

## COMPOSING A USEFUL LIFE: THE DIARY (1844-1902) OF HARRIETTE SMITH KIDDER (1816-1915)

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“How short is human life? How important that it be well spent, O that the rest of my days be filled up with usefulness.”<sup>1</sup>

*Harriette S. Kidder on her 29th birthday, June 20, 1845*

A personal diary can offer a map to another era and a set of clues to its author’s outward and inward life. The lengthy diary of Harriette Smith Kidder (1816-1915) charts the maturation and nineteenth-century landscape of an earnest and influential, yet now little known, American Methodist woman. Harriette Smith Kidder, the second wife of Daniel Parish Kidder (1815-1891), a major figure in the Methodist Episcopal Church, began her diary in 1844 at age 27. By that time she had declined an early marriage proposal, graduated from Amenia Seminary in New York, taught in three states, and served as principal of the Worthington Seminary in Ohio. When she married in 1842, motherhood came instantly as she assumed primary care for Daniel Kidder’s two young children by his first wife Cynthia Russell, who had died in Brazil during his time as a missionary, 1837-1840. The birth of Harriette and Daniel’s three children soon followed. In the early years of her marriage, she used her diary to describe how her religious conversion, education and vocational choice shaped her prior to her marriage. She also chronicled her daily domestic chores as Mrs. Kidder, managing the complexities of her multi-generational household, as well as providing hospitality to scores of guests including Phoebe Palmer, Bishop Matthew Simpson, and Frances Willard. She expressed her joys and sorrows as a mother and described the various roles she filled as a nineteenth century minister’s wife, which included D. P. Kidder’s long career leading the early Methodist Sunday School Board and Publications and teaching at Garrett Biblical Institute and Drew Seminary.

Harriette Smith Kidder’s diary offers rare primary source material passed down through several generations,<sup>2</sup> providing glimpses into how she, as the wife of a Methodist leader, understood her many roles and their accompany-

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<sup>1</sup> Harriette Smith Kidder, *Diary*, Daniel P. Kidder papers, MC 583, Vol. 5, in the Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries.

<sup>2</sup> The Kidder papers and diaries were donated to the Rutgers University Libraries by the Kidder’s great-grandson, Stanley Kidder Wilson.

ing domestic expectations.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, coming from a well-educated and reflective individual, her entries give voice to her persona not only as a married woman, but also as a single woman before marriage and as a widow for 24 years prior to her own death in Ocean Grove, New Jersey. Finally, Harriette Smith Kidder's 500-plus pages shed light on the form and substance of the nineteenth-century religious woman's diary, as well as the range of subjects addressed, subtly implied, or deliberately left out.

### The Independent Woman

"I now began to awake to a sense that I was constituted with capabilities equal to others and that by putting forth my energies with the blessing of God might attain to the same degree of literary eminence, I might be fitted for an equally honorable and useful sphere. This was an important era in my life."

January 28, 1844<sup>4</sup>

The anniversary of the death of Harriette's mother (January 28, 1828), when Harriette was eleven, triggered the reflection above. This twenty-four page entry early in the diary is Harriette's deliberate way to describe the formative influences on her life.

At age 15, Harriette began to embark upon a change in lifestyle, declining invitations to balls and card-playing, reading the Bible and praying, and amusing her sisters with her "Methodistical" notions.<sup>5</sup> June 13, 1831, when she joined the Methodist Episcopal Church in Winsted, Connecticut, marked the date of her conversion.<sup>6</sup> Upon the sudden death of her father in 1832, and her brother's decision to sell the family home despite the daughters' legal right to live there until marriage,<sup>7</sup> she and her siblings were scattered among various relatives. She described with pride her decision to turn down a marriage proposal, noting "a home where I was dependent was not home."<sup>8</sup> In 1835, she decided instead to spend the \$200 legacy from her father on tuition to attend the newly-formed Amenia Seminary in Amenia, New York,<sup>9</sup> where she was the first woman enrolled.<sup>10</sup> This decision set the course for the rest of her life. It broadened her mind, bolstered her confidence, led to life-long

