welcome, repeated & enthusiastic applause. &c &c and it was altogether a sinky time & some good things done. I think I wrote you of Alf. Noyes's failure to appear--ill in Memphis. R. W. (not up for substitute) Johnson did very well & read about 3 or 4 pretty things. Edw. Markham ranted and raved. Of course T. was somewhat longwinded--threatening never to be done telling us about poetry and reading several things, but he was delightfully himself and worthwhile. Marguerite did a charming thing & looked lovely--as picture, really, all in pink, long pink scarf, &c &c &c Several minor men names uncaught or forgot did good things, as ranting, one young Low, neberries of Seth--did a poem on "The Unborn Child"--very pretty & thoughtful, poetic--able T. A. Daly was inimitable in .... Well, anyway, I read "Sitting Blind by the Sea"--ill stanzas then "Oh, My Soul, You Must Be Walking in Your Sleep." I closed with "Rev. Bro' Mingo's Ordination" (as described by himself) with shrieks almost of applause--after each, really a hearty round--& Bro. Johnson, well he fairly trembled.

I met him going into Cent. C. yest. & he came up, grasped my hand, & said extreme things of a great reader--the best one &c &c why you change yo whole voice and attitude from one thing to another and do it wonderfully &c &c &c before he had done, he did what I meant him to do. Don't tell this said he "Fetch it back" &c &c &c and so it goes. Really, when he didn't take the Mingo at first he said it was only because he was overloaded with dialect. But he warned that after hearing it, tra, la!16

M & I were sent home in an automobile & yest. I wasn't even tired. Wasn't it great? The club met at ratt Ma'kin in Brooklyn, a great house--& there was a fine supper--lobster, chicken, Mou_pu &c &c &c

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16 The author is referring, of course, to the history of the publication of "Brother Mingo Millenium's Ordination." The poem did not appear for several months after the successful reading. It had been rejected before the author made it come alive with her animation.
ices, punch, &c &c & all J B Society in evidence—a great social occasion. I wore do you care to know? that Gus Meyers net—I added velvet a bow band at bottom & shoulders worn with tassels & over it the cutest ligamon made of a piece but effective and artistic—I looked well tho' I didn't feel very graceful but ????? is ...... of compliments referred to my "most" attractive personality on the platform wh. does very well for her. Dear Fannie I do—so I went & so delighted over my new "poem" & well—Enough of my own goings, but this was an occasion for me & must be forgiven.

I dined yesterday informally—stayed to dine, really with the Hepburns—& today I am restive (?) in bed ....

I hope H's candy reached him safely. I think the doctor is the one to come into the breach now & forbid his going on the stroll for a stated period—he the M. D. to say when—Suppose you think of this—we don't want the poor dear man over & bent or killed & we the well ones, are the ones to decide for him whether he knows it or not. This is right & his duty I am sure.

Got the "Awful No" of Life 10ª Mech. 27th & try for the prize again—a nice picture—Its an interesting no—Cover-picture delightful take-off of "futuristic" art & some good things in it.

See our Boy, to a dot, kissing a girl, p. 621. "Airing her views," p. 622 & a stunning amole p 3 scenes "Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow" by Bayard James (whom I don't know). The progress toward indecency is vivid. The middle picture "Today" giving a not exaggerated impression of the Turkey Trot, so popular here. The young people don't want to dance anything else. Tho they confess that to dance it well the knees are interlocked or inter-whatted? See ....

The next letter preserved in the Ruth McEnery Stuart collection at Tulane was written by the author from Coliseum Street, New Orleans.

The envelope bears the postmark New Orleans, April 3, 1914, and is addressed to Mrs. Candace Wheeler, Thomasville, Georgia. There is in it the love of life and friends and New Orleans—all so much a part of Mrs. Stuart in the days before the loss of Stirling.

Dear Beloved Friend,

Sister Sallie and I were sitting talking a while ago and she said suddenly, (Dora's coming being in both our minds) "Why didn't we ask Mrs. Wheeler to come, too!" Whereupon we looked at each other in silence a moment and then exclaimed, "Lord o' glory, holy Columbus. Do you think she might?" (or words to that effect) and so I

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17 The letter is in the Tulane Stuart Collection.
am rushing this along to say for gracious sakes alive, dear, dear friend, is there any chance to get you? We'd be "tickled iridescent" [*sic*] both of us.

There's only one big room and one big bed in it, but it's a bed of the old school, half a mile wide, and, if you couldn't be fully comfy that way there's a nice little bed in a little room near into which Dora could slip for night sleeps or day naps.

And the weather is a dream of Elysium, and I do believe good now for quite a spell.

And there are two Iris blooms out along the unworked flower border and lots o' buds gaping purple and red. Won't it be great larks if you two do come and we'll do every devilish thing our chaste minds will allow—we'll sit between a Chinaman and a Gascon in the famous market and drink coffee and we'll find the witch who called you old and give him his delayed deserts. And when we come home every day we'll sit and talk and talk about everything and everybody and speak our minds and—

Oh, I'd—only feel that you want to come and can.

Sister had read this and says it's from her—from us both—

All love to you both—and all.

Ruth

On April 19, 1914, a letter to Mrs. Wheeler spoke of how ill "the McEnerys" had been with grippe—"real go-to-bed-and-lie-there-aching grippe—for days and days—Sister Sallie and I—and then for me earache and face-ache and toothache, and latterly even heartache! ... I had dim reluctant visions of emerging from my ear trouble with hearing blunted and a bit like a needle wh. has lost its point, but that is past. If there's anything the matter with my hearing, it is that I hear too much!"\(^{18}\)

The letter also compliments Mrs. Wheeler on her birthday: "It's great to have an 87th birthday and to produce poems an the event oneself, conceiving, bearing, and borning them as you do at this stage of life."\(^{19}\)

\(^{18}\) The letter is in the Tulane Stuart Collection.

\(^{19}\) Ibid.
In the Bookman, August, 1914, appeared Mrs. Stuart's critical interpretation of her own work, an article in which she explained her method of creating a story. First of all, she visualized her character, for portrayal of personality was her primary aim. The richness of character material in the South made her task little more than the selection of what seemed obviously probable. Having conceived the character, she worked to make the narrative grow out of it, as in actual life. Uncle Mingo, the first of her creations and one of her best, came from the human drifts of the crowded, poor quarters. Typical of the faithful colored man who guarded the unprotected women and children during the war, the old fellow is individualized by his poetic fancy. The story, whose theme is pride, shows development of character. The obstacles to be overcome are those that try to vanquish the old Negro's dominant trait.

After her initial work in portraying the Negro Mrs. Stuart said her mind became obsessed with the Simpkinsville type, named for the Simpkins spinsters of the Woman's Exchange, the humble tale of village life which brought cordial praise from Herbert Spencer. Of all the stories with their setting in the fictitious little town in Southern Arkansas the one that haunted Mrs. Stuart most weirdly was "The Unlived Life of Little Mary Ellen," which she carried about in her mind several years, seeming to see the pathetic young woman driving through the streets of the little village, nursing her doll. Then courage came to write what she so plainly

saw. But fearing she might not make it convincing, she protected herself
by having the attending physician call the case one which seemed a psycho-
logical impossibility. Mrs. Stuart wrote that she was vindicated in deal-
ing with the subject not only in the kindly handling of the tale by the
critics, but also in the finding of several cases of precisely this delu-
sion. However, at the time Mrs. Stuart wrote the story she had never
heard of the real cases; thus she wondered from whence had come the in-
spiration for the story.

In "American Backgrounds for Fiction" Mrs. Stuart expressed a
preference for her own fabrications rather than "real touches." Miss
Sarah told this biographer that when Mrs. Stuart read to her "The Second
Mooing of Salina Sue" Miss Sarah told her sister that she thought she
had gone too far that time. Yet Ruth proceeded to send the story to be
published. Soon afterward a woman in a Southern town wrote to ask her
whether she had heard the story in that particular place, for the very
incident had occurred there.

In the critical article Mrs. Stuart stated that from her glean-
ings among the Negroes it was a matter of simple expansion to include the
Italians. While her mind was resting from the peasant folk and their
mixed talk, there arrived The River's Children, written out of her heart
and portraying her own gentle people. Still, she said, this did not

21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
really begin to live until the merry-hearted Negroes began to sing through the pages of it.

Thus grew the three kinds of material in which Mrs. Stuart was mainly interested: the Negro against the aristocratic background, the Italian and the Creole, and the hillbilly. In many of the Negro stories and poems, particularly in the jingles and in the spirituals, in the first monologue in Sonny, in the first part of "A Note of Scarlet," in The Unlived Life of Little Mary Ellen, and in The River's Children, Mrs. Stuart, in the opinion of this biographer, did her best work. For these compositions she should retain a place in American literature. A number of her other pieces it would be just as well had she never written. Yet many of the others are just beneath the mark of excellence and might have been excellent had the author not attempted so very much. Indeed, The Cocoon, a novelette of 1915, is hardly worthy of being mentioned. "I wish that Mrs. Stuart had never written that book,"23 said Mrs. Royden Douglas in 1951 as she recalled the last years of her friend's life.

On many days while Mrs. Stuart was in New Orleans she had lunch at the old Gnuewald Hotel, now the Roosevelt Hotel, with Mrs. Douglas, later a prominent woman attorney. Mrs. Stuart's friendship with Mrs. Douglas had begun about 1907 and had become an especial one, so that her friend knew and felt deeply all the sorrow in the heart of the author. Yet like gentlewomen neither ever referred to the tragedy in Mrs. Stuart's

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23 On October 22, 1951, this biographer visited Mrs. Douglas in Baton Rouge, where Mrs. Douglas had gone to live after her retirement.
"Often," Mrs. Douglas said, "we attended the pictures after lunch, and whenever there was a group of boys, the age of Stirling, she would put a trembling hand on my arm and with tears in her eyes she would say with a trembling voice, 'Dearie,' her pet name for me, 'do you mind if we go?' I would immediately rise but no word would be spoken for some time until the anguish of the moment had passed." Thus the same feelings that had made impossible the answering of the letters of condolence prompted Mrs. Stuart to leave the movies in the midst of the pictures.

Except for the overwhelming minutes of tenderness, Mrs. Stuart was gay and vivacious and much in her element in New Orleans. All the McEnerys liked a good drink, and she was no exception. Frequently at tea time she and Mrs. Douglas were together for a sandwich and a martini. 'Partner,' Mrs. Stuart would often say when she was with her friend, 'let's go shopping.' If Mrs. Douglas insisted that she had to work, she was reproached with the gay, 'Don't be so worthy!' One of Mrs. Stuart's favorite diversions was going to Gus Mayer's, still the most exclusive shop in New Orleans, and buying many pretty dresses for herself.

"Oh, how she enjoyed buying clothes—stylish clothes!" Mrs. Douglas laughingly exclaimed as she recalled the happy afternoons she

24 Mrs. Douglas told the biographer of Mrs. Stuart in 1933. On May 16, 1935, she wrote Miss Frances Fletcher a letter from Jennings, La. The quotations of Mrs. Douglas are from the letter.

25 The quotations in this paragraph are from the biographer's conversation with Mrs. Douglas in New Orleans in 1933.
and her friend had spent on Canal Street. "She was handsome in them, too!" A picture of Mrs. Stuart in a white evening gown trimmed at the neck and sleeves with fur confirms this statement. The long strand of pearls around her neck makes her appear regal. Her arms and her shoulders are beautiful, and her hair is piled high on her head.

Besides a good drink and pretty clothes Mrs. Stuart liked good talk. She had a "vast storehouse of inimitable anecdotes," Mrs. Douglas said. "I recall one afternoon we lingered over our demi-tasse. She was a brilliant raconteur, but never more so than on that occasion. We were alone except for a young writer, who leaned forward sitting behind me. He had recognized Mrs. Stuart and came forward, extended his hand, introduced himself, and asked if he might be allowed to hear all she said. He had just got a bit here and there, enough to be captivated by her anecdotes. She laughed at him and smiled delightfully, but said, 'I think not.' They talked for a few minutes and the young man left thoroughly disappointed."

Mrs. Stuart, for the sake of her boy, was always gentle to every young person with whom she came into contact. Of her Mrs. Douglas observed the same characteristic Miss Sarah Stirling McEnery thought so striking: "More than anyone else I have ever known, Mrs. Stuart loved people. She was fond of her colored servants, and would recount anecdotes by the hour about those who served her. Her sense of humor was an

26 Ibid.

27 Mrs. Douglas to Miss Fletcher, May 16, 1864. The letter was written from Jennings, La.
ever-present blessing. So from the time her early coffee was brought to her bed, until the cover was turned down at night, her sense of humor was a benediction to her, and cleared the day throughout for her."  

Mrs. Stuart was devoted to Mrs. Douglas's husband. "The proof of it was," her friend related, "that she came up one afternoon loaded with bundles. She said: 'These are for Roy, my boy's pipes and ash trays, I have brought to Roy.' These, also, I treasure more because she added, 'I would rather Roy have them than anyone else I know.'"  

The only diversion of Mrs. Douglas into which Mrs. Stuart did not enter was bridge. For her it held no interest; she thought it too dull. Talking was more to her fancy. One afternoon, Mrs. Douglas wrote in 1935, when she told her friend she would have to forego their usual engagement because she had promised to play bridge, Ruth replied: "'Now come on down, never mind that engagement, don't be so worthy.' That applied to a bridge engagement, sounded contradictory. Little did she think that I would apply that on other occasions 'not to be so worthy' when a matter of needed relaxation was more obligatory."  

The friendship of Mrs. Stuart and Mrs. Douglas has been memorialized in the Ruth McEnery Stuart Clan in New Orleans, an organization that remains an honor to the fame of the Louisiana writer. It was Mrs. Douglas

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28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
who organized the group in the winter of 1913-1914.

"Ruth never missed a meeting when she was in New Orleans," Mrs. Douglas said. "For six years the meetings were held every Thursday afternoon, except during the summer months, at the Douglas home on Elm Street. Ten charter members and Mrs. Douglas's most intimate friends attended the Clan, or class, as it was called in the beginning. To the teacher who instructed the members Mrs. Douglas paid one hundred dollars a month. Fanny Heaslip was among those who received the training. Every meeting some distinguished visitor to New Orleans came, Madam Rozika Schwinne, a Russian Embassadress, the Countess of Kingston, English woman, whose husband was one of the first killed in the World War."  

The first president was Ruth McEnery Stuart herself. Today the Ruth McEnery Stuart Clan is an exclusive literary club in the city of New Orleans.

Helen Pitkin, an author, a member of the clan, expressed the purpose of the organization to be "to keep a candle burning on the shrine of Mrs. Stuart." It is said, however, that only too often the members of the group have appeared unmindful of her whose name they bear. In November, 1954, a paper on Ruth McEnery Stuart and Grace King was read to the clan.

The linking of the names of the two writers is somewhat untoward. Though they knew each other, there was never a close friendship between them. The charming nephew of Miss King—Mr. Carlton King, her heir—graciously checked the books of his aunt to see whether there were among the complimentary copies presented to her with inscriptions from authors

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32 Ibid.

33 Mr. King, one of the delightful raconteurs whom this biographer met in her research, said he came to live when he was three or four years old in the home of Grace King. Today he and his family live in the Garden District in New Orleans in the beautiful old King mansion with the portrait of Grace King painted while she was visiting in the home of Samuel Clemens in Hartford and with the furniture willed to Miss King by Gayarre. In May, 1954, the biographer visited Mr. and Mrs. King in their home.
a single book from Ruth McEnery Stuart. He found none. Nor could he find any letters from her among the correspondence of Grace King. He could recall no occasion when his aunt had mentioned Ruth McEnery Stuart. Indeed, he was unfamiliar with the McEnery family, for he said he could not remember ever hearing of any friendship between the McEnerys and the sisters of his father.

On one significant occasion the names of the two ladies were linked—the time each was awarded an honorary degree by the Tulane University. Among the documents that preserve Mrs. Stuart's memory in the collection at Tulane is the copy of the citation Tulane presented her:

Tulane University of Louisiana

Be it known that, in recognition of her exalted character, her eminent attainments in Arts and Letters, her constant devotion to the advancement of Truth and the welfare of Society, the Administrators of the Tulane University of Louisiana have this day conferred upon

RUTH McENEKY STUART

the degree of

Doctor of Letters

with all the rights, honors and privileges appertaining thereto,

June 2nd, 1915

R. M. Walmsley

President of Board of Administrators

Robert Sharp

President of the University

New Orleans, La.

At the banquet which followed the awarding of the degree the toast mistress was Edith Garland Dupre. Something of the occasion enriches a letter of Mrs. Stuart to Miss Dupre. The letter, which follows, was written several days after the banquet:

34 In the letter Miss Dupre wrote to accompany the copy of Mrs. Stuart's letter she said, in part:
My dear Miss Dupre:

Surely you understand enough of the congestion of things at this season and realize enough of the deadly enervation of this relentless June sun beating all adventure out of our souls or trying to do it—you understand all this I say sufficiently to pardon my delay in answering your charming and much valued note of days and days ago.

I am much touched by the generous loyalty of our people in the quick response to Mrs. Douglas' all too complimentary idea of honoring me in naming their study clubs. Of course I am pleased and I'm glad I have a pretty name—I didn't make it you see—and I'll have a personal feeling of kinship for any Stuart clan who thus gives me the glad hand.

Didn't we have a merry evening at the Banquet? I was far from pleased with my own small part in it—as a contributor of mirth—and wished I had been forewarned as to speaking. However though I'm always loud with fright when I have to speak without the railing which the printed page affords, I forget it afterwards and return to a moderately normal condition of mind.

I wish you'd come and see me when you come down to New Orleans or up to New York. You're a master toastmistress, you must know.

Gratefully,
R. McEnery Stuart

At an annual meeting of the clan held at the country club, Dorothy Paul Wade, the philanthropist honored in the Hall of Fame for securing two million dollars from the United States for the leper colony, presented to Mrs. Stuart the gift from the clan. It was a jeweled box to hold the copy

Dear Frances:

At last I have dug up the letter from Ruth McEnery Stuart, about which I once spoke to Mr. Fletcher!! ....

As far as I can recall, she was referring to a Newcomb banquet, at which as you would gather from her letter I was "toast-mistress." My recollection is that it was the year that Newcomb had through Tulane (of course), conferred on her an honorary degree. I know that she was a special guest that night. You have probably already checked the fact that she was honored by Tulane with a degree. Was it in 1915? If so, I am correct. If not, then she was simply being given recognition by Newcomb on that occasion with emphasis on establishment of Stuart Clan.
of the citation of Tulane in its presentation of her degree. Mrs. Douglas wrote of the occasion: "She gave me a hug afterward, saying, 'How could you know what that Jewelled box meant to me, presented in such an unforgettable way?'"35

Mrs. Douglas referred to this banquet in 1951 when she told the biographer her feeling of regret that Mrs. Stuart had written The Cocoon, a copy of which was at the place of each guest at the luncheon.

