Rebecca Harding Davis Society Newsletter

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PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

I want to first recognize the passing of Karen Dandurand, a founding member of the society who supported our work through her teaching and attendance at society events. She was one of the few attendees at our first small summer conference in 2007, bringing two graduate students with her to boost our numbers and expand their literary interests. Those of us who worked alongside her to promote the study of women writers will miss her steadfast commitment to the recovery of women's writing and the restoration of women writers to their place in literary studies.

I also want to recognize all of you who attended and/or presented papers on the two Davis panels at the 2011 ALA conference in Boston; our audience is growing. We are hoping to keep the momentum going by attracting new members through the offer of a free book with a two-year membership (see membership form at the end of the newsletter) and some conference opportunities that are in the works. Please stay tuned for updates on society events. We will post these on the website as they become available.

Ah, yes, the website; we are still looking for someone to help with the website. Our web address is http://scotus.francis.edu/rebeccahardingdavis. If you are interested in helping to provide maintenance (or can help to provide some content), please contact me. I'd love to talk to you about ways to improve our web presence.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you who continue to support the Davis Society with your research, publications, and teaching. Getting Davis's works into classrooms and having new generations of students read them is the best way to recognize her contributions to the

field. Through publications such as Sherry's comprehensive biography and Mischa's scholarly edition of *Waiting for the Verdict*, both still in the research stage, we can offer students more than an introduction to Davis; we can help them to uncover the complexity of her life and writings.

NEW SCHOLARSHIP ON REBECCA HARDING DAVIS – by Robin Cadwallader

Newly Discovered: "Women as Beekeepers." *American Apiculturist* 3.9 (15 Sept. 1885): 214.

Rebecca Harding Davis and Her Bees

After reading a small announcement in the *Salt Lake Daily Herald*, whose lead declared, "Rebecca Harding Davis advised bee raising . . . ," I thought, "Huh, bees!" Later, in transcribing Davis's correspondence, I found a letter to an unidentified reader who must have asked for advice on "bee-keeping." At that point, I was hooked. What, I wondered, was Davis's interest in bees, why would she have advised bee-keeping, and how would our knowledge of this activity expand our current knowledge of Davis's daily life. What I found in my search is the following article, published in an 1885 issue of the *American Apiculturist*:

Women as Beekeepers

by Rebecca Harding Davis

The advantages of both beekeeping and poultry raising as an employment for women are great for these reasons:

1. They can be followed at home. Whether on a farm or in town, or even in a city, if you can have the ground necessary to set the hives, it is all the land you need. No matter if you do not own the land, or, if your lot is small, a place can easily be made on the roof of a house, shed or barn.
2. It is not necessary in the case of bees to raise anything for their support. There is not a home in the country where this need be done for a few hives.
3. Any woman or girl can not only make honey boxes, but the hives themselves, as these can now be bought all ready to nail together, so that putting them up and painting them require no strength.
4. The capital necessary to commence with is small.

The little time required for their care can be secured without interfering with other occupations. A mother can care for her children while she attends to her bees. (My own successful work with bees was done with an infant in my arms, or in a baby carriage, and the other children barely able to play alone, but all the time within reach of my voice.) A teacher can care for her bees out of school hours, and after she has a start, make more from them

than from her other work. We have in mind teachers who have also found health in the out-door air and exercise which their bees gave them.

5. There is a fascination about the business which relieves all its tedium. A woman will think of her bees, study about them, and become so interested as to be almost paid for her work by the love of it.

Seemingly a response to this article, the notice I found in the *Herald* reads in full:

> Rebecca Harding Davis advised bee raising as an employment for women because it takes only land enough to set the hives on and a small capital; because hives and honey boxes come now ready to be put together, which any woman can do; because the bees make their own living; because the little time they require interferes with no other occupation—she herself carried on bees successfully with a baby in her arms and the other children near; and because they give real pleasure and relief from tedium, as well as profit.

The problem with assuming the *Herald* notice was a reference to what had been published in the *Apiculturist* is that the *Herald* piece was published almost two and a half years before in 1883 and a year before that (1882), Davis had recommended bee-keeping to readers of the *Youth's Companion* in a piece titled "Home Industries for Women: Bee-keeping."

In the article for the *Youth's Companion*, Davis extols the virtues of bee-keeping but advises that "[a] woman who proposes to make money by this business should be able to make her own boxes for the honey" because building her own boxes will save her significant cost in the establishment of her hives. She then informs readers that they should consult bee-keeping journals, providing titles to some of her favorites, and recommends, "[A]bove all, do not be afraid to ask questions."

