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The Lady at Box 99

THE STORY

OF MIRIAM VAN WATERS

BY BURTON J. ROWLES



GREENWICH/CONNECTICUT

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To E. C. (Gran) Granbery

One of the Memorably Good

Acknowledgments

Anyone who realizes that she can color her biography by what she reveals or conceals about her life during the interviews preceding the writing, places herself severely on trial. I am grateful to Miriam Van Waters for her honesty and candor. She never dodged, never camouflaged. She didn't ask to read the manuscript, but asked only that the book cause no suffering to her family and friends. Offered the manuscript for checking, she made twelve minor corrections: a first name, a date, a few extensions of fact. She did not tamper with a single word of text unflattering to her. She was the wholly objective person the biography says she is. And she was charming.

There were many more capable and sympathetic hands involved in this work than the eye can spy in the text. Mrs. Cynthia Thomas, still serving Dr. Van Waters as secretary-librarian-advocate, knew

just where to find the right document among hundreds of such packed away in fat cartons; she borrowed many hours from her busy family life to expedite the research—always cheerfully.

Miss Mary Howard, archivist of the Women's Archives at Radcliffe College, cooperated enthusiastically, having already made the research an author's dream by cataloguing and indexing an extensive collection of Van Waters papers in apple-pie order. Mrs. Peter Solomon, director of the Archives, was a scholarly counselor and hospitable executive, providing for the writer the privacy of an unused chemistry laboratory where he worked in peace among old test tubes, beakers, and empty gas cylinders.

Mrs. Serena Brown, wife of The Hill School chaplain, worked with rare good humor through holidays and late hours she really couldn't spare to prepare the manuscript.

The Hill's headmaster, Edward T. Hall, pretended on more than one day that he saw the author at his school desk when the author was playing hooky to work on the last chapters of this book. Mr. Hall knows a great deal about writers' deadlines. Now that the truth is out, the Trustees of the School also deserve a strong vote of thanks for their tolerance.

Miss Ellen McKey, who retired to a dream cottage in Chatham, Massachusetts, after a long career at Wellesley College, proved a champion of Miriam Van Waters and a true friend of the author by offering her living room and a view of Pleasant Bay as a hideout when the author's house became crowded with teenagers and 45 r.p.m. records. Miss McKey was away all summer of 1960, but left her refrigerator on and a kitchen cabinet jammed with canned food. The broom was hidden.

Mrs. Janet Raymond, also of Chatham, struggled nobly with early chunks of the manuscript in the summer of 1960, dealing al-

ways with the problem of strawberry jam and her lively young children.

Finally, here is a salute to a patient wife, Margaret, who put up with all kinds of shenanigans, crazy hours, spells of sullen or comatose behavior, spurts of frenetic productivity, three-o'clock lunches, and all the other tribulations of living in the same house with a book for two years. It is a compliment to her character that she still is speaking to her husband.

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The scores of people who appear in the pages of this biography are all real; most of them are still alive. However, the names of all “students” and inmates in the various institutions served by Dr. Van Waters have been changed to safeguard their owners’ rehabilitation and spare them unwarranted embarrassment.

The Lady at Box 99

Prologue

A biting northeast wind broke against the gilded dome of the State House of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and twisted southward across Beacon Street and the Common, setting whorls of snow dancing around the statue of Gen. Joseph Hooker on the approach to the capitol's east wing. This Union General who led some of Massachusetts's bravest against the Confederacy sat his transfixed horse and stared to the south. Erect in the saddle, steely, and tense, he seemed to expect a Rebel charge from that quarter, although he was many days' march from the Potomac, and the time was January, 1949.

The general's horse, nostrils flared, seemed more certain of danger, but it could not have been in the scent of powder smoke from muskets at Chancellorsville, ghosting across nearly a century, because the wind was not right for that, and there were no witches burning in Salem from whence the wind blew.

A more likely source of corruption lay only a few yards to windward of Hooker's warhorse: Gardner Auditorium, in the basement of the State House.

Down there, Dr. Miriam Van Waters, deposed Superintendent of the State Reformatory for Women in Framingham, Massachusetts, was defending herself, in public hearings, against a series of charges. Some of them, if true, branded her an enemy of the people rather than the redeemer of troubled lives so many considered her to be. If true, the charges would justify the Commonwealth's action in having dismissed her suddenly from her job and confirm the Commonwealth's inference that she had been undermining the correction of hundreds of girls and women while being paid and widely praised for rehabilitating them.

The charges, if true, would establish that a nobly-intentioned woman, after thirty-six years of leadership in enlightened penology, had veered unaccountably off the road, leaving a set of skidmarks transmutable to two hundred and eighty-five exhibits for her prosecutors' case. Certainly the charges, if accurate, would indicate that she was no longer the professionally competent administrator of whom the *Boston Herald* had written, at the time of her appointment in December, 1931:

"Dr. Van Waters, one of the foremost authorities on social work and juvenile and female delinquency in the United States, has been persuaded to accept the position of Superintendent of the State Reformatory for Women at Framingham, to succeed the late Jessie D. Hodder.

"The appointment of Dr. Van Waters will bring to the service of the State a woman whose distinguished career has carried her into many fields and activities, and who is considered probably the country's most eminent authority on crime problems affecting women. Her specialty has been in work to reclaim them for society.

"Massachusetts experts in correctional work expect that general commendation will follow news of the appointment."

By the same token, the charges, if true, must correct another Boston newspaper that had hailed her, in December, 1931, as "a Christmas bargain," because she had accepted the Framingham appointment at less than her former salary as Referee of the Juvenile Court in Los Angeles. The newspaper had boasted that "the Reformatory is getting as its head a woman of the stature of a college president."

In fairness to Professor Felix Frankfurter, of the Harvard Law School (soon to become a Supreme Court Justice), who wrote Dr. Van Waters at the time of her appointment that "only a far-sighted Commissioner of Correction, with courage to act upon his insight, would have appointed you Superintendent of the Reformatory at Framingham," it could be said that he was right about her at that time, but could not foresee her slide from competence. Earlier, when he had urged Dr. Van Waters to accept full responsibility for the juvenile delinquency section of the Harvard Law School Crime Survey, and had referred to her as "my mind and conscience" on matters relating to youth in trouble, his judgment could have been momentarily accurate, but vulnerable to changes in that mind and lapses of that conscience he so confidently adopted.

The situation was made of the stuff of a bad dream worsened by the painfully slow cadence of its progress before the eyes of eight hundred witnesses in Gardner Auditorium and by headlines the length and width of Massachusetts. Reports of the hearing leaked through the Commonwealth's boundaries as far south as the *New York Times* and the national news weeklies. Boston radio stations aired full summaries of each day's proceedings. It was virtually impossible to be neutral about Dr. Van Waters, and many families were divided on the question of her innocence.

How could it be that this white-haired, then sixty-one-year-old woman, author of a classic book on juvenile delinquency, esteemed former juvenile court judge, founder and pioneering director of the famous El Retiro home for girls in Los Angeles, author of dozens of articles on social work, capital punishment, and problems of the youthful offender, consultant to the Wickersham Commission under President Herbert Hoover, author of the Encyclopedia Britannica's section on juvenile delinquency, and public speaker in great demand wherever communities sought to mend the causes of juvenile delinquency—how could it be that she found herself in quasi-judicial hearings, fighting for her job, career, and reputation?

Dr. Van Waters stood accused of twenty-seven specific abuses of her authority lumped in a general charge of misconduct in office. Each charge was bolstered by incriminating evidence ferreted by the office of the Commissioner of Correction for the Commonwealth. The twenty-seven charges fell into six categories: (1) granting undue privileges to inmates; (2) condoning homosexuality; (3) violating rules and regulations; (4) violating the "indenture statute"; (5) employing ex-convicts for staff duty; (6) miscellaneous.

Under the first category, it was charged that Dr. Van Waters had authorized "special privileges" constituting favoritism for some inmates, such as allowing them to be taken away from the Reformatory to meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, to church, to a Chinese restaurant, an ice cream store, and the movies in Framingham, and to Boston for psychiatric treatment. The Commission's office claimed this constituted unequal treatment and lowered inmate morale. By permitting "sentenced prisoners to be outside the institution as described above," the Superintendent, it was charged, had broken the law, ignored the orders of the

courts and “made a mockery of the sentence of the courts of the Commonwealth.” The Deputy Commissioner of Correction claimed that “these special privileges have also been a cause for confusion in the mind of the person privileged as to the purpose of her imprisonment, as has been stated in the case of Alice Wherry when she stated ‘I have gone out nights half a dozen times, shopping and to the show or something. I have felt very funny when sitting in the show because I always felt that I was supposed to be in jail.’”

Her permitting reformatory women occasionally to enjoy chow mein, chocolate frappes, and selected films did not seem serious enough to indict Dr. Van Waters for anything worse than soft-headedness and warm-heartedness, although “special privileges” and “favoritism” implied petty exercise of authority, if not tyranny. Taken with the other charges, however, these added ballast to the Commissioner’s belief that the Superintendent of Framingham Reformatory was not only a derelict administrator but she made her own laws to accommodate her questionable practice of penology. The Commissioner was convinced that she was unfit to continue in the sensitive role of Superintendent of the Framingham institution, the Commonwealth’s showcase in the field of modern penology.

Inseparable from charges involving special privileges for inmates of the Reformatory were those alleging that Dr. Van Waters took a whimsical attitude toward rules and regulations governing officers and employees of the institution. She allegedly failed to supply her staff with copies of these rules and regulations. She entrusted keys to prisoners and permitted them to retain money and valuables. She allowed former inmates and their children to come to the institution for medical care. Released alcoholics, struggling toward sobriety, readily got her permission to return

for a visit, even to stay overnight, while others were allowed to return for dances, dramatics, and "reunions." She failed to administer the prescribed oath of office to all her officers, and her librarian refused to answer the investigating deputy's questions. She did not keep strict records.

The fourth category of charges, dealing with the indenture of prisoners, was rooted in an old statute authorizing the Commissioner of Correction, with the consent of a reformatory inmate, to "contract to have her employed in domestic service for such term not exceeding her term of imprisonment, and upon such conditions as he considers proper with reference to her welfare and reformation."

The indenture system, part of the 1886 charter of the Reformatory, was a startling innovation in U.S. penology. It is a conditional release of a prisoner, enabling her to refit herself for freedom under the sympathetic guidance of her employer. The earliest record of indenture concerns the Renaissance Italian artist, Benvenuto Cellini, who swung far wide of the law and landed in prison. One of his sponsors, a silversmith, persuaded the court to release Cellini in his custody with the understanding that the artist would live with him, work with him, and offend no more.

In Massachusetts, the law provided for a short-term or long-term indenture contract, with the wages of the released person's labors accruing to her account against the day of her terminal release. She could be recalled at any time for medical care, or because her employer no longer needed or wanted her, or because conditions of her employment proved unsatisfactory. Her good behavior was essential to the success of the system.

Social conventions dominating the female's role in society in 1886 accounted for the law's specifying "domestic service." The bread pan, dish towel, dust cloth, and diaper were common de-

nominators of women's rightful and righteous place. But in the lethal epidemic of influenza that swept the nation in 1918, the then Superintendent, Mrs. Jessie D. Hodder, went to her Commissioner and obtained approval for indenturing fourteen reformatory women to the Framingham hospital, setting a precedent for departure from the statutory limitation of indenture to domestic service.

Dr. Van Waters expanded the indenture system to include "day work," a short-term form of indenture requiring women assigned to it to be returned to the Reformatory at the end of each workday. Gradually, allowance was made for women who needed, deserved, and wanted work, but who could not cope emotionally with a house filled with another woman's children and a kitchen sink filled with dirty dishes. Some were permitted to work in factories, restaurants, laundries and other places, with the knowledge and consent of the incumbent Commissioner of Correction. During World War II years of manpower shortages, Framingham Reformatory's available hands saved many crops when harvest time arrived on the farms nearby. They also shoveled the coal at the Reformatory's power plant.

Prior to the appointment of Commissioner of Correction Elliott E. McDowell, who was now trying to make his abrupt firing of Dr. Van Waters stick in Gardner Auditorium, it was the custom of his predecessors to approve a blanket contract covering several women at the Reformatory for day work and to let Dr. Van Waters add new names at her discretion, because there was a steady turnover in jobs as women were discharged from the institution. More to the point, former Commissioners believed Dr. Van Waters thoroughly qualified to manage the details of the program. Considering that the Commonwealth bestowed an average of eighty-five cents to each girl released from the Reformatory, and that

drunkenness and various sex offenses accounted for the largest proportion of the reformatory population, it was no strain on the imagination of a Commissioner to anticipate the probable course of a girl with freedom and eighty-five cents. With the accumulated wages of her day work, however, she was a far better risk to the Commonwealth. Indenture made her an economic asset; jail held her as an economic liability. Jessie Hodder had reasoned that way, and circumstances hadn't altered cases since.

Deputy Commissioner Frank A. Dwyer, Jr.'s investigation of the reformatory indenture system disclosed, he said, that a number of inmates had been indentured not for domestic service in private homes but to the Superintendent and other officers of the institution, and that these girls, for pay, cared for babies in the reformatory nursery, worked as stenographers, and studied in a secretarial school in Framingham. One of them, Dwyer charged, had been indentured to the owner of a restaurant in nearby Wellesley, whose manager was an ex-convict. It was not brought out in the charges that the restaurant manager had convincingly lived down his past, nor that the public revelation of his record had driven him out of his job and his town. It was just wretched luck that he had been struck from his blind side by a legal locomotive, but he happened to have been standing on the track of the investigation.

"I find," wrote Deputy Dwyer, "that the employment of those released on 'indenture' . . . has had a bad effect on the morale of some officer personnel, and . . . (on) inmate morale, in view of the fact that some of those indentured receive money for their work, are allowed to live in the staff home, and that certain inmates were known as having been involved in the 'doll racket,' (inmate's slang phrase for alleged intramural homosexual practices, including the recruiting of "innocent young inmates" for perversion) and they resented the fact that they, the inmates, are supervised by persons serving sentences for serious crimes."

Dwyer also presented a detailed report of the case of one girl on domestic indenture who had told him she had mixed and served highballs at a dinner party given by her employer. It was the Deputy's duty to report, he said, that girls released for domestic day work had smuggled liquor into the Reformatory.

Charges in the fifth category, relating to the employment of persons with police or court records, struck indignation in the sunless regions of the puritanical mind where life-repair and penance are not in any way deserving of forgiveness, and sin is forever.

"I find," Dwyer reported, "that there are presently employed at the Reformatory the following persons who have served sentences of imprisonment," and he listed sixteen persons then working, or who had previously worked, as staff members of the institution, beginning with Margaret O'Keefe, who for ten years had been assistant superintendent under Dr. Van Waters. (Two former drug addicts, a one-time forger and an ex-prostitute were listed by a Boston newspaper as being among the sixteen officers.)

"The importance of 'proper personnel' in penal institutions exceeds all other factors," Dwyer wrote in the report of his investigation of the Reformatory. "Certain of its members are not of the calibre and type of officer that the administration of a penal institution requires."

An assortment of charges under the sixth category, "miscellaneous," included inadequate policing of the grounds, lax safeguarding of drugs, and uncleanness in the kitchen. Thrown in were a challenge of the Superintendent's right to place children of reformatory women in foster homes, and an impeachment of her judgment of what constituted proper homes for them.

In Dwyer's book, Miriam Van Waters was also guilty of crossing jobs, creating jobs, and conferring titles with irritating indifference to Commonwealth job classifications as established by the Division of Personnel and Standardization.

Although these charges alone made boxcar headlines in Boston, the yeast that made the Van Waters case ferment, or the bacteria that made it a suppurating social wound, were the Commissioner's charges concerning homosexuality in the Reformatory.

Deputy Dwyer reported that homosexual practices had occurred "within the past few years," and that Dr. Van Waters' "lack of knowledge" of the fact was "incomprehensible."

Dwyer claimed that innocent young inmates had been drawn into the toils of perverts because of "a lack of proper segregation," and that "little or nothing (was) being done to control or keep such practices at a minimum." He implied that two officers of the institution were sex deviates; of one of them he wrote that "it has been alleged by inmates" that she had been "involved in homosexual acts."

On his bill of particulars, Dwyer hung an indictment on Dr. Van Waters for "not having told the whole truth when asked questions pertaining to homosexual tendencies of inmates."

A sensational prelude to the homosexual theme in the case had been played in brass in Hearst's daily tabloid, the Boston *American*, in 1948, after an inmate had committed suicide in her room at the Reformatory. The *American* insisted that she had been driven to her death by the agony of unrequited love for a dominating homosexual girl who ruled the institution's dairy barn.

Deputy Dwyer stated flatly in his report that a homosexual relationship had existed between the deceased and the survivor of the alleged affair.

There was more detail, much more, but now the time for confrontation of accused and accuser had come. Inasmuch as the State House sheltered a plaque memorializing horses, dogs, and other animals whose faithful service, suffering and death were part of the price paid for the liberties of mankind in World War I, it was to be

expected that it harbored justice for human beings struggling for healing truth, honor, and decency.

On a table at which Deputy Dwyer sat, in front of a dais and the "bench" where Commissioner McDowell presided, lay Dwyer's three hundred and sixty-four-page confidential report of his Framingham investigation. Samples of its details had appeared in the Hearst *American*, plainly indicating the sordidness of some of the report, if not explaining how its contents happened to reach a newspaper that was hostile to Dr. Van Waters. Neither she nor her attorney, Boston's Claude Cross, nor anyone else connected with her defense, had been permitted to examine the report.

It was a document as sinister in its mystery as though it had been a solid, footed object wrapped in butcher's paper and brought to court by a prosecutor seeking damages for his client's accidental loss of a leg.

If the report was accurate, it was, indeed, the source of foulness in the wind. If false, then the wind was tainted with the fear and guilt of men torturing an innocent woman. Was there, perhaps, a witch-burning in progress in Gardner Auditorium, corrupting the wind that blew accusingly from the direction of Salem?

If so, then how had Miriam Van Waters come to the stake this grievous day?

CHAPTER ONE

Lesson One at Box 99

In the dreary dusk of Thursday, March 15, 1932, Miriam Van Waters drove past a guardhouse, up a curving road and through a narrow passageway that separates the red brick Superintendent's home from the massive, brick, main buildings of the Massachusetts State Reformatory for Women. Beside her in the car were her "daughter," Sarah Ann, ten, and Elizabeth Bode, a young social worker, secretary, companion to Sarah and devoted protégé who had followed Miriam east from California.

Miriam parked her car just beyond the passageway and led her daughter and her friend into the big home that had, technically, been hers since her appointment as Superintendent the previous December 17, and was now hers to live in so long as she remained a servant of the Commonwealth in her present capacity.

Across the threshold, Miriam's first impression was a sick-sweet odor of dead plants and stagnant water. Her predecessor, Jessie Hodder, had left this house eighteen weeks ago, and in the living room a mass of funeral flowers, now shrunken blossoms and withered stalks in vases, persisted in their message of death and departure.

Every ounce of what the Boston *Herald* had called her "115 pounds of nervous energy" felt weary on Miriam's small-boned, militarily erect, five-foot-two frame. She was hungry. The chill of the bleak March evening hung in the big sitting room.

A girl in a cotton dress and dirty sneakers appeared in the hall and confronted her new boss.

"Hiya," she said. "My name is Kate. What do you want me to do first?"

Miriam's expressive face lit up, kindled by her alert, intelligent brown eyes. She extended her hand to Kate and spoke in her soft, low-key voice:

"Hello Kate. I'm Doctor Van Waters."

Kate was not the hand-shaking sort, but she acknowledged this with a nod.

"Could you get us a light supper, please? A can of beans would be fine."

Kate sniffed, appraising this little bit of a woman who would wear the big shoes from now on.

"Okay," she said, and went back to the kitchen.

Miriam, Sarah and "Bode"—her name was pronounced Bó-dee, but her nickname rhymed with "road"—sank into chairs. Miriam inspected the faded wallpaper and speculated on what the room needed, besides fresh air and a vacuum cleaner, to give it new life.

In a few minutes, coal smoke drifted from the kitchen, where

Miriam found Kate struggling with a broken-down stove, scooping hot coals off the floor with a cookie tin and dropping them back where they belonged.

"We'll get a new stove right away," Miriam promised cheerfully.

Kate looked over her shoulder and sniffed.

"Shows you how much you know about the budget at Framingham," she said. "This is March and you can't spend a nickel till June."

Miriam ate her beans under a pall of smoke and thought of the words her father had spoken so often, the ones she had first heard as a child in St. David's, his church in Portland, Oregon:

"Here endeth the First Lesson."

Miriam rose very early the next morning. By the time the reformatory women had eaten their seven-thirty breakfast of prune sauce, corn flakes, bread and tea, she had decided that the guard-house would come down, brick by brick, to make a path in the flower garden she had explored at dawn. The lumber from the high board fence protecting the front of the grounds from public gaze would, she knew, make a pavilion where inmates' children could play in summer, especially on rainy days.

From her observations during preliminary visits after her appointment in December, 1931, she had already made a mental note about the rusted steel bars in several windows in the front of the Reformatory, and those that remained on a few security cells to remind of a once vengeful State. Jessie Hodder had long since ripped out tiers of steel-barred cells to make a gymnasium for the inmates. The remnants of barred-cell days were allocated, in Miriam's mind, to the garden, where she imagined them as sturdy stakes for flowers, and trellises for vines.

Miriam's previous visits to the Reformatory had convinced her that it was gloomy and dismal, that its chief trouble was its age, and that it had been built for strength and permanence instead of light and cheer.

The old structure had been intended originally as a factory, then enlarged in the same general architectural pattern as that of Wellesley College before it was designated a State Reformatory Prison for Women by Commonwealth legislators reacting belatedly to reports from Dorothea Dix on the status and treatment of women in prisons. Miss Dix, a social reformer active at the time of the Civil War, had gone to the Cambridge jail to teach Sunday School, but had been so appalled by what she saw in the lockup that she shifted her Bible to her left hand and took up the torch in her right. Drunkards, the insane, prostitutes, robbers, and manslaughterers were indiscriminately mixed with lost children, women held as material witnesses, and the children of these witnesses. The deranged, when they became violent, were isolated in the jail's cold cellar.

Outraged, Miss Dix investigated three hundred and twenty institutions and almshouses along the Atlantic seaboard as far south as New Jersey, then summarized her dreadful discoveries in a memorandum to the Massachusetts Legislature. Being a woman, she couldn't appear personally; her document was presented by a Cambridge representative.

Denials nearly drowned her report, each representative insisting that it was inconceivable in his district that insane persons were chained naked, starved and beaten, or that children were kept with harlots and sots. Beneath the denials, however, were layers of culpability, and a year later a commission was appointed to investigate. Three years later, in a sober report, the commission agreed that Miss Dix had indeed got her facts straight. For five

more years, reform petitions were circulated in every county in Massachusetts. These and public hearings persuaded the Legislature to vote a separate institution for the woman offender. It was established, about 1886, on the border between Sherborn and Framingham and was, for many years, called "Sherborn."

The prison was anchored on a gently rising knoll in one corner of over four hundred acres whose meadowland was married to thickly wooded uplands, a brook and, beyond, a glacial ridge of New England granite. Prosperous farms surrounded the place on all sides, widening the already sufficient band of earth that protected the nearest communities from whatever contamination their wariest citizens imagined might seep from the Reformatory.

On November 7, 1877, the institution opened its gate to a Worcester girl sentenced for vagrancy. She was followed quickly by thirty-eight prisoners transferred from the House of Correction in South Boston. Eudora Atkinson, the first Superintendent, reporting on the first eleven months of operations, said of these thirty-eight transfers:

"After they were clad in our prison dress of bright blue plaid, they were taken to the reception room. They were told this prison had been built through the influence of earnest, kindhearted men and women who were sorry for those who had wandered from the right way, and were anxious by every possible means to restore them to a better and happier life; that this place was not designed for imprisonment alone, but for reformation; . . . that God alone can give strength. . . .

"They were told that all privileges consistent with obedience and good order would be allowed them, that the infliction of punishment would be a painful duty. This has been the manner of reception of women all through the year."

After three years, Superintendent Atkinson gave way to Eliz-

abeth Mosher, who served until 1883, when Clara Barton, the Red Cross yet unborn in her mind, took over. Miss Barton served one year and departed, leaving written evidence that the experience had been a kick in the heart, a strain on her sense of mercy, and a political back-knifing.

"She has gone timidly through her own halls," she wrote of herself in the third person, "dreading the scrutiny of the criticizing clique she knew and felt was there to meet her, and all because they were made bold by the countenances of those above her in power, and they knew it. She has waded waist deep in snow and mud, through spite, jealousy and detraction."

How Miss Barton felt about Sherborn's role in penology she made icily clear:

"It is classed as a State's prison . . . squared by the same rule of discipline as ordinary State prisons, and for the punishment of State crimes.

"And yet, these poor, hopeless, misguided, rum-wrecked women and night-walking girls are sentenced to the same servitude, subjected to the same code of discipline, and go out with the same brand of shame upon the brow—nay, far deeper, than the clear-headed, cool, intelligent, calculating men of Concord, where every inmate is convicted of crime."

In Miss Barton's final month in office, she dealt no punishment at all among her three hundred charges. Her parting comment on this score laid her empathy bare:

"Surely, we must be too near alike, if not akin, or they would never have clung to me with that pitiful love."

Anti-feminist jibes annoyed Clara Barton. She designated part of her only annual report as being "in the interest of that portion of the community which still questions the management of a prison by women, doubting if it be possible for them to maintain

government and enforce discipline, and amuses itself by styling the institution 'gilt-edged' and its inmates 'boarders.'"

Echoes of similar derision were to be amplified in Gardner Auditorium sixty-six years later in a charge that Miriam Van Waters called the inmates "students" instead of "prisoners," in contradiction of the fact that "the legal status of a person sentenced by the courts of the Commonwealth is that of prisoner."

But the hoots and sarcasm in Clara Barton's day failed to dent the Reformatory's charter, the first of whose four radical principles specified that government of the institution should be in the hands of women especially trained and of suitable character for the helm. The second provided for a resident physician. It was a novel idea that the physical condition of an offender had anything to do with her offense. When examination by a resident physician was made mandatory, the addition of a trained nurse to the staff quickly followed.

The third principle specified the services of a female resident chaplain. She was to serve also as librarian, head of the reformatory school, counselor, and instructor in the Bible. The dim beginnings of social case work were inherent in her interviewing, guiding, and counseling, because she kept records of inmates as persons, not statistics.

Fourth of the pioneering principles was the right of indenture, or conditional release.

Ellen Cheeney Johnson succeeded Clara Barton, remaining for fifteen years, after which Frances A. Morton came on for eleven years. Jessie Hodder took over in 1911 and guided the Reformatory with distinction until November, 1931.

And now Miriam Van Waters, walking through the drab, gray corridors so familiar to her six predecessors, smiled and spoke to

the girls and women passing her in their uniforms of blue and white. Going from wing to wing, from workroom to workroom, inspecting and being inspected, Miriam sought that intangible quality of atmosphere, in any institution, that is too subtle for detailed, objective description and unavailable for scientific measurement. It was emotional tone, or morale, she felt for, and although her manner seemed casual and uncritical to staff and inmates alike, she studied posture, facial tensions and gestures for flickers of rebelliousness, signs of restlessness, or contentment.

As long as she remained, she would be keenly alert to the faintest signals from bodies, souls, and minds. At assemblies, she would appraise the quality of group singing—at games and dramatic performances, the quality of cheering, applause, hissing or booing—as a doctor apprehends the meaning of what he hears through a stethoscope.

Arriving at her office, she opened the door and left it open. From her desk, she glanced at the curtainless, barred windows of her office and saw them barless and colorfully curtained. She inspected the faded pictures of former Governors of Massachusetts staring at her from the walls, and thought of bright watercolors. Slowly, slowly, she thought, she would let the outside world into this institution.

Late in November, when she had written her father at the rectory of St. Paul's Church in Wellsboro, Pa., to tell him she was about to be offered this job, she had assured him that she did not want a desk job or an empty title.

"I would rather run a 'good' prison than be president of the best women's college on earth. I would teach students from all over the U.S. and the world and have the training school I am interested in."

Her friends and colleagues, including Professor Felix Frank-

furter, Dr. George W. Kirchwey and Dr. Warren Stearns, the psychiatrically-trained Commissioner of Correction who had offered her the job and urged her to accept it, had assured her that she was embarking on a type of opportunity combining administration and teaching. She knew that national foundations were interested in Framingham. She had been assured of connections with Harvard Law School and Tufts Medical School. She firmly believed she was occupying the most important post in penology in America.

Salaries, she reflected, have nothing to do with the worth, dignity, and contribution of a person's position. She thought of her father as doing more liberal thinking than anyone in his field, and doing it in an Episcopal rectory in a small Pennsylvania town, on a moderate salary.

"What did Darwin get?" she asked herself.

Miriam was getting \$4100 a year, plus a house and maintenance equivalent to another \$5000 a year, a car, and control of her time.

In the bottom drawer of her desk, she found a dusty composition book filled with routine notes and directives written by Jessie Hodder to her staff. Miriam thumbed the pages slowly, glancing at these footnotes on the evolution of the Reformatory. Several entries caught her interest:

"Nov. 18, 1919: Handcuffs are kept in upper right-hand drawer of desk in front office. Women who are having meals in their rooms are not to receive mail during period of punishment; (they must) never speak to another prisoner or communicate in any way. This rule *must* be obeyed.

"March 6, 1921: Each woman receives clean undergarments and clean hose once a week and a clean dress every second week. In the Shirt Room women are allowed to talk while dusting and getting machines ready. Five minutes is allowed for this, then all

talk ceases. Otherwise, privilege of talking period taken away. Women are not allowed to talk or sing during working hours.

"April 19, 1921: When extra workers are needed in the kitchen for berries, lettuce, or string beans, each woman is locked in the separate compartments of the kitchen to do the work assigned. When leaving a woman locked in the meat room or any other place, the officer will be careful to see that there is no opportunity for the inmate to have any communication with men from the outside.

"June 7, 1921: If possible, a girl who is trustworthy ought to hold the position of winder in the Knitting Room. Unless the officer watches constantly a girl can hide behind the winder and shirk her work. Do not put a girl on work just because she asks for a certain kind of work.

"July 6, 1921: Under no conditions is a woman to be deprived of washing herself every day, brushing her teeth and combing her hair. A *trusted* woman can be put in the clothes room and locked in to do her mending. All women are to eat breadcrusts with the exception of the toothless women."

Miriam closed the book and replaced it in the bottom drawer. She looked through her mail, searching for the familiar handwriting of her father or mother. Several of the letters addressed to her carried the full address of the Reformatory. Most of them were addressed to "Box 99, Framingham, Mass.," postal shorthand for the Commonwealth's only minimum, medium, and maximum security institution for the "adult female" offender.

Late Saturday afternoon, Miriam scrawled a short note to her parents:

"All's well the second day here. I have not been out because of the many tasks of settling. I have engaged a new medical interne—got a good deal of business done. The house is very comfortable.

We will all be happy here. Sarah is a joy, and the cat settles into his new home in enjoyment. He, too, is a comfort.

"Tomorrow the girls sing Dubois' *Seven Last Words* at choral service."

Miriam paused a moment over the letter, thinking of the *Seven Last Words*, which were not, she reflected gratefully, "no talking or singing during working hours."

Then she wrote: "In haste, love and kisses, your Mayo," and reached for a yellow note pad while thoughts for her talk in chapel tomorrow—her first appearance before the entire Reformatory—were fresh in her mind.

The thoughts came freely and quickly, dropping into place with the order and precision of matrices in a typesetting machine. She wrote in a hurried, almost illegible hand—a scrawl resulting from hasty note-taking through twenty-one years of academic study and nineteen years of professional service.

Emperor Jones, the fortieth or one hundred and fortieth cat in her life, depending upon whether all the kittens passing through had counted, leaped up to her desktop and dropped a dead mouse at her elbow. She studied "Empie" and the gift mouse serenely, then added a postscript to the letter to her parents:

"Emperor Jones has caught and killed a mouse. I didn't even know he liked mice."

CHAPTER TWO

My Baby Don't Bite So Much

At six-fifteen that first Sunday evening, Miriam took her place on the platform of the chapel on the third floor of the Reformatory, listened reverently to *The Seven Last Words* and studied the rows of uniformed inmates whose eyes were fixed on her. In the sea of upturned faces, Miriam searched for signals. Each face was powderless and unrouged, the lips plain. There were no unnatural curls on any heads. Rules forbade such vanities.

Here and there throughout the assembly were bleached islands of authority—the white uniforms of the FRO's (Female Reformatory Officers). They, too, were curious about this "Doctor" who had floated into the Superintendent's office on a tide of praise from the newspapers. Some of the huskier officers must have wondered what this petite boss would do if she were ever cornered by a rough, tough girl with vengeance in her eye. But one thing was obvious:

the new boss reflected supreme confidence. She walked and talked with the grace and poise of an experienced actress. What was *she* doing in jail work?

Stories about her were already pulsing along the grapevine whose tendrils reached into every undecorated, mirrorless room where an inmate conducted what was left of her private life, and into the Sewing Room (60 machines for plain stitching, buttonholing, hemstitching, stitch-writing, binders for the hospital, pajamas, sheets, spreads, shirts, face cloths, handkerchiefs, surgical suits, bibs, restraining shirts, towels and pillow cases); the Flag Room (16 machines for making flags of all sizes for use in Commonwealth schools, courthouses, State House and other public buildings); the Knitting Room (43 machines for ribbing, looping, winding, knitting. Socks made here went to other penal institutions and hospitals in the State); Poultry (18,000 laying hens producing eggs and fowl for hospitals, prisons and reform schools); the Farm (62 registered Holsteins supplying all the milk for the institution and some for Charlestown Jail, plus gardens producing 20 vegetables and two kinds of berries, plus greenhouse and lawns); Materials (point of origin for requisitions for reformatory supplies and point of reception for orders of goods for outside institutions); the Personnel Department (industrial supervisors; shop managers and instructors) and the Office (two clerk-stenographers).

One of the tales was about Miriam and her keys. The day of her appointment she inherited an enormous bunch of reformatory keys whose weight was oppressive and whose symbolism—it conjured an image of a bosomy, granitic, dictatorial, jail matron—was anathema to Miriam. She called in the chief engineer of the Reformatory and asked him to reduce the mass to the least possible size. The result was two keys: one for the iron fire protection doors and the other a super-master key that was to become known affec-

tionately as "Number 54." Along the grapevine, the story Miriam enjoyed was that the new Super couldn't be trusted with more than two keys because she unlocked everything.

Sarah and Bode sat in the front row in chapel. Miriam noticed that Sarah was apprehensively perched on the edge of her chair. She smiled at her as she came to the front of the platform to speak.

"I thank you from my heart for the welcome you have given me," she began, and went on to speak very briefly of the challenge and the inspiration she had received from her brief exposure to Framingham.

"Over the door of this place," she said, "there should be a parchment scroll with lovely letters that say: 'The institution is within.' Bricks and mortar do not make an institution, fortunately. The spirit makes it.

"When I first came here, I felt the place was pretty big and pretty grim, but soon the spirit began to speak its own language—its atmosphere.

"The things which impressed me are these: the unselfishness here; the order, cheerfulness, honor, and industry with its high standard of excellence.

"Or put it this way: when you place food in an ice box, you are careful. Milk and butter take up the smell of fish and onions. The atmosphere of a house—the spiritual air—is either wholesome and sweet or faintly tainted.

"You don't need words to express to little children, or animals, the fact that you are kind or cross, or sad, or angry, or happy. They know. Grownups know. The little children here know. We must all plan together to make and keep these children happy and sound. Children are sensitive. They are like the plants in the greenhouse. Soon you will have plants in your rooms for Easter."

Miriam studied the faces peering up at her. She saw the fifteen-year-olds and the seventy-year-olds. She knew their mental ages ranged from eight on. She chose her words carefully.

"You are wondering about me," she said. "Just as I am wondering about you. As we meet and smile, as our eyes encounter one another, we are saying: 'Who are you?' Not merely the names but 'who are you, inside?'"

"I shall tell you something of my life now. I first came to Massachusetts twenty-two years ago. . . ."

Simply and sparsely, she reviewed her professional career for them. At one point she referred briefly to her experience as Referee of the Juvenile Court in Los Angeles, picturing her "courtroom," as a little room with a table and chairs where she "talked things over" with boys and girls and their parents who came there.

"I learned that judges talk too much," she said.

Framingham's women burst into laughter.

Miriam's notes listed things she liked at Framingham: "music of good quality, sung with skill, zest and feeling; pleasant faces—I like erect posture, too. Head well up. Do try for better posture. Everyone busy. Everything clean. Delicious, well-baked bread; farm; library; industries—flax; school rooms; your self-government."

Her notes itemized "Things I want" as: "Everything to go on well; full cooperation; frank letters—to be put in Supt's box—suggestions—personal—and for general improvement and welfare—please feel free to write."

There was something about this "Doctor" on the platform that appealed deeply to the audience and for the moment, as one middle-aged inmate put it later, "it was the way that what she said sank right in, right away, as the honest-to-God truth. She was a

real lady, not just putting it on. She was a real, high-class lady who actually cared about us.”

“My joy in coming here,” Miriam concluded, “is to share life with you, and for a joint work and a joint adventure the essentials are courage, loyalty, truth, and kindness. St. Paul said that ‘though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.’

“Charity is love, understanding, and compassion. We can show it only in three ways: Kindness. Carefulness—care means ‘dear’ . . . it’s another word for love, an act of love—and courtesy.”

Miriam ended with a quotation from Hillaire Belloc:

Of courtesy it is much less
Than courage of heart or holiness,
Yet in my walks it seems to me
The grace of God is in courtesy.

Framingham’s women, touched by the Doctor’s manner as much as by her words, applauded long and loud, led by Sarah Van Waters in the front row, who commented to Bode:

“It was neatzie.” At the Shady Hill School in nearby Cambridge, where Sarah was a student, “neatzie” was the current synonym for “excellent.”

Going down the stairs from the chapel and through the gloomy corridors, Sarah slipped her hand in Miriam’s and told her “that was fine,” and Miriam’s heart melted. She had not legally adopted Sarah in the three years since she had assumed guardianship of her in Los Angeles; but now that Miriam was a resident of Framingham, she had received Felix Frankfurter’s help in

recommending a good lawyer to deal with the red tape of adoption.

The Massachusetts State Department required two references as to the quality of Miriam's maternalism. Frankfurter's gracious wife, Marion, "ghosted" his letter for Miriam, and Ada Comstock, President of Radcliffe College, wrote the second. The State Department had rarely seen such ringing endorsements of a woman's credentials for foster motherhood.

Miriam hadn't told Sarah that she would have to appear in court, and it struck Miriam that the child might be disturbed to learn that Miriam was not then her legal "mother," and would have to be made so.

"Our child welfare laws are simply terrible," Miriam wrote her father. Later, she wrote that "Sarah took the explanation of her situation well, like the wise child she is. I have to go to court in Boston tomorrow, and hope Judge Arthur Hill doesn't make any stupid remarks."

Her final word on the episode was triumphant. "Her adoption went through without a hitch. She is now 'entitled' to her name, poor child. Felix wrote me a lovely letter. Sarah is going to be a powerful leader, I think, and possibly in this field.

"Of course, my methods may be questioned, but there is not a topic of adult life Sarah doesn't discuss with me with the frankness of science, and she reads all sorts of grown-up books. In school she is prominent but is not priggish."

That evening in her study, Miriam thought of the hundred and one things she must do at Framingham. Her thoughts were those of "a high-class lady" who actually cared. She was concerned for the mothers and children in the institution, dissatisfied with the nursery. One of her first acts as Superintendent had been to

order extra chairs for the nursery so that mothers who had been sitting on the floor to feed their infants could accomplish this in minimum comfort.

She knew that Framingham's nursery had originated in the public sense of humanity, and that modern psychiatry had discovered that the child deprived of its mother is a potential psychopath. At all costs, she wanted the Reformatory's mothers and children to be together, but she knew that mere physical association did not guarantee good results, that the sense of shame and frustration and the obloquy the community places on the unmarried mother all too often distorted the primitive biological bond between mother and infant. Miriam wanted to create a child-centered feeling in Framingham, and to establish a program of parent education.

The idea of a Mothers' Club came logically to her as the foundation on which to build. She wanted to create a core of maternal love strong enough to dissolve resentment and guilt. By insight and experience, she knew that a happy nursery could arouse true responsibility in Framingham's mothers, and contribute to the complete rehabilitation of many of them.

Later that night, when the mothers went to their rooms where the inconvenient, unwelcome or unwanted reminders of their recent past slept innocently in cribs, Miriam's Mothers' Club was well rounded in her thoughts as a synthesis of pediatrics, psychology, the value and continuity of life, and the love of God.

Within days, Miriam would have on her desk a note from one of those mothers:

"I wish to thank you for all that is being done for my baby. Since the nursery school has started I see so much improvement in my baby. She used to be nervous, but now that is nearly all gone. I went down to the laundry yesterday and ironed her doll's dress

and bonnet so she may have a nice, clean dolly to take out with her when we go from here. Dr. Van Waters, since they have nursery school, my baby don't bite so much. That is something for which I am glad."

There was something else on Miriam's mind as she sat up late that first Sunday. Under existing procedure, parolees were being released from the institution without notice. They were simply told, suddenly, to report to the dressing room under the basement stairs, and there given the same clothing, washed and ironed, they had shed in the dressing room the day of their arrival.

Miriam would change the procedure as quickly as she could, but meanwhile, a Parole Club could be the link between confinement and release—a framework for seminars on the trials of readjustment to the community, something more durable than a sermonette from an officer and a parting warning from a grade-mate to "keep your nose clean or they'll hustle you back to Box 99," and more substantial than a dollar or two in cash and a ticket on the Boston & Albany from Framingham to Boston's South Station. That was the "boo-hoo express," the "blues train" to the outside world that had forgotten the traveler, or remembered her grudgingly.

Slowly, slowly, Miriam let the outside world into Framingham. In her own "Directives" file, the entries grew:

"March 25, 1932: In going over a girl's folder, I found a little silk handkerchief, sent to her by her sister. On the spur of the moment, because of the death of her infant, I sent this handkerchief to her. I understand that the women have not been permitted to receive articles from their families. I suggest that it may be a future policy to permit the women to have some personal belongings.

"May 2, 1932: In order to develop some contact with the out-

side world, looking to the new responsibilities awaiting our women on parole, I have established the policy of permitting small groups to leave the grounds with different staff members.

"June 28, 1932: One of the students is scheduled to go out on parole. Will you please give me your recommendation. I do not wish any paroled woman to leave, as a matter of routine, when she has been disrespectful to authority."

A Poetry Club followed Mothers' and Parole, for Miriam wanted the women to read and learn to write modern verse. The choir sang Haydn's *Creation*. Miriam wrote her parents that she wanted "to show the community how much waste and neglected beauty they have caused."

She invited her staff of sixty to her living room for sandwiches, cake, and coffee. She was convinced she had a loyal staff, although nine of them, for one reason or another, would be fired within a year. On Mother's Day, she took the whole institution to a big pasture nearly a mile away from the front door. Some of the women put on a health play, and all of them picked wild flowers and sang songs of spring.

Her second chapel talk, in April, was based on a similar, earlier excursion:

"I am sure we will remember all our lives long the Easter walk. The fields, the woods, the pasture were so beautiful. Doubtless there were a few bruises, scratches and sore muscles after fence-climbing and race-running, but there were radiant, sunshiny faces which have delighted me all week.

"Good sportsmanship prevailed. There was never a more pleasant, loyal group to go walking with. I was impressed with your cheerfulness, enjoyment and courtesy. We must have many such good times together. Good times have to be earned, if we

want to enjoy them fully, not only here but outside. When work is done and responsibilities met, there is what the funny papers used to call 'a grand and glorious feeling' as we settle down to an earned privilege.

"In Framingham, we are a place built on industry, order, and obedience. This is the ready coin with which we purchase privileges."

Somehow, this sounded all right coming from "Doctor" who seemed, in some magical way, to absolve her audience from the fact and memory of their wrongs, no matter how serious. She was kind, careful, and courteous, as she had asked them to be. She seemed to regard her audience not as what it had been, but as what it could become, and if this escaped the reasoning power of many of the inmates, they sensed it, each according to her capacity for understanding pure love, kindness, and courtesy and separating these essences from wheedling, cajolery, and lightly-sugared threats.

The four hundred girls and women in chapel represented some four hundred and thirty-six charges by the Commonwealth, because some of them were there on more than one charge. Statistically, sixty of them were there for drunkenness, and fifty-seven for lewd and lascivious cohabitation. Another fifty-one had been branded idle and disorderly persons, and forty-six had arrived for neglect of children. The list included thirty-six charged with adultery. The Commonwealth took a relentless view of woman's part in extra-marital sex conduct, little changed from the days of the scarlet "A" sewn on the bodice of a wife caught out in her infidelity.

This fact violated Miriam's sense of justice, but she was obliged to do as she was told by the law, reserving for her personal crusade the injustice of it and the fact that if all states committed

all known adulteresses to their reformatories, the crowding would require drastic building programs. Miriam believed that the imposition of one hundred per cent of the penalty on a woman for fifty per cent of the offense represented a shortage of fifty per cent in the establishment of equal treatment under the law.

Larceny had brought twenty-nine women to Framingham; escape had returned twenty-nine; vagrancy fourteen. Another fourteen were there on the stubborn child charge, one that had been conceived to lend the law's arm to parents who could not command obedience from their children, but one that had become, in many instances, a "basket" charge, or catch-all.

Other sentences covered a wide range:

Abandoning children 9; abortion 6; accessory after fact to arson; aiding escape of prisoner 1; armed robbery 1; armed with intent to murder 1; assault and battery 1; assault and battery to kill infant 2; assault and battery with dangerous weapon 6; breaking and entering in daytime 4; in nighttime 1; with larceny 4; common streetwalker 1; concealing the death of illegitimate child 1; drug addict 4; forgery 4; fornication 9; manslaughter 4; mayhem 1; murder in the second degree 3; neglect of family 1; perjury 1; possession of hypodermic needle 1; robbery 9; runaway 2; transferred from Lancaster Industrial School for Girls 8; unnatural act (sex conduct) 2; vagabond and idle 1; violation of the narcotic law 1; and voluntary admissions 1.

Early in Miriam's administration, seventy-four "Defective Delinquents" were transferred to Framingham from the State Prison Farm. Under laws then pertaining, a defective delinquent was any person whose parents or guardians had decided she was unruly and had been able to have their opinion certified by two doctors. Also, superintendents of schools for the feeble-minded, or social workers who had placed children in foster homes, could have any trouble-

some inmate confined for life. Often, these "DD's" remained imprisoned for periods of from ten to forty years with no legal or psychological review of their cases. Nearly all of them were capable of handling reformatory work, and many of them were touchingly eager for schooling. Many of them were backward, but not all were defective, by any standards. In due course, Miriam would help to change the statutes that so arbitrarily cancelled their freedom. Meanwhile, they were all "lifers" at Framingham.

All of them were among the four hundred who listened attentively to Doctor in chapel.

"I have interviewed a few of you," she said. "Some thirty so far. A good conversation cannot be too hurried. It will take time to see you all, perhaps not more than six in an afternoon . . . I shall see each one of you, of course, in time.

"On the whole, the requests I have listened to are impersonal and unselfish. They deal with family situations, with children, affairs you could not clear up before you left your homes, and plans for the future. I have received, also, some good suggestions for our general welfare. As I told you two weeks ago, any institution or home is a joint enterprise. If only one person is discouraged, or is not giving her first best, it affects the whole place. In the same way, a happy person and one who is giving her first best is *felt* through all the place, whether anything is said about it or no.

"In the time of Oliver Cromwell in English history—about 1650—there was a group of Christians called Seekers, and some of them Happy Finders. They went about homes and fields preaching. Many of them were thrown into prison, Quakers, Puritans and Anabaptists. One of them, noted for his nobility and sweetness of character, was Paul Sherry. He said:

"The spirit of man is a candle of the Lord. When one candle is lighted, we light many by it, and when God hath kindled the Life

of his Glory in one man's heart, he often enkindles many of the flame of that.'

"That is what we can see here. One cheerful, courageous person is like a candle from which others may be enkindled."

Miriam told the chapel audience that a group of Boston artists had loaned some pictures to the institution, and that more were coming, along with the artists themselves, who would talk to the women.

"The pictures will be changed from time to time, and we shall have them in all departments. An artist sees things in common objects which the unseeing eye does not see. We can learn to see better. An object is never just one color or shape, but at different times of day, bathed in light, it takes on different shapes and colors. Ask yourselves what time of day was the artist seeing. How did he discover the colors and the relationships between objects?"

"Even an ugly gas filling station may be beautiful in certain lights. Framingham is full of unpainted pictures, both outdoors and in. It is interesting to look for them. We wish to make Framingham more beautiful."

She reminded them that privileges had to be won, and that the "simple way is to do your duty faithfully and to think before you act.

"Think how each act, or word, will affect your neighbor. This is hard. The Tumblers Club meets Monday afternoon. From the drawing on my invitation I gather some of the girls stand on their heads. At first, standing on your head seems all wrong. Later it feels natural. At first, thinking of your neighbor before you act feels as hard as standing on your head. Later it becomes a habit, and feels natural."

Miriam knew more than she ever told Framingham about the joys of standing on one's head. Her father boasted, the day after

her birth, that she had “the head of a classics scholar.” He was resoundingly right about that, but before she filled her head with the classics, she stood on it numberless times in countless places, mostly in the wilderness of Oregon and in the rectory of St. David’s Church in Portland.

CHAPTER THREE

Father, There's a Muddy Man at the Door

George B. Van Waters was born, in 1856, in Rensselaer Falls, New York, in a commodious frame house above the flood line of the Oswegatchie River, close by the St. Lawrence. His report cards were impressive from the beginning of his public school education. He drank the cream of Oberlin College's curriculum, discovered the flavor of the Church in it, and went on to Kenyon, where he was graduated in 1883, bound for the ministry. Bexley Divinity School, in Gambier, Ohio, conferred its Bachelor of Divinity upon him, and within a year he was ordained deacon, then priest, at the hands of Episcopal Bishop Cortlandt Whitehead, in Pittsburgh.

He had barely settled in his first parish in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, when he fell in love with eighteen-year-old Maude Ophelia Vosburg, daughter of the parish's senior warden who was an attorney for the Pennsylvania Railroad. Maternally, Maude was a

descendant of the family after which the Pennsylvania town of Dubois was named. Her marriage to George, in 1884, was a union of two Holland Dutch lineages.

George's young bride quickly realized she had married a man with a strong Pauline urge. First, he lit out for her mother's home town to establish a church, then founded another in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, where he decided to improve upon his creation by remaining as rector.

It was there, in Greensburg, October 4, 1887, at 9:25 p.m., that Miriam arrived on the scene. Her supperless father missed connections with the local telegraph operator, but gave him a busy hour the next morning, composing messages to both sides of the family.

Later in the day, he wrote his father in Rensselaer Falls: "Dear Pa: I telegraphed you today that the baby was born last night at nine twenty-five. (He formed the words with an engraver's precision.) The labor was not hard. Everything passed off nicely. The Dr. says he had never seen a case work better. Maude is not exhausted as she was before. (Rachel, their first-born, died in her third year shortly before Miriam's birth.) She looks well and has a good appetite. Of course, the nurse is giving her the best of attention.

"The placenta came soon—was, the Dr. says, expelled most naturally and thoroughly. Maude wishes me to say you can have no idea how well she feels

"The baby is a perfect baby, sound from head to toe, is plump, and has a vigorous appetite. Lungs good. Head made for the classics. Yours in haste—G. B. Van Waters."

His haste ordinarily could have been associated with chores piling up in the rectory, but, such was his nature, it could also have been his response to an urge to be off to churchless settlements on

the map. Benjamin Wistar Morris, Bishop of Oregon, had recently crossed George's path and set him to dreaming of opportunities in that semi-wilderness. The Bishop, a Lincolnesque figure who had already blazed an Anglican trail in the Northwest with a suitcase in one hand and a trout rod in the other, touched a frontier nerve in George's ministry, and George was as good as measured for a buckskin cassock.

As soon as strength flowed back to Maude, and Miriam was sturdily rooted in her childhood, George announced that Oregon needed them all. They set out by train, Maude fighting stubborn reservations about discarding comforts of the east for the easily imagined hardships of a missionary wife in a strange country.

She had a wide streak of Dutch courage in her make-up, overlaid with the manners and bearing of an aristocrat. She would have been a fitting subject for Rembrandt's portraiture as "A Young Matron of Royalty." She had been trained early and well at home in the social graces and practical arts. She knew Bach's work from Mozart's; she could bake bread and clean a chicken; she loved flowers and gardening, and she knew more than most young women of her generation about nature in the unhedged outdoors.

By a coincidence that may have influenced her husband's westering drive and her own willingness to yield to it, if not share it, she had inherited, from the Dubois family, the Oregon Nursery Company (Orenco) near Portland, along with a farm and timberland at Oregon City, south of Portland, and a substantial acreage of high timber in Tillamook and Clatsop counties in northwestern Oregon.

In that sense, she was rooted in this far region to which she traveled as a pioneer with her best hats packed in shiny boxes and her smelling salts tucked in a small case in the Pullman car that was, for several days, the only home the family had. If she was aware

of disturbing doubts about her future with a minister determined to lift up the souls of timbertoppers (who went almost to heaven to do a day's earthly work), she merged them with daydreams of the gracious home she would make for her family at the core of the roughneck society she imagined awaiting her at the end of the line.

George must have pondered, as he headed west, how Oregon congregations would receive his convictions. He was, without being aware of a phrase that came later, a champion of the "social gospel." He was a "liberal" among clergymen, a man who wanted to "shake up" the Church, to "humanize" it. In his liberality, he would soon be advocating, half a century ahead of the times, that the Episcopal Church recognize divorce. He would share the beliefs of Margaret Sanger, crusader for birth control, and accept the risks of his advocacy, which included jail.

He was stubborn in his resistance to blind denominationalism, and wary of dogma. He argued for ecumenical Christianity and he was to be, all his life, an exponent of the reconciliation of science and religion.

The challenge that drew George Van Waters to Oregon was called the Missionary District of Eastern Oregon, which consisted then of one self-supporting parish and fewer than four hundred confirmed followers among a population of one hundred fifty thousand in a region containing several counties at least as large as Massachusetts. Regular services were held in four towns in the same number of "silent" churches, but in most towns there were no members at all, and the Episcopal Church was unknown.

As late as 1907, an elderly woman asked the district's second head, Bishop Robert L. Paddock, if his Church might be "the one that was started last year back in Indiana." More than one revivalist

raised the fence around his flock with a warning that "you might as well go to hell as into the Episcopal Church."

The scarcity of Episcopalians was more than offset in the district by an excess of pastors and parishes of other denominations. Each small town had at least one church, and in some there was a church and parson for every hundred souls, all supported by eastern missionary funds. Often the congregations clashed theologically, and pastors snubbed each other. Bishop Paddock called it "an ecclesiastical hell watched over by the devil, smiling as he counted so many righteous hands working for him."

The early policy of the Episcopal Church in the district was one of building the Kingdom rather than improving real estate; and instead of adding another resident rector and another church to a hamlet with three or four of each, the Church's missionaries struck a bargain with existing congregations: they would build no churches in return for the barest use of those already standing. This arrangement would enable George Van Waters to practice his faith without immediately patronizing the lumber yards. It would also enable him and his fellow clergymen to build churches when the need justified them. Over a period of thirty years that he was to serve in Oregon, he founded St. David's and Grace Memorial parishes in Portland, and fifteen others throughout the district, encouraged by those who weighed the revivalists' alternatives of hell and Episcopalianism, chose the latter, and decided to put a roof over it.

Soon after his arrival in Portland, George was to found St. Helen's Hall, a preparatory school for girls; Scott Academy, for boys, and the Good Samaritan Hospital, when he was not out on the circuit ministering to ranchers and homesteaders. He would spend many lonely hours writing scholarly sermons on the station-

ery of such hostelrys as "Hotel Hall, Klamath Falls, Oregon (E. B. Hall, Prop.,) Headquarters for Commerical Travelers and Automobile Tourists, Now Operating Beautiful New Annex. Sample Rooms in Connection—Modern and In the Center of the Business District."

The details of all these things were unknown to him as he gazed out the window of the train carrying him westward, but the larger shapes of them were roughly outlined in his imagination, and he was contented.

Long after her father's death, Miriam remembered the rectory of St. David's in Portland as a "settlement house and family hearth" filled with friends and strangers, visited by down-and-outers coming and going with her father's everlasting patience and sympathy welcoming them or departing with them.

She remembered a man who knocked at the door, which she opened to him, and stood in the entrance hall, swaying on his feet and dripping rain water on the polished floor. His sopping mackinaw, smeared with mud from a fall in the road, was missing enough buttons to reveal his bare chest. Her father had told her that a man's worth should never be judged by his clothes. She was delighted to see him, anyway, and told him to wait while she called her father from his study where he was writing a sermon.

"Father, there's a muddy man at the door," she reported.

A few cups of sobering coffee and some hot soup were set before the man in the muddy mackinaw before he was put to bed in the back room, probably, Miriam thought, in one of her father's flannel nightgowns. Miriam remembers her mother speaking to her father about the stranger.

"Who is it, George?"

"I'm not sure, Maudy."

Mrs. Van Waters did not "suffer fools gladly," nor greet them

with equal warmth, but she put up with mud-tracking derelicts because her husband believed they deserved a chance to straighten up and go out and try again. There were many who seemed never to get very far from the rectory.

Bishop Peter Trimble Rowe, of Alaska, invariably stopped at the rectory on his journeys to and from his post, as did Bishop Charles Henry Brent, en route to or from the Philippines. Bishop Morris was a regular guest. When these men were there, Miriam's father usually called in theological students and other ministers for parlor forums that lasted far into the night. Miriam was permitted to stay up and listen long after her bedtime, and to serve hot chocolate when the guests showed signs of lagging.

Bishop Rowe's woolly tales of his life in Alaska—his dashes from post to post by dog team, his Communion services in a saloon that was silenced by the bartender and cleared of whiskey glasses for the occasion—sent Miriam to bed with dreams of writing her second novel with a background of the frozen North.

Her first, entitled *Jezebel*, a fictionalized version of the biblical siren's life, was a thick manuscript she kept in her bedroom. She suspended it on a chapter in which Jezebel was flung from a window to a pack of woman-eating dogs. She would have finished it, but she had too many other things to do in Oregon.

CHAPTER FOUR

Don't Stop Crying, Genevieve

Miriam took to Oregon as though Lewis and Clark had wrapped it in ribbon with a sprig of native mistletoe and put it away as a special Christmas gift inscribed "hold for arrival of Miriam Van Waters." She romped in it or, in her mother's words, "ran wild" in its great forests around the family's lumber camps and a summer cabin on a northern beach. She wrote blank-verse love notes to Oregon's seacoast, streams and mountains, farms and wilderness. Before she was twelve, she discovered its clams, trout, trees, grapes, huckleberries, moss, ferns, fogs, rains, cougars, beaver, deer, mosquitoes, wild bees, and all the moods, sounds, and silences of its civilized Portland and its pristine woodlands.

In her father's book-lined study, she read from left to right, end to end, shelf by shelf.

"George," said Mrs. Van Waters, "do you know that child is reading Byron's *Don Juan*?"

"Now Maudy, some books are better than others. Let her find out for herself."

Scarlet fever and then typhoid reached her during epidemics the summer before she was to have entered the first grade in school, and her father began to tutor her during her convalescence at the rectory. She was so quick and bright that he decided to continue educating her at home with the help of young theology students who were always visiting the house. Miriam never set foot in the Portland public school. She learned Latin and Greek, history, arithmetic, algebra, music and art, Emerson and Shakespeare, Shelley and Longfellow at the elbows of her father and the students who came to learn missionary tactics from him. The family's morning prayers were read in Greek, Latin, or Hebrew and repeated in English. The housemaid, if the family was lucky enough to have one for a while, joined in these prayers.

Miriam's first piece of connected writing was a semi-case report on her infant sister, Ruth, written in the author's seventh year:

"Ruth is my sister, she is a pretty baby. She can not walk yet. She is five months old and she likes her mama. I take her out every day. her eyes are blue. she has brown hair. she says good-girl. she likes to play with the cat. she likes dogs and she likes to play dolls. (Signed) Miriam Van Waters."

Her second, composed a few days later, was a hymn to nature:

"We went on the creak and had a nice time with my frend. we went in the wood and got flowers for the baby. the baby liket it very much. they had a yard full of apples so we could tack them. in the woods there were so meney birds and they are so pretty with there red coats on."

Nine years later, writing from Vosburg, Oregon, the tiny post-office that served the family's lumber camp on the Nehalem River up north, she wrote her mother that "the long silent benediction

of the forest falls over these few desolate cottages. And yet the solitude is beautiful. I love it. O dearest mother, if only you were here with me—if we could only roam the woods together and watch these moonlit, forest-scented nights on the hay. Last night before the rain came, when the moon shed a soft light over the hay and as we drifted silently, and the only sound was the rippling of the water and the music of a faraway cowbell, my happiness was complete, save for you. Darling, take care of yourself. You are so young—so pretty. Don't waste your strength. Your grace of face and figure is God-given. Take care of it."

