

## *The Diary of Helen Parrish, 1888*

*Tuesday, July 3* Application from Ida Haines wife of Wm. Haines now living at 511 First Street. Landlord James McKenna 10th and Christian Sts. She works for Mrs. Randolph 19th & Spruce Sts.(?) and at 2nd & Race Sts. He is a stevedore. Shall let them take the Watson's room and then will inquire about them. Very respectable looking young woman, but she probably drinks. Knew of the room through Katy Clayton whom she knows slightly. Went to the Jones' in Griscone St. today about some friends of theirs who applied for room and then never came to see about it again & to bring reference. It is dangerous to ask too much of them for then they do not turn up. A man named Greenleaf applied from 517 So. 7th. I told him to come back the next day with his wife. When I went to inquire why he did not, they said I would find his wife at Mary Brown's, and to ask for Sally Harris. I did not do so, but perhaps I ought to inquire more, and take them even if they are so flagrantly bad. Also Joseph Robinson a good kind of man came. I said I wanted to see the wife who has been away from him at work for some time, but she is a white woman I hear, and a pretty bad lot as he even cannot find her. I told him I did not want a man alone. The Jones' friends have taken a room in Hurst Street, which is a pity.

*July 5th* Did not stay very long, found very little money waiting for me as I expected after the 4th. They all seem to have been at home all day yesterday and to have spent much of the time in the yard. I don't know what may have taken place. . . .

*July 7th, Saturday* Had a prolonged and stormy interview with Mrs. Fisher, she was raving about the house, storming against people who talked to her husband, and who said she had paid only 15 cents at a time. She was carrying on wildly and has been doing so, they say, ever since I spoke to Fisher on Sunday. On Thursday I saw her but did not ask for the rent because as Fisher asked her to see him today I thought he meant to pay then. She was very indignant at this omission on my part. Finally I got her upstairs, and she quieted down somewhat and at last paid me \$1.50. They feel, poor things! their ignorance and powerlessness I think, before us, and yet such sick half crazy ones as she rage against it, taking

hold of any little mistake of ours, when the whole matter is that she has been keeping back what he gave her for me, and is now furious that we know it. I might have managed more wisely if I had told her first I meant to speak to him but she has continually said "ask him," when we have found fault before. I think there was considerable dissatisfaction all about today stirred up by her words and by the fact of my having conversed with the husbands last Sunday. The atmosphere was very cloudy. It is mindful to be as wise as a serpent surely in dealing with them and I must remember never to speak a word of one to any other. Even the most casual is sure to breed trouble. Also they are too much together, too much at home. They talk and gossip too much. I find knots in the yard and whatever I do is sure to bring about some discussion—alone they are amenable, but en masse far from it. Mrs. Riley finished mother's petticoat and paid 40 cts besides for rent. She is trying hard I think. Clark came while I was there for a man to help him take out ashes. He thought he might find Riley, I think, as Mrs. Riley said he had spoken of getting work for her husband. I asked him if he ever had a job to remember R. as he needed work so much and I did not see why he could not get on. Rebecca came up & perhaps saying this may make trouble. I hope not. I feel as if I ought to be able to trust them & I think I can trust the men, but not the women. Mrs. Wilson still with the Waples—John E. Balderston, 2703 N. 11th St. (Joseph Robinson's employer). Evening. Such a miserable time with the Fishers this afternoon. I went down about 5 and bought 5 cts. worth of ice for a bucket in the yard so as to conciliate things generally. Then I talked with Gibson giving him a copy book in hopes that he will learn to write. Then came Fisher—he antagonized—and it was all too wretched. I felt he was in the right for there was Miss Duhring's [*the previous rent collector whom Miss Parrish replaced*] garbled book of receipts and everything in such a knot. He cannot read and so for an hour I patiently tried to figure and explain to him what was very involved to me and yet not daring to let him see how much so. He was not at all pleasant and I can't blame him—in the first place, he should never have been allowed to get back and in the second he ought not to have any suspicion of us and our correctness in any way—this was so hard to fight against.

