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UA37/44 Diary to Kelly

Gordon Wilson

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December 12, 1967

(After Supper or dinner)

Annually the Alpha Gamma Rho boys have Mom and me out for dinner at their house next door. Tonight was the time for this year. And a very good time we had, as always. The boys seem to have adopted us quite as much as we have adopted them. And their leadership is still good, with some excellent boys in charge. As I have often told them, they or any other group will always be judged by their leadership and will rarely rise any higher than their leaders. Three dozen boys in one big house is a big problem in the first place. But they seem to get along quite well together, thanks to their leadership and their wonderful house mother, Mrs. Anna Jones. It must be a good education just to see as well-balanced middle-aged woman as she is, day by day. And lots of the boys have told me that they feel unusually fortunate in having such a house mother.

Some of us boys and girls of older times had some older people to take care of us, but some did not, and that brought tragedies to many lives. There was not enough actual contact between student and teacher as there ought to have been; and often some of the older people of Bowling Green did not try to disguise their contempt for the country fellows who came into Bowling Green in hordes to get educated. An occasional boarding-house keeper, like Mrs. Bass, the mother-in-law of W. L. Hall, seemed to regard her boarders or roomers as actual people. I enjoyed telling Mrs. Bass, in her ninetieth year, how much I appreciated the home-like atmosphere that she gave to old Cherry Hall, away back in 1908-1911. Her old face lit up with smiles, and she told some of the people who were sitting by about the skinny little fellow I used to be and how much she enjoyed having him around. I hope that she really meant me, for a friendly person has always been to me about the best thing made.
That old memory of Cherry Hall the First certainly seems strange by the side of another memory of staying in a house for two years when I never entered the front door and never sat on the porch, no matter how hot the weather. That may sound like a long-ago grip, but democracy was often talked about without its being practiced much by some of the older generation.

A boy away from home needs, even more than a girl, some older woman to mother him or to act as big sister. Sometimes such a person can do more to make a man of him than a dozen strong men. It is such a short jump in time but such a chasm in reality when a boy goes away from home and has to face a world where Mother and Big Sister are not fairly close by. Without in any way trying to shape my life, my Big Sister got a letter from me every week of the years from Christmas, 1906, until I was married, in September, 1913. I cannot recall that she ever offered any free advice, and I cannot recall that I ever asked for any. But I knew that in her I had a sympathetic listener, one who would read my most trivial letters and probably quote the most ordinary items to the old neighbors, who undoubtedly were slightly afraid that I might be doing something wrong by going to school so many years. "Ain't you learned it all yet?" an elderly neighbor asked me. All honor to the Big Sisters and the House Mothers for their influence on big boys who were just little boys so short a time ago!