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INGLIS FLETCHER OF BANDON PLANTATION

by

RICHARD WALSER



CHAPEL HILL

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARY

Inglis Fletcher of Bandon Plantation





Robert Shoaf, Lexington, N. C.

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TO THE KEEPERS OF THE GATES

"I make my acknowledgment to the men and women who have so carefully collected and so lovingly preserved the manuscripts and documents, journals and private letters that form the living link between the past and the present now housed in the public and private libraries of this country.

"In desert lands, in ancient times, the Guardian of the floodgates stood on the banks of the Euphrates and the Nile, waiting to turn the life-giving water on the arid land. In our times, librarians are the *keepers of the gates*. They stand ready and eager to open the gates to allow a great stream of history to flow from its uncontaminated source."

INGLIS FLETCHER

From *Men of Albemarle*, page [7].



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PREFACE

Turning north away from Albemarle Sound along beautiful Broad Street in Edenton, the motorist comes to a triangle. The highway to the right goes on to Hertford and Elizabeth City and eventually astride the sand banks to Roanoke Island. The left-hand road, after six miles, comes to a crossroad called Valhalla. To the left again and seven miles farther through the historic Rocky Hock section (from the Indian *Rockahock*), the motorist begins to notice hanging moss festooning the trees along the roadway. Suddenly, if he drives slowly, a quarter of a mile from the road he can see down an open expanse the dignified lines of a large plantation house. Soon his automobile is parked in front of the walkway, and two persons appear on the porch. "Welcome to Bandon!" With the warm greeting, Inglis and John Fletcher walk forward. "Come into the house!"

Thus it was one day last summer that I arrived at Bandon. Several weeks before, arrangements had been completed for me to write a short biography of Inglis Fletcher to continue the series published by the Library Extension Department of the University of North Carolina Library—a series composed of studies by Agatha Boyd Adams of John Charles McNeill, Thomas Wolfe, and Paul Green. That I might get the complete story, much of it never recorded anywhere, Mrs. Fletcher had invited me for a stay at Bandon.

The following day I was busy at work. Since Mrs. Fletcher was writing on a new novel with publication date already set for the fall of 1952, I saw little of her during the day. I set up my typewriter in Parson Earl's Schoolhouse in the yard; and until dinner time I gathered data from the letter boxes of correspondence, the packages of reviews and feature articles, of publisher's memoranda and so on, which every writer collects over the years. The information secured from these sources has been freely used in the pages which follow.

In the evenings Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher and I sat on the cool, screened-in side gallery and talked of the matters not covered in the preserved papers—the early days in Illinois, the years in the mining camps, the San Francisco sojourn. Equipped with note pad and pencil, I asked endless questions and jotted down copious notes.

More generous cooperation was never before given a neophyte Boswell. He hopes that this informal study, not intended as a critical analysis of the work of Inglis Fletcher, will provide the factual information so often sought by the many readers of her books.

R. W.

23 October 1951

Department of English

North Carolina State College

Raleigh

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I. ENGLAND TO CAROLINA TO ILLINOIS

AMONG the necessary prerequisites of any serious, successful writer are purpose and experience. The purpose—"a thing to tell," as Thomas Wolfe called it—comes after the experience, when the experience has assumed vitality and meaning, when it has been intensified and uplifted by imagination. But the experience itself is the foundation; and it is the experience which provides the basis for the psychological complexities around the Danish throne in *Hamlet*, for that creative re-living of the Puritan past in *The Scarlet Letter*, as well as for the contemporaneous involvements in *Moby-Dick* or *Look Homeward, Angel*.

And so with Inglis Fletcher, there was the experience first and the purpose later. The personal experience came by way of Illinois, the mining camps of the West, through Alaska and Africa. The just-as-real imaginative experience plunged back hundreds of years to Tyrrell County, North Carolina, when the early settlers of Virginia and the West Indies were sailing ships along Albemarle Sound to claim their grants on the south shore. It went back, further than that, to Devonshire, England, with the West Country men who loved land and fought for it, who saw visions and, with the Renaissance spirit of adventure, came to a New World to make the visions real.

If one is to understand Inglis Fletcher, he must go back through the years and trace with her the forefathers who inspired her best work. He must know the heritage she bears; he must share with her those imaginative experiences which finally spiraled into a purpose. Only then will he understand how it was that she came to be known as one of the leading historical novelists in America.

In 1940 *Raleigh's Eden*, the first of the Carolina Series, was published. It was dedicated to her mother, Flora Chapman Clark. *Chapman!* And now back through the years!

The Chapman family came to prominence first in Devonshire, England. There during the sixteenth century they were noted as shipbuilders, and until a few years ago Richard Chapman's shipyard was still a landmark near Biddeford. The Chapmans were cousins of Sir Walter Raleigh, and doubtless this connection accounts for the fact that John and Alice Chapman were members of the Lost Colony. A cousin of the family was George Chapman, noted Elizabethan playwright, whose famous *Eastward Ho* (1605) was a collaboration with Ben Jonson and John Marston. Two characters in the play started off to Virginia and were wrecked on the Isle of Dogs.

Shortly after Monmouth's Rebellion, Roger Chapman left England and after serving as an indentured servant in Bermuda (see Inglis Fletcher's *Bennett's Welcome* for a similar incident) came on to Virginia in 1624. A descendant, another Richard Chapman, came down from the James River area into the Albemarle region shortly after a settler by the name of Richard Davenport arrived there from Virginia in 1684. A later Alice Chapman, cousin of Richard Chapman, had married the Cromwellian governor of Virginia, Richard Bennett (again see *Bennett's Welcome*).

Later, by 1712, two brothers from Maryland, Mathew Caswell and Francis Caswell, came into the Alligator River section of Tyrrell County. Not far from Lake Phelps, Mathew Caswell settled and took as his wife Elizabeth Spruill, daughter of Dr. Godfry Spruill, a Royalist associate justice. Mathew was the great-uncle of Richard Caswell, first democratic governor of North Carolina. Mathew Caswell's will, dated 1754 and now deposited in the State Archives in Raleigh, has this sentence:

I Give and bequeath to my Beloved Daughter Jemima Casewell the plantation and Land belonging to the Same; Known by the Name of Addison's Island; and likewise my part of the Tract of Land Survey'd Between me and James Phelps Senr. Lying on the East Side of Scuppernong River . . .

Jemima, whose "Addison's Island" has never been identified, married Joseph Chapman. Their son was Richard Chapman, the great-grandfather of the novelist. This Richard married Cecelia

Davenport, a descendant of Richard Davenport, who had come into the Albemarle in 1684.

In Tyrrell County, Richard Chapman was a shipbuilder, as had been many of his forefathers. Like his Devon kin, he loved the sea. He had several vessels running between North Carolina and the West Indies. But Cecelia was not happy. She wanted her husband to get away from the water, which she knew had claimed so many lives of his folk. The westward movement was in her ears on all sides. Folk from the Albemarle were moving across the mountains, and she convinced her husband to strike into the new country. He sold his vessels and his Tyrrell County shipyards, and in 1818 with all his family and goods he started the trek into the rich lands of the Mississippi Valley. After all, there was pioneer blood in his veins—the blood of the Lost Colonists at Roanoke, the adventurers into the Albemarle. They arrived in Illinois in the very year it was made a state and settled first on a farm near Alton, where one could see from a cliff the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers and where only a dozen miles away was the old French fort of St. Louis.

The first years were not easy ones. Cecelia, educated in a Sisters' school in Charleston, South Carolina, fortunately had learned languages, and served as an interpreter of French prisoners captured in the Indian wars still being fought along the Canadian border to the north. The country was wild, too, and Cecelia once killed a panther with an axe. The beast had attacked the children while the men were away from home.

The new land, however, was free of many of the things which back in North Carolina had come to rankle great-grandfather Richard. He disliked the whiskey-drinking, fox-hunting Episcopal preachers sent over from England by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Apparently the English church found it fit to send only the most undesirable of her preachers to the young nation across the Atlantic. But in Illinois he never changed his Episcopal affiliation and remained in the church till he died at the age of ninety-four.

Going along with Richard and Cecelia was their young son Joseph, the novelist's grandfather. This Joseph had been born

in North Carolina, and he never lost the love of his native state. He revisited the Albemarle in his youth, and later lugged across the mountains the things which reminded him of his birth-place: trumpet vines, yellow honeysuckle, and gum trees from the Albemarle—species unknown in southern Illinois. Grandfather Joseph became clerk of the court at Alton, judge of the county court, and manager of an abstract office of land grants. He married Rachel Inglis, descendant of the Captain Andrew Inglis (see page 515 of *Raleigh's Eden*, where he is used as a character) who had been Washington's aide at Valley Forge. Joseph and Rachel had twelve children, and one of the novelist's earliest recollections is the "North Carolina dinners" given by her grandfather for his family. The main dishes of these dinners were Southern fried chicken, and potatoes cooked with bacon, both not well known in Illinois. Though grandfather Joseph strayed from the Episcopal church into the Unitarian, he still liked his sports, the most favored being the show horses which managed to pick up many blue ribbons in the area.

One of the twelve children was the novelist's mother, Flora Deane Chapman, who got back into the Episcopal church through her mother, Rachel Inglis. Flora Deane grew up in Edwardsville in the house which her father had bought from a friend who had observed Spanish architecture in Mexico when he served there as a soldier in 1848. She was well educated, and actually taught school for a while. "To buy my trousseau," she said, "to marry Maurice William Clark." She had a keen wit and was a talented declaimer. She wrote verse and published children's stories. She always loved young people, and when she became old listened avidly to college football games on the radio every Saturday afternoon in the fall, though she never saw a game. "No, I wouldn't watch those men get hurt," she gave as her reason for staying at home.

Minna Inglis Clark, the first of three children, was born October 20, 1888, in Alton, at that time a town of about seven thousand. Her father, a native of New York state who had helped to build the Canadian Pacific Railroad in the Winnipeg area, had moved to Alton when he became connected with the

Chicago and Alton Railway. As a small child, Inglis moved with her family for a short while up to Bloomington; and then, when her father was away from home for long stretches, her mother went down to live near her family in Edwardsville, a town not far from her birthplace in Alton.

In Edwardsville she really grew up. There she attended Miss Delphine Wilson's kindergarten and then the Edwardsville grammar and high school. Edwardsville was a community of five or six thousand, most of them the second and third generation of Virginia and North Carolina settlers. The area was definitely Southern in atmosphere. It was a good life. Everybody knew everybody in the small towns nearby, and during the summer there was a constant moving back and forth at house parties.

In school Inglis was not an earnest student; she skimmed by mathematics, was never very good in spelling, but did her best work in history, geography, and literature. Discussion delighted her, and she liked remaining in the schoolroom during recess and arguing with her teacher rather than gallivanting on the playground with the other children.

The Edwardsville Library, a one-room institution over the firehouse, was her favorite retreat. Her mother was one of the twelve ladies who presided over the activities of the library, among their duties being the censoring of all the books before they appeared on the shelves. Between hunks of Sir Walter Scott, her favorite author at the time, Inglis read many exciting novels with purple passages which her mother brought home for review. Miss Sarah, the red-haired little librarian, was an arbiter of taste, often snatching "trash" from before young eyes and putting there, instead, books by more acceptable authors. From this variety of reading experiences, Inglis found out that she liked these good books better than the others. Her taste in reading was formed once and for all. At fourteen she was going through Smollett, and then all of Richardson.

She decided to try writing novels of her own, a pastime in which she was abetted by her younger sister Jean (later Mrs. Lloyd Chenoweth). These remarkable works of fiction concerned English country life. The heroines were always lovely and dark-

complexioned, with beautiful curly hair. (Inglis's was straight.) The heroes were handsome blue-eyed blonds, named "Guy Man-nering" or some such. One heroine had a cotton flannel negligee; in another story, her poor spelling persisting, an "ambulunch" rushed to an accident. But when she began reading Smollett, her novel-writing changed somewhat. All of the stories, nevertheless, were read with much enthusiasm by the neighborhood girls.

From this period one of her most pleasant memories is the old-fashioned habit of sitting about the dinner table for hours after the meal had been served. There were many discussions about all things of current interest, and the children were encouraged to take part. If one did not know the height of Mt. Everest or the exact location of Zanzibar, an immediate recourse was the dictionary or the encyclopedia.

Since Inglis was interested in drawing and illustration, it was decided upon high-school graduation that she would attend the St. Louis School of Fine Arts at Washington University. There, for several years, she studied under Robert Brinhurst, the Swedish sculptor. Concern for form became more and more important to her, though it was obvious that she was not destined to become a great artist. At one time Anders Zorn, the noted etcher, came daily to the school to observe the progress of student work. One morning as he looked over Inglis's shoulder, he quietly asked:

"And, Miss Clark, what are you going to do?"

"Well," she answered, "I think I'm going to get married."

"Perhaps it is well. Everything you do is very interesting, but I think you are a little lazy," he said as he walked away.

As a matter of fact, marriage was on Inglis's mind, and she had become somewhat uninterested in her art studies.

Through a mutual friend in Denver, where she had visited, she had begun a correspondence with young Jack Fletcher, a mining engineer. "Oh, he's just the one for you," her friend insisted. The correspondence continued for a long time before they met. Finally Jack came through St. Louis, and they saw each

other for the first time. Though he had to leave shortly for his work at the mines, the correspondence did not stop.

Jack, a native of Evanston, Illinois, was the son of a Presbyterian minister who later became a real-estate businessman in Denver. After his father lost all he had in an unfortunate venture, Jack gave up hopes for college and went into the mining activities which had been all around him since his boyhood. At seventeen he was bossing a mining camp of a hundred men. It was a tough life and he learned it early. By the time he met Inglis Clark in St. Louis, he was already well on his way as a successful engineer.

On a second brief visit to St. Louis, he asked Inglis to marry him. He said he would be on his way back from New York in two weeks. Return he did, and the young couple soon were married at Edwardsville, where Inglis's father had recently bought a hotel.

The society event in Edwardsville this week [reported the local paper] was the marriage of Minna Inglis Clark, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Maurice W. Clark, one of the most popular young ladies in the city, to Mr. John G. Fletcher. [After a description of the morning wedding in the St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, the account continued:] Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher intended to leave for St. Louis on the 12 o'clock electric car, driving out in the suburbs for that purpose, but were prevented from boarding the car by their friends, who had taken passage on the same for that purpose, and were afterwards obliged to take the Wabash 1 o'clock train, their departure from the hotel [where the luncheon had been held] being amid a shower of rice and old shoes.

From St. Louis, the couple turned their faces westward, as had Inglis's Devon ancestors and her North Carolina great-grandfather before her. The mining fields of California lay far ahead of them.

II. THE MINING CAMPS

Inglis Fletcher was both young and in love. She was adventurous, too, and she looked forward to the out-of-the-way places she knew she would see, for at that time the West was still "wild."

Jack was young and confident, but the nearer they approached the mountains, the less sure he was about taking a bride to the rough world in which he had formerly lived.

Jack's job was to prospect copper mines and then sell them to the big companies for development. One such was the Mammoth Mine at Kennet, California, toward which they were headed. The Mammoth was north of San Francisco, at the head of the Sacramento Valley. When the young couple reached the end of modern travel conveyances, the seven trunks of wedding presents and Inglis's trousseau started up the mountain on mule back. Since at one point the streams were swollen, for three weeks the trunks had to be left behind on the creek bank. The mules were reserved only for food and mine personnel.

At the copper mine were four or five cabins constructed of "shakes," or handmade shingles. Jack was the boss. The bridal pair ate at the mess with the miners, and Inglis was entertained with wild tales of rattlesnakes and animals. There was no other woman within a radius of twenty miles of the camp.

It was a beautiful country. From her cabin on the slope of Mt. Bahamatosh, she could see beyond several ranges of harsh peaks, the snow-covered crater of Mt. Lassen, and to the north the white glory of Mt. Shasta. But the wildness of the country and the stories she had been told were true. And there *were* rattlesnakes. One day when she was in her cabin, a miner yelled from nearby, "Look out, a rattlesnake!" She grabbed a shovel, rushed outside, and almost without knowing what she was doing, attacked the viper and hacked it to bits. The miner stood quietly looking at the onslaught, then finally spoke, "Stop, you haven't left an inch." It was true, for she had not. The rattler was in tatters. The next night she dreamed that the snake's mate had come after it, and she awoke screaming.

In spite of its remoteness, her life there was not uninteresting. Inglis carried a gun with her everywhere, shooting quail and grouse. She won fame when she hit a grouse right through the eyes. It was a remarkable feat, and she gave up shooting at that moment. "Always stop at the top of accomplishment" is her

motto, and she has tried to follow it since the episode of the pheasant.

Her home was a little cabin. There were green denim walls, oriental rugs over the floor matting, and all about the place her handsome wedding presents, which finally arrived. She rode horseback to the nearer mines and there made friends with wives of the college-bred engineers. Once a month up from San Francisco came twelve books from a subscription library; but as she could read four of them a day, they did not last long. It was hot in the summers, often 120 degrees during the day. In the cool of the evenings she sat down and again began to try her hand at writing. The first effort was a still unpublished article, the title of which is characteristic of the life of a mining engineer's wife, "Pay, Pack, and Follow."