*July 9th* All very serene at first. While I was in no 3 Katy came in, and quite unprovoked began reviling me about having spoken of her to her father. I quieted her and went my rounds. Mrs. Wilson still with the Waples. It appears she spent all her money staying longer than Tuesday which was the day she ought to have gone back, and now cannot go till they send her some. I wrote a postal for her and will lend it to her if she don't go soon. I did not interfere at first with her being there, but this is all wrong. I am afraid Priscilla Brown is living with Rebecca. She was angry because I did not want her to rent no 4. 2 sisters enough in the house, and now I think she must have left Mrs. Gales. Riley I gave another skirt. I went down to see Gallen. He said that on Friday or Sat. night, Katy, the 3 Gallaghers and others were on the steps. When he came again he met 2 Gallaghers leaving but not Jim. The step was empty. He put his key in the door, heard a scuffle, went through into the yard and Jim was there. He ordered him out and made him go. He slunk away. Two of the others were in the yard too. He says the officers are all alive about Katy, that if she can only be caught in the act, she will be arrested. That he believed in her before but is convinced now that things are wrong. I told him I would see the Lieutenant and spoke also about Mary Brown's. He says someone reported Mrs Denby as rioting also on Sat. night. When he came to her door, all was quiet. Denby has hurt his foot, and I went in and spoke to her about it before him—probably wrong. I went to see Lieutenant Mitchell telling him about Katy. He said he would consult P.C.C. and do what he could. I spoke also of Mary Brown's, and then I wished I hadn't. I feel he is doing all he can and what is right, and why should I dare to interfere and try to legislate? Oh it is so hard to blunder on as I do. I wait till circumstances impell some action, then I do what I know, and then I feel no safety in its being only right. I don't know what is best. I need someone to guide the helm while I do the work. I wrote asking Clayton to come here. He has been warned, and as he has done nothing, there seems nothing but to let things work out & perhaps it was better to speak to Lieutenant. He was very kind, but it frightened me to have my questionings & consulting him, mean that he should take such definite action about Katy & M. Brown too. Mary Lowry was there just out of prison where she was 12 days.

I hope she will not report my being there at the station. Often things seem to have been right after I do them but I want clear consciousness before. . . .

*Thursday July 12* Had a talk with Joe Robinson who is on the defensive at the slightest interference about his white fiancée. She is not 20 and English. . . .

*Tuesday 17th* Went to White's, the last house up Pat O'Brien's alley, found that Mrs. Wilson had pawned her shoes last night so first of all I went with Clara and redeemed them. Then I went back and had a plain talk with her. Told her I would redeem nothing unless she promised to go then and there to Mrs. Adams'. Finally she consented. Then White appeared. (I had been invited upstairs) said his landlord wanted to know what I was doing there; that he never liked to be impolite to a lady in his own house but that I had ordered him off our steps once. I gave Clara more money to redeem other things, but the landlord, Pat, was heard downstairs, storming & railing at my being there. White said I had business with a woman who had been cleaning for him! Finally, when Pat threatened to come upstairs after us, I thought best to descend & retreated taking Mrs. Wilson with me amid Pat's swearing and thundering—furious at my being in a house of his. We went into the library [*the St. Mary Street Library managed by Susan Wharton*] where Mrs. Wilson & Clara changed their dresses and made up their bundles. I had a visit from Katherine Laws about rooms but made no promise. Finally we got off and I put them on the boat at Market St. ferry with 50 cents to take the coach on the other side. The whole expenses \$1.61—the dollar Mrs. Adams had sent, the 61 Addie promised to send me sometime.

*Thursday, July 17* Told Clayton she ought to have Katy arrested when she beats her. Mrs. Haines, a man and woman appeared. He left and I told her she could not have men company. She said she would have them & I hope there will be no trouble. I wrote to Mr. Deringer, 1530 Spruce who was their landlord, and he left a message here simply not to rent to them. I have been fearing that she meant just to use this room as a shield in case 511 Hurst is pulled. She has hardly been in it, since she took it, and I have feared that there might be trouble. She said I had told her there must be no disorder—no drunkenness, no swearing—but that she had made

no agreement not to have company and she would always have company wherever her home was. Her husband always has his friends Sundays, etc. I think there was a pack of cards on the shelf & I almost wish I had given her notice today. The room looks so attractive, too much so to be right. 3 lovely pots of flowers on the window. I saw her on Monday at her sister's at 511, where she paid the rent. She has no stove in the room and did not then seem to mean to cook there at all. I said if she rented from us, she must make it her home, and perhaps that is why she was there today. She is a really intelligent young woman and I do wish there were some chance of her doing differently but I am afraid it's useless to try. I have been very worried lest she should get our house into a scrape. Mrs. Denby sleepy drunk but paid her rent and went to bed again very quiet.