Apparently, the unidentified reader found this admonition to be a personal invitation to ask her questions because she writes to Davis personally, apparently complaining that the costs for setting up a bee-keeping enterprise are higher than those given in the article (I found no costs stated in the article) and requesting further information from Davis on the subject. In her response, Davis cautions the reader, "Before purchasing bees you would do well to study the subject a little and determine whether being an invalid you could undertake the work. They are like babies, require constant steady care and will not bear neglect."

In the end, I believe Davis's fascination with bees must have been quite strong because bees are mentioned for various reasons in at least ten of her stories, and Davis's books were advertised in many bee-keeping journals, such as *Gleanings in Bee Culture*, *Bee-keepers Review*, and *American Bee Journal*, as "Books for Bee-keepers and Others." In one story in particular, "A Wayside Episode," she makes a connection between bees and poultry similar to that she would make in the *Apiculturist*: "She showed them the poultry-yards and colonies of bees." An additional connection between this story and the later article is in the emphasis on bee-keeping as work for women, even women with children. After revealing to readers that the poultry-yards and bee colonies "had been begun by [Mrs. Wootton] to help her husband

when every dollar counted in their weekly income," she writes, "[S]he has what she needed,--work and children. A woman at a certain age wants a baby to nurse and something to do. That is nature" (170).

Perhaps in bee-keeping, Davis herself found what she wrote into Mrs. Wootton's story, the satisfaction of having "what she needed," of "having children" and "something to do" other than write. Perhaps she, too, added to the family's income through bee-keeping "when every dollar counted in their weekly income." Perhaps there is more to learn about Davis's life as we continue to study the connection between Davis and her bees.

Works Cited

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RHD: HER WORLD

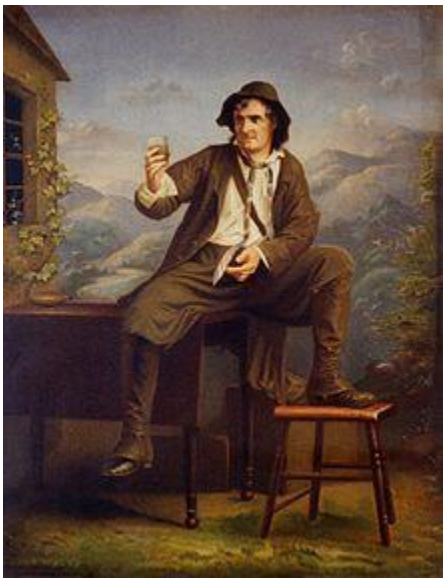
Philadelphia, 1863 – When Rebecca Harding married L. Clarke Davis in 1863 and settled in Philadelphia, she entered a city immersed in the Civil War but in very different ways than she had seen in Wheeling, which had been the headquarters for the Union Army's Mountain Department. Pennsylvania was actively recruiting African Americans to replenish its Army, and on September 1863, a grand review of African American troops took place at Camp William Penn (see color lithograph on next page). The camp, located just north of the city, had been built in July on land owned by Lucretia Mott's son-in-law, Edward Davis. Lucretia Mott and Rebecca Harding Davis came to know one another well during the war years.

Camp William Penn was one of the first camps in the country established by the federal government to recruit black soldiers. In the two years of its existence, eleven U.S. Colored Troops consisting of over ten thousand men were trained at the camp. In July, Frederick Douglass spoke to the troops about the importance of their contributions to the war, yet initially the 3rd U.S.C.T., the first group trained at Camp William Penn, was not allowed to parade through Philadelphia as they left for their first battle because of fears that seeing black men with rifles would evoke discord; however, on October 14 Colonel John W. Ames and the 3rd U.S.C.T. marched through Philadelphia and were greeted with cheers by an integrated group of spectators. After the war, what had been Camp William Penn was developed into an interracial community known as LaMott, named in honor of Lucretia Mott's abolitionist efforts.

