

Beyond the Cabbage Patch

The Literary World of Alice Hegan Rice

MARY BOEWE

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Louisville

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LOVEY MARY

1902

“Such IS Fame!”—Alice Hegan wrote at the top of page 12 in her new scrapbook, a 1901 Christmas present from Will Goddard, identified on the inside front cover as “my ‘other brother.’”¹ This was a timely gift, for reviews and printed references to *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* were in abundance, thanks to a clipping service. Just one of the twenty-four different versions of the patented Mark Twain Scrap Book, this particular three-column book was No. 15: 150 numbered pages; full cloth cover, stamped in black and gold; cover measuring ten by twelve inches.

In Alice’s bulging scrapbook, the first page has two envelopes pasted on it: the top one holds the two Century letters acknowledging receipt of the *Wiggs* manuscript; the bottom one encloses Frank Scott’s acceptance of the book. Immediately following are ten pages of *Wiggs* reviews; each item gives the source but not the date. The geographical range of these ninety items is impressive: New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Minneapolis, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Detroit, Toronto, and Providence are among the cities represented. An item from Milwaukee’s *Living Church* is balanced by one from the *Wall Street Journal*; a long passage from a Birmingham, Alabama, column is pasted above an item from *Harper’s Weekly*. On pages 12 and 13, eleven clippings are grouped together—each with Alice Hegan’s

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picture, a sketch made from a single photograph; the effect is that of an Andy Warhol silkscreen.

On New Year's Day, Will Goddard died tragically. The young man, only twenty-eight, had been hunting in south-central Kentucky; on the eve of his return to Louisville he accidentally shot himself while packing for the trip home. Newspaper headlines were terse; "Believed Gun Caught in the Bed Clothing" and "Shot Tore Through Heart," the subheads explained. On January third, Will Goddard was buried in Louisville's Cave Hill Cemetery.

At home, Sam Hegan was suffering from the headaches that had plagued him for two years. Even so, the man Alice described as her "good-looking, high-spirited father, whom I never called anything but 'Dear Boy,'"² preferred being surrounded by a profusion of young folks and family, and a confusion of laughter and talk. Shortly after ten on the morning of January 19 Sam Hegan left the house and went north to the business district. A few minutes after noon, while walking on East Market Street, he staggered and fell to the pavement. Death was instantaneous. A news item included a picture of Samuel W. Hegan—"victim of apoplexy"³—which emphasized his deep-set eyes, prominent nose, and a bushy walrus mustache. Two days later, grieving family members rode in carriages that followed the horse-drawn hearse to Cave Hill Cemetery. There, Dear Boy, only fifty-eight, was buried near his parents in the Hegan family plot.

Irons in the Fire

After the death of Samuel Hegan, the Hegan Manufacturing Company was reorganized, a legal attempt to keep the firm under family control. The 1903 Louisville City Directory, reflecting changes from the previous year, lists widowed Sallie Hegan as company president, James E. Hegan as treasurer and manager, and Alice C. Hegan as nominal secretary, a title attributed to her until 1906.

By late February, Alice's daily calendar was again filled. On

February 24 she wrote a local acquaintance that she was free to go for a walk on Wednesday or Thursday. If they could not telephone each other, it was because Louisville had two rival phone companies and patrons of one could not talk with those on the other system. By February, also, *The Black Cat* had appeared, its garish red and black front cover displaying a large heart-shaped head of a cat; the lower tip pointed to the lengthy title: "The Well-Bred Young Lady in a Barber Shop at Midnight." Just below, each story title and its author were listed; for only a nickel one could own all those absurd tales. This publication was an anticlimax for Alice Hegan now that *Mrs. Wiggs* was in bookstores all over the country. And she knew that the heroine of *her* Black Cat story, the lovely and serious Miss Corcoran, was no match for the homely and humorous Mrs. Wiggs.

Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch continued to be locally popular; better yet, the New York *Bookman* listed it as second among the top six best-selling books in the nation, a report based on March 1902 sales. The first four printings of 2000 copies each had sold out immediately; after January, tens of thousands came off the press. Century editors were soon begging Alice for a sequel. Since she had been quietly working on that sequel, she was ready on June second to show her still-unfinished story to editor Gilder. "Do you think 'The Sunshine Cure' would be a better name than 'Lovey Mary'?"⁴ she asked, adding confidently that she could easily complete the manuscript in time for winter serialization and spring book publication.