*Saturday, 21st* Met Nancy Harding. I had sent her a postal & been trying to see her since I heard she got the \$5,000 pension, I tried to persuade her to invest it. She has, she says, that is she has lent it to a "friend" who pays her 6% without security. I told her she must get a mortgage or something. She was with Harding but says they have parted company, that he has asked for nothing. I hope she will come again to see me. . . . Then I saw Joe Robinson, told him I had decided that if he marries the white girl he cannot stay. Also that I do not want the two women to go there to see him. If they do not, he may stay until Sept., but she cannot go there to live. I can't help trusting him, yet he is a darkey. Had a brother from the church upstairs with him & an open Bible in his hand. I said complaints had been made. He asked if Mrs. Whitaker were one, & when I said yes he informed me that the man who was with Mrs. W. so much—stays so much at her house—has a nice little wife and family uptown! . . .

*Thursday, July 26th* Poor old Clayton. I really believe she cannot pay and I don't know quite what to do. When I first took Miss D.'s place I scolded away, but I am beginning to think she really has paid her possible. One week she pawned her shoes for me, & today she had been tramping all over to try & get the money from her sons. In the other house her daughter paid I fancy. The boys are supposed to give her 50 cts a week apiece making \$1.50 but they don't seem to & she has to feed Katy. I really am fond

of her, & she ought to have a cheaper room. Fisher now has lumbago she says & has been to a doctor. She was very quiet on the bed with Rebecca, Irene & Sarah were with her. Nearly all have had cholera morbus and I brought some ginger and dosed round. We had a very amiable talk. . . .

*July 28, Saturday* Went down [*to the library*] this afternoon & had a treat of lemonade. I met Katy on the steps & she was a splendid help. The men were not about but the women had plenty & some over to save for the men if they wanted to. All were very amiable & nice & they walked about admiring the pictures and conversing like an afternoon party. Poor old Powers said, "Oh if you would only have a saloon where I could get a drink like that; I never tasted anything so good in all my life." We made a great fuss and mess in the library, but I wish the men had been there. . . . Anne Green, 517 S. 7th applied for the room. The "congregation" at her present abode is too noisy to suit her. I asked what her family was—"Me & a gentlemen friend who lives in the country & comes to town occasionally." He was with her then, and I had some conversation about him. She is a widow & assured me that it is purely a friendship. There is nothing wrong. He only comes to see her when he is in town. First I thought she said she could not refuse him a bed when he came, but afterwards she said she would not take him in at night, but only during the day. I am to see her former employer, Corset Place on 11th St where she used to scrub. She had two married children near Trenton. Katy says she is a "very respectable woman" and I think Katy knows. She never has any company excepting her children & this man. She is evidently one of good belongings and I feel like trying her, tho' when I came along 7th St she & the man were at the 2nd story window. She was somewhat pleased with his attentions I think, though she said she would not think of marrying or anything like that again. She was so honest about it that I was somewhat disarmed . . . Riley's baby looked better. I had gone back with shoes for Mary on Thursday but I fear they have not yet been to the sanitarium. It is hard to make them do anything & I did not ask today. . . .

*July 30th* The Riley baby still poorly. I got Powers to fix a pair of shoes for Mary in exchange for those I gave her that are too small, and I wish she would go to the sanitarium. . . .

*August 1st* Went down again this afternoon about the library; distributed some slips about the house, and wish some of them would join. . . .

*August 2nd* The Rileys had nothing. I gave Mary 50 cents to buy meat to make soup for the baby—& for that purpose only.

*Thursday, August 30th* Mary Riley seems wretched. . . . I want Harry to go to kindergarten but his father objects. She still uses a bucket for the children in spite of all I say, and it often smells very badly—I told her that Hy and Bernice are old enough to go downstairs and that at any rate she must have a tin tucket . . . Went back later—found Denby who has been at work both yesterday and today. Told her she must go and had a long talk while I waited till after 6:30 hoping he would come in. He did not, so I left the notice. A wild quarrel began for nothing on Sat. and culminating on Monday night. She had not been drunk while I was away she said. I think it is best for them to go. She seemed penitent and rebellious and gentle and rough all together. Poor thing with her bruised eye and dirty rags. As soon as she drinks she becomes perfectly uncontrolled and terribly outspoken and swearing. He grows angry and drinks too and yet when they are sober they are gentle and nice enough. . . .

