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THE LANDSCAPE PERCEPTION AND IMAGERY OF
MARY HALLOCK FOOTE

By

Barbara Taylor Cragg

B.A., University of Montana, 1976

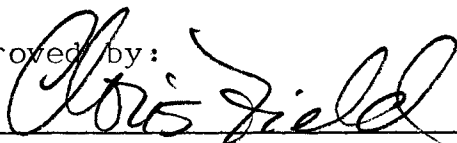
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for the degree of

Master of Interdisciplinary Studies

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1980

Approved by:



Chairman, Board of Examiners



Dean, Graduate School

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank those who helped me learn to read landscape.

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MARY HALLOCK FOOTE
(Family Photograph)



Mary Hallock Foote

Plate I

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

When Wallace Stegner wrote his Pulitzer prize-winning novel, Angle of Repose, he drew public attention to an unusual western woman.¹ In 1971, few readers realized that the story Stegner so carefully pieced together represented, in a very large part, the life of Mary Hallock Foote, a writer and illustrator of popular literary magazines in the late 1800's. Although scattered articles briefly mentioned her contribution to the literature and art of the Far West, and Mary Lou Benn had written a fairly comprehensive assessment of her literary accomplishment,² Foote was a forgotten woman.

Through communication with the Foote family, Ms. Benn had discovered Mary Hallock Foote's somewhat rambling but evocative reminiscences. In addition, a wealth of relatively untapped material existed in over 500 letters which Mary Foote had written her lifelong friend,

¹Wallace Stegner, Angle of Repose, (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971).

²Mary Lou Benn, "Mary Hallock Foote: Pioneer Woman Novelist," (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Wyoming, Laramie, 1955).

Helena de Kay Gilder, in the east.³ These letters and reminiscences along with additional memorabilia scattered here and there among collections,⁴ provided the "many details of their lives and characters" which Stegner used to write his novel and for which he thanks Foote's descendants.⁵ Shortly after the publication of Angle of Repose, the Huntington Library issued the reminiscences under the title, A Victorian Gentlewoman in the Far West.⁶ Carefully edited by Rodman Paul, and augmented by his extensive introduction, the reminiscences provide the most useful overview of Mary Hallock Foote's life so far available. Paul points out the omissions and partiality of the memoirs. Very wisely, I believe, he leaves much unsaid, recognizing that research never fully explains a human life.

Professor James H. Maguire has prepared an overview of Foote's literary work for the Western Writers' Series,⁷

³Mary Hallock Foote Letters, Stanford University Green Library (Manuscript collection Fe 115).

⁴The Huntington Library, San Marino, California holds the most comprehensive collection of Foote materials, much of it in facsimile.

⁵Stegner, preface to Angle of Repose.

⁶Rodman Paul, ed., A Victorian Gentlewoman in the Far West: The Reminiscences of Mary Hallock Foote (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1972).

⁷James H. Maguire, Mary Hallock Foote (Boise: Boise State College, 1972).

and Professor Richard Etulain has made both critical commentary of Foote's writing⁸ and a useful checklist of her work and that of her interpreters.⁹ Paul, Etulain and Maguire, along with Ms. Benn, note Mary Hallock Foote's fine descriptive prose which matches the excellence of her accompanying illustrations. Yet, for an artist whom contemporary critics termed "the dean of women illustrators,"¹⁰ her excellent pictorial work has been treated as secondary to her writing.¹¹ When grouped together, these illustrations, her descriptive essays and the word pictures of her fiction provide a formidable collection of material useful for interpreting Far Western landscapes and environments.

For a variety of reasons Mary Foote kept apart from everyday society. This aloofness may explain her failure to create truly persuasive western characters in the short stories and novels she wrote for the magazine trade.

⁸Richard Etulain, "Mary Hallock Foote (1847-1938)," American Literary Realism, 5 (Spring, 1972), 144-150.

⁹Richard Etulain, "Mary Hallock Foote: A Checklist," Western American Literature, 10 (August, 1975), 197.

¹⁰Regina Armstrong, "Representative American Illustrators," Critic, 37 (August, 1900), 131-141.

¹¹Shelley Armitage, University of Albuquerque, New Mexico, is currently preparing a Ph.D. thesis: "The Artist as Writer: Mary Hallock Foote as Realist."

Fortunately, she possessed an artist's eye for place and the ability to depict strong physical settings--especially in her illustrations. "I cannot write a story without seeing the places," she remarks.¹²

Mary Hallock Foote said that she stopped writing and illustrating when she believed her "vogue" had "passed away." Perhaps present interest in her life and work represents the 'vogue' of our time, for she belongs among the ranks of successful women long forgotten simply because they lived in an age when history generally meant the history of men's accomplishments written by men. Today, women hope to rewrite history to include themselves.

Although Americans have always maintained a fascination for the unusual landscapes of the west, they now try to understand their perception of all environments--all their lived-in landscapes. When they interpret past and present perception, they include, often for the first time, the views of women. As a western illustrator and writer, Foote pictured the west in images which contrasted markedly with the grand landscapes and challenging environments highlighted by male artists and writers of her time.

Landscape, British geographer Jay Appleton reminds

¹²Mary Hallock Foote (MHF) to James D. Hague, Milton, N.Y., May 27, 1882, in the Huntington Library Manuscript Collection.

us, forms a background to the whole range of human activity. Therefore we need to know "what is it that we like about landscape and why do we like it?"¹³ Yi-Fu Tuan, an American geographer, expressed the same idea when he gave us the delightful neologism "topophilia" which he suggests we use to express "the affective bond between people, place and setting."¹⁴ Topophilia--feeling for place--covers the whole range of emotion and intellect that forms our changing perception of environments.

Tuan and the Canadian geographer Ted Relph agree that human experience forms the base rock of perception. Tuan titled his second book Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience,¹⁵ and Relph asserts that "the meaning of places may be rooted in the physical setting and objects and activities, but they are not the property of them--rather they are the property of human intention and experiences."¹⁶

Tuan, Appleton and others who study human perception of place have contrasted various polarities between which

¹³Jay Appleton, The Experience of Landscape (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1975), p. 1.

¹⁴Yi-Fu Tuan, Topophilia (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1974), p. 4.

¹⁵Yi-Fu Tuan, Space and Place, The Perspective of Experience (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1977).

¹⁶E. Relph, Place and Placelessness (London: Pion Limited, 1976), p. 47.

we make our response to environments. Thus, when Tuan writes of space and place, he contrasts the security of place with the freedom of space.¹⁷ Appleton points to elements of prospect and refuge which he feels trigger remnant biological response to landscapes. He suggests that we appraise environments with an eye to avoiding hazard (anything that threatens our safety or comfort), seeking out aspects of prospect (points from which we command a view of what lies ahead and around us) as well as features of refuge (places where we may shelter or hide). Appleton contends that our behavior in landscapes rests in fundamental biological responses to these elements of prospect and refuge.¹⁸

And Harry Berger writes:

Man has two primal needs. First is a need for order, peace and security, for protection against the terror and confusion of life But the second primal impulse is contrary to the first: man positively needs anxiety and uncertainty, thrives on confusion and risk, wants trouble, tension, jeopardy, novelty, mystery, would be lost without enemies, is sometimes happiest when most miserable. Human spontaneity is eaten away by sameness. Man is the animal most expert at being bored.¹⁹

¹⁷Tuan, Space and Place, p. 3. "Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to one and long for the other."

¹⁸Appleton, p. 81-121.

¹⁹Harry Berger, "An Essay in Historical Structuralism," Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association, 6 (January, 1973), 35.

All three would contend that humans spend their lives working out the balances between uncertainty and order, prospect and refuge, freedom and security.

Tuan points out that a person's world view consists of elements unique to himself, elements he shares with others of his group and elements characteristic to his species.²⁰ Thus, one can study Foote as an individual artist, as a representative pioneer and as a western woman.

Most history tries to explain how individuals, groups and species have responded to imbalances in the vital polarities of their lives. American history of the Far West portrays a people working out an acceptable balance between the mythical prospect and dream of the frontier and the very real need for refuge from the harsh realities of life there. Their perception of landscape reflected the preconceptions and expectations they brought with them and the continuity that they tried to maintain in the transition from one place to another.²¹

Because of its interpretive quality, history is extremely vulnerable to bias, omission and the influence

²⁰Yi-Fu Tuan, "Perceiving and Evaluating the World: Three Standpoints." Lecture at University of Montana, June, 1971.

²¹Frank Bergon and Zeese Papanikolas, Looking Far West: The Search for the American West in History, Myth, and Literature (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1978), p. 3.

of myths. Therefore, historians constantly rewrite generalized interpretations of the past to reflect current focus of interest. Now, more than ever, the myth of the 'wild west', enduring as it has proven to be, faces the challenge of realism--the principle upon which Foote based her western imagery. "My work," she told her editor, Richard Watson Gilder, "is a helplessly faithful rendering into fiction of the experiences (my own and those of others) that have come under my own observation."²² Many of Mary Hallock Foote's "faithful" western representations, whether word pictures or black and white illustrations, challenge our widespread popular conception of the Far West. But one cannot speculate on the validity of her interpretations until one knows where and how she grew up, what she believed about herself and her place in the world, how she viewed her work, and what changes she made in it because of outside pressures. In other words, one must search her life for factors which influenced her response to both eastern and western environments. In this search, her letters to Helena Gilder prove enormously useful. Though unpolished, these intimate communications to a friend provide settings to which we can compare Foote's published expressions.

Very little of Mary Foote's early life experience prepared her for the move west. Born in 1847 into a Quaker

²²MHF to Richard Watson Gilder, undated, [188?].

family firmly rooted in upper New York State, her girlhood followed the more or less familiar pattern of that period until she decided to learn drawing, and was accepted on the merit of her skill at the School of Design for Women, Cooper Institute, New York. The faith of her instructors proved well founded, for, during the years between school and marriage, though she had returned to live in the secluded homestead, Mary worked steadily at her "trade," establishing her reputation as a talented illustrator of magazine articles and gift editions.

In 1876 Mary Hallock married Arthur Foote, a mining engineer who took her from her cloistered artistic life in the east to boisterous western pioneer communities. In the waning years of a life well lived, Mary would say of that break, "No girl ever wanted less to 'go West' with any man, or paid a man a greater compliment by doing so."²³ During the following years Mary met western life head-on in the mines of New Almaden, California, in Leadville, Colorado, and in Morelia, Mexico. During uncertain times in Arthur's career, she returned to the haven of the family farm on the Hudson River.

Eventually, Mary made the final break from eastern life when Arthur settled the family in Boise, Idaho, where he hoped to build a large-scale irrigation project. The

²³Paul, p. 114.

next ten years proved to be ones of disappointment and frustration, for the completion of such projects depended upon the support of eastern financiers. Eventually Arthur abandoned the scheme to search for work in other parts of the west and Mexico, leaving Mary and their children in Boise. Finally, the family settled permanently in Grass Valley, California, where Arthur worked for his brother-in-law, James Hague.

Through all these years Mary continued to write to Helena de Kay Gilder, whose husband, Richard Watson Gilder, had become editor of Century Magazine. These friends gave unfailing support to Mary's work, which, during many periods of the Foote's frequently uprooted lives, provided the family's sole support. It was the Gilders who first encouraged Mary to write as well as illustrate her experiences in the mining camps and irrigation settlements. Always a disciplined and steady worker, Mary provided a constant flow of western material for Scribner's Monthly (later Century Magazine) and St. Nicholas, Scribner's children's magazine.

Richard Etulain comments that Mary Foote was "one of the first women to portray the west in fiction" and that she is important to the literary historian because "she illustrates a time, a place, and a specific view."²⁴

²⁴Etulain, p. 145.

How accurate and realistic were her accounts of times and places? What exactly was her specific view? Only by entering into her life and times can we hope to understand the perspective which created her particular imagery of the Far West.

Chapter 2

MILTON, NEW YORK

Little eastern children, transplanted in their babyhood to the Far West, have to leave behind them grandfathers and grandmothers, and all the dear old places associated with those best friends of childhood

For the sake of those younger ones, deprived of their natural right to the possession of grandparents, the mother used to tell everything she could put into words, and that the children could understand, about the old Eastern home where her own childhood was spent, in entire unconsciousness of any such fate as that which is involved in the words, "gone West."¹

Surely Mary Hallock Foote nurtured a sensitive response to landscape in her fondly-remembered childhood home, "a sidehill farm facing the river with its back to the sunset."² The farm had held the Hallock name since 1762. There on the west bank of the Hudson River, her beloved "little mother" and her father maintained landscapes of tranquility and continuity. Nathaniel Hallock belonged to "the last of his breed of thinking and reading American farmers, working their own lands which they inherited from

¹Mary Hallock Foote, "The Gates on Grandfather's Farm," St. Nicholas, XVIII (April, 1891), 411.

²Ibid., p. 414.

their fathers."³ Patience and duty in the lives of these Quaker forebears produced the eastern home that Mary loved. She grew up in sturdy buildings surrounded by gardens set in the midst of well-tended apple orchards, small fields and tree-bordered meadows.

Mary gives us images of the farm in a delightful essay, "The Gates to Grandfather's Farm"⁴ written during her final discouraging years in the Boise Canyon. Gently reminiscing, almost certainly for the benefit of her own children, (the Jack, Polly and Baby of the essay match her Arthur Junior, Betty and Agnes), she leads young readers through the gateways of her old home place. With careful attention she describes the form, use and condition of the eastern farm gates for children like hers who lived with "no gates but the great rock gate of the Canyon itself."

During Mary's childhood the farm had fallen into a state of gentle decay as small farming became less profitable. One entered the farm by the picketed road gate and followed the tree-lined lane⁵ up to the door yard where,

³Paul, p. 316.

⁴Foote, "The Gates on Grandfather's Farm," 411-417.

⁵Ibid., p. 415. Foote's illustration shows a lane leading up through a canopy of large trees to a patch of open sky.

Mary said, the "grass was left to grow rather long before it was cut, like grandfather's beard before he could consent to have it trimmed."⁶ A small garden gate opened into terraced vegetable and fruit plots, all brightened by a "confusion of flowers."⁷

An older child might follow the footpath through the gates to the barnyard where clumps of trees shaded cows.⁸ The path extended up to the hillside apple orchard where Mary has pictured crumbling stone fences separating gnarled old trees.⁹ From this vantage point, she says, the walker might pause to view "low blue mountains" across the Hudson River.

In the uplying fields, a second old barn provided shelter. Mary recalls a privileged trip there one morning through "low light . . . streaming across the glistening fields . . ." to help her father "feed turnips to the spring lambs."¹⁰ Three sugar maples and a "giant walnut tree" remained standing near the upper barn.

In the hollow between her father Nathaniel's land

⁶Ibid., p. 415.

⁷Ibid., p. 413.

⁸Ibid., p. 414.

⁹Ibid., p. 417.

¹⁰Paul, p. 51.

and his brother Edward's, lay the family burying ground, overgrown with locust trees and myrtle beds and surrounded by a stone fence covered with woodbine. A one hundred and fifty year old chestnut tree marked the quiet resting place of her Quaker ancestors. Mary Hallock must have spent much of her childhood in exploration of these pastoral landscapes.¹¹

In 1878, during one of several retreats to her parental home, she drew a series of illustrations for "Picturesque Aspects of Farm Life in New York," by John Burroughs.¹² She undoubtedly used her Milton home and people as models.¹³ Among her sketches a girlish figure gathers butter from a churn in the basement;¹⁴ men pitch off a load of hay inside a barn where an open door reveals

¹¹An evocative sketch "The Strawberry of Memory," drawn by Foote for a Scribner's series, "Success With Small Fruits," Scribner's Monthly, XIX (November, 1879), shows children picking the wild berries on a grassy hillside.

¹²John Burroughs, "Picturesque Aspects of Farm Life in New York," Scribner's Monthly, XVII (November, 1878), 41-54. Burroughs was a well known naturalist and writer.

¹³Paul, p. 86. "What subjects we had about us!" recalls Mary. "Those fine big blushy lumps of gerruls that passed through our kitchen, on their way to marriage or service in other kitchens . . . were subjects for a Winslow Homer, for a Millet!"

¹⁴Ibid., "I must sing the praises of that basement that went under the whole house with windows set deep in the house foundations--windows at the level of a woman's head bent over a dishpan or kneading bread."

a meadow; children play on "the haywagon after harvest"; a man drives sheep through stout-trunked trees, and beehives in a leafy bower bear the inscription in Mary's hand, "a swarm of bees in June is worth a silver spoon."¹⁵ Finally, two pictures which may represent her father, catch the poignancy which sets her apart from other illustrators. In the first, an old man and his companion work in a cider cellar; in the second, an aging patriarch gazes contentedly over his peaceful acres (See Plate II).¹⁶ Sketches such as these prove one critic's assessment that "she links the poetic and the actual in a manner which makes them inseparable. This indefinable quality is peculiarly hers and is admired as much by artists as by laymen"¹⁷

Sadly, these pastoral images belonged in the framework of an agrarian age gone by, even as Mary Hallock grew up in them. She explains it:

As the price of labor continued to rise and prices of farm products went down, plain farming became a serious problem with holders of old land who were dependent upon their help. Our father met it by concentrating his skilled labor on the fruit crop and the cider making and letting the

¹⁵All these pictures have been reproduced from sketches "by process," rather than by engraving. They lack the sharpness and definition of woodcuts.

¹⁶The original sketch can be seen in the Stanford collection.

¹⁷Regina Armstrong, "Representative American Illustrators," Critic, 37 (August, 1800), 131.

Here, ground-fast in their native fields,
Untempted by the city's gain,
The quiet farmer folk remain

Who bear the pleasant name of Friends,
And keep their fathers' gentle ways
And simple speech of Bible days;

In those neat homesteads woman holds
With modest ease her equal place,
And wears upon her tranquil face

The look of one who, merging not
Her self-hood in another's will,
Is love and duty's handmaid still.

John Greenleaf Whittier
Mabel Martin (1876 edn.,
pp. 20-21)



TWILIGHT IN THE FIELDS.

Plate II

upper farm on shares to one of his Irish laborers, his own share not materializing to any extent when the accounts were made up.¹⁸

Thus the ideal eastern home that Mary pictured for her Boise Canyon children in 1890 no longer existed, the family having lost possession at father Nathaniel's death.¹⁹

Mary's letters describe her home as a cheerful spot given over to the nurture of family through intellectual and domestic pursuits.²⁰ At evening, the family gathered around the fire to read aloud to one another--Mary recalls her father reading from the Congressional Record and the New York Tribune--or to share lively conversation with visiting relatives and 'Friends'. Still, a good deal of seclusion marked their lives. They did not go to meeting in the manner of most Quakers, having broken from the main body of the New York conference following their Uncle Nicholas' censure for speaking out too violently against slavery. The Hallocks had little to do with the villagers as well. Fortunately, as Free Soil Republicans, the family

¹⁸Paul, p. 90.

¹⁹Paul, p. 5.

²⁰Helena de Kay Gilder, "Author Illustrators," The Book Buyer, XI (August, 1894), 339. "She could make bread and cake in a household where they still baked in a great oven in which a fire was made, and when the oven was hot the bread and cake and pies were put in on shovels with long handles She could 'work' butter like any dairy-maid. She was mistress of all the minor household arts"

hosted what Mary termed a "phantasmagoria of idealists, and propagandists and militant cranks and dreamers" brought to their door by her Aunt Sarah,²¹ a member of the New York anti-slavery society. These lively visits saved the family from provincialism.

Within the Hallock home, "cleanliness and fresh air and tempers, for the most part under control, food of the best and clothes of the plainest" prevailed.²² Mary had the warmth and guidance of a shy yet intellectual father, who though "he had not words of his own to express his sense of it . . . listened to his old poets all his silent hours," and "read them aloud in the evenings to his children."²³ There was also an engaging but imprudent older brother whose poor management of money eventually contributed to the loss of the farm.

As in most Victorian households, women formed the "dominant influence" in Mary's life.²⁴ Her mother "never

²¹Paul, p. 53-55. Sarah Hallock, Mary's Uncle Edward's second wife, young at marriage, and childless, gave her life over to "books and gardening and friendship and reform." She campaigned for women's rights. Susan B. Anthony and Ernestine Rose were among those she brought to the Hallock's door.

²²Paul, p. 87.

²³Paul, p. 90.

²⁴Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between women in Nineteenth-Century America." Signs: Journal of Women on Culture and Society, I (1975-1976), 9. ". . . between the

argued about her rights but knew how to get her way with Nathaniel," and, Mary said, "taught us strict obedience as children and then left us to our own decisions and spared comments on some of their obvious results."²⁵ Sister Bessie, Mary's early model in both art and living, would become a western woman in Boise. A second sister, Philadelphia, won these words of praise in Mary's reminiscences, ". . . noble lender, cheerful giver, modest worker all the years of her gray life."²⁶

Two essays written for St. Nicholas recall the pleasant interior of the home: a sunlit sitting room, dark formal parlors, a bountiful dining room, cozy bedrooms and the "spare bedroom"--special sanctuary for birth, illness or death--which also housed married daughters and their children when life 'out west' proved too

mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries . . . American society was characterized in large part by rigid gender role differentiation within the family and within society as a whole, leading to the emotional segregation of women and men. The roles of daughter and mother shaded imperceptibly and ineluctably into each other" and 15: "An intimate mother-daughter relationship lay at the heart of this female world."

²⁵Paul, p. 97.

²⁶Smith-Rosenberg, p. 13-14. Women frequently spent their days within the social confines of such extended families Sisters helped each other with housework, shopped and served for each other. Geographic separation was borne with difficulty Sisterly bonds continued across a lifetime.

unsettled.²⁷ Mary recaptures the magic of the garret with its half-moon window, where books and clothes and treasures from the family's past all muddled together with the autumn nut harvest and drying spices.²⁸ This place haunts Mary's thoughts as her haven of girlhood dreams. ". . . Nothing that was beautiful, or mysterious or stimulating to the fancy in those garret days was ever lost."²⁹

There is little record of Mary's teenage years. She attended Poughkeepsie Female College Seminary where Helena Gilder says she excelled in mathematics.³⁰ At seventeen she enrolled in the School of Design at Cooper Institute where she met Helena de Kay. New friendships, the heady excitement of life in New York, and the opportunity to study her chosen art provided the setting for growing intellectual depth and a tentative assertive independence.

²⁷Mary Hallock Foote, "The Spare Bedroom at Grandfather's," St. Nicholas, XIX (July, 1892), 656-660.

²⁸Mary Hallock Foote, "The Garret at Grandfather's," St. Nicholas, XX (March, 1893), 338-344.

²⁹Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), pp. 15-16. Foote's words here tend to bear out Gaston Bachelard's notions about the importance of the house to the dreamer. "The house we were born in is more than an embodiment of home, it is also an embodiment of dreams. Each one of its nooks and corners was a resting-place for daydreaming The house, the bedroom, the garret in which we were alone, furnished the framework for an interminable dream"

³⁰Gilder, p. 338.

Though not uncommon among Quaker women this last quality was unusual among the protected women of her time.³¹

Mary's letters to Helena, beginning about 1868, provide a rich description of the New England life to which she would compare her western experience. She had quietly revelled in the expansive gaiety of student life in New York, yet she tells Helena, "Oh, it is so beautiful to live in the country."³² In spring the young people gathered wild flowers; in summer they rowed on Long Pond, Old Pond and Mill Pond;³³ in autumn they went riding, returning home chilled and rosy-cheeked to roast chestnuts around the fireplace. On moonlit winter nights they went for sleigh rides or skated on the ponds. As hostess for groups of young city folk, Mary planned wagon trips and tramps through the picturesque New England countryside. One letter faithfully records such a hike to a waterfall near Big Pond with Arthur Foote among the guests:

³¹Mary Maples Dunn, "Women of Light," Women of America: A History, eds., Carol Ruth Berkin and Mary Beth Norton (Boston: Houghten Mifflin, 1979) p. 117.