What a pity that Mrs. Stuart did write the little rest-cure comedy of manners, a flagrant creation of sentimentality unredeemed even by its satire and wit and the charm of the heroine. The suspense is well worked out, but the denouement is inartistic. Since the author had referred to Pamela in "American Backgrounds for Fiction" a year before its publication, it is likely that she consciously used as her model Richardson's technique of constructing a romance through letters and a journal. Possibly the many generous reviews the little book received may be accounted for principally by the taste of the years just prior to the entrance of the United States into the war. The New York Times for June 6, 1916, stated: "The Cocoon, with its sparkling humor and its touches of pathos and tenderness is itself a rest cure for which to be grateful."36

Even more glowing is the following review:

\[35\] The letter of Mrs. Douglas to Miss Fletcher, written by Mrs. Douglas from Jennings, La., May 16, 1935.

Although the chill is hardly out of those early spring nights, the season of hammock literature is upon us. The forerunner is The Cocon by Ruth McEnery Stuart (Hearst's International Library Co., N. Y.). Of course, Mrs. Stuart is a southerner where presumably hammocks ripen earlier than they do in this altitude of lingering frosts.

And really The Cocon should be saved till the hot, aromatic days that are coming, for it is a perfect specimen of its class, which needs its own environment to be of greatest effect and appeal. Even read now in the busy course of a book reviewer's day, The Cocon is abundant in charm. The particular cocoon is a hospital bed out of which finally emerges a lovely butterfly of romance. Yet, it is not altogether fair to call the whimsical, outspoken, delightful heroine a mere butterfly; she is too substantial and sane for that. She is irresistible.

One of Mrs. Stuart's most original, quaintly fancied and delightfully told fictions.

Nearer this biographer's evaluation of The Cocon is an article that appeared in June, 1915:

Frankly it is a rather preposterous sort of story, exaggerated and rather dull. The characters described are unintentional caricatures, the descriptions overdrawn, and the final disentanglement of the unconvincing plot is as far fetched as a Gilbert and Sullivan opera.

The book Mrs. Stuart published in 1916, Plantation Parade, already reviewed in the preceding chapter, merited the acclaim it received more truly than did The Cocon. One critic stated:

Plantation Songs—sweetness of heart, the careful joyousness, and the simplicity of the Negro people. The verses run the whole gamut of human emotions from rollicking merriment to deep pathos.

Some delightful folk songs are "When De Sun Swings Low," "Plantation Hoe Song," "Lady Baby," "Come Along, Miss Nancy," "De Star in De East," "Oh, Shoutin's Mighty Sweet."
The review in *North American* underscored the nativism of the poems in the little volume of verse. "To the notable list of distinctively American verse in this distinctively American dialect is now to be added 'Plantation Songs' by Ruth McEnery Stuart—a little book of whimsies in rhyme and sentiment and in smoothly rolling dialect that has the indefinable quality of sympathetic nativism—as tho this, and not classic Anglo-Saxon, were the real language of the people."

In October, 1916, a sympathetic and cordial review appeared in *Poetry*:

These are Negro dialect songs of the best type, gay, humorous, rollicking and tender, full of sympathy and ricting with color. It is safe to predict that some of these, for their human qualities of mirth and patience, will be chanted and loved in nooks and corners of the earth for many a long year. If Mrs. Stuart's place was not already secure, this book alone would ennoble her to the hearts of her people.

Her serious poems, for the most part devotional, are unfortunately not so successful as the Plantation Songs. The best of these, *Sitting Blind by the Sea*, is already familiar to readers of *Poetry*.

But Uncle Remus himself might have written the Negro songs.

The excellent reviews of her last book indicate a national esteem for Mrs. Stuart. Again before her death New Orleans honored her as it had so many times before. The occasion was the great Peace program in the City Park, for which she wrote and read "The Sea of Peace." Hundreds of children took part in the ceremony of the planting of the Peace tree.

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One of the last happy occasions of the author's life was an evening at Mrs. Douglas's when her friend had about one hundred fifty guests to meet Mrs. Stuart and Mrs. John Dibrill, president of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs. Mrs. Stuart was radiant as she read by request her Daddy Do-Funny Wisdom Jingles and other short poems.

From New Orleans, however, she returned to New York. A main theme of her work—the star in the East—seemed to her lost. She was violently opposed to war. Her plan as presented in "Brotherhood," that only the unfit, the maimed, the afflicted be sent to war, is unlike Mrs. Stuart and inhuman. So she thought on the historic morning of April 6, 1917, when she and Miss Sarah heard down on 23rd Street a big, blatant newsboy shouting "War!"

Soon after this Mrs. Stuart became so ill that she had to go to a sanitarium. When she received a letter from Mrs. Douglas asking her to suggest a motto for the Ruth McEnery Stuart Clan she answered, said Mrs. Douglas, as follows:

"Let's have, 'Be sure you are right, then gang forward.'" "No, let's not," she added. "Some smart aleck would get up and say, 'Don't they know a Stirling motto should not be used for a Stuart Clan.'" Then she added: "Let's do and see what they will say." So that became the Stuart Clan motto. It was changed on the stationery not long ago, to "Be sure you are right then go forward." When I was asked about it they immediately changed it to the original.

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43 Miss Sarah Stirling McEnery.

44 From the letter of Mrs. Douglas to Miss Fletcher, written from Jennings, La., May 16, 1935.
Mrs. Stuart prepared a gift for Mrs. Douglas even after she went to the sanitarium. Mrs. Douglas said of her friend's thoughtfulness:

"The last thing Ruth did (Miss Sarah Stirling told me) was to wrap a present for me, which I little deserved, for I was remiss until it pains me yet to think of it, in letting her letters remain unanswered after Ruth left New Orleans. It only goes to prove that the little things we neglect are the ones which trouble our consciences when all our tears cannot wash out one word of it. I am sure Omar had such a friend as Ruth, for one can only grieve over the loss of one so beloved, and would shed an ocean of tears, if there could be brought back the last opportunity to reciprocate the kindnesses shown."

On May 6, 1917, as Mrs. Stuart, propped up in bed, was eating her lunch, the nurse on entering the room saw a sudden change come into her face and knew that she was dead.

A funeral service was held in Zion and Timothy's Church in New York City. An account of it by a special correspondent expresses the emotion which Mrs. Stuart's friends surely felt as they sat in the presence of one who in her public appearances in life glowed with animation:

...Death is doubly sad when it silences one who has radiated smiles and good cheer, and the author's southern dialect stories and poems always brought forth smiles.

It was a contrast to sit in the church, with Mrs. Stuart's body silenced and covered with flowers, from drawing room readings attended where the author herself with a vivacity of manner had read her stories to the merriment of her listeners.

The services were conducted by the Rev. Dr. Henry E. Lubeck, rector, who is known in Geneva, and in Clifton's Springs, where he spends his summers. At the close, Ladd Morgan, the noted harpist, played on the harp "Abide with Me," with variations.

45 Ibid.

46 Miss Sarah told the biographer of her sister's death.

Tributes to Mrs. Stuart filled the papers throughout the nation for many weeks. Some of them contained mistakes about the home of Mrs. Stuart’s husband, the age of Stirling, her own age, yet all paid honor to the spirit of the Southern woman’s contribution to American literature. "In her field, apparently," said the New York Times Book Review, "the picturesque writer of Louisiana has left no successor."\(^{48}\)

The body was taken to New Orleans, where it lies near that of Stirling.\(^{49}\) One other has been interred there since 1917.


\(^{49}\) Colonel J. Fair Harin first told the biographer that Mrs. Stuart and Stirling were buried in New Orleans. In response to an inquiry made by Mrs. Edward S. Hathaway for Miss Fletcher, the Baltman Funeral Home confirmed what Colonel Harin had said.

On a "Direction Map Metairie Cemetery" Mrs. Stuart’s biographer now has the following information:

\begin{align*}
\text{1} & \quad \text{Ruth McEnery Stuart} \\
& \quad \text{Daughter of} \\
& \quad \text{James McEnery} \\
& \quad \text{and} \\
& \quad \text{Mary Stirling} \\
& \quad \text{Wife of A. O. Stuart} \\
& \quad \text{Died May 6, 1917} \\
& \quad \text{And Her Son} \\
& \quad \text{Stirling McEnery Stuart} \\
& \quad \text{Died April 21, 1905}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{2} & \quad \text{McENERY} \\
& \quad \text{James McEnery} \\
& \quad \text{Died Aug. 7, 1871} \\
& \quad \text{Age 60 yrs.} \\
& \quad \text{Mary Routh Stirling} \\
& \quad \text{Widow of James McEnery} \\
& \quad \text{Died Nov. 28, 1904} \\
& \quad \text{Age 78 yrs.} \\
& \quad \text{John Christopher McEnery} \\
& \quad \text{Died May 1, 1860, Age 6 yrs.} \\
& \quad \text{Annie Baker McEnery} \\
& \quad \text{Died May 14, 1860, Age 2 yrs.} \\
& \quad \text{James A. McEnery} \\
& \quad \text{Died Nov. 14, 1911} \\
& \quad \text{Faithful, Loyal} \\
& \quad \text{Francis D. McEnery} \\
& \quad \text{Died Dec. 16, 1932}
\end{align*}
Only Francis D. McEnery, who passed away on December 16, 1932, has been buried in the McEnery plot in Metairie Cemetery since her interment. Some time after the summer of 1935 Miss Sarah died. However, there is no record of her having been buried with her family.

The will of Mrs. Stuart, first made on February 14, 1905, only a

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In the Name of God, Amen.
Flushing—L.I. Feb. 14th—1905

I, Ruth McEnery Stuart, of Louisiana, at present residing in the town of Flushing, Long Island, Queen's County, State of New York, do make, publish and declare this as and for my last will and testament.

First—I direct my executor hereinafter named, to pay all my just debts and funeral expenses as soon as the same can be done after my decease.

Second—I give and bequeath all my estate, real and personal, whatsoever and wherever, to my beloved son, save and excepting the following named bequests.

To my sister, Sarah Stirling McEnery, I bequeath the cottage at Onteora known as Tiger Lilies with the sum of One thousand Dollars to be paid from my royalty accounts as it shall accrue independently of the royalty on the book called Sonny which shall belong exclusively to my son. Also, to my sister, Sarah Stirling McEnery, One Thousand shares of the Golden Eagle mining stock with such of my personal property as will be named herein or in separate memorandum. My sister Sarah will also draw from my royalty account the sum of Fifty Dollars with which she will have made a seal ring bearing the McEnery crest and Coat of Arms, sending the same to my brother, James Alexander McEnery as a memento expressing a sister's affection and gratitude.

My entire wardrobe I leave to my sister, Sarah Stirling McEnery, with such as my jewelry as is not named in separate memorandum, and exclusive, particularly, of my pearl necklace and watch and chain which I leave to my son. Also my autograph books, type-writer, mahogany desk and chair and my basket collection I leave to my son. The last I advise him to sell, selecting only such as he may wish to keep in use. They would sell well as a collection only.

My furniture, table silver, house linen, china glass and bric-a-brac pictures &c, I wish my sister Sarah Stirling McEnery to hold and use until such time as my son marries or until after consulting with him, she may decide to sell the furniture in which case she and he will equally share the proceeds—this applies to all personal property excepting that given by separate memorandum.
few weeks before Stirling's fatal injury, named her beloved son her principal heir. The codicil added on July 5, 1906, gave to Miss Sarah not only what had been assigned to her the preceding year but also the inheritance of Stirling.

To my niece, Lea Callaway I leave Five Hundred shares of the Golden Eagle Mining Stock, a small "diamond-and-garnet" ring and my coral necklace.

To Mrs. H. Barry, should she survive me, I leave the sum of ten dollars a month to be paid at the office of the Century Company or as my sister shall elect.

Third—I hereby appoint my friend, George E. Marcus, executor of this, my last will and testament hereby revoking any and all other wills by me at any time made.

Ruth McEnery Stuart

Signed, sealed and published and declare by the said testator as and for his last will and testament, in the presence of us and each of us who in his presence and in the presence of each other and at her request, have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses at the end of the will.

Witness.
Fannie L. Elliott
R. H. E. Elliott
Flushing—L. I.
David D. M. Master
Notary Public
Queens County
N. Y.
(SEAL)

New York—July 5th 1906

In the Name of God, Amen

I, Ruth McEnery Stuart, at present residing in the City of New York, do publish and declare this codicil, as my last will and testament. It will verify and confirm the provision contained in the writing (type and handwriting) on the reverse of this sheet—excepting that since the death of my son, Stirling McEnery Stuart, I desire such property as was therein assigned or bequeathed to him shall pass to my sister, Sarah Stirling McEnery.

Also the Cottage Tiger Lillies, having been sold and Columbine bought, since the making of the will on reverse of this, my sister will by this Codicil own Columbine instead of the said Tiger Lillies.

Also I appoint this same sister, Sarah Stirling McEnery, sole administrator of my estate without bonds.

Signed, sealed published and declared by the said testator as and for her last will and testament in the presence of us and each of us, who
In 1934 Miss Sarah told this biographer that the royalty from Mrs. Stuart's writings amounted to three hundred dollars the first year after her sister's death and then began to dwindle. "There is always a lull," she said, "after an author's death." 51

It is likely that in her own day Ruth McEnery Stuart experienced financial success and popularity such as few other American women writers ever have. Indeed, she did not achieve the craftsmanship of Sarah Orne Jewett or Mary E. Wilkins Freeman. However, she was recognized in her time as a leading woman writer of the United States. In her portrayal of

in her presence and in the presence of each other and at her request have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses at the end of the will.

Ruth McEnery Stuart

Witnesses
Marguerite Merrington—220 Central Park South
State of New York )
County of New York )

I, Philip A. Donahue, Clerk of the Surrogate's Court of said County, do hereby certify that I have compared the foregoing copy of the last will and testament and codicil thereto of Ruth McEnery Stuart, deceased, admitted to probate June 29, 1917 and recorded in liber 1055 of wills, page 127 with the original record thereof now remaining in this office, and have found the same to be a correct transcript therefrom and of the whole of such original record.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of the Surrogate's Court of the County of New York this 3rd day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and fifty-five.

Philip A. Donahue
Clerk of the Surrogate's Court

(SEAL)

51 Interview, Miss Sarah Stirling McEnery, 3227 Coliseum Street, New Orleans, 1933.
the irrepressible mirth and spontaneous kindliness of the colored people she excelled all her contemporaries. Joel Chandler Harris thought she came nearer the heart of the Negro than did any other.
CHAPTER X

LITERARY REPUTATION

The reader of American literature from 1888 to 1917 could hardly have been unaware of Ruth McEnery Stuart, for her works appeared in nearly all the recognized periodicals of that time. A number of her books went through more than one edition. In the years of her literary activity she published an incredible volume of work and attained a somewhat phenomenal reputation. She was known and read in the East, the West, the North, and the South. Her reputation extended beyond the United States, and there is evidence that the English considered her one of the leading American women writers.

The story of Ruth McEnery Stuart's popularity is shown in the quantity of her works. Her reputation in her lifetime never fluctuated. There is continuous evidence in the reviews from 1888 to 1917 to prove that she was in public favor throughout her writing career.

"A New Southern Writer" is the title of a review of the first two published stories of Mrs. Stuart. The stories were "Uncle Mingo," which appeared in The Princeton Review, and "The Lamentations of Jeremiah Johnson," in Harper's Monthly. In addition to critical comment, the reviewer adds a biographical sketch and a description of her. "Mrs. Stuart is a slender woman, of medium height, erect and rather stately in her carriage. The chief characteristics of her strong, delicately featured face are fine dark eyes, very expressive and slightly contracted. A fashion of combing her hair straight back from her brow shows its ample proportions to
excellent advantage." There is a comment on the "pleasant, cordial manners of the kindly" new Southern writer and a statement that she spoke without self-consciousness of the "success attending her initial steps in literature." The concluding sentence points out that Mrs. Stuart has won a high place in the literary world and that those who know "the force, depth, and earnestness of the author, believe this is merely the prelude of more valuable work to be realized in the future."

Mrs. Stuart's publication of stories in Northern and Eastern periodicals won attention for her in New Orleans. The papers identified her with five of her relatives who had served Louisiana as governor and emphasized the distinction in her family background. Leaders in New Orleans and at Tulane, wishing to help her financially, made arrangements for her first public reading. An announcement of the occasion is in the Tulane Stuart collection:

Author's Reading
By Mrs. Ruth McEnery Stuart
(For Her Benefit)
Vocal Music by Mrs. Anna McLean Roach,
Accompanist, Mrs. J. W. H. Eckert,
At Tulane Hall
Thursday, May 19, '92, at 8 o'clock P. M.
Ticket .... One Dollar

A year after the reading at Tulane Mrs. Stuart was in New York.

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2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
There she served intermittently in the early 1890's as editor of Harper's Bazaar. The record of her popularity is to be found in a contemporary note: "Her literary associations are principally among what is known as the 'Harper Set,' and she is definitely enrolled as what the magazine people call a 'Harper pet.' She is a slender, dark-eyed, middle-aged widow, has one child, a son, is a very bright talker, and full of generous interest in other people's work."  

By 1893 Mrs. Stuart's contemporaries associated her with the Southern writers who had undertaken to translate the South into "language intelligible over the world." She was considered "not at all inferior to Miss Grace King in her reproductions of Negro character and comedy and inconsistency." A reviewer in discussing stories "out of the common" expressed the view that no writer had appeared who knew the Negro character better than Mrs. Stuart.  

