

## **Memorial to Lucy Salisbury Doolittle (February 1908)**

Lucy Salisbury came to Antioch College as a new student the year that it opened for classes in 1853, but her education experienced such frequent interruption, probably due to financial reasons, that by 1860 she was still in the College's preparatory program. There she met Myrick Hascall Doolittle, class of 1862, and the two married upon his graduation. Myrick would soon take a job with the United States Naval Observatory in Washington DC, then the most important scientific research facility in the country. In 1863, Lucy joined the United States Sanitary Commission. The USSC was formed by civilians but made official by legislation signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1861 to coordinate the volunteer efforts of women who wanted to contribute to the Union during the American Civil War. The Sanitary Commission staffed field hospitals, raised money, provided supplies, and worked to educate the military and government on matters of health and sanitation.

The memorial to Lucy Salisbury Doolittle that follows was delivered in February 1908 at All Soul's Unitarian Church of Washington DC and given by another Antiochian, Jennie Weeks Scudder, class of 1870. Interestingly, the two never crossed paths in Yellow Springs, although Jennie had been a student of Lucy's when the latter had been a schoolteacher in Castile, NY in the early 1850s. They would reconnect after the war as members of the Board of Managers of the Home for the Relief of Destitute Colored Women and Children, adjacent Howard University.

A LIFE OF SERVICE

IN MEMORY OF

Mrs. Lucy S. Doolittle BY

JENNIE W. SCUDDER

[Read before the Women's Alliance of All Souls Church.]

The woman in whose memory we meet today was born on October 7, 1832, and at her death on February 6, 1908, she had completed a life of almost seventy-six years, of which nearly the whole may be truthfully designated a life of service.

Some of us sometimes wondered at the intensity with which she gave herself up to this life. We find now its first impulse in the fact that at eight years she was motherless, and that from this moment she so hungered for mothering and for the birthright of youthful happiness that had been denied her, that to brighten the lot of motherless children seemed to her a most worthy object of life.

At the death of her mother, Lucy Salisbury was taken into the home of Jonathan and Sarah Gilbert, her great aunt and uncle. They were a couple who, having no family of their own, made up the deficiency by raising and helping to raise thirteen children of other people's relatives and friends. They were of Connecticut stock and were not so far removed from Puritanism but that its influence permeated more or less the atmosphere of their household. Sunday began at five o'clock Saturday afternoon, and on no other day was idleness tolerated. To the whole

community they were

Uncle Jock

and

Aunt Sarah.

The former was a bluff old farmer, thrifty and capable in his line. He lent a more or less generous aid to the most liberal minded church of the village, wherefore he was inclined to dominate its affairs. On one occasion he did not hesitate to express his disapproval of the bonnet worn by the minister's wife.

Aunt Sarah remains one of the most picturesque of my memories. Especially impressive to me was she, coming into church on a summer Sunday, her dress short, of soft black silk, with low shoes and white clocked stockings, a striped silk long shawl about her shoulders, a large black bonnet on her head, gold beads around her neck, and a wing fan in her hand. Again I recall her as in a picture seated in the large hall of the hillside house, engaged in picking wool. Drowsiness had overcome her, piles of wool lay all about on the floor, while through the open door one saw great fleecy clouds floating in a blue sky. Her plump hands grasped a bunch of wool, her gray hair lay in moist ringlets about a flushed brow, the gold beads glistened at her neck, and a little girl who happened in just then, went softly away, but never forgot.

My impression is that while Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert did their duty as they saw it, they did not rivet to themselves by bonds of unadulterated love the hearts of friends and adopted children. There were respect and gratitude, which probably increased as the years went by, in the hearts of those who had shared their home, but Lucy Salisbury never lost there her longing to sometime brighten life for motherless or homeless children.

No one left the Gilberts unprepared for the struggle for life. Many if not all learned a trade by which to earn their bread, and the girls were also thoroughly trained in household affairs and domestic economy. The lately revived art of weaving was an every day occupation, while the yarn woven was spun by the same hands. Surely this was no little thing to do for thirteen children.

School teaching was the first means that offered to Lucy Salisbury toward making her way in life. She had had a common school training sufficient for the purpose, and my earliest memory of her is as teacher of a summer school, in a little red school house in the picturesque village of Castile, Wyoming County, New York, where her girlhood was passed. Her wages were carefully saved until enough to help her to a broader education, and when the doors of Antioch College at Yellow Springs, Ohio, were opened, the first of all schools to grant absolutely the same privileges to women as to men, she entered its preparatory department. Her means were not yet sufficient to supply all her needs, and vacations were spent earning money for the next school year. This she did in various ways, and friends beholding her sincerity of purpose, were occasionally glad to help her. Mr. Gilbert gave her the use of a scholarship in the school, for which he had paid.