Meanwhile, Madison Cawein replied to a letter from his St. Louis friend, poet R. E. Lee Gibson: "Yes, Rice promises to put all our laurels here in the shade eventually. He is coming at last into his own. He has been patient & deserves success after working hard for it."⁵ This talk of success was based on Cale's announcement that he had impulsively sent a copy of his unpublished drama, "Charles di Tocca," to E. H. Sothern, the famous Broadway actor; soon, a telegram came from Sothern asking Cale to meet him in New York City. "A few days later I was on his doorstep at ten o'clock in the morning and

found him at breakfast—fried sole which he liked eating with two forks.”⁶ Sothern told Cale that the di Tocca role did not suit him; instead, he asked the would-be dramatist to write a play about David, the young biblical hero. “With a liberal contract and five hundred dollars in pocket I took the next train home,” Cale recalled later. “The gods were about to contribute to our matrimonial purse—and might even enable me to bring some renown to poetry in America, as well as profit to my pocket.”⁷ This made Alice’s recent publishing success more palatable and proved, to Cale at least, that financial success was possible for both of them.

Watermelon Stockings

During the summer, Alice revised a children’s story in response to a request from Mary Mapes Dodge, editor of *St. Nicholas Magazine*, the Century Company’s juvenile monthly. By the third week of July the story was ready for the scrutiny of Mrs. Dodge. If accepted, Alice’s story would be in the company of tales by Mark Twain, Bret Harte, Kate Douglas Wiggin, and other authors who were more than willing to write for *St. Nicholas*. Editor Dodge was never intimidated by her contributors. And she mercilessly altered Twain’s 1892 *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, publishing instead a genteel version from which drunkenness and death had been carefully deleted.

In an explanatory note, Alice Caldwell Hegan, author of the popular *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*, told Mary Mapes Dodge, author of the classic *Hans Brinker: or, the Silver Skates* (1865): “One of the first stories I ever wrote was called ‘The Watermelon Stockings’ and I wrote it for the *St. Nicholas*. It was very crude, written in the first person, and with all the ‘ear-marks’ of an amateur,” so its rejection was not surprising. “Now I believed in the little story, and I have kept it all this time,” Alice continued; after receiving Mrs. Dodge’s approval, she completely overhauled the rejected tale, “keeping only the incident and the name.”⁸

Mary Mapes Dodge had a reputation for creating trust and confidence, even with a promising new writer whom she had never met. However, there was a large picture of her correspondent in July's *Bookman*—a pensive Alice Caldwell Hegan sitting in an ornate armchair; her right arm was so placed that her hand supported her chin in a thinker's pose. Alice would soon meet Mrs. Dodge, a woman some forty years her senior. "She was brilliant, original, and possessed of discriminating judgment and executive ability"; in appearance, she had "a full oval face, soft wavy hair, a small nose, and a pouting, childlike mouth."⁹ Her practical policies made *St. Nicholas* noted for its lack of preachiness; instead, Mary Mapes Dodge believed that the ideal child's magazine, "a milk-and-water variety of the adult's periodical," must also be "stronger, truer, bolder, more uncompromising." Her stern injunction: "Let there be no sermonizing either, no wearisome spinning out of facts, no rattling of the dry bones of history."¹⁰ And so "The Watermelon Stockings" appeared in the December 1902 issue of *St. Nicholas*.

The first sentence of "The Watermelon Stockings" begins with Aunt Melvy's explosive anger, for 'Mazin' Grace, her eighth daughter, has failed to carry out assigned tasks. Nell Tracy, a curly-haired little blonde from the big house on the hill, looks on as 'Mazin' Grace of the ten black pigtailed continues to sleep while sitting upright, her back propping open the cabin door. ('Mazin' Grace was a real little girl, and Nell Tracy was a young Alice Hegan.) The two girls are playmates (even as their fathers were) and they have always shared everything—with one exception: Nell's watermelon stockings. "They were of a peculiar shade of pink silk, with clockwork up the sides and sprays of white flowers embroidered over the instep."¹¹

Soon the girls go off together to an old chicken coop which has been turned into a playhouse; Nell can get inside, but 'Mazin' Grace is too fat to squeeze through the door. She impulsively locks Nell in the coop and hurries to the house on the hill, where no one is at home. Upstairs, she finds the watermelon stockings and then draws "the

