

Hooper extracts from part 1 1886 to 1890

Aunt Fanny or Aunt Sally = Frances Emily Freame

“Em”= Emily Mary Heseltine Hooper

“Fanny”= Frances Susan Whittuck Hooper, married Frederick Robert Cruttwell, son Hugh

“Mortie” or Owl = Peter Mortimore Hooper

18th July 1888

Em looks a degree better than when she was here last, but still is not exactly brilliant. She gives a very poor account of Aunt Sally whose sight seems very bad. After dinner we wandered about and distributed slugs to her great disgust.

29th August 1888

This weather is depressing – nothing but rain day after day – lots of hay is still munt [wet?] in places, and there is no sun to ripen the corn. The farmers really do seem to have something to grumble at this year. Hugh and I prowled about and anathematised the state of affairs generally. Dear old Aunt Sally talks of going to live in Bath. Personally I wish she would, it would be a good thing for me, but it might be unpleasantly near Fanny and that is not desirable for all parties.

30th August 1888

It was horribly stormy and generally disagreeable but Hugh and I went out of course and struggle - uggled through it. We chose Kind Bush lane for a change. I like that boy, he has lots of sense and yet isn't a prig, altogether a pleasant companion and it always puzzles me that he should be so nice with such surroundings as he has at home. His great aim is to be a school master.

1 Sep 1888

I went down to the Vicarage with Hugh at 10.30 for tennis and wished the Inman relations in Jericho. The ground was soaked, balls ditto, and there was not a scrap of go about the whole affair. I came home as early as possible to see Miss Mullings who is home for a few days and promised to come in this morning. When she did come, she talked so much about the horrors she had seen and apparently enjoyed at the hospital, that I could hardly eat my lunch. I drove to Shanks after lunch for some more tennis and took Hugh to the gate that he might walk back. There were several people there. Fifes, Langhorns, Colin and his wife etc. I was introduced to Mrs Gerald who is there with her three children. I don't like her as much as Horace's wife. The Fifes brought a Mrs Turton with them, widow of a young man whose people used to live over the way where the Bells do now. We got into conversation and she told me a lot about James Deane's marriage, she maintains that the young woman was really ill when she behaved so badly to him. Father went to Shaftesbury and on to Bath by the 5.32. He sleeps there tonight and goes on to Turley [Uplands, Turleigh, Bradford on Avon] tomorrow to interview Aunt Sally about her intended move to Bath. I should doubt its being a good move but if the old lady has made up her mind she will probably stick to it whatever anyone may say.

16th September 1888

Hugh writes that I am to be asked to Turley when Mortie goes there shortly, whatever that may mean. I hope it will be possible as I should like to know him. Em predicts that we should get on and that is by no means what I usually do with my relations. I am not supposed to know anything about their plans in my regard.

28th September 1888

Mortie comes here next Saturday for a few days and Em has asked to come with him. It's horribly inconvenient for of course Gracie will still be here but we can't well refuse, especially as so many other people who are not kith and kin invite themselves here.

6th October 1888

As we turned down the Station Road a man and woman to my great surprise they turned out to be Mortie and Lui who came on by an earlier train than we expected them. Mortie is not at all bad looking with dark brown eyes and a dark moustache. We seemed to get on at once and he went to the station at 5.50 to help me meet Father. He sings comic songs very cleverly and kept us in fits all the evening.

Sunday 7th October 1888

I rather like Mortie, we seem to have so many tastes in common. The evening was a degree slower than usual for Mortie does not sing comic ditties on the Lord's day so the piano had a rest.

9th October 1888

We shall miss our lively young man guest [Mortie]. I think we two should get on if we saw a little more of one another, we don't seem a bit like acquaintances of a few days only but then cousins are not quite like other people I suppose.

15th February 1889

Aunt Fanny is ill, breaking up I should fancy, they are still at Hanham and Em doesn't seem to know how to get her home.

26th February 1889

To my horror Mother told me this morning that Fanny Cruttwell is coming up today for one night. I don't know what her husband has been doing to her but something worse than usual I imagine. Fanny looks smaller than ever and half starved. I never did cotton on to her somehow, there is a something about her that doesn't ring true. She says Hugh is seedy. Aunt Fanny has been and still is ill at Hanham – too ill to go home and yet Fanny agrees with me that there is too much talking and excitement there to be good for her.

6th August 1889 [at Turleigh]

I had two parsons as companions most of the way to Salisbury where Mortie had arrived just before me. He ought to have been there cooling his heels for an hour at least before my train arrived. He was as cracked as usual and sent a telegram to Mother to the effect that "Divinity" is in my charge. I tremble to think what Mother's feelings will be for she certainly never heard me called that before. We were packed like sardines in a box all the way from Salisbury and a wicked child would howl all the time. We left our luggage at Bradford to follow us and walked to Turley. Em met us at the top of the hill. Aunt is very well and jolly but awfully thin and I feel sure she half starves herself to send more to Fanny who is a great friend to my mind but I am supposed to know nothing! We had a very merry evening. Mortie talks a lot of nonsense, but it is a relief to have a good laugh even if it is at nothing.

