

# CRADLED OBSCURITY

by  
Sibyl Wilbur

## INTRODUCTION

It was about the year 1905, when we were living in Boston, that Sibyl Wilbur and I became friends. At that time the press was quite unfriendly toward Christian Science, and was especially antagonistic to our beloved Leader, Mary Baker Eddy. But God was with us, and raised up a champion to defend Mrs. Eddy, and this champion was none other than our friend, Sibyl Wilbur.

She was eminently fitted for this task, for she was a gifted writer. She was a newspaper woman, and was engaged at that time as a reporter for one of the leading newspapers of Boston. Her keen sense of justice and honesty caused her to doubt the truth of the malicious statements that were being published in some of the newspapers at that time and she resolved to investigate these things herself. One of her first steps toward this, was to call upon Alfred Farlow, who was the Publication Committee in Boston, and he encouraged her and did all he possibly could to arrange a meeting for her with Mrs. Eddy. But this was rather difficult, because other reporters had been given the same privilege, but had abused it, and had written such unkind things about her that Mrs. Eddy was very reluctant to see another newspaper woman.

However, after many delays an invitation came for her to visit Mrs. Eddy in her home in Concord. This proved to be a very important meeting, for it led eventually to the writing of *Mary Baker Eddy's Life* by Sibyl Wilbur. Mrs. Eddy received her graciously, and Miss Wilbur recognized at once that she was in the presence of a woman of vastly superior spiritual attainments. Mrs. Eddy saw in Miss Wilbur a woman she could love and trust.

I feel that I am very fortunate to have in my possession an old textbook in which I pasted a short article which Mrs. Eddy wrote at that time describing Miss Wilbur's visit with her. I shall read this article, and I am sure you will all be glad to hear what Mrs. Eddy had to say about Miss Wilbur and her call. From the Boston Herald:

### CARD

"My recent interview for a few moments with Sibyl Wilbur of the Boston Herald was prolific. I confess to having yielded reluctantly to meet the occasion for quieting the billows of public opinion while constantly signaling it as to my course and hoped-for haven. But what a grand, calm call was hers, what a short time it took for us to talk when touched by the truth of an honest purpose! By speaking less and feeling more we parted reciprocally blest. Will Miss Wilbur accept my thanks for her kind courtesy, for leaving me with not one hour less in which to put my mite with hers into the vast treasure-troves of eternity, to draw the interest on deposits gained from minutes, till we received the principal whereof God keeps account?"

Laura C. Conant

This introduction by Mrs. Conant was given at the time of the presentation to Sibyl Wilbur (Stone) of the Deluxe Edition of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy.

CRADLED OBSCURITY  
or  
THE FINDING OF THE CHRIST  
by  
Sibyl Wilbur

These are troublous times and frightful to the entire world, the end of an age, the beginning of a new era. Were it not for seeds that were sown, more than fifty years ago, words that were spoken by a great leader, a divine plan discerned and indicated, we might have reason to be fearful of heart. Jesus predicted the end of an age and it came in forty years with the most fearful siege a city ever witnessed, and Jerusalem fell,—as Babylon fell, Jerusalem fell, and Rome fell for “error repeats itself, and falls only before the sword of Spirit,” Mrs. Eddy said, also “Truth’s immortal idea is sweeping down the centuries. We welcome the increase of knowledge and the end of error, because even human invention must have its day, and we want that day to be succeeded by Christian Science, by divine reality. Midnight foretells the dawn. Led by a solitary star amid the darkness, the Magi of old foretold the Messiahship of Truth.”

It is not necessary to give page and line to my hearers today. Students of Truth, you have all read and pondered these words from Mrs. Eddy’s textbook. You know well there was prophecy given to this age, and gospel was given,—“the light which heralds Christ’s eternal dawn.” To some of us it may have been “cradled obscurity” when first we read it. Human invention has given us telegraph, radio, mastery of the air, civilization. Why take seriously the divine behest of Christian Science? The greatest woman of this age foresaw the inventions and said: “Lulled by stupefying illusions, the world is asleep in the cradle of infancy, dreaming away the hours.... This...world is even now becoming the arena for conflicting forces.... [In] [t]he breaking...of material beliefs... [there will]...be famine and pestilence.... During this final conflict, wicked minds will endeavor to find means by which to accomplish more evil...The looms of crime, hidden in the dark recesses of mortal thought, are every hour weaving webs more complicated and subtle. So secret are [its] present methods...that they ensnare the age into indolence...”

Prophecy, clear and definite, given fifty years ago, and this day is seeing its fulfillment. The great leader and founder is vindicated by time and events, even to the apathy which the criminal desires.