Between "Ruth is my sister" and "the long silent benediction of the forest," Miriam was a winter child immersed in books and chores of the rectory, and a summer child in bloomers and blouse, chasing after Peter Pan. At her Uncle Lawrence (Lonnie) Vosburg's farm in Oregon City, she *was* Peter Pan. Lonnie, one of Maude Van Waters' seven brothers, had thrown over his surveying job with the Pennsylvania Railroad and followed her west with his transit. Miriam worshipped him. One summer, she dared to ride his fiery stallion, Billy, terrorizing her Aunt Jenny. Uncle Lonnie only smiled.

Miriam swam the Willamette River near Uncle Lonnie's farm, something girls were not supposed to do under any circumstances, and Lonnie grinned and said "maybe you'd better not, next time." She got up in the middle of the night and followed him out cougar hunting. He didn't send her home or say she shouldn't have done it. When Uncle Lonnie's farm horses threw her, a Roman centurion, out of the field wagon, her chariot, breaking her collarbone, Lonnie picked her up, wiped her face with his handkerchief and asked her where she hurt the most. He took innumerable bark slivers out of her fingers and toes. He sat with her by the fire in the cool evenings after supper and talked with her about

the books he liked, the music he enjoyed and the adventures he'd had in the timber country he had measured with his transit.

In her filial devotion and cheerful acceptance of much more than a child's responsibility for the orderly functioning of the family household, Miriam was a blessing to her parents. Her Dutch instincts for housekeeping and her interest in cooking were thoroughly encouraged and guided by her neat, industrious mother. When her mother went to visit her brother, Lonnie, in March, 1899, Miriam reported faithfully on her Portland activities. One of her letters revealed that the missionary spirit of her father had rubbed off on her:

"My dearest, darling, sweet Mama: Are you sure you are not in some fairy place where every day is a hundred years? I am sure it is so. It must have been four hundred years at least since I saw you last. How I miss you, Mama. My dear Mama I hope you will keep warm and well.

"I spent Sunday as follows: Rise six-thirty, went to early Communion at seven. Came home, helped with work. I took Ruth's mackinaw and went to Mrs. Hibbs' house and got Maude, their youngest daughter, to come to Sunday School. She could not have come had not I taken Ruth's mackinaw to cover up her old dress.

"From Sunday School I went to church. After church I took Maude home then I read my Sunday School paper and book and Bible. Later on I took a walk with Papa . . . I helped Grandma get supper and wrote some of this letter, then I went to church, and came home and now I am finishing.

"I intend to wear my Eton suit with the white front. I found the blue ribbons which you gave me on Christmas and I will wear those. I sewed and blackened my black-buttoned shoes. I mean I sewed the buttons on and I am wearing those instead of my best

ones. I am going to get Papa to give me some money to get the rip mended in my laced shoes and with new laces and polishing I can wear those and give my new ones a little repose. . . .”

In the spring of 1902, Mrs. Van Waters, plagued by recurring spells of fatigue, goaded by homesickness and the long separation from most of her brothers, left Portland for long visits in the mid-west and east. Mr. Van Waters, carrying his first son, George, in his arms, went as far as Thayer, Kansas, with her. Her brother, George, a breeder of race horses in Thayer, returned to Portland with his brother-in-law for an extended stay while Mrs. Van Waters remained several weeks in Thayer and then went on to Dubois for a Pennsylvania reunion.

Miriam, once the rectory tomboy, abruptly became its mistress, sharing domestic duties with Ethel, a housemaid who “moved like a snail, forgot to make beds, swept in the middle while I swept on the sides, and cooked breakfast at the rate of a slice of bacon once an hour,” according to one of Miriam’s almost daily reports to her absent mother. Ethel was replaced by Sophie briefly, but for months Miriam, not yet fifteen, was the hub of a household that included her two young sisters, her Uncle George, her father, visiting clergy, her cousin Charles—son of Uncle Lonnie—a dog and a cat.

Each morning she got breakfast, reviewed her sister Ruth’s reading lesson with her, took Ruth to school, bathed her youngest sister, Rebekah, set “Beckie’s” hair in curls, cleaned out her sisters’ rooms and settled down to general chores, including her own school work.

Uncle George was gone for days at a time, locating families on homesteads and timber claims for a fee of seventy-five dollars per family. When her father departed for eastern Oregon, Miriam was in sole charge.

Her domain was a rambling, frame house with a spacious front porch whose lattice and columns were entwined by clematis, wistaria, Virginia creeper, and roses—each flourishing in its season, thickening the green wall that screened the hammock and rocking chairs from passersby on Twelfth Street. Near the door of the vestry, adjoining the rectory, sweet peas exploded in a range of pastels, harassed by choir boys and dogs.

Here Miriam reigned with mixed emotions, heaping her respect on visitors she respected and barely containing her scorn for those she didn't. The generous, priming coats of ladyship brushed on her by her mother had penetrated her skin, reacting there with the undiluted acids and syrups of adolescence in unpredictable chemical warfare.

On sectors of that battlefield where Miriam dealt with the organist of St. David's and the Woman's Auxiliary of the parish, the acids clearly triumphed in 1902. Mrs. Van Waters had organized a boys club within the church, recruiting some of the toughest pine knots in town, then worked her charm and tact upon them so effectively that she was able to break them to the cassocks and cottas of a boys' choir. The organist had taken over from there.

Whether Miriam's father had suffered the lash of the organist's temperament or whether Miriam rankled at the exclusion of female voices from the choir, or both, is clouded. She was fiercely loyal to her father and not the least impressed by claims for the "weakness" of her sex. In a letter to her mother, she indicated her reaction to the organist's decision to leave the parish:

"Rejoice! Hold a jubilee! Spare no money! 'Tis Mr. Darby's last Sunday. He is frozen out, at last. Going! Going! Gone! Mrs. McCary may lead the choir now and we may have a mixed choir. The music has been poor so the founder of *all* the Chicago choirs

—organist of Westminster—world critic and learned teacher goes. It is a shame you are not here to enjoy it. It was a mutual agreement and Papa did not suggest it. Perhaps my ‘freezing’ did it.”

Shifting targets in the same letter, Miriam referred to a vestryman:

“Mr. Parker is still here as a regular. Nearly every night he comes here and I have to be very diplomatic for he loves a fight and so do I—but as he’s guest and I’m hostess, we have to appear congenial.”

Supply clerics, filling the pulpit at St. David’s, while Mr. Van Waters made the rounds of preaching stations in the district, bobbed or sank in Miriam’s private social pool according to the content of their sermons. If, in her opinion, their sermons were broad and intelligent, she invited them to dinner or tea Sunday night. If she rated their homiletics narrow or bigoted, she scooted out the front door of the church and avoided the vestry. She considered her policy a little wicked, but nonetheless a perquisite of her role as mistress of the house.

The organist had dropped off Miriam’s black list by obligingly leaving town, but the Woman’s Auxiliary was neither mobile nor, in Miriam’s opinion, redeemable. The weekly Thursday meetings of these handmaidens of St. David were “caterwaulings” in Miriam’s estimation. She wrote vividly of one gathering:

“They met as usual yesterday and held their usual caterwauling, unsuccessful confab over an entertainment. How these women do squabble and fight over a little entertainment which might be gotten up in a week. The singing was indescribable. Nothing could be imagined that would equal it.

“First Papa’s deep bass voice—now high now low according to his fancy—starts in, then ten women including the worthy at the piano join in in ten different keys—all singing ten different tunes

and some even different hymns. The variations of the sweet treble and the squeals of delight most of them give at being through each verse all blend beautifully with the exquisite chords which threaten to break the piano. It is heavenly. No wonder the kittens are wild. It is a marvel that they are not crazy.

"Of course, Sophie and I worked hard to get the house in perfect order, the fire lit and the windows washed in the most approved fashion. So afterwards when they didn't offer us any cake I was insulted and stole a large piece."

Miriam was writing *Jezebel* at this point, bashfully withholding the manuscript from her parents, but sharing it with one of her friends, Genevieve Parke, whom she often invited to the rectory, usually for tea in her bedroom.

After several cups of tea and three or four pieces of Sophie's rock cake, Miriam would read the latest chapters of *Jezebel*. Genevieve would wail and Miriam would join her out of sympathy, or an author's gratitude for such cathartic evidence of her skill at manipulating her audience's emotions.

Genevieve's vulnerability to the sad parts ultimately prompted doubts in Miriam about Genevieve's emotional stability, and Miriam made a comment about some persons being slaves of passion that cut Genevieve deeply. After that, when Genevieve wept, Miriam stared at her disapprovingly until she regained control, a state she found increasingly easy to attain as *Jezebel* unfolded. At this turn of affairs, Miriam confided to Genevieve that she really wouldn't like her if she weren't emotional, and that she hadn't meant as anything personal that remark about slaves of passion.

That summer, Miriam inventoried the facets of her personality in a letter to her mother:

"You would laugh to see how many-sided I am. To Genevieve

Parke I try to show my imaginative, my weird, passionate side. To Rachel Josephi (before our smashup) I tried to show as sensible a side as I could command. To my acquaintances I am distantly cold, and to Dorothy Glover I am most frivolous. She and I are crazy to go to dancing school next winter to learn the 'tricks of the business,' then for party gowns and fun. Can you imagine your unsocial daughter dancing—can you imagine your clumsy bear treading the mazes of a walse?"

Mrs. Van Waters wrote long, solicitous letters from Kansas and Pennsylvania, praising Miriam, guiding her and dealing with her shifting moods. Miriam, in turn, reported her every deed, impulse, and opinion to her mother.

"Don't worry about me. I am always an angel. But now I must 'fess up. But don't tell anyone about this. One day when there was not a soul in the house, and that was the third day they had left me, I got desperate and of all dreadful things I *smoked half* a cigarette. I am awfully sorry and I won't do it again, but I felt easier if you knew about it. Don't scold me please for truly I won't do it again."

Miriam was sensitive to criticism, direct, implied, or imagined. She welcomed her father's return from a long trip because her cousin Charles had been staying at the rectory and Miriam thought that some of the women of the parish had hinted that this was improper under the circumstances.

"Sometimes," she wrote her mother, "people must defy conventional ideas, and circumstances alter cases. Those people rather hinted that it was shocking, etc. 'Evil to him who evil thinks.' Do you think we could have done differently—defenseless, alone in the house?"

Miriam's physical growth corresponded, that summer of 1902,

with her womanly responsibilities. Thanking her mother for a skirt and waist sent by mail, she wrote that "it's just a trifle too small around the chest. You know I am enormous, about 34 and that (waist) is about 32 . . . as I said before I have taken a notion to grow . . . if you send me anything please get it plenty large around the chest—nearly as big as the side of a barn."

Girl-in-woman, she sometimes lost her cheerful mien that spring of 1902. Her bravado slipped and she fretted about a misanthropic tendency. In one mood, she fancied that she was cultivating her "adversion" to people and called herself a "rotten nest egg" that had failed to tempt the family flock back to the rectory. "When I think how we are all separated and scattered over the face of the earth—some in the wilds of Oregon, some in Portland—some in dry-prohibition Kansas and some preparing to cross the continent, I wonder if they will ever come again."

In the same grip of self-doubt, she deplored her failure as a hostess: "I am extending myself for Charles. We play and talk and I endeavor to do the 'charming' act but fail, I never could be a hostess."

She crossed swords with a dinner guest over the quality of the butter: "Mr. Royal stayed to dinner but I didn't love him much. He said the butter was bad and said the La Grande Creamery is a fraud and you should never get butter there. The butter was good, very good, and I told him so. And we also fought over Senator Simon. I'm an anti-machine man and he approves of tax swindles and bloody policemen."

The Rev. Mr. Bull, from Spokane, came to preach ("delivery bad, sermon intelligent and good"). In view of his rating, he dined with Miriam. "He grieved me—greatly wounded my vanity. He asked how old I was and said 'what will you be at sixteen!'

Now what do you suppose he meant? I wonder if I really do look so old?"

She found two gray hairs in her brunette crown. These she solemnly displayed to Sophie, who told her she would be gray-haired at twenty, a prediction that proved only a few years in error.

In her imagination, her uncle's home in Thayer, where her mother and infant brother were staying, was "a great, low-lying farmhouse, with giant elms on either side. Outside all is grand and imposing but in the old farmhouse all is exquisite comfort. A great blazing fire throws its shadows on the walls and beside it sit a lonely, warm-hearted, noble aunt and a well-grown boy. And best of all, a sweet, slender, beautiful, adorable mother and a laughing, darling baby boy who could hardly be said to 'sit' any place. It is very silly, for you never seem to eat or go to bed or even talk. O Mother if the dream (save the eating and talking part) were true and we *all* and Uncle George also were there."

In a burst of loneliness and affection, she wrote her mother that "Papa cannot understand how I can love you so much and want you to stay away and get well. But can't you see, Mother? Can't you feel that our hearts are together beating in unison even if it is better for you to remain? . . .

"I have just done up sixteen jars of canned strawberries—one dozen glasses of preserves and there will be about four or five quarts of jam, I think."

Sometimes she drew a thin cloak of pathos about her, perhaps secretly hoping she could hasten her mother's return without seeming to try:

"Last night I dreamed that I held baby George in my arms. I felt his little baby arms around me and heard his sweet voice. Can you imagine a more forlorn, desolate creature than I when Uncle George and I ate our solitary breakfast after that dream?"

"This is a very stupid letter, but remember that I am here and there is nothing to write about. No news to tell and as I don't like other people I never have anything to tell about them."

Through a long series of afternoons when "it rained constantly without any provocation," Miriam tutored in Latin and, unaided, gobbled up large chunks of the sophomore curriculum of St. Helen's Hall, from whose regular classes she had been excused that spring to look after the rectory in her mother's absence. In her few spare moments, she read *Youth's Companion* from cover to cover—copies of it came from her Aunt May in Thayer—and the *Ladies Home Journal*, the only other popular periodical that came to the rectory.

One night she dreamed about Jerusalem and Ben Hur and "a Roman praecutor* whom I beat in a race." In her account of it to her mother, she added: "I also dreamed about you, only you didn't love me much because I persisted in riding races with a Roman whom you hated. I am in an inane mood tonight, so don't mind me."

A few days later, she was excited about the prospect of selling an unidentified story to a publisher. "Never breathe this to a soul, Mother, for if anyone should hear about it and my scheme should amount to nothing, I would be dreadfully mortified. I have had a little substantial encouragement from David C. Cooke Publishing Co. That is the Co. which published *Titus* you know. It isn't enough to raise my hopes very far but I'm writing 'a long senseless tale' for them which may make a little.

"The first cent I make I will lay humbly at your feet and you can buy soda pop with it. Please don't tell *one living soul* about it for it may be only an air castle."

* A Latin noun she must have invented.

This was Miriam Van Waters at fifteen: dreamer and skeptic, candid and cautious, aloof and involved in life. Her hands were happy stirring the strawberry preserves, flattening the linen on the beds she made, and placing silverware and china on the table at which she often presided.

Her mind was eager and grateful for the challenge of academic goals. Her soul reveled in the "long senseless tale" she wrote, and her heart was gladdened by her service as a substitute mother to her sisters and as a nurse to a rectory filled with family, relatives, and strangers.

"Charles' cold is much better and I have worked hard over it," she reported to her mother. "You know he never would take medicine and his lungs got sorer and sorer and his cough got more and more constant. Finally when he was too weak to resist I gave him some piping hot lemonade and put a mustard plaster on his chest—which scorched clear through him onto the sheet, he declared. In the morning he was much better and he is improving."

Another time it was an aunt "sick to her stomach last night. We were up several times in the night and I hated to see her go, she looked so sick."

Her Uncle George's "propensity for colds" was unbelievable to her. "No sooner is one cured than he has the audacity to get another. This last one he caught in the woods and I'm treating him in my usual mustard plaster, pepper tea, hot lemonade and vaseline fashion. He is better this morning and a repetition of one of my nice little messes will cure him."

But of all her talents, one clearly presaged her future vocation. It was her skill in managing her two younger sisters.

In two paragraphs of a letter to her mother, Miriam fashioned the ring that declared her engagement to the career she eventually married. The first paragraph was a diamond of discipline:

"After Beckie came home from Nehalem, she had a mistaken idea that she could do as she pleased. And though I approve of Beckie doing nearly as she pleases, there are some things I object to. Running away and having little accidents throughout the day for instance. I don't know whether it is wise or not but after each escapade she washes out her own things and spends an hour in a chair. She minds beautifully, perhaps because I have just learned that if I never lose my temper or raise my voice or repeat my commands or strike her, she respects me. I never speak twice to her and she knows I make good on all my promises—good or bad."

In the second paragraph she set the diamond in a golden circle of insight and understanding:

"Beckie is very much interested about natural things—the wind, the rain, the sunshine—and color is a perfect mystery to her. She is not so fanciful as I am and she finds poetry in the natural without using her imagination. It is better to never tell her myths or fairy tales for she would be horribly disappointed at discovering their lack of foundation, so I never do."

Vocationally, Miriam was a child bride.

In June, 1904, she was graduated from St. Helen's Hall with honors. The caption under her picture in the class yearbook was a classic example of the exclusively humorous perversity that often creeps into such publications:

"Stylish but stupid."

The author of the class prophecy for her forgot to prophesy, but hit a nail head on:

"Keeps Info Bureau. For General Knowledge, Please Apply."

CHAPTER FIVE

Caution: Deep Dutch Currents

In the fall of 1904, Miriam was a freshman in an off-campus girl's dormitory on Eleventh Street, in Eugene, Oregon, within walking distance of her classes at the University of Oregon, but ten thousand miles from Portland. Or so it seemed to her in the depths of an acute seizure of homesickness.

She awoke from a September afternoon nap and a frightening dream about her mother, ran to the telegraph office and dashed off an anxious request for assurance that all was well at home. After hours of miserable waiting, she received an "all's well" message laced with affection. Relieved, but stung by a second thought that she had acted foolishly, she promised she would try not to be "an idiot" any more. Her mother, nursing her second son, Ralph, raising George, Ruth, and Rebekah and doing most of the housework, had little time for long, comforting letters of the sort that

had sustained Miriam through her motherless days at the rectory in 1902.

At her mother's jocular suggestion that she might find home "tame" after life in Eugene, Miriam pleaded seriously with her not to think of such awful things and wrote that if she lived to be a thousand, and associated with all the wise fools in the world, home would never be less adorable or longed for than it was at that homesick moment, and how could her mother believe Miriam was such a sordid wretch as to think home "tame."

Eugene's early winter fogs weighted Miriam's longing for home. Recurrent palls of vapor sank over the town: stifling, almost palpable fogs that smothered the street lamps until they reminded Miriam of the afterglow of matches in the dark. Under their spell, Miriam once imagined her mother sick at the rectory and herself bereft, consequently, of a core to life. Projecting the thought, Miriam imagined herself sorely needed at home, and this inspired sacrificial thought of abandoning college, boarding the train to Portland and serving selflessly at her mother's side. Like the fogs, these imaginary crises evaporated when the sun broke through. Also, Miriam's day-dreaming time was suddenly claimed by a coed chore: making her share of two hundred paper chrysanthemums for the big football game.

Her spirits arose from the bog altogether when half of the men's glee club descended on her and her roommates one evening. Miriam made fudge on a chafing dish and served crackers and cheese, after which the delegation serenaded the hostesses and departed. One of her roommates, she thought, was quite impressed with so many men calling on "so inconspicuous a lot." By implication, Miriam wasn't impressed. It wouldn't have been consistent with her self-image at that time.

Decked in her lavender dress and her best smile, she attended

the Sophomore Hop with a Mr. Hixon, a civil engineer in embryo. She had grown a little more confident of her appeal to men, but she still was diffident.

About her studies, Miriam had long since adopted a self-effacing attitude. When she reported home that Dr. Sheldon, her philosophy professor, had rated her critique of Plato as "passable," her father knew she'd received an "A" on it. She was not so much what educators, fifty years later, would call a "tape recorder" as she was an artesian well. Lectures and reading were twin drills that bored into her solid mind until they struck the water of understanding, if not always acceptance. As a result, she did not merely pass examinations; she flooded them, convincing her instructors that they had tapped a gusher in a field from which they would have been grateful to get a trickle.

In the second semester of her sophomore year, Miriam was asked to teach her own philosophy class during a brief absence of its regular professor, Dr. Sheldon. She led the way through a review of *The Origin of Species*, then lectured on the key points, dispensing notes and shedding light. She felt her anatomy dissolving at the prospect of leading her classmates, but after the first session she lost nothing but her stage fright. Reviewing the experience, she said it demanded nothing more than "a lot of work and monumental gall."

Miriam, at nineteen, was reaping full interest on her inheritance and reinvesting it for the future. Among her legacies from her parents and her family life were a lean and healthy body; a strong sense of self-discipline and duty; an intellect fertilized by the classics and exposed to the warmth and light of Christianity; an indissoluble attachment to libraries; her father's scholarship and empirical wisdom; the adult forensics of the rectory parlor; a deep and consistent parental love that closely sheltered, but did not pre-

empt her; direct experience of the redemptive power of God as she saw it working through her father in his ministrations to the down-and-outs who came to the rectory; a cleansing, frank attitude of inquiry toward the unpleasant aspects of life; and, finally, what she called "the Dutch currents" of her being, to which she attributed her zeal for tilting at pedantry, throwing rocks at shibboleths, and battling like a cornered vixen for principles she held dear.

As founder and sophomore editor-in-chief of the *Oregon Monthly*, a campus literary magazine, she collided with what she believed to be strong partisanship against her. Her work was criticized, hooted at, and maligned; but she gloried in the fights. A Miss Carson, of the English Department, called her on the carpet and demanded to have all the proofsheets of an issue of the magazine. Miriam asked her if she intended to set up "an English Department of Censorship" over the *Monthly*. Miss Carson sparred but didn't deny it, and Miriam refused to hand over the proofsheets. She had already determined that nobody was going to censor the magazine; in the end, she prevailed.

To her mother's hint that she resign from the troublesome editorship, Miriam replied with a statement which, had it issued from a warrior or statesman under historic stress, might have been transposed posthumously in bronze:

"No Van Waters resigns—especially under difficulties."

Miriam's home-town friend and classmate at the university, Rachel Josephi, flatly refused to contribute her art talent to the *Monthly*, causing Miriam to reflect sadly that the friends of one's youth do not always approve of one's work afterwards. The path of the literary *avant garde* through the University of Oregon was strewn with the bodies of live philistines, but Miriam learned to hurdle the roadblocks at top speed, skirts flying and deep Dutch currents stirring.

Her family's financial circumstances compelled her to count pennies. She paid her board, three dollars and fifty cents a week, from the postal orders her father sent from Portland after receiving her list of expenses. "Now comes a disagreeable duty," she wrote, presenting a bill for board, books, laundry, and drayage of her luggage from the railroad depot to the campus. She had no money for frills; in her sophomore year, unable to buy stamps for several days and ashamed to borrow any more of them, she apologized on that ground for not having written home during the stampless period.

Her father's salary was pinchingly modest and not all of her mother's properties in Oregon were dependable producers. Those that were yielded returns relatively small compared with the holdings of better qualified operators who were to find so much gold in lumber one day. There was continuous talk in the rectory, and correspondence among Mrs. Van Waters and her co-holding brothers, about selling this property or that. Miriam had soaked up the details of the Van Waters's interests and transactions and had written her father a hard-headed comment on a business partner's judgment. She was fifteen at the time, reporting from the family's lumber camp in Vosburg, Oregon:

"The mill will soon start running for a month or so and Mr. Wheeler is out getting the men. He is also having the whole mill whitewashed—which, in a bankrupt company, and for the short space they can run this year, is a piece of crazy foolishness. They will have to do it over, you know, next time they run for any length of time, and each coat costs."

When her intensive reading at the university drove her to an optician, she wrote home that she was sorry about the trouble and expense of glasses, "but in the end it is best not to lose one's sight."

Her homesickness developed economic roots. "It is strange,"

she wrote her mother, "but I am never so homesick when I have \$3.75 in my purse (her board rate had risen to \$3.75 in her junior year). When that amount is no longer there—I feel completely isolated and desolate. While this feeling lasts I say to myself if this gets unbearable, I'll take the next 6 o'clock local."

In her junior year, she commented on a turn in family finances: "The news of the property is most encouraging. I hope all financial worry is over for you—if so, each year ought to make you younger and happier. Where is the new property—is its income as large as the old, or is this a speculation?"

In college, as all through her life, Miriam remembered the special days of sentimental, patriotic, or religious significance that had brightened her own childhood, and considered herself a stitch dropped from her closely-knit family if she was away from home on those occasions. As Valentine's Day approached, she thought of her mother knocking over paints and picking up paper scraps; she missed the children's litterings and voices and resented, momentarily, the "eternally grownup, sophisticated atmosphere—so tiresome—of college."

At Easter, in her junior year, she sent home a box containing a nest of grass, cotton chicks, and colored hardboiled eggs, a pair of gloves for her mother, and a box of spring flowers packed in moist moss for her youngest sister, Beckie. Her sister, Ruth, who had flourished under her guidance as a child but had reverted to moods and tantrums after Miriam left for college, came to Eugene to live with her and attend the local high school. Miriam's early, magic discipline had made an obviously deep impression on Ruth who looked up to Miriam as a wise, dependable older sister, close friend, confidante and teacher.

"We are happy and snug and busy," Miriam wrote of herself and Ruth. "Each night we draw our little curtains, light our

little oil stove and gather around the study table. Ruth reads—I study—and at ten we make tea or coffee or beef bullion—and after a bit more studying, go to bed. We live with clock-like regularity. Now and then we vary the monotony with a spree, whereat Eve and Harley, and now and then Roy H. and Boris Johnson, make their appearance, and then we eat and drink and are merry.” The “drink” was still tea or coffee.

Vacations at home were spiritual reinforcement for Miriam, and she rarely failed to acknowledge her mother’s contributions to those happy intervals. “The home you make beautiful is always pervaded with an atmosphere of contentment and love,” Miriam wrote after her Christmas vacation at home in 1907. “I pray to keep that atmosphere about me always, just as I pray to have your sweet spirit with me. Tell little George that the last thing I saw of home and of my beautiful vacation were his two sturdy legs flying to keep up with the train. His dear face and red little nose and cold little hands made me very homesick and weepy.

“I sat down next to an old man on the train and yielded to the sorrows of farewells—when suddenly it was borne upon me that my purse was, the Lord knows where. I had bought an *Oregonian*, so .95 remained between me and life on the road. I was relieved to hear your voice in reassurance over the telephone five hours later. You seemed to know just what I wanted.”

The *Oregonian* Miriam had bought for her train trip was no luxury item. She was the university correspondent for the Portland daily, writing solid, well-researched stories in a crisp style several cuts above those of most penny-a-liners of the period.

She was much too serious about her university work to be an habitual prom-trotter, and probably too intellectually stiff to attract and hold frivolous, male undergraduates. Her economics instruc-

tor, who she supposed didn't even know her name after three weeks of class, asked her to remain after a lecture and invited her to attend an Oregon-Washington debate with him. She felt flattered to accompany him in his role as master of the debate, but there her subjectivity ended. She "indexed" him as a clean-shaven, smug, young man of about thirty who was exceedingly fond of himself, talked incessantly to that point, wore thick-lensed glasses that gave him a blear-eyed appearance, and spoke only in platitudes. Still, she allowed, he was a human biped wearing trousers, which after all, she thought, was the main point.

Alternately, she joined her sister and another girl—"a trio of has-beens in the social life"—in the gallery of a ball-room, where they watched others dance and "knocked" their friends.

The key to her attitude toward her contemporaries might have been in a comment she made to her father: "There are students in college who should be in high school still, and who learn college studies with precision, while their emotions and physical faculties have not grown equally with their brains. It is a bad thing. I think it produces affectations and stupidity in later years."

She recorded that observation the same day that Dr. and Mrs. Sheldon invited her to their home for dinner.

"I am looking forward to it with the greatest pleasure, for one is not every day asked to dine with a member of the faculty. I shall probably wear the embroidered waist (with the new sleeve) over the blue slip. Alas, no Mumsie will be here to tell me that my clothes are on right."

Miriam's ambivalence toward her debate-minded economics instructor landed her on the debating team in the spring of her junior year. Pressing the negative, she and her colleague trounced the editor of the *Oregon Weekly* and her team-mate in the matter of "Resolved: That Katrina Van Tassle was justified in her treat-

ment of Ichabod Crane." Boiled down, the issue was the ethical aspect of flirting and, as a novelist with *Jezebel* behind her, Van Waters had an easy time unmasking Van Tassle.

While the debate waxed, several fun-loving dormitory boys raided the hall kitchen and carried off all the cakes. Only high windows prevented their adding an ice cream freezer to their booty. After refreshments, Miriam and the economics teacher danced, she repressing a yawn as she listened to his voluble discourse on how much the University of Wisconsin ladies of his college years had admired his dancing.

With A's in Philosophy (Spencer), Philosophy (Aristotle) and Sociology, and B's in Psychology and Contemporary European Literature, Miriam relaxed at the thought of final exams and turned to spring housecleaning.

"Woman really cannot emancipate herself," she wrote her parents, "as long as that innate tendance of spring housecleaning—inbred from generations—assails her once a year. I get along well enough until then. The dirt and trash I turned out of our room make me wonder how we ever lived in it healthfully."

Her brainpan filled and her dustpan empty, Miriam closed out her junior year with a labor of art—decorating a brand new university library for the annual alumni banquet. Confronted by a large room of classical outlines and yellow tones, she fell to with Grecian garlands of laurel and cedar for the walls and, for the top row of shelves, bursts of nasturtiums, yellow poppies, and buttercups massed in brass vases and dull green potteries.

"Never before," the President of the University intoned to chairman Van Waters of the decorating committee, "have I seen a more beautiful setting for this occasion."

The praise warmed Miriam on the long, slow, train ride north to Portland where she was folded lovingly into the rectory and

called "Mayo," a name derived from her sister Ruth's childish attempts to say "Miriam." As Mayo, she returned that summer to the beloved Cannon Beach, where she cast the spell of her imaginative being on the youngest and last of her siblings, Ralph, whom she at first had called "the enfant," and that summer "the King of Siam." To her brother, George, who remembered her as a bloom-ered wraith who could climb trees, run like a deer and wrestle like a boy, she remained "Bobby."

In the late-green, early-gold days of Oregon's September, she returned to Eugene to find a message awaiting her at the registrar's office. Dr. Sheldon, her philosophy professor, wanted to see her immediately. He told her he had to be away for a few days and wanted her to arrange his classes and interview freshmen candidates. Departing within the hour, he left her to sort out the mud-dle of freshman credits, sign study cards and plot class schedules.

The rooms she had cleaned so thoroughly the previous spring had been rented to earlier birds; she and her sister, Ruth, walked the streets for hours hunting a new place and finding, at last, two rooms in a house three blocks from the campus. The front room, furnished with a small wood-burning stove, two chairs, a couch and a small book case, was their study. An alcove, separated from the study by a brown curtain, was just big enough for a double bed and a bureau. Across the hall was a kitchen with a small cook stove, a table, cupboards and an upholstered woodbox. For this and a bath down the hall, Miriam and her sister paid sixteen dollars a month, including electricity and wood for heating and cooking. Miriam calculated that their joint budget of forty dollars a month would allow them twenty-four dollars worth of provisions, on which they could live like princes.

Princely menus for a weekend were part of a letter Miriam

wrote home "to give you an idea of what is nourishing your daughters' insides:

Yesterday lunch (our first meal):

Beef bouillon—sliced tomatoes—toast and egg—tea.

Last night dinner:

Veal cutlets—boiled potatoes—coffee—graham crackers—grapes.

Breakfast (today):

Cantaloupe—Germeal—toast—fried tomatoes—coffee.

Sunday dinner:

Beef soup—pronounced most excellent by the consumers—made of a .05 soup bone—baked potatoes—fresh corn—tomato and green pepper salad—chocolate and graham crackers—grapes.

"It took, not counting the soup which was simmering all morning, twenty-five minutes to cook the dinner. And it cost us .08 apiece. We are going to live very cheaply and yet have nicer things to eat than we had before. Plenty of fruits and vegetables are in the market and at a reasonable figure. We buy fresh eggs from our landlady and milk, when we need it, across the street.

"P.S. When you send the jams and jellies, please send a two-pound can—ground—of Dependable Coffee."

Wheat berries and corn-meal mush, fried cucumbers and rice fritters—Miriam knew all the economical, quick meals that filled the pauses in her crowded schedule as batter filled the concavities of a muffin pan. But when she had extra cash from the *Portland Oregonian* for her newswriting, she splurged with a Sunday chicken or a roast of beef and flanked it with such an array of vegetables and dessert as her mother would have mustered for a visiting bishop.

Miriam's separation from St. David's in Portland and her father's home preaching had somewhat the same effect on her spiritual diet as her removal from the rectory and her mother's home

cooking had on her eating habits, which were not quite so consistently wholesome as the menus for that first weekend indicated.

To her mother's gentle hint that Lenten services were coming up on the calendar, Miriam pleaded fatigue from attending classes four days out of five and said that she tried not to starve her spiritual side, if she had one worth developing. Often from sheer weariness or desire for fresh air, she could do no more than make good resolutions. After an Easter service at St. Mary's, in Eugene, Miriam wrote of the rector that he was so old that his speech was blurred and that his sermon might have shown thought and wisdom had she been able to hear it. She thought the music unbearable and she longed for the choir boys or the simple singing of the people at St. David's.

"Mother dear," she wrote, "much as I grieve to state it—material propriety *does* go a long way—at least in my sordid soul—in producing spiritual propriety."

All her life, Miriam was to compare other ministers with her father and find most of them woefully short. Since most of those she heard preach or read prayers were Episcopal clergymen, these suffered disproportionate casualties from her critical fire. In her senior year at the university, she heard the rector who had replaced the reverend oldster with the halting diction. Of the new man, she wrote:

"Of course he did not do nearly as well as *our* minister—and made me feel homesick. No one can read prayers and scriptures at all well but Father, unless perhaps Bishop Keator.* Is Mr. Pomeroy behaving himself in the narrow path of virtue these days? I trust, for St. David's sake, that it will not be necessary to fire him. We have had *such* a time with organists."

* Frederic William Keator

Nineteen Hundred and Eight was important in Miriam's life not only because it added twelve months' seasoning to her maturity, useful tiers to her well-structured mind, and a bachelor of arts degree to her name, but also because it disclosed and tested a talent that was to serve her all her life, personally and professionally. Young Genevieve Parke had sensed that talent when she listened to Miriam's readings of *Jezebel* over the teacups and rock cake at the rectory. The dinner guest who had argued with Miriam over the butter surely had known he was in the presence of that talent. Miriam's mother had seen it glinting from Miriam's posture, gestures, speech, facial expressions, and eyes. Miriam herself had acknowledged it in her inventory of her personality facets.

Miriam was a natural actress.

The university drama group's play that year was Sheridan's *The Rivals*, and Miriam won the role of Mrs. Malaprop by a wide margin over her competitors. As rehearsals developed, she bubbled with anticipation. An enveloping, warm contentment seized her, vulnerable only to momentary spells of anxiety.

"The costumes have arrived," she wrote her parents, "but we have not tried them on. I only hope they fit. We have the final rehearsal in the Opera House Wednesday night. From all accounts the house will be packed. I am decidedly nervous."

The *Eugene Register* and *Eugene Weekly* covered a rehearsal and wrote advance stories. The *Register's* man said, "Another mirth-provoker is Miss Van Waters who, as Mrs. Malaprop, the designing widow lady, employs a somewhat doubtful vocabulary in upholding her pretensions to gentility. Miss Van Waters is exceedingly clever in her interpretation of the part, and it is predicted that she will make a hit in the ludicrous role."

The *Weekly's* critic looked behind the play and found a revolution:

"Heretofore it has been the custom for graduating classes to appear in dramas centered about ancient life, as they have deemed the costumes and environment of those times to be more in keeping with their classical features and senioral dignity. But the Class of 1908 has been noted, in its four years' history, both for its utter disregard for customs and precedents and its love of innovation, and this instance only emphasizes the consistency of its actions.

"Secure in the belief that their countenances are expressive of enough intelligence and dignity to render unnecessary the aid of habiliatory accessories, the members of the class have decided upon a modern production."

The Portland *Oregonian* had to disqualify Mrs. Malaprop as a critic of her own performance, but a substitute reviewer wrote that "Miss Van Waters, of Portland, who played the heavy feminine role of Mrs. Malaprop, was especially good . . . everything went off smoothly with the exception of a few slight breaks caused by the incessant shower of vegetables which the various underclassmen chose to bestow on the actors in an attempt to play a college prank on the senior class."

Miriam omitted the vegetables in her account to her family:

"The dress rehearsal was disheartening. We all felt that failure loomed ahead of us. Everyone was stricken dumb at the critical moment. But the play itself served to put life into us. The house was packed. Not a seat left. None of us had ever played before an Opera House in our lives, so the very magnitude of the audience was terrifying. Webster Kincaid certainly made a great hit. He was splendid. But he got so excited that beads of sweat rolled off his face and blended all the wrinkles and paint.

"My costume was a wonderful creation of quilted blue satin and an overdress of brocaid. It was supposed to have been red, but no one minded. I wore a great white wig aggressively curled.

Deep wrinkles of gray paint were artistically laid on by Germanus, that Glee Club freshman who did the “stunt”—you remember. He also painted me white where people are red, and red where they are white. I was a lovely object—one you would have been proud to acknowledge as an offspring!

“Ruth Hansen lent me a pink ostrich feather fan and a powder puff. Ruth P. lent me a red glass heart, to be worn as a pendant on a black velvet ribbon around Mrs. Malaprop’s withered throat. I wore the turquoise ring—so you can imagine how *grand* was the total effect.

“At the end of Act I my mouth got so dry that I nearly choked. It took a whole lemon to restore me. But that was all the stage fright. It didn’t last very long, and I had the entire act to recover in.”

The “social has-been,” the “clumsy bear” not coping with the waltz, the “stick-in-the-mud” of no talent—all these imagined Miriams evaporated in the same heat from footlights that incubated a Miriam who could hold an audience compellingly, tip it off balance with a deft comic line and, in later years, in other kinds of theaters, command from it respect that bordered on reverence.

In the exhilaration of her Opera House success, she did not—probably could not—fully analyze the joyful release she received in return for giving pleasure to others. Later on, she would understand the healing aspects of it, the paradox of centripetal self-enrichment resulting from centrifugal self-expenditure.

It stemmed, essentially, from an old idea that she had heard in other terms from the pulpit of St. David’s and in the rectory parlor seminars: the noblest and finest fruits of the self follow after its death. Behind the grease paint, within the white wig and the satin gown, Miriam lost and found herself for one brief evening.

She asked her mother to save the reviews of *The Rivals* as she “may someday wish to show them to my grandnieces.”

Whether she had already ruled out the possibility of showing them to her children and grandchildren, or whether she was merely hedging her chances for marriage, or indirectly declaring her intention not to marry, was not clearly implicit in her statement, and only in retrospect does the remark qualify as a possible straw in the wind.

As commencement approached, Miriam worked hard on an oration for an oratory contest in June:

"I would set before you tonight a natural law; of proportions so immense, of interest so vital that it may be said to underlie all animate life. It is the primal law of the survival of the variation. The unique specimen, not the average, has the best chance of existence."

Her commencement present from home arrived in a large box. It was an expensive opera cloak that both overwhelmed her and recalled her image of herself as an unsocial being. With mixed feelings she wrote that she was "deeply grieved at this latest instance of my parents' extravagance—and for me! Dearest, you are both too kind. But it is also very rash. I don't need such a beautiful thing as an opera cloak. I am not going to any party or dance—I shall probably never go. It will hang to the end of its days in state and disuse—I feel dreadfully to think you bought it. I told you darling not to do it—especially at this season of stress . . . but don't think I don't appreciate your beautiful thoughtfulness."

Her father, delegated that year to the General Convention of his Church, wrote Miriam that he was unhappily going to be absent from her commencement, and hoped she would forgive him. Miriam suspected that a lack of funds owing to the extravagance of the opera cloak was the real reason he couldn't come to Eugene, in which case, she replied, she would be broken-hearted.

"By variation we mean unlikeness, departure from the aver-

age type, a pushing forth beyond the stereotyped level of ordinary development into fresh and numerous activities. Unlikeness, variation, is a sign of vitality . . . the first step toward survival. Variations survive because, being unlike, they may enter thereby fields of least competition."

For some reason, Miriam was "disgusted" with the oration. "It is pretty poor stuff," she wrote her father, "but perhaps a forceful delivery will cram it down their throats!"

"In the intense struggle for life all lower, weaker, unfit individuals are doomed to fail. This is a truism of evolution. Why are these individuals unfit? They are unfit because they cannot adapt themselves to their changing surroundings. They do not vary. Having reached a certain level they remain unalterable, passive, stagnant; in the midst of changing forces the unfit are still inert; in the midst of progression they are stationary. Because they do not vary, they cannot endure."

However little Miriam thought of her oration, it won a one-hundred-dollar Beckman Prize. Shortly afterward, Miriam scored equally well with the faculty, graduating with honors in Philosophy, her major.

In the unreal calm that settles over a campus the day after graduation exercises, Miriam plotted with Dr. Sheldon the last details of her course toward a Master of Arts degree in Psychology, added her diploma to a jammed suitcase and telephoned the drayman.

Two years later, she made the trip from Eugene to Portland for the last time, with her "Masters" engraved on a twenty-dollar parchment, "that foolish sheet of paper," her cheeks still burning from the challenge of a long oral examination, but her appetite for knowledge unsatisfied. She had resolved to teach, but not until she could swing her feet from the top of the ladder.

The top rung was three years higher up.

CHAPTER SIX

You Couldn't Be Run Over in Worcester

From a writing desk in the observation car of the Northern Pacific Railroad's "North Coast Limited," eastbound, Miriam watched the lights of Butte, Montana, slowly retreating. They reminded her of a band of diamonds set in jet. It was after midnight, but she was too excited to sleep. Across the aisle, deep in a lounge chair and Turgenev's *Torrents of Spring*, was Elizabeth Woods—"Betty" now, but soon to be "Bess"—a fellow Oregonian, daughter of a retired Sante Fe Railroad physician, a friend of Miriam's graduate years at the university in Eugene and bound, with her, for Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Sometime around midnight—the train had been two hours late arriving in Butte—a cousin of Betty's, alerted by telegraph, had boarded the train in the depot there and given the two girls a box of the best candy in town. At the sight of him, Miriam was

smitten, for he was, in her estimation, a very attractive-looking gentleman, and his visit tantalizingly brief.

Ever since the train had left Portland, Miriam and Betty had kept to themselves, although there were several young, lonely but tongue-tied men in the observation car. Now Miriam finished her letter to her mother, watched the Butte diamonds fade in the west and thought of Betty's cousin, pooling her fresh-paint image of him with dimmer ones of two men who had attracted her in Portland earlier that year.

One of them, Stanley Arnold, a federal attorney called to Portland to try a case, had been charming to Miriam. She had enjoyed his company and suffered twinges of regret when he left town. The other was a regional forester who, according to Miriam, controlled half the timber in the United States. He was stenciled in her thoughts as "a Yale man—young—and nice."

A little giddy, she walked forward through the swaying train and climbed into an upper berth for her first night's sleep on the rails since the unremembered childhood trip from Pennsylvania to Oregon. With agility she attributed to her "Chinese aptitude of mind and legs," she undressed and listened from her pillow to the clicking of the wheels, letting her thoughts stream homeward in the locomotive's smoky wake, because everything that lay ahead of the cowcatcher was fantasy, and the maturing scientist in her overruled excessive synthesizing of the unknown.

It was September, and back home her father was anticipating an honorary Ph.D. degree from Union College in the east. The choir boys were resisting their way back to rehearsals, all of them browned from a summer in the sun. The Women's Auxiliary . . .

There was Ruth, her sister, still testing their mother's strict standards, chafing in the yoke of daughtership in a clergyman's family. Miriam had written her mother about Ruth: "It is hard

being seventeen. I never knew a girl that age who didn't wish herself dead—not one. I suppose it is too much life flooding over all at once."

Then, unbidden, that clown in the circus at Eugene popped out of her memory, igniting a blush she felt in the dark. She and Ruth Parkhurst, a close friend in graduate school, had heard the calliope's piped appeal as they strolled across the campus and had hurried to the source. Just inside the tent a clown, playing usher and making fools of those who rejected him, walked solemnly up to them and offered his arm, which they refused. He insinuated himself between them and, when they continued to ignore him, shouted to the crowd:

"These old maid school marms never bite, anyway!"

The university crowd thought it hilarious and chorused their glee as Miriam and Ruth, smiling sickly, walked ten miles to their seats, Miriam feeling as conspicuous as if she had been naked.

The night wail of the locomotive whistle pierced her thoughts. Resolutely she turned over and closed her eyes. After her prayers, she slept.

Chicago was a wonderland where friends of her father met the two girls at the station and drove them through "long, hard-paved, brilliantly lighted streets, past wonderful parks and stolid brick houses" to a late cup of tea and a stationary bed. The next day, Mr. Van Waters arrived from a business trip elsewhere in the midwest and joined them, guiding them east by way of his parental home in Rensselaer Falls.

Miriam, seeing the St. Lawrence River for the first time, longed "to live for days without desire, floating down that river," drifting over reflections of red towers and slender spires that fell from both banks across the river's crystal clearness.

Her cousin, Sherwood, drove them home from the station in

a light buggy. Miriam's father introduced her to her Uncle Charles, a physician, her Aunt Mary and her grandmother. After supper, Sherwood played the piano impressively. Miriam wrote her mother that she and Sherwood were friendly, but that she hadn't yet discovered his "inner machinery," although she liked as much of him as she knew. Her uncle's house struck her as incongruous in its blending of modern thought and advanced views on the one hand and, on the other, the quaint dishes, tidies, decorations, pictures, flowers, and household arrangements.

"Imagine a woman using pillow shams and crocheted toilet mats and reading modern club literature," she wrote her mother.

There was no time for a prolonged family reunion in Rensselaer Falls. Registration day at Clark was less than a week away; Miriam, Betty and Mr. Van Waters had to hurry along.

Her Oregon Philosophy professor, Sheldon, held a doctorate from Clark University, and it was his enthusiasm for the faculty there that influenced Miriam's decision to go. She had sent her master's thesis on from Oregon and won a fellowship in Social Psychology under an eastern giant in that field, Dr. Stanley Hall, President of Clark. Hall had already persuaded Carl Jung, the Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist, to lecture at Clark; later, he introduced Sigmund Freud personally to the United States.

The three Oregonians arrived in Worcester Sept. 22, 1910, Miriam and Betty going to the YWCA to live in rooms that cost them twenty-five cents a day, while the rector settled in a hotel down the street. They met in a small restaurant on Main Street for their meals.

Miriam wrote back to Portland that Worcester—it took her several days to get the spelling right—"is very pleasant and full of polite, courteous people—with frightful hats and ill-fitting clothes. They make no noise. Father attracted attention and amazed ev-

everyone yesterday by sneezing on the main street! One couldn't be run over here. Someday I'm going to ride to the end of the street-car line and spit, swear and stamp my feet just to relieve my feelings.

"But the university is wonderful. There are about 90 students (6 women)—all mature men—some of them as old as Father, others under 30. Many Europeans, one Negro, one Japanese are enrolled. Each student is a sort of specialist. The plan of work is wholly personal. You go to any, or all, lectures without restraint—or you stay away and work. Theses count for everything. I think I can do the best work of my life here."

Miriam stood somewhat in awe of Clark and her colleagues, and appraised Dr. Hall as a combination of Hercules and Aristotle, "big, very strong, courteous and original. His wife is charming—but wholly without self-consciousness or 'dignity' or style in the accepted sense. I spent an hour in Dr. Hall's study. Free and easy of access and full of hospitality is that study. Every Monday evening students drop in informally to discuss their views and read their papers."

Finding "Worcester poor in apartments," Miriam and Betty Woods rented the entire second floor of a "three-decker" house whose first and third floors were occupied by a French physician, Dr. Jacques, his wife, small boy and young girl. Only two blocks from Clark, this spacious apartment's front parlor opened out on a mezzanine affording a pleasing view of some hills, a good residential street and streetcars droning back and forth. An upright piano, highbacked sofa, stuffed chairs, dull green carpet, and vaguely-matching wallpaper distinguished the parlor from the rear study, which was separated from it by folding doors and offered, among other things, two couches and an old-fashioned, carved organ.

From the study walls, a French grandmother watched the new

tenants with a look of amazement. In two other picture frames, Longfellow worked at his desk and a fox skulked toward some woods, carrying a goose in his jaws. Miriam and Betty substituted their own pictures and set their brasses and other treasures around the apartment as marks of their identities.

The rest of the floor was divided into a large dining room—stocked with gold-rimmed dishes, glassware in variety, plated silverware, light oak chairs and a china closet—a barn of a kitchen with a commodious pantry adjacent and a large bedroom with an adjoining bath.

As Miriam unpacked her trunk, she reflected that she was going to be well dressed, because Worcester, from her observations, was slow in such matters. That comforting conclusion banished whatever apprehensions she might have had that she would seem an Oregon backwoods bumpkin, as conspicuous among effete easterners of Worcester as she had been when she was the butt of a clown's practical joke in the circus tent at Eugene.

Within a few days, she shed nearly all traces of her awe of Clark's faculty and her fellow students. She strode over the campus bareheaded—Betty even whistled as she walked—and rolled up her sleeves in the library. She dined with her father in the home of a man who had twice been mayor of Worcester. The mayor's wife, she reported to her mother, was sincerely cordial, but the rest of the family, despite the two mayoralty terms, "can't compare to our Oregonians in any way."

Her defensive provincial pride developed a slow leak when she was invited for a day to the Templeton, Massachusetts, home of Florence White, a sister of Miriam's co-sufferer in the circus tent, Ruth Parkhurst. She traveled to Gardner on the Boston and Maine, then took a trolley car to Templeton, "a beautiful village, characteristically New England, set on a hill from which one can see the hills of Vermont and New Hampshire. We had dinner at a

fashionable inn where members of the Worcester Hunt Club go every fall to hunt foxes in true English style. The place was full of people from Boston—regular natives—of whom I met a great number.”

At a Worcester music festival, Miriam and Betty heard Maude Powell, “the greatest woman violinist of whom I used to write so learnedly in the northwest. We sat in the gallery and observed the flower of New England and New York below us. There were many celebrities from all over the east.”

At the wedding of a relative of her Oregon philosophy professor, she met many prominent Worcester people, but her eyes really widened when the Clark campus swarmed with distinguished scholars and diplomats attending an international History Conference. She and Betty were deeply flattered at being asked to pour coffee at a reception for the celebrities, the faculty, and students at Dr. Hall’s home.

A Frenchman with a red mustache and beautiful manners discovered Miriam behind a big brass samovar from which she poured coffee at the reception and introduced her to a dazzling array of celebrities.

Tingling, she wrote her father, now returned to Rensselaer Falls, that “Betty and I personally met many noted men, ambassadors, Fellows of the Royal Society in London, professors from all over the world. I particularly am interested in Dr. Ellis, a Negro, Fellow of the Royal George Society, for eight years Secretary of the American Legation in Liberia, and author of three books considered standard in their line.

“He is coming to call on us tomorrow to read us parts of the manuscript of a fourth book, dealing with the future of the African Negro. I never met a more polite, learned, dignified man in my life.”

When the Liberian Legation Secretary appeared at the Van

Waters-Woods apartment, he brought with him a dazzling collection of African diamonds, jewelled handwork, carved rings, leopard claws mounted in soft-worked gold, and additional chapters of his fourth book. He gave each of his hostesses a gift—Miriam didn't describe them—and departed for a round of lectures, dinners, and receptions in Boston, leaving Miriam with the gift and the memory of "one of the most fascinating men I ever met."

She walked two miles through an October afternoon from a clinic in abnormal psychology at the State Hospital for the Insane to an ice cream parlor in Worcester with a Dr. Baird, a former Fellow in Leipzig. "He is, I imagine, about 35—rather good looking and very athletic. We may become friends—for here where many of the students are as old as (or young as) Father, and many married men and women come to study together, and authors come to finish their books in quiet and seclusion—there are no fast lines between students and professors."

A few hours after the walk she attended a Bohemian Club dance with a young Canadian named DuBois and, a few days later, was escorted to a musicale by a Mr. Hartsen, of whom she wrote: "We shall probably see more of Hartsen. He is red-bearded and very nice and possesses a good voice. He took his M.A. from Columbia."

It was not until October 30 that Miriam got a chance to go to Boston, which she called "the real centre of the universe." The occasion was a lecture at Lowell Institute by "the great psychologist, Tichnor." Naively, with no thought of a reservation, Miriam and Betty went to the College Club, a women's residence, only to find there were no rooms available. By the time they reached the Y.W.C.A. following a streetcar conductor's faulty directions, it, too, was full. The pilgrims thereupon went to Jordan Marsh, bought a street map and mastered the streetcar system, ending up

in a downtown hotel that cost them a dollar and a half instead of the dollar they had expected to pay at the College Club.

That evening, they saw Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* made over by Oscar Strauss into *The Chocolate Soldier*.

"The music was the best I ever heard," Miriam wrote home. "The turning point in American comedy-opera, they say, has been reached. Nothing like it since *Pinafore*. We sat in the gallery, but saw many of Boston's higher lights."

The following morning, they went to the Boston Library "and saw, really saw, the famous paintings of Sir Galahad and his search for the Grail, and Sargent's Prophets. Now my Isaiah figure has become a living reality in wonderful color, and I love him dearly. But Sargent paints the mythological gods and goddesses best—his Moloch is a figure to be remembered for life—so strong, so relentless, so unconsciously cruel.

"We had lunch in the English Tea Room, where I fancy the cultured congregate. Some women wore sleeves rolled to the elbow and were mannish in the extreme. Others were bizarre, or conventional. But all had a 'look.' I didn't open my mouth for fear of putting my foot in it.

"Tell the girls the hair is worn very plain and tight, and white turn-down Dutch collars on the outside of coats are fashionable—and hats are practically untrimmed—just a small felt shape with a band, or feather. At least, so it is in Boston's best society."

Miriam's second trip to Boston, during Thanksgiving vacation, was guided by Florence White, whose country house in Templeton had impressed Miriam so much. This time, Miriam was introduced to the Touraine Hotel.

"It was a vision," she wrote her family in Portland. "Great bowls of hot-house tuberose stood everywhere. The best-dressed and best-looking people of Boston walked back and forth through

the corridor, and many of them were distinguished. The gowns, the flowers, the music—all were bewilderingly lovely. Yet Florence made us feel at ease. I never stopped to think of my clothes. After luncheon we stopped for a few moments in the Library which I imagine is a feature of the Touraine. Boston's cultured Highbrows meet here."

Thanksgiving weekend found Miriam living like Cinderella at the Whites' big, colonial "town house" in Lowell, where Thanksgiving dinner was so sumptuous and served with such grace and style that Miriam was more hypnotized than sated. Before returning to Worcester, she had one more glimpse of Boston, taking lunch with her hostess at the Women's Industrial Union, "a truly wonderful place where one may see the women of Boston who are interested in philanthropy and who help truly respectable working girls to acquire an accent. But really, it is like a great arts and crafts display room, filled with the skill of clever women."

In other sojourns in Boston her first year at Clark, Miriam was ineffably thrilled at a performance of *Il Trovatore*. The music, surpassing her wildest dreams, started tears rolling down her cheeks. She was entranced with the staging, acting, costumes, the crowded opera house, the "distinguished persons far below us in the boxes and the far more interesting people all around us—students; artists; poor or plainly dressed; the lights; the brilliant colors and, above all, the opera."

With Betty—now Bess—Woods, she visited the Christian Science Publishing Company "for Bess's mother's sake," and was "delighted." Bess had a personal friend, "a magnate," there, Miriam wrote her parents. "I never saw more intelligent organization of a great business, more happy faces, more sanitary and thoughtful care of working people. Their adherents grow by the thousands; they publish a successful daily newspaper and several magazines in Eng-

lish, French and German. Their main teaching is happiness and cleanness and cheerfulness—it seems—and tolerance.”

Miriam would one day acquire a deeper knowledge of Christian Science and find some of the tenets of that faith lying across her professional course like fallen trees.

Ruth St. Denis, the dancer, moved Miriam to tears. “She always conveys the spirit of primitive people. I suppose physical expression, gesture, dancing, is the most beautiful as well as the most human and natural of the arts. I once remember Beckie displayed all her soul in dancing by the seashore. And St. Denis had moments as spontaneous and joyous as those.”

Miriam wandered about Beacon Hill, which she described to her parents as “the old, old Boston. The houses, the doorways with white columns, the crooked streets and magnificent houses were all new to us, and full of fascination. We crossed over the Charles River on the new bridge and saw the lights begin to shine out of the dusk. Boston—unlike Portland—has a beautiful waterfront for children to play on, with grass and parks instead of warehouses.”

She was disappointed in Prof. George Santayana, then in his penultimate year of teaching Philosophy at Harvard, who lectured to a full house in Worcester. “I have read his books with pleasure,” she wrote home, “but the man himself was a disappointment. His views were hazy and indefinite and mystic. He delivered them in a cadenced voice, low and weak. The Worcester dowagers sat with their hats on and obscured the view. They liked him. One Clark woman said afterward she always went when he lectured because she liked his voice. Had it been announced that ‘Prof. Geo. Santayana, the renowned Lady Soother, will sing a Lullaby entitled “A Beautiful Thing Is a Thing of Beauty,”’ I suppose no one would have gone—yet that was all he did.”

Echoes of Miriam's social diffidence faded entirely in the adult society of Clark University and Boston. She was a Pacific salmon transplanted from the Columbia River to Boston Harbor, where she quickly learned the habits of codfish, finding them impressive in some aspects, but not necessarily enviable. When her parents hinted at sending her a fur muff for Christmas, she short-circuited the idea. "I could never carry a muff with all my books. Muffs are only for leisure-ladies such as I never hope to become. And such things I really detest, because they make one's throat sensitive." She was more interested in soft woolen underwear and an overcoat, because her raincoat didn't protect her from the cold.

More important, she discovered where her future lay. Before Christmas during her first year at Clark, Dr. Hall called her in and asked her to undertake a study of delinquent girls. It was a piece of research he wanted to fit into his own larger investigation of adolescence. Miriam liked the idea instantly and, within a few days, tackled the first of three hundred cases, working initially with the Boston Juvenile Court and arranging to serve as an intern the following summer at the famous Reformatory for Women in Bedford Hills, New York.

Excited at the prospects of her research, she resolved to return for another year at Clark. "There are several reasons," she wrote her parents. "First, everyone who has made a success, become a specialist, has spent more than 2 years. The field is so large and one cannot cram. It is just slow, reasonable growth. It is not only a question of the acquisition of knowledge, but the power to use it—of experience.

"Second, I am now working in a most promising field—one that may give rich returns—if I am not too hasty. I am tremendously interested and want to make a real success . . . I have

spent the week seeing important women superintendents of prisons, reformatories, etc., of schools for the feeble-minded. Later I shall stay in one of these institutions and get some valuable information.

"Some of the cleverest and most highly organized women in Massachusetts are engaged in this work—from the administrative side. And now if one can make it also a scientific study!

"Here is one interesting fact—the study of women criminals is the study of girls under my own age. The mass is under 20—the rest not often exceeding 25. It would be interesting to compare their wages, or their means of support, with their offenses. I want you to think over this idea with me. I have said nothing to Hall about another year—but want your loving advice and cooperation first. It is great to feel backed by such a family as mine."

As her first Christmas away from home approached, Miriam felt the burden of estrangement weighing upon her. Her heart drifted west: "All my longing is for the West. I love it passionately—it is paradise. The skies here are the most beautiful I have ever seen, but the land is cold and hard—and the people aren't so very much different from the land."

Her Uncle Harry and Aunt Florence Vosburg invited her to Dubois, Pennsylvania, for Christmas, but she could not afford the round trip. She window-shopped in Worcester and took her time selecting presents for her family—a necklace of varied non-precious stones for her mother; silk socks for her father; a Clark pennant and a hiker's drinking cup for George; toys for Ralph; a little-finger ring for Beckie and a scarf for Ruth. In a short note following the package, she said she and Bess would have a duck dinner for Christmas.

Then, in a year-end inventory of her intangible assets, she

listed her father's mind and both parents' character as having increased in value:

"I count myself fortunate, beyond most people, in having such a man for a father. I have discovered that that is the most important thing, really, the possession of the right sort of parents, and I have only one proof of my own intelligence—ie., the fact that I selected wisely."

Other intellectual wares within her ken fared less well:

"Some of these students are mutts! Any kind of absurdity they will accept if it be accompanied with footnotes, and nothing is so imbecilic that they won't believe it, if it be provided with a diagram and bibliography. The cleverest of the lot is a young Chinese sent here by the government. Last night, at Seminary, he gave the best talk of the season."

