

Western Kentucky University

TopSCHOLAR®

Faculty/Staff Personal Papers

WKU Archives Records

1966

UA37/44 Tidbits of Kentucky Folklore

Gordon Wilson

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/fac_staff_papers



Part of the [Folklore Commons](#), [Journalism Studies Commons](#), [Linguistic Anthropology Commons](#), and the [Mass Communication Commons](#)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty/Staff Personal Papers by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

TIDBITS OF KENTUCKY FOLKLORE

by

Gordon Wilson

Vol. XII

Nos. 1601 - 1697

Missing #1603, 1616

TIC

BECOMING CONSCIOUS OF WHO WE ARE

If I were asked what phase of our cultural life has changed most in my long life, I suspect that I would place first our consciousness of who we are. This applies not merely to the historians, sociologists, antiquarians, and such learned people, but also to plain Tom, Dick, and Harry.

We passed from log houses to better types so fast, in many areas, that the younger generations felt a sort of shame for the older conditions. Politicians may have capitalized on log-cabin candidates, but most of the voters who followed such a local or national hero made no great effort to go back to log houses or other primitive conditions. As fast as money accumulated, newer and more modern houses appeared; and think how many former dwellings spent their last years--often many of them--as storehouses for farm machinery and hay. Not too many years ago I could drive on country roads within ten miles of Bowling Green and pass several such log houses of other days. When I left Fidelity, in 1906, there were ~~still~~ many log houses still used for family living. Among dozens of others, my two brothers who lived in that section occupied their log houses until some years later. So far as I know, only a very few such houses now remain, and they are so covered over with weatherboarding that only old-timers know that they are log houses.

Furniture had to change to keep up with the newer kinds of houses. Only an occasional person thought enough of the old stuff to store it in some relatively dry and safe place. Some of the families actually cut up almost priceless furniture (as of now) and used it for kindling wood. A good many people felt that the old stuff was too much like the old log cabin and were glad to get rid of it in any way.

It was a rare person who saved a representative number of old dishes or pieces of glassware or outdated clothing, no matter how valuable they all might have been. Not yet had there grown up any widespread

appreciation for antiques, as we call them now. I have visited in some homes where the furniture, now worth a fortune, had been kept for sentimental reasons; but I was often embarrassed by the apologies given for the "tacky old stuff." Successive coats of paint or varnish had usually covered up the wood; years later, with plenty of paint-remover and patience, some of these ashamed-of antiques became the most prized objects of these same homes.

A sense of history was a long time developing. Only one person in a dozen, say, had any clear idea of where his people had come from and when. Any time farther away than Grandpap's boyhood seemed very long ago and got badly scrambled with events reaching back into the earliest colonial times. This seems strange to me now, for I knew ^{several} ~~lots of~~ people who had seen and talked to Revolutionary War soldiers. One of these oldsters lived so far down into my own lifetime that I was big enough to write a brief account of his long and interesting life for our county newspaper. Fortunately, in every neighborhood a few people were "well-read," as it was then called, so that it was possible to get, if any one wanted to put himself to that trouble, a fairly clear-cut view of history. I am afraid that many of the Fidelity citizens never knew enough history to have passed the most elemental courses offered in the country schools, and this knowledge would include all the traditional knowledge as well as what was to be found in books. Side by side existed a very exaggerated idea of the importance of one's family history and an utter ignorance of actual times and dates. Be it said frankly, most of the people I knew were just a little ashamed of themselves, whether they dared admit it, and did not care too much about digging into history.

One of the most marked differences between now and yesterday is the interstate highway and similar modern roads. As an old-timer who has watched a long~~pro~~cession of events in many spheres, I cannot help comparing the stretches of interstate highways in Kentucky that are now finished and open to travel and the roads that I knew as a child and for long afterwards.

My mother's father and mother came as small children all the way from central North Carolina to what is now Calloway County. Traveling in ox wagons, a whole group of relatives and neighbors, they spent six long weeks on the way. Though not especially a very religious group, they refused to travel on Sunday. They arose early Monday morning, did necessary washing of clothes, and tried to get in a short trip that afternoon. My grandmother-to-be rode a horse ~~alone~~ the entire journey and lived to a very ripe old age in spite of the handicaps of pioneer life. The one thing I recall most vividly about Mother's retelling the story as she had heard it was about how the emigrants managed to get over the mountains: on particularly steep roads they cut down a tree and hitched it, limbs and all, to the back of the wagon, to act as a brake. When I first drove over the Great Smokies, on a modern highway, I could not help recalling this primitive journey made so long ago, as I heard it as a child.

There were two seasons for roads, so-called roads, around Fidelity: mud and dust. Somehow I do not recall any intermediate seasons. One of my earliest memories is of observing the dust that had settled on the eyebrows of my sister as I went with her in the old family buggy to the funeral of our great uncle one dusty late-spring~~ing~~ day (He had died the preceding fall, but the custom still prevailed of having a funeral long after the burial). The dusty season covered some of the very late spring, all the summer, and a slice of fall; the rest was mud. Travel lived up to the old meaning of the word--"Suffering."

Murray, the county seat of my home county, was a bare eleven miles away, but we got up early, like the woman in the Proverbs, and set out, often before the sun was up, on our way to town. By rather diligent keeping the horses going along, we usually arrived at the railroad three hours after we had left home. The horses still had a lot of energy left, in spite of the long journey, and they pranced and snorted when a train came by. With some three hours to attend to "trading," we started back over what used to ~~be~~^{be} a "fur piece" about the middle of the afternoon and were pretty badly worn out by the time we came in sight of the lights in our house. Rather strangely, long after I have been an old man, I have walked as far as this round trip and felt equal to a full day's work the next day; I sometimes think it took more energy to ride in the lurching buggy or wagon than to hoof it along the road.

Going to Brownsville, at the edge of the Mammoth Cave National Park, only some twenty-two miles from my front door, used to take some ingenious planning, before the days of cars. I would go by train to Rocky Hill, hire someone to take me out in a buggy or wagon, and have to spend the night in the town because no trains were available to get me back that night. And it took some endurance for years after cars came in, too, for that stretch of road, from the train to the county seat, had some of the stickiest mud I have ever known; an extra boy often went along with us to help us out of the mudholes; a heavy pair of gum boots nearly always rode with us.

For some years now it has been a smooth ride to Brownsville and many another place where I have gone. In a half hour, and I am no speed fiend, I cover the distance it used to take several hours to make. And now a very modern highway, a part of Interstate 65, is finished within a few miles of my front door, and it is easy to go over the hills and far away at what used to seem the speed of light. Maybe I am inclining toward old age, but I somehow miss some of the more leisurely travel, maybe not the mud-dust type but some halfway point between the earlier trails and the super-highway.

T + C

Down Fidelity way, and, as I found out a long time later, around Mammoth Cave, people knew practically nothing about a blue moon as a measure of some long but indefinite time. Most people who read had seen the term, but they did not use it. So far as I can find out, blue moons were far more numerous to the north of us. In our latitude a coon's age is widespread, a sort of standard measurement. If you don't understand it, so what? Who understands a blue moon?

The longer I study folklore, the more I enjoy these efforts to indicate time or space or distance or age. If a ~~genuine~~ representative of the folk should suddenly come up with exact dates and measurements, I would doubt his genuineness, no matter how many character witnesses he might produce.

How fur is a 'fur piece? How can you adjust a 'little piece' with any of the tables of weights and measures in the arithmetic? And just where does a 'little piece' start becoming a 'right smart piece'? When does a boy become a 'pretty good-sized boy'? Just how tall does he have to be? How much does he weigh? How old is he? What sort of shoes does he wear?

On several occasions, back at Fidelity and long since, I have made some long journeys that were supposed to be a 'little ways.' About 1905 my sister and I started out one Saturday morning to drive to Puryear, Tennessee, to spend the weekend with a cousin of ours. There were plenty of roads, in fact, too many of them. We had been told before we started that the distance was fifteen miles, a pretty good journey for Old Mag, our family nag, to take us. We must have gone eight of the miles before we found ourselves lost; there were just too many roads, and turning to the right or left did not get us there, or even partly there, as we thought. We stopped at a house and asked directions and got lots of them and also discovered that we were still ten or twelve miles from our goal. Four or five miles later, again bewildered, we asked again

and found out that we still had ten miles to go. Fortunately, our last direction-finder knew his directions and his distances, and we finally came in sight of our cousin's house. Since we had no speedometers in those days, I will never know how many miles we added to the original fifteen. We somehow cut off a lot of miles on the way home, sometimes by flying blind and trusting to luck.

In 1913, when my new wife and I were going to visit her grandfather on our way to Bowling Green, we got off the train and were met by a hired hand with a buggy and a fast-stepping horse attached to it. He had led as he came to the train his own horse to ride back and direct us. It was pitch-dark as we alighted from the train and began our journey into the dark. My new father-in-law had told me the distance was some three miles, but he did not know that some of the road had been rerouted since his earlier days and that some of it was temporarily shut off for repairs. And so we journeyed through the darkness, with a shadowy form on horseback in front, now along fairly open country, and then through woods so deep that we had to trust the horse to bring us out. I always will believe that the crooked road wound some seven or eight miles before we finally found the ancestral house. Maybe by daylight it would have seemed much shorter, but a "fur piece" can become even "furrer" when there is no light.

Not too many years ago I started with a carload^{of people} to the funeral of a friend of the family. Again there were too many roads, not one of them marked. "Turn ^{left} ~~right~~ at the store" was the direction given me by one who knew. But which store? Stores seemed to sprout up everywhere, and most of them had a road that turned just there. And we took every one of them, in that county and the "nigh side" of the neighboring county and and finally arrived after the funeral was over. I have recently gone over the correct road again, for I know it now like a familiar path in the woods, but until it was marked with a number, I am afraid that I would be guilty of directing people to turn at the store and keep going. Who at Fidelity had ever heard of so many miles and tenths of miles, anyway?

UNKNOWN NAMES

Though America as a whole has been settled only a short time, relatively speaking, we have already developed a blind spot for many of our earlier history. If we were as myth-minded as were the ancients, we could develop an amazing body of stories to illustrate why certain names arose in the land. In dealing with the names to be found in the Mammoth Cave National Park, names that have become, since the park was established, just names, and nothing else, to millions of people, I have wondered how they came to be, why they and not other names became permanently associated with streams and hills and sinkholes and ridges. And I have developed a strong feeling for the names and have hoped that they will not be lost. In places where people continue to live, it is only natural that names slowly change to fit new times and conditions; since the people of the park are now elsewhere, why not keep their names, just as they were?

In trying to find the ^(origin)~~origins~~ of some of the odd names, I have run into many contradictions, so that I will probably never know the actual backgrounds. As an ornithologist and a sort of naturalist in general, I have enjoyed speculating about the names that may have come from animals. As of now here are some that may or may not be exactly true to history but at least seem to have a connection.

Raven Branch. This small stream in the rugged area along Nolin River has every indication of being named for the actual ravens that used to be found in just such places. Of course, none of the oldest inhabitants of today lived when ravens were around, and very few seemed to know that the area might have been frequented by these large black birds, now extinct in the whole area.

Panther Hollow. Rather oddly, stories of panthers remain to this day. Everybody believes that this hollow was once the abode of the much-feared panther, which goes by so many different names in America.

Chicken Hollow. My own opinion is that this name came from the prairie chicken, so numerous in this general area in early times. This belief is not shared by many of the former inhabitants, several of whom have other theories.

Deer Park Hollow. Until deer were reintroduced into the park area, in the 1930's, the Virginia deer was as unknown to most people as the prairie chicken or the raven or the panther. I have no doubt ~~but~~ that some years hence stories will arise that will connect the name with the modern population of deer, but the name is actually old and must have arisen among the early settlers.

✓ Buffalo Creek. Even though the buffalo disappeared from the region away back in the early 1800's, no one doubts that its name and fame appear in Buffalo Creek, with its two forks--Dry and Wet.

Wildcat Hollow.--This is another name that may acquire present-day significance since the wildcat or lynx has been reintroduced into the park. It was a great day for me to see a wildcat in the fl~~e~~sh, in the woods and not in a cage; it was even greater to hear all night, when I was camping alone, a wildcat serenading me. But this was in less romantic places than Wildcat Hollow, however much I wish it could have occurred there.

Goblin Knob. Old-timers say that Goblin Knob should be "Gobbling" Knob, as that picturesque conical hill on the north side of the park used to be a great place for turkeys in spring, and the gobbling of the males is still remembered by oldsters. Somehow this argument^f did not convince the map-makers, and "Goblin" is still the spelling of the knob.

"DON'T FENCE ME IN"

Daniel Boone and other pioneers have been quoted as saying that they felt things were getting too cluttered up when you could see the smoke from your neighbor's chimney. Certainly there used to be a desire for such big holdings that one's house or mansion would be away down a lane and a long way from the next house or mansion.

Until the coming of cars and modern roads this idea seems to have persisted, a left-over that was supposed to give a certain social stamp. I have driven down some of these long lanes in winter and spring, in the early days of cars, and wondered why the houses could not have been built a little nearer what passed for roads. Today it is a fellow with a lot of money who deliberately chooses a house site far back from his way out. It is not all due to stinginess or plain lack of money, either, that prompts this; there certainly is more desire to ^{be} fairly close to some other member of the race.

The passing of the remote place has caused a rehashing of folk ways, too. For example, it is hardly so easy to yell at the top of one's voice early in the morning to announce that the farm boy is up and feeding the stock. It is not so easy to cut across the country, climbing fences, either, for barbed wire and other modern fences just are hardly so primitive as rail fences. Besides, only a small percentage of the population cut across lots; they drive their cars down roads. Isolation developed its self-sufficiency, a good thing in its day, but it has had to be modified to suit more modern conditions. For better or for worse, and all the rest of this well-known rigmarole, we live in a world of people, not up some hollow where we can do as we please and get away with it.

It has taken some of our people a long time to realize that an unfenced wilderness no longer surrounds us. Just today I saw a hard-featured man out training his dogs, almost in the front yard of a farmer. Apparently the trainer used to go anywhere around here and train his dogs;

what does it matter to him if some upstart has built a house in his favorite training fields? Once some years ago I heard a bullet land in my back yard where my little granddaughter had been playing only minutes before. I took off in the direction of the source of that bullet and found a middle-aged man doing some target shooting in his back yard, with no care, it would seem, for the thickly-settled area of the city all around him. He was hardly civil when I told him how dangerous his miscellaneous shooting was, but, fortunately, he quit shooting after that encounter. I can just see him, after I was out of sight, cussing the modern world where a fellow can't shoot when he pleases and what he pleases.

In one of my observation areas I used to go, once or twice a year, past the home of what the neighbors called a hermit. He lived in a dirty little shack up a small hollow, completely out of sight of any other house. He drew a small pension because of previous military service and "let the rest of the world go by," in the words of a once-popular song. Occasionally he ventured out, a rough-looking, smelly individual, but generally he stayed put in his hermitage and thus offended few people. ~~It~~ ^{is} hard for many people, however, to find such an ideal place to live in a primitive fashion and return to a condition not too far above savagery. If a fellow just must be a hermit, let him be; but specify that he must stay within his hermitage and not be parading around among people who have had a few more baths and haircuts.

Much has been made of the primitive virtues. Many of them were and remain good, no matter what we attempt. But some of the primitive ways were and are disgusting and should have been frowned on long ago. In adjusting to changed conditions, these primitive ones sometimes merely make themselves barely within the law and continue to follow ways of their tribe that were acceptable when most of the land was unsettled, and when a conception of being a part of society did not necessarily have to be a part of one's life philosophy.

GET OUT THE ASAFETIDA

Of the 1200 folk remedies that I have collected in the Mammoth Cave region there are more for warts than for anything else; rheumatism is next in line. Just how anybody kept either of these diseases long is a mystery, for nearly everybody swore by his own pet remedy. Among the charms to use against disease the smelly old asafetida bag led the list. Everybody who is middle-aged and even a good many people between twenty and forty declare that they have seen the asafetida bag, and more than half of the younger generation say they have worn them. And then came modern medicine, and a new group are growing up who have never smelled the delightful odor of asafetida when it and the wearer were warming up around a schoolhouse stove. I am afraid that we are getting to be dainty.

Since I have lots of fun with the people whom I am interviewing, I have threatened to have investigations made to determine whether asafetida is not still being worn, just in case the modern drugs do not act properly. There are no schoolhouse stoves to bring out the odor, and it is possible to get by without being found out. Not long ago a distinguished folklorist, in a book that she is soon to publish, told a good yarn that illustrates what I am talking about. She went to call on an elderly woman of some wealth and social standing. She found the old lady sitting in front of her TV and with an electric heating pad across her rheumatic old knees. All that is modern, as it should be. But, the old lady confessed to the folklorist, she had rubbed skunk oil on her knees and was baking ~~it~~ it in with the electric pad. The author and I had a good laugh, by long-distance telephone, over this blending of old-time and new-time doctoring for rheumatiz. That incident and the very severe winter weather in late January and early February, 1966, made me wonder about some possible secret uses of the asafetida bag.

It has been a bit surprising that, with all the hundreds of folk remedies that have been told me, especially things that you can swallow, no one has taken an occasion to defend, except in a very general way, these old-time remedies. That is, medicine to be swallowed seems to be pretty well standardized now, what with radio and TV and doctors, not to mention health nurses and school requirements for children being enrolled for the first time.

Things to rub on are still around, often found in the same medicine chest with the latest drugs. However, elaborate home-made prescriptions for rub-on remedies are rare now. Fortunately, such things as turpentine are easily obtained and are still in use. One of the best tapes I have made recorded a long interview with two elderly people who were soon to celebrate their sixtieth wedding anniversary. Both were in rather good health and said that they had been blessed with good health all their lives. When I asked the old man what his favorite remedy was, he said that he had seldom had anything the matter with him that good old turpentine could not cure. He laughingly said that, as a lifelong timber buyer, he had seldom had anything wrong except some scratches on his hands or maybe some sore muscles from walking over rough tracts of woods. And turpentine came in handy for these minor ailments. I told him my wife's father and he should have known each other, for that was my father-in-law's favorite remedy for everything, internal or external.

With all the change from folk medicine to modern medicine, it is remarkable how few remnants there are of former times. When I have asked for treatments for a good many things, I have cautioned the person being interviewed that I was looking only for what used to be, home-made whenever possible. Even then I got some up-to-the-minute plugs for standard treatments, almost as if I had been interviewing a new graduate from medical college. Frankly, I sometimes felt that I was so far behind the times that I should have been the one to be questioned about old-timey stuff.
the truth of

All this merely shows what an eighty-year-old man said when I was asking him about herb remedies: "It's been so long since I heard or thought about such things that I'm afraid I'm not the one to be interviewed. But I used to help dig all sorts of stuff for my mother, who believed in her remedies and was known around here for her knowledge. She'd point to some plant and tell me to dig it; sometimes I knew what it was, and sometimes I didn't. Now I'm so old and forgetful that I don't remember even what I knew best."

T & C

"IT HAPPENED ONCE BEFORE"

The severe winter weather in late January and early February, 1966, has awakened the memories of old folks like me, and some of the younger ones are doubting our saying that we have seen just such weather a few times before. But that is only fair, for I have long doubted some of the memories of old people around Fidelity, who never allowed any modern weather to equal what they had experienced long before I was born. The old fellows didn't add, "Young upstart," but I suspect that they thought it.

Now there was snow, for example. What was a mere foot-deep fall as compared with the big snow of 1886, I believe they said? I was never able to find any two people, including my parents, who agreed on the depth of that snowfall, "on the level." Mother said it came up to the top of a post in our yard on which we kept a box of flowers in my day; that post was a good four feet high. Father said that there was a drift right there. Others told of having run out of wood and have ^{of} sawed down trees and left stumps considerably taller than they were themselves; but others said the snow never did get hardened enough for any such sawing. Anyway, Father, who rode his old yellow horse here and there to visit the sick in that big snow, said that the snow rolled up in front of the horse as he struggled along. Measure that with a yardstick if you please and then tell me exactly how much snow there was.

And then, in my own time, there was that terrible ice storm of 1899. It was really a whopper and left signs that remained as long as I lived at Fidelity, that is, until Christmas, 1906. Trees were so overloaded that they bent out of shape and remained that way. Those along our narrow trail-like roads completely blocked travel, except on the Big Road, for several days. People who had never been known to walk even a mile to visit friends and relatives actually walked for four and five miles dodging the bent-down trees. All this I remember, but I also remember the ice storm that ruined hundreds of trees in Bowling Green in the winter of 1950-51. Fortunately and oddly, this later storm did not affect the wooded areas as badly as it did the cities, or our timbered lands would have been ruined. Even as it was, the cedar trees in the Mammoth Cave National Park bent across electric lines and telephone lines and across the narrow roads and created plenty of discomfort.

1899-1900,

We children, back in the cold winters of 1898-99 and ~~1899-1900~~, laughed at some of the funny stories of how thermometers blew up. We just knew that someone was trying to get ahead of his neighbors by such a story. In fact, I laughed for years over this. And then, when we registered the lowest temperature ever recorded in Bowling Green and fairly shivered when we mentioned it, just north of us, on US31W Bonnieville made us all ashamed of our ^{minus} 21.1 record; Bonnieville, on a standard thermometer, had a reading of minus 30. In fact, it led the whole state on having the coldest weather at that season. Frankly, maybe some of those old boys who used to seem so determined to tell the biggest yarn were telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth. When the newspapers of January 31, 1966, announced that Russellville, Alabama, had an official reading of minus 24 when all we could do was a mere minus 11, I wanted to apologize to the spirits of our local weather scholars at Fidelity. If a county-seat town down in northwestern Alabama can get publicity for its cold, cold weather, why couldn't there have been a note in the Calloway County newspapers, back at the turn of the century, to tell how Uncle Briggs Witherspoon's thermometer "busted" in the cold weather?

To a folklorist it is a real joy to find ways out for the beliefs that people have held and probably will continue to hold. Before you laugh too much at some silly custom or belief that we have now outlived, let me remind you to read the advertisements in my home-town ^{paper}. If you do not find an occasional ad wanting to sell or buy an "asthma dog," please call me by telephone, and I will drive my car to well-~~to~~-do homes where the Mexican hairless is doing its part to keep the heads of the households free of asthma or even rheumatism. On our way back we will stop at a county-seat-town drugstore and pick up a wad of asafetida, so that you can immunize yourself and your children against measles, whooping cough, croup, and such like.

BUTTERCUPS AND SAGE GRASS

Just about everything ~~that~~ that has a name, especially if it has had contact with the folk, has acquired other names. In the scientific world a name is made up for something new, and it may soon be known to everybody everywhere. If aspirin had come in two generations earlier, I am sure it would have had many funny variations in what it is called. Certainly some of the patent-medicines I used to know about got folkish names, some of them from people who could not read and write and others from jokesters or smart-alecs. But it is not that ~~type~~^{type} of word that I want to talk about now.

All around us are plants, many of them known to just about everybody. Long before there were available books that could have given us the names, we had to call them something. And that is what we did. Fortunately, we called them lots of things, and that gave local flavor. The only hitch in this folk naming is that it is often hard to know what ~~the~~^a person is talking about unless we have an interpreter. Only within my own grown-up days has there been a serious attempt to standardize the names of birds, as an example. We called one of the best-known woodpeckers a yellow hammer, and in this general culture area this was well-known as the right name. But a list of more than a hundred names for this bird has been compiled. Today, in the books and among bird students, he is a flicker, and all the more recent books give no other common name; to tie the present-day study of birds to what was done a long time ago, ⁱⁿ the very large bird books, which few people own, there is a complete list of the local names for birds. A few years ago a very expensive book on Alexander Wilson, our first American ornithologist, appeared, the work of a research scholar who could write well but did not know his birds. As a result the common names, without the scientific binomials, are used, and 90% of the readers of the book do not know what is being said. Just why the author, an English professor from a big-name college, did not get an ornithologist to modernize Wilson's common names for birds is

an unanswered question.

When I have mentioned daffodils in my literature classes, I have often found the class puzzled about what flower was meant. I have ~~often~~ then started with buttercups, to see whether that was the name known; for a large majority of my students that was the name; some others said cups-and-saucers; some said March flowers; some said Easter flowers. By that time the poem or the reference might have cooled off. All the folk names are good, but how are we to understand the other fellow when he does not speak our language?

Old fields, turned out because of loss of fertility, grow up in what is called broomsage, broomsedge, or sage grass. Now which is it? Unfortunately, usage has not settled down on any of these names. I had thought that broomsage was the word used by everybody until I began to collect regional words; in the Mammoth Cave area sage grass is far ahead of any other word for this old-field plant. What do you call it?

Along the roadsides in mid-summer blooms one of our very prettiest wild flowers, the orange-flowered milkweed, a name that is gradually becoming the one best known. But chigger weed ~~is~~ widely known and used, even by good amateur botanists. Unfortunately, the black-eyed Susan is also called this picturesque name by some people. Sometimes it is much easier, if you are trying to communicate with other lovers of flowers, ~~to~~ use the scientific name, for your every-day word and his might not agree.

And that reminds me of how often I hear drosophila, the scientific name for the little gnat-like flies that you find around rotting fruit. I think that people who use this learned word are merely trying to be understood. And they might not be if they said fruit flies or sour gnats or, most picturesque name of all, drunkards. It is a pity that our descriptive and folkish names do not sound so flavorful for everybody; certainly I have had to adjust to accepted bird names and have not suffered thereby. Some of my friends still cling to the names given the birds at Podunk and Fidelity; sometimes it is hard to remember what they are talking about.

UNDERSTANDING OR ENJOYING

In a previous article I mentioned the difficulty of trying to make some outsider, unfamiliar with our local names for things, understand what we are talking about. How fine it is if he knows and also knows his own localisms. The minute either fellow believes that his way is the only way, prejudice enters and destroys the local flavor.

If it is a matter of knowledge, then we must try to settle on some official way of naming things. If a redbird is a tanager, either scarlet or summer, to many people, it is a cardinal to others. Now which bird is entitled to the local name? I love the local name, even if it disagrees with the standard one, unless the user of it refuses to accept what people in general are now using. For example, call it a field lark for your friends, but among people from everywhere call it a meadowlark. Field lark is just as good a name, of course, as meadowlark; it is not a question of the rightness or wrongness of a name, if we know what the other fellow is talking about.

It is characteristic of people who do not know how widely varying our localisms are to insist on calling things, on all occasions, by the names they learned early. No folklorist objects to localisms; they are among his best acquirements. And, just among homefolks, they are always flavorful and refreshing. But please allow the other fellow his meaningful and good-tasting words for the same things. If each of you knows what the other fellow is saying, just talk on in your own way and let him talk, too. But when your localism becomes a burden for your listener, then is the time to make an effort to find some word that both of you know about. Far too many people look upon ^{as} localism as tacky in everybody ^{except} us and "just the thing" for us. If you know what I mean when I say singletree when you say whiffletree and I understand you, too, we can have a big time together.

Localisms, to those who know them well, offer enjoyment. We know the object named, we know the standard word for it, and then we know, too, the local or regional term. In that way we can get a sort of extra poetic meaning for what might be a rather cold name or word. In recent years, while using a study of localisms designed for use in Wisconsin, I found many items that left me completely cold. How many kinds of cheese can you name, home-made kinds, that is? Cottage cheese I have known, and that is the extent of my knowledge. I know several local names for it in Kentucky: clabber cheese and smear^case, for two of them, with a very small usage of Dutch cheese in some of our counties where the British descendants and the German pioneers lived side by side. But pot cheese I never heard from a native Kentuckian; and lobber cheese sounded like a foreign word when I first heard it.

New Paragraph → (Another group of Wisconsin words dealt with winter, words that we have had few uses for in most winters. There are names for a half dozen kinds of ice and for almost as many kinds of sleds. And the childish terms for skating and sledding are numerous. The area in which our local study has been made is ignorant of nicknames for various kinds of foreigners or later immigrants. Not enough foreigners have come into south-central Kentucky in the last century to establish such nicknames. To test this very study that I have been quoting, I had a long interview with a native ^{of} Wisconsin, who lives near Mammoth Cave since he ^{retired} ~~retired~~ as a major in the United States Army. You should have seen the funny looks on the faces of the people who were sitting by when I asked him his local names for the most ordinary things; and then the crowd almost laughed outright when I began asking him to give nicknames for foreigners. Until a few years ago, when I began using this very learned study as a guide I would have found many of his words as funny as did my native helpers. Evidently the retired major enjoyed knowing that his boyhood vocabulary has some value, that it is still being sought after before it becomes too standardized. His localisms and yours and mine are for enjoyment, not merely for communication. Until you know that the other fellow will follow you when you use localisms, you had better stick to the standard.

OUT OF FOLK MEDICINE

For the first time in thirty and a half years, since this column started in 1935, I am late with my weekly essay. And I have a very good reason: bronchitis, accompanied by or with antibiotics and all the ^{other} modern drugs. After many days of fighting both the disease and the drugs, I am back at my typewriter, weak as branch water but still strong enough to say "Soo-ey" if the hogs had me down. Now I owe the readers of this column an apology, maybe a double one: for being late with this essay and for having betrayed folk medicine.

You see, a healthy old man like me, who has hardly had so much as a sniffle ⁱⁿ years, just will forget to stock up on folk remedies. Why, I did not have a supply of life everlasting (rabbit tobacco) to smoke to drive away the terrible cough. And, having been persuaded, some decades ago, to give up home-knit stockings, chiefly because I could not find any on the market and all my old ones had worn out, I did not so much as have a stocking to tie around my neck to relieve the congestion. In other days what I have had would have been called pneumonia or pneumonia fever, and I have oodles of remedies for that very disease. For example, while I was at my worst, slices of bacon should have been bound around my chest. Or I should have been wrapped in wet blankets, preferably wet ones. If some one could have dug up the right instruments, I could have been bled and probably hastened into the cemetery.

The chest is the place to doctor people who are coughing their heads off. Here are some good poultices and similar things to put there:

1. a freshly-killed chicken cut open and applied to the chest; 2. a corn-meal poultice, properly salted; 3. a flannel cloth, preferably red, saturated with linseed oil, all across the chest. ~~4.~~ 4. even better is a poultice of ground flax seed mixed with mustard; 5. a poultice of cooked onions; 6. a poultice of fresh, raw pork; 6. ~~7.~~ a bag of hot salt

on the chest; 7. a mixture of quinine, coal-oil, turpentine, and grease on a wool cloth; ~~8~~ 8. a wheat-bran poultice; 9. rub on the chest a mixture of vinegar, pepper, and salt; ^{or} 10. ~~rub~~ rub chest with mutton tallow and turpentine. Internal remedies are somewhat rare but said to have been used formerly: 1. drink scorched whiskey, that is, pour out some whiskey into a shallow pan, touch a match to it, and, after a while, "squench" the fire and drink the hot whiskey; ~~2~~ 2. drink onion juice and sugar syrup--cut up onions, cover them with sugar, and the resulting syrup is the good remedy; ~~3~~ 3. Drink dogwood tea and whiskey.

And, after any or all of these, if the ^{patient} ~~patient~~ is still around, he should be started off to health again by giving him bitters. You see, these respiratory troubles nearly always come in late winter or early spring, when the blood is too thick after the long season of cold weather. Burdock bitters seems the standard and also the easiest to make: dig the roots of burdock, wash off the dirt, split the roots lengthwise, and stand them on end in a tall bottle or jar, which has a layer of rock candy on the bottom; then ~~pour~~ ^{the} pour over all this whiskey and allow it to stand for a few days. When you feel puny or peaked or ornery, take a big swallow or two of this bad-tasting mixture, and your spirits will pick up. If you want a little ^{more} elaborate tonic, add to this some sarsaparilla roots, some sassaparilla root bark, some wild-cherry bark, some red-oak bark, some pokeroot, some mullein leaves, and some dogwood roots. But be sure that the collection of these healing plants ~~are~~ ^{is} properly sweetened with rock candy and more properly preserved in corn liquor.

Isn't it strange how foolish we can be? Here am I, a self-appointed D. F. M. (Doctor of Folk Medicine), caught with my medicine cabinet empty, just when it should have been bulging with nature's own remedies. Why, what I am having to pay the drugstore would have hired a half dozen people who know herbs to find and make ready what bronchitis and pneumonia patients need most.

Sometimes I wonder whether we Kentuckians are not just a little bit ashamed of ourselves. Only rarely, for instance, do we capitalize on our distinctive ways. There come to my mailbox every month two of the most fascinating little magazines you could find in a day's search? One of them is called GOOD OLD DAYS, and, although it is published in New England, ^{it} ~~will~~ comes letters, old pictures, words of old songs, and reminiscences from everywhere. It is like a breezy morning's visit with an elderly person to get a new GOOD OLD DAYS. There are, in every edition, some extracts from advertisements that used to appear in the standard and pulp magazines; some home remedies; some directions about preserving foods or weaving or knitting or quilting. And the letters from everywhere, usually written by old people who are not ashamed of their origins, recreate the good and bad phases of semi-pioneer life, of isolation, of difficulty in travel, of simple joys and universal sorrows. There is nothing profound or world-shaking in the little magazine, but it seems to thrive and certainly reaches a great many people who probably do not read many magazines and who rarely find someone who likes to talk about life as it used to be.

^{it} The other magazine is YANKEE, a monthly visit to New England, just as ^{it} was a generation or two ago and even as it still is in many remote places. There are some distinctive features in the magazine, like accounts of famous sailing ships, of sugar-making, of prominent New Englanders who are not known everywhere. It has a large number of advertisers, with everything folkish for sale, ranging from ship models to almost priceless antique furniture. Unlike GOOD OLD DAYS, it is devoted entirely to New England, as she was and as she is. There is no effort to apologize, and there is no use to brag, for the quaintness so often pictured is still in existence, impossible to become lost in even the most modern areas.

Now here is what I mean when I say that we Kentuckians often act as if we were ashamed of ourselves. We accept the partial view of

our state as good enough. Why, sixty to eighty per cent of Kentuckians are just as good literary material as are the quaint New Englanders. Somehow we have capitalized on only two types of Kentuckians: the Bluegrass farmer, and his rolling acres and fine "hosses," and the mountaineer, with a still up the holler and a good gun. Neither type is true to the areas described; it is possible to find many of the ~~two~~ types in other areas of the state and of neighboring states.

