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TIDBITS OF KENTUCKY FOLKLORE

By

Gordon Wilson

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Several times each year, for ever so long, I have taught Poe's "The Bells" to my students in Early American Literature. And every time, the poem renewes my memories of bells, many bells, that have come into my life, and, quite naturally, into the lives of so many of my generation.

It was never my good fortune as a youngster to hear a real carillon. I had heard of bell towers and of musicians who could play bells as the few among us could play an organ. That seemed about as unreal as many of the other things we had heard about the big world beyond our little hills. I had seen pictures of bell towers, including some of the great ones of Italy; I wished, heartily, to see the world and to hear its bells. But no carillon ever grew up in stone in our remote world. But we had our own bells, and even they could and did speak as only bells can speak. Some of these bells were very humble ones, but they connect with memories and with poetry.

On the farm we had several bells. A small one was tied to a bit of leather and then tied around the neck of the bell-weather of our flock. That tinkling bell, like the "silver bells" of Poe's poem, brought sounds of delight. When the bell tinkled normally, the sheep wearing it was grazing in the pasture, perfectly unconscious that a boy was listening and dreaming. Sometimes a slightly differ tinkle occurred: then the flock was coming back to the barnyard to be put up for the night. Occasionally, but not often in my memory, a strange clatter of the tinkling notes told me that some stray dog had frightened our flock and the leader was bounding away, the little bell sounding its own version of fright. And our cows wore bells, too, deeper-toned ones. And all the varieties of sounds associated with the sheep's bell were repeated on a larger scale. Away into the creek bottoms, still grown up in primitive timber, went each morning our cows, with the bell-cow leading. Gradually the sounds of the bell grew fainter and then stopped altogether until late in the afternoon, when a whole procession of cows came up from the lowlands, with each distinctive bell leaving the procession as cows
belonging to neighboring farms headed for their own milking places and nights to
rest and ruminate. Poets have said tender things about cowbells, down the lane
and in the pastures, but even the most sentimental ones have not said enough. The
music of cowbells gets into one's nervous system and stays there; all the eventful
years and all the thousands of hours of great music can never erase the morning
and evening concert of cowbells going to or coming from the bottom lands.

By degrees every farm acquired a bell, a big bell on a stout post set out in
the yard close to the house, where it could be rung by the mother of the family to
announce that dinner was ready. No two bells at Fidelity had the same sound: some
were high-toned and sleigh-bell-like; some were mellow and loud at the same time;
some seemed to cry out, much as a boy's hungry stomach was likely to be the most
obvious fact, along about eleven thirty in the morning. So far as I can now
remember, the mules learned the bells, too, and greeted them with a strange bray,
something like the sound often uttered by the mule when he was hitched to a sapling
at Sulphur Springs Church and must have been longing for dinner on the ground to
be served.

And there were two school bells. The small handbell, one of which I still
own, called the children in from their play. The teacher--usually mine was a
woman--came to the door and rang this small bell. All sorts of mixed-up feelings
greeted that sound: some children wanted to play longer, some longed to rest and
even doze in their seats; some actually wanted to get back to the perennial satis-
faction of reading of strange places in the geography book or memorizing the endless
spelling lists. Later we had a big bell like the farm bells. It became a custom
to ring this bell to announce school, about a half hour before time for "books" to
begin. But the school bell that still graces Fidelity High School used to be on
the tower above the old union church, a bell that had as many uses as a whole
carillon. That building was a church, a community house, sometimes a schoolroom
in the winter, and always the place where Fidelity saw itself. A candidate speak-
ing, a sleight-of-hand performer, a funeral, a school exhibition, a sermon--every
activity of our lives could be expressed in the tone of that bell. It still calls
the whole neighborhood together; in a way, it is the symbol of our carillon that
we knew about but never saw or heard.
"THIS IS THE PLACE"

The sight-seeing crowd poured out of the bus and soon encircled the great monument overlooking a fruitful valley. We were more than a hundred years behind the first pioneers who saw this view. Their leader was none other than Brigham Young, leader extraordinary, in spite of what his enemies said of him. He had sought a site for his great city; as he came out of Emigrant Canyon and saw this same view, he is said to have risen from his sick bed in a covered wagon and exclaimed, "This is the place." He and his followers have made the desert, in Scriptural words, "blossom as the rose." Precious water, directed in irrigation channels, has brought life to what was otherwise a land of little hope. No one with a sense of history can stand there and not marvel at the strange wisdom of the pioneer men who made this place one of the sacred places of America, regardless of our own individual faiths.

At another time I parked my car among some pine trees and went walking along the footpath that winds around Walden Pond. There are hundreds of lakes in New England, each of them worthy of immortality in painting and song and story; but this is Thoreau's lake, where he lived and wrote and dared to be just plain Henry David Thoreau, a sort of fanatical individualist in a world that was rapidly going toward Civil War and disillusionment. There are other lakes that are much larger and, from the point of view of some unbiassed traveler, much more beautiful; but only this one grew into a book, a strange, daring, epoch-making book, which is about half-nature, half-human nature. Whoever reads it and rereads it—a far better thing than with many other books—will never be the same man again. Something of Walden Pond gets into the reader's system, because, forsooth, one man saw the lake lovingly. Now the lake belongs to the world because Thoreau knew the place.

I am writing this essay on Easter Sunday. Nobody needs to be told where or what Bethlehem and Jerusalem are. Each had some local importance, and Jerusalem had become the center of a whole world religion. But something happened there
that added immeasurably to the fame and dignity of the old, old city. Today the three religious faiths that center there are celebrating their holy days together, a rare happening, but a fact that may mean something for humanity and the troubled Near East. But what would this sacred place have been but for great events that reclaimed it from forgetfulness? Who knows about or cares for Palmyra or some other once-great city, like Sidon, except some antiquarian who recognizes that there have been other strains to our civilization besides the ones that most of us know?

As I have so often said in this column, a mere place, hardly known beyond a county, happened to be the scene of something great: a landing, the birth of someone, a battle, the home of a great soul. But it is never the same afterwards. The far-away places send their worthy ones to visit at that shrine, the great and the humble vie with each other in knowing every fact or legend about the place. The folklorist lives in this very atmosphere. There is, to him, no unimportant place on earth. Here occurred a tragedy that has been immortalized in a ballad; there lived a neighborhood wiseacre whose strange wisdom spread over many an adjacent neighborhood; across the hill grew up a poet who has told in his verses the old but always new story of human life—its outlook on life and eternity, its faith that cannot be smothered, its daring and toil to achieve the simplest but most lasting wealth of the world.
At the annual spring meeting of the Kentucky Folklore Society at Louisville, which always occurs when the Kentucky Education Association is held, there was given this spring a program that very well showed how popular and effective folklore has become. Five different folklorists participated, each with a reputation in our state and elsewhere. Dr. William Hugh Jansen, of the University of Kentucky, gave an address on riddles that he has collected in this state, and distributed a sheet of a dozen or more of his best. Dr. Leonard Roberts, of Union College, told one of the entertaining stories that he has collected in the mountains, "south of Hell-fer-Sartin." Three musicians sang various types of folk songs, from very primitive ones to almost contemporary ones. Miss Edna Ritchie, of the famous "Singing Ritchies" of Perry County, sang some of the songs of her family, accompanying herself on a dulcimer. Miss Jane Brock, of Liberty, now a senior in English at the University of Kentucky and Miss Kentucky in 1957, also sang to her own accompaniment on a dulcimer songs that she had learned from her grandparents. Dr. D. K. Wilgus, of Western State College, played his guitar and sang several ballads that he has collected in the Bowling Green-Leitchfield-Hartford area. More than 200 people crowded the assembly room where the society was meeting, the largest group the Kentucky Folklore Society has ever seen at its meetings since its founding in 1912. In the group were a number of distinguished collectors and singers, antique connoisseurs, and writers. Many teachers, in all types of Kentucky schools, were there, drinking in the strange, though old, entertainment. I was deeply impressed by the attendance and the interest shown.

It is easy for me to go back to my earliest interest in folklore and to remember the blank stares that a folklorist used to get when he mentioned folk customs, songs, superstitions, and artistry. Some people even would sneer at an idea that such commonplace and even cheap things would attract the attention of educated people. In my earliest days one of my friends told me that, if he had
grown up in such primitive conditions as the ones I talked about, he would be ashamed to say so.

The interest in folklore is many-sided. Many people have come to value it as a very large part of our culture; many others have found it lends itself well to collecting, quite as well as does antique furniture; a large group have come to see how attractive to tourists a folk festival or play can be. Plain dollars and cents play a part in this new interest. Paul Green and Kermit Hunter now have some dozen local plays that attract thousands of people to historical places; our own Old Kentucky Home will have such a play by Paul Green by 1959 or so. The way Grandpa lived has come to have some meaning; grandchildren can feel that history was not merely something in a book, that the pioneers and their times were not merely romantic figures and periods of time but were as real as our own lives and times.

It is impossible for any thing that is commercialized to escape some touches of Hollywood, and folk plays and festivals have been no exception. But, after knowing many of these programs, I am convinced that the emphasis is generally good, that history is not too far from the programs being given. Overwrought sentiment, barn-storming acting, and outlandish costuming--some of the things that made the old-time tent shows famous and infamous--are strangely absent. There is nearly everywhere a tendency to be as true to history as possible to keep a good show. Consequently, the people who assemble in the many open-air summer theaters go away with a respectable idea of what our past was like, what our customs meant. Unless we get too concerned with jazzing up our past history or become too serious-minded and imagine that all the geese were swans, we are on the way to making a good use of our valuable folklore. Even I, with little or no talent for drama, would like to try my hand at producing a regional drama, with as much as possible of the rich customs that have made us what we are.
When I lived at Fidelity, there was a wide difference between city and country people. It may not have been as great as we country people thought, but it was real. Even though nearly everybody in a small town or city was only a little removed from the soil, that very little was recognizable. And, to make matters worse, both sides exaggerated their own importance and the faults of the others. Long since I have been a mature man, there have still existed this urban-rural feuding and this misunderstanding, even in places where there was a high school attended by both clans, and automobiles, and radios, and all the other signs of our present-day civilization. There may be still a little of this long-standing feud left, but it must be in some remote place that I do not know well. To most of my students this seems a myth, a left-over yarn of Grandpap's day.

In my freshman classes are youngsters who have come from crossroads high schools, from county seats, from good-sized towns, and from our largest city. I would defy the average observer to pick them out according to their place of residence. Here is a girl who has lived all her life on a farm, but she knows the intricacies of laboratory work and is paying her way through school by working in a clinic many hours a week. Here is another girl, equally bright, who also lives on a farm but is a saleslady on weekends and Saturdays in a ritzy dress shop. Sitting between these two is a city girl who lives in the very heart of Louisville who knows the ins and outs of farm life because of her numerous vacations at Grandpa's, out in one of our most remote counties. All of them have been educated at centrally-located high schools and have learned to take each other's measure, mentally and otherwise. Rural or urban or suburban, they are just young American girls and boys, with plenty of interest in life and with few impulses to run away from it.

Back in my younger days each side laughed at the ignorance of the other. A city boy who did not know about horses and cows and wagons and buggies and plows was just plain ignorant; a country boy who looked and felt green on the sidewalks of the small county-seat town was fair game for the young city slickers. "Clod-
hopper" and "city slicker" seem to have about run their course in our every-day language.

Since I was a rural youth, as most youths sixty years ago were, I quite naturally loved to laugh at the upstart young fellows who felt so important in town and so lost in the country. One such boy, who had been a country product but had moved as a small boy to the county seat, seemed to forget his rural background and assumed a top-lofty attitude toward the boys who drove in to town in a wagon and went "up town" to buy shoes and hats and suits from the store in which that boy worked. When the rest of us were glad to have a pair of shoes that looked pretty good, he wore patent-leather toothpick shoes and put us to shame. When we bought caps or ordinary hats, we could not help noticing his derby--brown or black, according to that year's style. By and by I drifted away from Fidelity and my home county and had forgotten how unimportant I used to feel in his presence. Being in my old home county to speak at some important educational meeting, I strayed back into that same store to buy a handkerchief or a pair of socks. There was my old friend, many years older but still as jaunty or trying to be. He put me into my place at once by asking, "How is everything out at Concord (Fidelity):" He had stayed behind that counter all those years and still thought I was living at Fidelity. I did not try to impress him with my rank as a college graduate and a college professor; I did say that I had not lived at Fidelity since 1906, but I am sure he still would like to overawe me, the county clodhopper who lived out on the dirt roads, far beyond the bright lights of the city.
Last week I told of the feud that used to be carried on, without a truce, between the city and the country. Today I would like to mention some strange things that have been developing in all those years since I was overawed by the derby-hatted boy in the men's clothing store.

With the coming of the automobile, the R. E. A., and their attendant inventions has come a new country, so that today the remote place is often no different from the city or suburban place. In fact, many good houses in the country are considerably better equipped than those of similar people in the cities. Farming in this time is a great business; consequently, many farmhouses would make lots of city houses ashamed of themselves. Many a rural church is lighted up and heated by electricity; many a barn today has more light than the best houses used to have. Machinery that is run by electricity is everywhere; even small houses-tenant houses, for example—often have the best accommodations.

Another thing that has tended to tear down the wall between city and country is the strong movement of people from congested areas in even good-sized towns to the wide-open spaces. Many a good-sized county that I know is really suburban, for a large number of the people living there commute daily to factories or business or offices to work. And back at home they may have a good slice of rural life all their own, with chickens and a garden and flowers and sometimes even a cow. Sometimes I have found in suburban areas more real country life than many rural areas can offer, certainly more satisfactory rural life.

Here is another reason for the breakdown of the wall between the two areas; the tendency to find recreation in the open spaces. Camping is today a national pastime. Thousands of families are finding the satisfaction of being able to go long distances on small budgets and yet see the great things that only the well-to-do used to see. I am glad to report that many people who could afford to stay in the best motels or hotels are often found in the wildest places—nature-lovers, photographers, people who are not afraid that getting their hands dirty will drop
them socially. Nothing can quite take the place of this contact with the soil, for it re-educates us all in primitive things and early history. Even the ones who have never learned the joys of camping have learned how good a picnic lunch can taste at a roadside park. Near me--just out US31W--is a very pretty roadside park that was made in a bend of the road when the highway was straightened out. There is hardly a day in the year when it is not in use, sometimes with all its ten tables occupied. Suburban homes and open fields are around, there are trees and flowers, and many a person who has hardly known the feel of the out-of-doors finds such roadside stops distinct pleasures in his vacation. I rejoice, as a seasoned camper, at seeing the rapid growth of roadside stopping places, many of them in beautiful locations, where the tired tourist can stretch his weary muscles and eat a bite or two. Some of the places where I have stopped for lunch would take a prize for the setting; many of them, though largely at some ordinary bend of the road, would grace a city as a park. Only rarely do I find one that has been robbed of its beauty by vandals and such-like degenerates. If I could only name the ones I have used in the last thirty years, it would make an inviting "call to the wild" to the people who love to travel in the family car and see and appreciate the country through which they travel. These things have helped tear down the barriers that once existed between the country and the city.
When my generation were young, they did not believe, very frankly, what they were told by their parents, especially when the facts presented seemed remote from present-day reality. I long ago joined the group of parents and, many years later, the grandparents. Now, of course, nobody believes me when I try the hardest to state facts, but facts colored by experiences of more than a half century ago. Today I will not be disappointed when I talk for a while about bread, just plain bread.

When Father told us that, in his young days in central Tennessee, white flour was available only for biscuits on Sunday morning, we felt sorry for our very poor ancestors, for everybody who was anybody at Fidelity bought flour by the barrel and could have biscuits at any time. We could not believe that white flour was such a delicacy a generation before us. Of course, the Fidelity people regarded cornbread as a sort of necessary evil but in no way as classy as white bread. Just anybody could shell some corn, take it to Mill Jimmy Stubblefield’s mill or Brandon’s Mill, and have cornbread indefinitely. Of course, again, there were degrees of cornbread, from plain corn dodgers or plain hoecake to rich, brown egg bread. And the cooks of Fidelity lost no time in telling how good cornbread was not a mere chance but required some brain work. Anyway, what was cornbread as compared with biscuits?

But biscuits were run-of-the-mine cookery for nearly everybody. It took some more culinary knowledge to produce lightbread, salt-rising or otherwise. Ravenous farm boys had to be satisfied with slugs of cornbread or stacks of muffins or biscuits as big as full moons; it was only company or some special occasion that produced or brought out lightbread. That is one reason why I liked quarterly meetings at Sulphur Springs Church. Many of our Methodist ladies vied with each other to produce the most toothsome lightbread, and, believe me, they did not lose a chance to pay sly compliments to their cookery after the food had been set on table-
cloths spread on the ground and some bewhiskered brother had asked a blessing on "what we were about to receive." And jams and jellies sometimes were added to that lightbread, until nothing short of a miracle could have kept some of us stuffers from being sick. (The miraculous rarely happened: I was nearly always off my feed or downright ailing for several days after.)

If home-made lightbread added a joy to the dinner on the ground, what can I say of fetched-on lightbread, "baker's bread"? In those days we used to get six loaves, as big as a roasting shoat, for a quarter. They had been baked at Paducah or Memphis and had been brought on one of the marvelous trains of that time, trains that sped into sight out of nowhere and then took another dip into the unknown after they had paused at our station long enough to discharge passengers and baggage and express. Not everybody at Fidelity could afford a quarter for this much extra style; therefore, those who had "baker's bread" advertised the treat and invited special friends to join in when the dinner began. Since I was just a small boy most of the time I lived at Fidelity, I did not often get in on this "baker's bread" treat and had to content myself with ten kinds of cakes, ditto pie, and on and on, with sweet pickles and sour pickles and green tomato ketchup. These, mind you, came after the main course, or courses, of roasted lamb or calf and the whole bevy of chickens that were counted as common fare. But occasionally I got a slice of that marvelous bread, smelling of hops, and wondered whether even nectar and ambrosia could beat it. And now I know that our strange bread was the sort that anybody in town or elsewhere now buys and eats and sometimes sneers at because it is so common and so tasteless. And so even the aristocrat of the bread world has come down to the level formerly occupied by cornbread, just plain, everyday food, not a bit stylish.
Practically every day I am forced to explain a folk figure of speech that seems as plain to me as the nose on a man's face. You see, the younger generation do not know about things that we used to have as commonplace, everyday things. Why, only yesterday I had to take time out to explain why a person should be hit over the head with a soap paddle. I got the idea of his needing punishment, but "What is a soap paddle?" And then the whole solar system had to stop turning while I laboriously told about ash-hoppers, lye, lye soap, and all the whole annual soap-making, including the rather disreputable soap-paddle, certainly not a very soft or dainty thing to have laid across one's skull. Meanwhile, my original reference was lost; I do not remember even who deserved such a messy and severe punishment.

Every semester I teach, among other great American poems, Holmes's "Contentment," in which he enumerates the few things that he could be content with—things that would bring millions of dollars on the market. He wants a horse, not a fast one but one that can do a smooth two-forty-five.

"Of course, for just a single spurt,
Some seconds less would do no hurt."

Then, with whatever patience I can muster, I must explain that the slow jog-trot that Dr. Holmes wished was a world record for that time. Stares, grins, or even loud laughter may greet this astounding announcement. Why, with cars averaging a mile a minute on roads that specifically say no speed must exceed forty-five miles an hour, who would want to ride behind a horse lazing along at such a ridiculous gait? And just wait; when we get our new private jet, we'll show those old-timers, if any are still around, what speed is!

Again, just recently I wanted to say something about a small patch of ground and instantly thought that it was not much bigger than a saddle blanket. Now who today would know what that meant? I used it anyway and looked important while I explained the significance of the comparison. The person being addressed did not
look impressed, for he remarked shortly afterward something about his Grandpa's forgetfulness and growing senility. I hope that nothing personal was intended. Ages ago in this column I remarked that if you would remember things accurately and, years later, tell them truthfully, nobody would believe a word you said.

Now, that soap-paddle reminds me of another useful comparison that is far beyond the understanding of the younger generation: "As big as a washing of soap." With mathematical meticulousness, some of my students want me to say just how big that would be, as if a mere measuring stick could tell. But all old-timers will recognize the appropriateness of such a figure and crave no further explanation. I would not be surprised if somebody took exception to another favorite of mine: "As big as a lump of coal."

The worst side of this comparison business is that we oldsters are put into our places as if we had outlived our usefulness. Some of us try to pick up the latest wisecrack on radio or television and throw that back at our younger accusers, but it seems to be a losing game. Those same younger people, however dumb they may be about such ordinary, though outdated, objects as soap-paddles and lye soap, and fast horses, can beat us at our own game of using fresh, live comparisons. My sage advice—which I will probably not keep—is for us who are past fifty to remember horse-and-buggy days and the language of that time but to speak, as nearly as we can, the strange new language of the time of cars and airplanes and television and atom bombs. That is almost like expecting your having to stop your newfangled car to let a dinosaur plod its cumbersome way across the superhighway.
"THE PORCH SWING"

One of my freshmen just recently wrote a familiar essay on the porch swing, and nearly all of the class wondered at the old-fashioned home that would have had such a thing. I felt as if I were a fossilized critter from ages ago, for it had never occurred to me that porch swings were going out of style. Within a few feet of my typewriter as I record this passing institution is such a piece of porch furniture, one we acquired forty years ago from a neighbor who was moving away. It was far from new then, but it is still here and going strong, after it has helped raise our two children and some grandchildren, not to mention visiting youngsters, who have used it as a fast vehicle into space. Maybe the very scarcity of the article makes it so appealing to children when they come. Anyway, my students say that porch swings are not around in such numbers as they once were.

People who are past fifty will remember when the porch swing, like so many other things, was once a sign of being somebody. Not everybody even had a front porch; lots of people with front porches did not have a swing. It gave a touch of style to own one. When company came, you sat in the porch swing and gossiped or sewed or just sat. If there were children, they had to be watched to keep them from swinging too high and falling out. Most of them liked to stand up, hold to the chains, and swing in any of the known directions. That such furniture lasted past one set of children is one of the modern Wonders of the World. But some, at least, did last and are still here to tell the story.

Then there was another type of swing that is becoming antique. I refer to the big swing, on the porch or in the yard, that was an independent unit and contained two facing seats. By pushing on your feet, you could start the thing to moving; when the swing had got to the end of its arc, you released the pressure on your feet, and the swing came back. Some swings, so-called, rolled, with the power applied as already indicated. This type of swing was even more a sign of being somebody than the one that was let down from the ceiling on chains. A yard with big trees just called for such a swing in summer, but winter usually saw this same bit of furniture
stored in a shed. Sewing, neighborly visiting, and all the other activities clustered about this yard swing. It could not be pushed into as big an arc as could the chain swing, but small boys had no difficulty in getting it to do some strange didoes, especially if Father was away at his place of business.

If I were a poet, I should write an idyl of summer centered around a lovely swing under spreading beech trees. There might be a small matter of a mother, some small children, and maybe a tall father; but the one face I see is that of a young lady, still in her teens, and that is the face seen by the young boy who sits beside or opposite her. You see, swings, like many other things, are associated in some memories with young love. When the family have discreetly gone away and all the neighbors have departed, just two sit in the swing and dream. Conversation is not necessary; the gloaming and young life and bright future plans are enough to occupy one's mind, without any foolish words. Somehow, if I have not forgotten, words seemed a little foolish always when big moments were around. And from the cool precincts of the yard swing the young people went in to supper, thoroughly unaware of what was being served, for any food to young lovers is nectar and ambrosia when the other party is around. Maybe this is wrong; maybe I should say that any food seems unnecessary when one is in love. And across years and years some oldsters look, a little dimly, to the shady yard and the big beech trees and the yard swing, now an antique if it even exists. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*
Today I was shown a letter from a young woman whose husband is a diplomat in Afghanistan. Among many funny things said about life in that far-away country, she told of finding a fly in a glass of milk and summoning a servant to do something about it. He came at once, rescued the fly and then, profoundly bowing, said, "I do not think that he drank much of your milk, madam."

Afghanistan is a "fun piece" from Fidelity, but that incident reminded me of the selection in our old school readers: "Baby Bye, Here's a Fly." A famous newspaper editor, a contemporary of the great Horace Greeley, wrote that poem, which was to be memorized by generations of American children. Older people will recall all the poem, but the pathetic younger generation will need to be told some more about this masterpiece of literature. I would quote the whole horrible thing, but it is barely possible that it is still copyrighted and might get the editor of this newspaper into trouble. Anyway, a child is called to watch a fly, "how it crawls up the walls, yet it never falls." There are other clichés about how you and I could walk on eggs with "six such legs." But the punch lines are these:

"There it goes on its toes,
Tickling Baby's nose.

I wonder whatever happened to that baby and whether it was too good for this world, as so many times we were told when infants were fed improperly or died of communicable diseases.

Ten or fifteen years ago my wife felt that we needed a new chair for our living room and went out shopping for one. At a furniture store in our town she saw a well-to-do couple who were also in the market for a chair. The woman of the couple remarked that the man could sit in this chair and "fight his own flies." She did not laugh when she said that, either. How close that remark was to actual conditions in the good old..."
days! Only when a man's case did people find it necessary to shoo away the flies with a flybrush. The rest of the time, each fellow, literally, fought his own flies as a necessary part of eating a square meal.