". . . Quakers very early began to accept their identity as a 'peculiar' people who marked themselves as social deviants by manner of speech, refusal to take oaths, plain clothing, and aggressiveness in their women."

³²MHF to Helena de Kay Gilder (HKG), October 13, 1873.

³³Paul, p. 92. These ponds had been formed before the American Revolution when Edward Hallock had stoned up the mill dams.

Suddenly the trees stopped on the brink of a wild stream, where we crawled down a bank and crossed on great white boulders trimmed with soft black moss like velvet. The water was clear and crystal and had lovely yellow-brown lights on it. There was such a roar and rush and whirl of water that we couldn't hear each other's voices except as we spoke face to face. Like the stream we seemed irresistably borne along on the brink!--There we stopped in wonder and gazed at each other in "wild surmise." . . . I lay flat on the edge of rock and looked down and under the fall where the water had hollowed out a dark cave behind the white veil of spray. There was no danger--Arthur Foote held onto my feet (not a joke) and it was the most fascinating thing to watch the water's descent from the shining edge--lit up with the sunset into the shining ravine.³⁴

Arthur Foote was a young engineer Mary had met one New Year's eve and whose face she had, with almost mystic presentiment, chosen to sketch. This letter reveals her fascination with water and the precipitous view which she would use so often in her western drawings.

Many of Mary's early letters describe the changing moods of the Hudson River. She would later illustrate a second Burroughs article, "Our River."³⁵ Her precise and detailed woodcuts show spring floods, a river road, a riverside cemetery, fishermen's cottages where housewives hang washing on fences edging steep banks of the river, fishermen "try[ing] for sturgeon" and mending shad nets

³⁴MHF to HKG, Milton, Oct. 12, [187?].

³⁵John Burroughs, "Our River," Century, XX (Aug., 1880), 481-493. These drawings were made in Mary's final stay at Milton before leaving for Boise, Idaho.

by an old cooper shop. One composite traces a stream on its way to the river through thick deciduous growth. In another picture captioned "A Bird's-eye View" a young lady seated comfortably beneath a tree sketches the river.

Not all her letters mirror enthusiasm. One hot muggy August she found Milton very unattractive, being overrun by strangers and thus losing the "peacefulness which is its chief charm."³⁶ She escaped to an uncle's house on Fire Island into "space and light exhilarating air."³⁷ She suggests that she positively required peacefulness.

In a letter to Helena in 1873, Mary explains her decision to work at her old home rather than in New York:

The "art atmosphere" which you say is necessary to an artist . . . is to me something--well--I cannot stand it! It is very intoxicating for awhile and to a certain extent stimulating, but you don't know what a reaction sets in after its strain is removed I am strong and well but people wear on me more than I can tell you. My own people are so restful that it is a great change to leave this peaceful atmosphere for a whirl of conflicting influences and impressions.³⁸

This ambivalence of feeling towards the new and the untried met its sternest test in her decision to marry a man whose future lay "out west."

³⁶MHF to HKG, undated [187?].

³⁷MHF to HKG, Friday, September 1, [187?].

³⁸MHF to HKG, September 15, [1873].

Through these early letters one may trace Mary's growing skill, intellect and maturity. She read Browning and Emerson and Henry James; she admired the work of Thomas Moran,³⁹ and she voiced quiet admiration for the feeling captured by Winslow Homer. Directed and encouraged by W. J. Linton, who had been her instructor at Cooper, and A. V. S. Anthony, master wood engraver of Osgood and Company, Mary filled increasingly exacting contracts for magazine and gift book editions.⁴⁰ She experimented with water colors (her training at Cooper had been in black and white) and she learned to draw directly upon engravers' blocks. She became an anomaly among women of her day--a self-supporting artist with a bright future.

If Mary ever thought of the west, she scarcely

³⁹In 1876 Mary and Moran, along with John J. Harley and A. R. Wand, illustrated a gift edition of John Greenleaf Whittier's Mabel Martin: A Harvest Idyl, (Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1876). A few verses of the poem explain much of the Quaker woman's somewhat exceptional status among Victorian households (see page 17, this thesis).

⁴⁰MHF to HKG, undated, [1876]. Longfellow praised her illustrations for his Skeleton in Armor, and she felt certain enough of her own abilities to poke fun at his surprise that a young lady had done the work. "What is the use of doing anything more than is expected of 'young ladies'? Mr. Longfellow asked Mr. Anthony if I was 'handsome and accomplished' and how old I was. These, you see are the important questions. An article in Scribner's says that English ladies do not trouble themselves to talk much or make an impression when their pedigree is known and their faces seen, all has been done that can be done for them. Of a lady born and handsome,--personal intelligence and charm are of no particular value. It is assumed, of course, that all a woman needs in life is a husband"

mentioned it. A Canadian cousin regaled her with tales of his adventure in the 'wild west'; now and then she read a Bret Harte story and one of her cousins took part in a Buffalo Bill show. Robert Taft tells us that her first credited illustrations appeared in A. D. Richardson's Beyond the Mississippi, published in 1867. Most "western" literature of the time was illustrated by artists who had never seen the west. Mary contributed a sketch of the Flathead Indians of Montana, showing truly grotesque skull deformities. Her second sketch shows a sedate Mormon couple, the third, a huge gold nugget.⁴¹

After her engagement to Arthur Foote she hints at conflicting views, no doubt a result of Arthur's letters. In 1874 Arthur was at work as assistant engineer on the Sutro tunnel, "exiled," Mary told Helena, in very wild country with "people like those in Bret Harte's stories."⁴² Yet in the autumn of 1875, encouraged by Arthur's report of the San Joaquin plain that spring, "miles and miles of flowers,"⁴³ she tentatively expressed a "longing to see

⁴¹Robert Taft, Artists and Illustrators of the Old West: 1850-1900 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953, p. 173. The three illustrations appear in Albert D. Richardson, Beyond the Mississippi (Hartford: American Publishing Company, 1867) pp. 357, 483, 516.

⁴²MHF to HKG, undated, [1874].

⁴³MHF to HKG, undated, [1875]. The letter goes on to explain that "in July, this paradise will be a scorched and barren desert."

this wonderful new world."⁴⁴ She pictured Arthur's life among "lines and angles, dark shafts and half-naked men."⁴⁵ But that was his life, not hers. He had promised her a house in the California mountains 25 miles south of San Jose where he had found a position in the quicksilver mines of New Almaden--a hillside house, set aside from the homes of the thousand or so inhabitants of that small community, a house with a view.⁴⁶

Of her twenty-sixth birthday, Mary wrote:

. . . I felt so comically the tremendous difference between thirteen and twice thirteen . . . it seemed almost as if I were masquerading. After all it is only a very little part of the time we are really ourselves, living our own lives--we are always expecting to be able to, meantime adapting ourselves to the people and circumstances around us--Perhaps that is education; being forced into other peoples channels, lest we grow warped in our own.⁴⁷

This conventional wisdom would carry her through the difficult decision to part with a world she loved deeply but which she knew would not last. She did not greatly fear change because she had successfully made her own way in the world and expected to continue to do so.

⁴⁴MHF to HKG, undated, [1875].

⁴⁵MHF to HKG, Milton, Sunday 24, [1875].

⁴⁶MHF to HKG, undated [1875]. "He has selected the site--a hill of course, with a far-off view of the sea and valleys and mountains all around. He says that I have never dreamed of such a view."

⁴⁷MHF to HKG, undated, [1873].

Arthur came home in February of 1876 to marry her in a solemn Quaker ceremony at the Milton home. He brought with him the dusty baggage and leathery odors of the west. The couple visited Arthur's family at Guilford, New York for a few weeks before he returned west alone leaving Mary to tidy up her art business and join him in the spring.

In her reminiscences Mary speaks glowingly of Arthur's affection and respect for his elderly father. This family too, prized its continuity and tradition, a solid homestead built in 1723 at Mulberry Point and family mementos which included a letter from George Washington. Significantly, Mary enjoyed more an old love letter written to Arthur's grandmother which bore the unlikely salutation, "Honored Madame."⁴⁸

Mary's letters to Helena during the brief Guilford visit indicate her satisfaction with the man she married. Between glowing accounts of walks along the shore buffeted by a "splendid wind" and stormy days passed comfortably in growing intimacy with Arthur, she attempts to persuade her friend, and perhaps herself, that, whatever awaits her in the west, she will be cared for and protected. Arthur has already proven himself there, fortunately without losing those qualities she admires: his "delicate reserve," his dedication to duty and his determination to succeed in what

⁴⁸MHF to HKG, Guilford, Feb. 18th, [1876].

she perceives as "devious, hard and dangerous places."⁴⁹ Together, the couple planned their house in New Almaden which Arthur would prepare for her arrival. Mary remarked of the Guilford visit that she would "never lose an affection for a place where I was so happy."⁵⁰

"I am so content and full of hope," Mary wrote as she prepared for the difficult break from home.⁵¹ Family and friends supported this young woman who was the first among them to cross the continent. Clearly she expected to be happy in her new life in the Far West.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰MHF to HKG, undated, [1876].

⁵¹MHF to HKG, Milton, March 26, 1876.

Chapter 3

NEW ALMADEN, CALIFORNIA

Through our eyes and ears the world takes possession of our hearts.¹

The search for Mary Foote's first perceptions of her new environment proves singularly unrewarding. There was the initial excitement of the cross-continental train trip, marred by nagging apprehension about the "new world" she was entering. Well aware that she could write little more than post card descriptions of the unaccustomed landscapes which she saw from the train window, she nonetheless tried to recount her reactions. She did not "care for the towns," and she wrote:

. . . the lonely little clusters of settler's houses with the great monotonous waves of land stretching miles around them make my heart ache for the women who live there. They stand in the door as the train whirls past, and I wonder if they feel the hopelessness of their exile.

But she felt determined to "look ahead instead of back."²

¹Mary Hallock Foote, "Friend Barton's Concern," Scribner's Monthly, XVIII (July, 1979), 341.

²MHF to HKG, Omaha, Sunday, [1876].

Once at New Almaden, she liked the clumps of live and scrub oaks that dotted the mountains she would eventually call "her mountains."³ From the seclusion of their small cabin among the trees, Mary absorbed the ever changing vistas of the Santa Clara Valley below.⁴ She was hard at work on a set of 29 blocks for a gift edition of The Scarlet Letter.

Repeatedly, the conflict between old loves and present realities surfaced in her confidences to Helena. Mary felt "deeply thankful that these mountains do not close all around us. Across the valley we can look out into a vague misty distance, which is the way back to all we left behind us."⁵ The size of the landscapes intimidated her and the magnificent sunsets and sunrises did not suit her black and white medium.⁶ She managed better with vivid details of the dryness, the wind, and the welcome

³In a small collection of pictures, drawings and photographs at Stanford MSS there is a charming original sketch of the trail to the Foote cabin which Mary has labeled "The Trail." "Arthur goes and comes to and from his office by this path. These young live-oaks look like apple trees."

⁴Old photos of the camp at New Almaden show the Foote cabin above and to one side of the settlement--well off the main trail and surrounded by trees.

⁵MHF to HKG, August 25, [1876].

⁶MHF to HKG, New Almaden, September 24, [1876]. "It seems perfectly hopeless for me to sketch out of doors--I am wearied at the thought of it--such vast expanses and always the need of color."

storm which ended the dry season and she wrote eloquently of the unusual stillness from which she missed the songs of birds.

Once Mary overcame her initial fear of the Mexican and Cornish families living in separate camps below the Foote cabin, she described them with vivid detail for those back east. Helena's husband, Richard Watson Gilder,⁷ who had become virtual editor of Scribner's Monthly urged Mary to illustrate the colorful scenes for that popular literary magazine and suggested that she write the essays to accompany them.

At that time Gilder hoped to develop a magazine with truly national appeal and he encouraged writers of regional literature.⁸ Probably he felt that Mary could give eastern readers a taste of the 'real west', and that his magazine could claim her as a western contributor. An influential editor who maintained a poetic idealism based on the genteel traditions of propriety and morality, Gilder played an important role in shaping the cultural attitudes

⁷Rodman Paul, ed., A Victorian Gentlewoman in the Far West, (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1972) p. 8. ". . . Richard Watson Gilder, poet, critic, reformer, public personality, and . . . editor of Century Magazine from its founding in 1881, and before that de facto editor of Century's predecessor, Scribner's Monthly."

⁸Herbert F. Smith, Richard Watson Gilder, (New York: Twayne, 1970).

of the Victorian age.⁹ Rodman Paul says that Mary "paid a price" for her dependence on the Gilders in that they "kept her subject to what would be called the viewpoint of the Eastern Establishment."¹⁰ Fortunately, the Gilders did not tamper much with Mary's view of place and her letters amplify her written work quite effectively.

Mary hesitated over the Gilder's offer. Always self-deprecating and shy, surrounded as she was by unfamiliar landscapes and people, newly married and soon to be a mother, she probably recognized that her first impressions lacked the depth and understanding that time could bring.¹¹ Finally, with much prodding from the Gilders, she agreed to try her hand at writing. Fortunately she had brought a domestic servant from the east, and could turn her full attention to her work while Arthur

⁹ John Tomsich, A Genteel Endeavor: American Culture and Politics in the Gilded Age, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), pp. 8-9. Tomsich says that Gilder was one of the powerful editors "who sat in day-by-day control of what passed into the hands of America's better-informed readers. It is their attitudes and values, carefully drawn for a large, but not too large, audience, that shaped cultural life in Victorian America."

¹⁰ Paul, p. 9.

¹¹ MHF to HKG, November 15th [1876]. "I suppose it would be better art for me to study the impressions which are so strong with me now of this new country, but I don't feel ready for that yet. They are not sufficiently a part of me."

gained his "engineer's capital."¹² Eagerly she set about accumulating her own capital. Calling upon the habits and abilities she had nurtured in her youth, she took long walks along "the cinnabar-colored trails," she made careful observation of the mining works and the miners, she paid strict attention to detail everywhere, and she kept an eye open for the picturesque in the Cornish and Mexican camps.¹³ The long hours she spent in walks, horseback rides into the mountains, and conversations with Arthur served a dual purpose, while strengthening her understanding of him and his work, all so foreign in her romanticized world of poetry and art, she began to acquire the tools of the realist. Arthur, she remarked, "sees the reality of things."¹⁴

Though Mary welcomed the opportunity to illustrate the west in this isolated camp, she considered her first written material little more than school composition unfit to grace the august pages of Scribner's Monthly. She pleaded once more with the Gilders to find someone else to write the commentary. Richard thought not. He recognized

¹²Paul, p. 139. Mary quotes Arthur: ". . . an engineer's capital is his experience."

¹³MHF to HKG, New Almaden, via San Jose, September 3, [1876]. "I am always either drawing or walking--I follow Arthur wherever I can--to his office in the morning--and on survey days I go with the party . . .," and MHF to HKG, New Almaden, October 4, [1876] ". . . it gives me a feeling of pride to be able to help Arthur with his work--besides, I get a glimmering sort of perception of many things"

¹⁴MHF to HKG, January 16, [1877].

sensitivity and clarity in paragraphs such as this:

There is a little spring by the roadside--not a romantic place in itself--a barrel sunk in the ground filled with water Above is the mountain side, below the wide outlook across the valley to the coast range opposite. Here I saw one afternoon an old donkey, standing perfectly motionless, looking into the pool. He was unsaddled but his back showed the galled places his burdens had made. His ears and his underlip drooped. There were a few dead leaves drifting down from the sycamore trees although, for a wonder, the afternoon was very still. A red sunset was burning itself out on the mountains and the valley was filled with cool grey shadow. I cannot tell you how dreary it was, and yet with a half humorous suggestion, I wanted to hug that old donkey dreaming by the pool, and in an absurd way came those words of Scott's to my head--"Drink, weary Pilgrim. Drink and Pray!"¹⁵

This, along with other parts of her letters to Helena, and what she called a "poor weak stiff little effort about the mine" formed her first published essay, "A California Mining Camp."¹⁶ Edited by Helena and Richard Gilder, this rambling pastiche catches much of the variety and undertone of life in New Almaden as perceived by a curious yet protected newcomer.

Although the article begins with a brief description of the mine works accompanied by tidy drawings of Cornishmen "trammings" and "packing" water from Bush Tunnel, most

¹⁵MHF to HKG, January 28th, [1877]. Reproduced in "A California Mining Camp," Scribner's Monthly, XV (February, 1878), 480-493. I have quoted the letter as the edited text lacks spontaneity--Mary's forte in her letter writing.

¹⁶Ibid.

of the fourteen pictures and the text describe the Mexican camp. She treats the Cornish camp lightly and respectfully; she understood these sturdy hardworking people. But the Mexicans enchanted her and no doubt fascinated her Scribner's audience, so touchingly did she portray them.¹⁷ The awesome strangeness of the still, lonely mountains defied her depiction¹⁸ but the amiable Mexicans suited her style (See Plate III).¹⁹ After she left New Almaden Mary wrote "The Cascarone Ball," one of her best local color pieces which describes the Shrove-Tuesday fiesta in the Mexican camp.²⁰

Unfortunately, her interest did not include the Chinese. Surely she later regretted calling them "a dreadful race."²¹ From the wisdom of old age she recalled the exploited mine workers and commented, "We lived in the

¹⁷ Ibid., "The Mexicans have the gift of harmoniousness; they seem always to fit their surroundings, and their dingy little camp has made itself at home on the barren hills, over which it is scattered; but the charm of the Cornish camp lies partly in the incongruity between its small clamorous activities and the repose of the vast silent nature around it."

¹⁸ MHF to HKG, New Almaden, November 15, [1876], "The most discouraging thing is the vastness of all the landscape effects"

¹⁹ Foote, "A California Mining Camp," p. 492.

²⁰ Mary Hallock Foote, "The Cascarone Ball," Scribner's Monthly, XVIII (August 1879), 614-617.

²¹ MHF to HKG, New Almaden, September 3, [1876].

The Mexicans alone seem to belong . . . in a way they have of uniting themselves with their clothes, their houses and even the country side itself

Mary Hallock Foote

("A California Mining Camp,"
Scribner's Monthly, 1878)



THE WATER-CARRIER OF THE MEXICAN CAMP.

Plate III

face of all that natural beauty, conscious in our souls of an overhanging mass of helplessness and want."²² (Even then she referred particularly to the Mexican population.) Arthur did not encourage her to visit the Chinese camp and she recognized that "it is very hard not to be impatient with one's fellow creatures when one's judgment of them is absolutely untempered by those mysteries of personal feeling which make the whole world, as well as our human face, for us."²³ But she opened herself to all the new experiences permitted her, expressing her response with growing confidence.

Mary had much time to work for few visitors arrived at their door--only the mine manager and his wife, a few visiting engineers, and an unannounced friend of the family, Mrs. Kirby, who stayed a week and greatly enlivened the cabin with her forceful presence.²⁴ Mary Hague, Arthur's sister-in-law, came down from San Francisco for a week. When the Footes visited the Hagues Mary briefly glimpsed the powerful group of western engineers who gathered around Arthur's brother-in-law, James Hague, among them William Ashburner and the Janin brothers. San Francisco seemed to

²²Paul, p. 124.

²³MHF to HKG, January 28, [1877].

²⁴Georgiana Bruce Kirby, one of the Brook Farm transcendentalists. Paul, p. 133.

represent aspects of the west which Mary held suspect. "It is easy and luxurious," she remarked to Helena, "and in a soft climate where there is but little social and intellectual life one is tempted to indulge the flesh--it is the atmosphere of the country--extravagance"25

Nevertheless, these men had traveled all over the world and their cultivated wives seemed to have "fewer prejudices." They impressed Mary for having given up their lives in the east. The women told her that when they returned to their old homes, it was the east that seemed changed and unfamiliar. There was no place for them there, nor did they need one. Now the west was their home.²⁶

In the snug, hillside cabin Mary followed the example of the engineers' wives. She made a family home--its fittings primarily western. She flung open the windows and they lived almost in the open air; every night on the piazza, they watched the sun set and the "rush of stars" in the darkening sky. They furnished their cabin with such western artifacts as came to hand; Mexican pottery, coyote skin rugs, a Japanese lounge, a "Figi" tablecloth and poi dish, and a wooden crib which Arthur built for their

²⁵MHF to HKG, January 16, [1877].

²⁶MHF to HKG, New Almaden, December 7, [1876].
Mary adds an intriguing comment: "I speak of the men first because at the dinners and evenings they talked to me and because they were rather more remarkable than the women."

baby. They grew to love the home, each other and the boy who was born there, but they never expected to stay, and within a year, when Arthur found he could no longer tolerate the exploitive policies of the mine manager, they decided to leave New Almaden. As soon as she regained her strength after baby Arthur's birth, Mary hurried around the camp finishing the sketches of the Mexican camp, the hill of graves, the wood packers, the Mexican water carrier (See Plate III), the wistful faces of a Mexican woman and Mexican children, and a "Chinaman packing brush," which appeared with her first essay. An additional sketch of a Mexican boy appeared in St. Nicholas, Scribner's children's magazine.²⁷

Despite Arthur's difficulties with the mine manager, the couple felt certain that he would soon find a new position. After all, had not Hague and Janin, powerful men of the mining world, declared him "fully competent"? Using her "drawing money," Mary settled herself and the baby on the sea coast at Santa Cruz for six months while Arthur took a temporary job in San Francisco. She commented to Richard Gilder that the seaport excited her much less than had New Almaden.²⁸ However, the change suited her. At that

²⁷Mary Hallock Foote, "A 'Muchacho' of the Mexican Camp," St. Nicholas, VI (December, 1878), 79-81.

²⁸MHF to Richard Watson Gilder (RWG), January 15, 1878, and MHF to RWG, undated, [1878] ". . . at New Almaden the place possessed me."

period of her young motherhood, she enjoyed the quiet peacefulness of the sleepy town and the priest's garden, a favorite haunt. The soft air of the sea coast beaches reminded her of the east and when she and Arthur found one particularly beautiful laguna she told him she wished they might stay forever. As she explained in her reminiscences, "I wanted a safe place to hide my offspring in, a hole or burrow of some sort where I could stay and watch it. The spirit of adventure was dead in me for the time."²⁹ Nevertheless, she agreed to illustrate and write an article about Santa Cruz.

Once again one may find marked differences between her personal letters and her published material. She makes some scathing remarks to the Gilders about people she found brash and uncultivated. "I look with pity on Young California . . .," she told Helena, "Young California has a contempt for everything in the east which is simply delicious. Of course it is natural enough. To be ignorant is to believe nothing is worthwhile outside one's own experience."³⁰ Only the "simply delicious" removes this complaint from the realm of pure snobbery. On the other hand, Mary's sensitive essay about Santa Cruz likens the

²⁹Paul, p. 148.