Mrs. Stuart was well known in St. Louis in 1893. In "Stories from the South" a critic surveyed the literature of the time, speaking especially of the writers in the New South movement and praising Mrs. Stuart. "To such as recall those ante-bellum days in the Far South, where the happy, careless darkeys worked and played like merry children, there

6 The Critic, June 10, 1893. Tulane Stuart Collection.  
7 Ibid.  
will come a rush of fond recollections, overpowering, delightful, if they read the collection of stories gathered into the pretty volume of "A Golden Wedding and Other Tales."^9

In 1894 a Boston paper^10 spoke of Ruth McNerney Stuart in connection with Mary E. Wilkins. The reviewer of Carlotta's Intended and Other Stories observed that Mrs. Stuart was to the South what Mrs. Wilkins was to the North and that her sketches had a similar truthfulness and charm. Another Boston paper called the book "the best and the most entertaining of its class."^11 A third New England critic wrote: "At all events these pages hold one of the sweetest and most captivating stories of common life we have read for many a day. The dialect, whether Italian-English, or Hibernian or Creole, is done so well as to please and not tire the reader."^12

A reporter in New York objected to the story of "Carlotta's Intended" on account of the Northern reader's prejudice against the Italian immigrant. However, he praised the "delicate charm"^13 of the author's dialect tales and expressed a preference for the story of the spinster postmistress and the "delightful tale about darkey Caesar's heroic and

^9"Stories from the South," Republic, St. Louis, Mo., April 2, 1895. Tulane Stuart Collection.
^10The Courier, Boston, July 8, 1894, Tulane Stuart Collection.
^11Congregationalist, Boston, July 26, 1894. Tulane Stuart Collection.
^12Eastern Argus, Portland, Maine, August 20, 1894. Tulane Stuart Collection.
ingenious devotion to his old master." He thought that "in creating Negro character and talk, Ruth LeEnery Stuart is quite at her best." The last sentence of the review compliments the melody of the verses at the end of the book.

A Southern magazine called attention to the career of Mrs. Stuart, "whose work has won its way with no adventitious aids of personal friendship or newspaper exploitation." One may recall Mrs. Baumgarten's comment on Mrs. Stuart's ascent to fame without the help of anyone except herself. "There was a spark in her, something of genius," she said. "Like Sam LeEnery, my cousin Ruth was an unusual person."

Mrs. Stuart was so well liked that she was invited to many parts of the United States to read her work. When she went to Chicago in the spring of 1895, the press devoted a great deal of space to her.

Chicago is just at present entertaining a distinguished visitor--Mrs. Ruth LeEnery Stuart, one of the best of American short-story writers. This lady's work is remarkable for its humanity, its naturalness, its tenderness and the delicacy and pervasiveness of its humor. Mrs. Stuart's negro dialect comes nearer to perfection than that of any other contemporaneous writer, and presumably so because when she addresses herself to negro dialect this writer not only speaks but also thinks in dialect.

The author did not place Mrs. Stuart above all other Southern

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14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
17 Interview, Mrs. H. Baumgarten, New Orleans, 1951.
writers, yet he spoke of "admir[ing her writings to the degree of enthusiasm"] and said he was grateful to know that "her extraordinary gifts and accomplishments are this week receiving candid recognition from the cleverest people in Chicago."20

The second day Ruth McEnery Stuart was in Chicago one of the papers published a feature story concerning her. The writer alluded to a time before the printing press when story tellers almost always made their utterances audible. "The appeal to the sensibilities," he said, "is not wholly vain. Dickens found only the larger audience for his readings, because the works he read had been appreciated in their published form."21 He praised Ruth McEnery Stuart for her skill in interpreting her work and for her effectiveness in the use of dialect. "The distinguished writer brings to her aid in portraying the peculiarities of speech and customs of her Southern country not only a fond familiarity of them from her childhood, quickened by her aptitude in observation and expression, but also the charm of the Southern manner."22

Mrs. Stuart's attitude toward the Northern people was one of good will. While she was in Chicago, she said:

I am so delighted with the way I have been treated in the North. I am very fond of my homeland, and I know the Southern people have the reputation of being more warm-hearted than the Northern people,

19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
but I do not believe it so. It is generally imagined that the farther North you get the more frigid are the people, but that I believe is mere superficial reserve and that only at the beginning.23

A record of 1896 proves the financial rewards of Mrs. Stuart's popularity. "Judged by those commercial standards which no one disputes, Mrs. Stuart ranks with Thomas Nelson Page and Frank Stockton. She is the best paid woman writer in town."24 Gobolinks, a new book of that year, contributed to the financial success of the author.

All kinds of demoniacal figures result from an apparently single start. Things with tentacles and proboscies and horns and arms and an occasional leg evolve; and the variety—usually on an entomological or crustacean basis—is remarkable. Ruth McNenry Stuart, the inventor, sets up the play, and Albert Bigelow Paine makes the monsters to illustrate its workings.25

A feature article in the middle of the summer of 1896 reviewed the eight years of Mrs. Stuart's career, pointing out how continuously she had written.

Eight years ago a new writer came out of the South. She signed herself Ruth McNenry Stuart, and her stories, dealing chiefly with quaint Southern negroes and with even more picturesque poor whites, with their unconventional manners and peculiar dialect, possessed a unique interest, a vigor and delicious humor that at once won the favor of readers and soon made the name of the writer famous all over the country. Since then Mrs. Stuart has written constantly, and she is now recognized as one of the leading writers of America, and as one of the few women writers who can blend with fine art and genuine pathos the most delicious humor. Moreover, there are

23 Ibid.
few among either the women or the men now contributing to the peri­
odicals whose skill can compare with hers in delineating character.26

The story quoted Mrs. Stuart as saying she was a realist, not a
romanticist. "I can't say that truth is in entire realism, as this term
is generally understood. Realism, if it means fidelity to life, must,
of course, always be the aim of all good workers."27

Feature articles and reviews of the author's works kept the name
of Ruth McEnery Stuart before people in 1897. Cable was complimented by
the press for having influenced Grace King, Ruth McEnery Stuart, Kate
Chopin, and Mollie E. Moore Davis, "all of whom had helped to make New
Orleans one of the richest cities in literary interest"28 outside Boston
and New York. Kate Chopin, a member of the New Orleans group, published
in St. Louis a story concerning Ruth McEnery Stuart. "It was in 1887,"
Mrs. Stuart told Kate Chopin, "that I first thought about writing, and
in 1888 my first story was published. I sent two stories to the Harper's.
It was in this way. I wrote an anonymous letter to them, and in reply re­
ceived a very pleasant note from Mr. Charles Dudley Warner, who afterward
sent one of my stories to Prof. Sloane of the Princeton Review, and kept
one for Harper's Magazine. The Princeton Review thus happened to be the
first magazine to print a story for me."29

27 Ibid.
29 Kate Chopin, unidentified printed article, St. Louis, Feb. 17, 1897. Tulane Stuart Collection.
Sonny, reviewed in every part of the country in 1897, was called "one of the treats of the hour." Critics pointed out that Mrs. Stuart was not indebted to Barrie's Sentimental Tommie, "since most, if not all, the chapters describing Sonny's youth had been written and published before Tommie came wafting over the arid planes of Hardy and Howells and Meredith." The "handsome" little book of monologues was called the "best thing she has done, good as her other work is." The reviewer said that Mrs. Stuart's art "grows finer, more delicate and yet more virile every day."

People were so interested in the author of Sonny that they wished to hear of her home, her mode of living in New York, and Stirling, "a handsome manly young fellow just finishing his teens, doubly interesting as the inspiration of his mother's 'Sonny' stories. ..." They wished to know of other members of her family, and so there was a reference to the sister who lived with her, "from whose pen some charming verse has more than once found its way into the best magazines." The other sister was mentioned too—Mrs. Susan McEnery Calloway, "the charming, hospitable mistress of Mrs. Stuart's old home in New Orleans."

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31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
In 1898 William Dean Howells published "The Southern States in Recent American Literature," in which he said:

Mrs. Stuart's work appears to me on the whole more akin in method and spirit to that of the Northern short-story writers than the work of the other Southerners. It is so much mellower in her latest than in her earlier book that one must have great hopes of her hereafter. She has already learned to get the better of her rude and harsh material; to present it still as frankly and truthfully as ever, and yet to subdue its crudity to the use of art. In the material itself it appears idle to deny that she is at a disadvantage.36

Herbert Spencer's well-known statement that The Woman's Exchange of Simpkinsville was "one of the best short stories he had ever read"37 was quoted by the press in 1899. He thought it "better than any fiction he had seen since George Eliot."38 Ruth McEnery Stuart always valued this statement as one of her greatest honors.

The West, like other parts of the United States, had an interest in Mrs. Stuart. In 1900 a long article entitled "Out of the South" told of her "blue blood" and her talent and placed her as "chief" among "the gifted" Southern women and possibly "worth more than all the rest of them put together."39

A paper in Atlanta expressed even more positively the rank of Mrs. Stuart. "No woman in the South has attained the position now occupied


37 Interior, Chicago, Nov. 16, 1899. Tulane Stuart Collection.

38 Ibid.

39 "Out of the South," The Times, Los Angeles, California. Tulane Stuart Collection.
by Ruth McEnery Stuart. Joel Chandler Harris wrote her, "You have got nearer the heart of the negro than any of us." Another critic cited Mrs. Stuart as evidence that American women writers are not destitute of humor. He found a "perpetual bubbling up of humor" in her stories.

In 1900 Mrs. Stuart helped the students from Hampton Normal and Agriculture Institute present "A Golden Wedding," a well-received benefit. Later that year when she visited New Orleans the paper told of her home in the Catskills, her feeling for New York, and her attitudes concerning many subjects. She was quoted as saying, "After all, the real secret of getting literary work done is to go somewhere, where one can just dress in the morning and simply forget the process until time to retire. I love my kind and enjoy human intercourse as well as anybody, but I realize that if I am to do any more work, I must be getting at it again." In 1901 the public liked a frivolous skit called "The Snow Cap Sisters." A critic in Indianapolis stated: "This is a charming burlesque written by a southern lady who has become known through humorous stories ....

40 "The Sunny South," an unidentified printed clipping, Atlanta, Georgia, March, 1900. Tulane Stuart Collection.


There are of course the usual song and dance effects. This burlesque will be excellent for use in private theatricals or as a bit of relief to more pretentious entertainment."  

One of the most delightful Negro stories, Napoleon Jackson, appeared in 1902. Mrs. Stuart always spoke well of this story and enjoyed reading it for audiences. One reviewer stated: "This colored gentleman is formed by nature for a life of rest, and to his wife is given the honor of supporting the family. Mrs. Stuart is as successful as usual in this humorous vein of hers." Another reviewer called Napoleon Jackson "inimitable" and said: "Very few writers are able to keep to the high level in all their stories as Ruth McEnery Stuart has done."  

Ruth McEnery Stuart received international recognition in 1904 when she was invited to be a member of the Lyceum Club of London. The other American women who received an invitation were Julia Ward Howe, Sarah Orne Jewett, Elizabeth G. Jordan, Harriet Monroe, Mary Putnam Jacobi, Kate Douglas Wiggin, Elia M. Peatti, and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman.

The River's Children, a book Mrs. Stuart liked a great deal, was published soon after the author received the English honor. Much of the story deals with the social life of the privileged gentle group. The

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book has the tone of the sentimental article in Florence Stuart's scrap-
book telling of the visit of the young ladies of Wesleyan Female Insti-
tute to Washington, D. C. A reviewer called The River's Children "a
dainty little Idyll." In April, 1905, Stirling died. For nearly five years Ruth McEnery
Stuart made hardly any contribution to literature, yet she was not for-
gotten. In 1907 the New York Times published a long feature article con-
cerning her. The article referred to her son's death.

A great sorrow came into her life, and she is only now taking
up her work again. She sent a bit of plantation verse recently
to Joel Chandler Harris, who is starting the "Uncle Remus Maga-
zine" in Atlanta. This was literally the first manuscript she
has sent from her desk for two years.

The article gave a long account of Mrs. Stuart's life, described
her as a person with a "mother look" and spoke of the influence Sonny
had had upon educators. "She was merely working out her own theories in
this story of child development, and she was surprised and naturally much
pleased to receive wide endorsement from leading educators, many of whom
have written to thank her." The reviewer included details concerning

49 "The School Girls in Washington," unidentified newspaper clipp-
ing in the scrapbook now in the possession of Mrs. Spragins. For a dis-
cussion of this visit see p.29 above.

50 "A Postbellum Sketch of Mississippi River Life," Literary Digest,
April 15, 1905. Tulane Stuart Collection.


52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.
the many places in which Mrs. Stuart had given readings, her interest in
the world's workers, and her gratitude to Charles Dudley Warner, the first
editor to encourage her. A closing paragraph referred to her "interesting
and powerful personality," her "absolute unconsciousness of self and
a certain cheeriness in spite of the shade of sorrow which lurks in her
dark eyes."

Mrs. Stuart always supported "causes." In 1908 she wrote a poem
entitled "Bon Voyage" to the Red Cross stamp, yet a long time passed be-
fore she began publishing much new work. The papers continued to review
the books published before 1905. In 1910 a Western journal reviewed
Carlotta's Intended. The Haunted Photograph was reviewed in various
parts of the United States in 1911. In 1913 a New York paper published
a long feature article concerning Mrs. Stuart. The author compared Daddy
Do-Funny's Wisdom Jingles with the work of the "inspired but faithful
Joel Chandler Harris," and called the book "a real contribution to
Southern folk-lore and its literature."

Several paragraphs presented the author's interest in folk lore.
"One contribution which Mrs. Stuart believes may come to the language from
the folk-lore literature of the South is its enrichment, and this, too,

54 Ibid.
57 New York *Post, Dec. 6, 1913. Tulane Stuart Collection.
58 Ibid.
she thinks to be an important gift of the American spoken tongue. She has one or two hobbies, but none more dear than a jealous study of the language. The reporter stated that Mrs. Stuart was planning to write a novel "along the lines which Mary Johnston and Mrs. Ellen Glasgow have followed recently. They have abandoned romance and ante-bellum times to write a story of a girl in modern times meeting problems in the light of 'feminism' as it flourishes today, and they are ardent feminists." Instead of writing such a book, Mrs. Stuart wrote The Cocoon, a piece of sentimentality somewhat different from anything else she had written. The press called it "one of Mrs. Stuart's most original, quaintly fancied and delightfully told fictions." In the same period she contributed to the "cause" of woman's suffrage a poem entitled "We Speak as Others."

In 1916, the year before Ruth McEnery Stuart's death, a number of well-thought-of periodicals reviewed Plantation Songs. A review in The North American pointed out the debt of American literature "to traditions, memories, influences, and actualities of plantation life in the South." The reviewer stated that no other nation had anything like the Southern material.

59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
The "nigger," as he is currently known—without disrespect—in England is as yet our unique national warrant of literary individuality, if not our ticket to the hall of fame. A new-world symphony lives because it is founded on negro melodies; a popular school of American fiction owes its continuance to skillful employment of plantation characters and dialect; the most enduring of our national songs are those exploiting Afro-American sentiment, from old slavery days to the present time.

To the notable list of distinctively American verse in this distinctively American dialect is now to be added "Plantation Songs" by Ruth McNerly Stuart—a little book of whimsies in rhyme and sentiment in smoothly rolling dialect that has the indefinable quality of sympathetic nativism—as tho this, and not classic Anglo-Saxon, were the real language of the people.64

One of the last critiques was published in Poetry about seven months before Mrs. Stuart died. It was a favorable review of Plantation Songs.

These are negro dialect songs of the best type, gay, humorous, rollicking and tender, full of sympathy and rioting with color. It is safe to predict that some of these, for their human qualities of mirth and patience, will be chanted and loved in nooks and corners of the earth for many a long year. If Mrs. Stuart's place was not already secure, this book alone would endear her to the hearts of her people.65

When Mrs. Stuart died in May, 1917, the press of the nation published many articles concerning her. One paper said, "Mrs. Stuart had many friends and more admirers."66 She was eulogized everywhere and commended for her dramatic use of Southern material.67 In New Orleans68

64 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
there was a memorial service for her. The papers devoted many columns to her life, her success, and the public's love for her.

A Louisville paper stated:

Is there time in these days of stress to pause a while and consider the debt we owe to a daughter of the Southern land, one of the rescuers of New York from the cult of Mammon, a writer with craftsmanship and a heart, Ruth McEnery Stuart?

Mrs. Stuart was scarcely of middle age, but she belonged to the older tradition, the tradition of the days before the war. Better than any of the present day she understood the faithful brown slaveman of the plantations through the South ....

Four days after the author's death a New England paper published the following statement: "Ruth McEnery Stuart, who died Sunday, was one of the best of the notable group of Southern writers who cultivated the negro dialect in prose and verse so assiduously and successfully in the last century. That was its flowering time ...."

A week after Mrs. Stuart's death a Baltimore paper published a long account of her life and a picture of the old McEnery home in Marks ville.

The recent death of Ruth McEnery Stuart, long a resident of New York City, removed a gifted author whose heart, through years of separation, ever remained in Dixie and whose books set out the life below Mason and Dixon's line with a beauty of touch and truthfulness of picturization that made her a real factor in characteristic American literature.

More than a month after Ruth McEnery Stuart's death a Houston paper copied what the New York Times had said of her. The author was


70 Evening Transcript, Boston, May 10, 1917. Tulane Stuart Collection.

possibly more discriminating than any other who wrote of Mrs. Stuart at the time.

With the death of Mrs. Ruth McEmery Stuart American literature loses one of the last of its writers of negro dialect stories. While Mrs. Stuart's achievement in her particular field may not be quite comparable either in intrinsic value or popularity to that of "Uncle Remus," there is no question either of her skill or originality as a story teller. Joel Chandler Harris created a type and a method of short story telling that bid fair to endear his name to an indefinite number of generations of young readers. It is altogether likely that the adventures of Bre'er Rabbit will always hold an enviable place in juvenile literature, not merely because they are successful renditions of the negro dialect in which they are couched, but because they contain vivid sketches—like Kipling's Jungle Book—of that favorite domain of childhood, the world of animals. When children are no longer interested in animals, Uncle Remus will lose his audiences. But it will not be until then. This is not said in detraction of Mrs. Stuart's art, but rather as indicating the choice on the part of Mr. Harris of a more durable subject matter than hers. The negro just after emancipation was a principal theme with Mrs. Stuart, and in her portrayals in this kind she evinced the skill that combines humor with pathos. ... In her field, apparently, the picturesque writer of Louisiana has left no successor.  

"A Lecturing Episode" by Mrs. Stuart was published two months after her death. The account concerns the time an "important" woman brought to one of her readings a number of negroes. The motive was to humiliate Ruth McEmery Stuart's sponsor. In telling the experience, Mrs. Stuart revealed an understanding of human nature. The portrait accompanying the article is one of the author in a white evening gown edged with fur at the neck. She appears to be "hardly middle aged." A headnote refers to her "delightful books."


74 Ibid.
The evidence of the reviews for twenty-nine years indicate the literary reputation of Ruth McEnery Stuart during her life. Miss McEnery's statement that she received three hundred dollars for royalties in 1918 proves that Mrs. Stuart was read for a while after her death. What happened to Ruth McEnery Stuart then? Time has almost obliterated her memory. For thirty-eight years she has been neglected. Can any other American woman writer match the story of her literary reputation in her lifetime? Emily Dickinson and Sarah Orne Jewett made more significant contributions to literature than she did, yet they must have lacked the "something of genius" in personality that she had. The quiet lives of these New England women were quite different from the public life of Ruth McEnery Stuart.