When I read an article on how New Englanders used to make maple sugar, I am thrilled at it all, but I envy the reputation of some future writers in our own state who will present graphically and truly such every-day things as growing sorghum and making molasses, the tobacco crop from plantbed to market, the self-sufficient farm that has adjusted to modern scientific methods and is still a wholesome picture of farming as it was earlier. And think of the treasures for some writer that can be found in dozens of villages, which, in their way, are as picturesque as any New England village. And Kentucky characters, not caricatures but real personalities, are awaiting good writers who can present them without doctoring the picture to fit imagined characteristics of Kentuckians. The thing I have so often enjoyed in this type of writing about New Englanders is the effort to be painfully accurate, sympathetic but not sentimental, factual but not cynical. It is not the oddity that we need to know better; we have a good many ^{oddities,} of course, and each one has attracted some attention; but what is the average citizen like? What makes him tick? How has he been able to revolutionize his whole way of living and yet remain the sturdy yeoman he has always been? He is the fellow on whose farm I study birds, who knows infinitely more about life than his immediate ancestors knew but who still is a learner. He is rather stolid, in politics, education, and religion; but, measured by what he was and what his backgrounds were, he is a strange new but still old type of person that we can't afford to lose.

On the Band-Wagon

In recent years anything that is called folklore has at once attention and a following. It doesn't have to be authentic; if it is merely strange or crude or unusual, then it is folklore. In these hoop-la years of accepting folklore there have been dozens of funny things and some that approached the pathetic. But the average person who is a part of the so-called folklore seems oblivious of it all. If it is called folklore by some well-known comic TV performer, then it is folklore; what would an old dry-as-dust college researcher know, anyway?

It may seem funny, but this very acceptance of whatever is the fad is probably the biggest sort of folklore now known. The very faddists usually assume that they are unhampered, free, illuminated; but to observers with memories of many similar outbreaks of faddism, the enthusiasts seem merely some reincarnations of other times. And this is not wholly a matter of enthusiastic youthfulness; many of the funniest, and therefore the most folkish, fads arose among the mature, the educated, the solid segments of society.

Probably no myth has had a tougher life than the myth of the superiority of the primitive. In spite of tons of data to prove that we are stronger, healthier, tougher than the pioneers, thousands of people still insist that the earlier people in America were almost demi-gods in vigor and size and strength. If one in a few dozens of men could stand six feet in his stockings, then all his generation were fully that large or even larger. If one old man, like one Mr. Chapman, who was the first white child born south of Green River, lived to the ripe old age of ninety-one, why, lots of others did that, too. Since few of the pioneers have a gravestone like the one to Mr. Chapman, on top of the hill as the road starts down to the Middle Bridge in Warren County, we just guess that very old people used to be common. There has rarely been a half year in the thirty-one years of this column when I have not heard someone who

should have known better raving over our modern degeneracy as compared with our heroic ancestors.

Many of the younger generation whom I know have had their best laughs at some of the earlier folk remedies. Good old asafetida has had many critics of late; why, some middle-aged people, even, now doubt ^{whether} the smelly bag tied around their necks actually drove away children's diseases. Just as funny as asafetida was the rage for bad-tasting water that swept over the whole country in the last century. If a spring or well produced water that had a pronounced taste, at once there grew up a hotel or, often, several hotels to take care of the people who came to drink the water or bathe in it or both. And carefully-worded analyses of the smelly or bad-flavored water seemed to show that each well or spring had almost the Elixir of Life itself. I used to see a one-horse wagon making the rounds of our town every day, delivering mineral water to people who thought themselves fortunate in having such sources of perennial health so near at hand.

If I could do so without facing a lawsuit, I could list for the rest of this article the names of medicines that had all the virtues. In the three quarters of a century that I can remember things I am sure that every year has seen the rise of some new nostrum. Maybe little more than branch water, with enough grain alcohol to keep it from spoiling, some remedy would sell like the proverbial hot cakes and then give way to some later invention that would cure everything from falling hair to falling arches. Not to have the new remedy on one's tongue branded you as outside the pale of real folks; if you still clung to your asafetida bag, how tacky and old-f^shioned you were!

Ho, hum! Now let me sing you an old ballad that I ~~made~~^{made} up last night, a genuine Kentucky mountain ballad, just reeking with the flavor of mountain ballads.

Boots, High-Tops, etc.

One of my folklore friends sent me recently a column on old-fashioned things, right out of a Massachusetts newspaper. It was strangely like Kentucky a half century ago. One day the essay dealt with high-tops, the laced-up boot that used to be the mark of a he-man among the boys. Unfortunately, this style is younger, in my part of the world, than my early memories, but some of my younger friends say that their laced high-tops made them feel equal to the world and all its evils. Rather oddly, high-tops came into my life after I was a mature man, as outdoor footwear, to tackle mud and snow and briars. Unfortunately for me, I have no memories of having felt proud when I wore my boots to Fidelity School and got some envious stares.

However, though I never owned a pair, real, sure-nuff boots, boots that you pulled on with difficulty and had to use a boot-jack to get off, were still around in my early days. Henry, one of my playmates, used to wear his boots to Fidelity School after regular cold weather set in. When we went up front to recite, Henry made as much noise as a small herd of horses. I envied him, but my parents somehow did not get any boots for me, even though my father, the country doctor, wore the same type as those belonging to Henry until I was a big boy, maybe nearly a grown one. This was a leftover from Civil War times, and it was still a mark of being somebody to wear them. One of the Fidelity beaux even bought a pair of stylish Sunday-go-to-meeting boots and proudly strode into Sulphur Springs Church with his glistening footwear and legwear. Really, since he was one of the few six-footers in our whole area, he put on a good show with his very expensive boots; when he sang bass as only he could sing, some listened to his big voice; others looked at his shiny boots. Henry, whom I mentioned before, developed a sort of gallop when we played on the school ground that made me envious and still does. He would do a kind of skipping run that brought out all the clatter of his boots.

W^e finally forgot his real name and just called him Boots; he liked that. If he is still living, I hope he remembers how much we other boys used to envy him and his boots.

More than a half century ago there developed a fad of wearing, for rough farm work, heavy shoes with metal soles or half soles. This style was in full swing in 1909 and 1910, I recall. To hear a man coming along on a plank sidewalk when he wore shoes like this would make you think that some well-trained old cavalry horse had got loose and was showing off.

But the footwear that still carries me back to childhood most was and is the metal-toed shoes that all sure-nuff boys wore back in the nineties. Usually made of heavy leather to start with, and with the sturdy soles held on with wooden pegs, they added a metal strip of brass or copper across the toes, so that the wearer could kick a gate off its hinges without doing himself any harm. I have never been the owner of a peg-leg, but wearing those heavy shoes made me know how a wooden leg might feel, for the heavy soles of those shoes couldn't bend; we walked around on two feet that did not bend. Except for the rattle of the boots such as my father and Henry wore, we boys with our brass-toed shoes did our part to keep the world awake when we walked across the schoolhouse floor or even the church floor, for these sturdy shoes looked pretty good when properly blacked up for the weekend.

T + C

Some of the old people whom I know have apparently lost their memory in the process of growing older. Some of them spend a lot of good time talking about the hair styles of today and declare that they never saw such outlandish things in all their lives. Well, I'm an oldster, too, and I can remember, all too well, just lots of styles and fads that did not differ too widely from the styles of today.

About the time I started my career as a teacher, back in 1907, rats were the rage. I do not refer to the pesky rodents around a barnyard, either, but all sorts of dodads and thingumbobs that ladies put on their heads and then swept their hair over. A very typical rat, I have been told by women, was made by stuffing one stocking inside another and then pinning that contraption across the head. Later a rat-comb was developed. A favorite trick the larger pupils worked on me many times, for after I found out that they were doing it, I played dumb and kept up the joke. Some girl would slip her rat-comb out and pass it to a boy, who would bring it up to my desk, saying that he had found it somewhere. I would look very serious and call it by all sorts of funny names, to the delight of the pupils; sometimes a girl would pretend that she had lost her comb but had not missed it. A day or two later some other girl would lose her rat-comb, and the senseless comedy would start all over.

Back when I first started to college, a few boys developed what was called a roach. The varieties of roaches would exhaust the descriptive adjectives of the best comic poet. One of my schoolmates had the champion roach of all, a long roll that extended from his forehead back to his crown and fully as long as lots of these Beatie haircuts. It was a standing joke among us boys that we were going to overpower him and cut that roach off, but we never carried out our threat.

Away back yonder, in staid old Fidelity, long or longish hair was the rule, for only occasionally did we get a "shingle." I often wonder whether very many men shampooed their hair after the swimming hole got too cold for outdoor bathing. The fellows sitting around the stoves in the Fidelity stores could have qualified for prominent places in Old English Sheepdog shows.

But, when I get to talking about hair, I soon find myself thinking, also, about whiskers and mustaches. One Mr. Hopper, down toward the river from Fidelity, wowed us all with the longest mustache I have yet seen. He fudged a bit by turning out some of his side whiskers to give body and strength to his mustache. When his mustache was at its longest, he could twine it over his ears (pronounced years). And, at church or other public gatherings, we sometimes forgot to listen to what was being said, for we were wondering at the tremendously long mustache of our friend. So far as I can now recall, that facial adornment was still going strong when I went away from Fidelity in 1906; I suspect that its proud owner wore it to his grave.

In the General Assembly of Kentucky that voted into existence the first two normal schools--Western and Eastern--a great friend of education, the representative from the county in which I was teaching, had the champion beard of my lifetime. I never could understand why he kept such a wonder hidden from an admiring public, for he plaited it up to a half foot or so of his chin and tucked this plait inside his shirt. Those in the know said his beard, when combed out, reached below his waist. My, wouldn't that be an adornment to some marcher in our marching times! A fellow could almost dare a policeman if he had a mark of being a he-man such as that. I never knew what happened to the long beard, but I suspect that the owner wore it to the end of the chapter, but it must have been lots of trouble to keep properly groomed.

Who knows? Probably some of the hairy, bearded critters we see roving around now may be descended from some of the hairy-bearded varmints at Fidelity and elsewhere?

While waiting in line at the bank where I keep my bit of money, I recently heard two old fellows flaying the government of our city for its high taxes and its extravagant spending of our good money. What was being said was so standardized that, if one of the old boys had stumbled on his lines, I could have prompted him, as I used to do when some scared fellow forgot when trying to say his piece on Friday afternoon. I do not know whether any grumbling about taxes by ancient Romans has survived, but I would wager that the chatter in the Forum in those long-ago days differed, in subject-matter, very little from the talk around the stove in the country store or in the very modern bank where my cash reposes.

When I was teaching in a two-room school in a small village, away back in 1909, it was necessary for the trustees to decree an annual tax to buy coal to heat the schoolhouse, and brooms to sweep the dirty floors, and hire a boy to act as a sort of sub-janitor. The biggest tax-payer in the district was the M. and O. Railroad; in fact, it probably paid more taxes than all the rest of the village put together. A tax of so many mills on each \$100 of property listed was passed, and the money came in. Since I knew the head trustee, I asked him about some of the actual bills presented to the tax-payers. I can recall now only one, the one presented to the father of five children in the school--four cents! That does not mean four cents on each \$100; it means the total local tax paid by the tax-payer. Fortunately, I had no opportunity to hear how he took this grinding tax, but I suspect that lots of fellows who paid less than a dollar griped and declared that public education just costs too much.

Very early in my experience in conducting teachers institutes, I picked up another experience that I have often told about. The county superintendent apologized, quite humbly, because it had been necessary to raise the county school tax to twelve and a half cents; it had been ten! Risking my neck, I arose, and really had no business to do it, and announced that I had just come from another poor county where fifty cents--the legal limit--had been assessed, and I did not see why the children of the twelve-and-a-half-cents county should be deprived of their share of money for the schools. I expected to be scorned, but, rather oddly, I was invited back the next year to speak to the teachers and have been at more education meetings in that county than in any other except my own, Warren. I love to tell this yarn and then add that, within two years, the county that had paid so little was assessing the limit and begging for some way to raise more money.

Sometimes I have wondered at the universal griping about taxes. It must be a sort of modern scapegoat, a critter that everybody must have. Government, to many people, is THE LAW; some fear to speak too plainly about even abuses in government. But it is fine to have some aspect of government that we can pick out and cuss to our heart's content.

I will admit that, with the tremendous changes in our whole scheme of government within the lifetimes of even middle-aged people, the question of taxes, open or hidden, grows more complicated. Only a small percentage of trained experts could tell us just how much or how many taxes we are paying. If the ordinary man who pays his own way and has a bit of property and a bank account has difficulty in understanding taxes, it is forgivable in the around-the-stove sages for wondering about their hard-earned money, which seems to be so lavishly spent by the big boys of government.

When you consider how many changes have taken place within the last half century, you are not too much surprised at how some people are all mixed up. For example, mechanical inventions have increased in number so fast that even the smallest child has more sense about dodads and thingumbobs in general than a mature person had at the turn of the century. Some years ago I asked a Czech student of mine what was the most obvious difference between the American boys and those of his older home; he said that almost any farm or city boy here knew more about machinery than anybody where he used to live except the actual trained mechanics.

Alongside these skills in running and using machinery have often appeared, however, primitive thinking about many of our modern problems. It is discouraging to ask the average young person about plain geography, especially places where he has never been. I have known well-to-do middle-aged people right in my home town who, if asked, would have been a little hazy about how to start to anywhere else but Louisville or Nashville. And most people seem to think of the long miles to the West Coast as a little more than the distance to Florida; the ones who have made the journey are rarely believed when they mention the hundreds of miles between Louisville, say, and San Francisco. The oddest feature of ignorance of geography is how little the average tourist among us knows of New England. And often these same people have often been in New York.

Modern medicine has, within a half generation, made greater strides than in double that time before. Most people are getting acquainted with modern remedies. But the sale of branch water, with some high-sounding name, I am told, proceeds apace. Everybody, it seems, has his own special branch water, which is likely to be good for just anything that ails you. If very serious illness occurs, a doctor and a hospital are soon a part of most lives; but in that intermediate state when a fellow is hardly bad off enough to need the services of either doctor or hospital, folkishly a lot of people fall back on traditional remedies.

On several occasions I have had an opportunity to see some farmers, but they are in the minority, who refused to accept the word of the county farm agent or even what they themselves can see in the fields of up-to-date farmers in their own neighborhood. One rather wealthy farmer I knew who accepted fertilizers almost at their par value, but he died without yielding to the idea of certified seed corn, for example; he still believed that the good ears of corn that he had grown were just as good as any high-priced stuff he could buy.

As a life-long educator, I cannot help seeing how difficult it is to "sell" education, beyond the grades or high school, to many people. Some of the brightest youngsters I have known in the last twenty years refused excellent scholarships to attend college; some of their neighbors had told them that all colleges were, as one old boy-phrased it, "hot-beds of infidelity." One such student went from high school to a large Mid-western city to work; I still wonder whether she found all the graces of Christianity in her immense factory. The tragedy of this is that, in her immediate neighborhood, with excellent opportunities to live at home and attend college, a very small percentage of the graduates of a high-class high school ever pretend to go farther in their education. There is almost a cult of middle-aged people who talk against a college education, especially some who have made a little money without having had anything beyond a one-roomed school. It is against their faith to believe that conditions have changed since they left their rural homes and went to town to succeed.

The One-roomed School

An article in the April 17, 1966, issue of the COUNIER-JOURNAL, like the imaginary sword that Macbeth saw, "marshalled me the way that I was going." When the last one-roomed school anywhere in my part of the state, Anderson School, at Jock, Edmonson County, closed, I made that the theme of many a talk and an essay for this column. According to the COUNIER-JOURNAL article, there are only ~~nine~~ one-roomed schools from Monroe County to the Mississippi River: 6 in Grayson County, and one each in Christian, McCracken, and Marshall Counties. All told, almost entirely in the mountains of the state, there are still left 422 of these small schools.

In my folklore study of the Mammoth Cave area I have accumulated hundreds of items connected with the country school as it used to be. For a year and more I have been planning a series of articles on the traditional aspects of the small school, for it is astonishing how many of the customs in the Mammoth Cave area agree with the ones at Fidelity and almost anywhere in the state and neighboring states.

To begin with, in Kentucky there was an almost universal use of the McGuffey Readers. Several decades of school history went into those books in their successive editions. Often some story or poem or essay from one of the readers furnished a subject for conversation between perfect strangers as they sat in an unattractive railroad station waiting for the next train. A mere reference to some well-known poem was sufficient; just about everybody had memorized that poem and could take up where you left off. When one of our teachers, reared in Indiana, one day at chapel when we were giving literary quotations as a program, said, in his turn to quote something, that just about everything had been quoted except "Harry and the Guide-post," the students cheered until he actually said the last lines; that quotation reached more people than some of the high-brow ones that we had heard.

And Ray's Arithmetic was so well-known that a reference to John Jones's Estate awoke as many memories as the one to the guide-post that looked, in the twilight, so much like something scary. You see, John Jones, later changed to Gordon Apgar, left a complicated will, involving a lot of juggling of figures, almost better solved by algebra. And arithmetic was taught all over the state in much the same way. I can recall when I first had a student who had not been compelled to memorize the multiplication tables through twelve; some could say them through twenty.

The Webster Blue-back Spelling Book was no longer an adopted textbook when I attended school at Fidelity, but lots of people in the community still had their spellers and would let them be used in spelling matches or as extra drill in the school. When I told some of my later students about learning to read in that little book, with its words and some simple sentences, I got some queer looks, especially when I gave the sentence "Ann can spin flax." One student wanted to know what spin meant; another was equally puzzled by flax. I knew then that I had outlived the old spelling book.

The way we spelled in older times in the one-roomed school seems to have been used everywhere. We spelled orally, chiefly, pronouncing each syllable as we spelled. We usually stood in a line, toeing a crack in the floor if possible. When someone missed a word, the next boy or girl down the line to spell it correctly "turned down" the one or more who had missed. And the one standing at the head when the class was over got a headmark and went to the foot of the class to start all over again. Getting a prize for the most headmarks in spelling made us feel bigger than anything else we could do in the old one-roomed school. Sometimes we had headmarks in other subjects: history, or geography, or physiology.

All in all, with no effort to standardize the schools, our texts accomplished that for us. And we knew where anybody was by the reader that he was using. Grades as such did not exist, but Fifth Readers did.

"GIANTS IN THOSE DAYS"

One of the hardest facts to face is that great heroes have not necessarily been giants. Fortunately, here in America, two of our folk heroes who were actual men and not myths, were tall and big: George Washington and Lincoln. However, if they were now of college age and enrolled in my own college, I doubt whether either one would be a member of the varsity basketball team. When I was a small boy and fairly lived on the stories about pioneer times and the Civil War, I had to imagine that my Uncle Carroll Robertson, like me short and fat, must have been an exception; surely the "brave men, living and dead," were more often giants. But across the creek lived Clark Bailey, by his own admission the bravest of the brave, who was not only short but thin and wiry. And, when I attended the annual Confederate Reunion at Sulphur Springs and said a piece sometimes as a part of the program, I looked out on a crowd of rather short men, with a six-footer a sort of wonder. Why, the commanding general of most of these old boys was only average in height, and yet my short, fat uncle said this officer was the bravest, most fearless man he had ever seen. In spite of all these facts, I grew up and left Fidelity before I began to question the tallness of people who lived before our time.

Every neighborhood had its learned man. Sometimes he really had read a lot for that time and was so far ahead of the average citizen in learning that he seemed almost supernatural. Nearly all the learned men in Fidelity had read some much-talked-about book and could quote it by the yard, whether the conversation of the time warranted it or not. A few oldsters had read Josephus' great history of the Hebrews and lost no time in explaining who Josephus was; if he said it, it was the truth. Even the textbooks in history in our little world were quoted almost like Holy Writ. If anyone owned two or three such compendiums of knowledge, he was a scholar, maybe knowing almost too much.

Another suggestion of there having been giants in earlier times was that some of our older people had seen some very great men; here I was, born an age too late, and I was envious of the fortunate ones who had conversed with General Nathan Bedford Forrest; who had seen and heard speak the great general for whom I was named, General John B. Gordon, of Georgia; who had attended a circus performance and seen P. T. Barnum himself and also Buffalo Bill. Why, after I was a good-sized boy but had never seen a circus, an older brother was envied by all of the younger generation because he had seen Frank James! After sitting open-mouthed for hours and listening to marvelous tales of great men of other times, I felt downright neglected or overlooked by Nature, to be born away down near the end of the Nineteenth Century.

Singing in and around Fidelity was pretty corny, I suspect; it probably had not been much better at any previous time, but older people would talk and talk about this and that singing-school master who used to be so great. And the best fiddlers had died before my time, too. And there had been great organ-players, too. You see, what we had and what we did, the theme of the more than sixteen hundred essays for this column, always seemed, to oldsters and, too often, to us, ~~very~~ practically beneath contempt. Suppose some local fellow could fairly raise the roof with his singing at Sulphur Springs; you just ought to have heard his granddaddy sing! Now that was singing, I tell you!

And if some local woman could design and make clothes for her family, she was small potatoes as compared with Great-Grandma. All the giants of earlier days had giantesses for wives; but their descendants, poor critters, had degenerated, in body, in learning, in music, in all the arts.

"BUILD THREE MORE STATELY MANSIONS"

Since my early manhood I have been interested in the coming and going of human customs. I do not know where I picked up the term "passing institutions," but, to most of my friends, I am the passing-institutions man. I hope that most of them understand that I am not a mere mourner for things that used to be.

While my interest has largely been in the ways people eat or dress or worship or sing or entertain themselves, I cannot help seeing certain mechanical phases of passing institutions. Transportation, for example, epitomizes man's whole history. Think how long he was finding the wheel. It has always astonished me that people as intellectual as many of the American Indians were, especially those of Mexico, had never invented wheels. With the coming of a wheel came one of man's great controls of nature. He could get about with less effort; he could hitch his horse or donkey or ox to a crude carriage with two crude wheels and relieve his back from heavy loads. And this same wheel could add distance to man's going across the land. He was not so confined to areas that he could reach in crude boats or on foot.

Having been reared in a rather primitive area, I was able to most of the steps in transportation since the ~~wheel~~ ^{see} became so useful. The wagon must have seemed like a wonderful carriage when it first appeared; certainly the buggy, so far as Fidelity was concerned, was not at all common when I could first remember. I have known children who were not much younger than I who boasted about having ridden in a buggy. Many families whom I knew had never owned a buggy when I left home, in 1906.

In 1906 I saw my first automobile, and I marveled at its speed. I think it was 20 miles an hour! Anyway, it could kick up a lot of dust and make a lot of noise. No one would have dared prophesy that this contraption would, within an ordinary lifetime, supersede the marvelous trains that we always looked at with saucer eyes. When I saw my first street car, it seemed no less a magical vehicle than did the train. In fact, its dependence upon electricity made it a little harder to understand, for we back-country people had at least seen some steam engines at the sawmills, though water mills were still going strong, and one of them survived until it had to be dismantled when Kentucky Lake was created.

In one day I saw three types of transportation that would soon be creating a far different world: I rode the first train of my life, I rode a street car, and I saw an automobile. It was a long time before any ordinary person dreamed of tractors or trucks. When I came to Bowling as a student, in January, 1908, there were three cars in the entire town, noisy things that scared horses into fits. It was three whole years later that the first truck appeared, a sort of wonderful carriage for picnickers, who would stand up while the noisy machine bumped and snorted over our very wretched roads. I wish I could recall when I saw the first tractor on a farm; it must have been long after the first truck. Even as late as January, 1918, in the midst of one of our worst winters, it was a horse and buggy that I rented for a half day to search for a house or apartment in which to live until we moved to our present address.

When I was a senior in college, I saw a very daring man crawl into the cockpit of a small airplane and take off. He got up a few yards but fell into a backstop wire fence at a tennis court; some of the open-mouthed people who, like me, were seeing their first airplane, remarked that it was impossible for a vehicle as heavy as that to fly. And the poor pilot, uninjured, except as to his vanity, crawled out of his plane not half as big a hero as had been the fellow who the day before had gone up in a gondola of a big balloon and had come to earth in some treetops a few miles away.

WHAT THE VISITORS WON'T SEE

When I look over interesting and well-illustrated guides to Kentucky, I am pleased to realize again how many things in our state are worthy of being seen. Our varied geography, our equally varied industries and ways of life--these make a good showing in anybody's Kentucky guide. Somehow, after looking over even the best of these advertisements of what we are or have, I am disappointed. The-real Kentucky cannot be photographed or certainly has never been. We make much of distinguished places and people; we love to parade our spectacular or obvious scenes. How seldom does an average fellow, like the readers of this column and me, fit into any scheme that shows Kentucky! We are just taken for granted, like the trainer who is leading a Kentucky thoroughbred.

In the twenty-nine years that I have spent many days at all seasons in the Mammoth Cave National Park, I have seen thousands of tourists. On many occasions I have had a chance to speak to some of them. Even though they are nearly always courteous, there seems in many of them a sort of disappointment; Kentuckians and Kentucky do not seem so spectacular, so Hollywoodish as the advertisements would indicate. Some tourists, widely-traveled and able to judge people and places, accept the state and its people for what they are and do not try to make either the state or its people fit some preconceived notion, which was probably built up by some person who merely saw what he was looking for and nothing else.

Much is made in some professions of what is called the image. A great business loves to seize upon some aspect of its history or its service and make that into a sort of glorified picture of the business. If a good slogan can be worked into this, so much the better. The British are much better at this game than we, for they seem to thrive on images. If some great British institution played a great part in history, the later generations are not allowed to forget it.

Kentucky is a big and varied state. Maybe no one image could or should be adequate. If it did, it would have to take in the Jackson Purchase as well as the Mountains, the Knobs, the Bluegrass, the Western Coalfields, and the Pennyriple. We are not all Kentucky Colonels, we do not own race horses everywhere, we do not live up a hollow or on top of a mountain. We are neither down-at-the-heel and on charity nor affluent. And yet, all of us, whether born here or Kentuckians by choice, somehow love to be regarded as typical of whatever it is that is pure Kentucky spirit. In more than three quarters of a century of being a Kentuckian I have tried to find out the common denominator of being a Kentuckian. I am still searching for a solution to my problem.

With the great intermingling of our native Kentucky population and that of just about everywhere else, it becomes more and more difficult to isolate some one characteristic that belongs to us all. I have rejoiced when some little nook or bend of the river was regarded as hardly like the rest of us; my rejoicing came from the spunkiness that these out-of-the-way places showed when they asserted their loyalty to Kentucky. I myself was reared so close to the Tennessee-Kentucky state line that my father, a country doctor, had a third of his practice in Tennessee. But my little Fidelity and even the folks four miles farther south, whose farms touched the state line, proudly boasted of our being Kentuckians and nothing else.

What is this quality that we are born with or acquire in some way? And how can it be developed into even finer loyalty? Many of the people who have written fan letters to me have been out of the state for years but still take the home-town paper. And many of them protest that they are still Kentuckians, no matter how many decades separate them from their native state. I still wonder just what this common denominator is.

DYSPEPSIA

Usually I like a good joke, even if it is on me. In March and April, 1966, I had bronchial pneumonia and had to take a lot of very strong medicine. As a result, I had considerable trouble with my digestion for some weeks after I was "up and about." My doctor, one of my former students, telephoned a prescription to my drugstore for this trouble. Remembering old-fashioned things, especially such terms as his father and I used to discuss, he gave as directions: "Every four hours for dyspepsia." The pharmacist, a young man, had never heard that word and did not know how to spell it; he had to call me to be sure that he had understood rightly. He and I had a big laugh; and the label on the bottle is just as the doctor meant it to be. I think I will keep that label as a souvenir.

The pharmacist did not live at Fidelity on both sides of 1900; I did. And lots of people who came to see my father about medicine had dyspepsia. They called it that, and my father did, too. Indigestion was a big word in a dictionary. Unless you were talking to the doctor, some very primitive words would do. It must have been forty years since I had heard dyspepsia except in my folk medicine files. And, a bit of poetic justice, it was applied to me, and my aches.

Tuberculosis or just TB is so common now that probably half the people who are under thirty-five would not understand you if you said consumption. But everybody, that is everybody except the victims themselves, called it that back in my younger days. The victims usually used as mild words as they could, probably thinking that they did not have consumption if they didn't call it by name. Unfortunately, though I may sometimes have pictured Fidelity as a sort of earthly paradise, tuberculosis or consumption was very common. My home county had the highest incidence of tuberculosis among white people of any Kentucky county, even after I was grown and had long been away from Fidelity.

Our ancestors, away back when, lumped just any sort of ache in the innards into one inclusive category--belly-ache. And that was that. They were not coarse; that was just the name of the aches. But Victorian modesty tabooed that word, and lots of others took its place, even before there was much differentiation of the various ailments of the alimentary canal. It sounded better and more modest, but it didn't relieve the aches. But the most modest lady could speak of her ailments without blushing; the strange names sounded like some modern, up-to-date disease. But, out in the fields and among men, the primitive term remained; and it is hard to improve on.

When we got our specs or eye-glasses from the roving peddler, we had few terms to indicate eye troubles. We could see or we couldn't. We knew near-sighted and far-sighted, but not many more terms. Cross eyes or wall eyes were just as the Lord had made them and were left that way; squint eyes were just squint eyes, and that was all. Astigmatism--my, how eagerly some of the younger ones jumped at that word; you could afford to have poor eyes if you had a big name for them. I had never heard of myopia then or presbyopia, that is, by name. And evidently our traveling peddlers did not know those words, or they would have said them solemnly as if uttering a blessing or curse, and sales would have mounted.

In the books we found ague. We said chills and fever or third-day chills. We somehow failed to associate malaria with what we had every summer. Not to have chills in season was practically unheard of. And good old quinine, in its simple form or in half a dozen other ways, came to the rescue. We liked to think that we were not taking quinine if it was all disguised by a lot of sugar; hence a doctor in a neighboring county in Tennessee became wealthy with his sugary tonic, on which we feasted annually, we and lots more people who did not know about high-falutin words like malaria.

MY LITTLE WORLD

If any young people read this article, they will conclude that I am untruthful or else was a subnormal youngster. If I had been the only one to have lived in such a small world, I would, quite naturally, be ashamed of myself and would not write this. All the people who were born after the family had acquired an automobile will be forgiven, however, for anything ~~thinking~~ they may think; for I know that it is unconceivable to young people that people now living could have known such a small area.

What set this essay to grinding was my reading, in one of my earlier writings, that I had never seen a steamboat until I was eighteen years old and had gone away to school. Between trains at Paducah, I rode on a street car from the old Union Station to down town and actually to the river, where not one but three or four steamboats were tied up at wharves. This may not sound too silly; but just wait. All my life, for eighteen years, I had lived only six miles from Tennessee River, where steamboats were as casual sights as as streetcars in Paducah. Every Thursday, one boat, whose whistle I had learned to know, whistled for the landings nearest my home; in fact, two boats, one going up stream, the other down, passed each other on that day, and I heard both whistles. Somehow I associate these melodious whistles most with cool, clear fall days, when all the colors are on the hills around Fidelity and on toward the big river. A very few times prior to my leaving home, at Christmas, 1906, I had actually seen the river, but it was my luck to arrive on a boatless day. One time, after I was nearly grown, I heard the boat whistle not long before I arrived at the river; the big waves set in motion by the boat's paddle wheel were still obvious, and even a few wisps of smoke could be seen far up the river; but no boat, and I felt very underprivileged at not having ~~indeed~~ arrived a few minutes sooner.

Just exactly four miles from our back fence was the Kentucky-Tennessee state line. Even by the crooked roads it was less than five miles to this important boundary. But I must have been fifteen before I crossed that line, one day when I went with Father on one of his calls across in Henry County, Tennessee. He had promised to tell me when we got across the line, but he forgot. I think I expected a line fence or some boundary stones plainly visible. Anyway, the soil was still the sand and clay type that I was used to around Fidelity; the patients of my father on the Tennessee side had no more money than the Kentuckians; and families were equally large and equally distressed with ~~malaria~~ and children's diseases as were my immediate neighbors. However, I felt considerable exultation in having been in another state.

Our numerous Robertson and Wilson relatives lived, for the most part, just beyond Murray. Visiting any of them meant a journey of some twelve or thirteen miles. And there were very few times that I ever accompanied Mother or one of my sisters so far away to the west. Not long before I was eighteen, maybe the very year of that birthday, my second sister and I drove to far-away Puryear, Tennessee, to spend a weekend with some cousins. And that was the farthest horizon I had ever known until I went away to school at eighteen.

Every day when I went up the path to our corn crib, I could see across Blood River some houses whose inhabitants I barely knew, since my father's practice extended that far away, but not until I had been away from home for two or more years and was back on a vacation did I drive the old family nag into those remote regions. There are two good reasons for this, however; there was no bridge across Blood River any nearer than the one on the "Lower Levee," which was our most direct route to Murray, and to reach it I would have had to add three or four miles each way to my mileage. Another reason was that the stores, the school, and the churches that I was acquainted with were on the east side of Blood River; hence I had no especial reason for exploring the west side. What a little world! It seems pathetically small to me; it must seem worse than that to you.

A SMALL COSMOS

Last week I outlined, somewhat tediously, the boundaries of the world I knew at Fidelity. If you read that article, please read this one, for it will show that our small cosmos was, after all, much more extensive than its boundaries, even though that is a paradox.

First of all, since Fidelity had the postoffice and some stores, hosts of people from far-away places, even with strange-sounding names, came to the village, especially on big days. Before rural routes were established, dozens of people got their mail only by going to Fidelity. Sometimes a neighbor would pick up all the mail for a dozen families. Though the mail came on twice a week when I was small, it was being brought on three days by the time I was six or eight, and every day after I was ten or twelve. Going after the mail was, to me, at least, one of the great adventures of my life after I was big enough to ride a horse alone.

Sulphur Springs, besides being the place where the Methodists had built, long before my time, a rather pretentious church for that time, was also a "gathering place" of prominence. There, for more years than I can now remember, was held annually the Confederate Reunion. There I heard annually the famous Rebel Yell, many lame imitations of which I have heard since I grew up and went away. There the candidates spoke regularly, using the outdoor stage and seating accommodations used earlier by the Confederates. There, at various set times and often at just any time in summer and fall, were held picnics. The owner of the property around the church could be counted on to have a stand or two to sell soda pop, wax (chewing gum), cigars, ice cream, and such like. And people came, not only from my own little world, but from miles beyond. To the church every year at a set time came the annual Quarterly Meeting; members of the other churches on the circuit thus came into my small cosmos. I thus widened my knowledge of people and geography.

