

FLORENCE GRANNELL MEANS

~~1877 So. 1st St. /  
Denver 2, Colorado~~

595 Baseline Road  
Boulder, Colorado  
November 14, 1947

Elizabeth Rider Montgomery  
3209 Alki Avenue  
Seattle 6, Washington

Dear Miss Montgomery,

How interesting your books do sound! Some of the titles are very familiar, but I have read none of them. Like many fictioneers, I take out a good deal of my reading on my own. That is not so self-centered as it sounds; for some time the actual hours have been lacking, with a dear bedfast mother in our home; and for still longer the ability to read much, because of slowly increasing cataracts and other eye difficulties, together with this apparently everlasting migraine. That is off the record, though.

I'm delighted that you wish to include SHUTTERED WINDOWS in this new book. It means much to me. And, by the way, I am sending one present-day snapshot, for I hardly recognize myself in these ten-year-past pictures.

1  
This bit really belongs to two of your questions, the one as to special difficulties and the later one - "anything else about your writing -"

When I went down to the sea islands, the stories about little children were my goal, and I chose Mather primarily because it had a practise teaching school on its campus, with plenty of (lovable!) little children, many of them from the most utterly primitive homes.

Before this I had spent some time getting acquainted with other minority groups in their own environment, and had found them pretty easy to make friends with. Here, I was warned, the problem would be different; I must not expect to find the teen-age girls friendly, nor at all open to friendly advances from the resented white. *Gullahs, mostly, proud and even*

*down.*  
So I was careful to make it clear that I had no intentions of using them in my writing. At first I tried my best not to act like a writer at all, but that didn't work, for I kept being asked to speak in classes and chapel and so on. Soon I gave up concealing my guilt, but ~~xxxxxx~~ made it known that I was writing about small children - my only intent. The girls warmed up steadily; hurry as much as I could, I'd find my room done, when I came up from breakfast, and a neatly lettered and decorated card on the pillows, saying, "Good Morning, Mrs. Means!" and perhaps a vase of flowers or a boutonniere of opoconax on the dresser; and at night the bed would be turned down, with the card turned about and saying, "Good night, Mrs. Means!"

They took me on hikes through the wonderful dusky woods; they had a party for me. And when the last day of my visit came, there were three or four who tried all day to get a visit with me. Always there seemed to be a teacher there ahead of them, and I'd look up only to see a disappointed face bob back out of sight. Time for the evening bell came, and still they had failed, so I asked the principal if they might come anyway. She consented, and they poured in, with as many more as the room would hold, in nighties, robes, slippers - and usually with firmly tied heads, so that the damp breezes should not "take out the straight."

Till near midnight they talked. They told about their hopes and fears and immediate plans. And at last there was a flash of eyes between two of the leaders, Susan and Jessie Ree; and as if by pre-arrangement, Jessie Ree (volatile, brilliant, poetic), burst out, "Mis' Means, we wish you'd write a book about us! Just as if we were white girls! ---And leave the problem out."

There was gooseflesh all over me and dew in my eyes.

Then Susan, a leader, tall and straight and independent, who became the beginning of my Harriet, said something that made the dew thicken: "Oh, Jessie Ree! Nobody could write about us and leave the problem out."

Well, you see? I had to write that book, though I had not meant to at all.

The then editor in the Children's Department of Houghton was distressed but pretty determined. Such a book, with neither the comic nor the tragic stressed, would have a painfully limited sale. At the time I was corresponding with Wilma McFarland, the vividly interesting editor (then) of Portal, Methodist publication for girls. I think I had just cut Tangled Waters for a serial for her. I added a postscript to a letter, telling her of my publishers' unwillingness to have me do this book and asking her whether she would like a serial of that sort. A joyful assent came back by air, with the assurance that it would have book publication even if Houghton didn't want it.

Houghton soon did, I'm glad to say. They have always been remarkably liberal in their attitudes. Ira Rich Kent, who long had charge of my own work, had been editor of Youth's Companion, to which I had sold some of my first stories and poems. That was the reason I sent him my first book, Candle In the Mist, and I always thanked my lucky stars, for he was the kind of publisher that embodied all the best, kindest, most delightful. It was a deep personal blow to receive word of his death just two years ago. My whole family felt it.