³⁰MHF to HKG, December 10, [1877].

villagers to a botanical garden of transplanted species all blooming "more or less prosperously together."³¹

We do not know if Richard Gilder made suggestions concerning her commentary about western people, or whether he edited her remarks. Certainly Mary must have understood his editorial position, and known that he expected congeniality towards the New Californians. Still, the openness and sensitivity of the essay seems to be hers, freely given. On the other hand, she chose to illustrate the sea coast, the wharf, the priest and his garden, and two langorous maidens reclining in hammocks--"Santa Cruz Americana" and "Santa Cruz Mexicana."³² She seems torn between loneliness on one hand and attraction on the other. "The people are nothing to us and never can be, but the place owns us," she assured Helena.³³

Lured by the prospect of hydraulic cement production (Arthur had struggled over the formula for several months and finally perfected it) the couple planned a home on their favorite laguna where Mary said they might live "always with a noble company--the mountains, the sky, the

³¹Mary Hallock Footé, "A Seaport on the Pacific," Scribner's Monthly, XVI (August, 1878), 449-460.

³²MHF to HKG, undated, [1878]. This letter seems to indicate that only small changes were made in Mary's original essay about Santa Cruz for she notes only the placing of a footnote and expresses delight with the quality of the engravings in the proofs Richard has sent to her.

³³MHF to RWG, undated [1877-8?].

sea and all the wild birds and their cries" Arthur spent several months more in negotiations with prospective financiers but the time was not right. Mary attributes the investor's caution which ruined their hopes to the political propaganda of Denis Kearney.³⁴ The Footes' dream "like all dreams . . . hard to hold" faded as Mary's drawing money came to an end. She mentions that Santa Cruz "boomed" a few years later.³⁵ She acknowledged, however, that although she craved a settled home for their child, she knew that Arthur's interest in cement extended little beyond the discovery of the correct formula--he sought further prospect in his profession as an engineer. In the meantime, she accepted the part of an engineer's wife, which, at that time, called for much waiting.

Arthur set out for the mines at Deadwood, taking Mary and the boy on the first part of their journey back to the east which Mary still called home. Still, one can find common sense and acceptance in her Santa Cruz article:

. . . Good men and women harmonize, in the best sense, with any landscape,--they may not always be picturesque,--they are often not very happy, but it is good for the country that they are there. Almost every settlement in California is more or

³⁴Paul, p. 148, " . . . Denis Kearney . . . leader of the Workingman's Party and demagogic orator against many presumed ills, notably Chinese competition with white labor."

³⁵Paul, p. 149.

less like the Basil plant, with old wrongs and tragedies clinging to the soil about its roots. Here the conflict of races, religion and land titles is not so far in the past that its heritage is entirely outworn. It is true that society in the West does not hide its wounds so closely as in the East, but is there not hope in the very fact of this openness? At all events the worst is known. The East constantly hears of the recklessness, the bad manners, and the immorality of the west, just as England hears of all our disgraces, social, financial, and national; but who can tell the tale of those quiet lives which are the life blood of the country--its present strength and its hope for the future?

The tourist sees the sensational side of California--its scenery and society, but it is not all included in the Yo Semite guide-books and the literature of Bret Harte.³⁶

Back in Milton, Mary raised her son within the closeknit family circle, and continued her work which now broadened in scope. Her modest success with the descriptive articles about New Almaden and Santa Cruz, very possibly coupled with recognition of the contribution she could make to the family income (Arthur had incurred some debts before giving up on the manufacture of cement), persuaded her to attempt some short stories for the magazine market. She said she felt "the impulse . . . of the unseasoned traveller to set down things about places new to me which now had the magic of perspective and like other vanishing things began to shine and call."³⁷ With characteristic modesty, she sent

³⁶"A Seaport on the Pacific," 459-460.

³⁷Paul, 155.

her first story to William Howells of The Atlantic Monthly, rather than to her friend, Richard Gilder. Mr. Howells accepted "In Exile," a gentle love story set in hills like those of New Almaden. Mary wrote about two transplanted easterners, a young engineer and a school mistress,³⁸ addressing the question which was her own. Could a woman in western "exile" face living out her life there? The story told of one woman who would not make the attempt and another who chose to try. Mary wrote of women's "attachment to places and objects and associations"³⁹ and of the freedom which allowed men alternatives to these comforts.

". . . what can any man know of loneliness?" asks the homesick teacher. "He can go out and walk about on the hills; he can go away altogether, and take the risks of life somewhere else. A woman must take no risks."⁴⁰ Mary's story reflected her feeling "that she had no real part in the life of the place." She hinted that indifference on the

³⁸Mary Hallock Foote, "In Exile," The Atlantic Monthly, XLVIII (August 1881), 184-192; (September 1881) 322-330. The story did not appear until 1881 and it is difficult to determine when it was written. However, the setting is "arid California," and the narrative revolves around problems which Mary confronted at that time. She calls it her first fiction although her second story appeared in 1879.

³⁹Ibid., p. 187-88.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 192.

part of Californians to the East might be mirrored by a similar lack of understanding of the west by the east. "The East concerns itself very little with us, I can tell you! It can spare us," complains the engineer.⁴¹

Having satisfied herself that her fiction was acceptable, Mary wrote "A Story of the Dry Season" for Scribner's Monthly.⁴² This fiction achieves neither the depth nor sensitivity of "In Exile." Mary uses a western setting such as Santa Cruz, and familiar character types--an arrogant engineer married to a shallow woman, and a young doctor suffering through the romantic enthrallment of a love which, if we can believe the story--and it is most unbelievable--the lady never noticed. But her husband detected it at once during a chance meeting with the young man. Foote's prose in these early attempts seldom approaches the excellence of her descriptive sketches. Her characters speak an awkward stilted language, somehow high-flown and unrealistic.⁴³

Mary did not illustrate either story. Reluctantly she turned down offers to illustrate books, because she

⁴¹Ibid., p. 326.

⁴²Mary Hallock Foote, "A Story of the Dry Season," Scribner's Monthly, XVIII (September, 1879), 766-781.

⁴³One recalls the style of "scribbling women" whose popular novels and short stories Mary may have read as she grew up.

feared family matters might keep her from meeting deadlines. However, she did complete the impressive collection of sketches for the articles by John Burroughs.

Mary used familiar eastern settings of sheep farming and milling as well as Quaker characters for her third story, "Friend Barton's Concern." "Friend" Barton had left his family to fulfill spiritual obligations, this separation setting in motion the events of the story. Mary wrote in her reminiscences: "It dealt with an early specimen of the girl of today with a will and a mind of her own; but my father said no daughter of a Friend preacher in 1812 would have been pert enough to question her father's choice when it came to . . . family claims and the call of the inner spirit."⁴⁴

Arthur wrote from Dakota of good health and good spirits while "roughing it." He describes the arduous trip into Deadwood where he was surveying a ditch line for George Randolph Hearst.⁴⁵ Another letter from camp offers reassurance that "it is nice country for camping and seems more like home than any place I have seen away from there. I find violets, wild roses, strawberry blossoms and lots of things that we have at home." Arthur, it seems, recognized

⁴⁴Paul, p. 188.

⁴⁵Arthur Foote to MHF, June 12, [18]78. Arthur comments that "The life I hate most, is board shanty and dirt life of a mining camp." He preferred the survey camps.

and shared his wife's enjoyment of these familiar small similarities. "But," he continued, "the woods are hard to get used to. For miles all around us over the mountains stretch a forest of dead trees." In a brief stiff note to Helena, Arthur describes Deadwood on the Fourth of July when "the streets are full of waving, shouting drunken men staggering around fighting and shooting as men will with no law to control them."⁴⁶ Apparently Helena had sent him a lock of Mary's hair which made him "more homesick than ever."⁴⁷ He expressed relief that Mary and the boy were safe in Milton. Yet Milton, too, held its terrors, for baby Arthur suffered recurring spells of malaria.

When Arthur refused to testify in a lawsuit brought by Hearst, they parted company, Arthur leaving Deadwood with little more than a collection of wild western paraphernalia; elk horns (shipped home to Mary in a packing box big enough for a piano), a stag's head and some beaver skins. Ever confident, he set out for the burgeoning camp at Leadville--the camp above the clouds. At Denver he

⁴⁶ Arthur Foote to HKG, Deadwood, Dakota, July 4th, [18]78.

⁴⁷ The degree of Arthur's loneliness may be judged from his closing sentences to Mary dated June 20, "In Camp": "Goodnight darling, I am very tired and it seems as if I would give up everything in the world to lie with my head in your lap and your hands stroking me. Your big loving boy, Arthur."

encountered William H. (Uncle Billy) Stevens who signed him on as an expert witness in litigation concerning the Iron Mine at Leadville.⁴⁸ Arthur's testimony, based on a thorough study of the mine carried on over a two-month period and impressively amplified by surveys, maps and a glass model, did much to win the case. For this contribution, Stevens handed him one hundred dollars. Arthur chose to be amused rather than indignant for he had made his mark. "Work flowed in," Mary commented.⁴⁹

⁴⁸The Iron Mine produced silver and later proved to be quite valuable.

⁴⁹Paul, p. 165.

Chapter 4

LEADVILLE, COLORADO

The discontent and despair of older mining camps in their decadence hastened to mingle their bitterness in the baptismal cup of the new one. It exhibited in its earliest youth every symptom of humanity in its decline. The restless elements of the Eastern cities, the disappointed, the reckless, the men with failures to wipe out, with losses to retrieve or forget, the men of whom one knows not what to expect, were there; but, as its practical needs increased and multiplied, and its ability to pay what it required became manifest, the new settlement began to attract a safer population.¹

Encouraged and supported by the women of her family, Mary made the difficult decision to leave her boy who was recuperating from a severe attack of malaria and to join Arthur in Leadville. It must have taken determination and courage to become one of the first wives in that raw and rugged camp. Mary could have stayed safely at home in the east; custom decreed that a woman's place was with her child, and Leadville, at 10,000 foot elevation, was certainly no place for a sick child. One suspects that beyond the obvious desire to be with her husband, Mary realized that she flourished in new surroundings. Now and then her words

¹Mary Hallock Foote, "The Led-Horse Claim," Century Magazine, XXV (Installments, November, 1882 to March, 1883). Also Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1883.

suggest a good deal of native curiosity and a little of the footloose spirit common among the westerners she was slowly beginning to understand. "I'm seeing a good deal of . . . unusual life and I'm happy enough to want to see more--perpetually more!"² she assured Helena, now off to Europe with Richard who had suffered a nervous collapse.

Mary learned of raw Western reality during her Leadville visits. The road over Mosquito Pass consisted of "wheel ploughed tracks of sloughs of mud, dead horses and cattle by the hundreds scattered along wherever they dropped, and human wreckage in proportion."³ At 10,200 feet, Leadville offered little but wind, cold and blizzards. She no longer felt free to roam the camp as she had in New Almaden.⁴ Once more Mary's letters indicate the need she felt to explore and to learn about new landscapes. She rode in the evenings, roaming the nearby valleys and ridges, always accompanied by Arthur or one of his juniors. Quite matter-of-factly she tells Helena about the forest fires which surrounded the camp for several weeks. One evening the couple returned from the select Assembly Ball at the

²MHF to HKG, January 20th, [1880].

³Ibid., p. 165. Mosquito pass elevation: 13,600 feet. Arthur and Mary lost two horses to lung fever on her first trip over the pass.

⁴Ibid., p. 197.

Clarendon Hotel:

. . . As we took our way along the stream which runs past the house into the town, the forest fires were reddening the horizon in every direction. We could hear the distant roaring of the fires and the sough of the wind in the pines--mingled with this came band from the town and the ceaseless tramp of feet on the board walks We followed the stream into the depths of the woods while the flames grew brighter and nearer. At a turn in the path we came upon the whole picket guard of fires--a long line extending on the windward side of the stream--while from the valley below heavy ominous clouds of smoke rolled up from the invading fires. There were figures of men reclining against fallen logs or squatted in the pine brush--perfectly silent, watchful, while the flames seemed alone, possessed of life and expression"⁵

As in New Almaden the Footes lived very much "on the crust of much that lay beneath."⁶ Most of the time the town itself was only a place from which sound drifted up--"hoarse, human echoes"⁷ suggesting temptations which her Victorian morality abhorred.⁸ Mary's best description of Leadville appears in "John Bodewin's Testimony":

⁵MHF to HKG, Leadville, Col., May 28, 1879. Mary wrote forest fires into a children's story: "The Children's Claim," St. Nicholas, VII (January 1880), 238-245.

⁶Paul, A Victorian Gentlewoman, p. 197.

⁷MHF to HKG, Box 1703, July 10, [18]80.

⁸Ibid., "I glory in the temptations which surround Arthur and which are not even temptations to him. In the general wreck of men's characters in places like this, it fills one with pride and joy to feel that, that, at least is a trouble which can never come into ones life."

. . . The avenue was straight and wide, as befits the avenue of the hopeful future; but the houses were the houses of the uncertain present. They were seldom more than two stories in height, miscellaneous in character, homogeneous in ugliness, crude in newness of paint or rawness of boards without paint. There were frequent breaks in the perspective of their roofs, where a vacant lot awaited its tenant or the tenant awaited his house. There were tents doing duty for houses; there were skeleton structures hastily clothing themselves with bricks and mortar that meantime impeded the sidewalk. One-half of the street was torn up for the laying of gas-pipes, and crossings were occasionally blockaded by the bulk of a house on rollers, which night had overtaken in its snail-like progress. The passing crowd was a crowd distinguished by a predominance of boots and hats--dusty or muddy boots, and hats with a look of preternatural age or of startling newness. There was a dearth of skirts; and these, when they appeared, were given a respectful, an almost humorously respectful, share of the sidewalk. The crowd went its way with none of that smart unanimity of movement which characterizes the up-town and down-town march of feet trained to the pavement. It slouched and straggled and stared, and stopped in the middle of the common way, and greeted its friends, and vociferated its sentiments, and exhibited its ore-specimens of fabulous promise, regardless of incommoded passers. It was invariably good-natured.⁹

The unusual form of Leadville's mineral deposits required extensive geologic study and inventive new mining methods.¹⁰ Geologists and mining experts of all sorts found their way, at one time or another, to the Footes' log

⁹Mary Hallock Foote, "John Bodewin's Testimony," Century Magazine, XXXI (Installments, November to April, 1885), 65.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 127-134 and Paul, A Victorian Gentlewoman in the Far West, p. 163, footnote: ". . . ores contained both silver and lead . . .; they occurred in a form new to western mining men: as replacement deposits in limestone rather than as veins."

cabin on "the ditch"--the upper reaches of the Arkansas River. Clarence King applauded Mary's use of Geological Maps to color the single grey and brown room where he, along with Samuel Emmons, Thomas Donaldson, Rossiter Raymond, and others of the "laceboot brigade" enjoyed the Footes' hospitality.¹¹ Donaldson recalled that he and King "forged along through a forest" to reach the cabin, then the first one on a hillside that would, within two years, be dotted with similar small homes. Donaldson noted the hammock on the "rustic porch," evidence that "a cultivated eastern woman" lived in the house, and he came away impressed not only by her black and white illustrations but by the fact that she was well read on everything.¹²

Helen Hunt Jackson came too,¹³ and all the mine owners, operators and junior engineers whom Arthur considered fit company for his wife. They turned the exile of Mary's life into something entirely different. "Leadville agree[s]

¹¹Clark C. Spence, Mining Engineers and the American West: The Lace-Boot Brigade, 1849-1933. Spence rounds out his accounts of engineers' lives with many quotes from Mary Foote's letters. Clarence King, originator of the Fortieth Parallel Survey, and its director from 1867 to 1878, at that time served as director of the U.S. Geological Survey. He and Donaldson were members of the Public Lands Commission set up in 1879 to study land laws and public lands. Emmons is remembered for his remarkable work on the unusual Leadville deposits (see Paul, Mining Frontiers, p. 130).

¹²Thomas Donaldson, Idaho of Yesterday, (Caldwell: Caxton Printers, 1941), pp. 358-360.

¹³Paul, A Victorian Gentlewoman, p. 179-180. Helen Hunt Jackson, a professional western writer.

with us," she assured "H. H." Jackson when that lady bemoaned the unnaturalness of a place where grass would not grow. Mary considered the cosmopolitan ease and intelligence of her guests equal to that of Richard and Helena's literary circle which she sometimes envied.

Mary witnessed the precipitous growth of Leadville from mining camp to city.¹⁴ Certainly Arthur protected Mary from the roughest elements, that "human surf beating on the flanks of those gulches," but she shared the essential life of her husband and those of his kind, often venturing where other women of her circle would not.

Her word pictures of the high country take on surety and grace; her discussions of mining works and the ever present legal entanglements gain in accuracy and authenticity. Mary found Leadville an exciting place and used it as the setting for her first novel, The Led-Horse Claim, as well as for later short stories and novels which mining folk all over the west praised.

In Leadville Mary worked steadily on illustrations for Scribner's. The October, 1879 issue contains two of her best; "As comfortable as circumstances will admit," shows

¹⁴Rodman Wilson Paul, Mining Frontiers of the Far West: 1848-1880, (San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1963), pp. 127-134. Paul indicates that Leadville's boom began in 1877, and that by 1880 its population had reached almost 15,000. Mary dates her first letter from Leadville May 12, 1879.

the interior of the Foote cabin with Arthur serving as his own model (See Plate IV).¹⁵ The lady reading the letter is not unlike Mary; clearly the woodcut pictures the Footes at home in Leadville. An unsigned print of the burning woods may also be hers. The pencil sketch for an idyllic print titled "In the Woods" is in the Stanford collection. Three men recline beneath the blackened spars of a burned-out forest while a young lady seated on a log reads to them. Mary's letter to Helena's brother Charlie describes such an outing taken one Sunday with a number of friends. They fished and caught nothing, laughed a great deal and one couple sang "with the rushing water and the wind for accompaniment," while Mary made two sketches.¹⁶

In August of 1879 Arthur was offered an appointment as a mining geologist on the Geological Survey.¹⁷ Though both Mary and Arthur admired that elite group, the prospect of a "wandering and waiting" life troubled Mary. Wives of survey men usually lived in small cottages in California.

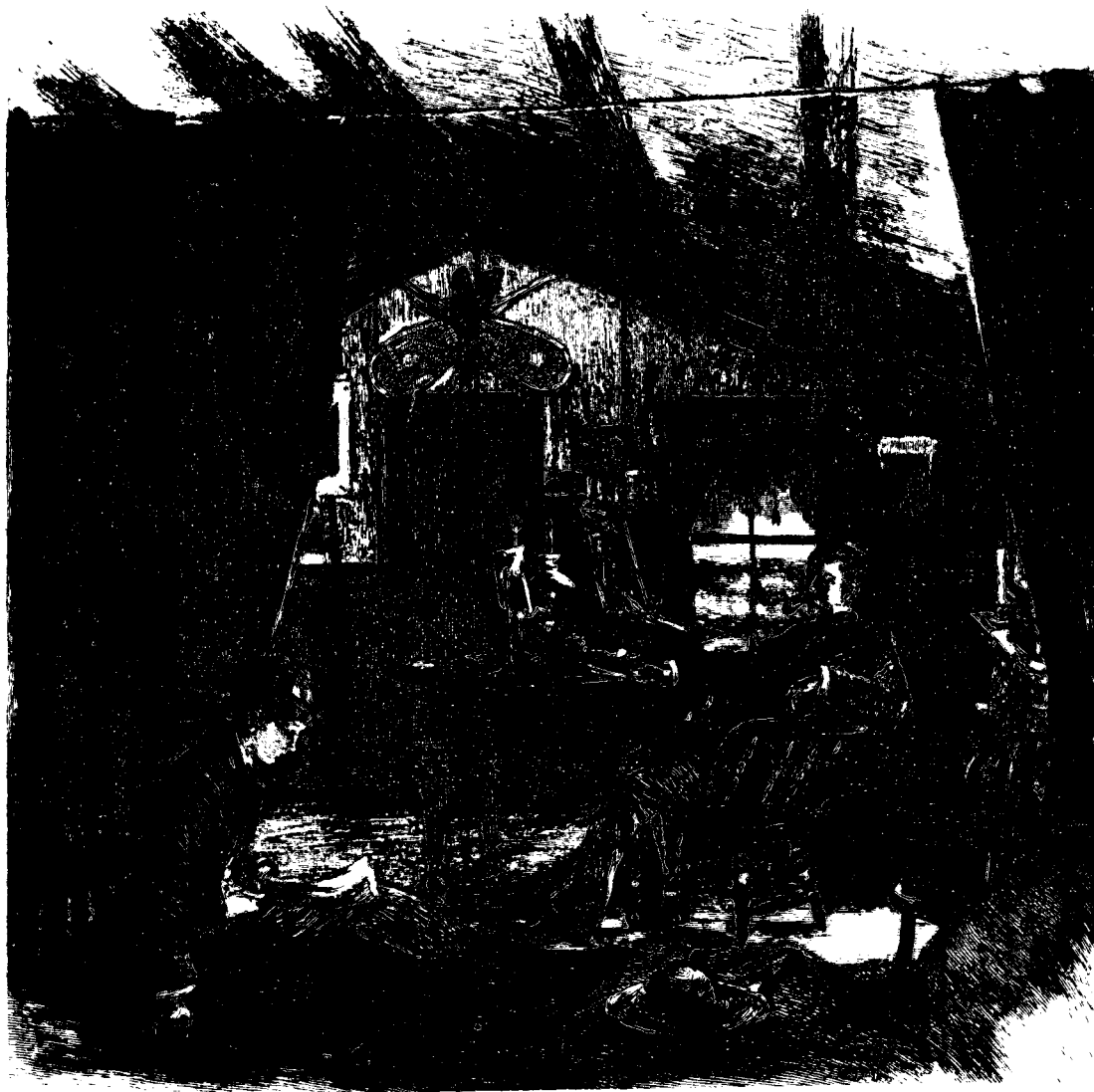
¹⁵"The Camp of the Carbonates" (no author given), Scribner's Monthly, XVIII (October, 1879) 805-824. The article gives a good general description of Leadville at this time.

¹⁶MHF to Charles de Kay, Leadville, July 8, [1879].

¹⁷MHF to HKG, Leadville, Colorado, August 22, 1879.

Our cabin was built of round logs at a dollar apiece, and they were not very long logs either. It was all in one room, lined with building paper which had an oak-grained side and a reverse of dark brown; one width of the brown we used as a wainscot, and the walls were covered with the oak side put on like wallpaper, and where the edges joined, pine strips painted black were nailed over them with an effect of paneling. The open-beamed ceiling to the ridge pole was papered between the unbarked log rafters, like the walls. So our color scheme matched the woods and on this quiet background we added pinks and blues and greens by pinning up the Geological Survey's maps of the Fortieth Parallel. When the geologists came out and were our guests they stared around and laughed to see this frivolous use their brains and research had been put to: James Hague insisted that geology had never been turned to better account! They mocked each other gaily of the impertinence which they considered peculiarly feminine (it was in fact my own idea) to stick up Old Silurian and the Tertiary deposits for the sake of their pretty colors!

Mary Hallock Foote
(Mary Hallock Foote: A
Victorian Gentlewoman in
the Far West, 1972)



AS COMFORTABLE AS CIRCUMSTANCES WILL ADMIT.

Plate IV

When given the chance to manage the Adelaide mine on Carbonate Hill Arthur turned down the appointment with the survey and eventually became manager of the smaller Mike and Star mines as well. Thus he continued his practical education as a mining engineer. Mary left Leadville at the end of October "crossing the pass as the first snow fell" to return to Milton and her son.

In his skillful introduction to A Victorian Gentlewoman in the Far West, Rodman Paul speaks of the "relentless tensions" that became part of Mary Foote's life. During these early years of her marriage she left a beloved family member behind each time she set out across the continent.¹⁸ Her choices were not easy ones. Resolving that "one must dare a little" Mary decided to take the boy with her when she returned to Leadville. "We are," she said, "a neighborhood in which already there is marriage, birth and sudden death--all the great mysteries" ¹⁹

Claim jumping, public hangings and dirty dealings had occurred, too, but these were mostly outside her life, and Arthur's as well--he refused to involve himself in such practices. Such uncompromising integrity cost him many jobs.

