

The Diary of Sidney George Fisher

1868-1871

FISHER's last few years were full of misery. His debts had piled up so high and were of such long standing that his creditors would not renew them. As a consequence, he was forced to take out a twenty-thousand-dollar mortgage on his farm, Mount Harmon. Fisher's credit was not good enough for him to raise this money through normal channels; he obtained it from relatives and wealthy friends of his brother Henry who were willing to help him out at probable loss to themselves. The mortgage, however, proved to be little more than a stopgap, since his financial condition grew bleaker by the year. One crop failure after another at Mount Harmon disappointed all hope of income. Worse yet, the diarist's physical decline kept step with his financial disasters; by 1870 he was a broken man in more ways than one. Only the generosity of his nieces and nephew saved him from actual want as death approached.

His diary was his last link with life aside from the companionship of his wife and child and the visits of friends. He read it through in 1871, editing out sections, particularly passages in its early volumes. In June alone, he read twenty-four volumes, and in July, the last month of his life, he read the remaining nine, scrawling on the title page of each "Read July 1871."

This is the twenty-fourth and final installment of selections from the diary to appear in this *Magazine*. The first was printed in the April, 1952, issue. It was followed by installments in the next four numbers, and was then discontinued. In April, 1955, its publication was resumed for three more issues, and then again stopped until January, 1962, when it was taken up once more and flowed through all four issues of that year, 1963, 1964, and, now, 1965.

January 20, 1868 Another volume begun. I wish I could know how it will end; whether it will tell a story of good or ill luck, of

happiness or misery. The wish however, tho it arises naturally, is an unwise one, unless with foreknowledge of evil we could possess the power to avert it, which would be a contradiction. We have as much of the knowledge & the power as is good for us, for we can, to a certain extent, foresee events by knowing the causes which produce them, & control facts & events, by controlling the causes. We are not entirely ignorant of the forces—moral, intellectual, & physical—that promote health, wealth, and honor among men, domestic joy & inward peace & their opposites, and over these forces we have greater or less control, so that he who is guided by wisdom & conscience into the right paths is generally sure of reaching a happy journey's end.

January 27, 1868 Bet & I some days ago received an invitation to a lunch at John W. Field's. She accepted for me & declined for herself. Mr. Dickens, who is now here, reading his novels with as much success as in New York, was expected to be present.¹ So, having got thro my business, I drove up to the house in 18th St. on the east side of Rittenhouse Square at 2 o'clock. There was quite a large party, but Mr. Dickens did not come. It is said that he accepts no invitations. It was all very pleasant, the house is large & handsome, the lunch was excellent, there was no crowd yet the rooms were well filled, & there were some very pretty & two or three beautiful girls. I have been so long out of the habit of going to parties that I saw but few familiar faces and thought the tone & manner of the company, as a whole, decidedly inferior to what our society displayed when I was young. Sally Wilcocks was there & I talked chiefly to her, Miss Emily Ashhurst, Meta McCall, & one or two men. Made a good dinner for I was hungry, drank hock, sherry, champagne, & punch & came away at 5 o'clock. Mr. Henry C. Carey was at the party & told me [he] had sent me a pamphlet that morning. Stopped at the post office on my way out, & got two—one called "Review of the Decade 1857-1867," & the other "Reconstruction—Industrial, Financial, & Political."² Read the first in the evening. Like everything Carey writes it is in bad taste as to manner & style—dogmatic, extreme, one-sided—yet his arguments are to a certain extent sound & the doctrines he defends, if true, are most important. He has a great reputation abroad. Was much disappointed that I

¹ Charles Dickens' readings took place at Concert Hall.

² Henry C. Carey (1793-1879) published both these pamphlets in Philadelphia in 1867.

missed seeing Dickens. Bought his photo this morning & paste it here. Certainly a head and face very striking & expressive. Would go to hear him read but dislike the effort of a night drive.

February 20, 1868 Bet went to town at 12. The carriage came back at 3 bringing a note from her that her Uncle Joe was dying & that I was to send in for her at 8 o'clock. Sidney & I dined & spent the evening together & I heard him say his lessons. He is quick & apt to learn. Bet came out at 10 o'clock. Mr. Ingersoll died at 5½ without effort or suffering of any kind, quietly breathing his last.³

February 24, 1868 Got to Mr. Ingersoll's house at 11½. Found quite a large company, notwithstanding Charles' restrictions,⁴ or rather quite a number came before the funeral started at 12 o'clock. I went in Mr. I's carriage with Harry, Charles, & Edward.⁵ The service was performed in St. Peter's Church, & the coffin carried thence to the vault, where some additional service was performed, which would have been better done in the church, as it was very cold, the ground was deeply covered with snow, & it was snowing, a severe exposure to many present. At the church there were a good many people who did not go to the house, so that quite as many were present as anyone could desire.

Returned to the house as I came. On the way Charles invited us to be present at the reading of the will. In a few minutes all parties interested or supposed possibly to be so—Mr. Ingersoll's nephews and the husbands of his nieces—assembled. The will was produced and read by Alex Wilcocks. With the exception of a few legacies to churches & charities, the whole estate is equally to be divided between Charles & Mary Wilcocks.⁶ . . . When the reading was concluded, Charles said, "Well gentlemen, this is a surprise to me." No one else said a word, but all quickly dispersed, each anxious, no doubt, to carry home the news. . . . Bet called for me in half an hour & we came out to dinner at 5. Although neither of us ever expected anything from Uncle Joe, so as to found calculations & plans, yet it was impossible not to have hopes, for it was a thing

³ Joseph Reed Ingersoll.

⁴ Charles Ingersoll, the diarist's brother-in-law, had wanted the funeral to be a private family affair, despite his uncle's public career and distinguished position in the community.

⁵ Harry, Charles, and Edward Ingersoll.

⁶ Mary Wilcocks had lived many years with her uncle, Joseph Reed Ingersoll, who considered her as a daughter.

very natural & probable that he should leave her something very handsome, considering simply the relation between them.

March 5, 1868 Edwd Ingersoll here in the morning. I was in want of money for daily expences & did not know where to get it. There will be due in April 6 mos. interest, \$450, on Kusenberg's mortgage, which Edwd receives for Bet. It struck me that Kusenberg⁷ would pay that sum or part of it now, if I asked him. I told this to Edward & asked him to give me a rect. to Kusenberg for the money. He replied by offering in a very kind manner to lend me \$200, which I accepted. I am glad to record this.

March 7, 1868 Muirheid⁸ . . . told me that the only way to get the money needed [*to refinance Fisher's debts by a mortgage on Mount Harmon*] was to borrow it from Liedy & Ellen.⁹ For many reasons this is a bitter thing for me to do. I told him it would be the last resort. Saw Hollis.¹⁰ He said the same thing. From what they both said, my affairs, & difficulties, & means, & expences are the town talk. How terrible all this is to me I cannot express. How much is no doubt said that is not true & what ill-natured comments are made, I can easily imagine. I am exasperated & indignant & feel one desire more strongly than any, & that is to go away, anywhere, 'to get out of such mortifications & insults.