Mrs. Stuart was a symbol of the genteel tradition. According to the language of that tradition she was a "lady" with "family background" and "refinement." She had a sense of humor, gaiety, and an insight into the hearts of people. A nation eager for romance found satisfaction in her stories of aristocratic Southerners, hillbillies, cosmopolitans in New Orleans, and the plantation Negro. As an ambassador of good will she was more restrained in her pictures of the "Old South" than many of her contemporaries were. Critics said she was the first to picture the Negro in his environment apart from the whites, though she did not always do this. She loved the Negro, yet her attitude toward him was that of her generation. It possibly never occurred to her that his social status might change.

75 Interview, Miss Sarah Stirling McEnery, New Orleans, 1933.
One of the reasons for Ruth McEnery Stuart's neglect may be found in the contemporary position of the Negro in the United States. However, it is unlikely that this is the main reason. World War I swept away many of the old attitudes and interests. Sinclair Lewis, H. L. Mencken, Michael Arlen, and F. Scott Fitzgerald appealed to the public taste after the war. Fundamentally life has been more serious since 1917 than it was from 1888 to 1917. Realism and naturalism have supplanted the sentimental tradition. Reviewers no longer praise a book because it is "pretty fiction" or the "sweetest story."

Mrs. Stuart herself noted the drift toward "unrefinement" and "immodesty." Although she called herself a realist, she did not speak well of a certain kind of realism. She said, "My idea is that so-called realism is often accepted as an excuse for ugliness, and this point, once granted, opens the doors to indecencies, it seems to me."76 She possibly never came nearer to violating the "code of decorum" than to write in her notebook, "Oh, I wish I'd been brought up to swear! If I had an adequately vocabulated husband to do it for me, I wouldn't mind. But a lone woman (widow?) really needs it."77

The statement of Poetry in the last year of Ruth McEnery Stuart's life that her poems would endure for many years and that her place in literature was secure seems ironic. Time has shown that she dealt with


77 Unpublished notebook. Tulane Stuart Collection.
ess "durable subject matter" than Joel Chandler Harris, yet she has not eserved the treatment time has given her. There should be new editions f Sonny, Holly and Pizen, Koriah's Mourning, The River's Children, Dadd; o-Funny's Wisdom Jingles, Plantation Songs, A Golden Wedding and Other ales, and Napoleon Jackson. Discerning anthologists would do well to eview her work and to rescue from oblivion the Negro stories and poems n which Joel Chandler Harris thought she came "nearer to the heart of he Negro" than any other writer.
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Appendix A

Some of the manuscripts, poems, and letters. See below: pp. 221 ff.

Appendix B

I. Books


II. Periodicals


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APPENDIX A

Some of the Manuscripts, Poems, and Letters

Notes and Memoranda

Jotted down
by

Ruth McEnery Stuart

Tulane Stuart Collection

The Characters

Mamzelle Zabet
(Zabetta)

Elizabeth Boughton Ashley

Amy Day

Cora

Knobs—Flanigan

Diminutives of Elizabeth

Elizabeth
Lizzie
Bet
Bettie or Betty
Bess
Bessie
'Liz
Ellispeth

Libbie
Beth Lee
Betsy
Bect
Lizbel
Isabel

Don't be lugubrious

No, I won't grow to be a tiresome, sloppy-eyed old woman.

And yet they call it a dumb waiter.

Isn't it strange that they are known as the waiters.
Request of moustache.

Names for use:
Eve (life)
Melissa (a bee)
Sarah (a princess)
Susan
Susanna (a lily)
Salome
Hester (a star-good fortune)
Lucy Marshall's name
(Pass Christian)

Lucy Ann Taylor Elie Jourdan Elizabeth Marshall had sister named Kizzial Elizabeth.

Names of family: Hectorine-Adeline-Viola-Jenny-Gabriel (Brother)

Saw Jef Davis when Gen. McGurdie's regiment was in Houston, Tex.

Melie-boy
Claude Featherstone
Durante

0, he is so idiosyncratic. He's never satisfied unless he's panegyrizing some one. Obsequiosity always palls on me.

Appear upon the scene-seen upon the pier.

Liz

Oh, I wish I had been brought up to swear! If I had an adequately vocabulated husband to do it for me, I wouldn't mind. But a lone woman (widow?) really needs it.

A little more and I'd be pretty.
She was a plush woman.
(Yes and cotton plush at that.)
A ratty person--of angles and bangles.
"And jangles?"
No, I can't say that. She was Tinkly, if you will, but musically so.

How may one judge of one's own judgment?

She wears side curls and shoulder pins, and calls poetry poesie.

If I could be quite sure that I suffered in the memory of having one wrong as I do in the consciousness of having made a fool of myself, I'd have more moral conceit.

He's too old. I'd suspect his plumbing.

Friend of publishers and sinners.

It's too serious to take seriously. One would have to get too angry.

A peanut's throw away.

His ears are so unbecoming to him.

Boonful
When purity gets sinned up, it's worse 'n natural iniquity.
I'll always take my dirt dry—an' my snow separate.
Deliver me from slush!
Dirt ain't a bad thing if it's kep' under foot.

Mr. Salomie Cawkins
Oh, he's engaged. I saw him out with his financier.

Oh, he frustrated me so I couldn't constrain myself.

Conversation Arts
"Pretty low standards, those."
"Yes, but I suspect he lives down to them."
"I should reverse that, I think. I fear the standards were
drawn up to condone the life. Tis often so. It is a sort
of defense—and when I hear a man put up such a screen I
always feel tempted to look behind it—and when I do, I find
I'm not mistaken.

"Lama, are we the quality?"
"No, but we are tip-top commonality."

Was a broad slab-sided woman. She always wore big plaids that
didn't match and her frocks were cut with the high side-bodies that
showed them off.

You could tell by the way the buckles set up on her bonnet that
she wasn't the one to contradict. Oh, she was a captain, I tell you.

They eat the last inside a beast has got—down to his liver and
lights.

Some drug-gists when they put a price on their physics, think how
high their rent may be raised an' others again, reflect not poor the
poor be. Them's God's apothecaries, then last.
Some wears wings an' others again is winged.

The law wasn't satisfactory, nowhow, till God A'mighty topped it with the Gospel.

I'm goin' to be baptized in de salt water o' de sea, so when the tide goes out, my sins, dey go out, too—cn wid it.

Never ask a question that may not be answered without embarrassment either way.

'Twouldn't be po'try if you could understand it all. A portion of it is bleeged to hover in de air.

It happened this way:
"He prayed for a baby and she prayed for one. God answered both prayers and twins were the natural result."
"Yes, but if they had had two souls with but a single thought it wouldn't have happened."

Nasty men say all the world is nasty, and for corroboration, point to its libertines. The clean man says nothing, points to no one, and looks to God.

Always mistrust disparagers of morals, public or private.

She was far-seeing. He said to her one day: "One attribute is universal in women. They always contradict." To which she instantly replied, "That's so."

By which she refuted it. And then she laughed over her shoulder at him.
"Which only proves the rule," he replied, as he kissed her.

I am too loyal to them to consider their action from a moral standpoint. Let us discuss it as a matter of taste.

"At the Waldorf
  "I was afraid to put my boots out for my honor, lest they'd be gilded."

"Ah, this world is a world of sin. It ought to be advertised."

Some familiar memories
   The "remarks" column in the Guest book.
When Lucindy’s eye do shine
   lak a ripe, ripe muscadine,
   An’ ’er lip sticks out
   In a tantalizin’ pout,
   I counts Lucindy mine.

When she droop ’er eyes so shy,
   lak she gwine ter pass me by,
   An’ des afore she pass
Drop ’er hankcee on de grass,
My courage rise up high.

When she sets up in de choir,
An ’er voice mounts higher
   an’ higher,
In unisom wid Jim’s.
A-singin’ o’ de hymns,
I sets back an’ puspire.

When she lean down on ’er hoe,
’N’ dig de san’ up wid ’er toe,
An’ look todes me an’ sigh,
Des lak she ’mos’ could cry,
I don’t know whar to go.
When she walk right down de aisle
At de cake-walk wid a smile,
An' she an' yaller Jake
Ketch han's an' win de cake,
I steam an' sizz an' bile.

When she claim me for her beau,
an' des dance do reel wid Joe:
An' when she swings on by
Squeeze my han' on de sly----
I don' know whe'r or no.

Tell de trufe, Lucindy's ways
Gits me so upsot some days
Dat, 'cep'n dat I know
Dats des de way she do,
I'd do some damage, 'caze----

Some days when she do de wus
Ef 'twarn't dat I hates a fuss,
An' loves 'er thoo an' thoo
Wid all de ways she do,
De least I's do'd be cuss.
When Winnie steps out ter de stable
You never would know—less you knowed
Dat she had been, sence she was able
Ter reach on tiptoe at the table,
De biggest humbugger dat growed.

'Caze me, I been riz up wid Winnie—
I'm talkin' 'bout dat what I know.
I'd have ter be wuss'n a ninny
Ef I could forgit all de shinny
Marbles an' chinies' we played long ago.

When she warn't no bigger'n a minute
I follered 'er roun' like a pup;
'We'd sneak ter de creek and wade in it—
She'd tuck up 'er\frock, an'
    I'd pin it,
An dat's des de way we growed up.

Why oncet, when she tromped in a briar,
'Way down by de gin-wagon track,
I stepped in de bramble right by 'er,
'Wid my foots a-stingin' like fire,
An' toted 'er home on my back.
Of co'se I was des like 'er brother
(I'm fetchin' dis up des fur proofs),
We could o' sot down close together,
An' pulled out de thorns fur each other,
Excep'n' nair one had front toofs.
An' so she hell on ter my shoulder,
An' talked 'er sweet talk in my ear;
Let on dat she liked me ter hold 'er,
An' all sech as dat, tell I told 'er—
Well, 'tain't no use tellin' it here.

But when we got down ter de open,
Instid o' me cross-cut tin' short,
I took de long road, an' it slopin',
An' limped all de way, des a-hopin'
She'd prechiate me like she ought.

But after me packin' 'er keerful,
An' settin' 'er down at 'er do',
Instid o' her thankin' me cheerful,
De way she cut up was des 'earful,
She slid f'om my back ter de flo',
An' 'fo' I could gether my senses
Dat gal she was dancin' a jig;
She des had been makin' pertences!
An' here I had clumb over fences
Wid her--an' she weighed like a pig.

Of co' se dis was while we was chillen,
But when we growed up it was wuss;
De way she'd pervoke me was killin;
Till sometimes I'd feel like a villain,
An', Lord, but I' d in' ardly cuss!

She'd ask me ter tote 'er pail for 'er,
An' walk by my side, an' she'd laugh--
An' tell me some joy or some sorrer
Dat fretted 'er min', Den to-morrer
She'd git me ter hoi' off de calf

While Pete, a big boy dat I hated,
Would come an' stan' clost by 'er side
An' stiddy de cow, while I waited
Way off 'cross de yard, so frustrated
Dat some days I purty nigh cried.

Day wasn't no principle in 'er,
Come down ter sech doin's as dat,
'Caze Pete, was a miser' ble sinner,
An' cep' I was littler an' thinner,
Some days I' d o' laid 'im out flat!
Well, sin, dat's de way Winnie acted--
She fooled me straight thoo all my life;
An' when she had got me clair 'stracted,
Tell I run at Pete an' got whackted
She turned roun', an----well, she's my wife.

My 'spe'unce wid Pete was bitter,
But sometimes it pays ter git hit;
'Caze Winnie's a curious critter,
An' 'cep' I had resked all ter git 'er,
I'd be holdin' off de calf yit.
Oh, my Rose ain't white,
An' my Rose ain't red,
An' my Rose don't grow
On de vine on de shed.

But she lives in de cabin
'Whar de roses twines,
An' she wrings out 'er clo'es
In de shade o' de vines.

An' de red leaves fall,
An' de white rose sheds,
Tell day kiver all de groun'
'Whar my brown Rose treads.

An' de butterfly comes,
An' de bumblebee, too,
An' de hummin' bird hums
All de long day throo.

An' day sip at de white,
And day tas'e at de red,
An' day fly in an' out
O' de vines roun' de shed.
While I comes along
An' gathers some buds,
An' I meks some remarks
About renching or suds.

But de birds an' de bees
An' de rest of us knows
Dat we all hangin' roun'
Des ter look at my Rose.
Oh my little yaller Lily wid de freckles 'crosst 'er nose,
An' 'er purty yaller ruffles roun' de
  aidges of 'er clo'es.

She's my speckled tiger-lily,
An' I giggles tell I'm silly
When she nods to me a-passin' f'on de
  winder whar she sews.

An' I looks at my bare foots, an' at
  my dirty gallus strings,
An' I knows de mules is waitin'
  fur me at de cattle springs,

  But wild horses couldn't hinder
  Le from buzzin' to her winder,
An' a-sayin' 'bout a million dozen
  honey-softie things.

You may talk about yo' daisy, you may
  brag about yo' rose,
But de spotted tiger-lily is de sweetest
  flower dat grows.

All de yether blooms looks jaded,
An' dey colors seers all faced,
When it curtsies to de gyarden
   in its yaller furbelows.

Ef you seen my Lily standin' on 'er
   little yaller toes
Out behind de ceders whar de tiger-lilies grow,
   'Cep'n dat de gal is taller,
   An' de flowers' bonnets smaller,
You couldn't designate 'er when she's
   hangin' out 'er clo'es.

Onc-t I called her "Tiger-Lily," des to
   see de way she'd do,
   An' she up an' spon', "I ain't a
   bit mo' yaller'n you."
   An' wid dat she suds-ed me over,
   Den she rolled me in de clover,
   Oh, she's a tiger an' a lily, an' a
   tiger-lily too.

Chorus--
   She my tiger, tiger, tiger,
   An' my lily--an' my lily--
   She's my tiger,
   An' my lily,
   An' my tiger-lily too.
Beauty Land
(A Lullaby)

Kiver up yo' eye, my baby, wid yo' mammy's sleeve,
"When de windy elemints is callin' out aloud,
Dat's de way de stars dey go to sleep, I do believe;
Mammy Night she kivers up her babies wid a cloud.

White mama, lady mama, she's so mighty gay,
Beauty's boun' to dance at de ball;
But black mammy, neger mammy, ain't a-gwine away,
Nuver leave 'er sleepin' baby 't all.

All about in Slumber-lan' day's beauty layin' roun'
Layin' loose a-waitin' for de chillen to come in;
Yisterday my baby went, an' what you think she foun'
But dem creases in 'er wrists an' dat dimple in 'er chin?

White mama, lady mama, she's so mighty gay,
Satins boun' to rustle at de ball,
But black mammy, neger mammy, nuver gwine away--
Ain't expected nowhere else at all.

Lady mama walked in Beauty's garden as a babe;
Same ole neger mammy settin watchin' at de gate
Trusted wid de treasure dough dey say she was a slabe--
Oh, chillen, quit yo' foolin', caze de times is settin' late!
White mama, lady mama, she's so mighty gay,
Boun' to grace de 'casion at de ball;
But black mammy, nigger mammy, ain't a-gwine away--
No, Sir, Mister Angel, don't you call.

Baby's gwine to Beauty-lan', de pinky gates is shet,
So mammy gwine a-noddin' too, to gyardens in de sky,
To view de heavenly mansions whar de golden street is set,
An' mammy an' her babies will be gathered, by an' by.

White mama, lady mama, she's so mighty gay,
Beauty's boun' to dance at de ball;
But black mammy, nigger mammy, ain't a-gwine away,
Niver leave 'er sleepin' baby 't all.
I

'Tis said that one who hears from
height remote
The mingling of the noises of the earth—
The whirr of wheels, the cries of death
and birth,
The clang of bells, and all the sounds
that float
From every stirring thing and
living throat.
Discerns nor crash, nor clash,
nor grief, nor mirth,
But hears, instead, one tone of
certain worth,
And that each city has its special
note.
To him who holds the key of sky and
clod
A thousand years are as a single day,
And nations rise and sing, and
turn to clay.
Their voices hushed beneath the
voiceless sod:
Yet on Time's mighty stave their
brief notes may
Make one grand anthem for the ear
of God.

II

The planets are the tireless wheels of Time
That move obedient to a mighty will.
Some boundless force, unseen, immutable.
That whirls them on in harmony sublime.

And through all ages men have
sought to climb
by devious ways, dim mountain
peaks until
They might behold from Science's topmost
hill
The hidden scheme of God's eternal rhyme.
Perhaps when Life's poor story
has been told,
Beyond these sequences of flower
and snow,
Earth's limitations and the pain of tears,
God's universal score may be unrolled
And with a larger vision we may know
The technic of the "music of the Spheres."
The Narrow Isle

I

There is a legend of a house that stands
Alone amid the eternal calm and stress
Of tossing waters— small and windowless
Set on a narrow isle by unknown hands:
And of a man who 'mid those shifting sands
Knows but his single room—
a dull duress
Yet longs to know, and vainly seeks to guess
What lies beyond the scope his eye commands.

So life may seem a dim un-windowed
room
Wherein we wait with eye upon
the latch
As if impelled to turn the fatal key:
We yearn yet fear to pierce the outer gloom
And ever bend an eager ear to catch
The mighty secret of the unknown sea.

II

I stood today beside a winter sea
And watched the light go out along the verge—
A crimson sorrow— and I felt the surge
Beat out the measures of day's threnody
And by and by I heard what seemed to me
An under-note of hope beneath the dirge,
And saw the wraith-like after glow emerge—
A subtle promise of a day to be.

So life goes out along the western rim
Of Time's tumultuous waters, and

we say
That one is dead, and briefly pause to pray:
Then, listening, see to catch, afar and dim,
An undertone of some triumphant
hymn
While death's war peace predicts
smile
another day.
The Port of Missing Ships

III

Within a dreamlit semi-tropic tide
There lies an island, far from mortal ken,
Where ships that sail and come not back again
Find harbor and forevermore abide
There in perennial summer, side by side,
Emancipated from the thrall of men,
And all the rocking tides that might have been,
They lie in haven while the ages glide.

And so, I fancy, in some far-off clime,
There is a port that ship-wrecked souls shall reach,
And that upon some dim enchanted beach
They rest from this tempestuous tide of time
And there they dream, while cycles weave
Vague dreams that never wed themselves to speech.
Oh, I love a little widder, an' 'er
name 's Melindy Jane,
An' she love me lakwise also---
so she say:
But you can't put no dependence
on my lady Lindy Jane,
'Caze she talks to all de
gen'lemen dat a-way;
An' she looks so pleadin',
An' she ac's so misleadin',
But I don't keer what de high
and mighties say,
Ver she don't mean to sin
When she tecks de fellers in,
'Caze it's only jes her way.

