

Ms. Auto  
Chautauquian  
Clippings

December 9, 1937

Dear Mr. Bates:

Here are a few informal,  
very informal, recollections of  
Meadville in the '80's centering around the  
Chautauquan of course. If you find  
them suitable to your purpose I shall  
be glad to have them used, but if they  
are of too light a weight do not  
hesitate to throw them into the waste  
basket.

With all good wishes  
for your undertaking, believe me

Very sincerely yours

Mr. Robert Bates  
Meadville Republican  
Meadville, Pa.

Ida M. Tarbell  
120 East 19th Street  
New York, N. Y.

## MEADVILLE IN THE '80'S

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Two years and a half after I graduated from Allegheny College in 1880 I came back to Meadville - to the town this time - as an assistant editor of The Chautauquan, a monthly magazine which announced itself as "Devoted to the Promotion of True Culture, Organ of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle."

The Chautauquan had first settled in Meadville in November 1880 brought there from Jamestown, New York, where it had been born by Dr. Theodore L. Flood, its new editor and proprietor. Dr. Flood's reason for establishing himself in Meadville was, as he set down at the time, that the editorial and business departments might be by the side of the printers, Messrs. Hempstead & Company, "the gentlemen who performs the remarkable feat every August of printing the Assembly Daily Herald in the woods at Chautauqua."

The printing and business offices had their own habitats when I reached Meadville in 1883, but the editing of the magazine was carried on in the library of Dr. Flood's home which I remember as a big square roomy house on Water Street just where it emerges into The Terrace. I looked for this house in

October of 1937 while in Headville, but could not place it. Either I was entirely wrong in my idea of what it looked like or else the section has been so packed with smaller houses that it has lost its identity.

The duties for which I had been engaged were supposed to cover only two weeks of each month but soon were extended to a year around job, handling departments and looking after make-up.

Up to that time the make-up of the magazine had been almost entirely in the hands of Adrian McCoy, the head of Mr. Hemstead's press room, as good a craftsman as I have ever known and as courteous a gentleman. He had had his own troubles in making up the Journal for Dr. Flood was anything but a methodical editor. He was a politically-minded man and needed someone to take the detail of the office from his hands which under Mr. McCoy's direction I bunglingly tried to do.

The magazine grew rapidly in these years, earned "good money", was soon able to build its own quarters bringing together the scattered department in a pleasant building at the corner of <sup>2</sup>/<sub>1</sub> and <sup>2</sup>/<sub>1</sub> *street*, I was a little shocked to find recently that time had changed the old Chautauquan offices into an auto sales room. Progress? Perhaps.

A pleasant result of the growth of the magazine was the increasing recognition it had from the town. *It* was natural enough. It was becoming important to the young people of the town - a place to work. Most of them were employed

in circulation, ~~clerical~~ offices particularly. Among these latter, one was to become a very important personage - Miss Elda Long, a cousin of Mary and Louise McClintock, <sup>she</sup> who developed into one of those important trusted assistants to the President which one finds every now and then among women, a fine executive with large common sense.

As the editorial department expanded we looked to the Allegheny College graduates for additions to our staff. The important ones that were brought on were Harriet Carter, a class mate of mine from North East and Josephine Henderson of the class of 1881 from Titusville.

The problem of living in a town where people had settled homes and not often an extra room to rent was finally solved by five of us in the editorial department taking a house just back of The Chautauquan on <sup>2</sup> Street and opposite George Shryock's fine big house, with a big well-groomed lawn on each side and many flowers. Our house was old but it was comfortable with large rooms. We lived and kept house there as long as I remained with The Chautauquan. The mother of Harriet Carter was our housekeeper - "The Co-ops" we were called.