¹⁸MHF to HKG, Leadville, September 8, [1879].
 "Three times I have taken that long journey, and always with a toll on my spirits--once leaving home and all my life before my marriage--once leaving Arthur and once the boy."

¹⁹MHF to HKG, Friday before Christmas, [1879].

Perhaps his example helped Mary form a somewhat idealistic opinion of western frontier men, such as one she describes from an eastbound train:

. . . There was a fine looking young ranchman on horseback--his broad hat turned up straight above his forehead; a heavy hand laid on the horse's bridle forced him back while with the other resting on the horses back he turned to look after the train. All this seems part of the endless repetition of History bringing back phases of human life and progress. These men are like the medieval knights . . . the frontier type.²⁰

Such images would reappear in her illustrations for western fiction.²¹

In the spring of 1880, Mary crossed Mosquito Pass in a violent blizzard with her small son wrapped in a down comforter. She brought Arthur's niece to help with domestic duties while she worked on illustrations for Lucille by Owen Meredith.²²

Almost at once the malaria which had troubled young Arthur returned and all Mary's energy went to nursing him and Arthur senior, who developed incapacitating headaches. To make matters worse, she began to suffer the insomnia which would plague her for much of her life. Mary blamed

²⁰MHF to HKG, January 20, [1880].

²¹For an illustration paralleling the quote above see Mary Hallock Foote, "The Chosen Valley," Century Magazine, XLIV (May-October, 1892), 400, (Plate XIII, this thesis).

²²Paul, A Victorian Gentlewoman, p. 196.

their illnesses on the cumulative effect of the high altitudes.²³ They were all tired, she said, and Arthur worried about a miners' strike.²⁴ She broke the Lucille contract and never worked with a deadline again.

The evening visits with the mining elite continued to delight Mary. "It is our theatre, picture galleries, music hall, our only dissipation, and . . . as good as any . . . the place makes a difference," she told Helena.²⁵ Mary continued to ride horseback, galloping across the meadows and exploring the ridges. At one point she accompanied Arthur to Twin Lakes near Leadville where he was resting to recuperate from nervous strain,²⁶ and she, too, became ill.²⁷ In her memoir she terms Leadville a "senseless, rootless place,--The altitude of heartbreak,"²⁸ yet her Leadville letters reflect little of those feelings

²³Ibid., p. 202.

²⁴Ibid., p. 202-203. Rodman Paul cites evidence suggesting that W. S. Keyes of the Chrysolite and George Daly, both mine operators, encouraged the strike.

²⁵MHF to HKG, Leadville, Box 1703, June 12, [18]80.

²⁶MHF to HKG, Box 1703, July 10, [18]80. Mary tells Helena that Arthur "is really as nervous and sensitive as a woman tho' always silent about his 'feelings' and self controlled. The care of other peoples money is a serious care"

²⁷MHF to HKG, Twin Lakes, Colorado, August 2, [18]80.

²⁸Paul, A Victorian Gentlewoman, p. 205.

about her life and Arthur's there. If she complained of anything, it was of sickness, not of purposelessness or separation. Her opinion of Leadville appears best summed up in an undated letter to Helena:

It is an exhilarating climate though a stern one. We were surrounded by people who were in good spirits . . . a good deal of nonsense and enthusiasm which could easily have been pricked but no one cared to trouble himself about his neighbors illusions, while convinced that he had none himself The ride over the range seemed to jolt the crust off people. Affectation is almost impossible or at all events quite unnecessary where we all begin at the roots of society again and build on a solid basis. There is no concealing what you are in a place like this.²⁹

At the end of the second summer in Leadville, Arthur was called east by the mine owners to explain a dispute between the Adelaide mine and the adjacent Argentine mine. Mary and the boy went back to Milton. After much "talkie-talkie," as Arthur called it, the company refused to continue the fight, leaving him without a job. The following winter, he agreed to make a survey and report on silver mines in Michoacan province, Mexico.

Helena Gilder's brother, Drake de Kay, managed the Michoacan Syndicate, and it was probably through his influence that Mary, armed with a contract from Century Magazine, was allowed to go along on the two-month tour. She would bring back a portfolio of over 100 sketches,

²⁹MHF to HKG, undated, [1880].

many of which appeared with three descriptive essays she wrote³⁰ and a fourth article by another author,³¹ (See Plate V).

No letters have been found from which to round out Mary's observations during this singular experience--for it was unusual for an engineer's wife to make such a journey in 1881. From Mexico to Morelia, the provincial capital, they travelled by diligence, a stagecoach drawn by eight mules and escorted by armed guards. Though they rested a few hours each night in hotels, they made the final lap between Maravatio and Morelia in a twenty-three hour ride. When they returned to Mexico City they made the trip on horseback.

Her three essays plus a lengthy section of the reminiscences titled simply "Romance" document the adventure.³² For a time the Footes hoped that Arthur's syndicate might leave him in Mexico--"we were growing hungry for a home of some sort"³³--but the offer never came. The

³⁰Mary Hallock Foote, "A Diligence Journey in Mexico," Century Magazine, XXIII (November 1881), 1-14.

_____, "A Provincial Capitol of Mexico," Century Magazine, XXIII (January, 1882), 321-333.

_____, "From Morelia to Mexico City on Horseback," Century Magazine, XXIII (March, 1882), 643-655.

³¹Robert H. Lamborn, "Life In a Mexican Street," Century Magazine, XXIV (October, 1882), 803-814.

³²Paul, A Victorian Gentlewoman, pp. 209-243.

³³Ibid., p. 230.

A spit is used in roasting, and every Mexican kitchen is well provided with a multitude of pottery vessels, even to pottery griddles, light and clean, which seemed to me far preferable to our heavy, unappetizing metal ones.

Mary Hallock Foote
("A Provincial Capital of
Mexico," Century Magazine,
1882)



FANNING THE FIRE.

Plate V

journey became a deeply remembered but seldom discussed experience. Mary wrote no fiction set in Mexico and she makes only passing reference to the place in her remaining letters. On this trip her tentative career as a writer-illustrator prospered. She travelled, worked hard, and received praise and good payment for her efforts. She says she came to think of herself as a "rambling mother" who carried the tools of her trade with her.³⁴ The journey must have touched her deeply; it was her only venture outside the country. But if it affected her changing attitude toward either east or west, it did so only as "a spot of intenser color in memory's painted windows that look toward sunset, riveting the eye amidst lower tones of burnt-out forests and dry deserts and old fenced-in farms."³⁵

The Leadville Novels

Mary used the Leadville setting for his first three novels, which Century Magazine serialized. She wrote The Led-Horse Claim during the interval between the Mexico journey and her return to the West in 1884. Both Mary Lou Benn and James Maguire have outlined the plots of these novels, and made literary criticism of Foote's work.³⁶

³⁴Ibid., p. 207.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Mary Lou Benn, "Mary Hallock Foote: Pioneer Woman Novelist," Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of

In The Led-Horse Claim, Mary wove a popular romance around circumstances not unlike those which ended Arthur's work at Leadville. Adjacent mining concerns fight a battle when one group pushes a tunnel into the other's territory. This occurrence was by no means uncommon, as mining battles flared regularly over conflicting claims. According to mining law, the first group to push a drift to a deposit claimed the pay dirt even though it might extend under the surface area claimed by another company.³⁷ Such a situation existed between the Adelaide Mine which Arthur managed and the nearby Argentine Mine. Arthur was travelling east to apprise the Adelaide owners of the situation when the Argentine crew drove their tunnel into Adelaide territory and broke through into an Adelaide tunnel.³⁸

Such authentic mining lore blends nicely with a rather contrived story. Mary herself recognized her

Wyoming, 1955, and James H. Maguire, "Mary Hallock Foote," Boise: Boise State College, 1972. Benn discusses and critiques the work in detail; Maguire gives an overview and a general criticism.

³⁷Clark C. Spence, Mining Engineers and the American West: The Lace-Boot Brigade, 1849-1933, p. 188. ". . . a valid claim was based on actual discovery. Thus, where claims conflicted, the party first reaching mineral gained possession."

³⁸Arthur instructed his men to barricade the tunnel, arm themselves, and defend their ground but the owners succumbed to the pressure.

tendency to write too much dialogue, the weakest facet of her literary skills.³⁹ Her characters march woodenly through the drama; as Mary Lou Benn points out, "they come alive only as types."⁴⁰ But the occasional illustrative paragraph shines and one cannot help but wish that she had written more essays and less fiction. Even a few settings seem contrived, as if she was striving too hard for the romantic aura.

In an article titled "The Image of the West in the Century, 1881-1889" Bill Schopf writes that most of Century's fiction in the 80's "could at its best be termed romantic, and at its worst saccharine. Much of it dealt with a west that had already vanished--the mining camps of the 1840's and 50's, for example."⁴¹ Mary's fiction generally fits the romantic designation and she uses well developed mining themes of the '70s culled from her experiences in the camps at New Almaden and Leadville.

Mary drew a fine sketch titled, "At the Foot of the Pass," which, along with a good descriptive introduction,

³⁹Knowing her tendency to be wordy and not broad in her pictures, Mary assures her editor that she will follow his advice to shorten and correct her drafts.

⁴⁰Benn, p. 51.

⁴¹Bill Schopf, "The Image of the West in the Century, 1881-1889," The Possible Sack, III (March, 1972), 8.

set the stage for The Led-Horse Claim.⁴² She defined the atmosphere of Leadville with brutal clarity (this thesis, p. 52) in a single paragraph and left it at that. The story revolves around eastern characters new to their western setting and ends with them back in their eastern "home."⁴³ The remaining pictures for the novel show the characters acting out their parts against ruggedly beautiful high country. Recognizing Mary's artistic skill, Richard Gilder saw to it that only the best wood engravers, such as Timothy Cole transcribed her sensitive sketches (See Plate VI).

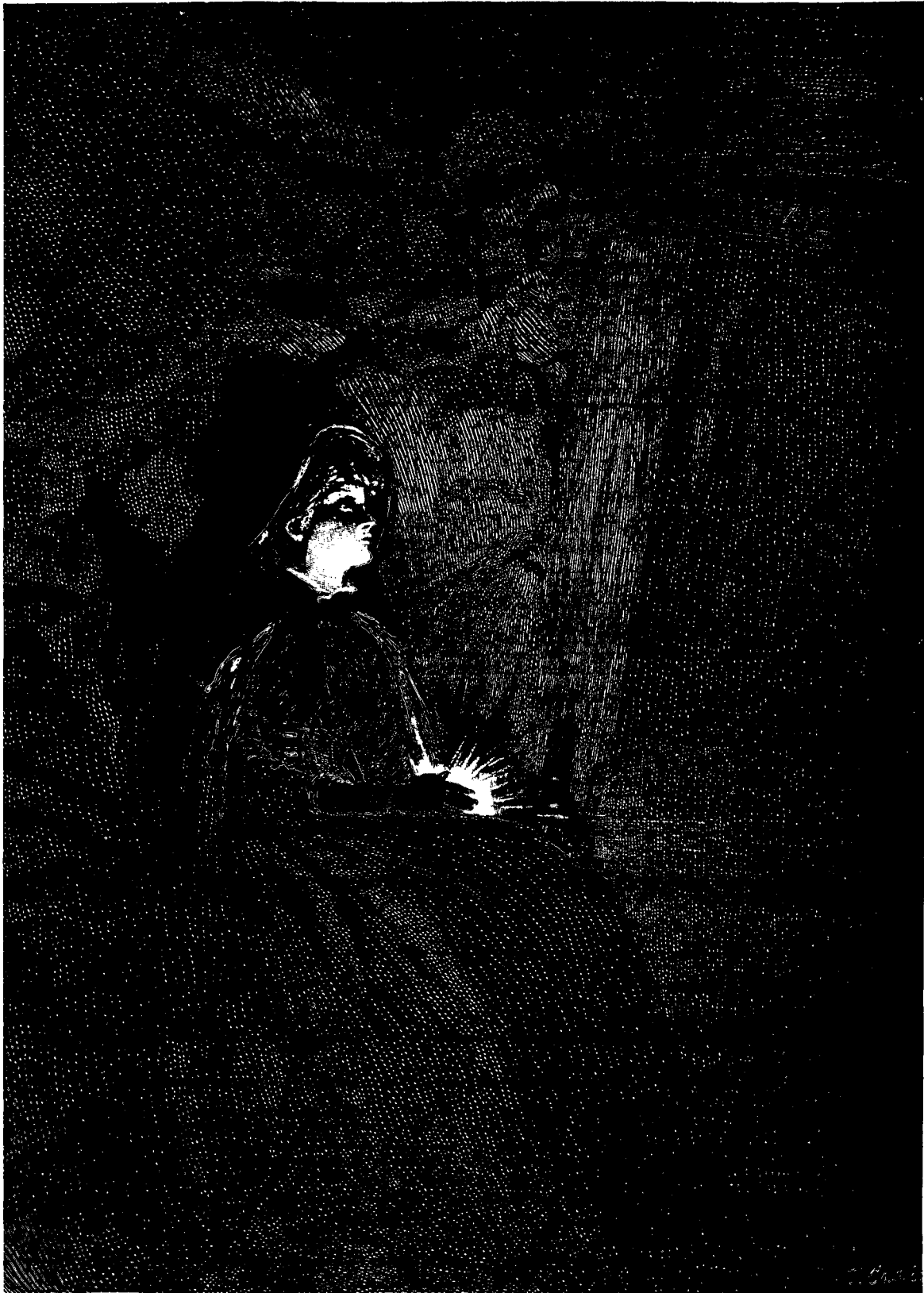
John Bodewin's Testimony, Mary's second novel, was not published until 1885. Once again Mary used familiar events and places. The 'testimony' resembles that which Arthur gave at Denver for the Iron Mine owners and the setting is entirely western. Mary wove the expected love story around events of the mining dispute, and confined purely descriptive material to a few excellent paragraphs. Nowhere do I find her perception of the high country more

⁴²Foote, The Led-Horse Claim, pp. 10-11 and Plate II.

⁴³Chapter XII of The Led-Horse Claim contains an interesting account of a train trip from west to east. Mary comments, "I ended the story at Leadville as I believe it should have ended; . . . but my publisher wouldn't hear of that! I had to make a happy ending." The comment appears in Levette J. Davidson, "Letters from Authors," Colorado Magazine, XIX (July, 1942), 122-125, and was written in 1922.

Cecil was intensely absorbed listening to this strange, low diapason of the under world. Its voice was pitched for the ear of solitude and silence. Its sky was perpetual night, moonless and starless, with only the wandering, will-o'-the-wisp candle-rays, shining and fading in its columnated avenues, where ranks of dead and barkless tree-trunks repressed the heavy, subterranean awakening of the rocks.

Mary Hallock Foote
("The Led-Horse Claim,"
Century Magazine, 1882-83)



UNDERGROUND

Plate VI

eloquently stated:

. . . Mr. Hillbury watched with Josephine, pointing out to her the long formless ridges which marked the recession of one of those vast glacial seas that had crawled down the mountain-sides during the epoch of ice. The lake had been formed between two of these ancient moraines. Solitary, unvisited, bare of human association or tradition as it was,--"foster-child of silence and slow time,"--its cradled waters were uncounted centuries old before the story of man was begun.⁴⁴

Mary manages to make the entire story more plausible and her western characters achieve a measure of veracity in narrative that flows well.⁴⁵ Her large sense of history emerges in lines like these where she describes Leadville as a "part of the wilderness."

. . . Its hopes and its capital were largely bound up in the fate of adventurers into that unpeopled land which has no history except the records written in fire, in ice, and in water, on its rocks and river beds; the voyagers across that inland sea where the smoke of lonely camp fires goes up from the wagon roads that were once hunter's trails, and trails that were once the tracks of buffalo.⁴⁶

She painted lovely word pictures of the awesome peaks around the camp.⁴⁷ As well as the beauty, she caught the devastation of the burned-out slopes and the attitude of the mine

⁴⁴Mary Hallock Foote, "John Bodewin's Testimony," Century Magazine, XXV (November, 1882 to March, 1883). Also Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1883, p. 234.

⁴⁵For a particularly fine example of her improving style see pp. 240-241 (Century Magazine serial).

⁴⁶Foote, John Bodewin's Testimony, p. 65

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 73, 230, 665 (Century Magazine serial).

owner who "did not trouble himself about his environment":

. . . the owner . . . looked about him and saw that the dead trees were fit for fuel, if not for building and the timbering of shafts. He saw that the slope of the hill was sufficient for drainage, and for the future ore-dumps of unknown value to lean their cone-shaped mounds against. He reckoned the cost of a wagon route to the nearest camp⁴⁸

In both the novels she brings out the dependence of western schemes upon uncertain eastern financing, a situation which had already caused her family considerable hardship.⁴⁹

The defense lawyer in John Bodewin's Testimony asserts:

. . . We are Western men; we want to encourage Eastern capitalists to seek investments in the West. One way to do it will be to show them that their investments in the West can be protected by the west.⁵⁰

In accord with most light fiction of her day, Mary kept the women in her novels more or less unsophisticated, "as all men, however wise in their generation like their women to be,"⁵¹ she comments rather wryly. But now and then her innate sensitivity brought touching reality to aspects of their lives. Mrs. Craig, in John Bodewin's Testimony, suffers an indefinable oppression in the midst of mountains:

They intruded upon her, in the midst of her small, subtle joys and pains of today, with their

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 60.

⁴⁹Foote, The Led-Horse Claim, p. 1.

⁵⁰Foote, John Bodewin's Testimony, p. 674.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 66.

heartbreaking stolidity and their immense past. They took the meaning out of her efforts, and made them seem to no avail. When she tried to express these fancies to her husband, he received them into his masculine consciousness as a phase of her own idiosyncrasy, in spite of her assurance that every other woman in the camp probably had the same.⁵²

On the other hand both Mrs. Craig as chaperone and Josephine, as heroine, entered quite boldly into the spirit of the place which she termed challenging, unrestful and inviting:

. . . [Josephine] had climbed her peak, had gone down into her mine, had visited smelting furnaces by night and hydraulic washings by day, had caught her trout in the waters of the "Lake Fork," and had thrilling gallops in the valley.⁵³

One can picture Mary Foote doing all these things.

Mary Lou Benn calls The Last Assembly Ball a "social criticism."⁵⁴ Published in 1889, it has a more polished and mature style than the earlier works, and attempts, through a "pseudo-romance," to deal with the tensions existing in a new society. Mary asserts at the onset:

. . . No society is so puzzling in its relations, so exacting in its demands upon self-restraint, as one which has no methods, which is yet in the stage of fermentation.

. . . Socially, [the West] is a genesis, a formless record of beginnings, tragic, grotesque, sorrowful,

⁵²Ibid., p. 69.

⁵³Ibid., p. 377.

⁵⁴Benn, p. 8.

unrelated, except as illustrations of a tendency toward confusion and failure, with contrasting lights of character and high achievement.

But . . . the West has a future socially, of enormous promise. The East denies it modesty, but there is a humility which apes pride and a pride that apes humility. It has never been denied generosity, charity, devotedness, humor of a peculiarly effective quality, a desire for self-improvement, [and] unconquerable, often pathetic, courage and enthusiasm.⁵⁵

If, as Rodman Paul suggests, Mary spent most of her life torn by tensions arising from conflicting loyalties to east and west,⁵⁶ her writing at times bridges the two points of view. These lines contain not only a statement of beliefs about western society but attempt to set these pleas into a framework of societal development--to explain to the east why the west was different, and to smooth over its rough edges with a plea for patience and understanding. The stories themselves would help along the understanding.

The setting of "The Last Assembly Ball" is clearly Leadville but the narrative seldom steps outside the very proper boarding house maintained for the nurture and

⁵⁵Mary Hallock Foote, "The Last Assembly Ball," Century Magazine, XXXVII and XXXVIII (March, 1889 to June, 1889). Also Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1889. p. 773.

⁵⁶Paul, A Victorian Gentlewoman, p. 3. "There was a continuing tension . . . between enthusiasm for the West's natural beauty and expansive way of life, and yearning for the intellectual and social stimulation of the eastern seaboard," Paul says in his introduction.

protection of homeless young mining engineers. The piece lacks imagery of place and she did not illustrate it.

Incidentally, the novel touches on the dilemma of eastern women who went west:

. . . When an Eastern woman goes west she--parts at one wrench with family, clan, traditions, . . . and all that has hitherto enabled her to merge her outlines--the support, the explanation, the excuse, if she needs one, for her personality. Suddenly she finds herself "cut out" in the arid light of a new community where there are no traditions and no backgrounds. Her angles are all discovered but none of her affinities⁵⁷

Mary wrote "The Last Assembly Ball" when she had spent over ten years in the west. She considered it a pot-boiler, written primarily for the "cool thousand" it brought her.⁵⁸ Still, the Leadville visits stood out in her life as a time of great stimulation and excitement, and they gave her settings which suited her style, her expertise and her editor.

⁵⁷ Foote, "The Last Assembly Ball," p. 780. Mary prefaces this paragraph with the enigmatic remark that "Woman is notoriously happy in a crowd, and never more herself--for to lose herself with a woman is to find herself." Here she must refer to the tendency of the mining camps to form into groups or "crowds" as she called them--depending on the mine for which they worked. These groups, she suggested, offered a sense of security and support for those within them, but, she hastened to add, did not attract what is "broadest, kindest, most human and democratic in our modern life."

⁵⁸ MHF to RWG, Boise, December 29, [1888].

Chapter 5

BOISE, IDAHO

Wind of the Great Far West, soft, electric and strong, blowing up through the gates of the great mountain ranges, over miles of dry savanna, where its playmates are the roving bands of wild horses, and the dust of the trails which it weaves into spiral clouds and carries like banners before it! Wind of prophecy and hope, of tireless energy and desire that life shall not satisfy! Who that has heard its call in the desert, or its whisper in the mountain valleys, can resist the longing to follow, to prove the hope, to test the prophecy!¹

The Footes passed a quiet summer at Deer Isle on Penobscot Bay. That fall Arthur stayed in New York to find himself a new position, while Mary returned to the old Milton home. The waiting chafed at both their natures, Mary finding her life "meagerly furnished as to events,"² and Arthur full of "wild hungry impatience to be afield again."³ In the spring of 1882 he went west to manage the Wolftone mine on the Wood River in Southern Idaho. Mary's brother-in-law, John Sherman, accompanied him and returned

¹Mary Hallock Foote, "John Bodewin's Testimony," Century Magazine, XXXI (Installments, November 1885 to April, 1886), p. 853.

²MHF to HKG, undated, [Milton, 1882].

³MHF to HKG, undated, [Milton, 1882].

that fall leaving Arthur in Idaho to search for a more promising situation.

That fall Mary rewrote the ending of The Led-Horse Claim while she waited for the birth of their second child. The galley proofs of this first novel arrived for proof-reading just after daughter Betty's birth in September, 1882. News from the west came when her "adventurousness" had vanished in the protective glow of motherhood.

Arthur spoke of reclaiming desert lands with huge irrigation works, a pragmatic dream which would become a reality at the turn of the century in Idaho. Large scale irrigation required visionary engineering skills; Arthur saw the prospect and put his mind to a scheme. Mary had her doubts about "darkest Idaho" but by February of 1883 when Arthur returned she was ready to be convinced. Respected financiers had formed a company to back the plan,⁴ and this time Mary's sister and her family would accompany them west. They were all, in a sense, to "have the confidence of homemakers,"⁵ to back the scheme as both investors and participants in a land Mary perceived as unborn.⁶

⁴General Charles H. Tompkins, a civil engineer who headed the American Diamond Rock Boring Company, and others.