As to Shuttered Windows, there was an initial difficulty which I neglected to mention: my own superficial personal acquaintance with the glamorously beautiful region. Previously I had tried always to use the thoroughly familiar ground....Then it occurred to me that the difficulty could be obviated by having my viewpoint character (Harriet)

an outlander herself, seeing as unfamiliar a scene as I did, and with as limited a knowledge of it. I really did think that was a little bit smart of me.

Miss Walters, then the principal of Mather, was interested in the evolving book, and through her I instituted a prize contest for letters which should tell of customs, sayings, superstitions, and elements which the girls would like to see embodied in "their book." That brought me a great deal of material. And when the book had had its second writing, I sent it to Miss Walters, and she read it aloud to her senior English class, for careful scrutiny. The teachers also scanned it with care for inaccuracies.

Yes, the girls seemed to like it, when it was done....I have kept in touch with a number of them, through the years.

Another thing I forgot, in the questionnaire, was a particularly silly set of nicknames which we used: my husband was Pebblers, I was Spuggings, Eleanor was Larky, and Pixy, her little terrier, was Gann. Don't ask me why. Other home nicknames for me - well, one has always been Gypsy; and another, my late beloved father's, My Son Tommy. I'm mostly Mom to my daughter; and the four adorable grandchildren (from three to nine) named me Nanny when I called myself Granny to them. My husband is Boppa.----That Gypsy really is confidential, since it is my husband's own name for me, and I give it only to add a touch to the picture....All my newer

*Please don't use it.*

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friends, when they begin to use my first name, first disdain the Flossy they hear older friends use - "How absurd, for you!" - but almost everyone comes to it.

Life has been so interesting - so exciting in a quiet way - that I could go on indefinitely when someone really asks for it! Work with the Indians has been a delight, and has led to many adventures and to a Hopi Sun-Clan name and a Hopi namesake, now beginning her nurse's training at Ganado, Arizona. As I suggested in the dedication of Assorted Sisters, the latest, I have an Assorted Family. Have just been dressing a doll for Christmas, for Flossy Lee, my Chinese granddaughter in Shanghai; have three more "grand children" there, and a daughter; and a Spanish-American family to whom I am always Nanny (Jody doesn't think our blood-kin grandchildren really belong to me as he does); two Japanese who call me Aunt Flo, two Burmese girls who call me Aunt Flossy; and so on. I like it.

And my best wishes to you in this fascinating project.

Sincerely yours,

*Louise Cannell Means*

FLORENCE CRANNELL MEANS  
185 SOUTH PEARL STREET  
DENVER 6, COLORADO  
595 Baseline Road  
Boulder, Colorado  
January 12, 1946

Miss Elizabeth Rider Montgomery  
3209 Alki Avenue  
Seattle 6, Washington

Dear Miss (or is it Mrs.?) Montgomery, *(oh, excuse my blindness! It is Mrs., I see)*

It has been a pleasure to read the chapter you have written about Shuttered Windows. I like it, and am grateful to have so fine a piece of publicity for the book. There was practically nothing that seemed to need change. One little point, which I have noted on the script, is that it was a particular group of Negroes that I was warned about: these Gullahs on the islands off the coast and in the Carolina Lowlands. The other, even more trivial, point, is that I don't recognize myself when I wear an "ie," for it has always been "Flossy" in our family. Before I send it back to you I'll ask my husband to read it over, too, and note anything that he may not like; but I don't see how there can be anything!

I am delighted with the list of other books you have chosen, also, and proud to be included in that goodly company. We shall be watching for your book.

Don't you think there are a terrific number of Us Writers that are bedeviled with migraine? I was much interested in your experience with it, for it is the second time these eye exercises have been commended to me on that score. I know a little about them, and we have one book on the subject, but I have been deterred by the urgency of my particular physicians and eye specialists. However, deep though my debt to physicians and high though my regard for them, I think they are remarkably slow in letting down their barriers against the new. Don't you?

About six years ago I had my eyes examined for "aniseikonia", rather newly discovered eye defect, and was found to have a marked degree of the defect, and given glasses which for a long time cut my migraine attacks to four or five a year (of the prostrating ones, that is) from the two a week which I had been having, - meaning ~~intervals~~ intervals only when bought by shots of gynergen. But a year of caring for my dear bedridden mother, after several years when she was partially bedridden, and months when she was my beloved helpless baby, and then her death last March, - these have brought the migraine back, and more nearly incessant than ever. The doctor thinks it is the prolonged overdraft of energy and emotion, together with slowly increasing cataracts.