Everybody knew that a mosquito bite was uncomfortable, but few had ever heard about the transmission of malaria by some of these pests. Some of those who had heard did not believe it, for nobody at Fidelity, then or now, had seen a germ with the naked eye, and who knows how much trickery there may be in a microscope? Now, everybody did know that malaria was caused by poisonous night air and by nothing else. What better thing could you do than to pull down your windows at night and shut out the disease-breeding asphytic vapors? Believe it or not, I actually knew that big word before I had ever heard of the germ theory of disease.

And we used to have loads of pies and such stuff that would spoil now in a matter of hours; but some of the pies were saved over for the next day. It should not be necessary to enumerate the dozens of cases of severe cramps and nausea. Always something was to blame. Once at Fidelity a dozen or more people who had eaten at the same place got very sick; the neighborhood at once said it was from the coloring in one of the cakes served. Our local druggist, pretty learned for our time neighborhood, knew that coloring had no poisonous nature and forthwith drank an ounce or two before witnesses to show his knowledge. Everybody expected a funeral the next day, but the druggist died of extreme old age long since this column came to be. Nobody, not even the druggist, suspected those creamy pies that had not been refrigerated. Flies, mosquitoes, invisible germs—what won't scientific upstarts think of next? I am reminded of the bespectacled rich man in another state who ridiculed the hubbub about a new filter plant for the city water: "There's nothing wrong with the water; it is as clear as can be. The whole movement for a filter is plain foolishness, a political scheme."
One of the best evidences of a person's being a folkish type is the ease with which local stories of all sorts become attached to him. As long as a person is just an historical character, his acts are plain facts, easily verified from the records; when he becomes a folk hero, his deeds become confused with those of typical folk heroes of all time. If a tenth of the Abraham Lincoln stories were true, no actual person could have had so many things happen to him in many lifetimes. It becomes customary to realize all stories that are already hanging around waiting for a picturesque character to be attached to. Lincoln is merely one of many such people who have actually lived, have captured the folk imagination, and have become as legendary as historical.

One of the first disappointments that I suffered when I left home was the finding out that many of the raciest yarns that we told of our own local characters were told, incident for incident, elsewhere and attached to some similar person. It took me years to give up my belief in the historical nature of the yarns I had known. For example, it was only after hearing of eight or ten versions of some local yarn from as many different counties that I decided that the same thing could hardly have happened so patly everywhere. It was some years before this disappointment grew into something else, a something that I hope is much better than my childish belief in the yarns as actual fact. This something was a recognition of the folk nature of the yarns, the yarns themselves being a part of our inheritance as northern Europeans. And, in some instances, the stories I had heard told on Uncle This or Aunt That could be duplicated in the folk tales of the Orient as well as of northern Europe.

Every neighborhood has the equivalent of the classical "village idiot." Sometimes he is just that and no more; sometimes he is only queer and may be anything from a plain idiot to a genius. Around every
such characters clottten dozens of stories, some of them authentic but most of them traditional tales that people have told of half-wits since time began. Our village had some three people who could have qualified under this title. One was an epileptic who was queer but in no sense lacking in intelligence; he was marked off from the other boys because of his spells. Probably because of this he said whatever he wanted to say, whether it was a matter of good manners or not. Most of his remarks were barbed and rather obviously so. Another local celebrity was a share-cropper who had no local connections and could, and did, have his say about the local great ones. Most of his remarks are unquotable in a newspaper or magazine that goes through the mails, but they were quoted, behind the hand, and laughed over again and again, even by highly respectable people. The third local queer one was actually a half-wit or less. He did not grow up but remained a mere child, with ardent childish loyalties and unexpected sayings. He quoted actual sayings of each of these and sometimes added queer ones that he had heard elsewhere or actually made up and told as genuine. I was guilty of some of this honest lying, for I wanted to have certain things said and did not dare say them. It was easy to put my thoughts, properly garbled, into the mouth of one of the three oracles. I got many a laugh from the people I entertained with my spurious yarns, but I never dared tell the truth about the sayings; it would have got me into trouble with some of the older people. You see, telling an age-old yarn and giving credit to a local half-wit was one thing, not at all wrong; making up such a tale and fostering it on the village idiot bordered on lying. I hope that some of the yarns I made up are still being told as fair samples of the wisdom of our local funny men. I would have considerable trouble right now in dissecting out the actual truth from my intentional but good-humored falsehood. People have talked in parables always; I was merely using my imagination, harmlessly, I hope.
GUNS AND THINGS

Today I read a very serious article on the great danger facing our nation because little boys are armed to the teeth and are playing desperado in imitation of some television hero. Not more than an hour later an elderly man, with no children, made the same comment that had been made by the writer of the article. "What is the world coming to, with even little boys toting guns and playing bad men?" I looked serious but laughed a little bit because both the writer and the commentator must have forgotten how wild they were as boys and toted guns. Of course, the guns may have been merely whittled out of a pine plank, but, with appropriate incidental noise furnished by the toter, they could make a great place for themselves. Ever since I had these two experiences, I have been trying to remember some bad boy who toted a toy gun and wound up in a state prison or got shot down by the law. So far I have not been successful on this man hunt. I have had a number of big laughs when I recalled what tame creatures most of these wild, desperate boys became. Even those who owned cap pistols turned out equally tame.

My, I had a cap pistol myself and must have slaughtered hundreds of Indians and cowboys and desperados themselves! And yet, then and now, I fear I have been a very peaceful citizen, one who has so far escaped even suspicion of being a bad boy. My throat is probably still rough in spots from the wild hollers and savage screams I uttered when I fell upon my prey and "shelped" the whole bunch, hiding their unsightly carcasses in the sage brush.

It is probably true that the older ones who fear we are on our way to the days have failed to differentiate between play-like desperados and the real article. Even at fidelity we had boys who would not play fair; if they were shot with a pine-plank gun, with all the attendant noise, they refused to stay dead. Sometimes they would forget that they were playing and would bite and gouge and pull hair, even though the rest of
us were only playing. Some would sneak around and ruin a fellow's prize pine gun or tamper with his cap pistol and otherwise act like a bunch of degenerates. Somehow this attitude seemed to trail these same fellows who refused to play fair. I know some who became common thieves and rogues, generally. One such boy engineered a turkey-and-chicken-stealing expedition that emptied most of the poultry coops in our neck of the woods. The captured fowl served Tennessee tables, for the thieves made off with their loot to the near-by state to dispose of their Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners. Evidence was strong but hardly strong enough to convict the fellows, but we grown men, who had played with those fellows years before, will die of old age still believing that stealing a wagon load of poultry was exactly like the underhanded tactics those men had played as boys when we acted what is now called "Cops and Robbers."

More than a half century ago I taught my first school and was chiefly a police officer, trying to keep the boys from killing each other. I wish I had known how to stimulate some sort of competitive sport for them. Those boys were full of energy and did not have any way to show it except in fighting. I did not especially object to their wrestling and hitting, but they wanted to use knives and also tub-handles for brass knuckles. I had visions of brains laid bare, of eyes gouged out, of youngsters dead long before their times. Probably the best part of this lamentable six-months school was that I was a little further indoctrinated into boy psychology, that I found that my marvelous ideas of what boys should do and be would not always work. It may be true that some of our loud condemnation of youth today stems from our complete lack of understanding or our refusal to adjust to a world that is far different from the one we once knew at Fidelity. Nobody wants boys to grow up into great men any more than I do; I have spent my life trying to help them do just that. But some of the noise and roughness of the time may be as much play-like as the kind we knew as children at Fidelity, long, long ago.
By a strange series of incidents, the buggy today is regarded by youngsters, such as my college freshmen, as more poetic and even more recent than the Model T. I suppose that the advertising schemes have worked in favor of this strange fancy. We have been told year after year of the amazing new gadgets that the newest model car has. We would be ashamed to believe that the Model T had anything very poetic about it, for its clumsy engine and rattling parts often grew to be sources of shame to the owner and his family. Though the youngsters of a few years ago prized themselves on owning a flivver, I doubt whether any such enthusiasm could survive now, for speed is so much sought after that the poor old Model T seems as slow as a horse. Once in a very great while I see a Model T pass my house or meet one on the road, but it is normally driven, these days, by mature people, sometimes an old man.

The horse-drawn vehicle, in our day, is associated with leisurely vacationing, with places that do not have to be reached in a hurry. Unlike the Model T, the horse, if properly trained, can almost drive himself. Day youngsters, now soaking up sunshine and resting from long and hard work in school, can take time to get acquainted all over again with Old Dobbin. Out at Grandpa's farm, too, it is such fun to imagine yourself a person of some distinction of another age, rather than a speed freak, turning a public highway into a drag strip. Also, the horses for rent at vacation spots are not the responsibility of the driver; some one else does the feeding and watering and currying. And the renter does not have to wash and grease the buggy and keep it in repair. Grandpa, if he wanted to, could tell the youngsters how much of the joy of the horse was lost on the boy who had to be baby sitter for the family dog and even for less desirable horses and mules on the farm. Starry-eyed youngsters today cannot see the drudgery of all this.
The early cars can be seen poetically only by old codgers like me, who found them coming into use just as maturity was coming to the lonely country boy. The romance of the self-moving vehicle still astonishes me. Since my city lot front on one of the important national highways, I see every type of wheeled vehicle every day and sometimes so many that I have to wait for a long time to get to my meals, for my college lies across that street from my house. Common and commonplace as cars are, they still seem like Cinderella vehicles, capable of carrying you over the hills and far away. I suppose that I am too old to feel the thrill that younger people feel when they contemplate gadgets and gadgets, but the mysterious gasoline engine is the poetry of it all to me. Fidelity was a good three hours of hard driving from our country seat, back in my youth. Today, with a state highway properly black-topped, six to fifteen minutes, depending on the age of the driver, is a sufficient time to take you over this stretch of road. Three or four hours, typical of former journeys to the country seat, according to the condition of the mere trails that we called roads in those days, would now take you into far-away places. Why, since Fidelity is in a corner of Kentucky, in four hours you could cut into five other states. That would necessitate crossing the Ohio, Wabash, and Mississippi Rivers, on bridges or ferries, but you could start in Kentucky, Indiana, across Kentucky in southern Illinois, take a bite of southeastern Missouri, a small bit of Arkansas, and get back to western Tennessee before your time was up. Of course, that is so commonplace to modern drivers and to youngsters generally that it would probably create a yawn if such a person ever reads this column. But think of the magic carpet that can cut across great boundaries and cut across history, too, in the time it used to take to take a load of tobacco from Fidelity to Luray! I knew that this particular location of my native place makes part of the romance, but the magic of the gasoline engine is still behind it all.
It is a paradox of old age to speak flippantly of everything that used to be, to make it appear that senility is setting in. Now I firmly believe. If that is true, I cannot yet qualify as an old man, regardless of the calendar. There were some fine things in my earlier days, of course, things that no amount of acquired property or number of possessions can make up for. One thing, however, has often impressed me about those old days that we seldom like to think about: we just did not have the health then that we do now. Health was hardly fashionable; just what would some people have done if they had not had their aches and to complain about? They, as well as now, probably a fourth of the people who talk most about their poor health are basically as strong as ever and could eat like oxes, too. But, after disorganizing properly, there used to be many who were actually unhealthy.

In Victoria there were two nations to humanity: that were really tuberculosis and its sequelae, scurvy. Everybody had chills and fever in the summer; only a person hardly acquired a good color in the winter, for his sunburnt condition made him susceptible to colds and helped him along toward consumption. If I were to name the people whom I knew as tuberculosis, it would sound like some sorrowful statistics, for many of my friends died young of this dread disease. There were a few arrested cases in my father's practice, but most of those who had a hemoptysis died within a few years. People did not panic this disease; they did everything they could to make it disappear, even though they seemed to glut over being afflicted otherwise. Ague was so common that it was neither a disease nor an affluity. You just expected to have chills and fever when almost everyone. Before many people had accepted the germ theory of disease, which was supposed to be caused by a mixture of things: breathing swamp air, especially at night; eating half-cooked potatoes;
only been the big thing of children and cooking and washing and ironing and
made绣在手的手巾; they also were the chief breadwinners of the family.
And quilting was distinctly a woman's work. They too would not have been caught
with a cold potato in their hands.

Since I have been grown, the toil of women that I have admired most has
been their lives in the kitchen. In especially hot days I can see them
bent over hot stoves, from before daybreak until after dark. No matter how
brief the day, folks must eat. You can that I knew how to do without
hot biscuits for breakfast; none could have tolerated a cold dinner. And
dishes have to be washed! The weak little woman of the house may not have
been an expert cook, but she had to provide quantity, even without
quality. Once I tried to imagine how many hot biscuits a hardy mother had
cooked by the time she had raised her big family and was about ready to
celebrate her fortieth wedding anniversary. I ran out of arithmetic while
trying to form a just equation and had to resort to algebra. Even my formu-
la got pretty intricate before I finally completed my estimate. If each
person consumed five biscuits per meal, and if the two in the family grew
ultimately to ten, and if there are 365 days a year and sometimes 366, how
many biscuits would forty years bring? You work it out; I feel like
wiping my brow and thinking of some cooler job than cooking in a hot
kitchen on a sultry day.

With no desire to make women any less lovable and any less the sub-
jects of laudatory poetry, modern men—and women—have found out that
a vigorous normally straighl to meet life is also poetic; it worthy of some
strong praise from wielders of honeyed words. In most homes now, labor-
saving devices have made the lot of women much easier, but it would be a
fine story for someone inclined to investigate to test the physical strain
of the weaker sex in modern, mechanized life as compared with the big big job
she used to feel that only they could bear heavy burdens and endure toll.
There used to be a pretty notion that women were weak sisters, incapable of difficult tasks, even of protecting herself. The facts helped keep this belief alive, and, I fear, one woman was not adverse to helping, too. Statistics, though shameless facts that everybody loves to quote and to sneer by, show that women have learned far more than any man how to get along in this world. 

I say, a girl, born now has a chance to live an average life of seventy-two years and a little more; but it is true that she will have to subtract some time of four years from this figure. I fear that the present age will burn over in their graves if they ever hear this. It was a beautiful dream, I suppose, for people lived, but it is false. But that does not mean that women respect for womanhood will go with this myth. In fact, I find a genuine respect for girls by those boys who are downright proud of their sweethearts' ability to swim, to hike, to work. Boys have learned that girls are not offensive to boys merely because they are strong, healthy animals. In fact, it is hard to explain to the present generation what was meant by the word idolize.

When I was a little boy at Midway, I got a few hints that women were not weaklings. A few women could and would work in the field along with their men-folk. In general, however, this was somewhat frowned on. I cannot remember that any of these women, black and white, who could do heavy farm work ever suffered any physical ills from it, and certainly they did not complain as much as old women whose men-folk could not have to field work for their sisters and daughters. Rather oddly, no use of Midway seemed to realize how hard such farm was. To draw immense buckets of water from a cistern or deep well, to buy this same water, when hot, from bottle to bottle, to carry many help of water after the day was over—that was just a part of the back-breaking toil of keeping the family clean. And what use of Midway or elsewhere, ever did the family live—? And very a woman I knew not
and other similar drugs. And everybody was risking on medicine, taken,
in my time, in capsules but previously raw or in some semi-disguised medium.
But disguising quinine was very much like disguising castor oil; across the
years the memory of these two tastes "lingers on."

Another feature of our bad health in those early days was an almost
complete lack of dentistry. If a tooth got very bad, it was pulled, and that
was that. Our few dentists could make plates, after a fashion, but filling
teeth or trying to save them was practically unheard of. Diseased teeth,
gumboils, accompanying bad breath—of course, people got sick or, in their
word, "sickly." A few people whom I knew had a perfect mania for pretty teeth
and maintained them; most people, though, did not bother to take much care of
things so valuable.

Though I cannot recall having known a victim of polio in my youth,
there were several pathetic sufferers from bone tuberculosis. Since
one had suspected that cows have and transmit tuberculosis, scrofula was
not associated with sick cows and their diseased milk. Living rather far
apart as families, it was not so common to have an infection from a wound as
it could be today. Of course, there were no tetanus shots then, and I never
knew anyone to have this disease, though I heard wild rumors of it. A small
percentage of people had been vaccinated, usually after some scare, but dozens
of the constancy people lived and died unvaccinated and probably feeling that
smallpox could not actually be escaped, just like death and taxes.

Probably the greatest difference between then and now where health is con-
cerned is that we now crave health, we believe in it, we feel that it is a
bit old-fashioned to talk about our aches and pains. Of course, with modern
health insurance and a much longer life, the typical person of our time has
more medical care; but he also has more to show for it. Men who would have
been regarded as too old to work in those days are still at their jobs in our
time, not counting the years until the arteries harden or arthritis gets too
bad. If some calamity were to take out of circulation the men of my home town
who are past sixty-five or even seventy, many of the wheels of action would stop.
Health and long life seem within the reach of almost everybody now.
A GOOD PROVIDER

Jack at fidelity the most gracious compliment that could be paid to a man was to say that he was a "good provider." Then and now I barely could tell what that meant, even though it sounded good. Recently, when food prices are going up steadily, I have wondered at the food that we used to have: plain stuff like country ham and fried chicken and such stuff. We were so used to it that we actually thought that we were on "poor-relief" rations. Like those contrary Israelites in the desert we longed for fleshpots of Egypt or anywhere except in our own little corner-place world. What was country ham? What other time was there? I have often laughed, privately and publicly, at our snickering at the whole-some jelly made from apples and other fruits that grew on our own trees.

I wanted "honey jelly," some sort of pecan preparation that tasted like the cypress bucket that contained it, and we could eat our weight in salt meat, even preferring it to fresh creek fish caught on our own lines. I am wondering whether that compliment about being a good provider meant just plain country grub or also food that was good the fancy trickings that sometimes appeared along about quarterly meeting or Confederate Reunion time.

Come to think of it, the fellow who most often said a man was a good provider was some Sunday visitor, some fellow who was sparrowing and who had no notion of returning in kind the good provisions that he was consuming. You see, if someone compliments your cooking or the raw material from which Sunday's dinners were made, it is up to you to feel properly uplifted and keep on providing. I can recall, also, that some men had a way of using this stock phrase, to describe the food at places where they used to work. The here and now was and is always a poor sort of thing as compared with that we used to have, or at least the sentimentalists say so. "Now, look at Mr. Johnson's, when I worked on his farm, that man
There was a good provider, and Mrs. Johnson's was not a good table. (I feel sure that the last line of this sentence should read: 'was not a good table.') And, between the tenth and eleventh biscuits on the third and fourth pieces of pie the hired man would expatiate (in slightly other phrase) on the abundance of food and the good cooking that he had known.

The father of most of eligible daughters also came to for his share of compliments on his free hand in providing food. Sometimes, in the language of the neighbors, he seemed to be a better catch than his daughter. I suppose that it was assumed that 'like produces like' and that the daughter would take after her father and mother. In always seeing to it that food was served, we in constant and attractive home.

The whole matter of food in those long-ago times appeals to me now, in quite a different way from my interest in those very times. I used to judge by quantity, at least in the early period of studying myself. I was in no sense a critic of what was set before me; in that sense I followed the footsteps where it is said that we should eat what is set before us, asking no questions. It was only after my waist line was becoming slim and large that I began to choose. But, since that time came along about the bring-in of coconuts, it took me some further time to decide that maybe the food was not as good as it had been many years back in the earlier stages of the meal. Now, ages after those remembered meals, I taste some essences that I did not know existed then. It is possible that most of the foods I knew then were rather poor, judged by modern standards. Certainly, the sanitation of old-fashioned farmhouses was hardly anything to rave about. But, with these days, however greatly I may have been, passed a certain liking for food that has never returned. I still use food for more than a means of living, but I cannot throw myself wholeheartedly into a meal as if my life, here and elsewhere, depended on it. In looking back, then, I see a hungry boy, who stopped eating by and by but never really stopped being hungry. Maybe the satisfaction that did not appear then is the thing that makes the food of a good provider so tasty now, after all has driven me more.
This article is being written to the accompaniment of deep thunder, which portends another rainy late afternoon and night in July, 1958. Already, though the month has another week, we have exceeded the usual July rainfall. Hardly a day of the month has failed to bring some rain, and many of them have brought heavy rains. And, believe it or not, it has often rained at night! Of course, those who used to listen to Uncle Simon Knight and his weather prophesies will not believe this, even though they may have had to get up, as I have, to let down windows, away along in the July nights. You see, Uncle Sim knew his weather; his sayings were neighborhood-wide. To have doubted then would have been almost as wicked as to have doubted a scripture story. Uncle Sim was old and gray-bearded, like Santa Claus. He was also well-to-do. Of such a man said anything about such a time-honored subject as the weather, what young upstart could or would dare to question him? It is true that I recorded in my diary, back in 1905-1906, while I was still living at Fidelity, some hard rainstorms that came in the dark hours of July. But it was safer to put down these facts and let them stay in the diary. Most people would have questioned my right to accuse Uncle Sim of lying, even in this scientific, cold-blooded way. And that is what made him, and many another person, a folk hero.

Let's take some odious things that we used to avoid. And we avoided them because some older person, whose word we did not dare challenge, had said they were not "tittin' to eat." One such thing was mulberries. I have always been greedy about berries of all sorts. I have never had enough of them, even though I have had to stop eating many a time because of lack of space for more. We were told scary yarns about how some child ate the berries and nearly died. Usually I sneaked out and ate things, but these yarns chilled me. To this day I have not
catch a handful of blackberries, though I long ago got over my fear of
instant I eat if I eat them. Some old people said that seventeen-year
locusts laid their eggs on blackberries; some said other fearful insects;
but the charm worked for me, I am sorry to say. For some reason I was
hardly so bluffed with stories about blackberries. Maybe I decided that
a chance of greeting Saint Peter a little early was no sufficient fright
when blackberries were around. But I was taught to blow each berry before
I ate it. I was perfectly unconscious of my doing this until I went
away to teach my first school and arrived in good blackberry time. Like
any normal boy, I ate my berries, properly blown, and suffered no ill
effects. One of the boys where I boarded got tickled at my blowing and
laughed me out of my habit. He would stuff his mouth with berries and
then bow, scattering berries and red juice over himself and anything else
around him. I soon ceased to blow berries, even though I was a bit fearful
of the first few quarts that I ate after being made fun of.

One of my favorite camping places, a wild series of cliffs, has a
local reputation of being infested with wild animals and even ghosts.
Forty years ago a grown man, even with a good lantern, would not have
ventured into that valley alone at night. When he had a companion or two,
he was outwardly brave but inwardly quaking. All the wild stories of
rattlesnakes and moonshiners and inexplicable happenings were circulating
through his brain cells and making his outward bravery a daring thing.
Fortunately I did not know the place when I was young and scared;
undoubtedly, I would have had similar feelings to those of the natives.
If Grandpap said that there were haunts and other invisible or nearly
invisible things in that valley, then who would be impudent enough to ques-
tion his word?

And, the very essence of folklore is that each believer in it and
each transmitter of it feels that what he knows and tells is sacred, made
so by the many people who have believed it and told it. And there is
rarely anyone so bold and so out of harmony as to test the truth of what
an old Grandpap told so effectively through his beard.
At Christmas, 1907, Santa Claus, already an old man, brought to my stocking (home-knit by mother), among other typical Christmas things, a little linen book entitled ALPHABET OF ANIMALS. In it were pictured many of the animals I already knew—dog, cat, horse; some odd ones that I had never seen but had read about often—elephant, brown bear, kangaroo, lion; and some that I thought very strange then and still do—nylghau, quagga, vicuna, and yak. On one page there would be four letters, with a picture of the animal; on the opposite page would appear half a rhy: "H is for horse, most mischievous he,
H is a Nygau, Aro frell, you see."

But in the two inside pages were rymes with the animal to it, more than a surce of them:

"Alligator, Beetle, Beaucorn, Gale,
Bokoil, Porcher, Dragon-like, Siall."

Within a few days I could say everything in the book, for learning things by memory was a weak spot in my nature, then and long afterwards. My older brothers and sisters could show me off to visiting teen-age kids by having me say, at a very fast clip, the whole "Alphabet of animals." Before me, as I write this, lies the dingy little linen book, with none of the colors of the marvellous animals still there. The cover pages are gone, but all 26 twenty-six letters and animals are there, to recite chapter by chapter the say that I just made up the rymes. But that is not what has made the little keepsake so precious.

"In spite of all the learned have said," to quote Philip Freneau, that little old book taught us to read. Just how children are supposed to learn reading I will leave to primary teachers and specialists. I know how I learned, and it seems well enough for me to have done quite a lot of reading since then. Here is my secret: I remember those lines in a short time. I said them over and over with a sort of glee, for they were
in my book. The words to spell were printed on the lines, one word at a time, you know. At first I worked out what the sentences were. I could not have spelled them, but there they were, a picture that I have never forgotten. Any word that I learned at that time was "now." By degrees, and by some method whose intricacies I have forgotten, I soon learned every word as I had already memorized every line from hearing it read aloud. Some time later I learned the letters, or I had them all learned from this little linen book, where they are large and colored. Then "initials" was made up of letters, and I knew the. Before I started to school, in the spring of 1895, I could have spelled readily and in writing, a vast number of the more than a hundred animal names in my book. Some of these animals I have not seen yet, for example, the Quagga, which, says a fellow in my newspaper, died out in 1872, quite a time before I arrived in this world of animal life. Whether I learned according to psychology or according to reverence for an animal, I learned to read, the greatest achievement of any civilized person's life. It could have been some other group of words and sentences that taught the systems of language, but it wasn't; it was my own little Christmas-stocking little book ANIMALS OF AUSTRALIA.