⁵Rodman Paul, ed., Reminiscences of Mary Hallock Foote: A Victorian Gentlewoman in the Far West (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1972).

⁶Ibid., p. 270.

Arthur and the Shermans went to Idaho in the fall of 1883, but Mary, weakened by a miscarriage, did not join them until the spring of 1884. By that time Mary's sister Bessie would serve as a catalyst to arouse Mary's feelings about the west as home. Her earlier hopes had hinged on Arthur's eventually giving them a life of ease in the east. But time and the realization that Arthur would hold no post with "men you couldn't work for and be a man yourself,"⁷ had forced Mary to recast her dream. Her model became Bessie, a practical resourceful woman who recognized at once that the west would be her home.⁸

Mary tells the story of their arrival at Kuna⁹ and the drive to Boise in her reminiscences¹⁰ (See Plate VII). She catches the silence, the wind that swept unhindered across the treeless desert, the soft greens of the sagebrush and the song of the meadowlark that welcomed them. The magnificent Sawtooth Range in the northwest and the Owyhee mountains in the south formed the backdrop that fulfilled

⁷Ibid., p. 265.

⁸John Sherman and Bessie had made an earlier unsuccessful western venture to Wisconsin, then found himself trapped in the depressing downslide of the Hallock home place fortunes. The venture to Idaho gave him a last chance for independence and hope.

⁹The Oregon short line, built by the Union Pacific Railroad passed through Kuna about 15 miles southwest of Boise.

¹⁰Paul, p. 275.

The only way to come west happily is to embrace the country, people, life, everything as colonists do, jealously maintaining its superiority and refusing to see a blemish. I love my West when I am in the East.

Mary Hallock Foote
(Letter to Helena, 1888)



DRAWN BY MARY HALLOCK FOOTE.

THE ENGINEER'S MATE.

ENGRAVED BY M. HAIDER.

Plate VII

her "yearnings and gropings after beauty." To Mary it seemed "the most cheerful beginning . . . we have made yet--not so gay and frantic as Leadville, nor quite so poetic as poor little Almaden"11

The two families rented a house which had been built by a priest, on the upper outskirts of town--the Foote's notion of their proper place in that provincial town.¹² The military post on the common separated them from the mountains. Kitchen and flower gardens, apple and pear orchards, all watered from poplar-lined ditches, surrounded the house which opened on almost every side into wide "piazzas."

Mary fancied Boise to be a "proper decent little town quite unlike the wild camps."¹³ They arrived when that "little oasis in the desert" put forth its spring show "with all its little ugly houses smothered in apple blossoms and roses."¹⁴ Mary dared to hope again--the prospect of the west beckoned her once more. "You must think of us gladly . . . for we will be happy here--if only the canal goes on

¹¹MHF to HKG, May 19, 1883 [1884]. Mary's first letter from Boise is clearly dated 1883 but must have been written in 1884. Other letter dates indicate that she was still in Milton in November of 1883. Foote seldom dated her letters and often made mistakes when she did.

¹²Ibid., "The ladies seem very kind hearted but fearfully poky . . . so decent and kind and so dowdy and uninteresting."

¹³MHF to HKG, Boise City, May 8, [1884].

¹⁴MHF to HKG, Boise City, 25 May [1883].

all right and no terrible life calamity tears up our foundations," she told Helena.¹⁵

Mary's letters to Helena and Richard that first year in Idaho maintain the eager descriptive tone of someone coming to terms with a new environment. One senses age and maturity. Goals of permanence intrude where before only the dream of returning east had prevailed.

Mary worked on John Bodewin's Testimony that first year, apparently rewriting large parts of the novel in response to the sensitive criticisms of Richard Gilder. Her decision not to illustrate the Leadville setting of that piece may have arisen from her preoccupation with the new place. She spent part of the first summer at the engineers' camp in the Boise Canyon with only Arthur and the junior officers for company. These were welcome escapes from the enthusiastic Boise welcome extended her as a recognized writer.¹⁶ She found the canyon "picturesque" and "exclusive," and called the little camp nestled in Lytell's Gulch the loveliest place she had lived next to Almaden. She wrote of the summer wind--the "wonderful wind of the west" which came "from an inland sea of warm

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶MHF to HKG, the Canyon, June 26th [1885], "In Boise between the time that I came out in the spring and we moved up here, less than a year, we have had calls from 72 different ladies."

places."¹⁷ Here she found birds which she had missed so in Leadville--curlews, wood doves, red-winged blackbirds. The summer took on the aspect of a lengthy camping trip with a great deal of riding and exploring, and campfires by the river each evening.

Mary listened to the professional talk between Arthur and his juniors and worked it into her stories¹⁸ along with a new kind of western landscape setting. She rode often through the precipitous basalt bluffs of the canyon where she sketched many landscapes in an effort to catch the light on the hills and the expression of motion in the rock which she saw in the masses of debris at the foot of the cliffs.¹⁹ "I have grown to love these soft low monotones that give such importance to a bit of human life and color . . . such splendor of skies and of atmosphere and radiant distance . . ." she told Helena.²⁰

¹⁷MHF to RWG, Boise City, June 19th, 1884. W. H. Auden in The Enchafed Flood asserts that, "as places of freedom and solitude the sea and the desert are symbolically the same," p. 19.

¹⁸MHF to RWG, Boise City, 14 July [1884], "We sit on trunks and boxes and eat out of tin plates (of course) and the talk is very manly and professional for I won't be condescended to by the likes of them."

¹⁹See "The Gates of the Canyon" in "Dream Horses," St. Nicholas, XIV (August, 1888), 3-7.

²⁰MHF to HKG, The Cañon, June 6, [18]85.

One night the boy in Arthur Foote asserted itself, as Mary put it, and he took the group downstream in the clumsy flat-bottomed row-boat--a "wildly delightful" trip which frightened Mary not at all. They ran aground a few times but the young men piloted them safely through rapids and down treacherous narrow channels where the current swept them along furiously.²¹ Mary was "wild to do it again" but Arthur refused to take the risk.

The first summer passed quickly and lazily, without routine or demand. Mary continued to detail her small adventures to Helena, all the while insisting that they were unimportant by comparison to Helena's sophisticated, socially demanding life. Mary hoped that Richard and Helena might visit Idaho for a rest from their obligations.

As editor of Century Magazine, Richard Watson Gilder kept active in business, professional and political circles which might today be described as activist. Tomsich calls him a "genteel reformer" in editorial attitude to labor unions, in attitude while serving on commissions of investigation, and as member of an elite group supporting the "moral fury" of Grover Cleveland.²² Tomsich says the

²¹". . . Eastern men have the same contempt for a western man's rowing as a western man has for an eastern man's horsemanship." MHF to HKG, August 17, 1884.

²²Tomsich, p. 74-5, 80.

Gilders revelled in their intimacy with Cleveland;²³ certainly Mary's letters reflect the warmth she felt for Cleveland and his wife whom she had never met but of whom Helena spoke repeatedly.

The Gilders maintained a salon where they gathered together an elite group who shaped the editorial and artistic stance of the day.²⁴ In addition, both Helena and Richard followed their own creative bents, Richard as a poet and Helena as an artist. Gilder's poetry achieved some popularity in his day--he published five volumes--but Helena's "divine spark" was nearly extinguished by constant pregnancy, miscarriage and family care.²⁵

The faithful exchange of letters between Mary and Helena, women of the same yet very different worlds, stands as a tribute to friendship. The editor of that correspondence, when it is finally assembled and published, may find indication of more subtle aspects of the friendship. For example, one wonders what place dependency may have played on Mary's side, and what Helena may have gained from her

²³Ibid., p. 103-4. Tomsich comments: [Gilders'] politics, purely a product of the Gilded Age, was marked by little generosity."

²⁴Ibid., p. 25.

²⁵For an interesting discussion of Mary Foote's confidences to Helena on the subject of birth control see Carl Degler, A History of Women in the American Family, forthcoming.

part of the exchange. The two women loved each other deeply; they shared a woman's world of family and of Art (with a capital A) and at times they shared the exclusive attitude of aristocrats in the Gilded Age. Yet Mary's life would finally remove her entirely from the Gilders' sphere. Hers was the life of "small adventures" cherished and drained of their essence in the constant attempt to reproduce them for her audience. "I love to see strange places and do the unexpected thing," she tells Helena after a night spent sleepless under the stars.²⁶

She had indeed done unexpected things--few women in the Far West in 1884 could claim actual cash contribution to the family purse. Mary kept a Chinese cook, a tutor and a nurse--whatever would free her for her craft²⁷ which provided more and more of the family income. John Bodewin's Testimony brought her \$1,500.00 from Century alone (it was later published as a book) at a time when \$25.00 a month paid a royal salary to domestic help.

The delightful summer ended with a miscarriage that weakened Mary's health and chilled her spirits. She could no longer ride or walk, a situation that left her fretful

²⁶MHF to HKG, Boise, August 30, 1884.

²⁷Paul, p. 282. ". . . when I talk of my work it should be remembered that in those uncanny places I had always unusual helpers, not only sister and lady help but strong arms to swing a child up to a tall shoulder . . . or a patient reader"

and caustic in her comments to Helena! "People in the East, as a rule, I think, appear to have more money than they have--but here they are careless of the impression . . . they make and are often quite prosperous while living very shabbily" ²⁸ Still, western society was reminiscent enough of her own egalitarian heritage that she would treat respectfully even those she cared little to join. She tells Helena of a New Year's Day when the Footes and Shermans received the men of Boise:

[These are] the old settlers [who] congratulate themselves year after year on the growth of their beloved little town.

Nothing could be more appropriate to a place like this where there is but one "set" and everybody in it It took strong men to succeed and build up the town. We can make light of it--coming here after things are comfortable--but one has only to look from the pretty bowery streets in summer--the little lawns and the fruit trees, out on the desert beyond, to see what these men have done in about 30 years. Like all self-made men they are prone to worship the work of their hands. ²⁹

By 1884 a nationwide economic depression had become so severe that financiers hesitated to back speculative schemes. Arthur lost his eastern support for the Boise Canyon scheme and by the end of the first year's work, salaries went unpaid and the Footes had to give up their house. By Easter Sunday of the second year the family was settled rent free in the engineer's camp at Lytell's Gulch,

²⁸MHF to HKG, Boise, November 28, [1884].

²⁹MHF to HKG, Boise City, Idaho, January 5, 1885.

12 miles from Boise to wait until the fortunes of their scheme improved.³⁰ The move seems to have pleased Mary who wrote, "I find I miss less and less the art of the world and depend more and more on the wild broad beauty that man has never touched."³¹

That fall, the camp house being inadequate for winter weather, the men built the house Mary always called the Cañon House. Her check for John Bodewin's Testimony financed the venture and the work of all hands and minds joined in combining plans with available materials to complete a high-chimneyed low-ceilinged thick-walled home of basalt rock and native earth plaster. The house, especially its wide piazzas, would appear in many of her pictures (See Plate XI). "Of all our wild nest building this was the wildest and the most improvident and the hardest to leave," Mary recalled.³²

The group built a suspension bridge across the river to the main road, they planted a garden and white clover on the hill slopes, with pear and apple trees on the protected slopes by the river, they lined the walk with

³⁰MHF to HKG, Boise Canyon, Easter Sunday [1885]. The letter contains a complete description of the expanded camp house and its setting plus a sketch. Paul, 291, contains a description of the setting.

³¹Ibid.

³²Paul, p. 293. In a letter dated June 6, 1885, Mary writes, "It seems to me that always I have dreamed of such a place as this."

poplar saplings and planted locust trees on the bare slope above them. Mary called it her 'love' house, perhaps referring to the love that went into the building of it as well as to the birth of their second daughter, Agnes, there in 1886.

When Mary wrote of the four years they spent in the Canyon she filled entire pages with tribute to the faithful and patient ditch crew who waited out the uncertainty of the project with them. Packer and camp cook, teacher and junior engineers share equally in her praise. She treats A. J. Wiley, who would finish building the Arrowrock Dam 25 years after he had served as junior assistant engineer to the man who designed the plan,³³ and Harry Tompkins, son of General Tompkins, with the love reserved for brothers.

With financial support withdrawn and salaries going unpaid, Mary turned her attention more seriously to her work. Caught between the traditional expectations of the time--" . . . nothing pays so well as loving and caring for [ones] own husband, children, family, friends--doings of any kind are no real satisfaction," and her own philosophy " . . . we have to keep doing or love itself would stifle," she acknowledged that she needed to work at her chosen

³³Paul, p. 284. Mary remarks that the Arrowrock, 250 feet when built, was the highest dam in the world.

career to keep her self respect.³⁴ In addition to working on the novels she began to write short stories again, and prepared full-page illustrations to go with them.

Mary sets "A Cloud on the Mountain" firmly in Idaho and her pictures authenticate the place for her eastern and western readers alike.³⁵ Maguire says the story does not lack realism.³⁶ The sketch shows a young girl beside a willow-lined stream which flows into a pass between high hills. A towering white peak looms in the distance. Even today I find the story appealing and touching in its tragic conclusion.

Mary introduced "The Fate of a Voice" with a lengthy lesson in the geology of the region:

There are many loose pages of the earth's history scattered through the unpeopled regions of the Far West An ancient lava stream once submerged the valley. Its hardening crust, bursting asunder in places, left great crooked rents through which the subsequent drainage from the mountain slopes found a way down to the desert plains. In one of these furrows, left by the fiery plowshare, a river, now called the Wallula, made its bed. Hurling itself from side to side, scouring out its straitened boundaries with tons of sand torn from the mountains, it slowly widened and deepened, and wore its ancient channel into the Canon Along the bluffs . . . the basalt walls are reared in tiers of columns with hexagonal cleavage. A column or a group of

³⁴MHF to HKG, Boise Canon, June 14, 1886.

³⁵Mary Hallock Foote, "A Cloud on the Mountain," Century Magazine, XXXI (November, 1885), 28-38.

³⁶Maguire, p. 22.

columns becomes dislocated from the mass, rests so, slightly apart . . . it topples down; the jointed columns fall apart, and their fragments go to increase the heap of debris which has found its angle of repose at the foot of the cliff³⁷

The picture shows the hexagonal basalt in detail.³⁸ The story outlines the dilemma of a singer faced with life in the uncultured west. The tension stems from her choice between life in the west with a western man or life in the east with her career. Mary managed a compromise which must have pleased her editors; the girl "went West" with her husband to bring culture to "a new country and a new people."

The men finished the house, studied and worked on inventions. They designed a flop gate for irrigation ditches³⁹ and took up book binding. Mary mentions in both letters and reminiscences their heroic efforts to keep the Cañon house gardens and fields and trees alive and how a sheepman with 5,000 sheep, going east from Oregon, passed that way "like an army destroying everything in their way."⁴⁰

³⁷Mary Hallock Foote, "The Fate of a Voice," Century Magazine, XXXIII (November, 1886), 61-73.

³⁸Mary says in a letter dated August 9 [1886] from the Cañon that her sister Bessie and Harry Tompkins served as models for the figures in the foreground.

³⁹Arthur D. Foote, "An Automatic Waste Weir," American Society of Civil Engineers, Transactions, 18 (February, 1888), 58-60.

⁴⁰MHF to HKG, undated, [1886]. Mary Foote used her letters to Helena, which had been saved and returned to her, to write her reminiscences.

The shepherd left a weak lamb with the children. The lamb died, but Mary, with what she called "remorseless practicality," wrote a story about it and used her own children as models for the picture.⁴¹ The story which she eventually sold to St. Nicholas shows Mary's excellent ability in comparing east and west--in this case she weaves details of sheep raising in both areas into the tale.

Mary calls the four years in her Cañon House "the endurance test." Her reminiscences treat them matter-of-factly, almost without emotion, but the letters betray her tensions and her volatile shifts of mood. Mary's enforced stay in the Boise Canyon both before and after Agnes birth wore on her.⁴² The bluffs she had loved became "a prison," the river's lull a "ceaseless roar" and the wind "cross-grained." A critic who commented that "Mrs. Foote had developed a literary ambition" provoked Mary to remark that she hoped the time would come when she need not publish her work, and she told Helena that she never would have begun to write except for the need of money.⁴³

⁴¹Mary Hallock Foote, "The Lamb That Couldn't Keep Up," St. Nicholas, XVI (September, 1889), 802-806.

⁴²MHF to HKG, March 6, 1887. The Footes had hoped for a second boy. See Paul, p. 301. "Queer how even in our family where all the women were self-supporting the old tradition held that boys are sure to be an asset and girls a liability."

⁴³Ibid.

Yet often the very solitude that imprisoned and depressed her lost its oppressiveness when she worked. Sometimes she felt inadequate to the challenge of place and expressed that feeling through her fictional characters. "There is something terribly sobering about these solitudes, these waste places of the earth. They belittle everything one is or tries to do . . . very few things in art hold their own against it," she wrote to Helena.⁴⁴ In "The Last Assembly Ball," Mrs. Danskin expresses much the same idea.⁴⁵

The waiting brought personalities under harsher stress, and Mary began once more to speak of their life as an exile! Sometimes "we wear on each other . . . in this secluded narrow life of intense anticipation and sickening delay."⁴⁶ She said Arthur refused to give up the scheme because he believed that irrigation would be "the next great movement in the west."⁴⁷

In late 1887 Mary wrote to Richard Watson Gilder outlining her plan for a series of full page illustrations

⁴⁴MHF to HKG, June 6, 1887.

⁴⁵Mary Hallock Foote, "The Last Assembly Ball," Century Magazine, XXXI (Installments, November 1885 to April 1886), p. 69.

⁴⁶MHF to HKG, Boise, August 26, 1887.

⁴⁷MHF to HKG, The Cañon, January 8, [18]88.
". . . the cattle ranges are all getting eaten off and the cattle men must 'feed' and the barren valleys and plains must yield pasture."

of the Far West. She hoped he would find a western poet to write verse for her sketches which she hoped might eventually be published as a small book.⁴⁸ She had already sent four pictures to Century Magazine's art editor, Mr. Frazer, insisting that she must be allowed to do horizontal blocks as she could not see things in the west "perpendicular."⁴⁹

The series appeared at monthly intervals in the 1888-1889 Century Magazine issues, accompanied not by verse but by Mary's own brief descriptive essays. The pictures evoke the sentiment of home place in a land that is open, large and treeless except where irrigation ditches water it. Viewed together, as Mary wished the series to be, the pictures and her comments present a continuation of her attempt to place the settlement of the west in the larger framework of time and history.

Most of these pictures are touching reproductions of Foote family life. The first, "Looking for Camp" could be Arthur coming down into the Boise Canyon at evening.⁵⁰ (See Plate VIII). Edith Thomas, a poet whom Mary admired greatly,

⁴⁸MHF to RWG, The Cañon, November 3, [1887].

⁴⁹MHF to RWG, The Cañon, Boise, Idaho, June 10, [1888].

⁵⁰Mary Hallock Foote, "Looking for Camp," Century Magazine, XXXVIII (November, 1888).

All the life of the hills tends downwards at night; the cattle, which always graze upwards, go down to the gulches to drink; the hunter makes his camp there when darkness overtakes him.

Mary Hallock Foote
("Looking for Camp,"
Century Magazine, 1889)



DRAWN BY MARY HALLOCK FOOTE.

LOOKING FOR CAMP.

ENGRAVED BY F. S. KING.

66

Plate VIII

wrote "Evening Among the Foothills" to supplement Mary's short essay.

"The Coming of Winter" shows a pioneer couple standing in front of their rough shack on the plains.⁵¹ The woman holds a baby and the man a gun. Mary carries these contrasts of prospect and refuge, so compellingly obvious in the sketch, into her essay.⁵²

When the settlers stop, it is not because they have reached the place to which they meant to go, but because they have found a sheltered valley with water and wild grass. The wagon needs mending, they build a rude cabin, the baby is born, summer has passed. It is too late to move that winter

The home-seeker, with all the West before him, will be wary of the final choice which costs him the freedom of the road.⁵³

A third picture shows "The Sheriff's Posse" riding through rolling hills covered with sagebrush.⁵⁴ Her essay touches lightly on cattle and sheep wars and Mary admits she has never seen a posse. Still, the picture and essay reinforce the image of the west as a place where law breakers will be punished--a safer place than the east might expect.

⁵¹Mary Hallock Foote, "The Coming of Winter," Century Magazine, XXXVIII (December 1888).

⁵²Jay Appleton, The Experience of Landscape, pp. 151-157.

⁵³Mary Hallock Foote, "The Coming of Winter," Century Magazine, XXXVIII (December, 1888).

⁵⁴Mary Hallock Foote, "The Sheriff's Posse," Century Magazine, XXXVII (January, 1889).

"The Orchard Windbreak"⁵⁵ is the weakest sketch of the series. The break serves only as background for a poorly proportioned and overly sentimental duo--a young woman petting a tame deer. To one side a fruit tree balances the composition. Mary wrote, "The planting of an orchard by a new settler is accepted as his final expression of content with his choice . . . , and added the quaint observation, "He who plants apple trees plants for himself but he who plants pears plants for his heirs. They are planting pear orchards in the valley of the Boise."

In "The Choice of Reuben and Gad,"⁵⁶ Mary achieves her usual standard. The river has a luminous quality and the elements of prospect fuse in the vision of the man who looks across it and the child who watches the protected camp (See Plate IX).

"Cinching Up"⁵⁷ pictures the west as a place where a Victorian Lady may ride, elegantly dressed in habit and solicitously attended by one of the lace-boot brigade. The riders pause on a bluff over the river canyon, a basalt cliff behind them.