Relatives from away-off-yonder often came to spend the weekend in summer or fall. It seems now, after more than fifty years, that we rarely missed having visitors at the weekend from April to November. I am sure that I am exaggerating, but there were lots of visitors anyway. Since Father was a doctor and until I was grown there were no telephones, somebody had to be around to answer the "Hello" at the gate. Sulphur Springs Church was so near that we could go there and be back within a couple of hours, often inviting somebody home with us. But Mother stayed at home and, after the telephone came in, answered the calls there as well as at the gate. No household of my acquaintance had enough beds for such crowds as came "a-visitin'." Therefore I grew up knowing how to sleep three-a-bed with cousins or, much better, several of us on made-down beds on the floor. Our visiting relatives, having been "born, bred, and brought up" nearer town than we, lost no time in telling of the marvelous things we were missing by not living nearer the railroad and the county seat. Some of these relatives "didn't talk like us," especially the older ones, who had often kept more of the primitive North Carolina words than we had, since Father had spent his youth in Middle Tennessee, not too far from Nashville, which was considerably larger than the county-seat town our younger relatives regarded as the last word in style and importance. Anyway, whether we were wholly happy with the visitors or they with us, we formed a number of opinions about life elsewhere and usually, just like most human beings, were glad that we lived on the East Side rather than on the West Side, even though that put us pretty far away from the railroad and the only town of importance for many, many miles.

In the long years since I left Fidelity I have marveled that I saw so many kinds of people in such a small space. I probably knew at sight a thousand people and knew of another few hundreds through our county newspaper. And, this is the queer thing, just about every type of human being sooner or later came across my vision. We were, in reality, not a mere isolated community but a cosmos.

IN THE PUBLIC EYE

Old people with short memories sometimes suggest that the younger generation are too avid about popular heroes or idols. Certainly there have been some great outbursts of faddism in recent years. It does not take an old person to remember how wild people went over this and that actor or singer or group of such. The Beatles, still going strong, are merely one of many groups who have swept all before them. Slightly older people can recall Rudolph Valentino and his wowing of mature women, not adolescent girls. His funeral, from contemporary accounts and the memories of plenty of living people, was almost perfect Hollywood. Even the best actors could hardly have improved on it.

But, as an old man, I cannot help thinking away back, for popular idols are in no way a modern invention. I am old enough to remember when Richmond Pearson Hobson, partly because of his heroic deeds in the Spanish-American War of 1898 and partly because he was what would later would have been called a sheik, became the "kissingest" man ever known. Women lined up and waited their turns. I can imagine some toothless old crone now bragging about this very romantic event in her life.

But, big national figures aside, there used to be some nauseating local idols, region-wide in popularity or county-wide or even neighborhood wide. Even Fidelity had its waves of adulation for some wower. He might be a candidate for some county office, he might be some visitor from the outside, he might be some local youth who had "been about," that is, had visited in such far-away places as Paducah or Memphis. Middle-aged women sometimes seemed to shove their eligible daughters at a popular young chap; sometimes the daughter had ever so much better sense than the mother and refused to be shoved. Fortunately, I have forgotten his name, but we had a case of this sort at Sulphur Springs Church. Away back toward the beginning of the century our local circuit rider brought in to help in a protracted meeting a very dressy and easy-mannered young fellow. His clothes fit him, he was always neat, he had good manners, and he knew how to talk to all sorts of people. Whether he could sing well I do not know, but he captured the hearts of numerous mammas. The local yokels, pardon the cheap pun, saw at once that they might be having some competition; and they evidently profited by having a good fright; they saw to it that their girls soon got their thoughts off the dazzling young fellow and back on plain Fidelity boys. The young singer drifted away and probably forgot the social tempest in a teapot that he caused. I wish I could have met him ten years later and asked him what he thought of our back-country place. He probably had forgotten Fidelity or had got it confused with some other remote place. As I recall the story, he was a student in a Methodist college and was entering the ministry; maybe the small furor he aroused at Sulphur Springs furnished him with the subject for some good sermons on human frailty.

Worship of candidates for county office took a more general turn, but its outer expressions were somewhat like the adulation of the well-dressed young singer. As I look back now, I know that many a candidate was using his back-slapping, baby-kissing, woman-complimenting rather clumsily as compared with certain national politicians, who have developed this to an art. But we had not been far from Fidelity and did not know that all this soft-soaping was a sort of badge of running for office. Again I wish I could have interviewed the local hero some time later to learn how much of his behavior was just for the occasion. Apparently, very few people ever learned to soft-pedal their enthusiasms and kept on worshipping their heroes. I saw a lot of this in my early college days, so much that I resolved to avoid popularity-seeking as I might have avoided jungle fever. It is sometimes hard to resist the overwhelming wave of popular clamor, whether it has any sense in it or not.

College, with which I have been associated for sixty years, is a great place for isms. Most of these enthusiasms are a good deal like any other adolescent outbreaks. Being away from home and the proverbial apron string, the average youth has temptations to try something he has never known. Fortunately, most young people get cases of rather harmless isms and learn, by making fools of themselves, a good many vital truths. It has been my experience with thousands of young men and women that most of them are basically sensible and soon learn when they are being unduly foolish. I never expected youngsters to have all the poise of fully-grown men and women; but many times they have surprised me by their taking a very sensible view of things, often far beyond what any one expected and even better than older people normally do.

Away back in my teaching career I told youngsters fairly regularly to work off some of their crackpot ideas while they were young and rather unknown, for it was not so bad to be acting the young fool as it would be to act the middle-aged or old fool. I got this impulse to lecture my students from watching the antics of some older people who outdid the very wackiest of the younger set. Sometimes it was politics, sometimes religion, sometimes civic improvement, sometimes culture on a big scale. But a lot of women and some men would lose their heads over the enthusiasm of the moment and make it appear that the rest of us were antiquies. Of course, as a young man and much later, I took my turn of acting the fool and then getting ashamed of myself for ages afterward. But, unfortunately, most people who get a bad case of isms after they are no longer young keep it or them, whichever is correct.

You would think that as regular a thing as politics would teach most of us to play a more sensible game and not make spectacles of ourselves every four years, at least. But meanwhile some others may have been slow about having their fling at isms and grabbed the new chance. No comedian have ever imagined anything more ludicrous than some of the political campaigns that I have witnessed, sometimes at Fidelity but more often in larger and supposedly more advanced regions.

Religion is supposed to be a great anchor to our lives, a steadying force. And, for most of us, it is. But you would not have to think very long to recall some bad case of religious isms that occurred in your own neck of the woods.

As a lifelong teacher of literature I have quite naturally seen more than one man's share of cultural isms. Rages have appeared among English teachers that are quite as silly as rages over some singer or actor or other applause-getter. College people and highly-praised speakers have periodically praised some contemporary writer ad nauseam. Once, some years ago, a young enthusiast wrote an extended history of American literature in which three lines were given to Longfellow but ten pages to Theodore Dreiser. The same young fellow dismissed Dante in a small paragraph and Shakespeare in another one, in a more extended history of world literature. Cults of worshipful readers of a poet's works seem not so common now as formerly, but they have amused me often. Some of our great writers have suffered more from their enthusiastic friends than from their cynical enemies. Browning and Whitman are two such victims; I often wonder whether their most enthusiastic followers really understand what either one is saying.

For years I have threatened to write down the successive isms that have been offered the teachers, plans that would transform all learning into a sweet Sunday School picnic, with plenty of ice cream and soft drinks. The real teachers have plodded on, often scorned by the enthusiasts. The funny thing is that, just as a good number of people are ready to accept some fad, the enthusiasts come up with another one, guaranteed to solve all the teaching problems, in any subject. Who said that isms are peculiar to adolescents?

Recently, while preparing an article for a folklore magazine on folk remedies, I was struck by the passing of some seasons of sickness or bad health that we used to take for granted. Colds were so common at Fidelity or elsewhere that we did not even recognize any except "bad colds." "How's your cold?" was almost as casual a greeting as "Howdy" itself. Winter just brought colds, and that was a part of the whole scheme of things, it seemed. To have gone to school one day at Fidelity and not heard some sneezing or nose-blowing would have made us wonder what was happening in this mixed-up world.

Similarly, if summer came and went without our having chills and fever, we might have concluded that the end of all things would soon be at hand. It has been forty years, say some of my best folklore helpers, since there has been an authentic case of ague in Warren and adjoining counties. And it has been almost sixty years since I had my last chill. I recall it rather vividly. In my childhood I seemed to have a chill every other day from late spring till after frost. Then I went away at eighteen to attend school and to teach in Hickman County. An occasional chill followed me for two years. One day at school I felt "a chill coming on," an expression that all people ~~who~~ have had chills will understand. I sent one of the boys back to my room to get a bottle of quinine. Since I had no capsules, I ran the blade of my knife down into that bottle and, without a frown or shiver, gouged up some quinine and swallowed it, without even a dipperful of water. You see, I wanted to appear brave before the pupils in my room. But I had been on such good terms with quinine all my life that I actually did not object so much to its taste as I might today. Anyway, that is the last chill that I remember, though I had malaria in other forms for another whole year. And I might add right here that those who read this who have never had a chill have missed some very unpleasant feelings. Don't be too critical of Grandpa when he tells how he used to have "agers" and fairly shook himself to pieces.

It must have been forty years since I have heard "the second summer" mentioned as the danger zone for babies. Long ago that term was so common that even small children knew it; to live past your second summer was a great achievement. A great many youngsters failed to pass this test. And lots of little fellows were sure to be puny or weakly even if they survived. With improved methods of feeding babies has passed most of the fear of the second summer. I can recall how I have seen older people, years ago, seem shocked when some daring mother fed her baby solid food when it was less than a year old; everybody felt that this was a plain invitation to all the ills that beset babies, anyway. I have attended the funerals of many second-summer youngsters who should still be living and well.

Just when I heard last someone speak of having a frostbitten foot I cannot remember. Apparently there are not many such feet any more. With better heating arrangements in public and private places, with greater care in wearing clothes to suit the weather, and, maybe, with a greater toughness and ruggedness of us all, chilblains have become almost as rare as smallpox.

And think how many people whom we older ones knew died of consumption, as we called it then. Sometimes it seemed worse in winter than in summer, but I suspect that it was, in Fidelity, not a seasonal disease at all. If I were to make out a list of tuberculosis victims whom I knew well, nobody would believe me. How glad I am that health is a goal attainable now; we don't have to be sick all the time to show that we are human beings.

"Where Are the Fads of Yesteryear?"

If M. Villon were living now, he could write another poem about things that used to be to match his famous poem on dead ladies. He might use as a refrain, not "Where are the snows of yesteryear?" but "Where are the fads of yesteryear?"

The funniest things about fads are their being so sure of themselves and their contempt for previous fads. Since I can remember fads and faddists back to the early 1890's, I certainly have witnessed lots of them that blazed like new planets for a season or two and then dimmed. Maybe a comparison of fads and comets would be better, for fads, like comets, have a funny way of reappearing.

When I was a small boy and for long after there were songs that were tear-jerkers. "After the Ball" was just such a one, and it was hard on young and old alike not to have a sudden attack of nose-blowing when this song was properly rendered. Broken hearts, faithless lovers, tragic deaths--why, these were so common that there seemed to have been an epidemic of them.

By the time I was getting grown, pseudo-Indian songs were a dime a dozen. If a pianist did not know how to play "Red Wing" from memory, he was a poor entertainer. And there were fully a dozen other songs of this type that everybody knew.

And a good musician or musical critic could add many other waves. Remember when Rudy Vallee was all the rage? And are you too young to remember the worship paid Frank Sinatra? And where would we have been if Kate Smith had not safely brought the moon over the mountain?

Fads in dress have been equally funny. I can recall the outbreak, like a disease, of toothpick shoes, away back in my young life. Not to have such a pair made a fellow feel cheap and back-country. The real blades at Sulphur Springs and Fidelity sported toothpick shoes like the sports of the county seats. Somehow it was a strange mixture of piety and envy when we who did not have them saw these "slide-runners," as local humorists called them, on the feet of the fellows who had come to church. "Thou shalt not covet," said the preacher; but human desire for what is all the rage is hard to squelch.

When we wore stand-up, stiffly-laundered collars, some of the ritziest fellows went us one better by appearing in such tall collars that we used to say that they had to tiptoe to see over them. Believe me, those boys with such collars felt their oats and showed their superiority on all occasions.

When I first went away from home, I felt pretty well dressed, for I had an every-day suit and a dress-up one. And that has been about my history ever since. But, when I entered Western or shortly afterwards, I heard a woman teacher ask the sheik of one of my classes, privately, how many suits he had. Like Wordsworth's "little cottage girl," he answered, "Seven." My eyes bugged out, but I would not have let him know how the rest of us envied him and his dressy clothes. To save my neck, I could not tell now what happened to him; with his good looks and his seven suits, plus some fair gray matter, he should have gone far. No succeeding commencement has brought him back, and I have not heard of him since the middle teens of this century. But he strutted his way across our campus and seemingly disappeared over the horizon.

And "Where are the fads of Yesteryear, I pray?"

LOOKING AT THE PAST

The older I grow, the more I realize that much of our conduct is based on the way we look at the past. And this is the very basis of folklore, too. The Latins had a word or phrase for it--*mos maiorum*--"the customs of the elders." Even the most up-to-date fad in customs is based on some age-old ways of doing things. In that way the most exclusive faddist of our time is a blood brother of some faddist of long ago. Chaucer, in trying to tell how the knights in his story of Palamon and Arcite were dressed arrived at a rather funny conclusion: that ancient warriors dressed just like the fighters of his own time. Of course, that is a misstatement of history, but he might have been nearer the truth if he had stressed the mood of fighters, the ends to be gained, the psychology of the rabble.

We are often so overcome by the outward appearance of things that we imagine that the mere clothing and gadgets that other people had made them basically different. To translate into our own language the ordinary feelings of other times is a difficult thing to do; sometimes I wonder whether we are not reading backwards when we seem to understand the words and settings made so vivid by Homer. According to some great literary critics, that is exactly what we should do, remembering, however, that we are doing just this and that the older writing fit an older time in terms of that time. These same critics warn us to be tolerant if some other reader finds a different meaning in old, old writings.

A worship of the past merely because it is the past is probably the human characteristic that amuses the folklorist most. Take antiques, for example. Actual age adds little to the permanent value of our artifacts except to show what our forerunners did and made. It is funny how many positively ugly antiques are held up by broken-voiced curators of museums as great, merely because they have survived. The same sort of veneration could be found for folk medicine; then why switch to penicillin when Grandma's medicine cabinet is overflowing with ancient remedies, hallowed by age? A very excellent lady told me, some years ago, that our state constitution should not be revised: "Our fathers knew best." She had met me at the bus station of a very prosperous county-seat town and was driving me in her latest-model car to the positively beautiful house where I was to speak. I wanted to suggest that her great-uncle, who was one of the fathers of our antiquated constitution, had never seen an automobile, that he had at best an eighth-grade education, that his world was a pretty small place. But I discreetly said nothing. I have not heard that the lady sold or gave away her car and bought a buggy or an ox wagon; that she disposed of her furnace and air-conditioner and reinstated her fireplace, just as our fathers, who knew best, had to be satisfied with.

I wish that I had had a tape-recorder with me on many such occasions, to keep for the record these worshipful attitudes for the past merely because it was the past. Unfortunately, most of the best items came into my experience before tape-recorders came along. I have heard education beyond a bare knowledge of reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic condemned by prominent men and women, most of whom have now hosts of descendants with high school, college, and university diplomas. Not one of them, even in their most vocal days, would have employed a physician who had merely taken up his saddlebags and started his professional career without benefit of medical training. But it seems so sound good to warn all the successive generations that only in the Good Old Days of the past were there virtues, and honor, and bravery, and understanding.

PERMANENT VALUES

Folklorists, unlike antique-hunters, have no especial ax to grind. They want to know what customs, words, artifacts of other times were and how they fit into the lives of the people who developed or used them. There is no effort on the part of a folklorist to select from the amazing number of outdated folkways what he feels is best for the race. I am slightly suspicious of the fellow who wants to reintroduce some older way of humanity merely because he likes it or because it was once practiced by great people.

When I have heard people rave over the grand old buildings, I have felt a little cynical because I know what sanitation was like then. I used to tell my students that I wanted to talk about Mammy in the kitchen but state it as "Mammy and the flies in the kitchen." I in no way want to tear down anybody's dream world, but people of wide reading ought to know that we must see conditions in toto in evaluating some long-gone time.

The study of human arts is valuable in proportion to its recognition of permanent values. A rage for some fad in art or architecture or music usually runs its course and is then dismissed. If such a fad had some permanent values, these can survive under other forms in later times. But to try to reintroduce any previous era without its accompanying good and bad features is a futile attempt and should be. It does not detract from the value of our ancestors to recognize the primitive virtues of the time, but only a person who has turned his back on his own time will try to bring back what has already had its day and ceased to be.

A great tragedy of old age is that it often attempts, in theory if not in practice, to turn the clock back to some imagined Good Old Time. Somehow this does not seem very convincing when I am talking to an advocate of his earlier days and can hardly hear what he says because his radio or television is turned up a bit too loud. And, often, all the furnishings of his room while he laments the despicable present are of a time far later than his dream world.

It is the responsibility of the scholar of any persuasion to try to know the permanent aspects of our culture and to adapt to our own needs such of these as seem appropriate to our times. As a teacher of Latin in my younger days I always tried to make my students see that the Romans were people, not abstractions, that they had the same basic pains and dreams and fears that are common to humanity. They met life in their own way, with a goodly number of old-timers always preaching the degeneracy of the present, the glory of some imagined perfect time. It took their wisest poets to see humanity in a sort of isolated experiment and work out some permanent values. The great value of genuine literature is that it knows how to span the ages because the authors recognize in even the humblest peasant of ancient Rome some of the problems that we all have to confront.

It is, then, not merely because a writer is old that he is to be respected and honored for having found some ways out. If his dreams have cheered generations of people of all sorts of cultures, that is excellent; on the other hand, if his writings have tended to discourage us in our struggles, he is better forgotten. Hosts of great things have been lost along the way, but we are fortunate that great ideas have marvelous survival values and return again and again in similar forms.

READING AND SPEAKING

Old-timers will find in today's article a record of what they used to know; younger readers will fear that the author of this column is getting old and shaky in his memories. For long generations children were taught to read one word at a time, about as unnatural as anything you could imagine. Some little boy who would have been very natural in ordinary talking would painfully read: "I--see--a--cat." And sometimes this would go on through several of the readers that we had in other times. Whether it was prose or poetry, all reading fell into this pattern. I have seen several teachers try to break up this method of calling words; in general, there was very little success, especially with small children. I have heard some children break up long words in their reading, so that a listener might have trouble in knowing what it was all about. In spite of this early training, there were occasional youngsters who actually read well and with some understanding and spirit.

When we memorized some poem, however, we changed our tempo. Somehow, we seemed to think that the faster we went, the better speakers of pieces we were. Born with a capacity for a big voice, I could rattle off a poem so fast that the listener, even one who had memorized the same rhymes, had to perk up his ears to keep up with me. This sort of saying pieces fell into some recognized rhythms, almost tunes. After hearing a fellow recite a poem, you could look at another one and guess where the speaker would emphasize words, not always the ones deserving emphasis. I have heard little fellows who did not know many pieces rattle off, when we were playing school, long narrative poems, as it were, with nonsense sounds or words but with the same emphasis he would use in actually saying a piece.

For some reason, when we memorized prose, we often fell into the habit of saying a word at a time rather than running some words together to make sense. Once, many years ago, I heard a group of smellish children present a rather delightful pageant-play in which Mother Goose characters, in costume, said their lines exactly like the small children reading in McGuffey's First Reader. For example:

"Good--morning--Jack--and--Jill--where--are--you--going--this--fine--morning?"

"We--are--going--to--the--well--to--get--a--bucket--of--water."
With Little Boy Blue, Mary-Mary Quite Contrary, Little Bo-peep, and a dozen other favorites doing their parts in this way, I am afraid that the audience got a little tickled. But the really beautiful costumes and the memories of having been, a long before, just such youngsters saying pieces, we sat calmly through it all and cheered loudly when the last little fellow said, "We--thank--you--kindly--for--attending--our--little--play."

Saying pieces may still survive in some form, but it can never be what it used to be. Since several generations had used the same readers, the usual source of the pieces we said, you knew in advance that you would hear about Mary and her lamb, the unfortunate boy who stood on the burning deck, and the criminal whose life was saved by his sweetheart, who prevented the bell from ringing that would announce the time of his execution. This was, of course, grown-up stuff; to reach such heights we had said short little rhymes about a dog named Rover or a mule named Jack or a pig that got so fat his tail popped off; then we gradually climbed up the scale of saying pieces until we could rattle off a long poem, so-called, with appropriate awkward gestures.

"BOUND EACH TO EACH"

It was a great surprise to me when I first began to study the folklore of the Mammoth Cave area to find that so many of the customs, the sayings, the bywords, even the obscene words were identical with those of Fidelity. Separated by 150 miles of land and water, the two areas were startlingly alike. I mentioned water deliberately, for only those who lived before the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers were bridged can know how far away Mammoth Cave was from Fidelity. Rather oddly, the area east of the Jackson Purchase, known always as "Old Kentucky," was much stranger than our neighboring western Tennessee and eastern Missouri and even southern Illinois, all of them close by, only western Tennessee being connected to us by land, with no wide river to cross.

From my years of study of the Mammoth Cave folklore I have come to believe that three influences made us much alike: 1. English and Scotch-Irish origins, 2. our affiliation with the same churches, especially Methodist and Baptist, and 3. the general uniformity of the public schools. There are, of course, other influences, but these seem most obvious.

When the great waves of immigration from the British Isles to America were in progress, it was only natural that old customs were brought along with the language and a few bits of furniture. Some historians, even, fail to see how widespread was the Scotch-Irish influence in most parts of the areas east of the Mississippi. The earlier British colonists had come from England; these occupied the good lands in the Tidewater area. The Scotch-Irish came later and, by necessity, had to go farther inland. When the areas west of the eastern mountains were open, and even before, these newcomers poured into Kentucky, Tennessee, and the southern parts of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, giving their native stamp to the earlier history of all these states. It is still almost comic to find how much alike folk customs are on both sides of the Ohio River.

The Methodists and Baptists were great pioneer churches. Other faiths came in, of course, but few of them had the missionary zeal of the Methodists and Baptists. Many preachers traveled widely, almost unbelievably reaching even the remotest settlements. The hard pioneer life was sometimes fatal to these roving ministers, but some thrived on it and rode their horses through the woods to the very edge of civilization. The traveling preacher was one of our most folkish characters, usually endowed with a strong sense of humor, a zeal for his work, and an unaccountable understanding of human nature. Both of these denominations also had many local preachers, who were usually farmers who served in their spare time ministering to needy areas. The local preachers were often greatly influenced by the best-known traveling preachers and, consciously and unconsciously, adopted their methods of reaching the people. Many of the best stories I ever heard had been brought into remote places by Brother This or That and kept alive for whole generations because of their being so tellable and so appropriate. I was fairly raised on such stories, a long time after real pioneer days.

Since the same textbooks were used over wide areas, methods of teaching were alike in places far apart. A boy in Fidelity might be saying a piece from McGuffey's Fourth Reader at exactly the same time that another one, a hundred or two hundred miles away, was doing the same thing. The helpful hints to teachers on how to present the subjects were followed religiously, so that my spelling match and that of my contemporaries elsewhere were twin brothers, and so on down to the most inconsequential event in the one-roomed country school.

MEMORY WORK

In a previous article I mentioned how very similar widely-separated areas of the state and neighboring states were in their folkishness because of common origins and religious and educational influences. Today I want to talk about memory work as it was practiced at Fidelity and Podunk and everywhere else in this general area of America.

Every teacher I had in the one-roomed school stressed memorizing of poetry and wise sayings and Bible verses. Some of us youngsters with a knack at memorizing always shone when it was time to quote something. Saying pieces at school, reciting at Sunday School, and even sitting around entertaining company gave us a chance to show off. I, for one, memorized anything, whether it had any especial value or not and still find myself rattling off dates just as we did at Fidelity at the turn of the century. A left-over of this type of memory work still exists in my life: I do not count sheep to bring slumber, for I have developed several games I play with myself. I name all the rulers of England from "William the Conqueror, then William his son" on down to Elizabeth II. The old rhyme I once knew stopped thus:

"Till Anne, Georges four, and fourth William all passed,
God sent Queen Victoria; may she long be the last."

It was easy to add the more recent monarchs, since I was thirteen the year that Queen Victoria died. Another device is to name the presidents and give their dates, not so hard a job as placing all the Henrys, and Edwards, and Georges and their dates. Since automobiles came to be, I have enjoyed naming the counties of Kentucky and Tennessee and their county seats. Usually, after naming the 120 counties of Kentucky and the 95 of Tennessee, I am drifting away on Cloud Nine.

At Sunday School we got a chance to show off some more. It did not take us long to answer the few questions printed in the Sunday School quarterly that we used as a textbook. Meanwhile the older people were vigorously engaged in deep theological quar-- excuse me, I mean discussions. To keep us quiet, our teacher would drill us on all sorts of facts about the Bible and its characters.

"Who was the first man?" "Who was the first woman?" "Who built the ark?" and on and on. We had done this so many times that we sometimes had the word out before the sentence was complete. "Strongest man" suggested "Samson," "Noah" suggested "ark." Many years after my Sunday School days at Sulphur Springs Church I got caught on a quiz and enjoyed it so much I kept it up for class after class. A well-known lecturer at old-fashioned teachers' institutes once was talking about how tricky our minds sometimes got to be by associative memory. He said that many teachers recommended concert reading and that it had some real merits. Without warning us that we were to be caught, he started a Bible quiz and requested that we all join in on the answers. We did so a little weakly at first, but under prodding by the lecturer, we got downright vociferous. Associative memory helped us right along. Suddenly he asked, "Who killed Cain" and we all fairly yelled, "Abel." I have seldom seen any more sheepish-looking people when we suddenly realized that we had allowed our childish memory habits take over. I have changed this question to "Who swallowed the ark?" or "Who was Adam's husband?" and many other distortions to bring out the point that chorus reading may drift into meaningless mouthing of words. But the trick is so illustrative of our memory work of long ago that I kept it to catch unsuspecting students for most of my half century of teaching.

AN ANNUAL DANGER-POINT

In all my years of studying customs I cannot recall that any husband, in suing for a divorce, named the annual spring house-cleaning as a cause of marital unhappiness. And yet, after fifty-three years of living through this yearly hectic time, I am surprised that it is not placed among the troubles that flesh is heir to, especially household troubles.

There seems to be nothing new about this disturbing time. One of the best essays on the subject was written by one of the signers of the Constitution. In colonial and later days houses were whitewashed. In addition to having all the furniture out of place, there was the strong scent of lime for days on end after the spring riot of cleaning.

House-cleaning at Fidelity followed a regular pattern, almost a patented process. Nice folks had carpets on at least two rooms: the living room and the front room. It took a lot of moving of furniture into other rooms or out into the yard to get ready to "take up" a carpet. Tacks around the edges had to be pried loose and pulled out, with frequent tearing of nails and restrained language. Then the whole dusty carpet was taken out and hung on a clothesline or a fence and fairly beaten to pieces. Under the carpet had been placed fresh wheat straw at the previous house-cleaning. All this dusty straw had to be swept up and taken out; then the floor was washed and scrubbed and allowed some hours to dry again before the carpet or another one, especially if a new one had recently been made, was tacked down over the fresh straw.

In the interim between the old carpet and the next one all the furniture had to be gone over. Successive layers of varnish on furniture that has survived show how painfully we tried to keep up appearances. A rite at our house survives in my memory better than anything else. Having bedbugs was considered a disgrace. Father, with his knowledge of medicine, saw to it that we had a big bottle of corrosive sublimate for the spring house-cleaning. We would take a stiff turkey feather and poke into a bottle of the bad-smelling stuff and then stick the dripping feather into every joint where the bed rails fitted into the headboard and footboard. Maybe that is why I have still to see my first bedbug. Anyway we endured the horrible smell for many nights with a sort of virtuous feeling that we were safe from bites and from being looked down on by the neighbors.

Wall paper began to be used in some of the houses at Fidelity in my early childhood. Since just about every house was ceiled, that entailed a lot of tacking of canvas over the walls and ceilings. Many a beautiful ceiled room became a ugly place with some of the wall paper that was put on. But, again, a house that had wall paper had advanced for its occupants another step upwards in the social world.

Now, three quarters of a century after the first house-cleanings in my life, I am still around, unbitten by bedbugs, not overcome with the odor of corrosive sublimate, not stifled by the paint or varnish on the furniture. And, with all the nervous times of the season, I am still married to the same wife of 1913, the first and only one and a great devotee of house-cleaning. And I have been wielding some paint brushes, too, not on furniture but on woodwork; and the smell of indoor paint and floor cleaners and of floor polish is abroad in the land.

MAGIC, EXTERNAL REMEDIES, INTERNAL REMEDIES

Folk remedies are easily divided into three main types: magic, something to swallow, or something to rub on. There are a good many remedies that employ two or all three of these. The very practical people of the Mammoth Cave region, whom I have studied so long and with such pleasure, had remedies that were largely practical, though a few bits of magic were known. In SOUTHERN FOLKLORE QUARTERLY for June, 1966, I have an article about the relatively few magic practices that I have found in my study area. Most of these, I must confess, were given as bits of fun, so that I am not sure how seriously any of them were taken, especially by people now under fifty.

Magic: carrying in the pocket a buckeye, which is almost world-wide in its use; carrying an acorn to prevent rheumatism; wishing a sty on the next fellow to come by, especially at a crossroad; rubbing a stolen dishrag on a wart and then burying the dishrag where it won't be dug up (formerly the best place was an ash-hopper); cutting a notch on a growing twig for each wart, with the assurance that the warts will disappear when the bark has again grown over the notched places. These are mere samples, practically all of them found all over our cultural area, that is, places settled by people from Virginia and the Carolinas.

"Swallow it."--A great many remedies took the form of tea, or bit-
ters, or cordials. Practically every plant was endowed by nature with curative powers, provided you used good horse sense in gathering it at the right time and processing it according to the folk tradition. Bark, for example, must be peeled down or up according to its planned use; that is, for a medicine made from bark to be effective, it must be peeled down when the medicine is to be used to prevent or cure diseases in the lower part of the body; and it must be peeled up when it is to do well for diseases of the chest, neck, and head. Peachtree bark, slippery elm bark, sassafras bark--why name the whole woods plants? You name it, and I can tell you what virtues each one has. And the reason I know is that more than 100 different people have told me one or many remedies. But there are other things to swallow besides teas and other liquids derived from plants; take soda, for example, and coal-oil, and salt, and pure white sand (for stomach troubles). And don't forget buckshot, the best possible remedy for boils: one each day for nine days.

"Rub it on."--Liniments and teas and just plain leaves, properly bruised or gathered in the right time of the moon, are even more efficacious than internal treatments, I am told. Jimson, plantain, snakeroot, yarrow--and just start with a and run to z with your remedies--plants, animal tissues, and minerals. If you have mutton tallow as a base, you can combine with that almost anything and have a salve that will do its stuff regularly and unfailingly. If you have some corn whiskey, add all sorts of stuff and have at your disposal a never-failing source of health, especially skin health. My favorite rub-on remedy is stump water, a time-honored cure for skin troubles: pimples, freckles, chapping, sunburn, and all the rest. For gentlemen I would recommend grape sap for beard, a good, long, glossy beard; for both sexes this same possum-grape sap will give you a fine head of hair. And May dew or rainwater will insure pretty hair and also keep down any insects that might take refuge on your head. Poultices of many kinds were formerly used, ranging from the very strong Sappish blister plaster to heated meal or cooked onions. Evidently these remedies had some good qualities, for the number of people past seventy who have told me about them seem still strong and able to meet life.

CARCASSONNE

When I was in my teens, the latest edition of the McGuffey Readers had, as one of its selections, "Carcassonne," a French poem translated by an American writer. In the poem an elderly peasant laments that he has lived a very long life but has never seen Carcassonne, a city not too far away, by modern standards of measuring distances. The original poet says that he suggested that he would take the old man to Carcassonne; they set out, but the old fellow died on the way. And then, like so many older poems, a clear-cut moral was drawn: "Each mortal has his Carcassonne." Even as a boy I was deeply impressed with that poem, for all around me were people who reminded me of the old French peasant.

In Fidelity there was an almost daily lamenting by some of our older neighbors and friends, because Fidelity and its poor soil and somewhat drab appearance just did not match the glories of North Carolina, where so many of our families had come from. Since none of us other people had at that time been in North Carolina and rarely more than ten miles from home, we could not dispute the older people who had come all the way from that Garden of Eden into our back-country area. Sometimes, however, --but I did not dare say so out loud--I wondered whether things were so nearly like Eden back in the older state.

Even more people, for there were more of them still alive and kicking, whose memories ran back to the days before and during the Civil War, made us younger ones long for times we could never see. For a large percentage of us the stirring days of the Civil War were our Carcassonne.

But, since I was born in 1888, it was impossible for me to know either of these glorious times, even though I sometimes imagined that I was transported away back when older people would re-live their former great days. Even great things had happened right in our own neighborhood, long after the Civil War, that I just wasn't around to witness. And older brothers and sisters lost no time in reminding me of what I had missed by being born an age too late. All the swans, in my day, were plain, unattractive geese; all the queens were just plain girls, with plenty of freckles and taggy hair. And a great many of the poems that I read and most of the stories dwelt on great events of "once upon a time!"

But somehow a fellow grows up and, if he isn't wise, he, too, joins the throng of folks who sit by their cabin doors and lament the Carcassonnes that they and others have failed to see. At church, at school, in the after-supper visits from the neighbors, at the log-rollings and wheat-threshings, and everywhere else we heard tales of a Golden Age that was never now, for Now was puny and foolish; "there were giants" in other times, but none were around now.

On the other hand, advancing age makes even the unpoetic long for Carcassonnes that no one has yet arrived at. A few years ago, when my legs began to feel the effect of too many years, I suddenly realized that mountain-climbing was for me a lost Eden. For years I dreamed of visiting Maine again and taking plenty of time off to climb Mount Katahdin; now I know my legs could not get me there and back. Thus Carcassonne works both ways, toward a Golden Past and toward a beckoning Future. Fortunately, in the meanwhile there are near-by things to see, small hills that will have to "make do" for scaling famous mountains, sunrises and sunsets over my own hills that must substitute for sunrises over the Andes or the Alps. "Each mortal has his Carcassonne."

VANISHING VOCABULARIES

Recently one of my friends asked me whether I had ever heard the simile "Hot as a depot stove." Yes, I have heard it often and have many memories of the stoves that used to adorn, if that is the right word, the plain, uncomfortable waiting rooms of depots. For many years of my life as a teacher I had to depend on the railroad and the steamboat to get me to where I was going. Apparently no two railroads liked to cooperate on train schedules; consequently, there was always a long wait when you had to change from one line to another. In summer or spring or fall you might get out of the depot and walk around a bit, to kill a little time. In winter, and it now seems that most of my waiting was in winter, you were likely to stick to the depot, with its very uncomfortable seats, where a fellow could sit upright but could not stretch out and nap while the train was on its way to pick you up.