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<sup>3</sup> Harriette Smith Kidder, Diary, Daniel P. Kidder papers, MC 583, Vol. 5, 18, in the Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries. Woman's sphere is distinguished from man's sphere, essentially the private from the public, and attended to home, family, religion, and personal morality, as discussed by Nancy Hardesty, *Women called to Witness: Evangelical Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Knoxville: U Tennessee P, 1999), 23-24. Hardesty refers to the oft-cited work of Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Women's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1978), describing how the separate spheres (especially for white, middle-class Protestants) emerged historically.

<sup>4</sup> The section of the diary is paginated separately as it falls within the January 28, 1844, entry. Many of the pages in the diary are numbered.

<sup>5</sup> Kidder, Diary, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Kidder, Diary, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Kidder, Diary, 12.

<sup>8</sup> Kidder, Diary, 18.

<sup>9</sup> Kidder, Diary, 19.

<sup>10</sup> James D. Bills, "Harriet Smith Kidder," *Minutes of the Eightieth Session of New Jersey Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, (March 15-20, 1916), 179.

friendships and eventual marriage, and trained her to be a highly successful educator.

Twentieth-century feminist historians have struggled in their efforts to interpret the lives of nineteenth-century evangelical women who came of age in the midst of the Second Great Awakening. They write of separate spheres for men and women and note the moral and domestic strictures “true womanhood” demanded.<sup>11</sup> Less understood, however, is the sense of empowerment that religious experience provided in the Wesley Arminian tradition, often leading women to avail themselves of the expanding educational opportunities and to seize the reins of many of the major reform movements of the nineteenth century. Harriette Kidder’s diary ably illustrates this “evangelical feminism.”<sup>12</sup>

In an early entry Harriette described her own emboldening experience of “exhorting” at a seminary prayer meeting just weeks into the school year:

During the course of the meeting my mind became impressed that I had a duty to perform on that occasion. I felt that now I was called upon to bear the cross for my Savior. . . . *No female had yet taken any part in the meeting.*

I did not know but it would be considered out of place for one to do so. . . . But to me duty was plain. . . . I was on my feet. The dreaded cross became my support. The fear of man was gone.<sup>13</sup>

While she did leave her career as an educator to marry at age 26, she utilized her role and talents to assume leadership in several reform movements. These reform movements served as training grounds for women, outlets for their concern and outrage at the deep-seated social problems of their century, even offering arenas for confrontation between men and women over the issues of the day.<sup>14</sup> Three organizational efforts stand out.

The first involved the founding of the Orphan’s Asylum in Newark, New Jersey, in 1848. She served as Secretary of the Orphan Asylum Committee and a member of the subcommittee on the constitution. She described making speeches in support of the subcommittee’s report (January 14, 1848), just weeks away from giving birth to Daniel Selvey. She spoke in opposition to several lawyers, including Frederick Frelinghuysen, who later served as Secretary of State under President Chester A. Arthur. Although silent on the specific issues, her position won the day.

A second effort, undertaken while the Kidders lived in Evanston, Illinois,

<sup>11</sup> See Cott above. Jean Miller Schmidt’s *Grace Sufficient: A History of Women in American Methodism 1760-1939* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 79-80, puts these theories into a Methodist context.

<sup>12</sup> Nancy Hardesty, *Women called to Witness: Evangelical Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Knoxville: U Tennessee P, 1999), x-xii. See also Joanna Bowen Gillespie, writing about *The Ladies Repository* in Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt, eds., *Perspectives on American Methodism: Interpretive Essays* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1993) who argues that its readers in the 1840s and 1850s “emboldened by a religiously-engendered individualism” were forging an “autonomous self and voice” (255).

<sup>13</sup> Kidder, *Diary*, 19-20. This paragraph comes from the same reflective piece referred to earlier, written in January, 1844.