March 9, 1868 The Life Insurance Company will do nothing & to make up the sum required I *must* ask Liedy & Ellen & Elizth Fisher.¹¹ It is a bitter thing to do, though I am sure they will at once comply with such a request and it is all the more painful on that account to make it. Determined to apply to Miffin Wistar,¹² because I knew that he would if he conveniently could lend the money & would also refuse it, if it were not convenient. Accordingly, called to see him. He received my proposition exactly in the proper manner, said he would be very glad to oblige me if possible, & would send me an answer the next day.

March 10, 1868 A note from Dr. Wistar this morning sent by a servant, regretting that he could not offer the amount I wanted on

⁷ Alfred Kusenberg, sugar refiner.

⁸ Charles H. Muirheid.

⁹ The diarist's nieces.

¹⁰ P. C. Hollis, the diarist's financial adviser.

¹¹ Elizabeth R. Fisher, cousin of the diarist.

¹² Dr. Miffin Wistar had married a cousin of the diarist.

mortgage, & enclosing a cheque for \$500, which he hoped I would keep for a long time. Wrote an answer thanking him & enclosing my promissory note of same amount payable on demand.

March 11, 1868 Went up to Wakefield. Saw Betty.¹³ Told Betty I wanted to borrow \$1,000. She was kind as possible—said she could not spare it out of her income but would consult Wm. Wister & see if she could manage by changing an investment. No one could have behaved better, but it was a dreadful business for me. This \$1,000 is to be in addition to the \$500 I already owe & both are to be secured by the mortgage.

March 12, 1868 Went to town. Our lane is a deep bog & it is hard work for Trustee to pull the carriage thro. All the lanes around us are nearly as bad, and that there should be such roads within 4 miles of a city of 700,000 people shows what sort of government we are living under. Went to see Wm. Wister. He said Betty would lend me the \$1,000. There was nothing now to be done but to apply to Liedy & Ellen, both of age & fully able to lend the money out of their income. William went with me to speak to Hollis. He said he would advise them to lend together \$3,500, William thought the balance necessary to make up the amount needed. . . . Hateful work this, but I can't help it.

March 16, 1868 Went to town, chiefly to get a cook & waiter, as those we have are too bad for endurance &, besides, say they are going on Thursday. They do as they please. Called at Mrs. Bourke's intelligence¹⁴ & she promised to send out two on Thursday. I have small hope of getting anything much better as the most respectable servants do not go to intelligence offices, neither are they willing at this season to go to the country.

Met Mrs. George Meade in the street. She asked if I had sent to her husband the letter of introduction to Forman¹⁵ that I promised him. I said that I had & requested her to write to Meade¹⁶ & inquire if he had delivered it & with what result. She is very weak & says foolish things, calculated to injure Meade. She is very jealous of

¹³ Wakefield was the name of Elizabeth R. Fisher's property.

¹⁴ Anna M. Bourke's intelligence office was at 302 Union St.

¹⁵ Thomas Marsh Forman (1809-1875) of Georgia was a former Maryland neighbor of Fisher's, his property adjoining Mount Harmon.

¹⁶ Gen. George Gordon Meade (1815-1872) was transferred in January, 1868, to Atlanta, where he commanded the Third Military District of the Department of the South.

Genl Grant, and abused him, saying that he was a drunkard and a liar & had tried to rob Meade of credit due to him &c. She made similar remarks to me on different occasions during the war & I know she said the same things to others. "Save me from my friends." Whatever else she may be, such a wife is a misfortune for a man in Meade's position. She told me that she had been reading a book entitled "80 years of the Republic" by an author named Jennings,¹⁷ in which the Trial of the Constitution¹⁸ was frequently quoted & referred to. As I do not often get such compliments, of course I went for it to the Library & brought it out with me.¹⁹ Looked over it in the evening. The author was a correspondent of the London Times. The book is not well written, but it shows some thought & cleverness &, as Mrs. Meade said, has frequent quotations from the Trial of the Constitution. It has gone to a second edition in England & has been reprinted here.

March 20, 1868 Went to town. Saw Muirheid & Hollis. Liedy & Ellen insisted on lending me on mortgage each \$3,000. I expected something of the kind & am glad to see their generous impulses & greatly obliged by their good feeling towards me. There is the difficulty—I am *too much* obliged & did not need such a proof of their excellence & regard. This makes up the sum required. To get it was necessary; what it may lead to & what may be the next step imposed by necessity is a secret of the mysterious future. I can only do what seems best at the present moment, determining to control the future for good, so far as my will & action can, & more than that no man can do. Finished Jennings book. Parts of it are moderately well written & the whole shows ability. He has made a strong statement & a true one, of some of the evils that democracy causes in this country, corruption gross & universal in all branches & details of the government, the rule of vulgar, ignorant, & dishonest demagogues and the tyranny of the majority, which is necessarily composed of the lower classes in each party, exercised at the elections & of their representatives, by the abuse of the "previous question," in the

¹⁷ Lewis John Jennings, *Eighty Years of republican Government in the United States* (New York, 1868).

¹⁸ Fisher's book, *The Trial of the Constitution*, was published in Philadelphia in 1862.

¹⁹ All references to the Library or to the City Library refer to the Library Company of Philadelphia.

legislatures. He has evidently got some of his leading ideas, particularly about the judiciary & its power over Congress & the difficulty of altering the Constitution at need, from my book, which he quotes in many places.

Was surprised by a visit this morning from Mr. Hinton Rowan Helper, author of the book which some years or so before the war caused such an excitement throughout the country—"The Impending Crisis."²⁰ The work was a very coarse & violent, but a forcible & telling attack on slavery & slaveowners, not induced by any feeling for the Negroes, but by sympathy for the nonslaveholding whites, whom he justly represented as condemned to ignorance & poverty by slavery & its consequences, want of capital & diversified pursuits that would, if permitted to grow up in the South, give employment to white labor. His book created a furious storm of passion at the time, in Congress, in the South, & indeed everywhere, had an immense sale & no doubt exerted much influence, as it was well suited to popular taste. I did not at all admire it, tho there was force in its arguments & in the startling facts by which they were supported. He sent his card into the library, where I was sitting & was showed in. He is a tall, good looking man, rather an agreeable face, but evidently, at first sight, underbred, tho there is nothing offensive in his manners. He said he had come to consult me as to the best means of restoring the prosperity of the South! I told him that this was a difficult question on which, after much reflection I had been unable to make up my mind. He then spoke of my book on Race²¹ which he greatly liked & said he was about to publish one in relation to the influence of the Negro race in the South,²² in which he intended largely to quote mine & concluded by offering me all the *profits* of the intended publication, if I would look over & *amend* the Mss & find a publisher who would print it. I, of course, declined this honor, but told him he would have no difficulty in finding a publisher, if he would pay the expences, & recommended Lippincott. He said that he was too poor at this time to pay expences, but would see Lippincott.