I have come here today to express again my gratitude for the beautiful book you have given me, and to tell you a little about my first meeting with Mrs. Eddy, the author of this great book. My paper is called “Cradled Obscurity or the Finding of the Christ.” I shall tell you how I was prepared for that meeting and how I came to write the story of her life. It may be that I shall seem to say too little about the sainted seer of Concord, but remember to note that what I say is compact, firmly united with her demonstration, that it holds the quintessence of fruitage, the seeds of eternal life. Fruitful harvest is not the result of careless scattering of seed on untilled soil. My experience in this momentous and sacred period should reveal a ploughing and harrowing and drenching with sorrow and also a solar fire of spiritual illumination. I ask you to find that in the life of the Leader, as I wrote it.

My first approach to Christian Science was in a meeting with Alfred Farlow in February 1905. That may seem a long time ago to some of you. It is in fact one half of my own life to date. The events of which I shall speak are so vivid in my memory that they seem to have happened yesterday. I was then a special writer for the Boston Herald, having served my apprenticeship through fifteen years of reporting in Minneapolis, Washington, New York and Boston in various fields. There was also some foreign correspondence from Paris and London. Society editing and women's clubs came first, cream puffs of journalism; dramatic criticism and feature writing with stars of the stage in the nineties, Julia Marlow, Ellen Terry, Sara Bernhardt, Irving, Skinner, Tabor, Drew, to mention a few whose notes and photographs filled my desk at one time and with whom I lunched and dined and tead. This is the champagne of newspaper life; industrial strikes in the coal fields of Pennsylvania, the mills of Fall River, the shoe-shops of Lynn, sterner stuff and bitter bread for writing of these toilers, one lives with these people, works with them, weeps with them, budgets accounts with them, and helps bury their dead. Then one perhaps interviews with Governors and Presidents because of them. All this is apprenticeship to foreign correspondence, Embassies and Spring salons in Paris, Ballets, racing and Parliament, teas on the embankment in London. Such is newspaper work, my discipline in journalism.

Now I was thirty-five and in Boston with a page to fill every Sunday in the Herald with topics chosen by myself for my feuilleton. I had been there less than a year meeting lecturers of Harvard College, and the living descendents of the Emerson tradition, President Eliot, great gentleman and educator, Edward Everett Hale and other workers for world peace, aged humanitarian Julia Ward Howe, white-haired Queen of the Back Bay. In feeling out this New England historically and contemporaneously, I had become obscurely aware of what was called, sometimes derisively, a new fad in religion. Transcendentalism had had its day, yet here it was back again under the name of Christian Science. As Emerson said once: "You may throw the Bible out of the window, but back it comes bounce."

There is a Boston snobbishness made up of collegiate tradition, Unitarianism and wealth of certain families founded largely on the fisheries of New England. One heard there the toast which celebrates this snobbery: "To the great state of Massachusetts, home of the sacred cod, where the Lowells speak only with Cabots, and the Cabots speak only with God." The toast was growing old; now they were extending it to a woman who lived in Concord in seclusion. For they said she spoke only with God and had learned a strange language. They, the wits, said that no one could understand her language but herself, or perhaps some of her fifty thousand followers, more or less.

So there was something like a new-world movement starting up here in Massachusetts called Christian Science and its Leader lived in Concord in seclusion. I had heard of it casually in Chicago at the time of the Boxer uprising in China because I had interviewed a Mr. McClellan there regarding the American Minister to China and his wife who was said to be of this faith and had with her a Christian Scientist companion and these two women had accomplished some miracles. Strange how this all came back to me from a far-away China story. Christian Science had reached China through Maurine Campbell, I began to remember, something miraculous about it all, with potentially spiritual significance.

Things began to fall into place in my mind, things heard and shoved into obscure mental darkness. Then there was that nice little church in the Back Bay with a big boarded enclosure behind it where some building was being erected. And there was a woman in Concord, New Hampshire, who it seemed had fifty thousand followers but lived alone and refused to see reporters. And she was the one they said spoke only with God. Had I been longer in Boston, I would have known more about it, would have known of the annual influx of throngs from afar for ten years now since the little church had been dedicated; also of the fine church in Concord and of the hundreds that used to go to that city to glimpse their Leader until requested to cease their pilgrimage. It takes a long time for some things to impress themselves on the public mind as of more importance than a presidential election, a general strike, or even a world war.

There was no Christian Science Publishing House then in the Back Bay. The publishing offices were in unimportant buildings on Huntington Avenue. Alfred Farlow's offices were in Huntington Chambers in very modest quarters. I have sketched in here a background of the time I first visited him in 1905. When I suggested to my editor the name of Mrs. Eddy of Concord as one I should like to write up for my Sunday Herald page, that editor laughed tolerantly and said: "That might be interesting to some people and tiresome to more, but you won't get anywhere with it. She is a recluse, probably an invalid, or this seclusion may be a pose. Her representatives guard her like the Pope in the Vatican."