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silken lengths over her bare, dusty feet,” giggling in her excitement. “Ain’t them scrumptious! I look lak a shore-’nuff circus lady!”¹² Suddenly, she smells something burning. From a window, she can see the barn in flames, its sparks landing on the porch roof. Then, “wild-eyed and tearful, a thought made its way through the kinky hair into her bewildered brain.”¹³ Going outside, ‘Mazin’ Grace climbs a ladder to the porch roof, and tries to beat out the sparks with a broom; soon, the exhausted child becomes unconscious. Though badly burned, she survives; the porch is destroyed by fire, but the homestead itself is saved—“a monument to the faithfulness of a very naughty little girl.”¹⁴

Later, ‘Mazin’ Grace went with Nell to the “Christian and Debil” Society, which young readers of the time would easily recognize as the church-sponsored Christian Endeavor Society. Both girls were wearing new watermelon stockings.

Muse to Merriment

Summer was almost over. There had been time to polish the *Lovey Mary* manuscript, to work on short stories, and to escape the humid heat of Louisville, this time in Canada. From a provincial Ontario resort Alice wrote Kentucky friends that even there she had been unable to escape the glare of publicity.

In the fall, a local news item announced that Miss Alice Hegan would depart on October 13, 1902, for New York City. After she left town, Alice escaped further attention when her engagement to Cale was formally announced. One out-of-town paper, in a special dispatch from Louisville, heralded the garbled news in bold type:

MISS HEGAN TO WED
PLAYWRIGHT RICE
BRIDE-TO-BE WON FAME AS AUTHOR OF
“MRS. WIGGS OF THE POTATO PATCH”

Elsewhere, columns about this engagement were long on publication history. Cale's contract with Sothorn for the play "David" was given prominence, but his poetry was never mentioned. *Mrs. Wiggs* was featured, of course, and one item called Alice Hegan "one of the brightest young women in the city. . . . Her success as a writer has been phenomenal, and she literally woke up one morning to find herself famous."¹⁵

While in New York, Alice called at the Century offices. She had a luncheon engagement with editor Richard Watson Gilder, whom she knew only by name. After waiting long and patiently, she finally was rescued by Robert Underwood Johnson, the associate editor. Gilder would not be in that day, Johnson said, but *he* would like the honor of taking her to lunch. And so Alice was escorted to the nearby Everett House by Johnson and five other staff members. During lunch, these courtly gentlemen "vied with each other in putting a flustered young lady at her ease."¹⁶ Soon, Gilder entered the restaurant, rushed over to their table, and quickly apologized for having forgotten the appointment. Alice readily forgave the famous editor, "a bewildered-looking gentleman with long hair and beautiful gentle brown eyes"¹⁷ who would become Alice's mentor and friend for the remainder of his life.

During her Century visit, Alice was talked into accepting an invitation she had previously declined. Members of the Press Club wanted Miss Hegan to give a reading from *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* during a meeting at the Waldorf-Astoria on October 25—valuable advance publicity for *Lovey Mary*. On that private Doomsday, a fearful young author arrived at the city's most prestigious hotel, located on stylish Fifth Avenue; in its public rooms, tourists from the hinterland could stare at members of New York's celebrated 400. When a very nervous Alice Hegan stepped into the hotel's elevator, a professional elocutionist told her that authors' readings were always so boring she wished she had stayed home. When Alice admitted that she had never read before such a large

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audience, the stranger gave some last-minute advice: “I beg of you to keep your chin up, and hurl your words at the back wall.”¹⁸ Instead, the celebrated young author barely made her words audible to the front row.

The main purpose of her New York trip, however, was to make final arrangements for the book publication of *Lovey Mary*, already slated for magazine serialization in December. Alice Hegan had signed a Memorandum of Agreement the previous March, when the Century Company increased royalty payments to 15 percent. The continued demand for Miss Hegan’s first book had easily convinced the firm that it must quickly acquire the rights to her second literary property.

Soon after returning to Louisville, Alice Hegan received an inscribed copy of Robert Underwood Johnson’s most recent book, *Poems*. She thanked Johnson for the gift, and she assured the editor and his gracious wife that “this Kentucky friend hopes to be for keeps.”¹⁹ Her letter to Johnson was written from the family’s new home at 410 Victoria Place, near the house on Fourth Street, but larger and more suitable for the December wedding of Alice and Cale.

