

### THREE WOMEN WRITERS OF NORTHEAST KANSAS

(BROWN AND DONIPHAN COUNTIES, 1856-1910)

by

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Women were few in number in Northeast Kansas in the 1850s; not surprisingly so since Kansas territory was not opened for settlement until 1854. In the seven years thereafter before statehood, the area was transformed from Indian country into a relatively settled and civilized homeland. One factor in this change was the influx of women, most of them wives and daughters of homesteaders. The dance hall girls, the madams, and even women entrepreneurs in businesses such as millinery stopped in St. Joseph, Missouri, because the pickings on the west side of the Missouri River were too slim to tempt them into Indian territory. Several of the Kansas farmwives somehow in addition to super-human feats of house construction and settling in, child-bearing and child-rearing, home-keeping and community establishing found time to keep up on events of the world; to write to dear ones left behind in the Westward rush; to express political opinions even though no female of that era could vote; to maintain faith in a joyous hereafter; and, most important for the culture of their new domain, to write belles-lettres recording their experiences and their feelings.

Among the women writers of the period in northeast Kansas a score appeared in Brown and Doniphan counties in the years 1856 to 1910. Five of these women published their work; of the five three rate a second look. The three are Elise Dubach Isley (1842-1936), Sunbonnet Days (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton, 1935); Marian Sorlie Livermore (1827- ? ), Prairie Flowers and Heather Bells (St. Joseph, Missouri: American Printing, 1910); and Ellen Palmer Allerton (1835-1893), Walls of Corn and Other Poems (Hiawatha, Kansas: Harrington Printing, 1894).<sup>1</sup>

These three women writers share, to a greater or lesser extent, a few common characteristics. None were Kansas born. Indeed no white woman was at the time they came to Kansas. Two of the three were foreign born; Livermore in Scotland and Isley in Switzerland; Allerton was an Easterner from New York State. Only Isely emigrated directly to the border territory of Missouri and Kansas; Livermore lived in Michigan and Ohio before settling near Palermo in Doniphan County; Allerton and her husband farmed in Wisconsin before they took up residence on a farm near Morrill in Brown County. Isely was as peripatetic as any twentieth-century American. She and her family landed in New Orleans and took a steamship up the Mississippi-Missouri to St. Joseph, Missouri. Shortly thereafter her father took over a claim in Doniphan County, Kansas. In a few years she went against the westward stream of migration to live in St. Joseph, Missouri. While her husband was off fighting in the Civil War, she lived with his parents in Ohio. On his return, they settled on a quarter section near Fairview, Kansas. Following the death of her husband, she spent her last years in Wichita.

All three women writers were farmwives for a considerable portion of their lives. Two of them, Isely and Livermore, were nonagenarians. Although Allerton died "young," at the time of her death in 1893 she was 58, a fairly advanced age for the time. Coincidentally, all three women were blind in their closing years. While none complained, all commented on the handicap.

One aspect of their lives can only be speculated upon: did they ever meet? Isely and Livermore came to Kansas in the same year, 1856, and lived less than ten miles apart. Later Allerton and Isely lived not far from each other in Brown County for many years, and Allerton was widely known as a poet. But from what we know of them from newspaper clippings, a few anecdotes, and their works, no record of any meeting exists.

All three had children (Isely, eleven; Livermore, at least two, while Allerton was reported as a childless woman with a namesake granddaughter [more on that point later]). All were interested in national and international events as well as in local concerns; all commented on the changes advancing civilization was bringing to their adopted homeland. While Livermore looked back to Scotland and Ohio with regret, Isely and Allerton waxed enthusiastic about Kansas, although both were well aware of its dangers and drawbacks.

Isely's Sunbonnet Days<sup>2</sup> is a useful introduction and invaluable backdrop to the poetry of Livermore and Allerton because it tells us so much of the conditions in the territory and the new state where all three lived and wrote. While Isely's slim book was not published until 1935, almost all of it deals with life and events between 1856 and 1880 along the Kansas-Missouri border and in Brown County, an area in which all three women lived. Isely's son Bliss, who wrote "this narrative largely in [his mother's] own words so that it would be a first-hand account of this glamorous period" (p. 7), may not have realized how much the title Sunbonnet Days reveals about the women "of this glamorous period." As Isely says, "The sunbonnet was the badge of the American farm woman, particularly of the pioneer farm woman" (p. 75). This "badge" had an esthetic purpose, however. It was a beauty aid, "an armor against the dreaded tan" (p. 76) in an era when the ideal female complexion was rose-pink, and lily-white. The bonnet protected the pioneer farmwife at work outside the house: gardening, collecting wild flowers and fruits, washing, making soap, continually working to keep her family clean, fed, and clothed. Since all three were farmwives, they certainly wore the sunbonnet, cherishing their femininity by shielding their faces.

