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Letters before the Bridge

1903-1907

July 23, 1903

Laurence Dear,

I'll bet you've been wondering night and day if I got your letter. I wasn't at home when it came but I got it alright. Mr. Staples the postman was mighty anxious to see who was going after it.

We're going to have the biggest company! They are my aunts and uncles, Mr. and Mrs. Brazell DeMars of Bathgate, N.D., and Mr. and Mrs. Nazareth Chevalier of Benson, Minnesota. But they will stay a month, so I'll have plenty of time to see them.

I didn't think you'd miss the "dear Laurence." I didn't like it a little bit when you said I was a "dear." Perhaps I am but I don't want to know it. Well, I won't be "sassy" any more. Don't worry about Mathias. He goes with another pretty girl.

Sakes alive! An automobile went by this afternoon. It went like the wind.

Goodbye,
Anna

November 24, 1903

Dear Laurence,

Oh, Land! If you want that long a letter, I'll have to begin to write it now. We get our mail in the morning now. It's kind of lonesome not to have to look for the mailman at night.

The river is frozen over above and below the ferry and it's all open at the crossing. We'll probably have to cross with the boat the greater part of the winter, unless the ice goes out again this fall.

I stayed over two days with Cecile the first night I came home; the young folks skated on the pond. I haven't skated for two years.

Last Tuesday morning the anchor ice was running awfully thick and Vassar didn't want to take me across because it was dangerous. But I finally persuaded him to take me over. We went up as far as the pier and tried to go across in an open place. We got halfway over and that channel ended so we had to turn back and rowed for shore.

Then we saw a nice open place. We hadn't gone over ten feet when the ice closed in all around us and we couldn't do a thing, except float down with the ice. We had to keep the boat rocking to keep it from getting frozen solid. It was awfully cold in the middle of the river and there was some pretty cold ice in the bottom of the boat to keep your feet warm with. We just calmly sat there for about three quarters of an hour floating down stream.

Burt Carr, who happened to be caught on our side of the river, wanted to take off his fur coat and let me have it but I declared I wasn't very cold. Gracious Heavens!

Finally, when we had reached the rapids, the ice happened to break away just where we were, and we started back for our shore. But I was determined to go to

*Dangers of
crossing the river.*

school! Just then there was a channel clear across that blessed river (I saw it too!) and Vassar rowed with all his might; we got there just in time before it closed around us again. It was very thrilling; cold, too.

Oh, that wasn't the funniest part of it. We couldn't get landed 'cause it was so shallow, the boat struck the rocks in the bottom of the river. Joe stepped on the ice near the shore and dragged the boat so that I could step out. Joe ran so fast that by the time Mr. Carr and I were ready to start, he was far out of sight.

It struck me awfully funny when he and I ran side by side clear uptown, about a mile, only stopped to crawl under fences and over logs and thru willow groves. He could hardly run with his coat and my dinner box under his arm. Anyone would have died laughing to see us.

I might have told this in a more interesting manner, but honest, I shiver now when I think of it. Vassar and Mr. Carr said I ought to get high marks in school and get credit for my wonderful courage. If that man hadn't been with me, I'd have broken plump down and cried.

I do that very easily anyway. So, I'm not so courageous after all. I was late, but Miss Dunn excused me and was glad I was able to get to school at all. The boys didn't dare to go over. I wasn't a bit scared, but I didn't care much for a watery grave in that "frigidus" dress.

Goodnight,
Anna Delia

Life Together

1908-1909

After a brief stay in Duluth, Minnesota, where Laurence liked to say of himself that his beat was covering the waterfront, the young couple had moved to North Branch before the year had passed. As they excitedly awaited the birth of their first child, Anna did not venture from home. She managed, however, with some help from friends and relatives, to keep up with the many burdens of household work, and to keep herself busy with sewing little things, gardening chores, reading, and most diligently praying for her child, her husband, and the little family which would become her whole interest and concern for many years.

She read the *North Branch Review* with interest since her young husband had become its editor and publisher. He was actually named in the masthead of the small town weekly as its owner and publisher, L.A. Dare & Co.

What this meant in subtle translation to L.A. Dare, was that his father Arthur Newman Dare of Elk River, publisher of the *Sherburne County Store News* since 1879, state representative to, and later Speaker of the House of Representatives in the 1890s, had managed to purchase the *Review* from Editor Bede on behalf of himself, AND, and son LAD.

Through the several years LAD and Anna spent at North Branch, Laurence made a success of his side of the business. As familiar as he had become with his family's *Star News* in Elk River, he wrote editorial paragraphs about as well as his dad.

Arthur had enjoyed state-wide approval by most weekly editors around the state. (On his death years later, Arthur was affectionately described by one publisher friend as "the best paragrapher in the state.") Editorial positions tended toward agreement politically among the numerous Republican-leaning journals of the day. There were fewer journals in the liberal camp, but strong views and high form kept readers alert as they scanned editorials. Most publishers found their strongly-worded opinions added more readers, and the public had more to talk about.

