

Christmas Visit to the Howell Kin  
near Atlanta in 1858

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Excerpt from the unpublished  
autobiography "Family Reminiscences"  
by Edna Perrin Heard Kilpatrick,  
written in White Plains, Ga.  
in 1922

...When she (Ma) got home she sent me for my books, and in a few days hired a carriage and took me out to Sandtown (now Newbern) and entered me in the Academy, which was in charge of Milton Cheney. He had a great name as an educator, but I must say as young as I was I had no opinion, that is no good opinion of him. He had a full school many large girls and boy boarders. The Howell family had three there, Clark Howell (son of Hamp.) and Robert and Henry Graham whose mother was a Howell. Em (the author's older sister, Emma) had (i.e., lived in) a good boarding house--in fact a beautifully kept home, and Clark H. and the Graham boys boarded there, and as they were very lively we all had a gay time. I had no trouble in taking and keeping a good stand in school because I had been so much better taught than his (Cheney's) pupils. But the term was short and it was not many weeks before we were back home.

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At about the same time we had a letter from Savannah Howell (daughter of Evan), a half aunt of Bob Graham, who had been a class mate of mine in Covington and a music pupil of Em's, and who was very fond of her, asking us to spend Christmas (1858) with her (Savannah). She lived with Mrs. Graham, as her mother had been dead for years, and her father lived by himself, all his (other) children being married. Bob would meet us at Stone Mountain at any time we named. Mrs. G.(raham) lived in Milton Co. about, I guess, ten miles from S.(tone) M.(ountain). We were much pleased with the idea and got ready and went. It was my first experience on a plantation and we found many things to interest us. As Bob's father was off on business (horse trading) Bob looked after the business (at home). He and Clark Howell (son of Hamp) saw to the running of the gin, and we would go down to the gin house and watch the work going on, or Savannah and Em would play duets and sing together. Savannah had a lovely voice and loved music. In fact that was all she cared about while at school, and was often in disgrace about her other work at school tho she had a good mind. She was not quite as old as I but was treated very much more like a young lady. The Graham home was a very nice square house, with large rooms and wide hall, but with a rather small piazza. It was by far the best house in the neighborhood, but was not furnished well. In fact, I think it was quite a new house, and perhaps it was soon furnished, as they seemed fully able. The next best house in the neighborhood was that of Hamp. Howell Mrs. Graham's brother. They were evidently the first people in the neighborhood, but were very kind and thoughtful of their poorer neighbors. There was a young girl in the neighborhood to whom Mrs. G.(raham) was very kind having her come and stay days at a time with her, because the girl had few pleasures. Old Mr. (Evan) Howell did not like this. I think he must have been a hard, wicked old man from several things we heard. The way he treated Mrs. Graham before her marriage was proof enough for me of that. It seems that Mr. Graham who was a Kentuckian used to come down to Georgia with a drove of horses and mules to sell, and when he was in that neighborhood would "put up" with the old man (Evan) Howell. He saw the daughter Julia, took a fancy to her and when she was about fifteen wrote her a love letter. Now Julia cared so little about it that she left it lying round in the sitting room, and her father saw it and read it. Being very angry he called her up, took a "cowhide" and gave her a hard whipping. She said, afterwards, that she had cared nothing for Mr. Graham, but while getting the whipping she made up her mind to marry him. Some time after while on a visit to a married sister while in the kitchen baking cake, Mr. G.(raham) came to the house, asked for her and walked straight through to the kitchen and told her he had come for her, to take care of her. And they married. Fortunately he was a fine man and they seemed very happy. I don't think she had forgiven him (her father) when we knew her though I remember that she spent one night at his house while we were there, but he never came to her house. But he was quite old, I should guess nearly eighty, and probably did not go about very much. I do remember, tho, that while Savannah was at school in Covington he came to see her, and while there he took a

great fancy to one of our young teachers Miss March, and tried to pay her attention, gave her boxes of candy and so on, until the girls caught on and teased her very much. He was a very young feeling old man, and has lately bought a nice carriage, and I heard used to go visiting young ladies taking his grandsons, Bob Graham and Clark Howell (son of Hamp.) with him. He played the fiddle well and nothing pleased him more than to have a lot of young people at his house, dancing to his music. He had very nice looking feet and took great pride in keeping them looking nice.