"And who are her representatives?" I asked.

"Her principal spokesman is Alfred Farlow, Chairman of the so-called Publication Committee. Every time we mention the subject of Christian Science in a news way, he appears with a correction, and he is so suave and persistent we have to insert the correction. It's a nuisance, because we never seem to say things right."

"There are a great many of these Christian Scientists, aren't there?"

"Yes, but there are a great many Catholics in Boston, too, don't forget."

"We've had our story about the new Cardinal," I replied, "and also about the Emmanuel Movement in the Episcopal Church. By the way, Dr. Worcester of the Emmanuel Church will probably acquire the structure some day when this little movement dies out."

"Maybe they will," said the editor, "IF it turns out to be a worthwhile building. No one is permitted to see what they are doing there, although they seem to be lifting an important sort of dome. They can't hide that."

"It would seem to me that this movement is as interesting as anything going on in New England," I said.

"Now if I should get the interview with Mrs. Eddy?"

"O, yes, we'd print that most certainly. But you won't get it," was the most emphatic reply of the editor.

I have indicated the state of mind in the office of the greatest daily newspaper in Boston at the beginning of 1905. I felt that this was a project worth taking time for—there were other things pressing, but this could be looked into and waited upon until it developed. So I went to see Alfred Farlow. Now I would like to quote from an article in Miscellany, p.244, and from a paragraph headed: "The November Class 1898." In this connection Mrs. Eddy said: "The 'secret place,' whereof David sang is unquestionably man's spiritual state in God's own image and likeness, even the inner sanctuary of

divine Science, in which mortals do not enter without a struggle or sharp experience, and in which they put off the human for the divine. Knowing this, our Master said: 'Many are called, but few are chosen.'

I happened to read this recently with reflection on that time. For it was at about this time of which I have been speaking that I myself had a struggle and sharp experience which changed the aspect of my world. After a long night of sorrow I heard one Sunday morning the bells of the new Old South across the square and said aloud, "God, let me do something for women who are alone." Before my eyes came the vision of the woman and her name, and I knew I was dedicated to a work, knew it in a cradled obscurity, like a beautiful dream. Doubt of the nobility of the cause left me, fell from me like a garment about my feet. The time came when Mrs. Eddy with her hands on my shoulders said: "You are doing for me what I cannot do for myself; may we gather flowers together in the fields of eternity." But there were many steps away from illusion to an achievement which has blessed me, and I know it has blessed others because it was the story of the demonstration of the Leader.

The person who labored with me most patiently at the beginning was subsequently my teacher, Alfred Farlow. He received me when I first called upon him, candidly and with friendliness. I have indicated a worldliness in my early professional life, and I shall trespass now with something further as explanatory to the name you read on the copyright page of "The Life." I was born and reared a Protestant. My father was of Quaker forebears, my mother Congregationalist. Both died while I was a child, and I went from New York to the middle-west where I lived with relatives who were Methodists. I attended a Methodist college, Hamline University in St. Paul. As a young woman in Washington, D.C., I met and married a gay young Irishman and joined the Catholic Church. I remained in communion but a short time. Like Jonah, I could not stay swallowed. Yet I do not regret my experience. It taught me much, and I honor the saints of that church of whom there are many.

Mr. Farlow's offices, when I first met him, looked to me like the simple offices of my mid-west college, rather shabby and bare, with the dignity of good work going on therein. And I recognized in him a sincerity in which there was no guile. We were to have many earnest talks across the little pull-out shelf of his desk through the months and years which followed; but of this first talk with him I remember chiefly asking him if Christian Science did not mean mind over matter; and his very astonishing reply: "No, Miss Wilbur, Christian Science says there is no matter. That is just how ridiculous we are"—smiling kindly—"in the eyes of the world. Matter is a state of mortal mind. In reality, all is Spirit."

We were both silent for awhile. As an interviewer, I had learned not to argue with a person being interviewed, rather to stimulate him to do the talking. I saw Alfred Farlow as a kindly, sympathetic teacher whose manner was that of one talking to an intelligent child. He seemed to have complete selflessness, to be entirely without prejudice, to be obliterating his personality within an atmosphere of crystalline clearness. He seemingly held no gauge of me as good or bad, as clever or stupid, but merely a person to whom he was laying open his cause. Perhaps I might prove receptive of the Truth, and he might be able to convey some understanding helpful to me, helpful also to his cause, as I was a writer. Perhaps a light would shine between us.