After eight months at Kennet, Jack announced suddenly one day that he was leaving immediately for a new job. Inglis was left behind to pay the bills, pack the household goods, and follow him. The second mine to which they went was Old Shasta, a ghost town of fifty families when they arrived there, but a place of 7,500 inhabitants at its peak back in the 1850's. The Fletchers rented a large furnished house, with roses all about it, for \$5 a month. The only difficulty was that the house was haunted. The "ghost" was a man murdered in the house by a Chinaman whose queue he had cut off. While Jack was away over the mountain at night, Inglis often heard the Chinaman and his victim running about, though she never saw anything. It was just as well, for her only protections were a baseball bat and a silly dog. One night the dog barked louder than usual, and it was sometime later that she learned that the dog had been alarmed by real "ghosts." A week or so before, the stage coach, which came through Old Shasta to transport the gold bars down to Wells Fargo at Redding, had been robbed of the bullion by bandits who then hid out in an abandoned mine a mile behind the Fletcher house. Only the dog had seen the men stealing a leg of lamb from the springhouse. Such events were not unusual near the mining towns.

The Fletchers' next stop was the Bully Hill Copper Mines.

There was rattlesnake trouble again. At a picnic a mild-spoken Westerner said, "Wait." Inglis had almost sat on a five-footer. The Westerner shot three times. The snake was dead. She sat down. And the picnic continued.

Excitement was on one occasion replaced by sadness. At the nearby mining-camp hospital at Kennet, the Fletchers' first son was born. After only a month the child died of an infection which modern medical science would surely have corrected. In the hinterland camps of those days, however, the disease was malignant.

At Bully Hill, too, Inglis got the idea for a story which later was the first one to pay off. It concerned an expressman named Dan Haskell. Dan was the one who brought up the gold from Redding, thirty miles away, to pay the mine employees. He had been held up several times in a small canyon through which he passed. On one trip, however, he refused to stop the coach when ordered to do so, but shot back at the bandits, drove on in to the Bully Hill store, delivered the gold to the authorities, and dropped dead. He had been shot in the back.

From this incident Inglis wrote a story synopsis—not a short story as we know it today—which the motion-picture producers of those times followed in filming a feature. The directors would then put in any other action they wished. She placed the synopsis in the hands of an agent whom she had met on a visit to Southern California, Kate Corbelay, later story editor for MGM. A small independent company bought it for \$100—a huge, unbelievable sum then, according to the novelist. Though she had written it with Bill Hart in mind, *Express Messenger* was produced successfully with Neil Hart as star.

The Fletchers went to other mining camps for short periods, but the raw living conditions, described with detail in the letters which Inglis wrote home, finally caused her to go into Denver one winter to be with her family, who had moved there. Jack was in remote parts of Nevada and Colorado. An exceptional offer came for Jack to go with Guggenheim Copper, and Inglis accepted the job for him though it was a long time before he could be reached with the news. When he finally got word, he left the intense cold of a Nevada winter and went back into California,

where Inglis joined him. Later there was a short stay in Oregon, where the snow was twenty feet high on the pine trees. When Jack went down to Lower California in Mexico, Inglis stayed behind in San Francisco.

The next trip—to Alaska—was too much for Inglis to turn down. Since only payroll personnel were allowed in Alaska, Inglis signed on as a cook. Via the inland passage they sailed from Seattle to Juneau. All along the coast the stark mountains jutted down into the sea, separated by inlets as beautiful as the Norwegian fjords. From Juneau they went up to the Mendenhall Mine by boat. At the camp location, the weather was not unbearable, in spite of the rain and mosquitoes; and the scenery was worth it all. The mountains rose up straight and black, and the sparkling streams gushed out of the Mendenhall Glacier like little silver threads. The tundra, a moss many feet deep, covered the old mining shafts, and Inglis carried a luger pistol with her everywhere to signal her location if she should fall into one of the pits. There were Kodiak bears about, too. At the cookhouse one night, a bear standing twelve feet up was caught looking into the window.

The giant vegetation was vividly green. Berries were everywhere, and succulent vegetables grew profusely. The cabbage was delicate as cauliflower. For meat there were salmon and deer, also a kind of pheasant known as ptarmigan, and the "foolish hens" so tame they could be killed with rocks.

Inglis did very little in the kitchen, for the Japanese cook was excellent. Once she unsuccessfully plucked a ptarmigan with difficulty, spreading the feathers everywhere, only to be told by the mine superintendent when he found her seated on the floor amid confusion that she was a "cheechako" or tenderfoot. Steamed in a gunny sack, he explained, the ptarmigan and his feather were easily separated. "Sourdoughs," or those who had been in Alaska more than a year, the Fletchers never became, for they were back in California before the twelve-month period was up. There were to be no more mining camps.

For a writer, no experience is ever lost. These mining-camp experiences not only served Inglis Fletcher in her apprentice-

ship as a writer; they brought her in touch with the good, clean life of men who fronted the elemental struggle with nature and the earth. As a young woman among men, she learned to adjust herself smoothly to her environment. In forest fires, in mine accidents, she learned to think quickly. "In time of danger, you leap at it," she said, "not away from it. You go forward, not back. You simply rely upon yourself. You learn to be self-sufficient."

No experience is ever lost. For a writer it is a background on which to draw and, reconverted perhaps, it can always be used. The stupendous stage setting is the *land* and the natural things which are there. The people who come upon this land and work with it—they are the story. Inglis Fletcher observed these people, far away from the centers of civilization, and watched how they won or lost the struggle with the land. Those who loved it won. The pioneers of the mining camps and the pioneers of Alaska were not unlike the pioneers of North Carolina two and three hundred years before. People who *start* anywhere start alike.

III. SPOKANE AND SAN FRANCISCO

During the Alaskan adventure, Jack had decided that it was time for him to settle down. The rather constant shifting from camp to camp, "experting" mines, actually provided little home life, and no permanence at all. Like his father, he decided to go into business as a real-estate agent, and so it was that the Fletchers went to Oakland, California. There, in July 1911 their son Stuart was born. But setting down seemed not to be in the cards for the Fletchers. After a short period in Oakland, they moved to Port Townsend on Puget Sound, where Jack was employed by a chemical manufacturing plant. In 1914 Jack went with Standard Oil, a connection which lasted twenty-five years, first in Riverside, near Los Angeles. By the time Stuart was ready to start school, they moved to Spokane.

World War I started, and the United States declared war. In

Spokane, Inglis rushed wholeheartedly into work with the Red Cross. First she supervised a district knitting department. When peace came, she helped organize the Junior Red Cross to promote a program of free medical clinics in the public schools. The clinics were to teach dental hygiene and to provide treatment for tonsils and adenoids among the school children. Initially the medical association was completely non-cooperative, and Inglis found herself with a controversy on her hands. For one who had faced remote mining camps and Alaskan wilds, the situation was rousing; and she decided if the opponents wanted a fight, they should have it. After an intense campaign, the doctors were won over, and the program instituted. When the Red Cross asked that someone come to New York to explain the Spokane project, Inglis Fletcher was chosen.

In 1921 she decided to arrange some lectures for Vilhjalmur Stefansson, the famous Arctic explorer. When he visited Spokane, he met the Fletchers and was soon a constant visitor in their home. Now that Stuart was in school, Inglis began to think once more about her writing. Those first efforts in the mining camps were in her mind constantly. She was determined to go ahead, but she needed encouragement. And it was Stefansson who provided the spur for that determination.

It was Vilhjalmur Stefansson, the explorer, who started me of my first book, [she explains]. I told him I wanted to write one, but I was afraid to attempt it. He said, "Every successful writer has had to write his first book." I'd never even written a short story, but I plunged right into a novel about Alaska—based on my Alaskan experiences.

It was not a story of exploration or of adventure for adventure's sake, as one might suppose, but a tale of the *land*, of a man who went to Alaska with ideas of settling there and establishing himself as a freeholder. Stefansson criticized her manuscript and she sent it off to the publisher.

The book went through the usual procedure at the publisher's office. Five readers went over it carefully, noted where it needed revisions, and sent it back to her. As no pay check was inclosed, she naively thought it had been completely rejected and, dismayed, she put it aside. Then one day while she was house-

cleaning, she threw the manuscript into the fire. Months later, she ran into the publisher, who asked when his firm could see the rewritten novel. Alas, she had to tell him the truth.

It was Stefansson, too, who caused Inglis Fletcher to become involved in an incident which assumed international significance. Several years before, the explorer had sponsored an expedition to Wrangle Island off the coast of Siberia. He had in mind testing the place as a landing field for trans-Arctic planes. The expedition was ill-fated, and when the relief ship finally arrived, all the men of the group had died, the only survivor an Eskimauan woman who had been taken along to sew furs. When Ada Blackjack was brought to Seattle, she refused to speak with reporters and officials of the incident. A reticent creature, she feared she would be held responsible for the tragedy. Stefansson called Inglis Fletcher, and before long the two women were talking easily and the full story came out. Inglis Fletcher's account provided a chapter in Stefansson's book *The Adventure of Wrangle Island*.

Other important figures came to the Fletcher household. One was Rodney Wood, a British agricultural scientist from Nyasaland in Central Africa. The adventuresome spirit arose once more in Inglis Fletcher as she heard him talk, and she yearned to see the land of which he spoke.

Life in Spokane was a full one and the Fletchers would like to have stayed there permanently, but once more they were on their way.

A Spokane newspaper of October 13, 1925, commented on the moving of the family "last week" to San Francisco. Mrs. Fletcher "is a writer, a traveller, an authority on books and pictures and has met most of the prominent people in the literary life of the country," the paper stated. When she returned for a visit, the newspaper described her:

She is a stunning matron of dark coloring that adds a dash to a magnetic personality. She is an interesting conversationalist, who has acquired a valuable fund of information on worth-while subjects, gained through delightful contacts with people prominent in the literary world. Spokane lost an enviable personality when she moved last fall to make her home in San Francisco.

San Francisco, where Jack continued with Standard Oil, was to be their home from 1925 to 1938. As in Spokane, both of them

entered into the life of the city and the community. Stuart was still in school, Inglis played bridge, and Jack worked. Daily living was very pleasant. But Inglis still wanted to write. The mining-camp pieces and the Alaskan novel had only whetted her ambitions. Finally she broke into print with drama and music reviews for hard-pressed friends on the San Francisco newspapers. While it was good training, there were no by-lines and no money involved.

One of her early San Francisco friends was the composer Francisca Vallejo. In 1926 the two collaborated on an opera based on early California history, with Inglis doing the libretto. "Rose of Castille" was followed by another, titled "El Moro," concerning the Moors in Spain. The experience of combining words and music led her to write a third composition of a different type, "Romney Marsh," a long ballad with a tenth-century English setting. This poem, still in manuscript, was composed to be read against a musical background. It was performed several times in England and also at the University of California at nearby Berkeley.

She met Gertrude Atherton, San Francisco's most famous author, whom Inglis admired tremendously. The friendship, which continued until the famous novelist's death, was due in no small part to their mutual interest in historical fiction. After Inglis's first two books were published, it was Gertrude Atherton who nominated her for membership in the International P.E.N. Club.

The motion pictures, meanwhile, had begun to engage her attention. First there was *Express Messenger*, the story of her mining-camp days. Then before leaving Spokane, she had written a scenario for Pauline Frederick called *The Western Gate*. It was a story from the Spokane area, of the wheat country of the Northwest, of a Norwegian who changed his land from cattle to wheat. For this scenario she received \$1,000 from RKO. Later during one winter, she worked in Hollywood with her friend, Kate Corbelay, selling scripts. On another occasion she was employed in the scenario department to write an original foreign story about Arabia, but the picture was never made.

Soon after arriving in San Francisco, she made a definite decision to go to Africa. It would be an expensive journey, and she had to have money. To gather funds, she entered into partnership with Alice Seckles, a concert manager, and formed a lecture bureau. The successful enterprise featured all the "big names" of the lecture platform of the time. During 1927-1928 the list included Lowell Thomas, Captain John Noel, Maurice Hindus, John Erskine, Richard Halliburton, Prince William of Sweden, and of course, Vilhjalmur Stefansson. In other years the bureau sponsored Carl Akeley, Sir Hubert Wilkins, Roy Chapman Andrews, Will Durant, and Count Felix Von Luckner. These notable people counted the Fletchers as friends, were guests in their home, and from the brief business connections made in San Francisco an extended acquaintance usually developed.

By early 1928 Inglis Fletcher had set aside the necessary amount to finance her trip. At first it was planned that all three Fletchers should go; but as the time approached, John Fletcher discovered that he could not leave his business at Standard Oil for so long a period, and Stuart needed to remain in school.

The Dark Continent beckoned. Once more, the pioneering spirit of her forefathers trampled down all fears. Again she was to learn, at first hand, more about that theme which most interested her: man's struggle with the land.

IV. AFRICA

Africa had beckoned for a long time. "I'd wanted to go there ever since I was a little girl and heard the stories of my Negro 'mammy,' who used to say she was a descendant of the Zulus," Inglis Fletcher explained. At twelve, she read Livingstone's account of his journey up the Zambezi River, as well as Captain Richard Burton's story of his trip across Tanganyika. And again in Spokane, Rodney Wood had aroused her old enthusiasm. At last the time had come. Correspondence with Wood had persisted through the intervening years, and she was to be his guest in the Blantyre country of Nyasaland. From the writer's

point of view, the region was almost untouched. She had in mind a book on the agricultural experiments of Rodney Wood, and another about witchcraft.

On April 10, 1928, she left San Francisco and sailed on the *Baltic* from New York on the 28th. In London, the Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery, Secretary to the Colonies and Dominions, gave her letters of introduction to the governors of the British Colonies she would visit. These letters became valued possessions. Also in London, final arrangements for her trip were completed—down to Cape Town by steamer, Durban by train, Biera in Portuguese East Africa by ship, up the Zambezi to Port Harold by steamer, and into Blantyre by train. From her base at Blantyre, Rodney Wood was to plan *ulendos*, the native word for hunting expeditions.

Because Inglis Fletcher believed that the success of the British in colonial countries depended on the natives' recognition of English superiority, she decided that she would take evening dresses to wear at social functions in Nyasaland. The evening-dress story was the most publicized part of her trip to Africa. Here are the details.

In New York a reporter spied a blue satin dress in her luggage. The story flew. Soon all the world knew that "Woman Will Wear Evening Gown in African Jungle." A raft of reporters who greeted the *Baltic* in Liverpool paid no attention to her when she tried to dispel the rumor. When she arrived in Cape Town, the situation was the same. Finally a South African newspaperman with a sympathetic ear listened to her pleas. The *Cape Times* of May 29 reported under the headline "An Adventurous Lady":

Few women, if any, have leaped to world-wide fame with the meteoric rapidity with which Mrs. Inglis Fletcher has. It is said that some people are born great and others achieve greatness. Mrs. Fletcher comes in the latter category. In San Francisco, California, where she resides, Mrs. Fletcher is a personage, one of the leaders of society, but America is a big country and there are many such personages, so that up to quite recently, Mrs. Fletcher was probably unknown in the Eastern and Southern States. But she became fired with the ambition to be the first woman to head a safari in a trek through "Darkest Africa," where no white woman had ever ventured in such a fashion before. As soon as her determination became known in San Francisco, the Press and the telegraph got to work, and speedily, Mrs. Fletcher was a national personage.

This, however, was only the beginning of fame. Cable messages reached

Europe, Africa, and other parts of the world, announcing that in the course of her journey through Africa Mrs. Fletcher intended, when dining in the forests with only natives present, that her table should be set with damask and silver, and that she would wear evening gowns. The reason for this unusual course was given. It was because Mrs. Fletcher believed that the whole secret by which the British kept the natives in control was that they impressed them with their superiority by their dress, and that, in the far jungles, British Governors always dressed for dinner.

Incidentally, Mrs. Fletcher's fame became international and, as far as South Africa is concerned, the arrival of few, if any, lady visitors has been looked forward to with such eagerness as was that of Mrs. Fletcher, who arrived yesterday morning by the R.M.M.V. Carnarvon Castle. . . .

[Shown a clipping of the evening-dress story,] "It is the most wonderful story that was ever invented," replied Mrs. Fletcher, who laughed outright on reading the cutting. "It has met me everywhere. It all arises from when I was in New York. I had many visitors and some of them came in when I had my things scattered about, Spanish shawls, and guns and so on, all mixed up, and one asked me what I was going to do with such clothes. Jokingly, but it was taken seriously apparently, I told the lady that I was going to wear them to keep up the morale of the Europeans, and the lady took it that I was going to wear evening frocks, etc. among the natives in the wilds. . . . It is really most absurd but very amusing."

When she arrived in Nyasaland, a protectorate inhabited then by a thousand Europeans and a million and a half natives, sterner problems of the jungles replaced the excitement over the evening gowns. Authorities consisted of a governor, at that time Sir Charles Bowering, three provincial commissioners, and native commissioners about every hundred miles. At Blantyre she met up with her old friend, Rodney Wood, and the provincial commissioner, W. Kirby Green, both of whom helped her tremendously. Shortly she had a *ulendo* organized, a small one consisting of thirty-two natives and an Arab interpreter.

For her, the most important member of the group was the *capita*, who was in charge of the natives. He cooked, washed, mended and made clothes, and even pressed those evening dresses! There was nothing extraordinary about this, for in Africa, the native "boys" are trained to be ideal servants. She started out wearing riding boots and breeches, but the heat soon drove her to shorts and a bush shirt.

