

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE Sunday, Oct. 14, 1934

MRS. KASEBIER
PHOTOGRAPHER
IS DEAD AT 82

Hailed As American Woman
Who Did Most To Make
Camera Prints A Fine Art

Noted as an Exponent of
New School Emotionalists

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She was a woman of medium height, though she seemed taller, perhaps because of her very erect carriage and, to put it mildly, her strong personality. Her features were strong and well-defined. She was handsome rather than pretty. Her eyes were brown and very alive; they kept their twinkle all her life. She looked at people with the disconcertingly frank stare of a child, and was embarrassingly accurate in summing them up, especially as she had no hesitancy at expressing her thoughts about them. She was honest to the point of tactlessness, and was saved from making many enemies only by the fact that she really liked people and was fascinated by what made the wheels go around.

She had chestnut brown hair which most of her life she wore in bangs over her very high forehead with coils wound around her head. Though her hair was as fine as a baby's, she had a great wealth of it. She always dressed differently ~~than~~ ^{from} any one else, a great source of pain to me as a child, not through any arty affectation, but because she liked to be comfortable. She gave up wearing corsets entirely, in a burst of rebellion when corsets that laced the human form into something quite other than its original lines, became fashionable. She finally evolved a quite unique but very becoming style of dress for herself, and she stuck to it, with minor variations, for the rest of her life. She wore a generously-cut black skirt, broadcloth in winter and tafeta in summer, topped with a Chinese man's double-breasted shirt, usually grey or soft blue silk damask, with a tiny stand-up collar, and fastened with frogs of the same material down one side. Over this a short wide-sleeved chinese jacket, elaborately embroidered for dress-up, and plain for every day. This outfit gave her freedom of movement and proved itself very practical. When she went out ~~thru~~ ^{on} a large black cape which reached the floor (sometimes trimmed with fur) and a tricorne hat rather like Napoleon's. She was an impressive figure when she swept into a room --- and she never just came in, she swept! In the dark-room she wore a heavy apron that engulfed her from neck to ankles: a necessary precaution as she usually came out splattered with chemicals ~~from~~ and with hypo on her shoes.

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In spite of her outspoken directness and her entry into a career and a man's world of business, she never became hard or brittle. She was a sentimentalist at heart. She had an outgoing and affectionate nature, a broad outlook, and a great sympathy for the human race. She said that people fell into two categories, animal and vegetable. She preferred the animals but tolerated the vegetables with real kindness. She greatly preferred men to women, as she felt men were more direct and honest.

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She had great clarity of mind and could make a decision of an eye, and then stick to it. Many of her decisions seemed selfish ones, as she had to decide between housewifely duties and her work. Her work always won: nothing was allowed to stand in the way of it. Her selfishness was not the personal sort. She was an artist, and chose to express herself; and she chose photography as a means of artistic expression. Everything else became relative to that. It was the driving force of her life. Without it she would die. You already know she lived to be 82.

I don't mean to try to justify Granny's selfishness. Her ⁿ contributions to a new, a growing form of art ~~can~~ can speak more eloquently than I can ever hope to. She left behind her a good deal of beauty that, but for her, might have gone unexpressed, besides the memory of a ^{very} charming and vivid personality.

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"Anything at all, Granny?"

"Yes, anything at all."

"Well, I know one thing He can't do."

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"He can't photograph me when I wiggle."

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We loved the stories of when she was a little girl, because instead of pointing a moral, as in most grown-ups' stories of "when I was your age", Granny's were the most exciting, even to the point of being blood-curdling, that we had ever heard. Her childhood was as full of adventure as a dime novel.

She was born out West among the Indians in 1852. It was at Des Moines, Iowa, to be exact (then called Fort Des Moines) in a log cabin situated on the Missouri River. She was the only white child for miles around, so I guess she learned early in life to depend on herself for entertainment. Later on she had a little brother, and told us that she had to watch him when her mother was busy. What she remembered about him at that age was that when he wet his pants she, Gertrude, got spanked.