When I see a stalk a sugar-cane
a-swayin' in de breeze,
Noddin' "No," but wavin'
"Come" wid all its tips,
It' minds me o' my lady when
she greets me wid a freeze,
While de love-words hangs a-trimblin
on'er lips.

Oh, she's cold as December
An' she's warm as September,
Or she's off an' on jes like a April day;
But to figgurfy de munts,
She'll perform 'em all at once,
But it's only jes her way.

Dey's a' purty gals a plenty,
down a-hoein' in de cane;
Twenty of 'em I could marry any day;
But I'd ruther be fooled by my lady 'Lindy Jane,
Jes to rake by 'er side in de hay,
When she rake so keerless,
An' she flirt so fearless,
When she drawin' fer'er labor
by de day;
But she don't mean no harm
When she swindles on de farm,
'Caze it's only jes her way.

When she crounches on de
mo'new' bench wid sinners
seekin' grace,
An' she whispers to me, "Hol' me, 
lest I fall!"

I sustains 'er sinkin' spirit
   wid my arm aroun' 'er wais',
An' I never holds 'er long
'Fo' she busts into song---
She kin git a call fer glory any day;
An' she dances back to sin
When de fiddle-notes begin,
But it's only jes her way.

She's mighty scrumptious lady when
you meet her on de block
Gwine to chu'ch in all
'er secon'-handed clo'es;
But I'd ruther sit beside 'er
   in 'er cotton-pickin' frock,
When she gethers clover-blossoms
   wid 'er toes.

She's a saint, an' she's a sinner,
An' she ain't no new beginner
When it comes to mixin' 'legion
up wid play;
But de devil couldn't take 'er,
An' I doubt if God' a time 'er,
'Caze He made 'er jes cut way.
I ain't got but one objection
to my lady 'Lindy Jane:
It's her widderhood I hates
wid all my might;
So we argufies de topic,
holdin' hands along de' lane,
while I begs to kyore 'er only
fault in sight;
An' my courage come a-floodin'
('Caze she always marries sudden),
An' I coaxes 'er to settle it to-day;
But she answers wid a titter
Dat I needn't 'spec' to git her;
But cat's only jes her way.
Keep step, Rabbit, man!

Hunter comin' quick's he can!

H'ist yo' self! Don't cross de road,

Less'n he'll hit you for a toad!

Up an' skip it, 'fo' it's too late!

Hoppit--lippit! What a bull-frog gait!

Hoppit--lippit--lippit--hoppit!

Goodness me, why don't you stop it?

Shame on you, Mr. Ge'man Rabbit,

Ter limp along wid sech a habit!

'F you'd balumpa on yo' hims legs straight,

An' hurry wid a mannish gait.

An' tie yo' ears down under yo' th' oat,

An' kiver yo' tail wid a cut-away coat,

Rabbit hunters by de dozen

Would sleek yo' han' an' call you cousin.

An' like as not, you onery sinner

Dey'd ax you home ter eat yo' dinner!

But don't you go, 'caze ef you do,

Dey'll set you down to rabbit stew.
An' de shape o' dem bones an' de smell o' dat meal
'll make you wish you was back in de fiel';
An' ef you'd stretch yo' mouf too wide,
You know yo' ears mought come entied;

An' when you'd jump, you couldn't fail
To show yo' little cotton tail,
An' den', 'fo' you could twis' yo' phiz,
Dey'd recognize you who you is;

An' fo' you'd sca'cely bat yo' eye,
Dey'd have you skun an' in a pie,
Or maybe roasted on a coal
Widout one thought about yo' soul.

So better teck ole Ephe's advice,
Dez riz yo' se'f out slick an' nice,
An' tie yo' ears down, like I said,
An' hide yo' tail an' lif' yo' head.
Little chillen's courtesies

Is nimble in de main;

Jes sway yo' se'f an' scrape

yo' foot

An' bob—an' up again!

Don't look too sad, nor yet too glad

When you begins to bow.

Lest some who couldn't bow at all

Wought think you jes' learned how—

Dem quality bows is in yo' blood!

Yo' mamma an' twin aunties

When dey had nary toof in front,

Dey bowed in ruffled panties.

We'd wrop dey curls in papers tight,

Me an' ole Harriet

An' take 'em up to dancin' school

In de ole family chariot.

An' cat's incrome I knows de way,

If dese new times is scanty,

To teach y'all line to Frenchman gone

To step out non-smali-ality.
Add to

"Fra Rymbelica"  "Rymbelicitis"
Oliver Herford  by Daphne Day

with compliments of Daphne Day

(The Century Magazine -- August and September by Ruth McEnery Stuart)

It's going round! It's going round!
It's called rymbelicitis;
Feel ye a slight rymbelly-ache,
With longing for ambrosial cake?
It's got you! Don your nighties!

A Don of 't was Herford aye,
But since he's taken orders,
We call him Fra Rymbelica,
No kith to da Angelica,
Though both be Vertu's warders

The Virtue which ye rymbel speeds
Is somewhat pedagogic,
But in a lemon-jelly cuss
With rue in his rymbelicus,
It's strictly pathologic.
Its path'logical advance
Savors of syncopation;
As one with too-certain feet
Will trip up and then repeat,
To reach a scheduled station.

Its search is sure, for pray behold
The Fra's pathetic drawing:
A squirmiform addendix glares
At Fair One formed to get up stares,
The inference is gnawing.

The Nor'-wing of a hospital,
With steady light for carving...
The bringing forth of—such as this!
Keen stitches then in Sir or Miss...
And now the patient "starving."

For when with patient eyes she reads
"Successful operation"
At nourishment she shakes her head,
"Rush me," she gasps, "a priest instead,
To shrive me for translation."

"The trance-lay shun! Leave that to swans!"
Says Loctor, eyes a-brimming,
"Why try to pass out like a bird?"
And so she goes, sans song or word,
With Rym bells softly rhyming.

1 Although the journal headnote leaves the impression that the poem was actually published in The Century Magazine, the author of this biography has been unable to find it.
"Rymbel"
(With apologies to Prof. Herford)
by
Daphne Dreadnaught

'Twas on a summer holiday

When I and Betsy T...

I put myself first, as man of nerve,

As anyone may see.)

The sea was still when we set sail,

She said it made her sick;

(T, in her name's for Tallifiero,

While I reply to "Oliver"

or "while my own name is

Aine guaranteed to stick.)

"A stick" is what she called me then

When she had mal de mer:

And told me I might go to—well,

Approximately there.

A proxy-mate I spoke for her

And ripped out—tell shall I?

No; hell's no word to write or print.

You hit it with your tongue like flint

And let it flare and die.
The die is cast the rymbel done

Of me and Betsy "T....."? 

Not on your life! we two are one,
And little Oliver's our son.
She's Madame Tweedlemie.

She tweedled me till I succumbed

Though selfish judgment kicked;
In single life, I'd been addicted
To plural Girls; now, thus restricted,

I'm only Benedict.
That the pine-tree full of needles never does a stick of work?
But it sings along in beauty
so we're pleased to see it shirk.
And the live-oak, ever leaving, never gets a step away,
But our swings swing in its branches,
so we're glad to have it stay.

That the brook keeps up a bubbling,
yet it never tells a tale
Tho' it knows a thousand secrets of the wee things in the dale
And when the moon comes down at night to dream upon its bed
It never tells the morning sun a single word she said.

That the winding road's not dizzy tho' it "takes a sudden turn"
At the cliffs alone the quarries when the fern slowly burn
But it keeps between the daisies and it doesn't lose its head
Tho' it skirts the spooky marshes where tall-trees and things are dead.

That when skies are blue, the day is bright, and everybody's glad
But when Mama says, "I feel blue,"
The whole plantation's sad.
The children look at one another as if saying "you--You did it! "Oh, it's awful when Mama is feeling blue.

That the doubt about a fish's weight in anecdote and song
Seems strange because each fish you catch must bring the scales along
And if it had its dearest wish,
'It would be to get a weight
And yet, what is the joke about?
'll any sportsman say?
"To the Red Cross Stamp"

Bon Voyage!

(From the Brooklyn Daily Eagle)

Oh Crimson Cross and festive holly,
Bright antidotes to melancholy,
Glad symbols ye of peace on Earth,
Good will to men and hope's rebirth.
Your cheery message North and South,
The same which goes from mouth to mouth,
Of Merry Christmas, glad New Year--
God speed you on your brave career!

II

Let no vain rival try to rout
The stamp which stamps dire evil out!
For every million busy stamps
Behold a hundred star-lit camps,
Where in God's pine-sweet forests deep
"He giveth his beloved sleep."

So, little stamp with face of cheer
He speed thee on thy glad career!

Ruth McEnery Stuart
New York, December 18, 1908.

Were I a crevice in a crumbling wall,
Mayhaps some bird would let me hold
her nest;
O blessed consciousness of home and
rest!
I'd feel the throbbing of her tender breast
And hear her answer to her fond mate's call.

Or, failing this, I'd be the empty space;
'Twere better than a fulness less than best,
And reverent longing for a homeless guest
Would fill me, till my emptiness were blest:
Where welcome waits is ne'er a cheerless place.

To be the darkness when the lamp is out—
To free tired eyes from tyranny of light
Which limits them to trivial things of sight—
To hold the kiss of Love and know no fright—
O blessed darkness, Thou art
Love's redoubt!

I'd be the dark, earth's confidence
to own;
The venerable darkness, first to hear
God's spoken word, and trembling,
disappear;
The first His clemency to know—to wear,
In equal reign with Light, a star-gemmed crown.

I'd be the silence, rather than the song—
The stillness which abides when it is sung;
And, better than the sun, its moons among,
I'd be the azure space in which are flung
All constellations which to God belong.

I'd be that last abstraction which abides,
Diffused, invisible, through time and space—
Which thinks the roses—holds the
stars in place—
Which shines in radiance from a
mother's face,
And, shy as opal flame, illumines the bride's.

I'd be the stir of life within the clod
When it conceives the image of a flower;
I'd be the throbbing secret of the bower
Yes, I'd be Love—my nothingness

all power:
But wait! How dare I say,
"I would be God!"
How many moons are in the night?

It's hard to tell.

When we stand close together, so,
We see the one all children know,
And in the sky and in the air
There's not another anywhere.

But when I ran around the house,
And little brother, like a mouse,
Kept watch, he said this never moved!
And so, you see, two moons are proved,
Because I'm sure as sure can be
That one moon went around with me!

Then I stayed here and let him run;
He's little and he's full of fun—
and off he went, but gazing so,
Of course he stumped his little toe;
And while I kissed his little scars,
He gasped: "No moon—but lots
of stars!"

We tried once more, then, pretty soon,
Each followed by a separate moon,
but when we got back here together,
One must have slipped behind the other,
For, right above us, just as plain,
There was the same old moon again!

How many moons are in the night?
   It's hard to tell.
Did this one stay and send two others,
One after me and little brother's?
Or did it watch its chance to run
While not a soul was looking on?
I asked the moon last night, and think
I saw the old man in it wink!
But did he wink because he stays?
Or just to show his tricky ways?
How many moons are in the night?
   Will some one tell?

Junior-Man is Mammy's boy,
Don't keer ef he do destroy
Boughten kites an' 'spensive clo'es,
Dat's de way de juniors grows!
But he plays so swif', some days,
I jes' holds my bref an' prays.
Lamed hisself las' week, po' dunce,
Tryin' to ride two dogs at once,
An', betwix' de two, dey flung
Man so hard he hit his tongue!

Junior's on'y gwine on seven,
Tall enough to be eleven;
Grows so fas' befo' my eyes,
I can't keep up wid 'is size.
Got to rise up tall an' straight
An' take on a noble gait
Fit to tote dat Randolph grace,
'Gin' he takes his papa's place!

Little toes is bruised wid knocks,
Caze he hides his shoes an' socks;
Den, when Jack Fros' snifs aroun',
On de white-hot crackly groan',
Nothin' does but red-tog boots
On his little freckles foots;
Plegg'd his mama an' his aunts
Tel dey put 'im in dem pants,
So we laid his kilts away
Tel mo' company comes to stay.

One thing sho, his mammy-nurse
She gwine teach 'im to converse
Jes' de way she hears his pa
Set down talkin' wid 'is ma!
Co'se, I has to do it slow,
Caze he's allus runnin' so!

Allus ketchin' doodle-bugs,
'R pullin' out de bung-hole plugs--
Lettin' good molasses was'e,
Jes' to track it roun' de place,
Now he's swallerin' o'ange-seeds,
'R'ec'ly tastin' cuys weeds,
Smokin' corn-silk, chewin' spruce,
Laws-a-mussy! 'hat's de use
Cittin' fustered up an' vexed,
Breadin' what he gwine do next.

Wander is, to me, I say,
Man ain't pizened every day!
Tripped, dis mornin', crost de rugs,
Tryin' to smother me wid hugs
Whilst he hid my tukky-fan--
Sly, mischievous Junior-Lan!

Man kin squeeze hisself, he say,
Any place a hen kin lay!
Bruised 'is little arms an' legs
Crawlin' 'neath de barn for eggs;
Got wedged in, one night so tight,
Nuver got 'ix out tel night,
But he hugged 'is little hat,
Filled wid eggs, all whole, at cat!
Man ain't nuver yit give in
Over what he'd once-t be-in!
"Spare my life, Lord, tel he's riz!"
All my prayer to heaven is.
Wouldn't want no other man'
Leadin' up our Junior-Lan!

But I never feels jes' right
Tel Man's in his bed at night.

Time he 'ot los', here jes' week,
All I thought of was de creek,
An' befo' dey rung de bell,
I had snook an' searched de well;
Co'se I know dat's lack o' faith,
Jes' de way de Scripture saith,
But sometimes Man acts so sweet,
Like a cherubim, complete,
An' dem innocent blue eyes
Seems like pieces o' de skies,
Whilst he questions me so given
Like he sca'cely b'longs down here.
Dat's now come my heart's so light
When he's safe-t in bed at night.

Allus begs to set up late,
But at bedtime, 'long 'bout eight,
I don't scer'cely smooth my lap,
'Fo' he starts to blink an' gap;
An' I totes him up de stairs,
Too far gone to say his prayers;
So, I prays his soul to keep,
When I lays him down to sleep.
Twinkle, twinkle, little star!
No wonder we wonder what you are!
For you're even higher than Daddy has been,
And he goes 'way up in his
flying-machine.

But we've found out about you,
little star,
And what you really, truly are;
A great long name with "solar" in it,
Big Sister told us, just this minute,
(She's been through kin-der-gar-ten-ing,
And says hard words like anything!)

She says you're in "as-tron-o-my,"
A thin book, most as tall as we;
I asked her why they put you in,
And she said, "To study you out
again."

She's twelve, an', of course,
She ought to know,
But Buddie just sighed,

"Well, maybe so,"

(He's "going on three," but he's

harder to fool

Than some big boys in the Sunday-schools)

But he laughed when I said what

you seem, for true:

"A hole that lets God's love

shine through;

The big one that they call the sun,

That's wide, wide love for everyone;

But each little star in the blue up there,

Seems like some little child's own

share."

So, Buddie and I know what we'll do,

We'll take our little shares through you,

And love you, dear, whatever

you are,

Oh, darling little twinkling star.
She's my lily-o'-de-valley,
But she lives upon de hill,
An 'er valley hit's de alley
Twix' de brick-yard an' de kiln;
But she sa'nters' mongs' de fan-pa'ns
An' she reads out all de man-pa'ns,
An' she tells each one a fortune with a
hundred-dollar bill.

But she'll tell it for a quarter
When de boys is short o' change,
'Caze she say de seventh daughter,
'Wid a gif' to kyore de mange
Is ordained by signs an' wonders,
Midday moons, an' summer thunders,
To distribute prophesy in' everywhar
within 'er range.

She kin feel de river risin'
For a week befo' de boom,
Wilst she brews a pot o' pizen
An' she hums a chant o' doom
Tel she sees de cuss is lifted--
Dat's de way my Lily's gifted!
Does you wonder dat I loves 'er lak a
   Valley-lily bloom?

She's de color of a lemon
Wid a little tinge o' brown,
An' she interviews de ge'men
In a mighty quyus gown;
   When you hear dem earrings jingle,
You kin feel yo' goose-skin tingle,
An' you trimbles lak de almonds o'
   yo' ears
   is fallin' down!

She's a queen an' fit to dazzle
When she wears dat crescent crown;
An' she'll gether sprigs o' basil,
An' she'll 'stribute 'em aroun,
Whilst she'll promise one a marri'ge
An' to one a horse an' carri'ge
An' she'll "glimpse de white-House
   loomin'" for de mayor
   o' de town.

He, I sca'cely ever sees 'er,
Less cey's lots o' men aroun';
But Cord knows I strives to please 'er,
'Caze I loves 'er walkin' goun',
But I's wo'eout to a frazzle,
'lectin' rabbit-foots an' basil
An' dem serpent-toofs an' conjure-bones
She dangles on 'er gown.
An' I wades de swamps for pizens
Though I sho' is feared o' snakes,
An' dark nights I views uprisin's
Of de sperits in de brakes,
'Caze she say a cross-eyed nigger
Of my spindle, bow-leg figger
Is ordained to 'sciver conjures
in de ma'shes an' de lakes.

An' so dat's de way I do do,—
Love don't mind a thing lak that,—
An' I spec' I is a hoodoo,
But I don't know whar I's at
When she calls me "yaller sweetness,"
But de height o' love's completeness
Is de way she'll even trus' me
whilst I pass
aroun' de hat.
Taking Antic's intimations
and forsaking all the others,
That "women's aims and ends are
reached when they're efficient mothers."
E'en ... still for sake of argument,
Though much against our taste ...
We'll grant that our dear spinsters
are but economic waste:
And while we hope to qualify
for ideal maternity
(And wonder why our men don't form
a "fatherhood" fraternity
To fit themselves as worthy dads and
make the job vocational,
With "Fathers' Meetings" and the rest of
functions educational)
We'd seek the VOTE with all it means
of stern and urgent duty,
If but to guard our daughters through
lawless hunters' questing-time;
And if they bag a twelve-year-old and waft
her to white slavery;
How can a ten-year-limit law convict
them of foul knavery?

So, spirited to hell's preserves, with
diabolic coaching there.

And so, because we'd be good mothers,
To our own daughters and motherless others,
For the sake of the little stranger maid,
All ignorant and unafraid;
For the sake of the weakling, "not all there,"
Who knows but the lure of her shining hair;
For the sake of the underpaid working-girl,
And the girl half lost in the dizzy whirl;
Too free with her smile or her challenging scowl,
At large in the jungle where hunters prowl ...