*August 31, Friday* Found Green at home in a filthy room. His wife has been out working by the week and I talked roundly about the room and yard. He had \$19.00 in his pocket and I begged him to go to the savings fund with me and open an account. He said he would next week! I begged but he wanted to deposit more he said, and must go to sleep this morning. . . .

*September 1, Saturday* Denby still out. Had another talk with Bella poor wretched thing—it seems impossible to turn her out. They are such irresponsible children. Yet it is liable to occur at any time. I asked her to bring him here tonight but they have come, and I wrote again to her mother. She is very angry at my having done this at all. Asked Clark for some money—he said he had none there—he went and brought me 50 cents. I think he must have borrowed it from Green. He says on Monday he begins to get \$2.00 a day. Oh! I wish I knew how to make them save. . . .

*Sunday, Sept. 2* After church went down to see Fisher and Denby. F. said nothing would induce him to send her to a hospital.

I spoke of her drinking and of her needing strengthening food but I don't see what I can do about it. I will send Miss Haydock [*a visiting nurse*] and leave the responsibility with her but I feel that asserting myself can do no good. . . . He [*Denby*] says I must bring down the notice and read it to him before he will go. And he hoped I wouldn't do business on Sunday. She evidently destroyed the one I gave her for him on Thursday. I remember Alex Dixon [*Alexander J. D. Dixon, a lawyer*] wrote something about "proof of service" and Denby seemed to think this a point and I suppose he has come home late on purpose. Last night I waited till 6:30 too. I must serve it on him in person. . . .

*September 3, Monday* Everything wrong in a most discouraging state this morning—I after again scolding Riley for the smells and finding Waples all upset, and having Pat O'Brien say it was a bad lot in that house, and Katy Clayton combing her hair in the street and white people drinking out of the fountain (they tell me) and Fisher drunk I guess, I went into the yard and there was a woman sitting with Rebecca Clark deliberately drinking beer. She went on and then Rebecca deliberately took the cup from her and finished it before me. If I gave her notice, she is really one of the best tenants, clean, paying well—and when I know how bad the rest are how can I send her off. . . .

*Wednesday, Sept. 5* Such a pleasant delightful morning; so different and such a relief from Monday. I was most at 637—and installed Hanson Hilton and Ben Thompson. Fanny is very ill with consumption and though the wife thinks it is a good deal of rent for them to undertake, still evidently Fanny cannot live long, and if she died they can give up one room. They have 16 and 17—I have given him the slop and ashes to attend to—he is a co-adjustor of Blind Susan's [*a local coffee house*] and a very gentle respectable darkey—but does little I fancy! Mamie Shephard also took possession of no. 5. She is a pretty attractive little thing, with a very respectable nice mother, Emma Berry living in Emeline St. Mamie is easily led I fancy, and her mother and I both wanted her to settle elsewhere, but she cannot find rooms and she is to try us temporarily, only she and her husband and she is going to try and be steady! Put Clayton to scrubbing, as both Riley and Waples declined the pleasure. Had a nice talk with Eliz. Green and gave her Jamaica ginger—



had an uncomfortable time with the Denbys and then at last to both our joys Mrs. Williams, the mother came. She has been away and only got the letter last night. Dear bright old thing—I could not talk much to her as Ike and Bell were both interrupting and very defensive and offensive—but I compromised by letting them stay until Monday, then left them to her influence. I think she believes Bella to have been only led astray by bad influence—that someone gave her to drink and she took it. She wants them to move to Media—if they only would! But I'm afraid Ike won't really believe it is best for them, themselves, to go; they have got to a pretty low ebb and I think it would not do to let things be as they are. My compromise will make them more lenient towards me I think, and all will I hope be better.

