

## Chapter IX

### Trouble about Signatures

Very soon our activities fell into a regular pattern, Lee using her talents for marketing, and I doing my best to become a cook. Lee's silver made our meals far more enjoyable and her payments for room and board eased my financial difficulties.

I gave as much time as I could to the yard and was especially proud of a row of lilies of the valley from Mother's garden which bordered the area John was preparing for the water lily pond. In the old wheelbarrow, remodeled and oiled, he had hauled away the dirt he dug out. It would be another season before we could have lilies in the pond, but at least we had made a start.

Our committee was also making progress with the petition for closing the alley. The other members already had the signatures of their neighbors, and I was doing well with those around me. Herb and Alice Jones, next door, and some others had seemed glad to sign. Mrs. Cox wanted to talk to her husband about it. She also offered to speak to her neighbor, Mrs. Hanks.

As I enjoyed a cup of tea before Mrs. Cox's cheerful fire one afternoon, Marguerite, her enterprising high school daughter, showed me Christmas cards on which she was taking orders. I selected one with a picture so much like Havenwood that I thought it would be appropriate for announcing to my friends news of my move.

Leaving the petition at Mrs. Duvall's for her and her husband to sign, I hurried home across her lawn, which had the straggling look of most autumn gardens.

Lee stopped work on her cross-word puzzle to hear about my progress. Although she didn't realize how vital it was to me to have the alleys closed, she did see that it would enhance the value of my property.

"I'll feel like a different person when this is over," I said, "And if I can also find a contractor!"

With a shrug, she said, "Kind of hopeless, it looks like. They all seem to be around three thousand dollars."

"Or 'up'—which I don't have."

Problems like this I carried to what Lee called "the magic bench." The old packing box was a poor specimen the day I dragged it from the debris the stream had washed down. Its top and one side were gone, the portion left was caked with mud. Scoured and painted a battleship gray, then propped on concrete blocks the same color, it made a comfortable garden seat, and more important, it gave protection from poison ivy. Close to the stream, it became my haven for thinking through problems such as I had today about finding a contractor. I still hoarded twenty-five hundred dollars in government bonds for the upstairs improvements, but even the lowest estimates were more than that.

Whimsically, I thought, if my stream would only round up a builder for me. But no such luck! After the next rain, it delivered on top of the debris a dead opossum, in none too savory state.

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One day Christine Stark, a long time Washington friend, called me, saying, "Becky, we begin our fall meetings next week."

I knew she meant our study group to which I had belonged for several years. We always met on Thursday evenings, which would make it difficult for me now, so I replied, "I am not sure that I can make it."

"I hope nothing is wrong."

"No, but I will let you know later."

I had found that group after a long search and our spiritual study together was one of my most rewarding endeavors.

My quest had begun as a child when I had sat in the family pew and heard hell-fire and damnation poured out on souls that had sinned. I felt then that things must be in an awful mess to make the preacher yell so loud and bang his fist down as if he wanted to hurt somebody. A lot of things bothered my eight-year-old mind. Why did they have to burn souls? Wasn't there anything else to keep the fire going? Who started it anyway? Had I done anything bad



enough for God to want to burn me? If God was so good, why did He want to burn anybody? If He was so great, why didn't He put the fire out? Maybe He didn't have enough people to help Him. That was it, the people must have started the fire and people would have to put it out. But what was my soul?

After I was grown I was still searching for the answer. At one time I went from bookstore to bookstore in Washington looking for a book called *In Search of a Soul* until finally I reached old Mr. Stoke's shop on Que Street. It looked as if it had dropped out of a Dickens novel and its owner, who resembled a piece of withered parchment, might be found in a corner huddled over a favorite volume. A customer could browse to his heart's content, if he was equal to wading through the dust and stepping over mounds of books on the floor. I never found the book I wanted, but I did meet Christine Stark there. She had invited me to become a member of the group about which she had phoned me today.

To take Lee to the meetings, even if she were interested, was out of the question. There were certain rules regarding visitors and we were too far along in the lessons for them to have any meaning for a beginner. On the other hand I couldn't think of leaving her until late into the evening, nervous as she seemed about being alone.