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As I think of him in gratitude, I am reminded of these words of Mrs. Eddy, "Students are instructed to pursue their mental ministrations very sacredly; never to touch the human thought save to issues of Truth; never to trespass mentally on individual rights; never to take away the right, but only the wrongs of mankind." At all times in my intercourse with Alfred Farlow, I found him in this mind, a sanctity of purpose enveloped him, a garment worn very naturally and simply without pious ostentation.

I was there to ask him for a letter of introduction to Mrs. Eddy, and he had to refuse my request. He said that he had not the privilege to make such request of Mrs. Eddy, requests which she of late had refused. He said her days were fully occupied and it was his duty to assist in protecting her from worldly intrusion. Nevertheless he asked me to come to see him again when I found something more I wished to talk about. I found I wished ardently to talk with him about Spirit and matter, no matter indeed, when we lived and moved and had our being in matter. No, no; that was God, and God is Spirit. And God is omnipresent. Now here was a discovery.

So I did return from time to time, for I lived just across the square and we had brief chats, friendly chats. He read some of my articles in the Herald and I read some of his articles, and eventually he succeeded in impressing me with the seriousness of what I had seemed to approach casually, a visit with Mrs. Eddy. But it was not casual, that purpose; it was definite, clear, accomplished. I was cradling the obscurity as a physical scientist cradles the hint of, say the audion, and cradling it, I shielded it from observation.

Eventually I suppose Mr. Farlow wrote to Mrs. Eddy concerning my quest. About two months after my first call, he told me that Mr. Armstrong, a Director of the Church, was coming to see me with a message from Mrs. Eddy. That seemed a hopeful sign indeed. When Mr. Armstrong came a little later, he looked observingly around my study and somewhat scrutinizingly at me, I thought, and I looking at this bearded man with the appearance of a country banker, rugged, honest, earnest Joseph Armstrong said to myself: "Here is St. Peter, I do believe, come to my abode, greatly humble and humbly great. And what has he for me?"

He had a letter from Mrs. Eddy and a copy of Science and Health, and a signed photograph. He said very little, refused to be seated, and departed leaving a current of fresh air that came as from another world; a world much different from smug and busy Boston, Back Bay mansions or even classic Harvard. It suggested Emerson's Concord where once was practiced plain living and high thinking. I opened my letter and read: "Dear Madam—You will excuse me since I must be uniform in declining the honor of calls from newspaper reporters. Christian Science cannot be carried on in certain worldly ways. Accept my thanks and this book. Please read page 464, paragraph 1. Sincerely yours, Mary Baker Eddy."

You may be sure I found and read at once the passage: "It has been said to the author, 'The world is benefitted by you, but it feels your influence without seeing you. Why do you not make yourself more widely known?' Could her friends know how little time the author has had in which to make herself outwardly known, except through the laborious Publications, and how much time and toil are still required to establish the stately operations of Christian Science, they would understand why she is so secluded. Others could not take her place, even if willing to do so. She has therefore

remained unseen at her post working for the generations to come, never looking for a present reward."

The refusal was entirely courteous and seemed complete. Still I was unconvinced. "Stately operations," I repeated. August, sublime. And the little church at Falmouth Street, and the country banker? Jesus at the well talked with the woman of Samaria, yet he scorns the solicitations of Herod. "Go and tell that fox" he said. Was I perhaps a fox, sly, flattering, betraying into the jaws of jeering journalism a sacred work? I read and reread the letter noting the words "cannot be carried on in certain worldly ways." But there was my vision in January cradled in my mind as a promise. Was I worldly? Wasn't it a smashing story I really wanted? Balance it in your heart, Sibyl, and know thyself. I determined to read *Science and Health*, to set down all the questions and criticisms that came to me. I would read carefully. I would blue pencil this book which had been described to me as written in a strange language, by certain intellectuals of Boston.

So I carried the book with me everywhere, in a cover, reading on street cars and trains. I remember some things that struck me: "Christian Science shows the scientific relation of man to God, disentangles the interlaced ambiguities of being, and sets free the imprisoned thought." A different phrase, and I pondered it as though it were the whole of my problem. And sometimes I read and heavily underscored: "unimproved opportunities will rebuke us when we suddenly claim the benefits of an experience we have not made our own, try to reap the harvest we have not sown, and wish to enter unlawfully into the labors of others."

My letter from Mrs. Eddy was dated March 25. The month of April and last of May passed. My list of questions was growing and some of them began to look foolish as I read this amazing book. I struck out some, but added more. Some day I would sit at her feet and ask her those questions face to face. I remembered a hymn I sang at my mother's knee: "I wish that his hand had been placed on my head, and his arms had been thrown around me." And I had wept in my mother's skirts at the thought of his kind looks when he said, "Let the little ones come." That glorious second chapter of *Science and Health* was overflowing, and tenderly revealing in love. "His mission was to reveal the Science of celestial being," she said. Think of asking her about this.