Yellow Springs at this time was a veritable Mecca for people of liberal opinions in education

and religion, to say nothing of those of more erratic ideas. It was an entirely different atmosphere from the little New York village, but she thrived in every way. Friendships made there lasted to the day of her death and the influence under which she came there was the formative one of her life. The lofty character of Horace Mann, with his devotion to high ideals, impressed her strongly, and his admonition to his students that it was unworthy to die without having done something for humanity found fertile soil in her mind.

During all her struggle for education she was sharing her hard earned means with relatives whom fortune had treated even less kindly than herself.

In 1862, after having finished the preparatory studies, and having taken some special courses in the College classes, she married Mr. Myrick H. Doolittle, who had that year graduated from the College.

The civil war was under way by this time and a more strenuous life beckoned her away from the quiet Ohio village. Her husband, who was not strong enough to take part in the war, went to Harvard, to pursue advanced mathematical studies, while Mrs. Doolittle came to Washington to act as voluntary nurse in the hospitals. Later she was employed by the Sanitary Commission.

Here she entered a field where many afterwards renowned in philanthropy, literature and science were already working together, to suppress rebellion, to succor the wounded and to uplift the slave.

When the tide of war was spent and the attention of people was turned to making good its ravages, the city of Washington offered as pleasant, as profitable and as useful a field for her as could any other place. Her husband was now employed in one of the scientific departments of the government and she began to make a home for themselves. At the same time she was employed by public institutions and private individuals in the work of establishing the negro in habits which would help to make him appreciate the rights of citizenship and capable of exercising them. She was an agent of the Freedman's Bureau, and she managed a sewing school for colored women and children, funds for which were furnished by Miss Abby Francis, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, daughter of Rev. Convers Francis.

About this time was founded the Industrial Home School for White Children, which still exists in Georgetown. In its establishment Mrs. Doolittle and her husband were very actively interested and in its administration for many years they took a leading part.

As national and municipal affairs began to settle into shape in Washington and thought could be given to systematic charity, Mr. and Mrs. Doolittle became so closely identified with all such efforts that any history of Washington's philanthropic development must make mention of them.

We can imagine the conditions faintly perhaps. The city was inundated with a flood of helpless, ignorant, irresponsible negroes from the surrounding country; it was strewn with the human flotsam and jetsam of the Northern and Southern Armies. There was great prevalence of petty

crimes which landed its victims in a jail or a workhouse where there were no separate quarters for women and men. Women thus committed, in trying to preserve their clothing for appearance at trial or for use after dismissal, were apt to go improperly clad. Hither went Mrs. Doolittle to teach these women to make other clothing from material furnished by the authorities, thus lending a mite of aid toward keeping a proper standard of life even in such unpromising circumstances.

There was no police court for the prompt trial of minor cases, and long waiting for trial by the District Court in such uncivilized surroundings did more to promote than to prevent crime. One of the judges of the District Court had such confidence in Mrs. Doolittle's judgment that in many cases investigated by her and reported to him, he either let the offender go free or gave him his freedom until time for trial on his promise to return. In fact he practically made her the judge in many cases. The need of a police court was so apparent to her that Mrs. Doolittle asked her husband to write a statement of things as she had found them. This statement she presented to many Congressmen and quite soon thereafter had the satisfaction of seeing a police court in operation. It is probably not claiming too much to say that its establishment then was largely due to her efforts and arguments.

After the war the first and most insistent need for help was among the hordes of colored people, and all the years of her life in the District of Columbia were devoted to some sort of work for the mental, physical and moral improvement of these people. She never lost faith that they were capable of improvement, nor the belief that they must and could only be made to help themselves by teaching them habits of thrift and the principles of right living.

Mrs. Doolittle, believing thus, naturally identified herself with many of the institutions designed for this purpose. She was for many years on the Board of Managers of the Home for the Relief of Destitute Colored Women and Children, being most of that time its treasurer. She was active in persuading the District Government to establish there a branch of the public schools, for she was beginning to see that segregation is not the best treatment for the little waifs. She was glad also to act for some years as treasurer of the Manassas Industrial School for Colored Youth, and did not give up the office until failing health made it imperative. She was interested also in the Colored Foundlings

Home, since abolished, and in the Temporary Home for Colored Children.

Mrs. Doolittle's experience in institutional charity led her to the belief that a system more closely following the family ideal was better, and when the question arose as to the organization of the Board of Guardians for Dependent Children, she was earnest in advocating such action, and was made a member of the first board. Children dependent upon the public are placed by an agent of the board in families in different parts of the country. They are carefully looked after by the agent who reports to the Board, and permanent homes are often thus found for them. The expense is borne by the District Government. The system demands discretion, executive ability and great devotion from those who administer it, and all these qualities our friend possessed in a marked degree. The members of this Board are appointed by a judge of the criminal court

and two judges of the police court of the District. Mrs. Doolittle served on it nine years, was twice elected its vice-president and three times its president. In the words of Mr. B. Pickman Mann, president of the Board, who was long associated with her there:

Her work was characterized by energy, fidelity and that manifestation of a kindly and sympathetic interest which won the confidence, respect and affection of her associates. She went quietly and effectively about the work in hand and made no show except of results or earnest efforts to achieve such as were desirable.

