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A very Happy Christmas and New Year to our Dear Friends:

Last spring a number of you asked about the last days of our precious Mother's earthly pilgrimage. At the time it was not possible to even thank you for your letters of loving sympathy. But in this more peaceful place, where I have come to prepare for my last stretch of service, I have taken time to share with you the memories of a year ago, hoping that especially to the Grandchildren whom she loved so much, Margaret Bell Haskell may seem to speak again.

Mother was nearly 84 years old but she had never retired to take a seat in the chimney corner; she kept up with the procession. She was interested in world affairs; was a member of the group striving for "International Friendship thru the Churches;" she made a study of the questions and candidates upon which she was to vote; she was a prop in the W.C.T.U. and especially so in the Community Prayer Circle, and the church prayer meetings. In her last illness she dictated a letter for me to type to Pres. Mary E. Wooley, which resulted in the gift of \$250 from the Student Chest of Mt. Holyoke College for the first Settlement House of Bulgaria.

What Miss Dimond used to call "The taking down of the Tabernacle" began with Mother in the fall (it was some form of liver trouble); this process can never be easy, it is necessarily accompanied with great discomfort, weariness, and at times with actual suffering, but with Mother there was also so much of happiness and of that ineffable "something" which comes to those whose faces are set Heavenward! You know that one thing that kept Mother young was her good will towards her fellows; every attention or kindness came as a glad surprise but the lack of the same made no impression; her pure soul could not suspect others of willful neglect; she never felt slighted. When in her illness the flowers, fruit, callers, and letters poured in, her cup was full; love seemed to just radiate from her, and she had something beautiful to say about every human being with whom she came in contact. And how good people were; our Landlady, Mrs. Dulmage, and all in the house, the Doctors, the church people, and the relatives, but when it came to those nearest her-- "There never was such a son as Harry" she said and then added quickly "Ed is just as good, of course, but he is so far away." I add "Amen"! What would our parents have done in their last days without a son in America to care for them and look after their affairs? I am sure she would wish me to thank again her precious grandchildren, whose letters and attentions were no end of comfort at all times, but especially now.

In Nov. Harry came from Kansas City and Edward's second son Douglas from New York and Eddy Haskell was studying in Oberlin. The dear Mother said over and over "I was so happy to have my three boys together". Had Edward and his grandson Bobbie been present she would have classified all as her "boys." Mother looked forward to Eddie Haskell's evening visits when he would wheel her back to her room from the sunny front room where she spent her days. "He is just like a breath of spring", she said.

By November we employed as regular night nurse Mrs. Anna Quinn Williams (colored). Thru the day I had the care but I knew that with Mrs. Williams at the helm all would be well thru the night. Iamsie confided to me, "Sometimes when Mrs. Williams is working over me at night and I see those great brown arms around me, (Mrs. W. weighed 230 lbs.) why, it almost seems as tho it was a bear. Then I think 'They are such DEAR arms, what does it matter if they ARE brown'!"

Mother was always a poor sleeper, and very dependent on some book of the "Daddy Longlegs" type for a soporific. Once the book happened to be "gentle Julia". The invalid told me with glee how after Mrs. W. had stopped reading aloud, she could hear her chuckling as she kept on reading to herself.

I had dreaded the nights for Mother, when that total blindness with which she was threatened, should overtake her, but kindly Death averted this calamity.