Depot stoves seem as far away from most of the younger generations as the highly-advertized saloons on the old-fashioned steamboats. Don't get the notion, younger readers, that a saloon on a steamboat was a place where you could get a drink and that only. You might get a drink, it is true, but the saloon was the grand central room that was sitting room, dining room, dance hall, and what have you. Mirrors were often found in these elaborate palace halls, mirrors so big that you could see your whole self and not merely your head and face. Everybody used to tell how he, personally, was walking down the long saloon when he saw a man approaching. He politely stepped aside to let the man pass; the man did the same, except that he stepped the wrong way and was still right in front of the greenhorn. Again the fellow who told the tale on himself gave the stranger a way to go by, only to find the contrary fellow still in front of him. Only after several such awkward trials and errors did the yokel realize that he was seeing himself in a full-length mirror.

Unlike the British, we did not keep our stagecoach vocabulary for our trains; we generally adapted steamboat jargon. Our fireman on a train is enshrined today in the French word for the same thing, chauffeur. The English train is in charge of a driver, not an engineer. Our stagecoach words seem to have faded away, like old soldiers. But in their heyday, everybody who was anybody could use the jargon of the stagecoach, just as later words connected with the canals, especially in the East, got into the language of many people who had never ridden on a canal boat.

When I was a boy, I lived where dark tobacco was the money crop. I grew up using words that seemed universal, largely because I had not been more than fifteen miles from home before I was eighteen. When I went away to teach school in Hickman County, only sixty miles or so, airline, from Fidelity, I found myself speaking, so far as tobacco was concerned, a strange language. I was probably asked more naive questions about the growing of tobacco than about all the other things that were different at Fidelity. I still laugh about a young fellow's asking me whether tobacco was raked up like hay and cut into plugs with a cornknife.

At nineteen I came into the limestone area and had to learn a whole new vocabulary about caves, sinkholes, and such. Frankly, an age later, I still marvel at a land where most of the water is underground. When I was much younger--and slenderer--I crawled around in caves like another and older Floyd Collins; I still shudder when I think how many dangerous places I squeezed through.

But, even if a fellow stays put right where he has always been, he loses touch with younger generations unless he keeps adding new words to his vocabulary. Just think, when I moved to my house in 1918, the world was barely digesting the vocabulary of World War I, and think how long we have come since then. And, I was a new father in 1918; for two years now I have been a great-grandfather! I tried to teach 36,000 students; my, my, what I learned from them! And, I fear I am a little behind in my vocabulary right now; where do we go from here?

The General Assembly of Kentucky, in its 1966 session, raised the four state colleges--Eastern, Western, Morehead, and Murray--to university status. Everybody ought to know that by now, for the newspapers, the radio, and all the other communications agencies have broadcast the news. To an old fellow like me, this marks another milestone in a rather long connection with the educational system and with Western in particular.

When I arrived at Western, in January, 1908, the state had been running the school, formerly a private one, just a year. I have thus seen just about everything that has happened in the life of Western. And its growth and successive steps upward are like those of the whole educational system.

In my earliest days as a student practically everybody, most of us grown men and women, ~~was~~ taking high school courses, for high schools were very few in number then and for some time thereafter. Even after I began to teach at Western, in January, 1912, a large percentage of my students were still taking these pre-college courses. As late as 1913, when I entered Indiana University, I had to take several extra hours to qualify as a junior, for Western was not a fully-accredited junior college.

By 1922 the state high schools were so numerous that most of our students were doing full college work, and we dropped our high school work and became a senior college. By degrees we, and all the other state normal schools, as they were originally called, have become large institutions, with many demands upon us. Our becoming universities is in keeping with the policy of our neighboring states, for our educational demands grow greater year by year.

The making of state colleges into universities is similar to the change in our whole educational system. When high schools were voted in 1908, a good many counties were slow to establish even one county high school. For a long time there was considerable apathy toward public high schools, sometimes whetted by selfish interests. It seems like folklore itself to recall how many times I have heard public education lambasted as if it were a training school for the state penitentiary. The intensity of the opposition to state-supported education was usually in direct ratio to the opponents' lack of education of any kind.

From feeble beginnings our high schools grew, before the days of good roads and transportation of students, into a huge system. Almost every good-sized village or even a prominent crossroads had a high school. In my capacity as commencement speaker I visited literally dozens of high schools with very small enrollments. On two occasions I addressed a graduating class of one, and often there were fewer than a half dozen graduates, even in fair-sized villages. Only five of the first⁵ high schools where I spoke, beginning in 1918, are still in existence under the names they bore then. Consolidation has gone on rapidly in most counties, so that a graduating class of today is often quite large.

When I began to instruct teachers' institutes, many a small county had from fifty to eighty one-roomed schools, some of them close enough to each other to justify the boys from one school, in a game of Cops and Robbers, in actually running over for a brief visit during the game. So far as I know, there is only one one-roomed school in the whole area of Kentucky west of the mountains or some border counties. My talking about the one-roomed school will soon be as strange to most of the younger listeners as would have been yarns about wolves and buffalo when I was young. And that is the reason why I, in my lifelong capacity of recorder of passing institutions, am now working on a series of articles for a folklore journal on the traditional phases of the one-roomed school as it was but is no more. Before we all forget what it was like, I think, we ought to set down its ordinary events as they occurred in our own school and, almost comically, in thousands of others like ours, all over our whole cultural area. From the one-roomed school to a university is a fur piece, I tell you. And lots of us have enjoyed every minute of the long journey.

BY THEIR FENCES SHALL YOU KNOW THEM

When I walk down my street or almost any street in my town, I sometimes wonder what it is that is missing. Just today--and I should have known this years ago--I suddenly found out that there are almost no fences around yards. Of course, there may be some play-like fences, just for looks, but the former kinds, complete with gate, just are gone.

When I arrived here, in 1908, Bowling Green had lots of fences. There were various kinds of sawed-paling or wooden fences, iron picket fences, stone walls. And you could tell at a glance where a person stood socially by the kind of fence he had. An "old family" almost certainly had a stone fence, sometimes a massive one. But picket fences were not far behind in distinctiveness. Not to have a fence of some sort branded a fellow as too lazy or too modern to know just how much standing he had lost.

When I have told about brass- or copper-toed shoes that could kick a gate off its hinges without hurting the shoe or the owner, I have usually met a blank stare in my audience. Probably not one person in a hundred actually got the picture, which seemed so plain to me. Why, back in the prim, moral old days when everybody did just what he should have done, I have seen sagging gates that opened on a sidewalk and were likely to impede traffic literally almost kicked off their hinges. A former roommate of mine, dressy and prim in appearance, was an expert at this lost art. He resented the gates that were left ajar, especially the ones that limited traffic.

And, an adjunct to homes to show what they were and who lived inside, there was often a very proper hitching post and/or a ~~mounting~~ stone. A few history-minded people have kept the old ~~reminder~~ of the days when gentlemen and also ladies rode horseback, very properly, up and down the quiet streets.

In order to have horses, there had to be places to keep them. Some slightly impersonal people allowed their steeds to be kept at a livery stable; but real hoss-lovers had their own stables. It has been hard to convince some of my later students that such things as horses were once so plentiful inside the town. Once, when I was telling about a fire that burned up a livery stable and its twenty-three horses, I got a sort of ingratiating smile that seemed to say, "Always be kind to old people, who have got their memories scrambled."

Even more than a gaited horse to ride as a sign of being Somebody was the carriage. And all sorts of carriages were around when I arrived here. In fact, there were only three automobiles in the entire town, and none in the surrounding county. When you heard the clop, clop of a horse's hoofs, you looked up to see whether some proud rider was going by or a carriage was being drawn by one or two high-stepping horses. Whooped! That were the days!

Away back when, in some primitive society, somebody captured a colt and tamed it. And thus man became a slave to his horse. For ages the partnership of horse and man seemed foreordained, just as later the stylish fence seemed to be forever and ever. But gone is the horse except for some few representatives of the species, mere ornaments now of our society. And the fences, except for some strongly-built ones, have left only memories. Who could have prophesied in 1908 that such a calamitous event would come in our time? I used to feel pretty low down in the scale: I did not own a horse and carriage, I had no fence, I have never been seen astride a horse since I entered this town. And now I seem so ordinary that most of my contemporaries ^{do not} even suspect how I have had to come up to old age through such serious lacks in a society that once seemed so firmly fixed, so necessary to keep alive the image of our town.

LOST PLACES

Some years ago a rather expensive publication was put out by some agency of the state government. It was, basically, an account of famous places all over the whole area of Kentucky and contained some valuable information about the early history of famous homes, great watering places, public buildings, and historic events, many of which are only dimly remembered by most people. All this was to the good. A feature of the book, however, that caused much laughter among people who had been about, as we used to say about people who had traveled extensively, was its recognition of places as still existing that had been gone for a whole generation or even two. In a county neighboring to Warren, where I live, existed before the Civil War some decades, but not since then, a famous rural hotel. It was listed along with the county seat, the villages, some fine old homes, and all the rest. A friend of mine, who lived in that county and is a walking encyclopedia of its history, was completely puzzled by the name of the great place. She had to confer with her aged father, who could barely remember having heard his parents talk about the place.

At the time I laughed heartily at the failure of the book-writer to check over her manuscript with somebody else before it appeared as a rather beautiful book. In recent years I have somehow felt a little kinder to the memory of the lecturer and her book, for oodles of places that seemed as fixed as the North Star, let us say, have folded up and completely disappeared within the last two decades. Not only have choice locations of residences been transformed into filling stations and shopping centers, with not a trace of what used to be around; some of the country places, known for generations as the Old Jones or Smith Farm, would not be recognizable if one of the earlier inhabitants came back to earth on a visit. A little village where I taught, away back in 1908-10, lost its age-old postoffice; most of the older portion of the village has completely disappeared; the present scattered houses are across the creek from where the village used to be. The name is still on the map, but the place I knew is now only a memory. When I went down into that area a few years ago, I could not determine where stood the house where I roomed and boarded for two years. The kind people who lived fairly close by were late-comers to the area and had never even heard of the family, a very prominent one, who used to live somewhere within a few yards of them.

The day before I wrote this essay I drove by the last remaining school building of the famous one-roomed type within miles and miles. For years it has had other uses; probably the younger people would be surprised to know that it was ever used as a schoolhouse. And who ever heard of a schoolhouse with just one room? And how did the children get there before the school buses were running?

My earliest memories go back to some pile of bricks or pudding stones that marked the remains of a pioneer chimney, over at the back of our field. Who lived there? Frankly, I do not know. He had been gone for several decades before I arrived. He did not know me, and I did not know him. Except for the remains of the chimney and a sunken place where the cellar had been the only reminder that this used to be somebody's castle was a good-sized plum thicket that had grown up from two or three trees that the original owner had set out, I was told. I often walked through that thicket, in broad daylight, but somehow it seemed slightly haunted after sunset. I wonder whether other haunts are now visiting the places where somebody's fine house, or even somebody's prosperous village used to stand? To us in America a place occupied a hundred years ago seems ancient; how we would feel in Europe, with ages of occupants of our acreage, I can hardly imagine. Maybe someone, like the estimable author of the guide to famous places, may set down, without consulting the most recent maps, some place that is today recognized, even without its Chamber of Commerce, as stable and permanent.

IS THERE ANOTHER ONE?

A day before I wrote this essay somebody asked me whether there was more than one Fidelity. I had to answer cryptically that there were hundreds of them. "But," said my visitor, "do you know of another village, like your own Fidelity that actually bears that name?" I thought a while and recalled that some student of mine from McCrory County, I believe it was, knew such a place. But my visitor said that Fidelity had appeared in a newspaper that celebrated a hundred and fifty years of history of a county not too far away from mine. Certainly, if any village named Fidelity ever existed there, I have yet to hear of it. "Then," said the visitor, "you should set that editor right for quoting you without giving you credit."

Since this column has never been copyrighted, I fear that I would have a hard time proving that my rights had been infringed upon when someone mentioned an old-fashioned village and called it Fidelity. It just may be that the editor thought that everybody would know that the word was a fictitious name for just such a village and would not imagine that such a title was ever used in the county that I mentioned.

Anyway, no especial harm has been done. If you find my village in yours or vice versa, well and good. If I had failed to find it, however, I would be afraid that I had spent my life rather foolishly writing about my village as if it were typical of a certain time and place.

Of course, there are Fidelities, lots of them; some are named smooth-sounding names like Fidelity, some are bearers of harsh or rather inappropriate names, some are named for famous people or famous places. But, down under the outward form and name is a Fidelity like mine: self-sufficient, independent, neighborly, able to meet new times and adjust to them, and not ashamed of being a small place.

My Fidelity was named New Concord and still bears that name, though locally and on the road signs it is called Concord. It is new only in name, for it was settled within a year after the Jackson Purchase was opened to the whites in 1819. It played a rather important part in early days, with its branch of the government dealing with the taking up of the land. At one time it is said to have been one of the largest offices of this sort in the whole Purchase. And, in its earliest days my Fidelity was called Humility, to me the funniest name for such a village in the whole world. Though its people were by no means tough customers, they were far from being humble in any ordinary sense. If humble means lowly, you'll have to go somewhere else to find my Fidelity; our folks were not aristocratic, but they were certainly far from being of lowly origin. If humble is to be thought of as meek, you are wrong again. Our folks were not arrogant, but they did not lick anybody's hands. They, like Longfellow's village blacksmith, straightened themselves up and "looked the whole world in the face." Just why Humility was dropped for Concord I do not know; the New was prefixed to keep the place from being confused with a lot of Concord's in other counties.

A number of my older friends, some of them my earliest away-from-home schoolmates, have wanted to know just how to reach my Fidelity. Fortunately, I could recall the actual numbers of the roads and could even draw a crude map to show how to approach the great little place, for it can be so approached. Now, after you get there, please do not think you have actually seen it. Hang around a while and catch some of its invisible personality; don't imagine that any Fidelity can ever be seen at one glance. If you had a Fidelity in your life, you will soon know mine, for the beauty of this village life was its being so similar all over our cultural area. If you want to go back home and call your Podunk or Turkey Hollow or Rabbit Ridge by the name of my actual and also dream village, you have my permission. And I won't sue you for using copyrighted material.

RIP NO. 2

When I was a little boy, one of our neighbor women gave me a child's version of Irving's "Rip Van Winkle." It was illustrated with several simple drawings, all of which I have forgotten except the one where Rip comes back home, only to ~~have~~^{be} forgotten by everybody. Somehow, seventy years later, that simple picture still haunts me, as it did when I was a little child. My older brothers and sisters could see the humor in the old story; I saw only the sadness of it all; it must be awful to be forgotten while one is still alive, even if he is peacefully sleeping up in the Catskill Mountains.

Here am I, not ~~asleep~~, not puzzled by the queer looks of the place where I was born or where I lived, not known by the self-important people who have arrived since I passed out of the picture. My memories sometimes seem just too pat, too shaped to fit whatever occasion calls them up.

Why, I remember when twenty-two trains a day carried passengers into or out of Bowling Green. And I could have named the time of arrival of each one of them. There is nothing remarkable about that, for I had, one or more times, ridden every one of them to and from. I arrived in this town on the Ten-Eighteen, so called by everybody. It came at 10:18 P. M. from down Memphis way. I had ridden a N. C. and St. L. train to Paris that afternoon and changed to the L. and N. By the time this second train got to Guthrie, we began to pick up lots of passengers, many of whom turned out to be lifelong friends, for they, like me, were on their way to The Normal, as Western was then called. And, over and over, as I would teach my country schools and return to Bowling Green, I arrived on the Ten-Eighteen, nearly always right on the dot. Several other trains were known nearly as well, but the Ten-Eighteen was My Train. For years on end I went to commencements on trains, sometimes transferring to wagons or buggies and, later, to T-Models for a final grand entry into the small-town or crossroads school where I was to speak. With the coming of better roads and my own car, I somehow lost connection with even the Ten-Eighteen; and most of the twenty-two passenger trains are gone now. I sometimes have to explain to the younger generation, like another Rip Van Winkle, what an accommodation train was.

And I remember when everybody who could hear would say, when a certain steamboat whistle echoed among our hills: "That's the Evansville," or some other well-known packet boat. One of the pilots in those days would announce the coming of his boat by playing well-known tunes on the wildcat whistle. Sometimes he would tune up away down the river, say, at Thomas's Landing, as if to get the spider webs out of the throat of the whistle. But he reserved his best music for the last mile or two before he guided the boat into the anchorage at our boat-landing. Again I had personal reasons for remembering the boats, for they, too, took me to many a place where I was going or brought me back. Occasionally I would ride a late-afternoon accommodation train to my speaking place, spend the night there, and then come home by steamer. Our river is so narrow that the boats almost filled it; we seem to float and swerve in and out among the cliffs and cornfields. Now the boats are gone on our river, and even an important lock has washed out. If that lock had broken down in 1915, hosts of people would have suffered, for it was a life-bringing vessel for river towns and the countryside that depended on them. Away down after 1915 the river froze over; as a result some villages ran out of staple foods. A brave man with a couple of mule teams hitched to his wagon braved the impossible and almost impassable roads to get sugar and such necessities for his village. If a boat suddenly rounded the corner or the bend now and began playing "Old Kentucky Home," I fear some old-timers would call an ambulance and ride it to the hospital, fearful that their last few active brain cells had suddenly dried up, plus a rushing of memories that would be a little too much for oldish brains. Move over, Rip; here I come.

"AND SO-AND-SO HAPPENED"

One of the most primitive ways of thinking feels that if something happens after something else, the first event was, in some weird way, the cause of the second one. Thus chronology takes precedence over logic.

Many a time, throughout my life, I have heard someone who should have known better tell of some sign and then conclude with some such words as these: "And the next day Uncle George fell down and broke his arm." I have found that it does no good to try to reason with a person who talks thus. Consequently, I have sat on the sideline and wondered at human frailty.

In writing, recently, a long article on times, seasons, and weather I was struck by the number of times that this matter of chronology bobbed up. There was a fog in August; that foretold a snow in winter. Or a thunderstorm in February prophesied a frost in April (or May, say some of the people I have interviewed). Dozens of weather signs are as flimsy as these. The late Dr. Frank Rainey, biology professor at Centre College, used to quote often Mark Twain's favorite weather sign: If cornshucks are thicker than usual, winter will be colder than summer; if they are thinner than usual, summer will be hotter than winter; if they are average in thickness, winter will be cold and summer hot.

This same time element enters into many phases of folk medicine. Everybody, nearly, knows about the phases of the moon. And a good many people still profess belief in the power of the moon over just about everything. In fact, the moon and its phases, plus the signs of the zodiac, just about tell everything that one needs to know. Still some of the almanacs show the exact planet or moon phase that influences each day. And the wise ones are those who follow this remarkable information. Plant your garden, butcher your hogs, gather in your crops, go courting, get married, move into a new house--name it, and the sign will show what you ought to do. Some people feel that the tremendous number of divorces could be cut in half at once if people who are about to get married would sit down calmly and study the almanac. And it is highly important, too, to know when to peel bark down to make good medicine, when to peel it up. Much of the medicine that we buy at the stores, according to one of my authorities, had been made without an observation of where the planets are and what shape the moon is in. Another equally good authority says that this is all nonsense; in fact, he used some strong words when he said it. He feels that in the woods are seeds and leaves and bark and fruits and flowers that are divinely set apart as remedies. He told me that doctors and pharmacists are in general ignorant and dishonest because they neglect the healing powers that are all around us.

Why, it is foolish to cut down an oak tree for boards without knowing what the phases of the moon is. The wrong time will insure that the boards will curl up at the ends, and that is no way for a self-respecting board to act. Besides, that sort of curling may trap some of the rain and turn it right into the house. In this way a very practical side of phases of the moon is shown.

An excellent lady told me, some years ago, that she took nine kinds of plants, tied them into a small bundle, and hung them inside the chimney where nothing would disturb them. And, some weeks later, the very persistent chills and fever that had made her daughter's life miserable left never to return.

Another good lady felt that her daughter's illness resulted from her having started a dress one Friday morning without finishing it before Saturday night. This lady might well have been the wife of a number of builders who somehow found excuses not to start some building on Friday; the job would be put off until Monday morning, even if the hands had to be laid off. Are you superstitious? I'll bet you are, even if you deny it. If you don't let the superstition change your conduct, you at least often wonder whether there might be something in it,

WHY I DID NOT KNOW ABOUT WATER-WITCHING

At Fidelity I never heard of water-witching. In books I had read about it but just supposed that no one took it seriously. You see, it took no hocus-pocus at Fidelity to strike water. In fact, it was pretty silly to think of such a thing. The topsoil was underlaid with clay and gravel and sand. All that was necessary when you wanted to dig a well was to start digging down at the foot of a slant. By looking around at stream courses, you could guess to within a few feet, at most, of how far down you would have to go. Lots of people had wells; it was easy to have them, whether they were dug or bored. The only thing that bothered was not an absence of water but a presence of crawling sand. If a well went dry, it had merely silted up, and some people felt that sand could almost penetrate wood or even concrete.

Another thing I never feared or dreaded was impure water. And this was no matter of ignorance, either. Our springs came up through huge beds of white sand and never took on any muddy color unless by carelessness we had not built the gum high enough from the regular drainage. Hollow sections of sweetgum trees were set around the place where the spring bubbled up through the sand, and the whole neighborhood had thus a source of rather pure water. I only wish that all other sources of uncleanness had been equally sanitary. We grew up feeling that spring water was about the purest thing in a rather wicked and impure world. And some of us migrated to limestone areas and kept for a while our feeling for spring water. When I think back to my earlier days in the limestone areas, I shudder, for I know now that I must have drunk about as much drainage and sewage as water.

With Fidelity as a background and with additional years in other areas in the Jackson Purchase, with the sand filters for springs, it came as a shock when I found what would be clear springs in the limestone area in dry weather often colored up like a muddy creek in rainy weather. It took a good many years, however, for this to soak into my thick skull.

Until Bowling Green belatedly, some decades ago, decided to install a sewer system, each house had its own private sink, sometimes but not always, with a septic tank. Our town is honeycombed underneath its rocky surface with caves and underground streams. It would take a computer to tell just how many such places there are. Some of these underground channels are narrow and deep, some are huge underground chambers, some are mere crevices between strata of harder rocks. And since water goes down, it did just that for generations in our town, when it didn't spew up somewhere when confined to too narrow quarters.

Water-witches had their part in locating proper outlets for our excess drainage. I have watched some of them at work; in fact, I have paid some money to workmen who refused to dig out a rock until the local water-witch said that there was a crevice beneath that would take off the water from the septic tank. And then the digging began, with great hope on the part of the diggers and arrant skepticism on my part. For a while the crevice laboriously found by the waterwitch took off the water; then came trouble and more expense. I never wavered in my skepticism and haven't yet; but you sometimes have to do something to keep from being a public nuisance with such offensive things as a leaky sink. And, over and over, I had to put up with this primitive stuff, waiting until a sewer system could be installed and the long, disgusting agony of having to depend on workmen who in turn depended on the wisdom of water-witches. I wonder where the waterwitches of that time are now and whether they are still doing their stuff for a price. I must say that I did not pay directly any of these savants, but I suspect that my hired men gave the waterwitch a rake-off when I paid for a temporary solving of disgusting problems. Are you a water-witch? Show me.

WHAT THEY REMEMBER

Some weeks ago I mentioned a rather delightful and quaint little magazine that was given to me as a present, GOOD OLD TIMES. It has been a genuine pleasure to read over and over some of its contributions, for it is made up wholly of contributions by its readers. Though published in Massachusetts, its contributors live everywhere.

What has engaged my attention many times as I have turned through its pages is to try to find what the people who send in material talk about. Naturally, nearly everybody who sends in material is old or approaching old age. There are pictures galore, of family groups, school and church crowds, weddings, farm workings; of small youngsters dressed up fit to kill and facing, somewhat fearfully, the camera; fancy buggies and surreys, earlier automobiles; fine livestock; sod shanties; fine old houses with the family and friends sitting on spacious porches; and on and on. The letters set down, sometimes in off-standard spelling, the memories of people who would probably average over seventy years old. Elaborate accounts of great events in the life of the writer are often well written, probably the longest letter ever penned by the writer. As would be expected, the tragic and unpleasant is always played down, but it is mentioned as a sort of foil for the pleasant memories. In no letter thus far have I found any cynicism about life, whether it was lived on a big Illinois farm or among the woods in Michigan but in a sod-house on the prairie. And nobody seemed eager to show how great he was or how superior he had been to his surroundings. These simple people, eager to tell some fascinating things about an era that is now gone by, as a New Englander would say, make no apologies for having lived in less modern times. Few play up the older conditions beyond actual facts. It is really wholesome stuff in a time when a great many people think that only tragedy is interesting.

Many oldsters send in the words of poems and songs they used to sing and often request others of which they know a few lines. The next issue of the magazine may have the much-sought-after poem or song and some more requests. The poems we used to recite on Friday afternoons seem about as popular with the readers as the sentimental love songs that run back into the years before 1900. There is a commendable restraint in most of the letters, though there is some sighing because life seems so busy and so nervous today as compared with memories of other days. This is to be expected, for the writers are usually living in cities, far away from the things they write about and often, it seems, limited in many ways because of advancing age.

What are you going to remember when you are getting old? Will you somewhat discount the sad and disappointing events of your life and play up the pleasant things? If you do not, you will be a rare old fellow. As one of your older friends, please let me remind you to try to keep a decent balance in your memories. See your early days through the best specs you have, but don't forget the needs, the lacks of your early times. Don't imagine that everybody then was perfect or nearly so, that making a living was easier, that real values were appreciated more than now, that humanity since you were young has gone down hill fast.

Primitive virtues are just that--primitive virtues. They worked well in primitive surroundings and, often, with some adjustment, can be adapted to other times and places. But the years after the Civil War and before World War I were, in spite of all their fascination, just the years that oldsters lived; therefore those years assume a grandeur that is perfectly natural for the oldsters, whose little worlds were mere backyards, but may seem pretty insignificant to later, widely-traveled generations. Dream, old-timers, all you want to about your own Good Old Days, but be kind to younger people who are right now, with all their disdain of Grandpa, building up their own memories. The age-old battle of the older ones and the younger ones has been around so long that it seems just a necessary part of being human.

MY FIDELITY AND OUTSIDERS

In all my years of writing and speaking about Fidelity, I have never forgotten, no matter what my essays might have said, that my view of Fidelity was just that--my view. Back when I lived a mile to the east of the actual village, just about everybody sneered at the village itself and its surrounding poor farms. The insiders somehow enjoyed knocking the only place they actually knew much about. To hear a typical group, around the country-store stove or in the yard after a big Sunday dinner, you would have thought the whole area was pretty terrible. Murders, mysterious disappearances, scandals, robberies, queer people--these formed the subject for conversation for most people. I have heard many of the good Fidelity people say things that would make you think that Fidelity was another name for some God-forsaken place where things were in a terrible fix.

The tune changed when some outsider came in ^{and} somewhat indicated that things as they were at Fidelity were hardly up to standards elsewhere. Then we rose up to defend our village and its hinterland like genuine patriots. We especially resented the remarks made by cousins who also lived on farms and did just what we did. But they were nearer the railroad and the county seat and somehow conveyed the idea that that somehow added stature to them. After a visit to them off of them to us, it took us some time to get straightened out again and resume our own belittling of our area. Insiders, of course, are privileged critics; but outsiders had better tend to their own tacky little villages and washed-out farms.

So common was this attitude that it came as a complete surprise, twenty years ago or more, when one of the ex-Fidelity residents sent me a copy of poems written by a middle-aged man who, as a boy, occasionally visited some relatives of his in our neighborhood. When he would be in our area, he would come to our Sunday School, looking comfortable in his dress-up shoes and suit while we farm boys were itching and suffering because we had on too many clothes and our shoes felt several sizes too small for feet that, six days a week, were turned out to wander in mud and dust and briars. Fortunately, that boy never said, in my presence, any derogatory word about our shut-in little world. In fact, we merely spoke to each other in our primest, good-mannered way, and that was all. Imagine my surprise, when I read his volume of poetry, when I found several poems that had grown out of his visits to our out-of-the-way place. He said things about our hills that I wish I had said, he did not hesitate to recall memories of primitive but genuine human kindnesses, he somehow felt that Fidelity (except he called it by its postoffice name) was a bright spot in his memories. He had been reared in the county seat, he belonged to a family that, for that time, was well-to-do, he had had, for that time, superior educational advantages; and he had traveled, again for that time, a lot and had seen lots of places that nobody at Sulphur Springs Church had never seen. He, too, went away, finally to far-away Oregon, where he was, for a long, long life of usefulness, a teacher in the state agricultural college. But no years, no recognition for his real merits, no amount of seeing the world blinded him to the strange appeal of the hills and people around Fidelity. Until his death, a few years ago, this volume of poetry brought him and me nearer together than his visits to Fidelity ever did; we exchanged several letters and compared our impressions of my native area, long after we had both been far away from it in distance or in other interests. Maybe our sitting around the store stove or in the backyard telling about the bad sides of our puny little place was just a sort of longing for better things, not only in Fidelity itself but in a bigger world than we ever knew. Maybe the testimony of some pious sister at the church that the world is but a desert drear was her rather standardized way of saying that we have not yet arrived, that life can be lived better, that the world has not got us down.

EATING HIGH ON THE HOG

Seasonal foods are intriguing. And most places see to it that the general public is aware of them. In my part of the state there are a good many farmers who raise strawberries. When strawberry season arrives, many of us literally stuff ourselves with strawberries, knowing that the season will be short. Of course, we can always get strawberries at the super-markets, but somehow the home-grown ones seem better. And we also have some fine peach orchards. When the roadside markets open, long groups of natives and tourists are in line to grab the first baskets for sale. And this season, fortunately, continues a rather long time, as the orchards have many varieties of peaches and keep the public informed about which ones are now ready. Again we eat peaches as if we were expecting never to see any of them for sale again.

And so we could go on, for just about every month brings something special, and there are "genuine Kentucky hams," often imported from elsewhere, just lying in wait for us. Some of my correspondents have said that their tenderest memory of Bowling Green is of a ham that they, as tourists, picked up as they came through.

When I have been in seacoast New England, I have smelled fish all the time I was in or near the markets. In fact, I smelled fish, free, for so long that I ordered a steak in one of the fishiest places of them all, Gloucester. You see, my Scotch nose accepted the free smell of fish, but my Scotch pocketbook preferred plain old steak, which can be bought all over the country.

And that reminds me how we used to do things at Fidelity. Fresh meat, except fish and chicken, was pretty scarce, since there were no very adequate ways to keep it cool. We could cook up some beef and hang in a special bucket the rest of the cooked meat in the cistern or in a dug well. But that was taking a risk, as we sometimes found out. Consequently, when we had fresh meat, we literally made hogs of ourselves while it was abundant. Some of us killed a calf or a pig and sold to the neighbors what we could not use ourselves. At the dinners on the ground, I am afraid that many a person had come to get a taste of roast beef rather than to hear the preacher or the political candidate. Of course, we all sat in the church or on hard planks under the trees near the spring and pretended that we were vastly enlightened by the speaker. But we lost no time when the service was over in finding our places along the end-to-end tablecloths spread out along the ground under the maples. You should have heard the compliments bestowed on the cooks. If a thing is free, why not take on over it and show how good it all is?

My specialty, far too often, was cake and its thousand-and-one varieties. I would cram down the earlier portions of the meal, somewhat after the manner of a dog eating, but I saved my tastebuds for the cakes. In all the decades since I lived at Fidelity, I still have felt that our local women could bake the best cakes that ever I smacked my lips over. And that is not just an old man's memories, either. Well-trained home economists have told me that Fidelity still turns out top-notch cakes. Even if they didn't say this, I would know from my own long experience as a cake-eater (no harm meant in this word). Somehow, though I often made myself sick on Quarterly Meetings days, I never seemed to learn any lesson. When the next day came round, or any other big event, I crammed myself to a state of misery on my favorite cakes. Who objects to a migraine headache or two when the trigger that set it off is a good cake or a rich pie or a combination of these plus candy, soda pop, and home-made ice cream? I still envy Hawthorne's old fellow who could still recall the taste of innumerable meals that had been eaten a half century back. Eating high on the hog brings good memories as well as delightfully present-moment sensations.

"TOO PRECIOUS TO BURN"

Every home that has been running very long has oodles of things that, intrinsically, are trash, piled and stored around, collecting dust or being gnawed by insects. But this stuff is too precious to burn, though nobody else wants it. Of just such things are antiques of many sorts made. Antique furniture got its day in the sun a long way back, but gadgets did not attract buyers very much until lately. Even I had to laugh when our daughter carried back to Oregon in her limited-weight baggage two flat irons, the very kind that her mother, grandmothers, and women far back into the past sweated over every week on the foreordained ironing day, Tuesday. Since we had no such irons around, she had to buy them in an antique store, paying a good sum for each of them. And, not too long ago, the old-fashioned hand-operated telephone offered for sale at the auction following the death of its owner brought some fine bids. A friend of mine had been tipped off to buy that telephone box for someone who could not be present. Bidding ran so high that it took a good many dollars to get it.

But still the attics, the lumberrooms, the chests, and other storage places are running-over full of things that are not yet on the market as antiques. If you can just keep them a few decades longer, properly insured against fire, rats, and cock roaches, you may have a fat purse in your future. Unfortunately, a great many things of great historic worth have come to pieces while waiting a reappraisal of their worth. The moths, long ago, got my last boy dress, the one I wore when I was four-going-on-five. I regret that time and its henchmen--insects, mildew, sunlight, and fire--have taken so much toll of what seems irreplaceable.

When I "moved home" from my office, in the late summer of 1959, after more than a half century of teaching, I discovered things that I had forgotten that I still owned. And some of the precious plunder that I uncovered and cleaned up are actually worth money now, though they are not for sale. One is an autographed copy of Jesse Stuart's first thin volume of poems, originally sold for a dollar but now a collector's item. I had had the great good fortune to print Stuart's first poem to appear; hence his sending me a copy of the little book. I was editing the KENTUCKY FOLKLORE AND POETRY MAGAZINE then and solicited collected folksongs, beliefs, and the like and also original poetry, especially if it had a folk touch. A teacher of Jesse Stuart's wrote me about his talented student at Lincoln Memorial University and sent me some of his poems. Later Jesse himself sent me a good folk-medicine article, the first prose of his published, he told me after he had become well-known as a short-story and novel writer. Now how could you evaluate a gift like that?

are valuable.