*Thursday, Sept. 6* Have been screwing my courage up to a serious talk with Powers for some time. Had it today. Very quiet. Said little and gave him a week to get his room cleaned. It is best I think—it seemed useless to nag about little things. So I said he must have the wood work and closet scrubbed and the window. I said it must not be once only, but frequently and if he could not learn to do it, he must pay for it. He said he would do nothing till his place is whitewashed. I said I would not have that done till he showed some sign of keeping it decent. He said I should not overlook the morality of some in the house and should let a decent person alone. . . . The Denbys of course are angry not contrite—they attribute it all to someone in the house (Gibson I believe) who told the watchman on them. He has done so before, and Irene also makes trouble with them—I think that considering all this, that it may be a good thing for them to settle over again. If let alone they will have their fights and make up again and get drunk and sober again. If Gallen [*probably the local policeman*] had not been so decided I might have been too weak to make them go—but I almost feel as if it would have been best anyhow. If they were the only tenants I would not, but I think they are considered bad by the others and that they are always suspicious. Had a comfortable talk with Aunt Sue [*Susan Wharton*] today—she is so wise. She said she thinks much harm is done by those who strive to regulate things too much themselves, to interfere with the natural order, in their enthusiasm workers forget there is a divine higher law which must be observed.

Thus each family should be left to stand more as a unit—it must work its own way. When the Temporary Homes gave itself up to the Children's Aid, acknowledging the superior merits of its working, nearly 9/10 of the children were taken back by their families who were perfectly able to support them! Thus the home's work had been almost entirely superfluous. She said that we never know where the seed may take root—and that indirectly incidentally we may sow it, but that in such work as ours the facts of putting the people in sanitary healthful conditions, in making them feel the obligation of the rent, a just debt, in bringing them in contact with a kindly and friendly landlord instead of a hard landlord—that these alone, if we did nothing more would justify the work. She said she went with a Mrs. Allen in London, who was substituting for one of Octavia Hill's workers. She sat in the little office and the tenants came to her one by one to pay the rent and give her the blanket money. One young man pleaded and pleaded to be excused his rent, his wife was ill. He had lost a day's work—Aunt Sue said her heart went out to him—but Mrs. Allen was inexorable. He must get it somehow. She was substituting—had no power to excuse him, it was her business to get the money, next week he would only have double to pay. She was pitiless, as far as that went. Of course, we must consider the race we deal with here, but we ought not to let it be as it has been I think, and I think we will not, now that we are more settled. This summer things have gone wrong—McKenna who owns two units about Hurst St. and in our neighborhood, turns them out if the rent is not paid within 5 days of the time it is due.

*Saturday, Sept. 8th* Aunt Sue thinks that their feeling of rebellion against our dictating about their rooms, or trying to legislate for them, ought to be respected. She says she could never look into their closets or anything like that excepting in so far as sanitary principles make it necessary. It is just what they keep saying to me, whenever I try to dictate, that they have paid for the room and that I have no right to interfere. . . . I went over to 511 Hurst to see a woman who had applied for rooms, and there on the steps was Bella Denby. I went upstairs with her and had a long talk. I tried to frighten her into going out of that house, as it has been raided several times and she said they were only there temporarily till they could get a better one. She said that it was all the drink, and seemed

to think that often the people knowing her so well had dragged her out into it. She would treat and then they would. She was very nice, her mother was to come again today (Sunday) to see her. I felt hopeful until I went back to 617 where Eliz. Green said that Thursday night she, Bella, had said the most disgusting things to the watchman and then he came back to try to arrest her, she had disappeared. . . . I had a delightful afternoon, letting myself be pleasant with all the people, and making my points without seeming to. I have been struggling not to do this, but to be severe & decided, but perhaps this way is more natural to me tho' less honest. . . .

*Sept. 10th, Monday* Still besieged by applicants at 635 & have had to refuse & put off. Rented room no. 8 to John & Flora Thomas & 5 children! He old & rheumatic, she fat & pretty. I got a good reference of her but they are very poor & I thought they would do well to take—respectable poverty would be interesting. . . .

*September 12, Wednesday* These attractive young people who live in that neighborhood are I expect nearly all fast—I mean those who are good looking and well dressed, even if as gentle & attractive as Mamie. I wonder whether there is any hope of bettering them; I am afraid where they are fond of company it is very little use. . . . I have been reading the papers of Octavia Hill's that Hannah lent Miss Duhring & that she returned to me this morning, & I almost feel as if a rent would never be back again, with anyone. I don't aspire to making Riley, Clayton & Fisher pay all they owe, but certainly they shall owe no more. . . .