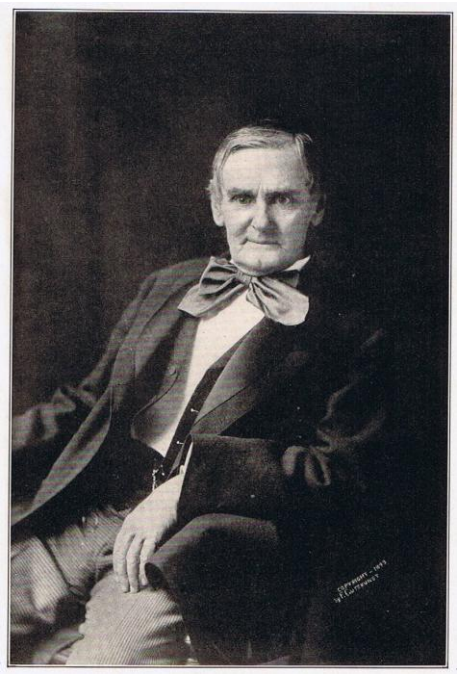
Family Friends

The Davises were well acquainted with the leading actors of the nineteenth century, including Ada Rehan, Ethel Barrymore, and Henry Irving. Clarke had a fascination with the theater that he shared with Rebecca and their children. Rebecca and her sons, Richard Harding Davis and Charles Belmont Davis, all wrote about the theater at various times throughout their careers, and both sons became writers for the stage and Charles an editor of famous dramatic works, including U.S. editions of Ibsen's plays. One of their lifelong friends was the American actor, **Joseph Jefferson** (1829-1905), who gained his first major recognition in 1859 when he played the lead role in *Rip Van Winkle*. The Davises and Jeffersons spent summers together at Point Pleasant, New Jersey, and the Jeffersons often stayed with the Davises when visiting Philadelphia. Clarke also wrote reviews of Jefferson's performances that helped his career, as in 1878 when his high praise for Jefferson's performance in *H.M.S. Pinafore* enflamed public interest in the play and kept it in Philadelphia all winter. The following year Clarke published an article about Jefferson for *Lippincotts Magazine*, further aiding his friend's career. When Richard began his journalism career with the *Philadelphia Press*, his family's friendship with Joe Jefferson allowed him access to the renowned actor and to publish a profile of Joe Jefferson. One of Jefferson's cards de visite was among the Davis family collection of portraits of their theater friends as well. The many conversations about the theater that the Davises shared with their actor friends helped shape their fictional writings as well. For an example of

Rebecca Harding Davis' engagement with the issue of women on the stage, see her short story "Across the Gulf" (*Lippincott's Magazine* 27 [Jul. 1881]: 59-71; rpt. *Silhouettes of American Life*, 1892).



Joe Jefferson portraying Rip Van Winkle as a young man, c. 1859 (Library of Congress), a role he played for several decades; to the right, Jefferson as the older Van Winkle in 1896 (public domain). Jefferson as the Davis family knew him is pictured below (Library of Congress):



Joe Jefferson, 1896

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FROM THE PEN OF REBECCA HARDING DAVIS

Davis published many "Thanksgiving stories" during her long career, and she began in the 1860s to write stories about alcoholism, though never with the call for complete temperance. One example of a story by Davis that combines the two genres is "On Trial," published in the 24 Nov. 1892 issue of *The Independent* (pp. 33-34). Davis also traveled several times to Europe, including a trip from May to October 1891 in which she visited Paris and other regions of France. ~~Sharon M. Harris

On Trial

The Reverend Peter Floyd glanced around the *table d'hôte* at the second breakfast of the *Hotel d'Angleterre* and was convinced that he was the only person there who spoke English. It was such a pity! He had been but an hour in Caen, but he wanted to pour out his impressions to somebody. This was the first foreign city that he had ever seen, as he had come here direct from Havre by night. But nothing in Europe, surely, could be as fine as this ancient Norman town, with its narrow, winding streets, its towering gray houses, its mysterious courts, and airy spires piercing the wintry sky.

The little Baptist minister from Ohio could have thrown up his hat and shouted he felt that he was so lucky. As he could have but three months in Europe every hour counted, and here were treasures of architecture, historic relics, medieval customs and costumes—all in one! This very inn had been the chateau of some old Norman in the fourteenth century.

There was the green court in the middle, and the living room, offices and stables running around it. To reach his chamber he had to climb a tower and across narrow, open galleries above the red-tiled roofs. Just outside the door of the *salle à manger* opened the kitchen, and a little cage where Madame sat with her knitting embowered in flowers. The red-faced soldier at his left he had discovered to be a Russian prince, and the silent, pale man opposite looked high-bred enough to be a *Duc de Bourbon*, or a Rohan himself. He meant to get a sly snap at them both with his Kodak; and then he laughed to himself, as he did a thousand times a day, to think how Sarah would delight in his pictures and stories when he came home.