March 23, 1868 Mrs. Harry McCall here in the morning, a great proof of friendship as I told her, to come thro our lane, which

²⁰ Hinton Rowan Helper's book was published in 1858.

²¹ *The Laws of Race, as Connected with Slavery* (Philadelphia, 1860).

²² *Negroes in Negroland*, published in 1868.

is in a shocking condition. She found it so bad that she would not return by it, but tried 6th St. & I fear found it as bad. All the lanes in the neighborhood are almost impassable, being wholly neglected by the supervisors, who are low party hacks, rewarded with the office for party services. They are generally vulgar loafers who spend most of their time at taverns. The mud in our lane is hub deep, wagons are stalled in it every day, John Dunn,²³ in returning this morning from taking Sidney to school, broke an axle & it is really dangerous to travel over it, impossible at night. Yet if one should complain to the highway commissioners about the matter he would be laughed at. Mrs. McCall very kind & very amusing. She sympathized in our trouble with servants and promised to try to send us some in place of the Yahoos who are now our plague.

April 1, 1868 At Mrs. Biddle's²⁴ saw a portrait by Sully of Miss Elizabeth Wadsworth.²⁵ Very beautiful, the characteristic expression caught. This is Sully's great merit & shows that he is a true artist. He idealized but his pictures were always likenesses. He is still alive, but very old & very poor.²⁶

April 4, 1868 Muirheid's clerk came out with the mortgage and in the afternoon a notary came to take Bet's acknowledgment. He & his wife were the witnesses. So another step of importance has been made; whether it is another step downward on the road to ruin or the *first* upward to something better, time only can show. How painful it is to me to mortgage Mt. Harmon, what misery & mortification I have endured for the last month to get the money, I need not attempt to describe. If the lesson has been bitter, it has also been tonic & medicinal; I think I am a sadder, a wiser man for it. I neither like nor respect the world as much as I did and feel a stronger love and desire than ever for a secluded & retired life.

A change of air & scene & freedom from the daily plague of household affairs would do Bet a great deal of good, & Richfield water, Dr. Wister²⁷ says, probably prove beneficial. At any rate, I *must* go as usual. Muirheid says I could no doubt rent this place for \$1,000

²³ The gardener at Forest Hill.

²⁴ Mrs. William Biddle.

²⁵ The beautiful Elizabeth Wadsworth of Geneseo, N. Y., married Charles Augustus Murray of England.

²⁶ Thomas Sully (1783-1872).

²⁷ Dr. Owen J. Wister.

from June 1 to October. We therefore think of all going to Richfield on the first of June & staying till October there, or part of September elsewhere, provided we can find a suitable tenant. We should make \$1,000 by doing this, a matter of much importance at this time.

April 5, 1868 Edward Ingersoll & then Clark Hare²⁸ here in the afternoon. We had some talk about the impeachment case now in progress in Washington. Edward, of course, opposed it, because he is a Democrat and a partizan. Clark thought the proceeding impolitic, because Johnson's term would so soon expire & Congress had him pretty securely under its control. I thought he ought to be impeached & expelled simply because he had been guilty of "high crimes & misdemeanors" over & over again & deserved it & it was the duty of Congress to vindicate the dignity & decorum of the Executive office as well as to require the President to execute the laws; and that always it is good policy to obey the behests of duty. The trial excites very little interest among the people & it is not of much consequence, except for the precedent, how it is decided.

April 26, 1868 Charles Ingersoll came whilst we were at dinner. He is some three or four years older than I am, yet what a difference, I weak & lame & scarcely a moment free from pain, he, vigorous, active, in perfect health, handsome & fresh in his complexion & looking like a man of 40. A grandfather too. All his daughters are satisfactorily married and by the death of his uncle Joe, he is rich. He was in good spirits & pleasant.

April 29, 1868 Got a note from Muirheid. He says there are a number of applicants to rent this place. It is a hateful thing to do, but, if we all are to go away to a watering place, it must be done to pay expences. How mortifying! I feel as if I had sunk into an inferior caste, & then to have strangers introduced into one's home & familiar with its sacred places. All this for want of *money*, which is the Lord of modern life.

May 5, 1868 Read Nathan the Wise by Lessing,²⁹ one of his best works that I got yesterday from the library, where, by the way, I lunched. It was the day for electing the directors & it is a custom to have a collation for the stockholders on that day—cold meat, bread, & cheese, & punch.

²⁸ Judge John Innes Clark Hare.

²⁹ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Nathan the Wise* (New York, 1868).

May 10, 1868 At 11 o'clock Henry Muirheid came to tell me that George Smith³⁰ yesterday morning at 10½ o'clock had an attack of paralysis and has been unconscious ever since. He was on his way to Brookwood to take the news there. I wrote a note to Liedy & also one to Elizabeth Fisher, for him to leave at Wakefield. Went to town at 12½. Driving up Walnut St., I saw the windows of Joshua Fisher's³¹ house bowed & I knew what had happened. When I got to George's house, there was crepe on the bell handle. Saw Alexander,³² Mrs. Coles & Mrs. Rush³³ & Miss Coles in the parlor. For several days George had been much better & more than usually cheerful. Yesterday morning when he woke, he said he felt better & Mary³⁴ went down to prepare breakfast for him. As he did not come when she expected, she went up to his room, & found him lying on the bed in an unusual attitude & his countenance much changed. "Why George," said she, "what is the matter." "Paralysis" he replied, & that was the last word he spoke. He remained insensible until this morning about 11 o'clock, when he died. I went up to see the body. The face somewhat distorted. I felt stunned & could not analyze my emotions, could not realize what had happened. . . . So another event of importance in my life is reached. An old & intimate friend, the best I ever had—gone.

May 13, 1868 East wind & rain all day. Th. 56. Shall we ever be able to dig or plow or plant?

This is May, the month of May,
 The time of leaves & roses,
 When pleasant sights should meet the eye
 And pleasant smells the noses.
 The weathercock has rushed East,
 The blue sky is forgotten,
 The earth's a saturated sponge
 And vegetation rotten.
 I hate to see the darker side,
 I hate to be complaining,
 But hang me if my temper stands
 This raining, raining, raining.

³⁰ George R. Smith.

³¹ Joshua Francis Fisher, cousin of the diarist.

³² Alexander Smith, brother of George R. Smith.