"One lives comfortably in the jungles after British precedent," she said, "and, however weary the trek, at the end of the day there

is always a five-course dinner served on dainty linen and with very good dishes, much the same as one would have in San Francisco. I started out regarding my trip as a serious affair, but humor met me at every turn."

For five months she explored the Lower River country of Nyasaland, braving the dangers of the jungles and veldts. The usual purpose of *ulendos* is wild-game hunting; but hers was different. Though elephants and lions were occasionally near, she never saw them; and at night when leopards, hyenas, and jackals prowled about her tent, the native "boys" slept outside and she knew she was safe. Neither did she see a black *mamba*, the deadliest of all African snakes, in spite of the fact that she was constantly warned to look out for them. However, she was fortunate to be probably the first white woman to see in its native habitat the rare *'nyala*, of which there are only about a hundred extant. The shy *'nyala* is a kind of antelope, a cross between a kudu and a bush buck.

She *did* want a pythom, in order to have a pair of shoes made from the tough skin. Rather regularly she told her "head boy" to find a python. Then one day outside her tent there was a turbulent commotion. When she stepped to the entrance, ten of her "boys" were holding a wriggling twenty-foot monster which they had found in a nearby tree. Two of the "boys" were assigned to the tip of the tail to keep the snake from constricting about one of the natives. "Take it away" she screamed. "But you wanted a python," explained the disappointed servant. "Yes, but not a live one, for heaven's sake!" The mammoth serpent was removed and slain.

Her principal interest on *ulendo* was in observing native customs, particularly the dances, the drum signals, and the survival of witchcraft. Camping near the villages, she watched the natives at close quarters in their daily activities. She noted their customs, which differed from tribe to tribe. The most interesting of the native dances was the *chinamalawa*, or secret Dance of the Initiation of the Virgins. She saw the ritualistic sex dances of the Yaos and Mang'anja tribes, the war dances of the Angoni. She pondered the mystery of the drums, that jungle telegraph sending news

from village to village; but like all Europeans, she failed to discover the secret. One thing she determined: Their message was not in code; rather the drums rolled out the entire words.

As for witchcraft—"You are twenty years too late," she was told, "for witchcraft has disappeared." She noticed, however, that witch doctors still held partial control over the villages. During her stay in Nyasaland, too, there was an occasion when human flesh was sold in the native market. From her own experiences, she became most suspicious when her *capita* asked for "the hair from the tail of one of the slain wild dogs, to be mixed with the crocodile liver, the dried skin of a snake, and similar ingredients, dried and powdered, to allay palpitations of the heart."

On *ulendo* only once did she need to use her gun, which, useless though it was without ammunition, was always a protection when by her side. One night she was alone in her tent with only her "boy" outside.—But here is the story in her own words:

Nearby, a group of natives were carousing at a beer house, and soon they began to perform a dance in the light of the fire. The men, some of whom were of huge stature, appeared like demons. Drums began to beat madly and the men responded by frenzied dancing to the steady tap-tap of the drums. For four or five days they had been drinking, and now they began to crowd in upon the tent and to menace the white woman there. No one but the boy to protect her, and he was helpless. And the gun I had lugged through jungle and through thicket lay at the bottom of my kit-bag, useless. I don't know what would have happened if I had shown fear of these men, maddened as they were, but I jumped to my feet, waved my arms wildly and began to swear at them in the most profane language at my command. The men did not know English, but they knew what swearing was—they'd heard it often enough from the white men. Stumbling out of the tent, they left me, and never came back again. The only way to treat the natives when they menaced you is to show you're not afraid. What, you think there was danger! The thing you call danger is only something you don't know, and when you face it and meet it, you find that it never existed.

Not all her time in Nyasaland, however, was spent on *ulendo*. She visited the various plantations throughout the area, and also was invited for a stay at Government House, the home of Sir Charles and Lady Bowring in Zomba, the capital of the protectorate. There she was present for Sports Week, when all the white inhabitants gather for a period of athletics and social affairs. At the Blantyre Cinema, during its once-weekly showing,

she recalls with pleasure seeing Bebe Daniels in *Miss Bluebeard*, a film which was so old that it was constantly breaking. Music from a gramophone played solemn strains from opera during the comedy. At intermission, coffee was served. The strange audience was composed half of Europeans in evening clothes, half of East Indians.

Away from the bush, transportation was not difficult. Good roads led from town to town, and her trips to the jungle were made by automobile to within twenty miles or less of the camps. The final distance she covered on foot.

Nevertheless, whether in jungle, on plantation, or at Government House, Inglis Fletcher kept copious notes during her entire stay in Africa. Besides her day-by-day diary, there were ledger books of notes under such headings as witchcraft, drums, music, folklore, people, and so on. W. Kirby Green gave her a store of information about the flora and fauna. Rodney Wood and he told her amazing stories gleaned from their long sojourns in Nyasaland.

Finally, she had material for many books, and the long trek home began. She started up Lake Nyasa, crossed into Tanganyika, took the railroad down to Dar-es-Salaam, a steamer to Zanzibar, and another up to Aden on the coastline of Arabia. She went through the Suez Canal to Egypt and caught a German freighter to England with stops along the Mediterranean.

In Africa she had had a long time to think. On her way home she made this resolution: *I give myself three years either to do something with my writing or to give it up entirely*. With the book on agricultural experiments completely gone from her mind and the volume on witchcraft hovering in the background, she began, at Dar-es-Salaam, to translate some of her notes into fiction—short stories, at first. Later in England on a visit to John Galsworthy's niece and nephew in the Sussex countryside, she sat quietly at the great author's writing desk and made a little silent prayer to be able to write a worthy book on Africa.

On November 9, she landed in New York on the *George Washington* and, after a short stop in Chicago, arrived in San Francisco on the 20th. She had covered forty thousand miles—

tramping on foot, traveling by train, boat, bushcar, dugout canoe, motor lorry; carried in a *machilla*, a hammock slung over the shoulders of eight natives; and once in an Arab dhow. She was home, determined to write of the African *land*.

V. THE AFRICAN NOVELS

Before three years had passed, her resolution to write a book on Africa was made good. Back in San Francisco, she began to work, turning from one type of composition to another. Like any apprentice, she had not yet found her best medium. One thing was certain: African had been so beautiful that she had wanted to write poetry about it all the time.

Looking over her journals, she found many prose poems written during her African stay. They were vivid impressions, made in the moment of inspiration—atmospheric free-verse interpretations of the African scene. In fact, in manuscript they form a sort of poetic diary of the trip, for the individual pieces are signed from Durban, Blantyre, Dar-es-Salaam, Zanzibar, Aden, Port Said, Algeciras, and elsewhere. While a number of them were later published and others were used as lyrics to musical settings, most of the poems were never printed. Here is a previously unpublished one:

THE FISHING EAGLE

Above Namalambo Hill
An eagle soars
In the blue sky
Showing black
Against a cloud,
Lazing superbly
With only a flicker
Of strong wings
To keep him aloft,
Watching with fierce eyes
The world below him
Scornful of danger,

Rushing through the air
With the sound of a mighty wind
To the arid plain below,
Ready to swoop
Upon his prey
And rend it to bits
With tearing coral talons.

She had made notes also on the drum beats and pipe strains played by the natives. These notations and some of the lyrics expressive of African folklore were submitted to Francisca Vallejo, who transcribed them for piano and voice. The result of this collaboration was a remarkable group of African tone pictures—an entire cycle of songs of Central Africa as well as groups titled “Caravan in Arabia,” “By the Indian Sea,” and “Circe Cycle.” Others, such as “Zulu Wail,” “Angoni War Song,” and “Herd-boy’s Pipes,” were based on the various drum beats of the native tribes. Inglis Fletcher tells of her observation which resulted in the songs:

Sometimes there are forty drums, all tuned to different pitch, playing together, often for a month continuously. When one player falls exhausted another takes his place. The effect is indescribable.

With several of the cycles completed, the poet and the composer, with the help of a soloist, went throughout California and Nevada giving lecture-recitals. The *Los Angeles Evening Herald* of August 24, 1929, carried a picture of the team seated at the piano with this caption: “San Francisco Society Women Visiting Los Angeles Transcribe Jungle Music.”

The writing of poetry might have gone on for a long time, but Mrs. Fletcher’s publishers discouraged her getting out a book of it. “It is good for prose because it teaches you to get a mood quickly,” they explained. “Write all you want to, but do you have to publish it?” There has never been a book.

The recitals were so rewarding that soon Mrs. Fletcher joined the Ellison-White Celebrity Bureau and was advertised for lectures on “Witchcraft in Central Africa,” “On Ulendo in Livingstone’s Africa,” and “Live Dangerously.” The lectures proved as successful as the recitals.

But fiction was her real goal. Upon her return from Africa,

she found that her seventeen-year-old son and his friends were keenly interested in the stories she told them of Nyasaland. With their attentiveness to encourage her, she once more began to write short stories based on true events. Thus was born *The White Leopard*. The series of short stories, three of which appeared in *The American Boy*, were expanded into a novel for older boys.

The White Leopard, published in 1931, is the story of Stephen Murdoch, young Englishman who arrives in Mobililand (Nyasaland) in Central East Africa as a native commissioner for his government. "We recommend the book to boys—and to adults, too, for that matter," wrote a reviewer. It has all the excitement and adventure any reader could wish for. A hand-to-hand fight with a leopard is quickly followed by an elephant hunt, and soon afterwards the hero is encountering crocodiles and hippopotamuses. Strange birds fly about. The natives rush with baskets to catch the *n'kungu* (flying white ants) that they may be dried in the sun and made into cakes for food.

Always over Murdoch broods the dark, mysterious continent, its superstitious black natives, and their unpredictable ways. Unused to the white man's laws, they must be subdued by Murdoch's fearlessness and courage alone, for he is allotted no troops to enforce his decrees. Murdoch's bravery wins him the awe and respect of the natives, and soon a name among them—*Nyalugwe*, or the Leopard. Murdoch's principal difficulties arise from his arch-enemies, the witch doctors who resent his power, and the Arab slave-traders whom he has sworn to stamp out. Against these foes he has the assistance of his faithful servants and gun-bearers, Metephele, Kalaiti, and Kapolo. Completely loyal, they stand with him when the drums of evil beat in the jungle and hostile eyes gleam from every bush. Murdoch comes to love his people and eventually almost to understand them. With his final victory over *N'yamgundu*, the defiant Black Emperor, he brings peace to his land.

The high quality of this adventure story brought it recognition as the Junior Literary Guild choice for August 1931. Almost twenty years after its initial appearance, it is still in print—a rather unusual history for a book whose primary appeal is to boys.

Perhaps the cause of this lies in the fact that Mrs. Fletcher, even in this first book, mastered two techniques, adventure and mystery. Chiefly on one or the other, the incidents of each chapter rely. There is a feeling that exaggeration plays no part in these adventures. These things might and did happen. Metephele, Kalaiti, and Kapolo are actual names of natives who accompanied Mrs. Fletcher on her *ulendos*; Rodney Wood and W. Kirby Green sat for the portrait of Stephen Murdoch. Words of African dialect are used frequently but so artfully that they in no way impede the reader's following the swift narrative. In *The White Leopard* Inglis Fletcher finally hit her stride.

The following year the book was published in England and throughout the British Empire. Commented the *Christchurch Press* of New Zealand on May 7, 1932: "... matter-of-fact justice as well as thrilling fiction." Reviewers everywhere recognized the authentic background and incidents.

The reception of the juvenile novel was highly gratifying, but Mrs. Fletcher wished to write an adult story. After the publication of *The White Leopard* she set to work immediately, and in 1932 *Red Jasmine* appeared. At that time the Fletchers were living in a flat on Leavenworth Street atop Russian Hill in the heart of San Francisco's artistic colony. Her son Stuart was already at Annapolis. As she wrote, she could look out across Fisherman's Wharf toward the island of Alcatraz, but her heart and mind were far away in Africa.

Red Jasmine, in various stages of the manuscript called by such titles as *Passion Fruit* and *Burnished Sun*, is a love drama against a fiery African setting. This time the life of the ruling class in mythical Aziziland (Nyasaland) is portrayed—Government House, the native commissioners, Sports Week, flirtation, intrigue, drinking, gossip—a very sophisticated living in the midst of savagery. International plotting, tea and cotton plantations, witch doctors, elephant hunts, ancient fetish-worship seen through the velvety blackness and sickening horror of the night, a mission-taught Negro preaching Black Africa for the Blacks, insurrections, massacre, dreadful death—all these things Inglis Fletcher had known or been told of first-hand.

Joyce Conningsby, daughter of a Colonial Secretary, goes to Aziziland with her husband, a career man investigating troubles in the colony. There she falls in love with Anthony Lindsay, one of the native commissioners. She admires his strength of character, his perception into native affairs, his bravery and fortitude. During the numerous occasions in the course of a *ulendo* she observes his superiority over Geoffrey Conningsby. In return Anthony comes to love her for her devotion to and understanding of Africa; he sees in her a contrast to his own wife, who lives in England because she cannot bear life in the bush.

A stirring scene is the one when Anthony saves the lives of Joyce and Geoffrey before the charge of an enraged wounded elephant. The climax of the story comes at the time of an impending native rebellion. In Anthony's absence, Geoffrey bolts and leaves Joyce in the care of a faithful native. Her presence of mind results in the capture of the insurrection leader, but not before a night of terror during which the blacks massacre an English planter and his family—a night even more horrible than the cannibalistic rites which she and Anthony had witnessed.

War with Germany is declared, and Geoffrey is killed. Joyce returns to England where she is needed, while Anthony throws himself into the fight against the Allemanni colony to the north.

One of the characters, Metephele the gun-bearer, is retained from *The White Leopard*. Though most of the action is in Aziziland, Mrs. Fletcher takes us this time to England, Zanzibar, and Aden as well. Besides the realistic portrayal of life in the jungles, Mrs. Fletcher gives us many chapters on life in the small capital town, its close-knit circle of white inhabitants, their occupations and interests about the clubs, the primitive movies, the dances and cocktail parties, and all the intricacies of colonial life. *Red Jasmine* is an exciting book. O. O. McIntyre, famous columnist and commentator, called it "a corking novel of Africa." *The New York Times* opined it had "plenty of action and suspense." Marie Hicks Davidson in the *San Francisco Cal-Bulletin* of June 4, 1932, wrote: "John Galsworthy in 'The Forsyte Saga' has no surer touch than has Inglis Fletcher in 'Red Jasmine,' no greater flair when setting forth English politics at home and abroad."

Several years later, in between the drafts of a new novel about North Carolina then consuming her, Inglis Fletcher collaborated in the writing of two mystery novels with Pauline Partridge, author of short stories and secretary of the San Francisco P.E.N. First was "Weeping Witch," the story of the murder of a South-African diamond-mine millionairess on a lonely island off the coast of England. Trap-doors, screams in the night, and all the paraphernalia of the whodunit are present in bounteous doses. It was serialized in a London periodical over the name of Fletcher Partridge. Actually, Mrs. Fletcher had difficulty with this novel. "I liked all the characters so much," she admitted, "I couldn't decide who was to be the villain. I didn't know which one to make the murderer till the very last. I think the readers were puzzled too."

A second collaboration was a still unpunished novel called "The Turquoise Widow." In this mystery tale, the team chose their characters from among Virginia City miners and San Francisco millionaires, and the trail of the sleuth runs not only through the crowded streets of the Golden Gate City but also through ghost towns and mountain tracks. The solution is worked out with the help of some old tales about the '49ers.

These two diversionary efforts were only brief pauses in the trail which already was leading back to the birthplace of her grandfather, back to North Carolina.

VI. "RALEIGH'S EDEN"

During her short stay in London on the way back from Africa, Inglis Fletcher was invited to tea in the office of the Colonial Secretary. One of the guests brought up the question as to whether or not they were gathered in the room where discussions took place concerning the American Colonies and the tax on tea. Soon the group were speaking of Cornwallis, and the thought flew through Mrs. Fletcher's mind that she would like to write a novel on Cornwallis and his campaigns in the Carolinas. Back in America, the African novels intervened.

The project might have been abandoned entirely if she had not walked one day into the Sutro Branch of the California State Library at San Francisco on a rather different mission—to look up some genealogical information about her Tyrrell County ancestors. The old records took a strange hold on her, and she asked what fiction had been written about those early times in that section of the South. "Probably none," she was told. The thought was disturbing.

Later she ran across this paragraph in an old will written by a North Carolina planter in 1753:

ITEM—My Will is that none of the Timber shall be cut or sold, except for use on the Plantation, and that no stranger shall be admitted to live on any part of my Back Land (timber); and no person shall by any circumstances be admitted to live on any part of my land (timber) excepting an overseer. My Will is likewise that all my negroes shall be admitted to keep on my Plantation; and that they be admitted to work on my Plantation.

Here was a long-forgotten man who interested her, a man who loved his land, his forests, his slaves. His struggle with the land, his fight to conquer it, his hope to perpetuate it—these thoughts flamed Inglis Fletcher's imagination. Perhaps she could combine the ideals of this man with the campaigns of Lord Cornwallis. There was a story there. And so she set to work in the flat on Russian Hill—reading, reading, reading into the past—then writing, writing, writing. It was six years and four long-hand drafts later before *Raleigh's Eden* finally appeared, all of those drafts over a thousand pages long.

