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# THE BOUSFIELD DIARIES

## Volume 1

### March 1878 to January 1883

1878

*At Undercliff House, Ventnor, March 24<sup>th</sup> 1878*

I celebrated my Silver-wedding, & it occurred to me that from that event would be a favorable time for keeping a record of the principal occurrences of my daily life; if it should please God to spare me some years longer, to recall them may, & will, be profitable to myself & perhaps interesting to my children. Although I wish to express my thoughts & feelings in reference to those circumstances which I think it worth while to chronicle as freely as if I knew no other eye than my own would rest on what I write, I feel it will not be easy to do this, yet I must be strictly truthful both in reference to myself & those of whom I may have somewhat to record.

With the 25 years that have flown past since my wedding day, I feel the summer of life has gone, but it has been crowded with mercies & its sun-shine far exceeded the clouds & storms. I have under some sort of inspiration for which I can scarcely account (for I know I am no poetess or I should often write verses when I cannot) written some lines, which grew into many more than I intended, but in which, dedicated to my dear Husband, I epitomized better than I can in prose just what our life together thus far has been, & this I think I shall write at the beginning of this journal, hoping & believing that our dear ones may, when they have reached our time of life, find in them some expression for themselves of the same loving kindness & tender mercy which followed their Parents so far on their pilgrimage.<sup>1</sup>

*March 27<sup>th</sup>*

With my eldest child over 24 & my youngest on earth 13 years old,<sup>2</sup> it is probable that the most important events of their lives may occur in a much shorter space of time than our married life has been, therefore although over 49 years of age seems late to begin a diary, I do so that I may keep in remembrance the way by which they may be led by the same Guiding Hand which has so wisely & wonderfully brought us to this stage of our journey & also, now that my memory is not so good as it once was, to keep a reminder of my own special mercies, & be able to recall them as I could not without aid if I should live to be really old or even for years whether many or few.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> CEB (henceforth used in footnotes to refer to Charlotte the diarist) apparently did not carry out her intention, as the verses have not survived.

<sup>2</sup> CEB alludes to her sixth child, Edris, a little girl who died at the age of three in 1872.

<sup>3</sup> CEB did indeed live to be 'really old': she died in 1933 at the age of 105.

To account for dating this at the beginning from Ventnor I must say that I left Alpha Villa with Hattie more than a month ago for this place, where Lottie joined us from Clifton the next day, and John from Chelmsford a few days later, all being out of health, the girls from coughs and John from weakness consequent on his long illness just as he was leaving home at Xmas. Ventnor has again & again been our resort when change was needed, with the result desired.<sup>4</sup>

After we had been settled here a few days Will gave us one of the surprises of which he is fond by making his appearance most unexpectedly. Capt<sup>n</sup> & M<sup>rs</sup> Alcock & family visited Ryde & he accompanied his pupil, coming on to us to stay & returning to him for a few hours daily; his spare time was spent with us or in geological searches, in which Hattie was generally his companion. He remained in the Island about a fortnight & returned to Clifton<sup>5</sup> only a few days before the time all had arranged to meet to commemorate our Silver wedding day. However not to disappoint me he came back Saturday 23rd on which day Papa & Ted also joined us. It was a great pleasure to me that my dear Husband was able to come, & to us both to have all our five children with us; except for the thought that one dear one had gone from us that would otherwise have been there also, there was nothing to mar my joy & pride & thankfulness at being so surrounded.

March 24th was a glorious Sabbath morning as bright in sunshine as our wedding morning 25 years ago. I felt so glad that it was Sunday & that we could in God's house offer our praise & thanksgiving for his great goodness to us from that day until the present. We all sat down to breakfast with a wedding cake gaily decorated, flowers etc on the table, & our silver presents from the children & others spread near. Will had brought us a beautiful antique salver, & John, Lottie & Hattie had united to present me with a silver bracelet. I felt even prouder than I did when I sat down as a Bride to our wedding-breakfast, & not without reason, for not only did I feel as much pride as ever in looking on my Husband, but my three tall boys & two girls were an additional source, of which I must not write all I (their Mother) think.

As I looked around on each, restored to health & strength, within, and then without on the grand & glorious ocean sparkling & heaving in the rays of the sun, my cup of earthly happiness was filled to the brim, & seemed even running over when we went together to worship in the Congregational Church where, sitting so that we could see the faces of all our children, my dear Husband & I joined with glad & grateful hearts in public thanksgiving, for good M<sup>r</sup> Davis knew why we had all assembled on that day & did not forget to offer it on our behalf. As we left the Church we were met by several of our Bedford friends who were staying here, amongst them D<sup>r</sup> Coombs & M<sup>r</sup> & M<sup>rs</sup> Hobson.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Ventnor, a seaside resort in the Isle of Wight, was well known for its microclimate which it was claimed was ideal for the treatment of pulmonary disease. At a time when tuberculosis was rife, sufferers came from all over the country to the Royal National Hospital for Diseases of the Chest.