After she left us someone said he had been much more helped by Mother's life than by reading the Bible. But Mother without the "Gude Buke" (as she called it) would be impossible to imagine. All her life the Book had "left its impress on a quiet, cultured gentlewoman". I used to marvel in Samokov at ~~her~~ perfect courtesy toward the poorest, most uninteresting human beings who because of lack of public welfare work crowded about any one who would help them. They did not suspect how many luxuries and even comforts that little lady forewent in order to share with them her worldly goods. "Bear ye one anothers burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ" had been her life motto. When ill she did not talk about death, but she made a list of keepsakes for her nearest and dearest and she had me read over and over the passage beginning "If our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved we have a building of God a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens". One evening she had been pretty miserable and after Mrs. Williams came to take charge and I had gone to my room, I could not rest, so walked down the hall to see how things were. Mother's door was open and she was sitting up in bed, with her face alight as she said "I am better now, I have had a sweet little talk with Mrs. Williams. Find her the place to read for me about the many mansions"! One night she wanted me to find the verse "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out"! She said it was the verse which had helped her when as a high school girl she had wanted to settle the question about personal religion. Mother was not upset by Modernism. She felt it of small importance whether stories hereto-fore supposed to be historical facts had been proved to be traditions, incorporated to teach great spiritual truths; ~~but~~ she did consider it important that men read the Bible to come to know their Creator, and that they obey the law of love to God and each other. At her funeral the Pastor dwelt at length on her TOLERANCE. He gave as an illustration an incident told him by a friend. When Mr. Nelson, the proprietor of the "Kansas City Star" was in his last illness, it seems that Mother wrote the great man a letter to express her gratitude that her son could have been long associated with one of Mr. Nelson's personality and fine principles. In her letter she made it plain that she considered Mr. Nelson's work a real contribution to the world's good, and that in his own way he had served God and his fellows. Mr. Nelson had not emphasized the church, and was touched that one so preeminently religious should recognize him as belonging to her class.

But no one who knew Mother would imagine her reading to have been confined to the one Book. Miss Chase of the College Library said the Library should have a special delivery system for Mrs. Haskell. Many varieties of books we read to her but always aimed to have a humorous book and some biography in hand. For weeks Miss Mary Case came every afternoon to read aloud and this gave me time to go out and do errands, the most important being a trip to the Library.

By Feb. 8, the dear one could no longer listen to steady reading, she was in such misery, but a friend who happened in, remarked on her perfect poise and courtesy withal. Feb. 10 was her last day of consciousness. Mr. VanderPyl's call and prayer cheered her greatly. "How good it was in him to come, and how thankful I am not to have been in misery while he was here", she said. Little Mrs. Heydenburg also came and Mother asked her to read from the Book so it happened that the last reading to which this aged missionary listened was the 126 Ps: "The Lord hath done for us great things, whereof we are glad.--They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bearing his sheaves with him."

Early on the morning of Lincoln's birthday came her release. Harry came right on and everyone was more than kind. The funeral service in the old First Church was very beautiful. Some of the passages read were Ps. 91, Ps. 23:4, Ps. 103:13, 14, Jn. 14:1-3, Jn. 11:25, 2Cor. 4:17. Where was Mother at this time? Could she hear the Pastor speak of how people loved her both in Oberlin and in far away Bulgaria? Why he even said "The church has been vindicated throughout the ages by such rare spirits"! A Bulgarian later reminded me that he said: "She had dignity divorced from stiffness" that "the atmosphere of a room subtly changed when she entered." I have already spoken of his words about her tolerance. What would she have said at the display of flowers? Of course she would have said the money should have been given to the needy (which is true) but in her heart she would have smiled to think the "Kansas City Star" and the other Kansas City friends had loved her son enough to remember his Mother, and she would have been touched at the offerings from her own personal friends.

We have already told you how a band of Bulgarian workingmen carried her, (volunteer pall bearers). We laid her by Father in Westwood. For her inscription we chose: "Blessed are the merciful." Mother left the manuscript of a daily devotional book, to be published in Bulgarian. The passage for one day reads "On the shores of the Adriatic, the wives of the fishermen whose husbands have gone far out upon the deep, are in the habit at eventide of going down to the seashore and singing the first stanza of a hymn. They listen till they hear borne by the wind, across the sea the second stanza, sung by their gallant husbands, as they are tossed by the gale upon the waves.

Perhaps if we could listen, we too could hear some sound, some whisper, borne from afar, to remind us that there is a heaven and a home!"

My Mother's children and grandchildren would all wish to thank all the friends for the expressions of their regard for her.

Sincerely,

Mary M. Haskell.