And have you noticed the opinions of medical men recently, after



much study? That all these other things - allergies, eyes, overwork - may be the trigger to set off the attack; but that the cause is an inherited over-sensitivity of the brain? I suppose we are almost all too high-keyed. But if I had to give up this prismatic world of mine, in exchange for entire freedom from the unutterable distress of migraine - well, would I?

But I shall get the Aldous Huxley (one of my friends had it laid out for me not long ago, I recall) and read it thoughtfully, in the light of your experience. If you have time, do tell me whether - No, you needn't, for I am pretty sure you must have taken the treatment under a specialist.

It has been fun to meet you, and I shall hope to hear from you again some day. And come and see us when you are in Colorado

Cordially yours,

*Florence Means*

P.S. My husband read the chapter and came in with the peculiarly blank look of a man who has had a thing explained twice while he was away exploring the possibilities of the income tax. "What is this, dear?" Both giggling and scolding, I explain. "Well, it's fine!" he says heartily. "It's really fine!"

And if you knew how discriminating he is, you'd really like that.



Boulder

January 9, 1950

Dear Mrs. Montgomery,

Your new book is perfectly delightful! As you know, my reading is strictly LTD, so I've so far only tasted The Story Behind Modern Books, reading maybe a dozen of the chapters. But I shall read them all! That's the kind of book it is.

When my latest sales report came, some three weeks ago, Carl and I noticed a considerable increase in the good, steady sale of Shattered Windows. "What's 'is?" says Carl. Flossy cogitated. Briefly: "What but E. R. M.," says she. It really does seem as if it must be your book, plus



the use of the S.W. chapter in American Girl, plus the reprint in a widely distributed pamphlet (the fiscal committee's). So here's another thank you.

Know what I mean to do? Make a list, from yours (I've a suspicion it will be 'make a list of yours'), of books which our dear grandchildren should have, and then have their mother, our Eleanor, check which they already possess, for the five (Jeremy, to be sure, only seven months old) have a library of several hundred. When we visit them, there is never time to make a list for reference, as I've proposed doing.

And did I tell you that Eleanor - Eleanor Hull - has had her first book published and is working on the next? Trumblewood Bay, first one; The Third Wish probably the next title.

Again, congratulations!  
Sincerely,  
Florence Means

Palmer Lake, Colorado  
July 20, 1948

Thank you so much for the carbon of your definitive chapter on S.W. - I like it very much indeed. You may be interested to know that S.W. has just outran all my other fourteen Houghton books on sales - and isn't that gratifying for its theme? -----  
Thank you too for the information about the eyes.---

We are here at our beloved mountain shack, but only briefly: all gay paint, bright calico, log fires, spruce trees. Come see us.----And please give my regards to your Janet and tell her how glad I am that she likes my books.----Would not let a post card do if deadlines were not just now pressing. You know!

*Sincerely,*

*Florence Cannell Means*

THIS SIDE OF CARD IS FOR ADDRESS



Mrs. Elizabeth R. Montgomery

3209 Alki Avenue

Seattle 6

Washington

# "Shattered Windows"

Published by Houghton Mifflin Co. Year \_\_\_\_\_

Real name Florence Cannell Means Pen name Florence Cannell Means

What do your family and friends call you? Flossy! and Fludel

## A. YOUR BACKGROUND

Date of birth May 15, 1891 Place of birth Baldwinsville, N.Y.

Father's occupation Minister Number of Brothers 0 and sisters 1

Father's nationality American Mother's nationality American

Kind of home during childhood (farm, small town, city apt. etc.) Small town, larger towns (Corning, N.Y. - Crystal City, and Topeka, Kansas,

Amount of schooling (high school, college, etc.) high school, college work by extension courses, summer courses, two years in art school.

Economic status during childhood (poor, middle class, wealthy) middle

Special interests as a child (sports, books, games, etc.) Books, dolls, drawing.

Childhood ambitions Definitely to be (1) a writer, (2) an artist, (3) a missionary (4) a kindergarten teacher.