I was weighing this problem when Selma, a close friend, came to spend the day with me. She was now visiting her married daughter who lived nearby. Selma was very special to me because of her rare spiritual qualities, particularly for her serenity and her habit of helping friends and strangers alike. I liked to look at her, well-groomed in her self-tailored, becoming outfits. Fair and pink-cheeked, her unlined face was framed with loosely waved gray hair, and in the depths of her blue eyes I often detected signs of enjoyment as if from some secret source of happiness. Today she was with me to make over the faille silk draperies, long ones for the living room and short traverse for by bedroom. How proud I was to see the four pairs beautifully made and pressed, laid away ready to be hung.

Selma shared my love for the stream. Seated beside it after lunch, I told her of my present quandary. She understood what the meetings meant to me, because she herself was deeply interested in study for spiritual development. She had the kind of faith that surmounts difficulties.

When I finished, she remarked, "Rebecca, we will put it where it belongs, in the light."

I knew what she meant. It was her way of praying and I trusted it because it always seemed to bring results. This was no exception.

Later that afternoon when she was leaving, she said, "Rebecca, I know now what you should do. You must have someone stay with your sister while you are out."

"A sister sitter," I said and we both laughed. "Mercy knows who."

"But you will. It will work out for you, because it is right for you to go to your meetings."

Marguerite Cox was my answer. The very next afternoon when I came in from the yard, she and Lee were enjoying a game of cards. Both were delighted with the idea of having an evening a week together and Marguerite's mother readily gave her consent.

I was disappointed to hear from Mrs. Cox that her husband was away for several weeks and she hadn't yet asked him about the petition. Neither had she mentioned it to Mrs. Hanks.

Even after Mr. Cox's return the matter dragged on so long that I finally discussed it with Mrs. Marsters, who said, "Miss Dial, I've heard that Mrs. Cox says she doesn't expect ever to sign the petition."

"Why?"

"I don't know, but it came straight."

Without further delay, I called on Mrs. Hanks who pleasantly assured me that she would sign when Mrs. Cox did. When I saw Mrs. Cox later, she also said pleasantly that she would sign when Mrs. Hanks did. Evidently, they had agreed not to sign at all.

The only reason either of them would give was, "Maybe we would like to have an alley back there."

The next time I was with Marguerite, she inadvertently disclosed the explanation by the remark that her mother wanted to do some building.

Aimlessly, I inquired, "Where?"

"On our lot next door," and Marguerite went on, "She may build two houses there, one behind the other. Mama thinks land is too valuable to have just one house on a lot that deep."

At last I had stumbled on the identity of the mysterious developer. I decided to find out all I could, so I asked, "Is she building on both sides of your home?"



"I don't know, ma'am, the other lot belongs to Mrs. Hanks."

I began to put the facts together. These two ladies, in partnership, could build six new houses on the lots they owned. The four at the rear would have to have some means of access. I wondered if Mrs. Cox expected to make streets out of the alleys as she had talked about doing that very first day she came to see me. I doubted that only two people could have the alleys opened, but I did not know zoning regulations. In any case, I didn't see how a street could be made on twenty and thirty-foot strips.

I argued the points back and forth in my mind; I wanted to think that my surmises about such a development were unfounded, that what Marguerite had told me was only childish prattle. Certainly, it would do no good for me to start worrying, yet the matter lay heavy on my heart.

I could do nothing—except wait.

## Chapter X

### Power Saws, Plumbing and a Baptist Preacher

After three months of constant effort, I had made no progress toward developing my retreat. I hadn't gotten the alleys closed. In fact, now I even faced having them opened. Besides, I hadn't received an estimate I could afford for finishing the upstairs. It was like traveling on an icy road where my tires would do nothing but spin. But suddenly the solution came one day through a name and a telephone number scribbled on a scrap of brown paper bag someone had given Lee at market.

I never knew why graying, distinguished-looking Mr. Redeget agreed to the terms of our arrangement. He was a contractor who would do my carpentering at a nominal fee, if I would pay for all materials and make my own contracts for the remainder of the work. By waiving his fee as contractor and giving me the benefit of his discount on materials, he felt that the work could be done within the limit of twenty-five hundred dollars. I would be taking on a big responsibility. I would even be accepting the man himself without credentials. It was a gamble, but I had no other choice.

I was to pay sixty dollars of his two-hundred-dollar fee when he began the work, fifty dollars at the end of the first week and the rest as the work progressed. I would also pay for the materials when they were delivered. The first load to arrive was the subflooring and two-by-fours for the joists. Mr. Redeget and his brother, Steve, planned to begin the work the first of the following week.