For a big as her or years I have been interested in what goes into one's basic education. Though I have been a boodleman and a formal teacher of literature and language, I have never explained the simplest experiences that educate us. Word words, to my thinking, tried to find and rare the experiences that one like a post. That was a worthy ambition, one that just any of us, whether poor or people doing, might like to determine. Many of you, like we, had a rich folk heritage, a mass of traditional experiences that varied enormously from neighborhoods before the immigration became as one. It would be easy to just all the simple things, but my little alphabet book, that's up our cultural heritage. But they were rare, for better or worse.
"You Can't Read What You Haven't Seen"

Last week I reviewed my early lessons in learning the strange angle of reading and told of my little old line of SNAKES AND HOGS. If any very young person read that article, he probably felt sorry for a little back-country boy who had so few evidences of civilization around him. Of course, if that little boy were now instead of nearly seventy, the pity felt for him would be well placed; but it is wasted on my little fellows from infamy or Joliff who never knew anything better than clay boots and one-roomed schoolhouses and plain country ways. It often seems to me that people in my profession waste a lot of good tears on the wrong things, especially things that were different from those of today, yes, but the things of today had not yet developed.

Boys who were, like myself, born in a far-away corner of things and with few of the so-called advantages, could not afford to wait until better times to grow up and be the beneficiaries of advancement. There we were, down in the hills, with rare trails for roads, with hosts of grown people who could not read or write, with few books and papers. Pathetic, was it not? Do you suppose that the mirror in Bucky Ford Creek grew thin and not fit to eat because their little stream wasn't the Columbia River and they weren't salmon? Those little fish had found themselves in a small creek in a distant corner of Kentucky but didn't know it. They swum and sought food and prospered in the clear water, perfectly contentious to bigger streams and better food. Most of them, like small fish everywhere, fell victims to bigger fish and so passed out of the picture.

Of course, there were some carefree dreams of us boys that fish never knew about, and few of our own kind knew about them, either, for dreams were often laughed at. But, rather oddly, we had the earth under our feet, the sun shining and harvest and cold and heat and winter and spring occurred as normally and regularly at Joliff as they did in central...
Jalib as khan and I said, 'where we live the days will fly, spring vegetation daily changes, the brevity of winter into lush plants and flowers, and bird song along our little creek would have rivalled the nightingale's song that beats like to sylvanoth songs while, 'Rich for home, she stood in tears and wept the corn.' Our good thresh did not appear to please lands but I wonder whether any of the numerous bird songs there woke any more emotions than did our own songster along the creek. We did not know more than the names of strange lands beyond the sea where great people had lived, we would have been perfectly lost in the cities of our own land, but we knew our little world, bounded by a few hill ranges, in a way that called any of the famed branches of knowledge. Though some of our knowledge of the world was pretty but from scientific fact, still it was traditional and came to us hallowed by having been transmitted through generations of Scotch-Irish immigrants. We did not miss the advantages that other youngsters were even then enjoying; we had never had them! [Footnote: told us of the riches that were ours, for most of the tellers of things in our little world recorded the sum total of creation as a sad mistake, or pretended to. They were so eager to get to be men that they had no time to enjoy the world and all that it is. An occasional person, somewhat unorthodox for our A. Strait-laced little community, dared to praise the beauty of flowers and music and sunrise and snow. And some of us younger ones dared, sometimes fearfully, to voice our sense of appreciation for that surrounds us. Though we were sadly lacking in many ways, for we lived in a poor, neglected, out-of-the-way place, we somehow managed to find a strange, even wicked, joy in loving our trees and our streams and our wild flowers, without spending such time night. For some imagine world beyond our close-by horizon.]
One of the older readers of this column and I recently met at a launderette, quite by accident, and spent all the time available talking about old-fashioned sales. Of course, there are such things now, but the luster of the sale has sadly faded. There was something about the older ones that reminded me of one of the oldest accounts of settling up a man's estate that ever appeared in English. Since this account is of a place in what is now Germany, nearly a thousand years ago, maybe some of this Germanic disposition of the property of a deceased man actually went from Germany to England and then, in due time, to America. This ancient method was to put large bundles of the late citizen's personal possessions at distances from the starting point, with the largest first, the successive bundles being smaller, and farther apart. That custom made the Germans of older time great horsemen and furious riders, for the fellow who could take off like a modern drag-racer was the one who got the biggest bundle. Though no such custom as such, the thrill of going to a sale seemed almost as great as our rural area was capable of.

All sorts of devices were used to attract a crowd, just as is done now. Special attention was paid to the inner needs of the prospective buyers, especially liquid needs. And a big-voiced auctioneer took over and practiced his arts, much to the delight of the younger generation. All sorts of things were sold, some of them bringing far more than they were worth. And some of the really valuable things almost went begging. My friend told me of seeing a huge flour barrel of stuff sold for a dollar, stuff that had once been worth fifty dollars but had gone out of style. There were wooden lasts for all sizes of shoes, briar blades without handles, "pegging awls," boxes of shoe pegs, a candle mould, a flax hackle, and on and on, as if one were cataloguing a modern small museum. Most of the people who saw the fellow bid a dollar thought he had spent his money foolishly. At this same sale a huge wilde-
cherry chest of drawers went unwanted. A son of the late owner went back the next day to find the chest, having meanwhile felt a pang or two for not having Pap's old chest. But he was too late; the antique had already been chopped into kindling wood. I have told before of the man of my acquaintance who bought two four-poster beds for a quarter, after everything else had been disposed of. Again a son of the late owner came back and wanted to buy one of those priceless antiques. The man who had acquired the old bed had meanwhile had a cabinet maker rework it, so that it was as good as new. He took pity on the belated understanding of the son and let him have the reworked bed for five dollars, a very small part of the bed's actual worth. The state of that bed stands now in a fine southern Kentucky home, worth almost the proverbial weight in gold. I wish I had followed the fortunes of some of the higher-priced articles that were so sought after on the big sale day.

A very excellent old lady where my wife and I used to have an apartment went to sales of her friends as a sort of religious pilgrimage. Though she had far more furniture than her crowded rooms could bear, she always came back with another table or another chair or some sort of wall gadget. It usually took her a day or two to rearrange her furniture so that you could get around and between the numerous things, still further crowded by the new purchases. And it was great sport on winter Sunday afternoons to sit in her living room and hear where this or that piece of furniture came from, for most of them had been once the prized possessions of her best friends.

Until antique-hunters learned the value of furniture, the mere sentimental value of the objects put up for sale prevailed often over the actual or monetary value. And every old-fashioned house was cluttered up with precious stuff that was too unwanted to give away and too much prized to burn. It is a pity that we cannot put some permanent price on things that once meant so much.

In general, it takes about two generations to find out the values of old things; only a few of us live long enough to see the treasure of our early day become a treasure again in our lifetimes.
"THE DAYS OF OUR YEARS"

Most of the newspapers that use this column will print this article in the week of my seventieth birthday. There was a time when I would have felt that such a date would have been a calamity; maybe it is; but in the days when I felt thus I was far from such a strange age. To the young everything a few years older than they are seems as ancient as Methuselah himself. Now that the actual date is here, it seems no different from many another late-fall date. For years I have held that, to a limited extent, age is not a matter of marks in a calendar. Cheerful people like to remind us that we are as old as our aspirations and dreams; medical men say it would be more sensible to say that we are as old as our arteries. Anyway, it is a new experience to be seventy, just as it was a strange new thing the day I was thirty-five. And, having arrived at this picturesque time, I cannot help thinking of how the world has changed its conception of age since I was a little fellow at Fidelity, away back at the turn of the century.

I know now that some of our patriarchs were far less than seventy years old. In fact, "Old Man" This or That was not more than fifty. One such old fellow, who was classified by us youngsters as an old man before I left home in 1906 is still very much alive, reaching for the century mark soon. And the mere little tads that regarded him as as old as men can get have many of them already grown ancient and given up the struggle. Some live on, little more active than the really old man who seemed old a half century ago.

Old people, at Fidelity and elsewhere, were regarded in several different ways. Truthful old fellows, who remembered accurately and told their stories with no apologies, were often placed in the same category as the neighborhood cheerful liars, who told lies for the fun of it and did not expect to be believed. Thus it was hard for us small ones to separate history and fiction. I trailed around after any old man I knew, asking all the questions I could think of, wanting to know what the world must have looked like before I arrived.
One such, Uncle John Ellin, whom I have so often referred to under his own and other names, lived to be ninety-three, the oldest man I had ever seen before I left Fidelity. What he told me about early history has proved true every time I have read up on our western Kentucky section. I regarded him highly then and felt highly honored when I could say, in my account of his passing, half a century ago, that he had interpreted for us younger ones the strange, long history of the Jackson Purchase. On the other hand the neighborhood liar, who also lived far into the patriarchal age, has my respect. Nobody believed him, even though he put on a look of profound seriousness every time he praised his own prowess at the battle of Shiloh or the virtues of his race-horse, Daisy. It would have been a pathetic boyhood if there had been only the old man who knew his history; it would have been somewhat silly if we had known only the old boy with his racy yarns. History and folklore joined then as now to reveal what men have done and what they have dreamed of doing. I sometimes find myself wishing that I could have understood then how the two strains of our lives should be respected and not scorned. I must confess that I did not write the obituary of the cheerful liar; he was hardly important enough to mention in the county paper to which I contributed my weekly record of what went on at Fidelity.

There was a time when those who had reached sixty seemed to feel that their chief duty henceforth was to treat their illnesses and tell endless stories of their aches and pains. Fortunately, it is not so fashionable now to give hourly bulletins about one's infirmities. When I recall how many accounts I have heard of miseries and rheumatiz and such like, I wonder that I, too, have not succumbed to a common human failure and started enumerating my shortcomings. Maybe we are as old as our self-centered attitude toward aches and pains; maybe we are to be judged by our complaints and our arteries jointly.
An Associated Press dispatch of August 15, 1958, told of the finding of an enormous deposit of valuable sand near my own Fidelity, sand so valuable that the Corning Glass Company has signed a contract to buy 20,000 tons of it a year! And a big processing plant is being built at Murray, to prepare the sand, an almost pure deposit of it, for shipment. Now, that is news, in anybody's world, I tell you.

I have always known that we had sand, lots of it, even though I am not a geologist. Everywhere in our neck of the county we had evidences of it. When a road on our hillsides once wore through the soil and the underlying clay, beautiful sand in unimaginable quantities appeared. I used to play in some of the gulleys, where we had no difficulty imagining ourselves in the Bad Lands. Some of the fields near my house were down into this sand and created a fine background for Cops and Robbers, or whatever we played with our toy pistols or those made of pine planks. Near the house of one of my older brothers was a gulley that would have taken a prize. It was an abandoned road, with its many feet of sand slowly crawling, every rain, down to fill up the swamp and the creek. Some of these gulleys actually ruined some good farm land and seemed destined to make a sort of Copperhill, Tennessee, wilderness of our little world.

In general, these sandy layers were covered up with other layers of clay and gravel and soil. When we dug cisterns, we ran into these strata. Many of the wells we had in our area went into and even through this great deposit of sands. Just how much of the sand I knew was actually the fine sand to be used in the manufacture of glass I do not know, but it was sand, anyway, and regarded as worthless. And now it is being worked for money, our old sand, which was everywhere in the area!

I cannot refrain from using this sand as a sort of parable, for it lends itself to such use, probably as valuable as the Corning Glass Company
products. Here for untold ages the deposits have lain, useless or even harmful when they were exposed to the rains and swept down on the cultivated fields. People passed the sands by, except us children, who built great castles in the gullies and slid down the steep sides of the washouts. As a folklorist I have watched similar things happen in human resources (my, what a big-sounding word that is, a very popular one now!). Human achievements are often overlooked persistently, so that whatever is, seems always to be wrong. Nobody in Fidelity ever dreamed that plain sand, the very sand of their hills, was a treasure that would some day be worked for profit. In early days people were just as dumb about the value of education, such as Fidelity High has been trying to dispense for a third of a century. When the high school was being talked of, many a person fell back on that trite talk about Grandpap and how he got along without more than the three R's. Strangely, not many used the same argument about the automobile when it came into the world, even into Fidelity. But, in Fidelity and elsewhere, automobiles and radios and television sets are much commoner than college or high school diplomas. Though Fidelity is within fifteen minutes of the large state college at Murray, many graduates of the Fidelity High School have never even dreamed of going on. After all, a high school diploma looks pretty large to a person whose parents could barely read and write and whose grandparents did not know A from B. A fair number, however, have felt the strange, new value of the education so close by and at such a reasonable price; they saw, far ahead of their generation, that there was some value in what might seem worthless sand. One such lad, whom I mentioned not long ago, now holds a fine college position in a neighboring state; another is on the last year of his Ph. D. in a Middle-Western university. Those boys, one a tenant's son, the other the son of my brother, found some paying sand and are working it. Their lines of research are vastly different, but they got their start at Fidelity High, under the same teachers. Who knows? There may be a stratum of pay dirt in your life.
In the summer vacation of 1958 I went back to a place in Michigan where I had taken my family more than twenty-five years before. By good fortune, my wife and I got a cottage at the same place where we had first got acquainted with the lake country, a cottage only a few feet from the one we had occupied so long ago with our children. Outwardly the cabins looked very much as they did in 1931, but summer vacationers have become more demanding of accommodations, and, as a result, the best of modern things were in our cabin or those near at hand. The only genuine ties with other days were the big stone fireplace, supplied with wood as a part of the rent, and a rowboat, which also went with the cottage or cabin. The lake looked very much as it used to, even though there are now 300 cottages around it as contrasted with fewer than 50 in our earlier visits. Some of these cottages belie their names, for they have cost as much as middle-income people can afford in the cities. And our humble paddle boat was put to shame by every sort of motor boat. Only after Labor Day, when nearly everybody went home, did the old place resume its quaint stillness; even the Loons came back and laughed at man and his inventions. Not far behind the cottages, however, nature is as wild as ever; there are dense forests of birch, aspens, conifers, with a heavy undergrowth of ferns and shrubs. I saw a deer not far from our cottage, and the smaller mammals were as obvious as they used to be.

But this article is not to tell about my vacation but to record a succession of changes that we have undergone in our recreations and vacations. Getting a real vacation used to be something to brag about. Back in my earlier days the watering place was the great attraction. People came from long distances, drank the bad-tasting water, ate heartily, slept regularly and long, and went home feeling that they had been brought back to life by taking the water cure. The cottage-cabin
idea was not developed much until after the automobile came. Even then the roads were often rather poor for travel, and vacationers had to wait for better times. With a five-day working week and with roads everywhere, the cottages have sprung up—at every lake or river or likely spot. Kentucky was a long time getting this fever of building cottages for rent, but it takes no unusual observation to see how well the state has learned how to attract tourists and to accommodate them. Our numerous man-made lakes are already lined with such cottages, and we are just getting started. Kentucky Lake, Dale Hollow Lake, Lake Cumberland, of the larger lakes that have come into existence recently, are beginning to look like the beautiful glacial lakes of the northern states and New England. Recreation has become one of our big efforts; tourists are becoming a big money.

This tendency of ours is no new thing; it has merely taken a new tack. The old-fashioned neighborhood gatherings, dinners on the ground, picnics, candidate speakings, Confederate reunions, quarterly meetings—what were they but similar things, when distances were much harder to cover? When we went eight or ten miles under one-horse power and had to get back in time to feed the stock and do the milking, we did the equivalent of a long journey today. Return visits offered another substitute for a vacation far away. And there was always—to the fortunate ones—Grandma's, where a youngster or two might spend a week or a little more.

Here is another thing that impressed me in 1958: most of the cottage people are plain, middle-class people, neither low nor high. They are largely family people, who have to get their children back to school as soon as Labor Day is over. There is little pretense about such folks; they have a busy year, largely in cities, and welcome the open air for the time some of the family can stay for weeks, with the working members joining them at weekends. At my Michigan lake there is still no source of diversion away from the lake; there are no dance halls, no poolrooms, no movies—the lake seems enough; these other things can be found back home.
INSECT STINGS

We have just gone through another summer, with all its bugs, and worms, and other biting creatures. And I have heard again some of the standard remedies for stings. Fortunately, I do not seem allergic to any sort of stings; the place itches, and then it disappears. If I were sensitive to such a thing as poison ivy, I would have to choose a different hobby, for my bird study leads through poison ivy and to where bees and other stingers live. When I was a child, I was not so immune, for I had my share of bad swellings from getting too close to a yellow jacket's nest, or I encountered a hornet or a wasp when I was roaming over the farm. When I got a sting, Mother had a standard treatment, even though I cannot remember the exact way it was applied: it was soda and vinegar. Whether the stinging spot was covered with soda and then wet with vinegar, or the two were mixed and then applied while they were fizzing, I cannot tell; anyway, this relieved the itching a bit. I can still remember the strange odor created by mixing an acid and an alkali. Father, as a doctor, had some applications that were less homely than soda and vinegar, but they did not smell any worse or do any more good, so far as I could tell.

This very year I heard a middle-aged man tell how he cured a sting inflicted by a wasp. He got three kinds of weeds, crushed them in his hand until they were juicy, and then applied this juice. Someone asked him what kinds of weeds were needed, thinking that there might be some curative properties in them. He said that any three kinds would be effective, just so they were crushed together and applied to the sting. I suppose that there is some magic in numbers; I am surprised that there were not seven of them... 7, 11, 17, 23, 31, 47, 59... seven seems more magic than three.

"The hair of a dog is good for its bite" is an old adage. Formerly people actually applied dog hair to a dog bite and hoped for favorable
results. I suspect that this was a good a remedy as the one I have seen tried for a burn: hold the burned place close to a hot fire to draw out the heat. I halfway recall that I tried this once for a minute or two but concluded that the remedy merely intensified the pain.

Folk remedies are of some three varieties: some of them actually are sane and are found, under learned names, in the pharmacal journals to this day; some are as harmless as branch water and probably do as much good as this; some are pure magic and are to be watched for the faith that some people place in them. Warts, for instance, can be removed by applying some bitter or burning sap of weeds, by washing them in stum water, or by cutting a notch in a small twig for every wart and burying the twig where it will not be disturbed. Sometimes the folk remedy consists of something that smells or tastes bad, but it is dissolved in alcohol. The alcohol, naturally, kills a lot of germs and therefore helps the sore to get well.

In spite of penicillin, the sulfa drugs, Salk vaccine, and the other well-known wonder drugs, it is still hardly safe in most crowds to doubt the efficacy of some remedy that was hallowed by its being used by one's parents or grandparents. My students tell me every year that they still see asafootida bags, even around the necks of children that have had all the modern shots and have a T. V. in their homes. Folklore, of all sorts, dies hard. Away down deep in us, below the veneer that society has given or required of us, we are still primitive and may suddenly fall back on some folk custom that we had felt we had outgrown.

If our electricity failed, our water became scarce, our opportunity to keep clean were curtailed, we might soon be trying the most primitive remedies to take the place of what the doctors and the nurses hand out. Why, one winter, many years ago, when water pipes froze up nearly all over our town, there was an outbreak of itch; and in Indiana, in a fashionable suburb of Evansville, head lice became so bad that state and national medical authorities had to be called in to deal with the pest.
HOW TO BE PRETTY

Having been a boy for seventy years, I do not know at first hand much about trying to be pretty, but I have been fairly observant of the girls, from seven to seventy, who have practiced the age-old arts of keeping or acquirinng beauty. As an act of kindness to girls of the same age limits, I want to pass along today some beauty hints.

Some things bring general beauty, not merely pretty eyes or hair or posture. One such is the eating of chicken hearts, raw. I have been told that to swallow a heart without chewing it is even more effective. Just how a chicken heart brings beauty I do not know; my business is to record, not explain, folk customs. Apparently chickens are magic critters; for eating—properly cooked—chicken feet will also bring beauty or preserve it. But these feet must be eaten according to the rules, or no good will come of the operation. You must stand behind a door, eat the stumply meat and skin on the cooked chicken feet, and then roll or throw the bones through the crack in the door. Of course, the more restrictions there are, the more likely you are to forget some of the rules and thus break the spell of the magic.

Pretty hair, according to the Bible, is a crowning glory to a woman. No man would agree to this and would be glad to help this glory to be achieved. My best advice is to wash hair only in rain water. All other kinds of water are inadequate or positively harmful. I do not know what soap you should use, but back in the good old days you most certainly would not have used home-made lye soap; that was for dirty hands and dirty clothes.

Freckles are often hated by girls. One of the finest students I have ever had used to be often in a bad mood. After I came to know her well, I saw why she was often so ill-humor'd. She stamped her foot,
gave a lady like version of a cuss-word, and said, "I had freckles." I regret that I had not been able to help her with my folk knowledge. Belatedly, I am telling you and her how to avoid this plague. Find a stump that is hollow and has water in it. That is nature's own beauty bath. Some of my informers have said that a certain number of times you must rub this dark, astringent water on your face. Since it is likely to be a strong solution of tannic acid, plus healing and other properties of bug bodies drowned in the stump, results are certain. Some people say that the water bleaches the freckles; some say that a strong solution of stump water will remove the freckles and the skin, too. There are those who put some genuine magic into this rite; it must be performed at midnight or at a certain phase of the moon or at daybreak. I cannot vouch for the cure anyway, but I doubt whether these extra precautions will add much power to good old stump water.

The whole question of feminine beauty, now so openly discussed in our magazines and in shop windows, was once a sort of hush-hush thing. Everybody liked pretty girls, but the assumption was that beauty just happened, that it did not require any touching up or attention. Older people, men and women alike, talked about beauty as if it were a thing to be feared and avoided. It was a sure sign of innate badness; any girl who did more than a minimum of fixing up was sure to be on her way down hill. But, somehow, girls were girls, then as now, and some time, openly or secretly, was given to looks. And, as time has gone by, the girls have won. And they should have. Whether you have your favorite stump with its magic water or frequent a beauty shop, openly and even brazenly, luck to you ladies! I hope that you will find every help to feminine beauty and even an elixir of life itself. If you find this magic prolonger of active, effective living, please slip a quart or two of it to me. In the words of the old song—"I would not live alway—" but I have no objection to hanging around as long I can take an active part in affairs.
A RUSTIC PIECE

Yesterday, as I returned from a 400-mile trip to the mountains to see fall colors, my companion and I saw a mule, just the common, garden variety of animal that was once so common, the animal that used to do the hard work on the farms. We remarked that this beast of burden would soon be a museum piece, for the tractor has caused his downfall. The somewhat more aristocratic horse is a little better enmeshed in our civilization, since he is the main attraction at dude ranches and riding academies. But who would advertise a riding academy serviced by mules?

My mind goes back to the farm as I knew it at the turn of the century. If a farmer did not have a team of mules, he was rather far down the scale of respectability. The more mules he had, the higher up he was. I remember that I used to feel a little ashamed because our mule team was made up of two large mules a size or two larger than a jackrabbit. They were large enough to draw a plow all day, to pull a loaded wagon over our almost impassable roads, to work singly in slowing corn or tobacco, and, in case of have-to, to be ridden to the country store or arranges or even to church. But they were small as compared with the big mules that some of our more prosperous neighbors owned.

When I went away to Hickman County in 1907 to teach my first school, I got my first sight of big Missouri mules, the kind that made the state famous. My landlord rented a dozen of the big mules to use in breaking wheat land. He did not have enough stable room to house them, and it would have been too hot, anyway, after a long day of pulling the large plow. Therefore, they all had to be fed out in the horse lot, in long troughs. By the way, those critters rented for 25¢ a day, plus their board and keep. There was something rather poetic about the many teams that the farmer could thus put into the field on those hot summer days, each team followed by a boy or a hired hand at about the
hardest work that the farm could find to do.

To add insult to injury, the power that has taken the mule's place today is measured in horses, not mules. Whether it is a tractor or a truck or a car, the advertisements brag about the increased horse power, even when the machine is doing a lot of the hard, dirty work that the mule used to do. And an occasional county fair brings out a mule race, not as a serious thing but to add laughs. Fellows who mount such humble steeds are well enough known in the community not to lose any prestige by stooping to such humble mounts. The mules available for such a race may be far below the general average of mules of other times, which is a further insult. Just why should anybody take great pains to breed great mules today? Who wants a mule? My companion and I wondered how far away would be the time when no farmer, however remote he might be from the highways, would have a mule, when all his back-breaking and dirty work would be done mechanically. I am no prophet, but, on the other hand, who could have guessed in 1907, when I first met the Missouri mule of song and story, that this great beast would so soon deteriorate in value and be regarded as an ugly, worthless creature? He has gone to join such other historical animals as the knight's steed, the fine lady's palfrey, the good old family nag. If I were a musician, I could blend into tones some of the wail of the mule as I used to hear it. My preference would be the mule's bray when he was tied to a siding at Sulphur Springs Church, waiting the end of a long morning service and the corn and fodder that would be his lot while the crowd partook of dinner on the ground.
JUST LOOKING

One of the most obvious changes in common people since I could first remember has been their frank admission that they love beauty. Yesterday was a cold, misty day in the mountains of eastern Tennessee, but there were dozens of cars of people out to see fall colors, with people from old to very young just looking at scenery. Some people had built fires to warm up the surroundings and allow the family to have one more picnic dinner out of doors before winter closed down. In very recent years this seeking of the wild has become so ordinary that the younger ones can hardly be convinced that there was ever a time when sensible people would disdain to travel far, even, to see bright leaves and rustic scenery.