~~Her mother was Gertrude~~

Her mother was Muncy Boone. She was related to Daniel Boone, so I guess she came by her pioneering instinct honestly. She came from Kentucky and married my great-grandfather, John Stanton, who lived in Ohio. I know very little about John Stanton before his marriage except that he came from the same family that supplied Lincoln's cabinet with a Secretary of War. He must have had his share of pioneer blood, too, because when Granny was about ~~four~~ years old, he set forth in search of gold in Colorado. The next year he sent for his family and they made the journey to Leadville, Colorado by covered wagon, accompanied by Gertrude's uncle, a Methodist minister, and his wife. It was on this trip that she experienced some of the things which she used to tell us children. ~~about~~. They ran into fierce storms and the lightning whipped around the iron rims of the wagon wheels like fire-works. They saw Indians buried by the wayside with heads, hands, and feet left sticking out, as a warning to other Indians not to molest the caravans of covered wagons.

The story of that trip I love best I will tell as nearly as I can remember as Granny told it to us:

*Gertrude is Stanton's Mother
was Daughter of an English Earl*

"We were travelling slowly along one afternoon just before dusk looking for a camp site for the night. Ours was the last wagon in the caravan. My uncle was up front driving the horses; my brother and I were inside the wagon with my mother and my aunt. Faintly at first, then unmistakably, we heard whoops and yells of Indians, and the beat of their horses' hooves. We looked out of the back of the wagon and saw them: a band of Indians riding straight for us, brandishing their tomahawks and screeching their blood-curdling yells. Escape was impossible, as obviously our tired ponies couldn't outrun the fast Indian ponies, even if they weren't pulling the heavy wagons after them. My uncle urged on our teams, but it was useless. It was only a matter of minutes before the Indians would capture us. My mother hid me and my brother under the seats of the wagon. The little gunpowder we had left would be of no help. We were out-run and out-numbered. Just as the Indians were closing in, and not ten feet from us, my aunt stepped to the back of the wagon and opened the flap. She stood there defiantly facing the Indians. Then calmly, and with great showmanship, she removed her false teeth and threw them at the Indians. It was a long chance, but it worked. The Indians reined their horses, and with cries of terror wheeled around and rode back over the plains, convinced they had met up with a white witch. Now don't ask me what she chewed with the rest of her days, because I don't know."

The West at this time was sparsely settled, and there were no playmates for little Gertrude Stanton. She played among the rocks and fields, with birds and little field animals for companionship. She even tamed some of the birds so they would eat out of her hand. At this time she became attuned to the simple natural things which gave her so much joy, even through her later, more sophisticated life.

The family had settled in Ureka Gulch, about forty miles from Denver. John Stanton had a mill nearby where gold was taken from the rocks. This gold was then brought home to the cabin, in balls about eight inches in diameter, where it was weighed and accounted for. Gertrude was allowed to gather the tiny crumbs of gold which fell, and keep them for her own. She had a little wide-necked bottle which she used for her bank. She tied a rag over the opening, and stored the bottle in a chink in the cabin wall. Finally the bottle was full --- but her private hoard was of no use to her, as there were no stores for miles around, where she could spend her carefully-saved fortune.

The nearest shopping place was about forty miles from the Stanton cabin, and one Christmas the miners suggested to Mrs. Stanton that she hang up a pillow slip on the door ~~instead~~ instead of stockings at the fireplace. The men rode to Denver and bought everything they could find for Gertrude and her little brother. With these gifts, and some of their own gold nuggets, they filled the pillow slip. Among other things that tumbled out of this improvised Christmas stocking, were a gold ring and a primer filled with pictures. The ring rolled out of the bundle, across the floor, and fell between the cracks to disappear forever. But Gerturde did not mourn for it a minute; she was entranced with the picture book, which became at once her dearest possession. Pictures, even at that early age, were more priceless to her than a whole pillow-slip of gold rings.

One day she sat in the doorway of the cabin with a pencil and a pad of crude lined paper. She wanted to draw the mountains. Her mother, who hadn't an atom of artistry in her whole being, said to her: "Wait a minute, Gertie, let me help you." She took the paper and pencil, and with the aid of a saucer, drew scallops around it for mountains. Gertrude never forgot the grief and isolation she felt in the presence of such misunderstanding.