She was knee-deep in a thesis of her own, debating whether to call it "Some Aspects of Twentieth-Century Pessimism" or, simply, "Studies in Twentieth-Century Pessimism."

She was scheduled to deliver the paper in February at one of Dr. Hall's seminars.

As the day of presentation neared, she scrambled paragraphs and tried to cut the thesis down to forty-eight minutes' reading time, only to find that excisions reduced the whole thing "to a junk heap." She read it aloud in the study and clutched her hair in horror. She tried a cup of tea and found herself forgetting to swallow. On passing a mirror as she paced the floor, she paused to indict her image:

"Miriam, you are a perfect ass."

At six-thirty on the evening of thesis delivery day, Bess Woods took Miriam in tow, helping her into a clean shirtwaist and stiff collar and bending on a new tie. Miriam brushed her clothes, polished her shoes and took off at a trot for Dr. Hall's seminar. He

appeared at seven-ten to find Miriam seated in a room filled with her peers, stroking the house cat with bogus nonchalance.

"My knees were knocking like knuckle-bones," she noted later, "as I took my place at the table, opened the thesis and began.

"It seems reflex mechanism carries one along fairly well. But then I got easier and finally forgot all about the people. When the paper was over the discussion began. As usual, everybody talked and argued and fired questions and aired views. Above all ruled the keen wit and master intelligence of Stanley Hall.

"I sat there until 8:30 answering points, etc. In the end, no one disproved them, and afterward there were some kind remarks made to me—a few words of praise and best of all a very few intelligent words of understanding criticism. So it's over and now I am known for my quality—either as a fool or not. Next day I had a nervous headache, but I shall never feel so timid again. The ice is broken."

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Prostitute Is Not a Type

By early spring of her first year at Clark, Miriam had gathered an impressive mass of data on the three hundred delinquent girls she chose for her study. The mere paper involved made a huge sail for her academic boat, and she was heeling along in a fresh breeze when she got the first inkling that she and Dr. Hall did not agree on where she should make port.

Worse, Hall was asking questions of her which suggested that he was not sure there was a keel in her boat.

The first sign of disagreement between the two came as a mild complaint from Miriam about the belittling of philosophy at Clark. "The cry here," she wrote, "is 'get to work, to the laboratory, to the streets, the homes, the real lives of real people.' Everything observed—or felt—is true knowledge."

A little later, Miriam got down to cases:

"I am becoming convinced that Clark is *not* the best place to

get my Ph.D . . . my mind is made up that Dr. Hall is not now the man he was while Dr. Sheldon was here, and that he is too arbitrary, though fascinatingly kind to me, and clever, to do one's best work under."

That comment came after Dr. Hall had rejected a thesis representing three years' work by one of Miriam's fellow candidates, a young man who Miriam believed had been driven to the edge of a breakdown over the failure. By taking him home and sustaining him with one of her best dinners, she believed she had prevented that breakdown.

"It is born in upon me," Miriam wrote her father, "that a trained psychologist measuring heart beats in a laboratory experiment in attention, memory, fatigue, etc., is rated higher in the modern academic world than the most oracular of living philosophers.

"On the other hand, Dr. Hall is interested only in *genetic* methods, tracing of origins of the racial stock of knowledge, feeling, etc., and in brilliant expositions of theories I cannot possibly accept. He uses his tractable students to collect data of all kinds which later he combines.

"He is a wonderful man, and an inspirer. Don't imagine that I am in the least disappointed with him. But I must tell you that my work lacks a core. Perhaps it is a temperamental necessity on my part to possess a broad, vague field for speculation. If so I fear I cannot write a Doctor's thesis in Clark—for that depends on one's ability to dissect thoroughly one inch of reality.

"But I am trusting that after my next talk with Dr. Hall I can harness myself to some sort of mental peanut and by much straining and groaning, lift it from the ground."

Miriam considered compromising:

"Didn't Thoreau say that 'the youth gathers lumber to build a temple or a palace or a bridge to the moon and, after a while, the

middle-aged man decides to build a woodshed of the lumber'? Well, that's my case. I must decide now to build a woodshed. O shades of Huxley and Spencer—and the old scientific-philosophical literary school! It is dead and gone."

Her talk with Hall solved nothing. "Matters are about as before. I am working in philosophy—but Dr. Hall insists on edging in his own problems. And his edging in is like the camel's nose in the tent . . . the fact remains I am not doing as much constructive work as I had hoped and the fault is partly Dr. Hall's."

Such tidings stirred up the rectory in Portland and, in a mollifying mood, Miriam wrote that "the situation between Dr. Hall and myself has never become strained. Personally I admire him and his work with all the enthusiasm of ignorance! If I may venture to put the three of us, or including the other doctor in the family, four of us, on record, I should say that neither of the present Dr. Van Waterses, nor the prospective one, will ever think in the same channel with Dr. Hall. His ancestors burned witches and nailed ears to pillories and let their women do all the work. The only sport they ever had was reading Jonathan Edwards and the Penal Code. We are all Dutch, and different. But it will be all right in the end. As long as I'm in the army I have to obey the rules."

In the end, it was not all right. Hall's conviction that only Psychology had a right to exist and that all the old philosophy was bankrupt prevailed over Miriam's opposition. The showdown came at a seminar. Miriam summed up her case studies of delinquent girls to Hall, several professors and a larger than usual audience of graduate students who had sniffed dissension in the situation.

Hall was outraged that Miriam had no basic theory of delinquency. He seemed to feel personally repudiated because she offered no Electra complex or related explanations for adolescent

waywardness. Miriam didn't budge. She insisted that a prostitute was not a type, and ended her summary with a "here I stand" declaration she would not modify:

"Only by studying the individual delinquent can the problem be solved."

Thus the girl with the deep Dutch currents and the immovable man descended from ear-nailers came to a parting of the ways. Miriam bore no grudge then nor forty-nine years later when she said, "We can't blame Stanley Hall for thinking my attitude superficial and unscientific. The modern, personal casework approach had not then arisen. And remember, please, he let Prof. Alexander Chamberlain take me on in Anthropology."

Alexander Chamberlain transferred to Miriam's impressionable mind a decalcomania of his personality that never faded. He was a brilliant scholar whose authority in his field was camouflaged by shyness, tenderness, and childlike simplicity. "Erratic, adorable, and always different," Miriam described him to a friend. He disagreed with virtually every other member of the faculty while admiring them all. Entitled to wear the most impressive academic robes on Clark's Founders' Day, he wore an old suit. On Lincoln's Birthday, he tabled his lecture on Anthropology and declared for the true, simple, natural environment that served Lincoln better than a college education. He capped his tribute with a verse in the style of Robert Burns:

The schools can make a learned man,
A Ph.D. and a' that;
But make a Lincoln scarce they can,
With brains and gear, and a' that.

He roamed like a Zuni Indian through the disordered, book-strewn house he shared with his poetry-quoting, red-haired wife

and ten-year-old daughter, Ruth, who impressed Miriam as being more unusual than her parents. The Chamberlains, disbelievers in systems of education, were educating their bright daughter at home. Miriam and Bess were the only Clark students admitted to associate membership in this household where three natural geniuses lived like chums in charming disarray and freedom, their exclusiveness rooted in shyness. Miriam's every visit there was a happy occasion. The amiability and intellectual give and take reminded her of the rectory in Portland.

Tolerant of Mrs. Chamberlain's household chaos, Miriam was less so of Mrs. Hall's. She described Clark's first lady as a "hit-and-miss housewife" behind whose sofa pillows "one might find *anything*." Also, Miriam wrote her mother, the "most dreadful" kinds of washing could be seen hanging on the Halls' clothesline, including the presidential winter underwear, euphemistically described as "flannels."

Miriam's conflict with Hall not only switched her out of Social Psychology into Anthropology, but also banished her misgivings about the focus of her doctor's thesis under Hall. She had written home that she was worried about her thesis, unable to settle on it because "I won't split hairs, yet I cannot make my net so big that everything real drops out. I am blackening pages of paper with notes."

Mrs. Van Waters feared that her daughter might get lost in Plato's Athenian grove and lose the common touch. "When you finish your studies," she wrote, "might you be too intellectual to love the companionship of ordinary intellects?" Miriam replied immediately:

"In the first place I could never encounter an ordinary intellect in my own family—because there isn't any ordinary one among them. And next, my darling, I am sure that the more one pierces

into the secrets of life the more one loves all mankind, the lowly and wicked, the great and pure, the specialists and scientists, and the people who stay at home and make the world go 'round. Perhaps the old scholastic education of classics and hard mathematics made one's heart proud and one's neck stiff, but the 'new' education is simply crammed with real facts about real people—so that the more one understands, the greater is one's joy in life and people.

"You talk of my great ambition, darling, and I do want to accomplish something definite; but every young professional man or woman has to go as far as I before even beginning to work. So my precious I am not in any sense 'superior,' and I want you to be as sure of my love and its warmth as you are of Ralph's and Father's."

Mr. Van Waters, in 1911, ventured out of the frying pan of theology into the fire of business. Feeling the pinch of supporting a family of seven (Miriam required \$300 a year for living expenses not included in her fellowship at Clark) and anticipating the costs of educating their two sons, the Van Waterses sold a parcel of Mrs. Van Waters' land on the east side of Portland to provide the rector an investment stake in a new brass works in Portland. His partner, who also owned a small hardwood floor-strip mill, had obtained patents on a new method of milling brass products. The partnership flourished at the outset, and Mr. Van Waters spent as much time in the mill office as he could spare from his ecclesiastical duties.

About the same time her father began doubling in brass, Miriam got her first look at Boston's Juvenile Court. Prof. Chamberlain's brother-in-law, Roy Cushman, an officer of the court, took Miriam and Bess there for an afternoon.

"A most interesting afternoon," she wrote. "Most of the offenses committed are either theft of food or playing ball on the

street. The boys (some of them) are very good looking—as bright and fine as any I ever saw—14,948 were brought in last year. Really, their elders ought to be busy building playgrounds instead of locking them up. But Boston is as conservative about ball-playing as about woman suffrage.”

Before the court visit, Miriam and Bess toured the State House where Miriam would one day undergo the ordeal of her life. She wrote home of the magnificent paintings of the Revolution and New England history and spoke of the “wonderful inlaid marble floor with bits of brass cannon. But the main trouble with this New England is that it lives entirely in its senescent past, believes everything has been done and has no thought of ever accomplishing anything more. Why, in Boston a house condemned 23 years ago as unfit for the wretched tenants who live there is still standing! The misery of Boston is frightful. We saw much of it.”

A rabbi of Boston's Temple Israel, a well-known social worker and orator, emerged whole and triumphant from the clerical field that Miriam kept under the smoking barrels of her critical artillery. “His address was excellent, full of Father's views,” she informed the Portland rectory. “Temple Israel is the most beautiful church I was ever in; the music was splendid and the Jewish service is quiet and short and full of pathos and courage.”

On the recommendation of Roy Cushman, Miriam was interviewed by Judge Harvey H. Baker for a job with the Boston Juvenile Court. She could have had the job, and might have cut short her studies at Clark to take it, or tried to manage both, but Chamberlain advised her against it. Clark renewed her fellowship. Her enthusiasm for working with Chamberlain soared, and she went home for summer vacation committed to another year at Clark and fired with an interest in courts and prisons that never waned.

In the fall, she returned to Juvenile Court at the first opportunity, this time for a day and a half. "You know that hearings are private," she wrote home. "It is scarcely or never that anyone enters the little room where the juvenile sessions are held . . . but Roy Cushman reintroduced me to Judge Baker and after I had talked to him, he allowed me the great privilege of sitting at the hearings. I learned much that was new and valuable. I was profoundly thrilled with the importance of this matter, but as I hope later to write an article for the *Oregonian*, I'll leave descriptions till then, my darlings."

During a recess in Judge Baker's hearings, Miriam met two women experienced in juvenile court and probation work: the Misses Foss and Friday, the latter the organizer of Baltimore's Juvenile Court.

"These capable women helped strengthen my own beforehand conviction that there is no 'juvenile vice,' that there are no 'wicked' boys and girls—only bad homes, rich and poor—and bad health and bad civic life and no adequate work for eager hands to do. That is the start and the soil. Plant a young life there and the result is millions of dollars per year for reformatories and jails—or gal-lows."

In December, 1911, the number of persons who shared this belief with Miriam wasn't determinable. At the most conservative estimate, it was undoubtedly a group too small to be labeled even a minority.

Deep in research on her doctoral dissertation under Chamberlain's relaxed guidance, Miriam delayed until October, 1912, any appraisal of her new major. Then she reported, with scientific caution, that her work had begun, at last, to take on a constructive look.

"Dr. Chamberlain is satisfied with it, so he says, but it is very

strenuous," she wrote her father. "If I can have attained the scientific attitude of the learner, after all my pains, I shall be thankful. I dare not hope to be an authority. I shall be content to become a judge of authorities. A vast humility is all one acquires, after all, when one has once seen the marvelous complexity of life. Perhaps the best contribution a student can bring to a problem is a cultured and well defined ignorance. Well, I've got that!"

On December 17, 1912, Miriam handed Chamberlain the first draft of her thesis, surrendering it over coffee at the Chamberlain dinner table. "It is very kind of them to make this occasion of criticism a friendly meeting," she wrote the day before. "Tomorrow Dr. Chamberlain, after reading my paper, will tell me how many kinds of ass I am."

If Chamberlain told her, she didn't mention it to her parents. Her father arrived in Worcester after Christmas and the two of them took a holiday in New York City, going there by boat from Boston. Miriam found New York a "million-eyed" city because of its myriad windows. She and her father crowded as many art museums into their visit as time would allow. They saw Maude Adams in *Peter Pan*, and one opera.

Back in Worcester after New Year's, Miriam was elated over Chamberlain's reception of her thesis. She had an interview with him ("if one can call anything as informal as my singular major professor's hurried, jerky, clever, thoroughly human utterances an 'interview'") during which he "appeared to be reconciled to the entire output."

The "entire output" was a library-based investigation of, and a detachedly thorough report on, the adolescent girl in primitive societies; it was crammed with details of various tribal taboos, rites and marital conventions affecting the young female. Laden with footnotes and end-heavy with an impressive bibliography, the thesis

was scholarly in content and style, shunning the exclamation point and believe-it-or-not tone that a popular writer might, with justification, have injected into such material. It was the kind of research that later attracted Margaret Mead, emerging from her agile mind as highly readable and scientifically accurate articles and books and fascinating lectures. The documentary film makers were to discover the field as well, and the *National Geographic Magazine* could scarcely have persisted without it.

Second only to Chamberlain's influence on Miriam was that of Dr. William H. Burnham, head of Clark's Pedagogy Department. She wrote little about him, but thought much of him, once referring to his pedagogy as "not just school practice—but to him as broad as life and extensive as the mind itself."

Their landlord that year was a big, kind-hearted, paid fireman who had secretly been tending inner fires with morphine for twenty years. Miriam returned from classes one day to find his wife hysterical and the landlord delirious in withdrawal agonies. Forced to bed by severe bronchitis, he had been cut off from his drug supply. An apparently inexperienced young doctor, summoned by Miriam at the wife's suggestion, administered strychnine to the patient.

Within a few days, she collared some of the reluctant relatives and explained that there were two courses open to them: they could neglect and eventually kill the man and let his widow go out and work to support herself and their child, or they could help him get on his feet, meanwhile assisting his wife and child until he could be rehabilitated.

Galvanized by Miriam's forceful authority, the addict's mother-in-law took charge of the baby, the wife went to work in a factory, and Miriam went to work on the fire department chief, who

agreed to take the fireman back on the job. Miriam believed that the man's friends and relatives would have killed him and that his wife would have gone off permanently into dementia, if she and Bess had not stepped in.

Miriam wrote her parents that she and Bess would have to move out of the fireman's house if they wanted their degrees from Clark. They piled their luggage into another apartment two blocks nearer the university and resumed their graduate work.

That spring, Miriam mailed home her fourth academic parchment, this one signifying her title to a Ph.D. in Anthropology, and went to work as a special agent for the Boston Children's Aid Society, in charge of young girls brought before Judge Harvey H. Baker, first judge of the Boston Juvenile Court.

Her special assignment was to take girls "who were otherwise normal" to the Boston Psychopathic Hospital for diagnosis and recommended treatment. There, she conferred often with Dr. A. Warren Stearns, a consulting psychiatrist, and the man who would one day be State Commissioner of Correction with an important job to fill at the Framingham Reformatory. His memory of Miriam was to be long and respectful.

Grace Wills, one of the founders of Lincoln Settlement House, in Boston, helped Miriam find foster homes and let Miriam's girls on probation use the Lincoln House facilities for drama and academic instruction.

Late in January, 1914, Dr. Chamberlain became seriously ill at his home in Worcester. For several days, Miriam left her job in Boston in the late afternoon, took a trolley to Worcester and sat up all night at her favorite professor's bedside, relieving his overtired wife. Chamberlain didn't want any strangers taking care of him.

One night, while the patient slept, Miriam wrote *A Tribute to Alexander Francis Chamberlain*.

Stern champion of the human race, of man as human,
Scorner of the petty pride of creed and skin and strength,
Warrior for the weak and young,
Builder of wonder-dreams for man,
And singer of strange, sweet songs;*
Thou wrought again the dead to life,
Thou gav'st long buried folk their due.
As some patient digger upturns the lovely face of some old jar,
Whereon the fingerprint of tiny hands
Reveals the mother-heart of her who fashioned it,
Nursing her child the while;
So you lifted the earth from off the long dead loves
And hopes and dreams of simple folk;
You showed the world their worth.

Old gods, long dead, you breathed upon and made to walk again,
In all their gentle, human traits,
In all their wrath and power,
We never dreamed how great was man,
How ever since the world began,
He toiled and wept and loved,
And in his heart kept flowers abloom,
The tender flowers of his imagining,
His dreams of peace and laughter in the sun,
His vision of the children in their play.

Now who shall champion thee,
O great worker in the human craft,

* Chamberlain had published a book of hymns and poems.

Whose hand is weak with pain,
Whose battle-shout is silenced in the night?
A hundred thousand of the folk will champion thee—
The coolie and the wage-slave and the black,
The outcast and the nestling,
And he whose lands are taken,
And he whose hopes are slain,
All these shall give thee shelter in their hearts,
And cherish thee so long as life shall last.

She read it to him, and gave it to him. He died two days later, with the salute in his hand.

There was no gradual transition period between Clark and the Children's Aid job. Miriam plunged directly into a deep stream of responsibility, as she had plunged into the Willamette River in her girlhood and come up swimming for the other shore against strong currents. By Christmas, she was tired, and during the winter of 1914, she became exhausted.

One night, working late in her office on a mountain of reports, she collapsed. A doctor sent her to bed for two days' rest after telling her she had overspent her strength and suggested that she might have either penumonia or tuberculosis. Miriam impatiently rejected both possibilities. They would interfere with her plans, for one thing, and were highly improbable, for another, in view of her vigorous health since childhood. When she felt strong enough to go back to the office she went, concealing from her doctor the fact that she tired very easily every day.

In Portland, newspaper stories of Miriam's Boston career landed on the desk of Judge Gatens, of the Multnomah County Juvenile Court. Late in March, 1914, he wrote Miriam that he

needed a new superintendent for the Frazer Detention Home, in Portland, as of May first, and the job was hers for the accepting.

On April 3, Miriam read the letter and wasted no time telegraphing her acceptance and confirming it by letter. Whatever it was that was sapping her strength and threatening her spirit, she believed that it could be promptly cured by reunion with her family, the magic air of Oregon and a fresh challenge in her own backyard.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Cruelty Stops at Home

Sometime during the night, Miriam awoke in her Pullman berth, her nightgown bonded by sweat to her body. She lay quiet, waiting for her pounding heart to subside and wondering what was wrong with her. She had sensed a wave of comfort when she boarded the train in Boston; she felt stronger than she had in days. As the train rocked westward between Boston and Albany, Miriam had probed her decision to go home and found it solid. The work she must do needed doing everywhere, and perhaps Oregon had a prior claim upon her. Or was she impelled, by inadmissible fears for her health, to the security of home?

The east had demolished her provincialism, substituted original paintings, live symphony, Boston celebrities, and historical shrines for her previous imaginings. Clark's best minds had furnished and stimulated hers. Her brief experience in the probate

field had confirmed her reasoning about the causes of most juvenile offenses and convinced her anew that she had chosen a career for which she was intended.

Only her body took exception, and she lay awake a long time trying to will its compliance.

In the joy of reunion with her family in Portland, Miriam dismissed all concern for her health. She talked for hours with her mother and sat up late with her father in his study, rambling along cerebral paths of scholarship. The role of the rectory hadn't changed. Bishops in transit, students in doubt and strangers in trouble still came to the door, and Miriam's father gathered them in with impartial warmth, nourishing each according to his need, and being fed in turn.

Organizational problems at Frazer Detention Home deferred Miriam's taking over at the institution until July 1; in the interim, she had several exploratory talks with Judge Gatens, whom she rated warm and clear-sighted. The Multnomah Juvenile Court was a contributor to the early vigor of the national juvenile court movement. It was well-intentioned, full of high hopes and had its simplicity to recommend it. The untrained, poorly-paid staff members of the court were close to the children who came to their attention. Their services were much like those that Dickens's Betsy Trotwood performed for David Copperfield when he ran away to her home. "What shall I do with this child?" Betsy asked Mr. Dick, and his response was, "Wash him."

The court was still sending children to the detention home to "teach them a lesson:" the lesson that it's painful to be young and in trouble. But it was the method of teaching this that provoked public indignation and reformatory action. The resulting investigation had prompted the judge's reach across the continent to tap Miriam's shoulder.

Miriam found conditions at Frazer appalling to her youth and inexperience. In a physical setting she considered wholesome she found sick and well "children" living together in segregation by sex that was more apparent than real. There were several cases of syphilis, many of gonorrhea and tuberculosis, a few epileptics, a great deal of scabies and impetigo and a house-full of vermin.

Before rolling up her sleeves, Miriam hospitalized the seriously ill, persuaded two physicians to volunteer for a wholesale clean-up campaign within the home, and laid groundwork for the services of a paid visiting doctor.

She hired a resident nurse, a recreation leader, and a dietician whom she instructed to eliminate heavily starch-laden meals in favor of a respectable diet. Riding with the tide of public enthusiasm for corrective action, she ordered isolation wards built for contagious disease cases, then bucked the home's disciplinary system.

Straps and rubber hoses were the chief implements of discipline. Boys were often beaten on the soles of their feet until they fainted, a punishment difficult to trace because it left no marks. Even though Miriam abolished this cruelty, it recurred, she suspected, because the children were afraid to report it.

By gradually introducing self-government, hiring new staff personnel and keeping constant, friendly watch day and night, Superintendent Van Waters succeeded in driving physical torture out of the place.

Although the place had been named after the county's first Juvenile Court judge, a good man, it had been managed by the judge's brother, in whose regime the rubber hose had flourished. Because Miriam had no authority to fire anyone, she was forced to keep him on as her assistant. Several staff members resigned after sampling her administration.

The social stagnation of the place was anathema to Miriam. Except for a few boy "trusties" assigned to garden work and some older girls who did housework, the children were idle most of the time not spent in school or in their dormitories. The boys were herded into a basement and the girls sat around the house.

Miriam organized a crammed daily schedule of work, play, and school for every child, aided by a man named Hiram Barr, a Portland school superintendent, whom she considered indispensable. The home had no library, so Miriam sought books from the city. When these arrived, Miriam taught the children to be librarians, bookbinders, and readers, then started current events clubs to balance booklore.

There was no psychologist in the court or in the detention home. Miriam herself tested all the children to obtain rough classification and found that nearly ten per cent were low-grade morons or imbeciles, many of whom she had transferred to proper institutions. She persuaded Dr. Eleanor Rowland Wembridge, then psychologist at Reed College, to supervise her students in voluntary, regular psychological work at Frazer. Later, she enlisted a young psychologist named Gilbert as resident psychologist and laboratory assistant.

Miriam summoned Bess Woods, on vacation from her first job at Vassar College. Bess joined Miriam in leading all the detained children to the Van Waters's Elk Creek summer camp at Cannon Beach, Oregon. The home's trained nurse and its matron took charge of the girls, while Miriam, Bess, Gilbert, and Barr supervised the boys. The railroad provided free transportation; food and bedding came out of the regular budget.

The sight of Miriam's charges gathered at the railroad depot, all wretchedly clothed and some in rags, moved the men's service clubs of Portland to reach for their wallets. As a result, the boys

and girls were properly dressed a few days after returning from two weeks of camping by the sea. Their new togs lasted until Miriam's sewing classes got the knack of making their own clothes.

Recharged by unaccustomed outdoor living and catching sparks of hope from the little woman who kept telling them they were wonderful, the Frazer population subscribed enthusiastically to Miriam's plan for burning all the mops in the home, scrubbing the place by hand and painting the interior, inch by inch. Miriam divided them into work squads, rotating duties among them. The cleaning group rated an outdoor picnic which the garden squad had prepared; the next day, tasks were shuffled: the painters worked in the garden, the gardeners manned the scrub-brushes, and the cleaners painted the walls, pride in their progress showing through as the work went on.

Long after she left Frazer, Miriam reported that she had had little success in getting the local clergy interested in religious services at the detention home, a problem, she said seventeen years later, that was still with her. She took groups of children to various churches in Portland and held weekly services at the home conducted by ministers whom she persuaded to volunteer, interested or not. There was a story hour and song service every Sunday night when young college students often dropped in, or, more accurately, were drawn in by curiosity about the bright, aristocratic young woman who found so much joy in "jail" work.

She proudly reported to Judge Gatens that her \$17,500 budget for an eight-months' period would last the year, and she busied herself with arithmetic proving the place could be operated for a whole year on half that amount by reducing the number of detained children through better probation work and by cutting the staff accordingly.

Frequently in the afternoon, she felt feverish; occasionally she experienced night sweats, but there was so much to be done she paid little attention to such seemingly minor protests from her flesh. Three or four nights a week she sat late at her desk, building a card file and individual folder for every child in detention. She jotted conduct and social histories, medical and psychological diagnoses and court decisions in her best scrawl; her budget precluded clerical help. As her years in the field lengthened, she would come to believe that courts, being in politics, with changing administrations, were not safe places for crudely written, adult interpretations of children's misdeeds. She would read too many records that she considered more "obscene" than a child's act could be. In time, she came to favor a Federal Children's Bureau plan advocating an accurate listing of a child offender by number, age, offense, etc., and used almost exclusively for statistical and clinical child guidance purposes.

Miriam would, one day, look back on her Frazer experience as a time when her goals of service were simple and direct, and before "we all became sophisticated and encased in technique." Her problem at Frazer was to secure genuine, practical, loving help for children, plus the aids that science could give.

All her life, she would search for the same two things in adequate combination.

But now, in the winter of 1915, the search was interrupted by unmistakable lung shadows on an X-ray plate—the long-ignored cause of her intermittent spells of fatigue, her afternoons of fever and night sweats. Miriam had tuberculosis, and the Frazer Detention Home had an opening for a superintendent.

Dr. Mary MacLachlan, of Portland, easily convinced Miriam that she was ill enough to pay attention to the business of recover-

ing. In June she felt strong enough to go to Cannon Beach with her brother, Ralph, ten, and Abby Whiteside, a close friend of the Van Waters family and a talented musician. In a board-floor tent by the sea, the three of them camped out, Miriam sleeping fourteen hours of every twenty-four.

Abby's two nephews joined the troupe to become a pirate crew on Treasure Island, with Ralph playing Jim Hawkins to Miriam's John Silver. Miriam committed daily "some dreadful act such as opening a boy with a can opener, or cutting his throat with a tomato can."

Miriam seemed more concerned about her heart than her lungs, reporting home that "the heart action is not normal yet. I have difficulty breathing and do not get much energy. I have written the doctor suggesting . . . digitalis." In August, she wrote that her heart action continued irregular, showing itself in scantness of breath and some pain. She said she could not take excitement calmly, had no plans for the winter and could not make a move until her heart straightened out.

Dr. MacLachlan made a remote house call at Cannon Beach to check Miriam. "She went over me thoroughly and thinks the lungs very remarkably improved. The heart has grown smaller, which is an improvement. Its beat is irregular still, and irritable, but no evidence of leak. Thinks another two weeks of digitalis will put it right. All I'll need then will be walking a little each day for wind and endurance."

The doctor persuaded Miriam to drop the burden of concealing her illness from all but her closest friends. "I am writing Aunt Jennie to tell Mrs. C., or anyone, where I am and all about me. It was a mistake from the first not to do so," Miriam explained to her parents.

Genevieve Parke, Miriam's old friend from St. Helen's Hall

days in Portland and the faithful, emotional auditor of *Jezebel* over tea and rock cake in Miriam's bedroom at the rectory, wrote from her home in Montana that she wanted Miriam for a long visit and would pay her transportation and all other expenses. Genevieve postscripted that if Miriam's doctor discouraged this idea, she would take her to Arizona at her expense. The doctor ruled out both.

In September, Miriam admitted discouragement. She had no news of a job; writing tired her, and she thought her heart was "not going right for work. I can walk to Haystacks and back now with just one rest. The digitalis is giving me more wind, but when I work it is a different matter. Someday Father might go in and see Judge C. and, without saying too much in my favor, which always works in the opposite direction, find out how the land lies about juvenile court jobs."

Her impatience was premature. In October, she was in the Pottinger Sanatorium, in Los Angeles, weakened by a lung hemorrhage and restless with fever. Her sister, Beckie, made the journey with her and stayed close to her. After ten days, she announced to Dr. Pottinger that she could no longer afford to lie in bed, that she was getting up and going to work. "My dear young lady," said Dr. Pottinger, "you must be joking with me."

The next day, Miriam "ran away" from the sanatorium (as she put it forty-five years later) and moved into Sara Fisher's house at 1043 Mariposa Street, Los Angeles. The following day she scribbled a postcard home: "Second day of work for me and a little done. Am getting rested."

Sara Fisher was a friend from Clark University graduate school, a daughter of the dean of a divinity school in Chicago, and an assistant professor of psychology at the University of California in Los Angeles. Miriam was almost totally dependent on Sara,

whom she called "Pole," because the Van Waterses in Portland had fallen on hard times.

Her father had lost every cent he invested in the brass works in Portland when somebody stole the patents on which the business was founded. The rector's partner would have had to sell his hardwood flooring business to pay his share of the partnership's liabilities had Mr. Van Waters been less the Samaritan in assuming both his own and his partner's debts. In order to raise the cash, he and his wife sold off most of the family's land at distress prices. They saved out the Elk Creek camp at Cannon Beach for Miriam, because she loved the place and offered to pay the taxes on it as soon as she could.

In Los Angeles her health mended so slowly that Miriam abandoned all hope of returning to the rigors of juvenile correction and decided to be a professional writer. "I will tell you and mother a secret," she wrote her father. "You will laugh, but never have I felt so confident of ultimate success. I have now resolved to do nothing but write, to try to forget my longing for active work with the world's children and the unfortunate."

Her first articles were "Four Kinds of Social Workers," "Some Ancient Peace Movements" and an essay attacking the hanging of a feeble-minded boy for homicide. The last came back from *New Republic* magazine with a note saying its office was congested with manuscripts, otherwise the article would certainly have been accepted. Miriam wrote her father that "this is very fine, and consoling, but it butters no parsnips. I have sent it to *Forum*. One must be equipped, in my job, to bear innumerable losses—especially at first.

In February, 1916, she wrote home that "for the first time now I can take a deep, full breath without the slightest pain . . . each day I can work I am filled with happiness. I think the next two

years will turn the trick. If I can only be successful, then we could do as we liked. I dream of the time when I can bring you here, when I am really a writer. You will come while I am doing a book and we will live in different parts of this country. I will work in the mornings; in the afternoons and evenings we will explore and rest and eat oranges."

Miriam began daydreaming of returning to Cannon Beach that summer. She volunteered to tutor George, the older of her two brothers, whose schooling had been interrupted by the family's financial crisis. Miriam said she could pour four years' high school work into George in less than a year, and present him to the University of Oregon as a qualified candidate.

Genevieve Parke wrote a note enclosing ten dollars which Miriam put aside toward her homecoming. In a letter to Ralph, she said that the chief news of the week was the arrival of a stray dog, "all kinds of a dog . . . a Simon-pure mongrel cur . . . very dainty, with fluffy hair, white and yellow, and very intelligent black eyes. We call her Jezebel—Jeze for short. She is a natural born tramp and came to us like a thief in the night. I gave her a bath and she turned five shades lighter."

Two days later, Jeze departed, leaving Miriam saddened. "Stray pups are so inconstant," she wrote, "and though this one was fed chicken, she wandered off."

In June, Miriam returned to Portland en route to Cannon Beach, staying long enough to appear on a public platform with Margaret Sanger, who had brought her crusade for birth control to the northwest. Mr. Van Waters, a sympathizer, sat in the front row of the audience. A few days later, after Miriam had gone to Cannon Beach, Miss Sanger was locked up in the Portland jail for airing her views in public. Miriam wrote that "the Sanger affair

gives me much uneasiness. I feel that Portland is disgraced more than ever."

Abby, Bess Woods, Miriam, George, and a cat named Beowulf made up the Cannon Beach complement that summer, all of them housed in tents.

George got a job working on county roads at two dollars and twenty-five cents a day. Abby kept house in the tents. Miriam got breakfast each morning and worked until noon on her writing. She wrote, in three days, a children's story she titled *The Woman Who Brought Up Her Son as She Liked*, and revised another, *Silver Fishes*. Miriam and Bess cornered George each day when he came home from his job and tutored him, Bess in biology and Miriam in the rest of a high school freshman curriculum.

"It is worth it," she wrote home, "if we can rescue George for a career instead of an existence. He tries, I think, but sometimes I fear he has gone too long without systematic work and concentration. I'll know in a few days if I can swing it. With his lessons he is pretty flighty. I set him a task and he goes out to dream for two hours. He was so happy to get your letter. He said 'I write and nobody writes to me.' He is a dear, sweet, lovable boy and whether he makes a name for himself, as we all desire, or not, he will always be sweet, clean and wholesome."

Miriam decided to stay at Cannon Beach in a neighbor's cottage through December and tutor George six hours a day for six months. "If we cannot get him ready for college in six months of this, four years of high school would do nothing for him. Since my own profession has been smashed, I am more than ever eager to serve youth, whose chances are good and whose success, at least, a hopeful thing."

George tended to vanish when he should have been carrying wood and water; but after a run-in with Miriam, he steadied down

to work and study. His letters to his parents were assignments in English composition.

In one of these assignments he noted that "Bobby" (his nickname for Miriam) "has some eight stories on the road, and good articles they are, too. I bet the old girl will be paying an income tax before the year is out."

Miriam would have had many more than eight articles in the hands of editors had she not considered George's tutoring her first obligation.

When summer slipped away at Cannon Beach, Miriam began rousing George at four forty-five every morning for breakfast. She started the day's tutoring at five-thirty. Under this Spartan schedule, George began to make rapid progress. Miriam's health kept pace, disappearing topically from her letters. When she and George returned to Portland late in January, he was prematurely ready for college and Miriam was ready for a seventeen dollars and a half suit, a new pair of glasses and a lecture on modern poetry before the Portland Little Club. Her job at the Frazer Detention Home had been filled; there was nothing else in her field available, nor was she yet sure she was physically ready for a demanding job.

From Los Angeles, Sara Fisher wrote Miriam, urging her to return there to live and write. Bess Woods was in Pasadena, a psychologist with the public school system, so Fisher's invitation was an appeal to reunite the "Three Musketeers," as they had labeled themselves in their student days at Eugene (Bess was "Athos," Fisher "Porthos" and Miriam "Aramis"). Besides being wanted in California, Miriam believed it to be a greater pasture and better climate for her. Consequently, she returned in the spring of 1917, moving in with Fisher and resuming her writing. She sold an article, "The Squaw Habit of Mind," to a magazine called *The Unpopular*, and for two uplifting days believed that she had won

Little Review magazine's national prize for free verse with her poem, "Art Is Born." It was all a mistake. A well-meaning friend had jumped to a wrong conclusion.

The "squaw" article had been accepted after an interval of many months. "You see, it takes infinite time, and meanwhile a writer would be starved to death," Miriam wrote her parents. "That is why I am returning to social work—at least one of the whys. Dr. Pottinger and his assistant, Dr. Burnside, give me their permission. I am in pretty good health, I think."

She did not report, in that letter, that she had a chance to land the job of Superintendent of Juvenile Hall, a Los Angeles County institution for juvenile offenders, and that she had already passed a written civil service examination qualifying her, in part, for the appointment.

She needed more than butter for her parsnips. She needed to be needed.

CHAPTER NINE

After Poison, the Sunstruck Peruvian

Fortunately, the Los Angeles County Hospital was next door to Juvenile Hall. A doctor rushed Miriam there in five minutes and had her noon meal pumped from her stomach before it could work its fullest damage, whatever that might have been. Neither Miriam nor the hospital suspected that she had been deliberately poisoned.

A Juvenile Hall officer whose rank had been drastically reduced when Miriam took over the superintendency confessed on her deathbed, a few years later, that she had catered privately to the new boss that day, but she did not disclose her recipe, nor indicate what she intended its ultimate effect to be. Presumably, she had other opportunities to improve upon her first effort—she taught cooking—but she evidently had something less than murder in mind. And had Miriam known that one of her staff was plotting gastric

revenge on her, she might have had less appetite for her demanding job.

But what she didn't know didn't hurt her after that enervating single experience, which she charged off to occupational hazards. There was much more on her mind than what her next meal would consist of, although that, too, was indirectly her responsibility.

Miriam had counted the days between May 14 and June 29 in suspense. In May, she passed the civil service examination, which she considered a rather perfunctory questioning by the commission, whose members, she thought, were primarily interested in looking her over to see whether they approved of her walk and the way she did her hair.

On June 29, she was appointed superintendent of Juvenile Hall. Between the two dates, she watched her candidacy being chewed, ground, reshaped, shunted, and, finally, accepted by the political machinery dedicated to that process. With acute impatience to return to work, she still had to wait. "I am not rich enough," she wrote home, "to throw aside a chance of \$1500 a year and expenses."

Miriam began a "scared superintendency" of the Hall August 1, finding the place had been "run like a church bazaar. Everyone fits in anywhere, with the results you may imagine," she wrote her father. Miriam's resentful predecessor refused to leave, accepting instead the second-in-command position from which she could carry on a campaign of harassment.

There were ninety boys, girls, and infants in the Hall, and a staff of sixteen, of whom Miriam considered fourteen "impossible" by her professional standards. A state of mutual contempt prevailed between the female physician in the girls' wing and the male doctor in the boys' section, although Miriam thought she had

the personal friendship and loyalty of both, a conclusion that later proved wrong in the case of the woman.

Before the end of August, two boys snatched the front door keys from an attendant's pocket and escaped.

"It was an opportunity for the Board to blame me very seriously," Miriam's next letter home reported, "but they did nothing of the kind. Mrs. Cora D. Lewis especially was wonderful. The place is gradually being cleaned up. I am very happy in the job." Her predecessor, she said, was taking an extra week's vacation, which prolonged Miriam's "freedom." Miriam anticipated an "atmosphere of disloyalty and deceit" with the woman's return and planned to assign her to the girls' dormitory, replacing her as assistant superintendent.

To her brother Ralph, Miriam wrote that "this is the queerest old ship that ever a pirate sailed and I often think I'll beach the whole thing on the rocks and leave her to the gulls. Very different from the good old ship, Treasure Island."

Miriam wrote her mother asking for pictures for her bare office at the Hall, and enclosing twenty dollars to match her parents' monthly allotment toward George's expenses at the University of Oregon. Miriam commented that George "needs the strictest discipline in money matters, and I feel we are failing to do our duty to him if we do not make him directly responsible for the proper use of his allowance. *Let us be firm.*"

Before the pictures arrived from Portland, Miriam's office was furnished with feathers. Juvenile Hall raised its own poultry under the supervision of a "chicken matron." One week, while the matron was on sick leave, two hundred dollars' worth of chicks hatched in the poultry house. Miriam visited the place every three hours to check the incubators and had the situation well in hand for several days until the brooder caught fire, destroying several birds. Miriam

carried the survivors to her office in boxes to keep them alive until a second brooder could be brought to the proper temperature. The experience taught her just enough to kindle her enthusiasm for poultry husbandry. It also, by driving her to a dictionary, taught her what a "capon" is.

Near the end of October, Miriam aborted a female riot in the Hall's hospital by transferring two ringleaders to the Hall and "talking Dutch" to the others before having them locked in their rooms by nine p.m. A sedan filled with men waiting for the escapees was parked outside the Hall during the uprising. Mrs. Lewis, of the Probation Committee, delighted that the incident had been settled without the police, praised Miriam's effectiveness.

Behind such scenes, a young lawyer in Mexico was doing his best to persuade Miriam to escape from the Hall into matrimony with him. Frederick Barker, an attorney representing U.S. business interests south of the border, was the suitor, destined to lose his case.

Miriam regarded him as interesting and charming. Replying to her mother's curiosity about the "situation," she wrote, "I shall not marry him and he knows it now. He loves me very much and he would care for me always . . . but I cannot care enough for him to run the risk. He will come up to see me and bid goodbye in January—I dread it, for he is sensitive and a very fine, spirited man. But I cannot help the inevitable."

An invitation to speak before the Los Angeles Friday Morning Club, then the largest women's club on the west coast, involved Miriam in an outlay of sixty dollars for a gray satin dress with blue and gray embroidery. "Very nifty," she wrote her mother. "But these things keep me poor! I have had to buy every-

thing from the ground up—shoes, stockings, etc., and I cannot wear anything not absolutely correct. For California is the dressiest place in the U.S. Darn it.”

The speech was a resounding success, judging not so much by Miriam’s modest appraisal: “It went off well,” as by the spate of lecture invitations that followed. Miriam’s poise, wit and natural sense of drama blended into a uniquely effective catalyst for her theories and practical knowledge of her field. She made rapt listeners of all kinds of audiences; but her impact upon them seldom made even a small dent. Her brown eyes flashed fire when she spoke; her expression and gestures carried authority. She made the entertainment chairman of any group eligible for re-election.

In the Juvenile Court where she appeared frequently, she made a strong first impression on Referee Orfa Jean Shontz, a pioneering woman jurist who later, with Miriam’s help, was the first of her sex to be elected to the Superior Court bench in California.

That first impression, Miriam believed, was one of dislike and prejudice that turned, in two and one-half months, into admiration and respect. At any rate, Judge Shontz asked Miriam if she would like to study law and succeed her as Referee of Juvenile Court. The idea caught fire in Miriam’s imagination. In October she wrote home that she would begin studying law the following February. “In two, three, or four years I can have you and Father and Ralph here,” she wrote her mother, “and we can have a snug little nest of Paradise.”

A few days later, ten boys escaped from the Hall, touching off headlines in the local press. Two runaways were found quickly; Miriam and Judge Shontz brought the others home from San Pedro in “Rastus,” the Judge’s “country club” Overland car. A county grand jury refused a petition from several disgruntled, former

employees of the Hall to investigate the place and turn Van Waters out. The former superintendent resigned, leaving Miriam solely responsible for keeping peace in the riot-prone hospital of the Hall. The girl patients there, Miriam said, were the "County's Pride—in husky defiance."

The deposed administration had relied on "powerful Katinikas"—two-hundred-pound matrons—to police the hospital. Miriam relied on a lady named Maguire, who stood five feet, four inches and weighed one hundred and fourteen pounds. Maguire, a Scotch-Irish girl, had a voice like a shy angel and a face like an Anglo-Saxon Madonna, but she could "stop" anything. Miriam held her ready at a moment's notice to quell trouble, but the hospital settled into a long, relatively obsequious spell of good behavior.

As 1917 faded, and Miriam sat in her office one day, supervising her "A" Company boys (fourteen and older) in the library across the hall, and listening to the shouts of her "B" Company boys (under fourteen) playing cricket in a sunny court below her window, it struck her that things were peaceful and serene contrasted with the struggle and turmoil of the first four months. One way or another she had, with the support of the Probation Committee, replaced fourteen of the sixteen "impossible" employees, and she was hopeful that the Board of Supervisors would approve her plans for reconstructing the Hall to provide for a receiving department with a resident nurse in charge.

Two months later, the *Los Angeles Times* sent its star reporter to dig out a feature story on Miriam, her receiving department, dental clinic and psychological laboratory. The story didn't mention, because the reporter didn't ask, that after the receiving nurse had once been absent for two days, Miriam found many heads

covered with lice. The Mexican problem, she explained to her father, took that form chiefly.

"It is difficult for anyone who does not live in an institution to realize the proposition I'm up against," she added in the letter to him. "I am happy in it—thoroughly. But constant vigilance, eternal conferences, infinite series of emergencies are one's weekly job."

Although she poured most of her spare time into studying law, she was increasingly in demand as a speaker at women's clubs and chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution. One of her topics was "The New Profession for Women—Social Work." This marked the beginning of her life-long effort to recruit well-educated girls and women for her kind of work, which rarely, at first look, seemed "nice" or "pleasant" to girls from stable, comfortable homes, but which challenged and held many of them once they took the plunge with Miriam.

Miriam did not turn away the "lady bountiful" types who came in increasing numbers to her office to lend a well-gloved hand at arm's length. She converted many of them to a deeper understanding of the needs and problems of the institution; many of them took off their gloves and became directly involved in rehabilitating juvenile offenders. Miriam believed that *participation in something* was indispensable in a delinquent's transition from hostility, anger, and rebellion to a positive attitude toward society. And participation in effecting the transition worked no less magic on those whom Miriam inspired to share her task.

Piling work upon work, Miriam innovated intramural classes for her staff with a Thursday night series of lectures and examinations that moved the University of Southern California to give academic credit for the course—a blend of psychology, sociology and philosophy grounded in actual cases at Juvenile Hall.

"I don't want to attract any undeserved pity," Miriam wrote

her father, "but I am said to be the hardest working woman in the County." It probably was an understatement. She conducted a morning assembly for sixty-five boys at the Hall, leading them in popular, patriotic and "Billy Sunday" songs, the Lord's Prayer, current events and map-making. In the afternoon, she varied the program for about seventy girls. Always, there were little things clawing at her time. A ten-year-old Chinese boy cried in school because he said another boy was drawing his face. The accused artist, it turned out, was trying to draw a house and a tree.

Miriam's sister, Beckie, discouraged by an unsuccessful effort to become a nurse, arrived for consolation and companionship. Miriam welcomed her into her new rented home at the Colony, a group of picturesque redwood houses on the edge of an arroyo between Los Angeles and Pasadena. Judge Shontz, Bess Woods, and Miram shared the big house and the rent.

Her multiplying responsibilities so filled her long working hours that she had little time for self-concern. In February, 1918, she wrote her father:

"I'll be putting in our peach trees and alfalfa soon. I've got my speech ready for tonight and gosh how I hate it! I never talked in a church before in my life. It's the Methodist Episcopal—a Civic Problems Conference. In Pasadena . . . there are some people so narrow they don't believe in children's theatres or playgrounds. Then there are New Thinkers and Christian Scientists who don't believe in medical or mental examinations, and Old Timers who don't believe in taxes (especially for delinquent children)—so what shall I say!"

Saying and doing, Miriam inspired the Probation Committee, in its year-end report, to note that "the superintendent of Juvenile Hall is one hundred per cent efficient and kindly" and to recom-

mend that her salary be raised. "Los Angeles County is fortunate to have her," said one of the report's laudatory passages.

Miriam's comment to Portland was, "I guess I'll worry along a while longer."

As though cued by the statement, the Persian leader of a Los Angeles cult of sun worshippers filed two suits against Miriam and her staff. The first, aimed directly at Miriam, was based on a charge that she permitted medical examination of children received at the Hall without their parents being present. The second, asking \$100,000 damages, was against Miriam and the Hall's two physicians, the latter being charged with presenting medical information that falsely incriminated the sun worshipper.

The medical examinations in question had indeed incriminated the plaintiff by underpinning his indictment on a charge of criminal sexual assault against children. He hoped to whitewash an ugly mess by legal action which, if successful, would have blocked the process that had not only disclosed his repulsive actions but was also essential to the central purpose of the Hall—physical, mental, and moral rescue.

The Court dismissed the first action before it could go to the jury, and Miriam took heart:

"If we can get a judgment on this it will be an important matter settled for all institutions," she wrote home. "Lawyers come in to hear the law of the case and I rather fancy the decision will be a matter of great precedent, whichever way it goes. I am learning a great deal about law, lawyers, and other matters. It is a good deal like a game, with the stakes reputation and influence. For instance, so much of a perverted, ugly nature has come out in the case that the lawyers for the Hanish cult, although they have done nothing else for months but live off the collections taken up by these poor

fanatics, have already lost some of their legal reputation and standing.

"On the other hand, the young lawyers for the County Counsel's office, defending the Hall, are gaining everyone's respect. It will be a big case for them. And it gives the Hall reputation and influence, too. I did not expect this result, and surely was surprised to see it, but I find that nearly every official I meet has something nice to say about the way we cleared. Personally, I have little confidence in a thing until it has been attacked—and here we have been hammered and still hold water."

During the trial, Miriam arose early, worked on her Hall records and set out at nine forty-five for court, her portable typewriter in hand. Throughout the noon recess, she worked alternately on a sandwich and Hall records, tapping away at her typewriter. After adjournment of court at five o'clock, she went back to the Hall to clear her desk and tend to the accumulated problems that went with being "the mother of one hundred twenty-six children." Unlike most mothers, she was never sure, from day to day, how many children she had.

The Persian's damage suit ended without a decision, and a retrial was ordered for April. Miriam told her parents that she had worried over the trial for some time, but that "now it is better than if we never had it. Not only have we not lost, but we have gained."

In the month between trials, Miriam tackled a mountain of paperwork, writing twenty detailed reports on children for the court. She composed these carefully, believing that each word could be important in deciding the future of the subject. A delegation of important visitors arrived to be shown through the Hall. Miriam hoped they had ignored a dozen bedsheets that had blown off a clothesline into the mud, because their special notice would have raised the matter of chronic bed-wetters in the Hall.

The mother of a Chinese boy brought Miriam a huge box of candy. ("If I were asked to give one definite thing one can always be sure of in the case of a delinquent Chinese boy, I would say they always bring you presents.") She called eighteen of her younger boys to her office, read them a fairy tale about a selfish giant and passed the candy, saving out a piece for each of the thirty-two girls working in the kitchen.

A visiting mother of the Holy Roller Pentecostal persuasion, a non-believer in medicine who spent her work-day on her knees with a scrub brush, regaled Miriam with the story of how the Lord had healed her of constipation: "I didn't move for four days, for the Lord had his hand on me. Then I said 'Lord, this will *never do*. I can't go on like this, but if I bust for it I won't take a pill.' And when the Lord heard that He healed me, like a flash of lightning."

A Negro woman brought a deck of cards to her boy. Examining them routinely, Miriam discovered that one of them was smeared with something. She turned it over to the police, who reported back that the mysterious substance was a paste of opium.

Miriam bought a suit for Ralph for Easter, and faithfully continued her monthly contributions of twenty dollars for George. As for Ralph, or the King of Siam, as she still called him at times, she said she wanted him to have every advantage, "and he will as long as I have hands—even with warts on them. I hope George doesn't have too much trouble meeting my old school friends. You know, distance lends enchantment, and almost any old thing in the way of a school record afterwards attaches to itself legendary splendor, especially if you are out of town." Such comment from a Phi Beta Kappa amused her father, but probably not George, who knew all too well that Miriam's record at the University of Oregon was no legend.

One afternoon Miriam's deep Dutch currents propelled her to the Civil Service Commission office where, in the presence of the chairman of the Probation Committee, she announced that unless she were given two additional assistants and a substantial increase in salary, she would leave her job five minutes after the budget committee had adjourned.

Her demand for more staff was granted immediately, and her salary ultimatum was taken under advisement. Miriam explained that she would not argue for more salary except to say that she had had to borrow money to live on and would not do it again.

"So I may be out of a job in a month," she wrote home. "Last year I asked for an increase in salary for all my staff and got it. But nobody suggested an increase in my salary.* I don't care much—there are plenty of jobs and everyone has talked so much about the efficiency of the Hall that I am tired of hearing it unless it means something."

A few days later she wired Portland:

"Damage suit ended with unanimous victory for the Hall. Tell Ralph to take new trousers to tailor before wearing. Legs are unfinished dont try to do it at home sorry there was not time here. All well. Easter Greetings and love."

Those nine words about the eclipse of the sun worshipper and twenty-six words of advice about having cuffs made for Ralph's trousers drew a comical letter from her mother, and Miriam explained in full:

"Unless you remember crazy telegrams you yourself sent, you will think I have suddenly gone demented. The tailor said by no means let anyone finish off the leg cuffs but an expert tailor, or the whole appearance is ruined. I had no time to write, so I telegraphed.

* The Probation Committee's flattering report in 1918 had recommended a salary raise, but it hadn't come through.

Please don't laugh. A matter that is serious enough to make me miss a day in Court is serious enough to telegraph about.

"The trial was a complete vindication. The Judge commented on the jury's decision and said it was just, and he hoped it would tend to discourage these 'foul cults.' He said that not only were our (medical) examinations legal, but if there were no such rule on our part we would be compelled to make one. It is a sad day for Christian Scientists. And a big victory for us.

"You asked if I went to Easter service! Beloved, I was on duty with my kids from six-thirty A.M. till nine P.M. Easter, and it was service every minute! We had good music, good sermons and much happiness—candy and eggs."

Miriam addressed her mother as "precious Mumsie," and wrote that sometimes—especially when it rained—she could cry with homesickness. "Maybe I am being punished for past sins," she wrote on one occasion, "but I hope not, for I need my mother as much as I ever did when I was little. It has been a long time since I have heard from my precious darling and I hope she isn't sick!"

Whether Miriam wrote such sentiments to satisfy her mother's needs or express her own, they seemed incongruous, welling from a woman whose daily life in the rough and tumble of a juvenile detention home might have eroded the tenderness of a saint. In the minds of hundreds of girls and women whose lives she changed over the years, she *was* a saint, an angel, a Joan of Arc, a sister, or all of these. The love that nourished her in her own childhood was virtually impervious to the corroding influence of human misery whose healing she would never shirk in nearly fifty years of a dedicated career.

In the middle of 1919, having threatened earlier to resign from Juvenile Hall, she not only remained on as superintendent,

but accepted an invitation from the Los Angeles County Supervisors and earned the electoral approval of the Hall's Board of Supervisors to take charge of a new home for delinquent girls—an institution destined to pioneer a new approach to the rehabilitation of “the female offender.” It was, as Miriam soon called it in the title of a magazine article, a place “Where Girls Go Right.”

Its name was El Retiro.

CHAPTER TEN

With Enough Votes,

A Girl May Stay in Jail

El Retiro, built as a plush sanatorium for tuberculosis patients, became an economic casualty of World War I without admitting a case. On August 15, 1919, it opened as what its backers believed to be the nation's first county institution devoted to preventive and constructive work in the field of "moral hygiene."

The doctors who had owned it and intended to operate it chose a beautiful site on ten acres of truck gardens and an olive grove tucked under a mountain in the San Fernando Valley, twenty-three miles from Los Angeles. The main building had separate sleeping quarters for twelve girls and four officers, a schoolroom for manual arts, a clinic and dispensary and a splendid dining room large

enough for fifty. All the single rooms had private baths, closets, white enameled furniture and large, screened, French windows.

There was a cottage for an instructor and ten girls in individual rooms; a laundry in a separate building; a kitchen and dining room in another building; a utility man's cottage, and twenty-two small, open-air cottages, each large enough for two girls. Only four of these had been completed when Miriam, her staff, and five girls moved in.

Los Angeles County, persuaded by a group of social workers, which was, in turn, led by a champion of girls in all kinds of trouble, bought it for one third its appraised value. Their first idea was to use the place for salvaging prostitutes released from isolation hospitals, but when the community rejected that plan, a committee called on Superintendent Van Waters of Juvenile Hall to suggest an alternate idea.

Miriam saw it as a "school for girls" devoted to re-educating young wards (fourteen to nineteen) of the Juvenile Court and controlled by the Probation Committee of that Court. It was to be linked, financially and administratively, with Juvenile Hall, directed by the Hall's superintendent in command of officers and employees chosen from civil service lists. All medical, psychological and other technical, scientific work, along with stenographic work, for El Retiro was to be handled by Juvenile Hall's staff at no extra expense.

Under Miriam's plan, no girl could be committed to El Retiro. She would come there on a Court order which read:

"Jane Doe is permitted to go to El Retiro until further order."

Miss (or Mrs.) Doe would be expected to stay at least a year, but she could stay on, subject to the protection and guidance of the Court, until she was twenty-one.

There were five entrance requirements:

1. An earnest desire to make good, proved by an unbroken good-conduct record at the detention home and an expressed willingness to undergo a period of training.
2. Freedom from infectious disease.
3. Candidate must be of normal, or borderline, mentality—no diagnosed cases of feeble-mindedness accepted.
4. Girl's home-situation must be one that prevents her successful re-education there. Such a home would be unfit, weak, or broken.
5. Evidence that the candidate cannot earn her living outside unharmed.

El Retiro's population was multi-racial. Its doors were open to ex-venereal and arrested tuberculosis cases, to the anemic and neurasthenic, to all for whom an outdoor life of healthful work and recreation was essential. Miriam insisted that moral reconstruction should not be undertaken until it was first rooted in social hygiene. Many "students" at El Retiro were disturbed; there were cases of incipient *dementia praecox*, grave problems in adolescent hysteria and others in the borderline field so troublesome and complex. Miriam saw El Retiro as a "preventorium" for both mental and physical disabilities—a place where a girl's needs could be taken care of by those who, at the same time, understood her discipline.

Miriam summed it up in a pamphlet she wrote for the California State Board of Health:

"El Retiro's chief aim is to establish—by modern, intensive methods—self-respect, self-government and sturdiness of purpose in its young students. We do not wish to shelter them until they are twenty-one, but to build up sufficient moral muscle for their protection in the world outside. First comes personal hygiene: baths, walks, exercise and then cleanliness and more cleanliness

until the girl is as dainty as her room, and as fresh as the mountain air. Then self-expression is cultivated. Student body meetings, departmental conferences, council meetings develop her sense of citizenship.

"A special program of work, study, and play is made for her, and she is assigned to one of the more advanced girls to train. Each girl is thus a teacher and a pupil. She is learning one type of work and teaching another. The hours allotted to her for school are equivalent to a full school day.

"The girls do the entire work of the school: cooking, dining room work, housekeeping, gardening, dairying, horticulture, olive culture and preserving, laundry, sewing, weaving, basketry, library work, running the commissary, painting, dressmaking, millinery, etc.

"Girls ready to assume responsibility are paid for their labor and are on the payroll of Los Angeles County. Such girls are called 'heads of departments' and have assistants. Girl inspectors go the rounds each morning and make reports as to the order and accomplishments in the departments. Written reports are filed with the secretary of the student organization. Each girl is a citizen in an important industrial community. She keeps a record of her own progress.

"The young student, having accumulated a bank account (two to fifty-eight dollars was the first year's range), is trained intensively for a few months in some skill or occupation of her choice for her future: library work, flower and bulb culture, or salad-making for commercial purposes.

"When the time comes to send her forth, she will have the tools to make her way—a definite structure between the institution and the community. She will not be left to jump the chasm as best she may.

"After a girl has been in residence for one month, her name

is presented to the student body and she is voted on. If the girls feel she cannot make good, or that she is not the type worth their trouble, she is sent back to the detention home and the Court is informed that the El Retiro Students Association cannot take her. If the vote is favorable, she is eligible for initiation. A ceremony is held, during which girls who have been elected officers impersonate, in simple pageant form, the virtues the school strives to inculcate.

"The new girl takes vows of allegiance and swears never, by word or deed, to bring dishonor to El Retiro. She is given a shield pin of the Association and is duly declared a member. Now she may vote, hold office, enjoy privileges, work on the payroll, go to the movies and speak her mind plainly."

(The theory behind this was the acceptance by a like-minded industrial community of full responsibility for the acts of all its members.)

"It (El Retiro) has succeeded thus far in surprising even its warm advocates by the efficient common sense of its government. It is not always easy for omniscient adults to keep their hands off when they see youth smashing traditions of discipline, but for the courage of those who believe in democracy let it be said that after nine years of training adolescents, I had not before seen so speedy a method of transforming a lazy, arrogant, determined young person into useful, cooperative citizenship.

"The spirit of cooperation is stressed. Community service, the use of the local banks and stores, attendance at the local churches and membership in local organizations is encouraged. Some of our girls are about to enter the high school of the community. Contact with the normal, healthful, rural community life of the beautiful San Fernando Valley is one of the strong aims of our program. In the most real sense we are the child of the socialized spirit of California, and we shall not live a life apart.