In early November, Alice asked a Mrs. Black to forgive “a very unsatisfactory letter from a girl whose wedding is only six weeks off and she hasn’t gotten her trousseau.”²⁰ A proper trousseau was expensive, but money was not the problem. The previous May, book royalties had come to \$2,232.40; that November she received royalty checks totaling \$6,925.63. (Compare this with a local schoolteacher’s salary of \$35-\$62 per month.) What Alice Hegan desperately needed was time—time to select, to be fitted, to shop for accessories. The March *Ladies Home Journal* had claimed one could buy a trousseau for \$75; the *Louisville Times* of August 23 put the price range from \$500 to the thousands—if a bride’s underwear had real lace. A proper trousseau must include the bridal gown and veil, a traveling dress, three reception gowns for weekly at-homes, and a dinner dress. There

should also be a carriage coat, a traveling coat, and five hats. Add to this, everyday skirts and blouses, shoes, gloves, hosiery, handkerchiefs, dressing gowns, and lingerie.

On December 14, 1902, the Sunday *Courier-Journal* announced: “The marriage of Miss Alice Caldwell Hegan and Mr. Cole [*sic*] Young Rice will take place Thursday afternoon at 5 o’clock at the residence of the bride’s brother, Mr. James Hegan, 410 Victoria Place.” Cale’s responsibilities during this flurry were minimal, but he wrote from personal experience when he described the emotions of David, his alter-ego and the hero of his 1923 novel, *Youth’s Way*: “To be light-hearted or apathetic in obtaining his marriage license was perhaps too much to be expected of David. Many men more fortunate have confessed to a feeling of panicky solemnity in performing that simple act.”²¹

On the day after the ceremony, Madison Cawein, one of the few invited guests, described the wedding for his friend Lee Gibson. Alice, he said, had been beautifully dressed in a white, lace-bordered gown; around her neck was a gift from her mother—seven strings of pearls banded together by perpendicular rows of diamonds, a large pear-shaped pearl hanging from the center. At dinner, a dozen young friends were seated at the bride’s table. Dangling above was a bell of holly, with an electric light for a clapper. The table itself was “a symphony in crimson.” At every place was a porcelain rose which held a burning crimson candle. “It was beautiful, beautiful.”²²

Cawein had given the couple a cut glass bowl; then he catalogued for Gibson the other wedding presents, which ranged from silver to Tiffany ware and from sets of the classics to oil paintings. He was especially impressed by the Century Company’s personal gift to Alice, a gold watch with emerald dial, set with thirty-nine diamonds, and hung on a filigreed gold chain. When it was all over, “Mrs. Wiggs’ went off in a halo of love and fame and glory. . . . Rice is certainly a lucky fellow. He deserves it though, I suppose.”²³

Cawein’s hesitancy may have been shared by others; for Alice

Hegan Rice, there were no doubts. “Temperamentally we were very unlike. He was a serious thinker, with unlimited ambition, I a gay dilettante with no thought of hitching my wagon to a star, but content to set it going with the hope that somehow it might coast to success. But despite these differences, our tastes, ideals, and standards were similar.”²⁴ Richard Watson Gilder summed it up in a verse titled “Eighteenth December, 1902”: “Wit—to fantasy, / The muse—to merriment, / Pathos—to poetry: / Such marriage, heaven-sent, / Lives eternally.”²⁵ Alice pasted that tribute into Gilder’s 1894 *Five Books of Song*, given to her during her recent October visit. The book also has a three-part poem by Gilder tipped in; the third verse ends: “And Mrs. Wiggs, God bless her, approves the match.” Alice’s comment, written below, is simply “at the Gilder’s Christmas Eve dinner 1902,”²⁶ a festivity that was her editor’s contribution to the New York City honeymoon.

Cale’s autobiography has a brief mention of their marrying quietly, although “not so quietly as to escape an ‘interview’—which had not taken place—in a New York paper.” His longer account of the New York honeymoon, with its “first exciting swim among the literati there,”²⁷ describes the Gilder dinner, a meeting with actress Minnie Maddern Fiske, and a luncheon with publisher S. S. McClure. After such a whirl, the couple’s predictable Louisville life might have been a letdown; yet, no matter where they traveled during their next four decades together, they gladly returned to Louisville.

That December, Alice’s picture, surrounded by holly, graced the cover of *Current Literature*. William Frederick Dix’s “Alice Caldwell Hegan” was a feature article in the December 6 *Outlook*. At the end, referring to the upcoming *Lovey Mary*, Dix asked, “Can she repeat her success? There is no reason in this case why she should not.”²⁸ For the Century Company, success was never in doubt. On February 27, 1903, the firm gave Alice Hegan Rice a \$10,000 check—an advance payment against royalties; it was exactly \$9,000 more than had been offered in the signed contract of March 1902.