Possibly Lee and I carried our idea of cleanliness too far when we gave the dirty subflooring planks a good scrubbing. They had the week-end in which to dry, but what Mr. Redeget muttered when he saw them didn't sound like praise. He did commend us however, for the heavy building paper we spread to protect the downstairs floors during construction work.



Music to my ears was the sound of the Redegets' power saw ripping through lumber, and of hammers banging away. I was most excited the day they cut an eight-foot opening in the roof to make space for the bathroom. It is quite an awesome experience to gaze heavenward through a chasm in one's roof. Fortunately the sides of the room were up and the roof restored before a cloud marred the bright October sky.

Another piece of luck was my falling heir to six doors stored in Mother's basement. They were almost the right size—almost—and I thought it was luck until I heard what the Redegets said about having to make them fit.

However, our pleasant relations were not really disturbed until we came to the closets. One small opening they called a closet had to be ripped out and enlarged. Every day I had to haggle over the number of shelves I wanted. The insulation between the rafters in the storage spaces reminded me of last year's straggling birds' nests. After declaring that only a wealthy woman could afford to be so finicky, the brothers finally gave in and not only covered the rafters with wall board, but placed heavy building paper on the rough floors for me.

Lee and I kept busy getting estimates for installation of heating and electrical equipment, for plumbing and bathroom tile and fixtures, and for plaster and paint. As we found out from the painter who never showed up because he had bid too low, it isn't always best to take the lowest estimate. I also paid dearly for scrimping too much on the ducts for the heating system.

While poring over color charts for the paint, I endured agonies of indecision. Even after the painter had begun the job, I felt sure I had made a mistake. However, I took his advice to let it dry before I made a change. In a few days the garish shade had toned down and I was quite satisfied with the turquoise rooms and bright yellow hall. If we had only extended the paper carpeting up the stairs, wet plaster wouldn't have been mashed into the treads. We should also have thought of something to prevent heavy boots from grinding plaster into my enamel tub.

As a whole, however, the contractors were capable and work progressed satisfactorily in spite of my inexperience. The funds, too, were holding out. When the other craftsmen had finished, Mr. Rede-

get came back to see about the floors; just in time, too, to save me from ordering a dark shade of oak when I wanted the lightest. The terms used on the unfinished hardwood samples had misled me.

The afternoon the hardwood flooring arrived I barely escaped a mishap. No one was around to help the driver move the lumber inside. Not realizing how heavy the bundles were, I insisted that I could take care of them if he would push them up through the second floor window. When I tackled the first one, instead of my holding it down, it lifted me like a toy balloon on a stick. The more the driver pushed, the higher I went, until in fear of being mashed against the ceiling, I began screaming. The driver stopped pushing, but stood rooted to the spot, not daring to let go. This left me suspended in mid air. Somehow, my sister waylaid a passerby who rushed to my rescue, then kindly helped the driver finish.

Clyde Yates was one person who tricked me. I hadn't seen Mr. Trapp's handyman, John, for some time and debris left by workmen was getting beyond me. Therefore, I welcomed Clyde's offer to come out and help me. I had met the hefty young fellow in a Washington health food shop. He appeared about noon the following Sunday. After dinner when I showed him what I wanted him to do, he developed symptoms of broom shyness, a malady which I have found is not uncommon to men. He made plain that his purpose in coming was to demonstrate his talents as a healer by treating my "poor tired feet!" He had them diagnosed all right; however, I knew the best cure for my feet would be for me to get off them for a while. So I sent the poor fellow away in a state of frustration—but his was no worse than my own, I felt sure.

Early the next morning I began cleaning upstairs myself. Anything worth saving, I stacked in the storage space under the eaves, then loaded boxes with hardened plaster, sawdust, shavings and general litter. These I carted outside to a ditch I was filling. A lot of splattered plaster had to be loosened and the places smoothed. Paint, also, was stuck here and there. The bathroom especially had to be scraped and scoured. Then there was sweeping and vacuuming. Lee kept asking what was going on. A-plenty, I told her. By night-fall all was in order—except poor feet.

Construction work was nearing completion when we faced a new snag. A freeze on steel products at the time prevented our obtaining



a frame for the casement window in the bathroom.