He passed the bread to the pale duke, nodding and smiling in his usual friendly fashion and afterward found that the possible Bourbon was looking at him attentively.

Now, the pale man was neither duke nor Bourbon, but John Dean of New York, who in his four years of exile from home, had tried to blot out the fact that he was an American, and had nearly succeeded. He had been for months on the Morbihan coast, where he had not met one of his own people. Coming here to-day, he listened, with furtive amusement and a certain beat at his heart, to the little preacher's familiar nasal tones. He guessed at Floyd's story.

"Clergyman's sore throat. Leave of absence. He'll understand nothing, without a word of French, poor devil! Ought to have gone with a 'personally conducted' gang."

He betook himself again to his salad. But Dean, at heart, was a kindly, sociable fellow in spite of his reserved, fastidious face. He never could be happy walking under an umbrella while his neighbor was in the rain. He had absolutely nothing to do here this morning; a few words of advice and explanation from him would turn this stranger's blank day in Caen into a pleasure which he would probably remember as long as he lived.

Mr. Floyd started with delight when his neighbor spoke to him in English, and recommended the salad. He responded quickly and waited breathless for another advance; for he had his own mild dignity and dread of intrusion on strangers. But in a few minutes he was pouring out his surprise and rapture.

"I must go this afternoon to the church which the Conqueror 'built for the glory of God.' And there is another which his wife built, Baedecker says. It is astonishing, sir! The very same churches—William and Matilda walked and prayed in them! You are, no doubt, familiar with these facts, but they take my breath. You will walk with me to them? You are most kind—most kind! I don't speak a word of this lingo," he said, laughing nervously, when they had reached the Place St. Pierre. "I should have learned a few phrases if I had known that I was coming. But it was all so sudden! A poor pastor in an Ohio village does not count on a trip to Europe as possibility in his life, nor is he likely to prepare for it."

"I hope it was not failing health which drove you from home?" said Dean, civilly.

"Partly. My throat gave way. Then there was a certain business—and agent was needed in Europe for a few months upon an errand requiring much prudence, and the duty was offered to me. Nothing could have been more lucky. It is a happiness for my whole life! My congregation generously filled my pulpit during my absence."

He wondered a little at the Englishman (for he was positive that his new friend was English) offered no account of himself in return, did not even give his name. But he soon forgot this in the gentle bustle of the marketplace. His round face beamed benevolently on the dwarfish soldiers, the men in their black velvet jerkins, and swarthy, bold-eyed women, with dangling earrings and chains under the high white Caennois caps.

"How leisurely they are! They do not seem like the same human beings as we Ohioans! Why did they all cross themselves then? What is the man singing?" he asked.

The man who sang wore a tarnished uniform and gilt chapeau. He beat upon a drum, chanting some words, then marched to another corner of the square and chanted them again:

"*A midi, aujourd'hui,*
Jacques Auray,
Mort! Mort! Mort!
Priez pour lui!"

"He hints to us that Monsieur Auray will be hanged at noon to-day. He is the town crier," said Mr. Dean.

Mr. Floyd shuddered and hurried on, silently praying for Auray, as heartily as any of his neighbors. Presently Mr. Dean stopped him under the shadow of the great church of St. Etienne.

"This is the Conqueror's tomb. You will find no Norman work finer than these towers," he said, but absently; for he was listening to the comments of the crowd on the murderer, Auray:

"A drunken beast!"

"His father was the same."

"Yet," said one sweet-voiced girl, "Jacques was a good fellow but for absinthe! His mother's heart will break to-day."

The drum beat again:

"*A midi! Mort! Mort!*
Priez pour lui!"

"Poor Jacques," Dean said to himself, with a bitter smile. "And yet— There goes John Dean, but for the grace of God!"

There had been times when the cause of his long exile had seemed vulgar and contemptible to Dean compared to his character and the level of his life. An hereditary drunkard; his wife and children rescued from him, in peril of their lives, and he driven forth and forgotten like Cain.

Auray's funeral knell brought it suddenly up before him. He had tried to fill his life with many things in these four years, and not unsuccessfully; art, archeology, music; he had found work and pleasure in them all. But the fact of his own mean tragedy lay always dormant on his mind, ready to clutch his breath and freeze his life, as now. An hereditary drunkard. The crime or sickness, whatever it was, came down to him through generations. He had been a madman—a beast. But he had loved Molly through it all—and the boy—the boy!