Public museums, showing typical artifacts, And all of us like to visit such places and try to visualize the people who owned these quaint old clothes and household articles. As we become more conscious of our backgrounds and less ashamed of them, these museums will be of even greater worth in our experiences. But every home has the makings of a private museum, and even outsiders can find a wealth of memories in going over the exhibits when they are brought forth. A few summers ago I had a personally-conducted tour of the area in Middle Tennessee where five generations of the family had lived. I got to see for the first time many of the local sights that my father, the fifth generation of the clan, had often told us children about. And my cousin, whom I had never seen until that day, brought out a whole dresser-drawer full of pictures of the family, some of them rather ancient and still, made when only a time-exposure was available for the picture-man's machine. I got some good laughs at the recurrent features of relatives whom I had seen only a few times more than a half century earlier and others whom I have never seen. It was a sort of museum of the Wilson clan, with their sandy or reddish hair and firm-set mouths, a sort of defiant look as if they were accepting the world and defying it to get them down.

LITTLE OR BIG?

When a history of our present-day America is written, there will have to be a chapter on the passing of small things. Whether this is wholly bad or wholly good, I will not say, for I do not know. Anyway, when we look back to earlier periods in our lives, we who are past middle-age, it is nearly always of small things that we find ourselves thinking.

Suppose we begin with our native communities. In my passion for studying maps, especially those made forty or fifty years ago, I am somewhat amused by the smallness of such areas as my own Fidelity community. It was barely four miles to the Kentucky-Tennessee state line, and from six to eight miles to landings along the Tennessee River. But to the south of us, even though there were only four miles of Kentucky, another whole community and its school seemed as firmly fixed as our Fidelity. To the east and Tennessee River there were two more communities, quite distinct when I was a boy, one of them about halfway between Fidelity and the river, the other at the river itself. To the west a small river formed a barrier, and outlined another community. Why, within a seven-mile radius there were in whole or in part some ten communities. Each Christmas, when I take an annual Christmas Bird Count for the American Audubon Society, I am confined to an area seven and a half miles in all directions from the starting point, Three Springs, south of Bowling Green. We try to get out four parties in this area, but sometimes have to be contented with fewer. Imagine having a vast expanse like that even to know at first hand when I lived at Fidelity. There were places not over three miles away that I had never seen before I left home; and some of them remain unseen to this day.

In the area covered by the Mammoth Cave National Park there were eleven schools, with portions of fully that many more. And yet the extreme length of the park is slightly under fifteen miles, its width varying from three to eight miles. On one ridge, now accessible by car in a few minutes, were three one-roomed schools. And this matter of the small community was universal. I could name a dozen counties where this prevailed.

In all the western counties of the state and all but some of the mountain counties and a few bordering ones, the one-roomed school is gone. One lone one-roomed school is the exception in the western area, and its days are obviously numbered. Before we know it, the younger generation will know as little about the one-roomed school as older people know about oxtams.

With the coming of voting machines, dozens of voting places, some of them very small, have vanished. A great many people are still undecided whether this is good or bad, and some would like to see the small voting place, the small school, the small business restored. Just how they would go about this, however, no two people agree.

In some denominations the very small rural church persists. Loyalty to the older time is hard to resist. Sometimes a religious hornet's nest has been stirred up when it was suggested that two small congregations would be better off if they united. Not often have I read of any such union, in any neighboring county.

Every once in a while I hear some old-timers, while we are filling our carts with groceries at the super-market, longing for the typical country store. They remind me of a friend of mine who went to his grave horrified at the loss of the one-roomed country school; but his children attended the best school available, which happened to be a big-city system, and neither he nor his family ever lived a day in the open country.

A very touchy subject is the union of small counties. Even more than suggestions about uniting two churches of different denominations is this one. A prophet would have a hard time deciding what is to happen in a lot of our states about this very modern and practical problem? Maybe churches and counties are immune to the consolidation idea.

LOYALTY, GOOD AND BAD

Loyalty is a queer thing. Sometimes it seems to be superior to all other human emotions. Sometimes this is good, sometimes it is bad, and often it is funny.

The old sectional loyalty, as in my original county, which arrayed the East Side against the West Side, seems, to an old man who has been away from the whole county for sixty years, pretty childish. Basically, it had no reason to be. Just about everybody was poor in my childhood, nearly everybody was a farmer or his family, and our outlook on the big world was comically narrow. But this loyalty to one's immediate region caused some strange things to happen: in politics, in religion, in education, and, of course, in society. Now, the county seems like a good-sized saddle blanket in size, using a very old figure; and we former residents who have so long been on the outside can see this funny loyalty as just that, something slightly comic.

Having lived in an area only a few miles from another state when I was a boy, I often wondered at state loyalty that usually became state prejudice. Since my father was a Tennessean by birth, and four generations of the family behind him; since he was the doctor for an area that was a third or more in Tennessee; and since no one could tell the difference between a Tennessean and a Kentuckian when some big event brought them together--because of all these things I grew up somewhat puzzled by an intense loyalty that made people on the opposite sides of a man-made line had for their side of the fence. Fortunately, this prejudiced loyalty was not often ugly, only comic.

As a member of the teaching profession I have seen, hundreds of times, intense loyalty to one's alma mater that really was no better and no worse than the most ignorant prejudice in other fields. I have seen many a teacher practically snubbed because he taught in a public school or because he graduated from some Southern or Middle Western university or college. And, worst of all, has been the high-schoolish jealousy of colleges inside one's own state, colleges with the same purpose and origin, whether private or public. Rivalry is all right if properly guarded, but it becomes silly or worse when it is whetted by people who should know better. One of the best teachers I ever had, a world-renowned folklorist, used to say that it was certainly a queer way to judge a scholar's ability merely by the name of the school he attended. And he could have been haughty, for, a country boy in origin, he had graduated from old Harvard itself. Only when it was necessary for the record did this information ever leak out; he preferred to stand on his own record and not dodge behind his alma mater.

→ Somehow these evidences of grown-up men and women and their prejudices remind me of the traditional story of the two boys who tell each other about the merits of their respective fathers: "My dad can lick your dad." Actually, with all our growing up, as individuals and as communities and as a nation, we sometimes keep the folkish attitude that we knew when we were small boys and had to rely on the prowess of some older brother or Pappy himself. I have often wished, as a college teacher, that I could dare to laugh at this loyalty that has gone wrong. No wonder some wise people who have had few opportunities to acquire an education sometimes laugh at the obvious pretensions of us inside the Inner Circle. And that reminds me of the very forceful preacher who said that if he knew that he had a drop of blood that was not Methodist, let us say, since I am a Methodist, he would open the blood vessel right then and let it out. I used to ask my students just how he would determine which drop was Methodist and which wasn't. "Hooray for dear old Whhosis College!"

1451
T x C

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

When this column started, in September, 1935, I was the head of the English department of the Western Kentucky State Teachers College. Later the word Teachers was dropped, and the institution was the Western Kentucky State College. Early this year, 1966, all four of the state colleges became universities; now my institution is the Western Kentucky University. And somehow that looks pretty big to a fellow like me who saw the small normal school grow into something as big as this. As I have said before in this column, I began my career as a student at Western when the new Western Kentucky State Normal School was hardly a year old; my whole mature life has been spent here, with a very little time out, in 1909-1910, to teach two years in a village school, and some years and parts of years after I had graduated in the old school, with its four years of high school and two years of college, to get my successive degrees. Naturally, I am old enough now, as a retired college professor, to exult in the new name and what it implies. And I would like to see the new name attached to anything that has to do with Western, as well as the other sister institutions. Normal-school days were formative and have become hallowed to us older ones, who had no opportunity otherwise to get even a high-school education. Teachers-college days saw my generation of oldsters as teachers gladly taking up the additional years of training for our students; now university days call my successors in the department to do a performance as great for them in their more-advanced age and better backgrounds than we oldsters ever could have accomplished. And we solicit the good will of our service area for the active ones, just as we were the recipients of some great experiences and some heart-warming events.

Using the new name from now on is like calling a married woman by her new name. Only occasionally do people forget that Mary Jones is now Mary Jones Smith; it is pretty hard on Mr. Smith if he seems to be a nonentity. Hundreds of schools were called colleges before any standards were applied to determine whether they were more than high schools, just as it was once common to call any college teacher Doctor, whether he had ever done a day's graduate study. Let us hope that people will now accept the new name and will use it, not to show off but because that is its name. And those who have known the years of hard work behind getting accreditation and recognition for our four state universities that came into existence about the middle of this year deserve to have their respective institutions called always by their names.

The Western Kentucky State College is gone. Or rather, it is reincarnated in its new name. Why not think of it and speak of it by its hard-earned and respected title?

Gordon Wilson

In a project of gathering material and writing a series of articles on "Traditional Aspects of the One-roomed School" for the KENTUCKY FOLKLORE RECORD, I have had occasion to ask about the size of school districts in our end of the state. It came as no great surprise that the one-roomed schools were rarely more than four or five miles apart, on an air line. With modern roads and with transportation, this seems very, very small for a school or any other unit.

Most of the old-timers whom I have talked to said that the school district was measured by short legs, for school children, as a class, are and were small and had to contend, morning and afternoon, with whatever miles there were between home and school. It has been hard for me to explain this to the younger generation, who have grown up since everybody owned a car, and former distances seem ridiculous.

Occasionally I have found some old-timer who had walked more than three miles to school, but even these oldsters also recalled how that long daily round trip did not interfere with the usual games of Wolf Over the River or Hare and Hounds. However, most old-timers admitted that they, personally, did not walk very far and usually had known short cuts through the woods or across fields that saved many steps.

Thinking about the daily school walk got me to think also about walking in general. Many a man who had walked behind a plow from sun-up till sundown would not have dreamed of walking three miles in any season, just to be walking or on serious business. We used to say, and there was a lot of truth in it, that some of our neighbors would go out to the pasture and chase a horse for a couple of miles trying to catch him to ride to Sulphur Springs Church, a half mile to a mile away. But riding even an ornery horse gave some style to its owner and rider; and if the horse were hitched to a buggy, that added local dignity.

Not long after the turn of the century I got the reputation in my home neighborhood of being quaser or maybe "slightly off" because I would walk miles and miles, just to be walking. In this way I visited places that no other member of my family had ever seen, creeks and hills and springs and extensive woods. But I must make a strange confession: though I lived for two school years within four miles of Cayce, Kentucky, the home of John Luther "Casey" Jones, I never walked that distance and knew Cayce only as it appeared from the train. I did borrow a mule one Saturday and rode to a teachers' association on the other side of Hickman County, where I was teaching. Long since I have been an old man, I have wondered at this left-over fear of walking that even I, a fanatical walker later, still had.

At Sulphur Springs and other country churches we expected all but the very strangest people to ride or drive to church. I cannot recall this incident, but an older brother used to tell of seeing six different families coming to our church in wide-tired log wagons. Some of these families could have walked to church in the time they had to take to round up the horses and hitch them to the wagons. But the arrival of a two-horse rig from "up the creek," with Papa and Mamma in the buggy, and with Big Brother and Little Brother riding young horses just behind the carriage, somehow set a pattern that all respected and most wanted to follow. "Thou shalt not covet," said the preacher, but even he should have known how envious were many of the congregation who did not have such a display of worldliness. But nobody envied the families, not enough to tell, at least, who came on foot, leaving the tired horses at home to recuperate for the next day's plowing. Considerably more than a century ago Thoreau said that man had invented a wheel and had lost the use of his legs; I wonder what he would say today?

WHY WE WERE ALIKE

In my one-roomed school study I often asked questions to determine whether there were any large differences between a school in far-western Kentucky and in the south-central counties. Though two hundred miles separate the extremes that I have studied, there was so little difference that even I, born and raised in the western extreme of the state and living nearly all of my mature life at Bowling Green, was surprised. This set me to thinking.

In the first place, our people who came in in pioneer days were largely alike, with Scotch-Irish blood predominating. A few differences are noticeable between my childhood people and those I have known later, for the central areas of the state had been settled for more than a generation when the Jackson Purchase was opened for settlement. Hosts of the settlers in this "last West" of the state came directly from North Carolina, some of them from families that had arrived long after the seacoast settlements were made. But even this brought, largely, differences in vocabulary rather than in customs.

For a long time our school books were identical, all over the state. Generation after generation used the McGuffey Readers, the Ray Arithmetics. Older people had grown up on the Blue-back Spelling Book, though it was not in active use after I could remember. We had learned to spell syllable by syllable, to read one word at a time, to rattle off the multiplication tables. The teaching devices suggested in the introduction and notes of our texts were taken seriously, so that a school in Barren County was reading a selection from McGuffey's Fifth Reader in exactly the same way as was my own Fidelity, back in the very early 1900's.

Even the terminology of the schools seemed copyrighted. Everybody whom I have consulted, from very young people who attended a one-roomed school to the very old ones, called the period spent in the schoolroom books. And every one called the morning and afternoons breaks recess, with the accent on the first syllable. Some people would say noon, but would immediately correct themselves and say dinnertime. School took up and let out or got out. Every person remembered the annual treat given at the end of the school, just before Christmas, or one then and another at the end of the term when the school term had been lengthened. Standing up and staying in were remembered punishments, called by these names.

The customs from the time the morning school bell rang until school was over were almost comically similar. The seating arrangements, the water bucket and dipper, the finger-sign language, the actual way the classes were conducted--all these could have been transferred from one place to another without creating comment. The same games were played, the same banter was engaged in, the same rewards and punishments were known. Headmarks indicated great honor, not only in spelling but in many other courses. And many a person recalled that history and geography lessons also became reading lessons sometimes, and even they had headmarks for drills on "What ocean east of North America?" "What gulf south?" "What cape at the southern extremity of Greenland?"

On the playground the same games were played, though the names were sometimes different. Our Wolf Over the River at Fidelity and other western areas was likely to be Cuch-sheepie or Wolf on the Hill in some easterly counties. But everybody recalled Antny Over as the game in which most children participated and enjoyed themselves, too. All the older people remembered balls made from worn-out yarn stockings and socks. And some form of Town Ball was universal. We were just growing up in a unified way without knowing it.

One of my most faithful fans has reminded me that I have failed to write about stovewood as a symbol of a person's being a good provider and also an industrious one. She spoke of having driven by farm homes, long ago, where great ricks of stovewood were always to be found; then other places would have small ricks or none at all. Even the children who saw these evidences of wisdom or the lack of it would remark about how Mr. X had provided lots of good stovewood for his wife, but Mr. Y. had neglected to keep up his end of the bargain. The greatest disgrace imaginable in Fidelity was for the woman to have to get out and split up stovewood. Years were necessary to live down such a disgrace; even grandchildren can remember having heard how poor a provider some old, old man was. But descendants of the men who had arranged nicely-piled ricks of stovewood mention this almost as much as they might mention some illustrious ancestor back in North Carolina or Virginia.

The whole question of wood was often discussed in my boyhood. Everybody knew that winter would require lots of wood for the fireplaces and, later, the stoves that gradually had replaced most fireplaces before I was fully grown. And most men seemed to be planning to get in an ample supply of wood before the worst weather set in. It was a very rare one who did not have to get out, in the winter itself, and snake up or haul up some more fuel. There was quite obviously a look of shame on the faces of men engaged in this belated preparation, even though the small boys got lots of sport about being out in the snow and driving the team.

In many communities that I have known it was regarded as a sign of shiftlessness not to have some adequate source of water. Wells, cisterns, and springs were everywhere, sometimes one or more of each near the average house. A creek might be within a few hundred yards, too. But, be it said to the shame of lots of good people, there was rarely a year when enough water was available, especially in the dry summer months. I have seen hundreds of barrels of water hauled from springs or even from creeks. The almost-universal rainbarrel had gone dry, the cistern had got low, sometimes the well was putting out too small a stream to supply all the farm needs. It was imperative, then, to get water and to get as much as possible. In my own area it was fairly customary to use up the cistern water deliberately and then haul dozens of barrels of water from a never-failing spring and fill up the cistern with good drinking water until the fall rains were again turned into the cisterns. Unlike folk sayings in some parts of the South, though, we never drank water out of stumps because we were so improvident. Stump water was there all right, but it one of Nature's most valuable remedies, externally applied. I am sure it was invented primarily to remove freckles and pimples and other defects of complexion and not to be taken internally like sulphur and molasses.

The whole subject of good provider would make a good-sized book, a very valuable one to present to some newly-married couple. If Jim is to be the perfect husband, he must see to it that there is meat in the smoke-house and some more hogs being raised or fattened to keep the supply adequate. He must get up lots of wood and stovewood. He must keep good credit at the country store so that things that cannot be grown on the farm will be ready to be bought and paid for, either in cash or when he sells his tobacco. And he must watch for the changes in his community and keep his wife and family properly up to date, so that they had hold up their heads and can, like Longfellow's village blacksmith, "look the whole world in the face."

THE JONESES, MRS. GRUNDY, and THE REST

At the conclusion of the preceding article I suggested what the good provider was expected to do, to keep his own and his family's standing in an old-fashioned community. I am sure, if any young people read the article, they must have thought that I was talking only about some long-ago time when values were rather comic as viewed by modern people. I am not so sure that these youngsters would say this, however, for they must have looked around themselves and seen how hard it is to keep up with the procession. No age has a monopoly on gadgets and dodads and customs that place us in our strata, whether these strata are what we desire or not.

Wasn't it funny that a rubber-tired buggy brought so much social advancement? And isn't a buggy of any type somewhat funny? Well, maybe. What type of car do you drive, and do you ever apologize for it and yourself? And is your house equipped with only the latest gadgets that can be bought and installed? Did you ever hear of an icebox? Why, that was really something to brag about. And did you ever ride in a surrey? No car of any kind can ever, in this day, bring so much solid satisfaction as did a surrey. It lifted you miles above the fellow who rode in a wagon and a good many yards above the fellow in a mere buggy, unless the driver were a young chap and his companion the best-looking girl of the neighborhood. But the old family buggy looked shabby beside the surrey, and the riders in the surrey knew it, even if they were on their way to church, where the sermon might have for a text something about coveting anything that is thy neighbor's.

Just what it would cost to have the same sort of social standing now that a frame house with a porch and everything painted white used to bring I would be afraid to guess. Accustomed to log houses or boxed houses, most of the Fidelity people had never attained to a frame house when I left home sixty years ago. Probably half of the people in my father's practice area as a country doctor were of logs as recently as 1900, and I could have counted on my hands the frame houses that I knew. Many people lived in boxed houses that had been weatherboarded and gabled, but the genuine frame house was pretty rare. Across our large creek stood, and still stands, the first--and only--brick house in our part of the county. It must have looked like something out of ancient Greece or Rome to the people who helped build it, away back in the eighteenth-hundreds. Even today, in its gaunt, unoccupied halls, it smacks of gracious living that was hardly available to many people a century and more ago. Our people at Fidelity had to be satisfied with far less grand places to keep up with the Joneses.

When a boy in the third school that I taught took the eighth-grade examination and made a high average in all the subjects then taught, I was very proud of him and encouraged him to enroll in the brand-new county high school. But he did not. His parents framed his diploma and set it on an easel in the front hallway of their house, where you had to go around it, no matter which room you were entering. Their boy had graduated! And he had a diploma! Why go farther? Wouldn't that seem almost comic, pathetically comic, today? I hope that he has several grandchildren who have college degrees; I rather doubt whether he sent his own children to high school. But the procession of Joneses goes on, and it is a wise fellow who learns to get into the procession and tries to keep up. Drop whatever you are doing; let's go for a ride in my new rubber-tired buggy!

In the more than a half century that I have been studying and teaching folklore there have been many learned discussions about what folklore is and what is not folklore. Gradually the scholarly world has widened its conception of folklore until it now includes everything that is traditionally rather than formally handed down from one generation to another. This would include language, beliefs of all sorts, folk industries, and, best of all, folk psychology. It is also obvious that there has never been a time when formal learning has been free from folkishness. It has taken centuries to convince most people of average learning that many of the so-called facts in our older textbooks about plants and animals and geography were purely traditional, not proved by competent observation. I sometimes wonder just how many other phases of our learning are free from folk influence. Maybe it is impossible to have abstract learning untinged with traditional ideas and attitudes.

Anyone who has sat through a lengthy trial will agree that abstract truth is hard to arrive at. It is possible for a group of witnesses to be perfectly honest and yet present their observations in such a way that A's testimony refutes B's. Just where was A standing when the fight took place? And what relationship existed between A or B and the fellow being tried? And what backgrounds of even generations may be struggling in some fairly simple case of justice? We like to feel that some historians can present the truth untarnished by personal, local, religious, political, or other bias. But I have yet to read any history that does not sometimes show rather plainly that the author, no matter how much he tries to be honest, lets his personal feelings enter into his writing. What is this but folklore?

We have come to regard science as above folkishness, and yet any one who has been associated with a class in almost any type of science will testify to the folkishness that appears often and sometimes very embarrassingly. I seriously doubt whether half the students in college courses in biology ever overcome their prejudices against hawks, snakes, lizards, and "varmints." Biology, it seems to me, is the field where more folklore still exists than in any other field of science. We grow up learning traditional attitudes toward things and often are so sure of our rightness that no mere learned presentation of skilled and unprejudiced observation can influence us. If Grandpa, who could barely read and write, said that a black snake is poisonous, then it is, no matter how many herpetologists say otherwise. I even know Ph. D.'s in some scientific fields who are still, in small areas of their thinking, thinking the traditional ideas that they learned early. And yet these same young leaders would swear that they are in every way scientific.

Probably the folkish idea that is the hardest to overcome is that it is desirable and proper for humanity to think alike on all subjects. Tolerance, in many fields, is colored with folkishness. It is still difficult to think that some fellow with a good brain might find a way out that is as good as the ones we have always known and respected. It is ours or none, so far as we are concerned. Usually this attitude seems worse in the minds of unlettered and out-of-the-way people, but some of the most arrogant bigots I have ever known grew up in cultured surroundings, got excellent formal educations, always moved in the best social circles. But humanity, except their own social group, were all wrong and, sometimes, with no possible way out. Folkishness, ingrained early in one's ways of thinking, had triumphed over all the later learning and association with humanity. What is folklore? What isn't?

In our McGuffey Readers there was a poem entitled "Forty Years Ago," which, like so many other poems, we memorized and often recited on Friday afternoons. To us children forty years seemed like a dreadful long time; when you are ten years old, forty is four times that much, as anybody can tell you. Somehow poems of that sort appealed to me, as did such songs as "Maggie" and "Silver Threads Among the Gold." I can still hear, in memory, the wailing notes of these tunes as I played them on my French harp to entertain my telephone sweetheart of long ago. I was young then but liked to play being old. Now there is no use to play like.

This is being written in Christmas Week, 1966, just sixty years since I started out on an adventure as a student and teacher. I recall very vividly that the day was a raw, misty one, with low-hanging clouds and a cold wind. My oldest brother and I sat on the spring seat of the farm wagon and drove the eleven and a fraction muddy miles to the railroad station. In the back of the wagon bed was my big trunk, full of just about everything, for I was to be gone until the very last of May. There was also a large telescope, for even the trunk could not hold all of my stuff. Slowly we made our way to town, and I was left alone at the depot for an hour or more before the train came, for the tired mules had to turn back to Fidelity through the mud before night set in.

And then the train came, and I went out into the unknown, not very far, it is true, but pretty far for a boy who had only once been as much as eighteen miles from home. Through the dim windows I saw the typical winter landscapes and marveled at the troops of people who came down at every small stop to see the train, to meet some visitor or see him off, or just came as a part of the winter day's duties. A long wait at Paducah and, in the middle of the night, another one at Fulton, and I finally got to my destination, Clinton, where I was to attend school for the next five months. The Crusaders, on their way to the Holy Land, probably did not have any more thrills than I did that day, for I saw my first steamboat, I had my first train ride, and, most marvelous of all, I saw my first automobile.

The strange thing about my leaving home was that my departure date coincided, almost spookily, with a whole change in our lives and not merely mine. The automobile had come and was soon to transform the whole world. Within another year the General Assembly of Kentucky was to enact a law providing for at least one high school in every county. Hosts of people from our part of the state were emigrating westward, to Texas and Oregon and Washington, so that whole families that I knew left Fidelity for ever. The rise of huge factories in the Middle West was only a few years away, and that event would attract hundreds of western Kentucky wage-earners away from the fields of black tobacco. Ultimately the car would bring a hard-surface road to Fidelity and would thus connect the village and every other remote village with the whole big world. It would even be necessary to post speed-limit signs on the road that succeeded the muddy one over which I traveled sixty years ago this week.

And now, as an old man, still interested in the things that made Fidelity and other places tick, I wonder how many things have passed since I played my French harp or whistled songs about long-past times, "When you and I were young." And the silver threads have come, too, in actuality and not merely as imagined by a boy whose voice had not long been past the wobbly gosling stage.

Feb. 20 T x C

"I KNOW THAT'S WRONG."

Many times, in my interviews with people about regional usage, I have asked for a term, such as the name for some farm animal or some bit of equipment; I have been given the regional word with an apology: "That is what I always said, but I know it is wrong." Too often people who ought to know better have taught us that what "comes naturally" is therefore wrong, in speech and everything else.

In naming things on the farm, for instance, we had as much right to our words as anybody else had to his. If we said "singletree" and he said "swingletree," so what? If we called a small pile of hay out in the field a "shock" or "pile" and he called it a "haycock" or "doodle," who is to say that we are wrong and he is right or vice versa? One way of talking, regionally, is as good as another. For ages the dictionaries have frowned on pronouncing the name of a common weed as "cucklebur"; Webster's Seventh Collegiate Dictionary has finally tumbled, and the good old "cucklebur" can be called that with no fear of our being back-country or wrong. And we do not have to say "pigsty" or "barnyard" or "stockbarn" if we grew up saying "pigpen" and "horselot" and "stables."

Even the so-called scholars have often shown themselves to be as folkish as the very people whom they felt they were foreordained to teach in the correct ways. No more folkish assumption ever existed than that all of us must talk alike, no matter whose language is taken as a standard. An earlier edition of the Webster's dictionary pronounced "ask" and similar words only as some but not all New Englanders pronounce them; a smallish figure after the word indicated a section in the introduction where it was stated that nearly everybody pronounced it with the same quality of the "a" as "a" in "at." That is, this very statement would indicate that nearly everybody is wrong. What is language anyway, something cut and dried or something alive and growing?

Of course, a dictionary that would give proper recognition of regional differences would be far too big for the average person to own, but at least small efforts are being made now by dictionary-makers to record our language as it is rather than as it ought to be, by the pattern in the speech of a limited number of careful speakers. Whether meaning or accent or sounds, a regional word has a right to its own place in our language.

If I were asked to state the one thing that seems to me, after a lifetime of teaching English, as the greatest disappointment to those who try to improve our language habits, I would say, cryptically, "prunes and prisms." Some one, long ago, used these words to indicate the affectation often used by people who were trying to impress strangers or people in authority. An affected British pronunciation, a stilted use of a word that is perfectly at home elsewhere but not here, an obvious straining for effect in the use of the most ordinary word or sentence--these are to me ridiculous, unnecessary, and enemies of good speech. We English teachers have heavy burdens to bear because we have so often broken up or tried to break up good language habits and replace them with others no better and far less natural. Even here we acted folkishly, for we handed down the stilted and authoritative pronouncements of our textbooks as if they were always true and even righteously so.

I am not pleading for obviously crude speech, of course, but for regional naturalness, a kind of talking and writing that is possible for everybody. Too often we have felt that we are to blame for not talking like Englishmen or New Englanders; maybe those people are just as wrong in not talking like us. The whole subject needs some more thought, some more interpretation, so that we can speak well and still not sound like a book or some Miss Mary who used to teach us to talk like nothing that ever was on land or sea.

THREE GENERATIONS

In linguistic tests three groups of people are usually thought of: 1. those who are 60 and upwards, a large group, larger than at any other time in history; 2. those between 40 and 60; and 3. those under 40; in other words, old, middle-aged, and young. These divisions are especially useful in word studies such as I have been doing for years, very intensively since my retirement in 1959. To get a correct view of regional usage, it is necessary, in most cases, to be aware of these ages, for each one will have its own sphere. For example, the older people, in this system, grew up in horse-and-buggy days, chiefly before a high-school system had been worked out sufficiently to allow everybody to have done some study beyond the limits of the old-fashioned one-roomed school. A person now barely 60 was born just a year after I left home to make my own way in the world. In 1907 automobiles were nine-days' wonders; I saw my first one then. It was years before I saw a truck and several more before I saw a tractor. A paved road was something hardly imaginable; you should have seen the mud and dust of those days. Think of the barriers in the way of rivers that shut in much of Kentucky, especially the Jackson Purchase, where only railroad bridges were known until long after 1906. As late as 1928, when I drove down to see my mother, in Calloway County, I returned by way of Dover, Tennessee, where the contract was to be let the next day for a bridge across the Cumberland River. For years I crossed the Ohio River on ferries unless I went by way of Louisville or Cincinnati. Naturally, the vocabulary of people who are now 60 and beyond was basically that of the old days, when nearly everybody lived on the farm, when farming itself was largely a way of life but not a business, when self-support rather than profit seemed to be the goal. In my early days of teaching at Western a very large percentage of my students were mature men and women who were doing high school work, just as I myself had worked off my high school subjects after I was grown and away on my own.

The middle generation seem like youngsters to me now, for they have all arrived on earth since I was grown. They, for the most part, were born late enough to get many advantages that my generation had to work for years to have or else do without. By the time most of them were grown, there was a family car, maybe a humble one but one anyway. And what used to be impossible distances had become a part of their lives, especially after they had grown to their late teens. The older ones were here soon enough to know at first hand the first World War and its tremendous effect on our lives. Many of them became the first high school and college graduates of their families. Hosts of them made journeys into what used to seem the very ends of the earth, for the family car was well used. A tremendous vocabulary of world-wide importance came to be, for we were actually citizens of the world and not, like our immediate forebears, largely citizens of some remote ridge or hollow.

The third generation are very numerous. Just think, a man barely 40 arrived in 1927, after we oldsters already seemed like old-timers. And the hordes of people under 40 make the older two groups seem small indeed. When I began to teach school, in a one-roomed school, the Civil War was no farther away than World War I now is. And Oklahoma became a state that year, with four more of our 50 states to be added later, two of them--Alaska and Hawaii--very much later. No wonder the vocabulary of the third generation often seems strange to us who belong in the first one; think what has happened in local and regional and world affairs since we were young. I have often said that in my later years of teaching I often had to spend more time explaining older words and ideas than in actually getting at the heart of any given poem or story. If the youngsters do not know "Gee" and "Haw" and "Whoa" as we used to, so what?

SPRINGS

Lately I have been trying to tell some of the younger generation about the former importance of springs. Many of my listeners must think I have a very fertile imagination when I mention how the first settlers here sought out a spring for the site of a house. Many of the places where that was so important are now dependent on other sources of water. In fact, many of the springs of earlier days have completely disappeared. In my whole bird-observation area I do not know where there is a spring that still serves as it did from early times until fifty years ago. Two elderly springhouses are fairly close to where I live, but one is largely now a mere pile of rocks over a trickly stream that now sometimes goes completely dry in summer; the other one still has an antique springhouse look about it and still puts out a big stream, which a man-made pond a few yards away stores for the stock on the farm and for irrigating. I do know that some less-known springs, formerly not used, have been capped and now under the pump for house and stockbarn uses. But most of the water now comes from individual wells or, and this is rapidly developing, from new water systems. At the present rate of building, in ten years a house that is not on a water line will be as queer as one today that does not have R. E. A.

Springs were so valuable and so prominent formerly that they gave their names to communities and churches and schools and country stores. As the communities grew and became less dependent on the springs, sometimes the original names seemed almost comic. One such place, written about by travelers across the Barrens in pioneer times, has now become a mere oozy trickle, putting out only enough water for a domesticated animal. In the early 1800's it was as definite a place as the villages of the time; people measured distances by how far they traveled to or from the springs.

There grew up a great fondness for mineral springs. Any spring that had a large percentage of mineral content in its water soon attracted attention. Thus grew up dozens of hostelrys, ranging from rather primitive to elaborate and expensive. There was rarely, in those days, a community that did not have, within a day's drive, just such a place. Some of these places drew people from far away; I can recall having seen special hacks used by one such place, which would be driven out to the railroad to meet every passenger train. Passenger trains and the very fashionable place have alike gone out of commission in that area. Before cars were a part of every household, a summer vacation trip to a watering place, with plenty of good food served, was regarded very highly. Within a hundred miles of Bowling Green there must have been at one time fully ten such areas, some of them with one and some with many hotels. And most other areas had similar accommodations.

The springs also had a very special place in the lives of plain people who stayed at home and took care of their families and their stock. My own Sulphur Springs, until long past my days at Fidelity, was a neighborhood institution. It was right by the side of the road near Sulphur Springs Methodist Church (which keeps its name but is now a mile and a half away on a ridge in Fidelity itself). Everybody depended on that spring. Because of it, nobody was greatly concerned if the cistern water ran low in the summer. With some large barrels in the wagon bed, we could haul all the water needed and even fill up our cistern again after it had run low and had been cleaned and scrubbed. The spring became a meeting place for the neighborhood, because of the church, of course, but also because of the supply of water, which never varied in volume from season to season, never showed any surface contamination, and welled up through pure white sand. No wonder we of that area had difficulty in adjusting to springs elsewhere that were contaminated by surface drainage and even sewage. It took me years on end to resist the temptation to drink from every spring I saw, for I remembered Sulphur Springs and many others of my childhood.

"LIGHT AND HITCH"

When someone rode up to an old-time house, he was invited to "Light and hitch" or "Come in and set a spell" or "Light and come in." And everybody did just that, especially if mealtime was somewhere around the corner or if a chance for a ~~spell~~ spell of talking seemed good. And, no matter how unimportant a caller might be, he was given royal treatment, as if he had been Somebody and had had a special invitation to "Drop by."

Isolation and consequent loneliness were often behind this old-time attitude. Hosts of people had never learned to depend on books or newspapers, now radio and TV, for news and ideas. Therefore, personal visits meant more. In my grown-up days I have often lamented the numerous times that my mother must have been imposed on by these visitors. I must admit that she somehow got a world of enjoyment out of cooking for people, for each new person brought to the doctor's house some new ideas and helped her and the rest of us understand better our common humanity. We saw how to act and how not to act when we went anywhere; we knew what constituted good manners and what was crude by any standard. We children got new jokes and new laughs at strange ways, without in any way feeling superior to the countless visitors.

After school was out, just before Christmas, until time to be out of doors most of the daylight hours was sometimes a boring season. We read and reread our store of books and magazines, we brought in wood and took out ashes, we fed and watered the stock; but these chores took up only part of our time. A chance caller, coming through the rain or snow, might enliven a whole day. We could tell and retell his choicest words and yarns and thus drive boredom away. On Sunday, when farm work ceased, callers came in droves, for sickness in their families could wait while work days were going by. Father would often disappear on a call early Sunday morning and be run down by the callers until it might be past midnight before we saw him again. Before we installed telephones, you had to go after the doctor and, not finding him at home, chase him down.