One Sunday morning I arose a little late and took in my newspapers. There was the *New York Herald* so full of European stories usually, provoking local interviews with the literati. But today it had a story on its front page screaming headlines and a story to the effect that Christian Scientists were being deceived concerning the Seeress of Concord; that Mrs. Eddy was a hopeless invalid, unbalanced if not insane; that she was dragged out to a daily drive, drugged and helpless, by her keepers, who were determined to keep their fiction going by showing the poor woman off in her closed carriage dressed up like a shop window effigy. I read this with amazed indignation, this outrage to a great woman, flashed to the world by what was then the greatest Journal in America. The newsman had prowled the grounds of Pleasant View, photographed Mrs. Eddy being assisted into her carriage. I dressed myself very hurriedly and telephoned Mr. Farlow's office to see if he might be there on a Sunday morning. He was, happily, and would receive me. Wonderfully, I put my hat on straight, and literally dashed across Copley Square to Huntington Chambers, expecting to find him as aroused as myself. I found him unperturbed, his usual self, calm and

composed. It was unbelievable.

"Mr. Farlow," I cried, "how can you behave like this?"

"Why, what is the matter, Miss Wilbur?" he asked looking at me closely I thought, and with a broad smile.

"Haven't you seen the papers this morning—the New York Herald?" I asked breathlessly.

"Yes, I have," he said still smiling. "What have you on your face?" He took a mirror from his desk and held it in front of me, at the same time proffering an immaculate pocket handkerchief.

I saw in the mirror my face covered with powder like a mask, in my excitement I had not dusted it off. I took out my own handkerchief, dabbed fiercely at my face and talking at the same time.

"You have seen the papers, you know what has happened?"

"I have seen the papers" he said calmly. "Nothing has happened."

"Nothing has happened?" I cried. "Didn't you see the front page story? Didn't you see what they have done to Mrs. Eddy?" And to my own complete astonishment I burst into tears.

"Sit down, Miss Wilbur," he said, "and compose yourself."

I sat down, wept a little longer, dried my eyes and looked at him. He was leaning back composedly in his chair, no longer smiling, but gazing at me seriously, questioningly. Presently he said, "One might think you loved Mrs. Eddy. Do you?"

"I don't know. How can I know? I am thinking of her church, her great book, her noble work for humanity. They want to make it all ridiculous, make her a foolish, silly old woman, a lunatic." As he looked at me, I added: "This beloved Christian woman all right-minded people must at least respect. Yes, I love her and I want to help her."

"Yes, you do love her. I am sure of it. Well, I repeat, nothing has happened to Mrs. Eddy."

"But I can't say that nothing has happened. This story will go all over the world. I know that newspaper. It will print it in its Paris Herald, in London and in Rome. James Gordon Bennett, its editor is a Catholic, he will stop at nothing. They, the Roman Catholics, began to fear Christian Science. They will keep this up unless one outside your church answers them."

"Perhaps you will be that someone, Miss Wilbur. It is clear you do love Mrs. Eddy. Love will always find a way. Now will you try to know that nothing has happened to her nor to the Christian Science movement."

I just sat looking at him, wondering, doubting, questioning, not his character. Oh, no, but his insight, his knowledge of the world.

"You have been patient," he said. "Perhaps you are to be rewarded. You will know your reward when you see Mrs. Eddy face to face. Come and see me tomorrow and bring your questions. You said you had a list. I will send them in my communication to Pleasant View."

"But I am going to Concord," I said, standing up as he did. "I will go with or without a letter from you because it is time go."

There was a little delay, but at the end of the week, Mr. Farlow gave me the coveted letter of introduction. By that time, I was in great spirits about it. But my

Boston editor was skeptical. "You will get no further than the door," he said, "no further than the New York reporter, unless you tell them a little lie. Suppose you tell them that you've heard rumors, that you know a successor to Mrs. Eddy has been chosen in New York—this Mrs. Augusta Stetson who seems to be building a grand church of her own."

"Thank you, I will tell no lies to them or to you," I replied.

But on the trip to Concord on a Saturday morning in late May of 1905, I rode for two hours on the train up along the Merrimac River thinking pretty seriously of what lay before us. Suppose I were admitted, suppose I found Mrs. Eddy was not in health, suppose I found her frightened or not capable of answering questions, what then? Could I write a veiled account? "No," I said, "If I find the New York Herald was right, I shall refuse to write a story, and I will resign my position before I will write a false story or one which will reflect on Mrs. Eddy in her old age."