*Saturday 15th* I think Octavia Hill & Mrs. Lincoln [*Mrs. Alice Lincoln of Boston who managed houses in a way similar to Octavia Hill, but was obviously more strict*] must work on very different principles. I think with our class it is Octavia Hill's we need most, and I am beginning to feel that I may have been trying too hard to work as Mrs. L. does—the dictatorial, authoritative rather than the non-interfering, silent influence way. I have had so little confidence in myself that I have been forcing myself and them unnaturally perhaps.

*Tuesday 18th* Had not meant to go down today—shall try to keep only to Mons. & Thurs. Laura Butcher, a very nice young girl whose request for rooms I had refused telling her she ought not to

come in that neighborhood, come back in despair, saying she had been able to find nothing, that they were spending all their money lodging & she would have to go to her mother in Haddenfield if they could not get a room. She seems loath to live there, but it can't be helped. I gave her the keys of no. 18—over the Hiltons—where she will be shielded, and it is pleasant to take occasionally the kind who appreciate being well off. . . . Thursday Emma Sutton asked me if she might take in a woman who is going to be confined, for a few weeks. Wm. Henry has not been there since she moved, and "my opinion is Miss Parrish, Wm. Henry is after other women." I told her decidedly no. She must be ready for him if he comes and besides it is against rules.

*Friday 21st* Went down and asked Dr. [Charles E.] Cadwalader to go to see Fanny. Her mother said oh if she could only have Dr. Fisher, then she spoke of Dr. C. and I said I would try. I did not see him, but left messages with a young man who seems to be at home, and who knew all about "Miss Fox and Miss Parrish." All the dispensary doctors say is that she had better go to the Alm's House. I don't think much can be done but it will be a comfort to Mrs. Hilton to have him.

*Sept. 24, Monday* Had only time to go there for about an hour before going to A. C. Found the Thomas baby very sick, throat stopped up. Dr. Edwards refused to attend it & said he would send someone else. Told her to try Pa. dispensary if he does not go. . . . Clayton says Mary Watson had a baby last night—a seven months child who died very soon. Dr. Cadwalader went to see Fanny but evidently told them he could not attend her as she is not in his district, and I wish I had not asked him. Unless I might have known—no—I think he went twice and I am glad.

*Tuesday* Went to see Dr. [William A.] Edwards 300 S. 13th as Mrs. Thomas came to tell me no one had been to see the baby. He has the district from the Del. to Broad St, and is paid by the city he said. He was very polite but young and has so many demands on him. He says the baby has the quinsy, that it will probably get well, and that he has sent another doctor to see it. I asked him about Fanny; he says he can do nothing for her; that she needs a nurse & all the care and attention to make her comfortable that a hospital

can give, that of course there is but little to do. . . . Forbade the people sending any more applicants for rooms here. Some have found where I live and I am besieged, but by too respectable a class of tenants. . . .

*September 29th* Stopped to ask Mamie Sharp about the rent, on my way to the library. She said she wanted to tell me that the first time she had spoken to James about the plan for them to separate, he had not seemed to mind, said he was going away this month, but that since she had spoken again, he had been very unwilling to hear of it. He was in the little room, she called him to me, and I sat trembling, waiting for him to come. We had a long talk. I told him all I thought—that I had not known they were unmarried when they came, that it was unlawful, that it was Mamie's punishment for her hasty marriage before, that they could not live together, that it could bring her, and does bring her no good. She is in constant danger and temptation and living with him is no protection for her, that there is both a civil & religious law to condemn such unions, etc, etc. He let me talk most but he said several things. Early in the time he said he cared for her, then later he looked up and said "Have you ever been married?" "Then you do not know what you ask—I love that woman as I love myself." Again he said to me "don't you suppose I would marry her if I could?" Again that it was no sudden thing that they have been together for nearly four years. (It is only four since Mamie told me she married her husband! She is 19 now). I said she was willing to do as I wished, then he called her. "Mamie" he said "did you tell Miss Parrish you were willing to give me up?" Mamie answered that she had told me she would take a place. "You are evading my question," he said. "You know what I asked." Yes, she admitted she had told me she would leave him as far as getting the place went. I told her she knew that was not what she had made me understand. He said he had nowhere to go to—no people—brothers but he does not know where they are. He comes from Florida. I said he could find work and a home. He said that would not be what he would look for but "peace of mind." He had tried going away before, but he had never stayed but two or three days. At last he asked me to give him a little time, and when would I be back again? I said

tomorrow and should I stop? He answered "Yes." It seems hard to write it out, hard to know what to think—how deeply to take the meaning of it all. He is a tall, [?] Young fellow. I do not even know whether she has always been faithful to him. I asked her last week if she would mind leaving him, and she said, oh no, she would not care. I told him that if he loved her, he could do more for her, by putting her where she would be shielded and cared for as she could not be with him.