³³ Mrs. Edward Coles and Mrs. William Rush, sisters of Mrs. Smith.

³⁴ Mrs. George R. Smith, the former Mary Roberts.

May 18, 1868 A letter from Yates.³⁵ He says the peach crop is a *failure*.

June 5, 1868 Sidney is very fond of reading, also of farming & gardening & takes a very intelligent interest in all going on, has his own little patches for corn, etc, which he works himself, milks one of the cows, has pigeons & a workshop, turkies, ducks, & chickens & a general superintendence of the whole place. I encourage all this, of course. It is not only good for his health, but it gives him a taste for simple pleasures, attaches him to home, and teaches him lessons from nature more valuable than those he gets at school.

June 14, 1868 Met Clark Hare when I was in town last & he asked me to dine with him today, which I promised to do. He has rented Meadow Bank, at Alverthorpe³⁶ and moved out a month ago or more. At 1, started with John Dunn to drive in the farm wagon & Trustee. Went by the York Road & drove slowly, as the weather was hot. Got to the house at 2¼. Dined about 3. A daughter of Richd Montgomery, a young girl, & some old lady, I forget her name, a friend of Mrs. Hare, at the table. Staid till 5, rather a long time for talk with Clark who never pauses and who seems incapable of thinking of any but the gravest topics, requiring a constant effort to answer or to follow him—such as the immortality of the soul, the existence of a God, liberty & necessity, man's mysterious destiny here & hereafter, questions of general politics & Constitutional law. To be sure he converses on these subjects sensibly, but he is sometimes prosy & often by no means profound or logical, &, after all, there is such a thing as becoming weary of philosophy at dinner & one cannot help longing for a variety of topics or even for intervals of silence. They are comfortably established at Meadow Bank, the house is sufficient & the grounds, tho not extensive are thickly shaded with trees & shrubbery. It is the original farm house on the place when Fisher bought it, & which he altered & improved as he did the ground about it & with so much taste that he made a nice, pretty place out of one that was homely and plain as possible. He lived there till he built the house he now lives in & since he has lived there has rented this, furnished, for the summer. It seemed very familiar to me, as I was in the habit of being there a great deal many years

³⁵ Yates had replaced Severson as the diarist's farmer at Mount Harmon.

³⁶ Alverthorpe was the countryseat of Joshua Francis Fisher.

ago, persuaded him indeed to get a farm at all, went with him to look at this place, with the aid of Mr. & Mrs. Harrison³⁷ induced him to buy it, & used to go out with him constantly & spend several days at a time, he superintending the improvements. I like the place, & the country around, which is very beautiful, well cultivated, healthy, with pure water, micaceous soil & elastic cool air. Stopped at Alverthorpe for a few moments as I drove thro on my way home. Would not get out, but had some talk at the door with the Lord & Lady of the Manor. Sophie is to be married in a week or two to Mr. Coxe.³⁸

June 19, 1868 Met Geo. Meade. He looking very well, in fine spirits and about to return to Atlanta to resume his command. He said he had been well received by the Southern people of all parties & treated with kindness & hospitality. It had even been proposed to him to allow himself to be nominated as the Southern candidate for the Presidency, which honor he declined, as he had no wish to have any connection with politics.

June 20, 1868 The advertisement in the North American of this morning.

FURNISHED COUNTRY HOUSE

Four miles from town; communication every twenty minutes, at five minutes' walk, by horse cars, and every hour, at fifteen minutes' walk, by steam; 14 rooms, well furnished; 5 acres of lawn, shaded by large forest trees; stable; garden, planted; ice house filled; use of three cows. Apply to

C. H. & H. P. MUIRHEID,
205 South 6th Street.

and it was answered this afternoon by a gentleman named Preault,³⁹ who came with his wife & daughter in a handsome equipage, bringing a note from Muirheid. Showed them the grounds & house. They expressed themselves much pleased with everything, & Mr. P. promised to give Muirheid an answer on Monday. They are evidently highly respectable people & I hope may take the place.

June 23, 1868 Saw Muirheid. Mr. Preault declines taking the house. He says all his servants would leave him because of the cellar kitchen. This is a great disappointment. Had he taken the place \$800

³⁷ Mr. & Mrs. George Harrison, who left their large fortune to Joshua Francis Fisher.

³⁸ Eckley B. Coxe.

³⁹ Presumably Henry Preaut, a merchant who lived at 2008 Walnut St.

would have been added to our income, which would have helped to make up the deficiency caused by failure of the peach crop.

June 25, 1868 Poor little Dandy, a black & tan terrier that I brought up from Mount Harmon about five years ago, died this morning, much regretted by us all. He was very handsome, affectionate, & intelligent. What a mystery are these creatures! They have passions, affections, ideas, therefore a spiritual nature. If so, have they immortal souls?

June 30, 1868 The peach crop is a *total* failure. When I was down last, I thought there might be 500 baskets, but the fruit has all fallen off & there will not be 500 peaches. We expected in the early spring from 8,000 to 10,000 baskets, which would have been a fair crop from the quantity of land, 100 acres. The apple crop is almost a failure. When I was down before the trees were loaded, but nearly all have fallen, & instead of 600 barrels, which I expected, there will not be 100. These two failures make a difference in my estimate of rent of at least \$3,000, a heavy blow. What is to become of us, I cannot tell. On the other hand, all the other crops promise well—corn, oats, potatoes, & grass, but the farm cannot pay this year more than half as much as it did last. The prospect for next year is very good.

July 2, 1868 A letter from Muirheid that he has rented the place for \$600 to a Mr. Edwin L. Levis.

October 4, 1868 There is not much worth recording, happily no misfortune, of the time spent since my last entry in this volume. Bet finished with the help of Bridget the vexatious job of getting our house ready for the strangers on Thursday July 9 & was much exhausted by the effort & the very hot weather & also distressed at the thought of leaving home and all its comforts. . . . At 10 o'clock on Friday, we started in the carriage driven by John Dunn, having sent forward the luggage by John Welsh⁴⁰ for the station at Kensington. . . . After a good deal of trouble at the station at Kensington to get tickets & checks for luggage, we started at 11 o'clock. Found in the cars Mr. & Mrs. Sam Chew & her sister Miss Brown, on their way to Long Branch. Had a pleasant run to New York where we arrived about 3. Went to the steamer where we met Muirheid.⁴¹ Our

⁴⁰ John Welsh was the farmer at Forest Hill.