As I made my resolve, we entered a covered railroad bridge into a minute of darkness, and as we presently shot out into the full sunshine of high noon, I felt the first divine healing I ever experienced. I seemed to be lifted above the earth into a radiant atmosphere. The light which was never on land or sea enveloped me. An inner voice sounded Alfred Farlow's words: "Nothing has happened to Mrs. Eddy nor to the Christian Science Movement." Mrs. Eddy has written in the chapter Apocalypse, "Because of his more spiritual vision St. John saw an angel standing in the sun..." I saw the Leader.

The story of my meeting with the Leader was fully told in the Herald and in Human Life, and is preserved in many scrap books. I hesitate to repeat it for it seemed a sacred event. But I will give it briefly here once again. On this day, May Day, in 1905 when I visited Concord and was driven out to Pleasant View, I was received by Calvin Frye first, then by Laura Sargent, and later by August Mann. They handed me over as it were from one to the other. They told me cheerfully and cordially that Mother wished me to see all of Pleasant View. I took this naturally as a preliminary and accepted it as such. I was shown the lower floor of the home, the parlors, library, dining room, even the linen rooms and the kitchen and was introduced to the women in charge there. Later I was taken over the grounds, through the hothouse, the stables and carriage house—even out in Mrs. Eddy's carriage in her own seat. We all became very friendly and happy and some two hours were consumed in this visit. I supposed we were waiting to be summoned to the Leader's private rooms. But I was told at the end that Mrs. Eddy wished to be excused, that she was busy with her secretary. To this I replied that I would gladly wait for her leisure, that I would wait at the hotel until she sent for me. Mrs. Sargent seemed perturbed, she said they had all done everything they could think of to make me welcome. And indeed they had, even to lemonade and cake from Mrs. Sargent and a box of pansies from the garden. Mr. August Mann drove me back to the Eagle House and left me.

On the following morning I went to church in the beautiful edifice Mrs. Eddy gave to her native city, and walking out from there still in the wondrous mood of my healing, I met August Mann driving toward the little town and was told Mrs. Eddy had sent for me. I was not surprised in the least. I explained it to myself, I simply knew more about it than the household, for Mrs. Eddy was giving me this last test of goodwill, as she did once again later. Was I merely a ravening reporter, or was I her

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friend? My healing had been complete—I knew we should meet. Knew it absolutely, as I know today we shall meet again.

She received me in that sunlit upper room with its great bay window looking out across the Merrimac Valley to her childhood home in Bow. I have told how she came to greet me, slowly and rhythmically as she turned from the window. No one announced me, they simply took me to the door of her apartment and left me. She was a slender buoyant figure with a silver crowned head and wore a black silk dress of severe simplicity, and I shall add as always that she seemed to walk in annunciation lilies. Like an angel she has taken the whole field with her presence and I was utterly speechless.

What she first said was almost playful and her tones were musical. "All this trouble to see poor little me." So she had known for six months I had persisted, and she had waited. Suddenly able to speak, I said, "All the world wishes to see you above all things and persons because of your wonderful book."

"But why do they wish to see me, why should you dear child, have wished it? I have given the world my message. All that I ask of the world now is time, time to assimilate myself to God."

Why could I not speak the words I had meant to speak. "Madam, you are threatened by an evil power. A great newspaper has begun a campaign against you and your great cause." A finger seemed laid upon my lips. If I thought of any words, it was the exquisite words of her hymn, "O gentle presence, peace and joy and power." It was borne in upon me that I was looking at a very great soul, an inspired prophet. Under such circumstances, one does not prefer protection. "I feel very honored to have been privileged to see you," I said.

"Well, but why should you; but now that I have granted all your requests, are you satisfied? You have seen how we live here, every nook and corner has been shown you, are you satisfied?"

She did not say it, but looked her question, "Am I ill, broken in spirit, or insane?"

I could say only with humility, "I am satisfied and I do thank you." [And Mrs. Eddy replied,] "I wish that I could satisfy everyone that wishes to see me with love in their hearts. I would that I could take the whole world to my heart, but I cannot do it. I can only say through you to them, look on Truth and forget my personality. Your questions have all been considered; they will give you my answers. If you require further teaching, my student Alfred Farlow is a good teacher."

She gave me her hand and I knelt to kiss it, while she lifted her other hand as if in blessing. I thought I should never see her in the flesh again, but I did subsequently on a few memorable occasions. These interviews were longer, more intimate because of events, but never more intensely illuminating. Seen as I saw her that first time she was indeed the angel in the sun, the spiritual idea. Later I had occasion to see her as a clear-minded woman meeting very practical affairs with calm judgment. "She knew more law than we did," said Samuel J. Elder to ex-Governor Bates.

I will give a brief picture of Pleasant View as it is engraved in memory for it no longer stands as it once did outside Concord.