Many of the memories of my early days are pleasant ones, but there is a bitterness attached to the memory of how lovers of beauty were laughed at or even threatened with some dire calamity for being so attached to worldly things. Long ago I paid my respects to the dear old ladies whom I knew who slipped by some of this tirade by confining their creation of beauty to what passed as useful, such as patchwork quilts. And some found a “green thumb” in their growing of flowers, even in humble vessels like worn-out cook things. Whether these creators of beauty ever had moments of fear that they had done something wrong I do not know. I trust that most of them are today enjoying perennial flower gardens that will never suffer from frost.

Years ago I was greatly interested in Warren H. Wilson’s book on Quaker Hill, a Quaker settlement in the East where several generations lived before modern times caught up with them. They were not poor people, for Quakers knew how to work and to be thrifty. And some of them had above-average education for their times. But there was never,
In the century and a half in which the settlement thrived, a single effort to write a poem or to paint a picture or even to discuss feelingly the magnificent views available every day from the hilltop where the village stood. Beauty was squelched, so that it seemed almost wicked to mention it. Really so engulfs the population that worldly things, even innocent or inspiring ones, just did not register.

In our little Fidelity world there was hardly a house or yard that did not have a few flowers; some places were as beautiful with many species of flowers as expensive estates today. A few people had flower pits dug into the side of a hill with a south exposure and thus were able to keep their flowers from one year to another. And there was a generous exchange of flower roots and bulbs and seeds and plants, in spite of the constant cloud of prejudices against beauty. And, as an oldish man, more than a half century after these efforts of my neighbors to make the earth a little better as a temporary residence, I gratefully acknowledge the memory of these artists in the fine art of living and to their descendants I wish as great a portion of this artistic spirit as is commensurate with our times and our places.
As I am soon coming to the age of retirement as a school teacher, I cannot help thinking back over more than a half century of my own work and the reasons why so many of my generation chose to be teachers. Back in our little fidelity neighborhood, thirty and sixty years ago, the teacher was somebody, a symbol of learning and advancement. Though most of my own teachers then were not far advanced in learning, they wanted to know; and our society gave them every opportunity to be regarded as actually scholarly. Of course, knowing even a few things at that time raised you above the general level, so that "book learning" seemed to exalt people rather fast. Many of my acquaintances, especially older people, could not read and write; many others could barely attest their literacy by writing their names when necessary or spelling out a few items in the county paper. Knowing anything above the average was certainly a mark of distinction. And our elders, for some strange reason, felt that knowledge was a great thing, though they might not have had very clear ideas of what constitutes education. Since nobody was even a high school graduate, it was easy to imagine that one became educated largely by his own efforts. Maybe that was one reason why a person with some learning was fairly worshiped in our far-away neck of the woods. This attitude toward a teacher was not lost on me, I assure you. I was not a strong boy and young man. I early had spinal curvature and was worthless at lifting at log-rollings and similar occasions when strong backs and arms were at a premium. But I could spell and read and do simple arithmetic and grammar and geography and history. Consequently, I wanted, as far back as I can remember, to be a teacher, to acquire some of the strange glamour attached to people who knew things.

Everything, as seen a long time afterwards, seemed to help my dream. Because I could read and did read, I was exhibited as a sort of strange
freak. My early teachers, almost as soon as I could read very well, would ask me to help some smaller child with his lessons. That gave me greater thrills than any subsequent achievement. My pupils were not always bright or eager to learn, but I tried to teach them just as the teacher would have if she had had time, with all eight grades in one room. Being asked to help these country boys and girls made me feel that I was called to be a teacher, a strange sort of feeling that fifty years has not wholly erased. Nobody ever seemed to think that I could have been anything else. I certainly dismissed most other dreams of being something besides a teacher.

And, when I was eighteen, like so many other boys in my generation, I began my first one-roomed country school. It is true that I was not the exalted personage that I thought teachers to be, but, looking back now, I can see that I was treated by the people of the community where I taught as if I were somewhat different from any other eighteen-year-old. That treatment made me grow up too fast and appear to be an ancient sage, but it helped to carry on the tradition that the teacher is somebody. Though I met many reverses in that first great year and sometimes wondered at the end of the day whether I could tackle my job the next day, I somehow arose with the dawn, for I lived with a very industrious family, walked across the fields to my schoolhouse, and tried again to prove to the world that a teacher is a very important person, what is now called a T. I. P.

That was a long time ago. Teachers have come and gone. Our schools have grown beyond our own dreams of size and complexity. Not always has the teacher been a very important person in our times, but we who have stayed with our early dreams have felt, beneath our humble exteriors, that the things of the mind are great, that the teacher, whether he lives up to his ideals or not, can be and ought to be somebody, just as we ignorant back-country folks regarded him at the turn of the century.
All my life as a teacher I have heard laments about the large turn-over in the profession. In fact, many a person whom I have known has declared that teaching is not a profession, if we are to judge by the people who stick to it. And then such a critic can cite genuine statistics about the hundreds of teachers who drop out, to start a home, to enter business, to study for some profession. Naturally, when teachers are compared with lawyers and doctors and ministers, they do seem to be merely a mixed multitude, with only a small percentage remaining, "for better or for worse," and all the other phrases of a certain well-known ritual. Nobody regrets more than I that there has not been a greater inducement for young people who really like to teach to follow the profession and be able to keep up reasonably with the people who hold remunerative positions. I must say that in my lowest-paid days I never felt any disposition to apologize for being a teacher; if people did not like me for my being just so, they could turn elsewhere for friends and acquaintance. But I realize that not all people can get as much satisfaction out of having only a partial means of livelihood; maybe we people who have loved to teach and have risked starvation have been partly to blame for mankind's long neglect of the teacher as a person who has to eat and wear clothes and drive cars like other people.

But enough of those who left the schoolroom for something more remunerative. This article is to praise some of my own teachers--typical ones for that time--who taught briefly but threw themselves into those few years and left many great impressions. Only one teacher that I ever had at Fidelity, so far as I can now recall, remained a teacher until he retired because of old age. He, however, like so many teachers of that and other times, left the state for greener pastures and retired away down in south Texas, not down in the Jackson Purchase. A very few of our Fidelity
teachers taught more than one school; some stopped with just one. I am sure that our teachers were startlingly like those everywhere in those times. Suppose we ran a list of them. My first teacher, a young widow, was already far gone in tuberculosis and died before the next school year began. Unfortunately, there were a great many such teachers in our part of the world, then and for a long time afterwards. Our second teacher was one of the few men teachers in our little school; he was the one who remained in the profession until he was far past seventy and died at a very advanced age just a half dozen years ago. Another young woman taught us as her first school, taught a neighboring district two years, and then settled down to a very long career as a housewife. Another one came almost being a professional teacher, for she remained a teacher until she was in the forties and then married and moved away to the West. One of our men teachers was teaching to make money enough to finish his medical course; he became a local physician but also succumbed to tuberculosis, our regional disease. Another man soon tired of teaching and became a Methodist preacher of note in the Jackson Purchase. Only one teacher that I had at Fidelity was approaching a mature age; nearly all had been youngsters only a few years older than the largest pupils. But I want to pay a tribute to these youngsters from our own community or a neighboring one: they were thoroughly alive; they knew a lot of things that we children had not yet learned; some of them had been to a review session at some county-seat school and sometimes came back full of enthusiasm for good reading and better history and such. Our little one-roomed schoolhouse was to readings from the best English and American poetry and stories. Our neighborhood literary society heard read or discussed the best of good writings. And these transient teachers, on their way to professions or "marrying and settling down," were leaders in this slow requirement of better things. There may have been a "professor time," there may be none today; but those rural teachers of mine set thoughts going that are still going, a half century later.
More than at this time, the teacher used to be an institution in his little world. Even in one-roomed-school days sometimes the same teacher would be in charge of the school for a whole generation, or for on into another one. He became for everybody the very symbol of education. He was consulted on every subject, not merely the ones connected with the Three R's. Somehow, the neighbors felt that he knew most of the answers. Often he had more theological knowledge than any one preacher around; sometimes he was ahead of the combined preachers of all denominations, and both he and they knew it. In politics he was sought after to give advice as to state or national figures. No local affairs were ever conducted without his support, open or tacit. Graybeards often remarked that the teacher had given them everything they had ever learned; fond parents gladly turned over their children to the old pedagogue to be educated.

This neighborhood institution was no Johnny-come-lately in methods and knowledge; he had followed a course of reading for years and years, he had taught the same subjects over and over, even the same textbooks, until he practically knew them by heart. In many a community there might be good-humored mention of the old fellow's crankiness, but everybody felt that in knowledge the old teacher was first.

In my own years of watching the schools of the state, I have been happy to observe older and more modern examples of this old-time teacher. Every county that I have known well has had one or several such faithful followers of learning who continued to keep school, in spite of low salaries and sometimes of sufficient appreciation. It is a shame that I cannot call names in this article, for it would embarrass some of those now living to find their names; it would hurt the feelings of others who were left out. Suppose we take a few typical examples.

A small county-seat town had, for a whole generation, a kind teacher
who taught every child in the community, corner or later; and, almost before she or anyone else realized it, she was teaching these children's children and grandchildren. Meanwhile time seemed to have passed her by; when I first knew her, she was already a middle-aged woman, but she had the step of a young girl and the devotion to her work of someone who has arrived. Her older students often told me of her teaching them, not merely the simple elements of a grade-school education but dynamic truths relating to getting along in the world with other people of different ideas. She lived to a very grand old age and is honored by having the auditorium of the town named after her. To say that someone is following in her footsteps as a teacher is the greatest possible compliment wherever she is known. In another town, somewhat larger, the English teacher for forty or more years brought each year to her classes the best in literature, along with interpretation of great ideas suggested or localized by these works of art. Her name, too, became a sort of talisman, uttered to justify anyone's appreciation for great books or great ideas. Often mature people, who had accomplished much in their own names, have told me that they have had no greater moments than those spent in that great teacher's class. One of my former students, several years younger than I, has become a tradition in his county-seat town. He is a great teacher, but the schoolroom has no confining walls for him. He is the recognized leader of the small town, the interpreter of its humor and its rugged faith in life. More than anyone else I have ever known, he symbolizes the good horse sense of his people; likewise, he, in his education and his lifelong wide reading, represents what many of his friends would like to have been. Many of his friends, like many of mine, are not very well educated in books, but they have lived and thought, and developed a philosophy of life that can stand a lot of hard knocks. These three teachers, two of them already gone to their rewards, have often made me feel the importance of the teacher who stays put, who somehow manages to eat and find enough money for a good life, who unconsciously becomes so much a part of a community that you almost instinctively associate the teacher and his home community.
THE TEACHER—A HALF CENTURY LATER—IV

In a profession as large as that of teaching, it would be strange if there were not some oddities as well as some stalwart teachers who have become for most of us models of their kind. Probably every one of you had an odd teacher, maybe one slightly "taught in the head." I have had enough of all sorts—some fifty-three—to have drawn just about every kind. Some of them were in the little one-roomed school at Fidelity, where I went to school from the spring of 1895 until the fall of 1905. There were no high schools then; consequently, we who liked to go to school just kept on going to the same little school, often to the same teacher. We who memorized easily soon knew all our books by heart and could anticipate any question that the teachers could ask. In my particular school we changed teachers often and thus had to adjust to slightly different ways of doing things each year. Since the college where I did my high school and junior-college work was relatively small, I had a chance to know and have every teacher who stayed more than a year. In that way I came to know what to expect in successive classes.

The teacher under whom I had more courses than under anyone else was a complete education in everything suggested by the words school and education. He was scholarly, in an old-fashioned and thorough way. There was no foolishness about him. His course was the most important fact in the world at that time, and somehow he soon came to make us students feel the same way about it. His teaching was so meticulous and so thorough that I honestly believe that I could pass one of his tests right now without an hour's review. Consciously and unconsciously, my own teaching has been influenced by his. The most abstruse point in language thrilled him as much as the most eloquent address. I have often likened him to Browning's scholar in "The Grammarian's Funeral," the old fellow who would not let bad health keep him from his beloved studies. Not everybody felt the same way
about this teacher as I do and did. Some were mortally afraid of him because he insisted on unswerving accuracy. I have often seen grown people, men as well as women, cry in his classes because they could not express themselves in a clear enough manner to be commended for their recitations.

The ones of us who stayed with him, as I did for ten terms, cannot find enough praise for his thoroughness and his masterful teaching, even though we, too, sometimes griped about his cold-blooded methods. He was never what could be called popular, and he taught many of us to look with contempt upon any one who seeks merely to be liked by the rabble.

At the other pole in my affections is the memory of the old gentleman who felt that everything had a definite answer and that he knew that answer. Though his formal education was as scanty as that of the teacher I just mentioned was wide and thorough, few things seemed to trouble him. He, too, was meticulous in his teaching, but, if you had looked beneath the surface, he was trying to make you state everything in his very words. I can never forget his chuckle when some timid soul came up with an answer, rather haltingly, that embodied the old professor's pet phrases. You would have thought that he was rejoicing over a new discovery, when all of us knew that this same comic show had gone on in class after class for a whole generation.

A great churchman, he refused to listen to any translation of the Bible except the King James Version; he even refused to contribute to a small fund to buy a Bible for the college chapel unless he was assured that only this version was to be bought. He had a considerable knowledge of classic music and, in the days of player pianos, could render many great numbers quite well. But no one dared suggest that there might be some other great music beyond his ken. His church, his political party, his tastes were the only ones to be considered; all others were beneath contempt.

As a friend of mine said about another cut-in-his-ways school man: "When he found that he was dying, he probably was greatly surprised that anything like death could happen to a man like him." Of all my teachers, these two suggest the extremes; I feel I have learned much, both positively and negatively, from the two.
"THE BOARDING HOUSE REACH"

As I have so often said in this column, I have to spend a large part of my time explaining to my classes some chance reference to conditions that used to be. Not long ago I remarked that a wit once said, very effectively: "If all the boarders in this town were seated at one table, they would REACH." Two or three youngsters giggled and then stopped suddenly, for fear that they should not have. Most of the class sat stolidly, as if I had uttered a truth that no one could contradict. Plainly, I felt embarrassed. You see, I grew up in the days of boarding houses, when everything was set before you, and you had to pass the stuff along. Sometimes there was nothing left but to reach if you needed food. And the boarding-house reach became proverbial, rightly so. When I get around to Holmes's "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," I have to spend nearly as much time in getting the students to comprehend a boarding house as to get them to grasp Holmes's quaint philosophy.

More than a half century ago, when I went away to school, boarding houses were on every street near the school, and the school itself ran a huge boarding house, with two or three hundred students eating together daily. Each one of us had his special place at his table. In this way we came to know a smallish group of people quite well, and lots more casually as they came and went. Some of us tried to make the meals genuine social occasions, where discussions, humor, and college wit were to be found. Some others merely came to eat, to render this obligation to nature as quickly as possible and then scram. Of such people there was a corny story to the effect that whenever they bent their elbows, their mouths flew open, thus making eating a fine illustration of a well-organized body or, if you please, of a labor-saving machine. Anyway, we got to know each other well, we took the measure of our schoolmates, we reviewed every
school in prairie, and we developed much of what was then called "college spirit."

Any a prominent older person of today paid his way through school by waiting on tables. At different eating places this service was regarded differently. One haughty old lady of our town referred to all the people who helped cook or serve meals as "the servants." Several of her ex-servants are today state-wide or even nation-wide in their reputations, but I fear the old lady and her family, even, are not so well or so widely known. There was a strange prejudice against girls who worked in the capacity of waitresses at boarding houses. The first girl I ever knew who helped pay her way through college in this way is still living and can bear me out when I say this. A very poor boy, who was having a difficult time getting enough money to pay for the cheapest board, asked me one day whether I thought a girl could be decent and wait on tables. What I said would not bear printing; I was never asked such a question again, but it was years before many girls would risk the cold stares of people who caught them in the act of passing the beans and potatoes at a "hash house," as boarding houses were sometimes incoherently called.

In addition to the regular clientele served by the boarding house were visitors who had come to see their children in college, or faculty members, or even just plain neighbors. Eating a boarding-house Sunday dinner was quite a bit "tough in my early married life. And what we got to eat would make most restaurants and cafeterias today ashamed of themselves, and we paid sometimes as much as a half dollar for a full Sunday dinner!

But the boarding house is so seldom found today that its very existence is sometimes doubted by young people; they feel that it was just a source of jokes about the food served or the crude people who ate there. But we who grew up under its spell, even though we did our share of griping about the food and the great expense, look back on the old boarding-house as a big thing in our early college lives.
THE LOCAL TRAIN

As my wife and I drove across the railroad tracks of a small town today, we were somewhat amused at seeing only two people waiting on the platform for the one southbound train a day that now stops at that small county seat town. The streets were full of passenger automobiles, several big busses thundered by, but only two men were there to greet the train, and one of those was the man-of-all-work who now sells tickets, attends to all the freight, operates the telegraph, and lives a pretty lonely life away down by the tracks. However, he can console himself by remembering that he would have no passenger trains to worry about if his little town were not on a prominent trunk line. Hundreds of other similar towns have not seen a passenger train in years. My home county seat is such a place; there has been no rushing down to the depot to see a friend off to distant places or just to see the noisy train arrive, discharge its passengers, and then, in a whirl of smoke, take off again. In fact, there is no such event in the lives of most people today. Most of people travel by bus, but there is no fanfare when a bus arrives or departs; it does not run on steam generated by burning coal, and thousands of people never ride a bus anyway but take off in their own cars. The romance of the train is about to run out.

This very week a teacher in my town had a brilliant idea. She wanted to help her small pupils understand the romance of transportation and used a very effective way to do it. She arranged with the officials of one of the few remaining passenger trains that stop at neighboring county seats to take her and her school to a distant city—thirty miles or more away—and then pick them up on the returning train. I sincerely wish I could have ridden on that same train to hear the excited remarks of the youngsters who were having
such a rare time. I could not help comparing their great experience and comparing it with my own first train ride. I would have been ashamed to confess that I had never ridden on a train. I was eighteen years old and was on my way to school, fresh from following a mule across the fields behind a plow. Every incident of the day was imprinted on my mind, even though I would probably have blushed if anyone had suggested that I was green. The train acted as all good trains of those days should have acted: it whistled approvingly for the crossings, belching out great clouds of steam and smoke, it slowed down under the influence of the brakes and stopped right on the dot, it took off with enough effort to make us know that the load was heavy but could be moved. At every crossing it whistled, at every station the crowds greeted it solemnly but inwardly with great emotion, at every imaginable time the news boy came through the coaches selling stuff, and the flagman or conductor or both sang out the most inconsequential station as if it were London or New York or Paris. Fortunately for me, I rode three trains that day and night, even though the place I was heading for was only sixty or seventy miles across country. But railroads in our neck of the woods did not seem to run where we wanted to go, and we had to zigzag across the country and ride many trains to reach our destination. I managed on this first train trip to wait two very long times for trains and to make the latter part of my journey by night, when actual electric lights were turned on in the coach. The landscape no longer flew by, but it was snug in the lighted coach, and the frequent stops, properly announced in stentorian tones, made us acquainted with geography and feel, too, that we had come far and seen much on a first train ride.
FOOL IN CURES

Today I asked a person well along in the forties whether he had a barrel of flour at his house; he looked somewhat surprised and asked me how he could remember a thing so long out of date. Poor fellow, he had never seen a barrel of salt, either, bought late in the fall before hog-killing time. And, probably the worst of all, he had never gone into a country grocery, ordered cheese and crackers, and had the merchant cut off a wedge of cheese from a big, round cheese—just as a cheese should be shaped—and then reach over into a barrel or big box and get a handful of big crackers to go with the cheese. I am afraid that this young fellow is Modern, spelled with a capital.

After the calumny about the cheese, I stopped asking questions, for I knew the mere youth could not remember the shed room of the country grocery where were kept barrels of coal-oil (imagine "kerosene" at the Ulysses), and vinegar, and boxes of salt pork (chiefly middlin's), and such like. Unless it was getting pretty cold in late fall or early winter, there would be sacks of cabbage, too, big, flat fellows that came in to keep us alive after our own cabbage patches had been eaten up, turned into sauerkraut, or had been frosted. That shed room, by the way, had its own smell, just like the country smoke-house, minus the smoke smell.

This same ignorant youngster probably never saw ice delivered in big hunks; his memory probably does not go far back beyond refrigerators in the house. Maybe, at some summer camp, he might have seen a big block of ice. My small grand-daughter, last summer, when we were visiting at a summer hotel, saw the man-of-all-work put a big hunk of ice into the cooler that sits, in summer, on the front porch of the hotel. "Look, Granddaddy, at the big ice cube." Then I had to remember that she had never seen that big a piece of ice before. I can imagine how big an ice tray it would have been to hold this hunk and a dozen or so others, and thus share in the wonder of the little girl.
Packaged goods of all sorts are so commonplace nowadays that it is natural for younger people to regard them as the normal way of putting things out for sale. I doubt whether many people now ever see a big, round cheese except those who work at or near a cheese factory. Cheese in the round might seem as odd a sight as a bag of green coffee, or a barrel of flour, or sugar, or salt, or crackers. However, with the coming of small packages, a certain distinction has been lost. Nobody of my younger friends could guess how a barrel of flour brought just plain decency to its owner; buying flour in smaller quantities laid open the buyer to a charge of being very poor or very shiftless. I am afraid that some of the old fellows I used to know would have fainted if they had seen some female member of their family buying a mere box of salt, not a man-sized barrel. When everybody slaughtered his own hogs, he needed more salt that you can buy in a puny little box with a spout on it.

Among other changes wrought by this packaging of food is the loss of the smell. The supermarket of our day has no place, unless it is behind the scenes, where you can get the odors that used to haunt the shed room of the country grocery. Of course, sanitation is considerably better practiced than it was in earlier days. The open cracker barrel did attract some bugs and other creatures; the open-ended box of prunes may have had an occasional visit from a hungry mouse. Some years ago my camping partner and I stopped at a small country store in Tennessee to replenish our supplies. My friend picked up a good-sized box of prunes but soon set it down again. It seems that a mouse had learned to guzzle through a mere carton and had helped itself to some prunes, expensive ones at that. Maybe that was a sort of revenge for having been shut out of an open barrel, where all good prunes used to recline until a customer needed to be waited on.
THE SUPER-MARKET

I have just got back from a Saturday-morning visit with my wife to a super-market, to stock up on some food for the weekend and beyond. That is a commonplace event in our lives now, don't you think? Who doesn't do just that, regularly or often? But it really does not require a very advanced age to make one remember when super-markets were as unknown as jet airplanes. The coming of these markets has brought a series of changes in our lives that some sociologist should write a dry book about or some poet a fascinating poem about.

In the transition period of getting adjusted to city life after a whole series of lifetimes in the country, grocery-buying was a mixed-up custom. Of course, the men folks would buy big things, like sacks of things, but women folks somehow felt that it was a pretty big come-down to go shopping for such ordinary stuff as food. Consequently, a grocery boy came around to the house to take your order if you bought regularly from one store. Or you gave in your order to the grocer himself, by telephone. If a store was handy, you could drop by and pick up a loaf of bread or send a child to get a written-out list of things, with some candy or chewing gum as a reward. If I had met a man on the street, say forty years ago, toting a big bag of groceries, I would probably have thought him very funny or even slightly touched in the head. It just wasn't being done, or very often. But cars came along pretty fast, and you could carry or pack or tote your bag of food a few yards, at least, and still keep in the proper society.

Now the super-market serves as a sort of clubroom for many people. There is where you can see many old acquaintances, pass the time of day, get caught up on neighborhood gossip, and feel that you have had a fine
day of it. If you are a man, you can feel blameless when your wife suggests that the two of you call on the Mrs. Jones. "Why, I saw Brown yesterday at the Super-market." And you did and you will again. Buying food is no longer secret; everybody does it and seems glad to do so.

In a previous article I discussed the passing of huge quantities of things, like barrels of flour and the like. The super-market enables you to buy for the family that is now left at home, not the big-eating one that you used to feed. And you can get dainties that you once never dreamed of, all because a huge store can afford to stock up on all sorts of stuff, even for a few purchasers, for the miracle of refrigeration and the packaged wonders of our time make food accessible to a poor man, who formerly could not have been bought for gold by a rich one. No wonder you sometimes have to stand in line a long time when you are checking out! Think of the crude supply of basic, but not always tasteful, foods that you once had. Unless you still had farm connections, it did not pay you to put up such huge quantities of things that you used to can or dry or preserve. I still wonder what ultimately became of the gallons of cucumbers that we used to raise and salt down in brine, even after most of the big family had left home. Though I am a pretty good pickle-eater, I certainly did not make away with all several gallons of these cucumbers that I helped to grow.

When I read Edward Bellamy's LOOKING BACKWARD, many years ago, I marveled at some of his conceptions of what we would be like in the year 2000. Of course, he had a sociological bee in his bonnet, but many of his dreams are now every-day affairs, such as central power plants, big storehouses of food, a wide variety of professions and jobs that were equally decent and important. His solution was one that is hardly ours today, for he thought that by 2000 A. D. we would need no money or would have a ration card issued us, and that would be that. Anyway, Mr. Bellamy, if he were alive and were to visit a super-market today, might find some phases of his prophecy strangely true.
The schoolhouse at Fidelity had two doors: the one to the left as you faced the building was the girls' door, and that side of the playground belonged to the girls, too; the other side was as certainly the boys'. Away back in the lives of our parents and teachers there had been a feeling that co-education must be kept "channelized," as some great educators are for ever saying now. Anyway, to the east sat the girls; to the west sat the boys. But, even at Fidelity there was developing a sort of break-away from this law of the sexes and persons, for in my earliest years a baby brother might have to sit for a while with big sister when he had got to crying on account of the newness of things educational. And then, along in my schooling, it actually became customary for brother and sister to sit together regularly. My sister Carrie and I were seatmates for many years after my earliest days at school; my neighbors, the Montgomery children, always sat together, usually in front of Carrie and me. And it came to be so usual for this brother-and-sister combination that nobody ever said anything about it, and teacher after teacher allowed it.