In Sunbonnet Days Elise Dubach Isely comes across as bright, educated (albeit haphazardly), competent, physically strong, and stoic. All these traits stood the pioneer woman in good stead. Isely joined the full-time work force at thirteen. When her mother died, she became housekeeper for her father and mother to her two younger brothers (p. 61). She took pride in her adult role; she introduced cheese-making to the community and early on invited the neighbor women in for a quilting, an all-day event. For dinner Elise



*Elise Dubach Isely*  
1842-1936

served them wild-grape pie. Like other pioneers she lived off the land as much as possible.

In addition to eking out a living, pioneers in this area in the 1850s and 1860s were actively involved in the quarrel between "Free Soilers" and slave owners. Isely, who had been brought up to consider slavery a sin, had her convictions in that regard strengthened when she witnessed a slave auction in St. Joseph, Missouri, where a black woman was "screaming lamentations" as she was carried away by her new owner. Isely, in a rare burst of emotion, says, "I felt like screaming with her. Of course we antislavery people were against secession, and regarded the two issues as one" (p. 116).

When the Civil War came, Elise's two brothers and her new husband, Christian Isely, enlisted in Kansas outfits. Her men did not come through the war unscathed. Because brutal commanders and the lack of supplies and equipment were more deadly than Southern troops, Elise's wounded brother Adolph died from lack of care; and her husband, after three years, came home so weak from starvation and malaria that he could scarcely walk. However Elise Isely never complained, although she cried herself to sleep every night for a year. "All that counted was the war. Friends, family, and home were of secondary importance" (p. 123).

In the 1870s the Iselys went west to Brown County and began again the sod-breaking and building-raising that Elise had first experienced in Doniphan County in her teens. One might have expected that one who had been brought up in Switzerland and spent several years "back East" in Ohio would have regretted leaving civilization. Not so. Actually Isely "found the mode of living in Holmes County [Ohio] more primitive than [that] on the frontier. They had less improved machinery and my mother-in-law was still spinning wool and flax." However "in one respect they were ultra-modern. They had coal oil lamps" (pp. 135-36). Despite this ultra-modern touch, "the people of Winnesburg were less influenced by economic changes than we of the frontier" (p. 136), and they were much more indifferent to the issues of the Civil War. Not only did Isely feel that the East was a much less up-to-date place than the frontier, but she also thought that the

pioneers took civilization with them. "So eager were we to keep in touch with civilization that even when we could afford a shotgun and ammunition to kill rabbits, we subscribed to newspapers and periodicals and bought books. I made it a rule, no matter how late at night it was or how tired I was, never to go to bed without reading a few minutes from the Bible and some other book" (p. 179). She recorded how both Doniphan and Brown County residents, as soon as houses were up and crops in, gathered together to erect a school and a church, the two bastions of culture.

Through all the oft-recounted events of pioneer life--prairie fires, blizzards, the death of children, the grasshopper invasion of 1874 that left "the earth a black desert" (p. 198), the harrowing events of border warfare and the Civil War, Isely never complained, never gave up, even when there was no meat for Thanksgiving dinner (p. 170). Patience paid off: for the meager dinner, the stray mongrel dog Towse, left behind by a wagon train, caught a rabbit (p. 170). Patience paid off again when the Fairview community was divided much as St. Joseph, Missouri and Ohio had been during the Civil War over the issue of prohibition. The Iselys, who were as fervid proponents of prohibition as they had been of abolition and the Union, lived long enough to see their "wet" neighbors who had boycotted Christian Isely (and presumably his family as well) come "forward to tell him they had been wrong and he had been right" (p. 212).