There was another case of misunderstanding which didn't bother her so much. In the lonely life they led, religion was about the only stimulus and excitement they had, and they had very little of that (of the formal, church-going variety). But one day a strolling preacher came along and announced that he would soon hold services in a deserted cabin over the mountain. Gertrude's aunt, herself a minister's wife, and accustomed to such tasks, busied herself making wine from wild grapes, while Gertrude watched each step with fascination. She was allowed to lick the spoon as a reward for her help in gathering the grapes. Finally the great day arrived, and her father took her small brother in his arms, and herself by the hand, and with the mother and relatives following closely behind, went along the path over the mountain. When they arrived, the cabin was filled with ~~men~~ miners. The minister exaltedly requested ~~all~~ to partake of communion for the forgiveness of their sins. Gertrude tottered down the aisle after them, her little knees shaking under her skirt, and knelt at the altar to receive communion. The sight of the small child walking alone to the altar in the midst of those rough men caused great excitement, and when the family returned home, her mother said to her: "Oh, Gertie, I was so proud of you today!" To this she did not reply, nor did she mention the incident again; but when Prohibition came in, she remembered that she had gone to the altar to get some of "that wine!"

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At one time Granny had an arrangement with World's Work to Photograph all their notables. They made an appointment for Lord Northcliffe, and Granny didn't know who he was so she telephoned her friend Arthur B. Davies who told her that Northcliffe was a good American (in spirit)

Lord Northcliffe said to Granny when she was photographing him "It distresses me, Madame Kasebier, to see you work so hard knowing that I can do nothing to help you."

She replied "Lord Northcliffe, I love to work. I would pay for the privilege!"

In loud tones he boomed, "where were you born?"

She said, "I was born out west among the Indians and I never got over it."

Later Granny and Northcliffe became good friends and at the outbreak of the first world war, he wrote her a letter which went something like this;

My dear Gertrude;

(A few platitudes) ... It may be a long war but in the end we will win.

Yr. affec. Northcliffe

As every one at that time thought it would be a short war Granny felt this was an interesting comment and saved the letter ... rather treasured it as a human document, especially as its predictions were true. It wasn't until years later, when she read the

Biography of Rosa Lewis (the famous cook - that she came across a letter Northcliffe had written to Rosa Lewis - It read:

My dear Rosa;

(A few platitudes) - It may be a long war but in the end we will win - and he sent her some soap! -

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Proposed Outline
of
Biography of Gertrude Kasebier [p. 1 of 45]

1852 - Born in Des Moines, Iowa (then called Fort Des Moines and situated on the Missouri River) in a log cabin. Only white child for many miles around. Daughter of Muncy Boone and John Stanton. Muncy Boone born in Kentucky - family owned slaves. Related to Daniel Boone (grandmother's father's brother). John Stanton born in Ohio, relative of Edwin Stanton, member of Lincoln's cabinet. She also had a brother Charles who, at the age of 15, went to Mexico and was never heard from again. Presumably killed in guerilla warfare.

1859 - John Stanton went west to Colorado to mine gold in Leadville. Mrs. Stanton and Charles and Gertrude followed the next year in a covered wagon with her sister and her husband (a Methodist minister). Chased by Indians, her Aunt repulsed Indians by throwing false teeth at them. She saw Indians buried with heads, hands and feet sticking out of the ground, as a warning not to molest the covered wagons. On the prairies they were at a loss for fuel, as there was no evidence of lumber of any description. They depended on Buffalo chips, and when Gertrude was sent forth to gather them, she fastidiously lifted her skirt to grasp them without soiling her fingers.

1859-1864 - The family settled in a log cabin in Ureka Gulch, Colorado (about forty miles from Denver). Mr. Stanton had a mill nearby where the gold was taken from the rocks. This gold was brought home to the cabin - usually in balls about eight inches in diameter - where it was weighed and accounted for. Gertrude was allowed to pick up the crumbs of gold, and she had a little bottle with a wide neck which finally came to be filled with these gold fragments. She tied a rag around the neck of the bottle and stored it in a chink in the cabin, for there was no place for miles around where she could buy anything with her gold.