<sup>14</sup> Hardesty, 94-95.

involved Harriette's founding of the Mothers' Association. Widespread in the nineteenth century, maternal associations offered women opportunities for mutual aid in the tasks of child-rearing. Her last speech before this group (1871), copied into her diary, elevated the discussion beyond contemporaneous social conventions of women's "proper sphere," to an appeal to the divine mission of motherhood:<sup>15</sup>

Whatever theories are agitated at the present day about the *sphere* of women, we as mothers find in our hearts an instinctive response to the claims which our children make upon us, not only when helpless infants, but during the successive years of their physical and mental development. And whatever other duties may devolve upon us *here* is certainly our mission, and a weight of obligation for which we need the greatest wisdom & the constant help of God. How appropriate then, that we seek to aid each other by mutual conference & cooperation and by united prayer.<sup>16</sup>

Harriette's third opportunity came by 1885, after D. P. Kidder had left Drew Seminary and become Secretary of the Board of Education for the Methodist Episcopal Church, when she served as president of the New York Indian Association, part of a larger national movement founded by Christian reform-minded women in the late nineteenth century. A newspaper article inserted into the back of her diary (source and date unknown, possibly *Christian Advocate*) states:

The report of the New York Indian Association for 1885 shows an encouraging progress in its specific work. A stronger and more wide spread sentiment and greater enthusiasm . . . for the securing by legislation the rights of the Indians and. . . the increasing demand among the people that the government deal righteously with these wards of the nation evinces a determination to secure for the Indians the justice which has been so long withheld.

This society is now an acknowledged power, a quiet but persistent influence emanates from its deliberations and from the printed leaflets scattered abroad . . . . *The choice of Mrs. D. P. Kidder as president of the Association has proven an excellent one. Thoroughly well informed, fertile in plans for effective work, dignified and affable, she commands the respect and confidence of all.*

These organizational efforts, much like the temperance work that both Kidders supported, were within the social and religious priorities of the Methodist Episcopal Church. While these efforts suggest an affinity with evangelical feminism, her diary never expressed her opinion on suffrage. It did, however, closely align her personally with Frances Willard, the head of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and a close friend of the Kidder family, particularly during the Evanston years.

One cause dear to her heart, however, reflected her commitment to female development. During her 1852 trip to England with her husband and daughter Katy, she visited an all-female class meeting led effectively by a woman. Clearly impressed, it prompted a lengthy entry on November 25, 1852,<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Victoria G. Harrison, "Little Matters and a Great Mission: The Life and Diary of Harriette Smith Kidder," *The Journal of The Rutgers University Libraries* 46 (1984): 63. This is the only scholarly article to date written about Harriette Smith Kidder's diary.

<sup>16</sup> Kidder, Diary, 426-427.

<sup>17</sup> Kidder, Diary, 256-257.

(as well as an article on class meetings in the *Christian Advocate* (date unknown). In the article she bemoaned the then-present system of combining ages and sexes, resulting in “too large classes, a scarcity of competent leaders, too great formality in the exercises, and a lack of personal interest in attendees.” She went on to note, “in our rapidly-increasing Churches, the demand for leaders is such, that men of comparatively little religious experience and little spirituality are appointed to this responsible office.” Describing the reluctance of many women fully to participate in the male-led classes, she suggested another plan, whereby “a capable, pious ‘mother in Israel’ is placed over her sisters in Christ.” She will “better understand . . . the peculiarities of her sex, their trials, temptations, and necessities.”

When Harriette’s plan came to fruition in 1854, and she was appointed a class leader for females, she wrote in her journal (May 3, 1854) of her inner conflict: “On receiving this information my heart sank within me, as if oppressed with a burden too great to be borne.” But then she added, “I dare not refuse the position as I think the good of the church requires females to be employed in this capacity.”<sup>18</sup> Once again, Harriette had garnered the courage to speak out on an issue of great importance to her, and her diary makes clear her struggle to be useful to her sex and her Church.