He followed Floyd through the cathedral, a kindly smile on his face. But he was listening to the drum and chant outside, and thinking of that old, terrible life of his.

The stout little preacher looked up with awed face through the aisles of huge, solemn columns.

"I never have seen anything as great or enduring as this," he said. "And the Conqueror built it to atone for a sin? That is a terrible idea—to make the story of his crime and his remorse last throughout all ages!"

"It does not seem hard to me to repent in stone," said Dean, quietly. "I knew a man once who took a vice which had been rooted in his body and mind before his birth, and who pulled it out. It was the work of every hour, of every minute for years; the doing of it tore his body and soul apart. Death any day would have been comforting"—

Mr. Floyd looked at him carefully. "But that man"—he began.

"He was alone, too," Dean went on vehemently—"cast off by his friends; he was alone, without a hope, without a word of encouragement. But he resolved to cure himself, to make a man of himself out of the beast; and he did it! He did it. I don't know what God thinks of this," nodding toward the stone pillars, "built for his glory! But he ought to have looked to that man's life!"

"*He did*," said the little preacher, in a low voice. He turned abruptly away leaving Dean alone for awhile. But the Englishman, as he called him, came up presently, cheerful and eager to show him a dreadful daub of boards which purported to be an original portrait of William himself.

It was natural to Dean to be eager and cheerful about trifles and to welcome new friends readily. Men beset by his vice are usually generous and warm-hearted and easily pleased.

Dean had unfortunately inherited great wealth, and had begun his married life by loitering idly through Europe for years. There his enemy suddenly leaped on him like a wolf in the dark and vanquished him. His wife's father, Doctor Gilroy, came to help him. His patience had been short-lived. Molly clung to him; but the day came at last when Molly, ill and unconscious, was taken away and he was left in the hospital—mindless, a mere beast, sick unto death.

He had never seen his wife or boy again. His letters were returned by Dr. Gilroy unopened. He had lived on alone, fighting his fight, keeping out of the way of traveling Americans, hiding in secluded corners of France or Germany. He was afraid to go back until he was sure of himself. He kept his little picture of Mary with Tom in her arms beside him day and night. He would never go back until he was fit to meet her clear, sad eyes, and to take his child in his arms.

Now, after these four years, he knew that he had won the victory. He was sure of himself. He would never fall again.

He never had blamed his wife. Her father was a stern, rigid Scotchman, and had thought it right to persuade Mary that her husband had sunk lower than ever in vice. Any course was right, he thought, to protect her from him.

A month ago Dean had written to Mary, sending a letter by a messenger in New York, who was charged to find her and deliver it into her own hands. He had told her the story of his long struggle and his triumph. He would not go to her until she recalled him. He made no appeal to her; but it seemed as if every day of these years of agony cried aloud to her in the few matter of fact words.

He had counted the days until the letter would reach her. Being an eager, impulsive fellow himself, he fancied she would not write but would cable him.

Perhaps she would only say "Come." That would be enough. He kept his trunks strapped, that a moment need not be lost when the message arrived.

A week on that slow voyage, and then! He was sure she would go back to the house where they had begun to make their home. Every little thing in it told of those first happy days. He would sit by the fire again with Molly close beside him and Tom on his knee.

But it was far too late now to hope for a dispatch. The time for a letter was almost past. But the messenger, perhaps, did not find her at once; the mails were delayed.

At four o'clock that afternoon the letters brought by the last steamer would be in. To pass away the hours until then Dean called a fiacre and drove the little preacher around the old gray city. There was a good augury, he thought, in the home accent—the English words.

It was a warm November day. They drove out into the country roads. A soft haze drifted over the sweeps of rich pasture, the fields, still blood red with the stubble of the luzerne, the sparkling little black rivers, and the comfortable farm-houses, with their roofs of soft, reddish-brown thatch and walls green with moss.

"The sheep are huge," said Mr. Floyd, "and so are the shepherdesses, for that matter. They have snug homes to thank God for, if they are thatched. This is Thanksgiving Day, by the way, in the States."

Mr. Dean said nothing; but a sudden choking rose in his throat. Thanksgiving Day? That was another good omen. God couldn't disappoint him on the day when everybody was reckoning up their mercies—surely? Yet he had not really thought of God in this long fight. Only of Molly and Tom.