Concerning her personal life Isely is reticent. This reticence may come from the purpose of the book: to explain how the Great American Desert became the Great American Breadbasket (p. 7); it may also be the result of the mores of the time: one did not spill one's own soul to strangers orally or in print. But one wonders what attracted the eighteen-year-old girl to a man of thirty-three. She says only, although she did not lack admirers, "I spurned them all, that is all until C.H. Isely came upon the scene" (p. 107). Also it seems odd that of her eleven children, she mentions only two by name: the first-born Adolph, who died during the early days of the Civil War; and Henry, apparently the next eldest son. Nor does she ever allude after coming to America to her school chum Louise Schmidt, who was inconsolable when her best friend left for America. Perhaps these losses and the death of her mother after only two weeks in America made her fear to love wholeheartedly again lest she lose the new loves too. Perhaps she was, in outlook, an archetypal American, one who always looks to the future and never looks back. Certainly, despite all the heartaches and the hardships, she found America--and Kansas--ultimately good to her and hers. That her lost loves were not entirely forgotten we can tell from her conclusion, when still looking forward, she says, "On the other side are many waiting, whom I will gladly join when the summons comes" (p. 219). This belief in a hereafter where the lost are rejoined she shares with both Livermore and Allerton, who use similar sentiments to close their own work.

From Isely's memoirs we learn much of how the other two women must have lived: from the poetry of the other two women we learn more of how women felt about life on the frontier.



*Marian Sorlie Livermore*  
1827 - ?



*Ellen Palmer Allerton*  
1835-1893

Although Livermore and Allerton wrote mostly lyrics, both do tell stories of pioneer life.

Livermore's slim book Prairie Bells and Heather Flowers contains one piece of narrative verse. In it she relates an incident during the Civil War when she fell dangerously ill. Kate, "a bright young German maid" in that "border household" in a snow so heavy "the young men dare[d] not go" rode alone through the night for medical help. Otherwise says Livermore, "I had not lived to tell." In another poem she recalls a burial at sea, an occurrence Isely remembered. No doubt such a solemn event on their passages to America impressed them both. However "Kate" and "The Burial at Sea" are rare glimpses into pioneer experiences in Livermore's poetry. One wonders if she somehow missed many of the common experiences of the Western vanguard, took them for granted or unsuitable for poetry, or was preoccupied with her friends, her emotions, and national or international events. These themes, rather than frontier life, she returns to again and again.

Except for poems on political events, Livermore's poetry is predominantly nostalgic or melancholy. For these traits it is impossible to say whether fashion, temperament, or fate was most responsible. From several poems in the book and what little I have discovered about her life, I suspect the events of her life exerted a strong influence. Her book was published as a desperate gamble to raise some much needed money. While she did not live to see her friendless son

Adrian, the town drunk, slit his throat, she must have had a lonely, poverty-stricken existence with him in a stark, gloomy house in Wathena, to which there was no family left to come and few people came. As she says in "Rest," "But I have so many ills below/Ills that I could not cure,/Sorrows too great for mortal to endure . . ." Much the same idea occurs in "Aspirations": "Earthly bliss hath been denied me;/Fierce the furnace-fires that tried me, . . ."

Although she acknowledged that America had its beauties, she never ceased to recall Scotland and to wish herself there again. This nostalgia begins with the epigraph from Sir Walter Scott "Where the heart-sick exiles in the strain/ Recalled fair Scotland's hills again!" through the pathetic poems she wrote friends and relatives such as the one to her sister Mrs. J.M. Melrose ("Oh, sister, dear sister, remember/ Whose life all this beauty hath lost;/Whose heart the wide ocean hath severed/From all it had valued the most") to the battle of Culloden, a name recalling "thoughts dark as the spirit of war." Perhaps she summed it up in "Send Me a Bunch of Heather":

The sun looks down in gladness  
On all this fair, bright land,  
And the fields, in their rich abundance,  
Wave wide on every hand;  
The hills are crowned with beauty,  
And the streams laugh in their glee;  
But the sunshine is all for others,  
The storm and the night for me.

Oh, why did I leave the valley  
Where the Almond's waters flow,  
And the braes where the purple heather,  
The pine and the fir-trees grow?  
Did the calm and the tempest spare me,  
And the wild waves bear me free,  
To die at last heart-broken,  
In this land beyond the sea?