Fable
(I) One day a report came that the Indians were coming to attack them. Her cousin was in the kitchen busily engaged in making cartridges, while her small brother stood beside him watching him pour powder into the shells. Suddenly a spark from the fire ignited the powder, and an explosion followed. Her brother's hand was so badly burned that the skin hung in ribbons from his fingertips. They took her cousin, whose face was badly burned, into the woods where they applied fresh manure to his wounds, as this was the only method of cure practised in those early days.

The West at that time was sparsely settled. Developments were primitive. Wild beasts including mountain lions, sheep etc. were in evidence, as well as great eagles and wild birds of many descriptions. Many of these birds came to be tamed by the settlers to the extent of eating out of their hands.

Her aunt (the wife of the minister) was accustomed to making wine for the church from unfermented wild grapes and Gertrude was allowed to lick the spoon.

There were no women or children within forty miles of where they lived and Religion was the only stimulus and excitement they had. One day a strolling preacher came along, and he held services in a little cabin set aside for that purpose far over the mountain. Her father, taking her small brother on his arm and herself by the hand, with her mother following closely behind, went along the path over the mountain to the cabin as there were no roads at all. When they arrived the cabin was filled with miners, whom the minister exaltedly requested to partake of communion for the forgiveness of their sins. Gertrude tottered down the aisle after them, her knees shaking under her skirt, and knelt at the altar to receive

Proposed Outline of Biography of Gertrude Kosebier - Page 2

communion. The sight of the small child walking alone to the altar in the midst of those men caused great excitement and when they returned home her mother said to her "Oh! Gertie, I was so proud of you today". To this she did not reply, nor did she mention it thereafter, but when Prohibition came in she remembered going to the altar for some of that wine.

(II) *dictated*
When she was five or six years old, she saw a crowd of men passing the cabin door one day with a man with a rope around his neck in their midst on their way to a lynching. She started after them, but her mother pulled her back (to her great displeasure) and said "Wait until I curl your hair, Gertie". (It seemed to her she was forever getting her hair curled!) Her mother lifted her to a chair, fixed her hair and fluffed out her skirts, then as Gertrude ran to the door she discovered that the lynching was over and the men were coming back. She never got over this disappointment until many years later when Buffalo Bill came East. Then she took a bus load of poor children to see his show, and there witnessed a fake lynching which got the matter out of her system once and for all.

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One day her father's partner came to him and told him that for several nights he had seen a group of men on horseback riding past the mill. So he decided to hide among the logs that night and listen, if possible to their conversation as they passed. He discovered that they were bound for the cabin of a neighboring settler who lived a few miles away from us. He went to this man's cabin and asked him to tell him more about it, but the man said he could not tell him - it would be worth his life. The partner, whose name was MacClellan (a relative of General MacClellan) then said to this man, "You're a Free Mason and so am I, and you are bound by oath to tell me of this". At this the man agreed, and disclosed that these men were Southerners who were planning to rob and kill them. Then my father heard of this he sent a messenger to Denver by pony, and the Colonel in charge of military activity in

Proposed Outline of Biography of Gertrude Kasebier - Page 2

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After they arrived in the East they went to live in New York and Gertrude started her formal education here. She later went to Moravian College in Pennsylvania, and afterwards told many stories of the "bundling" that went on while she was there.

- 1872 - At the age of twenty she had all her teeth taken out because she did not like to go to the dentist.
- 1873 - She was married to Eduard Kasebier of Wiesbaden, Germany, an importer of raw shellac (more details available). They lived in New York and then in Brooklyn. A son, Frederick, was soon born. She accompanied Eduard on numerous business trips to Germany and visited with his family while there.

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- 1873 - Married to Eduard Kasebier of Wiesbaden, Germany, an importer of raw shellac (more details available). They lived in New York and then in Brooklyn. A son, Frederick, was soon born. She accompanied Eduard on numerous business trips to Germany and visited with his family while there.

The first time she went to Europe to visit her husband's people, she had her little son with her and to her great disgust, they put her in the Ship's Manifest without asking her the facts. They had her age as 27 years and she was so outraged as she considere this the age of a very old woman.