The home of Pleasant View was not spacious or grand. There were broad acres around it, perhaps twenty, I do not know. The house was like a small villa, a remodeled farm house. Ira O. Knapp told me in a long friendly interview when I was

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writing "The Life," that Mrs. Eddy while seeking a place to make her Concord home saw a vision here of a heaven descending to embrace the landscape and the old farm house. The view here was glorious, but how modestly named by its subsequent owner, Pleasant View.

It was charmingly furnished but with simplicity. The long drawing room rose color, with filmy lace curtains. Across the hallway was a smaller room, the library with glass-encased walnut bookshelves from floor to ceiling, brown velvet curtains and leather furniture. The dining room was simple and homey. Altogether it was a Victorian homestead of a well-conditioned person with modest income. It was arranged for the needs of a household never large. Mrs. Sargent, companion and executive housekeeper, Calvin Frye, secretary and steward, so to speak, the brothers, Joseph and August Mann, who cared for the gardens and out buildings, the horses and carriages, and did some secretarial work—Pauline Mann and Clara Shannon, who assisted Mrs. Sargent.

Mrs. Eddy was born on a farm with a farm life of the early nineteenth century going on about her. This pioneer life was not rough, but perhaps rude as we have come in later years to live in rural scenes. The wreck of the main structure when she was born still stood when I made my biographical researches, and I climbed the stairs to the attic of the old red house, then a storage place for fodder and grain. I went up alone and sat under the rafters thinking of the days when Mary Baker climbed up there with her grandmother to look at the contents of the old chests which came from Scotland. Mary Baker lived later with her family in a more commodious home near Tilton, when she was a bride and later a widow. She loved beauty and delicacy, and may have carried a dream in her mind of a home like Pleasant View.

When the New York World, second of the great Journals to strive for her ruin, stirred her one son to bring suit against his mother, she was eighty-six, the son in his sixties, poor misguided son. The suit was set aside by the Masters in Chancery—but she was non-suited for them in this dream home, so simple and altogether lovely. The spacious and handsome home of Chestnut Hill was then devised and planned by others. Like Abraham Lincoln, she went from a rude homestead—not a log cabin—to a beautiful establishment to end her days. As honest as Lincoln, as human and as homespun, she never cared for the great house. Except perhaps for the larger work and opportunities. The Monitor was established in conferences there. Details of her will were planned to care for the great fortune which she had accumulated through frugal and simple living, and wise democratic investments in municipal bonds of growing western cities. This fortune was for one purpose only, the propagation of her spiritual Science throughout the world. It had been contributed to by the early students in gaining the pearl of great price. These early saints of the movement felt they gave little, and banded themselves together as First Members to work for the perpetuation of Science. Also here details of church government were worked out as it began to spread in branch churches everywhere. A government that is at once democratic and centrally strong.

In 1906 The New York World took up the New York Herald's malicious attacks. They produced a story in this year which brought representatives of some ten or twelve newspapers to Concord. Alfred Farlow asked me to go to Mrs. Eddy and ask her to receive these men and let me speak for her. I went to Concord, saw the newspaper men

at the Eagle House, and got their questions formulated, reducing them to three. Then we went to Pleasant View, Mrs. Eddy received them, I asked her the questions, which she answered briefly. She then left for her drive and the reporters swarmed over her house. The account of the incident is in *The Life*. Then McClure's magazine started its Georgine Milmine life of Mrs. Eddy. I resigned from *The Boston Herald* and took up the work of answering month by month these chapters of gossip gleaned in the New Hampshire hills from old people with childish and often malicious minds. While doing this, I determined to put it all in a book.

I remember well when this inspiration came to me. I was on the train from Concord again following the interview of the delegation of special writers instigated by the *New York World*. A prominent writer who has several books to his credit and was then an editor of McClure's told me casually while we waited for this train, his magazine was going to lay open the whole life of Mrs. Eddy. He told me Georgine Milmine had accumulated the data and who the distinguished writer was who would handle her vast accumulation of notes which were in rather a mess of confusion. She was not literary, Miss Milmine, but had worked three years gathering gossip and ferreting facts. The McClure publication promised to be a sensation.

Again I was stirred to the depths and again I went to see Mr. Farlow. He strove to discourage me. "You can't do it, Miss Wilbur," he said. "Even I couldn't do it. People refuse me information, sneer at me, falsify, tell long imaginary stories. They hate Mrs. Eddy because they once knew her in humbler circumstances. They envy and despise her work. No, you cannot do it."

"You mean you cannot, nor any other Christian Scientist," I said. "But I can because I am a trained reporter and interviewer, and can truthfully say I am not a member of her church. I will find some magazine to finance me, some poor little magazine that will be glad to give me a stipend to go on. You will see, I will get the truth, and the truth will be better than gossip in the end."