Even after we succeeded in getting one made of aluminum, trouble continued. Neither Mr. Redeget nor the man who had installed the window would put in the panes of glass. Each said it was a job for a glazier but left without telling me where I could find one. The tarpaulin which one of them had hung over the window was flapping in the December gale letting in blasts of icy air that howled down the stairs.

Suffering from a chill, Lee had gone to bed, wrapped in blankets and with two hot water bags which I prayed wouldn't leak. I was searching frantically for a cord heavy enough to anchor the loose end of the tarpaulin when I heard my buzzer. Wondering who could be calling on such a day, I found on the threshold an elderly man with thinning, mouse-colored hair who peered at me through heavy glasses. He said he was Emmanuel Bates, a retired Baptist minister, and he was looking for a room.

Maybe it wasn't altogether an ill wind which blew this unusual visitor to my door, and when he told me he was a carpenter and a glazier, I was sure he must be an angel in disguise. I could almost have become a Baptist and been immersed even in that weather, if he had requested it. Instead he wanted his work to be part payment on his rent.

I don't know who was praying harder, I holding the rickety ladder on the ground or the Baptist preacher at the top with numbed fingers fitting the panes of glass in place. Anyway the house was soon made snug and I invited the Reverend Bates inside to enjoy its warmth. During his six weeks' stay, he helped me in many ways, fulfilling his role as angel with a hammer instead of a halo.

For sometime Lee had been talking about going South. That afternoon both water bags had leaked. That did it. Dave was leaving on Christmas Eve for his new assignment in Columbia, South Carolina, and Lee went with him for a visit with relatives there. Both of them would enjoy our Southern friends and certainly the climate would be better for Lee.

As they left Christmas Eve morning, after a good breakfast, I tried to hide my sense of desolation. I was glad to have my morning filled with belated Christmas chores, getting the house in order and marketing. As I pushed my cart around the store and then trudged

home with the load, I realized I made a poor substitute for Lee, and wondered if I would ever become accustomed to shopping again.

Mr. Bates was spending Christmas with friends in Baltimore. Later that afternoon I was glad to see Mr. Redeget, in spite of the way he had treated me about the window. It was poor business, I know, but I couldn't refuse his appeal on the Eve of Christmas that I pay him in full, although he hadn't finished his work.

Early that evening I began preparing to go to Mother's for Christmas dinner next day. It was too much to expect one beauty treatment to counteract months of exposure and neglect. When I had done my best with soaps, cream and powder, I worked on my hair. Before the crackling fire Mr. Redeget had started for me in the living room, I finished with a manicure. The rest of the evening I would devote to the old trunks I had never investigated thoroughly.

In each there were reminders that made the past seem very close: my little two-year-old, auburn-haired sister with a voice like a silver bell; my sixteen-year-old brother, Mitchell, who tolerated having a little sister tag along with him wherever he went; and my gentle-natured mother, whom I barely remembered, revealed by her feminine clothing and accessories long packed away.

Later that evening as I relaxed on the chaise longue in the flickering firelight, the display of family photographs lining the mantel stirred so many memories that the shadows seemed to take almost human form. Seeing my baby chair beside Father's big rocker took me back to the wide, vine-covered veranda in our Southern home where I had spent many happy hours with him. The memory made me feel less alone on this first Christmas Eve in Havenwood, my new home.



## Chapter XI

### A Deadline to Meet

The minute I opened the door at Mother's, I was greeted by a dozen voices calling, "Christmas gift!" This custom was a hangover from my childhood. The idea was to say the greeting first, because that meant the other person would have to do the giving. None of us had ever taken it seriously, still we kept it up. Having survived the embraces which made me feel that I might have just arrived from overseas instead of from across the Potomac, I slipped my simple gifts under the tree.

Fannie and Dr. Perry were there with their three fine-looking boys and their pretty young daughter, all in high school or college. The most excited guests were the four young Smiths, the children of Dorothy and Harold. The three little girls, close enough in age to seem like triplets and their brother a little older, were not yet in school. Joe and Frances Dial had no children. We missed Lee and other members of the family who lived at a distance, but I doubt if the old house could have stood much more chatter and merriment.

We planned to open our presents after dinner so Julia could get through early enough to have some time for herself. Then, too, the aroma of turkey and Christmas "fixings" coming from the kitchen was teasing the appetites of adults as well as children.

