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September 2015

Nancy Hale Correspondence

Nancy Hale 1908-1988

Anna Westcott Hale 1908-1988

Nancy Hale Wertenbaker 1908-1988

Hilda McLeod

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HALE, Nancy

October 22, 1935

Miss Nancy Hale
Charles Scribner's Sons
597 Fifth Avenue
New York City

Dear Miss Hale:

Recently we read an article concerning you and your work, and realized with dismay that we had not acquired a copy of NEVER ANY MORE for our Maine Author Collection. This is an exhibit collection of the works of contemporary Maine Authors, and includes books with a Maine setting, as well as those of writers actually born in Maine. For this reason, in addition to the fact that it was a splendid book and one of last season's most popular, we are ordering a copy, which the publishers will doubtless forward to you. We hope that you will be kind enough to inscribe this copy of NEVER ANY MORE for us, and we assure you we will appreciate your kindness.

Very truly yours
Maine State Library

lm

Secretary

October 22, 1935

Miss Nancy Hale
c/o Charles Scribners' Sons
New York City

Dear Miss Hale:

Thank you for inscribing NEVER ANY MORE, and forwarding it to us for our Maine Author Collection. We appreciate your interest and kindness, and assure you we are delighted to add this book to the Collection.

We hope when you are in Maine that you will visit us some day, so that you may know the Maine Author Collection, and we may better know you. Our best wishes are yours for continued literary success.

Very truly yours
Maine State Library

lm

Secretary

Nancy Hale, Descendant Of Literary Celebrities Herself a Popular Author

Because she is a New England author, granddaughter of Edward Everett Hale, and author of a book, many of whose scenes were laid on an island off the Maine coast. ("Never Any More," one of last season's "best sellers" and reviewed in these columns) the following excerpts from a sketch in The Boston Transcript will be of interest to Maine readers. It is by Harry Salpeter:

When I first saw Nancy Hale, and in the circumstances under which I first saw her, I thought of her as Diana in a newspaper office, for there was in her first glance the calm, clear, almost cool, look of the fabled huntress. One could not perhaps tell right away that there was a glow and a warmth in her spirit which could quite thaw out that first impression of cool remoteness. I might say that Nancy Hale is a double contradiction, and that without disrespect to her sex; she is not only a lovely author, contradiction enough, but she is also a lovely newspaperwoman, which can hardly be counted a handicap even on The New York Times.

The young and buoyant presence of Miss Hale is a joyous suggestion of the future, not an evocation from the past. Yet the name and the ancestry of Miss Hale must be of precious significance to New England, and to Boston particularly. Whether she wills it or not, whether her future books take her further away from her roots than her past books have, her roots, spiritual and moral and intellectual, are in old New England.

The moment you learn that Edward Everett Hale was her grandfather, and that in her inheritance there is the blood of Everetts and Hales and links of association with the Beechers and the Stowes—Harriet Beecher Stowe was her great-aunt—why then the name Nancy Hale loses the pert and bright connotations which it has when you see it at the bottom of a little sketch in "The New Yorker," or at the top of a page in the no less fashionable "Vanity Fair," or even in the more sober and serious Scribner's. Rich as she may be in inheritance and in culture, in herself she is an untrammelled creature, seeking to create her own valuation, attempting to understand the present, to make terms with it and to conquer it.

She is only 25 years, an age at which many young men and women are still floundering about. She has marked her path clearly and is hewing close to the line of her serious intention. She is a wife and the mother of a son moving toward his fifth birthday. She is therefore in her fiction no air plant, but rooted in the human concerns of womanhood. She is the author of two novels, "The Young Die Good" and "Never Any More," the latter only recently published and most favorably received. As a short-story writer, she was represented in a recent series of O. Henry Prize Memorial Stories. For five years she was practically managing editor of Vogue and she writes short stories and sketches steadily for her, at present, limited cluster of magazines.

At the present time she is on the staff of The New York Times as a plain reporter. When she isn't mother, newspaperwoman, or short-story writer, she is planning and plotting the structure and method of her third novel, the basic idea of which is the impact of a New England woman on a Southern environment, and the impact of a Southern environment on a New England woman. In private life she is Mrs. Taylor Hardin. Mr. Hardin is a Southerner.

It is perhaps natural that the granddaughter of Edward Everett Hale and the grandniece of Harriet Beecher Stowe should be a writer, but it seemed for a time that Nancy Hale would be a painter, for she is the daughter of Philip L. Hale, painter and critic, under whom she studied at the Boston Museum School of Art. Her mother, Lillian Westcott Hale, was a painter too, and Nancy seemed on the way to make it unanimous, for as a young girl she sketched and painted and, a little later, fulfilled portrait commissions for various Bostonians. Even now, when leisure and inclination unite, she sketches and paints.

Her father was her first and most important literary influence, she tells me. He set her exercises of a Stevensonian nature. He would set her to the task, and pleasure too, of reading a page out of Peter or Landor or Sir Thomas Browne, a page out of an acknowledged master of English prose, after which she would have to reproduce as faithfully as possible as much as she could of the passage she had just read. In that way, she believes, her father helped her to form a style of her own—and it is, a

crisp, clear, lucid and intellectual prose style. It is from her father also that she obtained a sense of the past of Boston and of New England.

Her formative years were spent in the company of her elders; she was not one of those who plays games with her contemporaries. At school she was not popular, she was not "one of the girls." She did not regard as important the concerns which occupied the minds of girls of her age. It was not until she was given the task of running the magazine at the Winsor School that her real energies were engaged. Even then she had a sense, a feeling, that she cared more about writing than about anything else. At the age of nine she had sold a fairy story to one of the Boston dailies. In her teens she wrote verse that appeared in an anthology of children's poems.

Ludwig Lewisohn may be surprised, and interested, to learn that he is, after her father, the most vital literary influence Nancy Hale acknowledges today. She divides her creative life, thus far, into two parts; the first, before she read the introductory chapter to Lewisohn's "Expression in America"; the second, after she read that chapter.

The stories she wrote after reading that book were far better than the stories she wrote before. "Expression in America" and the introductory chapter particularly, made her realize "the sensation of dormancy in myself." He made her realize, she says, that writing should be expression, not trivial; that it must have meaning and significance for the man or woman who does the writing; that it must belong to, and spring from, the psyche of the writer.

Altho Miss Hale has been living and working in New York and environs for the past six years and more, she regards herself as a Bostonian, and she refreshes that which is Bostonian within her by making flying trips to her home city.

It is a little astonishing, as it is refreshing, to hear a young woman in a New York newspaper office sound the alarm, so to speak, for a recognition of the return to the tradition of Boston when the Puritans and the sons of the Puritans were the masters of the day.

No one reading the correspondence of the grandparents of the present generation of Bostonians, even if he knew nothing about the history of the time, could fail to be impressed, said Miss Hale, with the sense of activity which those letters convey. They show, she continued, that people were concerned with what was happening, with affairs and with literature. People cared then, they don't care now. Then it was the usual thing for all the members of a family to be active in a cause, serving a party, contributing to discussion from pulpit book, or periodical. If in the past every member of a family was in public office it was taken as a matter of course; nowadays, according to her diagnosis, if only one member of a family is doing something, that fact seems to be cause for congratulation by every other member of the family.

Lewiston Journal
July 27, 1935