Now summer visitors were of a slightly different kind. It is true that people still came after the doctor and often remained until dinner was over, but the chief visitors, as I remember them now, were week-end relatives from the other side of the county. We had no immediate relatives near us; anyone who came in a buggy or wagon to visit Cousin Mark or Aunt Malinda would most likely be with us for a night at least. Then we made friends with our little-known relatives and learned lots of new jokes. Then we boys slept on a pallet or slept three-a-bed. Then we ate at second table but allowed no conversation to interrupt our efforts to stave off starvation. Some of our best pieces of fried chicken may have disappeared before we younger people got to the table, but nobody scolded us for eating less-desirable pieces with our fingers rather than with our knives and forks. Maybe that is why I like ~~right~~ right now the bony pieces of chicken better than I used to like the pully bone and the breast. Once in a great while we or some of us would drive the long way--twelve to fifteen miles--to visit some of the Wilson and Robertson relatives and try to act as well as the cousins that Mother thought were good-mannered when they visited us. Since somebody had to stay at home to answer calls for the doctor, we never got away as a family as did some of our relatives, but I must say, after sixty years and more, the attention that I got as a small boy made me very proud to have relatives by the dozen on the other side of the county. The few times that I visited in this way stand out in memory like trips to famous places. I came into the world entirely too late to visit at Grandma's, but uncles and aunts and cousins made up for some of the things I had missed by being No. 10 in our big family.

March 20

I WISH I HAD THAT

In my old age I have taped several hundred interviews with people who have helped me in my folklore studies. I cherish these tapes and know how valuable they will be for language and folklore students in the future. I have had real joy in these interviews, which have now extended over several years. A good-sized group of my helpers have now gone to join the choir invisible, but I have their voices to show that they lived among us and had seen and known many things that made their lives and ours truly enjoyable.

Now here is something that I wish I could have had, a long time ago-- a tape-recorder. I realize that there just weren't any then, but how I would like to have the voices of many people whom I knew and loved: my parents, my brothers and sisters, my neighbors, my teachers, the preachers at Sulphur Springs and Mount Carmel, the political orators, the people who sang at singing schools and at church and at play parties! It is true that I have set down thousands of words, in my numerous diaries and in my endless column, hundreds of quaint things that I remember; but one talking tape would be worth more than reams of written accounts.

When I was a little boy, the oldest man whom I ever got to know in my whole younger days was Uncle John Elkin. He died when I was fifteen, and I wrote, for the county paper, a brief account of his active, colorful life. In my many associations with him, I quizzed him unmercifully, and he, kind old man that he was, seemed to enjoy my interest in the things that his tenacious memory could call up. Why, he had come, with older men, when he was a mere boy into what was later acquired as the Jackson Purchase. He had hunted wild animals before there was a white settlement anywhere. He had lived in the Purchase when it was all a single county; he had served as magistrate away back in the remote days. My father regarded him as one of the brightest men he had ever known, a man well-read in history and law, a man of convictions and of solid neighborhood life. We did not always agree with him, but he was so honest that we respected him anyway. How I wish I had a long, long tape of his crisp memories!

Father's uncle, a surgeon in the Confederate Army, was with President Jefferson Davis until Mr. Davis urged his followers to leave and do their best to get back home again. I was only five when this old soldier died, but I still remember his military bearing, his ability to remember even the minutest details about his service in the army and as a physician in a backwoods area. Here was history that did not have to be read about; he had lived in the midst of it and been a part of great events. A few feet of tape would certainly make the pre-Civil War period more alive than any book can make it.

Many times since I was a boy I have heard some lamentable imitations of the Rebel Yell. I use these derogatory adjectives advisedly, for I used to hear the real yell, given by a hundred or more aging Rebels, who could make the very leaves on the trees around Sulphur Springs shake with terror. You see, less than a half mile from my home was Sulphur Springs, with a place where the Confederates met every summer for a great day of oratory and flag-waving and some tears--and not a little whiskey. I was often called on, with my auctioneer voice, to speak a piece; thus I was there when the Rebel Yell awoke the echoes. How I would like to have that on tape! Just yelling isn't it; no statement about the famous yell has ever recreated it for me. You can read directions from now till you grow old and feeble, and still you can't reproduce that wild, weird, savage, boyish yell, which was not a yodel, not a scream, not a yell in the ordinary sense of that term, but something more unearthly than any other sound that I have ever heard. Imagine having that on a record to turn on after some ineffective lecture on Shiloh or Fort Donelson or Chickamauga or Appomattox!

"HOW VAST THE UNATTAINED"

Whittier, when he was a very old man, wrote a poem that has always appealed to me, in which he uses the words in the title:

"How little I have gained,
How vast the unattained."

No honest man has ever felt that he had done all that he was capable of; no life is long enough to make a "Finis" written at its end seem other than pathetic. All of us have seen brief views of what we would have liked to know more about, little thumb-nail sketches that we would have liked to expand into wall-size paintings.

In thinking about the mass of materials that I have collected from one smallish area, some 200 square miles, I have begun to realize that I have merely started investigating the many-sided folkways of my chosen area. I have more than 18,000 items, I know, covering dozens of phases of community life as it was lived in the general area of Mammoth Cave from early days until the coming of modern roads and electricity and cars and radio and TV and public high schools. But I can think of areas that I have slighted, not because I wanted to but because I just am only one old man and not a dozen. Here are some things that I have slighted or have touched upon only lightly: the music of the old-fashioned home and church and singing-school; the yarns told at the loafers' joint; the localized legends that are so often staunchly believed in as actual history; the varying alignments of people in great moments of history, like the rise of our political parties, the Civil War, the Westward Movement; the entertainments in great detail. I do have a few items that fit into this vast scheme of the unattained, but only a few. Whittier says, in that same poem:

"Others will sing the song,
Others will right the wrong."

It is with a great deal of joy that I am seeing a great interest in folkways developing. When I first started studying birds, I was suspect, for, without fishing line or boat paddle or gun, I looked queer and maybe dangerous. By living in one place for over a half century and going over the same ground hundreds of times, I have gradually been accepted as not dangerous,—simple, maybe and queer, but not likely to steal anything or leave some gates open so the livestock would get out or in. Similarly, I was looked at with some strange glances when I first began to talk and write about folkways. One of my best friends said that if he had had as primitive a background as I claimed to have had, he would keep it a secret. Most people used to think that folklore dealt only with the oddities, the queer ones, the ragtag and bobtail of humanity. And, all the while, even the most aloof and stylish and well-fixed person was living folklore and guiding his every move in a complicated society by its maxims. Master or slave, old or young, poor or rich, illiterate or educated, we all depend every day of our lives on traditional learning and traditional points of view. Even the most bookish of us all, who have lived our lives with books all around us and have taught, we thought, knowledge untouched by folklore, are walking encyclopedias of folkways. Even if we wanted to, we could not escape being folkish. And a good many people who formerly felt that folklore was only about sub-normal people have come to feel that "Mrs. O'Grady and the Colonel's lady are sisters under the skin." It is with great pleasure, then, that I can say to the younger generation who have shown interest in my studies; "I have merely opened the gate; go in and possess the land."

Apr. 3
typed & cl.

Recently I have interviewed twenty-two people on aspects of the one-roomed school, as a basis for four articles for a folklore magazine. The people interviewed ranged in age from 83 to 21. All except one had attended a one-roomed school, and that one had taught her first school in this now passing institution. Several of the number had secured all their formal education thus, a few had also gone on to high school only; the rest were college or university graduates. Certainly with a range like that I should have found out what aspects of the school were traditional. I deliberately chose people from many areas of western Kentucky, for I practically knew that their experiences had been similar if not identical. In reality I found many more similarities than I expected.

One of my questions was about the standing of the teacher in the one-roomed school district. Without a single exception, I learned, the teacher was always highly regarded, even by the few who admitted being poor students or even problem children. From the first day of his teaching a man was Mr. Jim, never Mr. Johnson; he may have grown up in that district or a neighboring one, but still courtesy demanded this title. In many places, if he had taught a long time, he was Professor. The eighteen-year-old girl who had taken the examinations on the common-school branches and made a certificate was Miss Mary, not Miss Brown. And she remained Miss Mary to her former pupils even after she became Mrs. Smith. Not a single one of my helpers felt that the teacher was ever regarded as being even fairly well educated; it was almost universal among the pupils, at least, that the teacher knew lots of things. And a number of the women I interviewed said that as children they wanted to grow up and be as pretty as their first teacher.

Many times some of my friends and I have discussed why we were drawn into the profession of teaching. Nearly always we agreed that the teacher was Somebody, and that appealed to us as small children. Personally I cannot recall when I did not want to be a teacher. Though a very husky man since I was in the twenties, I was a frail boy and young man and hardly felt equal to earning my way by some sort of physical strength. However, I had made three crops on the farm before I got my certificate and started teaching on July 1, 1907. In Fidelity, and in many other places, the soil was so poor that there seemed to be very little future in farming. A very few boys studied medicine, a few more became preachers, but a large number taught school for a few years or for a lifetime job. Some wag said that our little Fidelity neighborhood had soil so poor that it would not sprout peas but it could grow some fine preachers and doctors and teachers. After almost sixty years since my first day of teaching I can still recall how important my patrons made me feel, even when I was fairly shaking in my boots. I soon found out that the teacher's life is not always smooth sailing, but I somehow got enough energy to stay with it until teaching came as natural to me as swimming is to a fish or barking is to a dog.

Some of my former students have told me that they had their greatest success in the one-roomed school, even though they went on in education and experience until they attained to college professorship. Just about every teacher I interviewed could rattle off a long list of names of people who grew up in the one-roomed school and then became locally or even nationally famous. I am glad to say that no one looked down on his having had his early schooling in a humble little building away out in the woods or up a muddy or dusty road. And all of them somehow felt saddened when I reminded them that only one one-roomed school now remains in all of western Kentucky.

typical
Apr 3

When I was a very young man, I would hear some near-grown speaker start off his speech, on almost any subject, with "Never before in the history of the world." And then would follow some statement that only an amateur and nearly-grown person could make, about some human tendency that is as old as the human race, or human history, anyway. It just happened that the speaker had merely run up on some common fact that he had not previously noticed. And it sounded big to start off as he did, as he had lived long and profitably as a philosopher.

But it is hardly fair to laugh only at an inexperienced, and often scared, speaker when he finds something world-shaking. Through many years I have scanned the typical letters that are written to the editors of newspapers and have often found my oratorical friend of other times. Sometimes these letters take the Pollyanna view that things have never been so rosy, that we live in the best of all possible worlds. "Everything is lovely, and the goose hangs high." However, these letters are in the minority. Most letters to the editors are afraid that we are going down hill with the brakes off, that never before have we seen such bad conditions.

A very few categories will be needed to classify the typical folksish letters. One group attacks everything connected with the government and usually knows about as much about our government or any other as did the fellows who used to debate learned questions at the country schoolhouse. Most of the letters about government are bitterly opposed to the party in office, to which they attribute everything from bad crop years to outbreaks of epidemics. Why, I heard that, to perfection, in the stores at Fidelity, at the turn of the century. Almost to a man the Fidelity folks were Democrats; and for a good long age, broken only by the two terms of office of Grover Cleveland, the Republicans had been in power. It was easy to find some scapegoat when tobacco did not sell well, when dry or wet weather interfered with the normal growth of farm crops. A few left-over Confederate veterans, but not all of them, aided the general cussing of the "guvmint," and they felt that they had just cause to blame everything on the fellows they used to fight. An occasional old fellow, Confederate veteran or not, would be bold enough to remind the younger cussers that times had been hard before they were born, that they ought to have lived back in the 1873 Depression, when things were bad sure enough. Most of the younger ones were too well-raised to dispute openly the word of some old-timer, but out away from the loafers' joint, they would suggest that Uncle Bill was getting old and wobbly in his memories of hard times.

Another group of letter-writers rise to defend Christianity or their home-made version of it. Often they seem to forget their mission and enter into what would have been called name-calling back in my neck of the woods. They remind me of my mother's telling of having seen two middle-aged women, all wrought up at an old-time religious debate, resort to rather tough name-calling and then to the time-honored hair-pulling, in the name of their brand of faith. Some of the letters to the editor sound as if the writers could pull hair or even stand by and see some opponent horse-whipped for being so bold, so wrong.

A third group know just what is wrong with education, for they attended a one-roomed school away back when and learned all that should be learned; anything that differs from the way their Miss Mary taught them is bad, even dangerous. I wonder whether these same letter-writers, of whatever category, still cling to the Saturday-night bath, the horse-and-buggy, the screenless houses that were the rule at Fidelity and elsewhere until I was a big boy. Somehow the letters remind me of the model ones that used to appear in THE COMPLETE LETTER-WRITER.

Apr. 17
Lysbeth

If you were to ask me to name some radical differences between now and in my earlier days, I think I would name first the change from a definite center for most people's thinking to many centers or maybe none. There are good and bad qualities about such a philosophical system, but oldsters will soon recognize what I am driving at.

In older times the community was somewhat standardized, somewhat marked off from others. If you were from Fidelity, you were not from Cherry Corner or New Providence or Pottertown. Most likely you knew just about everybody in your immediate section, and, if you were oldish, you had known a lot of the ancestors of the present generation. People from areas that now seem comically near by were known only casually unless you had some close relatives living there. The old school districts seem, in our older phrasing, no bigger than saddle blankets; but they were quite distinctive and resented being mistaken for each other almost as much as a good-sized boy resented being mistaken for a younger brother.

Sometimes the local church had wider boundaries than did the school district, for you could drive your carriage or ride your horse to church, but school was largely reached on foot. At Sulphur Springs Church, for instance, we had members from "up the creek," some four miles away and in another school district, and even some from over on Dog Creek, in another direction. Our voting precincts were small, but even they overlapped a little the boundaries of school and church. But everything had a center, one usually long recognized.

By degrees, as roads and automobiles and other features of modern living have arrived, old centers have lost their importance. Within a few years there will be no one person who could locate the sites of the sixty one-roomed schools of a typical county; to many young people whom I know and have taught these small units with their seemingly fixed centers seem funny, almost silly. Long after roads of sorts came to be, my camping partner and I spent a weekend by the side of one of our major Kentucky rivers, on the farm of an elderly and extremely well-informed man. We had taught some of his relatives and thus had a good start toward getting acquainted. In nearly every way he seemed twenty years younger than he was, but, when he mentioned politics, he reverted to his ancient prejudices and told us about the would-be kings of the county who lived at Podunk, let us call it, a seedy, unpainted, muddy village that we had barely got our car through on the way to our camping ground. As we went back through the almost-deserted village, we laughed at the old man's left-over fears for the king-makers and kings of Podunk. The funny thing was and is that he was reflecting a condition that was once true in every way: that little village, once prosperous and up-and-coming, did boss county politics, did look down its nose at country fellows like our old friend, who owned several hundred acres of the best land in the county. I wonder whether the descendants of the old fellow still detest the powerful politicians of the seedy village or whether they have found a bigger center for their thinking.

To many of us there seem to be few centers today. What is a place in most people's mind? Why, you can step on the gas and be miles away in a matter of minutes, in towns or cities that make our native village or country store look very ornery. I wonder whether the people who now seem to have no center are cherishing some area as areas used to be cherished. Do the students, for example, who leave for elsewhere the minute their last classes are over and return barely in time for the one next Monday morning, have a sense of some place to rally around? If the hot air that is wasted on praising one's college is more than just that, why run away from dear old Whosis College at every opportunity? Maybe a center is no longer necessary; maybe life is too complicated to allow it to become attached to some Fidelity or Podunk or some "wide place in the road

"NO MEAN CITY"

Even St. Paul could not escape the very human characteristic of being proud of his home town, "no mean city." It is hard to imagine anyone, ancient or modern, who is so completely a citizen of the world that just any place looks as good as another.

It is only when we try to force others to accept our Fidelities for what we think they are and were worth that we show how very folkish we are, and this applies to many other things than one's native place. Intense college loyalties, with which I as a teacher have been thrown for nearly sixty years, as student and teacher, can become annoying and disgusting. I used to think that this partisanship would calm down a bit after my general grew up and became sophisticated, but I have found very little change in the whole feeling of loyalty. The first time I ever saw a parade in college, I was greatly impressed with the fine spirit of a young man with a megaphone, a rather rare bit of equipment in those days. He could make more noise than a dozen others of us. He moved in and out of the procession, which I must confess was pretty tame, and shouted and yelled and waved the megaphone. Some of us envied him and wished we could afford a similar noise-maker to show how loyal we were to our college. The rather strange thing is that the star performer dropped out of school before he had finished a single term of credit and has never been heard of since then. I would like to know whether he found plenty of opportunities to sound off in the rather big world of which he had to be a part: World War I, World II, and all the other big events since that spring morning in 1908.

"My daddy can whip your daddy." We have always laughed at this boyish boast. It sums up a species of self-importance that is comic and also tragic. I was a weakling in my childhood; I couldn't chin a pole or skin a cat or stand on my head or walk on my hands. It is true that my daddy was a big man and probably could have licked just about any fellow in his whole practice range as a country doctor. But it never became necessary in my lifetime, and probably not before, for him to straighten himself to what was then his giant's stature--six feet even--and test his strength against another man of any size. I can think of nothing more unexpected than such an event. At school, though, it was often the boast of boys, just as it is everywhere, that he or his older brother or his father or his Uncle Jim could whup airy man in the whole county. Fortunately, it rarely became necessary to carry out this boast; humanity, though pretty loud on its threats, did not often resort to such primitive stuff as blows.

Some years ago I heard a girl give a thumb-nail sketch of her father, a prominent man, that was to me a classic: "He's the sort of man who thinks that something is added by smoking a better cigar or driving a better car than the other fellow." I burst out into a laugh, for that sketch was the whole truth. The young woman repeated her saying and said, "And you know it is true, even though I love my daddy as well as anybody ever loved a parent." And that seemed true, too. But that remark opened up a whole chain of thinking, of folkish attitudes, of daddies that could whip anybody else's daddy, of towns that were ever so much better than similar seedy places, of families that claimed for themselves the bluest of the blue blood, which had taken on its color in a few short generations from middle-class, respectable, but not noble or royal blood back in Europe. Not to have known people, from one-roomed-school days on, who feel this way is to have missed a profound knowledge of our common humanity.

May 1
TLC

You remember when Hamlet was listening to a play where the husband and wife are saying lots of sweet nothings to each other, especially the wife, Hamlet asks someone or suggests: "Methinks the lady doth profess too much." From long association with plain people, "one of whom I am which," as a speaker said at our chapel one day, I believe that the folk dislike most of all what seems pretense. The poetry they used to read or hear read was very sentimental, but little of this passed over into speech. To an outsider, my relatives and neighbors at Fidelity would have seemed cold and lacking in emotion. But, if you know the folk, you must judge by other ways than outward appearances.

There seemed, at Fidelity and similar places, a hostility to any outward show of charity. The people took the Bible literally and tried to keep one hand from knowing what the other one had done. A case in point, which I have often mentioned before, was that of the three old-maid sisters whom my part of the world would not consent to send to the county poorhouse. Almost as if it were something secret, neighbors saw to it that the "old girls," as they were called, had plenty to eat, wood to heat their small house, and a doctor when he was needed. Two or three times a year a whole group of men and women would go to the home of the old ladies, taking food in quantities; the men would work out the garden for the old girls and, later in the season, cut and rick up enough wood to last all winter. In such severe winters as 1899-1900 and 1900-1901 the men and boys took turn about going by the place every day when the snow was deep or the ice covered everything, to see that all was well. It would have hurt the feelings of any of these givers of charity if even some of us insiders had complimented such fine human conduct; if an outsider had mentioned it, I fear it would have been almost an insult. This unnoticed charity went on for a number of years, until two of the three sisters died, and the remaining one was taken in by a distant relative.

At Sulphur Spring Church, when a protracted meeting had got into high gear, we heard some unusual testimonies, some of them masterpieces of humble, faltering, genuine narratives of how a great idea had transformed their rather inconsequential lives. Others, over-emotional and sometimes overburdened with adjectives, were just a little too much. We were too well-bred to laugh in church when some rather obvious show-off told of mountain-top views that religion had brought him. Too often his outburst was too much an echo of similar carryings-on that we knew all too well. Sometimes our preacher, who had not lived as we had, in our out-of-the-way place, a long time, took these protestations at face value and seemed greatly lifted up at the testimonies; sometimes it was an endurance contest, between the loud declaimer and our nerves. For some reason that you can work out for your own satisfaction, the people in the Sulphur Springs congregation who never testified, humbly or arrogantly, seem now, a half century and more ^{later} the ones we most often remember.

Living all my mature life in college, I have learned to judge the sincere or insincere ring in the voice of the "old grad" who comes back and tells how our college gave him everything he has. No college ever did that, unless the receiver was a pretty sorry specimen of humanity to begin with. College, like genuine medicine, is at best a sustainer, a helper, not a transformer; the student does his own transforming or is never transformed into anything except a rooter for dear old Whoosis College.

THE CLOTHES PHILOSOPHY

Swift suggested a clothes philosophy which Carlyle took up and developed in SARTOR RESARTUS. "Clothes make the man" is the folk version of the general idea. Carlyle, in his ponderous, confusing way, stretched the idea to include all extra dressings that we put on to change our natural selves.

In my long life the attitude toward clothes has undergone some admirable changes. The stiff way that most dressed-up people used to walk and talk and even laugh seems to have given place to a sort of naturalness that should have been the custom all along. Of course, to be honest, some of the stiff people I used to know were only a few days or weeks or years away from the plowhandles, but they wanted to appear born sophisticates, with natural-born good manners. The thing that used to tickle me about all this was the great honor that was often paid to some fellow who was cleaned and dressed up but actually had no more personality than a scarecrow.

There used to be, for most people, two kinds of clothes: dress-up and work clothes. I tell you it was a pretty fur piece between my overalls and brogans and my stiff collars and pressed Sunday pants. Six days we labored, but on the seventh we dressed up and suffered some of the horrible things that we often heard about in the fire-and-brimstone sermons. How fine--and wicked--it was to get back home and pull off our Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes and actually make the rest of the day what we had sung about: "Welcome sweet day of rest." I suppose a better song for us after we got home would have been "Safely Through Another Week." I used to laugh when one of our neighbors would come along the Big Road from Sulphur Springs Church in his wagon, with his three little girls on the quilt over straw in the back of the wagon behind the spring seat, where Pappy and Mammy sat with Baby Brother. Those little girls began unhooking and unbuttoning their Sunday dresses by the time they had got a half mile on their way home and, I suppose, were ready to jump into play attire and take off their shoes the minute the wagon stopped in front of their house.

In a very similar way, pursuing some of Carlyle's thought, we used to fancy that there were two levels of language and only two: formal (good) and informal (bad or at least not good). If a man had got up, in 1908, let me say, and started a chapel talk informally, I honestly believe that he would have been asked to improve his manners or resign. Such high-falutin speeches I have heard, millions of them, it seems now! Like the gag about Dr. Samuel Johnson's writing about fishes and having even the minnows speaking like whales, many of the speeches were about very every-day things and would have been ever so much better in plain language, but they were not.

For years I tried to get my students to write naturally, but it was an uphill business. They had been taught to write "finely," as it used to be called, and that's what they kept on writing. When a more easy style was developed, I began to feel that maybe my type of teaching was getting some results. I can recall, in my old age, some of the best writing I have ever seen, even in books, when boys and girls got interested in what they were writing and "turned on." Take the theme written by the boy from a dying coal-mining town where he described what it was like to see a man killed in cold blood as the writer, a mere eight years old at the time, was on his way to Sunday School. Or the theme of the girl from a small village in northern Alabama that told of renaming the dogs of the town because when you called your own pup, maybe a whole dozen dogs of varying breeds and ages and sizes would come a-running. Or, the best one I ever read, of the Czech boy who told about his early conception of Virginia, gained from an "old warhorse" in Czechoslovakia who smoked strong cigars made from Virginia tobacco. Even the ordinary student can write when he is encouraged to write in his own way.

TVC
May 15

Right now I am working on a series of articles, written in collaboration with several other people, which will show how folklore appears, "bobs up" would be better, in just about any profession. Each of my collaborators is very much interested in the scheme I have worked out and is giving me a lot of excellent material. I am planning to record on tape some long interviews with them, to get for permanence the actual story of the folkish things that have arisen in their particular professions.

As a collector of folk medicines, I have naturally turned to two professions to help me: pharmacy and medicine. In the doctor's office and in the drugstore folk things are forever bobbing up. Many people, though willing to pay for the services of the doctor and the pharmacist, cannot get wholly away from what used to be the remedy or practice back in the remote places where all of us came from ultimately. Granny did not have any sort of degree or license, she did not often get any encouragement from even the old family doctor, but she had a way of inspiring confidence; even the bitterest concoction that she made was swallowed by the "patients" with a calm assurance that they were being treated by a self-licensed, but actually a sort of divine, doctor.

To a hunter and fisherman there is a body of beliefs that have long been followed or believed in. It would be foolish on his part to ignore them, unless, of course, he wished to become a sort of feared rebel in his chosen hobby or even profession. Every type of act has a rule or two behind it; every animal must be treated by rules that seem to me, not a hunter, almost too much like the laws of the Medes and the Persians. Of course, the hunter and fisherman and trapper can always show by his "luck" how well he has followed the rules of the game and thus justify himself.

As an ornithologist for most of my many years, I have run into a great ~~deal~~ of unnatural natural history. My collaborator, a physician by profession, has had similar experiences and is fairly bristling with beliefs that he has picked up. He and I often say that we have ceased trying--very hard, at least--to convince the majority of the people who ask us about birds; we state the facts as we know them, and usually we are sure that they will slide off, like water off the proverbial duck's back. Didn't Grandpap say that so and so is correct about birds? What right, then, has a Glasgow physician and a stuffy college teacher to run counter to the truth as revealed in the accepted truths of Grandpap and his kind?

Biology in general has hundreds of instances of accepted folklore that can hardly be uprooted, even by years of serious study. Since most high school and college students get just a smattering of scientific knowledge, it is unfair to expect them to accept very joyously what is in the texts or in the lectures by the professor. When a student took issue with my biology helper, he cited the most ponderously learned work on snakes to show that only the rattlesnake and the copperhead of the snakes in this area of the country are poisonous. "My brother says that the black snake is poisonous," she replied, with the sort of ignorant unctuousness that most irritates a seeker after knowledge.

But every phase of the classroom has its peculiar folklore. Students come to college with their minds made up about the private lives of authors, about the interpretation of poems and plays and short stories and novels. A mere term or two under a well-trained teacher may open a few new doors to the average student, but, I fear, most of them will go out, now as college graduates, with most of their immature thinking about literature and language that they brought to college.

TLC
May 15

Away back in the early days of this column I gave, as accurately as I could, an account of our going to town in horse-and-buggy days. It was a great adventure, for we got up early, as on days when we killed hogs, and were in town, eleven miles away, by mid-morning. We "parked" our wagons in a vacant lot or, if we were somewhat stylish, at a livery stable, and went "trading" up town. Late in the afternoon, after our trading was over, we started back to our remote place, tired but also excited over having been a fur piece from Fidelity, all the way to the county seat.

Going to town is still practiced, but most of its adventurous nature has gone. Why, in the same time that we took to drive our round trip, do our shopping, and house and feed our animals after we got home just anybody now could drive to Louisville and back and have even more time for shopping (that is, from Bowling Green and almost from Fidelity). This very thing has been common so long that a trip to our biggest city is commonplace, a sort of like our going, in my boyhood, to one of the neighboring country stores in the hinterlands of Fidelity.

Not too long before I wrote this article the tobacco markets were big news all over the tobacco-growing areas of western and central Kentucky. And people came to town, believe me! Tons of burley tobacco rolled on trucks into my town, and, actually, millions of dollars exchanged hands. The livery stables did a big business. Wait, I am some decades out of gear. We haven't had a livery stable in so long that younger people never saw one and looked slightly unimpressed when I have told them of the great days when we drove to town and put up our animals at a livery stable. Well, anyway, I never heard of any of the tobacco growers' bringing to town a shoebox full of grub for lunch out on the vacant lot where the wagons were parked. In fact, vacant lots, livery stables, and, maybe, shoeboxes seem to have vanished with our youth. These country fellers with their truckloads of tobacco ate at restaurants and ordered things that had hardly been brought into Fidelity in my boyhood. They took their checks, too, and stood in long lines at the banks; lots of them had wives who drove the family cars, too, and helped spend some of that tobacco money. And lots of these same women went to Nashville or Louisville and spent some more of it, for Louisville and Nashville are now barely over the horizon to the north or south.

This very morning I took my cane and walked down town for the exercise and to pick up some needed things, such as some money at the bank and a pair of new pants at a clothing (no, men's) store. Not once did I see a four-footed animal; the hitching racks were empty except in memory; in fact, I have forgotten where they used to be. The watering trough at the side of the central park is gone; no horse had used it in ages when it was finally removed. I did not see any horse, hitched to a stylish carriage, shy or even dance a jig when an occasional car came sputtering by. When the lights changed, my cane and I hurried across the street, not afraid some dare-devil driver would run us down but hoping that our timing would be good enough to get us across before another light would change and a block-long group of cars would charge by, like the trains when we used to go to the county seat. It was too cold for country fellows to be sitting outside the courthouse, but some might have been inside, but whittling has gone by, along with the veterans of the Civil War and the endless yarns they used to spin. And yet this is the same town, now much larger, where I used to see just about everything that made my childhood at Fidelity a slice of life for my own generation and my own time. The world do move!

T + C
May 29

Being by birth and nature a country feller myself, I have always been interested in my kind. A very large percentage of my schoolmates were country born and bred; most of us had attended one-roomed schools, and only a few had had the advantage of high school before they came to The Normal, as Western used to be called, as grown men and women to do their high school work and as much college as their meager salaries as country teachers or their ability to borrow money from the county-seat banks or some supposedly wealthy local citizen would pay for. We were a queer bunch, if judged by later, more sophisticated generations as students. Many went down in the struggle but a few, as soldiers at Gettysburg or Waterloo, lived to battle long lives as products of earlier education.

At the ripe old age of eighteen I began to teach school, in a one-roomed country school. For two later years I was the principal of a small village school, so close to the soil that I could hear and identify a half dozen hog-callers on any given afternoon when the farmers were rounding up their swine for the day. Then I began my years of teaching at Western, where I ultimately, as a student and teacher, put in fifty-one and a half years, forty-seven of them as teacher. Of the 36,000 boys and girls I taught ultimately, far more than half of them were from the country and a large group from small villages where the odors of corn-fields drifted into the heart of the village.

Early in my life I took up studying birds as a hobby, which became almost an obsession. To see my birds I used to have very little trouble, for my house was for years the last one in town on my street; even our campus had a huge cedar thicket that brought some of the best finds of my life. I frequented some of the farms for years, until I actually made a path along streams and through woods. And I rarely made trips to study birds without seeing and talking with people right on the soil. So usual was this practice that some of the owners of the fields I walked over might see me down town some Saturday and ask me whether I had forsaken them and their birds.

In 1924 I invested in a T-Model car and thus widened my circuit of observation, soon learning areas that had been just a little too distant for me and my youthful legs. Again I began to make paths through more distant woods and along more distant streams, and I enlarged my knowledge of country people quite as much as my knowledge of bird life. My rural friends, where I have so often studied birds, got into the habit of asking me to speak to their schools or clubs or Sunday School classes; and thus I got many a trip into my extended territory.

Meanwhile, as my years grew more numerous, farm life revolutionized. What had been a rather poor area became rich in resources, resources made available by knowledge. And still I went to my favorite haunts and met the people whom I knew and their children and grandchildren. The scrawny cows that I used to see in scanty pastures gave way to fine herds of dairy or beef cattle, which grazed in luscious grasses and clovers. Shabby country houses were reworked or replaced as the family income took turns upward. High school graduates and then college graduates lived where common-school education used to be the rule. And still I saw my birds and my people, two very interesting groups of animated nature. And, if for no other reason than the many I have mentioned, I always love to say that I am a country feller, born and bred and brought up in the country; educated in a country college and even, then, in a country university in another state, and constantly in touch with the soil and the fellers who till it. Years ago one of my colleagues asked me why I did not run for office, for he knew I would get lots of votes; I told him that I had kept up my connection with the soil just because I liked that association and had no selfish motive in liking my birds and my folks very much in the same measure.

file May 29

APOLOGIA

The word used as the title of this article--APOLOGIA--is a Greek word meaning, basically, apology, but with many deeper meanings. It can be translated by several words, each one hardly adequate--defense, explanation, even autobiography. Cardinal Newman, when he came to write his masterful explanation of why he left the Established Church of England and became a Catholic, used this word for the title of his book: APOLOGIA PRO VITA SUA, a defense of his life or an explanation of why he had acted as he had done.

Every book written by any author is, in brief or extended, an apology for one's point of view, a brief chapter of how the world and all that it contains has struck the writer. Even the villain in one's play or novel may be the author's meaner self that circumstances and strong will power prevented from actually growing to maturity.

My, this sounds dreadfully learned and pompous for what I mean to say now! Reared in the country by parents that would have been able to adapt themselves to life anywhere, shown from childhood some of the values of good books and other good possessions of the human race, taught to respect the philosophies of all honest people and to dislike the obvious hypocrisies of lots of people, even at Fidelity, my actual home area and also my dreamworld, I have spent a long life, with adventures bobbing up at every possible unexpected moment.

No, I have not had an exciting life, as viewed by some person who has traveled to the ends of the earth and escaped death in hundreds of split-second and breath-taking moments. But excitement is not limited to blood and thunder, to far-away places with strange-sounding names. I have lived for most of my almost four score years in a small town in a rural area of Kentucky, with few visible giants or ogres or Indians or lions to hunt, with no perpendicular, mile-high cliffs to climb, no rivers so wide that only on fair days can you see across them.

But life, nevertheless, has brought some of the greatest adventures one could dream of. I have watched, as an educator, the generations to which I have been given my grown-up labor, progress from a semi-pioneer life to one in which my people are the equals of those anywhere. It is not merely an acquirement of things that has made them different; horizons have been widened by education, by travel, by thinking. Our boys can talk as casually about the ends of the earth as could Columbus and his crew when they got back home from their wild adventures. One of my students accidentally summed this up when he started his speech on "The Old Swimming Hole" by saying, "One morning as I was flying over the North Pole, I forgot the miles and miles of snow and could see, with my eyes open, the shady old hole in the little creek where I used to go in swimming." When asked how many times he had flown over the North Pole, he said, "I don't know; four or five times for five months." I wasn't there with him in the flesh, but we all flew that day with him, right over the pole and back to the old swimming hole.