"So much of our social endeavor is the ceaseless stemming of a tide so vast, so monstrous, that only the stoutest hearts can work with courage or with hope. A generous vision is needed. Particularly has childhood suffered by our parsimony. From wayward youths we have taken away freedom and all that makes life livable to the adolescent. We have denied those splendid affirmations of the spirit that, under happier conditions, have meant life to the race. Here, under the olive trees of El Retiro, we have commenced an experiment of restoration; we are trying to restore to the girl, under unusually favorable conditions, her health, her self-respect, and her faith—her faith in the integrity of human life. This is the supreme task of the social hygiene of the future."

Between Miriam and accomplishment of this "supreme task" lay the "three P's" that haunted her all during her professional career: prejudice, public opinion, and politics. All three set beartraps for her and caught her more than once.

The Negro girls from El Retiro were turned away at one church, but another one took them in after some "education" by Miriam. There was strong local opposition to Miriam's girls going to the high school. That barrier came down only after a persistent crusade and a Board of Education ballot confirming the girls' right to attend.

Politicians playing to the grandstand ordered deputy sheriffs into El Retiro, despite its orderly nature, to conduct a military regime. Older residents of the school marched in a body nineteen miles back to Juvenile Hall on a blistering hot day, voluntarily replacing themselves in the detention home in protest against the incursion.

"It was one of the most remarkable treks in correctional history," Miriam told a Hollywood scriptwriter many years later.

One night, a forest fire broke out on the mountain behind El Retiro, threatening the place. The students sat all night on the steps of the high school until the danger had passed, then went home at dawn to make coffee for the fire fighters.

Responsible now for stretching a budget of \$100,000 over the demands of two institutions and keeping two sets of reins tight in her grip, Miriam went home at night to "her room and her cats" at the Colony, weary and sometimes discouraged by the nagging of those who seemed determined to hamper her work for whimsical reasons. Her law books waited on her desk. There still was much to learn before her bar examinations. Then, too, the Civil Service examinations for the refereeship of Juvenile Court were scheduled for mid-1920.

The Hall's second woman doctor—the first had been fired—publicly charged that the Hall's hospital was in bad condition and that Miriam was responsible. Mrs. Lewis, the Probation Committee woman who had championed Miriam early in her tenure, encouraged the doctor, who thereupon wrote Miriam an insolent letter. Miriam demanded an investigation of the hospital by an official of the State Board of Health, a man who had said, recently and publicly, that the Hall was the best managed institution in California.

"The whole thing is politics again," Miriam wrote her father, "and I am so sick of it I can hardly stand it. I have too high an opinion of dogs to use the usual terms 'a set of curs barking at one's heels'—for I'm firmly convinced that if dogs bark at people those persons are in the wrong; they are irritating themselves and even dogs. No, I won't call these folks (including Civil Service) curs—they are rats; someone has left a piece of mouldy cheese, and they are tearing the very bricks down to get at it."

Miriam passed her bar examinations handily, and when Judge Shontz was appointed City Clerk of Los Angeles, Miriam was named Referee of Juvenile Court to fill the vacancy. About three weeks later, she was in the unique position of competing in Civil Service examinations with five other candidates for the job she already held, pending results of her Civil Service exams.

She reported at Civil Service headquarters one August morning at eight-thirty, and wrote until five-thirty, with an hour off for oral examination before the Commission and two high-ranking judges. One of the judges, she thought, was a square shooter. The other, she said later, had a history that boded ill for her. For one thing, he was "a very dear friend" of the woman physician who had been ousted from the Hall. For another, he was up for re-election and despised the judge who would be Miriam's immediate boss if she were confirmed as Referee of Juvenile Court.

Of his other qualifications, Miriam later wrote that he "once sat in Juvenile Court for six weeks and got his name in the paper every day—for ordering boys spanked and making husbands in court get down on their knees and kiss their wives' hands—and other little traits. He is an enormous man with a great round tub face and cold fishy eyes. Years ago some woman refused him and he has 'remained true to her memory forever,' although occasionally he would be picked up out of the gutter, or bailed out in the course of some police raid.

"So he had it in for me, although I had never seen him before. He had a chance to pay off Judge Reeve and also avenge the downfall of (Dr.) Proctor, and he did. I've been through a good deal in this county—but I was never so badly insulted as by this judge. I got through it all right—his chief objection seemed to be that I would think I was as good as the judges. . . . I have not

heard the results yet—but I have been told that this judge, in spite of his attitude, voted for me—probably we will not know for several days.”

According to Miriam’s own credo of having little confidence in anything until it has been attacked, she must have been brimming with self-confidence for the next few days. If so, it was justified late in August when the Civil Service Commission confirmed her as Referee of the Los Angeles Juvenile Court. She not only emerged from the exams the winner but the only candidate who passed. With her usual diffidence, she explained to Portland that “it must have been an unusually stupid lot of lawyers, etc., who took the exams—for my own performance was anything but brilliant.”

After a week or so on the job, Referee Van Waters was proud of her record, liked her boss, Judge Reeve—“he not only never interferes, but never makes a suggestion”—and her job. To her father, she wrote: “The new job is a highly interesting one. Battles of lawyers and witnesses are a good deal like games of chess, and if one takes them calmly, a great deal of enjoyment and wisdom may be possessed. As a learned profession I find the law has been greatly over-estimated, as far as the majority who come up before me are concerned.

“Mere speaking of the English language is an accomplishment for the most part beyond them. Our Cabin Boy (brother Ralph) could give them points on grammar and cards and the same on public speaking. But in the ancient arts of scoundrelry, malice and pettifogging—they are magnificent. Still, I am determined to be one, and I suppose they are quite as virtuous and intelligent as the common run of Ph.D.’s and D.D.’s.

“I am lonesome for you. Even a whiff of your old pipe would

be comforting—even filled with Velvet! Do you like my new cards? Please note they are engraved. They are the first professional cards I have ever had.”

In a sunny, comfortable office whose first tenant had been former Secretary of the Navy, Curtis Wilbur, Miriam held gentle sway over a procession of life in the raw.

By far the best account of her Court, her work, and her methods is one that an editor of *The New Republic* wrote in 1926 as part of a review of Miriam’s first book, *Youth in Conflict*.

“On a recent visit to Los Angeles, I sat in Dr. Van Waters’ court one long afternoon, while about fifteen cases were being heard. Picture to yourself a room with no forbidding legal air, a room with table and chairs and an air of simplicity and quiet. Here the grim majesty of the law court, as well as its sordidness, is thrown overboard. Nothing which terrifies the child is permitted.

“Something of the clinic, something of the confessional is present, but its spirit differs from either, for the court has not only the power to inquire, to recommend and reconstruct, but it can obtain the obedience of child and community. The instrument it uses is knowledge, not force.

“In all my life I have never witnessed anything so dramatic, nor so inspiring as on that afternoon. No performance in the theatre could possibly approach the intense realism of tragedy and comedy there enacted, and no invented plots conceivably could improve upon the stories there related. It seemed to me that every case was different from every other one, each typical of itself alone.

“There was a bright, shining little Negro, so small that he would have fitted into a cat basket, who had been found a home well out of the reach of his quarreling parents; two little urchins

in overalls who had run away from home repeatedly rather than sleep in the garage, and who chanted in unison in response to every question:

“‘She’s mean’—meaning their stepmother.

“But most interesting of all were the cases of adolescents. I saw girls of sixteen calmly admit conduct that would have been incredible at twice their age; I saw their utter indifference both to their parents and the moral disapproval of society. I saw a girl who had been beaten by her father for staying out at night until her body was striped with ugly welts, but in her eyes was a cold defiance and an unrepentant resolve to escape.

“I saw girls whose parents had showered them with kindness and love, but who, urged by a nameless impulse, had deserted their comfortable home to live with diseased men in disreputable places. Startling as it sounds, the general attitude of these girls was that their conduct, good or bad, was entirely a matter of their own deciding. They stood firmly by what they had done; by what they intended to do . . .

“But the inspiring thing was the effect of the court’s attitude on the hardness and indifference of these youngsters. Under the sympathetic questioning of Dr. Van Waters their resistance yielded and disappeared. They had expected to be scolded, as at home, to be preached at, as at church, or lectured, as at school. Instead they encountered a kindly disposed person who without formality sought only to understand.

“There was no insistence that the right was all on her side, the wrong on theirs. She simply asked why. Why did you do it? Why do you dislike your mother? Why have you no respect for your teacher? In the atmosphere of kindliness, sympathy and intelligent understanding pervading this remarkable court, I felt that here, at least, delinquency was being dealt with in a way that prom-

ised its eventual elimination. I felt that if parents and teachers and all those who have in their hands the guidance and training of youth could be possessed of the insight and wisdom of this discerning judge, there would be an end to delinquency among normal children."

Miriam herself seemed temporarily less enthusiastic about her new job than about a play to be produced by the girls at El Retiro—*Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil*. She wrote her parents that it was child-like, very simple but beautiful. "It will be out of doors. The stage will be the front porch and the audience will sit out in front."

The disgruntled lady doctor at the Hall filed a thirty thousand dollar damage suit against Miriam, but nothing ever came of it. A few weeks later, Miriam wrote home that the doctor had "dropped out of sight as completely as if drowned. Her professional career seems ended—no one hears of her. The Grand Jury will investigate . . . we of course are willing to be investigated."

There would be many others besides the doctor who would discover that Miriam had incredible courage under fire; that she would bend and yield only in what she believed to be the right direction. Those who tried to frighten her had no way of knowing that she once camped out in Oregon forests, rode a stallion, and swam the Willamette River—and was the best friend that mice, dead or alive, ever had.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Every Institution Has a Back Door

"One day there came into our courtroom, followed by two or three distinguished persons, a presence. I remember her clothes: something gray molded to her so that her body and spirit seemed one, a harmony. Her eyes were luminous and she had great composure.

"She sat there and listened to the children's cases. At the end of it she said, 'I am coming home with you.' She came to the little place in California where I lived, and met Elizabeth Woods, psychologist of the Los Angeles city school system, and Sara Carolyn Fisher, who is assistant professor of psychology at the University of California, and Orfa Jean Shontz, the first woman judge in the West and a colleague of your great Mary Bartholomew in Chicago. She sat by the fireside and we talked a very long time.

"From there Mrs. Dummer sent me out over the nation. I

went to some twenty-six states surveying reform schools, making recommendations to the Federal government for the granting of aid to those with constructive policy.

"I came to Mrs. Dummer's house in Chicago* many times. It is very important to note the people you meet going up and down the stairs of a person's house. On that second floor library you would meet janitors and school teachers and college presidents and research workers and famous scientists, or those who were going to become famous, carrying books, bringing books up and back down. Like a Jacob's ladder were the stairs in Mrs. Dummer's house. Always she served coffee and cakes especially relished by famished social workers and teachers. Mrs. Dummer had the idea that the breaking of bread was deeply symbolic.

"Think of the creativity of the mind which conceived the first psychological clinic in the world, as far as my information goes, for normal children.

"What is the essence of creativity? Among the components are faith, serenity, relatedness, and humility. I think she also had a cosmic patience, the kind of constructive composure that was never more apparent to me than when I would tell Mrs. Dummer some of my political vicissitudes both in California and Massachusetts. I think she felt that even politicians could be saved; even they were human.

"Without any 'I' in her makeup, without any doubt, or fear, or belief in death, Mrs. Dummer lived her life fully; and from this time on, I think there ought to be a great ongoing-ness in Chicago, in the state, in the nation and in the world."

These tributes were part of Miriam's address at memorial services for Ethel Sturges Dummer (Mrs. William F.) at the Institute of Juvenile Research, in Chicago, many years after that first meeting in Miriam's courtroom.

* At 670 North Michigan Avenue.

Mrs. Dummer was one of two “guardian angels” in Miriam’s career—a patroness of social work who also plunged into the thick of it, chipping off large chunks of her fortune to support the best of it as she judged it. Her life-long co-worker, Thomas D. Eliot, of Northwestern University, called her a “switchboard for the brokering of ideas and contacts through the hospitality of her home to alert thinkers and innovators, through wide correspondence, and through generous circulation of reprints and books.”

She practiced and preached the doctrines of Mary Everest Boole, the mathematician wife of Cambridge University mathematician George Boole, who built a theoretical scaffolding for symbolic logic and “Boolean algebra.” Mrs. Dummer understood this little-known English seeress and eagerly put her hunches to the test of experience. Without a college education, Mrs. Dummer was a profound student and thinker, as well as something of a mystic. Mr. Eliot said of her: “She integrates thought and action, mind and body, unconscious and conscious, past and future, hypothesis and verification.” She was an anticipator of Gestalt psychology.

One of her “hunches” was that juvenile delinquency is related to inability to understand mathematics. In her extensive correspondence with Miriam, she explained that “few teachers understand the philosophy of mathematics. ‘Fractions as proportional relationship of parts within a whole.’ I keep pegging away at this. I cannot follow the elaborate mathematical formulae of today, but I do grasp the relation of a part to the whole, both in mathematics and religion. Of course, you use this in your work, as you give each woman a sense of belonging, of being part of, and having meaning for, the vast whole.”

Mrs. Dummer, in 1909, established The Juvenile Psychopathic Institute to deal intensively with personality and behavior disorders of children, and persuaded Dr. William Healy, a student of William James, of Harvard, to direct the Institute. She is credited

with "discovering" Healy, who became world-famous in juvenile work. When the City of Chicago took over responsibility for the Institute in 1916, Healy returned to Boston to establish the Judge Baker Foundation along the lines of the Chicago institution.

Mrs. Dummer's catalytic personality was a major influence in Miriam's professional growth. Coming to El Retiro and Miriam's courtroom and admiring what she found, she identified herself with Miriam with all the intellectual and much of the monetary wealth at her command.

"Mrs. Dummer's idea," Miriam wrote Portland, "is largely that of the missionary. When she found the way the girls lived and worked and studied at El Retiro—their freedom and democracy—she became convinced that it is a new idea—though of course it is old—as old as the Spirit of Revolution."

At Mrs. Dummer's urging and expense, Miriam arranged for a six-month leave—all she could get—to visit the nation's important industrial training and reform schools for girls, comparing them and analyzing their results and methods to determine the degree of their accomplishment. It was Mrs. Dummer's idea that El Retiro's success might prove that other schools were on the wrong track. She arranged with the Federal government to publish Miriam's research as a Federal survey.

Hurrying across the country, Miriam landed in Washington, D.C., in time for a national conference of social workers, a meeting with delegates from state boards of health—"all experts on hygiene, wonderful people"—and a meeting of the chief heads of the nation's institutions for delinquent women and girls.

Her letters home were a journal of her experience:

"El Retiro is taking like wildfire. You would be astonished at the genuine interest and enthusiasm . . . have received more

help and encouragement than I have ever known . . . had dinner last night with Jane Addams and Jeanette Rankin . . . have spoken twice a day throughout the Conference. California ideas seem to take well and I am receiving the greatest possible benefit."

Two nights later she was in Virginia, riding by moonlight in a high, rickety surrey through frosted woods and banks of fallen leaves. A pair of mules, Jennie and Jewel, driven by a "hunched-up, carved figure of ebony," took her to a school where eighty Negro girls greeted her with Christmas carols. "The superintendent, Mrs. Barrett, is a real power—intelligent, vivid, forceful, a graduate of Hampton."

North Carolina, she said, had the "best school yet—stands on a par with El Retiro, only we have more self-government." On her way to Baltimore, she went to Chestnut Hill, near Philadelphia, and took a taxi to Flourtown, where she visited Carson College, a two-year-old school for orphans. "It is built like an old English village," she wrote, "with painted tiles on the roofs. The names of the cottages where children live are Thistle, Red Gables, Stork Hill and Mother Goose . . . they do marvelous teaching here for backward and retarded youngsters, developing them as I have seen nowhere else."

That same day, she dined in Baltimore with Dr. Adolf Meyer, the Johns Hopkins psychiatrist. "He is, I think, the wisest psychologist in America," she wrote. "I trust his judgment absolutely. Tomorrow forenoon I will go to Johns Hopkins' clinic—where I'll study difficult behavior problems such as I encounter with my girls—only these are grown-up psychopathic patients of America's finest hospital."

Christmas Day, Miriam was at Sleighton Farms, in Darling, Pennsylvania, the correction school directed by Martha Falconer, a pioneer after Miriam's heart and philosophy. "George Ellis, the

writer and correspondent, gave the Christmas talk, which was excellent. Mr. and Mrs. Peter Sterling came to the excellent dinner. He is editor of the *Public Ledger* (Philadelphia), she a member of the Board. Dinner was jolly, with tricks and jokes. A jar of jam on being opened sent out a long, green jack-in-the-box . . . plates began dancing with the little device used on such occasions. There was even a dribble glass for an august board member.

"I simply cannot tell you, Mother and Beckie, how much I appreciated those *lovely* bloomers. Now there are bloomers and bloomers, and none to be despised, but these are the quintessence, the sugared-off and boiled-down luxury of a perfect bloomer. Such stitching! Such material! Such style and shape! Well, they are the niftiest things I have ever seen, much less worn. My one regret is that I am unable to defy the Blue Book Laws of some of these sections and wear them on the street."

After watching two brain operations at Johns Hopkins and observing Dr. Meyer's handling of some grave cases, Miriam lit out for Connecticut, where she missed a train connection because of a flat tire and was marooned for two and a half hours in a New Haven railroad station at Berlin. She spent the time working on her survey notes.

Turning back west, she worked up a case of semi-mock indignation against a Pullman conductor who asked her not to use her portable typewriter because it disturbed those who were trying to sleep—in broad daylight.

"We have let lawmakers take away beer, threaten tobacco and threaten to revive the Blue Laws of 1659 . . . but now they have forbidden Coronas on Pullman cars. One is supposed to sit and look out of the window, or read, or sleep. One can not write on the typewriter. It makes too much noise. To interdict the harmless little Corona on which busy people jot down their outlines

for articles, catch up on their letters, record their ideas born of long hours of travel and contemplation—that is an outrage and calls for violence. Why are American people so indifferent to personal liberty?”

The law, incidentally, took no beer from Miriam, although it snatched an occasional glass of wine from her hand when she dined out. She adopted the moral position that she could not—as referee in a court dealing with many cases that originated in, or were complicated by, bootleg liquor—break Prohibition laws; she remained a teetotaler until Repeal in 1932, although her drinking after that was moderate, to say the least.

During this cross-country survey news reached her that politicians in Los Angeles were cutting her up in her absence. Miriam’s supervising judge had resigned and been replaced by another, to whom she tendered an automatic courtesy resignation which he refused to accept. But now her accomplishments at Juvenile Hall and El Retiro were being viciously attacked, and she was worried about the structure she had been at such pains to build.

“It should not be, of course, that a system of child care should depend on a personality—but that is merely a defect of time. I shall now try to get the work on a basis where it can be left,” she wrote her father.

Some of Miriam’s associates, particularly in her later years, said Miriam was vain, and so she was, but her sense of humor and human frailty enabled her to view her behavior detachedly; seeing herself as she would not like to see others, she usually had the honesty to say: “Miriam, you are an ass.”

At Marshall Field’s, in Chicago, she bought an expensive English pipe for her father, sending it on with a note of philosophy: “I am aware that pipes—like religions—show all degrees of harsh-

ness, yet are not altogether bad. A footnote by way of caution: the gentleman who sold it to me did not think boiling it in milk would improve it. There may be an excellent authority* to the contrary; still it is well to record all the evidence and the argument on both sides."

In Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Iowa, and Minnesota, Miriam visited one reform school after another, making a series of long, strenuous trips over primitive roads. She was, of course, sticking her nose in other superintendents' business, but what she called her long "apprenticeship" in institutions made her task relatively easy. There were two other national surveys going on in the field at the time. Miriam consoled herself with the thought that the other canvassers knew the front door, while she knew the back-door-and-scrub-bucket aspects of the institutions.

Encountering, in one "frightful" institution a wall motto: "As for God His Way is Perfect," she wrote her father: "That must have been welcome information to the young girl inmates! I wish you could tell your people that *bad* theology makes bad reformatories and jails—it is far from the harmless, academic thing that we think it is."

Arriving back in Los Angeles, she quickly realized that her antagonists had been making hay. She was moved out of her comfortable, sunny office and installed near the county game warden in a windowless room. Juvenile Court was under attack from all sides; its enemies were making derogatory speeches about it at women's clubs. The district attorney's office, Miriam believed, was corrupt through and through. A new county Board of Supervisors had been elected and had turned a deaf ear to the social workers, who were fighting among themselves. There was strong sen-

* Her father.

timent for one ordinance to curb activities of the Referee and another for cutting her salary. It seemed to Miriam that the new judge was apathetic about her work.

"I am not discouraged," Miriam wrote home. "I view it all as part of our great American movement, Back to Normalcy. After some damage has been done, the pendulum will swing. It is the children who suffer first and most. The best way to handle the situation is to work from day to day without wasting energy in by-paths. As one Hull House worker said—'Whenever there is a change in political administration, all the workers are looking for a place to jump.' But that is the wrong way to spend your time."

Miriam had learned in the east that the successful schools there were run without civil service, a system which she considered hopeless in Los Angeles, if only because it opposed "every right sort of person we get."

Her salary was cut.

She patched together what her detractors had left her and got the Juvenile Court running smoothly again in a matter of days. Her sister, Beckie, arrived from the north, still unhappy and bruised from her bout with a nursing career, and this time she moved in with Miriam to stay. Miriam helped her land a job with an insurance company. Brother Ralph wrote that he would like to come and live with her, too, and go to school in Los Angeles. She wrote a rousing, pirate-style letter—John Silver to Jim Hawkins—telling him to come ahead and swab the decks along with the four-woman crew at the Colony.

The newspapers couldn't stay away from her. Reporters who wanted to do "human interest" pieces about her found themselves subtly steered toward the needs and achievements of inmates at the Hall and students at El Retiro. One reporter quoted her:

"There's a Joan of Arc sleeping in every girl."

Miriam's influence moved the Business and Professional Women's Club of the city to deliver, at a modest rent, an attractive ten-room house in a good section of the city as a club house for El Retiro "graduates" who couldn't stretch their small salaries over the cost of living, or who needed a place to live until they could get a job and support themselves, or marry. For girls who could pay, the cost was scaled to their salaries. The jobless lived there free. The residence was called The Los Angeles Business Girls' Club.

In the fall of 1921, Miriam resumed her survey of reformatories, working her way through the southwest, then eastward to Florida, where she addressed the National Prison Conference. Mrs. Dummer paid all her expenses.

From the conference, she wrote Portland that "it was striking to see gathered in one group the old and the new—old ideas of crime and punishment; the old, man-eating type of prison official with the new type. The new type is a combination of young college athlete and Boy Scout leader, farmer, or foreman in industry. Since more persons graduate each year from our prisons, jails, and reformatories than from our institutions of higher learning, wardens, as a type, are more interesting than college presidents."

What cheered her most was the number and reputations of women at the conference. She listed Martha Falconer; Maud Miner, of New York; Dr. Maud Baker, of New Orleans; Mrs. Van Winkle, of Washington, D.C. (a foremost policewoman), and Dr. Valerie Porter, chief of the Federal Bureau of Social Hygiene.

On her desk, awaiting her return to Los Angeles, was a letter from Madison, Wisconsin, offering her the directorship of that state's new Bureau of Juvenile Delinquency. Late in December, 1921, she stopped in Madison on her way to Pittsburgh, but was not persuaded, because she felt a strong bond with her Los Angeles

work. "I have built the foundations, and I guess I'll wait and see the roof. Then too—I'm not sure I have pep enough to begin all over again."

In her federal survey, a masterfully documented report, she said the five best institutions in the country were those in Minnesota, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Los Angeles (El Retiro). *Survey Graphic* printed her article on the survey, and her father's congratulatory telegram on the piece reached her before the *Graphic*.

From Ogdensburg, New York, her doctor-uncle, Charles, wrote her father: "When you recount the achievements of Miriam I sometimes wonder how she can be a relative of ours . . . but I glory in the triumph. There is no exaggeration of the ego about her, no prudery, but just a typical American woman of the highest type. A national reputation at thirty-four! That's going some."

Her reputation began to make itself felt on many fronts. The Children's Bureau in Washington dispatched a visiting member of the Japanese Government to Miriam's court when he expressed interest in studying the best examples of the U.S. juvenile court system.

A young dwarf died at El Retiro. "We had a beautiful service for her in the hospital chapel," Miriam wrote home. "And we tried to make the most of our first break in the circle. Thousands of little outcasts die and no one cares, but we shall try to make El Retiro stand for the preciousness of human lives. The local papers gave notices, too. Is that not a victory when we consider that only a short time ago they were trying to run us out?"

Miriam addressed "600 and more fine Jewish women at the annual meeting of the Council of Jewish Women. They are much interested in the court and have given me a full-time, paid, trained

worker who has her desk in my office. For the first time in the history of this county we are getting good work done on Jewish cases. The Catholic and Negro groups are also cooperating to the fullest extent. I need more time to accomplish anything."

After returning from a happy family vacation at Cannon Beach, Miriam was stunned by news from Portland that her father, at sixty-eight, had been forced to retire from his post as a result of action taken by his Church. She wrote immediately, affirming her respect and affection for him, reaffirming her faith in his abilities, invoking a pox on his antagonists and predicting a spiritual drouth in eastern Oregon.

"I am deeply disappointed at the turn taken at the convention . . . nothing can obscure the great work that you have done, the implanting in thousands of hearts the love of truth and knowledge, the keen attention to learning and research, the kindly human spirit in matters of religion, the interest in social reform, the breadth of vision and the zest for scholarship.

"The truth is that many of the smaller fry scented a danger by comparison. Eastern Oregon could never have been what it is had you not labored in the field. It seems to me that definitely you have raised the standard of culture there for a long time to come. You will have no successor . . . I am confident that you are being merely released for a wider field . . . this is the supreme opportunity for you to go on the lecture platform . . . the first course of action probably would be . . . collect all your press notices and apply to the Lyceum Bureau in Chicago . . . the next ten years ought to mark your highest mark of constructive effort . . . please do not get the idea that you are 'old,' but I know your intelligence sees through the Episcopal convention and all its devices. Have you read Bernard Shaw's play, *Back to Methuselah*? It has some excellent satire.

"It is of course a source of satisfaction, although it may be wicked, to reflect how the congregations will fall off and the interest flag out there in those keen little towns when they are subject to the dry-rot of the coming regime . . . the thinker, the real explorer, the innovator, the Lincoln, the Emerson, is a solitary figure, understood and adored by the few."

However subjectively she dealt with the facts of her father's situation, he could not possibly have surrendered to defeat after reading her testimonial. Within a few weeks, he accepted a call to St. Paul's Church in Wellsboro, Pennsylvania, not far from his first parish in Williamsport.

"Take it in the spirit of adventure," Miriam counseled her mother. "Go lightly and with a carefree heart. Send my books and sell, store, or lend anything of mine you wish. I leave it all to you."

CHAPTER TWELVE

Homeland or Hans: Choose One

According to a script almost as old as the movie business, the pretty young girl arrives in Hollywood from a small town somewhere in the sprawling U.S. with twenty dollars in her purse and a dream in her heart. She works behind a drugstore soda fountain until a big film producer spies her, recognizes her "star potential" at a glance, and signs her to a modest contract after a screen test confirms his hunch. He tears up the silly contract when her first picture makes her name and face a magnet to millions. She marries the idolized male lead of her choice and lives happily, ever after a new husband.

Miriam saw many of the nine hundred ninety-nine out of a thousand girls for whom the script was written another way. They were the ones who couldn't get a job at a drugstore, couldn't find the big producer anywhere, couldn't live on twenty dollars

forever, and couldn't face the imagined or real humiliation of going back to that small town somewhere in the sprawling U.S. where a touch of beauty and a smattering of acting talent didn't handicap a girl if she didn't take them too seriously.

Sometimes, Miriam went out in the city and rescued "her" girls on probation to the Juvenile Court from the debris of their dreams.

The first time, she acted on a tip from a girl brought into her courtroom. A little after midnight, Miriam and two of her young staff officers drove to a crumbling apartment building on the edge of the Chinese quarter. None of them wore the special police badge that belonged to them as officers of Juvenile Hall, nor carried a gun, although Miriam was an excellent pistol shot. She regarded the wearing of her police badge as she did displaying her Phi Beta Kappa key: if one has any authority or knowledge, it will show without the badge.

It was 1923, and the "white slave trade" between California and Mexico and South America was lively. Somewhere in the building in front of which Miriam parked her car, three girls on probation to the Juvenile Court were plying the oldest trade, willingly or unwillingly.

One of the staff officers sat at the wheel of the car while Miriam and the other officer walked into a bar on the ground floor. They were attractively dressed. They sat down at different tables and ordered drinks, looking, they hoped, like house girls momentarily out of work.

Watching traffic, Miriam saw that doors off the saloon opened into hallways leading to bedrooms. She sipped her necessary drink patiently. After a while, one of the old Mexican waitresses in the room recognized Miriam, caught her eye and winked, nodding slightly in the direction of one of the hallways, down which she

disappeared. Five minutes later, Miriam's three girls came into the saloon from the hall. Miriam rose quietly and walked up to them.

A headwaiter-bouncer drifted suspiciously up to the group. Miriam spoke to him out of the corner of her mouth:

"This babe's mom," she said, nodding to one of the girls, "is awful sick." *

"Sure," said the bouncer. Miriam was never certain if he knew who she was, or whether he was really touched by the thought of illness in the prostitute's family.

Miriam steered the girls down a long corridor, through a window into an alley and around the block to her waiting car.

She didn't try to leave by the front door because she knew the underworld hated being cheated. She didn't call the police in because the girls would have been frightened, whereas they left with her almost happily. Also, she knew the place paid heavily for protection, and that, by interfering, the police ran a double risk of being fired or demoted by authorities who, in turn, contributed funds to political bosses in both major political parties, or getting shot or beaten up by underworld agents.

It is difficult to know how Miriam really reacted to such adventures. She seemed, in describing them to her father, to stay in the character she invariably presented to him: the unruffled, mature, objective woman, almost masculine in her control of dramatic situations. It seemed that she cast herself in roles she knew he would champion, and played these roles in a mood she knew would appeal to his ideas of admirable human conduct. And yet, she was not a pretender; she had the physical courage to raid a brothel and brave it through. It was typical of her that she could, in a letter to her father, describe the action of the raid as though it were an every-

* Hollywood crime movies came later. This was Miriam's best imitation of underworld "lingo" of the times.

day experience and, in a subsequent letter to her mother, revert to expressions of almost childlike dependence upon her mother's counsel in feminine matters, or pour out hurt feelings when she sensed her affection for one of the family was not reciprocated.

"Grown up as I am and pressed with routine and burdens, I can't quite feel—not hurt—that George never writes to me, even on birthdays," she confessed to her mother. "I used to go without lunches and silk stockings cheerfully to keep him in college. I know his not writing means nothing—that we should not misinterpret the thoughtlessness of young people—and I don't want you to say a word about it."

It was a painful sort of ambivalence, her yearning at heart for a sign of affection from George and rationalizing the lack of it in her professional mind. If George's next letter had been a request for a loan, she would have scraped up the money with joy.

When Beckie became engaged, Miriam cheerfully planned and underwrote the requisite social amenities. Beckie worried a little that Miriam might be overspending and said so in a letter home:

"Miriam gave me a luncheon yesterday. She is the dearest sister a girl ever had. And I can't begin to tell you all that she has done for me. I can't stop her. I am afraid she is getting herself in debt to get me things while she herself goes without. I hate to have her do it, but she seems real happy about it all."

Miriam planned Beckie's spring wedding luncheon to begin with a reminder of Oregon—Olympic oysters—and continue with an impressive array of costly dishes. When Beckie left Los Angeles as Mrs. Lee Bartholomew, Miriam was broke and happy. She had gladly spent a hundred dollars on the luncheon and three hundred dollars for her share of Beckie's linens, china and other necessities.

With the scent of orange blossoms for Beckie's wedding in the

air, Miriam set forth to battle a stench attributed to crime publicity in Los Angeles newspapers. She was chosen one of a committee of three to lead a public campaign for "decency" in the press.

Ralph arrived in the fall of that year to be near Miriam and attend law school. Judge Shontz gave him a part-time job serving summonses. Miriam sent three Long Beach policemen to jail and ordered seven others bound over to a grand jury for "joy-riding" with three girls, seventeen, fourteen and ten. October found her broke again after getting Ralph started in school. She couldn't pay a fifty-seven-dollar assessment on the family's one remaining lot in Portland.

Ralph flirted with the newspaper business, working in the advertising department of the Los Angeles *Times*. As his infatuation with the law staled, he thought of teaching as a career. Later, Miriam thought he was secretly thinking of the ministry, but before he had jelled in any of these directions, he returned to to the University of Oregon and his old fraternity house, Kappa Sigma, with his vocational destination undetermined.

Miriam decided to write a book and call it *Youth In Conflict*. Mrs. Dummer planted the idea and pledged her support of the project.

"I wish to show the meaning of delinquency in modern life—how it is not just drift or 'badness' but a genuine struggle, a conflict misunderstood. It is youth striving, however blindly, for new forms of life. The *bad* in it comes a great deal from parental misunderstanding, and from commercialization (adults, that is to say, who run hotels, dance halls, amusements and taxicabs for profit, regardless of the young and their desire for a good time). I will show how youth is in conflict with home, school, church, courts and com-

munities, and then point the way out. O, I am eager to begin—but there is so much daily routine to live through.”

By daily routine, she meant handling an ever-growing case load at Juvenile Court, keeping close to El Retiro, Juvenile Hall, and the Business Girls' Club, serving as president and prime mover of the city's mental hygiene clinic, working on a Travelers Aid Society Committee, lecturing at U.C.L.A. on Social Diagnosis and making an average of two speeches a week in the Los Angeles area.

Small wonder that her handwriting grew less legible by the day, that her father wrote teasingly from Wellsboro that he loved her letters so much he wished he could read them, and that one of Miriam's best, young, woman probation officers needed God's help to interpret the Van Waters “scrawl.” This officer came to a probation session one day with no report. Miriam hastily jotted three points she wanted her to make in the meeting. The girl glanced at the notes, looked startled, left the room and didn't return until the meeting had adjourned.

“Where on earth have you been?” Miriam asked.

“I took your notes to the front steps and sat down and prayed,” the girl said. “And after awhile I figured them out.”

Petty jealousy of doctors and political attacks dogged Miriam's leadership of the mental hygiene clinic until she discovered a capable replacement who believed in her policies. She turned her office over to Dr. E. P. Ryland, a Congregational minister whom she considered one of the great men in California. She continued on the board, working as hard as ever, but she felt as though she had rolled away a stone she'd been carrying uphill.

The Governor of California stepped into Miriam's life at this point with an official appointment that proved to be an assignment

to romance. He sent her to Washington to serve on a White House-sponsored committee to draw up federal standards for juvenile courts.

There she met the only man she ever seriously considered marrying.

His name was Hans Weiss. He was a brilliant young Swiss lawyer sent to this country by his government to study U.S. juvenile court methods. His first official utterance was music to Miriam's ears. It came in a conference room after the reading of a report on juvenile delinquency. He arose in the back of the room and said:

"But I don't agree."

In the front row, Miriam arose to second his dissent.

"I don't believe a word of this," she said, going on to explain why.

As she sat down, she turned to see her fellow doubter. Their eyes met for a long moment in which curiosity was satisfied and transmuted to mutual attraction.

The next day, Hans introduced himself to Miriam and told her he had asked the Federal Children's Bureau for permission to study her court in Los Angeles.

A month later, he arrived in Los Angeles to learn at her side in court and audit her lecture course at U.C.L.A. The second night, he took Miriam to dinner at the Riverside Inn, where by candlelight she looked into his glacier-blue eyes and realized that she was falling in love with him. For days, they were together almost constantly.

His background and interests were strikingly similar to hers. He was the son of a Protestant minister who represented his canton in the Swiss State Council; he had studied law at the Univer-

sity of Zurich and was deeply interested in social work; he was an idealist, a nature-lover, a bibliophile and student of philosophy. He sang in a rich baritone voice and accompanied himself on a lute he had brought from home.

Miriam and Hans walked miles together, discussing their mutual interests. Hans had the graceful, tough physique of a skier who had climbed and schussed his native mountains since early boyhood. He was a gourmet who led Miriam into more restaurants than she knew existed in her own city, but the Inn at Riverside was their favorite. They would spend hours over a dinner in the circular, open courtyard there, close to the center fountain where streams of water played from the mouths of grotesque animals carved in rough stone. After dinner, they would explore the catacombs beneath the Inn—cell-like structures housing relics from the Missions. In a large, theatre-like auditorium in the main building of the Inn Miriam and Hans sometimes listened to organ recitals in the late afternoon.

After seven days of teaching Hans that Christian principles and scientific techniques were the core of a good juvenile court, Miriam learned, at thirty-seven, that her student had her heart in his hands. It grieved her, because Hans was talking of marriage, and she wanted very much to marry him; but she knew she must pay a steep price to do that.

She would have to surrender her U.S. citizenship if she accepted him, an alien. The law was blunt about it, although it was relaxed several years later.

In agonizing moments of weighing a life as Mrs. Hans Weiss, Miriam had to consider her career and her economic importance to her family. Ralph was dependent upon her for expenses at Oregon University. And despite her soaring letter of encourage-

ment to her father when he was let out of his Portland parish, she knew he was close to retirement and failing in health. Would he need her help sooner than he, or she, believed?

She made her decision in sorrow. She and Hans lived through some heartbreaking scenes, but he returned east a bachelor and chief probation officer in Judge Frederick P. Cabot's Boston Juvenile Court, and Miriam went back to her book and her inexorable responsibilities with a painful sense of loss. There would be other marriage proposals for her, but in her heart there was one best, and she never found one better.

Six months later, Miriam handed the eighty-five thousand-word manuscript of *Youth In Conflict* to Mrs. Dummer. "It is not written in the style of the *Saturday Evening Post*, nor yet that of the *Country Almanac*," she wrote her father, "I don't know whether it will 'get by' or not. It is neither science nor fiction; it is just as if someone had sat down and said: 'I have been working with these children now for over ten years—these are my words of comment and warning: the landmarks of my experience, both gay and sad.'"

She was needed at El Retiro for six weeks, to train a new superintendent. "They need a strong hand . . . it is hard for an old dog like me to submit again to institution life, but I am really needed there. Orfa will go on caring for the court and I'll stay out there night and day until the new worker can learn to run it."

A few months later, she referred to the new superintendent as "my fine, young new worker. Her name is Edna Mahan. I have really no fear for her. She is a dandy, and already my loyal supporter."

Miriam blamed a new Probation Committee for undermining her influence at El Retiro by starting a whispering campaign to the

effect that she no longer cared about the place, and would let the Probation Committee run it until all the students had been sent to the state reform school in Ventura. Four girls among fifty-seven at El Retiro rioted over this rumor and were taken to Juvenile Hall. Miriam rushed to the school and addressed the whole student body, speaking calmly and telling jokes until she got down to the heart of the matter with two sentences: "El Retiro is like a young child of my flesh and blood and I hold him in my arms because he cannot walk yet. Would I ever turn down El Retiro?"

The rhetorical question, of necessity, met with silence, but it effectively put a stop to the unrest, the rumor, and the undermined confidence in Miriam.

Mrs. Dummer, who had paid Miriam the equivalent of her court salary while she was on leave of absence to write her book, submitted the manuscript to Little, Brown in Boston. Its fate there was fogged in Miriam's report home that Mrs. Dummer had "withdrawn" the book from Little, Brown and sent it to *The New Republic*, where it was accepted as one of a series of books on social work with the proviso that Miriam slash ten thousand words out of it. This wasn't easy, and Miriam pruned so many articles out of the text that some of it seemed to have been edited for Western Union.

A first edition of two thousand copies went quickly. Mrs. Dummer's interest being what it was, copies went out to all the leading editors in the country, including the *New York Times*. "Probably they," Miriam wrote, "will give it a short review. The largest reviews will come in the *Survey*, *New Republic*, *Mental Hygiene*, *Psychiatric Review*, etc. Jessie Binford will review it for the *Woman Citizen*, which is the magazine of the National League of Women Voters, and the Federated Women's Clubs."

The reviews were almost unanimously enthusiastic. *Survey*

Associates (*Survey Graphic* and *The Survey*) drew a superlative from the solar system, commenting, in part:

"Every two or three hundred years we get a total eclipse of the sun. Just about as often we get a thoroughly satisfactory book—one that you can recommend to your friends without reservation. Dr. Miriam Van Waters' *Youth In Conflict* is such a book."

In the symphony of praise that swelled in volume as a second edition of five thousand copies of her book flowed across the country, Miriam kept hearing one arresting note sounded by her father. It was a "yes, but" theme, a subtle reminder from him that Miriam, in her busy, versatile being, had dropped the church out of her life.

Coincidentally, she was deeply touched by a talk at St. Paul's Cathedral in Los Angeles by Dean Lathrop, then executive secretary of the Episcopal Church's national department of social service.

"He struck a note that I urged to be discovered in the book—a mystic, vivid consciousness of the human personality of Christ that will appeal to our young intellectuals today as the Russian Revolution does to the Russians and the American Revolution did to our ancestors. Something worth going to jail for. Of course, any real Christians that appear *are* promptly put in jail, so the suggestion is timely."

Miriam spoke at the same social service supper that Dean Lathrop addressed, talking for ten minutes on the Christian spirit in social work. "I do honor the Church and its traditions, its scholarship, and probably you would have been surprised at what I said," she wrote her father.

Honoring the Church was not exactly what Miriam's father had in mind, and Miriam knew it. She temporized:

"As to Father's suggestion—if I can find a minister who is at

all unlike Balaam's ass, I shall probably make a church application. How about the Cathedral (St. Paul's, Los Angeles)? How does Bishop Stevens rank?"

The power of the man at St. Paul's, Wellsboro, Pa., prevailed. "Now, please write me my letter of transfer," Miriam wrote later, "for I have decided to return to the fold. I am mindful of your remark to my statement that I could not be discharged from my position except for neglect of duty or for moral depravity—and you said, 'well, they can never discharge you for neglect of duty.' You need not put that in the letter!"

Soon thereafter, Bishop Joseph Horsfall Johnson, of California, "almost commanded" Miriam to speak at a Diocesan Convention, where he introduced her as the daughter of a clergyman, and said that "wherever one finds someone changing the social conditions of his community for betterment, one finds the son or daughter of a clergyman." Miriam translated this into encouragement for her father. "I was happy, because it might sometime lead to a call (for her father) in California, or at least, that is my great dream. Before this, I never supposed I would have the slightest influence with a bishop!"

Repercussions from her book were startling. The Los Angeles captain of police in charge of juvenile affairs asked Miriam "for the first time in history" to cooperate with him on a plan for reorganizing police work with children. He came to her court and stayed two hours. Miriam saw it as an opportunity to put the whole city police department on a better basis. She rarely thought small.

In New York, Lawrence K. Frank, of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Fund, read the book and boarded a train for Los Angeles to propose to Miriam that she undertake a major research project, doing for the adolescent what Helen Thompson Wooley was doing for the pre-school child, with a different procedure.

Miriam was to have as many Fund-sponsored students as she could handle. She was to put them, with their fellowships and their freedom, to work on various aspects of adolescent difficulty, especially in home and school. As fast as the group could find the facts, they were to formulate teaching methods for parents, then call groups of parents together. Teaching and research were to begin simultaneously, one strengthening the other.

What Miriam and her Spelman fellows worked out in California was to be carried to other states. The Fund had ample means and was not staggered at the prospect of a ten or twenty year program of adult education. Mr. Frank plainly indicated to Miriam that he liked her view that mental hygiene belonged to everybody, not just to psychiatrists.

Miriam was not to be required to give up her work. Rather, her court, the Hall, El Retiro, the business girl's club, and lecture classes fused into the ideal laboratory for the project. She was to receive no salary, thereby remaining free, but she would be provided with adequate sums for the fellowships, traveling expenses and stenographic work.

Mr. Frank had barely entrained for the east when Miriam wrote of her excitement, and her gratitude to Mrs. Dummer:

"O, my Dear! My Dear! Such a strange, wonderful thing has happened to me. And remember it is all because of *you*. You gave me freedom to write the book and many ideas and inspirations to put into it. And you believed in me. Now it seems that one of the members of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Fund read the book and found in it certain ideas which he wanted."

Leaving four cats—Peter, Dulcinea, Rudolph, Josephine—and two kittens with Orfa and Bess, Miriam returned to Portland for a triumphant re-entry as the home-town girl who had made good. Some thirty sponsoring organizations had invited her back to lec-

ture on delinquency and mental hygiene, and greeted her with a luncheon that packed the Hotel Portland. Among the various groups of social workers and civic clubs, two tables were reserved for the Rev. George Van Waters's old parishes—St. David's and Grace Memorial.

Miriam assigned any laurels connected with her reception to her parents, writing them: "I take no credit for their attendance. It was a beautiful tribute to you and Mother . . . it was really almost overcoming to see all the old ones out . . . Sellwoods, Josephis . . . Webers . . . Davies . . . Joneses . . . Burneses. . . all spoke of *Dr.* and *Mrs.* Van Waters with deepest affection."

Speaking invitations poured in on her from all over California, one of them taking her to Stockton, where she discovered The College of the Pacific and was amazed to find the place "Methodist but absolutely liberal. They read everything, even *Youth In Conflict*. In fact, all unknown to me, there has grown up here a real movement. It is so strong that I am thinking of putting a Laura Spelman worker here for a month on leadership."

Journalistic coverage of Miriam's appearance at the College of the Pacific was flattering enough to intoxicate anybody. She passed it along, paraphrased and quoted, to Wellsboro with a comment: "It is silly for me to tell you things like this. I just do it for especially privileged, especially tried parents."

Her public speaking repertory, by now, included seven single lectures and eight series of lectures. The single talks were:

1. The Juvenile Court and the Community
2. The Mental Hygiene Movement
3. The Child Guidance Clinic of Los Angeles
4. Youth in Conflict

5. Child Versus Parent
6. Certain Problems of Adolescence
7. The Major Problems of Social Diagnosis

Her series were:

1. Modern Goals of Child Welfare
2. The Emotionally Unstable Child
3. The Unadjusted Child and the Community
4. The Movement Toward Mental Health
5. The Normal Mind in Action
6. The Disordered Personality
7. Personality and Social Relationships
8. The Modern Teacher of Social Psychology.

Miriam moved into an office in Los Angeles' brand new Hall of Justice, dubbed the "Haul" of Justice by newspapers because of its enormous cost. On the floors above its gold-leaf-ceilinged courtrooms were prisoners' cells from which several prisoners promptly escaped.

Miriam and Bess motored to Palos Verdes to ride horseback and came home "with our lungs full of sea air and fresh grass and ploughed earth smells, our ears with meadow lark songs and our eyes with sea-mists that hung between us and the sun."

Awaiting her was a letter from Dr. Felix Frankfurter, of Harvard Law School, sounding out her interest in working on a proposed Harvard Law School Crime Survey in Boston. He would like to talk to her about the matter.

She had her hair bobbed, long in front—"it looks no different"—and short in back, and everyone liked it. She wrote a limerick for her father:

There was a great Prelate at St. Paul
Whose girth no one could call small
He went to his club
At golf he's no dub
For he keeps his eye right on the ball.

Her eyes were on the hills beyond, and her trouble-centered
world was flooded with rose-colored light.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Deliver Us from

Coddling, Tantrums, Divorces . . .

"Sometimes I think I do too many things and none of them too well," Miriam told her father in 1927, before adding a qualifying rider: "But some of us are meant to be pioneers in several fields—a sort of surveyor's job—and others can come along and settle up the county."

In addition to her regular duties, she was, at that time, writing her second book: "It shall be on modern ethics for the young and shall be dedicated to my parents. I was ashamed to dedicate the first one to you because I expected it to fail." She was tracking two Laura Spelman Fellows: Sybil Brown, from England, on leadership, and Dr. Josephine Gleason, of Vassar, on the adjustment of

older adolescents, and she had begun a shuttling operation between Los Angeles and Cambridge, Massachusetts, that was to last almost until her appointment to the Framingham Reformatory.

Assigned to full charge of the juvenile aspects of the Harvard Crime Survey, Miriam had an "eastern office" in the Law School near her boss *pro tem*, Professor Frankfurter, of whom she wrote: "He is a truly great man, courageous, fiery, full of knowledge and shrewdness, very likeable. He gives me complete leeway and no restrictions. It is an inspiration to work with him."

She was charged with surveying eight separate courts, whose systems of handling children ranged from the medieval to the modern; all the Boston area schools, parks, playgrounds, social agencies, churches and industries, as these were related to children under seventeen; and the three industrial schools for delinquents—Lancaster for girls, Lyman School for boys eight to fifteen, and Shirley for boys, fifteen to seventeen. It was the biggest "outside" job she'd ever tackled.

All this seemed to have no firm date for its conclusion; Miriam understood she could take as long as necessary, although Frankfurter, urging her to finish her written report seven years later, thought he had been more than patient with her in this respect.

Miriam now felt intellectually more at home in the east than in the west. She thought easterners seemed more responsive to ideas and westerners more responsive to action "and some kinds of personalities." No one in California except a few personal friends, she noticed, had shown any enthusiasm for her book, while in New York there were dozens of persons who seemed to "get all she meant" and were excited about the possibilities.

Besides, New York was the home of Dr. George W. Kirchwey, a distinguished criminologist at the New York School of Social

Work and a professional whom Miriam placed in the limited category of those she both admired personally and respected professionally. In 1915 he had served with distinction as Warden of Sing Sing Prison while Thomas Mott Osborne, the famous penologist and head of that institution, was defending his liberal principles against politicians who had had him suspended. He also was Dean of Columbia Law School.

New York was also a suburb, in Miriam's geography, of Lincolnton, New Jersey, itself a suburb of Red Bank, and the location of "Brookdale," the sprawling estate of Col. and Mrs. Lewis S. Thompson.

Geraldine S. Thompson was the other guardian angel and provider in Miriam's life. Daughter of Gerald Morgan and wife of a Standard Oil executive, Mrs. Thompson was a generous, enthusiastic, purposeful, courageous, intelligent social worker whose value to the State of New Jersey was beyond measuring. She was a charter member of the board of control of the New Jersey Department of Institutions and Agencies, and remained such until her retirement in 1957, at the age of eighty-five.

Her birthdays in her later years were occasions for feature stories in the *New York Times*. At eighty-eight, as a member emeritus, she still was attending board of control meetings and appearing in juvenile court at Freehold, New Jersey, once a week to rescue delinquents, often by inviting one or more of them and what remained of their families to live in one of the cottages at Brookdale formerly occupied by grooms and trainers of Thompson horseflesh.

The day after Mrs. Thompson first met Miriam in 1927, she instructed her lawyer to include a legacy in her will for her. She didn't tell Miriam about it until several years later, saying then that it was her intention that Miriam should have no financial worries for the future.

It was Geraldine Thompson who ordered a hotel room filled with flowers just before Miriam checked in; who sent her chauffeur to New York to fetch Miriam to Brookdale for dinner parties with other nationally known guests; who handed Miriam tickets and reservations for a Pullman compartment from coast to coast, so Miriam could write and dream in privacy. When Miriam took over the superintendency of Framingham, Mrs. Thompson paid the salary of a private secretary for her; there was no such job on the state's roster. Additionally, Mrs. Thompson supplied a generous discretionary fund, enabling Miriam to help women whose needs were beyond the state's consideration.

Mrs. Thompson and her quiet, reserved, sportsman-husband invited Miriam several times to their Colorado mountain lodge for fishing, riding, and hiking in the summer and, later, to their plantation in the piney woods of Georgia for winter vacations.

In Cambridge, Miriam was no longer the Clark University student admiring the Brahmins and other notables of Boston from the gallery of a theatre; she entertained and was entertained by them. Judge Cabot invited her to dinner at his home and on to a Boston Symphony concert with his other guests. She had the Frankfurters, Federal Judge Julian March and "Dorothy Kirchwey and her husband" to her apartment for dinner, doing the cooking herself, but hiring a maid to serve. Edna Mahan, formerly of El Retiro, and Sybil Brown, the Spelman Fellow, both of whom Miriam brought east to work with her on the Crime Survey, came in after dinner to listen to the conversation.

Dorothy Kirchwey, daughter of Dr. George W. Kirchwey, was married to Larue Brown, an attorney who would one day be Miriam's champion throughout her 1948-1949 ordeal and her hearing in Gardner Auditorium. From lower windows on the west side of the Hotel Bellevue, where Miriam stayed for a while, she

could have looked directly into that auditorium, a view somewhat less than *belle*.

She sat on the bench beside Boston's Judge Day while he handled twenty-three cases in forty minutes, sending an eighteen-year-old boy to the grand jury with a recommendation of ten years in state prison for stealing an automobile valued at \$1000. "What good will that do the owner?" Miriam asked her father. "I hate to criticize the judge and probation officer—they were so kind to me—but it's the fault of the system, not the persons."

Absorbing Boston lore by osmosis, Miriam explained it to her parents: "You know, here in Boston, it is Puritan *versus* Irish," and cited a sample of Puritan-Irish dialogue she had heard quoted at a dinner party. Judge Stone, an elderly, strict jurist from Cambridge, was questioning an Irish policeman about a delinquent boy:

"Has he had any religious training?"

"No, your Honor. He is a Protestant."

The judge scowled over his glasses.

"You missed your vocation, didn't you?"

"No, your Honor. I had two weeks in July."

Leaving Boston to the Puritans and Irish and her survey in the hands of twelve assistants, Miriam went back to Los Angeles in June, 1927, to find new breaks in the levees she was forever patching around her court and her institutions. The "three P's" had been hyper-active again—politics, prejudice and public opinion—and she needed all her Dutch fingers to plug the holes in the dikes.

The end of June, she came home to the Colony late one night to find her home burned to the ground, the fire having been caused by defective wiring. Bess Woods had saved a few clothes, but Orfa Shontz and Miriam lost nearly everything they owned. In Miriam's case, this meant clothing, books, furniture, lecture notes, cor-

respondence files, references and, calamitously, fifty thousand words of manuscript of her second book, *Parents on Probation*. The neighborhood butcher offered to lend the three refugees money, and dozens of friends invited them to their homes.

A week later, in a friend's home, Miriam sat down in a borrowed study in a borrowed smock and borrowed knickers and, with a borrowed pen, began to coax her book back from the ashes, a writer's nightmare. "It will take more than a crossed wire to shut me up," she wrote her mother. "I feel like Father when he broke his legs—never felt better. Beloved darlings, don't feel too sorry, nor waste any tears. I *needed* new clothes and I was glad to see the old coffee pot go, for its lid fell into the cups. The only tragic loss is poor Peter and her two orange-colored kittens."

The borrowed study, smock, knickers and pen belonged to Mrs. John C. MacFarland, who opened her home at 1130 Garfield Avenue, South Pasadena, to all three displaced Colony tenants until they rented a castle-like, cobblestone house—the "Stone House"—on a hill at 1833 Verdugo Vista Road, Glendale. Mrs. MacFarland, mother of one of Miriam's students at U.C.L.A., was so impressed by Miriam and her work that she later rallied dozens of prominent professionals all over the country in a booster campaign to establish a chair of social work at U.C.L.A. and install Miriam in it.

At El Retiro, the armed guards came back, and newly-elected county politicians were bent on blasting Juvenile Court out of business. "I have stopped them there," Miriam wrote home. "It is like a tidal wave checked. But they won't return our superintendent, and apparently won't run El Retiro my way, but as a reform school.

"The thing has its comedy side. They stopped the girls writing to their mothers to 'save' postage stamps, told them they couldn't wear stockings, did not take them to church. When one of the girls asked one of the armed guards, 'can't we have grace to-

night at supper?" he said, "Grace isn't here, is she?" The people they have sent are so incompetent the whole thing is ridiculous. The girls have been loyal to the last ditch."

Miriam despaired of restoring El Retiro as a county school; she resolved to try to raise funds in New York for a private one. "Our army of friends is growing," she wrote a sympathizer, "but in spite of education, there are not many who understand the practical game of withstanding politicians who don't want votes, but plunder, for the next two years; you have to remember, our (county) supervisors were indicted by a grand jury last year and escaped jail, so nothing terrifies them."

In September of 1927, Miriam finished her book and headed back to Cambridge, leaving her court in Orfa's hands. She took an apartment at 5 Concord Avenue, checked in at her office at the Harvard Law School and handed a section of her report over to Frankfurter, who found it "austere and thorough," which pleased her.

Miriam dashed off a letter to Mrs. Jessie D. Hodder, superintendent of the Framingham Reformatory for Women, requesting permission to visit there in connection with the Crime Survey. Although Mrs. Hodder probably was no more anxious to see Miriam than Miriam would have been to see Mrs. Hodder had the roles been reversed, she was co-operative.

"The Parole Board will meet here on Tuesday, Nov. 8th," Mrs. Hodder replied, "but I will be glad to see you just the same. Your letter of October 26th was addressed to Sherborn and forwarded to me from there. We are in Framingham, on the Boston and Albany Railroad, and one mile from the Framingham station, where you can always get a taxi to bring you to the Reformatory."

Miriam had chronic trouble with place names. She misspelled Worcester for weeks after she arrived there to study at Clark, and two years after her parents moved from Oregon to Wellsboro, she still sent an occasional letter to Westboro. "If there be such a place, tell the postmaster there you have a feeble-minded, absent-minded daughter and want her letters nonetheless. I was about to buy a railroad ticket to Westboro!"

In Los Angeles, a new probation committee ousted Miriam's handpicked superintendent, Alma Holzchuh, who thus qualified for a job on Miriam's crime survey staff in Boston, and went on from there eventually to become, with Edna Mahan, one of the country's foremost heads of correctional institutions.

When Miriam attended a late November meeting of a new Probation Committee in Los Angeles, she found the chairman, Mrs. McManus, "like a mask painted in black and white. She wore a black hat with a diamond buckle, a new black Paris frock; her lips were ashen and hard, dark circles under her eyes. I was disdainful to meet all of them, but I was calm, neither indifferent nor tense nor scornful. They seemed like distressed, puzzled, bewildered human beings with blood on their fingers. Of course, they did not realize how it got there, nor what to do to wash it off. The (new) Judge and I got on well. He is learning."

What the judge had not learned was that Miriam could be pleasant on the surface and simmering deep inside, like a dormant volcano. She attended the Probation Committee meetings only because he requested it. "His idea seems to be that there is good on both sides, and I must be a nice girl and play with them . . . I spend a good deal of my time with sinners and criminals, child-beaters, lawbreakers, thieves and bigamists. I find them quite normal and likeable. But I am sure I can't get used to sitting in the

same room with the traitors and blackmailers who destroyed El Retiro and pretend to be holy. Their last meeting opened with a prayer. Actually!"

Reading these words in his parish office in Wellsboro, the Rev. George Van Waters must have nodded knowingly. His daughter, who regarded El Retiro as a "child of my own flesh and blood," was reacting like any mother to the betrayal of her offspring.

Her New Year's present in 1928 was a letter from the editors of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, asking her to write their next article on children's courts. "It is a little like being requested to rewrite a prayer in the prayer book, and gave me an awful shock," she wrote home. "As we grow older, all these worshipful things—prayer books, encyclopedias and the Republican Party—reveal themselves as being made by human hands. I felt very humble until I read what they published in 1926 on juvenile delinquency, and it's so bad I am eager to begin."

Mother's Day found Miriam regretting that "advertising scheme" for the patronizing of mothers, and counting the family's blessings. She was grateful for her sisters' husbands and her brother's wife, each of whom, she thought, was "perfectly suitable for the task." She met her brother, Ralph, in Chicago, where he was studying psychology at the University of Chicago, and he introduced her to his best girl, Bert Groën, who had just graduated from nursing school. Miriam liked her: "She is young, fresh, very likeable—neither worldly nor very serious. She is, I think, a very wholesome young person, a merry good comrade. They are real pals . . . I think Ralph's affection for her is real, but I do not think they will ever marry."

After their marriage in 1931, Ralph and Bert joined Miriam in Framingham, where Bert's rare skill and enthusiasm made the

reformatory nursery an example of compassion and competence that inspired many reluctant mothers to a change of heart. Ralph worked as a research psychologist at the institution until he branched out as a clinical psychologist and university instructor in Boston.

That autumn, Miriam returned to Cambridge, taking a room in the Commander Hotel which she left shortly, finding it "stiff, formal and yet, in the New England fashion, uncomfortable and full of flies." She rented a furnished apartment that needed only a few kitchen items from the five-and-ten—"a blessed American institution, although they tie up bundles horribly." Through Geraldine Thompson, she met England's Lady Astor ("that is why she was so kind to me") and talked delinquency. She found Lady Astor "witty, shrewd, practical, very lively and somewhat charming," and enjoyed the brief meeting, but left it "none the wiser."

The November presidential elections found Miriam a continent's width away from her polling place, and she guessed the rest of the Van Waters family would go solid for Hoover. "I'm for Smith," she wrote her father. She remained a Democrat the rest of her life, although she never worked hard at it.

Back in Los Angeles for Christmas of 1928, she suffered intermittent pains in the lower back which she called "lumbago." Her health had given her no cause for alarm since her recovery from tuberculosis, although she had been disturbed by a series of colds and coughs that plagued her through the winter and spring of 1927. On June 17, that year, two Los Angeles physicians, Doctors Lissner and Rosenfeld, checked her thoroughly, and found nothing serious, except the ominous "Heart muscle tone is weak."