Even the youngest child had a place at Mother's table. I needed another pair of ears to keep up with all that was going on. However, a statement by Mother caught my attention. She said that having found a suitable apartment, she had sold our home!

"When do you expect to move, Mother?" I asked.

"About the first of March. They may have my apartment ready before then." Of course I was glad for her, but it was a shock, especially when she added, "Beck, when do you think you can move your things?"

A picture of my basement rose before me, "When would you like to have me move them?"

"I'd like to begin clearing out as soon as possible."

"I have some things I must do first, Mother, but I will hurry," I said, trying not to show my anxiety.

Right now nothing must spoil my gala day or my candid enjoyment of the delicious food. After dinner, with Mother playing for us on the old Stieff upright which would soon be mine and my burden to house, we all joined in singing favorite carols before receiving our presents.

What a happy day it was, like Christmases when Father had been present with all of us. And now our last one together in our old home. Memories mingled with apprehension at the speedy move I must make.

Late that afternoon when I returned to my still, cold house, the problems I had put aside while I was with my family hit me harder than ever. After I turned up the thermostat, I found some comfort in the warmth and in arranging my Christmas gifts around the room. I appreciated each remembrance, but Mother's check for ten dollars meant the most. In my mind I had spent it a dozen times. None of my family knew how badly I needed money. If I let them know it wouldn't be a venture in faith. My retreat would soon be opening, Mother's move would spur me on. In the meantime I had one hundred and eighty dollars in quarterly dividends, Mr. Bates' thirty-five dollars monthly rent and fifty dollars in savings.

Now was no time to worry about finances. At once I began tugging to the basement everything I could from Lee's room in order to get an early start devarnishing the old furniture the next day. Doing that suite over would be my hardest task, but it would make room for the things I had to bring from Mother's. After I had gone to bed, I heard Mr. Bates come in. That meant he would be on hand to help me get the heavier pieces down to the basement tomorrow.

I never doubted that the old man with his washed blue eyes and thinning hair, who had seemed to blow in with the December storm, was God-sent. He helped me in so many ways when he was not off on other jobs. Items left undone by the Redeget brothers, he completed in exchange for his rent, and many smaller tasks he performed without recompense as if he really were an angel in disguise.



When we chatted by my fireside over a cup of tea, I learned a good deal about him. In his boyhood, as son of a tenant farmer who moved so frequently that the family never had time to take root anywhere, he began teaching others less fortunate than himself and spreading by example as well as by dogma the spirit of the "Golden Rule." I sincerely hoped that the congregation which had called him here would continue to need his services, but in January they employed a younger man permanently and Mr. Bates made plans to move on to Baltimore. When he chugged off in his dilapidated old Chevy, I had a sense of loss of more than his rent, serious as that was to me.

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Working on the old suite of furniture, I could hardly let the bones of my ancestors rest in peace—they had covered it with so many layers of heavy brown varnish. Cleaning the plain sections down to the walnut wood was bad enough, but that intricate carving! Gouging with a varsol-soaked rag wrapped around a screwdriver, ice pick or any other tool I could lay my hands on, I went over and over the designs on the bed, the mirror frame and the handles of all the drawers until they were clean enough to be redone.

Even if it were a sacrilege to cover the beautiful wood, I had already decided on a light gray finish. It would be similar to that used on a suite of furniture Mother had redone for three hundred dollars. I began with fifteen dollars worth of gray paint specially blended to go with the salmon-pink dogwood sprays on the wallpaper. This part of the work seemed like play, but three coats would be needed and time was running out. Therefore, I gladly accepted the offer of young James Humbert to come out and give me a hand. He was a new acquaintance made at church in Washington one Sunday.

The next morning was rainy and dismal and a glass jar of paint had just crashed and splattered around my feet when I heard my buzzer. Leaving my shoes in the paint, as quickly as possible I got to the door where my church volunteer, holding a suitcase, stood under his dripping umbrella. Although I was surprised at his coming to stay, I told him to take his things to a room upstairs. It was the one Mr. Bates had occupied and I hoped this boy would be as helpful as the old man had been.

When he came down a few minutes later, he helped me clean up

the paint on the basement floor. For his reward, I let him begin painting the bed as he requested, while I finished the chair on which I was working.