### The Minister’s Wife

“The repairing with our friend to the church Miss Harriette Smith who had just resigned the Principalship of the Seminary; and myself in Holy Matrimony. . . .”

*Daniel Parish Kidder, journal entry, April 6, 1842*<sup>19</sup>

The entire courtship and marriage of Harriette Smith and Daniel Parish Kidder occurred over the course of one early April weekend in 1842, in Worthington, Ohio, where she was serving as principal of the Worthington Female Seminary. From their diaries and the sole biography published on the life of Daniel Parish Kidder,<sup>20</sup> it is likely they had not seen each other for at least five years prior to that weekend—a brief engagement indeed! Much had happened in those five years. Kidder’s first wife, Cynthia Russell, had died in Brazil in April, 1840, leaving him with Rowena, age two, and an infant, Henry Martyn, who were subsequently cared for by Cynthia’s parents in Salisbury, Connecticut, for the two years prior to Daniel’s marriage to Harriette. Meanwhile as of June, 1841, Daniel Kidder had been appointed pastor of the Methodist church in Paterson, New Jersey.<sup>21</sup>

How did Kidder know of Harriette, and why did she consent to such a sudden relationship? The first question is easy. She was the close friend of Marcella Russell McMurdy, Cynthia’s older sister, and all three young women had been classmates at Amenia Seminary in the mid-1830s, where they

<sup>18</sup> Harrison, 65, also describes these entries on the leadership of class meetings.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel P. Kidder, *Diary*, Daniel P. Kidder papers, MC 583, Vol. 3, in the Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries.

<sup>20</sup> G. E. Strobbridge, *Biography of the Rev. Daniel Parish Kidder* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1894).

<sup>21</sup> Strobbridge, 135.

got to know Kidder as a teacher and minister. In an early entry she described meeting Marcella at Amenia, a lady of “independent womanly bearing and free conversational ability in such a contrast with my timid, shrinking nature.”<sup>22</sup> Marcella had accompanied the Kidders to Brazil, subsequently marrying another missionary and returning home (May, 1839) prior to Cynthia’s death. She appears to have been the connecting force.

Nevertheless, why would a highly accomplished teacher and principal marry so abruptly? Her motivations for marriage, notwithstanding her own personal affections (and her diary contains no reference to that early April, 1842 weekend) were likely traditional. She wrote light-heartedly on April 6, 1840, to her sister Elizabeth while she was teaching in Maryland, “I am blessed with good health constantly and am as free and healthy as a lark . . . I shall, however, be an old maid pretty soon.”<sup>23</sup> As Leonard Sweet has written, the primary vocational fantasies for Evangelical women of the nineteenth century were being the wife of a minister or missionary, for both allowed them a keen sense of usefulness, both in winning souls and being publicly assertive.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps that was reason enough, despite the challenges she would face.

Leonard Sweet has offered four models for roles of Methodist ministers’ wives in the nineteenth century: the Companion, the Sacrificer, the Assistant, and the Partner.<sup>25</sup> Of these, the Companion seems to describe Harriette best: D. P. Kidder was never a traditional itinerant preacher; as his wife, Harriette never had to make the great personal sacrifices historically associated with that role; and Harriette had five children to raise. Harriette was comfortable with and articulate about the scope of her duties. Her diary began in January, 1844, during the time her husband was appointed to serve in Trenton, New Jersey. She reports on January 19, 1844, “there have been 10 or 12 funerals a week, (cholera epidemic?) A number have been persons who professed no interest in the Savior and left no evidence that they died otherwise than they lived in rebellion against their Maker.” Her reading included Phoebe Palmer’s *Guide to Christ Perfection*, finding it a “work of inestimable value,” and *The Way of Holiness*, which she had received as a gift from Palmer (February 5, 1844). She entertained many visitors but delighted in a visit from “dear old father Hibbard, one of the oldest Methodist preachers in New England . . . I enjoy seeing him again exceedingly” (February 5, 1844). Sometimes so much company was onerous. “We have had company every day and at almost every meal . . . We have had at least 25 meals eaten in our house this week by strangers” (October 18, 1845). But they were honored with distinguished guests, e.g., a visit on January 31, 1846, from “Mr. Aguiar, the Brazilian con-

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<sup>22</sup> Harriette Smith Kidder, *Diary*, 416.

