4/22/1962

Dearly Beloved,

I was up very early and at work. Now I am really exhausted. I don’t like to get so very tired. Listen to this! For a long time I’ve been planning to clean out a small section of my library that I sorely need for space. There were several very big books there that I had not looked at for years. And guess what I discovered. There were two very big, thick scrap books. One was pasted almost solid with clippings that went back to 1838 and 1839 on up to 1881. Most of them were undated. The book was a cash book belonging, I surmise, to my great-grandfather. Towards the end, in the early 1880s, I found my mother’s handwriting and some dates. Well, I flipped through the pages idly and a name caught my eye: E. Slater. That was my grandfather’s name on mother’s side. There was an entire column. Mother had dated it July 22, 1865! It was an account of the presentation to my grandfather, Edward Slater, of a gold watch and chain, valued at $275 – an awful lot of money in those days – by the white and Negro employees of Government Works, Savannah, Ga. Grandfather had been Chief Marine Engineer at Fort Sumpter! And here I am deploring the fact that I’m a “damned Yankee.” How times change. Sometime I’ll show you the clipping. Might even send you the page to look at, but too busy now. And on the same page is a poem which my mother had marked. So prophetic! The clippings couldn’t have been pasted in by her, for she was born in 1862 – 100 yrs. ago this Oct.

Then there was another scrap book just as big and packed solid with my father’s writings – mostly jokes, essays, short pieces. And I found a 1932 magazine with an article of his. The Editor’s note says that father was one of the charter members of the staff of the old New York Sun. He was a reporter and columnist. In 1932 he was said to be the last living member of that old staff. He died in 1934 just before he was 73.

Then I came upon the family Bible, a very big polyglot affair. Published in 1837 with beautiful old woodcuts. It contains records of births, deaths, and marriages. The earliest entry is of the birth of my great, great-grandmother, Martha Force, in 1764. Long line in Newark, N.J. Her daughter, Phebe Force, married George Sanford who committed suicide at age 45. His wife was a common scold and he couldn’t take it any longer. Phebe lived into her eighties, a nagging thorn in everyone’s side. My mother was named after her.

I found in the Bible that I was named Marjorie Anne, Anne being the name of my father’s English mother. I never used the Anne. Mother must have picked Marjorie. It’s nowhere in the list of family names. I like it better than any other name she could have picked.