7th August 1889

We loafed about most of the morning assisted by Hugh who appeared during breakfast and after lunch we all started to see the aquatic sports at Bradford and had a great deal of fun. I never saw

sights as we beheld, such dresses, black lace over yellow, apple green, a green spencer over an indescribable shirt and many other varieties. Miss Cayle was there and seemed surprised to see me, especially with two of the superior(?) sex in attendance The races did not interest me much as I knew none of the people competing but we got our amusement in our surroundings. We stayed there till after 7 and that wretch Mortie brought W.F. Saunders up to speak to us. He is an awful creature 52 inches round the - well it's hardly his waist. An awful voice is another of his charms and his hair is brushed up at the back as if it had agreed to quarrel all round and no individual hair was on speaking terms with it's next door neighbour. Fred Hyde came and talked to us, he is a nice fellow not a bit like his brother, and he starts tomorrow for Switzerland. A Miss Spencer was also starting tomorrow for the same place. We walked home by the canal and after supper, Mortie, Hugh and I wandered out to hear the weir by moonlight. It was so lovely. We certainly do miss a lot of the loveliest part of the day.

8th August 1889

Mortie started for Bath soon after breakfast and did not come home again till quite late in the evening. I hope he won't go off again for the whole day, for it was decidedly dull without him. Hugh stayed instead of going home as he intended doing and we all went up to the Manor House for tennis in the afternoon. Aunt walked both ways, she really is very wonderful for her age, she will be 78 tomorrow. There were many drawbacks to my enjoyment of the so called tennis, the court was too small the people duller than ditchwater. They had no netting or anything to keep the balls in bounds, so being of an enquiring mind, they wandered all over the field and we must have walked miles looking for them. So altogether I commend Mortie's prudence in being absent. Then they made me sing to a bad piano in a room whose ceiling I could have touched with my hand easily. Then, thank Heaven we came home and found Mortie intent on fishing tackle for the subjugation of the wily fish in the canal. I chaff him awfully about his hands which are very nice ones in shape and colour, a fact of which I believe he was quite unconscious.

9th August 1889

Aunt's birthday and she had heaps of letters, to her great delight. Mortie went to fish in the canal soon after breakfast and when Hugh started to catch his train at Limpley Stoke, I went with him until we met Mortie and I remained with him. The canal is quite lovely. On the towing path side a belt of beech trees goes for miles and on the other the bank rises very sharply and is covered with scotch firs low shrubs and wild clematis everywhere. It hangs in festoons from the trees and joins the shrubs in a mass of lovely green and white. It was very stormy but the beeches made a beautiful tent and I did not get wet at all. After dinner Mortie went down again and about six I went to fetch him home. He is a wonderful fellow for noticing every sort of bird, butterfly or flower and we are certainly congenial spirits.

10th August 1889

Soon after breakfast Mortie and I started on our rambles. Today we went through the woods at Conkwell to Dundas – such a lovely place. We scrambled down a steep path to the canal and met nobody and nothing. The absolute stillness of the place impresses me and the view was quite out of the common. The weather favoured us too for the clouds were just big enough to make light and shadows and there was a tiny breeze that turned the leaves inside out and so increased the beauties of the summer green. Mortie fished with grasshoppers which I caught for him and thereby improved my knowledge of their wonderful construction. It was quite a new experience for me lying on the grass in the sun surrounded by grasshoppers and listening to the birds. We came back up Limpley Stoke Hill – what an awful place it is. We struck across part of Murhull

where the wild flowers were so lovely and such lots of them too. This is a very wonderful neighbourhood for all kinds of animal and vegetable life. After lunch we three juveniles walked to Bradford where the Thrings asked us to play tennis but it was too wet for that so after one sloppy game when we got very wet we went into tea. No doubt the Thrings are very nice girls but they have painfully loud voices and all talk at once. Gwen is the jolliest but her nails were awfully dirty and all their stockings were coming down. Such ankles too - "ye fishes" as Mortie said "They were all very fine and large".

11th August 1889

Mortie chaffs me awfully about my size and I do my best to return the compliment but pretending he is vain of his hands. So we go on all day long. [Ethel is quite short and weighs 7st 2 lb]

13th August 1889

We went down to the Layards' to tennis but there seemed nobody to play and it was very stupid until Mortie and I had a couple of singles - of course he beat me, he is left handed as well as being of the stronger sex but it is capital practice playing against him and I hope to do it again before we part company.

16th August 1889

Mortie and I started soon after 11 for what proved the most beautiful walk we have had. We began by climbing to Westwood which is on the opposite side of the canal and a higher hill than the one above Aunt's house. Here we stopped and looked out our trains, his to Devizes, mine home and his from Corsham to Gillingham next week. The view along the valley was lovely and the clouds especially favoured us by making exquisite lights and shades over the vivid green of the fields and woods. Then we wandered on to Westwood church hoping to see a special window of stained glass but it was locked up after the manner of Protestant churches [Ethel, Bertram and their Mum are Catholic]- so we had to content ourselves with the admiring the gargoyles - one Mortie declared was exactly like me! Then we went down an awful road for the express purpose of seeing a lovely romantic little bridge over the Frome. There was a baby weir hardly more than a rapid a few yards from the bridge and the brown water tumbling over it in the sunlight was a thing to be remembered and dreamt about. I really could be spoony there by moonlight. Thence we climbed the same road we came down and turned off to Freshford, another charming little village. Close to the Frome stands the New Inn a regular haunt of anglers. In front is a huge wych elm quite hollow, but in flourishing condition and round it is a low stone wall with rests for weary backs where the old men of the village smoke their pipes. We came along the fields beside the Avon to Avoncliff up the fields and home to dinner. It was a walk to be remembered for everything combined to make it pleasant, scenery, companionship, nature, everything!