Well- to go on. While at Mrs. Grahams we were invited to a party at a house several miles from Mrs. G. (Graham's). The weather was cold and the days short, so we started by the middle of the afternoon getting there just before dark. The crowd had nearly all eaten supper, or dinner which ever it was, but the table was full of good food of all sorts, meats, breads, cakes, fruits and candies. We had good appetites and did justice to the feast. Then we went into the front of the house where two rooms were given up to the guests--one room for dancing, and the other for games. The affair was quite a novel one to us. The people all plain country people with plain ways. Just before we left, at about midnight plates of long narrow cakes were handed the guests called quits, so Savannah informed us.

We were to spend the night with the old man (Evan Howell) who lived near to the family who gave the party and the old man was expecting us. Mrs. Graham had told us we must return home early as she wanted the conveyance we were in to go to Atlanta, but after breakfast the old man got his fiddle and said we must have a dance. Bob went out and hitched up but his grandfather would not let us go with one dance but kept us a good while. Bob in the meantime urging us to leave. Going home Bob was quite serious, and when we got there he and all of us got a good scolding which we deserved, but not Bob. She said he was most to blame and she was going to punish him in some way for it. We all tried to make her see that Bob was not to blame but she shut me up by saying "Of course you don't want to see Bob punished." She seemed to have a special feeling for me, and I suppose (in fact I know it was because she thought we were in love, and she seemed to look upon it as a serious affair. When Mr. Graham came home she introduced me to him as the little girl who will one day be our daughter. I suppose because she had married so young she thought it the thing to do. On Christmas day when the negroes came round catching "Christmas Gift", she told the negroes I would be their young mistress some day. It was quite embarrassing to me, but I felt it was very complimentary for Bob was evidently her pride. I could never see why she seemed so cordial, for I was not a pretty girl, not especially talented in any way, the daughter of a widow teaching to educate her children. But if I had been all that I was not I could not have been treated any more kindly. It was more embarrassing to me because Bob had not ever said anything to me about marrying, had not even told me he loved me.

We all spent Christmas Day with the Hamp Howells, who lived about a mile away, not only the regular family but a Mr. Parsons, a partner in business of Mr. Grahams, and a young man by the name of Clark, from Atlanta, and both of whom were suitors for Savannah tho she was only fifteen years old, and she had promised them an answer on Christmas day. I found out afterward that she said "yes" to Mr. Parsons and "no" to Clark. Just before leaving the house to return home she told me privately that when we got home and I got out of the buggy to get in Mr. Clark's with her as he had agreed to let her drive his pair of fasthorses (livery, stable horses) down to the river, a distance of several miles. I did as she said, and before any one could interfere she drove off. Fortunately the horses behaved all right, and when we reached the river she had no trouble in turning them. When we got back Savannah got a very serious talking to. Mrs. Graham told her that she had suffered much in mind while we were gone being fearful that she could not turn the horses at the river and fearing that she might have to send me back to my mother.

drowned or maimed. I do not know, but I suspect she had given Mr. Clark a good talk too which he certainly deserved.