In 1934 she went to Charlotte to work in the Public Library there, gathering material on Cornwallis' campaigns, material dim at first but finally made clear to her by General Fletcher Sharpe at the United States Army Presidio in San Francisco. In 1937 she was in Edenton for the first time, going over with Mrs. Sidney McMullan all the historical records in the library at the Cupola House. The novel was going through numerous changes. Tentative titles ranged from *Heritage of Freedom*, to *Garden Eastward*, to the *Iron Men of Albemarle*, and finally to *Raleigh's Eden*, a term of derision applied by contemporary Englishmen to that

coastal region of North Carolina which Sir Walter Raleigh described to Queen Elizabeth as "a land most beautiful and pleasant to behold, in such plenty that in all the world the like abundance could not be found." Though at first Cornwallis was to be the central character, the more she read, the more she went over to his enemies, the freedom-loving Carolinians.

In 1938 the Fletchers moved from San Francisco to Balboa Beach in Southern California, where the writing of the last draft was made. In June 1940 she registered at the Joseph Hewes Hotel in Edenton spending much time there checking the accuracy of the galley proofs.

Meanwhile, the minute research was almost overwhelming. She read court records, personal letters, rare books, documents, journals, memoirs, *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, contemporary histories, and one complete set of the *London Morning Post* from 1777 to 1782, the last just to get the "feel" of the period. Old wills and inventories provided her with a thorough knowledge of just what the people owned, and from these ancient papers came the ideas of the personal property of her characters, the assurance of large plantations in North Carolina like the well-publicized ones of Virginia and South Carolina. The characters came to life: first the historical ones, whose words in *Raleigh's Eden*, especially if they concern something important such as politics, were taken directly from speeches and letters; and the fictitious ones, often built on her own distant kin—the Spruills, Hasells, Phelps, Caswells, and Blounts. All of them fused into a tale of plantation-owners, small farmers, soldiers, merchants, slaves, politicians, "interweaving to show how they played their part in our first struggle for liberty." It was a huge panorama of the *people* of North Carolina from the days of Governor Tryon to Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown, the years 1765-1782.

The period chosen was perhaps the most exciting in North Carolina history, a time of transition from colony to state. The gaiety of colonial North Carolina in the early chapters turned in the later ones to somberness and war. French Huguenots, Scots (Highland and Lowland), Dutch, Quakers, and Englishmen crowded the pages.

A Moorish architect designed the Governor's Palace at New Bern; pirates raided the fertile lands along Albemarle Sound; Scots in colorful plaids marched in Campbelltown; an Oriental sold his wares at the wharf in Edenton; in manor houses along the shores rich squires lived the life of their ancestors in England, rode to foxhounds, danced, and quarreled about British tyranny; in the backwoods the hardworking farmers felt the heavy hand of overseas taxation.

There are more than a hundred characters. Besides Cornwallis, the historical figures are General Nathaniel Greene, John Paul Jones, Banastre Tarleton, Edmund Fanning, Governor Tryon, Flora Macdonald, Ephriam Brevard, Abraham Alexander; the Iron Men of Albemarle, Samuel Johnston, Joseph Hewes, James Iredell, Parson Daniel Earl; John Harvey, the Perquimans County Patrick Henry; and many, many others, generally serving as background.

There is history aplenty: the Battle of Alamance, the building of Tryon's Palace, the Edenton Tea Party, the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. Captain Jack's ride to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia with the Mecklenburg Declaration is described in detail.

The pageantry was more than satisfactory, but Mrs. Fletcher needed a plot.

A story to fit into this rich and colorful background of North Carolina history was now my major problem, [she once wrote]. At last it was quite simple. One day, after weeks of groping, I opened a Gideon Bible in a hotel room. The story lay before my eyes: Abraham and Sara, the barren woman; Hagar and Ishmael. And so my imaginary characters came to life and, after a time, fitted in with the men and women of Colonial Edenton and the Albemarle.

The story opens in Queen Anne's Town (Edenton) with a hunt, Parson Daniel Earl wearing boots beneath his cassock. Master of the Hounds is Adam Rutledge, heir of one of the Lords Proprietors and owner of Rutledge Riding, his vast estate across the sound. At Rutledge Riding is Adam's young invalid wife, Sara, who knowing her husband's love for Mary Warden, has put into his path a beautiful Moslem princess, Azizi, now a slave of Adam's. Mary Warden, who with Adam shares the dominant

interest of the plot, is a political hostess and wife of a Tory old enough to be her father. The intricacies of this situation and its outcome compete throughout the novel with the swelling struggle for freedom.

It is Adam, almost alone among the rich gentry, who recognizes the justice of the back-country farmers' claims that they are overtaxed. Though his peers cannot understand his condescending to step outside his class to help the rebels, Adam espouses their cause after the assault of Tryon at Alamance. He takes his seat in the Provincial Assembly only when he believes he can help them.

One critic noted that Mrs. Fletcher in *Raleigh's Eden* had managed to create quite a few well-characterized women: Judith, Sara's malevolent African witch-slave; Lavinia, Peyton Rutledge's beautiful, sparkling wife; Sara, whose relentless anger prompted her to try selling Azizi and Adam's son, David, into slavery; Mary Warden, who remains thoroughly a woman in spite of her political activity and who prevents Sara's plans from maturing.

Unforgettable, particularly, is mysterious, charming Lady Caroline, reputed to be the Queen's sister, who catches Peyton Rutledge in her snares as easily as she does most of the men of the colony. As a matter of fact, Lady Caroline presented a most difficult problem when Mrs. Fletcher finally had to get her murdered. The owners of the present plantation house where the murder ought to have taken place were most unwilling to have her done away with there. Mrs. McMullan denied the novelist the use of the Cupola House as a place for slaughter. Edentonians did not want her murdered on their beautiful green in front of the Chowan County Court House. So one afternoon John and Inglis Fletcher went riding about the countryside to find a place. They struck upon John's Island Swamp, a pocosin about which nobody had a sentimental or historical attachment. When Californians, hearing of this trouble, wanted to know what a pocosin was, the novelist replied, "Pocosin? I shan't tell you. Buy the book and find out. I murder only for money." North Carolinians, of course, would have known.

The theme of the book is that land is a birthright. Land brought the men to America. It was their trust; they had to keep it. When it was being taxed away, they fought for it. The serpent had crept into Eden. The novel tells the unfamiliar part that North Carolina played in throwing off the yoke of what the land-enslaved freedmen considered ruinous taxation.

When Adam visited the hinterlands, Farmer Whitlock told him:

"I am an ignorant man. But I know what me and my neighbors came to America for. We came here to be free, and to own land. Land is the way to freedom. Every man has a right to freedom."

Adam could not forget what he was told. The government was to aid, not oppress, its people.

"We do not own the earth. It belongs to the rain, the wind and the sun. We have the land to use as long as we take care of it. If we give it up nature takes it back. If we do not keep the land as rich as we found it, we lose it. Land is a heritage we hold in trust and we must guard it carefully."

And again: "Commerce and trade will come, but land is, and always will be, the basic source of wealth."

Adam did not want to fight the war; he wanted to go west and so planned; but he was a young man whose deepest affections and hopes were rooted in the soil he had cultivated. When war came, he wanted to plow the land and feed the armies. But he soon found out that it was not enough. He learned that freedom was his because of those who had gone before him. When that freedom was threatened, avoidance was not the way. He had to turn and fight to renew that freedom—to make the same sacrifices his forebears had made. And so he did.

Adam's struggle for love, for freedom, and for the land constitutes the tale of *Raleigh's Eden*.

The book was published in October 1940 with much fanfare and excitement. It thrived on the controversy which followed. Never before had North Carolina been so extensively pictured in a historical novel. Governor Clyde R. Hoey and the author signed five hundred copies of the first edition, which sold quickly. It was a propitious time to issue a novel with a story like that of *Raleigh's Eden*. The war in Europe had begun, and Americans

were becoming history-conscious; readers saw a parallel between America's oppression by George III and Europe's oppression by Hitler. They liked the stirringly and authentically written battle scenes, always viewed from the eyes of one of the characters; they were not battles described by a historian.

Inglis Fletcher went on an extensive autographing tour—Henderson, Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Asheville, and later throughout the South and Midwest. *Raleigh's Eden* stayed on the best-seller lists for months, in spite of its publication during the same season as Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and Thomas Wolfe's last novel, *You Can't Go Home Again*. If North Carolina had lost its old giant, it had taken on a new one from California.

Sterling North in the *Chicago News* wrote:

And although her principal characters live in great houses, own slaves and ships and estates, the author seems equally at home in the cottages of the poor, the slave quarters and the market place. Her battle scenes would be remarkable, even if they had not been written by a woman. She seems to know horses, piracy and international intrigue as thoroughly as she knows the economic reasons for the American Revolution.

In the *Canadian Historical Review* of March 1941, a British Empire reviewer saw *Raleigh's Eden* this way:

Some considerable space is taken to describe the expansive and genial and lush North Carolina plantation life of the squires, and the restricted and bitter and narrow life of the actual tillers of the land. The rumblings of men struggling against domination and against injustice come to the surface. There are the early battles and the war itself, with excitement, danger, suspense, courageous deeds, heartbreaks, and aftermaths. Mrs. Fletcher's theme is that the Revolutionary War was not fought by Americans against the mother country but by Britons against a Hanoverian King and a small group of his ministers who did not represent the Britain of Pitt, Burke, and Fox. The result was the emergence of America . . . There are, finally, contemporary implications in *Raleigh's Eden*: democracy battles for its life against oppression—says the leading character, "We have come to the place where we have learned that freedom can't be held by arrangement. We must realize that freedom must be fought for. Fighting is itself a part of freedom."

Margaret Wallace in the *New York Times Book Review* wrote that "the effect in the end is more thoughtful than dramatic; not so

much moving and exciting as serious and dignified." Jonathan Daniels in the *Saturday Review of Literature* thought the splendour portrayed in *Raleigh's Eden* reflected "less a glory that is gone than a discontent that is here." He objected to the flamboyance, calling it "historical homesickness," but like all reviewers, applauded the excitement and colorfulness of the background and narrative.

Jonathan Daniels' review typifies the reception of the book in North Carolina. Though practically everybody read it, Tarheel readers found it far too glamorous for their conception of North Carolina as remembered from the grammar-grade history books. They objected to the manor houses, the wealth of the families who could send their children to school in Europe; they thought Edenton only "a country village community full of ordinary people who dealt with pirates and did nothing to startle the world." They questioned the presence of Arabs along the Albemarle, the "exaggerated" characters of Hewes and Iredell. They disputed the English gardens, the large estates. They resented the novelist's doing her research in far-off California. They much preferred to believe William Byrd's damning description, which even historians admit is not very accurate. Such was the case, in spite of a letter written to Mrs. Fletcher's publishers on July 1, several months before the publication, by Hugh T. Lefler, professor of North Carolina history at Chapel Hill:

I have read *Raleigh's Eden* and have found the novel remarkably free from historical errors. I think that the author has caught the spirit of North Carolina during the late colonial period and the story that she presents is very interesting. She has done an unusual amount of historical research and has made very effective use of some significant documents. I consider the novel as one of the best I have read dealing with this period of American history, and I rank it with James Boyd's *Drums* as the two best novels of Colonial and Revolutionary North Carolina. . . .

At the height of this controversy, Mrs. Fletcher appeared on the public platform at the State Theatre in Raleigh, where the disputed historical points were discussed. Jonathan Daniels was moderator. C. C. Crittenden of the State Department of Archives and History was there. In part, she said:

I have had several complaints from historians about certain features of *Raleigh's Eden*. One of them is that the farms I tell of are too big—that nobody at that time had farms as large as I describe. I have the answer to that. Historians base their claims on the tax lists—a very poor idea, in my opinion, for people didn't pay their taxes any more then than they do now.

Several persons have told me there were no plantations as large as Rutledge Riding. I refer them to Grimes' Wills and Inventories. If they read that, they'll discover that the Thomas Pollock holdings amounted to about 62,000 acres, and that there were 107 plantations around Albemarle Sound as big as 25,000 or 30,000 acres.

Slaves? Old Josiah Collins of Somerset Manor used to send his own ships to Africa for slaves.

One newspaper man said, "When I read *Raleigh's Eden* I thought Lady Caroline was the most fantastic, the most flamboyant character I ever heard of—but I looked at a history and there she was."

People ask, "Were there Arabs in North Carolina?" "Did Flora Macdonald live in Campbelltown?" The answer is "Yes."

The book, when first written, was 1,200 pages long. It was cut and rewritten four times. In the original story I had Adam and his bondsman go from his Mecklenburg plantation through the mountain pass into Kentucky and out to the Illinois country. This section of the book covered 100 to 150 pages, and was cut out. In the original, when Adam returned he came through the Northern hill country and down to the Roanoke River. It was there that he found a cabin in the wilderness. When the two sections came together it made it seem as though he had gone from Mecklenburg down the Roanoke. When Dr. Crittenden called my attention to this I immediately wrote the publishers. By writing in a paragraph the gap was covered for later editions of the book.

"Rutledges in North Carolina?" someone asked. Mrs. Fletcher did not know. An irate defender from the audience came to her support. "They're not all in South Carolina," she exclaimed; "go and look at the names on the tombstones in Duplin County."

Inglis Fletcher admitted introducing James Iredell two years before he really came into the picture. Lady Caroline came in too early for history also, and the Duke of Clarence. "But I wanted them in the story at that particular place, and it's a novelist's privilege to do so."

A novelist's privilege? It seemed that her critics had forgotten about that. It would excuse far more than those matters for which she had been unjustly accused. But what did it matter? Readers liked the book, and they liked Mrs. Fletcher's way of handling her problems. The Carolina Series was off to a stirring start.

VII. "MEN OF ALBEMARLE"

If there had been any doubt in Inglis Fletcher's mind about her future course of action, the success of *Raleigh's Eden* resolved all difficulties. From now on, North Carolina was to be her fictional stamping-ground. The research she had done for her first historical novel had been only partly exploited. The exciting story of early North Carolina had been only touched.

Her original idea in *Raleigh's Eden* was to initiate a series of novels in which the characters and their descendants should move progressively westward, like her forefathers and herself, on to Illinois and finally across the mountains to the West Coast. Soon she found she could only imply that movement. She could not get her characters to move out of the Albemarle. On the contrary, they kept moving backwards—backwards into the past.

Particularly, one brief sentence from an Edenton document in the *Colonial Records of North Carolina* (Volume II, page 3; Council Journal, 9 January 1712/13) intrigued her: "Mad^m Catha Hyde Came before this Board and was admitted to prove upon oath y^e Importation of Eight person into this Govern^t (Viz^t) Edw^d Hyde Esq^r M^{rs} Penelope Hyde W^m Clayton Jn^o Lovick Mary Tудо James Gregory, Andrew Stephenson & her selfe." Who were these people? As she thought about them and searched for information about them, they became real and began to live. Here was the germ of a new novel. Illinois and California would have to wait.

Once more, she went "researching." During the winter of 1940-1941 the Fletchers were in Nassau, where the library in the old octagonal powderhouse yielded much. She found there was considerable linkage between the Bahamas and the Carolinas. On other trips she was again in California, and in the Library of Congress in Washington. But mostly, this time, she searched the vast historical holdings of various North Carolina libraries and depositories. Particularly revealing was the letter book—deposited in the State Archives in Raleigh—of Thomas Pollock, a planter of the period. There, also, she found valuable maps, one drawn by Edward Moseley, chief justice of the Cary government. To

lend contemporaneousness to her story, she decided to use the old spellings found on the maps, Pamticoe for Pamlico and so on.

The days of research over, the Fletchers looked about for a quiet place where the second Carolina novel could be written. A dozen miles from Edenton, they located a small abandoned house on the banks of Albemarle Sound. This house was on the property of Mr. and Mrs. George Wood of Greenfield Plantation, noted for hundreds of years as the home of gait and hospitality. Greenfield Fishery, as the house was called, was a half mile from the plantation mansion; it was off to itself and would make an ideal writer's retreat. But "Fan" Lamb Wood, the mistress of Greenfield, feared it was inadequate for a distinguished writer. Previously used as an ice-house in the old days before modern refrigeration, it had since served variously as a tenant house and a sportsmen's club. In no sense were its accommodations modern. In was, however, quiet and secluded; and most important, it faced a green lawn of shade trees down to the water's edge and looked across the beautiful expanse of Albemarle Sound—the scene of the book Inglis Fletcher contemplated.

Necessary repairs were effected, woven curtains from the Roanoke Rapids Mills were hung, candles were placed on the mantle, antique furniture which the Fletchers had picked up was brought in, and the novelist started her work. A rigid routine, carefully followed since that time, was set up: Until four o'clock each day she wrote. At that hour, Mrs. Wood allowed the stream of constant visitors to continue down the narrow shaded country lane to the Fishery. In the evenings, the Fletchers were always dinner guests at Greenfield. It is no wonder that Greenfield Plantation was woven into *Men of Albemarle* as the fictional home of Lady Mary Tower and her ward, Marita. With its double gallery, its beautiful old furniture including the original Edenton Tea Party table, and its gracious hosts, pre-Revolutionary Greenfield is just the sort of place the many North Carolinians who have never visited the Chowan and Albemarle section believe did not exist in their native state. In such surroundings the first draft of *Men of Albemarle* was written. Nearby plantations, such as

Mulberry Hill and Montpellier (called Queen's Gift in the novel) were also used.