And so it was I found "*Human Life*," a poor struggling magazine that gave me enough to live on while I did my research. Its circulation shot up from 20,000 to nearly 100,000 in three months. I worked out the details in the *Biography* in one year. And the little magazine then fell back to its normal circulation and subsequently disappeared. For two years more I revised my material and my book appeared in 1909. There are many stories about how I wrote this *Life*, how I waited weeks to overcome someone's prejudice, how I traced down gossip and refuted it. But all that is a story written within my own heart.

Mr. Farlow took me through his class in 1907, and while I was writing *The Life*, he sent my questions to Mrs. Eddy, and her dictated replies came to me from her secretary with occasional handwritten notes of encouragement from the Leader. Also I had occasional visits with Mrs. Eddy and a few letters. Mr. Farlow also let me read all my manuscript to him a few chapters at a time, and occasionally advised an omission as I was inclined to wax ironic or even bitter in refuting malice. This is why there is nothing of Mrs. Josephine Woodbury, who claimed virginal conception of her son. Mrs. Eddy herself said to me as I knelt by her chair in a last interview: "I am an old woman, my dear, and I have never found it wise to argue with a lie. You are doing what I cannot do for myself; do it wisely." Mr. Farlow had again been right; Mrs. Eddy would not perpetuate a brazen, foolish story even by denial. On one occasion when I was

eloquent for an early deserter, he himself was indignant. The passage is about Daniel Spofford and it remains in the book, and has been commented upon as an evidence of fair dealing. I can hear his objection now, so emphatic; and his withdrawal of it, so Christianly gentle. I had only to recall to him the first edition and its promulgation; for this man had broken tough ground.

On a recent visit to New York, I saw the old World building, once the pride of newspaper row, standing empty and desolate. The New York World no longer exists. And the once very beautiful New York Herald building, degraded then to a used car emporium; I think it is gone as is the paper itself. The New York Herald no longer exists. And McClure's Magazine, I believe is defunct. The new Christian Science Publishing House on the contrary is the glory and pride of Boston. These are incidents which remind one of Mrs. Eddy's words: "Entering upon the hitherto unknown reality of Spirit, material sense like an outlaw found on forbidden ground is doomed to an unlooked for death."

Mr. Farlow brought me a letter from Mrs. Eddy on a Sunday morning in 1909 requesting me to withhold my book from publication. I read this letter with trembling limbs and blanched face. The work of four years, not the complete work, for the last two chapters were added after her going, but the first edition was printed, bound, ready for issue. How could I know what counselled delay. But Alfred Farlow knew and stood watching me. "Does this mean never," I asked. "It may mean never," he said. "What message shall I take from you to Mrs.. Eddy?"

After a pause I faltered, "Tell her, "I said, "Divine Love governs." A voice seemed speaking through me.

"I will tell her what you say and that you are a good soldier." It was characteristic of him that he gave me no encouragement, and left me with his usual cheerfulness and equanimity and the month of October found me a recluse unwilling to go out of my home. So it was Mrs. Eddy tested me again. Had I written my book for fame? Know thyself. And Mrs. Eddy, did she shrink from publication of her life story when nearing ninety? We know what she said of mortal life in Recapitulation. Was I sharing with her that month a sharp struggle? Cradled obscurity.

It has always been my opinion that Mr. Farlow read the book with her and was thereby able after a month to send me word the book was released for publication. He never said so, but he gave me her written approval which appears in Miscellany. Again this cradled obscurity. There lay the young child who was to find the Christ.

Mrs. Eddy said: "To live so as to keep human consciousness in constant relation with the divine, the spiritual, and the eternal, is to individualize infinite power; and this is Christian Science." (Miscellany, page 160).

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May she, because of her goodness, broaden her wide range of usefulness; and I, work on to widen mine into paths of peace; til the burden and heat of the day are done, and eventide is past, and bird and blossom wake in the sunshine."

(Signed) Mary Baker Eddy.

Pleasant View, Concord, N.H., May 24, 1905"

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Mrs. Conant concluded the meeting with the presentation:

You, Sibyl Wilbur, who have had the privilege of personal association with our beloved Leader, and an opportunity to give to the world a graphic, accurate recording of all the major events of her earthly pilgrimage, are entitled to an expression of our appreciation for what you have done. Wherever Christian Science is known and loved, your "Life of Mary Baker Eddy" will be read and loved. It is altogether fitting that we should express in some tangible form our affection for you, our dear friend and neighbor.

[Editor's Note: The quotations used herein are from Miss Wilbur's manuscript and evidently represent the text of *Science and Health* as it was when she was working with Mrs. Eddy.]