Suddenly catching a glimpse of the way James was smearing the headboard, I gasped, "James! What are you doing? You should put the paint on with smooth, even strokes."

"How come?" he shrugged, "This is just the first coat."

"And the last," I wanted to snap, but instead, I suggested that he take a cigarette break.

When he came back down, I gave him a job devarnishing in which, without harm, he could work off all his freak designs. I soon noticed, however, that his absences increased in frequency and length.

When I stopped for lunch, James was stretched out on the chaise longue having a nap from which he wakened refreshed for his midday meal. After an unproductive afternoon he was at his best again at dinner.

Things couldn't go on like this. The boy must be able to do something. At the risk of burning the house down, I brought out a pale gray pottery vase and asked him if he could electrify it as a table lamp.

"I think so," I was glad to hear him say.

For less than nine dollar I had laid in enough wire, plugs, holders, shades and bulbs for six such pieces. An electric supply store in Washington had quoted me ten dollars per lamp for the same service.

While James tinkered with the wiring, I stuffed small cloth bags with sand to weight the bases. Each time James tested one, I held my breath. Finally, all six were finished without even blowing a fuse. Surely this boy had earned a lasting welcome, but I had no more electrical work for him to do.

James spent most of the next morning on the chaise longue. The third time I called him, he said, "I'm having to rest my back."

"Your back?"

"Yes, I seem to have strained it."

"How?"

"Lifting. I'm not supposed to do any heavy work."

I had seen him lift nothing heavier than a wooden chair, or possibly his overloaded fork, yet I felt uneasy. I wondered if he could be trying to trump up a claim of some kind against me. After all



I knew nothing about him. This might be an old game of his. Certainly he had ceased to be any help to me and the quicker I could get rid of him the better.

In response to my SOS, Josephine Collier, a friend in my Thursday class, came out that evening. At dinner James's appetite remained unimpaired.

Afterwards when we were sitting around the fire, I casually remarked, "Josephine, I think I'll accept your invitation and come into town for a few days."

I wasn't prepared for James's rejoinder, "Fine, Miss Dial, I'll be glad to look after things while you are gone."

Josephine came to my rescue by saying, "You remember that Christine wants you for a visit, too."

Letting it appear that my absence might be prolonged, I then explained that there was enough food in the house for breakfast and lunch, after which James would have to supply his own provisions. It took no other persuasion to make him join us when we went into town the following morning. We parted on good terms, James the recipient of all my spare change.

Thankful for Josephine's help in this dilemma, I decided to accept no more volunteers without proper credentials. I have also taken the precaution of having workmen's compensation for any injuries a workman might incur on duty around my premises.

At last I finished all the painting. Besides the old suite of furniture, I did three dressing tables, a desk and the knotty pine partition in the basement with shellac, and a number of tables and chairs with various finishes. After the paper carpeting was removed, I had the floors rewaxed and polished and the upstairs sanded and finished.

When my furniture was delivered I knew where I wanted each piece placed. My Sheraton chest of drawers more than fulfilled my expectations in the living room. The love seat was perfect in the space opposite the fireplace, but it didn't remain there long. After almost taking the house apart to force the old Stieff piano down the basement stairs, we had to let it occupy the place intended for the love seat.

Disappointment about the piano wasn't my only problem. In my basement the conglomeration of furniture in various stages of dilapidation, trunks, rugs, mirrors, pictures and draperies, topped by two

billowing feather mattresses, looked as if it might have been heaved up by an earthquake. My job was to get some order out of the chaos—and quickly.

I had such a list of things to do that I didn't know where to begin. And without money, too! Payment for the furniture delivery had left me with less than ten dollars. Since I was receiving no rent and it would be about a month before my next dividend, I began to live in dread of some of my utilities being cut off. I must find a way to make some money quickly—other than by robbing a bank.

The accumulation in my basement looked ideal for starting a rummage sale, but most of the things there I needed. Besides, I had always claimed I had no gift for salesmanship. Now, however, I surprised myself by selling to an antique dealer nearby a well-worn wall-to-wall carpet, a trunk that, judging from its size and weight, might have held treasure for Captain Cook, and a spinning wheel that would no longer spin. Reluctantly, I parted with a light gray alpaca dress of my mother's, now out of vogue, but a beautiful costume of its period.

The thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents I got for these things took care of my pressing bills as well as helping to restock my pantry. At least I had manna for present needs.