*Sunday* Found that Shepheard had come to no decision, so feel that I must just put the thing through and hope he will really leave the city. He said he wanted to wait until a particular friend comes from N. Y. and then they may go away together. Mamie I believe is very unprincipled. Gallen tells me today (Monday) that Shepheard was away for a week and that Mamie had another man with her during that time. When S. came home he broke the door in. Mamie came and told Gallen this but he Gallen has seen no disturbance there.

*Thursday Oct. 4th* Found Dr. Edwards pronouncing that the only chance for the Thomas baby was to take it at once to the Children's Hospital, hoping they would operate on its throat. I went up with it and Mrs. T. in the car and they took hold of it at once, with a prompt interest and solicitude that was beautiful. . . . On my way back I met Mamie and heard the tale that I have since cut out of paper. Geo. Spanks is the James Shepheard who has been living with Mamie and with whom I have been conversing. The shooting took place in gambling house and Mamie says she knows of no quarrel, although he is a man whose wife Mamie harbored when she had left him on account of some fuss. Mamie still keeps

### A BULLET IN HIS NECK

George Grant Claims He Accidentally Shot  
George Spanks, His Friend.

George Grant, colored, of No. 620 Barclay street, who shot George Spanks, also colored, of No. 635 St. Mary street, in the neck early last evening at a house on Lisbon street, below Hurst, was arraigned at the Central Police Station this morning. Detective Crawford stated that the physicians at the Pennsylvania Hospital this morning said Spanks was in a critical

condition. The prisoner admitted the shooting, but said it was accidental, as he and Spanks were friends. Magistrate Smith committed Grant to prison to await the result of Spanks' injuries.

the rooms, and is of course running to the hospital and posing as his wife. He must be very badly hurt. Mamie says he sent a message to her Mother to pray for him. I must make her pay the back rent and turn her out, I suppose. The Hiltons had not the rent and needed medicine. They had called in Dr. Ashton, but had not been able to fill the prescriptions. I thought I might fill one for them—medicine is so necessary and I did so. . . .

*Friday 5th* Went to the hospital to find out about the baby. There it was—doing well in a room all to itself with the nurses and its mother. They performed the operation (which is rarely done on such young babies—6 mos.) very successfully and it may get thro' all rightly. It looked so well and bright. Mrs. Thomas has been there all day but went home last night. Isn't it fine, and I never dreamed that they were so gentle and kind and interested as they are. They are doing everything. . . .

*Thursday, 11th* The Thomas baby died at the hospital on Tuesday and is to be buried today. The funeral is to cost \$12.00—\$6.00 had to be paid in advance. The other 6 in weekly payments to the undertaker afterward. I have lent her \$4.00. This is to be paid back after the undertaker and must be collected rapidly. Not having the baby she can now go out to work more and must get the money—last week I told them I would forgive the rent for one week but that due today must be paid. I forgave it because the child was growing worse without my knowing it and I felt I might have done for it in ways to save them money for it perhaps had I known. Thomas works in the 5th Street market carrying home baskets. In this way the market people supply them with food. This explains how they get on, which seemed inexplicable. Then by the odd jobs and her work they pay the rent. The rents at 635 not satisfactory. Madlock, Mary Ann the old woman who has no. 7 and is always out at work,—pretends to bring her rent up here to me—on Thursdays. She did not do this last week and also shirked the scrubbing which I told her she must do. If there is any more difficulty about the rent and if she will not leave it with a neighbor—she had better

be turned out at once. It is very unsatisfactory to have tenants who work all the time. . . .