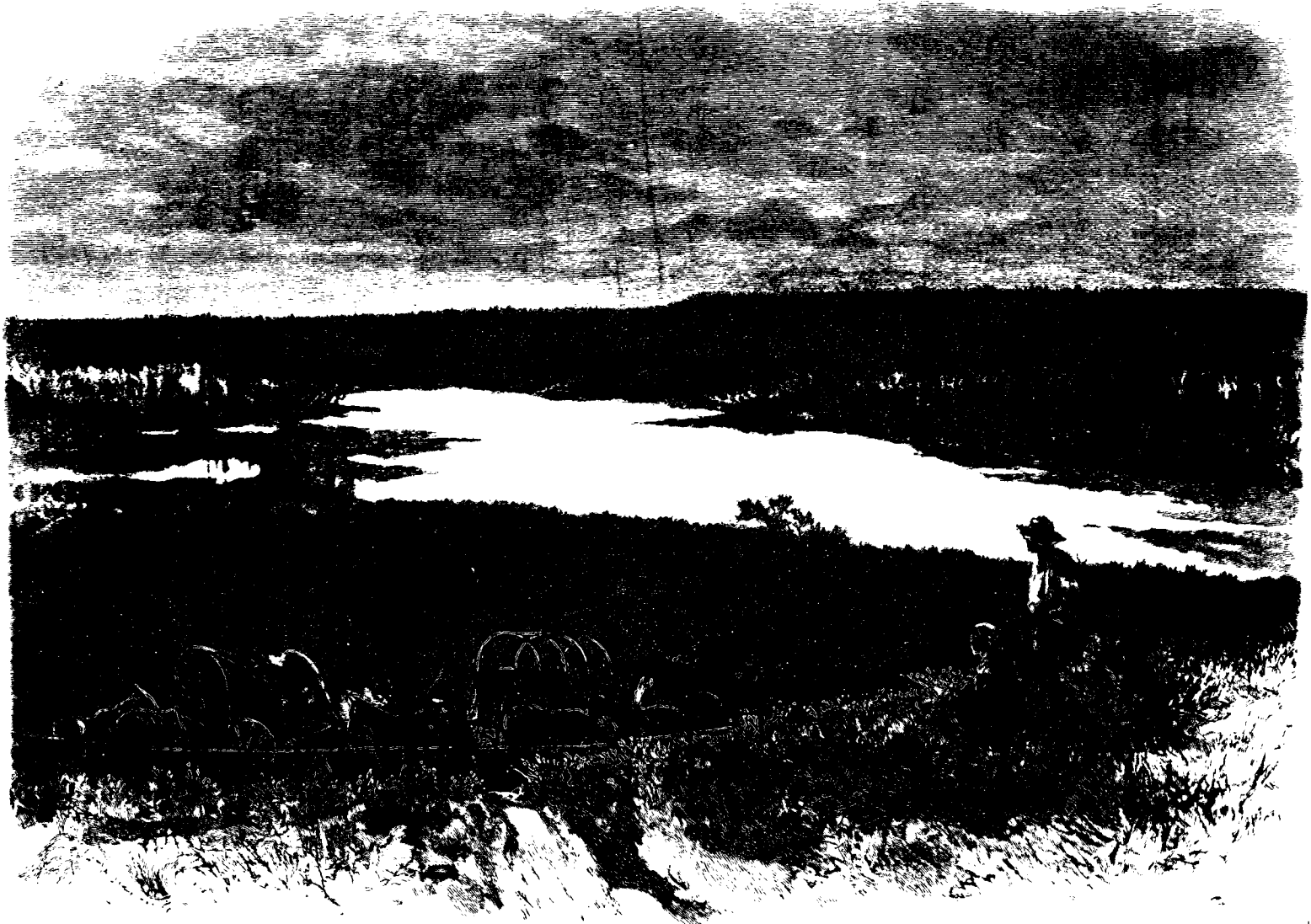
⁵⁵Mary Hallock Foote, "The Orchard Windbreak," Century Magazine, XXXVII (February, 1889).

⁵⁶Mary Hallock Foote, "The Choice of Reuben and Gad," Century Magazine, XXXVII (March, 1889).

⁵⁷Mary Hallock Foote, "Cinching Up," Century Magazine XXXVIII (May, 1889).

We know that the cowboy is as genuine, and probably as historic, an outgrowth of the western border of the Platte as was the wily Gibeonite of the eastern borders of the Jordan. . . . This hither shore of the river, rich in grass, broken by hills into shelter from the winds, is our land of Gilead; those hills to the eastward, with their strange copper-colored lights at sunset, are the lonely hills of sepulture; the Promised Land lies just beyond the river's twilight gleam, where the mesa steps down by treads ten miles long to the dim, color-washed line of the plain.

Mary Hallock Foote
("The Choice of Reuben and
Gad," Century Magazine, 1889)



W. A. ...

THE CHOICE OF REUBEN AND GAD.

ENGRAVED BY J. H. ...

Plate IX

"The Irrigation Ditch" ranks among Mary's most reproduced pictures⁵⁸ (See Plate X). It touches one with its serenity and domesticity. Mary made plain her belief in irrigators as builders of the west. Once more Edith Thomas supplied a poem, "The Water Seeker."

"The Last Trip In"⁵⁹ pictures a "freighter of the plains"--mule teams hauling a covered wagon train uphill through a landscape whited out by blowing snow. But civilization's marker in the form of a telegraph pole and line intrudes upon the stark scene.

Mary used the Cañon house piazza and her daughter Betty to picture "Afternoon on a Ranch"⁶⁰ (See Plate XI), and the same setting for "A Pretty Girl in the West."⁶¹ The pretty girl sits in a hammock strumming a guitar while a young man--booted, spurred and hat in hand--watches. Mary told Helena that she would be amused at her "in the seat of propriety" to deliver her comments in this essay."⁶²

⁵⁸Mary Hallock Foote, "The Irrigation Ditch," Century Magazine XXXVIII (June, 1889). The pencil sketch is in the Stanford University collection. One of Mary's domestics, named Evaleen, and baby Agnes served as models. Maguire uses it on the cover of his booklet.

⁵⁹Mary Hallock Foote, "The Last Trip In," Century Magazine, XXXVIII (July, 1889).

⁶⁰Mary Hallock Foote, "Afternoon at a Ranch," Century Magazine, XXXVIII (August, 1889).

⁶¹Mary Hallock Foote, "A Pretty Girl in the West," Century Magazine, XXXVII (October, 1889).

⁶²MHF to HKG, Friday, April 7, [1889].

The men and women who took the brunt of the siege and capture of those first square miles of desert will carry in their countenances something of the record of that achievement. The second generation may seek to forget that its fathers and mothers "walked in" behind a plains' wagon; but in the third, the story will be proudly revived, with all the honors of tradition; and in the fourth generation from the sage-brush the ancestral irrigator will be no less a personage, in the eyes of his descendants, than the Pilgrim Father, the Dutch Patroon, or the Virginia Cavalier.

Mary Hallock Foote
("The Irrigation Ditch,"
Century Magazine, 1889)

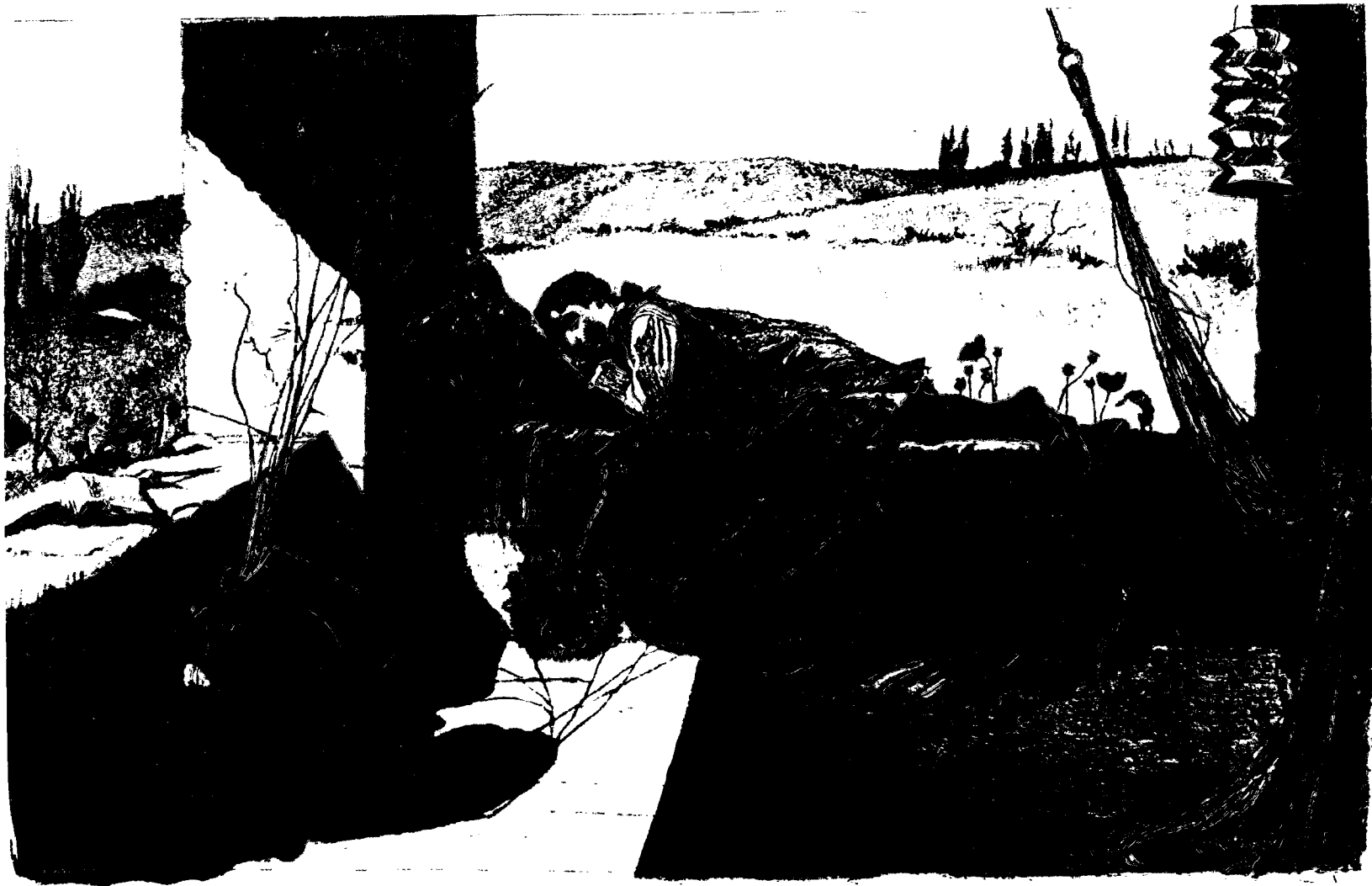


THE IRRIGATION DITCH.

Plate X

The imaginative builder in the West, as in the East, frequently "slips up" in practice: but it will be he that first catches the spirit of the landscape and makes its poetry of suggestion his own. The people of certain races build with an unconscious truth to the nature around them which is like an instinct; or perhaps it is part of that providence which is said to attend upon the lame and the lazy. They are crippled by their poverty; they have the temperament that can wait. They cannot afford to "haul" expensive lumber or pay for carpenters to aid them in their experiment; so they scrape up the mud around them, make it into adobes and wait for them to dry, and pile them up in the simplest way, which proves to be the best. They build long and low because it is less trouble than to build high; for the same reason, perhaps, they do not cut up their wall space into windows. The result is the architecture of simplicity and rest; and it goes very well with a country that pauses, for miles, in a trance of sky and mountain and plain, and forgets to put in the details.

Mary Hallock Foote
("Afternoon At a Ranch,"
Century Magazine, 1889)



DRAWN BY MARY HALLOCK FOOTE.

AFTERNOON AT A RANCH.

ENGRAVED BY H. DAVIDSON.

Plate XI

She concluded the set with "The Winter's Camp--A Day's Ride With the Mail."⁶³ The picture and essay make a small tribute to the junior engineers who often wintered in such tent camps, a day's ride from the nearest habitation.

Robert M. Taft sums up the importance of this series, which is perhaps Mary's best work.

These illustrations were beautifully engraved woodcuts, for this period marks the golden age of American woodcut illustrations; a period which produced magazine illustrations which have never been excelled, and The Century was the leader in its field Mrs. Foote is the only woman who can claim company among the men in the field of the western picture.⁶⁴

Mary continued to write children's stories for St. Nicholas now and then. She illustrated both "An Idaho Picnic" and "Dream Horses" with basalt canyon sketches. Writing the children's stories may have forced her to pause and think about her own family and to acknowledge to Helena, "This Cañon life which is but an episode in our grownup lives is the most important part of the boy's life and all of Betty's that she can remember."⁶⁵

Though Mary had much help and could not imagine settling into a life of domesticity, she nonetheless spent

⁶³Mary Hallock Foote, "The Winter's Camp," Century Magazine, XXXIX (November, 1889).

⁶⁴Robert Taft, Artists and Illustrators of the Old West: 1850-1900, (New York: Scribner's Sons, Ltd., 1953).

⁶⁵MHF to HKG, December 6, 1887.

much of her life assisting with household matters and tending the children when they were sick--and they were sick very often. Nowadays, surrounded by our robust youngsters, we forget the anguish and fear which attended child raising when any epidemic of disease such as measles, whooping cough, scarlet fever and the like invaded a home. Even those who survived often carried permanent damage. Paul has called Mary an "over protective" mother.⁶⁶ A more suitable adjective might be "dedicated." Not only were the children repeatedly ill, but Arthur suffered severe headaches, facial neuralgia and "turns with his liver."⁶⁷ With the exception of problems relating to miscarriage and childbirth, Mary kept her good health.

For awhile it seemed that Henry Villard of the Northern Pacific Railroad would back the irrigation scheme which he felt would provide incentive for settlement along the Oregon Short Line just built into Idaho. But his business failed and once more there was nothing for the Footes to do but wait. Such inactivity chafed the nerves of a man "whose temperament demands activity at the rate of 40 miles a day on horseback." Mary saw Arthur as a man of imagination, an originator, "a born inventor and pioneer but always in the world outside," a man whose vision was "long

⁶⁶Paul, p. 4.

⁶⁷MHF to HKG, undated, [1887].

lines of gleaming ditches with fields of alfalfa and herds of cattle, and rows and rows of poplars marking the boundaries of the farms."⁶⁸ She told Richard that the simplest lives were often the most difficult to lead, probably referring to the waiting they were enduring.⁶⁹ For her part she hoped someday to write the history of a scheme from her point of view--something more than the usual frontier type tale.

In the spring of 1888, Mary's father died, and the Milton home, except for the mill place which went to her brother, Tom, was sold to pay creditors. The loss of the eastern home must have caused Mary much reflection on her western life where she must now seek her "angle of repose."⁷⁰ Her search for such an angle takes form when one studies her letters from the Cañon house.

Constantly vacillating between hunger for the cultural life she missed and her innate sense of higher values, she managed to keep her work relatively free of the

⁶⁸MHF to HKG, The Cañon, December 16, 1887.

⁶⁹MHF to RWG, The Canon, February 3, [1888].

⁷⁰Paul, 306, 309. (Wallace Stegner used this geomorphic term as title for his novel based on Foote's life.) "For a given material on a hillside--whether a blanket of soil or a layer of loose debris--there is a maximum slope angle, called the angle of repose, that material can make without slipping downhill,"--definition from Physical Geography Today, (California: Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, 1974).

bias that colors her letters to Helena whom she sometimes envied. Her stories, drawn as they so often were, from her experience, treated many of the problems of new settlers and communities. Even to Helena she tried to explain the balances of life in the west--"fresher, less subtle, far less intellectual, but also less timid and self-conscious."⁷¹

In the spring of 1880, Arthur Foote felt he could await the outcome of his scheme no longer and accepted a position on the United States Geological Survey under J. W. Powell and Clarence Dutton who had been named to head the new section of the irrigation survey. Arthur agreed to make the surveys of the upper Missouri, Montana and Wyoming areas if Southern Idaho would be included in his region. Foote retained the position of consulting engineer for his Idaho scheme and Harry Tompkins took over as chief.⁷² Now that Arthur would be gone on lengthy survey trips the family could no longer stay in the canyon so far from Boise. The "mesa house" so long planned would have to be built. In the meantime the family moved in with Bessie and John Sherman in Boise City.

⁷¹MHF to HKG, Boise City, October 10, 1888.

⁷²MHF to HKG, April 12, 1889. Mary explains Arthur's decision to give up the scheme. "I feel that we deteriorate in this life of physical inaction and mental unrest. This perpetual rising and sinking upon waves of hope into depths of disappointment wears into the temper of one's very soul. This is too great a price to pay for any scheme."

That spring Mary finally confided to Helena that Arthur's "spells" with "liver and kidney trouble" and her own almost unbearable nervousness had been brought on by his heavy drinking during the long wait. Mary feared he would disgrace himself publicly, particularly at business meetings. One suspects that he had already done so. Mary resolved to relieve this cumulative pressure by spending a summer in Victoria, Canada with the children while Arthur went on his survey trips.⁷³

Interpreters of her life have felt that Mary planned this separation with an eye to making it permanent.⁷⁴ Certainly she may have considered the possibility for she could support her family--a claim few Victorian ladies could make--and she was under a great deal of stress from the scandal of Arthur's drinking. But we need to remember that separation and 'the demon drink' were equally scandalous in those Victorian times.

The letters neither prove nor disprove the notion that she planned to leave Arthur and she never mentions the matter in her reminiscences. What the letters do show is the price she paid for seeing her family through those troubled times. She ranges from almost hectic cheerfulness to morbid despair. She speaks little of those things she

⁷³MHF to HKG, April 12, [1889].

⁷⁴Paul, pp. 32-34.

had loved--the river, the mountains, the air and the light. At first her moods followed the fortunes of the canal scheme with optimism and hope, but when her anxiety about Arthur overcomes her, she turns her eyes inward.

As she could no longer count on any family income from Arthur, she faced the added tension of having to step up her own work pace. The letters, so different from the philosophical hindsight of the reminiscences, trace the disintegration of her personality as burden after burden falls on her shoulders. Her father dies, the children are sick, the scheme has lost another backer, her work is going poorly and Arthur has another spell of his "trouble."

The change of scene at Victoria rested her. There she met Edith Angus who would be her friend for life. They shared problems; both their husbands drank too much. Mrs. Angus seemed in her life, "as I in mine . . . helpless to direct her own course," Mary remarked.

Whatever her motives behind the separation, she returned from Victoria "irrevocably committed to the part of an anxious wife."⁷⁵ She found that Arthur had escaped losing his position on the survey only through the loyalty of his subordinates who had covered up for one of his

⁷⁵MHF to HKG, Victoria, July 5, [18] '89. "This experiment has settled one thing in my mind. There is no use my thinking I could go anywhere with the children for their improvement and my own away from my old boy."

relapses. Mary, anguished, took a firm stand. There would be no thoughts of "homes or housebuilding. From this time on I shall keep my separate account," she told Helena.⁷⁶ She settled her family with Bessie, now her mainstay and set to work on her irrigation story.⁷⁷ In her next letter, making one of her dramatic emotional swings, she apologizes for her "dreadful letter." Arthur has returned, admitted the truth (she dreaded the moral implications of his deceit) and made a good report to his superiors.⁷⁸ He needed, she realized, to "respect himself,"⁷⁹ and she meant to help.⁸⁰

The road was a rough one; her volatile moods continued as her responsibilities increased. Reading the letters, one fears for her health and her life. Then her characteristic stubborn determination and steady maturity begin to assert themselves. In this transition she loses much of her affectedness and snobbishness. One wonders

⁷⁶MHF to HKG, Boise City, August 8, 1889.

⁷⁷MHF to HKG, Boise, November 14, [18] '89. "I am deep at work on my Irrigation story and Arthur doesn't mind me writing it so much, now that he is on the survey . . . all the characters are quite different--only the local color is the same."

⁷⁸Arthur, accompanied by John Brown, had packed into the Grand Tetons to study reservoir sites on the Snake River. He had gone on to the Yellowstone area as well.

⁷⁹MHF to HKG, August 25, 1889.

⁸⁰MHF to HKG, Boise, November 14, [18] '89, ". . . the man's fight for his dignity is not ignoble."

if many of the comments Mary made to Helena were made because she was Helena--in a world that Mary could never hope to share. One remaining letter to her mother lacks the flowery overtones and cutting criticisms.⁸¹

As the realization of a long-forming dream based on the Tompkins' advice, the Footes sent Arthur Junior east for secondary school at St. Pauls in Concord, New Hampshire. Early in 1890 Arthur went to New York to report to Dutton and Mary travelled east to make her last parting with the Milton home. In New York, General Tompkins assured Arthur that the scheme had found a backer in Enoch Harvey, a wealthy Englishman, while the excavation contract for seventy-five miles of canal would go to William Bradbury, a distant cousin of Arthur's. Their hopes were high again but Mary had grown pessimistic.

Back at Boise they found daughter Agnes very ill. While she recovered the Footes went on with their long-deferred plan for the mesa house. Mary called Arthur's design "a symphony of mud and shingles . . . the yellow-gray adobe mud of the region and cedar shingles." Once more they built thick walls and wide piazzas which would provide their only shade before their trees grew. Arthur and Mary had, as well as their preemptive claim on the mesa, a tree culture

⁸¹MHF to "My dearest little mother," 16 Young St., Victoria, July 4, 1889.

and desert claim.⁸² He intended to prove up his land (1,000 acres in all) as an example where others might see the fruits of irrigation. His whole plan relied on the completion of the Phyllis canal which he believed would reach his mesa property the next year.⁸³

Once the family settled into the mesa house which Arthur built just two and one-half miles from Boise, Mary began to make friends among the Boise women and those at the army post, and to participate a little in community affairs such as raising money for a reading room and library. She grew, during those hard years, to accept the west as home--not as an exile--and her stay there as permanent, not a temporary trip into paradise. She came also to accept her status as a somewhat minor writer who turned out what she herself joylessly termed "pot-boilers." She recognized that she and Arthur had talents and vision that the West needed, and she agreed to be one of its builders. Even when Arthur gave up the scheme she had assured Helena, "We love this scheme . . . it may be understood after awhile that the

⁸²Preemption laws granted land to settlers at \$1.25 per acre up to 160 acres. The Timber Culture Act of 1883 and 1888 allowed a settler an additional 160 acres at no cost, if planted in trees. Each settler might also have 640 acres at \$1.25 an acre, if he irrigated the land within three years. Paul, p. 321.

⁸³On the promise of Mr. Harvey's support, and the backing of the Rockwells, the company had begun the Phyllis, a short canal to reach some established farms in the Boise area and the Snake River Placer Mines. Paul, p. 328.

future of whole provinces of the West, agriculturally, depends upon it."⁸⁴

They lived on hope: "We have not a single tree nor one in sight . . . to the north lies the irrigated land along the river. The noble shape of the country lies bare under the sky as if just made and ready for the birth of trees and crops. It has its own great and growing charm"⁸⁵ Arthur planted trees, prepared lawns, scraped a fifty acre field for wheat and laid out ditches which would fill when the Phyllis reached their land. In the meantime he relied on a windmill with a storage tank.⁸⁶

By December of 1890 Mary could tell Richard and Helena, "This year has been one of unbroken peace in regard to one great anxiety connected with my husband." Apparently Arthur had stopped drinking. He had not been the only one to suffer the demoralizing effects of the delay on the canal work. The junior engineer, Harry Tompkins, suffered a nervous collapse marked by faintness and loss of muscle function.

Bessie's husband, John Sherman, died in the spring of 1891. Bessie showed no desire to return east. Having

⁸⁴MHF to HKG, April 12, [1889].

⁸⁵MHF to HKG, July 5, [1890].

⁸⁶The windmill pumped 40-60 barrels a day. MHF to HKG, Boise, October 20, [18] '90.

"balanced the opportunities for her children," she decided to continue running a boarding house in Boise. For the Shermans, the west had meant independence--first for John and now for Bessie.⁸⁷

Mary set to work on her irrigation story, The Chosen Valley. "In this story, though it may not be generally interesting, I know my ground," she told Richard.⁸⁸ Published as a serial in the 1892 Century Magazine⁸⁹ and illustrated with some of her finest work, I find The Chosen Valley the best of her early western novels.⁹⁰ Mary works through the story of a scheme not unlike those Arthur planned in Idaho. She shows remarkable restraint, fairness and understanding in her treatment of the irrigation theme in a story that shows how human character and ambition chart the course of each person. Somehow Mary overcame her own experience, discouraging and eroding as it has been, and discussed schemes such as theirs realistically:

The ideal scheme is ever beckoning from the West; but the scheme with an ideal record is yet to find--

⁸⁷Paul, p. 334.

⁸⁸MHF to RWG, May 12, 1891.

⁸⁹Mary Hallock Foote, "The Chosen Valley," Century Magazine, XLIV (Installments May-November, 1892), and (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1892).