Letter from Anna to her mother-in-law, May, shortly after moving to North Branch

December 1908

Dear Mother Dare,

You will probably be greatly surprised, but I tho't it would be better to tell you before I went that there is going to be a little Laurence about next June.

Will it be embarrassing to you and the family to have me come? If so, I will send Laurence alone, although he says he will not go without me.

Of course, you can tell the girls, but I would rather it would not go any farther, so please warn them accordingly.

Lovingly,
Anna

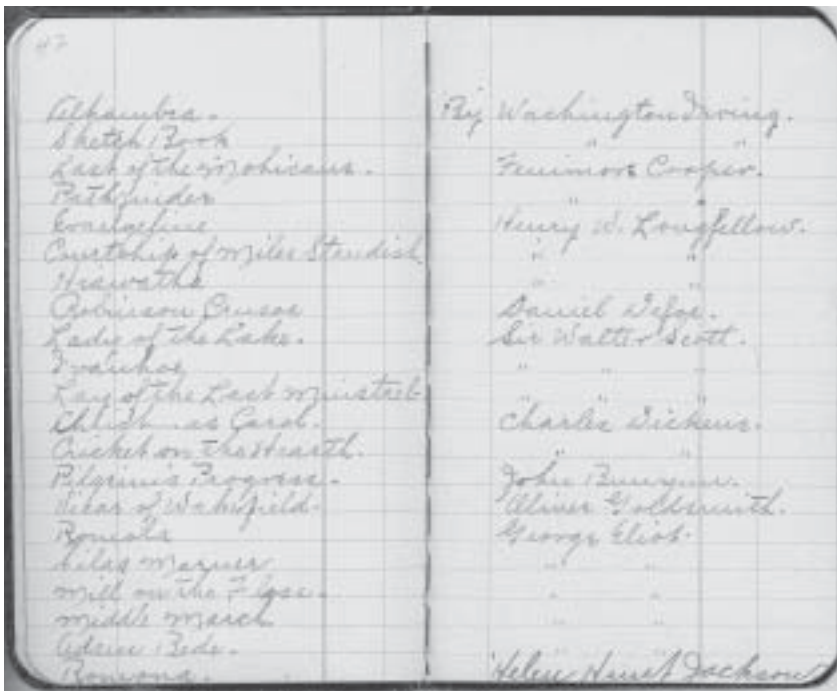
Anna's Diary

1914-1918

Anna was an orderly, conscientious person. She kept track of many day-to-day tasks, chores, and spiritual challenges. She was also a voracious reader and kept a small red leather notebook in which she listed titles and authors in long, neat rows. She kept track at different times in her marriage of concerts, plays, operas, and many other things which interested her.

Authors she had enjoyed included Louisa May Alcott, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Kipling, Irving, J.F. Cooper, Longfellow, Scott, Dickens, and George Eliot. Among her favorites were Shakespeare, Tennyson, and Longfellow.

The sampling of pages that follow from Anna's diary shows the rhythm and struggles of life before World War I, the challenges of being a good mother (Alan Dare was born in 1914) and wife, and Anna's determination and effort at making her life be a testimony to her spiritual convictions.



An entry from Anna's small leather notebook. The name of the book is on the left page, the corresponding author on the right page. At last count, Anna had read and recorded 278 books in this notebook.

1914

- Translated 64 lessons of English into French.
- Finished book of Sonatas: 78 hours
- Read carefully, "The Pathfinder's Sketch Book."
- Read "Nancy, the Joyous," "Strawberry Acres," "The Blunderer," "The Rise of Roscoe Payne," and "Pollyanna."
- Made a fireless cooker that works.
- Took leading part in home talent play.
- Made six pair curtains.
- Made an apron.
- I can make doughnuts!
- Sewing: new pink poplin dress, several madeovers, new white voile, one gown, two combinations, plush muff and collar, cuffs and buttons on winter coat.
 - Memorized, "Nearer Home," "Emperor's Nest," "The Arrow and the Song," "The Immaculate Conception," by Father Ryan (47 stanzas).

Other historical events of 1914:

The Panama Canal opens for traffic August 15.

World War I begins.

The dial phone system is demonstrated in Minneapolis.

Will Rogers appears at the Orpheum Theater.

War Letters

1918

As the war raged in Europe, more and more of the effects of that war were being felt at home by Anna and Laurence. Laurence served in the Minnesota Home Guard, an organization started in 1917 to serve as backup to the National Guard. A letter sent to Anna added, “Your mother told us how tickled Laurence is over drilling and getting to have a uniform.” Ben, Anna’s brother, enlisted in the Army. Plans were that Ben’s wife, Frances, and their soon to be born child, would stay with Laurence and Anna until Ben returned from military duty.

May 2, 1918

Dearest Sis,

I received your letter last night and am much amused at the mopp performances. Does he still smoke when he hears, "B?" I wonder how he'll like the Trist cousin. I sure would give my shoes to see that little mopp of mine.