Another sitting together developed, too, allowed by the teacher unless trouble developed; and, fortunately, it usually didn't. I refer to some boy being allowed to sit, for a period or two, by some girl while they were studying their arithmetic or geography, in the same big seat. Not always was this a mere matter of school sweethearts, for it could also be a genuine desire to learn and an appreciation of the brightness of the partners studying together. Of course, the other boys would tease the fortunate boy, but it was nearly always a real case of envy. You see, even at quaint old Fidelity, brains were respected, and it was something to be allowed the privilege of studying with a girl whose good horse sense you admired.
On the playground the lines of demarcation between boys and girls was usually pretty tightly drawn. But in front of the building there was a sort of neutral ground, where we could play together, usually under the watchful eye of the teacher, such games as Wolf Over the River, and Dare Base, and Stealing Goods (called, rather learnedly, by some Prisoner's Base). And when we played Antsy Over, we could run around the house to take our vengeance on the opposing side. But if any of us strayed only a few yards away from the building, some larger girl, the teacher, or an older boy put us into our places. The boys' side was similarly sacred territory. We felt scandalized when the younger sister of one of our big boys insisted on playing with other small children, boys as well as girls, right over on our side, even down by the acting pole. A few suggestions from the teacher, though, put things back into their places, and the two sexes, somewhat like Kipling's East and West did not often have a chance to meet.

Of course, this lining up according to one's sex had a more dignified approval from the country church. In some of the churches I knew the sexes were kept absolutely separate, but Sulphur Springs compromised a bit by allowing young fellows and their dates to sit together in the middle row of pews, but the pews next to the walls were for men and women, respectively. A crybaby little boy might find it convenient to run to Mass in the Forbidden Ground, but larger boys would have never lived down such a breach of etiquette as actually sitting under the very eye of one's mother. If any such boy had existed, he would have had to lick four or five boys of his own age before he would have been allowed to not as he pleased. "Male and female created he them."
LIVING IN THREE WORLDS

Everyone lives, sooner or later, in his life, in three worlds: the world of his parents, his own world, and the world of his children and grandchildren. Men and women of my generation have lived in a strange triple living even more than ordinary people, for they witnessed in their lives changes that make the patriarchs of song and story look like young rejections. Every day of my teaching in the last twenty-five years it has been necessary to adjust my thinking, my vocabulary, my attitude to a world that had never been dreamed of in my youth. It is hard on youngsters to drop them into college life after twelve years of rather care-free life in the grades and high school; it is equally hard on the teacher. What their grandparents and great-grandparents were like I know; I grew up with those people. Often it is nearly impossible to meet on common ground when this present generation is around. And yet I have tried to keep in touch with successive college generations of youngsters and have often prided myself on having done fairly well with this hard job. But I wonder sometimes whether I do not seem like a stranger to my students, even in the moments when I know that my thinking is as youthful as theirs.

It is certainly not necessary for us to enrol once again the vast physical changes that have taken place since I was born. What the earliest settlers had known was still common practice when I was born. We seemed only a generation or so removed from the patriarchs of the Bible themselves. Pioneers and other famous people were still living, customs had changed only slightly since colonial and Revolutionary days. To start with that and live on, with a youthful mind, into the so-called Atomic Age is to enter a leap into unknown space. Human nature remains the same, but the outward forms of human conduct have undergone so many changes that we seem to be living on another planet.
In my efforts to avoid becoming an old fogey, I have often appeared much too young for my age, much too active, when the younger ones probably thought I was old enough to retire to a chair, and nurse my old joints and declare that the world is steadily going down hill, that only the old things were and are best. But I often find that my youngest students are much more afraid of life than I ever was or am now; they all are going to the moon or some other sort of fantastic effort to break out, few of them are basically other than ultra-conservative, fearful of learning anything that does not fit into a very pigeon-holed universe as conceived by a small, back-country neighborhood, such as Fiddlety once was.

Students, though they might hate to admit it, are subject to growing pains, some of them as unanalyzable as those aches we adolescents used to have. But these college pains are mental rather than physical. Changes have come so suddenly, so unpredictably, that the youngsters do not know how to adjust. Having a high school diploma, often the first one ever owned in a whole family; attending college as a new experience, again for the whole family; hearing new views of things that seem far away from one's small little world of childhood—these do stir up minds and cause queer mental aches. And who are we older ones, who still remember our aches and pains at similar happenings, to back off into a corner and let the younger generation fight it out? When I sit in the bleachers, so to speak, and cheer on the young team, I sometimes forget that it is after the middle of the twentieth century and have to pinch myself to realize that it is not a half century ago, and I am the puzzled young fellow who is having a hard time adjusting to a new world. And that is one of the reasons why I frankly say that I feel sorry for the oldish teacher who is struggling so hard to keep his head above water, to face a generation that has arisen—yes, two generations that have come into being—since I was shivering in my boots at the daily adjustments to life.
Today I told a student the story of one of my humorous friends who said that Al Henry, one of our students of many years ago, ought not to be in college, that all he could do would be to take the down row. My story fell pretty flat, as many of my stories often do these days: my listener had never heard of a down row. By the time I had that explained, it was time for us to part. I tried, however, to indicate that taking the down row in gathering corn required no very great skill or even intelligence and that it was regarded as a sort of insult to be asked to do this necessary but humble work. As a boy I felt that there were few depths of degradation below taking the down row. The only redeeming feature about it was that I could be out with full-grown men when I did this work and could be in on all the big-man talk. I am sure now that sometimes the grown boys and men deliberately missed the wagon bed with the corn they threw, just to give me the humiliation of searching for the ears and depositing them in the bed. That was bad enough, but it was worse to have to pick up the ears that the mules had bitten into and slobbered over. Every time I followed the down row, I made resolutions about what I would do when I got to be a big man; none of them included taking the down row.

This same humorous fellow who felt that our student should take only the down row recognized that corn-gathering is of only brief duration; consequently, some busy work would have to be found for other seasons. I cannot recall what all the seasonal jobs were, but the one for spring was the dropping of tobacco plants, another lost art. It was next to disgraceful to find a grown man dropping plants for others to set. That was a job for the smallest boys,
little fellows who were not big enough to take their places like
grown men and break their backs in this seasonal difficult job.
Sometimes an elderly man would be drafted for plant-dropper, but
even he felt ashamed that he could not bend over the steaming earth
and set plants like a he-man. Very rarely I saw a mature man dropp-
ing plants, but he was temporarily "under the weather" and just
could not do his share of man's work. Usually he would apologize
again and again for not being in the setting crew.

I believe that the summer job for our moronic friend was holding
tobacco sticks. Again, it was not a grown man's job to hold sticks.
Teen-age boys or even younger ones had this job. Grown men cut
the plants, skillfully and rapidly. Some of the finest exhibitions
of trained hands I have ever seen came at tobacco-cutting time.
Some fellows used knives somewhat like a butcher knife but usually
curved up a bit at the end; others used a razor-like knife that
was fastened to a long iron shank, with this iron inserted into
a handle. I must confess that I never learned to use that kind
but could look at the other man's skillful hands and envy.

In winter this same dumb boy could pick up chips. That cer-
tainly did not require much skill or sense. Again, this was
child's work, something to keep the little fellows from under foot
and out of mischief. I have picked up my million or so of chips;
sometimes until the ones Mother sent me back after were not any
larger than silver dollars. Sometimes we had baskets and boxes
bulging with chips, for Mother did not wait for the ox to fall into
the ditch; if necessary, she shoved him in, so that we could get him
out and in doing so be kept busy. A fireplace in our house without
a basket or box of chips near by was the same sort of disgrace as
having a dirty face or nose. But I cannot recall having seen
grown men out picking up chips; they had to chop wood and tote
in the big logs that we boys could not budge. Anyway, my former
student could have these four jobs to compensate for his few brains.
LIKE A BIG MAN

It has been so long since my own boy was small that I do not know what it is that small boys regard as acting like men. My grandson is going through the two-gun stage right now, but will soon be into some other equally fascinating period of growing up. It is pretty easy to think back over my own life and recall how I developed great longings to appear grown-up or a he-man. These are not steps arranged chronologically or psychologically but are just some that I remember rather vividly.

Every farm boy I knew longed for the day when he could ride a horse unwatched and unattended. Sometimes the getting to this great day involved some hair-breadth escapes from falls and horse hoofs. Father or Older Brother helped in the first futile attempts to ride a perfectly gentle nag. I was chagrined that I could not mount my steed without getting on a stump or a pile of wood; my legs were short, then and now. By and by I did manage to put my foot into the stirrup and climb on, with an inner feeling of being equal to the world and all its problems.

Wearing short pants was a disgrace, so far as I was concerned. Little boys were marked off from grown ones by the length of trouser legs. If a fellow attempted to put on long pants too early, he had to lick some other big boys who did not want their sacred precincts of grown manhood thus invaded. Pants were largely home-made in those days and fit in various ways: new pants were likely to be large enough to allow for shrinkage and the boy's growing. The next season or two those pants got smaller as the boy got bigger, until the Texas cowboy and his tight pants was in no way different from us boys. Just about the time the skin-tight pants could not stand another washing without positively shriveling up, our voices had changed enough for us to wear our first longies and feel
that we had arrived at manhood.

Maybe it was unfortunate for me that I never tried to chew tobacco, a habit that was a real mark of being a big fellow. Many a boy that I knew would try again and again to chew his quid like a big man, and get sick. I have drawn up many a bucket of water from the school cistern to pour on the head of some boy who could not take his tobacco at first. Or it might be that he was trying his hand at rolling and smoking a cigar. Tobacco down my way was none of this dainty stuff that is a first cousin to tissue paper; it was he-man tobacco, dark stuff that made the user of it know that he had come in contact with the real article. It is thinkable, then, that some boy who had never tried it might find himself pretty sick for some hours after making an effort to be a big man.

Another mark of being a big fellow I failed to achieve that of owning a fine horse, fine in the view of Fidelity and such remote places. The horse-bridle-and-saddle tradition was alive down to my time, but my steed was a little red mule that certainly did not make its owner envied by the other boys. Maybe that is one reason why I preferred then and now, unless the distance was forbidding. But the boys who had the saddle or harness horses enjoyed their exalted position and let the rest of us know how insignificant we were. For a year or two a boy might be contented to ride his horse to church and picnics and candidate speakings; the thrill of having envious eyes turned toward him was reward enough. But a natural step was to get a buggy for that fine horse and a girl to ride in the buggy. Right there my growing up came to a dead stop. I left home before I ever acquired a buggy; I sold my mule to go to school on the proceeds; and I was thirty-six years old before I owned a vehicle of any kind, a T-Model Ford. It was too late to triumph over the other fellows, since most of them had long had their own jalopies. I missed my chance to be big.
It is always an event in my life when another book on Kentucky appears. In early December, 1958, the book came to my desk, with the compliments of the author, whom I have known a long time, TALES FROM THE CLOUD-WALKING COUNTRY, by Marie Campbell. Miss Campbell, now Dr. Campbell, began collecting folklore in Knott and Letcher Counties in 1926, when she was teaching in settlement schools there. Though a very young woman at that time, she realized the significance of the folklore about her and set down every sort of story she heard. She says that her very ignorance helped, for she was not influenced to take this and reject that; as a result she has five volumes of these stories as told in the Kentucky mountains, of which this is the first in the series. This volume deals with what the Germans call "Marchen," usually translated as "household tales."

Tale-telling is a passing institution, even in the mountains. This volume contains seventy-eight tales, six story-tellers giving them in their own words, which Miss Campbell took down carefully and well. The volume has its chief value this fidelity to actual conditions. The stories are not dressed up, either by having words above the level of the tellers or by having too many folksy words, such as appear in many of the writings about our mountaineers.

All the story-tellers except one, Sam Caudill, are oldish. Each narrator specializes in certain types of tales. Aunt Lizbeth Fields, for instance, likes to tell stories about golden things; Doc Roark tells yarns picked up in his professional life as a self-appointed doctor. Uncle Tom Dixon likes stories where the events occur in threes. The personality of each teller appears in his stories.

Though nearly all of the stories belong to definite types that have been catalogued, the teller gives his own flavor to the
tales, as they come to life in his telling. If he does not under-
stand some of the words or expressions he has used, he stops to 
explain that that word was the way it appeared in the tale as told 
by Granny or some other older tale-teller. If he does not know 
what happened, say, to the second brother in a tale, he says so, 
again defending himself by referring to the tale as told to him.

Naturally, the appeal of the book to me, and to others who 
have labored to defend the folk, is its truth to the yarn-spinner's 
time and place. This is no imagined world, no Broadway conception 
of what Kentucky mountaineers should be. Miss Campbell was a 
very live part of the mountain schools where she taught and would 
resent any effort to make demigods or clowns out of her good friends.
Furthermore, she is a scholar, not a promoter or a mere book-maker.
Kentucky and other places have suffered too much from the outsider 
who has tried to make the folk ridiculous or even a bit too good to be 
true. Our mountain folk are neither saints nor Li'l Abners; I 
\[ \text{wish} \] people who write about them would take counsel of Marie Camp-
bell and present them honestly.

Rather oddly, in my remote western end of the state there were 
very few of these stories current in the nineties and early nineteen-
hundreds. Our settlers had come to Kentucky in a much later mi-
gration and had probably lost most of their supernatural yarns along 
the way. Besides, there was a strong denominational opposition 
at Fidelity to such yarns and even to ballads. Most of the "better 
families" frowned on such primitive things; only occasionally would 
there be a break-over, especially when some of us younger ones would 
know that some old auntie or uncle knew some magic yarns. I wish 
I had had the good sense to write down the ones we heard; unfortunat-
ely, I did not realize the importance of such a passing institution 
as did Miss Campbell. All of us who love the flavor of old yarns 
and their tellers will be watching for the appearance of the other 
volumes in the series.
Just before I put this sheet into my typewriter, one of my former students called me to ask a very hard question that I could not answer. I had to refer him to another older man, who probably will know the answer. Neither the asker nor I had any printed matter that contained the answer to his very natural question. Now, in older days, it was just the thing to refer to the old citizen or the neighborhood sage for information and advice. Books were scarce or non-existent; learning had to be largely traditional. Some people had ancient books of facts that were gospel truth to them and the neighbors; but much of what was known about the world and all that in it was was in some old person's mind and memory.

When I lived at Fidelity, it was hard to sort out the sources of learning around us. Some of our informers were excellent readers and had good memories; some were theorists and made facts agree with their pre-conceived notions. On matters of pioneer days we all believed Uncle John Elkin. He was not spectacular or sensational and had a way of verifying his remarks by citing state and national history; it was easy to find some of his citations in our own history texts. As I have said before in this column, it has been a source of respect for Uncle John that much of my own reading since I left home has proved that, in the main, he was right, not warped by prejudice or ignorance. The Meador brothers, Monroe and William, who lived up the creek and were rather well-read for that time, could be relied on for contemporary politics and national issues. They were Democrats, as everybody else was in our little corner of the world, but they were fair-minded in viewing big events. When they told us about Garfield and Cleveland, we had every reason
to believe them. Again, it has given me a feeling of appreciation for the two brothers that a lifetime of reading has proved that they knew their contemporary history rather well. My father was our authority for Scottish history. Apparently he drifted into this through Scott's novels. But I look back now and recall how often we had mentioned in our simple country home the events that had made a big stir back in the days of Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots. It was not hard to see how nearly three centuries that had passed since the Scotch migrated to Northern Ireland had done little to change the Scotchman's attitude toward Elizabeth and Mary.

There was another sort of local encyclopedia that I have so often written about, what might be called the folk encyclopedia. Uncle Charlie Stubblefield, the garrulous ex-slave, told of marvelous hunting expeditions he had been a part of; he gave us a half-comic, half-tragic picture of slave life under his old master, he gave rhymes and sayings that he had known when he was a youngster working in the newground. Of course, it would be impossible to verify most of what he said; probably it would be unkind to want to do so. Uncle Charlie was our Uncle Remus; we did not want to have him appear to be anybody else. And Uncle Clark, our valiant soldier of Shiloh and many another engagement, told yarns about the Civil War that have never got into print, chiefly because he was always the hero of the scrapes. It was fortunate that some of our less-affable ex-Confederates would tell us that Uncle Clark was fully as brave as he said he was. But none of them attempted to prove the truth of some of the marvels in which Uncle Clark was the hero. When we wanted to get a final say-so about the weather, we asked Uncle Sim. He knew a good deal about weather, but he had theories to prove and would twist the weather to make his theories prove true. Still, many people believed that he and the almanac could do no wrong.

It is wonderful to be a local sage; it is almost as wonderful to live near one. Some of his glory rubs off on the neighbors.
LOST WONDER

At the Christmas season, 1958, I again felt that we have destroyed some of the wonder that children used to have and to enjoy. Not only is Santa Claus scheduled to arrive on Christmas Eve, but he has already arrived on many a street corner and in many a store. Sometimes he is fat and sassy; sometimes he is pretty skinny to have such a bushel-basket tummy; sometimes he is pretty dull; sometimes he is full of corny remarks. Even the littlest child must get pretty tired of seeing him in his many reincarnations. And, since Christmas gets started before the last turkey hash of Thanksgiving has disappeared, the whole season is worn out before it begins. All this may be what it should be, but I somehow wish the younger generation could get the full impact of Christmas, with the first inklings of it not more than twenty-four hours before Santa himself is to appear. Gilbert Keith Chesterton, the humorist and essayist, says that Christmas is for grown-ups, that Christmas or Not Christmas would be a great experience for children. Though there is much truth in his tribute to childish imagination, there ought to be a little more left to be comprehended by faith at Christmas and less of the obvious.

Maybe we have advanced to an age when wonder is no longer needed. Modern machinery is so complicated and so ordinary at the same time that we do not stop to wonder at it. Lighting a candle or coal-oil lamp often brought with it more actual wonder than switching on the electric lights or starting the car or some other electrically-operated machine. I wish I could actually know whether small children believe in Santa Claus with any of the strange wonder-worship that earlier children had. I, too, was a child that knew,
almost as soon as I knew anything, that Santa Claus had no physical reality, but that intelligence did not prevent my wondering at the strange events of Christmas Eve, when my new home-knit stockings got filled to capacity with things that ordinary days did not bring. What I got would hardly cause a child of today to look up from his play, for raisins and peppermint candy and oranges and apples are so ordinary that youngsters have a hard time imagining why they were ever scarce or unusual. And, even in our rather matter-of-fact world at Fidelity, it was impossible to keep down a strange, childish glee in the grown-ups at Christmas. They always liked to eat, but Christmas things tasted better than ordinary food. They liked to visit, but Christmas visits had a kindness, a cheerfulness about them that just average visits never brought. I hope that this spirit, even though it may be outwardly disguised, still exists in the minds of children and older people, for without it Christmas is just like any other time.

With daily or weekly lessons in nature study, under different names, most children are exposed to much of the scientific knowledge of the time. Capillary attraction, embryology, osmosis, sexual dimorphism—these are usually known in a rudimentary manner by children whose parents wondered at the strange facts of nature. I would not have any less known by children but more; however, I do hope that teachers will not explain away the strange mystery that surrounds the smallest organism, even after we know how it acts and how it fits into the scheme of things. Whitman's wonder at what he loves to call a "leaf of grass" is never out of place, in a laboratory or out of doors or wherever a plant is to be found. And it is no desire to sentimentalize nature that I feel thus; the barest facts that science can find out are full of mysterious connections with all we are and do. Wonder is not dead, let us hope.
WHAT CAN WE BRAG ABOUT?

There was a time when it was easy to brag about experiences that you had had, for it was likely that not many people had gone very far beyond their little world and, therefore, had seen nothing new. At Fidelity we had whole cycles of bragging. And after a type of bragging had gone out of date, it seemed positively silly, because nearly everybody had meanwhile shared in such experiences. But, also, some smart-alec cousin would come to spend a weekend and make all of us ashamed of our puny experiences. As long as I lived at Fidelity, I did not get to match stories with some of these modern far-travelers.

One cousin must have come to see us once to tell about his experiences in a big city. He had gone to a theater and seen some marvelous vaudeville, though he did not know the name of the entertainment. Some of his tales were slightly embarrassing to the female members of the family, but he redeemed himself by singing some of the songs he had heard on this same glorious night. Some years later, before any of us had wandered far from Fidelity and the county seat, another cousin visited us and spent a whole evening, until very late bedtime, telling how he had been to California. Meanwhile, I had read a lot of travel stuff and was able to trace his Ulysses-like journeys. I was also able to discover that he had actually been to the famous places and had not merely manufactured his story.

I suspect that the best braggarts we ever produced were the few fortunate ones who actually went to the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. They brought back many souvenirs of what they had seen and heard about; these were casually displayed in their front room, as if they were no more important than picture postcards displayed on a rack were to be a little later. But men and women alike were at
hand to make equally casual remarks about Chicago, as if they had spent a large part of their lives there. We brats whose parents had never been so far away listened open-eyed and open-mouthed and dared not say how very much we envied such fortunate people.

One of our neighbors, a singer of sorts, used to go away to meetings in another state, just across the river, and then regale us with stories about what had taken place at the big meetings where he had been. There was an element of bragging about his quaint telling of his importance among people in such a far-away place (some fifteen miles). But we dared not question his stories of great things in Stewart County, Tennessee; we had not been there; he had.

After I was a grown man, I came into the Cavernous Limestone area of Kentucky to spend my life. My father had been reared in the limestone area south of Nashville, Tennessee, which is, as you know, like our Bluegrass Region. In the Jackson Purchase we did not have caves, for the simple reason that our limestone was very limited and to be found only in some hills down toward Tennessee River. We felt, without saying anything to him about it, that Father was bragging when he told us of having followed caves for a mile or more and of having to take a lantern to find his way out. He also told of strange formations in those caves that made us all the more skeptical: that there were rock formations like icicles and some of them twenty to fifty feet in length. We admired our father's knowledge of history and his fairness in adjusting to the strange new world that resulted from the Civil War, but we were badly puzzled about his limestone stories; maybe he had forgotten or was just playing-like. What in the world can anybody brag about now, when the dumbest as well as the brightest has had a chance to see most of the wonders of the world, to drive to both oceans and into Canada and Mexico?
A WHOLE NEW WORLD

Today in class, while most of my students respectfully listened but probably thought me remembering incorrectly, I mentioned my first days in Bowling Green, in the winter of 1908. The thing that they had most trouble in believing had to do with automobiles. At that time there were three of the new contraptions in the town. If they had been three elephants at large, they could not have attracted more attention. Even though we country students, who constituted the larger portion of the enrollment, had been taught not to point, for that was a mark of being country, we forgot all manners when one of the horseless carriages came by. We pointed or gaped or exclaimed or did whatever the savage Indians must have done when they saw gigantic canoes coming up American rivers bringing the white men. In some ways were in for as complete a change as those same savages were. Long before we youngsters of that time were mature men and women, the automobile had become a necessity of modern life; we former pointers would have laughed at any greenhorn who took the modern miracle as other than necessary.

One day not long after I got to Bowling Green, I walked along a side street and saw a strange new word, which I spelled out carefully—G*A*R*A*G*E. I made no effort to pronounce it, but a car was standing in front of the building—still standing and pretty shabby-looking. That car clinched it: it was a place to attend to cars. Cars in those days were pretty far apart; I wonder whether the first garage man made ends meet, unless he also shod horses as a side line or maybe made harness. I am glad that I got that word when I did; it opens a whole epoch in my life and the lives of my contemporaries.

One day at chapel in our school, a man in khaki, which was then
as rare a sight as an automobile, appeared and was invited to speak a few words. He said he was exploring a Canada-to-Gulf highway that would pass through Bowling Green and that his car had to be taken to a garage to be readied for his further journey. Some of us snickered at the idea of such a highway. What, possibly, could anyone on the Canadian border want with anything away down on the Gulf of Mexico? A little over twenty years later I had been over every inch of that road he talked about, and in a car—my car! U. S. 31, therefore, somehow stands for the automobile age, when distances seem so incredibly small, when we have or pretend to have business in any part of the whole world.

Because of that strange man's visit, I resolved to take his journey some day, to see the wide-open spaces. Something of the poetry of motion seized me, and I once prepared an elaborate evening entertainment about U. S. 31, beginning with its start at the Sault Ste. Marie Locks and proceeding southward to the heart of Mobile, where it intersects another great call to the wide-open spaces, U. S. 90. From northern pine forests and the Great Lakes to the cotton fields of the Lower South! For days I reveled in that dream of a speech I hoped to make. I even arranged music for the whole trip and numerous stop-overs where I could tell my audience about famous geological, geographical, historic, literary, and folk places along the marvelous highway. Since it begins in Hiawatha Land, the actual area where Schoolcraft collected his stories later used by Longfellow, I planned to have appropriate Indian music as a curtain-raiser. And down across the Straits of Mackinac, along the eastern shore of Lake Michigan, through central Indiana, across Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama—every fifty or sixty miles I would stop in my imaginary journey, eager to give a sense of the strange new world opened up by the automobile. I have never given that evening's entertainment, with its assortment of American history, literature, and folklore; it has remained for me a summary of the epoch opened so strangely by that half-crazy man who addressed us at chapel in early 1908. Where he went, I never knew. His road still goes on and on, a living link between Before Automobiles and After Automobiles.
PAYING THE DOCTOR

My father, the country doctor, was a poor collector of money due him. There were many reasons for this. In the first place, he was a poor business man, if that term means that he made any money. He must have taken the Hippocratic Oath too seriously, for he seemed unable to refuse when a sick person needed him, regardless of what would ever be paid for the doctor's services. But the patients had a side, too, for money was scarce, almost unknown in many homes. And then there were those who looked upon the doctor's service as free, just like salvation. Then there were some who were as honest as you ever saw and would do anything to pay their way in the world. Since money was hardly to be found, they could work to pay in whole or in part for the medicine and the medical care. It is about these last named that I want to write.