It was a pleasant way to live and having a home of our own tied us up with the town more intimately than otherwise would have been possible. As a fact we were, rather slowly perhaps, but surely, being recognized as belonging to a worthwhile cultural activity. One of the results of this was that we were taken into <sup>the</sup> most interesting and delightful little

group of women to which I have ever belonged. The group was made up of one or more from each of three or four sets in the town which rather prided themselves on being intellectual. They were not pretentious about it, if a bit solemn. They met fortnightly for a simple early supper and an informal talk on some theme which had been fixed at a previous meeting. No papers were read. They avoided the Encyclopaedia, but brought whatever could be gathered on the subject and talked about it freely, the whole point being to try and hold themselves to one theme instead of everything in the world. The Co-ops were rather proud of being accepted by these serious ladies and I think kept up their end rather well.

One result of the expanding editorial policies of The Chautauquan as well as its very rapid financial growth was that people of interest who came to visit in Meadville looked us up. It was our recognition as something of consequence in the town that plunged us at one time in the years I was on The Chautauquan into one of the most ridiculous predicaments Meadville ever experienced. In our case this came about from our close association with the faculty members of Allegheny College, several of whom had become contributors to the magazine.

It was not infrequent for outside people of importance to visit Allegheny College so it was not at all surprising to us that one Sunday afternoon Dr. Montgomery, whom everybody who knew Allegheny in those years will remember with affection, brought into Dr. Flood's house where I was at that time

living, a rather odd looking specimen whom he introduced as Captain Dutton of the United States Army. According to Dr. Montgomery Captain Dutton had dropped off on his way to Washington to look over a rather famous collection of minerals owned by the College. He had shown such intelligent interest that Dr. Montgomery had asked him about three or four unclassified specimens and Captain Dutton professing not to be quite sure about them had pocketed them to look up in Washington.

There was a military officer in the College at that time - a Lieutenant Fuller. He knew all about Captain Dutton. Had not Captain Dutton been one of the major members of the recent spectacular descent of the Colorado Canyon under the direction of Major Powell? So important did Lieutenant Fuller consider the man that he hastened to give a stag dinner inviting several important men from the town, prominent among them Colonel Dick, a former member of Congress, one of the few really experienced socialities in Leadville. Colonel Dick thought he had met Captain Dutton at some function at Washington. At any rate ~~he was received and soon all the town was talking about him.~~ <sup>well</sup>

Our visitor showed himself one of the most brilliant talkers I had ever listened to. He thrilled us by his stories of his Western exploration, particularly the descent of the Colorado Canyon. Before he had left that afternoon Dr. Flood had engaged two articles from him to be delivered at once.

The arrangements for the articles were left in my hands and on Monday morning the Captain called at the office

to arrange details. Incidentally asked me to go driving with him in the afternoon and show him the town. It was a brisk snowy day, the roads were beautiful around Meadville, and he took me out behind a spanking span, I doing my best as a personal conductor. He also delivered me back, safe and sound before dark. I had to stand a lot of jeering from the young men at the house who did not understand why a Captain of the United States Army should be running around Meadville without an overcoat in what they called a "five dollar hand-me-down suit." I was lofty about it saying that a man as brilliant as he could wear whatever he wanted so far as I was concerned.

We got our articles promptly and Captain Dutton got and cashed his check within twenty four hours thereafter. Then suddenly Dr. Montgomery came into my office with a very sober face and said, "I think you better not have anything more to do with Captain Dutton until we hear from Washington."

It was something of a blow. But it was not many hours afterwards when Captain Dutton, himself, appeared in the office. He had had a hurried call from Washington. He had come to bid me goodbye. With some misgivings and quite solemnly I bid him goodbye and from the window of my office watched him flying down the street to train three. I noticed he wore a military cape which flew out behind him as he hurried along. I learned afterwards that the cape belonged to Lieutenant Fuller.

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It was soon known in Meadville that the town had been completely and beautifully swindled by a finished rogue. We also learned that he had been victimising some Middle Western towns, each of which had kept still about it out of chagrin, as we were inclined to do. We heard later that soon after he left us he was caught up with, but whatever became of him I have never known. Indeed, it was a subject on which for some time I was too sore to talk. As to the articles that Dr. Flood had bought Captain Dutton had hardly disappeared before I began to wonder. I looked up Major Powell's report of his expedition and I found that our articles had been copied verbatim from that report.

Many more important things happened in Meadville as I knew it in the '80's, but certainly nothing that compared in picturesqueness.