<sup>5</sup> Clifton, a suburb of Bristol.

<sup>6</sup> Mr and Mrs Hobson were Bedford's Mayor and Mayoress in 1881.

*April 1<sup>st</sup>*

The boys have confided some of their love affairs to me, but will not I dare say take my opinion in reference to them if they have an opposite one of their own.<sup>7</sup> I tell Will & Eddie, as professional men, they cannot marry & keep their necessary position in society as early as their Father did; at their age his future course was tolerably settled & income not uncertain, & what was ample for us when we began life together would not suffice now to bring them an equal amount of comfort & respectability. We have never lacked not only the comforts but many of the luxuries of life & did not marry until we had a reasonable prospect of having them. Eddie is fond of saying what Papa did when I advise him, as I think for his good, & he is so warm in his love affairs that I fear if his affections should get fixed where his love is returned (which I think can scarcely be said at present), his prudence should be outrun or set aside.

My first anxiety for my boys is that they shall choose Christian women & next that they may not bring upon themselves & us anxieties which love only cannot keep off. But I find I am chronicling ideas rather than facts, which however I shall sometimes allow myself to do that I may in the future be able to compare events with my thoughts in the past in reference to them.

*April 8<sup>th</sup>*

Our intention of leaving Ventnor last Wednesday was altered by a pouring wet morning & Hattie's having taken a bad influenza cold – a bottle of medicine from Dr Williamson & keeping her in bed for the day did her so much good that I thought it best to take advantage of the warm sunny morning which succeeded the previous day's down-pour &, hastily packing what was not already done, left Undercliff House about noon. After a delightful little passage across the Solent & a pleasant journey in a carriage all to ourselves the whole way to London, we crossed from Victoria to St Pancras in a cab & thence on to Bedford arriving at 'home sweet home' soon after 7 o'clock.

I found Papa had prepared a pleasant little surprise for me by having the breakfast room fresh papered & new turkey carpet & rug & the stove taken out & replaced by a Dog-grate with tiled hearth & sides. Howcutt was busy finishing the setting of the latter when I got in.<sup>8</sup>

*April<sup>9</sup>*

I went to [St. Paul's] Chapel<sup>10</sup> with Ted & remained to the sacramental service, as this was the first opportunity I had ever had of doing so with him. I was disappointed that it was not one of unmixed pleasure. Thoughts of anxiety for his future so filled my mind as to almost unfit it for God's worship. Clara Henman sat before us, & I find he continues to think more of her even than he did when a correspondence

<sup>7</sup> CEB refers to the 'love affairs' between Will and Florence Kelly, and between Eddie (or Ted, as she usually calls him) and Clara Henman, discussed further in diary entries for 9 and 10 April and 15 and 23 October.

<sup>8</sup> Howcutt is the odd-job man whose duties included gardening, looking after the horse and carriage and household repairs.

<sup>9</sup> No specific date is given, but it is presumably 9 April, as it appears between entries on 8 and 10 April.

<sup>10</sup> St Paul's Chapel, in Harpur Street, built in 1804.

began between them in some way last Nov<sup>r</sup>, of which he told me on my return from Hastings when passing through town & greatly to my surprise, as it began in the fortnight of our absence from home, & without their having met in the meantime.

*April 10<sup>th</sup>*

Eddie left us yesterday after having been living at home three months, he has had a season railway ticket & instead of lodging in London has been daily to the Hospital returning each night. I had proposed his doing this principally because I did not wish him to share lodgings with O Coombs who wished to live with him when Mr Hayward<sup>11</sup> left, the difference between the two as companions was that one was a Christian man (with whom I was glad for him to associate) & the other was not; if anything can show the value of religion it is the restraining power it influences over young men left unrestrained by anything else in a great city.

Ted's stay at home has done him good in some ways, but I fear his premature attachment is strengthened; his Papa & I have pointed out to him the imprudence as we both think of engaging himself before he has completed his studies, & he promised to keep himself free. If he likes Clara as well as he now thinks he does when he has been further abroad in the world, & a long engagement is contemplated by them, all may be well, but I had hoped his mind would have been more absorbed by the ambitions which he seemed to have in his profession for some time to come. Papa thinks exactly as I do in the matter. I have been to Mrs Henman & told her that we cannot give any countenance to the correspondence which is, we hear, going on under the circumstances in which they are both placed.