The very poorest had only strong backs and willing minds and could, therefore, chop wood or help plow or do other farm work. Many a humble fellow worked faithfully until he felt that he had discharged his obligation to "Dr. Mark." We children respected these humble ones and loved to work in the fields or woods with them; they had a sense of duty that was not lost on us. Some of Father's patients were just as strong physically but not so willing to saw or chop or plow; for these we felt contempt.

My memory goes a long way back to the elderly widow and her three old-maid daughters who showed a very commendable zeal in trying to pay for the long illness of the father of the family. These women were almost professional makers of quilts. Slowly they quilted a dozen or so quilts for us, quilts that became a storehouse of cover for each of the children as we married off and established a
home of his own. Three of the quilts that Mother gave me in 1913 when I got married came from this hoard of honest efforts to pay one's "just and honest debts." I regret that earthly things have to wear out; I wish I could say that some of those same quilts are still around. They were a part of our rearing our two children and getting them started out into life, the same strange old cycle that makes a genuine home. But quilts, like strength and patience and other valuable things, wear out, leaving only a memory.

On a slightly higher level of paying debts was Father's taking in various things on debts. One man paid a big bill by delivering to Father a huge wild cherry chest of drawers, a piece of furniture that looked tacky to me as a child, today worth a good big part of its weight in gold or any other money. On the mantel of my study sits the old Seth Thomas clock that Father acquired in this same way when he was a very young doctor, away back in the 1870's; the clock has long been silent, for even Seth Thomas did not make works that never wore out. After all, the clock, already upwards of thirty years old when it became a part of the Wilson household, is now long past a century old. Even Holmes's "one-hoss shay" lasted only a hundred years. But the wood of the old clock, protected for more than half of its life by innumerable layers of paint and varnish, waited its day of triumph, when a skilled neighbor removed the paint and showed me what a priceless jewel that old timepiece was and is, whether it can keep time or not.

Besides these two pieces of furniture, there were other things, somewhat the worse for wear or even broken down, that came to us on Father's bills: a complete set of blacksmith tools, a one-rocker rocking chair, a bushel splint basket, besides such stuff as smoked sausage, middlings, bushels of potatoes, sacks of cabbage. Barter was the basis of much of the country doctor's life: he had the pills, the others had the ills; and our house was a sort of museum of what the others did not need or want.
Again I am an old-timer, one who has to explain what he is talking about. I asked my senior class a few days ago, while we were in the midst of folklore in Chaucer, how to call horses. And not one knew how. One boy even wanted to know why anyone would want to call a horse. I interrupted Chaucer's garrulous *Wife of Bath* to illustrate by whistles how to make a horse come up from the pasture. I suspect that most of my seniors secretly laughed at the old man’s antics. I even called “quup,” if that is how to spell the call we used. Anyway, our horses understood and came, whether we called a nonsense word or whistled an appealing call. I wish I knew how a whistle or the unspellable word grew up. As I recall it, we usually used both the whistle and the call, and got results, too.

County fairs may still have hog-calling and chicken-calling contests. Certainly these used to be great events. Once, many years ago in Indiana, a radio in a filling station, carrying the State Fair program, stopped everybody with the hog-calling. I forgot that I was in a hurry, the station manager forgot that he was supposed to fill my tank, and the flunkie forgot to wipe off my windshield. We listened to a souped-up radio and its hog-calling. Just why “goo-ey” or some similar sound suggests pigs is another problem for linguists. We also added “pig, pig, pig” to this nonsense word. And the pigs came, just as did the horses when their sounds were made.

Nearly everybody whom I have known calls cats with a falsetto voice. “Kitty, kitty, kitty” is, I suppose, almost standard; and cats are still so common that we all hear this call. Years ago I tried to find out why the falsetto but failed; later a scientist suggested that the higher-pitched sounds would be more acceptable to a cat, maybe even better heard. One little Hoosier whom I used to know would call in a voice two octaves below what you might expect from a small boy: “Here, Kitty; come here, Kitty.” And the cat, from associating that deep sound with milk or other food, came.
but the sound got results, I observed, with dogs, horses, and girls.

We also used a strange, tonguery sound to call hogs, almost the same ugly sound we used to make fun of somebody. Pigs reacted favorably to this talking, clicking sound. When we used this sound to make fun of a youngster, we usually crooked our right fore finger, too. That was supposed to produce great shame. I have seen it produce hair-pulling and fisticuffs.

One of our neighbors, still living and ninety-seven years old, used to say "Steady, Noble" to his horse. I never knew just what he was trying to have the horse do. Maybe he meant for the animal to slow down, "take it easy." Whether Noble steadied I did not find out.

I wish I had recorded the various things I have heard people say to their animals, from "Saw" (probably "So") to the cow to various remarks that could hardly be quoted here. One of our neighbors apparently called his old bay mare what he would have loved to call his wife but did not dare. Since this same fellow was a very pious churchman, some of the neighbor boys twitted him about his foul language to a bumb drute. He said that these fighting words uttered to his old mare were pet names that she would understand. I am glad that she had not studied plain English, for I fear she would have felt badly put upon by her owner. My favorite of all this kind of talk was uttered by Big Mac, a very large colored hired hand, to the mule he was plowing: "Get up, you ________, or I'll jerk your hind leg off and beat you to death with it." Of course, Big Mac had an audience; for them and not for the mule was he such a maker of mayhem.

Anyway, talking to animals often relieves one's feelings, good ones and bad ones. Very few animals can talk back, but a dog certainly seems to try. I wonder what he would really say, however, if he suddenly found human speech. He might shock us with his language, particularly if there were another dog around to hear the language.
"GIDDAP" and "WHOA"

Last week I spoke of our losing our ways of calling animals. The whole vocabulary we once used with our animals is certainly growing less well known. It is hardly worth the time and trouble to explain to any young person about "Adam's off ox." In the first place, what is an ox? And why is the right one called the "off" one? Who wants an ox? Who cares how to drive the hard-headed critters, anyway, when it is unlikely that anyone who reads this column will see an ox team in this year?

Our mule Beck, which was raised as an orphan by the man whom we bought her from, had been taught all the signs that well-bred mules should know. My brother would often show off when other boys were looking by tying the plowlines to the hames of the mule and plow her back and forth across the cornfield merely by calling "Gee," "Haw," and "Whoa," with a "Giddap" when Beck decided that she would resort to idling along like a lazy boy. I have seen many an ox team that were even better trained than our tricky mule; sometimes I could not understand the directions given by some soft-voiced colored helper, but the oxen seemed to understand; anyway, they gee-ed at the right time and haw-ed at the right time.

Down Fidelity way we had only right-handed plows; therefore the "lead" animal was the one on our left sides as we followed the plow. When I came into the Pennyrile, I found plows of either type. I wonder whether my hard-headed Beck mule could have adjusted to a left-handed plow. I am afraid that she would have felt like Adam's off ox.

Besides whistles and nonsense words used to call animals or shoo them away, there were and are a lot of clicks, smacks, and other sounds that every farm boy of my time knew. One such smack gave rise to a riddle: "What will make a dog come to you, a horse go from you, and a girl stay with you always?" I regret that I cannot spell the smack that we used;
Of course, everybody knows how to call a dog. Just why "Here,"
usually pronounced at Fidelity without the final r, should be used for a dog
rather than a horse or other animal is another puzzle. I suppose that
"sick 'im" is equally widespread and equally puzzling to those who might
have stopped to question our funny ways of doing things. Some dogs that
I have known did not need any formula in the call; speaking their names
rather loudly out the back kitchen door would usually wake any sleeping
dog and get him ready to grab the food prepared for him or to chase rabbits
in the fields or make the other livestock stay within bounds.

Sheep are not as well known to lots of people as are dogs, cats, and
even horses. "Cush-sheep" is the way our words sounded, but writers
spell it in many ways. I never heard "Co-nan," which appears in some
stories I have read. Generally we affected a falsetto for sheep-calling
just as we did for calling cats. I do not know whether sheep have a high
range of hearing or just why we did this. Like Uncle Remus, I suspect,
we "gin it to others as it had been gun to us." These and other ways of
calling animals are, according to the Linguistic Atlas of America, now par-
tially finished (for New England and the Atlantic States), good signs
of the origins of the people in any given locality. You can take a Scotch-
Irishman out of Northern Ireland, but he and his descendants seem destined
to call the animals as Pa and Grandpa called them. Scholars rejoice when
they find any considerable variation in these nonsense calls. How do you
call the remaining animals that you have? And how do you make them
"get-up" or take a certain direction? Are we going to lose "Gee,"
"Haw," "Whoa," "Sook," "Sooey," and the rest of these picturesque words?
Without a doubt mankind is losing contact with the animals that have
been a mainstay in our long climb from primitive savages to what we are.
Mechanization achieves many more results and more quickly, but there has
been lost something that we older ones can recall with strange, nostalgic
feelings.

The tractor, the car, the truck, and many other inventions have made
the horse practically useless. The horse is still around, more as an adorn-
ment of our civilization than any very vital part of it. Lost are the
many skills that boys and men used to have, skills in breaking horses
to the saddle, to the plow, to buggy harness, to becoming the "old family
nag," trusted and loved by everybody. From the lives of the present
generation have been taken away some tenderness of care for the horse.
Many a youngster is growing up without having played with a colt, without
having had a share in converting this same wild young thing into a useful
farm animal. And it almost creates a laugh when I mention the genuine
affection the family felt for the old stand-by, the old nag that helped
rear the family by being a creature of all work.

Cows are around, in droves. And the very fact that droves are here
removes the "bossy cow" from a warm spot in family hearts. Bossy is now
likely to be registered and pedigreed, almost like some great people. Data
are kept about her value to the owner; she has become a mass of statistics.
There are, on many of the farms I know, too many calves for any one of
them to be loved and spoiled by the boys and girls of the farm. This lit-
tle fellow is destined to be a registered animal, worth its weight in gold,
or, if it is hardly up to standards, to be prime veal. Why waste affec-
tion on it? It will merely help your heart break when the little fellow
has to be given up, on the livestock market for beef or breeding. Now,
the calves used to have names, and everybody on the place knew which was
which. These were not aristocratic names, such as the pedigreed ones bear now, but homely, somewhat standardized names that reappeared on many farms. And the cows, too, bore names that placed them in a certain civilization: Bossy, Spot, and every variety of tender name. Imagine now calling *Hildegard* Evelyn St. Genevieve IV to come to be milked. Of course, we users of milk prefer the royal-sounding names of the registered cows and their tested milk; but the boys and girls that are growing up with the pedigreed cattle are missing some of the pleasantest associations on the farm.

I fear that hogs are also being mass produced now and have lost some of the affection that Old Sally or other family pig used to have. Pigs are for meat, and meat is for sale; why worry over any sentimental nonsense? How many pounds did the hog in question gain in the last period of feeding? How well does the strain of hogs stand up? Is there any money in raising them? What about a pet pig? "Phooey, pigs are to be fattened, slaughtered, and eaten." Even so, a pet pig is an experience that most of us past fifty would not want to give up. I do recall that pet pigs used to be slaughtered, too, and something was taken out of our lives when this happened. So it may be better to regard the pig as purely an investment and waste no feelings on him.

Even chickens used to have some individuality. A rooster or a hen was not merely a potential Sunday meal. This proud Chanticleer could crow better than any other chicken in the neighborhood. One we once owned added an extra "doodle" right in the midst of his crow. When I would wake up in the night and hear the roosters announcing the passing of the hours, as old people used to call it, that old fellow seemed to know his skill. He would come in with the chorus a little more often than some of the others, just ordinary roosters that had no operatic voice or whatever it was that he had. Imagine knowing by voice the chickens in a chicken ranch that turns out its thousands each year!
TURNED OUT TO DIE

At Fidelity it was the greatest condemnation possible when someone accused another of turning an old horse out to die. We did not know about the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, but we felt that a faithful old servant of the farm family deserved to have a few days or even years of retirement when the days of usefulness were over. Occasionally some neighbor would wonder why some farmer, none too wealthy, would treat an old family mare like something aristocratic by buying special feed for her or making her a comfortable stall; the critic, however, would not have done otherwise. Community feelings and his own tenderness of heart would have made him equally silly in ministering to the needs of a broken-down old animal. One of the saddest rites in our area was the coup de grace that ultimately had to be administered to even the most faithful animal. After even years of tender care the old creature finally had to give up the struggle. Some morning she would be unable to get up on her staggery feet or would fall down again when helped. A set stare would be in her eyes, a sign that her career was over and that it was only a mercy to ease her out of the world. No member of the family could do this or could even look on while it was being done. Some neighbor boy, no harder of heart but merely not so sentimentally attached to the old animal, would be called to end the misery of age and sickness. Many times the women folks would barricade themselves in the house and would put their hands over their ears to keep from hearing the fatal shot that ended Old Maud or Old Nelly. It sometimes would be days before any of the family could or would even mention her name. Even this necessary cruelty on the part of man was pitiful; when the owner refused to take care of the old creature in her declining days, he was regarded as lower than a horse thief.
In aristocratic places like the Bluegrass, horses are buried, just like folks. And many of them have markers, unlike hosts of people you and I have known. At Fidelity and similar remote places, burying a horse was out of the question; such an act might do for a hog that had died of disease, but there was not enough labor-saving machinery to dig a hole big enough to hold a horse. Rendering plants were unknown then. Consequently, the old animal was dragged away to some remote place on the farm, a sort of cemetery for dead animals. There the buzzards had their day until only bones were left to bleach in the remote pasture. In my bird study I often come upon just such places, now with rather aged bones, since most dead animals now find their way into rendering vats. I often find myself wondering, like another Hamlet gazing at Yorick's skull, just what famous animal this might have been, how intimately a part of some family it may have been. However, these open cemeteries are no more pathetic than the resting places of the dead owners, now so often grown up in briars and sassafras or persimmon bushes and forming an unplowed area in some big farm field.

Some of these old animals that had been turned out to die apparently got some renewed strength. They often became rogues and, though old, could push down ten-rail fences and eat up the crops of their owners and the neighbors. One such horse I saw after he had satisfied his hunger a bit too much after his master-imposed fast. The old fellow lay dying at a haystack, rolling his eyes in such a fierce manner that I still recall how they looked, and that was back in the early 1890's. His first full meal after being abandoned by his owner was his last. And he went to join the other piles of bones on the far side of the farm where he had eaten and was full. No wonder that I grew up to regard such an owner as one of the world's worst people, one who would actually let Old Bob starve to death or die from his first full meal!
WARTS AND SUCH

Recently I have had my freshmen writing short papers or making short speeches about some superstitions that they have encountered. Most of them were the regular crop of such beliefs, almost standardized in form and significance: black cats, Friday as an unlucky day, walking under a ladder, katydids as weather prophets. I was amused that nearly every one told of some belief in removing warts. Since warts are a very common affliction of children and seem positively mysterious to many grown-ups, it is quite natural that superstitions have arisen about them.

Wart remedies fall into some three categories: medicinal, touching, and magic. Milkweed sap is a standard remedy, known and approved everywhere. An assorted weed collection, properly crushed, is fairly widely known; the number of weeds to be represented varies but most often is three or seven. The manner of the application is also hardly standardized; some people crush the weeds and apply only the juice of the three or seven weeds. Some apply the weeds themselves, properly mashed. I have never found a list of the actual weeds to be used, but most people say that any will do, provided they are applied in threes or sevens. Any ordinary weed, perfectly harmless or neutral in its effect alone, becomes a part of a king-cure-all when associated with two or six others.

More of my students wrote about wart-removers, people who touch warts and make them vanish. Some of these wizards are rather poor, ornery people, but some are leaders in their communities. A famous judge, a brilliant lay leader in church, even a preacher or teacher may possess this remarkable ability to charm away warts. Sometimes the wart-chaser says hocus-pocus words; sometimes he merely rubs his fingers over the warts, and that is all.
Several students actually witnessed the magic act that chased the wart away. One boy told of having gone with a friend of his with a stolen dishrag that had been rubbed on the friend's offending warts; the two boys stole away to the creek, where the poisoned dishrag was thrown into the current. Of course, the warts, as warts have a way of doing, disappeared in due time, or in time, anyway. Another told of seeing notches cut on a small twig, one notch for each wart; this twig was buried under the drip of a barn, where it would soon disintegrate. The younger the twig, the better the cure. Most often the twig must be of the current year; otherwise no cure is guaranteed. A new form of an old superstition appeared in one of the papers: split open a raw Irish potato, pick each wart until it bleeds, rub the cut potato on the bleeding places, put the two pieces of potato back together and tie them so they will not fall apart, and then bury the potatoes, properly smeared with wart blood. I forget what happens next, but the warts will ultimately go. Maybe the potato will rot or will grow; either way will bring a cure. Of course, everybody knows that a grain of corn smeared with blood drawn from a wart should be fed to a chicken. That ends the wart, but I do not know what price the chicken pays for curing a human being. Maybe chickens are immune to wart blood anyway.

It has always seemed to me a very poor organization of society that will allow such disfiguring and unpleasant things as warts to continue when sure-cure remedies are so ready at hand. If the doctors would only listen to these remedies and then practice them, there is no telling how few warts and how many rich doctors there would be. Maybe I, in my old age, with so much knowledge gleaned from the folk, should set up as a remover of warts and wens and moles and freckles. I already know enough to make my fortune; I am just afraid the medical profession would demand that I exhibit a license, forgetting how many years of folk training I have had.
SIR ROGER'S COAT

Many times in this column I have mentioned Sir Roger de Coverley's coat, which, because he did not change the style twelve times and cut twelve before he came to the end of his life. One of the advantages of living a long time is to see things come and go and then come back again, sometimes in such regular cycles that it is almost possible to prophesy when the next reincarnation of the style will be. Since I have spent more than a half century in the schoolroom, I have naturally watched with glee the ardent reformers in education. About once every ten years there has been a brand-new idea that has taken the educational world by storm: the annual state meetings, even the most remote gathering of educators, have been given over to the epoch-making discovery. Then it has gone along for a while, to be succeeded by another educational fad. And, in due time, here it has come again.

Now, at Fidelity we really stressed the three R's. And the poorly-educated teachers we had, actually, without knowing a word of progressive education, made learning interesting. It was fun to count, to make figures on the painted school walls, to add long columns of numbers, to solve some intricate problem. Of course, only a few of us got the joy of all this, but we few got it, whether we should have or not. Being able to cypher was an honor. We did not get any newspaper publicity because we liked figures; our pictures did not appear in prominent places as if we were somebody merely because we could add, subtract, multiply, and divide.

Reading was our stand-by. Much of it was mechanical and songsong, but we did it, anyway. Some of our teachers actually helped us to appreciate reading as literature and not merely something to call the words of, one at a time. I actually learned how to scan poetry in a one-
roomed country school, that pitiful, tragic little place of education that sentimentalists have cried over and modern reformers have regarded as little better than a pigpen. And in that same school I learned hundreds of lines of the best poetry and can still say them to myself; frankly, that is one of the ways I calm down after the hard day's work; I do not count sheep. And, nearly everywhere we went at Fidelity, we heard reading: church, the neighborhood literary society, at school on Friday afternoons or on the last day of school, even in homes. I had older brothers and sisters who read dozens of the best poems and stories and essays to me and to the rest of the family. Before I could read with any degree of pleasure, I had heard read enough good literature to last a lifetime. You see, we took our three R's seriously.

And we wrote, too. Most of us never learned to write in a very literary way, but the person who got our letters could read them. We dotted our i's and crossed our t's and looped our h's, b's, and l's above the base line and our j's, y's, and z's below the line. Sometimes we actually had a writing school of two or three weeks and still further learned how to write "legibly and speedily." Not long ago I saw a letter written in 1855 by a youngish man whom I knew in his extreme old age. He was out in Kentucky prospecting, hoping to bring his family from east-central North Carolina. He did that very thing and was one of the patriarchs of my early boyhood. That old letter, now more than a century old, is so well written that it looks as if it had been prepared for publication, just as it was penned with a goose-quill. You see, writing was an art, the mark of a literate person.

Here at the end of my teaching career the emphasis on the three R's is coming back. If I wore a hat, I would take it off to the strange, new, old customs that are being revived. Success to the boys and girls who will learn again the magic of reading, writing, and arithmetic!
One of my students, who has just visited at the weekend with her great-aunt at Fidelity, came into my office today to announce, gleefully, that Fidelity now has a motel! Now, what do you think of that? Even the young woman saw the fun in the whole idea but proudly announced that the new business was making money with its ten units. Lots of things make me pause and think, but somehow this announcement is the most significant one lately. Imagine Fidelity as being important enough to justify such an investment!

But my old Fidelity did not need a motel; the very word would have been strange. However, it had, as I said long ago in this column, a hotel that was locally and widely famous for its ham and chicken dinners. "Drummers" proudly spread its fame wherever they went, and they and other drummers came to eat at the Knight Hotel. When it was the task of a day to get from New Concord (Fidelity) to Murray and back, there had to be a stopping place somewhere, to recuperate and stoke up a bit. The horses that pulled the "double-rig" needed some corn and hay; the driver and the drummer needed chicken and ham and all the country trimmings. And, according to the local legend, they were all stuffed with plenty of good, homely food that is now almost aristocratic in our newer world.

If I were a patient historian, I would love to chronicle the coming of modern things to Fidelity. Even in my childhood the mail got to coming six times a week rather than two or three times. Some few people, encouraged by this drastic improvement, subscribed for a daily paper. Long after I left Fidelity, gravel was dumped, thinly, on the road out. And by 1913, when I was bringing my new bride to visit my folks, my sister's old family nag reared up and waved her forefeet in air when we met an automobile chug-chugging along. The car obligingly
stopped while I led the old mare and the buggy in behind a small house until the noisy contraption could get under way again and out of hearing. Pretty soon some more gravel was spread on that road, so that cars could run in the winter time, if any one wanted to be so daring as to venture out. After years of loose talk about putting a dam across the lower Tennessee River, Kentucky Dam was finished, and Kentucky Lake appeared, sending an embayment up Blood River bottom directly north of where our old house had stood, and only a half mile or so away. And then things began to happen fast.

I do not know the order of the various happenings, but probably the making of our old trail road a numbered state highway, KY-21, was most important. Much of it was rerouted to shun the Jimmie Stubblefield Hill, which had cost many a horse whole years' growth while trying to pull a load up its poor, winding road. R. E. A., long a fixture in most of the state, wandered into the area some years ago. The embayments on Kentucky Lake attracted fishermen, even before the road was much improved. The stores at Fidelity began to put in stocks of fishing tackle and campers' needs. A brick-fronted eating place appeared suddenly to keep the fishermen happy. With R. E. A., with black-topped roads, and with two fine embayments not far away, where boat docks are available, what more could you expect than a motel to house these avid fishermen, who would prefer to remain somewhat nearer the lake and its bays than the county seat? Since fishing was a sort of mania around Fidelity long ago, it now has had a chance to break out afresh, both locally and as a part of the whole T. V. A. world. Success to that new motel! I might come down some fine day and occupy one of its rooms between spells of chasing birds over the area where I first became interested in them. That would be a fine point of departure for the places that I used to wander over more than a half century ago.
"JUST FORTY YEARS AGO"

Two weeks from the time this is being written I am to make my first 1959 commencement address. And it is easy to remember that I made my first one "just forty years ago," as the poem in our old school reader used to say in its refrain. I would be a poor chronicler of past and passing things not to be tempted to burden the readers of this column with a few reminiscences on such an occasion.

The public high school system of the state owed its origin to an enactment of our General Assembly of 1908, which decreed that each county must provide at least one high school as a part of the public school system. Most good-sized towns had already developed graded schools, and a few, relatively speaking, had established high schools. Now the so-called "county" high schools began to be a part of our educational efforts. Though exceedingly slow about getting started, the county high school finally became a sort of rage. Just about every crossroads had one, a two-year or a full four-year school. Warren County, for example, at one time had thirteen county high schools, not to mention the three inside the town of Bowling Green, then and now under the independent graded system. Graves County went Warren one better by having fourteen high schools at one time. Even smallish counties could boast four to eight such schools. Now the efforts to improve the curriculum and the teaching force have resulted in a huge cutting down of these small high schools; many a smallish county has only one high school now, and hosts of counties have pared the number down to three or four. My native county still has four outside the county seat town, but three of these schools are below standardization and may go out of existence soon. Even Fidelity High School, never large, faces extinction. While they lasted, these small high schools did a great work, the chief one being their calling attention to the
need for high school education.

In my more than 300 high school commencements I have been just about everywhere in the state, with experiences enough to fill a good-sized book. Two of my high school commencements lavished all the enthusiasm of the occasion on one graduate; one of these turned out a girl, the other a boy. More than a third of the places where I have spoken are now out of existence as high schools and many of them as any sort of school. In the early days the graduating class was often wholly of girls; only recently have the boys often outnumbered the girls. It was many years of the forty that I have been a commencement speaker before there was a class of more than thirty or forty. But I must say that some of the most enthusiastic audiences I have ever known were in out-of-the-way places that had never had a commencement of any sort before. I gave the first commencement address at Fidelity, for instance; I doubt whether I have ever felt so strange anywhere else. Imagine me giving a commencement address at my own Fidelity!