Six years later, in Boston, Dr. Samuel A. Levine examined Miriam, read all clinical reports on her since 1927, and wrote her

that "as far as the reports of the electrocardiograms are concerned, the interpretations may be entirely disregarded. I do not think that you ever had anything wrong with your heart muscle."

If there had been, it would have been dangerously tried early in 1928, when a half-blind colored woman who had raised and abused two children, whom Miriam placed with their paternal uncle, went berserk in Juvenile Court. Rising from her chair, the woman began to howl, then bore down on her two children. Diverted by an officer, she turned on him, knocking down chairs in her path, then, still howling, started for Miriam, who sat motionless in her chair while five male officers got the woman under control and rushed her to a hospital for psychopathic cases. Nobody was hurt, but it was "exciting," Miriam recalled later.

Shortly after this incident, Miriam wrote one of her frequent notes of gratitude to her parents:

"How blessed we are in our health and strength and happy family love. We should never forget that we have been blessed beyond the lot of most mortals. Whenever I talk to parents on security I think of this. All I do, all I am, is the result of the love and stimulus I received in my home through my parents. No matter how much study people get nowadays, they cannot surpass what you and Father did for me in my childhood. . . . I am no C.S.* but I do believe if we are happy, busy, and courageous we don't get sick."

In February, Miriam reluctantly attended dedication ceremonies held on completion of half a million dollars worth of new buildings for Juvenile Hall. She sent newspaper clippings of the event to Wellsboro, commenting on numbered photographs of the additions and details in the news story itself.

"Picture 1. A lie. Gov. Young did not come. I started all the

* Christian Scientist.

domestic science and hand work in that place 12 years ago. 2. A lie. The place looks exactly like a detention home, and the iron bars I wanted to take off are still on the old building. 3. A lie. There are dozens of 'reform' schools. Mrs. McManus pointed out that before she came it was a prison, and there were many run-aways; now it was a home, and there were none. There is an 18-foot cement wall around the place; no prison in the country has a worse wall. The kids couldn't run away if they wanted to. 4. The 'homey' atmosphere, everyone says, is practically destroyed now, though we used to have it.

"No one knows how many of the people who sat on the platform and made speeches had a share in the graft of the half million—at least 4. Beacon, the arch-grafter just defeated, was there! The speeches were terrible—fulsome flattery of everybody. I made a 2 minute one, thanking them for new buildings in which the Court ought to do better work. I hope I am beyond infantile pique and jealousy, but I must say I was pretty mad. For 25 years social work in California has gone on slowly building. Orfa has labored 20 years and I 12—and there was no credit given (to) Bullen, Mahan, Dr. Dorothea Moore, Mrs. Coman (Mary M.) etc. You see, I was in no mood for my speech."

After dinner that evening, Miriam spoke in more happy company, addressing the U.C.L.A. Philosophical Union and a gallery jammed with students on "The Meaning of Morality," her answer to one of the university professors who contended that social work raised no problems of theoretical importance and, more importantly, her chance to show her intellectual wares to the dons of an institution under petition to create a chair of social work for Miriam. The speech was a cracking success, but California's governor vetoed an appropriation to establish the chair. Miriam considered it a better bet for the following year; besides, she wanted to stay

with her court two more years. Among other reasons, she wanted to be close to the court records, which she required for background for a handbook on court procedure she contemplated writing.

Researching her speech, she came across a quatrain she liked and passed on to Wellsboro:

There once was a metaphysician
Who claimed that he didn't exist;
His peers, when they heard him explain it,
Said, "really, you'll never be missed."

A telegram from Felix Frankfurter informed her that she was likely to be appointed to President Herbert Hoover's Law Enforcement Commission (the Wickersham Commission) and advised her to accept. That, she reflected, was something she could not refuse, nor could the County Supervisors nor the judge in charge of her court refuse to grant her leave, because such an appointment was something they could understand.

At the same time, she realized she was going to be the official candidate for president of the National Conference of Social Workers, whose annual convention was coming up in June, in San Francisco.

"No one has written me," she reported to Wellsboro, "but letters are being sent out to all the social workers by the New York School of Social Work and the Survey . . . fortunately I have no national enemies. I would not lift a finger to get the nomination, but if I do, I shall accept."

Dr. Kirchwey, Mrs. Dummer, Paul Kellogg, Bess Woods, and Hans Weiss had all indicated they were coming west for the convention. Miriam went shopping in anticipation and itemized the results for her mother:

"I have a new black lace evening gown to go with my shawl.

I have an ensemble suit in black, a black coat, an orange jumper with a figured green skirt. It sounds gayer than it is. I could wear it in New York or Wellsboro and not be *too* conspicuous. A black hat goes with it; then I bought a silk French dress, gray, tan, and blue, fit for court, or morning wear. It will do well for the conference; also a tan polo coat and a dull, sage-green sport hat. Two pairs of French slippers and some underwear and sand-colored stockings complete the outfit. I hate to spend so much money on myself, but I am *not* going to look like a social worker!"

Looking unlike any of the four thousand delegates in San Francisco, Miriam acted unlike a vote-getter at the conference. Her opponent had started a campaign in advance of the meeting and had lined up one hundred fifty of the four hundred votes possible under the Conference's seniority rules on voting eligibility. Miriam's first speech rubbed the Traveler's Aid the wrong way. She urged that it stay in its own field and stay out of case work extending beyond one week. Her second talk outraged Boston delegates, because she criticized conditions in their courts. Her third speech to the Girls Council was favorable, but her fourth, on "The New Morality," irritated some delegates. She spoke on race relations, equal opportunity for Negroes, and the advantages of race mingling where it had occurred in South America and along the Mediterranean shore. She denounced breaking up homes by court action, struck at the smugness of social workers, attacked sterilization as a remedy for social sickness, and hammered hard against capital punishment and the kind of criminal procedure that "killed Sacco and Vanzetti" and kept Tom Mooney in jail. She calculated that she lost at least twenty-five votes with that speech alone, although she heard that the voteless younger delegates liked it.

One delegate who listened to all four speeches and voted, when the time came, for Miriam, was Hans Weiss. Whether Hans lis-

tened to every word, or simply heard her voice while his thoughts trailed back to Los Angeles and the candlelight at Riverside Inn, only he knew. In a postcard home, Miriam reported merely that Hans was there, and that she had spent a few evenings with him in company with Dr. Kirchwey.

The conference vote was one hundred sixty-seven for Van Waters, one hundred sixty-six for C. M. Bookman, of Cincinnati. She went back to Los Angeles quite confident that her new office would keep her from political interference for at least the year of her incumbency. The "politicians" docked her pay for the time she had been away.

As for where she stood and what she stood for as national head of the social workers, there was no better reference than her own "The Children's Litany," paraphrasing the Litany in The Book of Common Prayer. She wrote it a few months before she went to San Francisco.

*To be used after child welfare conferences, committee meetings,
clinics, and court sessions:*

O Grown-ups;

Have mercy upon us.

O Parents, Teachers and Scientists;

Have mercy upon us.

O Social Workers;

Have mercy upon us.

REMEMBER not, Grown-ups, thy theories of deterrence and heredity, nor the theories of sin of thy forefathers, neither take thou vengeance on our youth. Spare us, Grown-ups, spare thy children

who redeem thee with their most precious laughter and be not stupid with us forever.

Spare us, Grown-ups.

FROM all thy evil and mischief, from thy fears and griefs, from thy craft and assaults by force, from thy anger and boredom, and from everlasting misunderstanding,

Good Grown-ups, deliver us.

From thy blindness of heart, from pride, false values, and hypocrisy; from envy, ambition, and all morbid introspection,

Good Grown-ups, deliver us.

From thy inordinate and possessive affections, from all the deceits of the family, the school, and the community,

Good Parents, deliver us.

From coddling, and tantrums, from divorces, dependence, and delinquency; from the quarrels and discussions about money, and sudden desertion,

Good Parents, deliver us.

From all absurd and wasteful duplication of effort, from thy resignation, from thy wordiness, from all wholesale classifications of I.Q. and psychopathic personality; from penury of imagination and contempt of our childhood and playtime,

Good Social Workers, deliver us.

By the mystery of our growth; by our spontaneity, and our pleasure and satisfaction in what we are doing; by thy own inhibitions, struggles and complexes,

Good Parents, deliver us.

By thy wars and industrial conflicts; by thy glorious achievements and adulthood; and by the coming of thy brief periods of insight,

Good Adults, deliver us.

In all the time of our infancy; in all time of our helplessness;
in the hour of innocence, and in the day of sophistication,

Good Parents, deliver us.

WE children do beseech thee to hear us, good Adults, that it may
please thee to rule and govern thy world in the right way;

We beseech thee to hear us, good Adults.

That it may please thee to bless and preserve all those who
show an unique eagerness to love us, giving them freedom to execute
their dreams, and to maintain our happiness;

We beseech thee to hear us, good Adults.

That it may please thee to illuminate all Politicians, Boards of
Directors, and Executives with true knowledge of childhood and
its needs, that both by their public speeches, their annual reports,
and their daily living, they may set it forth and show it accordingly;

We beseech thee to hear us, O Citizens.

That it may please thee to send forth thy best workers into our
field;

We beseech thee to hear us, O Civil Service Commissions.

That it may please thee to preserve all thy children;

We beseech thee to hear us, O Community.

That it may please thee to give to all scientists and research
workers common-sense, clear English, integrity, and a sense of
humor;

We beseech thee to hear us, O Lord of the Academicians.

That it may please thee to give to all child welfare workers
increase of humanity to bear meekly the gospel of childhood, and
to receive it with pure affection and to bring forth the fruits of our
spirit;

We beseech thee to hear us, O Child Welfare Workers.

That it may please thee to bring into the way of simplicity all such as have theses to write and are deceived by statistics;

We beseech thee to hear us, O Research Workers.

That it may please thee to strengthen all such as do stand for joy and creative education; and to comfort and help those who are "fired" because they believe in us, and who try to make the machinery with which you deal with us less ponderous; that it may please thee to raise up those who are faint-hearted, and fearful; and finally to beat down formalism and pride of dominance under our little feet;

We beseech thee to hear us, O Rulers of Counties and Cities.

That it may please thee to succour, help, and comfort all youthful souls who seek to embattle thy despair, thy subterfuge, and thy outworn traditions;

We beseech thee to hear us, O Adults.

That it may please thee to preserve all who travel adventurously by deed or imagination, all creators in the peril of giving birth to new ideas, all those who fall sick in thy civilization; and to show thy pity upon all whom thy greed or fear imprisons, detains, or makes captive;

We beseech thee to hear us, O Judges and District Attorneys.

That it may please thee to provide less technically for the fatherless children, and all those who must come to the tender mercies of the Welfare Commissions;

We beseech thee to hear us, O Community Chests.

That it may please thee to choose thy leading administrators somewhat differently;

We beseech thee to hear us, O Board of Directors.

That it may please thee to write only the truth;

We beseech thee to hear us, O Press.

That it may please thee to forgive our headline writers,

criminologists, and grand juries, and to turn their interests into something constructive;

We beseech thee to hear us, O Public Opinion.

That it may please thee to give and preserve to our use the kindly fruits of science and humanity, to imbue us with vitality to withstand your experiments, and to live our lives according to our own best natural impulses;

We beseech thee to hear us, O Psychiatrists.

Grant us freedom and space, O Adults, grant us our freedom from thy masks, and thy double-dealing.

We beseech thee to hear us, O Adults.

GRANT us life and let us keep our excitement. O Spirit of Childhood who springest eternal in the soul of Man;

Grant us thy laughter and permit us to gaze at the sky.

Bend thy attention to the un-Christlike aspects of thy city streets, thy places of confinement, thy shops, thy homes, thy schools, thy churches, the ghastly imbecility of thy committee meetings; for we know what Christ has offered us.

Now what do you have to offer, O Adults?"

She signed this: "From All Lovers of Children."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Now Let Me Talk about My Child

She looked, to Miriam, like an elf—a seven-year-old elf with hazel eyes set in a solemn face that was pinched from undernourishment and too much concern, too soon, with problems too big for her. Her fine, straight, brown hair had been combed for the occasion of meeting Referee Van Waters in Juvenile Court, who was asked to decide what the County of Los Angeles could do for her now that she was an orphan.

Her name was Betty Jean.

Miriam looked at her again, searchingly, while Betty Jean stared at the tips of her shoes. The social worker's report on the child lay on Miriam's table. She picked it up, read it quickly and put it down. Betty Jean's appointed guardian, a Mrs. Martin, shifted impatiently in her chair beside the child.

"Would you like to visit my house?" Miriam asked the girl.

The child stared at her shoes. Without looking up, she said, softly: "All right."

Miriam looked at the case report to confirm a notation there: "I.Q.—170."

For a week, Miriam entertained Betty Jean at the Stone House, teaching her to swim, taking her shopping for new dresses, and feeding her all the wholesome food she could eat. Betty Jean confided in Miriam that if Mrs. Martin knew she was having such a good time she would take her away.

Within two days, the girl was calling her Aunt Miriam. Miriam wrote to Wellsboro rather guardedly about the girl: "I never saw in all my work such a thoroughbred. I can't tell you how happy she makes me: a source of new life and love. I am not thinking of adopting her, but after the Harvard business, I want her to live with me. She will distinguish herself in any field."

The following Sunday, Miriam took Betty Jean to Riverside Inn, which Miriam now associated with her innermost longings. They enjoyed a royal dinner, then walked together through the catacombs, strolling after a while to the auditorium where they listened to an organ recital, hand in hand. When the organist finished, Miriam offered half or more of her life to Betty Jean.

"Would you like to be my child?"

The girl slipped her hand away, sat up very straight and, without looking at Miriam, whispered, "Yes."

Lighthearted, they walked to the curio store where Miriam bought a set of handmade Indian dolls. At the book shop, Miriam bought an old, three-volume set of *Don Quixote* bound in Spanish leather—the seed of her daughter's library and the first "story" she read to her. From that day, Betty Jean became Sarah Ann Van Waters, after Miriam's paternal grandmother, and the beneficiary of concentrated maternal love.

Sarah provided the missing dimension in Miriam's life. Sarah was the child that Miriam and Hans Weiss might have had; she was the issue of Miriam's union with a career that had jeopardized her health, tried her soul, and given her every reward that selfless service is entitled to except material wealth and a vital link to time beyond. Miriam saw in Sarah an inheritor of her own lofty standard. In her late foster-maternity—she was forty-two when Sarah annexed her—she was exultant, renewed, recharged with purpose. And yet, so tough-fibered was her bond with her parents that she proceeded cautiously to prepare their emotional acceptance of a granddaughter not of their flesh and blood.

"Maybe, if you agree, I'll bring her to visit in Wellsboro while I'm in Boston . . . of course I won't bring her if you would rather not . . . I want your blessing and approval on this, because it means so much to me. Ruth, George, and Beckie have their children, and I need one of my own to raise as I think best. Perfect manners and English, poise, consideration of others, refinement and absolute obedience mark this child. You will love her." Miriam was describing herself at the age of seven. How could her parents resist such a child?

Within a few days, Miriam hired an El Retiro graduate as Sarah's "governess," reiterated her delight in Sarah and predicted that she would go far. "I am eager to show her to you. I am proud to share my name with her and you will be, too."

Her parents evidently reassured Miriam that they would be pleased to see Sarah, because Miriam wrote that she was "happy that you accept Sarah Ann. I shall not adopt her, but you will never be sorry that her name is Sarah Ann Van Waters. Shall I bring her to Wellsboro?"

Orfa Shontz acquired a recreation area called Indian Springs—a sylvan place with a swimming pool, horses, ponies, and picnic

tables. Miriam took Sarah there for a picnic supper with some U.C.L.A. faculty families which included six children. "My child was radiantly happy and very much better and quicker in all her responses to the situation than the university children her age," Miriam boasted to Wellsboro in the unscientific, subjective manner of a proud mother. "This morning she said 'I am so happy to be in a family where they make blackberry jam.' She washed and ironed her Hungarian embroidery dress better than I could. She has gained in weight, lost all the pinched look. She has been half-starved. You will agree that I am a judge of children—seeing so many thousands all these years. Well, this one is the finest in personality, for a seven-year-old girl, that I have ever seen. I am most amazed. She would do all the work if I would let her. She is obedient to me at a look. I have never seen her cry. Gradually she is losing her fear, and laughs and runs and jumps and is a little mischievous. Where she got her table manners and her speech I don't know, but she stands out like a thoroughbred, even among well-raised children. She has the capacity for observing and absorbing that which is excellent and rejecting the rest.

"Someday, in the field of letters or science, she will be among our greatest, our very greatest, and so my life will count to the race even though I have no children of my own."

In the same letter, a cautious note reappeared:

"I don't suppose you approve of it. Mothers think first of their children at every age, and you will be thinking of the extra work. But you will be glad to know I do not intend to do any more night teaching. I have always loved the care of children—the actual care more than anything else. I always rejoiced when Ruth, Beckie, George, Ralph appeared, and they never troubled me. Having darling nieces and nephews is a rare happiness, but not the same as having a child every day and every night under my own roof.

"I want my Darling Mother's blessing on this before I can be completely happy . . . I do not act rashly, or long ago I would have married somebody and had my own seven children. Also I *know* people. That's my job. I am happier than I have been for years. The twelve years labor in Court, with all its sorrows, is richly compensated, like Jacob when he finally got Rachel after slaving seven years for Leah."

Sarah was a prism between Miriam and all the aspects of her life she had been viewing in a familiar light. The same light, reflected back to Miriam through Sarah, revealed bands of color, warmth, and promise.

"The effect of training in childhood is well illustrated," she wrote her father. "For years I have not thought I had time to go to church. But as soon as I have a child of my own to be responsible for, I want her to have the best—and the best is still the Church. It has profoundly influenced me in ways that are not always conscious."

Miriam enrolled Sarah in St. Mark's Episcopal Church Sunday School, going with her to an airless basement the first Sunday to hear the story of Abraham's and Isaac's sacrifice. Afterward, they went upstairs to church, joining a small congregation that Miriam immediately qualified as "devout."

Noting that the Presbyterian church across the street was thronged by comparison with St. Mark's, Miriam thought Sarah would be disappointed in the smaller place, but Sarah volunteered that she liked the little church best.

"Sarah Ann," Miriam said, "I shall take you every Sunday."

Sarah told Miriam "with a shiver of distaste," that she had been taken to "Aimee's"* and hadn't liked it.

For weeks, all of Miriam's letters home were filled with Sarah.

*Aimee Semple McPherson's Temple in Los Angeles.

"When I want to study, I say, 'Sarah Ann, for three hours I do not want to be disturbed,' and the child will go about her own business all day if she thinks I intend to work. She asked, 'But why do you work so hard?' I said, 'To write articles to make money.' Her reply: 'Then you shouldn't buy me so many dresses, for you get too tired.'"

Miriam hoped her father could baptize Sarah. "She is almost a miracle. I feel that all my own thought and feeling is absorbed by her, and she has, of course, her own thoughts too. If I have done anything to the name my parents gave me—to help it along—I feel I have the right to select a human being to carry it, too. I realize all the responsibilities. But this child compensates to me for the loss of El Retiro. I feel convinced that I have made a wise and blessed choice and that no one in the family will regret it.

"I love this child, not as I love other children, but with the intense feeling that she belongs to me and hence to all of us. It has been a strange experience but one of the deepest of my life. I know I am like other parents, and talk too much about her. But all my life I have listened to other people talking about their children. Now it is my turn!"

Miriam selected among Sarah's traits and opinions those she knew would appeal to her mother. "One thing she said will please you Mother. She said the Presbyterian church across the street from the little Episcopal one did not look like a church, but 'more like a dance hall.' You see, instinctively this little one is an aristocrat."

Miriam's heart melted when Sarah, riding beside her one night in moonlight and singing *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, sang the lines: "In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea; with a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me," and stopped.

"Mommie, you have the beauty of the lilies in your eyes."

"What do you mean, Sarah?"

"The stars are reflected in your eyes and make them shine."

In September, Miriam dressed her daughter in "pale green pique with green and coral-colored Russian cross-stitching" and took her down the hill from the Stone House to her first day of school in the second grade. A week later, the principal stopped Miriam to tell her that Sarah was the most remarkable child in the school. "I could have told her that," Miriam assured her mother.

On September 18, 1929, Miriam decided to resign from the Juvenile Court as of October 15, giving as her official reason her obligation to the Harvard Crime Survey and the heavy responsibility of her high office with the national social workers organization. Her personal, and real, reason, was her conviction that it was no longer possible to do scientific work in the court. She was equally convinced that anyone who amounted to anything in the local juvenile rehabilitation system was turned out sooner or later. She was certain "they" would never put her out, but they would isolate her work to the point where it became meaningless. Her senior judge, she thought, was hopeless.

She was a little hazy about her future, but she planned to devote herself exclusively to the Crime Survey, lectures, and writing until June, 1930, after which she saw a gap until September, when she "might accept" the directorship of the Progressive School in Hollywood. A few weeks later, she planned to go east, return December 1, and open an office in the Roosevelt Building as a consultant in parent-child relationships, or something more simple, continuing her lecturing and writing. She resolved to have faith in her money-making capacity, to work hard and trust to Providence.

Or, she reflected, she could always cook, and George would

lend her some money if she went broke, wouldn't he? That reminded her to ask her parents to tell George she could no longer pay the taxes on the Cannon Beach property. She wasn't taking a direct line to George at the time because he had not written to her in months.

Sarah strayed from home to the Boulevard below one day in violation of Miriam's forbiddance. Bess Woods told Miriam such disobedience called for great severity. Miriam agreed, but used her own methods, based on ruling Sarah by approval rather than disapproval. She said nothing to Sarah all day. At bedtime, Sarah said, "Mother, I pledge you my word that I will never go off this place again without your consent."

Miriam asked, "How did you know I didn't like it?"

"Because," Sarah replied, "when you are tired, or mad, you don't smile and your hair doesn't dance."

Felix Frankfurter advised Miriam to postpone resigning from her court until she had talked to him on her next trip east, which Miriam made in October, taking Sarah as far as Wellsboro, where she left her with her new grandparents. At the railway station in Wellsboro, Mr. Van Waters received Sarah with all the graciousness Miriam had hoped for. He bent over the girl and held her face between his hands.

"Sarah," he said, "you have a light in your eyes. My child, always keep that light."

Before her visit came to an end, some of that light turned out to be devilish fire.

Miriam went from Wellsboro to New York for a meeting with Mrs. Thompson, who pledged her influence with President Hoover if Miriam would take the Wickersham Commission assignment to survey the whole field of federal prisons and juvenile prisoners:

why they landed in them, how they were being treated, and what progress they were making toward readjustment to society.

In Cambridge, Ada Comstock, Radcliffe College's president, invited Miriam to her home, Greenleaf House, at 76 Brattle Street, to outline the work of the Wickersham Commission. Miriam later recorded their dialogue:

Comstock: Is there any war on in the children's delinquency field?

Miriam: No. We're all agreed on saving the child.

Comstock: Do you think any additional research is needed apart from that done by the Federal Children's Bureau?

Miriam: Yes. How much time has the Commission?

Comstock: One year. President Hoover is an engineer. He wants *results*. But maybe we can get another year.

Miriam: That is a minimum essential.

Comstock: We want this to be a permanent contribution to the field. Scientific. Sound.

Miriam: That depends entirely on how it is done.

Comstock: Everyone says you are the only person who can do it.

Miriam: That only shows what a state of ignorance we are in.

Comstock: No one of the Commission knows anything about child delinquency.

Miriam: No one knows much of anything. What are the Commission's plans?

Comstock: We want you to study our report to date, outline our plan and program and submit it. We can give you, here at Radcliffe, all the stenographic help you need.

Miriam said Harvard provided that, and left with a promise to

outline a plan in two days, which she did in her room at the Commander Hotel, the place she had found "stiff" and "fly-ridden" in her last visit there. "This is the best hotel in Cambridge," she wrote home. "In Portland it would be third class. Furniture very meagre and desk the size of a gnat."

Felix Frankfurter and Ada Comstock arranged that after Miriam's return to Los Angeles, President Hoover would write her superior for her release from Juvenile Court. She was not to resign but to take a protracted leave. Los Angeles newspapers were to get the story of her appointment straight from Washington. She was to finish her Harvard survey, return east in January, crank up and go.

"I have decided to take it. No mention yet of salary, but they asked me to name what I want. It is all handed to me—the entire job . . . all my energy of twelve years ago has returned. I hope my report will 'run like a spark through the stubble.' What I mean is, we must seize this opportunity to take the nation to school, and let them see the problem of delinquency in children is not a matter of better courts and fewer policemen nor more laws, but a spiritual architecture for the whole land. Reform is not through buildings, but a change in viewpoint.

"It is like a huge circus," she wrote of her accelerated life. "Harvard puts on the lions. The National (Wickersham) Commission (puts on) the dogs, monkeys and donkeys; the National Conference (of Social Workers) the clowns—only they don't know they're funny—and I have to switch rapidly from roaring, barking, scratching, and braying to turning somersaults.

"All these so-called 'great affairs' are nothing. The only 'great' men I know are the few rare ones who have character and humor,

and they rarely 'get anywhere.' And I would not enjoy any of it if I could not share it with you."

She dined with Professor Francis Sayre, of Harvard, and his wife, Jessie Wilson Sayre, both of whom would soon be staunch friends of the Framingham Reformatory. "He is interested in juvenile courts," Miriam said of Sayre. "He is a Pennsylvanian and a very good Episcopalian."

It was clear from part of a letter Miriam wrote her parents, after taking Sarah back to California, that she had got an inkling from her about her behavior at Wellsboro:

"With guidance her health and energy may turn to real power, her willfulness into strength of character, her self-assurance into the right sort of self-confidence, her imagination and argumentativeness into strength for intellectual achievement. We can't tell, but I'd like to try."

Translated, this indicated Miriam understood that Sarah had probably jumped on the furniture, insisted on having her own way and sassied her grandparents when she didn't get it. It also indicated that Miriam could, where Sarah was concerned, call a spade a digging instrument.

Elizabeth Bode walked into Miriam's life shortly after Miriam settled back in the Stone House. Her father had come to Miriam one day in court and asked her if she would consider hiring his Pomona College-educated daughter who, he said, liked Miriam's kind of work and wanted to make a career in it. Miriam interviewed Elizabeth and promptly assigned her to duty at the Business Girls' Club, where Miriam thought she did better than older staff members. A few days later, she invited Elizabeth home to dine. Before

the twenty-four-year-old guest departed, it was decided that she would start the following Monday as secretary to Miriam and general supervisor of Sarah in Miriam's absence.

"She has a life goal to become a great juvenile court leader," Miriam said of her. "Well, she could. She is used to work and will fit into our household . . . help with the dishes in the evening and, in short, take her part just as Bess or I would. She will live out in the summer house which is now roofed over, boarded in, electric lighted and warmed with a sheet-iron stove. Miss Bodie* is willing to do it, glad to do it, because of the contacts she will make here and the chance to study. If she does well I can help her to a good job someday."

Four days later, Miriam was even more pleased with Elizabeth: "(She) fits in so beautifully—she came yesterday—that we are all delighted. She is working on my Harvard report. Sarah accepts her as a kind of teacher, so there is little trouble about discipline. Miss Bodie 'takes hold'—does dishes, cleans, or anything, just as Bess or Edna Mahan. I feel blessed to have her."

Miriam's senior judge, Scott, flatly refused to grant her a long leave to serve the Wickersham Commission and was treated to a rare display of the Van Waters temper in turn. He insisted she resign. She refused. The stalemate was broken when the judge suddenly relented. "Somebody told him he looked small to refuse it," Miriam reported home. The Civil Service Commission board followed through, graciously granting the leave and expressing its pleasure at the honor paid Los Angeles County. The "old man who wrecked El Retiro" was in New York at the time, Miriam wrote. "I enter national service now with the blessing of the local politicians. I am grateful for my long training in politics. One de-

* She spelled it phonetically in this letter, got it right later.

velops the epidermis of a horned toad, the lethargy of a possum, and the patience of a donkey.”

December 11 was Miriam’s last working day in California. She wound up her morning court session, then talked to the probation officers about the meaning of her new work. She asked them to carry on their high standards.

“I was sad and gay, for they cried, and I made them laugh a little by telling them of their funny deeds in court. When I got back to my office I found a beautiful suit case, a really exquisite gift, and just what I would have purchased for myself had I been able. It matches the Gladstone bag Orfa gave me, and replaces the black case which was broken.

“Tonight the Associated Press took the news of my leave and all is absolutely O.K. Judge Scott is most cordial, sent a telegram to Washington and wishes to see me before I depart.”

At five-fifteen she returned to her court to hear three cases in chambers: “Poor folk who could not get in during working hours.” At six she closed her office door with regret, relief, and an unexpected sense of possessiveness that caused her to smile as she hurried down the corridor with her empty suitcase growing heavier with memories that insisted on coming along.

The next morning at eleven she sat for her portrait, which the Lissners—her doctor and his wife—insisted on having for hanging in the Exposition Building. “I can’t figure out what the idea is, but they are so insistent I am yielding.”

After Christmas, she traveled east, leaving Sarah with Elizabeth Bode, “my new assistant,” and leaving both of them as collateral on time borrowed from California.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A Freebooter in Enemy Country

“That guy’s lucky, you know it, to have her.”

The “guy” was President Hoover and, in the opinion of an El Retiro graduate, relayed to Miriam by Bode, he was lucky to have Miriam working for him.

Miriam’s Washington office was in the Tower Building, 14th and K Streets. She lived at the Ambassador Hotel. She had secretaries in depth and all kinds of service and consideration.

“No one disturbs me,” she reported to Wellsboro. “I have taken 3 massage ‘treatments’ from my Swedish masseuse and plan some more, although I haven’t an ache nor pain, and it’s expensive—\$3 per—but I feel so much better after a sound rubbing that I believe the money well spent. Sunday I dine at the home of Justice Brandeis—a rare delight—besides business.”

Miriam divided her time between Washington and Cambridge,

where she lived at the Harvard Law School, while she juggled her portions of the Crime Survey and the Wickersham Commission Report.

But there was no flexibility in the deadline for The Wickersham Report as there was for the Harvard Crime Survey. Miriam told a friend, apologizing for the vulgarity of the expression, "I'm keeping the seat of my pants to the seat of my chair." After a few days in Washington she wrote home:

"I am coming to admire President Hoover. Your judgment was always that he is a great man. I did not concede that. But I am changing my attitude. His accomplishments are really outstanding. I shall go at my job with a feeling of definite loyalty and enthusiasm."

The Assistant Secretary of State told her the Turkish translation of *Youth In Conflict* had prompted a request from that government for U.S. help in rebuilding their juvenile courts according to Miriam's blueprints.

"Tell them to go slow," Miriam advised the man from State. "We started our courts to get children out of jail and we have more children in jail than when we started. They'd better copy the Swiss or Belgians."

Felix Frankfurter posed a survey query: "What about the governor's power of pardon and commutation?" Miriam answered hurriedly:

"To abolish the governor's power of pardon and commutation would be to suggest a doom-like inflexibility in the system, an omniscience which nobody, scientific, legal or religious, ought to have. I would retain executive clemency as a symbol of hope. Always, in any system under which human beings live, there should be an appeal to a higher, or differently motivated authority, even if it vanishes ultimately in the blue. I know we haven't any gover-

nors who are capable of a higher or differently motivated viewpoint than judges or psychiatrists, but someday there might be one."

Frankfurter sent back a note: "Not only do I agree with you, but you have, for my purposes, comprehensibly and definitely dealt with the subject."

She dined at the Frederick S. Cabots with the Dr. Richard Cabots, the Sheldon Gluecks, of Harvard criminology fame, Felix Frankfurter, Hans Weiss, and Ada Comstock. After dinner, Sheldon Glueck read Shylock's key speech from *The Merchant of Venice* with what Miriam considered dramatic effect, and the elderly Dr. Richard Cabot played a Brahms sonata on the violin.

In February, she went back west to find that Sarah had "grown in stature, health and grace, if not in goodness." She had Sarah examined by a child specialist, who found her overweight and put her on a diet eliminating ice cream, cake, candy, potatoes and gravy—her favorites.

On a hurried round trip east, Miriam stopped in Wellsboro, where she gloried in a sermon by the man she regarded as the greatest rector who ever buttoned the Anglican collar around his golden throat. Scarcely had her train left Wellsboro when she wrote back: "I want to say to Father that I shall forever treasure the sight of him before the altar on St. Peter's Day, in his white robes and red stole . . . with a pencil of sunlight touching his head. He looked like some noble painting—every inch a great man—in spirit and power. It was fitting that he talked of himself that day—he rarely does—and the inspiration he received from his teacher."

Vivian Pierce, secretary of the League for Abolition of Capital Punishment, visited Miriam for a while, proving an ideal guest because she worked or read most of the day. "She is certainly one of God's soldiers," Miriam wrote home. "All we have gained in the

abolition of capital punishment is due to her. I learned yesterday that her mother is a Paree Hindu—you know, the intellectuals of India. That may account for her devotion. In New York she lives almost exclusively on rice, spending all her money on her work, receiving no salary. What she lives on she earns by writing for newspapers. Such courage is a source of faith and inspiration. I feel ashamed. All I do is write and speak, once in a while, for abolition. She is living and dying for it.”

Speaking against capital punishment, Miriam and Jack Black, author of *You Can't Win*, rallied four hundred people in the Unitarian Church on a hot night, competing with miniature golf, a craze sweeping California. Switching themes a few nights later, she made a fifteen-minute political speech over radio station KFI for Governor Young. It was sandwiched between a violin solo and a permanent wave plug, but she hoped the Governor liked it. For a while in August, her address was “Great Forest, Sequoia National Park, care of Forest Ranger,” while she camped out.

On Armistice Day, 1930, Miriam officially resigned from Juvenile Court, her leave having expired, and in December, Judge Scott headed a group that sponsored a farewell dinner for her.

“It is all Hooey and Bologny,” she wrote her father. “If he (Scott) wished, he could extend my leave of absence. But the dinner will be an opportunity to see my old friends and to greet them . . . it will be pretty awful, but I am determined to enjoy it. Lovely letters keep flowing in from friends who do not wish me to leave California.”

A cherished part of Miriam's past changed hands when one of her lots at Cannon Beach was sold for \$1500, subject to back taxes and title insurance costs. Miriam sent the remainder, \$1384.75, to her mother. “I hope it can be saved for a nest egg for your retire-

ment. In California we get 6% interest in an excellent bank where I have Sarah's money." That excellent bank went under in the Depression with Sarah's and Miriam's savings.

Like a carpenter building a house, Miriam was slowly working herself out of a job as she erected the frame of her Wickersham investigation and nailed siding and roofing on it week by week. Throughout 1931, as the country's economy slid downward, she became conscious of the possibility that she might "join the apple sellers" by January, 1932.

She held some hope that U.C.L.A. would establish that chair in social work, but the possibility was strangled with the tightening of the state budget for education. She asked her father if he knew any of the board members on the Episcopal Social Service Commission. The executive job had been vacant for a while, and she wanted it. She was still sending checks to her brother, Ralph, although these stopped when he went to work for the State of Illinois' Welfare Department. Occidental College, she reported home, was proposing to open a school of social work in 1932 and wanted her to run it. She talked with two social science professors from Johns Hopkins about starting a similar school that needed only Miriam's plans and someone else's money to launch it. Nothing came of it.

She felt somewhat encouraged when Felix Frankfurter and Ada Comstock suggested that she might do a joint research and teaching job at Harvard and Radcliffe. It was only an idea, she realized, but a friendly one. Frankfurter said he would give her two or three months on salary to finish her Harvard Survey Report after the Wickersham job.

Regardless, Miriam seemed casual about her situation. She realized that she was more grasshopper than ant in her attitude toward next winter's needs, and she once told her father that, having

no thrift sense, she lived "like a freebooter in enemy country—high today, nothing tomorrow." Actually, her charity made outrageous demands on her pocketbook.

On July 8, and 9, 1932, Washington correspondents and the press associations spread the Wickersham Commission's findings across the country. Miriam's report on juveniles in federal prisons rated page-one prominence.

The United Press story led off with Van Waters material:

"Forbidden to laugh on penalty of being confined in prison dungeons, flogged for petty infraction of the rules, thrown into solitary, dark cells for speaking in the dining room, juvenile delinquents in American prisons are subject to daily abuse and even 'torture,' according to a report of the Wickersham Law Enforcement Commission made public today by President Hoover."

The details, prison by prison, documented a case for pulling the Federal Government away from the prosecution of juveniles and turning it over to state agencies.

Shock waves were still spreading when Miriam was called off a tennis court in Cambridge to receive a telegram from the Governor of Pennsylvania:

HAVE BEEN TRYING TO GET YOU LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE ON SUGGESTION OUR MUTUAL FRIEND DR. POTTER STOP WOULD YOU CONSIDER COMING BACK TO PENNSYLVANIA AS FIRST DEPUTY IN WELFARE DEPARTMENT WITH RESPONSIBILITY OF MAKING POLICIES STOP COULD YOU TELEPHONE ME MILFORD PENN. REVERSING CHARGES IF YOU WOULD CONSIDER OFFER HOPE SO MUCH YOU WILL COME AND HELP US.

GIFFORD PINCHOT

Avoiding unseemly haste, Miriam telephoned the next day, by which time Mr. Pinchot had left Milford. Miriam explained to

Mrs. Pinchot that she was committed until November and would like to know more about the job before making a decision. Secretly, she reasoned that Pennsylvania politics were little different from the California brand, and that Pinchot's presidential plans might come to nothing, after which he might lose out in his home state. The first law of politics, according to her observations, was to kick a man when he is down.

Miriam rated herself a good subordinate only to a leader she respected. She wrote Governor Pinchot she would see him in September, but their paths did not cross again.

The Los Angeles *Examiner* relayed a wire from Hearst headquarters in New York proposing that Miriam write, for syndication at her own price, her case findings on juveniles in federal prisons. She turned the offer down for a number of reasons. She felt that newspaper publicity in general was cheap and that the Hearst papers in particular had a bad name. She also believed that the government would disapprove and this might prevent her from getting a decent job.

Sanford Bates, newly-appointed head of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, fired an angry letter at Miriam:

"You know there are no 'children' at Chillicothe; you know that not one of the permanent buildings there is yet occupied; you know there is no cruel punishment there, but beyond all that you promised me that the Chillicothe report would not be made public.

"All in all then I cannot but think your action ill-timed, unfortunate, and unfriendly. It has subjected our Bureau to severe and unmerited criticism, it has made my already difficult job more difficult, and it has shaken my confidence in you.

"Like most investigators, having introduced a touch of the scandalous into your report and received the headline, you can

depart leaving it to the administrators to grapple with the much harder task of getting some real advance *accomplished*."

Bates had a legitimate complaint about Miriam's use of the noun "children," instead of "adolescents" or "youths," when referring to young persons between puberty and maturity. Usually precise in semantics, Miriam erred in using "children" as the catch-all antonym of "adults."

Miriam wrote Bates a gentle reply. Months later, meeting him at a Baltimore luncheon arranged by him to consider plans for youthful federal offenders, she "*made* him be cordial and natural, and all went well," according to her account of it for Wellsboro.

In the summer of 1931, Miriam decided to move to Cambridge, although she had no certain job prospects. She applied to the independent Shady Hill School for a place for Sarah—"the public schools are impossibly backward in Cambridge," she wrote home—and had a favorable response from Miss Katherine Taylor, the headmistress.

"The school is splendid, very 'progressive'—whatever that is—and Sarah can at least go on with her French and Latin and also study Greek civilization and have plenty of outdoor life."

After a farewell speech to the local chapter of the American Association of Social Workers, in which she stressed the need of cultivating courage and developing the art of resigning, Miriam pulled up stakes in California. In September, she, Sarah, and Bode moved into 7 Reidesel Avenue, Cambridge, and were soon joined by Alma Holzchuh, who paid her own way.

"Having Alma in the home makes it easier in every way. She is a source of strength and happiness . . . quiet, gentle, firm, sweet, wholesome," Miriam wrote Wellsboro.

Hans Weiss, back from a six-months' survey of Egyptian juvenile courts for the U.S. State Department, spent an evening at the Van Waters apartment before leaving for Detroit and his wedding. "He is very happy," Miriam wrote to her parents in a brief postscript to the romance of her life.

The Wickersham job behind her, Miriam worked full time on completing the final report of her section of the Harvard Crime Survey. For two weeks, she wrote home, the Sheldon Gluecks tried to put her out of her office so they could move in their files. Then she had to order a new telephone because they claimed theirs was "too congested," although Miriam said she had only a call or so a day. A week later, she reported the Gluecks "OK again and friendly."

Alma Holzchuh grew in Miriam's esteem. "I wish she could get a reformatory to run, but she is so fine nobody will hire her. I don't mean to be bitter, but they like 'em big-fisted and tough-looking, or if not that, bootlickers."

Driving home from Charlestown one afternoon, Miriam got lost and wound up on the Boston waterfront in a crowd of dock workers on strike and "hundreds of men, women, and children in rags. I have never seen anything like it—though Dickens writes of such scenes. The police, seeing our California license, smiled, but would not let us through. Fellows jumped on our running board. They kept yelling 'Say Hollywood!' and 'Don't you need a truck to carry your grapes, California?' It was an interesting and sad experience."

One afternoon, a young student from the Episcopal Theological School, in Cambridge, appeared at Miriam's door, and introduced himself as Howard P. Kellett. Could he be of any help

to her? He'd been graduated from Harvard; he wanted to work with kids in trouble.

Miriam promptly dubbed this greenhorn her research assistant in the Crime Survey and assigned him to study conditions in two calloused Massachusetts reform schools for boys—Lyman, at West-boro, and the Industrial School, at Shirley. For the first few days, young Kellett thought he had slipped back to the Dark Ages. The cruelties he witnessed so wracked his soul that he hung on only because he had courage and the notion that quitting would be traitorous to God.

The third time he visited the school at Shirley, a pug-nosed boy with a yard-long record, welts, and atrophied tear ducts sized him up carefully and asked, "What'd they send *you* back for?" Kellett, for the first time, felt as one of the inmates.

Kellett eventually became executive secretary of the Department of Social Service of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. He also became a first-rate prison chaplain, certain every hour that a prison ministry was closer than any to the Gospel. That certainty, and his dedication, carried him through many trials. His first Sunday as visiting chaplain at Miriam's Framingham Reformatory was discouraging. Four women came to chapel. The following Sunday, the chapel was not only packed, but excitement crackled in the big room.

"What happened?" Howard asked Miriam after the service.

Miriam gazed at him, her brown eyes mirrors of innocence.

"Well," she said, "a rumor has been going around all week that you're James Stewart, the movie actor."

In 1956, at the twentieth anniversary of Kellett's ordination, Miriam, speaking in Boston's Church of the Advent, recalled a number of milestones in his career. Among them:

"Another picture: A girl is in prison for a long term—at first responding to the activities and training, then sliding downhill into depression, into cheapness. I send for Howard Kellett. To Howard, a prisoner who causes trouble presents the greatest opportunity. He spent the afternoon. I cannot describe the miracle of healing, but never again did this girl become lost in the gloom and the mire."

The girl was Anna Cortman, a young married mother who had murdered her lover when she was twenty-three. Howard saw her soon after she'd been committed to the Charles Street jail, where she wanted nothing more than a chance to kill herself.

After Anna Cortman was removed to Framingham, Miriam telephoned Kellett when Anna retreated from a preliminary show of interest in life there. Kellett went out to see her. She was almost impossible to help for a while; she wouldn't talk. Howard broke one of their silences one day with "Anna, I'm going to sit here as long as necessary. You're the one who's going to talk."

One day, after Kellett had seen her daily for several days, Anna talked. Not about what was on her heart, but about inconsequential things. Kellett tried to get her to talk about things of value in her life, the positive parts of her being, particularly her concern for her daughter, who was in her husband's custody. Prompting her gently, he kept her talking more and more.

Religious conversion, Kellett believes, follows upon the continued emphasis of the positive, and he convinced Anna that even though she had lost everything, God was with her and cared deeply about her. He mentioned repeatedly the importance of her going to chapel services, even though they didn't mean anything to her.

In Howard Kellett's words, Anna Cortman finally "received."

She was "ecstatic." Miriam put her in charge of Martha Dakins, who had come to the Reformatory from a medical practice that had included one too many abortions, grown old, and chosen to stay forever. Anna nursed the old woman with touching concern, and was paid in the coin of wisdom from her remarkably erudite and profoundly Christian patient.

The Reformatory's psychiatrist told Kellett that Anna Cortman's redemption was the most remarkable thing he had ever seen. Anna's became one of the incandescent spirits of the Reformatory. She qualified for parole at the earliest possible date, returned to society and rebuilt her life.

Pharisees, said Miriam in her 1956 tribute to Kellett, were right to warn people against one who associates with sinners. Such a person, she added, knows too much, and what he knows makes other people look uncomfortable.

In 1961, after five years as vicar of Boston's historic Old North Church, Kellett was living in harmony with hundreds of Italian families whose tenements press against that hallowed shrine. The steel lattice guards had been removed from the old church's windows, because the neighborhood's resentment of the church's former insularity had dissolved in its affection for "Father" Kellett; throwing stones through Old North's windows was no longer therapeutic. He was the unofficial mayor of the teeming, noisy neighborhood, carrying its problems to City Hall. A string of clothes, flapping in a Monday morning breeze from a tenement porch overlooking the courtyard and grave markers of many of our Puritan forebears, was no irritant to him. Cleanliness, he reminds visitors, is next to godliness.

A new kind of pilgrimage to Old North began after Kellett went there. The calendar pad on his disordered desk was often

crowded with reminders of appointments with men and women who had met him in jail and needed him to steer their courses "outside."

On the day when Kellett, the young seminarian, walked into Miriam's life the course and cargo of her future, and much of his, had already been ordained. A few miles away, in Framingham, Jessie D. Hodder grew weary at her desk in the Women's Reformatory. The inevitable limiting factor had entered into the one-plus-one arithmetic of her heart's beating. She was only a month from her death, and the shrunken funeral flowers that Miriam would find in the superintendent's residence in March, 1932, were budding in George Butterworth's greenhouse in Framingham town.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Come Back, Big Dora, and Try Again

Several alcoholics and, once in a blue moon, a drug addict, walked into Framingham Reformatory and traded their freedom for isolation from temptation and for the moral reinforcement they drew from "Doctor," as Miriam was called by reformatory women. She called them "students," not only because she preferred it to "inmates," or "prisoners," but also because Framingham was staffed to educate its women and girls from first grade through junior high. Individual students could go farther on their own initiative and help from the staff.

Those who came there involuntarily arrived the same day they were sentenced by the court. Some came drunk and disorderly, kicking and clawing, some in alcoholic stupor, and others broken and sick. The reformatory hospital was prepared to deal with coma, skull fractures, broken limbs, epilepsy, severe burns, contagious diseases, and advanced pregnancy, although major surgical

and obstetrical cases were referred to the Framingham Union Hospital.

An incoming student was taken, if not to the hospital for immediate attention, to the dressing room in the "catacombs" under the stairs, where she was put in a shower, given a shampoo, deloused, if necessary, and issued institutional clothing—blue "probationer's" dress to be worn for three months, and a white dress for chapel.

The student's cash, jewelry, and important papers were taken to the treasurer's office for safekeeping. Any letters and photographs she may have been carrying, her dress (after laundering), and any miscellaneous items she brought with her were sent to the research department. The receiving officer listed everything in her possession, filled out three forms for further use by the hospital, research department, and the Annex, then took her to the officer in charge of the Annex, where newcomers were oriented.

The student and her special Annex form (listing only name, date, charge, previous commitment, religion, month of pregnancy, if pregnant, and condition of head) were now in the care of the Annex officer, and procedure marched on. The student was assigned a room, given a book of house rules and a daily schedule.

On the first Sunday and Monday after admission, the hospital staff tested her for venereal infection. Three negative Wassermann results were required before the student could be assigned to other quarters in the Reformatory.

During her three weeks of confinement in the Annex, with meals the first two days in her room, an early bedtime and no special personal privileges, the girl was taken to the hospital for inoculations against typhoid, diphtheria and smallpox.

After two days of isolation, she went to the separate Annex dining room for meals and helped with Annex house cleaning,

under supervision. Group therapy leaders among the staff took her outdoors for gardening, sketching, and other activities. She was permitted to have newspapers, library books, and handcraft work. She was allowed to join the general group in the clubroom for a daily cigarette, attend chapel and assembly programs. Depending upon her response to discipline, she could be assigned, at the end of her first week, to a work department, returning to the Annex for meals and sleep. She was interviewed by the chaplain, the psychologist, a social worker, and every other specialist on the staff. Miriam, herself, went down to the new arrival's Annex room to talk to her, usually within twenty-four hours of her commitment.

Such was the procedure in 1948, after Miriam had been shaping the Reformatory for sixteen years. She believed commitment to Framingham was a crisis and a shock to the individual, that those first three weeks were important for diagnosis and treatment, and that the impression a student gained of the institution in the first few days produced lasting benefit or harm to her. Miriam wanted the hospital atmosphere to reflect an attitude of helpful care to the mentally and physically ill (Framingham's new admissions arrived with mental conditions ranging from normal to insane). Miriam preached that the new arrival must be made to feel that she was in a *reformatory* where the staff was united in a team to remake and rebuild.

Within three weeks after a new student's arrival, the Reformatory's classification board considered her case. The resident doctor, head social worker, head teacher, psychologist, chaplain, the superintendent and her deputy, and a psychiatric social worker gathered around a reading table in the library to synthesize a medical and social diagnosis and plan of treatment based on their individual analyses of the case. Undominated by any member, this board discussed and sometimes clashed heatedly about the new student's

needs and nature, and planned her program accordingly: where she should room, what work she should do, what classes she should take in the reformatory school and what social groups and group therapy forms she should be encouraged to join. They classified the student as to health, intelligence, personality, and social attitude. Sixty days later, they reviewed their judgment. Miriam did not preside over these conferences, but she made the final decisions, because the law required it.

A five-woman counselling staff, one of whom was always accessible to a student, tried to use student "gripes" creatively, and solve problems that, in reformatory confinement, could lead to accumulation of tension and consequent depression, inability to benefit from the educational aspect of the place, or physical illness. Miriam wanted her counsellors to have sympathy, a sense of proportion, and a conscience that prevented their becoming mere sounding boards for complaints. The pattern of a good counsellor, as Miriam saw it, called for the mental equipment to use students' problems for therapeutic purposes, vision trained to see problems as part of a total personality pattern, and patience and faith in her work, because personality changes often came slowly.

Reformatory residential sections, besides the Annex, were West Wing ("After you have lived here for a while, and proved you can fit into the life here without difficulty, you will have a chance to go to one of the three Grades");* Grade I, dominating the central section of the main building; East Wing, for women on long sentences; and North Wing, for alcoholics. Beyond the main buildings were Hodder Hall, a separate cottage for girls in the seventeen to twenty-five age group who were split away from older "repeaters," and Wilson Cottage, a separate residence for mothers and

* Miriam would not classify the students by offenses, but into groups for administration—separating the repeaters from the younger girls, etc.

babies. Hodder and Wilson, a quarter of a mile from the old part of the institution, were the fruits of Miriam's determination to extend the physical plant she inherited into an "open" cottage system. These two pleasant buildings looked like large, comfortable homes in a rural setting. Both were completed in 1936 as federal Public Works Administration projects.

Miriam named Hodder Hall in commemoration of her predecessor at Framingham, and Wilson Cottage in memory of Jessie Wilson Sayre, daughter of President Woodrow Wilson and wife of Francis Sayre, who left Harvard to succeed Dr. Warren Stearns as Miriam's Commissioner of Correction.

After Miriam had been in charge for a year, it was easy for a student to run away from the Reformatory. There were no walls or fences, and no guards patrolling the open grounds. In Miriam's first year (before she ordered a board fence removed), a woman brought in for armed robbery got away by prying up a floorboard with a lead pencil, ripping up adjoining boards, and dropping into the basement where she hid out until she located a loose window. She climbed through and went over the board fence.

Years later, when it was much easier to slip away, Patsy Dennis, a defective delinquent who worked in Miriam's house and tended her flower garden, vanished without a trace.

Anxiety in the Reformatory became almost palpable when a girl ran away. The "in" group resented and condemned the escapee, fearing her act might tighten security and subtract from their privileges. Hearing over their radios that the police were alerted, they imagined themselves nationally prominent. They circulated fantastic rumors about their own fate.

Patsy was back the next day, lying in the hospital, her eyes swollen from crying. She told her story to a Grade officer:

"I had to do it, Miss. It was coming on me for days that I had to see my Mom. My sister wrote me she was sick. I'd think about Mom and it was like there was marbles in my stomach. Pretty soon the marbles was in my chest and I couldn't hardly breathe and I knew if I could see my Mom them marbles would go away. So I ran."

Patsy said she had hitchhiked home, thinking all the way about seeing her mother, imagining that her mother would be so glad to see her she would cry and beg her to stay, but she would say she couldn't do that because she had to get back to Doctor. And then her mother would put her arms around her and tell her she was her little girl.

Patsy made it. She burst through the door and ran upstairs to her mother's room. Her sister followed a step behind her, talking frantically, but she ignored her sister.

"Mom!"

Patsy's mother lay in a rumpled bed, staring at the ceiling. She heard Patsy's voice but didn't acknowledge it. Patsy didn't know what to say next. She sat on the bed and looked at her mother. The woman didn't recognize her, or indicate that she knew she was there, but when she spoke, after a while, she was prompted by a scrambled mind:

"How's Patsy getting along?" she said. "Did we get a letter from Patsy today?"

Patsy walked out of the house to a public telephone, called Doctor and asked her to come and get her.

Any student whose escape took her past the boundaries of the place was presumed to have had sexual contact. Patsy went through the routine physical examinations before she returned to her dusting and her roses. She was one of twenty-eight "DD's" whose classification Miriam challenged and whose release she even-

tually obtained. Only two of them were brought back, but Patsy wasn't one of them. She had a job.

Probing into a new student's background, next of kin, social affiliations and the rest was designed to accomplish more than a profile of vital statistics. It was aimed at determining status, or identification: *Who am I?* Some women who came to Framingham literally didn't know who they were.

Illegitimately born, abandoned, passed along from broken homes to institutions, living under aliases, married and divorced perhaps several times, a woman remained a stranger to herself. If she hit the bottom of the barrel as a depraved sex offender, an alcoholic, or both, and desperately wanted rehabilitation, she was tranquilized by every new piece of information the Reformatory's social workers fitted into the jigsaw puzzle of her identity. Sometimes it took years to establish the identity of an illegitimate child, or to find a lost brother or sister. A criminal who didn't want status fought it, but a woman who craved it was clay in Miriam's hands.

Bertha wanted more than status. In for the second time on a charge of drunkenness, she slouched through Grade I, mop in hand, a barely animate scarecrow who dragged the heels of her worn-out loafers when she walked, a habit so irritating to other students in the Grade they taunted her bitterly about it:

"Pick up your lousy feet when you walk. We can all see you without you making that racket."

Bertha's Grade officer, who had written a first-rate book on life in a women's reformatory, took a different approach to Bertha. She saw faint traces of beauty in her face: a lovely, wide brow, straight black eyebrows and deep-set, blue eyes.

"There must be something you're not sick and tired of,

Bertha," the Grade officer said to her one day. "What is it you really want?"

Bertha leaned on her mop handle.

"Most of all I want a baby. But my boy friend says he won't marry no drunk, so I guess I'll have to find me another boy friend when I get out of here. I sure like him. I'm crazy for him, but he don't write me no more, and unless I get out of here pretty soon, he'll likely get himself another gal. That'll slay me. There won't be nothing left for me, not nothing."

Bertha attended an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting in the chapel one night and listened to a "pitch" by a lady from Boston who had been a Bertha in every way except one: she'd managed to keep out of jail. Bertha sought her out after the meeting. The woman promised Bertha she'd be her friend and stick with her after Bertha got out. She told Bertha to say over and over to herself: "She'll be my friend."

The next morning, Bertha told her Grade officer she wouldn't be on mop duty until later, because she had a note from Doctor to see her at nine-thirty.

When Bertha returned to the Grade from her appointment, the officer restrained her curiosity as Bertha flew around the place, vigorously wielding her mop. Finally, Bertha drew herself up, thrust her shoulders back and walked over to the Grade officer, picking her feet up every step of the way.

"So you got no interest in what me and Doctor talked about, huh?"

"Certainly, I'm interested, but I didn't know whether you wanted to tell me. Do you?"

"Well, it was all kinda personal."

"What happened?"

"Nothing *happened*. How could anything happen in half an hour? We just talked."

The officer waited.

"Well, it was pretty personal-like. She didn't say nothing about me being an alcoholic. Not a word. She asked me how I'd like to look outside and what I needed to look the way I wanted to look outside, because she wanted me to start practicing as though I was living outside.

"I asked her could I have a perm and she said 'of course, that can be arranged, and what else would you like for your practicing?' I told her I needed some other shoes, these are too big for me and that's why I drag 'em.

"And do you know, Miss, right there in her office she closed the door and had me practicing walking better. First she walked up and down in her office, straight and tall as she could be, and then she told me to walk the nicest way I knew how to. As I was walking, she was saying to me, 'lift your chest, Bertha, lift your chest. She kinda made a little song out of it."

Bertha looked around the Grade.

"Nobody's here. I'll show you." She walked away several steps, then turned and came back, ramrod straight, reciting as she walked:

"Lift-step, your-step, chest-step, Bertha-step, lift-step, your-step, chest-step, Bertha-step."

The A.A. lady in Boston kept her word. She was Bertha's friend when Bertha left Framingham. Several months later a reformatory social worker reported that Bertha was firmly on the wagon, trim of figure and walking like a queen. Whether she got her man and her baby nobody knew, but she never came back to Box 99, where happy endings were sometimes made of such or-

dinary things as a promise, a posture lesson, a permanent wave, and a new pair of shoes—laced with love and faith.

Miriam waged a losing battle against the popular meaning of “discipline.” She held out for the original meaning of the word—training or following—but the popular connotation of the word—force, punishment, coercion, and orders from a superior to an inferior—prevailed against her wishes at Framingham. In a Boston University lecture on discipline, she itemized the situations in the Reformatory that called for its use and went on to comment on the cause and treatment of infractions:

“Escape; refusal to work; breakage of state property; sabotage by damaging machinery or yard goods that are about to go into the cutting machine; spoiling food (e.g., putting Dutch Cleanser in the soup); neglect of children, hospital patients, or animals (not feeding the livestock); fighting; insolence; threats against others and the self; swearing; obscenity; contraband (trying to get something from officers, family members, or visitors that is forbidden, and attempts by women having work jobs on the grounds to hail passing cars and signaling for cigarettes, liquor, perhaps even drugs to be hidden under a hedge and brought in with some of the supplies to the store room); getting messages out through dishonest taxi drivers; stealing from one another or from the staff; refusal to follow regulations; refusal to eat; violent emotional outbursts like yelling all night so people can’t sleep; failure to keep schedules; cheating on the time of reporting for work in a factory; being scheduled to go to class at a certain time, then hiding out; mutilating clothing—women do this a great deal. I suppose they may think they are altering it for the better. A great many people object to state clothing anyway. But apart from all the normal woman’s desire to experiment with dressmaking, there is in a

woman a strong tendency to mutilate clothes—her own or a rival's who is paroled or gets a job she wants. Then there are others who go to bed with clothes on, or refuse to bathe.

"These are the leading disciplinary reports that reach my desk in a month, a few of which are checked and go to the State House as disciplinary reports. The (Classification) Conference decides if they are to be disciplinary reports or are to go to the hospital as adjustment reports. Running away is never punished in our institution except by another sentence. If a person is gone more than one or two hours and has gotten off the grounds, she has to go through the period of isolation all over again on the theory she may have contracted a disease. If she is captured right on the grounds, or wandering nearby on the highroad, it is highly unlikely there has been any sex contact, or contact of any nature with anyone; after the doctor has looked her over she is released to her own room. Always, the next day the prisoner is taken to court. The sentence for escape is two years; it may be an 'on and after' sentence, it may be suspended, it may be inflicted and the individual placed on probation, or it may be concurrent . . . the matter is entirely at the discretion of the judge and the judge always wants all the facts.

"If a girl is excessively lonely for her family and hasn't been away from home before, has had sudden bad news, illness and so forth in the family, or they (the family) haven't written at all, the judge is very likely to take that into consideration and there is no damage done other than the girl's untrustworthy record. If a girl has run away from a privilege group, perhaps having recreation outside, she is disbarred from that by the other members of the group, so running away is not a very dramatic thing. There are three types of escapees: those who run by compulsion, and would even if they were going to be executed for it; those who follow a

bad example, and those who think they are in a desperate situation.

"Refusal to work is not a problem in our institution. It used to be, but with classification and with a kind of feeling that you put in a request for a certain job—you want to get this job and wonder if you can—then you know it will be settled by a committee. Work is usually considered a privilege. Now and then a person will refuse to work and she is isolated in her room. Her meals are sent to her, including dessert. She is let out to classes. (There were twenty-six courses in the reformatory school curriculum, in addition to trade-skill training, at the peak of Miriam's administration.)