<sup>23</sup> Harriette Smith Kidder, *Diary*, 406-407.

<sup>24</sup> Leonard Sweet, *The Minister’s Wife: Her Role in Nineteenth-Century American Evangelicalism* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1983), 91.

<sup>25</sup> Sweet argues through the examples of famous clergy/wives four dominant patterns: the Companion, exemplified by Sarah Edwards (20); the Sacrificer, by Peggy Dow (44); the Assistant, by Lydia Finney (76); and the Partner, Elizabeth Finney, (184).

sul and his lady,” and frequently hosted numerous church leaders, including bishops, ministers, missionaries, and temperance leaders.

Her diary reflected her fascination with the moral issues of the day. On March 20, 1846, she wrote, “the capture of the Slave Ship ‘Pons’ and . . . the condition of the miserable creatures who were the victims of that foul traffic, is exciting a very general interest in the community at the present time.” And on December 15, 1846, “I went to N. York to attend the first public Meeting of the (international) Evangelical Alliance held in this country. The Greene Street Methodist church was filled to overflowing with an intelligent audience . . .” These events clearly energized her mind and spirit.

On June 4, 1844, she wrote in great detail of her travels to New York to be present at General Conference where her husband was nominated and “elected by a very large vote to fill the office of Editor of the Sunday School Publications and Tracts,” a new office created for the development and improvement of Sunday School literature.<sup>26</sup> While this new assignment tapped his strong educational background, it seems likely Harriette was a useful sounding board and advisor. Indeed during one of his many trips out west visiting Sunday Schools, Harriette reported, “In consequence of his absence, my cares and duties are greatly increased. I find it necessary to spend two days a week in N.Y attending to his office matters, besides considerable time that I devote to them at home” (August 11, 1846). Unfortunately, she failed to provide details about which aspects of his job she performed.

On the Kidders’ fifth wedding anniversary (April 6, 1847) she was pleased by reports on how “we are peculiarly fitted for each other that our tastes, views, feelings and aims remarkably coincide.” And upon their leaving the Trenton pastorate (actually their last) she writes on July 4, 1844,

I have learned many very important lessons—such as I hope will prove a lasting benefit to me as a pastor’s wife. And I love more and more the duties of my station . . . . Indeed I doubt whether there is any situation in life, more conducive to happiness than that which we as a Methodist preacher’s family are permitted to enjoy.

### Mother and Stepmother

“I fear I have made but little advancement this week in the way of holiness . . . . Have had my failings pointed out to me this week—felt deeply humbled on account of them and am striving with all diligence with watchfulness & prayer to correct every thing in me that may offend.”

*October 12, 1844*

Historian Barbara Welter, writing on the cult of true womanhood (1820-1860), argued that the cardinal virtues by which nineteenth-century women judged themselves and were judged by their husbands and society were piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity.<sup>27</sup> If Harriette felt threatened by

<sup>26</sup> Strobridge, 159. Daniel Kidder served in this position from 1844-1856. It was a high profile position requiring a great deal of travel.