Many of her poems are addressed to friends in Scotland, although she wrote about and to others in America. The American ones range from the Indian girl May-Osh-Na-Qua, whom she met in Michigan, to Esther Marie Libel, newborn in St. Joseph, Missouri, in 1910. To Mrs. Milton Tootle (St. Joseph, Missouri) she addressed one of her most effective poems, "Beautiful Eyes." This lyric stresses her friend's kindness and beauty. "Many a joy in my heart must die/Ere the sweetness of life hath faded--/But never the glance of that dark-brown eye, with silken lashes shaded."

Another favorite topic of Livermore's is the death of little children. Although it was a fashionable theme for poetry in her day, one suspects that in her case the children were real. Certainly "Little Belle, My Darling Daughter," over whom she must weep, "else the weary heart must break/ Overwhelmed with speechless, tearless woe," was, according to the brief biographical sketch, Livermore's daughter.<sup>2</sup> Livermore wrote of her again in "Only a Lock of Hair." How many other children she had, besides Belle and Adrian, we do

not know. In "Balmy Spring" she speaks of herself as "a mother, discouraged and weary, with more than a handful of boys," a phrase which suggests more than one son. Was hers the dead boy "Little Lawrence"? Or "Little Willie," aged two, who provoked his mother's wrath by bringing his wagon into the parlor and tying it up to the table with the excuse, "'Mama, it's doin' to rain'"? In sentimental Livermore fashion, the mother recalls scolding him when "the chilling autumn rain" falls on his "little new-made grave." Trite as the poem is, its pathos still haunts the reader with the ending: "Never again shall the dear lips say,/'Mama, it's doin' to rain.'"

When Mrs. Livermore wrote of stars or of political happenings and other contemporary events, her style became more lively. Stars to her are associated with a purer, brighter realm. Her favorite seemed to be Aldebaran because "None . . . moves my heart like thee," with Vega Lyra, the purest, fairest," a close second.

Stirring events in the world beyond Doniphan County roused Livermore to vigorous verse. She cheered for Cuban independence with a rousing "'Viva Cubre Libre'"--and she probably never heard of the drink. In "'Poor Carlotta'" she sighed for Maximilian and commiserated with Carlotta. She penned an elegy for General Custer in a poem best left unquoted because of the terms in which she excoriated Indians. Parenthetically, it should be noted, there are no contemporary accounts from this area and period which are complimentary to Indians. But she could be equally hard upon those of her own color; she found Quantrill's raiders "worse than the savage ('Lawrence [Kansas]')." In "November Days" she urged the "boys" to do what she herself could not, vote for McKinley.

While many of her poems seem to come from nostalgia and the grief of a long, unhappy exile which a visit to Scotland apparently did not alleviate, a few poems reflect happier moments. In "Beauty and Song" she answered a friend who asked, "Do you still love poetry and song as much as when you were a girl?" by saying that after "a full decade/Beyond the three score years and ten" she "did not forget the singers,/ Nor yet the songs they sung,/On the banks of the Miami/in the days when we were young." In "Songs in the Night: '827, U.P.'" there is even a hint of science fiction (although she would not have recognized the term):

Skillful the hands that wrought thee,  
 And wise the brain to plan.  
 When a ray from the Master's wisdom  
 Illumined the mind of man,  
 Did they breathe in those mighty nostrils  
 The life of a human soul,  
 When the thought of man created  
 The powers that his will control?

Furthermore she evoked in sound and rhythm the image of a passing steam engine and the quiet that seems almost palpable after its passing.

There is life in they cry of warning,  
 And the sound of they panting breath--  
 They have passed, and the silence and darkness  
 Fall down, like the hush of death.

But the morbidity is there too in the closing line.

In "Saint Joseph, from the Cliffs," she looked across the Missouri River and noted the changes a growing population had wrought:

On yonder hill once smooth and green,  
 Or covered but with tangled trees,  
 Where many a wild flower grew between,  
 And drew the honey-laden bees,  
 A hundred happy homes are seen,  
 Whose roses scent the summer breeze.

Ultimately the sight however, but served to remind her of the "dear lost friends" who once with her "gathered sweet spring violets there. . . ."