We had all been invited to spend several days with Mrs. Graham's brother Col. Clark Howell who lived several miles from Atlanta and preparations for that visit were begun soon after Christmas. It was then that Mrs. Graham told how she was going to punish Bob for not obeying her in coming home so late from his grandfather's - that she was not going to let him go on this trip. Of course we all (the girls of the party) felt very bad about it for we knew it was not his fault but ours and we felt that we would not enjoy the visit at all if Bob did not go. So the night before the visit was to come off we went in a body to Mrs. Graham to plead for Bob. It took a good deal of pleading but after a while she gave in, I expect as much to please herself as us. Savannah had before this been sent to ask her father for the use of his carriage and horses to take us girls. After some talk he agreed provided only three girls went in it. Savannah agreed, but when we left the house she said "That is to keep Bettie Brown from going, for he doesn't like me to be intimate with her, but she shall go and ride in that carriage, and one of us will go in a buggy with one of the boys." And so it was, much to my sorrow, for I was the girl who went with Clark Howell (son of Hamp.), and the day proved to be a rain windy day, and before I got to the end of the trip I had taken a bad cold and got there with a red nose and swollen eyes and lips and the knowledge that I was looking my worst. Col. Howell's family were very interesting people. He had married the second time to an old friend of mother's -- a Miss Hooks, daughter of Dr. Hooks who had been pastor of the Christian Church of which Ma was a member. He, himself, was a fine looking man of genial manners. He had quite a family of children, all I think by his first wife, but it seemed a very peaceful family and the young folks seemed fond of her (the second wife) and perfectly free with her. I do not remember all their names, but remember well Evan, about twenty years old and a fine looking pleasant fellow, who soon after joined the army and became a col. of whom his men were very fond--Albert about eighteen also a very attractive young man, and Clark about twelve or fourteen. There were several younger ones, two little girls I think, but I have a very hazy recollection of them. They had a nice large brick house, well furnished and I think every room was filled. Everything was abundant and the guests were made to feel very much at home. I do not remember much about that visit--we stayed only two or three days, and I suppose my cold made me feel stupid - at any rate I was not sorry when the time came to leave. The others seemed to be having a fine time and there were young men from Atlanta to add to the pleasure.

When we left it was understood that we were to go as far as a certain crossroads and there to wait for Mrs. Graham who had gone into Atlanta on some business. So when we got to that part of the road the boys built a large fire and we all got out of our conveyances and sat round on the buggy cushions and were having a good time when some one proposed that we eat dinner. So the basket of lunch was brought out and finished, no one remembering Mrs. Graham and her little daughter who were driving from Atlanta. When she got to us and found that we had eaten and left nothing for them, she was naturally quite angry. I think some one went up to a little store where the boys had bought candy for us, and got some crackers or something for her. By the time we reached old Mr. (Evan) Howell's where we were to spend the night we were a hungry crowd, and Savannah said to Bob and me "Come let us go to some of the negroes cabins and see if we cannot get some thing to eat." At the first cabin we found a woman just about to take a corn hoe cake from the hoe, which she very willingly gave us, and which with some nice, thick, cold buttermilk tasted fine to us, and the woman seemed to enjoy it as much, and listened to our chatter with great pleasure. We then went up to the house where we waited with more patience than the others probably did until supper was announced. And such a supper! Every thing that the plantation could get together it seemed to me, and the

The next morning saw us on our way back to the Graham home, and pretty soon Em and I bade farewell to them and left for W. Plains by the way of Covington. Bob and Clark took us in buggies to Stone Mountain to take the train, and on the way Bob asked me to marry him and I said "yes". We then planned for several years to come. We would go on with our education as had been planned for us -- I to some Georgia college and Bob to Virginia. Little did we know what the next years would bring! It seems that we must have had no idea of the state our country was in as it never seemed to enter our minds that war was threatening. One thing that surprises me is that I would not agree to correspond with Bob; Why I do not remember. It may be because we were not allowed to write to boys during the school term in Covington, and I supposed Dawson Institute would have some such rule. At any rate I would not. We started out to be a very sensible couple and felt very well satisfied with ourselves and each other.

When we got to Covington Mrs. Eddleman teased Em a good deal for letting me get ahead of her, but Em said that she had been just with boys while she was gone. But I noticed that when we were looking for Clark and Bob to spend the evening with us on their way back to their school that Em primped a good deal and even curled her hair which was a very unusual thing, and that she was very cordial with Clark, and he never left her side the whole evening. When he left he asked her to correspond with him to which she agreed. He wrote very often and it was not long before he asked her to marry him, which she regretted very much. And when she wrote him to that effect he wrote her a very sharp letter letting her know that he thought she had flirted with him. Em felt badly about it, as she ought to have, for it was true.