<sup>27</sup> Barbara Welter, *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 1976), 21. Welter examined a wide range of period women’s magazines and religious literature for women.

any of these standards, it was most likely in her role as mother/stepmother. From all evidence, Daniel Kidder delegated both the physical and moral upbringing of the children to his second wife.<sup>28</sup> The early years were especially difficult. Because expectations were high, criticism stung all the harder, fueling insecurity, yet also her resolve to be better. She wrote on February 3, 1844, when her first child Katy was just a toddler, “I have been exceedingly tried by the little inconveniences and vexations which are frequently occurring in a family . . . . I have realized the importance of obedience to the command—watch and pray lest you enter into temptation.” And on April 1, 1849, she wrote “my mind is much disturbed by family cares . . . . I think I have never been so much tempted to impatience and complaining in my whole life as I have during the past six months.” She rarely stated the exact nature of her cares, but attempts to bring them under control with her faith and piety,<sup>29</sup> and more than once she noted being “enlightened” (by her husband, her in laws, her own conscience?) about how she “may endeavour to render (her)self useful” (January 28, 1845).

We also learn about the domestic realities of the relatively affluent Kidder household. “The morning I parted with the servant girl who has lived with us for the last four months without knowing who to get to supply her place” (March 18, 1844), and “I have had a seamstress for the last 2 weeks, who had succeeded in getting made all the articles of clothing most needed . . . . for winter” (December 12, 1846). On March 5, 1848, she announced the birth of Daniel Selvey, (“a strong healthy boy weighing 8 3/4 lbs”). Harriette’s own children, especially Katy, are mentioned far more often than her stepchildren, yet the Russells visited with some frequency, evidently to help with their grandchildren. Disease was common. Katy had a bout with whooping cough in 1844, and Harriette wrote in an anxious voice on July 31, 1849, “I kept about and was the main dependence all the week, though I suffered much & am still suffering such excessive exertions,” when all her family, servant and house guests suffered from cholera.<sup>30</sup> In taking stock of herself on January 1, 1847, she wrote, “I fear I am too much like (biblical) Martha, careful & troubled about little things. I am not sufficiently self-denying. I need a deeper work of grace in my heart.”

Yet motherhood provided moments of parental pride. “Today Katy hemmed 2 sides of a pocket handkerchief.” (November 2, 1846—Katy was 3!) And she was most gratified when the children “gave their hearts to the Lord.” “I think I feel more deeply than heretofore, my responsibility as a parent—the importance of training up my children for the Lord,” she wrote on March 5, 1848. Hence there was great rejoicing when Katy and Rowena joined the church on probation (February 4, 1855) and upon learning of Henry’s “having given his heart to God”. . . . while a student in an Illinois

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<sup>28</sup> Harrison, “Little Matters and a Great Mission: The Life and Diary of Harriette Smith Kidder,” *The Journal of The Rutgers University Libraries* 46 (December, 1984): 62.

<sup>29</sup> Harrison, 61.

<sup>30</sup> Harrison, 60.



Seminary, despite his “natural wayward tendencies.” Daniel and Harriette’s third child, Eva, was born on October 13, 1855, and later baptized by their friend Bishop Simpson on the Sunday evening of the New Jersey Conference (the Kidders having entertained Bishop Simpson, the wife of Bishop Janes, and many other delegates, as reported June 30, 1856).<sup>31</sup>

There is evidence she felt constrained by motherhood, especially in the early years. She adored travel and had the means to travel often, noting on June 4, 1846, a trip to Vermont with only Katy. Katy was “like a little bird let loose from a cage. She sings & talks & plays all day long.” And in 1852-1853 she and Katy travelled with Daniel to Europe in search of authors and books for the growing Sunday School publications. Her diary contains long descriptive letters she wrote to her mother-in-law about London and Paris, including her reactions to British Wesleyan preaching, the overt militarism, and her emotional preference for American republican democracy after witnessing the House of Lords.

The Kidders lived in Evanston, Illinois, from 1856 until 1871. Although it was a quieter life with fewer visits from extended family and Methodist dignitaries, she devoted far less time to her diary. Yet an entry on New Year’s Eve, 1857, may encapsulate the philosophical way she had come to see motherhood over the course of fifteen years of marriage.

This last evening finds me where I usually am found in the evening since I came to this place, in my chamber, with Dannie sitting by my side at the table and little Eva sleeping on the bed. How many years I have had such a pressure of cares & duties demanding my attention that I have been able to give much too little time to my children. I value greatly, therefore, the opportunity I now have for instructing and training them.