⁴¹ Charles H. Muirheid had secured the staterooms for the Fishers.

staterooms were secured & we went to them, put away our carpet bags & rested for half an hour. We then got a carriage & drove up to Delmonico's restaurant at the corner of 5th Avenue & 14th St. I wished Bet & Sidney to see that famous establishment & that part of New York, for both are well worth seeing as they mark the highest point in luxury & costliness, I do not mean comfort & good taste, yet reached in America, & both are characteristic of New York. Delmonico's is a large & handsome building, containing two spacious saloons, richly decorated & furnished for a restaurant, besides a number of parlors for private parties. The cooking, the service, the linen, glass, china, etc are all very good. The prices are high, of course. . . . Our dinner, a very moderate one, cost us \$5, of which 20 cents was an extra charge for finger glasses, which we asked for, but which at such an establishment one would have thought would have been as much of course as napkins.

We drove back to the steamboat a little before six, the hour she sailed. We had two comfortable adjoining staterooms. We sat on deck till it was time to go to bed, enjoying a cool breeze from the water & the sight of the river & its shores, the latter crowded with costly & well kept countryseats. We reached Albany the next morning in time to get a hurried breakfast at the Delavan & to reach the western cars. . . . At Herkimer we took the stagecoach and at 3 arrived at Richfield after a most fatiguing journey from Herkimer, for the road is hilly, the weather was intensely hot, & the pace about 3 miles an hour thro the dust.

A few days after we arrived came Chas Gibbons & Mr. Cooper,⁴² who I was very glad to see. . . . Besides these were Mr. & Mrs. Heyward Drayton, Lloyd P. Smith, the librarian,⁴³ Freas of Germantown, editor of the *Germantown Telegraph*,⁴⁴ J. Smith Homans of N. York, editor of the *Banker's Magazine*, and Admiral Porter. . . .⁴⁵

I had a good deal of talk with Admiral Porter. . . . He is intimate with Gen. Grant, whose election he considered sure & who in case of trouble with the South he said would certainly be made dictator

⁴² Cooper was a bachelor from Camden, N. J.

⁴³ Lloyd P. Smith (1822-1886) had succeeded his father John Jay Smith (1798-1881) as librarian of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

⁴⁴ Philip R. Freas of the weekly *Germantown Telegraph*.

⁴⁵ Vice-Admiral David Dixon Porter (1813-1891).

& be supported by the army & navy as one man. This result, Porter evidently desired. He hates democracy & universal suffrage, for says he "it makes us all slaves," & can see no way out of its dangers other than military despotism. I did not like the tone in which he said all this. It was that of a man who looked forward to such a result, not with regret as a dismal & dreary consequence of mob rule, but with satisfaction as a triumph for himself & his friends. Porter's opinions are of no consequence. . . .⁴⁶

We left Richfield Sept. 1, and instead of going by Herkimer took a carriage & drove to Little Falls on the Central Railroad. . . . At Little Falls we waited half an hour at a wretched station for the cars. There was the usual rush & crowd & confusion to get tickets, checks, & seats, made worse on this occasion by a party of young men playing baseball in the midst of the tumult. We got places at last, but not near each other, started about 2 o'clock & after a vexatious journey reached Albany about 5. Bet very much fatigued. . . .

At seven o'clock we went on board the St. John steamer, where we had secured staterooms, had a comfortable night and got to New York about 7 o'clock. On board the boat, I checked our luggage except two carpet bags to Philadelphia, being assured by the express agent that it would go on with me by the 12 o'clock train. . . .

We left New York in the 1 o'clock line, which we soon found was a mistake as it is not an express train but stops at every village & the cars are old & dirty. The journey was very tedious & fatiguing. We found out also from the expressman that our trunks would not reach Phila till the next day, which was very vexatious. When we reached Camden, there was the usual uproar & confusion around the baggage cars, & after a great deal of trouble I discovered that our two bags did not come in the train that we did, & would not arrive till 9 o'clock at night. They contained indispensable things & Bet declared that she would not go out to Germantown without them, but would take refuge at Charles'⁴⁷ & there wait for them. This we did. [*The Fishers took lodgings in Germantown from September 3 until September 21, when their tenants left Forest Hill and they were able to return home.*]

⁴⁶ Grant thought otherwise, for he appointed Porter as an adviser to the Secretary of the Navy in March, 1869.

⁴⁷ Charles Ingersoll's house was at 512 Walnut St.

The farm & garden were in good order. John Welsh apparently did his duty faithfully & the crops were quite as good as I had reason to expect. We have got hay, oats, potatoes, corn, rye straw, & vegetables enough to give us a supply for home use, which is much more than we ever did before. At Mount Harmon, I had worse luck than usual, so bad indeed that all my troubles of last year are likely to be renewed. I got no peaches at all, instead of about 10,000 baskets as I expected, almost no apples, instead of 500 barrels, scarcely any oats & a short crop of wheat. . . . I shall again be obliged to borrow money to live.

January 1, 1869 I begin another year with another volume. I hope it may prove more fortunate than the last, for one cannot help hoping for something better even when there is small reason to expect it, which is my case. Indeed, so far as I can peer into the future, the chances are against me, as they generally are against those growing older & who have been growing poorer for some time, for the power of effort diminishes with waning strength and every day's experience proves the truth of the saying that "To him who hath shall be given & he shall have abundance, but from him who hath not shall be taken even that which he has."

January 12, 1869 The many inconveniences of Forest Hill are becoming unendurable, the chief is the impossibility of getting servants & I fear it will end in our being obliged to give it up. And to what can we go? A small cottage in Germantown seems the only resource, a *rented* house, with a little patch of land, no lawn, no farm, no space, no feeling of seclusion & privacy, *village* life.

January 14, 1869 This morning at 1 o'clock, Caldwell's magnificent jewelry store at 9th & Chestnut St. was destroyed by fire, & the adjoining stores, Howell's paper hanging & Orne's carpet establishment⁴⁸ were greatly injured. They were all three costly & very handsome buildings of white marble, erected where the house of Mr. Edward Burd stood some years ago and by his estate, and filled with valuable goods. The loss is over a million. The fire is supposed to have been caused by the explosion of a steamboiler in the basement.

January 16, 1869 I never go to the meetings of the Am. Philosophical Society, of which I was elected a member some years ago. I have been to two or three meetings and found them insuffer-

⁴⁸ Howell & Brothers, 900 Chestnut St., and J. F. & E. B. Orne, 904 Chestnut St.

ably stupid and dull. It is an old institution with a respectable reputation & I suppose does some good. It has a valuable library & collection of mss & various relics & curiosities & numbers many distinguished names among its former members. It is no great distinction to belong to it now for membership is obtained on easy terms. Nevertheless, respectability of character & social position and some scientific or literary reputation are necessary, tho less so now than in the past. My grandfathers, Thomas Fisher & Sidney George, were members.

January 17, 1869 Began table of contents of last vol. of this diary in the morning. Bet laughs at me for filling so many volumes which no one will care to read & which may possibly fall into the hands of those who ought not to read them. I tell her that I write them because it has become a habit to do so—it is a pleasant occupation & I feel interest in reading what I have written. . . .