~~Whilexxxxxwas~~

Her husband's sister had married a Bismark (nephew of etc.) and the two remaining daughters of the family felt that they could not afford to marry below this rank - but as there no other Bismarks lying around loose, one of them married a piano manufacturer. He could buy and sell the whole family, but he was in trade and therefore not eligible to the family circle, and was ~~therefore~~ never invited to the family house. But Gertrude always made a bee-line to his house when she went to Germany, as his wine was good and his hospitality famous.

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At this time everybody in Europe went in for titles. One time when she went to a coffee party, which were as popular there as tea parties are here, she was introduced to Frau Upper Criminal Inspector Schmidt!

1884 - Subsequently, two daughters Gertrude and Hermine, were born to the Kasebiers, in Brooklyn.

1884 - The family moved to a farm in New Durham, New Jersey. Gertrude milked the cow, tended the horse and chickens, helped with the garden, wore hip-boots, chased trespassers with an unloaded rifle. Eduard commuted to work in New York. There were Newfoundland dogs and carts for the children, too. They stayed on this farm four years, and they moved back to Brooklyn, where Gertrude enrolled at Pratt Institute and studied painting for ten years. During the last of these years she wanted to go to Paris to study but her husband objected. Finally she was offered the opportunity to chaperone a class from Pratt going to Paris for summer school and she took it. Among the children in this class were Eduard Steichen, Willard Paddock and Clara and Charlotte Smith. It was about this time that she bought her first camera and started working with it for fun. Photography was in its infancy and very little artistic work had been done in it. Steichen also became interested in photography at this time. They developed their negatives in little rivers outside of Paris on moonless nights - as they had no darkroom. She was surprised with the results she achieved and gradually laid aside her brushes and paints and gave up the Academy Julien, and the camera became her one consuming interest. When she returned to New York she realized her lack of technical skill. One day she went into a photographic shop to buy some supplies. The boy in charge of the shop was very stupid, and could not help her, but there happened to be an old priest waiting there who evidently knew something about this. He said to her, "Let me see your plates, Madame". And after looking at them he told her exactly what to do. She told him that that was all very well but that she would not be able to remember it all after she got home. He then

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Proposed Outline of Biography of Gertrude Kasebier - Page 5

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She went to a little photographer, Mr. Lifshy, in Brooklyn, and told him she wanted to learn from him. He said he didn't want a woman around getting in his way, but she turned up the next day anyway and set to work. As he couldn't get rid of her he made the best of it, but she butted into his sittings, corrected his lighting and composition. He always said she taught him all he ever knew about taking a picture.

All this was very embarrassing to her conservative German husband, who felt him disgraced by a wife who would work, but there were still many embarrassments to follow for the poor man. He was a kind, gentle man who adored his family, and never became accustomed to his very unconventional wife. Her frankness was a constant source of uneasiness to him. They went to the World's Fair in Chicago in 18-- , with a business associate of his. As they rode through the grounds in a carriage, Gertrude spied a log cabin - a replica of Lincoln's birthplace. "Oh! Let's stop", she cried, "I want to see that". Eduard nudged her to keep still. "But I must see it," she said. Another nudge. "But I was born in a house like that", she shouted. Eduard's humiliation was complete. Genteel German people didn't get themselves born in log cabins and he never could understand the pioneer spirit that was part of his wife. He must have lived in constant suspense, never knowing whether he would find a house full of Indians (who must have amazed him), or artists, whom he understood even less. Patience is hardly the word for the virtue he must have possessed.

Of course, in those days women did not go into business, and when Gertrude opened a studio, it must have been a bitter blow to him. He very likely had learned by then that she couldn't be swayed from anything she was determined to do, and so he bore his pain in silence.

She won a prize of \$50. with one of her photographs and this spurred her on to harder work. She showed some of her photographs to Alfred Steiglitz and he advised her to open a studio. She opened her first studio on E. 30th St. in what was then the Women's Exchange Bldg.

Several years later she moved to 273-5th Ave. Had great success. Work very new and different from anything being done. Showed great courage in departure from conventional methods. Was hailed by some criticized by others but remarked by all.

1901- Exhibited and won medals and recognition in England France Germany and South America as well as in the U.S.

1903- Steiglitz published first number of Camera Work and devoted it to Granny's work. She was nicknamed "Granny" about this time, when her first grandchild was born. Was also called "Cassy".