He turned abruptly and drove to Matilda's great church of *La Sainte Trinité*.

"Here is the way in which our poor French brothers give thanks," he said, leading the way into a chapel. Around the altar were hung innumerable cheap little tablets, inscribed with the day and year on which some signal of mercy had been vouchsafed to the giver. Dean translated some of them for his companion, his voice a little unsteady. "'A mother for the life of her child, May 2d.' 'Louis and José, rescued from drowning, August 6th.' 'Marie has heard my prayer, June 24th.' 'My sin has been forgiven.'"

The fat little minister stood, with his hat in his hand, nodding eagerly, his face full of sympathy.

"I've no doubt they are just as sincere as we Americans are with our Thanksgiving sermon and big dinner," he said, when they went out. "'Marie,' eh? A pity—a pity! But the poor creatures mean well! What is this?" Dean was leading him away from the church through a green field to the buildings of *l'Hôtel Dieu*.

"It is a hospital, 'God's house,' founded by Matilda. It has been ever since her day a refuge for the sick and poor."

They climbed a grassy hill through circling paths shaded by great lime trees to an ancient stone set at the top, from which they looked down into the beautiful gardens of the hospital. Some convalescent patients in blue blouses sat in the sunshine, tended by the white-robed nuns.

"You see, I—I don't hold at all with Romanists," said Mr. Floyd, anxiously; "yet that woman, you say, started this good work in the world eight centuries ago, and other women have kept it up ever since. It really looks as if God helped us to do right, no matter what we are."

"Yes; it certainly does," Dean said, his eyes kindling suddenly, "We will drive back now; it is nearly mail time." Every trifling remark suggested encouragement and promise.

The clock struck four as the two men entered the court of the inn, and met the *facteur* turning away from Madame's office. A letter lay on the desk. She smiled, "*Pour vous, Monsieur*."

Dean took it; it was not the white envelop with dear Mary's dear old illegible scratches on it, which he had thought of for a month. This was a business letter; the writing was that of the agent in New York whom he had employed to find his wife. Dean walked to a quiet corner in the archway of the court, and slowly opened it. He read:

"I regret to state that Mrs. Dean has removed to the West, whither it was impossible for me to follow her. I forwarded your letter by her bankers in New York. She received it a week ago."

"She has not answered! She does not mean to answer!" John Dean said aloud, staring at the gray stones on the wall. Then his eye caught another line of the letter:

"It think it only right to send you the inclosed clipping. It is from the personal column of the *Daily Budget* of yesterday."

A newspaper slip was pasted below. It said:

"It is rumored that the well-known Boston banker, Mr. Peter Maret, is soon to marry Mrs. Dean, the daughter of Dr. F. Gilroy, of this city. Mrs. Dean, it is understood, is residing temporarily in the West, for the purpose of obtaining more easily freedom from the unfortunate marriage contracted in her youth."

"Divorced? Married again?" John Dean walked slowly down the crooked street, mechanically tearing the letter into pieces. The *portier* of the inn met him, and, seeing his ghastly face, turned and followed him irresolutely.

"*Monsieur est malade*?" he ventured at last, touching him, when he did not answer, on the arm.

John smiled and said "No," and walked on steadily. He did not know who had spoken to him. He did not know what this town was where he was.

The fight was over, and it had been of no use. Mary was divorced from him. She was going to marry again. It had been of no use.

It is better that we should not spy upon Dean during the hour that followed. At the end of it he found himself standing before a little cabaret. He could see the rows of clean, shining bottles on the shelves inside. There was cognac and absinthe.

There was—forgetfulness.

He stood motionless for a long time. "I can bear no more," he said to himself, quietly at last. "I can forget in that way, and soon creep out of life." He opened the door and gave his order, throwing some money on the table. The woman behind it poured out the liquor and pushed it toward him. Half a dozen men were drinking gayly. The absinthe apparently had but a temporary influence over them. It would be different with him. He thought of that.

"If I take it now I shall never be free from it again."

The smell of the liquor began to exert its power over him. He trembled; every part of his body seemed to grope for it. He took up the glass.

Why not? He was alone. There was neither wife nor child nor God to watch him or care how he died. He could bear no more; he was beaten.

Dean raised the glass to his lips and tested it. Then he set it down and went out quickly.

"I will *not* be beaten. I will *not* die like a beast," he said in a whisper, as he went down the street, weak and shivering with the physical longing for the liquor.