January 24, 1869 Bet & Sidney went to Calvary Church⁴⁹ & to Edward's. Bet much pleased with this church, where she meets acquaintances & which in all respects is infinitely superior to the wretched tabernacle in the Rising Sun, which fortunately fell down some months ago.

January 26, 1869 Called to see McMichael⁵⁰ at the office of the North American in 3rd St., where he is now to be found, as he is no longer mayor. . . . He was cordial & friendly & among other things said that he would like me to collect materials & prepare a full obituary notice of *Mr. Binney*, now over 89 & who cannot be expected to remain here long.⁵¹ I told him that I was not qualified for the task. . . . I might have added that I did not fancy writing an obituary notice of a man whilst he was alive. Bet was quite shocked when I told her, & said that McMichael was as bad as Charles McCalaster, whose father being very ill, & his death expected every hour, stopped on his way to town at a friend's house & asked him to send his carriage to the funeral. "Is your father dead?" said his friend. "No," replied McCalaster, "but he cannot live thro the day and I thought I might as well stop as I was passing your gate to save the trouble of sending."

⁴⁹ Calvary Church at Manheim St. and Plank Road, Germantown.

⁵⁰ Morton McMichael.

⁵¹ Horace Binney (1780-1875).

March 18, 1869 In the evening read diaries 1849 to 1851, which include the date of my happy marriage. I suppose no one will ever read these volumes with anything like the interest that I do, as they bring back forcibly to my mind the scenes & persons of the most important period of my life, many of which would have else been forgotten. I have the vanity to think them, in part at least, well written & that the various reflections on men & things, books & public affairs are sound & well reasoned.

April 3, 1869 Edward Ingersoll here in the afternoon. Charles' play, "Women Rule," was performed at the Arch St. Theatre on the 29th ulto & was very well received.⁵² There have been favorable notices of it in the newspapers. I should like to see it acted, but it was too great an effort to go to town. It has very considerable merits, among others the rare one of genuine wit.

April 5, 1869 Edwd & Anna here.⁵³ They seem to take it for granted that we are to leave Forest Hill & live in some hovel in Germantown or some alley in town & to be much pleased at the idea. Edward is very hard, dry, practical, &, like all such people, has an immense opinion of his own infallibility, an opinion religiously held by Anna & to a very great extent by Bet. I, of course, am regarded by all as a mere dreamer whose judgment is not entitled to any respect whatever.

May 10, 1869 Called to see Mrs. Barton and had a good deal of talk with her & the Doctor.⁵⁴ . . . Their new house at Broad & South St is to be finished during the summer, & they expect to move into it in the autumn. It is a large house in a spacious lot & tho they said it was very plain, it will no doubt be very comfortable & complete. The situation is far from pleasant now, tho it will grow better rapidly as Broad St is becoming the grand avenue of the city & will soon be built up as far as South St with costly houses.

May 30, 1869 Bet & Sidney to Church. There they saw Mrs. McKean⁵⁵ who told Bet of the death of Dr. Jas. Rush & that he had left the bulk of his fortune to the City Library. She also said that

⁵² A copy of *Women Rule, A Comedy* (Philadelphia, 1868) is at the Library Company.

⁵³ Mr. & Mrs. Edward Ingersoll.

⁵⁴ Dr. & Mrs. John Rhea Barton.

⁵⁵ Mrs. Henry Pratt McKean.

Adolph Borie⁵⁶ & Judge Hoar⁵⁷ were to dine at Fern Hill⁵⁸ today. Judge Hoar is the U. S. Attorney General. Bet engaged a pew at the Church in Manheim St., \$50 per ann., another expence but there is no help for it, as she must go to church & of course must have a pew. At 5 in the afternoon drove over to Fern Hill, as I wanted to see Judge Hoar & Borie & hear what they had to say about affairs.

We sat in the hall, the fountain playing in front & the grounds in all their glory of flowers & foliage. Judge Hoar is a tall well made man, with an intelligent & agreeable countenance & well defined features. His manners are easy & affable, tho perhaps not quite thoro-bred, but gentlemanlike on the whole & the effect is to please & inspire confidence. He talks fluently & well, but more like a lawyer than a man of society. Evidently he has trained talents, but not general culture. Subordinate truths, not general principles, I should say, govern his mind, & I doubt whether he is capable of philosophical reasoning on public affairs. He is, however, I doubt not, fully competent to the duties of his office & an honorable worthy man. Such are the indications given by his countenance & manners & conversation, & such is his character. He lives in Concord, Mass., & his father was an eminent lawyer.

He is a contrast to Borie, who notwithstanding his amiable qualities, is dull & uneducated, certainly far below the standard required for a member of the cabinet, supposing him to have any authority as such, which, however, he has not, & his opinions will therefore go for what they are worth. He says, indeed, that Admiral Porter does all the real work of the department.

June 1, 1869 Dr. Rush's will in the morning paper. The whole of his estate is given to the Library and the new building is to be placed on a large lot in Broad St. at the corner of Catherine,⁵⁹ far down the street & beyond the built up part of it, therefore at a most inconvenient distance from the homes & habitual resort of all persons in the habit of using the Library. For some years to come the

⁵⁶ Adolph E. Borie (1809-1880) resigned as Secretary of the Navy on June 25, 1869.

⁵⁷ Judge Ebenezer R. Hoar (1816-1895) was one of Grant's most effective department heads.

⁵⁸ Fern Hill, the countryseat of Henry Pratt McKean.

⁵⁹ Actually, Christian St.

librarian is likely to have it all to himself.⁶⁰ The will is full of all sorts of petty restrictions & directions which will be found difficult to observe & are likely to give rise to constant litigation. As he got the whole of the property thus devolved from his wife, he very properly directs that the building be called the Ridgway Branch of the Phila. Library and declares that he founds it as a monument of his respect & regard for his father-in-law Jacob Ridgway & of his affection & gratitude to his wife. This is all very well.

June 13, 1869 Sidney at Edward's in the afternoon. I am glad for him to go there & to encourage his intimacy with Edward's children, who I hope will be his friends & companions in the future. Indeed, Edward himself is the only one from whom he could expect any kindness or care in case he should be left alone in the world.

June 29, 1869 Went to a meeting of the stockholders of the City Library, called to decide whether to accept or reject the bequest of Dr. Rush. I found quite a crowd assembled. Judge Sharswood⁶¹ was in the chair. After I entered speeches were made by Mr. Henry J. Williams, the executor of Dr. Rush, explaining his position in the matter & advocating neither side, & by Mr. Flanders,⁶² P. McCall,⁶³ Clark Hare, Wm Tilghman, Jos. Clay, Fred. Fraley, Judge Cadwalader,⁶⁴ & others—all of them, except those of Hare & Williams, miserable trash I thought. Indeed it is wonderful what supreme nonsense men occupying positions requiring ability can talk. It was very hot & I was excessively tired, so I went away before the meeting adjourned & heard afterwards that it was determined not to decide the question till next October. The stockholders were divided in opinion, many being opposed to accepting the bequest. It is hampered by so many conditions that, tho a million is a large sum, it is doubtful whether the usefulness of the Library would be promoted by it.