In the name of honest womanhood
Without which naught in life seems good,
We reverently demand to bear
In the care of our daughters, an equal share!

And we come again as mothers of the sons
whom we are bearing;

We're weary of the "privilege" of rearing
and caring,

With ne'er a voice in council when it comes
to peace and fighting;
We're tired of this—our master wrong—

and mean to get the righting!

With interest preëminent in every living man,

We've a corner on our product,

by the grace of Nature's plan;

We're the makers of Life's vanguards—

and the masters of its balm;

We're producers, willy nilly, of the

soldiers of the realm.

We'd have our brave boys fight for life,

nor flinch when it means death!

Each mother takes a soldier's chance,

to give each soldier breath,

And she must have a word to say ere

seized by cruel Hate,

To gratify a lust for blood

or greed insatiate,

Her sons, conceived in holy love ...

and passed along as MEN,

(Our nation's greatest asset in the

honest citizen!)

Are marshalled out to murder,

taught to glory in its shame!

We'll have that LORD, or by the Gods,

we'll shut down on the same!
With the dove upon our banners
    and our toddling sons beside us,
We'll charge the temple at the Hague ...
    let sonless ones deride us ...
Depositing our VOTES for PEACE!
    Let motherful endeavor
Starve out the yelping dogs of war
    and silence them forever!
And so, because we'd be good mothers
To our sons and motherless others,
For the sake of our clear-eyed trusting boys
So easily lured by martial voice;
For the sake of poets with songs unsung,
Their broken lyres on willows hung;
For the sake of all manhood unexpressed,
And womanhood put to crucial test ...
In the name of the song we'd sing again
Of "Peace on earth, good will to men,"
We reverently demand to bear
In the fate of our sons, an equal share.
Parody on the Raven

"Once upon an evening cheery
When the reading club was merry,
Over song and recitation
Borrowed from forgotten lore;
While I sat and smiled content
Suddenly the air was rent
With calls upon the president
To write a poem for the floor.
'Tis an enemy, I muttered,
Who would make of me a bore,
Only this and nothing more.

Oh, distinctly I remember--
'Twas in March, and not December
How each separate, vicious member
Caught the sounds, and o'er and o'er
Eagerly did each repeat it,
Till no power could defeat it--
Make the president a bore!
Make that most retiring person,
Who would scorn to be a bore
Write a poem for the floor!

Oh! each word was like an ember
On my head, and I remember
How it thrilled me, how it filled me
With revenge unknown before.
I'll obey them to the letter
And ask they may hence know better,
Than ask a poem for the floor,
I will write an epic poem,
And I'll s-l-o-w-w-ly read it to 'em,
And they'll never ask me more.

So I felt me growing stronger;
Hesitating then no longer--
Dearest members said I truly
(While revenge was in me sore)
When I come to think about it,
I can write for you a sonnet,
And I'll do it for the floor
If your noble secretary
Will but read it for the floor.
On their noble visage peering
For a moment sat I, fearing
Hoping, with conflicting feelings
Mortal never felt before.
But the silence soon was broken,
And the dread consent was spoken
Which did give me final token
That remonstrance time was o'er,
That the verses should be written
Which should make of me a bore.

Midnight in my chamber turning,
Deep revenge still in me burning,
Said I: I'll begin my rapping
At imagination's door.
Surely said I, surely there is
Brain enough for such vagaries
As an epic often carries
In my head enough and more,
Let my head be still a moment
While its chambers I explore
And survey my stock in store.

Open here I flung the door
Of my mind, to look it o'er
But I found its chambers empty,
And it mortified me sore.
Come to me, O muse historic,
Or thou "Mistress Allegoric"
Write for me the life of Yorick,
Of whose skill you've heard before.
Make it lengthy for the floor
So they'll never ask me more.

E'er my lips had ceased to utter
Came without a flirt or flutter
A divinely lovely maiden
Of the saintly days of yore;
Crowned with palm and having on her
Bosom, great historic honor,
That the gods had heaped upon her,
Meekly stood above my door; reaching
High above my chamber door,
Smiled on me, and nothing more.
Then this heavenly maid beguiling
My sad fancy into smiling,
By the dignified demeanor
Of the countenance she wore,
"Clio," said I, "maid of beauty
Pray inspire me for this duty,
Let me find in it some booty
For the ire that's in me sore.
Give me inspiration lengthy
Eighteen verses or a score
For my poem for the floor."

But the maiden standing lonely
High above me, smiling only
Waved her hand, a sign of parting,
Faded from above my door.
Not a syllable she'd uttered,
Not a fold of dress had fluttered,
But I slowly, sadly muttered--
She has come, and come to show me
That the muses did not know me,
Did not know the name I bore;
Only this and nothing more.--

Smiled down on me, stood above me;
Oh, ye members, if you love me
Never ask for poem more.
For of all humiliations
That I've met in various stations
Of life's constant variations,
As I look and view them o'er,
This has been to me far keener
Than the worst I've felt before.

Now at midnight, never flitting
Still I'm sitting, sadly sitting
And I find no inspiration.
This letter was copied from the original, now in the possession of Miss Nobles' sister in New Orleans.

6 East 43rd Street
New York, New York
November 22, 1892

My dear Miss Nobles,

Just as much ashamed of myself as I ought to be for not acknowledging your brother's kind attention in sending me his wedding cards. I don't know where to find him and his bride, your sister, and so won't you convey to them my very best wishes, please.

It is awfully exciting to have a wedding in the family and you know it's terribly catching so keep a strict eye on yourself and sisters.

I have often felt like sitting down and writing you a good long talk and indeed promised myself to take just this mean advantage of you, but the days have been so full, somehow, that I hardly ever do my own will. I wish that instead of this stupid method of reaching you now I could wrap a hankie around my head after dinner and get Sister to do likewise and we would run down and spend an hour with you.

New York is at this season specially interesting, I think. Everything is in a state of transition and even the street toilets show a sort of lapping over of last year's things into the beginnings of this season's provisions--excuse the words. Placards of chrysanthemum shows are pasted beside advertisements of Christmas novelties. The little lunch houses are still serving ice cream--and oysters.

You have seen the November Harper no doubt, and have read Mrs. Davis's charming little story. I think it is exceedingly good--clever, original, and delightful with several deliciously delicate touches. By the way, Mrs. Davis spoke so sweetly of you while she was here. Of course I feel sure she must be fully aware of just the fine bright woman you are and yet it was pleasant to hear her say so.

If you have the November Harper, read "The Rivals" by Francois Copper. It is quite unusual and fine.

Of course you hear from Nollie frequently. I saw her several days ago when we enjoyed one of her animated discussions of Richard Harding Davis whom you know she cannot endure. And whom I admire with reservations. By the way, I think "Father Saucher Elia" one of the best short stories I ever read--by anybody. Drop me a line when you feel like it and do pardon this poor scrawl.
This letter was copied from the original, now in the possession of the sister of Miss Nobles in New Orleans.

126 East 27th St.
New York, August 24th

My dear Miss Nobles,

I need not tell you how pleased I was when I opened the little package and you stood before me.

It is quite as if you were paying me a real visit and as I look from my pages to my desk-top where you preside at present, I find myself almost conscious of the sound of your voice.

I have been hunting for a little spare time to write you an acknowledgement of the pleasure your clippings gave me. You have the gift of topical selection, a thing so valuable to one who works along your line and all of your articles are good. I was quite amused at the image of myself when I learned that my silken gown would fetch only 35 cents!

Sister tells me you have done me up for The New Cycle. What number am I to be in? For all your good words many thanks.

Kind messages to all your circle not forgetting Mrs. Bisland.

Faithfully yrs.

Ruth M.I. Stuart

By the way, and this is important, can and will you send me a list of the Federated Women's Clubs of America. If—so to Mrs. J. E. Langouorthy, 6565 Yale Ave., Chicago. That will be much better and I'll enter one more kindness to your credit in my book of remembrances.

I forgot to say I think your photograph excellent.
To the mother of Mr. Austin Reese, New Orleans. The note is written in Sonny, a gift from the author. (Copied from the original).

126 East 27th St.
New York, December 13, '96

My dear Friend,

Remembering that through three generations there has been a beloved "Sonny" in your home, I think perhaps there may be something in this little book that will appeal to you.

Will you have it with the writer's love?
My dear Sis:

I've had a good night's rest and am full of impressions--and a good breakfast.

My room overlooks a rolling snow-covered country, dotted under our eyes with tiny cabins with here and there a "residence" which looks to me as if some patient--weary of the sanitarium, had set up a home. But I don't know. There may be a "business" here--and, too, my view of the town may be very limited.

The matron has just told me that this room is $35.00; meals in rooms are posted 25% a meal extra, or so much a wk.; no gas in b'ldg and no cooking allowed in rooms.

A button at head of bed is guaranteed to bring service, "day or night," but it took nearly an hour & about 5 rings at intervals to get an ans. this morn, a fact wh. I mentioned to one matron. Finally, however, I got a girl--then after quite a wait--the bill of fare--and then after a long wait, the breakfast. But the meals, service, linen, &c. are admirable. Everything good and hot.

The doctor is to come in and see me this morning and we'll talk over things--and I'll have all necessary service and without patience--breaking waits.

My face was somewhat swollen last night but I managed to lance one gum again this morn and am relieved.

Perpetual talking in the next room reminds me of Mrs. Somers. It went on until I fell asleep last night and is faithful this morn--at this moment, however, it has failed. A closed door lets it through. I am trying not to mind it but it is so unaccented it annoys me. Such a flow never means anything.

I am trying to take my mind from one detail of your busy days. I wish I could help you. It was best that I sh’d get away but this trip was almost too much. I was frightened last night, but went to sleep as
I generally do and am so much better today. The house is full. Not a room vacant, and the view of halls & dining-room as I came in was most cheerful & pretty. How I wish you could come here for a month.

I thought to write Stirling by this same mail, but my hand is tired & this is equally to you both.

Did you pack my Bible? Love and love and God bless you both!

Your loving

Sister and Mother
Dansville, N. Y.
Feb. 18, 1905

I bless the day! The day tomorrow when you get this!
Feb. 19th my birthday. The child has come!

God! What a child! Get tickets and you & Stirling go
to see The Little Minister or Something sweet and pretty wh. you
haven't seen! Go for me and be happy.

And joy and peace and love be yours, dear Sister, this
day and many mates to it.

Your ever loving

Sister
Dear, dear Friends,

It has been in my mind for several days to drop you a line but somehow doing nothing all day does seem to crowd one so!!

I breakfast, with a note home, go for "treatment," a rub of sea-salt or massage, get mail, order dinner and--so on, nothing to do always did work me to death!

This is a great place to grow strong in and, if only the climate were less execrable, I should be delighted to have come.

But it is deadly--snow and snow and more snow. This all the ranges of temperature from below zero to 70 deg. above as it was yesterday--snowing and dripping--and it's snowing now, mercury at 40 outside my window--so that I am house-bound and it is wearisome.

But I'll stay along, taking tonic treatment and resting as I have not been able to do in my life, until I feel my wings. Then I'm going to set out for sunny skies somewhere. Of course, my first thought is of you, dear friends. No companionship would mean more to me than yours and the blessed Dora and won't you give me your plans in a month? I mean where you will be? I don't think altitude very good for me now. It is too stimulating. The sedative sea-air is better but I want to get a place to stay when I do move, I mean to stay a few months and finish my last book without moving.

I have an idea that Southern California would be fine--and again my heart goes out to Italy--when I'm entirely strong. Come along!

I shall do no work (with my pen) for weeks to come no matter how well I may feel.

There could hardly be better conditions for writing than are here--a card on the door prohibiting intrusion is respected even by the doctors. Mrs. Higgins finished Rebecca here and Howells did here much of his April hopes.

The people are lovely Christians--spiritual minded and refined and the serving girls bring in their dainty trays of clean food, smiling and noiseless in soft slippers. I wish you were here. It is really ideal in itself.
Sister and Stirling are yet at No. 6 Locust—trying to rent it but no one comes while the streets are frozen. It has been a relentless winter. Love and love, dear friends.

Ruth
June 24, 1905

Col. Albert N. Pope
% Dr. Pope
163 Newbury Street
Boston, Mass.
Back Bay

Dear Col. Pope,

I have been intending to drop you a line of appreciation and thanks for your kind effort in our behalf. We wanted those people, who are trying to do a great wrong, to know the truth of the integrity of our dear one and of ourselves and the testimony of such as you goes a long way. You see, they are all strangers. I sent you our thanks but must give you this personal word.

We do hope you are taking good care of the valuable man whose kind eyes look into your face from your mirror.

We hear that you have not been quite strong and that won't do. How fortunate you are, dear Col. Pope, in having the wise and affectionate counsel of two such women as the matchless twin sisters. They have so much experience of life, all stored and kept warm by sympathy and insight. They were a tower of strength to us in our great sorrow— which only deepens as the days go on. God help us.

I had a most kind and sympathetic letter from your wife, Mrs. Pope, which I have wished to answer now but I have not her address. I'll get it though and in the meantime, express our appreciation for us, please.

Ever Sincerely yr. friend,

Ruth McE. Stuart
Tuesday, August 27, 1905

Dr. Pope
163 Newbury St.
Back Bay
Boston, Mass.

Dear Friends,

You will be glad to know this. The Columbian has at last paid over their cheque in full and we owe the result chiefly to your good brother's "wiping up the floor with them" as they deserved.

In their answers, recently sent in, they had repeated every crude and lying charge—that was after getting Col. Pope's letter—but they saw it was a forlorn hope—after their young man, or men, met him in this affair.

It is no use to think of it again. It is done and over, thank God, and tell the Colonel for us that while we dote on his Justice, we are mighty glad his mother had a boy baby his time!

I am so glad to know of Robert's doing so well. I have been able only to keep up by telephone thus far—have been utterly prostrate by the weather here, so that I have had virtually to keep my bed. I shall try to see him tomorrow. Poor fellow! He had a hard time. I continue so strengthless that I am thinking of returning to Dansville for a month or two. This Col. difficulty has taken my life out of me nearly. I did not realize how much it meant until it was over, and I collapsed, with poor heart action, for several days—not in bed, but on it.

I think of you all the time. Give our love to the dear Margaret. The name fits her fair fine spirit. She is a real pearl.

Love to Miss Leonora & Ella.
Dear, dear Friends,

Strange is it not? How our thoughts pass, coming and going! For two days I have been trying to get a word to you just to send my love and let you know how and where I am. I was pretty well used up and was going to Danville for a month or so of rubbing and rest when my Flushing tenant left me owing me and leaving things pretty badly abused. Then my good landlord offered to free me and tried to rent me one of these apartments, and it seemed best to stay here and see it through.

So I have been through the dickens of a time. In that hot spell, I had to find an apartment and move in &c, &c, &c.

Now, I am getting it in shape and want to rent it for the winter—if anyone wants it—and when I am done, I'll get away to rest, just where I do not know, but probably for a month or so, to Dansville—and then God knows where—I may go to Italy, or to the Mexican Gulf.

Sister is still at Onteora. She had a complete break-down, and has taken an out-of-doors rest cure and is feeling stronger. She walks now, a mile or so, daily, and hopes to come home pretty strong. Her address is "Pennyroyol, Onteora, Laurenceville, New York—c/o Mrs. Candace Wheeler." She will be so glad of a word from you.

Love and love to you, dear Friend. The tie strengthens as time passes. God keep us all, but life is hard.

Lovingly,

Ruth

My boy—my boy

My boy! This my heart's cry and thus far time has not helped.
You two Dears,

What shall I say to you—you were too—generous two!

I stalk about in the black scarf or the other. One airily flower in the white one or we say things that would make your right ears burn!

You really are too generous, and I’ve said as much before!

We are both only fairly semi-well, not ill but just below par and it’s hard to rise above it when once this is the case.

Our Christmas Season has had much to sweeten it—much love and sweet memories which we are trying to love and not to dread.

How we missed our bonny Boy in it all, no one can know—but where he is we shall everyone be are long—all of us, dear friend, and it ought not to be too sorrowful.

Dear Mary Pearce spent last night with us. She is such a dear—so loving and so full of capable quality and good sense. She seems really devoted to us and comes in when she can to see us.

We have just got some pictures of the Boy and I send them for you to have your choice. They came an hour ago.

I think we have rented the apartment today—probably—I am sending lease to be signed. Love and love, dear friends, from us both. I sent you "Saline Sue." Have you "The River's Children"? Love to all.

Ruth

If we should move, mail would be forwarded promptly.
Dear Friends,

I haven't forgotten the Boy's picture but have been waiting for the full order to come, not yet arrived. The several of each sitting were soon exhausted in the family excepting one or two not quite up to the mark. They take a long time to finish them up.

I had a strong impulse to run up to you for a few days last week. I felt so restless and depressed and my sleep was so broken and my heart went out to you. I felt as if it would do me good just to be with you a little while, selfish, yes, I own it, but I'm having a hard time.

Well, before I could say the final word to myself, my teeth set up a cry, and when I talked, instead of pearls, great chunks of gold fell out of my mouth, and I had to hie me to my dentist, and I've been going there once and twice a day since and am to keep it up several days longer. It seems to me that I would seem to be blessed with trials but something unforeseen drops out of the sky.

But I won't write you an unqualified wail. We are hoping to be comfortably settled somewhere with a good tenant here, within the next few days. Our tenant expects to come on the 23rd. I shall probably go to Dansville although frankly I dread the housing. The climate is so severe. So I think I'll run over to Atlantic City Wednesday afternoon or Thursday and take a survey of things there. If I can find a good sunny room overlooking the sea, I'll be glad, in a place of course, where I can be quiet and get to work. There are plenty of hotels there with brass bands for dinner. The Hotel Sanatorium there, Galen Hall, has been enlarged and improved. I'll look it over again. Dear love to you all.

Your
Heart-broken

Ruth
Dearest Friends,

At last I am in the haven of rest! Such a time as I have had—such a pull! I cannot tell you how many times I have begun to write you lately and every time I was interrupted and my strength used up before I would get a chance to return.

I don't think I have written you since the blessed Colonel came to see us. It was my intention to do so immediately and then we had to scurry out for the long-desired tenant—Then Sister got off to Washington where she is now with Mrs. Custer—and then—

I had to change my rooms at the St. Albans for a very handsome but dark suite—no sun and gas burning on all cloudy days—and it put me on my back so that I had to send for a trained nurse to take care of me for a week and then, getting no better but rather worse, I left without doing the several things I had stayed for. Such is life—or my life, at least! I brought the nurse here with me—you may know how ill I felt and how very strengthless!—and left N. Y. last Thursday night, arriving here on Friday morning.