Livermore is in many respects a distinct contrast to Isely. While part of the difference may be do to the time of writing, still the impression remains that they had quite different responses to their environment. Perhaps the years between the events of Sunbonnet Days and their recording made Isely more objective and more positive while Livermore was too obsessed with her homesickness, her lost family and friends, and her sorrows to achieve that degree of stoicism and objectivity. Yet the topics which are missing from her poetry are nearly as revealing as the ones she returned to frequently. For instance, if Livermore had opinions on slavery, secession, or prohibition, all of which were of deep concern to Isely and her family, these burning issues of the day never found their way into her poetry. "Lawrence (Kansas)" is a cry for vengeance with no considerations of the motives that drove Quantrill to attack Lawrence. Livermore demanded freedom for Cuba, but never touched on the issue of freedom for the black man in America. Her concern for events at a distance is in marked contrast to her silence on concerns of her community at hand. From her poetry we get the impression of a woman who read and who brooded over the past while letting the near and the present slide by almost unnoticed.

But in one respect she was close to Isely and Allerton, and that is in her trust in God and her faith in a brighter hereafter. Although she touched on this strain in several poems, it is perhaps nowhere clearer than in the concluding poem "Vaie":

I could not stay to say farewell;  
 Death came while I was sleeping. . .

I would not break your needed rest,  
 Or dim your eyes with weeping,  
 My true and tried and faithful friends,  
 God have you in His keeping.



Livermore's pathos touches us, but she has little of the subtlety of Ellen Palmer Allerton. Allerton was a much more polished poet. She used a wide variety of poetic techniques over a larger range of subjects. Where Livermore has one narrative poem, Allerton has several. The opening poem in Walls of Corn and Other Poems, "Annabelle," tells the story of a married woman who loved too late. But the outcome of this poem, written in blank verse, shows Allerton's unconventional attitude toward forbidden love--her poem has a happy ending. This same attitude appears in "Tar-and-Feather Reform," in which she attacks the double standard of male-female morality. Before Thomas Hardy had drawn upon himself the wrath of public and publisher with Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Allerton wrote this heavily ironic poem.

Pour the tar on, pour it thick;  
Bring the feathers, make them stick  
On her temples smooth and fair,  
In the meshes of her hair;  
There, now, shameless courtesen, (sic)  
Charm your lovers if you can.

But the lovers--where are they?  
Silently they slink away.  
Boys must sow wild oats, you know;  
Scold them well and let them go.  
Boys are boys; to err is human--  
Tar and feathers for the woman. . . .

In a more traditional strain is "Good Luck.--A Christmas Ballad," in which Oscar in the Horatio-Alger manner wins the banker's daughter although he is only a clerk.

The mystery of how childless Ellen Allerton could have had a namesake granddaughter may be explained in the poem "The Stepmother," in which she speaks perhaps of herself as a "Bride of a week, my arms, unused to holding,/Clasp a bright boy that sits upon my knee;/And to my neck a brown-haired girl is clinging,/Calling me mama. . . ." The poem closes with an expression of love for her husband, an emotion never voiced by Isely or Livermore. Her stepchildren grown, the stepmother looks back and says, "Could all these years be blotted--were I standing/Unfettered, free, still would I dare--for him."

Allerton's wide range of subjects are frequently clothed in unusual, sometimes striking, metaphors as witness her description of the treatment of the fallen woman as "Tar-and-Feather Reform." Dealing with the Civil War, from which she seems to have been too isolated to have been personally involved, she calls it "The Nation's Patient" and gives its close a medical description.

"Out of danger," the doctors say;  
The battle with Death is won.

Allerton seems to have been haunted by the dangers of blizzards on the prairie, for she referred to them in several poems. "The Renter's Exodus" has a sad ending when a farmer refuses a westerling family haven for the night: "A family found frozen." "A Storm on the Frontier" has a similar

outcome when those inside do not heed a cry in "a night of piercing cold and whirling snow," only to find next morning, "Here lies my neighbor, frozen at my door." She mentioned this danger again in "Out West": "the western 'blizzard,' that awful blast of death" to which "A storm of the Alleghanies is the flap of a pigeon's wing."

Nevertheless, Allerton was, like Isely, "sold" on Kansas. Her most famous poem, the one from which her collected works takes its title, is "Walls of Corn." Although it exalts Kansas as "a great State," it began as a gentle protest to a neighbor. Allerton loved to look across the road to a wooded hollow below a rolling hill, a spot which reminded her pleasantly of Wisconsin. But when the neighbor's corn grew tall and blocked off her view, Allerton felt cut off, walled in and circumscribed, until in the fall "All wide the world is narrowed down/To walls of corn, now sear and brown." The lines "rich and bounteous land/That yields such fruits to the toiler's hand" and the list of benefits from corn struck the railroads as just the right kind of genteel advertising to lure settlers out to become users of the rails. So Allerton's poem was sent out over the East and to Europe to show what an inhabitant thought of the possibilities of her state.