If the history of North Carolina at the time of *Raleigh's Eden* was one of her most exciting, the period 1710-1712, chosen for *Men of Albemarle*, was one of her stormiest. Inglis Fletcher's theme was the fight for liberty and the establishment of law in a new unsettled land. At a time when three men claimed the governorship, the colonists obeyed no law at all.

As in her first book, the year 1710 seemed to parallel 1942, the date of its publication. Queen Anne's Wars, called by some historians the First World War, saw all Europe seething. In England the people were beseeching John Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough, for victories. A few years before, the British had won Gibraltar; but as Charles II had sold Dunkerque to the French, England had no jumping-off place to invade the continent. Ships sailing from England to the Carolinas had to be convoyed to protect them against the maurauding French and Spanish off Cape Hatteras. In North Carolina the people were divided; the inefficiency of the Lords Proprietors at home was somewhat responsible for the disorderly condition of the Carolina colonies. John Locke's *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*, while guaranteeing a certain degree of freedom, provided that a majority of the colonists were to be "leet" or serf; thus a considerable aristocracy was developing. The Lords Proprietors, losing money on their New World venture, advertised for "young men of noble birth" to settle the province, offering them fortune and freedom. Stampeding into the colony was a disturbing variety of people, all with different traditions and laws—Cavaliers and the English gentry, Scotch artisans, traders, Quakers, Swiss and German Palatinates, smugglers and criminals and pirates—the last three giving North Carolina the opprobrious name of Rogues' Harbor. Sober settlers looked at the situation with horror: no law was respected; each man was a law unto himself. Previously, planters had governed their own areas, but no longer did that plan work. There was trouble with Virginia, which demanded a tax on the sheep and tobacco hauled across the border for shipment to markets in England; still North Carolina was attempting to re-

main separate from the Crown status of her neighbor to the north.

In the raw, fumbling colony, Common Law had practically disappeared. The situation was desperate. Thomas Cary, a fighting Quaker, had thrown out of office the ineffectual deputy governor, William Glover of the Anglican Church. Arriving to assume the leadership was aristocratic Edward Hyde, cousin of Anne Hyde, wife of James II and mother of two queens of England. Intelligent and able but weak in warfare, Hyde attempted to take over peacefully and was surprised at the opposition of Cary. Lawlessness was rampant. In the disputed area between North Carolina and Virginia, a sorry result of the long-unsettled boundary quarrel, were tax evaders, cutthroats, and villains.

Against this background, two love stories develop: the first between a Carolina planter and an English Jacobite—Roger Mainwaring (pronounced Mannering), the grandfather of Mary Warden in *Raleigh's Eden*, and Lady Mary Tower, illegitimate daughter of Charles II, in Carolina because Queen Anne suspected her of plotting against the throne; the second between a Quaker and a Jacobite—Michael Cary, young nephew of Governor Cary with a New-World outlook, and Marita Tower, ward of Lady Mary.

Although called Mary Tower during her stay in Carolina, the noble woman is really Lady Mary Tudor. For her who had come to Carolina with the new governor and his ambitious wife, life in the colony is only a brief exile from fashionable London society. For Marita, it is the beginning of an exciting adventure.

Hyde, breathing the elegance of court life to the romantic rudeness of the wilderness and having difficulty mustering a hundred soldiers for his defense, is hardly a match for Cary, who has already gained the support of the Assembly and has no intention of surrendering without the defeat of the small army he has raised. Eventually, however, Hyde wins; and after Cary's Rebellion, law is established.

For historical action, *Men of Albemarle* provides, besides Cary's Rebellion during which the novelist inserts an attempted kidnapping of Hyde, the bloody Tuscarora uprisings at Bath. For

historical characters, besides those already mentioned, there are Christopher Gale, Baron de Graffenreid, and Edward Moseley. For picturesqueness, the novel opens with a coach dragging through Dismal Swamp. For mystery, there is the "leet" girl, daughter of a woman hanged for witchcraft, roaming the forests with her great staghound, a "W" branded upon her. For excitement, there are a plague of pigeons, a shipwreck, a hurricane. For high life, there are the scenes of Hyde's welcome by Thomas Pollock at Balgray up the river from Queen Anne's Town, of his life there while his wife is in town preparing a government house with a cupola, of the later parties of Madame Hyde and Hester Pollock, trying to outdo each other in lavish hospitality. For authentic background, there are pirates and Turkish merchants, small farmers and slaves, descriptions of trade conditions and plantation exports, Quaker meetings, and Assembly gatherings.

The principal character in the novel, the one whom Inglis Fletcher considers her finest creation, is Roger Mainwaring. After seven years as an indentured servant on a sisal plantation in the Bahamas for his part in Monmouth's Rebellion, he has come to the Albemarle to build Queen's Gift as a wedding present for Rhoda Chapman (Inglis Fletcher's ancestor, by the way) when she arrives from England with her string of hunters. At Queen's Gift he lives in lordly fashion in imitation of William Byrd at Westover. He "realized that the land itself did something for people. The fight against the wilderness all about them gave stamina to the weak, added stamina to the strong." He was not so concerned with the struggle among Glover, Cary, and Hyde, as with the disunity it effected, the weakness it produced to encourage the watchful Tuscaroras. After suffering, losses, and lack of faith, Roger makes it clear to all on the village green that goodwill among them must precede any successful living as a group, even though they have the heritage of the Magna Charta. This call for the enforcement of the Common Law and its preservation in the wilderness when there were poor governments or no governments at all provide the basis for our legal codes today. In North Carolina, the fundamental rights of the common man were beginning to be recognized and protected. Assemblies of the people

had been granted by the Lords Proprietors. Stimulated by the energy and democracy of a New World, the colonists were striving for a government under law. Mrs. Fletcher's emphases are the qualities of strength and cooperation which are necessary to form a government and a civilization.

The writer's problems presented in *Men of Albemarle* were few when compared with those constantly arising during the composition of *Raleigh's Eden*. And no wonder, for the breadth of Albemarle Sound, whose waters the Men of Albemarle traversed during the course of her story, spread out before her as she wrote. The problems, indeed, were minor. One annoying one was the tutor of the Hyde children. She found, in writing the book, that she could not manage him; so she "sent him up to William and Mary College to teach Latin." She says, "No doubt he's there now."

When the novel appeared, one of the first readers was Mrs. Fletcher's old friend, Gertrude Atherton, the grand lady of San Francisco letters. Miss Atherton wrote: "*Men of Albemarle* is magnificent. It opens with a bang; and the pace never drops. In the very first chapter one becomes deeply interested in the characters, the locale, and the promise of great things to come. Mrs. Fletcher is in the top rank of America's historical novelists." An early reviewer commented: "The descriptions of the taverns and ordinaries in Carolina sound as authentic and written-on-the-spot as do Addison's coffee-house essays, and the entire background is written with a confident pen."

As in *Raleigh's Eden* the author provided romance by getting aristocratic people into her books from the history of political exiles and indentured servants. Of the two novels, most critics considered its story faster, its characters more interesting than those of *Raleigh's Eden*. If a reader thinks it hard to believe that these exciting adventures and events actually took place, he need spend only an hour with an encyclopedia and he will find there the dry historical facts which have been metamorphosed into zestful life.

Men of Albemarle is the historical novel at its best, with mixed components of historical accuracy, full immediacy of colorful

background, imaginatively conceived real and fictitious characters, and finally, excitement of plot and episode.

For the fourth time Inglis Fletcher had a book on the best-seller lists.

VIII. "LUSTY WIND FOR CAROLINA"

The next book was a "natural." From the writing of *Men of Albemarle*, Inglis Fletcher was led directly into that most fascinating, intriguing period in North Carolina history—the period of the pirates. Freebooters were not new to the Carolina coast, for they had long lurked in the many secluded inlets which jut into the land, fully protected from the dangerous Atlantic by a stream of sandbanks; but their heyday was not till the years 1718-1725. Compressing as much action as she could into this 500-page novel, Inglis Fletcher began to write. As things turned out, it was the most popular book she had before or has since written, if one may judge popularity by sales. In almost any form, pirates make good reading; with Inglis Fletcher's meticulous research and ability to provoke excitement, they become irresistible.

It was at Nassau, reading in the octagonal library there, that Inglis Fletcher first got the idea for her story. As she looked across the harbor, which had once served as a pirate rendezvous, it was "easy to dream up stories of the past," as she put it.

Meanwhile, back home, World War II was at its height, and John Fletcher decided to enter war work and to leave his real-estate office in Southern California, where he had gone after retiring from Standard Oil. Coincidentally enough, in the winter of 1942-1943 he was sent to North Carolina. In Wilmington he became Director of Shipyard Training with the North Carolina Shipbuilding Corporation for the Maritime Commission. His wife willingly came along and in the Wilmington Public Library with the help of the custodian, Mrs. Emma Woodward Mac-Millan, continued her research.

The Wilmington of 1943, by the time the Fletchers arrived,

had reached boom-town proportions. Getting a place to live was almost an impossible task, and renting a house unheard of. Luck, however, has its strange way with the Fletchers. Hearing of their plight, the Laurence Sprunts of historic Orton Plantation got in touch with Mrs. Devereaux Lippitt, owner of Clarendon, a beautiful home on the Cape Fear not far from Orton; and soon the Fletchers were established in the handsome river house unoccupied since the beginning of the war.

Though the present structure is of twentieth-century origin, Clarendon was established in 1720. The Fletchers found it a lovely, roomy home. In spite of the fact that the gardens were planned to be formal, throughout the years flowers have been added at various spots until the effect is informal and very charming. Below the house are the rice fields looking straight out across the river. At the bottom of the gardens is a small wharf, the terminus of a narrow canal which cuts through the marsh.

The servant problem was "licked," too. On the place was a cook, whose juvenile relatives built the fires, milked the cows, and gathered the eggs. There, for most of 1943, the Fletchers lived, Mr. Fletcher busy at work at the nearby shipyards and Mrs. Fletcher writing the first draft of her new novel then known as *Where Past Years Are*. On week-ends they entertained British officers stationed at Camp Davis, a military establishment near Wilmington.

It is no wonder that Clarendon and its history began to appear in the pages of the manuscript coming from Inglis Fletcher's pen. As in *Men of Albemarle*, the scene of her action was just beyond her window as she wrote—this time the stately Cape Fear River on which Huguenots and pirates had sailed in the early eighteenth century.

During her Wilmington stay a few activities interrupted her writing. With Mrs. MacMillan's cooperation, she arranged to have a library of popular books put on the new vessels being commissioned at the shipyards. During the latter part of her stay, the Fletchers traveled up to Edenton to make the presentation of a painting by Miss Anne Fletcher, noted artist and sister of Mr. Fletcher. This portrait of the Duke of Albemarle, first of the

Lords Proprietors, was hung in the Assembly Room of the Chowan County Court House.

In November the Fletchers went to Washington. Their son Stuart was at Annapolis that winter taking a postgraduate course. Following six months of writing and more research at the Library of Congress and the Folger Shakespeare Memorial Library, the manuscript of *Lusty Wind for Carolina* was submitted to the publishers.

In a way *Lusty Wind for Carolina* is a sequel to *Men of Albemarle*, several of the major characters from the older book playing brief roles in the new one. In England, Roger Mainwaring influences a Huguenot weaver to secure a land grant in North Carolina and to repair there; dashing Michael Cary visits the Cape Fear country and has a romance with gay Mary Lepel; the "leet" witch-girl, who roamed the pages of *Men of Albemarle* with her staghounds and was saved from death by Roger Mainwaring, is now Anne Bonney, the woman pirate. With the exception of a few minor characters, however, *Lusty Wind for Carolina* presents a new story and a new setting.

The book covers the years 1718-1725. After the Peace of Utrecht in 1713, merchants in England wished to put their money in New World ventures. As the story opens, Captain Woodes Rogers, the great navigator now named governor of the Bahamas, is promising to rid the Atlantic Coast of pirates. On him falls the duty of making the sea lanes safe for merchants. The Lords Proprietors do not afford protection for the North Carolina settlers; neither does George I, busy sending English fleets to help his German electorate against Sweden.

The theme of the book is the fight made for the freedom of the seas against the pirates, who are aided by the interference of English officials. Symbolizing the struggle to maintain trade routes from the plantations to world markets is Woodes Rogers. In an atmosphere of pirate waters, dark swamps, and deep wilderness, the story moves from the British waterfront to Nassau, then to Charles Town, to the Albemarle, and finally for most of the novel to the Cape Fear.

Three plots intertwine: the merchant-pirate combat; the ef-

forts of Robert Fountaine, the Huguenot weaver, towards settlement; and the two love stories.

From sea actions with the Spanish off the Canary Islands to pirate encounters in Nassau Harbor and the Carolinas, the battles are vividly described. For her principal villains, Inglis Fletcher has a "terror" group indeed: filthy, roaring Blackbeard, with his vermin-infested beard; swashbuckling, high-born, handsome Bonnet, the Huguenot pirate; his partner, Rackham, also known as Calico Jack; cold-blooded and deadly Charles Vane, the leader; flaming, beautiful Anne Bonney, the pirate queen, decked out in the silks and satins of conquered ships; and along with them the lesser known freebooters, Worley, Fly, Moody, and Harriot. Besides pictures of early Edenton and Governor Eden's complicity with Blackbeard, the novelist tells of Teach's capture by Lieutenant Maynard at Ocracock (the old spelling) and that of Bonnet by Captain Rhett in the Cape Fear.

Running parallel with pirate adventures is the story of the second unsuccessful colonization of the Cape Fear. Deeply religious Robert Fountaine arrives on the spot where the Yeomans and Vassal attempt has failed. He has been driven from France after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. With his invalid wife and beautiful daughter, Gabrielle, he has further fled Ireland when burned out by the jealous Irish weavers. In England his skill with the loom again draws the jealousy of the weavers' guild. With a grant of 8,500 acres, he sails with his family aboard Woodes Rogers' ship the *Delicia* along with Roger Mainwaring and David Moray. Now a bondsman and gardener, handsome and quiet Moray is of gentle Scotch Highland blood, formerly a king's officer for the Stuart pretender. Fountaine settles at Old Town Creek on the Cape Fear with his group of Bristol artisans and tradesmen. There he is harried by pirates and the expected difficulties of a New World colony. A dreamer devoting his life to his wife and his weaving art, Fountaine is anxious, too, to convert the Indians who are not so gentle as he thinks. The welfare of the settlement gradually falls to Moray and Gabrielle, who, bolstered by their mutual interests, fall in love. How Gabrielle transplants the French cultural background of her youth to the

Carolina wilds, with fragile furniture, candlesticks and fine linens adding in the creation of a homelike atmosphere, makes good reading.

While adventure is present in every chapter, it is subordinate to the larger assignment of depicting the human frailties and nobilities of the settlers, and also the obstacles, human and otherwise, which they face. Mrs. Fletcher gives meticulous justice to the fine points of living, dressing, eating, thinking, talking, and behaving. She has steeped herself in the historical background, down to the minutest details. She studied old wills that listed every item of furniture and silver and plate; inventories; ship cargo manifests; old maps. The terrain was an open book to her as she wrote. But behind the adventures and research, the dominant over-all theme of the Carolina Series persists. One of her Carolinians boasts: "We live under the greatest freedom ever given to man, the fundamental constitutions devised by John Locke and the Earl of Shaftesbury."

Of *Lusty Wind for Carolina*, Jonathan Daniels wrote in the *Book-of-the-Month Club News* for October 1944:

It is not only her best book, but one of the liveliest and best informed novels recently written about this period of American settlement She has stuck close to history Her book is no costume pageant, but a dramatic story of credible human beings in a convincingly human colony.

IX. BANDON PLANTATION

Two days before Easter in 1585, Governor Ralph Lane of Sir Walter Raleigh's first unsuccessful Roanoke venture was sailing down a wide river which we know nowadays as the Chowan. He was returning from an expedition up the river (about as far as to what is today the town of Winton) to find gold and pearls. Certainly he and his party, at that time famished and worn out, were the first white men ever to see the Chowan. All this we know from Lane's account in Richard Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations, Voiages, and Discoveries of the English Nation*. Concerning

their arrival at a certain point on the downstream trip, Lane writes:

In the euening whereof, about three of the clocke wee heard certaine Sauages call as we thought, Manteo, who was also at that time with me in the boat, whereof we all being very glad, hoping of some friendly conference with them, and making him to answere them, they presently began a song, as we thought, in token of our welcome to them: but Manteo presently betooke him to his piece [gun], and tolde mee that they meant to fight with vs: which worde was not so soone spoken by him, and the light horsemen ready to put to shoare, but there lighted a vollie of their arrowes amongst them in the boat, but did no hurt (God be thanked) to any man. Immediately, the other boate lying ready with their shot to skoure the place for our hand weapons to lande vpon, which was presently done, although *the land was very high and steepe* [italics added], the Sauages forthwith quitted the shoare, and betooke themselves to flight: wee landed, and hauing faire and easily followed for a smal time after them, who had wooded themselves we know not where: the Sunne drawing then towards the setting, and being then assured that the next day if wee would pursue them, though we might happen to meete with them, yet wee should be assured to meete with none of their victuall, which we then had good cause to think of: therefore choosing for the company a conuenient ground in safetie to lodge in for the night, making a strong Corps of guard, and putting out good Centinels, I determined the next morning before the rising of the Sunne to be going backe againe, if possibly we might recouer the mouth of the riuier, into the broad sound, which at my first motion I found my whole company ready to assent vnto: for they were nowe come to their Dogges porredge [a stew made of their dogs, since they had nothing else to eat], that they had bespoken for themselves if that befell them which did, and I before did mistrust we should hardly escape. The ende was, we came the next day by night *to the Riuers mouth within foure or fve miles of the same* [italics added], hauing rowed in one day downe the current, as much as in foure dayes wee had done against the same: we lodged vpon an Iland, where we had nothing in the world to eat but pottage of Sassafras leaues, the like whereof for a meate was neuer vsed before as I thinke. The broad sound wee had to passe the next day all fresh and fasting: that day the winde blew so strongly, and the billow so great, that there was no possibilitie of passage without sinking of our boates. This was upon Easter eue, which was fasted very truely. Upon Easter day in the morning the winde comming very calme, we entred the sound . . .