"Breakage and sabotage are usually tied up with the need of treatment from the psychologist or psychiatrist. Now and then you get a person who belongs to an organized criminal gang and is not bright—the bright ones are very good prisoners. The gang has given her up as being too dumb, or she wouldn't have been caught. Take shop-lifting, where word gets around through the grapevine and she is repudiated. Her I.Q. may be 80; she is not very skillful. She doesn't want to go to any of her classes; she has no interests. She feels antagonistic, wants to break things up, so she will spoil machinery and threads. There is not a great deal that can be done with that sort of thing. Usually she is put at rather hard cleaning and scrubbing work and watched very carefully. Things of that kind are always reported to the State House (the Department of Correction), as is destruction of property and all sabotage. That is very unusual in a well-run women's institution.

"Fighting is also always reported, because it involves another prisoner. The prisoner's family may want to know, particularly if there was a scratch or a black eye or any kind of injury. It is usually dealt with by separating the individuals at once and usually

there is no difficulty in getting them both to go to their rooms. If they live in the same division, one is sent to the probation Grade, or they are isolated in the hospital until the matter can be looked into. The Deputy makes a very thorough study of what the situation was and the Classification Conference takes it up the next morning.

"The concept that the staff has is important. You are running a reformatory, not a prison. You are trying to make people better by means of science, so in these training courses that I give the staff we study how behavior is caused, how it is amended, what is most successful, what works best. Most of our disciplinary problems are very young girls. The older women cause very little trouble."

Miriam prided herself on her ability to handle fights.

"Very few persons can handle a fight," she told one of her lecture groups. "There are people who, when the situation gets tense, are perfectly relaxed, and I want to say without boasting that I am one of those persons. If anyone fights around me, I stand off and watch them do it, and it stops like that. After many years, I am experienced, and have been through hundreds of fights, but I always feel perfectly calm inside. If you watch any school teacher or anyone else handling people in an emergency you see the ones who are stirred by violence."

She likened her punishment technique to that of a skilled dog trainer who accomplished more by threatening in a calm and purposeful manner with a folded newspaper than by slapping a dog with his hand. Miriam believed it was not the severity or length of the punishment, but the quiet purpose, "the fact that you do it," that accomplished results.

"Say to a girl, 'you shall not come into the Library,' but don't say 'for three weeks.' You don't say anything, as a rule, until Classification Conference."

In a corridor one day, a student who didn't know Miriam was a step behind her turned on a Grade mate and delivered an opinion:

"Jeezus Cha-rist, you're stupid!"

Miriam invited the student to the Grade clubroom, where she commented briefly on the utterance.

"I believe Christ walks in these old corridors. I think He would rather hear His name mentioned the way you just mentioned it than not at all."

Her formula for good discipline was "a good program, alertness, no lazy officers, people who knew the rules, know what they want, know the program, know where people ought to be, and who curb their tempers. For women, who find it very hard to be consistent, because women's duties and viewpoints in the modern world are very complex, this persistence and continuity works wonders. I should say that we have in the Reformatory a minimum of disciplinary problems, and New Jersey and New York can tell you the same."

Miriam didn't always run the Reformatory by the "book." When she first came to Framingham, the women in the community and on the farms around the Reformatory did not generally use or approve of cosmetics. Such vanities were reserved for city women, so Miriam continued a ban on them.

A few years later, Miriam was driving past the home of a woman who lived up the road from the Reformatory when this neighbor signaled her to stop. Miriam was fond of this woman who boarded two children who had outgrown the reform-

atory nursery, owned her house and land, raised flowers, geese, and chickens and was well regarded by the community.

"I have a Star of Bethlehem plant for you," the woman told Miriam, handing it over. Miriam almost dropped it when she looked at the donor's smiling countenance. The woman wore lipstick. Hurrying back to the Reformatory, Miriam had only one thought: if she could, they could. She immediately telephoned her Commissioner in Boston and said she was going to let her students use cosmetics. He agreed, after hearing her say that it wasn't a trivial matter.

"If everyone in the tribe had a blue dot in the middle of the forehead, and you didn't, wouldn't you feel distinctly different, out-cast?" she put it to him.

Miriam also improvised her handling of the crisis of Big Dora, an enormous woman in her thirties who came to the Reformatory from the command post of a disorderly house, and a position of power in the underworld of Boston.

Dora, almost immobilized by her own bulk, was a sedentary tyrant with a loud, strident voice that carried a promise of unspeakable violence to students who refused to obey her orders. Once settled in a chair, she ruled everyone within earshot. When she wanted a comb or a candy bar from her room, or her one daily cigarette from the dispensing officer, Big Dora growled orders to the nearest student.

Often, she sat alone crooning to herself. Then, her voice was all honey and pathos, and the Grade sisters who feared, resented, and probably hated her, drew close to listen.

One afternoon, Dora pulled her body over a low windowsill on the third floor and, with heroic effort, drew herself upright on a wide ledge. Merely by leaning forward she could have dropped

to her death, and that was what she threatened to do, while Margaret (Peg) O'Keefe, Miriam's deputy responsible for discipline, pleaded with her from the window. Dora announced that she would wait until Doctor appeared among the handful of officers and grounds keepers watching her from the lawn below. She said she wanted Doctor to see her die.

Miriam, alerted, walked calmly upstairs from her office on the ground floor and moved at her usual pace down a long corridor leading to the room where Peg O'Keefe was stationed. On the way, Miriam stopped to speak briefly to an officer about the situation.

Rumors hummed along the grapevine:

"Doctor told Big Dora if she jumped, Doctor would jump too, and then what would happen to the institution?"

"Doctor said if she jumped there wouldn't be no big funeral."

"Doctor said if she didn't jump she could get out in a couple weeks."

Miriam entered the room nearest Big Dora. There were four or five persons in the room by then. Miriam asked them politely to leave; when they had gone, she walked to the window, leaned out and looked up at Big Dora.

"Before you jump, Dora, tell me what's troubling you. You know I will have to have some reason to give to the newspapers, because as soon as you jump they will all be calling me up and asking questions. What do you want me to tell them?"

Big Dora strained to hear Miriam, who spoke softly and calmly, as though she were asking Big Dora about her parole plans.

"No damned body likes me in this place," Big Dora said.

Miriam thought a moment before she spoke again.

"Before you jump, I want you to tell me whom you like. Your friends will want to know you liked them and thought of them just before you jumped. Who are they?"

Big Dora seemed stunned by the question. She slid carefully down to a sitting position on the ledge. After a while, she figured out the answer.

"People don't like me, so I don't like them. I liked my mother, before she died. I hated my father. I never liked any men in my racket except one, and he left me flat for another woman. I found out, though, that I could get them to do what I wanted by scaring hell out of them, and then I learned about blackmail and got slick as satin with it. Then I got caught and came here." She rambled on, telling Miriam she had made a pile of money and would make a lot more when she got out, but she didn't care anything about money, because it didn't make her forget she was always hungry as a girl and never knew where her home was, because her father never paid the rent and they were always being thrown into the street with the furniture.

Tears flooded from the big woman's eyes. She said there was one person in the Reformatory she liked: Doctor. She said Doctor was the only "true-blue person" she had ever known in her life.

"If you like me," Miriam said, "that's enough to start with. I'll guarantee, if you go on liking me, and will let me show you how, you will make friends you will like and who will like you. But you and I will have to work it out together and spend a lot of time planning and thinking about it."

Big Dora weighed the choice: easy, certain friendship with death, a stranger, or a promise from Doctor to teach her a harder way to make friends. She reached for Doctor's outstretched hand and held on tightly until other, stronger hands helped her back to safety.

Big Dora's new life began, appropriately enough, with a hand-clasp.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

How Hot Will It Be by Noon?

A professional in Miriam's field once said that Miriam's optimism about the salvability of everybody—from the toughest repeaters in crime to seemingly hopeless alcoholics—was protected from evidence to the contrary by her "denial mechanism," which simply excluded realities she didn't like. Another long-time associate said, without explanation, that Miriam would rarely admit that she was physically indisposed, although she could be walking around with a splitting headache resulting from a fractured skull.

In January, 1933, Miriam bought a gentle mare, Lady. Riding was her favorite exercise as well as a means of getting quickly into the wooded hills around the Reformatory. She liked to ride at dawn, and, occasionally, in the moonlight. She put Lady in the same bracket of extravagance as a radio, and saddled up regardless of weather.

Anne Gladding, then a young "intern" at the Reformatory, was her first companion on the bridle trails. Anne, with a background of Vassar, Rousseau Institute in Switzerland, and nursery supervision training, later became supervisor of child care and placement. She was one of a group of twelve representing Radcliffe, Smith, Pembroke, Vassar, and Barnard, that Miriam selected from as many as fifty applicants each year. These girls signed on for six months or a year, working for board, lodging, and experience.

One morning, after a brisk ride over trails and roads that were icy in places, Miriam and Anne turned their horses homeward. Miriam suggested that instead of stopping at the barn they ride to her house and show their horses to Geraldine Thompson, who was visiting.

Near the barn, Miriam's mare slipped on ice and went down; the horse's spasmodic recovery effort threw Miriam hard to the ground, where she lay motionless. Anne knelt beside her.

"Doctor, are you all right?"

Miriam's eyelids fluttered and opened.

"What's your name?" she asked. "What have you done with my horse?"

A farm hand half carried Miriam to her house, where she sat in great pain, bleeding from a gash at the base of her skull.

"Not a word of this to anybody," she commanded.

Mrs. Thompson, disregarding orders, called the staff doctor, who took one look and summoned a local surgeon. After examining her, the surgeon risked a diagnosis without benefit of X-rays: no fracture.

Miriam was relieved, because she desperately wanted to keep a speaking engagement the next morning at Boston's Symphony Hall, where she had a chance to head off a crisis in State parole af-

fairs. With heavy adhesive tape binding the stitches in the back of her head and a borrowed turban concealing the patchwork, she delivered a stirring speech to one thousand listeners, mostly members of the Community Church. If necessary, she probably would have made the speech from an oxygen tent, because she had promised it to Matthew P. Bullock, a brilliant Negro graduate of Harvard Law School, all-American football player, and member of the State Parole Board who shared her belief in a parole system free of political interference and the influence of emotional amateurs.

The day after the speech, a young woman from Tufts Medical School, doing research at the Reformatory, insisted that Miriam go to Boston for further examination and X-rays. Miriam took her time obeying; it was a week after her fall before a Boston specialist's findings got back to her by telephone. She came out of her office and found Anne.

"My skull is fractured," she announced calmly. "Let's sit down and decide what we're going to do."

Months passed before her headaches stopped, but she had only a brief period of rest during her recovery. On a visit to her parents in Syracuse, N.Y., where they settled after her father's retirement from his parish in Wellsboro, she looked so pale that Mrs. Van Waters was concerned, but Miriam said nothing about her skull. Several months later in Framingham her mother got the story from Commissioner of Correction, Francis Sayre.

"I have never forgiven him for his bluntness and tactlessness in telling you about my bump," Miriam wrote her mother. Every time the accident was mentioned, Miriam insisted that the horse, not she, had fallen.

Dr. Eugene Gaston, a Framingham surgeon, recalled an instance of Miriam's optimism running headlong into contrary facts. He was twenty-nine and just starting to practice in the city when

Miriam asked him to handle the Reformatory's cases, which he did, turning his salary back to the institution.

On his first visit, his professional composure was shattered when several girls, queued up for lunch, whistled at him. His patient was a large, strong, red-haired girl who had been "raising hell on emotional sprees, breaking her bed, ripping draperies and terrorizing her neighbors."

The girl had a colostomy, an inconvenient and unpleasant condition. She told Dr. Gaston that she had overheard another reformatory doctor say there was no necessity for it. Although Dr. Gaston could find no records on the case, he examined her and confirmed the other doctor's opinion. His first operation as the reformatory surgeon was closing the tempestuous redhead's colostomy. Overnight, she became one of the sweetest, most serene students in the place.

Miriam was joyful. She told Gaston she knew the student's conduct had resulted directly from her neglected condition. It was a perfect demonstration of Miriam's First Law: all behavior is caused. Soon afterward, the girl was paroled on a Saturday. The following night she landed in a Worcester jail and shortly thereafter was back at Box 99. There was another cause, obviously, and Miriam patiently renewed her search for it.

Framingham's colorful chief of police, Edward T. McCarthy, was on duty late one night during the early years of Miriam's superintendency when he saw "one of her trusties in a joint. I said 'I'm going to put the snatch on this girl and take her back so I'll know where she is.' I get a call in the morning. Doctor Van Waters is at the police station, perturbed because she couldn't believe her girl would do this. I'll tell you, she stuck up for her girls through thick and thin."

Chief McCarthy knew that Miriam competed with his force when one of her alcoholics leaked from the grounds. Many a night she combed the bars of Framingham for a woman willing to trade two more years in the North Wing for a few hours of anesthetized freedom. Miriam was so sure an "on and after" sentence for running away was poor therapy in alcoholism that she would have run a foot race with the police to reach an escaped alcoholic first.

She often defended or protected those she loved and respected from discouraging reality. Hans Weiss, according to a professional colleague of Miriam's, made a "mess" of his brief administration of the Lyman Industrial School for Boys. Miriam insisted that he was a superb administrator who would have accomplished great reforms had he been given a free hand such as hers at Framingham.

At the bottom of the Great Depression, when job opportunities for clinical psychologists almost evaporated, Miriam twice arranged with her mother secretly to finance research projects for her brother, Ralph. She told Ralph the funds had come from outside sources interested in his work in the research department she created for him under the eaves of her house.

For every reversal Miriam came up with many triumphs. Early in World War II, when hundreds of "Victory Girls" rallied around service men training at Camp Edwards and Fort Devens, in Massachusetts, the Reformatory became a collection point for those who contributed more than a reasonable share to victory, or gave too flagrantly. Rounded up, these girls were put through what Miriam called the Army's "rough medical diagnosis," and those who were not infected were shipped on to wherever they wanted to go. The rest, admitted for treatment, overcrowded the Reformatory.

Governor Leverett Saltonstall, consulting Miriam about the

problem, suggested the Commonwealth should be more cooperative in dealing with the situation. Miriam suggested using the unoccupied annex of the House of Correction (for men) in Greenfield, a quiet little town in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts.

"I can do it for the cost of the food, a few salaries and a little maintenance," she told the Governor. "But I want to run it. It's better than spending half a million dollars."

Gov. Saltonstall agreed. Miriam went back to her institution and called an assembly.

"Girls," she said to a full house, "it seems we have to protect the men." (Laughter). She explained the plan: "Now I can't send sick girls, off the street, over there to the Berkshires. We need pioneers—about forty pioneers and volunteers. Of course, the sociologists and psychiatrists will move in and check on all of you who volunteer, but it won't matter." Fifty pioneers—subtracted from a record population of five hundred and fifty students—left for Greenfield under the supervision of Deputy Peg O'Keefe. They were anything but welcome. Peg remembered that first day after a long interval.

"People there were closely knit, clannish. The first day, I was aware that they thought we were a den of thieves. They stared at us. The men in the main prison wouldn't tolerate us. They wouldn't even help us paint the annex."

Ignoring the snubs, the transferees from Framingham painted their cell walls in pastels and planted ivy below the bars of the open cell doors. One day a prominent local man, struggling with illness in his family, met Peg at the annex and told her about his situation.

"Do you want any help from here?" Peg asked. He hesitated

just long enough to prompt Peg to pick up the telephone and ask her Commissioner in Boston for permission to release a girl for domestic day work in the man's home.

A few days later, a town doctor requested a day-work girl; within a month, there weren't enough girls to go around. Peg broke down resentment from the male side of the prison with baked beans and brown bread, which her charges set out before leaving the kitchen that both sides shared on a staggered schedule. Framingham's emissaries donated blood, bought war bonds with their day-work earnings, and toiled for the Red Cross.

Greenfield was sorry to see them go.

In January, 1934, Miriam's father fell seriously ill. Bert and Ralph hurried to Syracuse, where Bert's nursing talent raised everybody's confidence. Miriam kept in touch constantly with them. She wrote cheerful letters whose brave hopes she undoubtedly believed: "I believe the rest and good care will do him good, and when he gets up he will be as strong as a race horse." Again, to her father: "I have never really doubted that you would kick off the bed clothes some fine morning and send your nurses packing. They can't keep YOU down, not a whole colony of them. You are so strong and precious. So give 'em hell."

On February 7, she sent her mother a check for one hundred dollars, earned from speaking, to hire a nurse and relieve her, Bert, and Ralph from their twenty-four-hour bedside duties. "As an anxious parent you might want to know where I came by all this cash . . . it may have been a lousy speech, but the check is O.K. It is going to be a long road, but a good recovery. You can't down Father."

Three days later, the Rev. George Browne Van Waters, greatest

of all mortal men known to Miriam, contracted pneumonia and died.

It was not until autumn of that year that Miriam found herself able to write of him in her letters to her mother.

Early on the morning of her birthday, October 4th, while she was prowling around her study drinking coffee, the entire student body appeared outdoors under her window and formed a huge crescent, waving autumn leaves and banners made in the Shirt Room—HAPPY BIRTHDAY read one, and FRAMINGHAM GLEE CLUB the other. They serenaded her with one song dedicated to her: "There is a lady sweet and kind . . ." and another she had dedicated to them: "The mansions we builded." In the next half hour, her house was filled with flowers, and her living room table strewn with dozens of greeting cards painstakingly painted in watercolors or crayon by her students.

"Their fresh voices, the beauty of the music, the wet grass, the autumn leaves made an unforgettable picture," she wrote her mother in describing what had become an annual celebration.

Three weeks before Christmas, 1934, Miriam was resting in rustic comfort at "Sunny Hill," the piney woods plantation of Colonel and Mrs. Thompson at Thomasville, Georgia, sharing hospitality with a U.S. Senator from Maine and the French Ambassador.

She poked her nose into the blankets at sunup while two maids lit a fatwood fire in a little stove in her room, closed her windows and brought her a hot water bottle. She went to early communion service in a little town near the plantation.

"I think the words, 'for, in the night in which he was betrayed, he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it,' are among the most poignant in literature. This acceptance of the

weakness of human nature, this affirmation of hope and gratitude, is boundless," she wrote her mother.

The maids, mother and daughter, always together, one leaning on her broom contemplating the other, reminded her of Framingham and caused her regret that she might have been impatient with "our dear maids, for there, as here, they have only a simple, loyal desire to serve and to rest easy.

One needs to travel to appreciate home, and one travels wide "only as the heart is wide," she quoted Edna St. Vincent Millay.

She came home with freckles that made her look, she thought, as though she had stuck her nose in coffee grounds. Her desk was piled with mail, more and more of it, as the years went by, from graduates of El Retiro raising families in California, and from former students of the Framingham Reformatory who remembered her, often with touching affection, and kept her posted on every important or trivial step of their rehabilitated lives.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts provided no budget for much of the work Miriam carried on at Framingham. The counselling services were established by the Altrusa Club, a feminine Rotary. The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial underwrote much of the mother-and-baby program (at one time during World War II there were nearly fifty babies at the Reformatory). Mrs. Thompson financed the education system. Dr. Robert Fleming, a psychiatrist, volunteered his services to the alcoholics. Mrs. J. B. Jamieson, of Newton Centre, provided a counsellor and a caseworker. Miriam acknowledged all of them in a report she wrote in 1948 for the United Nations: *Specialized Treatment of the Woman Offender in America and the Reasons for the Success of this Movement*.

Henry S. Dennison—head of the Framingham manufacturing company whose crepe paper, festive novelties, and party favors, among other things, festooned nearly every makeshift ballroom and banquet setting in the nation—visited Miriam's "jail" the first Christmas she was there, watched a student production of *The Christmas Carol*, went straightaway home and wrote six pages of free verse on the essence of the spirit of Christmas. He inscribed it "For Dr. Miriam Van Waters." Many ex-students of Framingham started new lives with jobs at Dennison's.

Dennison's daughter, Helen Dennison Smith, volunteered to direct the Reformatory's music program, a job which carried the title: "Supervising Female Reformatory Officer." Writing of her appointment in the Radcliffe alumnae publication, she said that "Dr. Van Waters . . . had an amused gleam in her fine eyes as she gave me, over two years ago, this imposing title."

Those who were attracted to Miriam were rarely lukewarm about her. Judge Henry S. Waldman, of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court of Union County, N.J., after attending a meeting in Baltimore of the National Conference of Juvenile Agencies, wrote "Baltimore—In Retrospect," a brief report of the Conference.

"Two of the female superintendents," he wrote, "were young, and the others were dowdy, grandmotherish and dressed in the manner of the mauve decade. I therefore concluded that the destiny of delinquent girls rested in the hands of elderly matrons who knew little of the tempo of modern life, but (were) steeped in the vintage of the forgotten past."

Finding the speeches "poor" and two papers presented at the conference filled with "the arid dust of academic training without . . . real knowledge of social conditions among our young," the

judge admitted he “grinned, yawned, twiddled my thumbs and was as bored as an adventurous schoolboy listening to Einstein explain his theory of relativity.”

“Thank the Lord for Miss Miriam Van Waters, Ph.D.,” he concluded. “She spoke as she writes: clearly, convincingly, succinctly and honestly. She told the array of old fogies how to conduct a correctional institution and also stated what she thought a Juvenile Court should be. I do hereby declare, now and forever, that she is a wonderful woman, and I nominate her for the Nobel Prize, Hall of Fame, and the Garden of Perpetual Life.”

Whenever Miriam entered a room either at the Reformatory or elsewhere, persons who were seated usually rose to their feet. In the Reformatory, this was a gesture of respect for her office, but that didn’t explain why hundreds of men at the Massachusetts State Prison, Charlestown, rose in a body when Miriam entered their chapel, where she was often invited to speak.

Howard Kellett said “they knew they were in the presence of greatness,” and the prison’s star reporter verified that opinion in his account of one of her appearances, written for *The Mentor*, the Charlestown house magazine.

The date, he wrote, “shall stand as the high point of the calendar year to the men of this doomed bastille. On that date, the great lady who has been so rightly referred to as ‘The Angel of the Iron Desert’ visited the prison. Hundreds turned out to see her at chapel, and no one left the services without realizing that he had been, for one glorious hour, in the presence of a person as close to God as it is possible to get on this earth.

“Dr. Van Waters chose The Trinity for her theme. She said, ‘sometimes the symbol of the Trinity awes us a little. Perhaps we

find it difficult to think of God as three Persons, because our thinking revolves around one person. And yet, how simple it is to understand this symbol of the Trinity when we remember that we, too, are, after all, three persons: the child, the father, and the spirit. Oh yes, 'In the image of God made he him.' It is well that man should remember he is so well equipped: first, with the grand quality of wonder that marks the child; then, with the wisdom that marks the father; and finally, with the inner creativeness that marks the spirit and which may give us wings to soar out of our distress into the distant spheres of sublimity, which are, perhaps after all, the ultimate realities."

Prisoners who shook her hand after the service found her "radiant, smiling, and gracious," *The Mentor's* man reported, borrowing from Emily Dickinson to describe her compassion: "'I measure every grief I meet.' Somehow, some of us saw that line inscribed in Dr. Van Waters' eyes, the beauty of it, the genuineness."

In a parting paragraph, the reporter wrote the ultimate tribute: "If her sainthood is not long since established in Heaven, then the rest of us might as well forever contemplate, with Dante, the netherest pits of the Inferno, abandoning all hope. However, God knows His own, and she is one, and because that is so, there is hope for us all."

Professor Francis Sayre, who left the Harvard faculty to become, briefly, Miriam's boss as Commissioner of Correction, soon became her admirer, and devoted champion of her Christian approach to penology. After the death of his wife, he commissioned Charles Connick, a noted Boston stained glass artist, to design a window for the reformatory chapel. Connick produced a striking pictorialization of St. Francis' *Canticle to the Sun*, which was dedicated in April, 1935.

One of the editors of the Reformatory's mimeographed magazine, *Harmony News*, reported the dedication services in a subjective vein:

"Dr. Van Waters . . . was in white. To me she always suggests a bit of poetry, 'Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark Sea.' She is keen like a sword, vivid like a flame. She spoke simply, from her heart, as she always does. She said she thought her students were worthy of this beautiful gift, as they were all either mothers or daughters who could understand the radiant, laughing love of St. Francis and the tender spirit of Jessie Wilson Sayre.

"Bishop Henry Knox Sherrill was the officiating clergyman. He was as eloquent as he was ornamental. Good looking people are sometimes, alas, not very interesting, but at this ceremony, thank God, everyone was beautiful and clever, too. Bishop Sherrill said Jessie Sayre made goodness attractive . . . Christ made goodness attractive, too. The Bishop also said that a life like hers was an unanswerable argument for immortality.

"Well, I have never had any doubts on the question of immortality, but I have had many on that of Christianity—as to when it would arrive, for instance. But since I have lived at Framingham, my views have changed. I have come to believe that there are some people in life who are really trying to follow Christ's example and help their erring brethren. Of such are Dr. Van Waters and Francis Sayre.

"Francis Sayre smiled on us all like a boy. I am afraid, though, that the tears were not very far away from that friendly smile. He spoke of his wife . . . how he felt she would want this gift to the women in prison rather than to a church in the outside world. One thing he said comes back to me repeatedly: 'the future is never shackled by the past.' God bless him for that message of hope."

A middle-aged businessman in a community near Framingham appealed to Miriam to help him stem the flow of his elderly mother's charity. Under the spell of the sisterhood spirit at the Reformatory, she had loaned a former student one thousand dollars, sent unsolicited checks to others, and appeared headed, in her son's estimation, for the sort of bankruptcy that Christ once prescribed for the wealthy young prince who wanted to follow him. Miriam gently suggested to the woman that she blend a little serpentine wisdom with her lamb-pure generosity. A few days later, the chastened giver sent Miriam a check for five hundred dollars and a note thanking her for her advice and suggesting that she spend the money as she saw fit.

Miriam's large staff gave her more than an honest day's work, much more than a forty-hour week and, considering the variables in human nature, a large measure of loyalty. One of them said, years later, that "Miriam's warm personality, applied on the student level, subtly undermined the Grade officers who worked with the students evenly, steadily, day after day. The staff feeling was that students could get to the head too easily—over their heads."

If there was mild disagreement with Miriam's tactics, there was no real disaffection with the Boss, as the staff called Miriam. She valued loyalty above all in those who worked with her; she would patiently train any willing person in her philosophy and methods of running a reformatory, but she could not abide disloyalty. The woods outside were too full of opponents of her kind of penology; she needed fidelity inside.

Opposition, Miriam realized, arose out of the controversial nature of penology. It is controversial, first of all, because it is not a science, but a practical art devoted to turning the period of a court sentence into a constructive treatment or rehabilitation. Penology's three main branches, however—probation, the institution,

and parole—lean on science. They use anthropology in deciding how, in a given culture, an individual has been conditioned to regard parents, marriage, childhood, or property. They employ psychology in determining the intelligence level and earning capacity; sociology in working out groups and making family studies; and education in classrooms and vocational workshops. But penology remains an art.

Secondly, penology is controversial because those who practice it share their responsibility with a variety of agencies, or forces. Politics and legislatures are perennially nibbling and fretting at penology when they are not directly interfering with it. A political administration is usually content with providing the mechanism of education and letting the teacher run the classroom, but it feels compelled to rush into the jail and lay hands on the methodology of prison administration. No one who is not in the work, Miriam often said, can realize the amount of actual obstruction and interference that hinders any penal process.

In the third place, tradition and prejudice make for controversy in penology. Prejudice against offenders has ancient roots, and the art of dealing with them humanely began late in history when William Penn founded the first workhouse on the premise that man is not a vegetable to be stored and left to rot.

And finally, neuroses and psychoses in non-prison populations make penology controversial. People who covet the property of another, who may cheat, but stop short of committing larceny, will exhibit a neurosis or, sometimes, a psychosis if prison reform is begun in their community. Miriam believed neuroticism lay behind discriminatory treatment of women in sex offenses and in the differential treatment of rich and poor in infanticide, abortion, and even murder.

When the opposition thundered and flung lightning at a safe distance, Miriam waited calmly until the sound and fury had abated. If it came too close, she built lightning rods of facts; if it threatened any of her students, she fought it like a well-rounded cat which, she believed, should have a spit as good as its purr.

No amount of any kind of opposition could change her credo, which was, simply, that no human being can be discarded to a scrap heap.

A former El Retiro girl living in California in 1943 wrote Miriam a two-page, typewritten, single-spaced tale of utter human degradation. The girl's three "babies" had been taken from her by the state, which first declared her an unfit mother. She described an agonizing series of brawls with her husband and a hair-pulling fight with a neighbor woman whom she found with her husband in her house. She described in detail how her husband had repeatedly thrown buckets of water on her, mentioned late-night police visits to break up their fights, and reported that her drunken father-in-law had threatened to kill her.

Then, she wrote of her children: "I love them and they love me, just hate to see them wards of the court, as everyone looks down on those kind of children, and are waiting for any false move they make. No one knows better than I. Guess that is enough of all that, the sun is shining so brightly outside, it is going to be another warm day as it is morning now. How hot will it be by noon?"

To a motherless young student, miserable in the Reformatory, Miriam wrote this note:

Dear Child, my Maria:

Surely you know I am like a mother of a large family and care for all my children. I have never felt the least coldness to you.

Your smile and loyalty and carefulness make me happy. Were it not for your future I would like to keep you here always as my little waitress.

You must know I never listen to tales. I hate them. I hate all unkindness and quarreling—but I never dislike any one person. Truly, we *are* God's children.

You can be happy here. Just think of the goodness and happiness we share in our home. I want to be really a mother to you, especially since you have no other. Trust all your friends. That is the better way. I never had the least little thought of blaming you for anything.

You ought to go to church more. This Sunday morning I shall take you with me.

Be a good and happy child.

Your mother,
Miriam Van Waters

Valentines, photographs of sons and daughters in and out of the Reformatory, postcards, soul-baring letters, proud announcements of new jobs lauded, newspaper clippings of wedding announcements, children's drawings, knitted sweaters, quilts, hundreds of Christmas cards, birthday, Easter and just-thinking-of-you cards, knickknacks and ceramics, manuscripts of stories, magazines containing stories published, boxes of candy, tins of cookies, poems in praise or gratitude, snapshots of husbands, houses, and cars, jars of jelly and home-grown beans—all these tokens of remembrance, and many more, flowed back to the lady at Box 99 from women and girls who had learned how not to return in person, except for proud and grateful visits.

They were the ones who had learned the truth as Miriam told the truth; had made adjustment as Miriam effected adjustment: "It

consists of our constant awareness of the nature and needs of others. It does not mean saying or doing what others think they want.

"A soldier sent to spy out the country may return with information his commanding officer doesn't want to hear, but both have a concept of the value of truth, because their safety depends upon it.

"The concept we hold of goals and values of rehabilitation and religion enables the individual to use his personality without any awareness of it at all. It really is an instrument through which the truth passes without the emotional blaming, without the emotional self-seeking; and this may be one of the facets of wisdom of Jesus' command to 'love thy neighbor as thyself.' You will find that the person who is truly religious has this adjustment.

"Penology will not make a complete success until we practice, and get the public to accept, social treatment as our goal and our value. Just that."

Framingham's "alumnae" often bore the stamp of the place, in a complimentary sense, when they returned to the outside. In one instance, a graduate's old school spirit directly influenced a former member of the "faculty" to return to her job.

Ruth F. Weinberg, a graduate of Wellesley with credits from the New School for Social Research, interned at the Reformatory and earned Miriam's praise for her skill as an educator. She left to take a job in New York that kept her close to the courts and girls in trouble.

One day, a letter from Miss Weinberg landed on Miriam's desk:

Dora Pachero, who was your house girl, was in the Women's Court Friday. She was extremely handsomely dressed and seemed

quite the most prosperous and sophisticated girl in the pen that morning. The doctor (Board of Health) and the police matron agreed that 'here is a tough baby who can use the language.' I took Dora out of the pen to talk with her, and as she started to talk about Framingham, about you and your mother, about picnics on the hill, her whole manner changed, and a gentleness appeared—as well as an almost little-girl quality which completely belied her appearance. She talked on and on about the things Framingham and you had meant to her—and it seemed to me that there was, paradoxically, an almost nostalgic quality. And that is what Framingham can give that is so very special.

And that is why I want to be again associated with Framingham and you.

A young mother who was among the first to live and raise her infant in the new Wilson cottage, wrote Miriam in gratitude:

I feel that I owe all these wonderful happenings to you and can only say that I shall earnestly endeavor, when I am released from here, to live up to the true type of womanhood that you have manifested before us all.

In the mid-thirties, Smith College summoned Miriam to Northampton, Massachusetts, to accept an honorary Doctor of Laws degree in the presence of her beaming father and mother. By 1960, she was to have other collegiate recognition. The University of Oregon conferred its Doctor of Laws degree on her, as did the Coolidge Law School, in Boston. Bates College awarded her an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree, and so did Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio. Including her academic Doctorate in Anthropology from Clark, she was a sixfold doctor.

After her father's death in 1934, Miriam's mother came to live with her in the superintendent's house in 1935, becoming, in

a few months, a warm companion of the elderly women in the Reformatory as well as friend and confidante to many of the younger students.

Sarah went off to Putney School in Vermont in the fall of 1936, where Miriam wrote her long, affectionate letters addressed to her as "Dearest Pooh."

Ralph took Miriam to her first baseball game in Boston, where she sat in puzzlement as the Braves struggled against St. Louis. Ralph's explanations of the game fell on barren ground, but she enjoyed the "spectacle," and she was impressed by the crowd. "It was different from any crowd I had seen," she wrote a friend. "Thoughtful, quiet, contented, absorbed, democratic, highly sophisticated in their knowledge of the sport, all reacting as one. I got a new view of American life . . . once is enough."

On a Pennsylvania highway, state police on routine patrol the afternoon of August 15, 1936, came upon the wreckage of a car and pulled the lifeless body of Hans Weiss from beneath a crumpled steering wheel. His mother, in the seat beside him, was not injured. She had just arrived from Switzerland to see her first American granddaughter.

Miriam, lecturing at Teachers College, Columbia University, that summer, wrote her mother soon after she heard the news.

"That this young, so useful life was destroyed so violently was a blow, naturally, but made more intense by the fact that within ten minutes I had to go on giving my lecture. Always I have been conscious, especially on Father's birthday and Hans', that the spirit of work and joy and service, the giving of light to others (if one can) is the constant, unselfish lesson we learn from the brave idealists who have lived with us."

Clarence Dykstra, president, in 1938, of the University of Wisconsin, wanted Miriam to establish a graduate school of social

work there. Depending upon Phil LaFollette's election to the governorship of Wisconsin, she was to be offered the state commissionership of correction. She wasn't tempted, she wrote a close friend who had heard about it indirectly. "I shall never leave Framingham, because I want to demonstrate here, in this one place, that a Christian penology can bring fruits. One can never escape politics and other obstacles," she added.

The big September hurricane of 1938 slashed through Framingham with \$20,000 worth of vengeance, ripping away roof slates and chimneys, damaging barns and poultry sheds, and killing chickens.

The violent episode, according to Miriam, was primarily a test of the iron in Framingham's students. "The hurricane showed me," she wrote a friend, "that every Framingham student can be courageous. It takes common sense to stay quietly locked in a room while slates are falling from the roof . . . the chimney is throwing its bricks in the air like confetti . . . great trees are crashing to earth and live wires are snapping like snakes."

By mutual agreement, Miriam lost her student-cook, Mary Dubbs, who admitted she couldn't manage all her kitchen staff. Mary explained that she respected no female who was not a bum, a drunk, or a thief.

In April, 1938, Mrs. Thompson and Miriam were invited to the White House for a ten-minute talk with President Roosevelt. Miriam's account of this to her mother called it "a great experience. He asked me about parole and prisons and I was privileged to make suggestions. The simplicity, courage, friendliness, and optimism of the President are outstanding. Truly, he is a great American."

Later that month, she was appointed to a committee of The White House Conference on Child Welfare and very soon there-

after, was named secretary of the American Youth Commission, whose membership list was sparse and distinguished: William W. Alexander; Ralph Budd; Clarence A. Dykstra; Dorothy Canfield Fisher; Willard E. Givens; Henry I. Harriman; George Johnson; Chester H. Rowell; William E. Russell; John W. Studebaker; Henry C. Taylor; Matthew Woll; Robert E. Wood; Owen D. Young; George F. Zook, *ex officio*; Floyd W. Reeves, director, and Miriam.

The minority of their gender may have drawn Miriam and Dorothy Fisher together in the Commission's early days; in any case they formed a friendship that persisted for many years after the Commission's work had ended. Mrs. Fisher considered writing a novel based on the lives of Miriam and Sarah, but never got down to it.

Eleanor Roosevelt was another distinguished woman who found Miriam distinctly worth advocating and befriending. As First Lady, in 1940, she invited Miriam and Geraldine Thompson to dine and spend the night at the White House. Years later, Mrs. Roosevelt, in her syndicated newspaper column, supported Miriam to the hilt during her days under fire in Gardner Auditorium.

Detaching herself from her several yokes, Miriam went to California briefly as a "returning exile" to an educational conference in Santa Barbara and a reunion of the "Three Musketeers." Orfa Jean Shontz and Bess Woods welcomed her enthusiastically. Bess gave a dinner for all the old Juvenile Court girls, Business Club girls, El Retiro graduates and their husbands and children. Miriam revisited Juvenile Hall, but there was no longer a holding power in any of the old places. She was eager to go back home. California seemed more foreign than England or France.

"I love every brick of Framingham," she wrote back east. "Every rock and weed."

She had barely settled back inside her beloved bricks when she

upended a jar of instant coffee, tapped it in the palm of one hand to loosen the cap, saw the glass shatter and felt a jagged edge ripping into her flesh.

At the hospital, two doctors worked over the hand. "They gave me a very nice anesthetic. I mean, it didn't choke me. It took them quite a long time to suture the hand all together . . . but it seems I won't be able to leave for another few days . . . seven or eight."

The truth was, she almost cut her hand in two, but since that was not her idea of how a hand should be, she did not recognize it, officially, until it had healed.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Won't Somebody Play the Villain?

Throughout her twenty-five years at Box 99, Miriam maintained a second address where no telephone rang, no parole board called, no politician invaded, and sorrow rarely followed her.

It was an expanse of woodland on the crest of the granite ridge that rose to the south of the Reformatory. Her special patch lay southeast, on state and privately owned tracts, just across the Sherborn Township line. She found it in her early explorations and returned to it often to rest, think, pray, and daydream. Sometimes she ate picnic lunches at the base of a large rock that belonged to the Commonwealth. The place was not as primeval as the Oregon forests of her girlhood, but it was wild enough, and it was accessible. She dubbed it "Hill Top."

In 1939, she cashed an insurance policy, bought ten acres of

land downslope from the big rock and hired men to build a log cabin with a broad, deep fireplace, bunks, coal stove, kitchen, and porch. While the cabin was building, she cleared poison ivy until her arms ached, and planted hundreds of spring-flowering bulbs on the approaches to the rock.

In her love of nature, she memorized Hill Top's flowers and trees, located its nests and burrows, and took a census of its wildlife. Then she did what she always did with a good thing: turned it to the redemption of her students.

With a pile of donated surplus army slacks and shirts, and forty-five pairs of hikers' boots that she bought for them, Miriam founded the Rangers in 1939 on the rock of her conviction that Nature was her ally in the rehabilitation of girls.

In two months, the "I Am A Ranger" badge became one of the most prized possessions in the Reformatory, and there was a long waiting list of prospective joiners. Membership was limited to forty-five because that was the passenger capacity of a truck that hauled the club to distant projects.

Miriam got permission from the Commonwealth and from conservators of the Sherborn forests to lead the Rangers into protected woods to clear underbrush, windfall and hurricane debris, and to plant trees.

A student had to attend three Ranger meetings before she could join officially. If she missed three meetings without a valid excuse, she was dropped, but could reapply. It seemed highly unlikely to the cynical that a girl who had grown up in the sidewalk-and-saloon society of a city could care a tinker's dam about climbing a tree or classifying sparrows. And what about the temptation, let alone the opportunities, to slip quietly through the woods and over the hill for good?

The club's founder had considered all these realities:

"Ranger activities give the students the opportunity of proving that they can trust themselves not to abscond, even when they could do so easily . . . this helps to produce in them a feeling of responsibility toward the group and an individual concern for the privilege of being out of the institution buildings, for freedom of movement, and for good food shared." It was anticipated that student interest in trees, flowers, birds, animals, and seasons would come later—after the freedom and food—and it did in many cases. Miriam eventually got Audubon Society scholarships for Ranger-trained graduates who wanted to go to Audubon camps.

One of the charter members was so moved by the beauty of her surroundings on the Rangers' maiden excursion that she stopped in her tracks and asked the others to say the Lord's Prayer with her. Cautiously, the others formed a circle and spoke the prayer softly. The next day, one of the interns, reading outgoing student mail as part of her research, came across a new Ranger's comment on the previous day's outing:

"We hadn't been out of the place for months. Then the Doctor took us to the woods. We said the Lord's Prayer and ran like hell up the hill."

Wave after wave of Rangers cleared the woods around the big rock on the hill and built there a stone grill on which Miriam broiled the hamburgers and tossed the green salads that made her locally famous as an outdoor chef.

Eventually, the boulder in the state-owned picnic grove was named after the elderly physician who preferred to spend her last years in the Reformatory as an intern on annual contract, rather than accept release to a less friendly world outside. The cabin on Hill Top was Miriam's retreat, her spiritual wellspring, and place of privacy—when it was not crowded with Rangers on a rainy day.

Sometimes, Miriam invited official female guests to share the

tranquility of Hill Top. Major Dorothy Berry, secretary of the women's prison bureau of the Salvation Army, was one who spun long thoughts and traded ideas with Miriam around the cabin fireplace. She wrote her appreciation of the inspiration she found there, and said she had longed to stay, but had to "come down from the hill and go to work."

Whether Miriam spent the night at Hill Top or in her red brick house at the institution, she began her day at dawn, or soon thereafter. She often wrote magazine articles in the first hours of the day, but in the warm months she liked to work in her garden. Some of her freshest and best thoughts came in early daylight while she was kneeling and working with the "hand of God," as her Mexican friends in California called the ungloved hand that works the soil.

Miriam was influenced early by Spinoza, the Spanish refugee-philosopher who believed "the whole duty of man is to love God and to rejoice." One of her favorite phrases was, "rejoice and be glad." In a world she found not very glad, she was "just glad, that's all." She once explained to a friend that she was not a mystic in the sense that she expected the physical touch of God, "but all our efforts are naught unless God gives the growth—the increase. So I never feel defeated."

She disagreed with the suffrage in the Litany for the protection and preservation of "Christian Rulers and Magistrates," because she believed many of our best magistrates are Jewish ("This prayer should be abolished!"). Nor did she go along with the admonition to punish the wicked, because she rated punishment below love, understanding, and help in dealing with the "wicked."

Miriam's reasons for founding the Rangers and other reform-

atory clubs—sixteen of them at one point in her administration—went deeper than a desire to create mere diversions for her students. She believed participation in constructive effort was healing, and she had little faith in the theory of deterrence as a block to waywardness, finding it feeble in effect.

“Apply it (the deterrent theory) to yourself,” she once told a class of adults. “You go to the hospital. The doctor says you are smoking too much, or that smoking, or drinking, is a contributing factor in your illness. Do you give it up? You do not, or at least not for that reason. Very few people follow advice designed to alleviate discomfort. Do wars, alcoholism, and highway disasters stop fighting, drinking, and driving?”

“Now as to the effect on the community of the deterrent theory: The community knows nothing of what goes on. There are pictures of crime in the newspapers, reports of it on the radio, etc.; but people do not follow the picture into our institutions. Our average citizen-taxpayer knows nothing about what actually goes on, so the theory can’t be effective on the community. The offenders just disappear until they come out. A woman goes to a modern, well-run reformatory, is punished by loss of freedom and by public condemnation. But what really happens to *her*?

“She must be under constant supervision, must take orders. This is the punishment. Could she have prevented coming to the reformatory? If you ask the most intelligent women why they are there, they will say ‘because the judge sent me,’ or ‘because the police made a complaint,’ or ‘because of neighborhood gossip’; or they will blame it on angry, outraged, or conscientious parents who brought them to the reformatory.

“They have no more notion of cause and effect than you and I usually have in our lives. They find themselves there, but cannot connect the fact that they are there with their previous behav-

ior—with the fact that they don't know when to stop drinking, or that they pick up companions too easily. Why connect anything so remote as a prison sentence with your comfortable daily life?

"A reformatory sentence may improve a woman's desire to lead a socially acceptable life, but it is not the punishment that changes her at all.

"It is a new slant on values.

"I even doubt if it is habit-training. You have to give habit training in an institution to keep the place clean and the population well fed. But habits acquired in strange conditions do not transfer over to other conditions."

Miriam illustrated the point with a story of a schoolboy who persisted in saying and writing "I have went." His teacher made him stay after school and write "I have gone home" on the blackboard one hundred times. Finishing this chore, he wrote the teacher a note:

"'Dear teacher, I have done my work so I have went home.'"

Miriam recognized the difficulty of imposing her ideas of habits on others. She worked with the individual, selecting from each person's skills and attitudes those that could be enlarged and developed until they became second nature to the student.

Music, art, drama, literature, self-government, and nature study were high on her list of useful catalysts in effecting changes in lives at Framingham.

Every Friday after supper, she arrived at the reformatory library with a basket of cigarettes and candy on her arm. Awaiting her, chattering and expectant, was the Literary Club, seated around a large table. The club secretary read a report of the previous meeting before cigarettes and candy were handed around, then Miriam opened the current book and either read from it or handed it on to another for reading aloud.

Some members were attracted, originally, by the cigarettes and chocolate, and persuaded by Shakespeare to linger. Others remained for a few readings, decided the price for nicotine and sweets was too high, and fell away. A registered nurse with an I.Q. of 140 sat opposite a voluntary alcoholic "admission," the wife of a prominent businessman. Some of the listeners had left school before the fifth grade, but sat spellbound while Miriam read novels, biographies, poems, and plays with sensitivity. If the listeners didn't like what they heard, they could vote for breaking it off.

Miriam chose Shakespeare's tragedies and other distinguished works whose plots were constructed around crime, tragedy, or intense family conflicts, because Framingham's women had known all these things without realizing they could be lifted out of the gutter and brought within human understanding. She steered clear of writers who leave their stories mired in futility.

The Two-Side Club was Miriam's instrument for teaching the democratic process of government and relieving the pressure that builds within those who have the tonnage of the state weighing on their freedom.

Twice a year, by secret ballot, reformatory women voted on nominees they had already filed with their superintendent. The four most popular students became president, vice-president, secretary, and historian of the student body. The president automatically became president of the Two-Side Club. A nominated and elected representative from each Grade, work department, and club within the Reformatory joined the four officers, which meant that about forty women and girls piled into Miriam's sitting room every month to air their grievances, file requests, report on their constituent groups, and discuss arrangements for assemblies, public holidays, intramural plays, and fairs.

The superintendent of a New Zealand women's reformatory,

observing Framingham's life during a four-week residence, wrote that "many new representatives come to the Two-Side Club reluctantly, bringing with them their normal burdens of prejudice, aggressiveness, and egocentricity. But soon they feel the permissive and friendly group atmosphere. They are reassured and gain enough self-confidence to begin to participate in the decision-making of the group. Probably, for the first time in their lives, they feel accepted."

At one meeting, the Two-Side president, a beautiful young woman who conducted proceedings with dignity, tact, and strict adherence to parliamentary order, recognized a representative from Grade I, who rose to speak: "Madam Chairman, we just have one little mirror in Grade I. When we're rushing to get ready for breakfast, how can all of us look in it at the same time? Doctor says to start the day looking our best, but how can we tell that without a mirror to tell us?"

Miriam's hedge against potential race trouble in Framingham was the Merry Makers, an all-Negro group within which Miriam hoped members would "relate together in any suitable way." The Merry Makers quickly related musically and dramatically.

Miriam took the anthropologist's view of races and national groupings, seeing all points of difference not as the result of biology but as the result of culture patterns ages old; she recognized superior qualities and achievements in every race, from the most primitive, isolated community to the most cosmopolitan community of today.

She discounted the assumption that a reformatory was an unlikely place to learn brotherhood, tolerance, and cooperation. She held that, with a staff sympathetic to the idea of interracial understanding and participation, the reformatory was fertile ground for its development because the rejection and failure that were com-

mon denominators to all the women drew them together across barriers of prejudice.

The Social Club met two evenings a week in the Recreation Room for scrabble, checkers, and cards. The Dorothea Dix Club comprised the so-called defective delinquents, the lifers, and the top executive of the Two-Side Club. Cook-outs were the club's main social expression, but its real core was the study of elementary democratic procedures necessary to work for changes in legislation that sent them there as "DD's" and for pardons and revisions of sentences. Over the years, they helped Miriam obtain the release of fifty-five of fifty-nine of their own members, the other four being physically unprepared for discharge.

The Audubon Club brought twenty staff and students together in their enthusiasm for winged life and their mutual commitment to the conservation of natural resources. Six members earned Audubon pins at Audubon camps.

The Camp Fire Girls (chosen over the Girl Scouts because the uniforms and equipment were less elaborate), was the first unit of this organization ever established in a penal institution. The girls met around a symbolic campfire of candles burning in silver holders on a handmade mat in the assembly hall. Sarah Van Waters helped her mother organize it, and worked tirelessly with the group.

Miriam had made a cracking good speech before two thousand delegates to a Camp Fire Girls conference in New York, and when officers of the national organization offered to pay her, she told them they could pay her by giving her the right to organize a unit at the Reformatory. Sarah drilled the first neophytes in handwork, minding babies, raising calves, and training dogs before the national organization admitted them.

Alcoholics Anonymous, usually thirty-five to forty strong, met

every Sunday evening. Many of them had never heard of the organization until they found it in their laps. Outside speakers came often; several of them became sponsors of released alcoholics in the battleground beyond the Reformatory's gate.

The Sports rallied around the softball diamond and archery range in outdoor months, and the basketball court in winter. The Glee Club appeared on dozens of occasions every year with a repertoire ranging from western folk songs to Bach chorales.

Every month, Miriam invited the Birthday Club to her home for a party in honor of those whose birthdays fell within the month. At four in the afternoon, she received them at her door with a cupcake topped with an unlighted candle for each guest. Dressed in their best, the guests were self-conscious and conversation was stilted until Miriam began asking each girl her birthdate, lighting the candle on her cake and reading to each one a quotation from an old-fashioned book of sentiments blended with truth and hope. This done, Miriam went to a table piled with artistically wrapped presents, explaining, before she offered them, that they had all cost the same, and that it was all right for the birthday girls to exchange them among themselves.

As soap, combs, ball point pens, mechanical pencils, socks, toothpaste, photograph frames, and other modest gifts emerged from wrappings, excitement mounted and chatter rose in volume. On cue, a Dorothea Dix clubgirl entered with a huge cake, pink-frosted and bathed in light from candles equal in number to the guests. Students on domestic duty in Miriam's home paraded in with ice cream, salted nuts, candy, and cigarettes. There were seconds of everything.

A guest from "outside" described the next phase of one of these parties:

"We all went over to the big bay window and stood in a circle clasping one another's hands around a huge, sturdy-looking, white

candle, and then sang Happy Birthday to each other. As we still clasped our neighbors' hands, Dr. Van Waters spoke briefly on the gift of life, saying that inasmuch as each one of us had been granted life, we might take this one memorable moment to think what we are going to do with it. Live it, of course, but how? Live it for just ourselves and what we can get out of it?

"Possibly, but a still better way is to live it for others by remembering that all of us have problems and all of us need love and help and understanding as we try to solve our problems. She closed her brief remarks while we were still holding hands in the circle with this prayer:

"Dear Father of us all, we do thank Thee for the gift of life. It is precious to live, and dangerous, too, unless we think carefully about the living of it. Each one of us wants her life to be useful to herself, to others, and to Thee. Pour into our lives this day and every day an enduring and growing love for those about us. Forgive our tempers and our irritations with one another, and help us to love Thee more by the love we show to all those about us. Amen."

"There was not a dry eye in that circle at the close of the prayer. It was difficult for us to drop the hands we were holding. The sheer fact of holding one another's hands gave us all a consciousness that we were not alone in this task of love, and if we could stay this near to one another, we could walk the way of love.

"The students who, at first, had looked stiff had melted completely, and their misted eyes shone with a kind of exaltation. On their way out, Dr. Van Waters was again at her door to tell each one good-bye. Two or three of them told me on their way out that this was their first real birthday party. One of these said she was thirty-three that day, but the party had been worth waiting for."

Miriam sponsored all these clubs, supplying many of their

needs at her own expense because they did not exist, in theory, in the eyes of the Commonwealth—any more than did the costumes and grease paint of the reformatory Drama Club which Miriam served as producer, director, makeup artist, and constant angel.

Miriam was fortunate, early in her administration, in having, first as an intern, then as an officer, a skillful dramatist and able student of penology who understood the importance of dramatics in the rehabilitation of the morally diseased and socially maladjusted. Her name was Hilda Hinckley.

There were no movies yet on the reformatory program in the thirties, not for financial reasons, but because, as Hilda explained it, "we have something so much better . . . The difference between the vicarious participation in an emotional and removed film drama, and the reality of creating a play which may have beauty, or charm, or humor, out of the limitations of an unpleasant, everyday life, with the help of compulsory, everyday companions, is the difference between passive amusement—which is an escape from reality—and active participation—which is firing reality with imagination and producing a play which brings the joy of creation and the satisfaction of achievement."

Hilda compressed her reformatory drama experience into an article for *Theatre Arts Monthly* (October, 1937) titled "Cell-Block Into Greenroom." The title referred to a few cells left over from Framingham's early years. Most of a tier of cells had been ripped out to make a gymnasium, where plays were staged, but a few that remained became storage rooms for a collection of costumes that grew with the institution's amazing repertory.

"Barring disease, distemper, and dungeon," Hilda wrote, "there are no absences from rehearsals, and with actors, stagehands, costumers, and director living under one roof there is a

conservation of time and energy in the actual getting together of physical forces which would be appreciated by many a community playhouse.

"The director's word is law, with the authority of the Commonwealth behind it, and while the need for drastic action comes seldom, still the possibility of dictatorship is there and felt. 'Cut out that noise backstage!' means to cut it out. Nor is there a moment's concern given to business worries or the haunting fear that the audience may not be large or responsive . . . The audience is trained at Framingham to a tradition of respectful attention climaxed by generous applause. If the play is good, the approval is spontaneous and appreciative; if not so good, the actors are still given the courtesy of attention. The patience and thought which have gone into building a fine audience in the institution are as great as the energy which has gone into preparing the plays."

Hilda had her problems, nonetheless. In casting, she had to be sure that paroles and pardons wouldn't decimate the *dramatis personae*. Paradoxically, she had trouble casting villains who were hard-boiled enough to earn the audience's approval; it was easy to get lovely young girls who could be convincingly coy and innocent.

Being simultaneously drama director and "female reformatory officer," Hilda was restrained by her latter role from sending actors to fetch a property or borrow a piece of furniture. She carried the only keys to locked doors in her Grade, and she had to scurry around after evening rehearsals to lock her cast in their rooms for the night. She also had to lock up lipstick, mascara, and rouge— forbidden in everyday life until that day when Miriam saw red on the lips of a neighboring farm woman.

Hilda's first production was a Polish wedding scene, "assembled from many memories of childhood festivities and family tra-

ditions, and given entirely in Polish." This choice of vehicle was part of Miriam's anthropological approach to penology—the idea of fostering understanding and acceptance of "foreign" cultures either by underlining their relation to local culture in common life situations, or by revealing their differences in an interesting and sympathetic way.

The Polish wedding couple "danced with spirit suited to the occasion," Hilda wrote in her article, although their combined weight was five hundred pounds, and Hilda had visions of the stage collapsing. "The floor," she said, "outlasted the dancers' breath, and the bride was duly married to a pregnant bridegroom."

During rehearsals of the Polish scene, an officer who taught "ethics" went into a pique of jealousy over Hilda's prowess and ripped the gown off the bride; Miriam calmly fired her.

Of the more than thirty plays that Hilda directed, the students' favorites were *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; two scenes from *The Green Pastures*; and *Workhouse Ward*, a one-act play by Lady Gregory whose theme, Hilda believed, would have instant recognition in any institution, not only because it is a true picture of two bed-ridden Irishmen, but because of its deep understanding of human irritations and loyalties which are always intensified in a restricted group. One of the two actors in this play had been judged, in a psychometric examination, "unstable but probably feeble-minded," although a year and a half after the curtain had dropped on *Workhouse Ward* she remembered her many lines verbatim.

Midsummer Night's Dream was rehearsed for production outdoors on a slope of pasture studded with rocks. Aside from tardiness at rehearsals and slow memorizing of their parts by a few staff officers who wanted to be in the play, everything went well. There was an acrobatic dancer for Puck, a beautiful Titania, and artisans

Hilda thought must have been sent from heaven for the play.

"Wall and Moonshine," she wrote, "the one black, round, sullen, the other angular, gaunt, hollow-voiced, both had the mental capacity, the unaffected earnestness, the conviction of the seriousness of the play which Shakespeare intended Snout and Starveling to portray. These two saw fit, however, to escape from the institution two weeks before the performance, but two others almost as perfect were substituted."

It rained hard the afternoon of the performance, but when the downpour subsided to a steady drizzle, the cast announced it would go on with the show. The entire population turned out, walking a quarter mile to stand in wet meadow grass for an hour and a half.

"Not Joe E. Brown," Hilda wrote, "but the girl who scrubbed the other half of the corridor with them that morning and helped them wash tin plates after meals was the means of transporting them into a new world. They were generous and sincere in their praise to the actors; there was no need to gossip or speculate about one's neighbor's delinquencies when her performance in the play gave (them) a topic of conversation for many days."

Hilda rated *The Green Pastures* ideally suited to Framingham; she had such a depth of Negro talent available for it she wondered whether the Boston police hadn't cooperated indirectly. The players staged the ark scenes for an audience that understood the simple, direct, and reasonable sinfulness of the gamblers, their jibes at the righteous Noah, and the final triumph of Good symbolized by the rainbow.

In her article, Hilda explained that "Noah and Mrs. Noah, forced by circumstances into a complex situation beyond their comprehension, were very real. The Lawd, shining with the dignity of a frock coat and the part; Gabriel flashing a million-dollar smile; the naturalness of the gamblers; the almost too-professional flirting

of Zeba; and the lovely singing of the spirituals, made the play alive. It had spirit and sincerity and meaning as a play and as an experience in the lives of the women."

Summing up, Hilda wrote, "how could one better teach the necessity for group cooperation, the realization that all parts are not leads, and that success is sweet but hard-earned? . . . During rehearsals and performances of plays the world which the student creates is no longer one of failure, of defiance, of hopelessness."

When Hilda left Framingham, Miriam took over as director, playwright and makeup woman. She wrote two original plays, *Hill of Beans* and *St. Martin of Tours* for the students. The Rev. John U. Harris, rector of St. Andrew's, Miriam's parish in Framingham, saw her come on stage one evening to make an announcement and never forgot the experience.

"She was so strikingly regal," he said, "that I was reminded all evening of Queen Elizabeth. She was a superb actress with a great sense of the dramatic."

The Devil and Daniel Webster was Miriam's favorite among all the plays she produced for her students, with *Our Town* a close second, followed by *The Chalked Circle* and *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife*, all of which, she believed, spoke directly to the Reformatory's captive audience and effected relief and healing of guilt, self-doubt and despair.

Not all the drama in the Reformatory unfolded on the gymnasium stage. A few days after a student warned a deputy she would kill her if she could get her hands on a gun, a staff teacher went up to the attic above the chapel to get some teacups from a trunk she had stored there. In checking through the contents of the trunk, the teacher discovered that the cups, and a pearl-handled revolver in a chamois case, were missing. Why she had packed a

gun among her effects was never disclosed, but there was no doubt that it was gone. She reported it instantly to Miriam, who quickly summoned Peg O'Keefe and relayed the electrifying news.

Acting on a hunch, Peg looked up a seventeen-year-old girl who, although recently committed for assault with a knife, had made no threats at Framingham. The girl sang in the choir, and could have had access to the attic above. Peg asked the girl to "help" her "find and replace some things" taken from a trunk in the attic. Two hours later, the girl returned to Peg to report she couldn't get a line on the "things," but she had a suggestion. How about going up to the attic and looking around? Peg played along.

When they reached the space over the chapel, the girl pointed to a rafter.

"What's that?" she asked, pointing to a small lump on the rafter.

Peg raised dust getting to the gun. Slipping it from its case, she saw that there was one bullet in the cylinder. For a moment, she thought she was going to faint.

Three years later, the girl confessed that she had stolen the gun and, after talking to Peg, had slipped back to the attic and planted it for easy discovery. Peg wasn't surprised.

The teacups never did show up.