Traveling to and from commencements, or from anywhere to anywhere else, used to be a big job, a sort of spring pilgrimage. My very first commencement was only forty-three miles away, but I spent a day and a half getting there and back, for trains did not make connections well. I traveled more than 200 miles on that round trip. Eight years later I spoke at a river town only twenty-five miles away, but I had to start, by mail boat, by daybreak to be on hand for the evening address and managed to get a daring boy in a Model-T to drive me home the next morning. By hard chug-chugging and putt-putting, we made the twenty-five miles between 8:00 and 11:30 A.M. In these and many other journeys I began to feel something of the nature of Kentuckians and of Kentucky itself. However remote or primitive the place might be, it was my Kentucky, a part of my civilization, not something in a book or in fiction. Thus the whole 300 addresses have brought me nearer my state.
"BLOOD KIN"

In the years since I was sixty I have often found myself speaking a foreign language among my younger students, as I have so often said in this column. In trying to explain myself, so that I would not appear to be a false prophet speaking in false tongues, I have come to the conclusion that my predicament is not so different from that of any older generation when in the presence of a younger one. The only thing that makes my position unusual is that so many changes have taken place in my lifetime that I have spanned two or three ordinary generations and have had to adjust proportionately.

Here is something to make you think. The people at Fidelity who were as old as I now am could remember the 1820's, that is, the people who were in their sixties when I was ten and under. The very oldest, a few of whom were left, recalled the coming home of the soldiers from the War of 1912 and had often seen old fellows who had fought in the Revolution. Why, one of my Revolutionary ancestors lived until 1840, not too long before my own father was born. Imagine the adjusting to "modern" things that those old-timers had to do! Steamboats were as amazing in their day as jet planes are now. The whole new vocabulary applied to canals and steamboats and ships grew up within a generation and must have required a lot of trial-and-error memorizing on the part of our ancestors. Trains came in, too, with elaborate terminology and unbelievable speed. Thus each new age finds itself compelled to learn the new vocabulary and the new attitudes or be labeled as "old fogy."

Here are some vocabularies that I have lost or nearly lost:

1. The words pertaining to ox teams. I still know "Gee" and "Haw," but I would have a hard time recalling the names of the ox yoke, the ox wagon, and the semi-professional jargon of that era.
2. The words about cooking on the fire. It has been many a year since I was served sweet potatoes cooked in an oven that had coals of fire under and on the lid. And those quick-cooking biscuits from the same oven! My mouth is watering; I had better go on.

3. Words about house-raising, log-rolling, and threshing wheat with the old horse-power thresher. What is a skid? And how would you "carry a corner"? I have not wholly forgotten these and similar vocabularies, but I feel pretty rusty when I attempt to use them.

4. Words relating to horse-drawn plows, harrows, and wagons. I think I could soon relearn all these words, for I once learned them and used them as glibly as I could talk about turnip sallet and hog's jowl; but I have not had any occasion to recall them lately.

5. The vocabulary of the loom and weaving. I used to help in this primitive and useful work and could have rattled off dozens of expressions that were meaningful; but what do they mean now?

6. Words about slaughtering hogs in the old-fashioned country ways. I have held my head up at hog-killings with the best of the farmers and hired hands, but now I would be pretty awkward with a butcher knife. This awkwardness is not merely because I have been so long away from the farm; the farm today is, in the opposite sense of the old song, "not what she used to be." How many who read this have helped kill hogs this calendar year of 1959?

Years ago I sometimes employed to help me around the place a little middle-aged colored man who had drifted into our town with a circus and stayed. He was from the New York City area and certainly talked quite differently from others of his race. One day he told me that he had come from a family of slaves imported from Guinea and that he could speak several languages, including Gink, Rink, and "Portugee." Sometimes his wife, a Kentucky woman, would sometimes ask him what he had said, and he would say, with a laugh: "Oh, I was just talking Gink." Sometimes I feel I am taking Gink to the younger generation.
Dr. Albert Kohlmeier, emeritus professor of history of Indiana University, and I were recently discussing the almost fabulous career of a world-figure, Dr. Hastings K. Banda, the leader of the African natives in Nyasaland. Dr. Banda, now some fifty-five years old, was a naked savage until he was a boy of twelve, when he entered a mission school in his native jungles. He soon felt that he must become a physician, to help relieve the tragic conditions among his native people. After finishing his first years of high school in his mission school, he walked for thirty days to reach the nearest steamboat and came out to civilization, ultimately enrolling at Wilberforce University in Ohio to finish his high school work, at Indiana University to do his pre-medical work, and on to great achievements in the field of medicine. At Indiana, where Dr. Kohlmeier and I knew him, he was among the ten per cent highest in scholarship and kept up this amazing career. One of my schoolmates at Indiana told a group of graduate students after he had heard Banda lecture that if that colored boy was a savage, what we call civilization is a mistake. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this mild-mannered physician today has the same standing among his black people in Africa that the late Ghandi had among his followers in India.

Though the case of Hastings K. Banda is an extreme one, it differs only in degree from thousands of instances that any thinking person could remember. We oldsters have seen a whole generation of backward boys and girls, when given a half chance, rise to greatness in every known field. A half century of connection with my college has brought so many illustrations of this that I sometimes wish I could imitate the writers of the Book of Hebrews and sing an epic song of heroes of faith that I have known. The youngsters that I have known and taught did not have as far to go as did Banda of Africa,
but, relatively speaking, they have traveled a long, long way. Sometimes, when we have run across young people who fail to see the romantic allurements of arising and going, like Abraham from a distant land to another promised land, we get disconcerted and resort to the age-old lament: "What is this world coming to?"

Within the week that this is being written I have had two experiences that have heartened me to believe still in the vision of modern Abrahams, who still know that there are promised lands beyond the desert and the mountains. One boy, now a distinguished scholar, world-renowned for his grasp of education for the remotest corners of the world, sat in my office and told, in a simple manner, the way his ideas developed from the days of his following the plow in one of our Kentucky counties until today, when he is one of the great names in scholarship. It all seemed so natural, so easy, that I could hardly help wondering how or why a boy with such simple and discouraging backgrounds could ever have walked out, not thirty days, like Banda, but a few miles to get to college and to his life work. The other incident, hardly so spectacular and going only a few years back, concerns a very successful journalist who came into my class of below-average students just after the second World War. That he was needy is an understatement; he was not even aware that there was anything to learn that he had not already known. He floundered pitifully, he almost fainted when he had to make a speech, he had to do much of his work over, for his backgrounds had been poor. The strange thing about it all was that he stayed on, that he refused to give up. Few more unlikely prospects have been in my numerous classes in my long years of teaching. I rejoice that this boy found himself and has come such a long way. Since he is still a mere boy, to me, he has many more achievements ahead.

This article has had one purpose: to indicate that a chronicler of old things, however appealing they may be, believes that it is the future and not the past, however appealing the latter may have been, that must engage our attention. This old man, for one, has no inclination to sigh for imagined glories of some older time.
"WERE THEY ALL QUEER?"

Several times, in my long years of talking or writing about people at Fidelity, people have asked me whether all the folks I used to know were queer. Now, I cannot answer that question directly unless I retell that story of the old Quaker who declared that everybody but himself and his wife were queer and she was a little queer. Of course, they were all queer as viewed by any modern standardization of dress and conduct. Living away back in the remote places, with few chances to touch elbows with people who knew more or cared more, it was natural for them to acquire some eccentricities. But, so far as we of that olden time were concerned, they seemed as natural as the hordes we have known in the bigger world. There were so few of them in my acquaintance that I just learned more odd things about them than I know about the butcher, the baker, and the candle-stick maker of my later life.

The country store, the Fourth of July picnics, the Confederate reunions, the protracted meetings, and the procession of the sick ones to the country doctor, my father, brought people again and again into view. Country people, then and probably now, mingled a world of kindness with what the unknowing world calls gossip. In that way everybody knew just about everything about everybody. We did not live under a bushel, in Scriptural phrase. My brother, for instance, knew every horse in the neighborhood quite as well as he knew its owner. When someone rode or drove down the "Big Road" a couple of hundred yards from our house, Ruthven Wilson could tell at a glance whether it was a close neighbor, some one up the creek or out in the Flatwoods, or a stranger from far away, ten or twelve miles away at that. Somehow I never learned that strange skill, any more than I have learned to spot someone's car and be ready to give the model and the probable price paid for it.
Here is another reason why many of my old acquaintances were queer: many of them were inbred; what had been a queerness in one branch of the family was doubled. And this intermarriage of rather close relatives had occurred on all social levels. Most of the oldest people I knew had been born in North Carolina and had come in huge family caravans all the way from there to the Jackson Purchase; many of the families were inordinately proud of this background and must have kept up some of their queerness because that was the way folks acted back in God's Country. My family, at least as far as Fidelity was concerned, was a set of lone wolves; for we had no relatives near us and could not call every third person we saw Cousin This or That. Naturally, we probably seemed queer to the closely-knit clans around us, where nearly everybody was some sort of cousin or in-law.

Of course, isolation probably had the greatest influence in making and keeping all us queer. We sometimes knew that we were queer, but most of the relatives who visited us were no better off than we in queerness, even though they lived nearer the county seat and were not at all hesitant to remind us of the big things they had seen or known. The area east of where the railroad was finally built was settled rather slowly, but after the first complete settlement, there was little changing of people. Members of big families by the dozen moved "out," but some of the original stock stayed, and few new ones came "in." Fidelity was a great drawing card for the former inhabitants, especially in the summer; they came on visits to the end of my days there and long afterwards, somehow eager to get back where everybody was so queer. And I rarely live through a year without hearing from somebody who, though separated, even like me, by a whole lifetime from Fidelity, does not recall vividly the strange, queer days that we all knew and the strange, queer people who have lived on in our memories long after they have left the world.
Reformers and such like have many theories as to why we have so many cases of juvenile delinquency. Most of these critics of our times have some very clear-cut ways they would stop youngsters in their mad career and bring about a millennium almost over night. Nobody deplores criminal tendencies in young people any more than I do, and nobody wishes any more sincerely for some good way to engage the young in such activities as will make them refuse to go wrong. But I am not going to show my age by saying that it used to be nearly perfect, away back in the Good Old Days, when everybody was so worth while. Believe it or not, we had juvenile delinquents in those days, too. They did not get into the newspapers quite so often and were not made into heroes quite so much by the youngsters who did not have the chance or the disposition to imitate them.

One of the things that saddened my childhood and almost made it a tragedy was the sight of diseased and injured young fellows who came to my father's house for medical treatment. A skin full of corn liquor and a fist horse could do almost as much harm as the same inside dose plus a fast car today. When a buggy turns over on a rocky hillside and spills a wife and children into the road, bones can be broken quite as easily as when a car, in newspaper terms, "leaves" the road and wraps itself around a convenient tree or light pole. A bullet fired point-blank across a crap table can cut as neat a hole as any modern gun could wish. Public property vandalized was not unknown in the days before the automobile came into being. Steps were taken in those days to stop crime, sometimes with a fair success. Every would-be criminal I knew at Fidelity, and I knew all of them, had his defenders, no matter how puny seemed his excuse for wandering away from the "straight and narrow." And every one was able to convince some girl that matrimony and reform would go hand in hand.
In general, the results of this philosophy were not obvious enough to recommend it as fool-proof.

Then and now the adult delinquents may have had a lot to do with what the youngsters did and do, though this is certainly not a very good excuse for the youngsters, a mere rationalization such as any wrong-doer is capable of making. Some of our local old men were horrible examples of what not to be, at Fidelity as at any other location. One old boy, who was said to have been the bravest of the brave at Shiloh, somehow failed to have enough bravery to behave himself in less trying times. I once heard my father say that this old fellow, who had a decent and highly-respected family of boys and girls, was a menace to the morals of our remote little corner of the world. Maybe the younger generation profited by looking at Grand-pap and shuddering.

Often I have spoken in this column of how many times we have had to adjust ourselves to rapid changes. Maybe some of our delinquency, juvenile and adult, has resulted from our constant change. Remember how unstable morals and manners can become in a great gold rush or some similar upheaval of our own historic times. Horse-and-buggy education, horse-and-buggy education manners, and horse-and-buggy outlook on life have often had to adjust, violently, to a faster-moving world. Some can adjust, like you and me, let us hope. Others want to jump from one era to another without going through all the intervening years of adjustment. Maybe the reformers should see how perilous our time is in its boundless attempts to explore space and its less boundless efforts to keep us calm and going honestly about our commonplace duties. We need an equal number of social and moral adjusters to help us keep us with the procession and still be calm enough to live honest lives.
OLD MEN'S YARNS

When I was a child, a good bit ago as time runs, we youngsters used to enjoy the yarns told by the old men, but sometimes, just among ourselves, we felt that the aged ones had slipped a few notches in memory. Because of our parental control, we did not often openly question these oldsters, but when only younger ones were present, we imitated the yarn-spinners and were probably pretty disrespectful. Of course, no young person ever dreamed that he would live to be just such an old fellow, respected but doubted. Now I am in that strange period of my life when half of my friends are afraid that something has broken, or slipped, or come untied in my brain.

The oldsters I knew were mere children, in general, beside me and my three score and ten years. But I was pretty young then, and forty is four times as much as ten and sixty is six times this number. Old Uncle This or That, almost too feeble to carry on and certainly living with one foot in the grave, was probably under sixty at the most and, in rare instances, had twenty years ahead rather than the few hours, the period we children had allotted to him. With few or no teeth, with a patriarchal beard, with rheumatic joints, the middle-aged men of my youth were old, actually, no matter what the calendar and almanac said. Naturally, their memories of three to five decades of events seemed like a treasure house of history itself, even distorted history.

Our "old men" told stories about times that seemed remote as Columbus, away back in the early 1800's. Since I arrived in Kentucky in 1888, someone who got here as early as 1820 was a patriarch, sure enough. Such an oldster could talk glibly about having seen Revolutionary War soldiers, about fighting in the Mexican and Civil Wars, about early pioneer days in the Jackson Purchase, about slavery as a strange present reality. Wide-eyed and wide-mouthed, we listened, not quite sure whether to rank the entertaining yarn-spinner with
well-known neighborhood liars or with the half-mythical Santa Claus. 
I fear that the younger generation are still in the same quandary. 
What used to be is just as strange to my children and grandchildren as 
anything that my parents told me about. It is not hard to see how 
small a line distinguishes the thing we call history and the rather 
indefinite thing called folklore.

All honor to the oldsters, whether they are actual historians or 
just cheerful liars. When they can recreate for us the backgrounds of 
ourselves and our families, they have done us a useful service. It 
is hard to picture the stiff, serious-looking immediate ancestors of 
the tintype pictures with laughter and ordinary life. They seem 
hardened into some sort of prehistoric fossils or even something that 
never had any life but accidentally resembled something that did. 
When my Great-Aunt Mary told some funny saying of her father, my 
great-grandfather, who was born away back in 1799, I felt a warmth to-
w ard the old man; he actually seemed human. Even when Mother told 
how the same old boy ran and leaped over the picket fence around our 
yard long after he was eighty, I again wished that he had delayed his 
departure a few years so I could have known him. Even when oldsters 
said that I looked exactly like him and that he was the ugliest man in 
Calloway County, I longed all the more to share my own humiliation 
with him and probably blame him for my looks. As I got older, I 
felt more and more that Marquis de Lafayette Wilson, ardent Yankee 
in a solid Southern community, must have been something more than a 
hard-featured old man in a stiff tintype. What I actually know about 
him is scant, probably no more than you know about your great-grand-
father. But the few anecdotes of the old man's agility, his ugly 
features, his hard-headed championing of an unpopular cause, have made 
him far more real than some of the men I have actually known. The 
stories of the oldsters who knew him made him live far beyond the range 
of his eighty-eight years. But for this unwritten history, he would 
would be only a statistic in a family Bible or on a deed or will.
"Clothes make the man" used to be a way of saying that we are pretty largely a composite of our outward appearance, a very unwise conclusion about man and his outer garments. Too often we think that there is something profound in that and similar sayings, forgetting how much we would hate to be taken for the way we look at any given time. Most of us feel that any given photograph of ours does not show enough of our personalities. And certainly we are often rebuffed when looking at pictures of other times, for we dwell too much on external appearances.

This is a round-about way of saying that the historian or the folklorist is a man who sees the basic humanity of everybody and is not too much impressed by the cut of the clothes that were fashionable at any given time. It used to be a source of great amusement, at Fidelity and elsewhere, to look through the old family album and feel a sort of superiority to the people who were dressed so outlandishly. Here is Grandpa, stiff as a corpse, staring into the old-fashioned camera and thus into our faces a half century or more afterwards. At that moment Grandpa certainly looked uncomfortable and must have been a man who did not get much joy out of life. It hardly seems possible that he, so smartly dressed for that time and so prim of manner, could ever have smiled or acted like a normal modern person. We let the conventions of the old photographic studio and the still older conventions of dress make of Grandpa something only slightly related to our world. We are thinking of how he would look in our normal society if he, like another Rip Van Winkle, could suddenly wander into our easy society. If such a happening could occur, Grandpa would probably be as much shocked and amused as we. One of the funniest cartoons I have ever seen showed a ragged, bearded, dirty Revolutionary War soldier showing up at the meeting of the Daughters of the American Revolution and being greeted, but not warmly, by his female descendant.
All my mature life I have lived with books and like to feel, sometimes, that I would have felt at ease with their authors. It has frequently come as a shock to find authentic portraits of my authors. They were not as much like me as I had expected, but I fear that the chief difference consisted in the way they combed their hair or wore their beards or the cut of their suits. Certainly these are minor matters, not the real Longfellow or Whittier or Emerson or Thoreau. Unfortunately, it is hard to accept Wordsworth as tall and skinny, Lowell as short and big-headed.

Many of our early folklorists emphasized too much these outer garments of our humanity. "Is not life more than meat and the body than raiment?" Consequently, the common traits of us all as human beings often appear as oddly, even comically, dressed up in such garb as would have been out of place in the time of our ancestors as well as of our time. The cartoonist breed of folklorists are determined to find only among the oddities of humanity deep folkishness that is just as apparent in us all. To be superstitious, for example, does not mean that a person must live in a tumble-down shack and take baths only at rare intervals. Some of the most superstitious people I have known live in good houses, associate with learned people, and drive fine cars. Some of the most intolerant people have had every opportunity to learn the ways of the world and to make allowances for differences. Some of the greatest worshipers of imagined family greatness are actually descended from famous people and should rise to higher levels because of this but, instead, sink to levels that antedate the famous people themselves. Maybe having a great ancestor is a little too heavy a burden for people to bear and still be normal. It is unfair to assume that only the ignorant, the unwashed, the untraveled, the neglected are folkish.
"BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES"

As I was washing my car today, I suddenly was aware that I was whistling "Bringing in the Sheaves," certainly a well-known church song of my earlier days. But the thing that most impressed me when I recalled the words was that not anybody today except some oldish people can form any sensible idea about bringing in sheaves. A few of us are still around who have tied behind a man with a cradle, but even we certainly did not bring in sheaves except in wagons. We had seen the pictures in the family Bible showing gleaners with sheaves in their arms or on their heads, and those pictures seemed as strange to us as they must seem to the youngest ones today. I am afraid that it would take a preacher a long time to explain the exact meaning of the song if it were sung today. Just as I sometimes have to explain the telling figure of speech in some well-known poem, the preacher is beset with exegesis of both the ancient and the modern tongues.

Probably there is nothing so convincing as a comparison when the relationship first appears to an observer. He experiences something very vividly and instantly finds that it parallels some human experience in the realms of thought and morals. He either expresses it orally and often creates a happy moment for the listener, or, very rarely, he writes it down in some form and has a chance of preserving his comparison for a longer time. The oral comparison may last a long time, however, in folk simile, even until people have quite forgotten why a speckled puppy or a mud fence or a washing of soap conveyed a vivid impression. Whole books have been written to explain some of these very comparisons: one such book, A HOG ON ICE, gives the history of dozens of similes that would otherwise seem dumb. Even the hog on ice turns out to be a term from a game and does not refer to a hog or ice, in the usual meanings of the words.
In Lowell's "The Courtin'" the imagined New England back-country poet concluded his vivid account of how Zekle won Huldy with

"And all I know is they were cried
In meeting, come next Sunday."

Only one student in a dozen in my classes had the remotest notion of what "being cried in meeting" would mean. An occasional Catholic or Episcopalian usually enlightens the class, who are as surprised by a custom like publishing the banns as by the quaint New England dialect of this excellent ballad.

A few days back I mentioned Adam's off ox and got a chilly stare for reward. A let the class wait a short while until I explained about plowing and the lead and the off oxen. Mouths flew open at the strange talk, as if a cave man had reappeared and explained some of his cave-man philosophy. Now, I never plowed an ox, but I have seen it done. I have also ridden on a log wagon drawn by oxen, which could, on a bit of urging, make a mile or two an hour. Some of these same dumb brutes, however, knew "Gee" and "Haw" and could be driven with no guiding lines of any sort.

Fortunately, it was not so hard to explain a few days ago about ancient runners, who trained with great handicaps and then "ran with patience the race set before them." When one of my best students won a trophy in a track meet for throwing the discus, I got a chance to link us again with other times, times long ago. In fact, if the Greeks came back to us, they probably would feel more at home at a track meet than anywhere else in our complex world. Our arguments would seem trivial and disconnected, our religion would seem too ethereal, our democracy, in spite of our getting the very word from them, would scare them; but they would probably beat us on a cross-country race and would excel us in wrestling and discus-throwing and similar things.

Maybe St. Paul would have less difficulty, also, in explaining what he meant by finishing the course, a good word for a runner.
Nature at Fidelity

Though there were many things at Fidelity that were good then and would be good in any civilization, I must confess that there were certain others or certain lacks that would not be good anywhere. One of these, which I have often spoken of in this column, was a feeling that a love of nature was sissy or crazy. Certain old ladies in our neighborhood loved flowers, in spite of hearing nearly every Sunday that loving anything earthly was dangerously worldly. These same old ladies early learned that I, a boy, loved flowers, too. And from their flower gardens I built up mine, not a very pretentious one but one full of blooms from the earliest daffodils in spring to clematis in the fall. A few shrubs, several vines, a number of annual and perennial flowers made a spot next to our vegetable garden something more than another place for vegetables. I stayed in that spot many an hour, cultivating my flowers as if they depended upon me for life itself. Boys of my own age did not hesitate to laugh at me, even to sneer, for being so unmasculine, though that is not the word they used. When I took bouquets from my little garden to sick folks, I got some rare thank-you's that are still alive after more than a half century. When I took a miscellaneous bunch of blooms to school, I recall that the teacher always put them into a jar or something that would hold water and placed them on her desk. Maybe folks were afraid of being caught loving flowers and really would have liked to be as crazy as I. But it was not often enough that any grown person encouraged me in my crazy love. And when I took long walks in the woods alone, they knew that something inside my brain had slipped. It was torture then; it is almost funny now.

Wherever I go in my summer vacations, I see people rapt with wonder at the same things that I knew and loved and at other things that I had dreamed of, like mountains and seashores. You see,
it was not I that was crazy, but some of my neighbors just had not caught up with the procession of humanity in its understanding and appreciation. Ages before my day there had been lovers of natural beauty; these same people were, most of them, silent so far as books are concerned, but one in a thousand wrote down, in prose or verse, his reaction to flowers and trees and sunsets and snow and flights of birds. I was fortunate to have found some of these in my early life, poems that opened new fields of beauty, essays that led on and on through the woods or across the plains. Fortunately, again, I memorized the poems easily and quoted them out of doors, right where the flowers and autumn leaves and snow or the ever-seen actually existed. I did not know then that I would live into a time when these things would be the basis for recommending hundreds of places where people can come to commune with nature. Imagine today a summer vacation that made no effort to tell about its natural beauties; imagine, for example, a cottage by the seashore that wanted to attract visitors and did not know the advertising value of salty breezes and combing breakers. So even money-seekers have found in natural beauty an attractiveness that too many of my neighbors overlooked. I can recall how a haughty cousin of mine, visiting us for the weekend, turned up his nose when I waved my arm toward our range of hills and spoke of their beauty: "Hill! Beauty! Ugh!" And then he told how hard his horse had to strain to get the buggy up those same low hills, for my cousin lived in a flat area where no hills existed to challenge man or brute.

It is likely that most people who read this column will doubt whether any such benighted neighborhood existed, but maybe those same readers were born after the days when it was thought a weakness to love natural beauty. It is also to be hoped that they lived in areas where all sorts of folks regarded their sunsets and seasonal changes as part of a wonderful system of orderliness and beauty. How fortunate! How could those same people have read their book of Psalms and not felt the dignity and wonder of the starry skies and the massive hills?
Our Ignorance

We folks who have been to college sometimes forget how much we do not know. For decades we have studied books, big books, and we really ought to know something. And, judged by other bookish folks, we do. We can pass examinations and write learned papers and make dull, learned talks. We can belong to learned societies and write initials after our names. All this is fine and costs money. In some circles it gives great prestige. But some of our ancestors had heads just as full as ours can ever be. They believed in sciences that are now discredited, but those same sciences had an elaborate series of vocabularies and even more elaborate set of tests and measurements.