⁹⁰For literary summary and critique of The Chosen Valley see Benn, pp. 85-95, and Maguire, pp. 17-19.

that shall fulfill its promises and pay its debts, and remember its friends and keep itself unspotted from the world. Over the groves of the dead, and over the hearts of the living, presses the cruel expansion of our country's material progress Men shall go down, the deed arrives, not unimpeachable, as the first proud word went forth, but mishandled, shorn, and stained with obloquy, and dragged through crushing strains. And those that are with it in its latter days are not those who set out in the beginning. And victory, if it come, shall border hard upon defeat.⁹¹

Henry Nash Smith tells us that the agricultural west "proved quite intractable as literary material . . . the difficulty lay in the class status of the Western farmer."⁹² The Chosen Valley addresses the subject of the agricultural west, but through the class of engineers rather than through farmers. Mary wrote about engineers because she lived among them and could discuss their activities authentically. She brought realism to this story which in some details parallels aspects of Arthur's scheme as it had developed.

In "The Chosen Valley," both illustrations and setting mirror the river canyons and the sage-covered basalt bluffs of the Snake River (See Plate XII). The other pictures focus on figures with typical southern Idaho settings forming a backdrop (See Plate XIII). Mary probably used the Boise River Canyon to draw the view seen through the window in this sketch. The picture illustrates her facility

⁹¹Foote, The Chosen Valley, p. 833.

⁹²Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 211.

"Dolly," said Philip, "don't forget what we are here for: this is the land we are going to reclaim. Can you not fancy it--miles and miles, at sunset, shining with ditches, catching the sky in gleams; and the low houses and the crops, and the dark lines of trees reflected in the water-channels? You will like it when you see it, and I should n't be surprised if you called it home. And if there are no burns, there will be gentle, sober ditches. Our waters shall do their singing and shouting up in the mountains; they come down here on business. Your burns are nothing but mad children. Ditches are tender, good mothers, taking thought where they go, not ripping and tearing through the land. Oh, you will like it, and one day you will own it for your country. You are a 'bunch'grass belle,' Dolly, however you may boast of your heather."

Mary Hallock Foote
("The Chosen Valley,"
Century Magazine, 1892)



DOLLY WAS SERVING A HOUSEKEEPER'S APPRENTICESHIP.

Already his prospect was immensely enlarged; he had gained a cooler stratum of air; he could see the formation of the canon from end to end, from its rise in the hills to the gate of the river's departure. He could pick out the rocks and shallows in the brown water beneath. Tons of boulders, fallen from the bluffs, lay embedded near shore, breaking the current into swirls and eddies. The river had worn a way down to its present bed, from the level of its former path, through a fissure in the ancient lava-flow which once submerged the valley.

Mary Hallock Foote
("The Chosen Valley"
Century Magazine, 1892)



ENGRAVED BY H. DAVIDSON.

“HE TURNED HIS BACK ON THE TENTS AND STRUCK OUT ACROSS THE SAGE-BRUSH.”

Plate XIII

for placing domesticity and settlement in casual juxtaposition to the stark ruggedness of the basalt country. Through most of her life Mary accepted the dictum of her time-- " . . . all of us helpless as women are in the grasp of our men's determinations."⁹³ Having made her choice to follow Arthur--"my man of the future" she called him⁹⁴--she used her illustrations to show men and women who shared the engineer's quest for prospect and the homesteader's search for refuge. Set side by side, these two pictures illustrate conflicting human desire for novelty and adventure and for a safe haven at the end of the day.

The Footes' bad luck continued. Their first plantings on the mesa withered in the drought of 1891. The wheat did not even sprout and funds for the Phyllis ran out when it was only two miles from their ranch. Mr. Harvey, the English financier had been killed in a rail accident and no new backer could be found,⁹⁵ for the myth of the west as Garden of the World had vanished.⁹⁶ But Mary reckoned it was faith they had planted in a scheme that in years to

⁹³Paul, p. 319.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 324.

⁹⁵Congress refused to appropriate money for the scheme. Paul, p. 330.

⁹⁶Martyn J. Bowden, "The American Desert in the American Mind," in David Lowenthal and Martyn J. Bowden, eds., Geographics of the Mind, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 131. Bowden says, "Throughout the

come would prove Arthur's vision. She saw their dream as much more than "a living," or even as a symbol of Arthur's professional success, and would remember that dream as an essential part of their lives.

But even now, on our continental journeys, when we have reached the country of the valleys and the old lava flows between the knees of the ranges, when we halt at some lone junction or water tank in the sagebrush and step out to breathe the "essential silence" after the roar of the train--it is there, that whisper of the desert wind--it all comes back, the shiver of an old longing and doubt and expectancy⁹⁷

At last Mary believed that Arthur had "gained the mastery" of his drinking problem.⁹⁸ Her faith in him renewed on a firmer basis. She would need all the faith she could muster. Leaving their parched claim behind them they packed up the mesa house and returned to Bessie's home in Boise.

In 1892 Arthur was named President of the American Society of Mining Engineers. His integrity was intact. Putting his broken dreams behind him he went on with plans for a smaller scheme--a reservoir on Black's Creek near Boise. His survey was complete except for a final location

nineteenth century the west had been viewed largely as the Garden of the World . . . [following] a succession of dry years . . . by the mid-1890's the myth of the garden was no longer tenable."

⁹⁷Paul, p. 329.

⁹⁸MHF to HKG, undated, [1892].

marker so that his claim could be filed in Washington. On the strength of his plan he proceeded to promote his new scheme. Once more his open and honest approach failed. Mary tells how his claim was jumped by a cheating engineer named Clark and how all Arthur's work was lost.⁹⁹ With dogged determination, Arthur proposed another scheme, this time a "City Ditch Scheme" for Boise. Mary tells Helena:

I am ashamed to tell you of our small doing--How for six months Arthur has been working on this City Ditch, how the City Council granted him the franchise with enthusiasm; how the private artisian water monopolists fought him; how the city was with him and how at last after much red tape back and forth and the usual delays, the water department has refused him the right of way through the Reservation, though the commandant of the post was greatly in favor of it and the post needs the water badly, and had made all sorts of plans for grass and flowers and trees and bathrooms and electric lights and the city was to have free water for sprinkling, and its own electric plant and the water with pressure for fire purposes and pipes and culverts instead of this wretched surface irrigation with puddles and ponds in the middle of the street wasting water and breeding disease.¹⁰⁰

Once again Arthur's visionary plans came too early for public and political acceptance.

Sad news came of Ferdinand Van Zandt's death by suicide. The brightest and most successful of Arthur's juniors at Leadville, his death prompted Mary to reflect that "no race of men ever worshipped success, personal

⁹⁹MHF to HKG, Boise [November] 1892.

¹⁰⁰MHF to HKG, November 11, 1892.

achievement as we Americans--It must be because on a common level we have no other way to show that individually, here and there, we are above the average."¹⁰¹

Mary, all the while, was "working her poor wits for all they were worth"¹⁰² to keep their boy at St. Paul's in the east and the rest of the family fed and clothed. She drudged on with her "pot-boilers," encouraged by letters of praise for "The Chosen Valley."

. . . I get the nicest letters from strangers about "The Chosen Valley" that I have had about any of my books. The old engineers say it is a "miracle I done it" (quotation from "Pat dearie"). Bless their hearts. I couldn't but for my husband and my editor.¹⁰³

One can read a sense of urgency in Mary's letters to Richard. She needs to publish for she needs the money and she will send her stories elsewhere if he cannot use them.¹⁰⁴ She began Coeur d'Alene, a story of the silver mines with the comment that she "never felt so able to work" but that she had "not another word to say about this part of the west."¹⁰⁵ But she was pleased to read in Critic that

¹⁰¹MHF to HKG, Boise, March 7, 1892.

¹⁰²MHF to HKG, November 11, 1892.

¹⁰³MHF to HKG, Boise, [November], 1892.

¹⁰⁴MHF to RWG, undated [1892]. She comments on her short story, "Maverick."

¹⁰⁵MHF to HKG, Boise, February 25, 1894.

she was one of seventeen American writers who could live by their pens.¹⁰⁶

Mary told Helena and Richard of a growing sense of culture hunger in the west. "After awhile there will arise a society of letters in the west. Already they are striving and wildly ambitious to be considered literary and artistic."¹⁰⁷ She was not proud of Coeur d'Alene which she rewrote into a play for Elizabeth W. Doremus. Benn points out that the novel lacks both "the intimate personal philosophy" and descriptive settings which characterize her work.¹⁰⁸ This is a story of mines and mining labor disputes. In her zeal for law and order, Foote generally supports the mining companies, showing little understanding of the pro-unionist sentiment which led to riots in Coeur d'Alene in 1882.

In early 1893 Arthur gave up on schemes for the Boise Valley. He went to Bakersfield, California where he was briefly employed on a survey of irrigation in the Kern Valley. There he saw the outcome of plans such as he had envisioned for the Boise Valley. When Sam Emmons wrote asking him to work with him on an onyx mine project in Lower

¹⁰⁶MHF to HKG, Boise, February 25, 1894.

¹⁰⁷MHG to HKG, Boise, undated, 1894.

¹⁰⁸Benn, pp. 95-105, discusses the novel. See also Maguire, pp. 19-21.

California, Arthur accepted.¹⁰⁹ He would not return to Boise for two years.

It was the desert time of Mary's life as Arthur's absence dragged on, and she told Helena, ". . . a woman's life gradually sinks--a married woman's of course I mean--and if it have any fertilizing quality it must show greenness of the plain which hides its underflow and the flowers which spring up there for a token that there is water somewhere out of sight but not all dried away."¹¹⁰ Her heart was in the lower peninsula where Arthur wrote that he was pushing a road through from the onyx mine to the port of San Carlos.¹¹¹ There was, he told Mary wryly, "plenty of romance in it, and like most things romantic there are many and much of dirt and hardships." This remark comes from one of three surviving letters written from San Diego and Onyx Landing in Lower California. He wished that they would share the sound of the thundering surf but not the "grub or the water or the blowing sand," and he expresses his loneliness with warmth and devotion:

¹⁰⁹MHF to HKG, Boise, March 27, 1893. The letter discusses the irrigation survey at the head of the San Joaquin Valley and Emmon's invitation.

¹¹⁰MHF to HKG, Boise, July 27, 1893.

¹¹¹The onyx mine was located "two days journey" inland from San Carlos, halfway down the Lower California peninsula on the gulf side opposite Guaymas.

Thy letters are more comfort to me than thee can imagine. Now that thee is happier I can go on with this work . . . a desolate country but I am happy if thee is. Good night my brave lovely wife. Thee is all the world to me more than thee was years ago when first I saw this bleak coast. Thy loving old boy, Arthur.¹¹²

At home, Mary continued to write between spells of nursing her children through quarantines with scarlet fever. In 1893, she spent 12 weeks alone in quarantine with the little girls. Thinking about her children's place in the west, Mary came to realize that they looked upon it as their home, just as she had loved her childhood home in the east. Bernie Sherman, sent east to school, pined for her "Beloved West" and "wore a sprig of sagebrush" . . . "as a Scot lassie might wear a sprig of heather," Mary told Helena. "So while we are striving in exile in order that we may one day take our children home, they are striking deep roots into alien soil and may not consent to call any other home," she concluded.¹¹³

Once more Arthur's luck turned bad. Having built the road to the coast and equipped a ship to transport the onyx, and with success just in sight, the price of onyx fell, crippling the operation. To make matters worse, Arthur lost most of his salary in a San Diego bank failure.

¹¹²ADF to MHF, Onyx Landing, Baja California, April 28, [18]93.

¹¹³MHF to HKG, Boise, Easter Sunday, 1892.

With patient stoicism he tells Mary, "I suppose there is no use in being discouraged. One cannot get ahead any faster in that way but it makes me a little tired to have every single thing turn against me."¹¹⁴ One senses an acceptance of shared responsibility between the couple unusual in their day.¹¹⁵ Mary felt that their son, kept on at St. Paul's by the generous headmaster when the Footes could no longer afford the tuition, shared their worries. "I think the boy worries about our dismal affairs. He worries about his mother, bless him! While I am as tough as all of them put together."¹¹⁶

In 1893 Mary was invited to serve on a jury of selection at the World's Fair in Chicago (Mrs. Potter Palmer encouraged the appointment of women, whom, Mary says, "men did not want . . . on their juries"). This provided a respite from work and a chance for Mary to visit her son Arthur. Mary met this new experience with her usual enthusiasm and returned stimulated by the change. A new maturity steadied her uneven moods and she told Helena: "How I have been thankful for the continuum of life beyond

¹¹⁴ADF to MHF, PO Box 186, San Diego, California, September 13, [18]93.

¹¹⁵MHF to HKG, undated, [1894] " . . . In the old days I used to regard my work as subsidiary to Arthur's--who knows when an engineer who has spent his big stake in Idaho may ever get in the line again."

¹¹⁶Ibid.

that confused and heated period of transition from youth to middle age. Middle age is humble in ways that youth knows nothing of . . . middle age has learned to be grateful."¹¹⁷ A paragraph from her reminiscences perhaps best describes the perspective from which she had come to view the world.

All the bewildering mechanisms, and still more heaped up products [of the Fair] . . . it takes from one's power to assimilate things, a mass of things, to have lived with a few persons intimately beside the voice of a river year after year, or listened to a wind from beyond half a million acres of desert plain--you rest from details there, or you invent your own details.¹¹⁸

As Arthur drifted from job to job, never able to return home¹¹⁹ Mary told Helena to read her letters "like pictures of my life"¹²⁰ a life of writing and drawing which "for several years past has been the sole family income"¹²¹--of family management and child care, and ultimately of aging. "I am growing indifferent: things do not hurt me as they used, or give me keen pleasure," she told Helena. "My keen consciousness is in my three new

¹¹⁷MHF to HKG, undated, [18]94.

¹¹⁸Paul, pp. 347-8.

¹¹⁹Arthur did a report for James Hague at Riverside, California and then Hague sent him to the Calumet and Hecla copper mines in Northern Michigan to study an electric pumping plant.

¹²⁰MHF to HKG, Sunday, January 20, 1895.

¹²¹MHF to HKG, undated [1894 or 1895].

bodies, my youth three times multiplied, my hopes and fears are in them."¹²²

At length Arthur returned and the family spent a final summer in Idaho while he investigated the possibility of bringing electric power to Silver City by building a dam. They stayed at Grand View with Mr. Wiley, chief engineer of the Bruneau Valley irrigation scheme, who would eventually complete the Swan Falls Power Plant on Arthur's design.

Arthur moved on to Grass Valley, northern California, where the Foote family fortunes came to rest under the patronage of James Hague, Arthur's brother-in-law. James gave Arthur the project of reworking the North Star gold mine at Grass Valley, which needed a pumping system installed. The family joined him there and with relief settled into permanency when Arthur became mine manager. Arthur resumed financial support of the family while Mary relaxed her efforts and worked more selectively. Her trust in his ability was finally rewarded and her acceptance of the west, already tested by the Boise years of failure, must have seemed final when she turned down an offer to become principal of the Cooper School of Design for Women--an offer that came before the family's security at Grass Valley had been assured. "Did I want it?--I did not!" she writes.¹²³

¹²²MHF to HKG, Boise, April 3, 1894.

¹²³Paul, p. 390.

She had become a western woman.

In keeping with her acceptance of the west, she expressed concern for landscapes she had come to love:

We call our forests solitudes because we have never shown up there before. Precious little we were missed. This desert subsisted its own population, and asked no favors of irrigation, till man came and overstocked it, and upset domestic economies. When the sheep-men and the cattle-men came with their foreign mouths to fill, the wild natives had to scatter and forage for food, and trot back and forth to the river for drink¹²⁴

Mary Foote's work during the harried, late Boise years shows a stronger literary style. She handles both plot and characters with increasing confidence, but the stories, though set in the west, generally lack imagery of place. She dwells more on social situations and moral fiction. Similarly, her illustrations more often build her characterizations than they do her settings, which she nonetheless keeps entirely western. She has drawn a fine picture for "The Rapture of Hetty,"¹²⁵ a light romance. The enraptured Hetty and her cowboy lover ride towards their future--an isolated ranch house and corral, against

¹²⁴Mary Hallock Foote, "The Harshaw Bride," Century Magazine, LII (May, 1896), 90-104, LII (June, 1896) 228-241, and in A Touch of Sun. (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), pp. 219-273.

¹²⁵Mary Hallock Foote, "The Rapture of Hetty," Century Magazine, XLIII (December, 1891), pp. 198-201.

rugged mountains. She built "The Watchman"¹²⁶ around an irrigation theme--the watchman is a ditch rider--and made three sketches of irrigation canals.

"Maverick"¹²⁷ contains extensive descriptive place setting of the Arco, Idaho lava fields near Craters of the Moon.

Arco, at the time, consisted of the stage house, a store, and one or two cabins--a poor little seed of civilization dropped by the wayside, between the Black Lava and the hills where Lost River comes down and "sinks" on the edge of the lava

. . . I tried to fancy it as it must have been, a sluggish, vitreous flood, filling the great valley, and stiffening as it slowly pushed toward the basis of the hills. It climbed and spread, as dough rises and crawls over the edge of the pan.¹²⁸ The black lava is always called a sea

I agree with Maguire that "Maverick" is one of Foote's best short stories.¹²⁹ She sets a tragic love story against the stark darkness of the lava fields, proving once again her superior depiction of place. Unfortunately, she did not

¹²⁶Mary Hallock Foote, "The Watchman," Century Magazine, XLVII (November, 1893), pp. 30-41.

¹²⁷Mary Hallock Foote, "Maverick," Century Magazine, XLVIII (August, 1894), 544-550, and The Cup of Trembling (New York, Books for Libraries Press, 1970), pp. 86-119.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 92-94.

¹²⁹Maguire, p. 24.

illustrate the piece. "The Trumpeter,"¹³⁰ Foote's only treatment of an Indian woman, follows a similar tragic pattern, ending in a suicide, as did "Maverick." Mary used the familiar military reservation setting but did not illustrate it. Mary set a third tragedy, "The Cup of Trembling,"¹³¹ in the Coeur d'Alenes, using a snowslide to deliver the just rewards of evil. Mary Lou Benn remarks on "a prevailing theme of these works . . . death or suicide as a means of escaping an intolerable situation or as penance for a wrong doing."¹³²

Mary uses a cross continental train journey as setting for "On a Side-Track."¹³³ The train leaves Omaha, and the action continues as the train steams westward through Cheyenne and the Wind River Valley, finally becoming snowbound in the Bear Lake Valley just inside the Idaho border at 8000 feet. Mary drew one small picture of the train and a full-page sketch of the heroine. "Pilgrims to

¹³⁰Mary Hallock Foote, "The Trumpeter." The Atlantic Monthly, LXXIV (November, 1894) 577-597; LXXIV (December, 1894), 721-729, and The Cup of Trembling, pp. 174-273.

¹³¹Mary Hallock Foote, "The Cup of Trembling," Century Magazine, L (September, 1885), 673-690, and The Cup of Trembling, pp. 1-85.

¹³²Benn, p. 119.

¹³³Mary Hallock Foote, "On a Side-Track," Century Magazine, L (June, 1895), 271-283, and The Cup of Trembling, pp. 120-173.

Mecca" also has a train setting and concentrates on the idea that the west has become home for the children of transplanted easterners.¹³⁴

Approximately half of Foote's drawings from this period picture charming young women, dreamy of countenance, "noble" of feature (the term is Mary's) and evocative of emotional response. While we may regret that Mary chose to draw them instead of western landscapes we should not overlook her success with these subjects. Remember that she was a woman alone with her family when this work was done; there were no junior engineers to escort her on sketching trips through the canyons. These were her available models-- her daughters and those of friends. And these were pictures of western heroines, full of feeling, each perfectly matched to the character she illustrated. Mary's skill could transform even the frivolous. (See Plate XIV). When Century Magazine published "The Century Series of American Artists," it included one of Foote's memorable sketches of women, accompanied by a poem of Edith Thomas', "Seabird and Landbird."¹³⁵ Mary sketched the picture in Victoria: a pensive lady, seated on a rock, stares out to sea. Shelley Armitage comments on the "wistful" expression often tempered

¹³⁴Mary Hallock Foote, "Pilgrims to Mecca," Century Magazine, LIII (March 1889), 742-751, and A Touch of Sun, pp. 141-146.

¹³⁵Century Magazine, "The Century Series of American Artists," Vol. XLVI, (July, 1893) p. 292.

"THE GOLF BONNET"
(Century Magazine, 1889)



THE GOLF BONNET

Plate XIV

by strength that Mary so often creates in her pictures of western women.¹³⁶

Foote used the Snake River Valley in Idaho as setting for "Pilgrim Station" ("The Maid's Progress"),¹³⁷ using the "oppression of purely natural causes," the "primeval waste" of the desert to enhance the setting.

Mary says her setting for "The Harshaw Bride,"¹³⁸ was culled from their summer spent investigating the electric power plan for Silver City:

My schemer studied this enchanting place for days making his cold calculations. It was, however, 100 miles from anywhere. Electric power could be carried for distances like these, the Westinghouse people said, but it had never been done at the time. Nothing came of the trip to his account, but I made profit of it in my fashion of Ruth in the field of Boaz. I wove it impertinently into a story, a thing of barter and sale called "The Harshaw Bride."¹³⁹

Along with the usual sketches of women, Foote included unremarkable (and poorly reproduced) sketches of a snow bank, the Sand Springs Fall, a ranch on the Snake River, a man on horseback, a covered wagon and a mule team.

¹³⁶Shelley Armitage, "The Artist as Writer: Mary Hallock Foote as Realist." Paper given at Western Literature Association Meeting, Albuquerque, New Mexico, October 5, 1979, 6.

¹³⁷Mary Hallock Foote, "Pilgrim Station," The Atlantic Monthly, LXXVII, (May, 1896, 596-613; retitled "The Maids Progress" in A Touch of Sun, pp. 81-140.

¹³⁸Foote, "The Harshaw Bride."

¹³⁹Paul, p. 371.

In contrast to these mediocre sketches, two of Mary's finest prints illustrated "The Conquest of Arid America."¹⁴⁰ "The Engineers Mate" (Plate VII) shows the flat, empty plains stretching away to the distance where the telegraph lines and the railroad tracks vanish. It is one of her most narrative sketches. "Between the Desert and the Sown" is less successful (Plate XV) but is quite evocative. She illustrated a second article for Smythe with three of her irrepressible western women, some children playing among alfalfa stacks, and a ten-mule team moving a base camp cabin.¹⁴¹

"The Borrowed Shift"¹⁴² and "How the Pump Stopped at Morning Watch,"¹⁴³ were written after Mary settled in Grass Valley and have mining themes set in that place. The first is based on actual events and both center on the Cornish miners there. These, along with "A Touch of Sun,"

¹⁴⁰William E. Smythe, "The Conquest of Arid America," Century Magazine, Vol. L (May, 1895) 89-90.

¹⁴¹William E. Smythe, "Ways and Means in Arid America," Century Magazine, Vol. LI (March, 1896), 747-766.

¹⁴²Mary Hallock Foote, "The Borrowed Shift," Land of Sunshine, X (December, 1898), 12-24.

¹⁴³Mary Hallock Foote, "How the Pump Stopped at Morning Watch," Century Magazine, LVIII (July, 1899), 469-472.

The new settlement is but an outpost of the frontier: if the mines hold out, if the railroads presently remember that it is there, its young fields need not wither nor its ditches be choked with dust. Twenty years, if it should survive, will have brought it beauty as well as comfort and security. The older ranches will show signs of prosperous tenantage in their tree-defended barns and long lines of ditches, dividing, with a still sheen, the varied greens of the springing crops. Each freshly plowed field that encroaches upon the aboriginal sage-brush is a new stitch taken in the pattern of civilization which runs, a slender, bright border, along the skirt of the desert's dusty garment.