When did you begin to write? As soon as I could print.

Why? Goodness knows. An irresistible force.

Who encouraged you? Father - Mother - and one artist-aunt.

What and when was your first success or recognition? Sold a love story to Will Carleton's magazine "Everybody," when I was fifteen.

How did you happen to write for children? Just because I had a child and told her stories; second (I think) because my grandparents' pioneering demanded writing and seemed well suited to a children's book - Candle in the Mist. Went on from there.

Anything else about your background which has a bearing on your writing. The general bookworminess of our family, and Father's fondness for reading aloud to us. Shakespeare, Browning, Tennyson - anything. Father's own writing - many articles, many poems, much exegesis, several books of essays and sermons. Also the gathering of people of every race, color, kind, creed, at the parsonage.

Also, I think, the fact that the eldest of my father's sisters, Enetta Cannell, conducted just normal courses in Albany schools, died in harness, and was honored by "Cannell Free Kindergarten."

Encouraged by father - then president of Theological Seminary.

B. THE WRITING OF THIS BOOK

Where did you get the idea for the book? On the spot. Visiting the sea islands off the coast of South Carolina, to write two little paper-covered books of stories about little children in the Deep South.

When? (Season as well as year) Autumn, ~~1934~~ 1935. (good thing I keep a diary)

Were the characters real people, or based on real people? Based on real people. Great-Grandmother's original was a majestic old woman whom I met on the amazing little island Hilton's Head, when one of the teachers from Mather School were entertained at her "grand's" home. Others were pupils at <sup>Land</sup> Mather. Where were you living at the time? Denver in winter, Palmer Lake Mather in summer.

What was your major occupation? Homemaking and writing.

Names (also nicknames) and identities of members of your household at the time. (If children, give ages.) My father and mother, who had retired and built on an apartment so that we were under one roof but had separate homes; my husband, Carl (too many nicknames for him), and our daughter, Eleanor, through college and a graduate course in fine arts, writing a little herself (much more since), and serving as Counselor for a Camp Fire group in one of our schools in the underprivileged district, so that our house was a happy

Did you talk the book idea over with any of them? Plenty, always; this time my husband a bit discouraging, only because fearing repercussions for me.

Did you discuss it with an editor? Yes; Houghton thought it a very bad bet from a monetary standpoint. Wilma McFarland, editor of PORTAL, was enthusiastic

Where and how did you get the material? (library research, travel, personal experience, etc.) All three ways - four, counting the etcetera. Got everything I could find at the library. Had first been impelled to write something when we made our first motor trip to the Deep South, about ~~1932~~ 1934 made another trip and settled down on the campus at Mather, boarding school for girls

When did you begin to write the book? July 5, 1937

Where? Palmer Lake, at our mountain cabin: in my spruce tree study, a circle of spruces on the hillside behind the cabin.

How much had you had published when you began it? (Give names of books)

Rafael and Consuelo (junior age, pub. by Friendship Press), Children of the Great Spirit, ditto, Candle in the Mist, Ranch and Ring, Bowlful of Stars, What was your purpose in writing this book? Dusky Day, Singing Wood, Tangled

Purpose: to give happiness to the girls at Mather, who had asked me to write such a book; and to introduce white girls to Negro girls.

How do you write? (typewriter, long-hand, dictate) Typewriter - hunt and peck.

Where? (study, office, etc.) Study, in winter home, spruce tree study in summer.

Do you keep regular office hours? Yes. If so, what are they? 9 to 12 then; 9:30 to 12 now.

Do you revise much? Yes. Write easily or laboriously? Easily; first writing joyfully rapid.

Do you let your family or friends read your work, or try it out on children? My family always read or hear my books first; then my writer friends (we have a colony of them in Denver); and when the setting is at all strange to me, I have the script carefully read by one or more people who are on the ground.

*Handwritten notes in right margin: "writing down for girls - American, Japanese and plain white girls" with "up in 1936" written near the top.*

to say so much; open, they let in bitter cold and rain in season; closed, they shut out the light.

This title about midway of the writing of which betweens admitted the scattered windows

Who makes your final copies? (yourself, private secretary, public typist, etc.) With few exceptions, I myself. Love to do it.

Did you make an outline before writing the book? Yes.