Lovey Mary

For Cale, there were countless schemes and dreams. As he informed Gilder after the New York visit, “I have written about four hundred lyrics, and shall not keep more than seventy or eighty of them. . . . I desire some day to publish a book of songs, every one of which shall be a poem of the first water.”²⁹ Using his famous bride as an intermediary, the brash young poet constantly sought the attention of this wise older poet, whose patronage was of major importance in that literary era. Alice’s need was for privacy, not patronage. Once, when asked to talk about herself, she replied “plaintively,” but with uncharacteristic asperity, “I am just a plain, average, everyday sort of person, who objects to seeing herself advertised instead of her book.”³⁰

Sketches in Charcoal

Despite rumors that *Lovey Mary* would be a much bigger volume than *Mrs. Wiggs*, Alice Hegan Rice was still unable to spin a plot into more than two hundred printed pages. But, as a Wisconsin reviewer observed, “One point that Mrs. Rice can hardly be praised for too eloquently is the total absence of padding in her stories. They are so brief, so readable, so delightfully amusing that they may be confidently recommended as perfect books for reading aloud, a panacea for dullness or low spirits.”³¹ Century editors did not want padding, but they did want subplots to bolster the sequel’s thin main story line.

In the summer of 1901, Alice had escaped Louisville’s 100-degree heat by traveling north to Martinsville, Indiana. Since 1889, Hoosiers and people from surrounding states had flocked there, convinced they could be miraculously restored to health by a few of the 57,000 gallons of medicinal water that flowed daily from an artesian well. At the Home Lawn Sanitarium, where she took the invigorating baths, Alice accidentally learned about the nearby garden of Miss Celestina R. Phelps, known locally as Aunt Tiny. Alice then called on

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the friendly gardener and was given a guided tour of her flower beds, where she pointed out that each type of flower had the characteristics of a religious denomination. Immediately, Alice Hegan knew she had another odd character for her second book about the Cabbage Patch. Politely, she asked the elderly spinster if she would mind having her garden described in a book. Miss Phelps later told a reporter that she replied, “No, indeed; go along. You can’t hurt me!”³² And then Miss Hegan disappeared.

In that book’s eighth chapter, the reader gets a conducted tour of the Phelps garden similar to the one the author took in 1901; this time, however, Martinsville’s Aunt Tiny has been transformed into Miss Viny, and her celebrated garden has been transported to the outskirts of Louisville. When Lovey Mary is sent to Miss Viny for some yellowroot to cure her “nervous sensations,” the author then introduces a thinly disguised Aunt Tiny and her many flowers. Titled “A Denominational Garden,” it is the one memorable chapter in the *Wiggs* sequel.

During her guided tour, Lovey Mary heard the opinionated old gardener point out that Baptist irises and heliotropes needed lots of water, whereas Methodist phlox and geraniums easily fell from grace, needing revival. The tiger lilies and roses and dahlias, all Presbyterians, “knew what they was goin’ to be afore they started to grow. They was elected to it.” As for the “tony” azaleas and more stately lilies, they were “Piscopals” and “pretty pernickity.” Unitarian sweet williams grew among the orthodox varieties because, “if the sun an’ the rain don’t make no distinction, I don’t see what right I got to put ’em on the other side of the fence.”³³ Asked about Catholics, Miss Viny pointed to the hollyhocks, snowballs, and lilacs, which took up lots of room but brought “cheer and brightness to the whole garden when it needs it most.” In contrast, the Quaker ferns sought shade and quiet. What all these flowers had in common was their need to fight against “the canker-worm, Hate,”³⁴ which could only be eradicated by prayer and perseverance. Said Miss Viny, “I don’t

b'lieve in shuttin' a flower up in a greenhouse any more 'n I b'lieve in shuttin' myself up in one church."³⁵ Both Tiny and Viny were impartial; "I ain't got no faverite bed. I keer fer 'em all jes alike."³⁶ Miss Viny even justified her work: "You see, I'm tryin' to be to these flowers what God is to his churches. The sun, which answers to the Sperrit, has to shine on 'em all, an' the rain, which answers to God's mercy, has to fall on 'em all. I jes watch 'em, an' plan fer 'em, an' shelter 'em, an' love 'em, an' if they do their part they're bound to grow."³⁷