*Monday, Oct. 15* James Shephard is still so ill that I have not yet turned Mamie out. She says if I do she will only have to take another room so as to leave a place to bury him from in case he should die. Her mother thinks as they have lived together so long, it is right for her to do this. She lets the stairs get very dirty and does not keep things clean in general. As soon as he begins to mend—will try to make her store her furniture and take a place. We have many talks and this is the general drift. . . .

*Monday November 5* The other day, a nice young looking darkey stopped (Mrs. Thomas and me) and asked for a room—for himself & one other. "You are married then"—"Oh yes"—"then it is for you and your wife." "No, for me and a young lady friend!" . . . Then we went to see poor old Fisher at 20 & 22 S. Front, Reeves Parvin & Co. He said he would go to see Mrs. Thomas on Saturday—we talked a long time, telling him Mrs. Fisher is killing herself by living in so smothering a room, the heat today was unbearable. . . .

*Friday, 9th* Fisher seemed so very low, that I went to the visiting nurse. A most elegant fashionably dressed young woman—she said they would see her twice tomorrow, and I said that if it seemed necessary that they had better get someone to stay there with her. Fisher I thought would pay something and I would be responsible. She said it might be \$5.00 a week!!

*Saturday, 10th* After the Library I met Fisher. I told him that I was willing to keep him, pay someone to care for his wife and the visiting nurse approved! He said he did not want the nurses, nor did he trust me. What he does want he says is money to help bury her. I said that it is more important to do for her now. He said he can take care of her now but will need help then. I have never seen so distrustful, pitiable a nature. I have not the power to soften and do for him. It is where my faithlessness tells I suppose. . . .

*Monday, Nov. 12* Went down early trying to get applicants and fill the rooms. No definite results. Mrs. Fisher died at 11 last night—I went after Henderson for some keys and she asked me whether they might use her vacant room for the funeral. Of course I said yes and later gave the key to Fisher. Mrs. H. told me she died very quietly. That at about 5 o'clock she "got religion," a



number of people were there praying with her and singing and she was quite quiet in the evening, saying she did not want to be disturbed. Fisher came to us, telling us the funeral will cost \$25.00 and asking us for five. He says he will stay in the room—paying each week until the back rent and this debt are discharged. . . .

*Wednesday, 14th* Rented room no. 9 to Geo. and Annie Matthews. They are old habitués of the street they say and have been in the country all summer. I like the man and I think they are the style of Irene and Rebecca so took them without a reference.

*Thursday, 15th* Took some chrysanthemums to Fisher, and was not invited to the funeral—it is today—went down early hoping for applicants. Had a number and hope they will come back all right and fill up the rooms—I put off so many in the autumn that they have gotten somewhat out of repute—the rooms—and then I suppose it is natural many should apply who do not come back, but now I encourage all. . . .

*November 16, 1888* [*Evidently a note to Hannah Fox as Helen Parrish leaves for England to work with Octavia Hill.*] This is about all I can think of lady dear. I do hope all will go well, write and ask me anything I do not tell you. I trust you will grow to care for them and enjoy all those people—I hate to leave them—it is a great pleasure to know them! I am in hopes that by Jan. 1st the houses may be in full running order and paying the regular income, then we can forget this first year with all its blunderings or rather my blundering and mistakes and can date the work from there. I hope by that time the houses will be full and that Mrs. Thomas will be a strong arm. I must stop.

## *Epilogue*

Helen Parrish, 1859–1942, never married and devoted her entire life to housing reform. Unlike some reformers of the Progressive Era, she appears to have restricted her efforts to this activity. She was an active member of the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity and was responsible for attracting Mary Richmond to serve as its executive secretary during the first decade of this century. However, she is best remembered for her achievements in housing.

While a member of the Octavia Hill Association, she and Hannah Fox lobbied tirelessly for the Housing Act of 1907, and later, as a member of the Philadelphia Housing Association, she continued energetically to support housing legislation. She was also well known as a lecturer and writer, both locally and in conjunction with the National Conference of Charities and Correction and the National Housing Association.

Miss Parrish was a physically diminutive woman, but she had a strong, vigorous personality and an ability for clear, concise argument which served her well in her legislative battles. She was a woman of sophisticated taste who enjoyed collecting art prints and entertaining in her home on Clinton Street. Although she had many friends and associates, her relationship with Hannah Fox remained very close until the latter's death in 1933, and the two functioned together as a team throughout a period of nearly half a century.