Did you decide on the title first or last? First if possible, last if

How long did it take you to write the book? First writing, first revision, <sup>necessary.</sup> about three months. Final revision another two.

Did you work on it steadily? Between second and final revision, a long interval, for reading in a Mather English class and by family and friends.

Did it go fairly smoothly or did you hit rough spots? (Details of any particular difficulty and its solution would be appreciated.) No particular

difficulty. At first I had a "mystery" <sup>by</sup> ~~agle~~, besides the mystery of ~~Black Moses, which delighted me: family silver hidden in one of the high old tombs which I saw in the woods, during War-Between-States. As I went on, I became convinced that the story would be stronger without it. Cut it.~~

Was your book accepted immediately by a publisher? Yes; in spite of having <sup>tr</sup>ied to dissuade me from writing, it, Houghton accepted it before completed

Was it immediately popular on publication? I think it was.

Anything else about your writing that might be of interest, especially anything that concerns this book. See appended pages

C. ILLUSTRATIONS

How much did you have to do with the illustrations of your book? Not a great deal. If it were Tangled Waters or Great Day, I'd have good stories for you. I had hoped a portrait painter - Reinold, I believe - who did magnificent pictures of the Island Negroes, could be secured. However, I like Armstrong Sperry's drawings, and they have seemed generally, though not invariably, acceptable to the Negro reader.  
If you did them yourself, which came first, the pictures or the text?

What medium did you work in? \_\_\_\_\_

How much experience had you had in illustrating? You probably don't care about answer to this; but I had great dreams of illustrating my own. Did illustrate early shorts; but soon found my technique (to be as kind to myself as possible) not at all equal to the demands of present-day publishers. However, I find my art education and my itch for pencils and paint rather a disadvantage, makin me hard to satisfy; something like an automobile passenger who is able to drive and so is watchful and critical of the driver.



D. WHAT SORT OF PERSON YOU ARE

Very "dark gittin' light"!

What did you look like when you wrote this book? Dark or fair? Brunet, grayin

Tall or short? Tall Thin or plump? Medium

Color of eyes? Dark brown Wore glasses? yes, since seven years old  
(then)

Color of hair? Black, grayin. Kind of hair--long or short? Short, then, no,  
half and half.

Curly or straight? Curly. How did you wear it? One side long, in braid  
across head.

Any special features of your appearance (square jaw, dimples, stoop,  
etc.) Dear, dear: a nose that caused me as much suffering as Amy March's.

Are you quiet or talkative? Talkative. Friendly or reserved? Friendly,  
My seven-year-old grandson sat on the edge of my bed last  
Do you laugh a great deal or are you usually grave? summer (migraine  
putting me down a great deal) and crooned fondly, "Nanny is always laughing."

Are you quick-tempered or calm and placid? Well - sometimes I'm afraid it's  
plenty quick, but it stays inside - as "migraine people" are likely to,

What sort of clothes do you wear most when writing? (sports, suits, I think  
slacks, etc.) House coats or slacks.

Favorite occupations and hobbies? WRITING; painting; motoring; getting  
acquainted with all kinds of people, just  
plain walking.

What is your normal speech like? (Meticulously correct, colloquial,  
Pretty correct, but with plenty of contrac-  
slangy, abrupt, rambling, etc.) tions. My daughter discourages my slang,

which she says I use with enthusiasm but also with inaccuracy.

What are some of your pet expressions and exclamations? \_\_\_\_\_

If strongly religious, give denomination. Baptist. Also a member of the

Wider Quaker Fellowship, and head of the fellowship of the little Friends'

Any other details about yourself, no matter how trivial, which might

Community Church at Palmer Lake/

help me to picture you in my own mind. Dawndarndarn! My most

frequent sight now, on our new home with its gorgeous  
mountain setting, in an exuberant light "Ooh, what  
a beautiful morning! Oh, what a beautifed day!"

Can you direct me to any articles or books which have been written

about you? Siri Andrews wrote an article which was published by HORN BOOK  
early in 1946, and reprinted by Houghton for distribution on request.

Book of Authors may have some other angles; I forget.

Who's Who has dates, of course.

If you have a photograph or snapshot of yourself of about the vintage

of your book, I would appreciate it. Of course I would return it

promptly.

*Excuse me,  
This belongs above*