Thus it was that white men first set foot on the site of what was later to be known as Bandon Plantation. Certainly it was either on the property or not far from it, where "the land was very high and steepe" and where the explorers were only a day's

rowing to "within foure or fiue miles" of the "Riuers mouth," that Governor Ralph Lane and Manteo and their companions ate "Dogges porredge" and hostile Indians hurled "a vollie of their arrowes amongst them in the boat."

It was to Bandon that the Fletchers came in 1944. It was home to the granddaughter of Carolina-born Joseph Chapman.

The move had been long contemplated. Just after the publication of *Raleigh's Eden* in 1940, the Fletchers considered buying a home in North Carolina, but no suitable one was located near Edenton, their choice for a place to live. In August 1944 while they were in California, a telegram informed them that the Bandon property was available. Immediately it was purchased by long distance. Soon they were back visiting the George Woods at Greenfield and going over every day to see about repairs. Just before Christmas, when only several rooms were ready for occupancy, they moved in and held a housewarming. Inglis and John Fletcher were home at last.

Since Bandon Plantation has become almost synonymous with Inglis Fletcher and her work, it is well, perhaps, that its history be given in some detail.

Hundreds of years before it was first seen by white men, the banks along the river at Bandon had been frequented by Indians. At Bandon Bluff, where the banks of the Chowan are twenty-five feet high, the river graduates in depth for about two miles. The sandy bottom furnishes excellent breeding ground for the mussel, a shellfish similar to the oyster. Though disdained by the white man because of its nauseating taste and yellow color, the redskins liked the mussel, came to the beds during the summers, and gathered the shellfish. Samuel A'Court Ashe in his *History of North Carolina* (I, 86-87), quoting Dr. Richard Dillard, further tells us: "One of the largest and most remarkable Indian mounds in eastern North Carolina is located at Bandon, on the Chowan, evidently the site of the ancient town of the Chowanokes, which Grenville's party visited in 1585, and was called Mavaton. The map of James Wimble, made in 1738, also locates it at about this point. The mound extends along the river bank five hundred or six hundred yards, is sixty yards wide and five feet deep, covered

with about one foot of sand and soil. It is composed almost exclusively of mussel shells taken from the river, pieces of pottery, ashes, arrow-heads and human bones." To this day, Indian relics such as tomahawks, and even portions of human skeletons, are still unearthed on the plantation property. By some the place was called Weyanoke.

The original grant of the site was to Thomas Gilbert, on March 15, 1711/12. John Coffield owned part of the property in 1717. The name of Edward Moseley, surveyor general of the colony (see *Men of Albemarle*), appears on a deed for the land dated November 11, 1719 .

In the early 1750's it was bought by Parson Daniel Earl, a historical character who was used first by James Boyd in *Drums* and whose activities at Bandon are related in *Raleigh's Eden*. Earl built a house on his 1400-acre plantation and named it "Bandon" after the town of his birth in the province of Munster in Ireland. Though this house was long ago destroyed, the outdoors kitchen and the schoolhouse built by the Parson are in good preservation at Bandon today.

In the schoolhouse Parson Earl conducted one of the first classical academies for boys in the South. Assisted by his daughter Nancy, a native of Ireland also, the Parson gave instruction in Greek, Latin, and mathematics. Among his pupils at Bandon were the children of Baron de Poelnitz, placed there at the suggestion of James Iredell. The Baron, who was Grand Chamberlain at the Court of Frederick the Great, and his wife, Lady Anne Stuart, were spending some time traveling throughout America.

Since Parson Earl had pursuits far more intriguing than his rectorship at St. Paul's in Edenton, religion was at a low ebb during his tenure. The church was in need of repairs, and the parishioners in general followed the Parson in neglecting their religious duties. On one occasion a wag wrote this sign and nailed it, Luther-fashion, to the church door:

A weather-beaten church,
A broken-down steeple,
A herring-catching parson,
And a damn set of people.

As a matter of fact, the Parson was quite a busy man, riding to the hounds, tending his flax fields, and seeing after the first herring fishery in North Carolina which he had set up at Bandon. He made a neat bit of money shipping salt dried herring to England and the West Indies. It was the Parson-Earl type of rector who drove Inglis Fletcher's ancestors away from North Carolina to Illinois. The present story concerns how the daughter of those forebears came back.

Parson Daniel Earl willed the property to his daughter Elizabeth, wife of Charles Johnson, who was cousin of Samuel Johnston of Hayes and relative of Royal Governor Gabriel Johnston. The Johnsons built Bandon house as we know it today.

The present house, one of the architectural gems of Chowan County, was completed about 1800, after almost a decade of building. In part it was the work of indentured servants. The architect is not known. At the front is a spacious stoop before the broad paneled main entrance topped by an oblong window. Built on the T-plan, the house has a wide central hall from which large rooms give on side and back. It is constructed to take full advantage of light and air, the back room downstairs and all the upstairs rooms being open on three sides. Almost every window to the west commands sweeping views of the Chowan River, seen like a silver ribbon beyond the cotton and tobacco fields. On the rear are two one-storey galleries reached from low side wings. A beautifully arched concealed stairway may be of later construction under Jeffersonian influence. Thomas Waterman in *Early Architecture of North Carolina* says the style of Bandon had its origin in the West Indies and that the detail is "designed with sure touch and great refinement." Waterman compares Bandon with Somerset, the famous Josiah Collins mansion across Albemarle Sound at Lake Phelps, calling them both "particularly pleasant houses." Bandon is the earlier of the two.

Bandon was owned by the Johnson family for three generations. In the 1850's, when there were five hundred slaves on the plantation, Charles E. Johnson, Sr., a wealthy fisherman and farmer, was the master. Johnson made the place a constant scene of luxury and hospitality. Stately in person and distinguished in



Evelyn Leary

PARSON DANIEL EARL'S SCHOOLHOUSE (ca. 1756)



Aycock Brown

BANDON PLANTATION (ca. 1800)



life, the old gentleman was never happier than when he relaxed his dignity on some festive occasion. It was during one such occasion when a steamer, with flag at half mast, docked at the Bandon wharf on the river. From it came a cortege bearing a corpse to the door of the gay party. It was the body of his son, Daniel E. Johnson, a young unmarried doctor who had been living in Hertford. At a duel in Maryland young Johnson had been shot by a Hertford lawyer who accused him of undue attention to his wife. It was one of the most notorious scandals of the time, for both men were prominent in the area. An old story says that a new grave was dug in the yard near the window at which the old father commonly sat and that he was never known to smile afterwards. It is no wonder that ghosts walk the lawn at Bandon on moonlit nights.

Some years later Bandon was sold to the Holley family, who in turn occupied it for three generations. In 1885, when William J. Holley lived there, Bandon was reached from the west by boat either from Colerain, four miles across the broad river, or from Franklin, Virginia, down the Chowan directly to Holley's Wharf.

Then it came into the Forehand family for two generations. The purchaser, John Martin Forehand, used the partly decomposed mussel shells at Bandon Bluff for fertilizer, though thousands of bushels remain. The local farmers call this fertilizer *marl*.

The house had been vacant eighteen years when bought by the Fletchers in 1944. They have not attempted to "restore" it as a museum piece or work on it as an architectural hobby, but simply to put it in good repair and make it livable. Its original carved mantels, high corniced ceilings, and arched entrances to its lower-floor rooms have nevertheless been carefully preserved, as have the "spirit doors," which were designed with overlaid crosses for protection against witches. As one enters the house, to the left is the large dining room furnished in mahogany and walnut antique pieces. To the right is the library, with easy chairs and a fireplace for conversation, books along the walls for ready reference, and looking down from its perch a goddess reminiscent of Inglis

Fletcher's African days. This carved idol, characterized by Rodney Wood as one of the rarest in existence, was worshiped by the natives of the upper Lake Nyasa country, near Kota Kota.

At the rear of the house is the large drawing room, rather formally designed along Adam lines. The nine rooms are furnished according to the British custom of combining pieces of different periods: John and Inglis Fletcher fit the place as graciously as did their eighteenth- and nineteenth-century predecessors. It is hard to believe that not long ago Bandon was in almost complete disrepair, that Forehand tenants sewed flour sacks in the Adam parlor, that chickens and pigs occupied the rear galleries. Today Bandon is the home it was in long times past.

Actually, John Fletcher has attempted in the dependency buildings some minor "restorations" which he decided would not interfere with comfortable living. The yard kitchen with its swinging crane has been repaired to show it as it was in the old days; and the smokehouse and icehouse have been renovated, the latter as a studio for Miss Anne Fletcher who comes down occasionally from her home in Richmond. And Parson Earl's Schoolhouse, dating from about 1756, with its dormitory above the classroom, has been charmingly restored.

Bandon with its dependency houses sits gracefully at the end of a two-hundred-foot grove stretching from the paved highway. In and around this grove, several thousand long-leaf pines have been planted. Along the roadways leading to the house, flowing grey beards of hanging moss drape the noble old oak trees. The house itself is framed by century-old ailanthus and crepe myrtle. Tiger lilies grow in profusion in plots not far from the house. Mocking birds and whippoorwills sing in the cypress trees along the river close by. The summers are cool; in spring and autumn the foliage is breath-taking; in winter there is always the warm fireplace in the library. No writer of historical fiction about North Carolina could wish for a more pleasant retreat, a worthier spot in which to do her work.

X. LIFE AT AND AROUND BANDON

"At Bandon we live at a slow tempo," John and Inglis Fletcher say. "We have time to know our neighbors. We have time to pause and laugh with them when we meet them on the green at Edenton, or when we shop in the morning, or when we stop at the drug store for a coke. Time to laugh at some reminiscence, always time for laughter. As a matter of fact, one of the reasons we returned to the Albemarle is the manner and amount of spontaneous laughter which abounds here. Usually, when you see two people talking here, there is some laughter, and it is more pronounced here than in other regions of the country."

At Bandon, Inglis Fletcher always stops work on Saturdays and Sundays. Visitors are welcome on those days, as also they are after four o'clock on week-day afternoons. On those occasions there is plenty of laughter and talk. When Bandon is quiet, the Fletchers find plenty of time to read. Inglis Fletcher's major relaxation is the whodunits, several of which she can consume in one evening. In more serious moments, she takes from her shelf of English classics, Jane Austen, Scott, Thackeray, and Trollope—but not Dickens. Her two top choices as the ablest American historical novelists today are Van Wyck Mason (*Rivers of Glory* and *Captain Nemesis*) and Kenneth Roberts (*Oliver Wiswell* and *Northwest Passage*). She has read all of Thomas Wolfe and considers *Of Time and the River* his best, because it interprets a man fully—and this is important, she says. Novels of social consciousness she does not care for, explaining that they attack only small segments of society. However, Inglis Fletcher's reading is naturally made up principally of history, biography, non-fiction, and such books as are necessary to learn the immediate period about which she is writing.

The writing and reading of books are put aside when visitors arrive at Bandon, and the most welcome one is Commander Stuart Fletcher, USN, a torpedo expert who comes down often from his various duty-posts. His mother says smilingly of him: "Stuart didn't pay much attention to my struggles with writing until one day during the war he saw one of my books, *Men of Albe-*

marle, in a bookstore in Sydney, Australia. Later his ship went to Rio, and there he ran into a Portuguese edition of *Lusty Wind for Carolina* and wrote me that my name on the cover gave him a thrill. Then, in Cape Town, South Africa, a brother officer brought him another to autograph—and I really think my son thinks mamma is pretty good now!”

The four Fletcher grandchildren live nearby and frequently make Bandon lively with their shouts and laughter.

Actually, the most ubiquitous person at Bandon is John Fletcher, who is always on hand. An excellent conversationalist, he likes to recall the time when he was a center on the Manual High School football team in Denver and the time when his father, the Denver pioneer realtor Donald Fletcher, made a fortune and built a tremendous mansion known in Denver even today as “Fletcher’s Folly.” John Fletcher is full of stories of the days when he was a volunteer in the Spanish-American War, of mining camps, of Standard Oil, of real-estate booms at Balboa Beach. Nowadays he considers himself his wife’s secretary, for he writes the business letters and makes the first typescript of her novels. He even brings in her coffee in the mornings. And why should he not? He explains that Inglis Fletcher lived *his* life for a long enough time. John Fletcher’s proudest affiliation is the past presidency of the Husbands of Famous Wives Club in San Francisco. When he was initiated, he was presented a small emblem. “You may think that is a violin,” he was told, “but it is not; it is a second fiddle, and if you will look closely, you will discover that the strings are mute.”

Besides greeting visitors, bathing in the soft waters of “Bandon Beach” several hundred yards away, and making continual repairs and restorations about the grounds, John Fletcher’s principal concern is the farm surrounding the house. With a 2450-foot frontage on the Chowan River, the property is made up of 63½ acres. An old Negro of the neighborhood was right when he said: “The Fletchers raise a little cotton, a little corn, a little tobacco, and a lot of books.” There are peanuts and hogs too, the latter usually ending up in the Fletcher smokehouse. “Our farm is just about the right size to be worked by one horse, one

mule, and one man," explains John Fletcher. The "one man" is Art Holley, whose name comes from the antebellum owners of Bandon. Still noticeable about the place is the two-wheel Devon cart, a survival from colonial days.

Art's wife, Bessie Holley, is the *chef de cuisine* at Bandon. Bessie represents four generations on Bandon property. The kitchen arts are second nature with Bessie, whose mother Tulli was cook of Bandon for forty years; and she likes nothing better than displaying these arts before frequent dinner guests. Since the Fletchers prefer having something from their garden on the table at each meal, Bessie will probably line up a menu like this: herring roe from the Chowan, stuffed potatoes, corn, stewed tomatoes, hot corn pone, jelly, biscuits, and coffee. It is just about the kind of menu Parson Earl would have had.

Inglis Fletcher does most of her actual writing in the second-storey "river room," three sides of which command an unobstructed view of the Chowan. She is as methodical as a business woman, goes to work at a stated time each morning, and insists on laboring at least seven hours a day. With the start of each new novel, there is a hard, pencil-chewing struggle. Some days nothing goes down on paper; others, eighteen thousand words may be written without a pause. Regardless of the result of the day's work, her husband blows a hunting horn at four o'clock each afternoon and things come to a halt.

Besides writing novels, Mrs. Fletcher has a number of interests which keep her busy. She is continually and actively engaged in various projects which she hopes will benefit her adopted state. In 1945 she donated seven cash prizes to school children who wrote the best essays on Governor Tryon or his New Bern palace—a contest sponsored by the State Garden Club. In 1948 she was presented a Cannon Award by the Society for the Preservation of Antiquities, given to those who had won distinction in restoration, preservation, or research. In 1951 she opened Bandon to the state Garden Club tour, and later entertained the Eastern North Carolina Press Association at the plantation.

Close to her heart is Paul Green's symphonic drama at Manteo,

The Lost Colony; for she is deeply interested in emphasizing the Elizabethan background of North Carolina. In 1951 *The Lost Colony* got a new face mainly through her efforts and a grant of \$2,500 from the North Carolina Society for the Preservation of Antiquities. Inglis Fletcher insisted that the log cabins, which had persisted through ten seasons as scenery for the play, were in error. Her research indicated that the log cabin came to America much later, with the Scandinavians in Delaware. Records in Hakluyt and the drawings of John White proved that the Roanoke colonists found "fabric for houses," meaning the usual materials familiar to the artisan-colonists from England. On opening night in 1951 realistic "wattle and daub" huts appeared on the set for the first time. Another project at Manteo, which is sponsored by the North Carolina Garden Club and which she hopes soon to see completed, is a formal Elizabethan garden near the Lost Colony site—a two-acre flower park similar to the ones of Sir Walter Raleigh's time. "Roanoke Island is the only place in the United States which can claim that its culture came direct from Elizabethan England," she explains.

A list of the organizations to which she belongs is a lengthy one, but there is not a name on the list in which she is not active: International P.E.N., California Writers Club, Business and Professional Woman's Club (honorary), Delta Kappa Gamma (honorary educational fraternity), Woman's Club of Edenton, Roanoke Island Historical Association, the Governor of North Carolina's Highway Safety Committee, the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association, the North Carolina State Art Society, the North Carolina Garden Club, the North Carolina Society of County Historians, the North Carolina Society for the Preservation of Antiquities, Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Colonial Dames.

In 1949 the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina conferred upon her the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature. The citation read: ". . . A writer of international recognition, a traveler of warm and intelligent perception, a creative historian and a loyal citizen of the Old North State."