End of letter of Jackson Health Resort
May 9, 1906

The first for much over a year, and it did me good to feel myself alive once more.

I love you and love you, dear friends—but that; an old story—

Suppose Brown and Brown have applied to you again. They have to me, but I do not feel warranted in making any new obligations now.

Still I do believe they are honorable and I hope their optimism will be rewarded—Their optimism and their energy.

I'd sell my 3000 shares for what they cost me if I could today. How do you feel about yours? But we are not worrying; are we? Dear love to all. I am reduced to scraps of my season's supply of paper—but you won't mind—and I am dead tired, as this letter may be like a bit of crazy patch-work. I often long to see you and I think of the days you sat and watched with us a year ago.
Dear Friends,

Just a line to tell you I’m "home" again and fairly improved am trying to rent my apartment and to go abroad for a few months—to try to get hold of life.

The Sorrow seems to grow with time and I am only a vessel of tears, but I must not talk about it. I am hoping to rent for a year or more though this season is unfavorable for long leases. I need a stretch of ease with few cares, or I suppose I do. I need something and the thousand calls upon my time and patience and sympathy are somewhat disastrous.

I think of you often, dear friends. Mrs. McKelvey was here a day or two ago and we spoke of you. She is among your ardent admirers.

Sister is at Onteora getting our little place there ready for tenants. She’s with Mrs. Wheeler c/o Mrs. Candace Wheeler, Pennyroyal Cottage, Onteora Park, Tannersville, New York.

Dora and her little girl are there, and it is heavenly at this season.

Marguerite Harrington is bearing me company here now for a few days, and Sibbie C. comes in, she is going today to stay with a friend who is having a slight operation. Where anxiety or trouble come, there is the blessed woman, ever. God bless her!

Lovingly,
Ruth

I have found a bully lot of dark amber like ours—$2 to $3 a string. Keep it to yourselves, but if you want any, let me know—pdq
Tuesday -- 9'

Dear Friends,

I wrote you yesterday saying I thought of running up to you for a little visit; and now I feel sure I ought not think of it as the best thing I can do is not to break this opportunity to work. I have written the lady who owns the apartment in Provincetown and I'll take or leave one of them, by her description. It is snowing and twirlingly--almost a blizzard--this morning--and I suppose you are having the same sort of weather.

I am not "worrying" about you, Gustie darling, but I do want to see you well. Our dear Carrie Clements is ill of a slight attack of rheumatism with some inflammation at first--now past. I am improving tho' I am pretty tired and am going to draw the line on social things and do my best to send out a longish story ere many days. Somehow, the desk work is the very hardest--and it is there that memory haunts and torments me. But I will fight it out. God keep us all.

Lovingly ever,

Ruth
Dear Friends,

I have been hoping to join my dear friend Mrs. Clements tonight on the midnight train to Boston and I thought to be sending you a telegram about now but instead, I must write that I have to be quiet for some days longer. I find myself so exhausted after every effort and have to take to my bed, improving slowly and if I get any sort of uplift, I shall see you very soon, supposing that it is convenient to you, dear friends, when I am able to go.

I have been disappointed in getting the woman who always comes to help me out with my wardrobe, mending, renovating, etc., and I am obliged to see to this and to do one or two things easily done, when I am myself but thus far impossible.

There is something about the fatal blow which is misleading. I suppose we are numbered, stunned, and only as we come gradually back, every returning bit of vitality attuned to pain, do we know how hopeless is recovery. This is my mental condition and it is akin to insanity. Still, I hope to get the mastery and to live and work, but it will be as another woman not the merry-hearted Ruth whom you knew. I still laugh and tell a funny story on occasion, but the pendulum swings back to sorrow and tears. God help me.

Dear love to you all. I'll write again in a day or so.

Lovingly

Ruth

Sister sends love from Onteora.
Au revoir

JULY 5th - 6 A.M.

Do forgive the scrawls I am sending you and know how it is. I think I sent you my summer address:

c/o Hawson E. Dahe Jr.
Frydo Alli 19
Christiania
Norway

Lovingly ever

Ruth

Black
Border
Letters
end here
Dear Friends,

After writing Sister a letter in this fashion, I am tempted to do the same by you, just for the saving of time. My dear Mother said, during her last years, that she preferred Ruth's type-written letters, because she could read them off, almost without her glasses, like open-print news-papers.

Well, Dearie, there's nothing special to tell. Marguerite came in on Friday and handed in her key, having used it not at all, and I really believe the dear girl thought I had wanted her to serve me in some way, coming into my rooms—and I took her little apology as I should take regrets for a dinner party—and it is all right. I am pleased to see her looking very much better, which is the important thing. We went out together to dine at the "Cape aux enfants", and I got some early sleep, had the elevator-man to wake me at a quarter to ten when I dressed and was ready when Mr. and Mrs. Colgate called for me to go to the Old Guards' Ball, an annual event of great interest. Of course we went in simple dress only to look on, and it was worth the effort—the midnight military parade being very fine and imposing. I had just declined to join a party at Carnegie Hall, with a chafing-dish supper afterward when Mrs. Colgate telephoned me, to see if I had got home. I am sending regrets for everything of this sort for this week and am determined, if it is in me, to write and send off a story before I go to Phila. I got a very nice letter from Mr. Alden day before yesterday, asking me to hurry up and send in something there and saying some things which make me feel that I must prove worthy of the faith they put in me, for good work. But oh, my! how difficult is life to me these days. I was obliged to spend all Friday with the maid in giving these rooms a thorough cleaning—so not a line could I do that day—then I had so many notes to answer on Saturday, and company and company...then, this Sabbath day I had to clean my silver—a matter of at least two hours—but you better believe it is shining,—and then, I have got my own coffee and washed the plague-coned things—and now, my lunch, and washed the few dishes, and the dress I wore to the ball is dragged and somewhat torn—such a crush!—and I have telephoned to dear Mrs. Kelway that I cannot go over to her today, so I am going to give my tired senses to my desk—All more than wrong—but how to right it in a hurry, I know not. I know company will come in about four or five o'clock for an hour...and I declined to go out with a very nice man to supper tonight, as I wanted to keep myself free...and I'm going over all this only as an illustration of how the days are stolen away. Last evening the boy who was with my darling Stirling the night he met his death came and spent about three hours with me—talking about the beyond...
well, he loved him, and it is all a mystery. I wrote Mrs. Rollins day before yesterday about having Grace to help me and a note today tells me she will not be free for a month—still at school—and so it goes. But don't carry me in your minds, dear friends, in anxiety. It is likely that I shall pass out of life some day—from heart failure or some such, and, really, it is a good way, and what's the difference? I studied over the list of "Apartment to let, furnished" today in The Herald, just a bit des­perate and longing to find some little place which I might take by the month for a few months and have a hired girl to look after my comfort. My hands are as chapped as a cook's—And I fear my patience is a wee bit chapped, too. But, nevermind. A rich widower is coming to see me and I may do something sudden!!!!

But don't lose any sleep over this contingency!!!!

Dear love to you all, and God help us all, here and where sister is trying to straighten out tangles—and in this, I am remembering your brother—cousin, home Cale—and isn't life a "chore" as the saying is, indeed!

Much love ever, Ruth
How delighted we were, dearest friends, to have the last good news of our beloved Gustie! Isn’t it fine!

All my life, I have had rather exceptional recuperative power as you may remember Sister’s declaring in her frequent admonition:

"Look out that you don’t wear your recuperator out!"

Now, I think Gustie must have a pretty strong recuperator, too—and I’m sure she needed it, bless her!

I am wretched with a most tenacious and distressing cold so severe that I stayed in bed once one day and feared I was having grip. There is a great deal of it about—and I don’t see how anyone keeps well while we have summer and winter, wind and rain and fog and sunshine about on a three-days pivot alternately the winter through.

Two nights ago there was a freeze and today we have had to put out the little grate fires and to open the windows so far as the blustery March weather will allow. I opened a front sash and a back door and had to rush to save all my papers and fluffy ruffles from the middle of the street. So now, with back door closed, I have fresh air, rattling window-shades, and sashes and flapping of every bit of loose drapery anywhere in reach of the wind. Do I like it? I abhor it! There is no comfort anywhere excepting out in the open and that, barring the scurrying wind, is really heavenly—so mild and balmy and full of the sweetish warmth of a lenient sun—incapable of burning (at this season) and filled with elixir of life.

But give me my summer in summer-time, and my winter I’ll take frozen if you please—. Sallie would send love if she knew I wrote. She is much stronger and better. I asked Harper to send you a copy of the Xmas ed. of the Women’s Exchange—a very pretty book in the physical make-up. Maybe Gustie will enjoy looking it over.

Lovingly ever,

luth
Dear Friends,

Just a line tonight to send our dear love and to tell you we think of you every day and we are beginning to wonder if the dear invalid or convalescent, I should say, is not just about getting home.

We have dear Mrs. Wheeler here in New Orleans and we spend part of every day in going about with her and trying to have her see the old city. Of course, our society people have her when they can get her and she is being toasted around a great deal—almost more than is good for her. We had a little reception here for her yesterday and today we went with her to another—tomorrow there is something else and Thursday another reception and so it goes. But she is going to slip out of a lot of things now and try to nose around in the picturesque quarters of N. O. We had a lovely time in The French Market the other day and her artistic sense was thoroughly delighted with the color and quaintness and picturesque features of this and its most interesting location. We shall probably go for a little while with her and her niece, Candace Thurber, to the Mexican Gulf coast in a few days. There is, by the way, a new delightful sanitarium at Biloxi now—Dr. Folks Sanitarium—built on the beach of beautiful blue waters with the pine forests to landward. It is dark to be finely kept. You will be glad to know, dear friends, that I am working along at my desk—and I am generally better, though this grippy cold—things in this uncertain climate.

Sister Sallie joins me in much love to you both and all.

Lovingly

Ruth
Dear Gustie,

I can't tell you how delighted I was to see your old "fist" again! Bless you!

And so steady and firm—and so fully your whole self!

I could hardly keep back the "weeps" when I saw you writing—but only joy-weeps, you know.

The letter came back here promptly and sister had it very soon after my reading.

Mrs. Wheeler and Candace Thurber and I came over on Wednesday after 11 days of the delightful sea-shore, all benefited and with fresh pleasure in the city and its demands. They expect to be here until after Mardi Gras and our people are keeping them going. Mrs. Wheeler delivered an address on the decorative art at the Sophie Newcomb College last week, and will read her paper on "Color" at the Quarante Club and she is as full of appreciation of everything as such girls as we four are!

This is a poor scrawl, I know, and hardly worthy of either you or me—but I am bound to write a pile of notes in a limited time and I expect the gate bell to ring any moment, this perfect Sunday afternoon. I wish you dear two were here to go with us in our bumming around old New Orleans—and I constantly thought of you both on the sleepy sea-shore. It would have been good for dear Em and you, too. But the journey is long and perhaps as good places may be nearer. But someday we may have the pleasure of looking around French Town together.

Sister and I send lots and lots of love to all.

Devotedly,

Ruth

I wrote nearly all this amid torturing interruptions.

Love always to the dear Colonel
Dear Friends,

I send these little clippings so you'll see we had a good time. I sent you one of the announcements.

It was really a sweet and great occasion for me. I wish you'd been there.

We are well, but it is warm here, Sisters!!

Dear me! How warm! But the air is this minute alive with bird calls and filled with the fragrance of blooming gardens. It is all so fascinating to me—this swift passage from a whimsical winter into full summer—no real spring to speak of.

Did I ask you in my letter the other day, what you know of Annisquam? I am minded to try it this summer, as I want a quiet cool place to write.

The breakfast bell— wee tinkle but penetrating and piercing the pit o' my tum-tum, calls me down stairs.

Dear love

Ruth

Tell me about Lucy Wheelock (Mrs?) who lives at 134 Newbury Street across your street? She was here with the Kindergartners at The International Meeting—Heard me read and has written me a lovely letter. I'm hungry for a sight of you, my dear, dear friends.
Dear Friends

It's just about the loveliest day I've spent for many a long one—this Decoration day in the rain with everything nearly more or less cut off—the mail, visiting (by the weather) and all the shops closed so that one may not run around the corner and buy a paper o'pins even. I was to go to Onteora today but it occurred to me that the trains would be overcrowded and so I called up the RR station—East 42nd Street—and they said there that all out-going trains w'd be "very heavy"—and it is warm and wet and I didn't feel as if I ought to put myself thro the experience.

I've had a number of erranus in the nine days since I came beside the important one of Reading before the Woman's Club of Ansonia, Derby and Shelton wh. I did the day after my arrival—and had a fine time.

Your long letter, Gustie dear, is dearly prized as it tells me all about your plans and the family—and my heart is ever with you, you both know—all know. It is the right and only thing for you to be absolutely free for a time. I only wish it might be for a longer period—at least thro August, as Sept. begins to let down the heat bars and admit the edge of a more stimulating season. But the sea will do you both much good and the meeting with friends of other thoughts and interests. And you will not take anxious thoughts with you—more than you can't keep. Everything must be right—and it's a long road that has no turning—and the darkest hour is before the dawn—all of which are the things I'm saying, in one form or another, to myself, every day.

There are dark days for me when life seems so fully overcast that courage almost leaves me—but generally my pluck doesn't desert me and I shall not.

I sent the little parcel yesterday—just the brown sweater and a hand-made "hanky" apiece with my love and bon voyage. I wanted to send you each a lovely Varilive square—but there were no attractive colors in stock. They are so handy in traveling—for the neck or head—or both.

Remember, dearies, the sweater is not what I'd select for you as it is but a good wool, machine-made wh I bought for the lovely color wh will be very good for either one of you—and I love to send it. If the sleeves are a trifle too long, they can easily be shortened—in a few minutes—and it will serve for enough wear at sea and in the country.
I promised my dear Mrs. Candace Wheeler this winter that I'd throw off my black as soon as I could, but the time isn't yet if it ever will be. Not that I coddle sentiment of this sort at all—or that I believe in it in any particular way. I never wore any heavy crepe or heavy gloom—but somehow, I feel that color has gone out, for me—at least—I feel so yet—and these things are best left to settle themselves.

I expect to read a lot next fall and winter—and when I'm getting my dresses made, I'll take out the trunk of colored things and have that green velvet made and the brown remodeled &c, &c, if I can. It will be well for me—I do want to send you $5.00 to get me a stunning scarf at Liberty's—I want gorgeous color—you know the sort—either all the great purples in combination—or anything in great Persian effects—not light tints, of course—like pink and light blue. I see one occasionally here and they cost so high.

I am going for a visit to Motere L—when I come from Onteora, in about a week to stay till June 15th when my tenants leave. Then I am going to the apt'm't and see how things are and do some work—look over my lovely auto-books packed for 3 yrs under—sometimes—leaking roof—but I think they are safely bestowed. Marguerite Herrington will visit me for a while. The poor gifted dear is having a hard pull. Carrie Clements and Anna spent night before last with me here on their way to Watervitch where they have taken a cottage for the summer. I'm going to them for a little visit later. Now at Onteora I go to Mrs. Wheeler.

I left Sister Sallie only pretty well and my mind is not easy about her. She is so very frail. Give my love to the great old colonel. I hate to think of him as being ill or weak. Does he ever read fiction and would he care for some of my books? I'd love to do anything to give him the least pleasure. Dear love to you all.

Your devoted

Ruth
Dearest friends,

I've wanted to write you ever since your good long letter—but ah, me! Such pressure! Now I have all mechanics out of the place and am working along with a man house-cleaner—varnishing floors, polishing furniture, etc., etc. and I see daylight ahead. I have a very good and settled woman to do the gen. work—not gifted at cooking and a bit clumsy but eager to please—and nothing would make me discharge her now, after my siege, experimenting with "samples" from the employment agencies.

But I began this to say that I am to be in Boston on the 5th as, no doubt Miss Reed has told you, dear friends, and to be with you, as you say, if it is entirely convenient, and, if not, don't hesitate to say so. I am to read for the Bradford Academy again in the week following—I suggested Tuesday or Wednesday—and have not had time for reply, yet. Also, I read in Springfield in that week—probably Thursday—or possibly Wednesday. And I want, if I can, dear friends, to stay the week with you. It has been a long time since I have had the joy of seeing your faces and it has been a checkered period for us all. I think of you so much—and of the dear brother. My love to him, always.

Love to everyone

This writing shows my hand to be pretty tired. I am really ashamed of it.

Drop me a line at your convenience.

Lovingly ever

Ruth
Dear Friends,

Just a line to you Dears this Thanksgiving Day—my beloved Boy's birthday. I've had Carrie Clements and her two children, Henry—pater being away, the dear Urma and Brent, and Marguerite Lerington and a Southern friend who lives in a boarding house—for an early dinner—just a good turkey and accessories with pumpkin pie—and talk and cheer. And now a man I know who is a bachelor and so detached—has asked me to go out and dine with him tonight—and I promised—and I'm sure I'll have to enjoy the dinner by proxy as I feel as if I could never dine again—not that I particularly dined early, but I stuffed the turkey and made the gumbo—and fussed with things all morning (after going out and buying them) and you know that tends to satisfy just as much as taking the good things in.

In a wk. from tomorrow I start to New England—and I'm going to take a rest from things this week. For one thing—and don't tell it—I am not well—and the strength is returning not so violently as before but enough to disturb my tranquillity a good deal and with considerable pain in the side and leg. I am taking the homeopathic specific for it Rhus tax—which a friend recommends so strongly. The treatment of the ordinary practice seemed very ineffectual and slow if it helped me at all. I was frightened three days ago when I know it was coming back. I feared I might have to give up reading—but I think by taking a tonic and resting—I'll build my strength a little. I've taken a maid—a second personal maid, for a while to relieve me. She will put my things in order pack my trunk etc etc and go on errands—buy my tickets and do the thousand and one things which have consumed too much of my life's little blaze all along.

If you can suggest any special thing for me to do now—please do—I mean, I mean, in the need for strength and the pernickity interference of the shingles.

And don't mention it to Miss Reed—or to anybody.

I don't want any anxiety about me or uncertainty. I believe everything promises well for the reading—so writes Miss Reed—I was so glad, my dear Friends, to see your names among the patronesses.

Dear love to you and to all the household.

Ruth
Darling Friends,

It was sweet of you to have a letter here for me—almost waiting my arrival, for it came early Saturday morning.

My visit with you is already a tender memory and the sharing with you of intimate sorrow as you have shared mine brings us nearer again in our close friendship.