\* Resolutions passed by the Board at her death said among other things:

It has been truly said of her that she never touched a life except to improve and bless it.

In the years immediately following the war, begging on the streets of this city by persons of all ages and sexes, was so common as to be very noticeable and disagreeable. The system of Associated Charities, already in operation in other cities, was resorted to to put an end to this and to prevent it in the future by removing its cause. Here again Mrs. Doolittle and her husband were ready helpers. They assisted in the organization of the third sub-division of the Society in the northwestern part of the city, and later Mrs. Doolittle became one of the Board of Managers of the Central Society.

The arrival in her own home of two little girls turned Mrs. Doolittle's attention to the matter of education more decidedly than heretofore. She had long been the friend of Miss Elizabeth Peabody, and was her disciple in the matter of kindergartening. She was able to place her own children in a private kindergarten, but she felt that this training was the right of every child, and that it was the duty of the government to thus provide for the moral development which is perhaps the best result of the method. She therefore associated herself with various organizations whose ultimate object was the introduction of kindergartens into the public school system of the District. In later years she was happy in seeing this accomplished. She and her husband were generous subscribers to the fund for the support of free kindergartens established by Mr. B.P. Mann, and soon after the formation of the Columbian Kindergarten Association Mrs. Doolittle was made a member of its Executive Board. She was also the trusted friend and counsellor of Mrs. Phoebe Hearst during the time she maintained free kindergartens in this city.

She was the personal friend of several of the women prominent in the suffrage movement, but I think that while sympathetic, her interest in that matter was limited by the belief that being a resident of the District of Columbia she could do better work for humanity in other ways.

Mrs. Doolittle was not a philanthropist who neglected her own home. Her domestic affairs were always well managed, and her children were nurtured with loving care. The fact that she helped her husband to acquire considerable property also gives proof that she was a woman of well ordered mind and not a shallow enthusiast, neglecting her own affairs while regulating those of other people.

Her relation to this church began at an early period in her life here and she was acquainted with many of the families connected with its early history. This relation was suspended for a time but

when her children became old enough to enter a Sunday School she brought them to All Souls and from that time she took for many years a very active part in its affairs. She was one of the first two women elected to the Board of Trustees and her influence there was for those methods and means of administration which should make All Souls distinguished in philanthropy and education as well as in religion.

In short, hers was a practical religion. She was from the first prominent on the Charity Committee, working with vigor whether for the sewing schools and day nursery in the Miner Building in South Washington or for the making and sending of clothing to the Mission School at the Crow Indian Reservation, or for free kindergartens maintained by the Committee for some years among the poor white and colored people in different sections of the city. At that time it was necessary for the Committee to collect its funds by personal appeal and Mrs. Doolittle never shirked this not altogether agreeable duty. A liberal giver herself, she was a successful persuader to liberality in others.

In the Alliance she was the same earnest worker as elsewhere, and her word was always for the utmost endeavor. She was a charter member of the Twentieth Century Club and had great hope for and faith in its future. There, as elsewhere, the philanthropic side was most attractive to her.

When failing health made it advisable that she take up her residence in the little Maryland village of Linden, where she died, she relinquished most of the philanthropic work that had so long engaged her; but her counsel and advice were still a refuge for many accustomed, even for years, to seek them when troubled or perplexed. She had long before this time availed herself of the privilege which the Unitarian belief permits its holders of accepting truth wherever found, and the seed of truth in mental science grew in her mind to a flourishing plant affording her comfort in her later life. But her eyes were never dimmed to the principle which this denomination makes prominent in its declaration of faith, and when told by her physician that death was at hand, she calmly replied that believing in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, she had always tried to put her belief into practice. She was not afraid of the future.

This summary of the life of Lucy Salisbury Doolittle has not been made entirely by way of eulogy. It is simply to show how one of our number tried to live the life of service and to what extent she succeeded. In the rush of life we do not get a true perspective. It is only when some one's work is done, and we stop our own long enough to survey from all sides the finished product that we realize its proportions. Even then we forget the mass of detail necessary to bring out the final results.

Believing that it is well for us to stop and consider these things in the life of one who for years was one of us, I, whose lifelong friend she was, have herein tried to set forth her noble and effective service for family, church and state.

\*From Mr. Mann's address at the Memorial Services held by the Colored People.

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