There had been good fighting blood in the Deans for many generations. They had bequeathed this downright grit, this respect for their own manhood, to John along with the physical disease.

With a vague purpose of escaping from the crowd, of being alone, he hurried to the grounds of the *l'Hôtel Dieu* again and climbed the little wooded hill to the old stone seat under the limes.

He had been there but a short time when hurried steps came up the hill behind him, and the little Baptist preacher appeared, panting with haste and excitement.

"I missed you, sir! I've been following you!" he cried, patting his red, perspiring face with his handkerchief. "I've been searching for you all through Caen. But—you are ill?"

"No, I am not ill." John stood stiffly erect. "But I have some to—consider. You must pardon me, Mr. Floyd, I prefer to be alone now."

"Surely. No offence," said the preacher, still breathless. "I don't wish to intrude, Mr. Dean. I did not know that you *were* Mr. Dean until I went back to the hotel or all of these hours need not have been wasted. Stop! Don't go! You must be patient. I must explain. I did not expect to find you in Caen. I telegraphed to you at Rouen this morning before I saw you"—

"What do you mean?"

"I came to Europe to find you, or rather, I came in charge of a person who wished to find you"—

John started forward with a harsh cry. "She—she came!"

"There, sir! Coming up the hill." It was Molly and little Tom.

Mr. Floyd went hastily down the path through the limes, not glancing back once at the group on the old seat. He laughed to himself, but there was a sob in his throat.

The day was nearly over. He was a little homesick and wondered how Brother Tisdale had succeeded with his Thanksgiving sermon. Sarah and the children would be sitting down to the roast turkey and mince pie by this time. As for him, there was not a Baptist meeting house within hundreds of miles; these poor French creatures had never heard of Thanksgiving.

The sun was setting: the mighty towers of the two old Norman churches rose victorious with the worship of ages into the red light of heaven; below in the garden the kindly nuns were leading their patients under shelter; from the chapel came the soft rejoicing music of a vesper hymn. Yonder on the hill was a man rescued from death, beginning life again with love and home and God.

The Baptist minister drew a long breath. "I'd like to be at home to day, I don't deny," he thought. "Yet here, too, it is Thanksgiving Day."

PHILADELPHIA, PENN.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

A scholarly edition of Davis's ***A Law Unto Herself*** (1878) is being edited by Mischa Renfroe and is forthcoming in the University of Nebraska Press's *Legacies of 19th-Century American Women Writers* Series.

A collection of Davis's **letters** relating to her business correspondence with editors is being prepared by Robin Cadwallader.

Sharon Harris is currently writing a **biography** of Davis.

UPCOMING EVENTS – CALL FOR PAPERS

The Society for the Study of Rebecca Harding Davis and Her World will organize one session at the annual conference of the American Literature Association. The conference will be held May 2012 at the Hyatt Regency (Embarcadero Center) in San Francisco, California. For further information about the conference, please consult the ALA website at www.americanliterature.org.

To encourage scholarship on a wide range of issues on Davis's work and her world, we are planning an "Open Topic" session. We are interested in proposals that touch on any topic in Davis's work and especially welcome proposals that draw attention to her lesser-known texts. Presentations will be limited to 15-20 minutes to accommodate 3 or 4 presenters.

Deadline: January 16, 2012

Please send a one-page abstract and a brief C.V. to

Mischa Renfroe
Middle Tennessee State University
mischa.renfroe@mtsu.edu

and

Melanie Scriptunas
University of Delaware
mscript@udel.edu

About the Newsletter

The Society thanks Michael Sell for maintaining the website. Past issues of the *Newsletter* are posted on the website at http://scotus.francis.edu/rebeccahardingdavis/.

If you wish to contribute items to the newsletter, please contact its editor: Sharon.Harris@uconn.edu

For membership, please complete the membership form below and mail it along with your membership dues to:

Robin L. Cadwallader
Dept. of English
Saint Francis University
Loretto, PA 15940

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Membership Form

Name:

Address:

Email:

Telephone:

This information may____ / may not____ be included in the Society's secure online Members' Directory.

Membership dues are $5.00 annually. With a two-year membership or a gift of $10 or more to the Society, you will receive a free copy of *Writing Cultural Autobiography*, a reprint of Davis's *Bits of Gossip* with additional material, edited by Janice Milner Lasseter and Sharon M. Harris.