I still think I ought not to have gone to you this time—not that I was less welcome for the pressure upon you now, but only because every added responsibility is an added burden—and yet, I can't fully regret going to you and if I were doing it over no doubt I'd find myself at your door. The bravery and cheer with which you are meeting the inevitable has been a new lesson to me. God bless you!

I found my dear Boy at home and Marguerite sitting with him at the evening lamp—all so cozy and content—and everything has gone delightfully while I was away.

Mrs. Wheeler telephoned me Sat. morn (yesterday) asking how I was and wanting to see me—telling me she is starting to Camden, S. C. on Tuesday. Then Mrs. McKilway called me up to ask me to lunch or early Sunday dinner, later, and we are going then to see Mrs. Wheeler who is staying at the Thurber's—her brother's family—near the McK's in Brooklyn. I came home late in the afternoon stopping at a reception given to Gertrude Atherton by Miss Jordan of Kesckenes—and tonight I am going to write letters and correct some work for the printers.

The letter postmarked Boston contained my cheque from the Folk Lore people—without a word! This is unusual and is either an accident—The usual courteous tone of appreciation and thanks having been dropped out—or—

Is it possible they mean to offer me scant courtesy? anyway—

I am sorry—and I'm telling you so that you can fix up things a little—conciliate them and let them fully understand that I didn't express any complaint.

Right or wrong, I suspect they feel aggrieved and what's the difference?

Marguerite says I "look ten years younger" for my week in your home. It's a real rest-cure for me to be there I'm not dragged at every moment of the day and I realize myself that I am better.
Well—so long! As the darkies say. My love to the household and always to the invalid.

Miss Herrington remembers you and begs to be remembered.

Lovingly ever

Ruth.

Please, if one of you is going down Boylesdon Street, get me 2 more of those covered diaters—the ones with the grape design if you can—keep them till there's a chance to bring them. They are lovely. Do excuse scraps of paper.

On Envelope I'm disgusted to find this not mailed to you yesterday. I told my maid to take it out and thought till this am she had done so. I had a lovely time yesterday at McK's and they send you all love.
Dear Friends,

I’m well and have been, but so deep in work, trying to conclude my book—but I go tomorrow back to N Y to the St. Albans again, 349 West 58th Street—and am taking it back unfinished. But I’ve done some shorter things in the meantime—I am just correcting the page proof of the Silver Wedding Story for June Century. Frost has made three lovely illustrations. I know you’ll like them. I am sorry not to have this lovely mo. here but I have three readings in first part of April—one in Worcester the 13th or 14th. After that, I hope to rent my aptmt for the summer and then go south and stay a little while and probably go with the family somewhere but this cannot be settled quite yet.

I’ve done several poems (?) I hate to dare claim that ambitious word—but they are said to be poems. They are verses and correct in form with some feeling. For the rest, you shall see. One goes into Outlook, the other Century—and one good short story (good for me, I mean) not yet placed—just done last wk and another started—and the big story moving slowly.

I think of you all the time, dear friends—when I write or when I don’t—and of the dear ill brother. Mrs. Sutton is so far from well since her stroke last summer. She is here, you know and often looking very well. I’ve had such pleasure in wearing my wonderful scarf which you two dears brot me. It is such a color. Glory I had a fine audience here and a great time last wk. at my reading. Tonight we are going to stir things up a little by a "costume frolic" all going down to supper in improvised costumes. I’m going as a Voudou Queen and will do Mrs. Davis’s "Throwin’ The Varys"...glad of a quite informal fun in the early evenings. I am under promise to do an episode for the Westchester pageant in wh. Libbie Custer is so interested with the Lawrence’s and it is a formidable task—I don’t know how I am to come out, but Libbie and my friends wanted me in it and I am glad to be. Only I am not sure of my ability in this direction—I have the last Episode Hash Irving, after his return from his foreign ministry receiving homage etc etc—Toasts etc etc ye Gods!
Dearest Friends,

I am so touched that you should remember my darling Boy's birthday. I tried to think of it only as a day of joy as it was in its beginning and each year we had him with us—and then I filled the day with such thoughts of others as I could and so it passes as other anniversaries—which should make us all a little more tender.

I am feeling somewhat better. There is some neuralgia but not very much. The itching is trying but I never let this get the better of me even at first when it was so insistent.

The thing I have dreaded was the heart-depression and I am resting all I can. It is 11:30 now and I'm not regularly up yet. I go to a quiet lunch at one with friends, The Marcuse's which is really a little diversion.

Don't think I dined twice on Thanksgiving day—my dears—no, I simply went with a friend to The Arts Club and sat and hardly tasted the dinner and listened to the speeches—a quiet enough time and a little diverting. I'd have been glad not to go but he had counted on my going.

Now, my dearest friends, about my coming to you. We have been thro' so much together and we understand each other as not many do, and you must feel free to let me go somewhere near you and not be a care if my coming will add to your responsibility as I can see it must no matter how intimately we know each other. Do this, dear friends, and just write me where I am to go and I'll be in and out with you—and another time we'll have the visit together.

Of course, nothing will be the same to me as being with you but it will be only a pleasure deferred.

It is heavenly here today—the park a dream of sunlight.

Harquert sits with me—off for the day to her sister—and she will be here and look for the boy while I'm away. I wrote you, I am sure, of my having such a nice boy, an art student, age 20, with me. He is so like my own boy it hurts sometimes—but altogether is good for me.
I wish love to you all and now—do think this over and be sensible. Don't let me trouble you—if it will be a trouble.

Lovingly ever.

Ruth

I y love to the colonel ever. I hate to think of him as being less than his old enthusiastic self.
Just a line of love and thanks, dear friends. The paper cutter is lovely—so choice and fine and it will fall into Service immediately.

The books I sent you bore my loving wishes and the pillow cover I put in just for a touch of fine color.

It is sweet of you to offer to make me a bag and some time, when you feel like it, I'll love to have you do it and I'll prize it. But don't think of it now. There are so many things pressing. I won't suggest a color just so you may not have it on your mind.

I've had a sweet Christmas, so many dear expressions of affections. Yes, I can understand your missing dear Mrs. Hutton—dear "Poet-Louisa" as I called her. Even I miss the consciousness of her presence. She was a dear loving spirit and invariable as the years passed which we cannot say of everyone—not even of all our love. She was ever the same loving friend.

I am beginning to thin out my belongings, selling the larger, heavier pieces of old furniture, so that when I am ready to take a small place, I may not have to sacrifice them.

Mrs. ...heeler is in Georgia, in her dear little winter resort, "Wintergreen," and dear Dora will go to her for a while during the late winter.

I hope to rent these rooms and long, for a few months, and then I'll probably skip for the land of winter sunshine, and finish my book. I am very well but a little too tired. It is pretty severe in New York now and the streets are like guarded ice! How guarded ice sounds!

Love to the dear brother,

Kuth
Dear Friends,

Just a hurried line, for I am hard pressed this overful day. You see where I am. I have rented the apartment till May 3rd (and possibly a little later) and am here for a turn before going South to N. O.

I loved your letter, Gustie dear, and you know only being snowed under with work here prevented my answering this long. However, we need not even explain anything, we friends who understand so well.

I am very well and getting work done right along, which is the one joy _______? left me.

I am wondering if you have seen Kate Higgins "Rebecca" now playing in Boston.

If not, try to go and if you'd enjoy seeing her there and probably getting some.

Also a set of serious verse, I hope your friends will think worthy. All love to the household. Ever your affectionate Friend.

Sister Sallie is well and impatient at my delay in coming. I am staying here to see some... vaudeville folk, for one thing--about singing my songs, but don't speak of that, please.
Tulane Stuart Collection

Hotel St. Albans
349 West 58th Street
N. Y. March 16, '10

My dear Gustie,

The bag is a raving beauty! I simply love it. I'd go wild over it even if your dear loving hands hadn't made it for me, and this is saying a lot. The whole thing is a delight. The integrity of the work—the color and the stitches! The whole!

Thank you again and again, dear Lum friends.

You see I am still here but getting ready to sail on sail—Southern Pacific Steamer for N. O., direct.

I'll have only about five weeks there as I must be back here first week in May—but the change and the Southern spring out-doorings will make me over, I feel sure, and I really need it, for, altho' I am very well, I am tired.

I've been working with considerable strain for a long time. I read to a club here on Friday—only members, about 200—and had a good time but next day I was a wet rag and this shows me that I need rest.

I wish you dears could set sail and I with you—for parts unknown for an indefinite period—over seas and far away, touching here and there and throwing responsibility and care to the winds, for just as long as we might please. It would give us a new lease on life.

Ah, well! All may have a great trip together, someday! And if not, anyway we have our busy days here now with plenty of blue in the skies! You know the N. O. address. 1435 St. Andrews Street.

Love to Em dear—and to all.

Ruth
Dear Sis,

I'm up and among living this fifth morning since sailing—for the first time. I except an hour's experiment two night's ago when I went on deck, got blown out of shape, chilled, and went back to the comfy annk wh. has cradled me these days of exhaustion. I've never been so low in strength from tire, and I'll never do it again ever.

It is grey and gloomy today and a bit rough but not enough to make the writing difficult. To this time the weather has been heavenly and the entire ship, with my comfortable stateroom all to myself and a most kind and attractive Mrs. Dunn as stewardess, attending to & anticipating my wants, has been about perfect.

I've had no ache or pain but the pitching in time has really frightened me by its violence and persistence. Now it takes the time of the ship & heart-throb—and is as relentless but less violent than yesterday.

A most typical list o' passengers--middle class children like & many evidently quite poor. I've met to know only my next neighbor the stalwart wife of a successful Brooklyn physician, but one or two people have "peeped" concerning me—and "hope I'm coming out" so the stewardess tells me. The stewardess is a superior creature, and so nice. She is very like Bertha with blondined hair blonde to the French doll type—with her blk. eyes. But I believe this sort o' thing is less in ill repute in the loyal countries--the court--(and as being so notably made up.

I've eaten every meal, more or less fully, and the basket o' fruit I brought nearly all the great basket & the inter sent me--such a basket! One of Charles's best--Flora came to ship with me & Mrs. Lek joined me for ten minutes before we sailed--getting aboard after visitors were leaving. Flora had despaired of her and gone when they were ordered ashore. F has a mean cough--has had a few night sweats & is much too thin.

Friday A.M.—All grey & serene without—trust it & no perhaps tempered within this A.M. but dammably harassing—I'm staying in my berth as the smartest thing to do. It's damp & raw on deck—a shivering this aft.--all comic "events"...stay 2 or 3 days in Glasgow--
I am still intending to go on to Glasgow-- tho this will probably be mailed at Derry. I'll stop over there for the night & next day & Mrs. Mackintosh & Mary Hewitt have friends there to whom I'm to send cards of introduction. And then I'm going to do my best at going to Stirling & to Dundie-- from Edinborough-- Bella Yule is in Edinborough and I may possibly get her to find a $7 a wk. boarding-place with plain people there & stay a few days-- but I hardly think I'll do this.

Jim is surely inscrutable as to his intention as to buying a home, but I'm not worrying over that. He said that house wd. be 16 or $18,000 at first-- and then he questioned all 9-- front &c &c. Now he hesitates to-- it at half the price-- all that awfully well planned but isn't it funny? I'll have this now for letter something about Camp & Philip & it would please me very much if it should prove true-- Such a nice useful trip! I'd like to stay aboard & go back and come again-- I am hoping you are off for your good rest and change-- Such love to all--

Your Sis--

I go to Haviland Hotel in Glasgow for a day or two then to Edinborough.

To Miss S. S. McEnery
2029 Coliseum Street
New Orleans, Louisiana
U. S. A.

(In red ink-- readdressed to)
Fletcher, North Carolina
Near Ashville
What's wrong with our civilization, I wonder, that we have no
time of ease—not an hour unclaimed in the twenty-four—and everybody
seems to be working in the same pressure.

This, dear Friends, is the question we ask and ask & to which
we seem unable to evolve our answer.

There is, absolutely, some occult force at work some irresistible
influence which draws and keeps us in the maelstrom from which we may
not escape.

Here we two are, living most quietly this winter, doing nothing
socially, and yet there is a daily scramble to get through, really. We
add to the leftovers on top of the pile as we draw out from the bottom.
And we are busy all the time—and not pokey or slow.

When your dear letter came I had just been saying I must write
and know of your plans and whether we might hope to see you here. It
has been a devilish winter. I don't like to use language but there's
no lesser word that will serve.

Since our dear brother left us on Nov. 14th (I arriving on the
16th) we have had hardly any clear Sunday days—and when there has been
one it has been only one and then a lapse with cold and raw and rainy
stretches—and so it is yet. but we do think this sort of thing may
presage a fine and clear spring. we surely hope so for we are thread­
bare in our patience and insistence.

Sister Sally is better than she has been for years and is look­
ing so well.

I am stout and look better than I feel for my nerves aren't
quite up to the mark for work—work which is so important.

If you do come, it seems to me that I'd advise the sea trip.
I know I should any other year, but....

It is a delightful journey of five days often advertised as "A
hundred golden hours." and although I've often taken it, I've met only
one storm and that was a delight and not violent enough to frighten good sailors.

You surely have had a long and most trying ordeal, dear friends, waiting for the slow processes of "justice" but I hope your patience won't be further tried.

Let us know when you make your plans and we'll make the best arrangements possible for you. If it should be that we can't claim you for ourselves--that's what we want--then we'll get you in somewhere quite near.

Much love to you all from both of us. Love ...

Ruth

We'd like much to have some of the Dickens plates--thank you so much. Sister Sally says two or three for her--this modest--but old greedy will have about eight, thank you!
Darling Friend,

I've just written dear Dora an endless letter and not ever mentioned your name, for my love to my onliest you has to go on its own initiative this time.

We were so happy to have your good note, our Dora, and the picture it brought us of your affluent spirit living out your resourcefulness and faith and fearlessness--and several other rich attributes--an inspiration to us, bless you.

We think of you all the time and miss you and miss you. Will this summer bring us together--I wonder? If the Destiny Divinity pays any attention to my selfish plan it will, I assure you.

I've just sent on last page-proof of my little book of merriment "The Cocoon," a rest-cure comedy and am buckling down to finish writing another, nearly done, but hard to round up in this environment of many cares and unavoidable diversion from the desk-industry.

Sister is much better lately—in strength, thanks be! And I may be able to run off in April for Onteora—we shall see.

Carrie and Henry are here—spent last evening and are in frequently, to our delight and our neighbor friends are dear and faithful.

Write just a line, dear friend, whatever you think about it—or as I've put it before, "never snub an impulse to write." We love you and love you--

Ruth
Dear Beloved Friend,

Sister Sallie and I were sitting talking a while ago and she said suddenly, (Dora's coming being in both our minds) "why didn't we ask Mrs. Wheeler to come, too!" Whereupon we looked at each other in silence a moment and then I exclaimed, "Land o'glory, holy Columbus. Do you think she might?" (or words to that effect) and so I'm rushing this along to say for gracious sakes alive, dear, dear friend, is there any chance to get you? We'd be "tickled iridescent" both of us.

There's only one big room and one big bed in it, but its a mile wide, and, if you couldn't be fully comfy that way there's a nice little bed in a little room near into which Dora could slip for night sleeps or day naps.

And the weather is a dream of Elysium, and I do believe good now for quite a spell.

And there are two iris blooms out along the unworked flower border and lots of buds gaping purple and red.

Won't it be great larks if you two do come and we'll do every devilish thing our chaste minds will allow—we'll sit between a Chinaman and a Gascon in the famous market and drink coffee and we'll find the witch who called you old and give him his delayed deserts. And when we come home every day we'll sit and talk and talk and talk about everything and everybody and speak our minds and---

Oh I'd--only feel that you want to come and can!

Sister has read this and says it's from her--from us both--

All love to you both--and all.

Ruth
My dear Mr. Riley,

If you see my name, I feel sure you will to some extent understand my writing to you at this time. When your dear and lovely mother was a child and then a young lady our family and hers were neighbors and she and my sister Ruth were great companions.

It has been a long time since we met, and I have been very sorry. My sister and I lived in New York which was really home for many years.

I have been an invalid for a long time and not able to go anywhere and was so sorry not to go when I saw the notice of your dear mother's death and now your sister. I can only offer you the deep sympathy I feel for you. I hope, however, that you have other relatives. Don't bother to answer this unless you feel like it, but I shall be pleased to have a line from you.

Yrs. in deep sympathy

Sarah S. McEnery
(To Mrs. Candace Wheeler
Thomasville, Georgia)

2024 Coliseum Street
New Orleans, La.
Sunday

And that did we with joy, dear Friend! We were only sorry their time was so short. You've heard of their loss of time in coming.

I don't feel as if they had seen anything but they got some true impressions, I'm sure, of our dear, dirty, romantic old town.

I wanted them to get a blink at our American Side but the time was all too short. When they come through going home, maybe--?

We are having spring, at last and violets! such violets! The borders in the best gardens are purple with them. All so glad to come again and so frankly forgiving of the cruel ripping of this misguided winter.

I wish you were here—and those two dears, Candace Thurber and Mary Hewitt with you! My love to them both. I hear they were to "arrive to you" yesterday and I'm that envious.

I'm rushing this out for the only Sunday mail—at noon I'm doing a perfectly lovely story. I thought you three loving would like to know—I'm that conceited in the assumption. Ahem!

How I miss and miss—and miss my New York and my friends there. I had to stay this winter but never again! I must make my nest over this autumn—somewhere near youze!

Lovingly,
Ruth

Sarah—the good—has gone to church—bless her. While I do my worshiping at home—so I send her love for her.

Tell Candace we so appreciated her sweet letter—in the dark time—and mean to say so but our pile of letters while it diminishes, is yet formidable.

Our friends were so dear.

May 1, 1914.
VITA

Mary Frances Fletcher, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joel L. Fletcher, Sr., was born in Ruston, Louisiana. She attended the A. E. Phillips School, the Ruston High School, and Louisiana Tech. While she was head of the English Department of the Lake Charles High School, she earned a master's degree in English at the University of Virginia. Her major professor was Dr. Armistead Churchill Gordon.

In 1940 she became a member of the Department of English and Foreign Languages at Louisiana Tech. She was invited that same year to assist the Department of Education at L. S. U. in the summer session. During the time she was in Baton Rouge she met Dr. R. B. Heilman and Dr. A. J. Bryan, who encouraged her to continue her graduate studies at L. S. U.

The war delayed her. Intermittently since 1947 she has returned to the university to teach or to study.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Frances Fletcher

Major Field: American literature

Title of Thesis: A Biographical and Critical Study of Ruth McEnery Stuart

Approved:

Clayton H. Holaday
Major Professor and Chairman

Richard J. Russell
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:

April 2, 1955