To see the great movement of my generations from earlier times to the present has greatly increased my faith in the race to which I belong. We humans are seekers; we often run after the undesirable, the cheap and ugly; but, given time, we come back to sensible places and try again to seek and find the satisfactory, the desirable, the lasting. Working with thousands of boys and girls for a half century and more somehow strengthened my belief that our world that I knew is good to recall but not to bring back; we did not want to bring back the world of our fathers, no matter how alluring it sounded when they told about it; and I for one am glad to have lived long enough to see the younger generations showing abundant ability to stand up to time and bravely carry on. That is my apologia in a few words, and I am not ashamed to utter it.

74
June 12

Only a few months before John Burroughs, the great nature writer and interpreter, left his country estate just north of New York City for a winter in California, he entertained at Woodchuck Lodge, his home, the popular nature writer Dallas Lore Sharp. In their chatter that day the eighty-eight-year-old Burroughs remarked that he had studied the woodchuck or groundhog all his life and still was learning new things about it every day. Sharp somehow felt that this remark summed up Burroughs as a writer and an observer. After a few months in California the old man decided he wanted to get back to his own acres to die; he died on the train as he was making his way back to an area that he interpreted as only one other American scene has been interpreted in books, Henry David Thoreau's Concord, Massachusetts, area.

Somehow it pleases me when some great scholar or great writer or a combination of these two decides to start digging right under his own feet, assured that the center of the earth is beneath. Some great people lose their chance to be identified with some place on the globe by trotting all around over it so fast that no place becomes for long their spot. I have never actually begged some student to stay where he was unless he had discovered that for him there was gold in them-thar hills. On several occasions I have had the satisfaction of finding young fellows who, like Thoreau, traveled extensively in their own little Concorde, who found satisfaction, a living, and happiness in what until their times, may have seemed just another little old place. It is alluring to set out to see the world and to persist until you have seen a lot of it. But for some of us, maybe hampered by not getting away and as far as we would often have liked, life has seemed very rich right in the cosmos around us and under our feet.

In this field of folklore many scholars have felt that they must go to the most undeveloped areas of the world, spend years on end trying to learn strange languages that have never been reduced to writing, and other years trying to arrive at the psychology of some half-wild tribes. They have done some remarkable work in thus bringing back to the world of learning the customs and other folkways of little-known peoples.

Another type of folklorist has felt that our own folklore, so well known that it seems universal and commonplace, deserves our attention.

In Nearly every part of America are now working scholars who have decided to start digging on their own acres, especially before those acres are overrun with modern interstate highways or occupied by skyscrapers. Forty years ago the local folklorist who thus tried to set down what is actually the folkways of his own area was looked down on by the real scholars in the field. Unless you could come up with something strange, you were not studying folklore at all. It has always been a source of great satisfaction to me that our own Kentuckian, a music teacher in the Louisville schools, thought enough of folk music to ride on horseback into the most out-of-the-way mountain counties to find and preserve these treasures of folk life. Miss Josephine McGill was a whole generation ahead of her time, for most of her contemporaries still felt folklore was wild stuff, concerned with illiterate, even coarse, people, people who lived the other side of nowhere or back of somebody's field. I have used Miss McGill as an illustration of what I am trying to say: right at your fingertips, maybe, and certainly close by are buried treasures of folkways that should be dug out and kept for future people to know how to judge themselves and their backgrounds.

TVC
June 12

Deifying one age of the world and neglecting even one's own age has always seemed to me a very short-sighted view of life. I certainly heard enough of this as a child to last several lifetimes. You see, in the rather primitive area where I grew up, people liked to think or pretend that life had been better elsewhere or at some other time. Most heads of families had grown up in North Carolina, it is true, and had come as young people to our Last West of Kentucky, the Jackson Purchase. Life had to be started all over again, with primitive conditions, with even the river pretty far away as an avenue of trade, and the railroad had not yet arrived. And our roads were not roads at all but mere trails through the woods, muddy in winter and dusty in summer; many roads wound around over large areas, for they got so bad that it was necessary to change the courses of the trails often. And there was no unusual group of supermen in our little neck of the woods; we were rather ordinary people, with few important connections here or elsewhere.

It seemed tragic to me, if these North Carolinians were telling the truth, that they had ever left their Paradise to come into what was certainly not that. Most of the people who claimed great connections back yonder did not go back; few of them even wrote to the more blessed ones who still lived back in God's Country. But the rest of us, not so recently from anywhere, wondered and wondered at the philosophy of the older people, who apparently expected humanity as a whole to continue going down hill until wretchedness would be the lot of everybody.

This would be comic if only Fidelity and its ex-North Carolina citizens had been the only offenders. But just about every generation is likely to regard its time as degenerate and other times, usually far off, the best to be alive in. Think how many of our spheres of thought live almost wholly in some historic or imagined past. Take our own American government, which unthinking people have often exalted far above its actual high value. Only a little reading of history with one eye open will show that our Constitution, for example, is the result of warring and other interests; the compromise arrived at did not seem very great to many contemporaries of Washington and the others. Believe it or not, things were said about our First President that would warrant a trial for plain disloyalty at many a time in our history. And probably only the fear of being gobbled up by European nations made us behave as well as we did. One of our historians has said that three things saved the infant nation: England itself, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Grace of God. It is commendable to praise the actual achievements of our elders, but it is certainly not very wise to assume that they knew all the answers.

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" says ^{the} Bible. This is slightly cynical, I will admit, and was probably meant to be just that. But it is coupled with other remarks that urge us to live wisely and well now and not expect any favors because of our origins or our possible future greatness.

Just why any considerable group of people will assume that dress at one certain time in history was the last word it is hard to understand. But almost every day we see some "letter to the editor" that makes just such an assumption. I will admit that "rushing the styles" is ridiculous, but it has always been so. Away back when I was young, there were as many oddities in dress, in proportion to the people I knew, as there are now. Some of the oddities we brushed aside by calling them tacky, but some were far-out in the other direction. Each age seems capable of adding new creations to hair styles, the cut of clothing, the nature of accessories. Before you get too wrought up over Beattle hair-cuts, which lots of us dislike, remember that a gentleman, not too far back in history, wore his hair long, even done up in a plait. Horrors!"

TVC
June 26

Folk knowledge takes itself seriously. It would have been regarded as downright lack of courtesy, at the least, not to accept it as it was handed down by the elders. And this prevailed for ages and still, to a lesser extent, prevails. Just today someone asked me when the robins would be coming back; the person asking the question has never made any study of birds and says so, but somewhere along the way somebody told her or she read in a book that robins are signs of spring. I told her that there are plenty of robins around all winter and every winter, but I seriously doubt whether she will remember it. Didn't Miss Mary, when she had us in the first grade, teach us about the robin as a sign of spring? And didn't we draw a robin's picture and color it some impossible color that no robin would have recognized?

Folklore such as this is funny but harmless, but folk knowledge often takes other turns. Think of the resistance to filth control that you can recall. I heard enough ugly things said about screens for doors and windows to make me think, as a boy, that maybe it was wrong to shut out the dear little flies. Before you are too critical of modern India and its primitive thinking about cows, just recall how you have seen sanitary measures resisted as if they were direct from the Prince of the Power of Darkness. In my own town the night a vote was to be taken by the City Council on requiring milk offered for sale to be pasteurized, a famous lawyer was sitting by to defend the interests who did not want that very sensible thing made into law. Fortunately, one of our own teachers, a professor of agriculture, did his biggest bit of showing the value of learning: he entered, in a quiet way, into the whole subject of pasteurization and actually convinced the City Council that the law was needed. The famous lawyer, fortunately for his memory, said nothing.

When I look back over a rather long life of education, for I am still just a learner, I can see many instances of valuable lessons that were taught negatively. That is, the championing of some ignorant side of a question forced me to be a more ardent partisan of a better view. I am sure that the dogmatic teacher I had in grammar early in my student life made me determine to search literature and other sources before I made or perpetuated some of his illy-grounded and pompous statements. He felt that good grammar was right because it was right, and that was that. I am sure that if one of his students had raised the question about usage making language good or bad, the teacher would have nearly burst a blood vessel in rage.

Even in my advanced graduate work as an English student I had a teacher who felt that his favorite pronunciations were foreordained. He tried to make us, many of us experienced teachers and probably as well grounded in the history of the language as he, use his pet pronunciations, even though they were given only second or third choice in his linguistic Bible, the INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY, of which he had been an editor. Some words that he set up as the only acceptable ones still make me cringe. At least, I did not use his methods in teaching thousands of major students in the English language course that was required then. Emerson, in a short poem that sounds somewhat unlike his usual dare-devil way of being an individual rather than a ball-bearing in a machine, thanks Providence for certain necessary bounds that have kept him within safe areas. I sometimes wish that I could have had the privilege of teaching some of my teachers; both of us would have learned a lot that we did not learn. I even wish I could have been allowed to make out the grades for a few of them; maybe if I had had this privilege, I would not be sitting here by my typewriter; some of them, I suspect, might have voted that I be tarred and feathered or at least kicked out of dear old Whoosis College, my alma mater.

June 26
T x C

It suddenly occurred to me, not long ago, that I do not know how to measure things as we used to. At least, my younger friends would have to employ an interpreter if I suddenly began using only the measures we used to employ.

How much is a "hand"? Every boy and man used to know, for that was the unit of measuring a horse's height. "Sixteen hands high" was a good-sized animal. Not many were that tall. A hand is approximately four inches, as used by the men and boys I once knew. Just now I measured the width of my own good-sized hand at the base of my thumb and found that my hand is about a quarter of an inch too small. But, for all practical purposes it will do. I am not planning to buy or measure a horse soon and can afford to let some one else do the measuring.

What is an "inch"? Everybody now knows the answer, but that was another folkish measurement as practiced long ago. The inch was the length of the second joint of your index finger. Of course, this varied somewhat, for some hands are slender and long, and some are thick and short. My finger is a trifle longer than the inch on a ruler. I have seen lots of cloth measured by women as they made garments for their family, with the finger joint as a unit.

What is a "foot"? Of course, you know, for you have a ruler or yard stick handy. But, again, I have seen people measure a foot by a time-honored way. Extend your thumbs at right angles to your hands; place the ends of the thumbs together; the distance from the side on one hand across to the other side of the second hand is a foot, good enough to measure ax-handles and lots of other things. I tried my own big hands and found that I had to lap over my thumbs slightly; I have seen some broad-handed fellows who had to lap nearly a whole thumb and not merely the nail, as I must.

What is a "yard"? Why, go get a yardstick and find out. But yardsticks were often pretty scarce in earlier times. But nature supplied an unfailing source of measuring a yard. If you are measuring cloth, for example, take a corner of the cloth in your left or right hand and stretch your arm out full length; turn your head in the other direction as far as you can comfortably do so; from where you are holding the cloth with thumb and forefinger to the tip of your nose is a yard, and that is good enough measurement for anybody. A rather long arm and plenty of nose makes me slightly off center on this measurement, for I measure a little better than four inches too much. I have seen short-armed women bend the arm away back, in order to get the correct yard.

What is a "rod"? That term is not so commonly used as formerly, though all surveyors know it as a part of their daily vocabulary, even if they call it a "pole." Five and a half yards or sixteen and a half feet make a rod, I remember from one-roomed school days, but it has been so long since then that I ran to a dictionary to be reassured, for some reader, assuming that there are readers, could have caught me in my own trap if I had been wrong. Now, I cannot recall having seen or even heard of the old rod and how it was derived from natural elements, just as were hand, inch, foot, and yard. The story is that you could get a correct rod by lining up the first eight men as they came out of church on Sunday morning and had them stand in a line, heel to toe. I suppose some extra-big feet accounted for that extra six inches that we now require to make a standard rod.

July 10
T+C

In a previous article I mentioned folk ways of measuring when standard tape lines or yardsticks were not common. I forgot to mention that a yard can be measured from the heel of one foot to the toe of the other one when you have stepped as far as you can. Again I have been testing this measurement and find that my short legs have to be pretty far extended, but I can barely make it. However, I would hate to have to walk across a field with such steps, especially a plowed field. I also forgot to tell how three feet would be measured quickly for other purposes. It was a sort of unwritten law that a log for a fireplace was three feet long; to meet this measurement, we would pick up a switch or small piece of plank, measure off three feet with our spread hands, and cut the stick this length to use in measuring our firewood as we sawed it. With chopped wood we used the ax and its handle, usually assumed to be three feet in length. We would chop a small notch in the small log being measured for handle length and then chop the pole through into three-stick lengths; these were the poles that we hauled in on the wagon to the woodpile to be further made into firewood. By the way, when wood was ricked up, it was almost disgraceful if it was not all the same length. A cord was a measurement understood as well as any of the units previously mentioned, for it was a pile of wood eight feet by four feet by four feet; however, for most people it was a pile of firewood eight feet long and four feet high, with the sticks actually only three feet long. Since firewood was not often bought--it was sawed and chopped for home use--it was not necessary to quibble over the other measurement of a rick of wood.

Another interesting use of primitive measurements was the marking off of corn or tobacco rows. Sometimes a farmer might have a stick to measure these distances; more often he stepped off the distance and prided himself on having his corn rows equally distant, up hill and down, and as straight as they could be made, usually by having a tall pole with a white rag on it set up at each end of the field to guide the man as he laid off his furrow in earlier times or ran his drill in later times. A standing joke in our Fidelity was that some one who had rather curved or crooked rows of corn laid off his rows by sighting on a cow in a pasture beyond the cornfield; the cow moved slightly in her grazing, and the row changed directions to keep up with her. A very short-legged man in our neighborhood boasted of having an acre of tobacco in a very small place; he knew, because he had stepped it off, with a foot on a heel to spare at each side of the field.

Not only was a hand used to measure horses; it was also handy (excuse the poor pun) to measure the distance of the sun above the horizon. Dozens of men whom I knew relied on this means of telling the time. You extended your arm to its full length and bent your hand at right angles; the lower side of the hand was supposed to be in line with the horizon; if the other side barely touched the sun's edge, it was a sure sign that the sun was a hand high. How easy to measure if you only know how.

A sort of mania sometimes grew up about measurements. A man of my acquaintance decided to see how many tobacco seeds there would be in a teaspoon. He got out his hoarded seeds and poured out a lot into a bowl. Next he took an inverted guncap and leveled it off with seeds. He poured the tiny seeds on a piece of white paper and tediously counted them. Then he took guncapful after guncapful and filled a "struck" teaspoon, that is, he smoothed off the seeds so that they did not bulge above the rim. Then he counted the teaspoonfuls needed to fill the cup level full. I regret that almost seventy years have made the actual figure forgotten, along with lots of other and more valuable things. But it was a "whole heap," I assure you.

July 10
T & C

While my mind is on the subject of measuring, I must tell some more folkish ways that used to be common. With standardized measurements available everywhere now, it is hard to understand that it was not always easy to find such things in my early days. We could rattle off all the tables found in our Ray's Third-Part Arithmetic, whether we understood them or not, but many of them we never saw; and now I would be ashamed to take a test on many of the tables, even though I remember the mixed-up jumps from one to another. Who ever saw a "gill" cut by itself? Please send me a pennyworth of something, and be sure you do not cheat me. And, if you are skilled in finances, isolate for my inspection a "mill." I do not mean a sawmill or a sorghum mill or a coffee mill or water mill or any of the other kinds where something is ground or prepared; I mean the tenth of one cent, the thousandth part of a dollar.

Even in my childhood we memorized the table that began: "Ten mills make a cent, ten cents a ~~dollar~~^{dime}, ten dollars an eagle, twenty dollars a double eagle." After you have isolated a mill, please send me a couple of eagles, and I will give you twenty one-dollar bills the next time I see you. Maybe a sawbuck and a double sawbuck, often heard a half century ago, would do just as well as eagle and double eagle.

Recently the British have reworked their monetary system by making it decimal, what ours has been since early days. I wonder whether some good but misguided people may not stage a march to request that the tyrannical government give back the dear old system. When I was young, I heard objections to the metric system that equated it with French infidelity and other foreign evils. Chemists, physicists, and many other students have used the metric system so long that it seems clumsy to think of our old ways. Our thermometer is so strongly grounded that we must think of it in older ways and let scholarly people talk about zero Centigrade, when we know zero as 32 degrees below freezing. What is a degree, by the way? I do not anticipate hearing very soon that it is so many kilometers to Louisville, not so many to Nashville. It is hard to give up our inches, feet, yards, rods, and all the rest.

Lots of jokes used to be told about storekeepers who had their own ways of measuring things. "A pint's a pound/ The world around" was a rhyme that we all knew, and we usually told an illustrative story of some ignoramus who used this very system. Lots of people today lift eyebrows when some dairyman tells about how many pounds of milk his cows average. "Gallons," those lifted eyebrows seem to say, is the foreordained word for measuring milk. Where do you get this "pound" stuff?

I lived at Fidelity for eighteen years, from my birth until Christmas Week, 1906, without ever knowing how far, actually, it was to Fidelity from our house. Fortunately, our neck of the woods was surveyed, and I knew how far things were apart on an air line. But our roads were not airline or section-line roads. It was only after cars came to be, cars with new things called speedometers, that I found out that the distance between our front-yard gate and the first store at Fidelity was a mile and three tenths. Long before I could remember, some surveyors came rolling a big wheel that measured distance and found out that this same store was exactly ten miles from the courthouse in the county seat. After I left Fidelity, a new road was built, most of it through areas I had never seen, but, again, the speedometer says it is ten miles from courthouse to country store. Aside from that ten miles I did not know the actual distance between any two places, and I did not need to know; we got into measuring the time taken by our horses to walk fairly fast and judged distances somewhat by that. One of my former staff members, now in Los Angeles, measures distances wholly by the time it takes to drive a car; he lives fifteen minutes from UCLA.

July 24
T & C

Recently I have been reviewing attitudes toward educated people by those not so well educated. It is no partiality on my part to say that, for the most part, the people of my study area are deeply impressed by education. Many a person with only what he learned in the one-roomed school has lived to see his descendants get high school diplomas and then college diplomas and, a few of them, master's and doctor's degrees. The uneducated or poorly educated may not be able to judge between the feller with an A. B. and one with something higher up, but he loves to mention his own or other people's boys and girls who have graduated with degrees. In that same area I had the good fortune to give the commencement address for the first boys and girls who finished the eighth grade, and I have gone, again and again, through the years, to speak to graduates from high schools. It has warmed my heart to see the general appreciation for learning on the part of even the oldest and least educated people.

Now, in some of the places where I have gone, and not merely in earlier times, high school and even college has been accepted without much hostility, though there was a lot a long time ago. But advanced degrees are something else. One of the commonest remarks that I have picked up, here and there, especially in the area where I originally came from, Fidelity itself, is that working for a doctor's degree destroys one's faith, that all Ph. D.'s are, almost ex officio, infidels. That sounds like something out of the long time ago, but I have heard these identical words more than once since I retired eight years ago. In each instance I felt that the person saying them was pitying poor me, who had definitely lived for years as a holder of a Ph. D. diploma, when a bad fellow like me ought to have been struck down long ago. I have never had any further explanation added; a Ph. D. is a tough customer, and that is that.

When I have told many younger people about the hostility to anything beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic that all of us oldsters once heard often, I have created a laugh, for most of them are the beneficiaries of two generations of growth since my younger days. I still know families that do not allow their children to go to college for fear they will become, even long before they graduate with an A. B. degree, as bad as the Ph. D.'s seem to be to some of the Fidelity elect.

It is the same old story, told every generation. What is not known is feared and often hated. When nobody but a very few could read, the reader was often regarded as in league with evil spirits, for he could look at crooked marks on a piece of paper and call off words, real words and not some hocus pocus. When one man in a community knew how to weld iron, he, too, was an associate of the Evil One and would not do to trust. When an occasional person knew a few things about medicine, he, too, was likely to have sold his soul to the devil for his spooky knowledge. I can recall having heard arguments against vaccination, antitoxins, and even screens to keep out flies and mosquitoes that would make of medical science everything bad and suspicious. Of course, Granny, bless her old heart, knew some things, but they were natural things and not fetched on at a drugstore. She got out in the woods and fields and found the remedies that were natural and right.

Returning to my study area, I love the title by which I am known everywhere there--Professor. It is a tribute not merely to me but to learning in whatever form. And these same people used to call the teacher in the one-roomed school by the same title, for he was Somebody, even by his first-class certificate made by examinations on the common-school branches ^{which} lifted ^{him} somewhat above the ordinary level. Thank goodness, my mature life has been spent largely among people who respected learning and wished well to those who sought it ever so slightly.

July 24
T. x e

The difference between folk measurements and standard ones has always intrigued me. If we had had standardized equipment with us at all times at Fidelity, we would have lost most of the flavor of measuring things. In previous articles I discussed some of these folk measures; now let's look at some more.

Suppose we start off with distance, a subject that all of us know a lot about, with miles and their tenths. It isn't just some miles to A from B; it is 145 miles, or so says the table of distances on the road map I am looking at. But we did not have any road maps at Fidelity sixty years ago; we didn't need them, for we seldom went anywhere or, if we did, we knew approximately how far it was and how soon we would have to start from home to get there by a certain time; and we did not need to know exactly when we would arrive at our homes; we would be there when we got there. Most places more than five miles away were pretty far away or down the road several miles or a pretty far piece. Most of us were not going, anyway, and did not need exact measurements. Shorter distances were a little piece or a little ways or just down the road or path or creek. It did not take you long to go a little piece, but a far piece was likely to take the better part of a day. If it was farther than that, you expected to stay over night and come back the next day. As I said in another article, we knew it was exactly ten miles from our village to the county seat, but that is the only exact distance we knew. All sorts of guesses were afloat as to how far it was to New Providence or to Pottertown or to the Mouth of Sandy; but nobody knew exactly or especially cared.

Quantities were folkish, too. Even a standardized thing like a bushel was of many sizes, some of them a third larger than the others. Grandpap had always said that this was a bushel; few people argued with this hallowed measure and went on using it without ever knowing whether Grandpap gave overfull or skimpy measure. A molasses bucket was regarded as a gallon, no matter how far below the standard gallon that might be; I sometimes think that the very idea of molasses bucket suggested gallon. A big bottle of whatever size was a quart, whether it was to hold whiskey or something else. A smaller one was a pint; a very much smaller one was a half pint. That seemed good enough for lots of people, who rarely bought anything except at the store, where the merchant had the proper cans or measures. "Methodist" or "Baptist" or some other measure was used, according to the company listening, to indicate generous measure, "pressed down and running over," above the rim. We would have enjoyed the Louisiana French word "lagniappe" if we had ever heard it; it means something extra, something for good measure, something graciously given. An extra potato for lagniappe would have been very appropriate with us; we got that tater anyway, call it whatever you like. After all, a potato was not pure gold and might be used to stick on a coal-oil can, anyway.

How much was some neighbor worth? He was well-fixed or well-to-do or able; he had money (amount not specified) in the bank; he owned several farms; he even owned a surrey as well as a buggy and a wagon. He had three mule teams and milked three cows just for himself, his family, and the pigs. His house was weatherboarded and painted white. Hot dog! He "had it made," in later phrase. But what would have been his actual worth if all his property was put up for sale? Why, I never thought of that? In all probability a lot of juggling would be done with his stuff after he died, so that the meager sums brought at the auction must have been tricky or false. Besides, what did his neighbors have? Being a rich man was usually a very relative term, for richness or poorness is not measured in dollars and cents in folkish areas.

WHAT WE SHOWED THE VISITORS

When I recall what we used to show our visitors, I can see how much Fidelity was like the Big World. Relatives came to see us to spend the weekend; we owed them some hearty meals and some entertainment. We did ourselves proud in both spheres.

Over beyond Fidelity was a hilltop that had as its cover a sandstone, or pudding stone, rock as big as a big house. For some reason it had acquired, long before my time, the name of Devil's Pulpit. For generations it had been a great picnicking place. On the big rock you could build a small fire and roast some potatoes or fry some bacon or, on some coals drawn away to one side, boil a pot of coffee. Meanwhile, for our part of the world, you had a wide view from the edge of the rock that looked out over Blood River Bottom. Rocks and wide views were rather rare in the flat Jackson Purchase and this added a brand-new experience to some of our visitors. Many years after I left home, a middle-aged cousin told me that our early-morning trip to Devil's Pulpit was the one thing she remembered about her visits to the home of the Wilsons.

Down to the east, toward what is now Kentucky Lake, was the tobacco factory. When the weed was being processed there, the singing of the colored women who did the stemming attracted wide attention. When we had visitors while the factory was running, we tried to include that as a memorable place to visit. In my long years of studying folklore I can think of nothing more folkish than that melodious singing.

Only a scant half mile from my home was Sulphur Springs Church and the picnicking area there. The church was for worship, the picnicking place for buying soda pop and chewing gum and ice cream. At the picnicking place there was a crude set of seats made to accommodate the annual throngs that came to the Confederate Reunion. Various other uses were made of this outdoor auditorium, such as candidate speakings, which, in those days, were as much a part of our lives as breathing. Close by were several springs, especially the one by the side of the road that was a neighborhood blessing, as it supplied water for dry cisterns, water for horses, water for wash days. Across the creek, via the footlog, was another spring, slightly sulphur, as the one by the road was iron-flavored. Springs were common enough, but not too many of them in our area were kept clean and properly "gummed." The gums were sections of hollow trees, usually sweetgum trees, set down deep in the sand, with clay rammed down to force the water to stay inside the gum and not just spill out in all directions. Many people went again and again to the springs when there was a big day, whether on week days or Sunday; in fact, it was a favorite stroll for the young couples. The scared young woman could be helped by her escort along the footlog, for it had no railing to reassure you. Dare-devil kids could make the log sway and thus sicken or dismay some visiting chicken-hearted youngsters.

For a few brief years we had an unusual attraction, the only set of triplets in my father's practice area. They were the children of a tenant on a big farm up the creek. Most of us had never seen a set of triplets before and not too many sets of twins; the older brothers of the three little girls would grab a baby apiece when somebody stopped out front and wanted to see the triplets. Many a nickel or dime passed into the hands of the accommodating brothers in this show of the three babies. But the triplets soon grew up and had rights of their own; they were just as great wonders as ever, but they might run away and hide when nosey people came along. Thus we lost one of our best entertainments for our visiting relatives and friends.

These are simple things, of course, but how much they are like modern tourist traps!

Page 7
TLC

Many times in my long life of talking and listening to people I have heard how country people used to be so lonely, so shut in. Maybe some people, up some hollow or away up on the ridge, were lonely; but every day was an active one at our house. The fact that my father was the country doctor was partly responsible for this, but only partly. Our Fidelity people seemed to like each other's company; that was one of the bases of the big Sunday dinner. Cooking up a lot of good stuff, sweating over a hot stove, washing innumerable dishes--all these paid off in having people around and enjoying food and conversation. Though summers, naturally, were more active than winters, since the crops had to be grown and harvested, the food put up for winter, and the new carpets woven, winter, too, had its share of goings and comings. The good old custom of sitting (but everybody said setting) till bedtime created a fine neighborhood unity that somehow is hard to forget. Wood-choppings, barn-raising, tobacco-cuttings, wheat-threshings--just about every kind of activity, summer and winter, was a neighborhood affair, not just the work of the family alone.

Some of my friends have often remarked about the greater interest in church in those days. We went to church, of course, for it was a part of our active neighborhood life; but I am not so sure that it was any special religious duty; we liked folks and got a chance to see them in this way. And we could invite somebody to come with us to dinner; or we could be invited. There was seldom a dull Sunday with nobody to come or go. The neighborhood activities that seem, a long way off, a great evidence of charity was thought of at the time as something quite casual. Taking some food to some elderly people was a chance to make a visit, to learn some news, to get some different points of view about life. Sitting up with the sick, laying out the dead, digging the graves of our friends--all of these were normal parts of normal lives.

When the telephone finally arrived at Fidelity, along about 1904-5, a new avenue for neighborhood life was opened up. We soon got better acquainted with our own people and with folks we had only occasionally seen, as at some annual event at Sulphur Springs or at the Union Church in Fidelity when a preacher or a sleight-of-hand performer or a man with a marvelous moving-picture machine came along. For many an older person after-supper hours were neighborhood hours, for a whole group could talk over the wonderful telephone, learn new jokes, tell old ones, check up on the health of our immediate community and adjoining areas. For a time some of the oldsters feared that the telephone would just about destroy our gatherings. One country fellow came up with the bright idea that it would not be necessary for you to bathe, dress up in stylish clothes, and go to church; the preacher could take down his receiver at a certain hour, and so could you and your neighbors. Whether a preacher in our area ever beat radio to the draw in this Sunday-morning service I never knew, partly because I left home when the telephones were only two years old. But I never feared that this handiness of the telephone would destroy the desire to see people and not merely hear their voices.

The country store, the postoffice (when it was not the same as the store), the blacksmith shop--these were great forums, open to men and boys especially. It was a lucky fellow who got to take a load of crossties to the river landing, for he could go far beyond our community boundaries, maybe see a steamboat, and also have all sorts of great stories of the sights along the way and how great a team of mules he had. County court days brought men from everywhere to the county seat, and it was not hard to think up some reason for your needing to go. Besides attending to "trading," you just might get to serve on a jury and have many a great story to tell at the country store for weeks to come.

Just how we got all this done still puzzles me. We were not lonely much of the time, at least.

Aug. 21
TIC

"IN THE MIDST OF LIFE"

To us who live in towns and cities the news of something that has happened to a fellow-citizen makes some impression, but there are so many impressions that our nerves get somewhat accustomed to them. In the country of my childhood and yours, neighborhood happenings, for better or worse, somehow became a part of all our lives. Events that happened when I was very small, too small to remember, were reviewed so many times in my presence that I could have sworn that I actually witnessed them. I must have been barely three when the five men drowned in what is now Kentucky Lake, while they were drawing a long seine one night. Those deaths cut into many families in Fidelity neighborhood. The two men who survived the tragedy were reluctant to talk, but everybody remembered the exact words and passed them on to the ones of us who were not privileged to hear the original accounts.

So vividly were events of the Civil War described in my presence that I used to feel that I could draw a picture of Shiloh or Fort Donelson or other great battles in our general area. Somehow the rather inconsequential participants in those world events did not look the part of heroes, but they acquired a small halo, at least. Probably they were envied more than any other men whom we knew.

However, the neighborhood memory was not concerned wholly with tragic events. As most primitive areas, Fidelity enjoyed its jokes, especially good-humored ones that bobbed up in every generation. Scaring the younger people was almost standardized. What is a neighborhood without a few haunted houses or other mysterious places? And good jokesters took advantage of the natural fear of such places and helped perpetuate the hair-raising groans and other noises associated with "haunted" places.

When a thing happened, it seemed to happen for everybody. When one of the girls eloped with a man a good deal older than she, we all shared in the humor when the girl's mother, very theatrically, begged a neighbor to pursue the eloping couple and shoot both of them. One tenant on a neighborhood farm declared that he would have enjoyed being in on this joke, for he would have ridden his horse hard after the couple as they tried to get across the Tennessee state line, he would have fired both barrels of his shotgun, and would have returned triumphantly to the frantic mother and told her that he had obeyed orders. I do not recall which event offered more neighborhood talk, the elopement or the subsequent sensational divorce. Both events were a part of our neighborhood life.

Cynicism was no common part of Fidelity life. We laughed at our crude practical jokes, we got pretty hot in political campaigns, we occasionally warmed up in the country store when religious dogmas came up (and they often did), but somehow all this seemed forgotten when trouble came along. I have known many a family that was ever so much better after a fire that consumed everything except the clothes ~~the~~ the family had on; neighborhood generosity made up for what had been lost and more. In general, there was a commendable tolerance, even though an outsider might have thought otherwise if he had heard only the endless political and religious arguments that almost came to blows. And, the beauty of all this, a strange mixture of desirable and undesirable human characteristics, was that my Fidelity was a fair sample of a whole era, a whole civilization, a period between the Civil War and World War I that was as distinctive as any period raved about by orators or written about lavishly by historians.

Aug 21
The strange word used as the subject--skinglish-- is my spelling of what we used to say when we meant "king's ex" in playing games and wishing for "time out." Our elders sometimes reminded us that we meant "king's excuse," but we followed the crowd, as all good folkish people do. And it worked quite as well as would have the more formal expression. I just supposed that our funny pronunciation was ours alone; imagine my surprise when I found a much-younger friend who used the same pronunciation, though she grew up 200 miles farther east in Kentucky. I wish I knew how widely this is used; I do not recall having found it in any of the sixty or more regional state lists of words that I have studied in my Mammoth Cave project.

My friend also states that some youngsters would often resort to this excuse when they were about to be caught in some game and did not wish to play according to the rules and become a member of the opposing team. Many a time I have seen youngsters fake nosebleed or tummyache or headache or some sudden pain in the arms or legs. We other children soon learned to have a sort of amused sneer for anyone who wanted to play but not according to the rules.

Hundreds of times in the bigger world than we knew at Fidelity I have seen fellows who used the same tactics, even though they did not use "skinglish" as an excuse. The going got tough, they did not get as much attention as they wanted, they did not like the crowd, they felt they were too good for their companions, or they liked to start something. Anyway, they tried to beg off, to be a rule to themselves and make up their rules for games all by themselves. Rather oddly, a great many of the brats whom I knew when they were young remained brats till the last chapter and verse of rather trashy lives. Unlike the characters in the mushy novels or Sunday School stories, not too many of them reformed and "lived happy ever after." Brats they were, and brats they remained. And, I have also observed, sometimes they became parents of brats that were exact duplicates of their elders.

We hear a lot of talk about loyalty and patriotism. We used to think that these were virtues of great people, little realizing that we had seen illustrations of them all our lives. On Confederate Reunion days at Sulphur Springs we sometimes had as a speaker a great ex-general from the Southern Army, a really distinguished man in his time. My uncles, who served under him and were captured with him, regarded him as the bravest man they had ever known, seemingly as unconcerned in a great battle as they might have been at a turkey shoot. But this great man refused to swear allegiance to the United States at the end of the Civil War and lived for many years as a man without a country. I myself heard him boast that he had never surrendered in spirit enough to become an American citizen and never would. And he didn't.

Present on the occasion when he made this wild statement were hundreds of people, many of them veterans of the Civil War, who had given their all for what they thought was right, had fought a good fight, had lost eyes or arms or legs or property--but they played the game and did not cry "skinglish." One old boy, across the creek, was said to have killed several Federal soldiers at Shiloh and had been cited for great bravery; but his killing days ended in 1865; he came back to his hillside farm and lived out a long, useful, unnoticed life. Another one whom I knew, for he was my uncle, could have said as the oft-quoted Southern soldier said at Appomattox: "Well, fellers, I've killed as many of them as they have of me; I'm going home and raise a crop."