In "Out West" Allerton took The Pioneer, a railroad publication, to task for misleading claims aimed at "a mighty army to settle the rolling flat,/That lies, like a garden of Eden, along the beautiful Platte."

But is it straight and honest, and is it fair and  
right,  
That only the good is shown us, and the bad left  
out of sight?

A spectre stalks the prairies, a spectre gaunt and  
grim,  
Scattering woe and famine, and waste of cheek and  
limb,  
There is freezing, there is starving, while rings  
the cherry call,  
"Wanted--five hundred thousand!"--Do they thiuk us  
idiots all?

When the "hopper," fires, Indian raids, and summer droughts, all of which she lists in this poem, are added to the lines quoted above, Allerton has compiled a complete, but succinct, list of the difficulties of pioneer life.

Allerton thought that Kansas had a more precious commodity than those she--and the railroads--lists, "Yet a greater wealth/She holds in her children. . . ."

We are proud of Kansas, the beautiful Queen,  
And proud are we of her fields of corn;  
But a nobler pride than these, I ween,  
Is our pride in her children, Kansas born!  
"Kansas, the Prairie Queen"

The railroad's advertising campaign for settlers is now history, but Allerton's "Farmer Jones on Inflation,"

beginning "So the law is passed. I suppose it's no use to talk, . . .," has a disturbingly current ring.

Softly the lawyers talked on the capitol floor,  
(How tender-hearted they were!) of the suffering  
poor.

Money, to pay the workingmen, starving for  
bread!

Money! to save the dying and bury the dead!

To the farmer was promised a new and a dawning  
day;

Fair prices for produce, where now he but gives  
away;

More he should get for his wheat, his corn, and  
rye,

But nothing they said of things he would have to  
buy.

If wheat goes up, but little's the good to me,  
If np with a jerk goes sugar, and coffee, and  
tea;

I have to pay more for a reaper, a horse, or a  
hand;

And, if I am homeless, more for a house and land.

"Inflation is sparkling wine," some one has said.  
"If it starts up the pulse and blood of sluggish  
trade,"

But wine is a mocker; we dream we are rich and  
great;

Then comes the drunken panic; then--why, we re-  
inflate.

Inflation is gas! and up and away, to the tune  
Of forty-four millions, soars Uncle Sam's balloon.  
But a storm is ahead; the dark skies scowl and  
frown,

And, stripped, and riddled, the thing has got to  
come down. . . .

Of quite a different stamp is another poem which, like "Walls of Corn," was widely admired. Eva Ryan, eastern Kansas newspaper woman and Allerton's friend, who collected the poems after her death, says in "In Memoriam" prefacing Walls of Corn and Other Poems, that "'Beautiful Things' has especially received recognition throughout the United States, and is unsurpassed by any American author. It had been reprinted in all the principal newspapers before she left Wisconsin, and its classical beauty recognized by its insertion in an American Anthology" (xiii). Eva Ryan's claims are of course overstated and the poem sentimental, but some of the lines were used appropriately on Ellen Allerton's tombstone near Morrill.

Beautiful twilight, at set of sun,  
Beautiful goal with race well run,  
Beautiful rest, with work well done,

Beautiful graves, where grasses creep,  
Where brown leaves fall, where drifts  
lie deep  
Over worn out hands--oh, beautiful sleep.

These lines are appropriate to the life and work of all three of these writers of eastern Kansas. All three women are now long gone, these author-pioneers; and their children too are dead. Their grandchildren are old and gray, and these people that were once well known in eastern Kansas are only memories that grow dimmer every year. But these souvenirs we have while print lasts: Sunbonnet Days, Heather Bells and Prairie Flowers, and Walls of Corn, reminders of the frontier as preserved by female pens.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Page numbers in text refer to the appropriate work.

<sup>2</sup>Bliss Isely says in the "Foreword", "I have written this narrative largely in Mother's own words, so that it would be a first-hand account of this glamorous period. I merely have arranged the sequence and have verified dates and other matters of record by reference to personal letters, diaries, and documents in her possession" (pp. 7-8).