This eighth chapter was rarely singled out by *Lovey Mary* reviewers, yet a discerning critic recognized its importance: "One of the most novel characteristics of the new book is Miss Viny's 'Denominational Garden.' This unique feature reminds one of a vaudeville act introduced into a comedy, or a monologue recital. It stands out clear and distinct from the rest of the story, and is a welcome innovation,—not because one is tired of the narrative, but because of its extreme originality and odd quality."³⁸ This entire chapter *can* stand alone

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(and, in fact, was published as a holiday booklet in England) but it also is a much-needed addition to the main plot:

Lovey Mary, a scrawny orphan of 13, is given full charge of baby Tommy, who was left at the orphanage by his mother, Kate Rider, a wayward former inmate. Two years later, when Kate returns for her child, Lovey Mary and Tommy run away from the Home; they find sanctuary in the Cabbage Patch, where it is an unwritten law that strangers must never be questioned. Lovey Mary and Tommy board at Miss Hazy's. Lovey also earns three dollars a week in a factory job. Meanwhile, she learns that Kate Rider, an accident victim, is in the city hospital. Worried about losing Tommy, Lovey Mary refuses to visit Kate and becomes so nervous she needs some of Miss Viny's yellowroot.

A second subplot (made famous by W. C. Fields in the 1934 movie version of the Wiggs story) is the comical tale of the mail-order bridegroom, Mr. Stubbins, who wanted to marry a lady "of good character and without incumbrances."³⁹ Dictated by Mrs. Wiggs and written down by Lovey Mary, Miss Hazy's letters to Stubbins result in a demand for an immediate wedding. The marriage takes place, but a week later a drunken Mr. Stubbins has to be hoisted into an empty freight car at midnight. In yet another chapter, Lovey Mary and Asia Wiggs call on Lucy Olcott Redding, still the patron saint of the Cabbage Patch. During this visit, Lovey Mary saves young Robert Redding, Jr., from choking on a piece of candy and a reward is quietly slipped into her hand.

Weeks later, Lovey Mary resolutely goes to the hospital to find Kate. Friendless and penniless, the invalid then becomes another of Miss Hazy's boarders. Finally, on a stormy night, Kate dies; her son Tommy is in her arms, and in that "one fleeting moment she had felt for the first and last time the blessed sanctity of motherhood."⁴⁰ As the book ends, the two orphans leave on a trip to Niagara Falls and a two-week vacation at the summer home of the grateful Robert and Lucy Redding. All Mrs. Wiggs asks as a reward for her generous

outpouring of advice and aphorisms is a bottle filled with “Niag’ry water. I want to see how them falls look.”⁴¹ By the last page, Lovey Mary has learned that “It ain’t hard to be good when folks love you.”⁴²

Lovey Mary, in which “Mrs. Alice Hegan Rice has surprised and irradiated the contemporary world of fiction,” and *Lady Rose’s Daughter*, by England’s Mrs. Humphry Ward, were featured in Henry Watterson’s editorial ramblings of Sunday, March 8, 1903, which were ostensibly about romance and reality in fiction. (Six days earlier, his paper had announced that advance orders for *Lovey Mary* totaled 100,000 copies; *Mrs. Wiggs* was continuing to sell at some 10,000 copies per week.) In his *Courier-Journal* column, this one-eyed giant of American journalism praised that “Kentucky woman” who “works in homespun and draws with charcoal”; furthermore, “her hand is so deft and her sketch so perfect that she constantly suggests Charles Dickens and actually emulates Bret Harte.” Obviously, according to Marse Henry, Mrs. Rice did not get her inspiration from Louisville; such a thought would be “the merest conceit of provincial vanity.”

Alice was modest in her acknowledgment of Watterson’s praise; being put in such literary company also brought “a grave responsibility, that of living up to the standard you have given me. My little stories, simple and unpretentious as they are, were written with little idea of so large an audience, and when they receive praise such as yours, it quite overwhelms me.”⁴³ She would never have told him that he could not have chosen two more disparate books than *Lovey Mary* and *Lady Rose’s Daughter* for his editorial comparison. Although Mrs. Rice would soon meet Mrs. Ward, the women were worlds apart in lifestyle and writing style.