### **One Nineteenth-Century Woman’s Diary**

Harriette Kidder’s diary charts her personal journey. From the timid teenager exhorting at the seminary prayer meeting to the mature woman advocating successfully for female class leaders, and from the insecure and overwhelmed young mother to the founder and president of the Evanston Mother’s Association, Harriette grew through her struggles. To peruse this very-worn single yet eclectic volume of Harriette’s writing is to sense how she might have assembled the chapters of her autobiography. She wrote earnestly to explain who she was and how she was meeting the challenges she faced. There are lengthy gaps between entries, particularly after 1861, and the later pages consist mainly of recopied letters, speeches, letters to the editor, articles about her husband’s and her own accomplishments, obituaries, a ribboned ringlet of hair, and even a photograph of her senior self by her mother’s grave. It became a scrapbook toward the end, a personal file of what mattered most. Yet her consistently legible penmanship, complete sen-

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<sup>31</sup> Bishop Simpson was a good friend of the Kidders. Daniel Kidder’s diary mentions being on the podium in Springfield, Ill, at the cemetery when Bishop Simpson preached Abraham Lincoln’s funeral address (May 2, 1865 entry).

tences, and coherent paragraphs suggest that she expected others, especially her children, to read her thoughts and understand who she was.

Much goes unsaid. She rarely if ever named those that hurt or anger her. She expresses appreciation for her husband on their anniversaries, but offers few details about their relationship, or even their conversations about their work or children. She is generally circumspect about the children's problems, particularly as they grew older, and she never states that she's pregnant, but refers instead to her "peculiar circumstances" (December, 1847).<sup>32</sup> Largely silent on the world and national events of the day, she grieved the losses suffered by her Illinois friends in the Great Chicago Fire. In contrast to this reticence, however, is the multi-page entry was devoted to Harriette's discomfort and treatment from gall stones! Possibly it was included to alert her children to family medical history.

Harriette mentioned many notable figures, not surprisingly, given the Kidders' social prominence in nineteenth-century Methodist history. She includes letters to and from Frances Willard. Of particular note is a drafted response to Willard's request for help in approaching Bishop Foster and Mr. Drew for donations for a new dormitory for the Evanston College for Ladies, of which Willard was president.<sup>33</sup> In fact, a brief news article about the Kidders by Willard pasted in the diary credits Mrs. Kidder as the first to propose Willard as president of the Woman's College. She describes an 1849 visit to the White House for tea, wryly comparing the feathers in Mrs. Polk's attire to the dress of the Native Americans also present, her subtle commentary on two cultures.<sup>34</sup>

In her later years, Harriette Smith Kidder was sought out as a family and community historian, and at least two published articles featured her memories of country life in the northwest corner of Connecticut.<sup>35</sup> A late testament to her energy for writing was her composition of a 130-stanza poem for her 95th birthday celebration in Ocean Grove, New Jersey, described in the *New York Times* on June 21, 1911. The onset of blindness had motivated her to learn to type at age 90, and the poem (lost to history) described the many world events and terms of Presidents of the United States she had lived through. One can only hope this lengthy poem, as well as the many friends and family members present, paid tribute to her not only long, but exceptionally useful life.

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<sup>32</sup> Harriette Smith Kidder, *Diary*, 133.

<sup>33</sup> See Lacey C. Warner, *Saving Women: Retrieving Evangelistic Theology and Practice* (Waco, TX: Baylor UP, 2007), 159-160 for a discussion of Willard's experience with the Evanston College for Women.

<sup>34</sup> Harriette Smith Kidder, *Diary*, 163.

<sup>35</sup> "Sketches written from memory in 1892," in "Reminiscences of Winchester," edited by William J. Chute, *Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin* 29 (January, 1964) 1:9-16, and "Christmas and Country Life a Hundred Years Ago," *Country Life in America* 27: 66-68.