After dinner it poured while Mortie slept and I felt very much inclined to follow his example but after tea it cleared and he got restless so we went off to the old Murrall quarry. Em wouldn't come from cracked sentimental reason I fancy so we did without her as lots have done before. It was awfully wet as our route lay through long grass but my dress was dirty before, so it did not matter much and when once we reached the quarries I forgot such minor details and revelled in the wildness of the place. Wild flowers have taken up their quarters there in a wonderful way and everywhere was the wild clematis, running riot all over the place, seen from the highest bit of all, the view was quite lovely taking in as it did, the canal, river, railway, woods and the blue downs in the distance.

17th August 1889

I had to start rather early and had ordered a fly overnight which was just as well for it was a horribly damp morning - Mortie was going to Devizes for the day so we travelled together as far as Trowbridge and of course I gave him a last bit of chaff just as the train was starting and when he could not take advantage of it.

24th August 1889

I was very glad to go and meet the 1.50 which brought the Owl to his diminutive cousin. Mrs Jay was on the platform waiting for her son and seemed greatly interested when she found I was waiting to meet a man. The dear old thing was really glad to see me I think and that's always so pleasant. He [Mortie] is greatly in hopes that his mother may be induced to go and live at Corsham as he finds the house she says she would like will be vacant at Michaelmas. It will be a great thing if she can be persuaded to leave Turley and very good for him too.

Sunday 25th August 1889

I had to drive to Marnhull as Bertram is away. Mortie got his religion from Dame Nature unassisted by parson or clerk and as it was a lovely morning he was not unwise.

27th August 1889

Mortie left by the 11.30 and I was really quite sorry to see him off. I quite like him which is odd considering he is one of the hated race of cousins. He took a basket of roses to his wife. I wish I knew her, it seems such a pity that they should be so cut off from everyone. I met Hugh at 4.26 and was almost as sorry to see his sorry to see his train come in as I was to see his uncle's go this morning. He seems to jar on me just now which is silly.

4th September 1889

Mortie has sent another advertisement sketch to Aspinall's and in return they have forwarded five guineas to him which is not bad as it only took him about ½ an hour to draw it. I hope he will make a lot by it now his drawings have once taken.

12th September 1889

Mr Hanham came by the 9.30 for the Petty Sessions and as might be expected Hugh stuck to us like a leech on all occasions. That boy worries me with his black beads of eyes.

15th September 1889

Hugh left last night - I am not altogether sorry - he bothered me with those black eyes of his that always seemed to be watching me - still he is not a bad boy on the whole.

8th October 1889

Mortie has sent me a crastoleum of Father, really a capital one, also a photo of himself, his wife and five boys. Winnie was away. The likeness of Mortie is excellent and he says the others are good too but having never seen any of them I can't judge. He is working for several firms now, sketching for advertisements. I hope he will make a good thing of it, poor old boy, he deserves to.

5th April 1890

At 5.32 I went to meet Father and Mortie's second boy Edgar. I recognised the little chap at once from the photograph I have of all the boys. He is a nice little fellow, very shy, not bad looking with very fair hair and big brown eyes with light lashes. Not by any means a common mixture. Mortie

went on to Turley [Turleigh] so he came from Salisbury by himself, I hope my experiment may answer and that he or some of his brothers may be asked again.

23rd August 1890

Father went to Shaftesbury as usual and nothing exciting happened until Mortie arrived at 5.32. I was glad to see the dear old Owl again. He is very thin but otherwise looks well and he reports himself all the better for his holiday short as it is. He does not give a very lively account of his mother, but then she is getting on in years and is beginning to fancy her loss of sight may be in some measure due to old age as well as cataract. I am glad Bertram and Owl have met at last, hitherto they have been like the little people in the old weather glasses - when one goes out the other stays in.

25th August 1890

The weather was like a pettish child a mixture of smiles and tears but Mortie and I braved the latter and went for a walk. First of all we took some tea to the old spirit woman and I talked to her while Mortie sketched her. I dreaded what she might be going to say next and found it very hard work to keep my countenance till the picture was completed.

17th September 1890

Hugh Cruttwell arrived, he is longer and thinner than ever, and not a bit more interesting. I don't love him, never did and in all probability never shall.

27th September 1890

Hugh left by the 7.48 for Bath and goes to Oxford on the 10th. He has not been so objectionable this time by a long way and has not haunted Father half so aggressively. £145 is the amount of his exhibition and scholarship combined, so with great care he ought not to want much more. I suppose Father will have to supply what he does want.