I got a telegram at guard call yesterday. I was handed one with that news, when a fellow next to me in the ranks was handed one that his mother was dead. I felt badly at not being home to be with Frances in her hour, but when I saw his telegram, I soon cheered up. It sure is rotten when it takes them 55 hours to get a telegram to a man in this damn army. A letter came almost as quickly as the wire—just four hours difference. Something rotten in Denmark, I'll say.

It certainly makes me happy to think how chummy Ma and Frances are getting. You should see the letters I get from both. I know positively that Frances loves Ma as well if not better than her own, and she tells me of all Ma does for her. That Ma is certainly an angel. All she has done for us can never be repaid in any fraction. It would certainly do Joe a world of good to get into the army for a spell. He'd do no more rocking around of chair and cursing in her presence.

I don't mind the work much now. I am all through with my shots and vaccine and feel good. We get good grub and sleep from 9 P.M. to 5:30 A.M. every night. I'm not on guard.

They had the pleasure of finding a guard with his throat cut about a week ago. They caught one of the civilians that did it. The other got away. Believe me, no one gets close enough to me nights to touch me. When they come within six paces, they're under a big .38 automatic. I take no chances. It doesn't pay.

I certainly am under your protection. Seems as though I have always been. I don't know as it's protection as much as good counsel. At any rate, I appreciate whatever you want to call it. Good counsel is often protection.

Poor Ma, she always has something to worry about. I don't think Frances takes much stock in Mrs. Davy anymore. She used to be impressed to a certain degree, but anyway, it's as well she doesn't associate with her. She is certainly some wife. I think I am certainly lucky to have such a wife, sis, mother and brother. I think my brother has improved a few thousand percent in the past couple of years. Hasn't he?

Well, Sis, they are going to start to organize this outfit in a week or so. I think Lars and I will get into the dispensary for a time. That is really a soft job. We work for about two hours in the morning, that's all.

We had a fine dinner today. Roast beef, mashed spuds, gravy, peas, celery, onions, ice cream, cookies and lemonade. Best meal I have had since I have been here. Haven't seen butter or sugar since I got here, and I am getting so I don't miss either. There isn't much variation in the chow, but it's all good when you get hungry enough. I tipped the scales at 186 last night. Not bad, is it? Here are a few snaps I took and had taken. Took some last Sunday on Lookout Mountain, 2700 feet high, but they aren't finished yet. I'll send you some when they are finished.

Well, little Sis, take good care of yourself and family, and go see the folks occasionally. I know you can always fix anything that might go wrong. Don't worry about me, as I can take care of myself fairly nice.

Ever yours, sis
Ben

Tell It to Jesus

1923-1925

The following letters written by Anna to Jesus were never meant to be viewed by other eyes. It was part of her disciplined quiet time, her time of meditation and reflection, where she could bare her soul to the God she seemed to love as much as life itself.

In these letters you'll catch a glimpse of Anna's devotion to her children. You'll remember that Daryl Dare died only a few days old in May 1909. Alan Dale Dare, mentioned in Anna's Diary, was born August 14, 1915. Two other children were also born and are mentioned briefly in this section. Charles Fournier Dare was born September 9, 1922, and Donna Mary Dare was born September 15, 1925, only seven months before Anna's death.

These letters have been included not only to share what was dear to Anna's heart, but also to lead the reader into exploring the depths of Anna's faith. Perhaps her words will give voice and encouragement to the reader's own thoughts and reflections and faith journey with God. In so doing, it is my hope that Anna may continue to do now what she so desperately longed to do during her lifetime—to help others know and experience the depth and meaning of God's great love for each of us.

If you are so moved, feel free to use the extra space in the margins in this book as a place to jot down your own thoughts and reflections as God speaks to you.

January 31, 1923

My confessor says I have no serious faults, and that he has been humiliated overlooking my shortcomings too much, because he knew all my troubles. I wish he would guide me in my effort at self-improvement. Poor father, he has prayed for me untiringly and he has extricated me from all kinds of difficulties, so I will not ask him for further work for me.

It has seemed very wonderful how many times you listened to him concerning small me. When you have all of the vast universe, how can you take the trouble to even notice that I exist? Of myself, I can do nothing. I will even forget my resolutions. You can do everything for me, but I feel sure that you want me to try very hard not to depend upon you entirely to give only for the asking.

My new plan is to work by positive suggestion for one quality each month. Tomorrow, February first, I will begin to always think well, and speak well of everyone for one month. I offer my effort to you, Almighty God, and all else that I shall do this month in honor of the Blessed Trinity. Please accept my failures also, which will probably be many.

The second portion of my plan is to forget myself, and pray only for others. Not so much for individuals; but in a broader sense, if that is the way to word my ideas. The intentions of the Holy Father are about as broad as any, and I will think up some others that will especially please you, I hope.

My Jesus, I love you so much. But I must go on to my rest before one of the family wakes and expects me to do something for them. It is not self sacrifice, but duty, that makes me willing to be at their beck and call, although please remember that my duty is all joy, because it is exactly what you want me to do to.