A much better comparison would have been *Lovey Mary* and *Emmy Lou, Her Book and Heart* by Alice’s mentor, George Madden Martin. Both books had recently appeared serially in leading magazines; both books had orphans for their little heroines. *Lovey Mary*, considered

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a white Topsy by some, is outwardly a homely castaway dressed in an orphan's standard blue gingham uniform. Despite her upper-class background, little Emmy Lou is just as sensitive, just as pathetic, as Lovey Mary. In his *Kentucky in American Letters*, John Wilson Townsend called Emmy Lou "the most charming child in Kentucky literature, a genuine creation."⁴⁴ This plump little girl was sent to live with three unmarried aunts and an uncle when her mother went South for her health and moved from there to Heaven—two places which merged in the child's mind ever after. Each of the ten chapters of the Emmy Lou book is a story complete in itself; they take a babyish pupil from primer class to high school, with the older Emmy Lou still naive and still with no guile in her heart. Somehow, the reader of this book soon begins to understand the thought processes of a child and the hidden fears of childhood. Plot exists, but it is subordinate to character, whereas in *Lovey Mary* the plot determines the reactions of both heroine and reader. Author Hegan tried to amuse the reader; author Martin wanted to educate the reader. Only one of them grew wealthy—and it wasn't the educator. When *Emmy Lou* was published as a book in October 1902, parents and teachers responded to Martin's skillful portrayal of the confused little girl who tried so obediently to learn her lessons. Teaching methods began to come under scrutiny; the book is even credited with bringing change to educational philosophy and procedures. Never a bestseller, *Emmy Lou* was a steady seller, going into fifteen impressions in its first six years. Forty years later, the book was still in print.

Watterson's editorial was not about educational reform, however, and the problems of the orphan did not concern him. He was talking about literature and trying to blend the new with the old. Perhaps he chose the soon-forgotten *Lady Rose's Daughter* because of the "fine, attractive picture of the Peerage we get in these delightful pages."⁴⁵ To Watterson, Lady Rose's illegitimate daughter was "not the nasty, new woman with her alleged intellect and her knowledge of dirt, which she mistakes for information—but the woman meant by

God and Nature to be the better sense and moral light of the world, inspired of Heaven and having from Heaven the pure instinct of preservation symbolized in all her activities of Religion, Wifehood and Maternity.”⁴⁶

Like the bewildered Emmy Lou, the patriarchal Henry Watterson was subconsciously trying to combine the mannerly South with the mystical Hereafter.

A Pledge of Allegiance

When *Lovey Mary* made the bestseller lists, it began to merge with its predecessor in readers’ minds until the highly quotable Mrs. Wiggs became the star of both books. In fact, the second novel was entertaining only while *Lovey Mary* lived in the Cabbage Patch, not in the loveless orphanage. *Lovey Mary* had almost as many rose-colored reviews as *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*—bouquets of praise from gentle critics. According to one of them, Mrs. Rice’s “humor is as real, and no more complex, than Mother Goose.” And she knew “the secret of writing a popular novel—be pure, be genuine, be optimistic, be humorous, be sentimental, be conventional, but, above all, use only incidents about which everybody knows, which everybody understands.”⁴⁷

Some of the magazine readers had objected to this graphic though humorous portrayal of children living in the slums. The *Denver Republican* published a harsh review of the book: “Mrs. Rice has shown that she has not enough strength or originality to depart from the field of her first success.” As for the book’s dedication—“To Cale Young Rice, who taught me the secret of plucking roses from a cabbage patch”—the reviewer said, “If the rose comparison is to be applied, one can only think of those painfully artificial roses of tissue paper which adorn some houses. For ‘Lovey Mary’ is artificial from the first page to the last.”⁴⁸

The New York *Bookman* bridged pro and con arguments when it

“Taint no street . . . ; this here is the Cabbage Patch.”

sensibly suggested that “ten years from now, as a reading people, we probably shall not be entirely satisfied with the *Lovey Marys* and the *Mrs. Wiggsses*”; those books were “nothing but very excellent types of stories for Sunday-school children of tender years, with a dash of humour which has proved attractive to people of more mature age. . . . Whatever they may not be, Mrs. Wiggs and Lovey Mary are genuine.”⁴⁹

Part of *Lovey Mary*'s appeal came from its clever illustrations, an expense not undertaken when *Mrs. Wiggs* was first published. Florence Scovel Shinn, who had illustrated “The Watermelon Stockings” for *St. Nicholas*, contributed a dozen drawings for *Lovey Mary* after working with Louisville photographs to ensure background authenticity. Later she made a set of drawings for *Mrs. Wiggs*, and the two companion volumes came out in 1903 in a deluxe boxed Christmas edition, selling at four dollars. Mrs. Shinn, a Philadelphia artist trained at the prestigious Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, was noted for her drawings of children; they ranged from the wistful to the wanton, and were either angels or imps.