74C Sept 4
T & R

"HERE WE GO ROUND THE MULBERRY BUSH"

Before this article sees print, we will have passed through another statewide primary for governor and the other offices. Lots of hot air will have been turned loose, lots of unnecessary harsh things will have been said, and a few noses will have lost their compass-needle straightness. And lots of people, like me, who have chosen to be sidelines in politics, will sigh a bit and be thankful that we have come through another campaign with most of our eyes and noses and fingers intact. Then we can take a few deep breaths and get ready for the general election in November, with contests with no holds barred.

There is an added attraction in Kentucky this year: the Republicans are to have one of their very rare primaries. The strongly-Republican counties and districts will get a taste of what the rest of the state has had every four years, for the Democrats seem to thrive on internal strife. It has been a very rare occasion in my lifetime, in state politics, when it was possible to hear the inside story of the whole party as revealed by partisans that seemed to want to scalp their friends and on the strength of their success be able to roast or boil in oil their opponents in the fall election. We are in for some high old times.

To an elderly fellow like me there is a lot to enjoy about politics, which I have watched purely as an outsider all my life. It would be hard to say what is the most folkish phase of our American life, but it would be hard to place anything above a political campaign. In my younger days I studied and taught a lot of Latin and found my fidelity friends on many a page. The candidate, with his white dress--toga--indicating his purity as a man, addressed his fellow-citizens in Latin, of course, but a sympathetic translation of it would sound just like the speeches I heard at the old Union Church (community house, we would call it now) or in the woods at Sulphur Springs, where candidates held forth just as did the Latins in their Forum. The country was always bleeding, suffering, being wasted, ruined by the party in power; "turn the rascals out" was apparently born with representative government. And the Romans, just like Kentuckians, sometimes acted on that saying; at the end of the term of office of those who had turned the rascals out, many times, another group used the same slogan and got into power. Hot dog, now we'll have a millennium, a heaven on earth! Just wait.

Now this is not meant to be cynical, for we are much better off by working out some of our inner feelings than by smothering them until we go on a rampage of ruin and murder. Use up your crop of bad adjectives, call your opponent everything except some fighting word, show your dear constituents how very necessary it is to elect you. You may be elected, you may be defeated, but anyway you had your say and got by with it. If you are a good sport, you can shake hands with the fellow who would ruin us all and wish him well; you can even be present when he takes office and cheer as loudly as his most ardent partisans. Not many times in my seventy-nine years have actual killings resulted from hot campaigns, but many of us have feared outbreaks of mayhem; somehow we calm down and wait for the next time to work off some of our heat. Meanwhile some younger voters, not seasoned veterans like us, may arise and beat us at our games, for they are much nearer basketball games than we and know how to boo the referees, and such, much, much better. But here we are, with the primary over and our knives being sharpened for the November election. If you can get rid of your feelings by using bad words and loud talk rather than by bloodshed, do this; otherwise you might endanger the chances of your younger fellows to enjoy the circus-side-show game we play in American politics, thinking it something new, but the Romans had words for it--lots of bad ones--and could have beaten us at our own game.

Sept 4
T & C

In the days of my innocence, as some pious people used to call their childhood, I believed everything that I heard, just as I heard it. Was not my Uncle Carroll a true-blue Southern soldier, and didn't he tell some pretty unbelievable stories that Mother said were true? Therefore any story told by any ex-Confederate soldier just had to be true, for imagine doubting the word of these heroes. Uncle Clark Bailey (no relation of ours but "uncled" by all of us younger people) could tell dozens of yarns that made Uncle Carroll's seem tame. Usually Uncle Carroll would laugh when he told some seeming whopper, but Uncle Clark looked downright pious when he told his best ones. It would have taken some accumulation of bad manners to express doubt of such a serious narration. But Father, who respectfully listened to Uncle Carroll's yarns, would squirm when Uncle Clark got wound up. Father used to tell Mother that she encouraged the old man to lie; but Mother would only smile at Uncle Clark or "Oh" and "Ah" at the right places. This gave the yarn-spinner all the encouragement he wanted, and on he went until I want to kick myself for not setting down some dozens of his great stories, in which he was always the hero. In this column I have told two or three, the only ones I now remember as having first heard from Uncle Clark.

And that is what started me to thinking about some of my disillusionments as I went away from Fidelity and found the same stories localized elsewhere. Why, I would think silently, I did not know that Uncle Clark could have ever been here; I thought he spent his whole life, except for the four years of the Civil War, over on Panther Creek. Slowly I had to admit that the great deeds of Uncle Clark were folklore, though I did not know that term then. And lots of other true stories that I knew and began to spin when I went away to teach school or to attend Western were not with: "Why, that happened in my home neighborhood." And the student or other fellow would give places and dates and all the other necessary details to prove that I had my yarn all wrong. It took me years to get over my disappointment that these traditional yarns had not been actual happenings in the general area of Fidelity.

And then another funny thing happened. I learned to preface my yarns by saying, "There is an old folk yarn that runs thus and so." Then some elderly woman or man would call my hand and remind me, just as my roommate or some other student, that I was laughing at history, for my folk yarn was an actual event, something that happened to a good old truthful man now long dead. I just couldn't win, whether I told my yarn as a fact or as a folk yarn. And it is funny that I still run into embarrassing moments when I am lecturing to some club and plan to get a little laugh at some traditional story; I get reminded gently but firmly that I am laughing at what happened to Uncle George, bless his truthful old soul!

This very verisimilitude about folk narratives is one of the best features about them. As far back as time can be dated fairly well, some of our best localized yarns were being told, with careful details to prove them accurate history. That is one of my chief joys in Chaucer, whose tales I taught for a generation. His yarns, sometimes slightly dry-cleaned, would enthrall an audience now. He was like his very learned hen in the Run's Priest's Tale, for he knew hundreds of anecdotes, some of which he merely hinted at and a goodly number of which he told as only Chaucer could tell them. I wish Uncle Clark could have known Chaucer; if he could have lived long enough for me to slip him out by ourselves and fish a while on Blood River, I could have made him Simons, for I could have told him the yarn and let Uncle Clark pin it on some well-known Fidelity fellow.

AC Sept 18

Not everybody can tell a good story. I have sat in classes under eminent scholars and squirmed when they would attempt to bring some dandy yarns from the past, traditional yarns or well-written ones. And then I would think of some illiterate fellow who could have taken the same details and made even the most blase whittlers at the stores at Fidelity laugh themselves hoarse over.

A conscious humorist is a poor tale-teller unless he has done his stuff a long time, as did Mark Twain, and got used to a public demonstration of his own yarn. I dislike very much a yarn-spinner who tells his yarn as if he were reading it out of a book. My yarn-spinner is a born actor, whether he doesn't know B from bull's foot or holds a string of degrees. Too many of the others who have bored me for three quarters of a century may have been good readers and may have had excellent voices, but they were too aloof. When I hear a folk yarn about a dog, for example, I want to see that dog in the actions and gestures and grimaces of the teller. A good spinner of tales does not need makeup; he can do well in his overalls and jumper right in the store or, if he is of another type, he can even throw you into stitches while you and he are dressed for a swell ball.

Many would-be yarn-spinners imagine that they can tell all sorts of yarns. That is almost like suggesting that a great buffoon can do a moron act one night and Hamlet the next equally well or that it is immaterial whether the singer attempts a high tenor one time and a deep bass the next. One of the jokes that some light-opera companies have often played is to cast a part deliberately to create a laugh. Little Buttercup, in H. M. S. PINAFORE, is often the largest lady of the group; that makes her songs all the merrier. Chaucer realized how yarns must, in general, fit their tellers. Only rarely does his tale sound too profound or too raw for the character of the pilgrim telling the piece.

Traditional yarns are of many kinds. And the chosen character of the teller is often the biggest element in making the yarn a success. I believe that I enjoy most the following kinds: the dumb-bell, who imagines himself something important and stumbles along, growing more dumb all the time; the self-important big boy, with wealth or prominence; the elderly fellow who intrudes into the conversations and adds his bit of worldly wisdom, usually a little too raw for Grandpa to understand or to enjoy; the lofty moralist who can draw a moral out of anything as easily as a magician draws a white rabbit from a hat. Once get the right teller of a yarn, and the yarn will get told. It may not differ, in plain data, from the same yarn told by some other and vastly different yarn-spinner; the atmosphere of the teller's own philosophy and his words and gestures often tell more than any mere sequence of sentences.

Having attended several thousand daily convocations that our college called chapels, I have heard enough good and bad yarns to fill a shelf much longer than the five-foot shelf of the Harvard Classics. You could dismiss sixty per cent of the yarns as tedious, poorly told, told by the wrong fellow, or in poor taste. But the others, accidentally usually, arrived because the tellers had entered into their yarns so much that the yarn and the yarn-spinner had become one. The very unconscious gestures had become a part of the yarn; the tones of voice, the slowness or fastness of the telling were organic. And when you applauded or laughed or ever reached for your handkerchief, you were unconsciously praising the art of the natural-born story-teller who had learned to tell this kind of story until it was his very own. Then who cares how many times you have heard it? I can repeat from memory the best yarn I ever heard, and I should have, for I must have heard it seventy-five times; but I am too honest to imagine that I can tell that story as it was told and ought to be told.

Sept 18
T & C

In LORNA DOONE occur some words that certainly describe my own young days:

"It puzzles me now, that I remember all these young impressions so, because I took no heed of them at the time whatever; and yet they come upon me bright, when nothing else is evident in the gray fog of experience."

As much as I would like to say that I knew I was living in a very fascinating epoch of history, I cannot do so and be truthful. To be honest, I often was ashamed of the very happenings that today are my stock in trade. Our little Fidelity world seemed so puny by the side of the romantic places I was reading about that just about everything that we knew and did was beneath the notice of what I thought serious people ought to be. Only untouched nature was my sphere; I admit that I liked wild things better than I liked folks and probably often showed my perversity.

But, as Blackmore, the author of LORNA DOONE, says, I absorbed thousands of impressions from the life around me, so that the people of Fidelity now seem very important. There I was, I had never been anywhere else except imaginary lands of the imagination. Naturally, I had no adequate standard to judge Fidelity by; since it did not seem as grand as Sir Walter Scott's historical places or so quaint as George Eliot's English byways or so self-centered as Hawthorne's New England, it was only something to be endured until, by some unimagined good luck, I would fly away to story-book lands and escape the little out-of-the-way neighborhood into which I had been brought without being previously consulted.

Jesse Stuart said in my presence once that he did not know that he wrote folklore until a great scholar wrote a doctor's thesis about his entire output of novels and stories and poems and found them running over full of it. Just so, I did not know that no story-book ever had any more fascinating background than my own remote neighborhood, so far as my life and thinking would be concerned when I "came to myself."

Fortunately, my memory took in whatever came around it and, maybe also fortunately, laid it away in mothballs for future use. Since Father was a doctor, I got to see all the kinds of people in our part of the world. And, rather oddly, as I have so often said, there are very few types of folks anywhere that I have since seen or even read about that did not have a pretty good sample right at Fidelity. I represented many times seeing somebody coming for the doctor, for I would have to break into my dreams and catch Father's old yellow horse for him. I did not dislike the patients and their families; I just hated to have them interrupt my dreaming. But I remembered their tones of voice, their quaint words, their very dress; and, years later, I could see them still, after I had learned that they counted and were not the inconsequential people I had imagined them to be.

In all my writing and speaking about Fidelity I have hardly scratched the surface of my memories. Part of this is due to the fact that I have not yet found a way to put things down that are vivid to me but might, or most certainly would, be boring to you who read my column. Lots of things that still seem of no earthly use in memories could, possibly, acquire more value as I learn how to set them down. Styles of writing change so much that it is thinkable that these unwritten things might be the most important of all. Meanwhile there they lie, still vivid, awaiting some opportunity to be written down, to be evaluated.

Now, of course, this is a sort of parable, for I am saying I when I mean all of us, with our horde of things remembered that may be just as valuable to humanity as the ones that more fortunate people have found a way to make available.

"THE CHOIR INVISIBLE"

George Eliot, in her poem called "The Choir Invisible," pays tribute to the unnamed and unnamable hosts of human beings to whom we are all indebted. You and I, however self-important we may feel, are late comers in a world that was around a long time without knowing about us. And, somehow, it managed to survive without our help or assistance in any form.

And, scattered over the whole human world, things were being put together that would be here when we got here: the family, learning, reverence, governments, ways to prepare foods, clothing, and all the rest. It almost makes a fellow have a spell of dizziness to contemplate how many debts we owe to the creators of all times who had things ready for us to live here.

We praise, and rightly so, some one who discovers something that will benefit mankind. I have a great reverence for the pioneers of science, of medical lore, of literature, of art, of religion. But, we must remember, no great man ever just rose up without any background. A great writer sets down in a book great characters, but generations of human experience had produced the originals of these. A quaint country philosopher, made famous by some inimitable humorist, is merely a stage in the growth of humor through countless generations. Great-uncle George may have been basically as great a philosopher as his great-great-nephew became, but nobody set down his wise and quaint sayings. Peter Cartwright is justly a great character in our early-American religious life, but it would be a great study to know how much of his seemingly originality was a modification of the worldly wisdom of people whom he had known and absorbed. When a great man actually arises, we soon ascribe to him his own greatness and then bring together in his name instances that he probably never heard of but which we like to think he evaluated in his own way. There are hundreds of Abraham Lincoln stories; some of them are authentic; others are Lincoln-like and are often accepted at face value. I can think of no harder job than separating any great human character from the traditional character he has grown to be.

Daily we are surrounded by evidences of the choir invisible who have set standards in our lives, who have shaped our conception of the Good Life, who have provided ways and means to live and thrive and be happy and useful. Only one out of hundreds or thousands of these benefactors have names; but their work lives on, and we are as we are because of it.

It is a worthy custom to build monuments to exceptional members of our race who were able to accomplish great things that "took the eye and had the price." All honor to these fine examples of our race, and all honor, even, to the ones of our race who have felt that some recognition should be taken of great achievements. But let us not forget the unnumbered millions beside the recognized few. Hans Christian Andersen could tell stories in a great way; I have enjoyed standing by the monument to this quaint member of our race and civilization; but Uncle George, bless his ignorant old soul, was a great yarn-spinner in our little world. He does not have even a "tomb rock" at his grave. I doubt whether five people now living can tell you in what part of the Fidelity graveyard he was buried, some half century ago. But, in our memories his yarns live on; our world has been somewhat different from what it would have been without the dear old illiterate, ungrammatical, but natural-born story-teller. We, too, would like to be among the

"Choir invisible

Whose music is the gladness of the world."

Oct 2
TAC

"TO LAY THE OLD ASIDE"

We Fidelity youngsters used to memorize hundreds of lines of poetry and near-poetry. If the lines held some pretty obvious moral, we liked it better. I recall almost the hour I memorized these two lines:

"Be not the first by whom the new is tried
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."

That couplet was simple enough to make sense to me, for I could look around and see some funny illustrations of it. We had lots of old people in our community, I thought, though I know now that probably not five of them were as old as I am now. But they looked old and talked old and dressed old and thought old. They were in every way the very opposite of St. Paul's "spake as a child, etc." Since I was very young then, they seemed like some left-overs of some long-ago age, maybe contemporaries of the people we read about in the Bible.

The funny thing is that these oldsters were consciously and unconsciously trying to be ancient philosophers. They looked down on young upstarts who had not known at first hand still-older people, even born when the 1800's were still very few, just as we were growing up in the early 1900's. Since beards were very common, though not universal, a beard gave each old fellow one of the badges of philosophers as we conceived them to be. The beard, plus an absence of most of the teeth; plus long, stringy hair; plus a lost effort to wear clothes that were like those worn by their younger contemporaries--these made the Fidelity old men marked as wise men, for were not all the prophets so pictured?

And most of the oldsters lived up to their looks. They accepted or took the right to have their say about everything that had happened that was out of harmony with their own philosophy. Just how they had come to adopt such thinking we never knew, but it would have been downright bad manners to oppose one of the elders publicly, no matter how much we loved, away from people who might scold us, to act out the toothless warnings and prophecies of these ancients.

Somewhere they had gone as far as human beings should go, in every kind of thinking and acting and dressing, and bathing, for that matter. To go beyond that was to brand oneself as a young upstart, who might make a fool of himself or might even bring disgrace upon his family. There were plenty of chances to make fools of young people then and still are, but the bearded savants were not thinking of just straying from the straight and narrow ways of morals. The fellow who went away to school was in danger of getting too big for his breeches, if not of declining in morals and manners. The building of a house that differed very much from traditional standards brought down fearful warnings upon the builder's head. I heard enough harsh things said about buggies, for example, to make some people believe that no invention since Adam first invented clothing had done more to undermine morals than the buggy. And screens came in for some toothless condemnations that would sound "made-up" now if I were to write them down. When the railroad was built through our county, when I was a very little boy, it aroused so much hostility that many of the oldsters identified it with some of the mysterious evils mentioned in the Book of Revelations.

Whether these sages had been slow about accepting things when they were young I, naturally, could not know; certainly they were not going to "lay the old aside" without a struggle. What had been the thing in their youth was foreordained and predestined as right; all that had happened since then was questionable at best and plain wicked at worst.

Oct 16
T x C

With so many things being said about fads in dress and hair, I have reviewed some of my long years and have come up with a definition: "An old fogy is an aging new fogy." The same impulse, apparently, that prompts a wild young chap to overstep the conservative bounds of his time prompts him to cling to his own way of doing things after they have ceased to be just the thing. My mother, in her older, philosophical days, gave me this notion. She, too, was interested in the changing manners of people and had observed, in her long life, that faddists are likely to remain faddists to the end of the chapter. Some antiquated fellow who would come to see us on the strength of being a sixth cousin would look to us youngsters like something out of the poorhouse. He was not necessarily poor, but he had gone to seed in his way of dressing and felt that humanity was going downhill fast. But Mother said he "rushed the style" in their younger days and was never satisfied to dress approximately like anybody else; he must look different.

Wouldn't it shock some of our English-sheepdog friends if they could see themselves forty or fifty years from now as museum pieces? Photography has been a great corrector of notions, especially as to the looks of people at certain times of history. I hope that all the wildest dressers of our time will have many pictures taken and that these same exhibits will be kept faithfully somewhere to refute the old-men attitudes of youngsters, say in 2020. If there is any funnier book in existence than an old family album, I have yet to see it. Only a person with historical research in mind could turn through such a comedy book without hilarious laughter. If you want to see what was actually worn in those days, how hair was fixed, and how easy or stiff the victims of photography looked, then an old picture album is great. But imagine Father with that shaving-brush beard on the tip of his chin! And look at Mother, short and plump when we knew her, attired in clothes that would have graced a ballet dancer! And the brave old ex-Confederate in the stiff picture that makes him look like a boy whose voice has barely changed, whose beard is yet to appear! He certainly cannot be the bearded, roly-poly ancient gentleman whom we always pictured, as so many people do, as the same fellow in appearance in far-away times. Some of my literary friends somehow resent any picture of Longfellow except the one where he is a white-whiskered, kind-faced old gentleman, a sort of incarnation of whole generations of kindly college professors and neighborhood heroes.

Biographies of such men as Longfellow have a way of telling how the poet was not always the kindly-eyed old gentleman whom we revere. It took some unusual courage to face a life as a poet and foreign-language teacher a century and a third ago. Born into a prominent family where making money was expected to be a portion of a normal life, he had to face opposition; imagine a New Englander wanting to be a poet! And his professional life was not all roses, as older lives of the poet seemed to indicate. He had to explore new ground and even write his own textbooks. He had to face almost solid opposition from the old classicists; what was literature by the side of Greek and Latin? I have enjoyed seeing early portraits of Longfellow and finding in them a human being somewhat like us later college teachers, not an ethereal word-maker who lived apart and felt superior to just plain people. I sometimes feel like saying ugly words about the distortion of literature by some of my early teachers. To them a poet was hardly of earthy stuff; he sat, as in Longfellow's case, behind his bushy white beard and looked with tender amusement at the pretty world of which he had become a god. Look out, young fellow, that funny hair may entangle you yet. Don't imagine that you are the first dare-devil to sprout hair or whiskers. For further details, consult Grandma's old family album.

T & C Oct 16
1693

COLLECTORS' ITEMS

Years ago Will Rogers gave an excellent idea about how to become rich: just keep intact the stuff you now have and live to be old; then the most ordinary wearing apparel, furniture, household items, books, and such will be valuable. You can sell off a few at a time and have a steady income in your old age.

There is much truth in this ridiculous statement. While we have things, they seem worthless or barely endurable; then, after time has tested them, they acquire a worth that we never dreamed of. Not long ago Jesse Stuart paid a visit to our town and was our big news item for days. He was kind enough to repeat that I published his first prose work, "The Yarb Doctor," in the now-defunct KENTUCKY FOLKLORE AND POETRY MAGAZINE and also some of the very first of his poems a little earlier in the same short-lived magazine. As a result of my interest in his early work, he sent me an autographed copy of his first thin volume of verse, HARVEST OF YOUTH. For years I was afraid I had lost the little book, but, when I "moved home" from my office in the summer of 1959, when I retired, there I found in my storeroom, covered up with tons of other stuff, the priceless little book. I use the term "priceless" deliberately. In a collectors' list today, February 15, 1967, I found the book quoted at \$300! Mr. Stuart says he knows of only six copies in existence. The poet's later work has made his name known everywhere, but he showed this same ability long ago; hence the greater value of this little book to me. "I knew him when."

It is not always possible to guess what will be more valuable as time goes on. What creates a stir may be a great work, or it may be a bit of temporary stuff, maybe trash. It is easy to imagine great futures for certain books or pictures and great works of art. A good blurb from someone high in authority as a critic may make a book sell like the proverbial hot cakes; ten years later it may happen that nobody remembers what all the stir was about. Everybody is entitled to his liking of a certain book, even though the critics may have ignored it. And, I have lived long enough to learn, some of the ~~stones~~ that the builders rejected have become the heads of the corners.

Never having had a surplus of money, I have not followed collectors' manias enough to shell out an extra dollar or two. Maybe I could have bought up something I believed to be great and have now a treasure; however, the same thing might be merely some more paper for rats and mice to gnaw on. I have never believed that I could prophesy what would or wouldn't be great even ten years from now, not to mention a century hence.

When I bought my little seventy-five-cent copy of WALDEN in 1905, I suspect that not two dozen copies of the book in any edition could have been found in the entire state. Hundreds of educated people did not have the slightest idea of what the book was about or even who wrote it. But it was "my" book, anyway, and I clutched it to my bosom as a great treasure. I do not know whether that particular edition is now valuable, for my copy, like my copy of HARVEST OF YOUTH, is not for sale. But I have been mad^{happy} through the sixty-two years since I bought the book for my birthday present to myself because hosts of people have come to regard WALDEN as one of our supremely great American books. It would take a big shelf to hold a single copy of each edition that has appeared since 1905, and another bigger one to hold works on Thoreau and his quaint little volume. At the time ^{it} was published, 900 copies, 700 failed to sell. Thoreau quaintly wrote in his diary: "I now own a library of 900 volumes, 700 of which I wrote myself," for he had had to take over the unsold volumes; my, what a treasure a copy of that little book would be today! Ordinary fellows like you and me are not often privileged to see such treasures or to hold them in our hands.

Week on the Concord

Oct 30
TLC

FRONT ROOM, STOREROOM, FRONT ROOM

When I was a boy at Fidelity, some of our neighbors had some old stuff, quaint old dressers and bedsteads and washstands, that they were ashamed of. You see, these old-fashioned things had been brought by the original heads of the families from North Carolina. Sentiment, maybe a little shame-faced, still held on to the old things, while families that did not have such near connections with North Carolina and Virginia were disposing of their less-famous furniture and buying iron beds and other more modern furniture. The owners of the old things covered them up with varnish and paint and thus preserved them from the injuries that all furniture ultimately gets. Some of the families just could not resist the urge to get rid of the antiques, and so they stored them in the attics or in the sideroom to the smoke-house or even in the loft of the buggy-shed. And there they lay for years, while brand-new beds and chests and such took their places. That was about the stage of things when I went away to school in 1906.

Then, gradually, the idea crept in that these belongings were valuable. Almost ashamed to be seen with their new employment, men and women brought out the still-strong and elegant old furniture, dusted it off, removed dozens of layers of paint and varnish, and then had the temerity to expose the old things to public gaze by placing them in the guest room, the modern equivalent of the front room of my youth. And, as a visitor in some of those homes, I tell you I felt that I was being entertained in a place of wealth, for this four-poster or this chest of drawers would bring a prince's ransom if the proud owners ever decided to turn stingy and sell what they used to be ashamed of. I had to look several times at some of the things I used to know before I found anything to recognize. An oval mirror on one chest or bureau was the only mark of the much-painted old chest that I used to know. And, believe me, the present owner, who had helped take down the treasure and hide it away, was present, as a middle-aged woman, when it was brought back out again and restored to its former place of grandeur.

How folkish all this is! We used to have a riddle that ran like this: "I haven't got it, I don't want it, but, if I had it, I wouldn't take a million dollars for it." The answer was "a bald head." These antiques, preserved purely through sentiment, could come back to life and respect, none the worse for slumbering for several decades in the storeroom or attic. Their owners did not want them, but now they would not part with them for gold or silver or any other medium of exchange.

It does me good to chronicle this strange development of appreciation for really valuable stuff. Some of our neighbors, with no particular sentiment attaching to four-posters, since they had been bought and not inherited, cut them up and made settees for the front porch, using the headboard for a back, the footboard, properly sawed down, for the front. I used to pass a place where the front porch held one of these former four-posters every time I went down Fidelity way to see my mother. I do not know whether the front-porch settee ultimately found itself chopped up for kindling or still may be serving the family who owned it long ago.

This attitude can be blamed for the neglect of a study of our backgrounds. It was not popular some years ago to assume that what happened to our folks before we got here was of any special value; folklore and its allied studies are gradually bringing a more sensible attitude toward our folkways, whether of beliefs and practices, of language, or of folk industries and artistry.

In our copybooks we sometimes had some maxims that we wrote again and again and thus absorbed. "I will try has done wonders" was one of them. "If at first you don't succeed, try again" was another. And one that seemed pretty unwise wisdom to some of the elders was, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." You see, work was supposed to be holy; play was questionable at best and very wicked at worst.

But count on youth to find a way out. If life had to be largely a matter of work, why not make it a sort of play? Working alone in the field or around the farms generally could be pretty boring, but, if some companionship could be added, then everybody had a good time.

It may be wicked in me, but I never liked farm animals. I never, never neglected them; but it took some private talks with myself to see that every animal got fed and watered or otherwise taken care of. Down the road a piece was Sulphur Springs, where we took our horses and mules to water. Lots of other boys had the same chore, and thus we had some incentive to provide for the needs of our animals. We might even have some bareback horse or mule races, safely away from parental eyes. And there was always the chance to learn some new practical jokes or some smart-alec saying that we could pull on the less fortunate ones who had not been sent to water the stock.

Being very weak as a boy, I never succeeded in achieving any local fame as a strong man or high jumper or fast swimmer. But I could be water boy, I could hold tobacco sticks for the he-men who cut the tobacco, and I could hold sacks for the wheat as it came rolling out of the thresher. The machine made too much noise for me to talk or to hear, but if some girls came to visit the thresher, they could not help seeing me in my prominent position. Of course, I would have liked to drive the horses that gave power to the thresher or, better still, to feed the hopper; but these were skilled operations, and I had to be content to act in less dignified positions.

Most men who owned farms allowed their boys or their hired hands a half hour or so to rest after they had downed a big dinner. Some wise boys would steal out into the yard, lie down on the grass, and completely relax for this half hour; others, in spite of the heavy toil involved in following a mule team and plow, would wrestle or play practical jokes on each other. You see, when you are following your team and likely to be jerked away by the plow, there is little time to joke and act the fool. And, when eating time comes on, who would be so foolish to lose time by talking, anyway? And so the only time to be a boy of high spirits was this brief rest period at noon.

Just now I stole to the bookcase where are stored my fading, dusty old diaries. It must have been some sort of fate that directed me to pick up one for 1905, in which I found that I had just attended, with fourteen others, a log-rolling. I even gave the time we started and the hour of stopping our back-breaking work. But I did not set down some of the rarest unprintable tales and jokes that I acquired that very afternoon. When we had finished a huge pile of logs, some boy would mount the pile, crow like a rooster, and sit down to rest. The men and boys, instead of resting, played endless jokes on some greenhorn, who was trying to be a regular feller. I suspect that I bit at some fake joke that afternoon, for I recall a little too vividly some of the tricks that I learned then. Anyway, we got the logs rolled, we had a lot of good horse laughs, and I, with not too much output of strength, got my bag of jokes and he-men talk filled to stuffiness. "All work and no play" did not make this Jack a dull boy for that big neighborhood event; I would not trade that afternoon for some of the best grades I made in college, for it gave me things that books cannot give, that society has never properly evaluated.

Nov 13
T & C

ENJOYING THE WEATHER

There used to be a notion among sophisticated people that talking about the weather was the best evidence of boorishness, of plain country manners. I have been snubbed lots of times for descending to such low breeding. But, as so often happens in this contradictory world of ours, weather has become one of our biggest and most often used subjects. Think how often the subject appears on radio and television; look how important it appears in your daily newspaper; imagine paying no attention to the weather even for a day. Where might your plane land or fail to land if the pilot did not know about wind and clouds and such stuff? How many accidents you might avoid by knowing the condition of highways because of snows or storms or floods!

Long ago I made no effort to be polite and give up weather as a topic of conversation; I fairly revel in it. And why should I not, and why should the subject be frowned on? From early boyhood I have kept records of exceptional weather and could, if necessary, go back into memory or into my old diaries and report on the big snow or the below-zero cold snap or the floods. I can say truthfully that I enjoy the weather. Now, don't get a notion that I do not get cold or hot or wet or otherwise uncomfortable, just like everybody else. But those experiences are part of the whole scheme; it would be a queer world without some ups and downs of weather. I am glad to live where winter is likely to be cold and summer hot; I like rains and snows and fair weather and so-called gloomy weather. A whole month of unchanging weather can become pretty monotonous, especially if you are thinking about farm life and work. A month of unbroken sunshine might be as bad in mid-summer as a month of continuous rains in spring or winter.

We people who enjoy weather are a varied lot. Some of us oldsters like to pit our own observations against the cocky prophecies of the professional weathermen; and, we love to crow over some of our prophecies that beat the weatherman's guess. Of course, we modern weather observers cannot be as free from outside influence as were our wise predecessors. When a newspaper came once a week, if at all; when there were no telephones, even, not to mention radios and TV's; when few of us had been twenty miles from the places of our birth, we had to depend on signs and feelings rather than on such modern things as four-times-an-hour reports on the weather in progress and the weather to come. From away back in memory we had to dig out the signs that preceded the big snow or the long drought. Some memories would get badly tangled, for not many weather savants put down, even on the wall calendar, the exact date of some great spell of weather. I once laughed at my father's record of the Big Snow of 1886. Some of the neighbors were questioning him whether the snow came in 1882 or 1884 or 1886. He went to the old desk where he kept his "doctor's books" and brought out the 1886 volume; there on a flyleaf he had put down the exact days when this exceptional snow had begun, ended, and finally melted off. That silenced some of the neighbors, but I would wager that some person who depended purely on memory got his years so mixed up that the year might have been, in his account, anywhere from 1878 to 1888.

Just let a big snow or a severe cold spell or some unusual hot weather come, and all of us sink to the level of the boors of the Gay Nineties who actually talked about the weather, even in stylish company. And nothing so awakes kindly human nature as a lusus naturae, a freak of nature, for we become again the same kind folks we were when the big snows shut in the older people or used up the woodpile of the "widow women" whom we knew. Forthwith we rise to the occasion and talk about the weather and do something neighborly.

Often I am asked to define "lore." It is not an easy word to define, for it has many sides, many emotional hookups, many social positions. Scientists usually regard lore as interesting but hardly worthy of serious study or regard. That illustrates one idea of lore: something that is not scientific, not provable, not "so." But usually the scientist, even, likes to know what so-called knowledge there is about anything, even the most absurd and primitive.

Some scholars like to think of lore as all the knowledge about a certain subject, provable or unprovable, just as some people think of "literature" as the whole of things written and not merely the portion that most people call "mere literature." In my sideline of ornithology there are tons of things known and adequately proved. Scholars through ages of study have established a body of facts that are worthy of belief. If the scientists have worked with their hearts in their tasks, they have found very fascinating facts; it is not necessary to invent anything to make birds interesting and delightful to study. But a cold-blooded person, who probably does not care for the bird out of doors, can present the facts about birds in such a way as to make the creatures little more than lifeless rocks or clods. The real naturalist, who knows something about many kinds of living things and their backgrounds, can take the same facts and, without adding a single new one, show the bird as a very live thing, not a mere geological specimen.

In my early days of reading about folklore I ran into a great many writers and even some of them in the flesh who had studied folklore as if human beings were mere facts and had no flesh-and-blood reality. Even the scholars who felt that people can be real failed to see more than a small section of the race. He too often tabulated the queer things that are done by queer people, not the average folkishness of most of us. In some of these early years I was repulsed by what was called folklore and seriously doubted whether it was a subject to challenge serious study if these results were all that could be gained by watching, somewhat mechanically, human beings.

But, I am glad to say, lore about the folk came to have new meaning as I rather seriously started out to learn more and to observe for myself. Instead of finding folklore only in strange places, among abnormal or subnormal or primitive people, I began to find it everywhere, often so much of it that I myself could hardly believe it was all there. We have lots of accurate observations about ourselves and our kind, and these observations help us to develop formal sides of our learning and our inventions. But this alone would not make the study very alluring to most of us. What is there that cannot be reduced to rules? How much individuality do people have? How can you account for the oddities of personality, of folkishness?

In my collecting I made no effort to separate the beliefs that have some sensible basis in science from the merest superstition. Most folkish people do not make any difference; why should I? Weather signs, for example, often are valid in even scientific circles; but the same fellow who follows them will plant his crops by some sign that no modern-day scientist would accept. In folk medicine the same is true: a tonic of herbs, with the basic corn liquor, may have many merits, say some of my pharmacist friends; but the peeling of the bark down or up to get proper results must be banished from serious belief. Lore accepts both for what they are worth or what they seemed to be worth to the people who used them. If a father split a small sapling and spread the two sides far enough apart to pass his asthmatic child through, and if the asthma quit troubling the youngster when the bark grew back over the split parts, so what? Would you doubt if you were the father or the child? Lore would answer that question.