July 24, 1869 If I go at all, I ought now to start for Richfield or the Virginia Springs, but I must wait for some more peach money.

⁶⁰ The site of the Ridgway Branch of the Library Company of Philadelphia was an unfortunate one. The property was sold in 1964, and the Library Company has built a new Ridgway Branch next to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania on Locust St.

⁶¹ Judge George Sharswood (1810-1883) of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.

⁶² Henry Flanders.

⁶³ Peter McCall.

⁶⁴ Judge John Cadwalader.

It is a calamity to be obliged to go at all, but health is a most important consideration, not to be disregarded. So, I suppose, if enough money comes in time that I shall go.

September 5, 1869 [*Fisher left home for Richfield on August 11.*]

I soon fell into my ordinary Richfield routine of habits. The place has a familiar look, as well it may for this is the sixth year that I have been there, everyone in the village knows me & the hills around have a friendly look. If I failed to go there at the usual time, I should feel that I had missed something in the year that ought not to be lost. [*Fisher returned from Richfield on September 1.*]

September 15, 1869 It by no means follows that a successful lawyer is a gentleman, that he is a man of honor, or that he has received a liberal education, and indeed those who are now most successful in *making money*, the great object of all, are notoriously deficient in these qualities, which were once regarded as requisites. The bar & the bench, too, have fallen very far below the dignified & respectable position it held when I knew it thirty years ago. I saw & knew the last of the old set who gave it so much influence & reputation—Rawle, Binney, Sergeant, Chauncey, the two Ingersolls, Scott,⁶⁵ etc.—all of them gentlemen by culture, birth, and manners, all of them distinguished for learning & ability, Binney & Sergeant pre-eminent for eloquence & power, all of them, too, with scarcely an exception, worthy of all confidence & respect for integrity, professional honor, and moral worth. The courtroom, in those days, every morning when the bar assembled, was like a drawingroom, filled with elegantly dressed gentlemen of courtly & refined manners. Many a time have I gone to it to hear Binney or Sergeant speak & to enjoy the conversation of these men, for they were very gracious & kind to young members of the profession, & I always remember their courtesy to me with pleasure, whether when I met them in Court, or enjoyed, as I constantly did, the hospitality of their homes. All is now changed—culture, elegance, refinement, courtesy, eloquence, wit, scholarship have vanished.

September 17, 1869 I think my trip to Richfield this year did me much good, tho I staid but a short time. I still have gouty pains

⁶⁵ William Rawle (1759-1836), Horace Binney (1780-1875), John Sergeant (1779-1852), Charles Chauncey (1777-1849), Charles J. Ingersoll (1782-1862), Joseph Reed Ingersoll (1786-1868), and John Morin Scott (1789-1858).

but in other respects feel generally well. Today we had rain in the morning, which stopped at 12 or 1. Went to town. Bet is in trouble again about servants which are a source of indescribable torment. Their stupidity, ignorance, insolence, and dishonesty render them household plagues which greatly injure the happiness of the most prosperous life. The annoyances and discomforts they cause are felt every hour of the day & poor Bet is worn out & harassed, body & spirit by attempting to teach & govern them. This cause alone will, I think, force us ere long to leave Forest Hill & go to town or German-town, either of which we would regard as a dismal fate unless we could afford to buy or rent one of the nice villas in the latter with an acre or two of land & a stable, but this would be too expensive. Without horses I should be a prisoner & they cost but little here.

September 19, 1868 The mosquitoes are very annoying, particularly at night. They are a great torment & we shall suffer from them, I suppose, as we usually do till frost. What is the final cause of mosquitoes? Why have they this power to torment the best men, the sweetest & loveliest women, & innocent children? These are the questions that will constantly arise to perplex & sadden thoughtful minds in things more important than mosquitoes.

December 18, 1869 Read among other things the address of Mr. Ch. W. Eliot, on his inauguration sometime ago as President of Harvard College. Do not like it. It is hard, dry, practical, Yankee of the utilitarian sort, in thought & sentiment & not well written. There is no genial love of letters in it, no liberal views, no elegance of style, no indications of refined & cultivated taste. The colleges of the country are sinking in tone, lower & lower, in accordance with the opinion & manners of the people—I mean of what is considered even the best educated portion of the people. Practical ability, physical science, knowledge that may promote success in the great & absorbing ambition of all—making money—are now immensely prized & preferred to literature, philosophy, & art. Parents wish to see their sons successful men of business, not scholars & gentlemen, & to gratify this desire the colleges are reducing their standard of excellence & admitting the natural sciences to the foremost place among the studies prescribed. I doubt very much whether any of them are improving & look forward with anxiety to the time when I must make a choice among them for Sidney.

December 26, 1869 News came yesterday of the death of Stanton, who during the war was Secretary of War. He had just received the appointment of Judge in the Supreme Court. His death was sudden & unexpected, tho he had been for some time out of health. His death causes much regret. He conducted the War Department, which during the rebellion was an immense thing, with ability, energy, industry, & *honesty*. He had talents, a strong will, they say a kind heart, but was rough in his manners, violent in temper & rather bitter & unforgiving in his enmity. He had a great deal, however, in the daily duties of the Department to develop unamiable qualities.

December 31, 1869 And so the year closes. At the beginning of it, I had many gloomy fears as to what was to happen in its course, but they have not been realized. On the whole it has been a happy year. Bet & Sidney have been well, my health much better, I have enjoyed leisure & comfort & my money affairs, tho far from satisfactory have turned out much more prosperous than ever before or than I expected. We suffer more from the ills that never happen than from those that do, & the only wise way is to live as many good hours in the present as we can & take the pleasure & do the duty that lies next to us.

April 1, 1870 In April 1868, I was obliged to borrow money, \$20,000, on mortgage of Mount Harmon to pay debts that had gradually accumulated for some years because of deficiency of income from the farm. As it was impossible to raise money on such property as a matter of regular business, I was obliged to rely on my friends, with how much mortification & pain cannot be told, & among them, my nieces, Liedy & Ellen, who at once, on the matter being suggested to them, offered to lend \$3,000 each. This morning I received a package containing my two bonds & a release duly executed with a very kind & well expressed note from Liedy, speaking for both, begging me to accept them. Tho of course I could not do this, I was much moved & gratified by their offer, which accords with the nobleness & generosity of their nature & proves, I hope, a real regard for me. Went to town. Took the bonds to Hollis. He tried to persuade me to accept them. It would indeed be a great relief to get rid of that much debt, but I should at the same time get rid of a good deal of self-respect which is worth more than money.