*It is now far in May:* several weeks have elapsed since I have written in my journal. I have been very busy from the time of returning home from Norwood where I stayed until Thursday.<sup>12</sup> Papa only spent Sunday at Grandpapa's, returning to Bedford on Monday morning, although it was Bank Holiday, to make trial of some machines which the rain prevented his being able to do on Saturday before he left. I was very much disappointed that he could not be with me in the Crystal Palace where we had intended spending Easter Monday together.

I accompanied him to the station after breakfast & did my best as he begged me to enjoy myself without him. G-papa & G-mama promised to come to me at 2 o'clock, but by some mistake we did not meet. After waiting for them a long time I determined to get a seat where I could see the vast concourse of people that thronged the centre of the Palace & at the same time hear the Concert which was about to be held. Getting into as advantageous position as possible in the Orchestra in front of the great Organ, I found ample occupation for eyes & ears.

Amongst the attractions for the day was the Phonograph which was being exhibited & explained for (I believe) the first time. I heard the sounds & songs that were said or sung into it re-produced by the instrument in a muffled sort of tone, but quite sufficient to show that when perfected it may be as wonderful & useful as

<sup>11</sup> The Haywards were cousins of CEB.

<sup>12</sup> with her father (referred to as Grandpapa) and step-mother (Grandmama). The house was named Penrith Lodge, in Belvedere Road, conveniently close to the re-sited Crystal Palace.

the Telephone, which I hear is really used as a medium of communication between persons at immense distances.

During the next week we had a succession of visitors. Will was the last of them; he went to Ventnor for his Easter holiday & to continue the geological researches which he began when with us in the Island earlier. Mr Derham was still there. Staying in London to eat his dinners at the Middle Temple, he afterwards came home to take Hattie with him to Clifton; he prefers the company of one of his sisters in his lodgings &, thinking it good for him to have one of them with him, we have been willing that they should go. Lottie went first after Xmas, but our intention of letting her study at the High School, opened there at that time,<sup>13</sup> was set aside by her taking cold directly she went; she continued to go two or three days but was too unwell to take the walks from Will's rooms to the school after that time & did not regain her usual health until her visit to Ventnor.

Hattie had begun the same term with Mrs Brown & for the same reason had to leave school.<sup>14</sup> After our return to Bedford Lottie began again with Mrs Brown & as Hattie seemed the stronger of the two, I was more willing for her to go from home with Will & for him to regulate her studies, although I scarcely think she will feel sufficient interest in them alone or be ready to pass the junior Cambridge exam at Xmas as she had hoped to do with Mrs B. However, it will do her good to be thrown more on her own resources & be away from us; as the youngest (on earth) we are apt to do too much for her.

I never mention 'the youngest' but the words recall my precious one that passed away more than six years ago; she has a place in my heart that can never be filled by any other, I think of her still as my babe.

### *May*<sup>15</sup>

Ted's final exam for his MRCS is over; it has been the subject of alternate hopes & fears for some weeks for it was not until the time for it drew very near that he really realized that he must work much harder than he had been doing to get through. This however he has done, & the next morning came home triumphantly flourishing the tin case containing his diploma. I had no fears for him in anything in which skilful use of his fingers would lead to his success; surgery & practical anatomy have been his delight since he began at St Bart's;<sup>16</sup> he inherits to some extent his Papa's mechanical powers which I have often thought may make him great as a Surgeon if he will specially devote himself to his favorite branch of the Medical profession as he has expressed his intention of doing. Hard reading is not what he likes & has not occupied his time as systematically as it ought to have done, so that he had too

<sup>13</sup> Clifton High School, one of several being established at this time by the Girls' Public Day School Company (now the Girls' Schools Association), was opened on 1 January 1878.

<sup>14</sup> Ada Haydon Brown was the wife of Dr John Brown, pastor of the Congregational Chapel in Bedford, better known as the Bunyan Meeting, in Mill Street. She had been involved in the establishment of the Cambridge Higher Local Examinations in the 1870s. She started her own school in the Manse, situated opposite the Harpur Trust Almshouses in Dame Alice Street. She was the grandmother of the influential economist John Maynard Keynes.

<sup>15</sup> No specific date is given to this entry, but the previous entry (deleted here) is for 19 May, and the subsequent one (also deleted) is dated 30 June.

<sup>16</sup> St Bartholomew's Hospital in Smithfield London is the oldest in the country. Ted would have studied at the Hospital's Medical College, founded in 1843, for his MRCS (Member of the Royal College of Surgeons) qualification.

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