The Fletchers do not, in spite of all their work at Bandon and

their interests in state activities, stay at home all the time. In 1947, Mrs. Fletcher was a delegate to International P.E.N. at Zurich; in 1949, at Venice. These trips supplement the autographing tours after the publication of each novel and the frequent travels to libraries and research centers.

Sometimes there is "play" at home. In recent years the Fletchers have been joining in the foxhunts at Nags Head. Fox-hunting on the sand banks is of ancient origin, though the sport had been discontinued until several years ago. With 120 Walker hounds the hunts now go on for four days, the riders following the hounds in jeeps and automobiles over the dunes and across the marshes and lowland myrtle thickets.

Over in Edenton the Fletchers' friends are warm and loyal, Edentonians claim Inglis Fletcher as a neighbor, but they *read* her too. There is no bookshop in the small town, but the local drug store stocks dictionaries, Bibles, and the Fletcher novels. This drug store, in a town of four and a half thousand people, sells a thousand copies of each book. One wonders if Asheville did as well with Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel*.

Life at Bandon, at Edenton, and up and down North Carolina has made the Fletchers real Tarheels indeed.

XI. "TOIL OF THE BRAVE"

Settled at Bandon, Inglis Fletcher began writing the fourth novel of the Carolina Series. While the workmen, knowing nothing of authors and intellectuals and caring less, were banging and hammering all over the house, she set to work. The noise and incessant activity, the blue paint being splashed, the chickens let loose—none of these things bothered the writer. Already her mind was back into the past. As in *Men of Albemarle* and *Lusty Wind for Carolina* she was near the scene of her action. From her window she could look out and describe the land and waters on which her characters began to move.

The idea for the new book came during a visit to Kings Moun-

tain National Park, the scene of Ferguson's defeat by the Mountain Men in 1780. There she was told that when Major Ferguson's remains were removed to a more suitable spot, it was discovered that a woman was buried by his side. No one knew why. The vibrant imagination of Inglis Fletcher started re-creating the possibilities for this peculiar fact of history. In the novel the woman turns up as Michèle Roi.

In Edenton at St. Paul's cemetery she read the inscriptions on the tombs of important Revolutionary heroes. In old records she learned about Cosmo de' Medici and the sojourn in America of that member of the famous Florentine family. Into her hands came some intriguing letters of Penelope Dawson, daughter of Governor Gabriel Johnston and inheritor of Eden House, whose running account of plantation and village life had sprightly comments on the famous people of Edenton. She read of a shipwreck on the Carolina banks; she heard tales of Revolutionary espionage and counterespionage. Once more she dug into the historical records of the Vestry of St. Paul's Church at Edenton, the Cupola House, and the Chowan County Court House.

In and through all these diverse sources, she wove a plot of her own. *There* was the novel. From the pages of *Raleigh's Eden*, Adam Rutledge, Mary and William Warden, Dr. Armitage, and Parson Earl stepped to life again.

Before 1778, detached North Carolina had not felt the war very closely. In 1779, following Washington's terrible winter at Valley Forge, the situation in the South had changed and patriotism was at a low ebb. The cause hung in the balance. The soldiers wanted to go home to plant crops. In the Whig ranks apathy, dissension, lack of money, and scarcity of provisions for the poorly equipped army resulted in disillusionment. The Colonial Army moved south, and a snappy company made its headquarters at Queen Anne's Town. Along the Chowan and Albemarle, family was divided against family. The British attempted to instigate a rebellion among the slaves, who servile in the daytime, gathered at night in the forest to observe queer rites and sit in judgment over men of their own kind who violated tribal law.

The new novel shows the struggle for food, clothes, and

money focused in personal terms by the appearance in Queen Anne's Town of two undercover agents. Captain Peter Huntley of Washington's Continental Army is there ostensibly to check on the national lottery but really to spy upon Tory activity. Jeremiah Morse (Captain Anthony Allison) is apparently a Boston cattle-buyer but actually a Briton engaged in spying. Both are in love with Spanish-dark Angela, stepdaughter of State Senator Alexander Ferrier who is a staunch supporter of the American cause. Huntley, at first sight loving Angela who is infatuated by Allison, has a double score to settle with his enemy. This personal war is not resolved till the Battle of Kings Mountain.

The action of this plot moves against a background of Queen Anne's Town and the Albemarle estates. Planters visit one another's mansions, have tea and sherry parties. There are duels on the green, moonlight walks, a plague of the pox, drunken brawls in roadside taverns, and illicit love affairs of the demoralized soldiers. The Governor has a ball in Edenton; the Assembly meets in Smithfield. Minor characters are in abundance: signers of the Declaration of Independence, British and American generals, diplomats, doctors, innkeepers, soldiers, camp followers, backwoodsmen, and lovely ladies with questionable respectability. A host of historical personages crowd the pages: Joseph Hewes, "father of the American Navy," whose shipyard is on Albemarle Sound; Samuel Johnston, who sees the cause as one of strict legality and who becomes a leader through the force of his cool conviction and logic; William Hooper, the orator of the movement, who shows his neighbors that this is not a war for the zealots of New England to which North Carolina can afford to be indifferent; Anne and Cullen Pollock, Hugh Williamson, James Iredell, and Penelope and Thomas Barker.

Resurrected from actual history is one of the most fascinating of all Inglis Fletcher's characters: Cosmo de' Medici, a captain of the dragoons whom history shows to have been in and around Edenton in 1779-1780. By allowing him to be associated with Captain Peter Huntley in recruiting men and supplies, the novelist provides a perfect counterbalance for the purposeful, serious Scot. Also treated broadly from history is Pene-

lope Dawson, whom reviewers preferred as a likable heroine instead of the capricious Angela. Penelope, whose mother is the stepdaughter of Royal Governor Eden, is the woman Huntley admires but can never marry. In war times she keeps a cool patriotic head and turns her shoulders to the wheel as realistically as the men.

When the novel was completed, Inglis Fletcher was faced with what she considers the most important part in getting out a book—its title. She wished to call it *The Freeholders of Chowan*, but her publishers objected that readers would mispronounce the beautiful Indian place name. Tentative labels were *On to Kings Mountain*, *The Dark Captain*, *Eagle Forgotten*, *Storm over Hatteras*, and *Beacon of Kings Mountain*. One day she recalled an inscription she had read on the Wright Brothers Monument at Kill Devil Hill. Some words of the Greek poet Pindar had remained engraved in her memory: "The long Toil of the Brave/Is not lost in darkness." The days leading up to the critical contest at Kings Mountain, one of the few decisive American victories of the Revolution, were indeed the Toil of the Brave.

Toward the end of the book, the reader feels that at last the people of North Carolina are no longer apathetically disjoined and adrift, but are now solidly behind the cause of Independence.

On the day copies of *Toil of the Brave* appeared, the *Elizabeth City Daily Advance* called the publication "a public event in North Carolina" and its author, now a legal resident of the state for the first time since the Carolina Series began, the newspaper's choice for the day of "First Citizen of the Albemarle." In Edenton, on that same day, the book was the talk of the town and 385 copies were sold. The local verdict was unanimously favorable.

Reviewers in the metropolitan areas were pleased too. Jennings Rice in the *New York Herald-Tribune* wrote:

Skilled at manipulating plot and counterplot, equally adroit in handling dialogue or narrative, the author has prepared for her readers another beguiling tour into "the good old days." . . . Mrs. Fletcher's powers of invention seem as fresh as ever. In short, if one may shift the metaphor, "*Toil of the Brave*" is a delectable cup compounded of romance and gallantry, shrewdly laced with derring-do.

XII. "ROANOKE HUNDRED"

Those who do not write are always willing to pass along their ideas to those who do. For years Inglis Fletcher's readers bombarded her with continued requests that she write a novel of the Lost Colony, a long narrative of the early romantic history of North Carolina. She rightly felt, however, that the Lost Colony had been so magnificently portrayed in Paul Green's drama that any creative re-treatment was completely unnecessary. Her interest in North Carolina's Elizabethan background persisted, nevertheless, and it is perhaps inevitable that one day she should write of the Roanoke settlements. She felt that Plymouth Rock, antedated at Roanoke by thirty-five years, had been given far too much attention by both the historian and the novelist.

In 1585, two years before the fatal Lost Colony group, Roanoke Island had seen a first attempt at colonization. In Paul Green's play the exploits of the Grenville-Lane expedition are touched on rather lightly. Only one scene is shown, that in which the colonists surprise a band of sleeping Indians and murder Wingina, king of the tribe. This earlier settlement served as impetus from which Mrs. Fletcher's next novel sprang. "*Roanoke Hundred* deals," she said, "with the first English colony in America, which was brought to Virginia by Sir Richard Grenville, for his cousin Sir Walter Raleigh. It covers the period of planning, organization, and the voyage of 1585 under Governor Ralph Lane, the year's struggle to establish a colony on Roanoke and their return home with Sir Francis Drake."

In this book only three or four fictional characters were created. The others were there for her to use almost without imaginative treatment. In 1947, research on the historical figures carried her to England, where she began tracing the 108 men who came over with Grenville. For once, her title was chosen before she began writing. A "hundred" is a subdivision of a county having its own court. Sir Richard planned to take with him one man from every hundred in Devon and Cornwall. Though his plan was not feasible, most of the hundreds were represented in the 108 colonists.

Inglis Fletcher found that the trip to England was necessary, since the records of the early Virginia colonies were there. In North Carolina and Virginia there is a dearth of documentary material on the period. But after three months, eight hours a day, in the British Museum in London, she had traced a good number of the men; and by the time she had scoured the libraries in Devon and Cornwall, the lives of about three-fourths of the 108 were in her notebooks. The others were either servants or London friends of Lane's. Thus it happens that most of the pages in the novel are authenticated by contemporary documents. Of searching for her English historical characters, Inglis Fletcher says:

I visited the places where they had lived: I saw Raleigh's Hayes Barton and Grenville's home at Stowe, and when I had looked upon England's great seaports and had seen how her seafaring traditions are being carried out, I knew that those things will endure forever.

The 1580's represent the highest point of Elizabethan adventure. "Just think," says the novelist, "the five greatest sea captains of Elizabethan times—Drake, Grenville, Sir John Hawkins, Carlile, and Cavendish—were all right there at Roanoke at one time or another."

Always tugging at the British heart of those days was the desire to sail the unknown, the uncharted seas to the west, in Raleigh's words "to seeke new worlds, for golde, for prayse, for glory." When his rival Sir Francis Drake circumnavigated the globe, Grenville wished to counter Drake's fame by founding the first English colony in America. The dream was Raleigh's, but it was Grenville who breathed life into the dream.

Half the action takes place in England during preparations for the trip: organizing the expedition, selecting the men, fitting the ships. Queen Elizabeth, Raleigh, Sir Philip Sidney, Richard Hakluyt, Thomas Hariot, John White, and other important historical characters are seen briefly. The various personalities are introduced through the eyes of the herdsman Colin who, though his parentage is unknown, looks suspiciously like a Grenville. Mary, Grenville's wife, and his sophisticated foster-sister Philippa, whom he loves, move through lavish scenes on Gren-

ville's Cornwall estate. To his manor house, Stowe Barton, the nobleman brings sprightly, beautiful Thomasine Arundell, for training in the amenities of social life. On a feudal feast day come Raleigh, Sidney, Amadas, Lane, Hakluyt, and a group of young squires to discuss the Roanoke plan and to exude the spirit of Elizabethan discovery. The young squires are captivated by Thomasine, the witch-girl from Tintagel on the legend-haunted coast of Cornwall, and consider her fair game. When she thinks Colin, who really loves her, has taken liberties with her person, she has him branded by Grenville. The plot of the novel traces the development of Colin from a simple shepherd, through a transition into independence and resourcefulness on Roanoke, to his finally being acknowledged as a Grenville with his right to the girl of his choice. Colin's conversation is symbolic of the effect upon personality provided by New World experiences on those who might not otherwise have dared hope for ascendancy.

Soon the voyage is underway, and the scene shifts from England to the Canary Islands, to the West Indies (where Grenville captures Spanish ships in true pirate fashion), then to Roanoke. Through the young squires, Dick Prideaux and Black John Arundell, the reader feels the excitement of the new adventure and the arch importance of historic undertaking. Colin is along as Grenville's right-hand man.

But seeds of dissension are present. Grenville's ambitions are opposed by those of Ralph Lane, appointed by Elizabeth as governor. The hardy Cornish and Devon men suspect the Londoners, who are disdainful of the vigorous country folk. The desire of Lane for quick wealth instead of the establishment of a permanent settlement based on industry and agriculture will surely result in famine and failure.

After Grenville's departure for England, few besides Colin observe the Admiral's colonization policies. During the long winter, Lane makes enemies of the Indians whom Grenville had placated and, after Lane takes as his prisoner the son of a chieftain for the theft of a mere table piece, the savages no longer provide the settlers with food. Explorations for gold and pearls are disappointing. Hungry, undisciplined, and discouraged, the men

are picked up by Drake's ships the following summer a few weeks before the arrival of Grenville with supplies.

The towering figure throughout the novel is Sir Richard Grenville. In Elizabeth's time England had known thirteen generations of Grenvilles. They formed a part of the great Norman culture; they built well, prayed well, and fought well. Inglis Fletcher makes her hero splendidly human. Though he could brand Colin's hand for an assumed affront to a lady, Grenville could love the boy, test him, approve him, and bequeath him property as a remembrance of his esteem. Tall, handsome, proud, questing, adventurous, Grenville emerges in the novel as the very spirit of Elizabethan discovery. While it is unfortunate that, with all his executive ability, it was not he instead of Lane who was left in charge of the colony, history saved him for her mightiest sea battle of one ship against overwhelming odds. The climax of *Roanoke Hundred* relates how Grenville, to repair his dignity for the personal hurt suffered in the failure of the colony, sends his *Revenge* against fifty-three "mountainous galleons" of Spain to cover the retreat of cowardly Howard. Before the *Revenge* with Grenville aboard goes down, half the enemy fleet in all the world is destroyed.

Upon publication, the success of *Roanoke Hundred* was immediate. Randolph G. Adams, director of the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan, wrote the author: "*Roanoke Hundred* ought to be required reading in every high school in North Carolina. I only wish I had a dictatorial power in such a matter. It ought also to be required reading in every New England high school, but I fear the over-advertised Puritans have a head start." The *Lexington* (Kentucky) *Leader* commented: "... here is a historical novel that can be put alongside the best of them—and alongside the most enjoyable and well-written books in modern American literature."

Inglis Fletcher considers *Roanoke Hundred* her most important book historically. "This first colony has been peculiarly neglected by historians," she says. How she translated the seemingly dull pages of history into exciting narrative romance is well illustrated by comparing her account of Lane's incident with the Indians on

his river exploration (*Roanoke Hundred*, pages 393-395) against the original document from Hakluyt's *Voyages* (see page 47 of this study, where it is reprinted).

XIII. "BENNETT'S WELCOME"

Inglis Fletcher's sixth novel of the Carolina Series concerns one of the dimmest periods in the state's history—the first permanent settlements along the rivers and sounds by those who came down gradually from the James River country. Records of this period are practically non-existent. *Bennett's Welcome* was, however, a natural successor to *Roanoke Hundred*, which had dealt with the first settlement which was *not* permanent. In choosing the Cromwellian times in England and the struggle as reflected in America, Mrs. Fletcher hit upon a period totally neglected by the novelists, and historians agreed that her service in re-creating that age was considerable.

She started her research in Williamsburg at the libraries of William and Mary College and the Williamsburg Restoration. In Washington she spent weeks in the Library of Congress. Actually, there was little material in either place. She returned to the British Museum, where she was always getting lost among the millions of books. "But that's the way I got my best material, when not looking for it," she said.

After a year she had finally accumulated her notes for the background but still had no story; for once ideas did not come easily. This time it really seemed that she would have to give up her plans and start over again. After a weary stretch in London, discouraged and tired, she determined on a short visit with some friends, the Rudolph Sauters at their estate Coddington Manor in Herefordshire.

One morning her hostess announced that the gardener wished to see her. Mrs. Fletcher encountered a dignified old man among the flower beds.

"If the American lady wants to write about Cromwell," he said, "she's come to the right place. 'Twas here he tore down the

cross and told the country folk to worship God, not images. 'Twas at Ledbury, three miles away, that he fought Prince Rupert, and 'twas a step beyond at Worcester that old Noll put the young King Charles on the run. Yes, ma'am, she's come to the right place." Thus, unwittingly, she had rushed directly into Cromwell's footsteps. Immediately she and her hosts began to tour the countryside, inspecting the battlefields and listening to the local traditions. One legend was that Cromwell stayed at Coddington Manor shortly before the contest at Worcester. Since she had already decided to make her hero a resident of Coddington and a Royalist follower of Charles, a plot-seed suddenly began to grow and soon the whole story was before her.

At Coddington, Mrs. Fletcher's host provided the names for her characters. Mr. Sauter showed the author a deed of transfer, dated in the twenty-sixth year of the reign of Henry VIII. On it were the signatures of a dozen people: Richard Monington, lord of the manor (indeed a name for a hero), Sibyl, Kathryn, Nicholas. She could see them bending over the table to affix their signatures and seals to an age-old parchment. The names took on characters. They were real folk rising out of the past.

Excitedly, Inglis Fletcher sat down and began writing the opening sentences of her first chapter. *The August sun shone golden through the tall Lombardy poplars that circled Coddington Manor. It was near sundown and the wild marsh-hens fed in the meadows . . .* Back home at Bandon Plantation, many months later, the novel was completed.