Her associates at this time were Steiglitz, Steichen, Demachy, Kelley, W.B. Cadby, Clarence White, Frances B. Johnston etc. Materials were inferior. She coated her own papers, worked under difficulties, no artificial light, slow lenses etc. but produced results that are seldom equaled today for artistic merit. (Permanent collection in Library of Congress)

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She won a prize of \$50. with one of her photographs and this spurred her on to harder work. She showed some of her photographs to Alfred Steiglitz and he advised her to open a studio. She opened her first studio on E. 30th St. in what was then the Women's Exchange Bldg.

Several years later she moved to 273-5th Ave. Had great success. Work very new and different from anything being done. Showed great courage in departure from conventional methods. Was hailed by some criticized by others but remarked by all.

- 1901- Exhibited and won medals and recognition in England France Germany and South America as well as in the U.S.
- 1903- Steiglitz published first number of Camera Work and devoted it to Grann's work. She was nicknamed "Granny" about this time, when her first grandchild was born. Was also called "Cassy". Her associates at this time were Steiglitz, Steichen, Demachy, Kelley, W.B. Cadby, Clarence White, Frances B. Johnston etc. Materials were inferior. She coated her own papers, worked under difficulties, no artificial light, slow lenses etc. but produced results that are seldom equaled today for artistic merit. (Permanent collection in Library of Congress)

Proposed Outline of Biography of Gertrude Kasebier -Page6

She became friends with many of the interesting people of her day. On one of her trips abroad she had a letter of introduction to Rodin. She found him very simple, very honest, and very sincere. Instead of posing his models he would allow them to wander around the studio until they happened to fall into a position that pleased him. Then he would tell them to hold it and start drawing - watching the model all the time, and never looking at his paper.

Granny made a photograph of him, and when she returned to this country, sent it to him in care of a friend. She took it to his studio and he asked her to wait as he had to address a meeting of French artists. When they had gone away - she showed him the picture and he said: "Oh I am not as beautiful as that." ...and he ran after the French people who had left and brought them back to admire it.

A prominent society woman came to Granny's studio one day and saw a Rodin bronze and some drawings, this woman always treated Granny with condescension because she was a "working woman" - When she saw the Rodin things she showed great surprise and said "Where did YOU get get those?" Granny replied "M. Rodin presented them to me" "Well!" said the woman, catching her breath and becoming very confidential, "When I go to Paris I always send him a red rose, then he knows who is coming." Granny thought "you damned fool" but said nothing. "You know...he kissed me once" continued the woman. "That's nothing" said Granny "Just the French form of salutation...he kisses everyone" Silence. Granny: "Did any one see him kiss you?" Woman; "Most certainly not!" Granny: "Nobody saw him kiss me either."

Rodin sent Granny the bronze and drawings in appreciation of the pictures she had made of him, he also autographed one of her pictures of him "De tout mon coeur d'artiste a un autre artiste, affectement"

A connoisseur of fine art came to her one day and said "Where is that Rodin I hear you have, Madame Kasebier?" she said "It is here, Mr. Eddy-" indicating the photograph she had done of him. He said: "Well that is Rodin. That is the best thing I have ever seen of Rodin. But... with a woman's privilege you have flattered him" She said "You haven't got it quite right, Mr. Eddy, that is Rodin in the presence of a woman."

? Granny had some strange experiences, which she called *psychic* psychic. She said she developed this sense because she was deaf, and therefore her other senses became keener to compensate. One of these experiences concerned Rodin. It seems that she had made an enlargement of a picture she had taken of him in profile, and sent it to him. He died just at this time and she did not know if he had received it. One day a cloud formed within the range of her vision, and Rodin appeared to her. He would disappear then return but always in profile. She said, "I want to see you full face." he answered "This is to demonstrate to you that I got that profile picture before I passed away". Then he went away. A few days later another cloud appeared in which she could see his full face. He turned his head this way and that way and finally said, "Now I shall never come again." And he never did.

Granny accepted these so called "visions" very casually and often made drawings of what she had seen. Sometimes...perhaps coincidentally... pictures appeared in the paper a few days later depicting the same scenes and events that she had Recorded.

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