Some scenes were less melodramatic, but no less tingling. An officer, coming upon a husky, powerful, Negro student in a corridor where she wasn't supposed to be at the time, stopped her.

"Where do you think you're going?"

The girl said she was going to the dining room.

"Over my dead body," the officer said.

Another officer who had overheard this exchange stepped in and diverted the student's attention, although she could not

change a cold, hypnotic gleam that had set in the girl's eyes. The last woman who had seen that look had been beaten to death after a row over a man. The murderess's good behavior at Framingham had not altered the psychiatrist's opinion that she was preoccupied with ideas of assault and death.

The Maud Ophelia Club, named in memory of Miriam's mother, who had died at Framingham as the result of a broken hip, was a gathering of the elderly, in years or in outlook, who were in retreat from the hubbub of youth. The group had a separate dining room and social room, with a phonograph and a radio. Photographs of Mrs. Van Waters and Miriam, and an oil painting of a New England autumn landscape assured members that there was warm affection for them, though winter was just ahead. Grace Wills, who had encouraged Miriam and cooperated with her when Miriam worked for the Boston Juvenile Court in 1913, was the leading sponsor of this club. She appeared every week to visit its members. Miriam regarded Miss Wills as the greatest social worker in America, the "Jane Addams of the east," and said that she, "like other great persons, understood the dynamics of reconciliation. This was most useful in understanding how to cooperate with police and politicians."

Close as she was to each of these many groups within the old walls, Miriam reserved a special segment of her heart and her hopes for the mother-child program at Framingham. Her enthusiasm was contagious. Visitors could not say they had seen the Reformatory unless they had toured Wilson Cottage, geared and staffed for twenty-five mothers and thirty-three babies, and the medical nursery on the second floor of the main building, with facilities for nearly forty babies. The young ones were divided between tod-

dlers' sections and nursery schools, to which toddlers were graduated at fifteen months.

Under the solicitous eyes of Miriam's sister-in-law, "Bert" Van Waters; the nursery school director; a nurse for infants; a cottage director; two assistants, and an intern who signed on for a summer or winter term, Wilson's students did all their own housework, cooking and baby tending, studying mothercraft and baby care in special courses at Wilson, and in educational classes in the main building—if time permitted.

Every mother's day in Wilson and in the main building was planned around a regular routine for her baby (mealtimes, bathing, exercise, and rest) and herself (meals, rest, medical care, work placements, and recreation). It was a large-scale maternal, pediatric, and educational project that ran smoothly because the women who staffed it were a skillfully coordinated and dedicated team that knew how to keep the program tuned for harmony despite innumerable sources of discord. These women made daily reality of Miriam's aims for the program, which were to establish a home-like atmosphere; train mothers in the care of well and sick children; give the mother some conception of the child's need for consistent affection; develop in the mother some appreciation of the rate of the child's development and of the fact that each child has a different rate of growth; inculcate gentleness between mother and child; teach mothers how to enjoy their babies; express confidence in, and respect for, the mother, so that she builds these feelings in herself and becomes a better mother.

Miriam backed the whole nursery team, as well as her other officers, and all her students, at every turn. She organized and indoctrinated a group of women (and a few men) from Framingham and nearby communities as Friendly Visitors who would come

to the Reformatory, befriend students, hear their problems, supply transportation for special functions, and, in general, charge the atmosphere of the Reformatory with the freshness of their personalities and interests. Grace Wills was the first president of these missionaries.

Early each summer, Miriam promoted a mother-child reunion, inviting every ex-Framingham mother she could reach to return with her child, or children, for a festive Saturday. Friendly Visitors met the incoming guests at train or bus depots, or brought them from their homes in time for the afternoon get-together.

Wilson's residents registered the visitors and their youngsters as they arrived, and at two o'clock the party began in the pavilion of Wilson's pasture with a round of introductions and a lot of "remember how curly her hair was when she was a year old?" Ice cream cones, fruit punch, milk, and cookies appeared in ample quantities, followed by gifts of toys, books, and clothing for the "home coming" children who, with their mothers, could take their choice. Fed and gifted, the children were taken to visit the calves, pigs, and chickens, with Miriam and the Reformatory's Protestant and Catholic chaplains leading the tour.

Although none of this cost the Commonwealth a penny, it must have seemed a totally unjustifiable frill to the punitive school of penology. In Miriam's sight, it was a rare opportunity for reformatory mothers who had not yet faced the world with their babies to see mothers who had finished their parole, kept their children, and settled down in the community.

Because Miriam believed intensely in working with the individual girl, particularly in assigning day work outside, which was done on the basis of conferences and strict concern for individual needs, the charge of favoritism was sometimes leveled at her, not only by students but by certain staff members. Miriam

had no inflexible policy about day work, except that it should be granted on the basis of need rather than merit. In that sense, she acted as a conscientious surgeon would in refusing to adhere to any general policy about operating on his patients, and determining his actions according to the needs of the individual patient.

The surest clue to her objectivity in penology was her approach to case histories of Framingham women. She warned those who studied under her that the inexperienced among them would see details in case histories that would strike them as sordid, or bizarre, because they would tend to look at only one element, or view it out of focus.

"Try to be objective," she counselled. "That is, without the customary waves of feeling and thought common to your age, your sex, your income group, your social judgment, your pre-judgment. You may say, 'how can I think at all if I get rid of all these?' In truth, there is very little thinking done about behavior because, almost at once, the individual projects—I am a man, I am a woman, I am of a certain age, I have a certain attitude toward money, toward race, toward religion, toward education.

"You simply have to divorce yourself of these governing and controlling prejudicial trends before you can read a case history. Otherwise you are reacting as blindly as the criminal himself. You are merely following past experience."

In the next breath, she summed it up in a simple, profound analogy:

"As soon as you get over the desire to kill a bug, or shoot a bird, or step on a snake, and want to report on it, or enjoy it, or classify it, then you see the creature in its habitat, a form of life to which you have no relation whatever except that of the scientist, the photographer, the collector."

Miriam applied her objectivity to every case that crossed her ken. Her reasoning was heresy to the advocates of brass-knuckle penology, and anathema particularly to those who struck out contemptuously at homosexuals, as Miriam would one day learn so painfully.

In her scholarly way, Miriam studied homosexuality from the psychiatric, sociological, legal, and remedial points of view because she had to deal with it from all four in her full career. She believed that most homosexual activity resulted from confinement in such places as girls' boarding schools, or prisons, where women congregate exclusively, and in army barracks and on shipboard, where men are confined for long periods of time. She heeded psychiatrists who said it is perfectly possible for quite normal persons to have homosexual experiences under confining conditions and discontinue them when conditions change.

Lecturing on the subject to an adult group in Boston, she said that homosexuality in a penal institution is usually a major problem. "It isn't so much in the Women's Reformatory (Framingham) where the program is very active, because these emotional friendships which result in physical expression thrive most on overstrain, loneliness, grief, shock, and disappointment. Where the life is relatively open to the community and visitors come in, the emotional expression which is found as an extreme "crush," or emotional attachment, is not so likely to develop.

"What we do find is a small core of young girls whom our psychologists say are looking for a mother substitute. If they can be induced to attach themselves to a worthy older person of the maternal type, the homosexual trend never develops into overt activity. The usual manifestations are the giving of favors and caresses and the exchanging of confidences—not with the chosen older woman supervisor, but between contemporaries. But under

proper supervision this almost never will develop into overt physical advances."

The most severe homosexual Miriam ever encountered at Framingham she didn't recognize as such until the woman was given a Rorschach test. She was forty-five, a repeating forger from an unusually good family, which was financially able and morally straight. Stiff-necked, never moving her head from side to side, she did her bookkeeping work flawlessly, then retired to the library where she read only the best.

She shunned all organized activity in the Reformatory except one concert, and had only the politest talk for the psychologist. When the Rorschach disclosed latent homosexuality, the woman revealed that she had had a distressing sexual experience at nine and was morbidly frightened of normal and abnormal sex. She had married and borne a daughter, then refused further marital relations with her husband. As the pressure of natural sex life bore down, she began to forge checks, foolishly and clumsily.

The most amazing proof of Miriam's objectivity toward others was her attitude toward her enemies, whom she refused to recognize or treat as such. This exasperated some of Miriam's close, protective friends who called animosity and villainy by name. A certain female member of a Commonwealth Parole Board did everything but hiss at Miriam. Peg O'Keefe, Miriam's fiercely loyal deputy, thought this black-book-toting woman was aggressive, crude and cruel, and Peg was convinced she wanted to undermine Miriam and snatch her job. Mrs. Edward Scott O'Keefe, wife of a Harvard faculty member, had served on the same board with the woman and opposed her reappointment in the plainest language: "She appears to be a warm, intelligent, outgoing, cheerful and kind person . . . I found her ignorant, arrogant and cruel . . . It would

be a disaster to the Reformatory and to Dr. Van Waters to have this person again in the position of authority."

Others warned Miriam not to underestimate the lady, but, as Peg O'Keefe later explained ruefully, "the Boss saw the best in everybody."

"Well, you must understand," Miriam said later of this woman, "that she honestly believed, while she was on the Parole Board, that mothers with a prison record were not fit to raise their babies, that ex-convicts should not be employed at the Reformatory or be allowed to return for visits. It's true she fought and helped to defeat the indenture system of release. As these policies were vital to my staff, our students and me, we were hurt. But all this means is, public opinion must be educated to understand what we must do for a society of captives."

Miriam's father's spirit remained with her long after he had gone. She kept his stoles in her bedroom, but served his memory in her attitude. She wrote a friend, several years after his death:

"He is more and more a part of my everyday life—not in any vague, remote fashion, for he was so practical, so human in his *service*—but as a realistic inspiration and guide. Never miss an opportunity to be with your loved ones; he says that to me. Be moderate; be tolerant; be merry; make people *enjoy* life; enjoy it yourself; *never* say a harsh word; never criticize; never get discouraged; be *good*, but don't talk about it. All this flooded over me this morning."

A few months after her mother's death, Miriam wrote Sarah that she abhorred those words of "comfort" that her mother's death "was a blessing," because "that is so ignorant of life. All life is good, the trouble and the pain along with the rest. I had the privilege of looking after her when she was helpless. But when death

comes, what you gradually feel is the reconstruction of the whole life.

"Now—though my feet, through blind habit, start toward her room every time I come into the House—I almost never think of her there. It is in the institution, helping the girls, and it is in Wellsboro, and in childhood, and in camp, that I think of her. And so many things she said that I paid no attention to at all are now beautifully clear with deep meaning."

Sarah was graduated from Putney School and enrolled at Swarthmore in 1939, with Miriam's and Dorothy Canfield Fisher's signatures on her application. At the end of her second year there, Sarah appealed to Miriam to let her transfer to the University of New Hampshire.

"You went to a state university," she wrote her mother. "I think they are more democratic, and I could come home more often."

At New Hampshire, Sarah met Richard Hildebrandt, son of a prosperous Brooklyn businessman, and an artist. He had come to the university from Holy Cross College with an excellent record, and was deep in physics and electronics when he and Sarah fell in love.

Their campus courtship altered its course when Dick's parents died within a month of each other. Sarah's love for him became mixed with intensely compassionate feelings. As Miriam analyzed it many years later, Sarah, perhaps for the first time in her life, felt that someone needed her.

A few months later, Sarah and Richard were married. She bore three sons within four years, and Richard went off to war from their home in Wolfeboro, New Hampshire.

Miriam was a devoted grandmother who never forgot a birthday, and was never too busy to write long, affectionate letters to Sarah, still "Pooh" to her mother: "I hope my darling Georgie is well, and kiss him for Granny, and kiss Peter and Rickey, too."

By 1947, the Framingham Reformatory for Women was better than any place Dorothea Dix could have prayed for in her revolt against the charnel houses of her time. It was Jessie Hodder's brave experiment extended beyond her practical hopes. It was a model worthy of the national praise it received, and it was the institutional image of Miriam Van Waters. It had developed over fifteen years under sympathetic authority at the State House, and it had been almost immune from hostile public opinion, prejudice, and politics, the three P's that had hounded Miriam in California.

Yet no one knew better than Miriam that each of these three retains its potency, no matter how long it lies dormant. That was proved one day in November, 1947, when Antonette DiMarco, a darkly troubled girl from the tenement district of Boston's North End, had a nightmare at noon.

The "mansions we builded" were never the same after that.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Make Some Smoke and Blame It on a Fire

As one of six students in the "barn group," "Toni" DiMarco was awakened at four-thirty every morning. She dressed quickly in her six-by-nine-foot room, which in November was dark at that hour. Without breakfast, save for a cup of coffee or hot chocolate, she joined her workmates and a supervising officer, and walked to the pasture to drive twenty-six registered Holsteins to the barn, there to be fed beet pulp and milked by machine. When snow was on the ground, the barn group went directly to the barn. After the milking was done, Toni and the others carried grain and hay to the cows in their stalls. At seven o'clock the girls drove the cows back to pasture and returned to the main building for breakfast. After breakfast, the girls returned to the barn to clean it up.

It was hard work, but Toni was a strong, solidly-built eighteen-

year-old weighing about one hundred and seventy pounds. She was under psychiatric treatment, and, occasionally, she exploded with emotional violence. The psychiatrist noticed that these outbursts usually came after Toni's parents visited her, which they had done over the weekend preceding Monday, November 10, 1947. Toni seemed all right that morning. With the others, she came in from the barn for lunch and, because she had been working steadily for nearly eight hours, went to her room after the meal to rest and, probably, to sleep. Monday being movie night at the Reformatory, she was to be called at three-thirty to bring the cows in for the afternoon milking and finish her work for the day by six-thirty. Other afternoons, she worked from four-thirty until seven-thirty.

This particular afternoon, Toni had other plans. Not long after she closed the door of her room behind her, she evidently barricaded the door with her bed, knotted a bedsheet into a rope, stood on a chair, tied one end of the sheet around an overhead sprinkler pipe, tied the other end around her neck, and kicked the chair away.

At three-thirty, another barn group girl on call duty knocked heavily on Toni's door. Getting no response, she tried to open it, but couldn't. Forcing it, she jammed the bed between the door and the wall, making it impossible to obtain more than a ten-inch clearance. Somebody slipped sideways through that.

Deputy Peg O'Keefe cut the sheet-rope with a razor blade and lowered Toni's body to the floor. The resident physician confirmed what the eye knew at a glance. Middlesex County's medical examiner arrived as quickly as he could, studied the situation, asked Peg O'Keefe to re-enact her part in the crisis, asked a lot of questions and came to the conclusion that Toni had committed suicide.

In due course, the District Attorney's office stepped in, sorted over the evidence, asked many questions, and requested Peg O'Keefe once more to show him what she had done. It seemed ob-

vious that murder would have been all but impossible. The murderer would have had to surprise and quietly subdue a large, powerful girl in good physical condition, lynch her with her own bed linen and depart, leaving the room barricaded from the inside by the victim's bed. All this, omitting the fact that Toni was gravely disturbed, weighed heavily against the possibility of foul play, but the Hearst newspapers in Boston, the *Record* and the *American*, were excited by the tragedy, featured it excitingly, and planted the idea that there was something salacious, if not sinister, about it.

One reader especially excited by these stories was Michael LoPresti, State Senator representing the North End, home district of the late Toni Di Marco and her family. He insisted that his former constituent's death be re-investigated. Neither the District Attorney's verdict nor a later, concurring one based on an investigation by Daniel J. McDevitt, Deputy to Commissioner of Correction Paul Doyle, satisfied LoPresti or the *American*.

Anticipating scandal, the *American* put James Delaney, a crime-wise reporter, on the Framingham story. Soon he was ready with a series of "discoveries" that rocked the community. He claimed homosexuality was a flourishing evil at the Reformatory, charged violation of Commonwealth laws governing correction, and painted Dr. Van Waters as a scofflaw running a morally flabby institution. The stories, running for several months, sustained the *American's* (and LoPresti's) inference that Toni had been driven to her death in a fit of despondency over a homosexual crush on another girl in the barn group. While all these shots were flying and spattering against her door, Miriam kept it closed to reporters, refusing to dignify the attack by being drawn into a public defense of Framingham or her administration, neither of which, she trusted, could be seriously damaged by shotgun journalism.

The episode might have faded with the *American's* final blast and a rustle of shot in the dry leaves around Miriam's house if the Commonwealth's correctional machinery had not been due for overhauling early in 1948, when the firing started. Governor Robert F. Bradford looked over incumbent Commissioner Doyle's head for a successor and focused on Maurice F. Winslow, Superintendent of the State Prison Colony, at Norfolk, an intermediate security institution for men. Norfolk, within its walls, was intended as a rehabilitative colony for promising transferees from more restrictive prisons—nobody could be committed to Norfolk from the courts—but overcrowding in other institutions sent some less than ideal candidates to Norfolk, including some seemingly well-adjusted inmates with serious behavior records.

Winslow, a veteran building engineer with a strong personal interest in penology, was appointed boss of Norfolk in 1933, replacing a liberal penologist. Although he was near retirement age, and had no professional training or experience, Winslow took hold quickly. He was intelligent, healthy, leadership-minded and, according to one of his staff, despotic. He managed ably, displayed concern for his prisoners, and earned the admiration of many of them. He was impatient, however, with those whose conduct he thought detracted from Norfolk's prestige, and he shipped out the bad actors. He angrily resented homosexuals and the trouble they caused, discounted the psychiatric approach to such prisoners, and adopted a strict program of segregation and control once he or his officers "spotted" them. Winslow was sure he could detect homosexual tendencies without any help from Dr. Rorschach's or anybody else's test.

Winslow had heard of Miriam Van Waters before he came to Norfolk, but knew her only casually for some time after he took up his duties. But he heard, from a friend who had worked

at Framingham, that Miriam and her staff ran a loose “jail” and took a relaxed attitude toward homosexuality. That stiffened his neck. During World War II, while he was acting Farm Coordinator for the Commonwealth, he suspected that Miriam had withheld information from him and misled him, although Miriam never learned about his grievance until late 1953, and could not even recall discussing with him the situation that bred his rancor.

Winslow, in short, was more sensitively aware of Van Waters and her reputation than she was of him and his. He knew enough about her philosophy and methods to judge them in error and resent their popularity. Whether he was envious of her, only he could say. He, too, had sent understudies on to wardenships, but somehow had not achieved the almost reverent public acceptance that she enjoyed. Visiting dignitaries, including Eleanor Roosevelt, seemed, for one reason or another, to find Framingham fascinating.

After Winslow declined Governor Bradford’s offer of the Commonwealth’s commissionership of correction, he recommended for the job a man who saw eye to eye with him not only on the subject of penology, but on the subject of Miriam Van Waters. His candidate was his subordinate, Elliott E. McDowell, who for fourteen years had directed Norfolk’s extensive prison industries.

Educated in engineering at M.I.T., McDowell was a hero of World War I, returning home to go to work in the construction field. Coincidence put him to work on part of the Norfolk prison construction contract; Winslow’s regard for him, that of one competent building engineer for another, led to his being hired to coordinate the prison’s manufacture of brushes, concrete products, mattresses, shoes, clothing, and metal containers, and its processing of tobacco. He was expert at his job, training many prisoners for useful employment and helping them locate jobs on the outside.

McDowell's acquaintance with Miriam, although both served a common agency of the state, was slight. He had been at Framingham to examine sealed construction bids, and remembered measuring windows in Miriam's house for Venetian blinds to be made at Norfolk. She had been pleasant and friendly, and McDowell had no reason to be otherwise, despite what he had heard at Norfolk.

Governor Bradford, prior to appointing McDowell, called a conference of McDowell, Winslow and Reuben L. Lurie, an eminent Boston lawyer who had recently served as chairman of the Parole Board. Held against the background of the *American's* exposé of Framingham and Van Waters, this session presaged more rough weather for both. Winslow took it for granted that there was in fact a serious condition at Framingham, which would have to be remedied by the incoming Commissioner. Winslow had lately had his ear to the ground, and it had been filled with new, unfavorable reports on Framingham by officers in the Department of Correction and by members of the Parole Board. He was surer than ever that something was rotten at the Reformatory.

Lurie, at this meeting, told McDowell that five previous commissioners had found Van Waters quite competent to run the Reformatory, and hinted that the situation hadn't changed, current publicity to the contrary.

This counsel might as well have been shouted down a well. When McDowell moved into the Commissioner's office in February, 1948, he was welcomed by several former Norfolk staff men. He inherited one subordinate who was vocally annoyed by what he considered Miriam's insupportable confidence in her facts and figures, and another whose back was up over her procedures and her intellect. The word "egghead" had not come into common use.

To this nucleus, McDowell added Frank A. Dwyer, Jr., naming

him First Deputy Commissioner, a role that included responsibility for inspecting penal institutions and conducting special investigations.

Although he didn't know Dwyer well, McDowell liked what he knew about him. Dwyer was a state police officer of the "tough" school when Charles F. Hurley, on becoming Governor in 1937, tapped him to guard his body. In the lame duck days of Hurley's term, he rewarded Dwyer by appointing him to a minor post in the Department of Correction.

Dwyer saw red when the YMCA, in Greenfield, Mass., permitted Framingham's overflow contingent in the prison annex there to use its swimming pool when it was not asplash with members and other groups. Dwyer was revolted at the idea of prisoners, especially prostitutes, mingling with non-prisoners. He abhorred homosexuals, and had beaten one up in the name of righteousness. He invented the notion that prostitutes were also homosexual, thus doubling their contemptibility in his sight. He was convinced Miriam encouraged them with her unruffled attitude toward them.

Dwyer took his departmental appointment earnestly. With healthy ambition for himself and his family, he enrolled at Suffolk Law School, studied hard, and passed the bar examinations, improving his value to the department.

The letter of the law was Dwyer's god. In the Commonwealth's statutes concerning prisoners and prison sentences, he dug deep. He was alarmed, in his literalness, that a person committed to prison, and there, by the statutes, to be confined, could be allowed off prison limits to take shorthand courses, get psychiatric help, work in restaurants, or do any of the many things that Framingham's "students" (the noun was statutorily improper) were doing under indenture laws that technically permitted only domestic

service. The privileges of eating ice cream and Chinese food and seeing movies outside the Reformatory were, he believed, fantastically illegal.

Elizabeth Bode, who came to know Dwyer when she left Framingham and went to the Department of Correction as Supervisor of Parole, said he often came to her with letters from Miriam to Commissioner Arthur T. Lyman, asking approval of her plans. The letters irritated him.

On one occasion, Bode recalls, Dwyer said:

“What the hell is she *doing*, Elizabeth? She can’t do this. It’s against the law!”

Dwyer thought the boss of Framingham was vague, but, more significant, he considered her a snob. He was uncomfortable with her, and was inclined to treat her as, in former years, he would have treated a surly motorist who had led him a speed chase on a crowded highway. Conversely, Dwyer’s manner disturbed Miriam. It seemed to her gratuitously hostile.

Two days after McDowell took office, Miriam rode into Boston for a friendly discussion with Reuben Lurie about a prison-related bill then before the legislature. She also wanted to see her new Commissioner, but instead of telephoning him herself, she asked Lurie to make the appointment. The Commissioner thought this an odd approach. Why such cautious formality?

Over his desk, he and Miriam discussed a personnel requisition she had sent to McDowell’s predecessor, who had left it unsigned. It created a vacancy for an intern who would help in the nursery care of babies, and Miriam had already assigned a woman to the job. Meanwhile McDowell had heard from one of his staff that the new job-holder was an ex-inmate of Framingham. This was not unusual in Miriam’s experience, but McDowell hedged. He told her that Norfolk would not approve putting an ex-inmate

in charge of inmates, and postponed action by instructing Miriam to submit the matter in writing. He later disapproved it, and Miriam personally reimbursed the Commonwealth for salary paid the intern.

Miriam was not exactly surprised to get McDowell's confirmation of the differences between their penological credos, but she was jolted by his brusque response to her congratulations to him on his appointment, and her pledge to him of cooperation, support and loyalty.

"Your cooperation is mandatory," McDowell replied, in a tone he later said he did not intend to be so chilly, "and your loyalty is to the Reformatory, in accordance with your oath of office."

Miriam recalled that "he looked like a carven statue" as he handed down this dictum.

If there had been any doubt in her mind that the clouds massing to the east of Framingham would bring a complete change of climate, she shed it now.

The piece of legislation she had discussed with Reuben Lurie was a bill to abolish indenture. At a public hearing on it, February 24, 1948, she learned that Dwyer, who was about to be appointed McDowell's top deputy, endorsed it. By two-plus-two logic, she assumed McDowell also favored it.*

Miriam reacted promptly to the unfavorable legislative winds by notifying the management of Seiler's Restaurant, in Wellesley, that the services of all Framingham girls on weekend duty there would have to end Sunday, February 29. She knew, of course, that waiting on tables, cooking, and other restaurant work was not domestic service in the letter of the indenture law, and she anticipated

* Thomas H. Eliot, who made a notably thorough and impartial investigation of the Van Waters case for the Inter-University Case Program, and published his findings in a 1954 report that was skillfully written, completed some careful research on what happened at this juncture of the case.

McDowell's insistence upon strict interpretation of the old statute that Jessie Hodder, with her Commissioner's approval, had overlooked, just as Miriam had, in the light of later needs in rehabilitation.

The restaurant's owner, Andrew Seiler, hearing from his manager that there was going to be a sudden labor shortage in the place, protested directly to Governor Bradford, whose secretary telephoned McDowell and asked him to offer Seiler "some satisfaction." McDowell refused to approve continuation of restaurant work for the students, but said he would justify Miriam's cut-off order to Seiler.

Early on Saturday, February 28, McDowell and Dwyer arrived in Miriam's office without advance notice. It was more like a raid than a visit. Miriam's secretary was off for the day, and she and Peg O'Keefe had trouble satisfying the demand to produce all the day work contracts in the files. After careful search revealed no trace of a Seiler contract (it had been made orally with Seiler's manager), McDowell and Dwyer expressed displeased surprise.

Miriam took McDowell aside and asked him if he would come back soon, alone, because she wanted to discuss urgent matters of policy with him in private. What she didn't tell him was that she could not discuss such matters in Dwyer's presence, because "his attitude toward me was so belligerently hostile and scornful that I could not present problems of policy effectively . . ."

Departing abruptly, Correction's top executives went on to Wellesley and Seiler's Restaurant, where they told the manager his day work arrangement with the Reformatory was illegal. McDowell got on the restaurant's telephone to say the same thing to Seiler.

McDowell had a powerful advantage over Seiler's manager,

The same day the Governor's secretary telephoned him about the Seiler situation, McDowell learned from a staff member that the manager was an ex-convict. As a boy of seventeen, he had had a brief, sharp experience in crime. The Commonwealth had given him a new slant on values and sent him back to society. He had adjusted well, lived a constructive life, and generally proved a fine example of the correctional skills of the state.

McDowell ignored that. As his conflict with Miriam sharpened, he was able to charge her not only with employing ex-inmates in the Reformatory, but of indenturing inmates to an ex-convict on the outside. McDowell played this trump publicly. He exposed the manager's secret, held jointly with the Department of Correction, and the man resigned his job and left town—the first casualty of the Van Waters case.

McDowell was one up.

Early in March, 1948, McDowell accepted Miriam's invitation to a private conference. She was concerned for the rehabilitation of alcoholics at Framingham under a Commonwealth law that sentenced them indeterminately, with a one-year maximum. Under the Norfolk Prison's policy, male alcoholics usually were released after six months, but Miriam had built a strong program for alcoholics in cooperation with the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital clinic for alcoholics, in Boston, and believed that early release of some of her women would abort their recovery. McDowell went along with her suggestion that he release alcoholics on her recommendation.

A little later, McDowell and the department's business agent dropped in to talk about indenture contracts. McDowell wanted no more contracts submitted with the employers' signatures already on them. He wanted applications only. His office would check the applicants before authorizing any contracts. In mid-April, he sent

Miriam a contract signed in blank and instructed her to indenture a girl to the wife of a state legislator.

The restless Senator LoPresti from Boston's North End resumed his fulminations about this time, rekindling the suspicion of murder in the late Toni's death; at least, he insisted, she must have been driven to suicide.

McDowell returned to Framingham to speak to an assembly. The occasion was Prison Industries Day, and the gist of his speech was that he didn't know much about women's institutions and their problems, but the institution's purpose was to improve conditions for its inmates. A *Harmony News* reporter understood him to say he'd do everything possible to forward that objective, but he later claimed that he had said "everything possible within the law."

McDowell was acutely aware of pressure from outside to start moving against the head of Framingham. The *American's* posture was one of strained patience, and at April's end, LoPresti led Toni's parents into McDowell's office and demanded a new investigation into her death. McDowell did not think much of former Deputy McDevitt's probe of the case under Commissioner Paul Doyle. Miriam had not read the report, but thought that McDevitt had been painstakingly thorough. She regarded him as a man with deep concern for humanitarian policy, a skilled interviewer, and one of the best men in the Department of Correction.

Although his tendencies carried him in the same direction he was being pushed, McDowell may not have wanted to go as far as he did. But he had on his right hand a man who could pry statements from the statue of General Hooker in front of the State House, the time was ripe, and the pressure was on.

He telephoned Miriam to tell her he was sending Dwyer out to get to the bottom of the DiMarco case. Miriam appealed to his rea-

son: hadn't the matter been twice investigated and twice settled?

Dwyer, said McDowell, would be on the scene promptly; he was to be given an office in which he could conduct private interviews.

The fat was in the fire.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Get Her for Good

Frank Dwyer wanted to do a thorough job on this investigation, not only for personal and professional reasons, but also because McDowell had notified the *American* that it could expect just that from Dwyer. Besides, the rumored homosexual implications of Toni DiMarco's tragedy had aroused his terrier instincts.

His first interview was with Alaine Latour, head of the barn group that once included Toni. Dwyer noted what he called her mannish nature and deep voice, and the fact she wore slacks. Alaine, in the elaborate structure of hearsay that persisted after two previous investigations, was supposed to have beaten Toni the night before Toni hanged herself. Furthermore, Alaine was labeled as one of the beneficiaries of "favoritism" in the Reformatory, and journalistically branded a homosexual who had rebuffed Toni's suit, and either murdered her or driven her to depression and suicide.

Alaine denied all of this under Dwyer's grilling, confirming only that she was the girl who had knocked at Toni's door to alert her for barn duty, and had pushed, or helped push, the door open and discovered Toni's body.

He questioned five other girls on barn duty, developing his examinations along these lines:

Q. Did you ever see her (Alaine) do anything to her (Toni)?

A. No.

Q. Did she?

A. I don't know.

Q. Where did they do these things?

Dwyer told Alaine he didn't believe her story, and had contrary information; he warned her the situation was serious.

One of the five barn group girls made Dwyer's efforts worth his while. Yes, she said, "the kids told me" Alaine had beaten up Toni the night before she died. She wanted Dwyer to know that she wasn't involved in the "doll racket."

This phrase, unknown to Dwyer, proved to be a prosecutor's windfall. He quickly discovered it was house slang for homosexual affairs, real or imagined, active or passive. The obliging witness who used the phrase went on to mention the names of Alaine's associates who "might tell you something."

Dwyer followed this lead to another women's correctional institution in the state, where he questioned two inmates, one of whom boasted she had been Toni's best friend. She named several students and many of Framingham's chief officers as "being in love with each other." She had been transferred from Framingham, she said, because "I couldn't stand it up there." The other transferee ("they gave me the run-around up there") said she quit the barn group because Alaine had "made it tough for me." She handed

Dwyer an undated love letter addressed "Dear Alaine" and signed "Toni." She said she "happened to pick (it) up from the floor" in October, the month before Toni died.

Dwyer's easy suspicions about behavior at Framingham and the laxity of Miriam Van Waters' administration now seemed to have a hard base. He was blind to Miriam's views and methods concerning homosexuality; he did not allow the fact that homosexuality is a widespread institutional problem to modify his attitude toward its existence at Framingham; he did not concern himself with records in the Department of Correction proving that Miriam and her staff had dealt with overt homosexuality at Framingham when it was discovered. He was positive that he had uncovered enough incriminating evidence at Framingham to justify a much wider investigation than the one he had begun ostensibly for the sake of Toni DiMarco's parents, Senator LoPresti, and the Boston *American*. He went back to McDowell with a report that Toni could not have been murdered (he had examined Toni's room and concluded that a murderer could not have escaped from it) and asked the Commissioner's approval of a full-scale investigation of the place.

As for Miriam, Dwyer began to boast he would "pin her ears back."

McDowell readily agreed to Dwyer's request, and issued a press release saying that "certain conditions have been brought to light and will be further investigated and eliminated."

Between the day of that release, May 10, and June 1, Dwyer turned Framingham inside out. He questioned twenty-three members of the staff, fifty-three inmates and former inmates, and six others. Before he had finished, the institution was in convulsions, its morale was shattered, an unmeasurable amount of careful re-

habilitation work was undone, a large number of unstable women was hounded, some excellent personal reputations were dipped in tar, and many blackened sheep whose wool the Commonwealth had washed gray or white were cynically re-blackened under the banner of "correction" in the cause of cleaning up "the mess at Framingham."

Chief among the casualties was Peg O'Keefe, Miriam's respected Deputy, who had been in a juvenile institution in 1927, after her father's sudden death. It was clearly established that her offense was not of a criminal nature.

One day, a woman from Peg's home state was committed to Framingham. At first sight of Peg, this newcomer recognized her as the person she had known as a fellow inmate. Peg never knew whether the woman had been "planted" in Framingham, but the damage had been done. Dwyer knew about it and used it now. He accused Peg, during his interview with her, of concealing information. The word "brainwashing" came to Peg's mind many years later when she recalled his technique. The day she was questioned, May 25, 1948, she wrote a note to Miriam:

"Dear Boss: I could not begin to describe to you the humiliation I have been subjected to in today's interview with Mr. Dwyer. He read to me the court record of every member of our staff* including my juvenile offense of twenty-one years ago. He omitted one. Mrs. Hodder's appointment. Correction should begin in the State House, it seems, or where will it have any survival in this state? P.S. He referred to these (records) as 'criminal' records."

Dwyer had help from two women in Boston. One had been employed at Framingham and fired for "improper conversation" and running a messenger service in forbidden items. She was on the Boston *American's* payroll. The other, an ex-inmate referred

* She meant those who had court records.

to as “queen” of the Boston underworld, flushed parolees and former Framingham students into Dwyer’s net.

Miriam found this letter from Lynn, Mass., in Box 99 one morning:

“Dear Dr. Van Waters:

“Surprise to hear from me, hope you are well and happy. Dr. who is this man who claims he works for the Senator of Boston, the man was Mike Costuin they are going around to all of us girls that did time years ago. Tonight a man arrive at my house telling me they are trying to have you loses your honor and respect, the idea of him asking me if when I work in your home has I seen anything queer going on. I simply told him I have nothing to say you were good to me while I was there. I keep working for you I don’t want anything to happen to you.

“Its going fierce around here in Lynn we are all being questions. There is a girl around here in Lynn who is going around with this man her name is Florence Larkin.* She never was there who does she think she is. You should stop this girl. God only knows what they are trying to do of course you recall my name was Jane Donald. Please Dr. Van Waters don’t let this couple going around else where they are too many who would lie to get even for being kept there.

“Nothing more to say what they are looking for. I am still a faithful student to you, I like to see you again if I had free time but my job keep me busy.”

In a postscript, the writer said “please don’t mention my name. I am trying to help you. I will write if I hear anything.” She signed

* The last name suggested she was one of Dwyer’s helpers, although a fictitious name is used here.

her maiden name, but gave her married name at the bottom of the page.

In a letter to a friend, a sympathizer in Chestnut Hill, Mass., Miriam reported Dwyer's pursuit of four ex-Framingham women. One had been out a long time. Another, married, was listed in the telephone book under her maiden name—"this was known only to Dwyer, who took it from our records," Miriam wrote. A third former student was employed on a farm owned by others. Her name and address were known only to the reformatory staff and Dwyer.

This girl, Miriam wrote, "was intoxicated when Mr. Dwyer interviewed her. Mrs. Kestler (the farm owner's wife) begged him to wait till she (the ex-student) was well. He refused. Her statements in this condition are of course unreliable." Miriam was being her objective self in this letter. The girl was said to have downed a fifth of Scotch and taken a Nembutal over a period of three or four hours before she "talked" to Dwyer.

The fourth girl was Alaine Latour, whom McDowell, on Dwyer's recommendation, transferred to East Cambridge Jail, obviously to remove her from any influence Miriam might have on her. The girl was not to be interviewed in her new location except with McDowell's permission. Framingham's private reaction to the move was one of fear that Alaine might be pressured to concoct a crippling story supporting Dwyer's theories of her relationship with Toni DiMarco.

At Framingham, Dwyer bulled relentlessly forward through a formidable schedule of interviews in the private room he shared with his stenographer. He worked nearly every day and sometimes late into the night.

On May 14, Dwyer got around to Grace Tallberk, who told him that Alaine Latour had beaten Toni, and also told him that

"a lot goes on around here." She incriminated one of the officers. Because Grace had requested release on parole, Miriam had her interviewed by a state psychiatrist four days after her interview with Dwyer. The report indicated that Grace was deep in psychosis. That night, Dwyer asked McDowell to order her release, and on May 19, without bothering to ask for the psychiatrist's report on Grace, McDowell did so. Dwyer immediately questioned her again. She was arrested for drunkenness after a few more days of freedom.

Dwyer's direct, hard-boiled tactics might not have ruffled a man who felt at home in the back room of a police station, but they frightened some of Framingham's students. Peg O'Keefe reported that some of them were hysterical. One ran out the front door. Dwyer's manner was "surly, arrogant," and she said he used obscenities unfamiliar to women. Hammering the homosexual theme, he would accept one girl's testimony and try to substantiate it through another's. In the process he asked baited questions pertaining to staff officers: "What do you hear on Miss Alvor?" and "what have you on Miss Malcahy?"

"In all my thirty years of work in Federal, county, or state institutions," Miriam testified later, "I have seen nothing so disastrous on the morale." She described staff women who came to her in tears to report they had been asked "revolting" questions about other employees. "Within two or three days, the moral reputation of some eleven women holding key positions . . . had been questioned. I only know that they came in my office with a feeling of horror and revulsion, or else with the idea that the authority of the staff was about to be undermined.

"Since some questions related to Negro and white officers and

. . . inmates, and since it is very difficult in any institution to avoid faction, rumors, and gossip, I felt myself about to be confronted with what might develop into a race riot. Then, some girls, fearing a sudden unexplained release or transfer, and others who thought they might be able to get one and be sprung from the institution . . . all made it a scene of unwarranted terror."

Dwyer protested, in his report on his probe, that his job was made difficult because "there has been intimidation of inmates interviewed by institution personnel, in the questioning of certain inmates as to what was said in the interviews and in some cases causing inmates, after being interviewed, to be examined by State experts for the examination of insane prisoners . . . by the refusal of certain institution personnel to talk when interviewed, and the hostility of others . . ."

The *American* seemed to know more than the rest of the press about Dwyer's supposedly confidential investigation, and LoPresti indicated that he also had a pipeline when he commented, early in May, about facts pertaining to Dwyer's first witness, Alaine Latour. On May 12, the *American* spilled the Seiler Restaurant story under the headline: SHERBORN GIRLS FORCED TO WORK FOR EX-CONVICT.

On the morning of June 1, Dwyer reached the top of the interview ladder at Framingham: Miriam Van Waters. McDowell came out from Boston with his Deputy, bringing two stenographers, presumably to insure an accurate transcript.

McDowell led off with a statement about why he had ordered reinvestigation of the DiMarco case. Miriam sat in silence, thinking of the aftermath of that decision by her Commissioner. McDowell said: "The reason I am here today is not that I do not have

confidence in Mr. Dwyer, but I did not think he should talk to you without my being present. You are the number one person and the key person here.”

Miriam’s response was not recorded, but later she recalled making a plea to stop the investigation before it could do any more damage to the institution and everybody in it. McDowell asked her to satisfy Dwyer’s questions, and the Deputy opened with a query about changes in the rules that Miriam had made in the last six or seven years. She protested on the ground that what she had done in the past had been with the approval and consent of previous Commissioners. McDowell’s response was that he had a right, “as a matter of justice, plain justice to the people, . . . to inquire into any matters which have taken place in the past.”

Miriam said: “I was appointed by Governor Ely (in 1932) and Commissioner Stearns. At that time my instructions were to do everything that I thought fit to modernize the institution and to work for rehabilitation.”

“That is certainly my policy,” McDowell replied. He had very little more to say before he left the Reformatory at lunch time. Dwyer carried on alone after lunch.

According to the transcript, Dwyer lost no time focusing the interview on the “doll racket,” demanding “yes” or “no” answers from Miriam when he asked her whether pairs of students he named had had homosexual relationships. Miriam parried all such questions by citing her reliance on psychiatric guidance and staff conferences in dealing with the problem. The clues to each one’s attitudes and reactions to the subject were explicit in the dialogue.

Dwyer: Were you ever told that (Toni) was very much in love with Alaine Latour?

Van Waters: Well, all this, you see, makes it so difficult for an honest person to answer. With all the rumors that go around, I

think I had better just not say anything. I have told you my policy . . .”

Miriam wrote her own account of her duel with Dwyer soon after it was broken off at day's end with neither the victor, although Dwyer thought he had enough evidence to accomplish more than merely “straighten things out” at Framingham, as he later revealed.

Her notes say more about the drama of the interview than the state's official transcripts.

Theft of drugs—October,

Were inmates punished?

They were isolated in hospital.

Were they put in dungeon?

They were hospital patients.

Were inmates compelled to pay into Canteen Fund to cover shortage?

No. (I try to explain student voting on Canteen Fund in '46-47. He keeps on talking.)

I am silent.

He begins.

I say I cannot talk with interruptions.

He goes on.

I raise my voice to a roar. He trembles.*

Commissioner says let her talk. (This happens in his questioning *re* Martha Dakins, when I try to explain her contributions to output and morale, her almost religious dedication before her hip injury).

He interrupts. I roar. There is silence.

I say to have an elderly person** cared for properly in hospital by inmates helps teach them the lessons of care and compassion for aged—which they need to learn, as some have aged at home.

* At one point, Dwyer told his stenographer not to take down a statement Miriam made. She said she would say nothing if the stenographer did not record everything. There were no further gaps in the transcript.

** Martha Dakins, the inmate who had no home other than the Reformatory, where she preferred to stay after her sentence expired.

Who pays for her food?

I do—most of it. She gets broth, etc., from staff.

(1:30 p.m. Commissioner not present.)

Letters of girls read. Is it homo?

I say I could not interpret it without psychiatrists. I explain psychology, psychiatry and classification. I refer to this at every homo question.

D. says he can interpret this (exchange of letters).

I say perhaps I could have twenty years ago, but now I know a layman is incompetent.

He sneers.

Questions are in rougher language. Do inmates get rule book? Do I know I am breaking law? Do I know there is a bed (couch) in the dairy? When did I order it out? Why have I officers in my house? Members of my family? Officers ever object to inmates in Staff Home? Did I know Toni was beaten?

There were no beatings. I explain fights.

Do I require visitors to sign statement, under penalty of perjury, that they have not been convicted of felony? Did I know Miss O'Keefe had criminal record? Did I know she had spent time in the sanatorium?

Peg O'Keefe did not have a criminal record, but she had recovered from tuberculosis before taking her first job at Framingham. The question about "time" in the sanatorium must have deepened Miriam's concern about Dwyer's motives. Was this a constructive inquiry, or a personal vendetta?

The professional psychiatric observations on some of the inmates, on whose testimony Dwyer relied so heavily, speak for themselves.

No. 1: "Profoundly maladjusted human being, driven to self-destruction and terrified of attack, particularly from men, which would account for the rather brutal way in which she defended herself at time of her arrest. Academic diagnosis would certainly be psychopathic personality and her prognosis unfavorable." A later

report on this person noted that she "uses mechanism of projection when she becomes emotionally involved. Has had to be followed very closely. Instability marked from childhood."

No. 2: "(73 I.Q. Binet) Capable of normal interests, but fascinated by poor associations and commercialized, corrupt entertainment."

No. 3: "Constantly under terrific nervous tension. Persistently bitter about Parole Board. Every time she is thwarted, bitterness toward society increases tenfold . . . rigid, self-absorbed and vain person with a bitter grudge against the world . . . impossible to help her at this time since she has no positive feeling available."

No. 4: "88 I.Q. Dull. Normal Rorschach. Taunton State Hospital for 5 years. Feeble-minded School previously."

No. 5: "89 I.Q. (Binet) Recommended all drugs be withdrawn. Alcoholic 20 years. 9/25/40.

"Hostile, pernicious, paranoid. 5/18/48 (She had been hospitalized in 1922 with alcoholic psychosis and acute hallucinations.)"

No. 6: "110 I.Q. High Average Rorschach. Murder of child is closely connected with death of stepfather. Watch for depressive symptoms. 1/3/45.

"Watch for repressed feelings 3/22/45."

Regularly during his May inquiry, Dwyer was in touch with McDowell, who listened to his Deputy's running account of the Framingham "mess." By the night of June 1, when Dwyer had finished questioning Miriam and reported the results to his chief, McDowell was sure of his next move. He began writing a lengthy directive to the Superintendent of Framingham.

It was a startling document, dated June 4, 1948. How startling

was revealed in portions of a letter Miriam wrote to Dorothy Canfield Fisher:

"Now suddenly, with a change in administration, everything is overturned. We received a directive to return to the rules and regulations of October 31st, 1923. At the stroke of a pen we were thrown back into the conditions of a quarter century ago.

"All outside privileges were removed. All work for women in the community was prohibited. Last year the women earned \$18,000 to help buy their own necessities for starting life on parole. Now they go forth penniless. Mothers are forcibly separated from their babies. It is a complete end to rehabilitation . . .

"It is all bigger than the fate of Framingham. If the forces of reaction are not checked they will engulf the world. When we stop them from destroying our institution we do something constructive for social justice.

"Dear Dorothy, can you think what you can do to help?"

McDowell was annoyed at Miriam's making such appeals from his directive, which he intended as a private communication to establish peace on his terms. He delivered it personally to the Reformatory on June 7, leaving it in a sealed envelope marked for her immediate attention when he learned she was not in her office.

The directive snuffed out forty years of progress (or error, from McDowell's viewpoint) at Framingham. It covered more ground than Miriam mentioned in her letter to her former associate on the American Youth Commission. There would be no more alcoholics admitted voluntarily; no more educational and social outings, or amusement trips beyond the gates; no more indenturing of students to the Superintendent and other officers, or chaplains; no more trips for X-Rays, orthopedic fittings, dentistry, or psychiatry in connection with treatment for alcoholism.

Former inmates were not to return informally (this ruled out

visiting alcoholics who exemplified the power of mind over bottle, and cancelled the annual mother-baby reunion). Unreasonably, McDowell ordered Miriam to submit to him "by return mail" lists of all employees who formerly had been inmates, with the life history of each; all personnel functioning in other than classified jobs and doing other than prescribed duties (if such a request had been sent from the Governor's office to all branches of the Commonwealth government, the resultant scramble might have paralyzed the state); and a report on facilities which had been used for receiving and housing voluntary alcoholics and drug addicts who presented themselves at Framingham.

The directive specifically ordered Miriam to stay in line with correctional Rules and Regulations of 1923, as amended in 1926. McDowell was well aware that there was resistance to Dwyer's investigation; he had heard a feedback from the Governor's office. He learned, soon after he delivered his directive, that it had kindled a small but rapidly spreading blaze; but he probably had no idea that the backfires Miriam began to build against it would be fanned into a four-alarm fire.

It took Dwyer half of June to complete his three hundred and sixty-four-page report on Framingham,* and several days for McDowell to study it. This tortuous document, thick with transcripts of the author's interviews, stirred McDowell.

By June 28, when he submitted it to Governor Bradford, he seemed of a mind to fire Van Waters. "It is my considered judgment," he wrote Bradford, "that decisive action must be taken at once respecting the administration of the Reformatory for Women. Proper remedial action would appear to be within my legal authority."

As Thomas Eliot pointed out in his excellent report for the

* Details in the Prologue of this book.

Inter-University Case Program, "The Van Waters Case," McDowell, had he read Dwyer's report more thoroughly, "might have been more hesitant about accepting the report and using it as a basis for future action. For instance, Dwyer stated flatly that a homosexual relationship existed between Toni and Alaine Latour.* Yet among his 'exhibits' he included a report by Dr. Henry M. Baker, State Expert for Examination of Insane Criminals, about Alaine Latour that appeared to contradict Dwyer's findings."

That report, dated May 11, 1948, concludes with this excerpted statement:

"She reveals no symptoms of mental or nervous disease . . . She is now connected with the Alcoholics Anonymous and has a better insight and plans for her future. There is no evidence of homosexuality . . . She is a suitable person for parole consideration."

Eliot continues, in reference to McDowell:

"Had he referred to the interviews constantly as he read Dwyer's report, McDowell might have noted other weak spots. He would have found nothing to support the allegation that trips to a restaurant or the movies lowered inmate morale except the testimony of one inmate, Alice Wherry, that they made her feel uncomfortable because she felt she ought to be in prison. He would have realized that Dwyer's 'findings' that the day work system resulted in liquor being smuggled into the Reformatory was based on the statement of one former inmate with a long and tortuous record.

"In the same way, McDowell might have noticed that although Dwyer said that 'little or nothing' had been done to control homosexual practices at the Reformatory, he omitted any reference to what Van Waters had said about the matter. To be sure, he had

* Eliot uses another pseudonym for her.

given her little opportunity . . . Instead of seeking to elicit a full explanation (of Van Waters' statements about her procedure) Dwyer then asked: 'Are there any known homosexual inmates in charge of a group of other inmates?'"

The evidence indicates that McDowell readily accepted Dwyer's "findings," concerning homosexuality, because McDowell, like Dwyer (and Maurice Winslow) preferred "common sense and objective evidence" to psychiatric opinions. As Eliot noted, "McDowell had worked in prison administration for fourteen years, and was well aware of human frailty, and somewhat skeptical about human virtue, and knew sin when he saw it."

Miriam also knew something about human frailty, virtue and sin—on both sides of the cell door, figuratively speaking. She knew very little, however, about operating punitive machinery. Framingham's regenerative apparatus was not made of gears and cams, but of minds, hearts, and hands that functioned in a variety of ways according to the natures and needs of the individuals for whom it existed.

Into this organic apparatus McDowell, encouraged by Dwyer, heaved a shovelful of broken glass that minced tissue and traumatized the organism as a whole. Eleven years after McDowell's directive, there would be many scars still throbbing.

Miriam set about adapting Framingham's damaged, 1948-model reformatory apparatus to the ideology of legislators who wrote the correctional codes in 1923 and added some afterthoughts in 1926. McDowell did not appear to be in a hurry to fire Miriam, if that was the inference of his stiff comments to Governor Bradford. The situation seemed to slow down abruptly, although in fact it did not. As in slow-motion cinematography, which requires exposure of

film at an accelerated rate in order to produce decelerated movement on the screen, the summer's action in the "Van Waters Case" concealed the dynamics behind it.

Working quietly, two staunch friends of Miriam—Larue Brown, Boston attorney, and his wife, Dorothy Kirchwey Brown, former president of the state League of Women Voters, began to draw other champions of Miriam and her cause into a protective ring around her—a cordon that, by its very nature, could move outward to meet her attackers if necessary. Early volunteers among the sponsoring committee were the Right Reverend Norman B. Nash, Episcopal Bishop of Massachusetts; the Right Reverend William Appleton Lawrence, Bishop of Western Massachusetts; Mildred McAfee Horton, President of Wellesley College; Judge Elijah Adlow; Herbert B. Ehrmann; and Dr. Samuel A. Eliot. The Rev. Howard P. Kellett was vigorously helpful to this nucleus, which evolved gradually into an influential group calling itself The Friends of the Framingham Reformatory. The principals delayed formal action until the late fall of 1948, but Brown advised Miriam about obtaining legal help, and thus she met and retained Claude B. Cross, a skillful trial lawyer.

Senator LoPresti indirectly helped incubate the "Friends" with his resolution in the State Senate, on June 9, 1948, to create a special legislative commission to conduct an "immediate and thorough investigation of the conduct" of Framingham. He charged, in his personal remarks, that conditions at the Reformatory could not be described in language familiar to decent citizens.

An investigating committee was appointed, comprising five Representatives, three Senators and three Governor's appointees, all of the latter friendly admirers of Miriam Van Waters; but the chairman, Senator J. E. Callahan, was defeated for renomination in the September primaries, and along with some other lame ducks

on the committee, moved slowly toward Framingham, while Lo-Presti fidgeted. The committee did not meet until November 22.

Somewhere along the line, according to circumstantial evidence, Miriam might have softened the pressure upon herself by forcing Peg O'Keefe's resignation. Her reaction to that was clear in a letter to Sarah—"Dearest Pooh":

"I made the great decision: no matter what comes, I shall not ask Peg to resign. No matter, if the Archbishop says sacrifice her. And so I told Peg this morning . . . if Peg has to go I shall demand publicly that everyone in any state position all over this State go too. It is a thing that would defeat a Governor, for 1 out of 6 has a court record in the general population of Mass.—and I suppose that at least 50 persons now on State payroll have.

"You have your burdens (I feel them as mine, of course, close and warm to my heart). Like the old prayer for service to God, *you* go on—not counting the wounds nor asking any reward.

"But do you want to know how I felt after talking to you in the car, and then, after you left, to Ralph (Van Waters)?

"I felt like an old Moses. You don't know your Bible. I neglected your education. But Moses, leader of his population out of Egypt, was not permitted to enter the Promised Land. As he was too weak, old, and sinful to hold himself up to go, two young men, pillars of strength, supported him, one on the right hand, one on the left, and so he saw the vision of beauty and peace. So I felt with you and Ralph. No one else, not even the greatest, wanted me to do the right thing, but you two did. And therefore I had the strength to do it. So—you can know the other phrase on my monument is to be:

Her sole importance is she nearly cleared ten acres of poison ivy
and
She never made a deal.

Dwyer's forces (or McDowell's, in the official sense) were not idle during the long period between McDowell's directive to Miriam and the day he ousted her. Early in the summer of 1948, according to a report to Miriam from Peg O'Keefe (who had interviewed the girl involved), Geraldine Reese, a former student at Framingham had been approached in the Charles Street jail "by a dark, heavy-set man . . ." This man "asked her if she would like to be released" (she had been sentenced to serve ten days). He then asked her if she would be interested in testifying against the Reformatory since she had been here on previous commitments. At this point, she refused further conversation with him. Yesterday, Geraldine was admitted here on a charge of drunkenness. This arrest happened in the following manner:

"As she went into a café, she was approached by two plain-clothes men who invited her to have a drink. They then reminded her that since she had been formerly committed to Sherborn (the tenacious old name for Framingham Reformatory), what would she like to say regarding the administration, and would she like to give testimony, as Jean Parker (Dwyer's aide) was about to do? She had had enough to drink to become angry, and screamed at them that she 'hated publicity, but would testify in behalf of the Superintendent if it would help her.' She then left them, and within ten minutes was picked up by two officers in uniform.

"She believes that this was deliberately planned because she refused to cooperate, and that others are being treated in the same manner."

Another former Framingham student, with a record of arrest for drinking, proved more emotional than wise when she telephoned the *Boston American*, after listening to a radio broadcast about Framingham's troubles. "Why don't you tell some of the good things instead of all the lies?" she asked on the telephone.

Miriam, who interviewed this girl later, was told by her that she had then been asked her name and address and told that somebody from the *American* would be right out to see her. She waited until midnight and went to bed. At two a.m., a chubby reporter arrived.

Without referring to the substance of the broadcast about which the girl had protested, the reporter asked her what kind of a woman Dr. Van Waters was.

"I told him how wonderful I thought she was, and then he said 'what about the O'Keefe woman, she's the one we want to get out of there. She's involved in the doll racket, isn't she?'"

"I told him I knew nothing about it, and certainly thought she was not, that she was good to everybody. I said there is some of that in every institution, with the highest type of girls, but that the Reformatory separated girls, if suspected, and tries to prevent it.

"The reporter said 'what about Mr. Seifert,* he beats up all the women in the dungeon, doesn't he?' I said I never heard of such a thing, of course he doesn't.

"The reporter said 'you know something, but you aren't talking. If you won't play ball with me I won't play ball with you.' He went down the stairs with a wave. In a sarcastic tone he said 'we'll print a nice story about Sherborn tomorrow. I'll be seeing you.'

"The next afternoon a man and two women from the State House came for me. One said, 'come on, Della, you're going to Sherborn.' I said, why? They said 'you've been drinking.' I said no, I'd been in bed all week with a cold. One of them said 'you called the Boston *American* last night, didn't you?'"

"The man put an arm around my waist and started dragging me out. They wouldn't let me take anything but a coat and

* Erwin Seifert, maintenance supervisor.

an empty pocketbook. I didn't have a toothbrush, or anything."

This account, even though it was volunteered to Miriam, may have been no more credible than some of those Dwyer elicited from students he questioned in star chamber. It must be weighed in the light of the narrator's stability, and regarded primarily for the light it shed on the tactics of one newspaper and the questions it raised about civil rights as the Van Waters case developed.

Immediately after the state primaries, in September, the Framingham story erupted in print again, with a clear show of press partisanship this time. The *Herald* and the *Traveler* lined up behind Miriam, while the *American* and *Record* continued vigorously to oppose her. Large chunks of Dwyer's report leaked to the *American* and the *Post*. Nobody, including McDowell, seemed to be able to account for this. McDowell said he had given a copy to the Governor who had, he believed, handed it on to the legislative investigating committee.

After this large-scale leak, LoPresti and the *American* called for Miriam's scalp, while the *Herald*, under the by-line of one of its ablest reporters, Catherine Coyne, brought the controversy into focus as a clash between reactionary and "admittedly experimental" techniques of penology. Reporter Coyne's story went on to build a sympathetic case for Van Waters' methods.

On November 13, Miriam, too long goaded, and impatient with her defensive posture, demanded, through her attorney, Claude Cross, that she be given a public hearing to counter the "bitter and baseless" attack on her and her Framingham associates.

On the morning of November 22, the legislative committee called a public hearing. McDowell attended, at the committee's request, but sat among the audience, which contained some ardent Friends of Framingham.

The committee read out a long list of "specifications" taken from the Dwyer report, and after LoPresti had made a testy speech, Cross introduced Miriam, who talked at length about the charges, justifying her actions as having been completely endorsed by the Commissioners who had preceded McDowell. Yes, she had, temporarily, given keys to some dependable inmates during a staff shortage. No, there had been no undue staff permissiveness in allowing students to keep money and valuables. Point by point, she answered the "specifications."

On the subject of Toni DiMarco, Miriam said that "one of the tragedies of this is that, through the press, a subtle imputation was made that this girl was a sexual deviate, and a victim of another. Our records, our physicians, our psychiatrists do not show that this girl suffered that unfortunate deviation."

The committee listened carefully.

"Abnormalities," Miriam went on, "are medical problems. They are not within my province except as administrative and what doctors and psychiatrists and psychologists tell me to do." Their findings, coupled with their recommendations, she explained, prevailed in dealing with abnormalities. There were two attempts to box her in on the subject.

Q. Surely you have an opinion that might be equal if not better than most of these psychiatrists?

A. I wouldn't act on it.

LoPresti came back on another tack:

Q. You would be surprised to know that they (persons with homosexual tendencies) were on your staff, wouldn't you?"

A. It isn't so.

Throughout the day, Miriam remained calm and cheerful. A burst of applause came after her first long statement, and Senator

Callahan spoke about clearing the room. Several reporters who had come to the hearing uncommitted to either side of the dispute left with unconcealed respect for the small woman whose name had been dragged so rudely through the mud. There was a tinge of awe mixed with respect in some cases, but that was nothing unusual. Miriam, under heavy fire, always gave others the impression that she had walked into target range by mistake, and wanted to do everything she could to stop the shooting before others were hurt.

Nothing very much was accomplished by this hearing. The committee reported as much, in effect, and rather lamely suggested that another committee be appointed to continue.

McDowell, listening all day, had a fine opportunity to size up his opponent, and perhaps he spoke his secret reluctance to do further battle with her when he told an acquaintance, during the noon recess, "I wish this business had never happened. I'd like to have things go along as they are."

It was not to be. On December 16, he decided to fire Miriam. At a luncheon that day of the Legion of Valor, he listened to one of his old cronies Ralph W. Robart, a former chairman of the state Parole Board, make a hot-tempered speech deploring the situation at Framingham ("filthiest conditions imaginable"). On his feet, McDowell announced he would do something about it that very day.

He saw Maurice Winslow unexpectedly that afternoon and announced his decision to oust Van Waters. Winslow, reportedly, asked if McDowell thought he could make it stick, and McDowell replied "I'm certain I can."

McDowell lost momentum, because Governor Bradford's term in the State House was running out; Bradford seemed less than eager to have Van Waters' suffering on his record, and counselled delay on the grounds that if Van Waters were dismissed under his

banner, her case would have to be reviewed under his successor's, and that would not be fair to any of the principals in the case.