Mary Hallock Foote
("The Irrigation Ditch,"
Century Magazine, 1889)



DRAWN BY MARY HALLOCK FOOTE.

BETWEEN THE DESERT AND THE SOWN.

Plate XV

a light fiction, were Mary's last short stories.¹⁴⁴

Mary published a collection of children's stories in 1899 and seven more novels after 1900. She did not illustrate the novels and they deal primarily with themes of societal development. She did not publish any truly western sketches after 1900. But she did write her reminiscences which may now be considered valuable Far Western history.

¹⁴⁴Mary Hallock Foote, "A Touch of Sun," Century Magazine, LIX (January, 1900), 339-350, LIX (February, 1900) 555-558, and A Touch of Sun, pp. 1-81.

Chapter 6

ANGLE OF REPOSE

Wallace Stegner recognized a rich vein to mine when he discovered the Foote memorabilia. Having delved into Foote's life, work and intimate correspondence, he wrote Angle of Repose, a Pulitzer prize-winning novel artfully constructed around Foote's life and focusing on the restless years of Arthur's career.¹ Thus, he based the novel in thinly disguised fact. Scholars who study Foote's life need to be aware of the confusion which Stegner's interpretation can create for them.

In a nonspecific preface to the novel, Stegner alerted the reader to his sources and to the liberties he had taken with the lives of real people.

My thanks to J. M. and her sister for the loan of their ancestors. Though I have used many details of their lives and characters, I have not hesitated to warp both personalities and events to fictional needs. This is a novel which utilizes selected facts from their real lives. It is in no sense a family history.²

J. M. and her sister (Janet Foote Micholeau of Grass

¹Wallace Stegner, Angle of Repose, (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971).

²Ibid., preface.

Valley and Marian Conway), grandchildren of Mary Hallock Foote and Arthur De Wint Foote, were appalled to find that Stegner had created what is largely a family history--making the life of their grandmother unmistakably that of Susan Burling Ward in the novel. Worse still, he had satisfied the "fictional needs" of his novel by a crafty selection and augmentation of fact aimed at distortion of character. Stegner capped the whole exercise with a sensational climax--a product of what Paul calls "unrestrained invention."³

The Foote descendants think Stegner did not fictionalize the account enough to protect their grandmother's memory. Marian Conway told a San Francisco Chronicle reporter, "She can't defend herself and all her contemporaries are dead. We thought it was cruel."⁴ The family gave Stegner information without suspecting that he

³Paul, p. 403. Paul warns: "Comparison of the novel with the reminiscences and letters yields some fascinating insights into the freedom a writer feels when he is functioning as a novelist rather than as historian or biographer. Although the basic settings and the cast of characters have been re-created out of Mary Hallock Foote's own descriptions, with a few changes and only the thin disguise of a slight alteration of names, nevertheless the personalities and their individual destinies have been developed through a blinding of fact, perceptive interpretation, and sheer invention--at times, unrestrained invention."

⁴Blake Green, "The Genteel Western Lady Behind the Seasons New Opera," San Francisco Chronicle, Wednesday, September 8, 1976, p. 18.

would use it to make their grandmother's real life vulnerable to the "warped" interpretation he wrote into the novel.

Thunderous critical acclaim drowned out their protests. Reviewers hailed Stegner's scope, invention and color.⁵ They seemed generally unaware that his scope reflected the breadth of real lives, that his invention consisted merely of clever selection from a plethora of Mary Foote's own written and illustrative material, and that the color came ready made in the vivid personalities of Mary and Arthur Foote and their life in the West. Critics and public seem to have ignored the prefatory warning and accepted the novel's interpretation of Foote's life as accurate. Marian Conway recalls that "we were recognized and people asked us about things that never happened"⁶

Robinson and Robinson wrote a critical survey of Stegner's work, paralleling their critique of Angle of Repose with a brittle judgmental commentary on the Footes' real life, their biases heavily canted towards Stegner's

⁵William Abrahams, "The Real Thing," Atlantic, 227 (April 1971), 96. Abrahams credits Stegner with creating a wide range of settings--"California, New York, the Dakotas, Idaho, Mexico" and calls the reproduced letters "a triumph of verisimilitude, perfectly matched to Mr. Stegner's carefully rendered locales and social discriminations."

⁶Green, p. 18.

interpretation in the novel.⁷ Mary's "marriage exiled her forever to the west where she reluctantly made her home in the mining camps," they assure us. Arthur they treat no less harshly. With condescending candor they point out that he was "honest, energetic and mechanically inventive" and that he displayed extraordinary tact with "machines, human subordinates and work animals,"⁸ but that he was "selfrighteous and a snob."⁹ Robinson's and Robinson's sharp superficiality leaves little room for questions about deeper and more subtle attributes of the Foote personalities.

Although they tell us that Mary was "apt to confuse fine words with fine deeds" and Arthur was "arrogant, rigid and unwilling to compromise," Robinson and Robinson say Stegner chose their family history for his western novel because Mary and Arthur were "male and female, wanderer and nester, dreamer and realist"--both "strong-willed, tough-minded individualists," both "important western builders," and that both displayed serious lapses of judgment. They feel the characters "engaged Stegner's sympathy," but did not invite a "sentimental portrayal."¹⁰

⁷Forrest G. Robinson and Margaret G. Robinson, Wallace Stegner (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1977).

⁸Ibid., p. 148.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 150.

Robinson and Robinson point out that Stegner "makes several critical departures from the historical record"--they call them "reasonable extrapolations"--which "nevertheless amount to an interpretation rather than a rewriting of the story."¹¹ They suggest that the Foote material was "silent in the area of motives," and that Stegner's fiction filled these gaps with a plausible interpretation.¹² Stegner says he did not hesitate to warp the Foote's lives into fiction because neither was important enough to merit a biography.¹³

Ethical questions about the use and abuse of human lives have troubled those who compare Mary Foote's memorabilia with Stegner's fictional interpretation of it. In late 1979, Mary Ellen Williams articulated the concern felt by some of Foote's interpreters.¹⁴ Williams claims that the novel disfigures the life of Mary Hallock Foote whom Stegner has warped into "monstrous shapes--an Eve who

¹¹Ibid., p. 154.

¹²Ibid., p. 153, "What went on in the mind of this elusive woman? . . . As a novelist of "the middle ground" he [Stegner] is free, even obliged, to extrapolate and invent," the Robinsons assure us.

¹³Ibid., p. 151, ". . . Neither of the Footes had achieved enough to merit such formal and scholarly treatment."

¹⁴Mary Ellen Williams, "Succubi and Other Monsters: the Women in Angle of Repose," paper given at the Annual Meeting of the Western Literature Association, Albuquerque, New Mexico, Oct. 4, 1979.

destroyed her husband's western Eden, a lesbian, an adultress, a filicide." She raises the issue of one artist's ethical use of another's material and she analyzes Stegner's narrative method--his use of Lyman Ward as the interpreter of the material.¹⁵

Just what did Stegner do? How much of Angle of Repose can be called his creation? Did the "fictional needs" of his novel warrant the degree of replication and distortion he used?

Stegner's earlier novel, The Big Rock Candy Mountain, has been acclaimed by some as the ultimate "western" novel. It traces the fate of a would-be Western hero in a west that is neither frontier nor heroic. In a sense, Angle of Repose follows the same theme except that Oliver Ward (Arthur Foote) is ahead of his time with his ideas and schemes. Although the story focuses on Susan (Mary Hallock Foote), the reader's curiosity and sympathy are not-so-subtly directed towards Oliver, the silent, oft-thwarted engineer--the builder of the West. Stegner casts Oliver as the archetypal western hero--strong, stubborn, a man of action, an independent loner, and, above all else, an honorable man. Stegner holds Susan, unusual a Victorian as she may be, into the western woman's traditional role of civilizing agent. Following a somewhat worn

¹⁵Ibid., p. 2.

western fiction formula he makes her (for "fictional needs") the repository of weakness and corruption. The novel builds to a tightly controlled revelation suggesting high drama, heart break, disintegration and damaged lives. Smashing western fiction!

Stegner entwines the historical narrative with the dilemmas experienced by Lyman Ward, a "fictional" grandchild of Oliver and Susan Ward who seeks to confront his own problems armed with the wisdom learned from his grandparent's history. Stegner values history--he believes we must learn from the past,¹⁶ and he uses his narrator, Lyman Ward, to preach that belief.

Unravelling fact from fiction in Angle of Repose is frustrating work. Stegner begins by using the material almost point by point. One gets a sense of the novel as biography for any descriptive paragraph or event has its counterpart in the reminiscences, the letters, or in Foote's fiction or essays. Stegner uses the letters, freely altered and pieced together,¹⁷ as well as large blocks of quotes

¹⁶Richard G. Etulain, "The New Western Novel," Idaho Yesterdays, 15, (Winter 1972), 12-15. Etulain points to Stegner's concern with the "fluidity of time," with "permanence," "constancy" and "the question of the influence of the past on the present," 14.

¹⁷Williams, p. 7. "When Stegner presents Foote's letters as Susan's, he usually alters them without indicating that he has done so. He deletes significant passages that change the contexts of some of the letters;

from the reminiscences. Mary Ellen Williams is now documenting the extensive use Stegner made of Foote's own written work, including his incorporation of direct quotations into his novel without indication of the source.¹⁸

As the novel progresses, Stegner steps up the pace, becomes more selective of material from the real lives, distorts it heavily and begins to interweave his fictional additions. He has his narrator suggest that Susan's love for her friend Augusta (Helena Gilder) constitutes a lesbian relationship which prevents Susan from ever truly loving her husband.¹⁹ Then he creates a lover for Susan. Even Robinson and Robinson recognize the lover as a combination of three men in Foote's life--Steve Fleming, Ferdinand Van Zandt, and Harry Tompkins, all junior engineers and close friends of the Foote family. Stegner's narrator, Lyman Ward, finds enough information to conclude that Susan, his grandmother, shared a romantic love with this composite

he adds material not in the letters; he constructs some of the letters out of parts of several of Foote's originals." She goes on to give examples.

¹⁸Williams includes preliminary documented examples on page 8 of her paper.

¹⁹One of Stegner's most obvious alterations of a reproduced letter appears in the "Fishhill Landing" letter where he deletes the "(not)" from the sentence "I love her [Augusta] as wives do (not) love their husbands, as friends who have taken each other for life," making it read, "I love her as wives love their husbands, . . . ," p. 57.

young engineer, whom he calls Frank Sargent; that they met clandestinely in the arid landscape by the canal, taking along Susan's young daughter Agnes for propriety's sake, and that the child drowned while these two Victorian romantics agonized in the sagebrush--"a fruition far more terrible than mere infidelity" in Robinson's and Robinson's words.²⁰ Frank commits suicide; the family breaks apart and eventually reconciles to live out a half century of quiet desperation.²¹

Stegner's narrator asks himself: "Is it love and sympathy that makes me think myself capable of reconstructing these lives, or am I, nemesis in a wheel chair, bent on proving something--perhaps that not even gentility and integrity are proof against the corrosions of human weakness, human treachery, human disappointment, human inability to forget."²² Williams points out that Lyman Ward treats the

²⁰Robinson and Robinson, p. 154.

²¹Agnes died in Grass Valley of complications from a ruptured appendix when she was 18 years old. There is no record of suicide among the engineers except that of Van Zandt which occurred after he had established himself at the Bluebird Mine near Butte, Montana. In Paul, pp. 250-253, Mary discusses the life and death of their friend, Ferdinand Van Zandt.

²²Stegner, pp. 439-440.

fictionalized lives with little sympathy,²³ and I contend that Stegner has treated the Foote family reputation with neither respect nor sympathy. Perhaps he felt nothing more than contempt for their lack of success, or perhaps, as Williams suggests, he used them to express his own thinly veiled misogyny.²⁴

Certainly, as Williams charges, Stegner has Lyman set the women around him into ugly molds:

Stegner takes great pains to demonstrate Lyman Ward's hatred of women and to gain our sympathy for his hatred. Poor Lyman has been deserted by his wife. As if that were not enough, she has added insult to injury in a rather literal way, because she ran away with the surgeon who amputated his leg. And if that were not enough, she has left Lyman in an almost helpless state . . . confined to a wheel chair . . . at the mercy of the world. No woman should leave a Bancroft Prize-winning historian in such a pitiful condition. The first secretary he hires is a fool and an incompetent who clearly is appalled by his physical condition. He has to settle for a hippie chick, who does perform the secretarial work competently, but who deliberately taunts him sexually by unashamedly not wearing a brassiere and by telling him about group sex acts . . . in a Berkeley commune His wife, Ellen Ward, he labels his "succubus" with her "beak in his heart."²⁵

²³Williams, pp. 10-18. "What I wish to demonstrate is that the Susan Burling Ward story is the product of a male mind, sophisticated, yes, but also hate-filled and vengeful." With this sentence Williams sets out to show how Stegner used Lyman Ward, who hated all women, to warp the life he unravelled.

²⁴Ibid., p. 18.

²⁵Ibid., p. 10-11.

Stegner has Lyman vacillate between the academic need to be fair, to treat Susan's life as he describes one of her drawings--"narrative, sidelighted, suffused with possibility"²⁶--and the selfish need to impose his own bitter, abrasive interpretations on his grandparents' papers. For example, Lyman interprets Oliver's thoughts when Susan wants him to produce cement rather than continue his career as an engineer: "Perhaps he thought, though I do not believe that he did, that on that picnic afternoon of his courting he might just as well have put his hand on the pan of a bear trap."²⁷ Like a clever lawyer, Stegner has Lyman state his reservations about his interpretations in quickly forgotten phrases like "though I do not believe he did" above.

The startling conclusion Stegner has Lyman reach at the end of the novel closes the case with all doubts forgotten.

I have set myself the task of making choral comment on a woman who was a perfect lady, and a lady who was a feeling, eager, talented, proud, snobbish and exiled woman. And fallible. And responsible, willing to accept the blame for her actions when her actions were, as I suppose all actions are, acts of collaboration She held herself to account and was terribly punished.²⁸

²⁶Stegner, p. 60.

²⁷Ibid., p. 177.

²⁸Ibid., p. 534.

The key word here is, of course, "responsible." That is the word that damns Susan Ward, that brings anguish to the sensitive reader--male or female--and that carries over to damage the image of Foote, a woman artist who might well have been Stegner's rival had she lived today.²⁹

Throughout the novel Stegner has Lyman Ward rail against cheap sex and sensationalism, whether in the lives of his son, his secretary and his wife or in the lives of those he researches. "Every fourth-rate antiquarian in the west has panned Lola's [Montez] poor little gravel. My grandparents are in a deep vein that has never been dug. They were people," Lyman insists.³⁰

How can we reconcile Lyman's hell and brimstone righteousness with the cheaply sensational conclusion Stegner uses to end the story? Lyman upholds this frightening descent into the sensationalism he so earnestly deplors by having grandmother Susan take what she did seriously--

²⁹Williams, p. 4, "Mary Hallock Foote's reputation is worth one's concern. Her importance to the western literature of her day rivals Wallace Stegner's importance to his."

³⁰Ibid., p. 22. Williams quotes Richard Etulain in Jerome O. Steffen, ed., The American West: New Perspectives, New Dimensions (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979). "Nor does Lyman want a distorted meaning of the past once it is scrutinized. Too many readers are like Rodman, who wants the drama and color of something like the life of Lola Montez." p. 167.

responsibly--so that her fall from grace could provoke what terrible vengeance it would.

Thus Stegner, through Lyman, attempts to reaffirm the old myths--to take, in an age of emerging feminist sentiment, the old stance that women are evil, seductive Eves who use their charms and wiles against the integrity of men. To strengthen the disfigurement of Mary's character, Stegner distorts Arthur's as well, making him a man of considerable less warmth and understanding than the records would indicate. And what of the three young engineers whose lives he distorted?

Not satisfied with the sensationalism dredged from the lives of Mary, Arthur and the junior engineers, Stegner concludes the novel with a blatantly sexual and vulgarly comic dream scene. Is this every man's fears and fantasy that Lyman draws for us in his Freudian epic?--surrounded by the woman he hates and fears, tortured, humiliated, threatened with rape and finally absolved because his erection occurs in the stump of his amputated leg (a physiological impossibility) thereby making his duplicity impossible. And this is the man who, in a last sentence conversion, hopes to be "a bigger man than his grandfather."³¹ Is that sentence Stegner's last minute defense for Lyman, and himself?

³¹Stegner, p. 560--the last sentence of the novel.

It is sad that Stegner has chosen to reaffirm old myths at a time when thoughtful individuals seek to understand the history that engendered them. The life of Mary Hallock Foote serves as a first-rate source of such understanding for it exposes such myths to critical examination within the context of a life that sometimes affirms but just as often disproves them.

In Moral Fiction, John Gardner tells us that "Great art celebrates life's potential, offering a vision unmistakably and unsentimentally rooted in love."³² His reviewer writes:

. . . The book argues that current literature suffers most of all from a plain failure of morality. "Moral" fiction attempts to test human values, not for the purpose of preaching or peddling a particular ideology, but in a truly honest and open minded effort to find out what best promotes human fulfillment . . . [to] bring both writer and reader to understanding, sympathy and love for human possibility Because so much present day fiction fails to be moral in this sense, it undermines our experience of literature and our faith in ourselves.³³

Gardner does not include Angle of Repose in his discussion of moral fiction. Perhaps that is because Stegner's book is not fiction; neither is it moral.

³²John Gardner, On Moral Fiction (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977), p. 83.

³³Ibid., Book jacket.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

W. J. Linton called Mary Foote "the best of our designers on wood"¹ and Robert Taft remarked that "Mrs. Foote is the only woman who can claim company among the men in the field of the western picture."² In 1922 W. A. Rogers suggested:

If Mrs. Foote were not so identified with her work as a novelist she would be better known as one of the most accomplished illustrators in America . . . more than any other American illustrator, she lived the pictures from day to day which she drew so sympathetically.³

Though Foote's reputation dwindled to that of a rather insignificant writer of popular fiction and Wallace Stegner considered her not important enough for a biography, current academic interest indicates that Foote's reputation will be reestablished and that she has a place in the history of the Far West.

¹W. J. Linton, American Art and American Art Collections, I (Boston: 1899) p. 1449.

²Robert M. Taft, Artists and Illustrators of the Old West, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 174.

³W. A. Rogers, A World Worthwhile: A Record of "Auld Acquaintance," (New York: 1922), p. 188

Like many pioneer westerners, the Footes came to the west with the intention of making a quick fortune there and returning to the east. As time passed, like most dreamers, they tempered their dreams with reality and began to picture themselves as builders of the west. In this sense, Arthur can be called, as he was in his obituary, "a true pioneer."⁴ Mary was more reluctant, but her contribution may also be termed truly pioneer for she was the only woman artist of her time who combined literary and illustrative skills to describe the Far West.

Rodman Paul calls Mary an "incurable romantic" and says that she saw "more good than evil in the world." He points out that the realism in her fiction extends little beyond her own circle of experience.⁵ Mary herself admitted: "I could not get that sort of realism into my stories for I was one of the 'protected' women of the time --who are rather despised nowadays."⁶ Looking back from the twentieth century one can argue that Foote fits into no

⁴Arthur B. Foote, "Memoir of Arthur De Wint Foote," Transactions of the American Society of Civil Engineers, 99, (1934), 1449-1452. "He was never afraid of trying something new." The obituary describes some of Foote's schemes, including a spectacular plan called "The Redemption of the Great Valley of California."

⁵Rodman Paul, "When Culture Came to Boise: Mary Hallock Foote in Idaho," Idaho Yesterdays, XX, (Summer, 1976), 3-12.

⁶Levitte, Jay Davidson, "Letters from Authors," Colorado Magazine, XIX, (July, 1942), 122-125.

particular group or class and probably saw and understood more than many of the "unprotected" women of her day. Her uncommon occupation called for the superior perceptive abilities which she brought to her interpretation of landscape.

Jenni Calder contends that "the source of the power of Western terrain is its simultaneous beauty and cruelty. It can encourage the romantic and dismay the realist."⁷ Somehow Mary kept the courage of the romantic and overcame her dismay at the realities she met in her western life, at times producing work that transcends realism with vision.

The impact of her work as it appeared in the magazines and other sources can never be measured, for we do not understand human perception well enough. In our world today, the perceptive eye never wants for landscapes of fascination. But not so long ago, people treasured any image, even the black and white, and saved picture books and illustrated magazines to pass from hand to hand rather than carelessly tossing them aside as we do today, so saturated have we become with 'living color'.

Joshua C. Taylor suggests the importance of illustrations and prints in Foote's century:

⁷Jenni Calder, There Must Be a Lone Ranger, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1977), p. 7.

The visual impact was made less through the elevated arts of painting and sculpture than through illustrations and prints. These formed the real pictorial galleries for most Americans The expansion of book illustration and issuance of popularly priced lithographs and engravings coincided with the growth of the self-consciously American image.⁸

Mary Hallock Foote's art, essays, fiction, letters and reminiscences provide an eloquent record of perceptive responses expressed by an intelligent articulate woman. I have come to suspect that although she adhered rather monotonously to the conventions of her time, there lay scarcely hidden beneath that surface, a dreamer, an adventuress, a stubborn and optimistic builder of the west. Her word pictures and western landscape images appear touched by a special quality best expressed as a sense of place. While bearing out the themes of open country and isolation, they include as well, interpretations of accepted and loved home places.

In her time the myth of the west as frontier wilderness proved exceptionally durable for it fed the dreams of latter-day adventurers who shared a romance of less complex times and more simply defined places. Even today it survives as a cherished illusion.

Mary's work contrasts markedly with that of her

⁸Joshua C. Taylor, America As Art, (New York: 1976), pp. 93-94. I am indebted to Shelley Armitage, University of New Mexico, for bringing this quote to my attention.

contemporaries who wrote and illustrated the Century Magazine. They were almost without exception, men. Fredrick Remington and Teddy Roosevelt contrived the myth of the west as howling wilderness and masculine adventure and John Wesley Powell and John Muir glorified the 'grand' landscapes. Artists who had never seen the west etched other-worldly panoramas, but Mary interpreted the commonplace--realistically presenting images of a home for families. Symbols of prospect and hazard characterize the articles and illustrations by these men; symbols of prospect and refuge combine in Foote's work.

Much history and literature still treats the west as a place apart--a mythic last frontier of questing American man. Traditionally, the myth expresses the visions of men; supposedly women dreamed only of the heroic male-mediator who prepared the wilderness for the civilizing elements which she would bring to it. But myths survive only until they lose their usefulness; then they fade or take different forms.

If we hope to interpret how women perceived the Far West, I think we must question the usefulness of a myth which excludes them from the ranks of the adventurous, locking them into the role of civilizing agent. It is not enough to show that what women did was necessary, contributive, and even at times exceedingly heroic. We should recognize that women shared men's romantic dreams of place--

of wilderness, of the unfamiliar and the unexpected. For such dreams never have belonged exclusively to men, even in the Victorian Age that largely suggested they should. This changed view could help us understand how women, along with men, made their place in the west, helped shape eastern opinion of it and ultimately forged their own future in it.

With words such as these, Mary Foote fashioned her version of the myth:

. . . It is our fate to be always in these queer places--and I foresee the time when I shall long for them and be homesick for the waste of moonlight, the silence, the night wind and the river! There is nothing that will ever quite take its place. Dreamers we are, dreamers we always will be, and what is folly and vain imaginings to some people is the stuff our daily lives are made of--and there are thousands like us! If there had⁹ not been, there would be no great West

⁹MHF to HKG, undated, [1888?].

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