April 5, 1870 I begin another volume of this record of what has come to be, I must in sadness confess, a far from happy life. Advancing years, ill health, and poverty, a daily swarm of teasing, fretting anxieties & small hope of anything better in the future leave but little room for enjoyment. Nevertheless I have some pleasures. I have Bet & Sidney & I can read, immense blessings both, which atone for trouble & care tho they cannot prevent them or the torments they inflict. I must try to bear what is sent as well as I can.

May 22, 1870 Nothing worth noting since I wrote last. Have been too unwell to do anything but lounge on a sofa & read or try to read. Suffer from derangement of the stomach & short breath, as in asthma, a most distressing complaint.

June 15, 1870 I feel that my physical condition has changed for the worse permanently. I have very little gout or rheumatism in my limbs as before, but now the seat of the disease is the lungs & heart. I suppose it is notice to quit & that my time here is to be short. I try all the time to reconcile myself to the great change without much success. It seems very hard to leave Bet & Sidney, to say nothing of the rest of this wondrous world & interesting life, notwithstanding its evils, forever & to hear nothing about them again. Yet it is our fate & we must make up our minds to it as best we may. I cannot think without dread of the pain that is most probably in store for me, for there are few diseases that cause more than this asthmatic difficulty of breathing, this gasping & suffocation, which continues sometimes for many hours & even days.

July 1, 1870 I have given up writing regular diary, but make every day a short note of events in a pocket memorandum book & then from time to time record what is worth noting or remembering, which is very little. I am not equal to the essay writing that I have practiced so long & which has filled so many volumes & which I do not know now whether to keep or destroy. But I cannot entirely give up a habit from which I have derived so much pleasure & I like to preserve, if only for myself, some slight record of the passing hours.

The news from Mount Harmon is very bad. Scarce any peaches or wheat, so that poverty seems to stare us in the face. This gives me more trouble than bad health for it affects Bet & Sidney. It causes anxiety & care which oppress me at all times & from which I see no

escape. The Doctor says I must go to Richfield & Bet with me. I tell him the sad truth that I cannot afford it.

August 1, 1870 Yates came up on the 9th & renewed the lease for another year. He gave a gloomy account of the farm, not half crops of anything, which will reduce our income so much that *to live* we must borrow money, which means *ruin*. Joshua Fisher, hearing me say that I could not afford to go to Richfield, in the kindest manner offered to *give* me \$500 & said everything he could to induce me to take it, which I refused. Afterwards, learning how much I was embarrassed by debt, he offered \$1,200. This I consented to *borrow* & gave him my note for it. This is all very dreadful.

August 17, 1870 The Doctor & all my friends are so urgent that we should go to Richfield, that I have determined to do so.

September 15, 1870 Went according to our plan to Richfield on the 19, or rather started on that day from the Germantown Junction Station, about $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile from our house. . . . I got no better, but rather worse, grew weaker & had more difficulty of breathing so that it was a painful effort to go up stairs & to bathe & I longed for home. . . . we came away on the 2nd. [*This was the last entry Fisher made in his regular diary. The entries which follow are contained in a small memorandum book.*]

January 18, 1871 Town with Bet. Saw Hollis. . . . Am better indeed *well* today.

January 27, 1871 Feel pretty well & have much enjoyment notwithstanding many troubles.

February 4, 1871 Suffered a good deal from difficult breathing.

February 8, 1871 Our stable broke into last night. Nothing taken. Burglaries occur every night, generally 5 or 6. No arrests are made. The police are in league with the thieves.

February 10, 1871 Am rather better. Not equal to much exertion of any kind & lead a lazy useless life, which will not last long, I feel sure. I think more of death than of life.

February 16, 1871 Had buffalo meat at dinner. Sidney got it in market. Is just like beef steak.

February 28, 1871 Had a bad night, much difficult breathing, could not sleep nor lie down for a great part of the night. Weak & wretched this morning.

March 19, 1871 Have no cook, no furnace fire. Have got pretty low.

March 20, 1871 Liedy here, brought gift from herself, Jim,⁶⁶ & Ellen. . . . Don't know what to say about Jim & Ellen's gift—\$1,000.

April 3, 1871 The doctor here. Better. Yesterday and Saturday very sick in bed. Constant nausea & vomiting.

April 27, 1871 Read diary of 1837. Have been rereading those of 1836 etc with extreme interest.

April 29, 1871 Read diary of 1839. It brings back those days of youth very vividly. Strange that I could not then see all that I might have done & been, almost without effort.

May 2, 1871 Am much worse certainly. Read old diaries.

May 3, 1871 Read newspapers & old diaries. Tear out a great deal & feel much inclined to destroy the whole.

May 6, 1871 Read old diaries as usual with interest. Mean to go thro all in order to destroy what I do not wish to leave behind me. Must put my house in order.

May 20, 1871 Jim here. Brought a note from Liedy with \$2,000, a gift. Hardly know what to do. Am overwhelmed. Bad night, oppressed breathing, very unwell. Could say much. Was there ever anything like these children.

June 14, 1871 Feel pretty well. Ate a lamb chop for breakfast & piece of beef steak for dinner. The doctor comes every day.

June 20, 1871 Very weak & miserable. Cannot eat.

July 6, 1871 Weaker.

July 18, 1871 Am better, I suppose, tho not really so as the swelled legs do not diminish. E. R. Fisher here & then Mr. Hollis who said he would serve Bet as agent whenever she may want him.

July 22, 1871 Wm Wister here. Also Liedy & Ellen in afternoon. Very miserable all day. Am losing ground every day.

Epilogue

Sidney George Fisher died at the age of sixty-three on July 25, 1871, three days after making his final diary entry. For a while, his widow and child lived with the Edward Ingersolls, but Mrs. Fisher,

⁶⁶ James Logan Fisher, the diarist's nephew.

not wishing to be dependent on her brother, soon moved to lodgings in Germantown, where she survived her husband by less than a year, dying in May, 1872. It would be more comforting to believe that she died of a broken heart than to accept her son's bitter and unlikely diagnosis—*starvation!* The son, who spelled his first name Sydney, was educated at St. Paul's School, Concord, New Hampshire, Trinity College, and Harvard Law School. Later, he was to serve many years as president of Trinity's board of trustees and to interrupt his legal practice in favor of writing numerous books on American history. The diarist would have taken solace could he have but known that his son was to retain ownership of Mount Harmon all his life. Indeed, so far as physical possessions were concerned, about the only ones held by Sydney George Fisher at the time of his death, which occurred on February 22, 1927, were Mount Harmon and his father's diaries, still stored in the walnut chest made for them in 1866.