The year is 1651. Richard Monington, Royalist supporter of unseated young Charles II, is in love with Kathryn Audley, who has now turned her attention to Nicholas Holder, a follower of Cromwell. With Sibyl's help Richard narrowly escapes capture by Cromwell and his generals, who put up at Coddington Manor overnight. Charles II, trying to secure the throne left vacant when his father was beheaded, is marching down from Scotland in an attempt to reach London. Cromwell's efforts to halt him reach a climax in the Battle of Worcester. Mrs. Fletcher's narrative gift is at its best in the battle scenes at Worcester, the defeat of the Royalists, and the subsequent flight of Charles with Richard by his side. Though Charles escapes, Richard is apprehended,

thrown into prison, and put aboard a ship to Virginia, where he has been sold into bondage as an indentured servant to Stephen Bennett, cousin of the new Puritan governor.

In the New World the conflict of the Roundheads and the Cavaliers continues. Richard Bennett has taken over the governorship from the Royalist Sir William Berkeley, who is still supported by the rich Virginia families who resent Puritan rule. Jungle witchcraft, a devastating fire, a duel, and a formal ball are among the incidents which heighten the action. In Virginia, Monington had expected a free world and a land of opportunity; but working in the tobacco fields at "Bennett's Welcome" under a sadistic overseer, experiencing continued oppression, and living in a cabin with slaves and indentured servants, he observes life from a different point of view. His months of bondage prompt this proud Royalist to "thinking in terms of lowly folk." After a year, he moves with others who have been persecuted, south to the rich lands along the Chowan, when that area of North Carolina was still a part of Virginia. Through their common opposition to oppression, Royalist and yeoman escape persecution and, working together, open up a new land. The Cromwellian wars in England have sent high-born gentlemen into Virginia, and Cromwellian truculence in Virginia has pushed these Royalists into being the first fixed settlers in North Carolina.

There are many North Carolina names among the minor characters. George Durant, whose land grant in 1662 is the oldest on record in the state, is here, as are Thomas Blount, Nathaniel Batts, John Harvey and Henderson Walker, the last two destined to be governors of the new colony. This is North Carolina's earliest permanent history—a history of which there are almost no contemporary documents.

In her Introduction, Mrs. Fletcher writes: "I have endeavored to show, through the names of the first colonists of Virginia and Carolina, the close alliance with the Roanoke venture of 1585." The men of Devon came to Roanoke, their children's children to the Albemarle. At one point Philip Blount says: "Some day I'll tell you about my grandfather, for whom I am named, and how he came out in Sir Richard Grenville's ship on a great ad-

venture." This is North Carolina's *continuing* history. If the Devon and Cornwall folk were lost or went back to England, eventually their sons returned and set up the new country where their forefathers had temporarily failed. The land had finally been conquered.

One reviewer found a likeness between 1651-1652 and 1950:

There is an analogy in the story, presented unconsciously perhaps by Mrs. Fletcher, in important events of today, but with a reverse English, and no pun intended. Out of the furnace of conflicting opinion in the days of Cromwell came an ideal of liberty. Today in America, the Royalists, represented in the middle classes, are fighting a bitter battle to maintain freedom against the Roundheads, represented by Fabian Socialists and Communists, who would return men to slavery.

Many critics thought *Bennett's Welcome* Inglis Fletcher's best book, that she managed to make each novel a little better than the last one. At any rate, it jumped immediately to the best-seller lists, and was widely read and discussed.

XIV. RESEARCH AND FICTION

The historian deals with events, and the novelist deals with the people who make the events It is much harder to make truth sound like fiction than it is to make fiction sound like truth.

Perhaps these words of Inglis Fletcher tell the whole story of her work and her success. The expert combination of history, character, and plot through novel after novel has won her the large group of admiring readers she now has. Many readers have mistakenly assumed her books were straight history, though Mrs. Fletcher has been careful to warn constantly that the volumes are simply fiction based on historical research. Some critics feel her accurate, careful research is the key to her mastery of the *métier*; and from time to time in this study, brief comments have been made on the research activities for the various novels. Perhaps it is well now to summarize the research methods which stand behind the books, as well as her experiences in the use of material.

In the first place, the historical details must be exact. The historical situation must promote the actions of both the legitimate characters and those who are figments of the novelist's imagination, and not serve simply as a background for sex adventures of the heroes and heroines. There must be a complete blending of background and character.

There are two ways to approach a historical novel [Mrs. Fletcher writes]. Some writers have a plot in their hands, complete with costumes; and they fit the plot into an appropriate period. My method is to read deep into history, and suddenly a person cries out to be written about.

Before any plot can be formulated, all the research must be completed. Generally the story will spring from the research itself, from mingling thoroughly with the people of an age. The best way to get the precise feel of the period is to go back directly to the old papers themselves. Mrs. Fletcher seldom depends on modern historians. She insists on meticulous reading of epitaphs, land grants, deeds, wills, and, for her own work, that storehouse of information *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*. Every costume, every piece of furniture, every event too, is checked against the unedited original documents. From these come the intimate details of daily living: the food, the houses, the ships, the implements of daily work, the modes of transportation. From maps she gets the names of long-forgotten settlements; and to retain the spirit of authenticity, she frequently keeps the old spellings. William Byrd's *Diary*, when possible, is her weather expert. "Whenever he noted that the day was rainy, sunny, or overcast on a certain date," she says, "I made it the same sort of day in my book. Byrd didn't live so far from the scenes of my stories, and so I reasoned that the weather in one place would be just about the same as in the other."

Often purely historical personages speak the actual words of dusty letters, diaries, and orations. Other characters sometimes have fictitious names, sometimes do fictitious things, but all of them are based on records. Mrs. Fletcher finds she must be strangely careful, particularly in using characters of the Albemarle country; for in that area everybody knows everything about everyone, including his ancestors. She must not take liberties

with even a tombstone dweller. In one case, she found herself on the verge of a libel suit from a whole "passel" of descendants of a hero and heroine. In and around Edenton there must be no non-historical marriages or ex-marital adventures even by a creature bearing a real name but almost wholly acting out of Mrs. Fletcher's imagination.

Since *Raleigh's Eden* Inglis Fletcher has been little bothered with accusations that her novels contain too many romantic characters and beautiful scenes, that her stories are too glamorous. Her serious readers have found out that the things which happen in the novels may seem unlikely, but that they have a basis in fact and could and probably *did* happen. Many who in the last decade have grown fond of reading North Carolina history started doing so by "checking up" on Mrs. Fletcher. That is a good thing.

Perhaps one doesn't learn enough true history from historical novels [she writes], but the novel should challenge the reader to look into history for himself and see where the novelist's material came from. This holds especially true for North Carolina. If my stories of Carolina cavaliers encourage North Carolinians or outsiders to read our state's history or become interested in its progress, then my work will have accomplished its highest purpose.

As a matter of fact, with a novel due from the publishers every second autumn, Inglis Fletcher admits that the year spent in research is far more intriguing than the year of laborious writing. Besides, research is a rather excellent excuse to go traveling. We already know of her frequent visits outside North Carolina to libraries in California, Washington, and England. She likes, also, to hear what the experts have to say and will seek them out. In 1951 she attended the history classes of Dr. Hugh Lefler at Chapel Hill when he was lecturing on the period of North Carolina history between the end of the Revolution and the ratification of the Constitution—an era in which she was then interested. At the end of her weeks of attendance, she talked to Dr. Lefler's class on "The Novelist's Approach to History," a subject in which the students had become curious during her stay.

Inglis Fletcher's advice to would-be historical novelists is to select a period and region about which little or nothing has

been written. When she was in California, her deliberate geographical choice was eastern North Carolina, so rich in history but so neglected by the writing fraternity. She was surprised that so few had written novels about North Carolina's colorful colonial days, which remained practically untouched. "It's always better to be the *first* to write about a place and its history. An author always has a harder time following somebody else on the scene. Suppose, for instance," she says apprehensively, "I had tried to follow Kenneth Roberts in New England."

Another bit of advice to would-be historical novelists is to suspend their inevitable discouragement. Research is pleasant, but the first chapter is torture. Any novel goes slowly at first; then, suddenly one day, the writer begins to "see" the characters—they start acting, they commence to talk, they begin to live. Inglis Fletcher does not know in advance how her story will end, except that the conclusion must not deviate from historical fact. When the characters become alive, they work out their own destiny. If they are real, she has no trouble. On the other hand, she occasionally finds she must curb a character, like Dr. Armitage in *Raleigh's Eden*, who though only a minor character tried to run away with the story whenever he was allowed to appear. The novelist had to hold him in the background so that he would not overshadow the heroes and heroines.

Then, if characters do not live, Inglis Fletcher must get rid of them. Some of them just "flop down in a chair and won't do or say anything. They're no good. Sometimes I kill them if it's not too early in the story," she says. We recall the tutor in *Men of Al-bemarle* who got drunk and did other things unbecoming a teacher. Since the story was still young, she sent him off to Virginia and out of the picture.

The important bit of advice is to keep on writing *regularly* whether things are going well or badly, never deviating from a schedule. Inglis Fletcher, unlike most advice-givers, follows her own admonition. "Many of you can type and think at the same time," she told one group. "I can't. I use a pencil and belong to the end-chewing class." Once underway, she keeps at her pencil and paper from nine to four.

When a novel is completed and published, the careful reader will recall that the love story, simply a thread running through the tapestry of the times, is always subordinate to the historical elements. History is a passion with Inglis Fletcher, and she believes in the ultimate worth of its lesson. Hear this conversation from *Bennett's Welcome*:

"It comforts an old man to talk of the past."

"And it helps young men to listen."

XV. THE CAROLINA SERIES

Into the novels of the Carolina Series have gone all the real and all the imaginary experiences of a woman serious in purpose and constantly soaring in intent. The creative instinct has developed, novel by novel, from the time in Edwardsville when she wrote childish stories of English country life. Whether one wants to be a sculptor or a painter or a composer or a writer, this creative instinct is perhaps the same. Inglis Fletcher gave up sculpture upon leaving St. Louis, because continually traveling with her husband, she could not take with her the little hunks of clay. The mining-camp days gave her a man's point of view and a man's sense of responsibility. No wonder, with her unusual first name, readers think she is a man. And then from those days in Africa, when she hoped to write a book on witchcraft and never did, Inglis Fletcher took the information on primitive superstitions and later used them in her books. Not a single one of her novels is without some incident of jungle magic.

No experience, for the creative writer, is ever lost. From that unpublished novel about Alaska, a devotion to and a love for the land emerged. Years later this theme became the unifying element in the Carolina Series, with its constant emphasis on the land, on the loving care given it by those who master it, protect it, fight for it, and pass it on. The land and man's freedom, which is symbolized by an ownership of it, provide the key to the strength implicit in the American heritage. It was a land-loving people who

built up the democracy. They pushed that democracy, along with the land, to the Pacific West.

We know that it was Inglis Fletcher's intent to move westward with these pioneers, to follow them until they reached California during the gold rush, to write a series of novels of the transcontinental cavalcade. She never did. Though people move away, the problems of the land remain. From her research arose an interest in how the land was first conquered. Her characters, as her imaginative experiences moved backward, stayed with the land in North Carolina. Perhaps the characters who lived and breathed for her were those who did not leave the Albemarle, simply because they found that North Carolina came closest to their ideas of a democracy. They did not need to push on.

Most North Carolinians have long accepted the theory that their state was settled by those who were considerably less than noble born. They have been willing to accede to Virginia and South Carolina all claims to aristocracy, while believing their own ancestors as only too humble folk whose descendants rose above their beginnings to establish a commonwealth as great as or greater than those provinces of their royal neighbors. Mrs. Fletcher believes such an opinion is little more than false silly pride, and the Carolina Series is her answer to the shabbiness of a three-hundred-year-old error. In her novels she has presented historical evidence of her faith. North Carolina settlers were not *common* men. "They were most *uncommon* men," she says; "and here in North Carolina the kind of democracy they sought to achieve has somehow worked out better than anywhere else in the world." The Carolina Series shows the struggle, stretching across two hundred years, of these uncommon men, the gentle born as well as the artisan and small farmer, to found together and then to transform the wilderness of North Carolina into a mighty state.

The Carolina Series is not only the most brilliant portrayal of the Old North State in historical fiction; it is one of the broadest conceptions in the field of American literature. James Fenimore Cooper holds the five Leatherstocking Tales together by lacing them all with the dominant character of Natty Bumppo. William Gilmore Simms of South Carolina limits himself in his more

notable efforts to the history of his native state and the part played in it by her heroes. Mrs. Fletcher's theme is broader.

As of now—and the Series is not yet finished—the novels tell of the founding of a democratic state. They stand in the following chronological order (though not, of course, in the order in which they were written): *Roanoke Hundred*, 1585-1586, the first failure to colonize; *Bennett's Welcome*, 1651-1652, the first permanent settlements; *Men of Albemarle*, 1710-1712, the evolution of law and order; *Lusty Wind for Carolina*, 1718-1725, a dramatization of trade; *Raleigh's Eden*, 1765-1782, the causes of the Revolution; and *Toil of the Brave*, 1778-1780, the critical contest of the Revolution.

"Young people should know their history as a vital background to the events that are happening today," says Inglis Fletcher. "Our history should be taught, not by events, but through the people who make them. That is the function of the historical novelist."

The success of the Carolina Series is attested by the fact that in 1951 the books had sold almost a million and a quarter copies in America, that they have been published in England and throughout the British Empire, and that one or more of them have appeared in translation in eight other foreign countries in seven languages. The Scandinavians, particularly, have admired Inglis Fletcher's novels; they are interested in the beginnings of the American republic but prefer to read of its growth in restricted areas, believing in that way to get the idea as a whole.

Inglis Fletcher's success is in no small way due to the enthusiasm of her scholarly editor, D. L. Chambers of Bobbs-Merrill. Though always cautious never to be dictatorial in the writing and preparation of her books for publication, he is nevertheless demonstrative in his admiration. Mr. Chambers comments:

In an essay emphasizing his feeling that the literary element is important to historical writing Allan Nevins wrote, "Call it a department of literature or knowledge as you will—it is both—the work of historians will be most read when men are roused to a sense of their own dignity; when great events wake them to their most serious and responsible temper." The statement offers a key both to the popularity and worth of Inglis Fletcher's Carolina Series.

Her work began in an exigent present and she has written of an exigent

past. From the first she was aware of the inescapable relation between two critical periods of American history and this awareness has informed all her writing. In the decade when Americans renewed in global war the long defense of their liberty she has devoted her skill as a novelist to chronicling a significant part of the American adventure for freedom in the New World. She has given and continues to give hundreds of thousands of readers a vital sense of continuity with an inspiring past.

American reviewers have, for the most part, agreed with Mr. Chambers. The *Columbus* (Ohio) *Citizen* called her the "best woman historical writer today." George Minot in the *Boston Herald* of October 24, 1948, wrote:

A great many of you don't need to be told that Inglis Fletcher is the finest historical novelist now in the business when it comes to writing about the early settling of our shores. There is no argument about that among those who have read her magnificent Carolina Series.

In North Carolina her readers agree with these judgments. Tarheels are given to writing letters. Each morning the postman brings to Bandon a batch of letters, a few critical but for the most part praiseworthy. Mrs. Fletcher answers them all. A large number are from citizens of her own state. The letters seem to be principally from men—particularly lawyers who apparently read only historical fiction. Inglis Fletcher's favorite "fan letter" is one from a man who lives in Aulander, not far from Bandon across the Chowan River in Bertie County. He wrote:

Now, I am not an autograph hunter; I have no insurance, books, real estate or any other commodity to sell. I am not laying the ground work for getting you to do anything. I expect no reply whatever. I only want to tell you that I am glad you are a citizen of our part of the state and that I hope you will find it congenial and pleasant here. You have brought the remote or forgotten into full view which is very delightful in many ways.

I would add a sprig of Latin just here to give my note a little dignity, but it so happens that I do not know any Latin. But even so, I can hope you all the satisfaction that comes from work well done.

She answered it.

An appreciative Greensboro journalist wrote in his newspaper:

Mrs. Fletcher may be called a triple-tested Tar Heel—by descent, by her work and by her residence. Her books do the state a service by recalling from the past the courageous, adventurous and pertinacious men and women who laid

the foundations for our society. A state which was conceived in the days of Elizabeth, Raleigh and Shakespeare needs to hark back to its past occasionally lest it be too timorous or unimaginative in planning its future.

Inglis Fletcher's work in the Carolina Series is not yet, fortunately, concluded. The seventh novel will top the others chronologically, for it will tell the struggle of the years 1782-1789 in North Carolina, principally in the Albemarle, between the federalists, led by James Iredell, and the anti-federalists, led by Willie Jones of Halifax. Most of the research was carried out in North Carolina and particularly in Edenton, the center of the federalists.

The dusty history will live again. It is fortunate that North Carolina has for her historical chronicler a writer of wide experience, great integrity, unflagging energy, and high purpose and devotion.

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Length: 95,000 words.

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Published in England, 1943.

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Length: 239,000 words.

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Length: 183,522 words.

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NOTE: All six of the Carolina Series will appear in paper-bound Permabook for sale at newsstands. The Series will also be published in uniform hardbounds by Doubleday. Several of the novels have appeared in condensed form in *Omnibook*. Contract for Finnish translations was never carried into effect.

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