In the meantime, magazine editors continued to ask Alice for submissions. Edward Bok, the well-known editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, tried unsuccessfully to get her to write for his magazine; in January 1903, Alice told him that "My literary engagements are such that I can not make any promises even so far ahead as next Christmas."⁵⁰ A year later, she again refused but thanked him for his interest—small comfort for one who usually had no trouble luring authors. In April 1903, however, a story published under the name of Alice Caldwell Hegan did appear in *Harper's Monthly*. This literary maverick, titled "When Jove Nods," had been rejected by the *Century's* editors. Its four illustrations by Mrs. Shinn could not save a seven-page story that was overloaded with oppressive dialect. Even the two main characters, the Judge and the Doctor, wearing sunbonnets and taking a nocturnal ride down railroad tracks in a stolen handcar, are only mildly amusing.

Perhaps because she had been seen entering the Dodd, Mead company offices, Alice was advised not to stray too far from the *Century* fold; one of its editors gave her cautionary advice: "You must be prepared for attacks from other publishers in platoons. . . . They will come with bouquets, and opera tickets, and invitations to dinner. What is worse, they will come with attractive personalities and genuine appreciation of your work. In this latter respect we fear no competition. You do not begin to know what nice people we are, nor, for that matter, how easily the *Century* Company's heart can be broken!"⁵¹ Alice then swore that "my heart is and will be true to the *Century* Co. until debt do us part."⁵²

Shortly before her marriage, the newly famous Alice Hegan was adopted as "The Daughter of the *Century*," and her photo was hung for a time in the *Century* president's office. The *Century* had a reputation for its kindness to brand-new writers, according to L. Frank Tooker, the firm's trusted spokesman. If this was one of the company's strengths, it was also one of its weaknesses. Tooker was aware of the danger of accepting mediocre work from an author of

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an earlier success. “It might appear merely a matter of ill luck were one to forget that a great book is usually followed by a lesser one, that a sustained high note is rare indeed.”⁵³ An example Tooker gives of this lesser achievement is Alice Hegan Rice’s *Sandy*, published only two years after the very popular *Lovey Mary*.

SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The papers of Alice Hegan Rice and Cale Young Rice are scattered in libraries throughout the country—from Oregon to Massachusetts, from New York to Florida. The majority, however, are in the following repositories:

The Kentucky Library & Museum on the campus of Western Kentucky University; there Laban Lacy Rice, executor of his brother's estate, deposited the papers left in his possession, including some but not all of Alice Rice's scrapbook collection. This library is also rich in family correspondence.

The University of Louisville, which has the earliest of the scrapbooks, left there by Cale after Alice's death. Additional papers include those of other important women writers of Louisville.

The Filson Historical Society, formerly the Filson Club, whose archives include the club's minutes and some of Madison Cawein's papers, and Melville Otter's Memory Book.

The Louisville Free Public Library, especially its Kentucky scrapbooks and publications of Louisville women writers.

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The Library of Congress, with its massive Henry Watterson Collection, including recent additions.

Rollins College, where President Hamilton Holt's papers contain a number of letters by the Rices.

Pelletier Library at Allegheny College—the site of the Ida M. Tarbell Papers.

The Mark Twain Papers at the University of California, Berkeley—Alice's letters to Mark Twain.

The photo of the house Alice and Cale built in St. James Court in Louisville, that of their sampling Mongolian hot pot in Japan, and that of their friend George Madden Martin are courtesy of the Kentucky Library & Museum at Western Kentucky University. The Ekstrom Library's Special Collections of the University of Louisville authorized reproduction of the cartoon by Alice found on a blank page in the presentation copy of *The Honorable Percival* she gave to George Madden Martin. From the Ida M. Tarbell Collection at the Pelletier Library of Allegheny College came the Alfred Cheney Johnston portrait of Ida Tarbell reproduced here. The photo of Jessie B. Rittenhouse is courtesy of the Olin Library at Rollins College. Although the publicity still from Paramount's 1934 "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch" is not subject to copyright, the print of it is courtesy of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Beverly Hills, California. At my request, the late Dr. Ernest M. Ellison photographed the tombstone of Alice and Cale Rice in Louisville's Cave Hill Cemetery. All other images are from my own collection.

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