On January 7, 1949, with Governor Dever fresh in the State House, McDowell drafted a letter to Dr. Miriam Van Waters advising her that she was through as Superintendent as of midnight, January 11.

Enclosed with the dismissal notice was a list of twenty-seven specific charges supporting the dismissal. Dwyer had collaborated on drafting these, since they derived from his investigation.

According to Miriam's correspondence with Sarah, the notice of dismissal reached her by official messenger, who had scarcely left the premises before Miriam asked for a hearing of the charges and McDowell's action.

"Dearest Pooh:" Miriam wrote on January 8, "It was sweet of Dick (her son-in-law) to call me last night. I wish I could have said come on down—but later, perhaps. I was fired at 9 a.m. yesterday. Deputy ———, under the influence of liquor, handed me my notice of dismissal. He didn't look very happy in spite of the reinforcements he had taken.

"The charges are trifling from a legal point of view. But there is terrific detail work to be accomplished before the hearing.

"On Tuesday midnight I go out of office. So far I am able to keep the House, pending the decision."

Peg O'Keefe was on Miriam's mind:

"Peg can't be fired—save as they bring charges against her and go through the same proceeding as with me. The lawyers were here last night. I got to bed at 1:15. They are here today. Sunday too. I taught my Literary Group last night. They were *wonderful*. You wouldn't believe how well the students take it—unless you saw it.

"There is a maturity of response, a tolerance, a good humor in

spite of their fears and indignation. After all, they are used to injustice . . . after Tuesday night, when I am no longer King of the Kingdom of Cockroaches,* I shall devote my time to the more scholarly aspects of my legal defense.”

(Miriam dropped the letter here and resumed it the next day.)

“Now it is Sunday night—lawyers here all day—but I held the morning prayer, went to chapel at 6—then held the most wonderful assembly. It was beautiful. I’ll remember to tell you.

“O Dearest, let this little note tell you how much I love you. We’ll get as much fun out of this situation as possible. I’ve never been fired before so it is an absorbing experience and adjustment. I have so much to learn. All learning is painful, but it is worth it—you know that. God bless you Darling. Love to Dick and the dear children. Forever yours, Mother.”

At the reformatory assembly, two days before Miriam was cut off from all association with the students, pending the outcome of her hearing, she spoke in her usually calm manner.

“It is not new for the deeds and attitudes of my students to call forth thanksgiving—first to God, then to you as individual persons, So I am not doing it now because I am leaving you for what I hope is a short time. I am doing it because I am grateful for your work, your good feeling under the trying months recently passed.”

She thanked all the work departments and clubs by name, explained her being “fired,” the legal provision for a public hearing by the Department of Correction, and her right to appeal from its decision.

“We live under law,” she said. “We should be glad we do. We

* Early in MVW’s administration, cockroaches invaded the nursery. Miriam, crediting Carl Sandburg for the phrase, said they were “looking for a home.” Sarah dubbed her mother “King of the Kingdom of Cockroaches.”

have the right to fight for our rights, but we must abide contented by the final results.

"Share your life with whatever good group you join; bear one another's burdens with a sense of brotherhood. You have endured harder things.

"I am not sorry to put my belief in you, my faith in you and the staff to the test as your leader. Do you want to help? These are the surest ways: Keep good order, work conscientiously, preserve good feeling and obey your superiors."

She went downstairs, and walked through the enclosed passageway from the main building to the house she had occupied for seventeen years and to which, in a very short time, she would be "exiled" and billed for her household expenses by the Commonwealth. Brave and cheerful as she had been to the students in assembly, she knew a tug of doubt. The "three P's"—especially politics—might outflank her, somehow, and this time get her for good.

She knew quite well that, in her field, one could as easily be "got" for good as for bad. And it was more sport for one's enemies.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

O Lord, Lift Up This Foot

Miriam was in Howard Kellett's office at Episcopal Diocesan Headquarters, in Boston, the day she was fired. As noon-time approached, she glanced at her wrist watch.

"Well, Howard, we still have to eat," she said.

Howard reached for his coat and hat.

"I'm not sure you should be seen with me," she said, smiling.

"Our Lord wasn't too concerned about being seen with the adulteress," Howard said. "I'll take my chances on being seen with you."

At that moment, there was nearly \$40,000 available for Miriam's defense, all of it raised by The Friends of Framingham.

Two days later, on January 13, the public hearing to which she was entitled under Commonwealth law began in the State House. It was scheduled for a hearing room on the fourth floor, but as the

crowd swelled, the hearing was shifted to Gardner Auditorium in the basement where, by the time McDowell called for order, a capacity crowd of five hundred spectators was seated. Most of the audience were women and most of them, the Boston *Traveler* reported, were "violently partisan" to Dr. Van Waters.

The auditorium was box-shaped. Floor seats were divided into four wedge-shaped sections angled toward the center of the wall they faced. At the rear, a mezzanine spanned the width of the auditorium, and on the same plane there were galleries at right angles to the mezzanine. The narrow seats, upholstered in grainy leather, were too hard for comfort, but this was not a theatre. Nine huge windows behind the mezzanine seats were shaded by the adjacent Hotel Bellevue, and the weak light that entered was blended with artificial light from long ceiling panels and partially absorbed by the room's green walls.

The position of persons and furniture—McDowell behind a bench on a dais, Van Waters on a lower level at his left, at a table instead of a witness chair, Dwyer and Cross at tables in front of the bench—suggested a courtroom and a trial, and the proceedings were barely distinguishable from those of a trial. But this was, technically, a review, a public airing of a departmental decision. McDowell, by law, was cast as judge, jury, and prosecutor in a "case" he had, as Commissioner, already prosecuted and judged, and on which he had already returned a verdict.

The law, recognizing the imbalance of this quasi-judicial process, provided the right of appeal from its conclusion. A removed official could appeal to the Governor, who must then appoint a three-member impartial commission to examine the disputants, review the evidence, and make a final, binding decision.

The atmosphere in the big room was charged with tension. Beyond Gardner Auditorium, people were stirred and divided over

Miriam's case. Was she being railroaded? Had she been pulling the wool over everybody's eyes, condoning what the *American* called "orgies" at Framingham while being credited with running a model institution?

That was only the surface of the conflict, narrowed to "tabloid" size. Beneath lay the real issue, a contest between primary and opposed values. It was an old issue, root and cause of a century's worth of bitterness, passion and schism: rehabilitation or punishment?

"Here you are a student, not a prisoner," said Miriam in the handbook for newcomers to Framingham.

"The legal status of a person sentenced by the courts . . . is that of a prisoner," said Dwyer in the conclusion of his massive report.

McDowell called Miriam as the first witness, and the old struggle began anew.

The first round lasted eighteen days and filled 2,257 pages of record. Miriam testified for nine and a half days, always on her feet with her shoulders back, her head up. This show of strength and dignity upset both McDowell and Dwyer, but she turned aside their repeated requests to sit down with a polite "thank you, I will stand up." At night, her feet and ankles were so swollen she had difficulty removing her shoes, but nobody in the auditorium knew that.

McDowell, conducting himself as a judge but referring to himself as the "presiding authority," realized in the first hour that his cause was unpopular with the audience, which broke into applause when attorney Claude Cross scored a point for Miriam. "The applause will cease," McDowell ordered. Dwyer, who started the hearing as interrogator but gave way frequently to McDowell as the hearing progressed, quickly realized he was no hero to the majority

of spectators, least of all to Claude Cross, counsel for the defense.

Neither McDowell, who was not a lawyer, nor Dwyer, who had never tried a case, was a match for Miriam's attorney in the give and take of courtroom tactics. Cross used words as rapiers against them, flicking buttons off their jackets; and as clubs, bludgeoning them when they pressed his client. He defended Miriam with the smoldering righteousness of a southern gentleman protecting a lady from slander, challenging McDowell and Dwyer on points of procedure, questioning their motives, and harpooning them with sarcasm and irony. His booming, gravel voice served to express for Miriam's partisans the indignation, frustration, impatience, injured feelings and longing for justice they had kept corked in their chests for more than a year.

He was confident he had a good client and a good cause. Mississippi-born, he had turned to law "because down South the men in the legal profession are, in the main, leaders and highly respected in the community." From Missouri University, he had come north to Harvard for his Master of Arts and Bachelor of Law degrees. He had been appointed by the Court to defend Douglas Chandler, the grossly unpopular turncoat who broadcast Nazi propaganda from Germany in World War II. He was cited thereafter by the Bar Association for "able service in the best traditions of the Bar."

Less than two years after Miriam's hearing, the Harvard Law School *Record* would say of Cross: "Many a jury must have been captivated by the assertive cut of his chin, the conviction in his voice and the warmth and sincerity which surround the man."

McDowell and Dwyer felt little of his warmth, which he saved for the client he respected and admired, but they saw the assertive cut of his chin.

Miriam was remarkably effective in her own defense with her

calm demeanor, frankness, humor, and courage. Dwyer, who had bandied such words as “stud” and “queen” in his detective work on homosexuality at the Reformatory, showed a prudish streak at the hearing.

Dwyer: Would you give to the recorder the crime for which that inmate was committed to the Reformatory for Women?

Van Waters: The offense for which she was sentenced was cohabitation.

Dwyer: Please! I asked you not to . . .

Van Waters: Well, it sounded so mysterious, I thought I would say it. A five year sentence for cohabitation.

Before the first day's hearing was minutes old, Dwyer began building his case against Miriam's practice of indenturing inmates for duty in her household, hiring former inmates as interns, and retaining on her staff women who had court records (he led off by reading into the record the long-buried history of Peg O'Keefe's minor offense), and hammered away for hours on this theme, giving the real names of the women involved and reading from their records the charges that led to their commitment.

Miriam praised Peg O'Keefe's character, cited her skillful handling of reformatory students, pointed to her exemplary adult life, and reminded McDowell that former Commissioner Arthur Lyman had regarded her highly and approved her appointment to the assistant superintendency, although Miriam had not told Lyman of Peg's “petty offense” and had not considered this omission a breach of confidence.

Movingly, Miriam said, “I thought it (hiring O'Keefe) was a unique opportunity to demonstrate what a system of correction can do. The petty offense had been wiped out by study and devotion to the duties of her position.”

Cross insisted that a letter from officials of the same reformatory from which McDowell obtained the records on Peg O'Keefe—a letter praising her “particularly fine parole record” and commending her initiative in educating herself during a long siege of tuberculosis—be attached to the certificate.

Applause broke out when this letter was read, and McDowell had to remind the audience again to stop such demonstrations. He resisted an increasing number of pro-Van Waters outbursts as the hearing progressed, but it proved an almost hopeless task.

Near the close of the second day's testimony, Dwyer capped his long recitation of names and records, and questions about the fitness of their owners to serve the Commonwealth.

Q. In the indenture to you of such employes as (names), do you feel that they are persons to be on the staff, and worthy of imitation by the institution's inmates?

A. Yes, without the slightest doubt.

Q. Do you believe these persons are of the highest character for the state service?

A. Each one is different. You say “of the highest character.” I say, unless the state is willing to employ these rehabilitated persons, no taxpayer ought to be asked to.

Miriam's cheeks flushed when Dwyer brought up the case of Martha Dakins. “Is it necessary to bring up the record of a woman 88 years old?”

Dwyer pressed on, eliciting the information that the woman had been sentenced in 1928 to eight years for performing an abortion, had become an employee, and was no longer on the payroll, but lay helpless in the reformatory hospital. McDowell said he had told Miriam that it would be “a shame to drive her out,” when Miriam had appealed to him on the old woman's behalf.

Throughout Dwyer's questioning about alleged homosexual conduct of inmates he named, Miriam frequently protested that she could not give him specific answers without consulting the records. The individual case folders were locked up at Framingham. Miriam had turned the key over to the reformatory steward, Inga Johnson, who had been appointed acting Superintendent in Miriam's absence.

Cross objected strenuously to this situation soon after the hearing began, and McDowell was not sure how to handle it. The State's Assistant Attorney General, George B. Rowell, who sat conversationally close to McDowell to advise him on legal points, had no pat answer for this one. Under Cross's goading, McDowell said the records would be made available during the hearing, before Dr. Van Waters finished her testimony.

Cross raised a storm over this. He saw only injustice in denying his client her records and asking her detailed questions based on those records.

"We'll take the hearing to the records," McDowell said.

"I wouldn't be too sure of that, Commissioner," Cross replied.

Cross hoped that if McDowell shifted the hearing to the Reformatory, the hearing would no longer qualify as fully "public." His legal point was that the five hundred spectators at Gardner Auditorium constituted a measure of the number who wanted to attend the hearing, that there was not room for that many at the Reformatory, and that McDowell would be violating a statute guaranteeing the respondent a full public hearing. She must be automatically reinstated in that case.

McDowell, ignoring this possibility, ordered the third day of the hearing (a Saturday) be held in the basement of the Staff Home on the reformatory grounds, twenty miles from Gardner Auditorium.

Cross warned McDowell that if a huge crowd gathered, there might be a riot, and the blood would be on McDowell's hands.

McDowell was indifferent.

A round trip to Framingham proved no deterrent to out-of-town Friends of Framingham and others backing Miriam. The Saturday session began in confusion over seating; nearly fifty persons who couldn't crowd into the basement room signed a petition to that effect. Some students who had heard a radio newscast about Cross's warning of a possible riot at the Reformatory sent a note to Miriam saying they would give her a riot if she wanted one.

It was a day the Boston *Globe* described accurately as "uproarious." Cross clashed repeatedly with McDowell and Dwyer. At one point, Cross charged McDowell and Dwyer with turning the hearing into a "smear campaign," and described the day's proceedings as a "farce."

Applause, groans, and, at one point, hissing, reflected the audience's temper as Dwyer led Miriam through a long series of questions about indenture contracts and her policies on indenture.

Cross challenged McDowell to specify the charges related to two documents that Dwyer introduced. McDowell balked, saying that Dwyer was moving ahead on "all charges" (twenty-seven of them).

"Commissioner McDowell," Cross snorted, "you give us charges and you've got to prove them. I want to know what charge this comes under, or if you are just turning him (Dwyer) loose to wander all over the Reformatory. Do you decline to ask him to identify which of the charges he is proceeding under?"

McDowell: "We'll go on with the hearing."

The audience hissed and groaned. McDowell rapped for order.

Cross hung on. "If this is a mere smear campaign, that's one thing. If it's an effort to prove a charge, that's another thing."

Rowell and McDowell put their heads together.

"Proceed with the hearing," McDowell said.

"Apparently it's the former," snapped Cross.

Miriam knew her audience. Replying to an obvious question from Dwyer as to whether factory work could be classified as domestic work, she said it couldn't, although sometimes domestic work was "like a treadmill." Women in the audience laughed.

Cross and McDowell collided over the Seiler's Restaurant incident, Cross charging that Dwyer had removed the Seiler papers from Miriam's files and taken them to Boston, and McDowell denying it.

Cross interrupted at one point to say "the ventilation here is unbearable." Several seconds of applause greeted this. McDowell ordered the hearing to proceed.

"I want the record to show that nothing was done about the ventilation," Cross said.

Dwyer resumed examination of Miriam on the Seiler matter, using the names of inmates who had worked there. She interrupted a question suddenly:

"Couldn't we use numbers up here on the reformatory grounds where people are entitled, as wards of the State, to protection?"

Nobody replied. Dwyer told her to answer his question.

"But, couldn't we use numbers instead of names?"

Cheers rang out. McDowell demanded quiet.

"Give us numbers!" the audience shouted.

"The next time we have applause, I'll clear the room," McDowell warned. "I mean that."

A woman spectator arose to say the taxpayers had a right to hear "this trial . . . or hearing."

McDowell agreed, and said that was why he wanted decorum.

Rowell worked out a system whereby the name of any inmate

under discussion was handed to the official stenographer, and the inmate referred to thereafter as "this person" or "that person." Dwyer slipped once or twice, and Miriam quickly reminded him of the new rule.

McDowell, after one day at Framingham, had had enough. He had announced that he was going there to call three inmates to testify, but he called none, and Rowell announced that none at all would be called, unless it became necessary. Under Cross's driving insistence that McDowell connect evidence with charges, McDowell blurted out, "we are not concerned with charges," a statement that didn't help him any in the press.

Not until the fourth day of hearings did McDowell consent to make available to Cross, each evening, the records of inmates whose names were to figure in the next day's questioning.

Miriam scored heavily for her side when Dwyer queried her on her reasoning behind the "here you are a student, not a prisoner" statement he took out of context in the handbook for new admissions at Framingham. She read the whole text:

"Why you are here: To you it may seem a tough break and Framingham nothing but a lockup. However, you have it in your power to build your own future both here and in the world to which you will return. Nothing you have done in the past will determine your future here. We hold no prejudices. We care very much what you do now and what the future means for you.

"Every staff member is eager to help you find, in this experience, some definite values and skills that you may take with you when you return home which will help you to be a happier, more useful person. It is our hope that you will begin preparing for your better future immediately. You can if you will. Hundreds of girls have left here happier than when they came in. Hundreds have become more useful. Hundreds have learned to understand them-

selves and their families better. The staff would like to help you do this.

"True, the court punished you when you were sent here. But that is in the past. What matters now is education for the future. Here you are a student, not a prisoner. If you will, you can help to make this a better place. In making your contribution to help others who are sharing this experience with you, you will find this time worth while.

"You have our good wishes."

McDowell could not stem the cheering that followed this.

Letters flooded McDowell and Van Waters, and the newspapers in Boston, Framingham, Worcester and other nearby communities where the story was front page news day after day. There was enthusiasm for both sides, but Miriam's was heavily favored.

More than any man, the Rev. John S. Sexton, formerly an editor of the Roman Catholic newspaper, *Pilot*, dispelled the rumor that Miriam's case was a Catholic-Protestant battle. In his Stoneham, Massachusetts, parish magazine, *St. Patrick's Breastplate*, Father Sexton had this to say:

"As one reads carefully the interminable question and answer of the testimony, it does appear that, if this woman erred, it was on the side of the angels, in favor of mercy, in favor of decent, hopeful penology. And isn't it true that Christ told Mary Magdalene to 'go and sin no more'? He didn't suggest that she be locked in a cell, isolated, and fed bread and water for the rest of her days. In a word, the Divine Teacher suggested rehabilitation and insisted that the sinner get a chance to achieve it."

Letters, petitions and resolutions from organizations all over the state, urging Van Waters' reinstatement, landed on McDowell's desk. A good many anti-Van Waters letters and cards were anonymous, some unprintable. Among the printable were these:

"I feel that it is my duty as a former inmate to tell you confidently that this Van Waters woman is a low-down filthy woman."

Another: "She is so mentle. She has no shame."

And another: "How about the girl who beat the DiMarco girl to death? Does she go scot free? To probably visit Van Waters . . . degenerate filth. . . ."

However, there were responsible, signed comments. A former staff member at Framingham wrote that "it has always been a matter of surprise and concern that she has been allowed to remain at Framingham so long."

The widow of a judge wrote: "To me, a lay person, the basic question in the entire case is: Did Miss Van Waters act contrary to the statutory law governing the administration of the Reformatory? By her own admission she did this in many instances."

Van Waters mail on Governor Dever's desk was too much for his regular staff. An extra stenographer was required to handle it. A "pledge of allegiance" to Miriam, signed by three hundred and twenty-two students at the Reformatory, landed in her lap and in the news. Assistant Attorney General Rowell, himself a Harvard Law School graduate, revoked McDowell's and Cross's permission to the Harvard Radio Network to broadcast the hearing to Harvard and Radcliffe students, faculty and families.

The testimony, Rowell said, was "not good for teenagers." He did permit a Boston radio station to tape-record the hearing on January 18, for later broadcast.

Cross charged Dwyer with introducing five new cases, involving five inmates, without having informed Cross the previous night that he was going to bring them up. He demanded that McDowell link the cases with specific charges and, when McDowell refused, said McDowell was unable to make any connection. After delayed audience applause, McDowell said:

"Well, you finally got the applause you sought."

"I'm trying to get a decent decision here; and if you had the courage to make it, we might get a fair trial."

At mid-afternoon, January 18, the hearing exploded in an uproar when Cross snatched a case folder from Dwyer's hands and accused the Commissioner's office of having written a note and planted it in the folder sometime during the preceding weekend.

Waving the folder over his head, Cross shouted, "Just what I thought! This (note) was put there within two or three days by a man in your department!"

Somebody in the audience shouted:

"Kangeroo court!"

Another yelled, "Frame-up!"

"Mr. Cross," said McDowell, "a lawyer of your ability and standing should know that your conduct here would never be tolerated in any court. Don't forget, this is a quasi-judicial hearing."

Cross came back with, "I think this is the most outrageous conduct I've ever seen in any court. Now try and find me in contempt if you think you can!"

Rowell stepped in as peacemaker, minimizing the importance of the memorandum Cross had suspected as being planted.

"Let's get back to the subject," McDowell implored.

"Let's have no more explosive incidents," Cross said, baffling everybody. "I ask that that pencilled notation be erased."

The hearing rocked along. Miriam seemed to grow more calm as the sessions grew more dramatic. Testifying steadily on her feet, answering with confidence, trading sallies and enriching her responses with parenthetical chunks of wisdom, she grew in stature as the days went by.

"I don't know how many times, during that hearing, I breathed the prayer, 'now, Lord,' she said years later. I didn't want

to lose my voice. I kept thinking of a relatively elderly Negro who ran in one of those Boston Marathon races—he finished second, I think—and of his favorite prayer: ‘O Lord, lift up this foot. I’ll put it down.’”

On the fifth day of the hearings, the board of directors of the Massachusetts Council of Churches, representing two thousand Protestant churches, voted unanimously to back Miriam in her fight for reinstatement.

On the sixth day, McDowell said he was willing to “listen to any proposition” in connection with the case. Cross took him up instantly by asking for reinstatement of Van Waters on the ground that the Commissioner’s office had not produced a shred of evidence to back the charges against her.

Both sides then denied readiness to make any “deals,” and the hearing ground on.

Dwyer accused Miriam of permitting former inmates with homosexual tendencies to return to the Reformatory for dances, but the attack boomeranged. One of the girls he mentioned had gone back to Framingham to hear a talk by the then Archbishop Cushing; another had played in the orchestra; another had borne one child in marriage and later, after reconciliation with her husband, had had a second child.

“I don’t think you yet realize,” Cross said to McDowell, “the seriousness of what you are doing.”

For the first time, Miriam lost her composure. She lowered her head and wept briefly when Cross read to McDowell a note from a woman spectator and former inmate of Framingham.

The woman wrote that she had returned to the Reformatory several times “for novena services, and religious instruction.” She had sponsored, as godparent, a baby there, “visited and volun-

teered services to the educational department, and visited Dr. Van Waters' ill mother, whom I adored.

"But believe me, I have no abnormal tendencies nor inclinations. I also visited with literary groups. P.S. So what new crime have I unknowingly committed?"

The *Traveler* editorialized that Van Waters should be reinstated and the Governor should discharge McDowell and Dwyer. The *Herald* defended Miriam's employment of inmates, and thought it "a grim joke" that Framingham's rehabilitated girls were being pilloried while James M. Curley, Mayor of Boston, just back from a stay in a Federal penitentiary, was "granted public absolution." The *Herald* asked: "Must the little people be always the ones to pay? Whatever may be the decision on Dr. Van Waters, the decision on Massachusetts is 'guilty.'"

Just when Cross showed sudden cooperation with McDowell in controlling audience demonstrations, Miriam brought the house down with a bit of pantomime. Asked to hand back to Dwyer a visitors' register, she lifted the heavy book as though she were going to bring it down on his head, then offered it to him tenderly. Breaking through the humor, Cross demanded that McDowell fire Dwyer for having interviewed a former inmate after she had drunk a bottle of Scotch and taken a sleeping pill.

A Melrose, Massachusetts, Methodist minister, The Rev. Samuel K. Lord, former reformatory chaplain, called Miriam "a fighting saint who exhibits Christian courage and deep personal piety in the face of persecution." The Rev. William J. Wiltenburg, a Lutheran chaplain at Framingham, described Miriam's philosophy to a reporter as "a logical extension of Christian philosophy."

On January 25, the hearing was shifted to the auditorium of Suffolk University (Dwyer's alma mater), where one thousand spectators gathered, setting a new attendance record and listening

to a day of Dwyer's intensive exploration of homosexuality at Framingham.

Cross, near the day's end, gave audible thanks that "there's another tribunal" (the gubernatorial appellate panel) and deplored the day's "slimy suggestions, dirty insinuations and slanderous statements" he attributed to the prosecution.

Miriam disclosed that she had invited several reputable psychiatrists to lecture to her staff on the subject of homosexuality "when the subject of deviation has been brought to my attention and I have believed the staff in need of information and enlightenment."

Dwyer asked her:

"What was your standard practice in dealing with inmates who had crushes on each other?"

Miriam replied, "You would certainly have to present records which would call my attention to the social treatment. People are individuals. People are not masses, or numbers. Each one must be handled according to a plan based on her individual needs and nature." (Years before, Dr. Hall, of Clark University, had found a similar statement by Miriam lodged in his teeth.)

The audience applauded.

That "couch" or "cot" in the dairy barn, Dwyer learned upon questioning Miriam, was a broken-down settee in the barn loft where women sat to take their boots off when they came in from the wet dairy room. It was removed, she said, when chairs were obtained.

Cross argued for an hour and twenty minutes before the close of the day's session, categorically branding all of McDowell's twenty-seven charges against Van Waters as false, and repudiating them one by one. McDowell quietly rejected Cross's motion to order immediate reinstatement of Miriam.

(*The Encyclopaedia Britannica* was reminding Miriam that she

was close to the deadline for her article on juvenile delinquency. She worked on it over a weekend between sessions.)

On January 26, Cross began his cross-examination of Miriam, allowing her to tell her own career story with very few promptings from him. She told it well and told it all, from school days in Oregon to the very moment; and it filled most of one day and part of another. When she had finished, there was a hushed pause, then a prolonged ovation by the audience.

The Massachusetts chapter of the Army and Navy Legion of Valor passed a resolution praising McDowell and condemning "the Communist and Nazi-like tactics of the adherents and sympathizers of the former superintendent."

Back in Gardner Auditorium, January 28, McDowell challenged Miriam to show that his directive of June 4 had interfered with her program of classification and research, group therapy, religious services, medical care, and psychiatry. She said the first three had not been affected, although classification conferences might have been threatened. As for medical services, she said, the directive prevented taking patients out for X-rays, orthopedic care and dentistry, and stopped visits to psychiatrists in connection with the alcoholics program. As for psychiatry, she said, "I doubt if psychiatry in the Reformatory for Women will be practiced for many long years to come in the way it was, because of the violation of confidential statements made by inmates to doctors."

The *Traveler's* January 28th editorial on the case, headed "Her Own Best Witness," said "we doubt if any public official or any servant of the state in modern times has so completely turned the tables on her accusers. As she has told in simple and moving terms the story of her life's work at Framingham, how paltry the charges against her seem!"

On February 3, Miriam listened to three former Commissioners of Correction praise her work when Cross called them as defense witnesses. The man who appointed her, Dr. A. Warren Stearns, joined J. Paul Doyle and Arthur T. Lyman in assuming responsibility for acts, charged against Van Waters, which they had approved while in office. Former Commissioner Francis B. Sayre wrote from his desk in the State Department in Washington, praising Miriam.

Episcopal Bishop William Appleton Lawrence spoke in her behalf, as did Framingham's former Roman Catholic chaplain, the Rev. Frederick Mulrey, and clergymen Kellett, Lord, and Wiltenburg. They were joined by a former justice of the state superior court, Judge John J. Burns.

Dr. Eleanor Pavenstadt, a Boston psychiatrist who had worked on the reformatory staff for four years, testified that "everything possible was done" there to deal with the problem of sex deviation. Pauline Orsi, a staff officer high in Miriam's esteem, directly contradicted a previous witness who said she had reported to Miss Orsi a case of alleged homosexuality.

Then, Cross called Austin H. McCormack, executive director of the Osborne Association, chairman of the Army Parole Board, and an international authority on penology.

"Absolutely tops," McCormack said of Miriam. "One of the finest human beings I ever knew." Framingham Reformatory, he said, "has made a notable contribution not only to Massachusetts but to the United States and the world, and is so recognized throughout the United States and other countries. It is," he said, "close to the top. I don't say the top because that's not quite fair" to two other institutions (Clifton Farms, New Jersey, and Corona, California), both of which are run by "disciples" of Miriam (Edna Mahan and Alma Holzchuh). Later, he told reporters that a

woman of Dr. Van Waters' "charm, personality and spiritual quality" influenced a whole staff, "and pretty soon you have a dozen like that, and then they multiply indefinitely."

At Framingham Reformatory, he said, "you have much less (homosexuality) than elsewhere. I would be willing to wager there has been twenty to fifty times as much, right along, at Charlestown and the Concord Reformatory* than there has ever been at Framingham. That's just a guess, but I'll stake my professional reputation on it."

For the second time in the long ordeal, tears welled in Miriam's eyes, and remained there as two former inmates of Framingham spoke. One, a staff officer said, "Dr. Van Waters changed the course of my life. She's the only real friend I ever had. I used to be bitter, but she trusted me and gave me faith in human beings. Now I want to help others to live good lives, too."

The other, a dry alcoholic Miriam had rehabilitated and employed, said, "She's a god to me. I don't know what would happen to me without her help."

Mrs. K.G.T. Webster, of Milton, Massachusetts, watched Miriam intently through several days of the hearings, and wrote of her:

"There are sometimes shadows in a face whose look is of gentleness, courage, inward serenity, understanding, humor and, of course, deep sorrow. Not plaintive; no self-pity, but only quiet acceptance of all the grief in the world."

The *New England Journal of Medicine*, straying editorially afield to pay its respects to Miriam, used the word "Inquisition" in describing the hearings.

Newsweek magazine quoted four lines of a poem an inmate wrote for Miriam as the days wore on:

* Both Massachusetts prisons.

When God made the angels, God made you,
And sent you down to us.
When God made the angels, God made you,
In whom we place our trust.

One day a tall, thin man with a seamed face and an ascetic expression that concealed a sense of humor, passed through Boston and read the newspaper stories of the hearings. He was Starr Daily who, as a boy, had been ridiculed after a high school effort at oratory, slipped into a "wild" gang and went on to a career of crime during which he broke all but the Sixth Commandment, and bungled that. Although he was in prison for years, his father never gave up on him. This abiding love, and that of a prison mate, finally broke Daily's spirit. He experienced a vision of Christ in his cell at Dannemora, became an ardent Christian and, on his release, an effective one.

He wrote Miriam this letter:

"Came to Boston to find you in the midst of spreading the light through countless front pages of free publicity. It must give you great satisfaction to see your cause most vigorously promoted by your enemies. How you must love those unwitting enemies.

"They have done most to promote Jesus and His cause, and this is why He loves them so.

"The prayers of thousands are with you now, and every closing door will push a dozen open. So take no anxious thought.

"The light of the New Era penology is breaking everywhere, and the people will yet see and understand.

"My contemplated visit was quickly vetoed from on high. God has ways we know not of.

"Following your course with an overpowering interest. Bless you in the quest."

On the bottom of the letter, Miriam wrote a query:

"Sarah: Ask Miss Mahoney who this is. Perhaps you know."
She read the letter with renewed interest when she learned the author's history.

The final day of the hearing fizzled out with an odd and inconclusive attempt by Dwyer to show, with the aid of a handwriting expert, that former Commissioner Doyle's signature on an indenture contract had been forged. Doyle had already acknowledged the signature as his, but McDowell and Dwyer were convinced it was a forgery. They later conceded it was not.

In the next few days, McDowell prepared a thirty-six-page letter to Miriam containing his decision on the findings of the hearing. Maurice Winslow's prose hand was responsible for portions of this document; Dwyer and McDowell's legal counsel also helped him with it.

In a long preamble on "general matters," McDowell stated his belief that it was not "prudent treatment" for inmates to place them under the supervision of another whose "past record showed many strong indications of homosexuality." He cited this as one of the differences between his penal philosophy and Miriam's. He endorsed the scientific and religious approach to penology, but questioned the "social interludes" during which inmates were taken off the reformatory grounds by guards who, it seemed to McDowell, became "the servants" under such conditions. He didn't arbitrarily condemn this, but he said it was not permissible under the present laws.

He struck out at Cross's "slurring remarks" and "discourtesy," and scored the "propaganda" directed against him and Dwyer by some of Miriam's adherents. Cross's tactics, he said, had added to

his difficulties in conducting the hearing, but he said he had not let that influence his decision.

He said there was not one set of laws and regulations for "great penologists" and another for everyone else, and said Miriam had given the impression that she was above the law, approaching anarchism in her attitude.

He clung to his former rigidity about dealing with homosexuals, claiming that Miriam should have paid more heed to inmates' prior records and current behavior, and applied preventive measures before overt acts occurred. Obviously, he still was miles apart from her on this subject. He implied that Miriam had led former Commissioners by the nose, and held her accountable for exceptions to strict law, even though the Commissioners had been legally responsible for these exceptions.

On only one of his twenty-seven charges did he retreat. Margaret O'Keefe, he found, did not have a "criminal record." There was no apology for the damage that this error had inflicted.

McDowell's decision sustained himself. To Van Waters, he wrote:

"You stand removed."

Miriam promptly appealed to the Governor, who just as promptly chose an impartial commission of three to consider her appeal.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

I'd Better Get Back to Jail

Governor Dever's choices for the impartial commission to hear Miriam Van Waters's appeal were applauded by McDowell and Cross when the Governor announced them the evening of February 14, 1949.

"Most excellent," said McDowell. "Highest type of appointments," said Cross.

Erwin N. Griswold, Dean of the Harvard Law School, who acted as chairman of the commission, not only occupied an eminent post, but had arrived at it by way of a distinguished legal career with the Federal government. He was a respected authority on federal taxation, and author of a solid reference work on the subject.

Mrs. Caroline J. Putnam, fifty-seven-year-old wife of a former mayor of Springfield, Mass., and mother of six, was a member of

the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, a director of the Holy Child Guild, the South End Community Center and the Springfield Symphony Association. She was, she told a reporter, working hard at being a "good citizen." She was on the board of the Springfield Public Library, and was active in the Catholic Women's Club in her home town.

Robert J. Clark, Jr., was first assistant district attorney of Plymouth and Norfolk counties, a native of Bridgewater, and a graduate of Holy Cross and Boston University Law School, with twenty-three years of general law practice in Brookline behind him. He had earned a solid reputation in the district attorney's office.

Griswold lost no time trying to get the hearing under way, but proceedings were delayed when McDowell ran into legal vexations right at the start. Rowell, who knew the case, told Griswold he wanted no more theatrics of public hearings, and when Cross and Van Waters elected a public hearing, he withdrew. McDowell thought the state's new Attorney General, Francis Kelly, had left him out on a limb by not delivering Rowell. Kelly appointed another man, who worked feverishly on the case, then dropped out suddenly in favor of an elderly attorney, Henry P. Fielding. McDowell's back was up by now. He said he'd try the case himself.

After conferences with Griswold, McDowell approved, reluctantly, the idea of Dwyer's presenting evidence and examining witnesses, with Fielding backstopping him. Dwyer had expected to be a witness in the impartial hearings and, as such, to introduce his thick report on Framingham into the record. All that was now changed.

Griswold, in an effort to condense proceedings, asked whether McDowell and Cross could agree on some of the facts in the case. McDowell demurred.

The case, it was decided, would have to be heard anew, with Commissioner McDowell presenting his side first.

Thus, it began all over again with what one newspaper reporter called a "retake" of the exhaustive and exhausting evidence of the first hearing. The hearing ran on for nine days.

All facilities in the State House having been pre-empted, the hearing moved, the second day, to Langdell Hall, a courtroom of the Harvard Law School. In this austere setting, there was no applause, groaning, shouting, or other vocal reactions that had characterized the first hearing. Dean Griswold's mien put a damper on all that.

Miriam testified for nearly four days, tiring visibly under Dwyer's repetition of his former examination of her on all her methods, attitudes and policies in running the Framingham Reformatory for Women.

At the Reformatory, Miriam's ordeal was distressing to many of her staff. Jane Slobodzian, a hard-working psychologist, had many sleepless nights in her concern for the Boss and her "jail." Mary James, a social caseworker, and Nan Neilson, in charge of the flag department, suffered through the hearings, as did Anne Gladding, a gentle, sensitive associate and friend of whom Miriam once said, "she is a saint, if there ever was one."

The "chain gang"—those close associates who had worked late many nights with Miriam preparing her defense and dancing to McDowell's order for a mass of data "by return mail,"—lived on tenterhooks for a month.

Five of the students, Peg O'Keefe recalled later, were crippled by feelings of hopelessness. Three of them were in for eighteen years and two virtually for life. One of them asked Peg: "Who will fight our battles?"

McDowell followed Miriam to the stand. Dwyer asked him

one key question (Griswold said it was neither "proper nor relevant"):

"As a result of this investigation (Dwyer's) did you feel that there was cause for the removal of Dr. Van Waters?"

"I did," said McDowell.

Cross was remarkably soft in his cross-examination of McDowell. Soft, but lethal, for he dredged up the colloquy between McDowell and Miriam the day she went to his office and congratulated him on his appointment and pledged her loyalty and cooperation. McDowell recalled it accurately, and now repeated his response that day to the Superintendent of Framingham:

"I said that cooperation was mandatory and that loyalty was due not to a Commissioner but to the Reformatory for Women in accordance with her oath of office."

Griswold and Putnam seemed stunned by this. Clark, the man on whom McDowell had counted most for understanding and support, seemed amazed. "I did not get that," he said, incredulously. "You said that, when she came in to congratulate you?"

"That is right."

"You made this answer when she congratulated you?"

"I did."

McDowell responded thereafter in a weary voice, his manner as abject as though he had been caught pulling the wings off a butterfly.

Cross closed in. Why hadn't McDowell responded to Van Waters' request for his recommendations on the heels of his June 4th directive?

Cross: Did Dr. Van Waters ever receive your recommendations?

McDowell: No.

Cross: What reason do you give us for not saying or doing anything about it . . . ?

McDowell: In the meantime, I had a report concerning the institution. I did not think my question was answered there and certainly would not be answered by making recommendations . . .

Cross: Did it occur to you, you ought to tell Dr. Van Waters you hadn't considered it (her letter) full compliance?

McDowell: No.

Cross: It never occurred to you?

McDowell: No.

There was a day's recess for both sides to prepare final arguments. Dwyer and McDowell drafted a muscular speech for Fielding, their counsel. Fielding looked it over, but the following day, when Cross had finished his summation for Miriam, threw the script away and keyed his remarks to the mood of the commission as he had fathomed it. Sensing that Miriam had firmly established her virtues in the commission's minds, he stuck to lean charges that her sins had been against the letter of the law. Miriam shook his hand when the commission adjourned, but McDowell's emotions, pent up through the long weeks of drama, broke through his control.

"This is a cause for justifiable homicide!" he shouted, starting after Fielding.

Dwyer restrained him and pleaded with him to say nothing to Fielding.

"The hell I won't. I'll tell him exactly what I think!"

But he didn't. Instead, he wrote him, next day, a gracious letter of thanks.

The commission's decision, handed down March 11, a week after adjournment of the hearings, reversed "the decision of the

appointing authority," as McDowell had gloomily expected. McDowell's twenty-seven charges were compressed into ten general groups, which Thomas Eliot, in his Inter-University Case Program report, reduced to barest bones:

1. Brief trips away from the Reformatory were not illegal; "no court has ever held the Superintendent, or any other similar official of the Commonwealth, to be in contempt of court for allowing such visits." Nor did they constitute favoritism; they were carefully planned parts of the rehabilitation program.

2. Private manufacture at the Reformatory (a shoe company had set up a small shop there) was arranged for by Commissioner Doyle, and Van Waters' part in it "was at most an irregularity—and we are not sure it was that."

3. The charges concerning homosexuality were wholly unproved. The evidence showed that no known means of dealing with this problem were omitted or neglected at the Reformatory. Visits by former inmates were specifically allowed by the rules, and were properly permitted by Van Waters.

4. The use of keys by inmates, up until late 1947, did violate the rules; but it was approved by former Commissioners, and did not constitute just cause for removal.

5. Van Waters sought faithfully to comply with the directive of June 4, except for the excusable use of a bathroom key by an inmate.

6. No law or rule forbade the employment of prior inmates. "The evidence also showed that the appointment of such persons, carefully selected and in proper numbers, might be a constructive influence in the conduct of the Reformatory."

7. "The development of the indenture system by Dr. Van Waters grew out of prior practice." All contracts were signed by the Commissioner in office at the time; the basic responsibility was his.

8. There was insufficient evidence to support the charge of understaffing the night shift. "It also appeared that Commissioner McDowell has not provided any increased personnel since Dr. Van Waters' removal."

9. The fact that employees worked outside their classification was not just cause for removal. "If this were a ground for removal, it seems likely that every responsible employing officer in the service of the Commonwealth would find his position in peril."

10. Child placement work was essential at the Reformatory, and was carefully and faithfully done. "Dr. Van Waters would have failed in her responsibility if she had not made provision for this work. To charge that she committed an offense by doing it seems to us strange indeed."

The commission branded nine of McDowell's charges as "trivial and captious," and said "their chief importance appears to the Commission to be found in the light they cast on the general basis of the Commissioner's action."*

The impartial commission's opinion went on with statements that rocked McDowell, and tore Dwyer's legal quibbles to shreds.

About the use of keys: "A rule is not a statute. Within considerable limits it is the function of such an officer as the Superintendent of a reformatory to exercise judgment and discretion. One of the tasks and responsibilities of any senior administrator is to know

* These charges: statutory failure in not having all employees take an oath of office; not requiring visitors to state, in the visitors' register, whether they had been convicted of a felony; not supplying a copy of the rules to every employee; permitting inmates to retain valuables; allowing former inmates to visit without personal approval of Superintendent; favoritism toward Alaine Latour; a day-working inmate served liquor at her employer's home and was driven back to Reformatory at 9 p.m. by employer's son; failure to provide proper supervision by letting male employee oversee inmates' work on delivery truck, or as automobile mechanics; permitting non-employees to live at the staff home or eat in the staff dining room.

when to relax the rules. Anyone who is engaged in any field of public administration knows that practices often develop more rapidly than rules can be changed to meet them."

(Austin MacCormack's testimony foreshadowed these conclusions.)

"No institution can be static. Development will occur despite individual administrators and despite rules and even statutes. Many bits of progress in the law have come about because the practices get ahead of the law and it has been necessary to change the law to catch up with what is being done . . . We say this not to agree with the construction of the law adopted by Dr. Van Waters and prior Commissioners, but to show that what was done is constantly and necessarily being done in many administrative organisms, both governmental and private. If the things being done were not authorized by the statute, it was Commissioner McDowell's privilege to direct that they be terminated. This he did and Dr. Van Waters complied."

Miriam was in Cross's law office, with the devoted LaRue Browns, Mrs. Katherine Driscoll, and a few other Friends of Framingham, when the impartial commission's opinion was handed to the Governor and announced from there. She took the news without the slightest trace of jubilation.

Cross lost no time reaching McDowell. Years later, he quoted the dialogue:

"Can she go back?"

"Yes. She won," McDowell replied.

"No," Cross said. "I want a letter from you."

"All right. Let her come and get it."

"She'll never come to you. I'll send for it."

Miriam telephoned Anne Gladding at the Reformatory, told

her the news, and asked her to arrange an assembly of students and staff as soon as she arrived. She had already told Anne that if she ever came back as Superintendent, she wished the student choir to sing the *Te Deum*.

A few minutes later, a *Boston Globe* reporter cornered Miriam for an interview.

To his readers she expressed her thanks to the Governor for appointing such a distinguished and discriminating commission; she thanked the commission for giving so unselfishly of its time without compensation other than the performance of a civic duty; she thanked the many Friends of Framingham for their support of "our cause," and the press and public for their understanding support of the women in the Framingham Reformatory.

"Now," she said, "I'd better get back to jail."

It was mid-afternoon when the car carrying Miriam and Claude Cross entered the main gate of Framingham. Flurries of snow whipped across the narrow driveway. As the car slanted up the road, an almost palpable wave of sound rushed down to meet it. Sirens screamed. Every bell in the Reformatory clanged in unison. In Framingham town, pedestrians wondered why the fire engines didn't come out.

At the main entrance, nearly the entire staff was gathered, waving, and cheering in a soprano chorus that drowned the minority bass of the male officers.

"Somehow," Peg O'Keefe remembered a long time later, "we got her up to the chapel. I don't know how she could talk. The students were cheering wildly. Tears streamed down Mr. Cross's face. Mr. Kellett said, 'Our angel has been sent back to us.'"

Reporters and photographers, who had flocked out from Boston, followed Miriam upstairs to the chapel.

There, the student Assembly Committee had arranged seats

on the platform for guests and themselves. When the hubbub ceased, the president of the committee stood up and spoke:

"I declare this assembly open. Please rise and salute the flag. Remain standing while we sing one verse of 'America the Beautiful.'"

After the singing, she announced: "This assembly is one of thanksgiving to God and one of welcome to Dr. Van Waters."

Deafening cheers and applause broke out and lasted for three or four minutes. The assembly committee president stood in dignity until the din subsided, paused dramatically, and said, "Staff, students and guests, we welcome you to our homecoming. Kneel down, now, and offer a silent prayer."

The choir sang the *Te Deum* as it had never sung it before. The president turned to Miriam.

"Dr. Van Waters, have you anything to say to us?"

Miriam rose and went to the front of the platform.

"I want to say to you that I feel, as I have never felt in my life, that there is hope for you on your second and third chance.

"Untold thousands of people will help you now who never before knew about you and us . . . Each one of you knows what it is like to have to be alone and face a judge. I thought of you, often friendless and alone in a strange city, a strange place. The knowledge that, after that experience, you could come here and face life all over again and be cheerful and kind to one another, and come to church to sing and pray, gave me a great deal of courage.

"God bless you. We have got to get to work."

Epilogue

Commissioner McDowell remained in office for a full term, and Deputy Dwyer not only remained at his right hand, but still was working in the Department of Correction in 1961. The Rules and Regulations of 1923 (as amended in 1926) also persisted. For two consecutive years after the hearings, the Friends of Framingham raised money for intensive campaigns in the Legislature to restore indenture. Both times, the Friends-supported bill was passed by the House and killed by a narrow margin in the Senate. McDowell, Dwyer, and the woman Miriam's associates accused of undermining her while serving on the Parole Board, were the chief opponents. Time and circumstances removed Miriam from the field at the moment of greatest need for a younger leader of her stature.

When Miriam retired, in October, 1957, nearly all of her prac-

tices that had not been snuffed out by the McDowell directive of 1948, evaporated. The mother-baby program, student clubs, modified student government, even the cows, disappeared. As of 1961, a limited number of women in the Reformatory were permitted to leave the place for domestic service on a daily basis. The Reformatory had acquired a new name: Massachusetts Correctional Institution.

Mrs. Betty Cole Smith, a college-trained, experienced penologist who succeeded Miriam, came to the job with a mind of her own but only a fraction of Miriam's experience in dealing with those ever-circling politicians who keen over the fallen and do so little to help them up. Mrs. Smith came to Framingham, officially and temporarily, in 1950, in connection with the Reformatory's program for alcoholics. Her ability in this field is an important asset of the institution.

"Dr. Van Waters made a terrific impact on me," she said in June, 1959. "She could see no bad in things. I can, I have to admit. She was Christ-like. When she entered a room, any room, everybody seated in it stood up. I don't want that."

Mrs. Smith had her own ideas about dealing with homosexuality. "We let them know that overt behavior is not condoned. We won't permit Lesbian aspects in dress. Slacks for recreation, yes. Otherwise no slacks, or bluejeans, or men's shirts. I confiscated all men's shirts. These are fractional problems, but they stick out like sore thumbs."

Mrs. Smith called the inmates "girls" or "women." The mother-baby program, she said, had had "no follow-up," and added, "who knows whether it was good? There are only three babies here now. The average girl here is unstable, relieved not to have to buck the world with a baby."

Some of Miriam's former associates and professional acquaint-

ances believe she should have retired to speaking and lecturing after her reinstatement in 1949, and was ill-advised to stay on for a year after an illness in 1956. One said she was not a good administrator, because she relied too much on sentiment and emotion in her decisions. Another said Miriam was a crackerjack administrator for the first five years, "but when she became a public figure, her administration was diluted." These critics had not been in close personal touch with Miriam for a long time when they made these comments.

One of these observers thought Miriam's greatest fault as an administrator was her inability to say "no," but added, "psychologically, it might be defended that her permissiveness role was essential. The pendulum has swung. Today, the administration needs to be warm and friendly, but be able to say 'no.'"

On the night of February 6, 1953, Miriam returned home from making a speech at One Joy Street, Boston. Sarah, with three others who had heard Miriam's talk, followed later in another car.

Miriam reached home about 11:30, and was in a housecoat, sitting at her desk, when her telephone rang. A voice said, "Dr. Van Waters? Norwood Hospital calling. Your daughter is here on the critical list."

The car carrying Sarah had skidded on ice, turned over, and slammed into a tree.

Miriam told the hospital she would be right down, "but I didn't know how. By the time I got my street clothes on, the 'phone rang again, and Sarah was dead. I sat up all night in my chair, not wanting to bother Ralph and Bert. I called them at 6:30 in the morning and told them."

Sarah was buried in Pinecrest Cemetery, on the wooded plateau above the Reformatory.

There was much undone work at Hill Top for Miriam—many more stone paths to make, hundreds more bulbs to plant, and always poison ivy to clear. And there were countless unborn seasons she wanted to see come and go there. She spent the night of November 16, 1956 (she was sixty-nine that autumn), in her cabin at Hill Top. Very early the next morning, she arose and went exploring through the dew-wet woods.

About eight o'clock, Ralph Van Waters glanced out a window in the house he had built near Miriam's cabin, and saw Miriam lying on the back steps. He raced downstairs, carried her in the house and telephoned Framingham Union Hospital. Miriam was semi-conscious, but doctors found her cooperative, if a little disoriented. A Boston specialist was called in consultation, and on November 20, Miriam was admitted to Baptist Hospital, in Boston, where a Lahey Clinic neuro-surgeon operated on an atherosclerotic aneurysm in her right middle cerebral artery, a delicate procedure that could have resulted in brain damage if the surgeon had had to sacrifice one of the larger blood vessels. The operative mortality in her situation was approximately ten per cent.

She did not speak for ten days after her operation; when she began to talk, she made up for all ten days. Her brother, Ralph, recalls that her talk consisted of "the highlights of her personality—a concentrated essence of herself."

She was discharged December 13, with no motor deficits. She was alert, but prone to intermittent seizures involving the left side of her face.

Miriam's niece, Susan Van Waters, who was ten years old in 1956, found a black kitten abandoned in her family's rural mailbox just before her aunt went to the hospital. Four years later, she talked about both:

"It was sick and a lot of its fur was out. Daddy let me keep it

and we got it well, but it died when Auntie Miriam was sick, and she wouldn't believe it. She said we could 'patch it up' and just give it some food and it would be all right again."

Miriam would not accept the idea of the kitten's death.

Two years after her retirement, Miriam was a legend in Framingham town, where she lived. Those who knew her well spoke of her as the people of Springfield, Illinois, must have spoken of Lincoln after his death—with reverence, affection, and tenderness.

Mary Jacques—Miriam called her "May," and everybody pronounced her last name "Jakes"—talked about Miriam when she had a few moments between customers in the pastry department of the Wellworth Store on Main Street.

"I served her for 38 years—those birthday cakes for groups of girls, with the girls' names iced on them. This is the first Christmas I haven't served her. You know, President Eisenhower couldn't get a bigger reception in this town. Nobody will ever know what she spent out of her own pocket on those girls."

May accepted many reformatory girls for jobs in the restaurant-bakery-confectionary whose door she had opened every morning for more years than most townspeople remember. "They all worked out fine. Well, most of them did."

Nate Dershowitz leaned against a showcase in his small dress shop on Main Street. A man on intimate terms with grief—his son had died of cancer in his early 30's, and his son-in-law was in an iron lung—he spoke quietly for a while about Miriam: "One of the grandest persons I ever knew." Yes, she had often sent her students to his place for dresses, "and I often sent her the bill." He said nothing about the times he hadn't sent bills or the fact that the bills were pared to the bone.

Editor Raymond Callahan, in his *Framingham News* office, leaned back from an editorial in his typewriter and talked for half an hour about Miriam.

"A remarkable person. A genius at picking up human wrecks and encouraging them to be women."

He spoke in sub-headlines:

"Sayre (Francis) was very much interested in the Reformatory. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, also. Archbishop Cushing gave the Reformatory its first television set. The attitude of McDowell and Dwyer, and the manner in which they conducted that hearing made the blood boil. The DiMarco case was a delayed fuse."

Then he remembered a story about a volunteer on Miriam's staff, and an alcoholic student:

"The alcoholic used to go out and make sandwiches at the Navy Yard. She had been married, had a daughter. The in-laws brought the child up with the idea her mother was dead.

"The mother was afraid she'd die without any relatives or friends to bury her properly. She told the staff woman—a Jewish lady—her worries, and the staff lady told her she'd do her best to carry out her wishes. Well, the alcoholic died in a hospital out of the Reformatory. Before she died, though, she gave the name of the staff woman to the people in the hospital.

"The staff woman kept her promise. She arranged for an undertaker, cemetery lot, church services, everything. Dr. Van Waters provided the clothing to lay her out in. Here about a year ago, the Jewish woman died and left about \$40,000 to endow a bed at Framingham Union Hospital for any elderly, indigent woman. Miriam Van Waters attracted this kind of dedicated person."

Charles (Chuck) Ayers, a tall, husky reporter for the *News*, reminisced about Miriam's hearing, "She was the calmest person in the room," and commented on her philosophy. "She used to say

'there's no girl who can't be straightened out.' Well, that can't be one hundred per cent right. There are some pretty tough cookies, you know."

Ayers didn't like Dwyer's inferences that Cy (Erwin) Seifert, a maintenance man at the Reformatory, had beaten up girls in the dungeon. "Cy came out (of the dungeon) one day a little bloody and shirttail out, but it was in self-defense. He is not the type who would beat anybody up."

Chief of Police McCarthy,* a man who used words like "umbrage," "volatile," and "phlegmatic" with ease, although he said he "matriculated, and graduated from Railway Express," said, over and over, "I think she is a wonderful person." He said he used to take drunken girls to the Reformatory overnight because "she encouraged it. She wanted to help."

McCarthy said Miriam "had the confidence of about 85 per cent of the population here, and that's pretty high. I took the Cardinal (Cushing) to the Reformatory to visit, just after he was made. She was so pleased."

She was "always around," McCarthy said. "She wasn't one of these absentee administrators."

The Honorable Lewis W. Farley, Judge of the Middlesex County District Court, came into his chambers from his courtroom, still wearing his robe. He lit a cigarette ("I shouldn't smoke these things") and sat down. The idea of talking about Miriam pleased him. "The world's a better place now that she's walked upon it," he said, with the conviction of his judgeship and the sentiment of his Irish soul. "I remember a young, very pretty girl who was in there for stubbornness. She escaped, and was brought in to me. I couldn't help feel that, but for the grace of God, she

* He died in 1961. Miriam wrote a moving account of his professional skill and personal worth for the *Framingham News*.

was my daughter. Dr. Van Waters kept the young ones away from the hardened ones. This little one invited me to attend the Christmas play at the Reformatory. I couldn't help think she was ready to return to life outside, God love her. Oh, I remember the kindness of the woman (Miriam)," he said.

"During her trial, despite her trouble, she wrote me a note congratulating me on my appointment to the bench and expressing her regrets at being unable to attend my investment. She had a complete understanding of how the rules and the law worked, and of the unfortunates on the other side of the fence. All the girls who came to her were complicated machines, like Univacs. You need a good instinct for pushing the right buttons. She would come in here with a chronic escapee—maybe five runaways—and she knew how frustrated the girl was, and she'd convince me, and I'd suspend sentence. If I had imposed an 'on and after' sentence for consecutive escapes, a girl would be in for life."

If there slides into this testimony any hint that Miriam took to shawl and easy chair after her retirement, it does her an injustice. In 1961, she was serving as county president of the Muscular Dystrophy Associates, working with the United Fund for Higher Negro Education, writing publicity for the Framingham area of the League for Abolition of Capital Punishment, an organization she once served as national president, and keeping in touch with more than one hundred former students with the help of her secretary, Mrs. Cynthia Thomas. Her house on Clark Street, she said, was "a kind of lighthouse for ex-students."

There was Trickey, too. Miriam and Trickey.

One morning in June, 1959, I rang the doorbell at 14 Clark Street, Framingham, where Miriam lived in retirement. Instantly, a dog barked in the entrance hall. The door opened. A red-haired

lady in a flowered apron smilingly introduced herself as Mary Marcin, and invited me in. The dog seemed determined to bar the way, and I expected a nip on the ankle as I walked slowly into the living room.

Mrs. Marcin excused herself and retreated to the source of hunger-sharpening smells in the kitchen. At my feet, the little black and white dog paced nervously, anticipating any move I might make.

Miriam floated slowly down the stairs and came into the living room. Her appearance was more than a physical fact; it was an entrance in the best tradition of the stage. She seemed taller than her five feet two inches.

"I am Miriam Van Waters," she said, the soft quality and low key of her voice confirming an ingrained social grace, and commanding respect for the fact that she was the person named Miriam Van Waters.

The little dog made a mock charge at me, warning me not to get too close to Miriam.

"Trickey," she said. "It's all right. This man is our friend—and biographer."

In the heat of a summer morning in 1955, a seedy little tent show unpacked on the outskirts of Framingham. Kiddy rides and games of chance, and food stands reeking of rancid oil grew in a circle, linked by strings of naked lights. Wornout trucks sagged on their springs behind patched tents. Tired men shuffled along the midway on dusty errands.

By nightfall, this collection of chipped enamel, frayed rope and weary flesh was a tiny oasis of excitement, the heart of which was a dog and pony act.

The dogs, all small, sat on their hind legs within a circle of

trotting ponies until commanded to prance a simple ballet or leap over wooden hurdles. The animals were well trained, appealing performers.

On the third or fourth day of the show's one-week stand, Miriam, driving to Hill Top from the Reformatory, saw something move in the ferns. She stopped, got out and walked to the place. There she saw a small, black dog with white markings. She thought it might be a Spitz, but she wasn't sure.

Having been on a conversational basis with animals for more than sixty years, she spoke to the dog.

"You'd better go home," she said, quietly.

The dog slipped away.

Several days later, after the tent show had moved on, Miriam turned into the steep approach to Hill Top and saw the same dog, tottering up the grade. She and Ralph gathered it in, feeling, beneath its deceptive ruff of fur, an emaciated body. They fed it from a milk-soaked cloth, then carried it off to a veterinarian who said the dog was not only starved, but had been beaten.

A few days later, the dog moved into Miriam's house at the Reformatory. The little Spitz was cautious at first, then, its confidence regained, revealed its identity with show business. It pranced its ballets and leaped over chairs with joy, parading its theatrical talents as though in gratitude. It even presented its new owner with a litter of pups.

As often as I visited 14 Clark Street, Trickey guarded Miriam Van Waters fiercely, and one day I understood why, in the allegorical sense.

Trickey, like thousands of human females, had discovered life at Miriam's house to be more satisfying than the tinsel, loneliness, hunger, cruelty, and fleeting applause of the traveling show.

Wary of Miriam's kindness at first, Trickey learned that the hand that stroked her never struck her. It was easy to dance for this person, perfectly all right to jump over her chairs, to return affection and express joy. It was natural to present the puppies whose sire was indifferent, unknown, because the atmosphere was filled with assurance that each puppy would receive a full measure of care. It was essential, also, to protect the protector.

I don't want to make too much of this, but there was something absolutely right about the idea of a dog running away from a circus to join a home—considering whose home it was.

The final word belongs to the author, unknown to me, of the citation that accompanied the honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters awarded to Miriam by Bates College after her retirement. It is an excellent summarization of her career and philosophy:

"Mr. President:

"I have the honor to present Miss Miriam Van Waters, Bachelor of Arts, University of Oregon, 1908; Doctor of Philosophy, Clark University, 1913; Superintendent Retired, Massachusetts Correctional Institution, Framingham.

"Four American Commonwealths contributed to the career of one of the nation's truly great women: Pennsylvania, her birthplace; Oregon, from whose State University she carries three degrees; California, in whose Los Angeles Juvenile Court she achieved her foundation experience; Massachusetts, where she stood at Armageddon and battled for the Lord against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world.

"It is the strongly held view of Doctor Van Waters that a correctional institution has a duty that far exceeds the requirements

of restraint—the obligation to achieve, as far as possible, the permanent rehabilitation of the detained. Her four handmaidens have been: education, work, health-improvement, and religion. ‘Let her own work praise her in the gates.’ Eighty-five per cent of the Framingham women released never again were in prison. To them she is a doctor of broken lives.

“Never has Bates College bestowed its Doctorate of Humane Letters, *Honoris Causa*, more appropriately or deservedly than to Miriam Van Waters—scholar, author, internationally esteemed and singularly enlightened penologist, the woman with ‘the understanding heart.’”