For years on end I have taught Chaucer and loved him. He knew intimately all sorts of things that I merely know a few dry facts about. Astrology, now so discredited, was one of the things he could talk about the longest summer's day. The stars were not merely planets; they were influences in human lives. Every hour was presided over by a star, lucky or unlucky, so far as a human being was concerned. If you knew the exact hour of your birth, you knew what times to be aware of, what times to plan happiness. A great deal of astrology, dreadfully weakened by time and man's further advances, lasted on down into my time. Some very ignorant people, so far as books were concerned, knew the planets in our solar system and could tell just how their rising or setting would affect things as different as getting married, slaughtering hogs, or planting grain. My mother used to tell me of her father's pointing out Mars and Venus and Jupiter as casually as you and I would point out the Great Dipper or the Milky Way. And yet this grandfather of mine was a pioneer child, probably barely able to read or write his own name. When stars are thought to
have daily and even hourly influence on people, they had better learn
the names and influences of the heavenly bodies and not trust to some
mere bookish fellow who knows only what he has read in a big book.

Chaucer's medicines are as folkish as his astrology. In fact,
the two were so joined that it takes a bit of wrestling to separate them.
First, a doctor had to know your ruling star and its consequent good
and bad associations; then he could bleed you or give you a powerful
emetic or purgative or could blister you until the outward pain relieved
the inward agony. Medicine, in those days, was no sissy stuff;
you took, and lived or died, and that was that. Hosts of medical
practices of Chaucer's own day came down into my time. I lived through
the period when it seemed necessary for doctors to explain carefully
the germ theory of disease, to be cautious in telling about it to
keep from hurting one's feelings, since Pap and Grandpap had believed
otherwise. Do not doubt me when I say that the old-time medicine men
and the grandmothers who administered teas and such like had heads full
of knowledge; it may not have been the same sort that doctors are now
taught, but it had to be learned carefully and followed equally care-
fully. There must be whole Dark Continents of brain cells that you
and I are not using but were used by our immediate ancestors.

In matters like history, do not imagine that there is not a whole
canon of history that no books will tell you about. Most of us were
feared on tradition; some of us supplemented this folk learning by
reading books and sometimes adjusting our thinking to the bookish point
of view. Many others did not take that trouble. I wish I had collected
in my childhood the folk versions of the Civil War. Some of our ex-
Confederates had a fair show of learning and could fit their tiny view
of the four great years into the great plans of Lee and Grant. But
some of the bravest survivors had little or no conception of the whole
war. Their little outfit, almost their own little company, was the
war. But they had intimate details in mind and could recreate their
narrow but vivid story of how it all happened. Their heads were not
empty but as full as some of the learned heads.
SOME MORE IGNORANCE

Last week I spoke of the vast knowledge that people often called illiterate or ignorant have always had. Sometimes, by contrast, we who merely know books seem to be the ignorant ones. I am reminded of this quite often when I am thrown with some uninhibited people who have worked out or have had handed to them a full understanding of the place of everything in the world. Sometimes I am asked a dozen times a week what something is for. The asker may be a child or a student or an older person. Since I am supposed to be educated, I should know the answer. Most frequently I do not and cannot answer very glibly what anything is for. Back in the Middle Ages no such doubts existed. Everything was here to give some specific benefit to mankind: food, clothing, shelter, warning, reward. If something was particularly puzzling, some wiseacre came up with the idea that it was to test our faith or to make us realize that life is short and filled with danger. Why are mosquitoes? Why is typhoid fever? Why is falling hair, or an ingrowing toenail, or termites? Why are age and death and poverty and unrealizable dreams?

One of the best sources of amusement for people who have read medieval bestiaries is the theory that every animal symbolizes in some way holy and spiritual things. If the animal in question does not act in a certain way, he is made to do so, in order that the appropriate moral can be drawn. The male lion, says the Bestiary, drags his tail to obliterate his tracks; this is symbolic of the Devil and his sly way of covering up his schemes. The whale, probably bored by his huge bulk and the consequent necessity to find food in unbelievable quantities, sometimes comes to the surface of the sea and pretends to be an island. The shipwrecked sailor sees the huge bulk, is easily fooled, lands, falls asleep, and is forthwith drowned when the deceitful whale dives straight for the bottom. That, says the fascinating little
book, symbolizes the Devil again, who often offers a solid exterior and entices people to trust in him; then he, like the whale, dives straight for hell, taking the luckless sailor with him. And on and on the little book goes, showing that everything is tagged with a moral, that nothing exists for its own sake.

In my early days of teaching literature I often ran into students who were sure that all autumn days are melancholy because Bryant so regarded them after his favorite sister died in autumn. I sometimes had students almost rebel when I said that we must regard the moral of any poem in terms of the person who used it and must not accept it as the only possible one or even a desirable one. I said that we should try to get the effort of the poet to make as real as possible something invisible, idealistic by using some tangible, familiar object as a simile or metaphor. Slowly through the years I may have convinced a few students of this way to look upon poetry; many, however, preferred to stay with their childish conception that what the poet said was undeniable fact rather than poetic imagery. A few times I have been deliberately shocking by referring them to the great Psalm of them all, the Twenty-third, with its imagery of sheep and shepherd life. When I have suggested that the psalmist says we are sheep, they sometimes see the point, but are afraid that I am about to undermine their religion. Years ago I was delighted with an exegesis of this famous Hebrew song by a shepherd from Lebanon who carries out the idea of the sheep from one end of the poem to the other. After we see the quaint and simple figure of man as a helpless and trusting sheep, the psalm takes on even more beauty and effectiveness. It becomes a true figure of speech, a symbol of one poet's conception of man in his dependence on Deity. The poetic language is then justified, and a mere literalness of words seems foolish and primitive. A great poet knows how to see likenesses or imagined likenesses in the world and how to help the less imaginative to tie up the tangible and visible with the intangible and invisible.
One of the readers of this column has asked why I have not written about what people used to call (and still sometimes call) various pieces of money. Her especial reminder was about what nearly everybody now calls a penny. When she was a little girl, she used to be a favorite with her granddaddy, who sometimes gave her what he called a copper. Down our way that coin was a copper cent, occasionally mentioned without the second word. When I saw the word penny in stories, I was not sure whether our "little red cent" was meant or the English penny. As far back as I can remember, I knew the English had pennies and, for value, pence. One of our neighbors was called as a boy "Four-pence," which ultimately ceased to have any meaning; hence his nickname in my day was "Dime." I suspect that not one person in ten knew what his name actually was and would not have thought to associate A. C. Smith with Mr. Dime Smith.

It had been a long time since people could have known at first hand much about English money, but immigrants to our little world with Scotch-Irish ancestry held on to lots of other ways of saying and doing things. My mother's mother, for instance, always celebrated Christmas Day on January 6, "Old Christmas Day." Suppose that the calendar had been changed by the English people in 1752 and she had not been born until 1811; that is not long for old-timers to hold on to discarded customs. Probably her folks joined or wanted to join in the procession that bore placards saying "Give Us Back Our Eleven Days!" when the Gregorian Calendar went into effect. Just look around you and see how a suggestion about changing a time zone arouses most of us.

Another remnant of older money was the calculating parts of a
dollar in bits. Two bits (twenty-five cents or a quarter), four bits, six bits—I heard them even oftener than quarter, half a dollar, etc. But I never heard "eight bits." I wonder how many recall "a half dime," a silver coin worth only five cents and very small. Many people I knew kept one around as a sort of keepsake, probably afraid that they might not find another one when that one was spent. Another lost coin was the two-cent copper piece, called a big cent or a big copper. I do not know whether people actually received it in change after I could remember or merely, as with the silver five-cent piece, kept one for exhibit. That two-cent piece was a good-sized one and was always mentioned as the coin offered to the half wit, for him to choose it or a nickel. He always chose the larger coin, according to the folk yarn. When challenged, he said that if he took the nickel, nobody would offer him any more money. Pretty smart, idiot!

While we are discussing money, I wonder again whether any of you know about the bad luck attached to a two-dollar bill. I cannot remember having seen one in so long that it must be bad luck to own one. The last connection with such a bill that I recall came on my honeymoon, forty-six years ago, this fall. I bought railroad tickets for my wife and myself, getting a two-dollar bill in exchange. The brother of a prominent village doctor warned me against accepting such a bad-luck sign. I did not offer him the money to see whether he was afraid of it. Maybe I should have. Anyway, if that bad luck was ever coming, it seems it should have done so long ago.
A LIVING PASSING INSTITUTION

When this article reaches the newspapers that use it, I will be a retired schoolteacher, or, if you prefer the legal terminology, a professor of English who will be on a change-of-status program. Years ago I read Charles Lamb's famous essay called "The Superannuated Man" and felt, even then, that I would probably face such a crisis some day and be somewhat surprised at my being an ex-professor. Well, here it is, and I have become a living passing institution.

But I must confess that I do not feel any older than I did at forty-five and am very vigorous and active. I can chase birds over the roughest terrain, I can sleep on the ground in a pup tent, I can eat my own cooking indefinitely, and I can walk down most fellows half as old. Why retire, then? I have always wanted to step out before I got so down and out that I had to be removed on a stretcher. I have enjoyed my seventy years; I would hate to negate in a few years what I have tried hard to do for a lifetime. So I am retiring, call it whatever you like, with great joy, confident that my successor will do better than I have done, that my college will grow and grow under younger leadership, that my generation did not exhaust the good things that humanity is capable of doing.

But I am not retiring to a sleepy game of thumb-twiddling. I have enough planned to keep me busy until I actually get old. My column is to continue on and on, I hope to chase birds over all sorts of terrain, and I am working mightily on a word study of the general area of the Mammoth Cave National Park that will require many years and much patience to finish. Living just across the street from the college I have been a part of so long, I cannot imagine being very much bored with life.

Naturally, you would expect me, as a chronicler of passing insti-
tutions, to bid a sort of tearful farewell to the schoolroom. But
the schoolroom is not passing, the teacher is not passing; it is only
a man whom the world calls old who is stepping aside to let some
younger person take up the task. My more than a century as a teacher
has been a wonderful experience; my active retirement should be equally
wonderful. I shall not go back and tell again about the old family
hag and dow her with some sort of human sadness at having stepped aside
from her prominence to let the shiny new automobile or tractor go by.
I shall not sing the praises of home-knit yarn stockings and home-
woven carpets and home-made brooms, and the front room and the open
fireplace and the family album, of meeting all day and dinner on the
ground, of spelling bees and singing schools and all the rest. They
have had their day, it seems, and so have I. The Wife of Bath,
sturdy, coarse old soul that she was, said something that we all need to
say and think in watching the procession of passing institutions,
including ourselves: "When I think about my youth and all my joy, it
tickled me about the root of my heart; I have had my day in my time."
Why should I envy the younger fellows who are coming into places now
being vacated? They are due their fling at life, so that they, when
three score and ten overtakes them, can say with me: "I've had my fling."

If you readers, who have caused a column that was meant to run a
year run now into its twenty-fifth year, will stay with me, we will go
on to chronicle other passing institutions, probably some that seem
very much alive today. And there will be no apology for our having
lived when we did and known the now-past joys of our youth. I do not
own a family nag or even the picture of one; my home-knit yarn stockings
and socks long ago got threadbare; my tintype picture, taken in 1894,
is faded and shows a badly-scared little boy who failed to see any birdie
fly out of the photographer's black box. That little boy is seventy
now, but the same little boy looks out on life and finds it wonderful.
Will you other old-timers and some who are not yet in that fraternity
come with me again and again to look upon our fascinating folk heritage?
I long ago I discussed in this column some dozen of our most unusual folk heroes and how they had become such a permanent part of our literature as well as of traditional or oral lore. For many years I have taught a graduate class dealing with our American folk heroes, believing that advanced students should know some of the ideas that have inspired or amused generations of people in America. Fortunately, in my last teaching summer term I am teaching that course, as a sort of farewell, scholastically, to one of my favorite fields of reading and study.

One of the oddities about our American folklore is that some of it has a habit of recurring after intervals. Dr. Richard Dorson, chairman of the folklore division at Indiana University, has remarked that he tried, unsuccessfully, some thirty years ago to get Hollywood interested in Davy Crockett. The time was not ripe for a new reincarnation of the actual or the imagined Davy. Later the whole world has had Davy Crockett for breakfast, dinner, and supper. The acme of the new-old tradition, it seemed to me, was my seeing a full-blooded Indian boy on a reservation, dressed in a full Davy Crockett costume. That seems to me to be a full circle of folk influence. Davy is gradually passing out of the picture now, but he will come back again, whether the actual flesh-and-blood Davy or the imagined Davy of the DAVY CROCKETT ALMANACS and the movies, I do not know.

Other Western heroes have come back and again gone into a semi-oblivion in my long association with folklore. The old-time Southern Negro, the faithful old retainer, breezes across the pages of fiction in some new name every five years or so, as fresh a folk character as he ever was. I grew up in Joel Chandler Harris's late days and read at first hand many of his famous stories in the ATLANTA CONSTITUTION. Then I read his Uncle Remus stories in books and renewed my memories of similar uncles who lived at Fidelity and everywhere in the South and
on the border. Every few years throughout my long teaching career—some new edition of Uncle Remus and his stories has appeared, with the wealth of great illustrators to help make him perennially new. Great reputations have been built around several men, like Dr. Richard Thomas Wyche, who specialized in telling Uncle Remus stories to innumerable audiences. Tremendous strides have been made by the Negro as a person and the Negro as a race; but, sentimentally, hordes of people everywhere turn back to the kindly old man with the white hair, the endless fables, the wholesome attitude toward life. Uncle Remus is as much alive today as he was in the Gay Nineties, when I read weekly stories attributed to him, fresh in the pages of the CONSTITUTION.

The cowboy, too, lives in many new incarnations. In spite of barbed-wire fences and the passing of the free range, in spite of jeeps and even airplanes to oversee the vast ranches, in spite of ranching today as a carefully-watched big business that has to compete with green-pasture programs in the more eastern parts of the country, the cowboy and his horse live on, just as they lived more than a whole lifetime ago. Movies, TV shows, radio shows, records galore, songs, murals—where would they go but for the cowboy? And who would advertise, for the young fry, cereals and every other sort of stuff that growing, red-blooded kids demand? From the dashing cowboys of the old Chisholm Trail to the latest picture of some contemporary cowpuncher that adorns a box of cereal or a carton of milk, the true old breed lives on. Wild Western shows and the early sensational movies may have passed, but the immortal cowboy rides across the sagebrush, not into oblivion but into an ever-new world, for new boys are constantly being born into our world, no matter how humdrum this same world may seem to some who have outgrown boyish dreams of riding the wide-open spaces.
SOME MORE REINCARNATIONS

Last week I paid a tribute to some of our heroes, like the scout, the Negro, and the cowboy, who, periodically, spring again to life and have a second or a tenth career almost as vivid as the one of long ago. This week I would like to continue this listing of some folk heroes who are not dead but merely sleeping until some new fashion brings them back, like King Arthur from his Island Valley of Avalion.

Where is the neighborhood liar or boaster? He may have suffered a sort of eclipse in some places, but he is still around. Among other reincarnations, he is the Barker for tourist traps of all sorts. The most talented Baron Munchausen had nothing on some of the advertisees of our day. The world loves to be humbugged, said a great humbugger, the great P. T. Barnum. "A fool is born every minute," he said, and now he could raise his sights, for there are so many parents in America that probably four such creatures appear every minute. And what would a vacation be without our listening to wild yarns along the way, yarns about pioneers, Indians, gold-seekers, village idiots, poor boys who became famous, rich planters who lost their all in the breakup of slavery, wild bad men who made life interesting and fearful for the travelers along the Natchez Trace or across the plains? And, locally, who wants to hear the "whole truth and nothing but the truth" about probably very ordinary people who settled Podunk and Fidelity? Who cares about the casual settlers at Fidelity when Felix Holt can tell about Big Eli and Little Eli, and Burt Lancaster and his company can make a movie called THE KENTUCKIAN, which brought back many of the thrills of pioneer days that some might have thought dead and forgotten? Did the local liar leave no successors? Look about you; I suspect that no race suicide of this family will ever occur.
In actuality, that is, in real life, the Southern Colonel is practically gone. The last score of the breed in my home town were recognized as such and sadly buried in the city cemetery when the long procession of years overtook them. If you go down town today, you do not see the mustache and goatee of the Colonel on every corner. But in fiction he lives on and on. Just about anybody who can wield a pen or write on a typewriter can recreate for us some old fellow who represented a once-numerous race. In spite of comic and cynical efforts to destroy this stalwart citizen of the Old South, he somehow reasserts himself periodically in books and movies and songs and stories.

And who said that the Poor Boy Who Became Famous is dead? Maybe, since THE AMERICAN MAGAZINE suspended publication, we do not hear so often of some fellow who, from a pitiful start, went on to big achievements. But look over your local newspaper, the very one in which this article will appear, and read the names of lawyers and doctors and politicians and business men and farmers whose rise to prominence has somewhat duplicated the spectacular career of Ben Franklin or Abraham Lincoln. If I were to visit your town, where would you take me? I will bet that among other sights would be the modern mansion of the poor boy who had a great idea and cashed in on it or the boy who rose from humble circumstances to be a neighborhood institution. I would expect to find several such fellows at the City Hall and the County Courthouse, I know that some would have M. D. after their names, some others would be sitting in air-conditioned department stores on the square. We love all of our folk heroes, for their zeal in doing well, for their fearless attack on life, for their good humor or quaint pranks. We probably honor most the ones who managed to climb to the top and own the best house in town, especially if they also have been generous with their money for community affairs.

"Do you see that little fellow standing in the cold waiting for the school bus?" "Yes." "Just wait; he'll be your boss some day."
IT IS NOT DEAD

In my "last class," my course in Folklore in American Literature, so many living folk beliefs were recorded by my students that I am sure that folklore is by no means dead. Two of the students collected enough folk-medicine beliefs to offset all the antitoxins and vaccines and other efforts of man to combat disease. It is strange that we have so long neglected the simple remedies around us and paid high prices for shots and stuff. Only a few minutes of advice from some of our neighbors would have brought us treasures that should insure immortality itself. I suppose that we human beings are just plain dumb, or we would have long ago accepted these hundreds of folk health suggestions.

In the days of isolation it was to be expected that many people would have difficulty in giving up old remedies, especially those that beloved elders trusted implicitly. I used to hear some oldster say about some suggested remedy: "It help Paw, and it will help you." Of course, the only answer is: "Shore!" Now, with so many avenues of enlightenment open for everybody, it is both pathetic and comical to know that most of our folk remedies are still around. I feel about them as some wag did about the proper process to follow in burning a witch: if it became necessary for such an order, there would turn up some fellow who knew perfectly the whole ritual.

Living a long time with one eye on folklore makes a fellow realize that humanity changes, certainly, but not in any spectacular fashion. Not in my early youth but today I read about snake-handlers and their medieval rites; not long ago but recently have I gone through a meticulous account of initiation into voodoo. At Fidelity people sometimes put a pad of cobwebs or a mass of soot on a wound to stop bleeding; my students say that this still goes on, at other places besides Fidelity.
Civilization is, often, a veneer. Superficially we do seem to take on the outer aspects of culture and learning. It would be interesting to know, however, how many of the bravest souls that live around us are inwardly still literally trembling in their boots in the midst of a world that they must know that they do not understand.

Just recently we have read how the ruler of a great and rich oriental country dismissed several of his wives and even had the hands of some of them cut off because they had thrown objects at a favorite princess. That sounds like a chapter out of a fairy story. That rich ruler has all the outward evidences of the most modern civilization; his rich oil holdings furnish him with more money than he knows what to do with. But he is still an echo of a long time past. Before we sneer too much or too quickly at him and his cave-man tactics, maybe we had better take stock of some of our crude returns to an earlier time. When I was a child, I used to wonder what arson was. Fire broke out sometimes among us, but I cannot recall having ever heard of anyone's being actually accused of setting the fire. Today we read almost every week of bombings and burnings, in our sophisticated world. There were certainly plenty of such things in my childhood, if we had had as wide a coverage of news as we now have; now we know, almost before the firemen bring the blaze under control; our newspapers and radios and television sets give us an almost play-by-play account. I wonder whether any accounts of gouging can be found; gouging is as ancient as arson. I have seen a few ears that bore tooth prints, but not lately. When great disturbances occur in our thinking, so that we get out of balance, we return to an older type of conduct, return so quickly that it is scary. If some great calamity should deprive us of necessary food and clothing and shelter, I wonder how long before we return to cannibalism, like the famous Dinner Party in the early days of the West.
"AS OTHERS SEE US"

When I was motoring and camping in our Kentucky mountains this summer of 1959, I could not help thinking again of the immeasurable false pictures of our hill folk, in Kentucky and elsewhere. We have had enough bad reporting from our mountain counties of big-city newspaper representatives to warrant a good lot of lawsuits. Apparently the writers know in advance what they expect to find, for they have been ardent students of such great interpreters of mountain life as Al Capp; they find what they are looking for. Of course, if they had visited some other area and found similar conditions, they would not have been awake or conscious. Mountaineers just must fit the pattern set by outsiders who are looking for local color or insiders who just must please these same outsiders.

At Pikeville a recent visit of a reporter from a New York newspaper discovered a very modern invention: cables that bring down the moonshine liquor from up on the mountains to the tourist and other trade. At least, that is what she wrote in her article and thereby helped to pay her exploratory trip into the wilds of Kentucky. She failed to ask locally what these strange cables were; she would have discovered that they were from aerials on top of the mountains running down to the huts in which these same barefooted mountaineers live, bringing in television shows that surely must shock people who have seldom had a bath and worn shoes. Fortunately, the excellent people of Pikeville enjoyed the sneers of the high-born lady who had come among the heathen on a slumming tour. She probably will tell to the end of her years about those cables down which jugs ride to their destination. Since she concocted such a fable, why didn't she discover that the cables were pipelines, bringing a continuous flow of mountain dew?
But the mountaineers are not alone in being queer objects that
goggle-eyed tourists can see and interpret properly to the fellows
back home who did not get a chance to come to the wild areas of Kentucky
and escape without being shot at. In the middle of June of this same
year I camped alone one weekend at Mammoth Cave. There I met a well-
dressed man of some forty-five, with a big station wagon and a well-
dressed family. He told me that he and his wife had had a trip to
see some of the upper South, places he had read a lot about and had
heard more. He had driven west from Indianapolis, where he lived,
across Illinois, into the Ozarks of Missouri and Arkansas, across the
Mississippi at Memphis, and on up as far as Mayfield before he turned
and came through the southern Pennyrile, one of the finest agricultural
areas, as informed people know, in the state. This poorly-educated
but honest man had been surprised to death at seeing such fine soil,
such handsome country homes, such evidence of prosperity and culture.
He was going back, he said, to his church— one of the emotional off-
breeds that I had barely heard of—and tell his folks that he had not
seen any grown people barefooted, that he, the proprietor of a seed
store, could tell good crops when he saw them, and that western
Kentucky had them. I could not help rejoicing that one tourist,
not too well educated, certainly pretty narrow in his view of life,
had found a new world. He furtively said he expected to find poor
cabins sitting on hillsides, with half-starved children playing in the
dirt around them. Maybe he should write a letter to some of the
eastern papers and tell his strange experience.
KENTUCKY--THE CROSS ROADS

About the first speech I ever wrote mentioned Kentucky as the crossroads of America for several decades, where East and West, North and South met. For more than a half century I have been studying that very aspect of our state, especially as it relates to our folk customs. Down the Ohio, through Cumberland Gap and the other gaps in the mountains, and up from neighboring Tennessee gaps came the horses who were to transform the wilderness of Kentucky into a state within half a generation. And Tennessee, Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois got many of their first settlers by way of our two main migration routes. Some of each migration remained in the state, some moved on to ever-beckoning frontiers, taking the strange magic name of Kentucky with them. English, Scotch-Irish, Pennsylvania Germans, French Huguenots—these constituted the main folk streams. They brought their conceptions of religion, their views of government, their desire for education with them, along with a desire for land that was almost a mania. For a long time Kentucky, as the home of Henry Clay, was the center of frontier politics. Enough Kentuckians had arrived before the end of the Revolution to have some able sharpshooters in the later battles of that war; in every succeeding war the Kentuckians have done their part, even when it meant fighting against kinsmen as in the Civil War. The great revival spirit grew up in Kentucky, spreading ultimately over the civilized world. Quaint religionists like the Shakers found their way into two widely-separated, excellent agricultural areas: central Kentucky and Logan County. Almost every phase of folk custom was represented here, from the more aristocratic Bluegrass manners to the plain but honest folkways of the outlying areas. Truly, the migration routes crossed here and left their lasting impressions on our people.
In literature the extremes of our folkways have been presented. Since outsiders expect us to be rich and leisurely or poor and ornery, many of our writers and those that strole into our preserve have written about these two extremes. It would be hard to convince the reading world that most of our people, and therefore most of our folkways, are as far from one extreme as from the other. Owners of wide-spreading farms are rare; rare, too, are the tribe of no-accounts who live up the "holler" and go barefooted. Our ways are ways of self-respecting middle-class and middle-income people who know that they will have to make their way in the world or be looked down on by those who have git-up-and-git.

As compared with many other regions, we are certainly conservative as a people. But only a blind man could not see the tremendous strides we have made within the last thirty years. Roads and their accompanying automobiles have opened up worlds that were hardly suspected by most of our own state and utterly unknown elsewhere. On a recent canoeing trip through the Kentucky mountains I was made to realize how far and how fast we have come. A similar trip into the far west of our state, back towards Fidelity and my childhood, shows the same noticeable changes. There is still a commendable conservatism everywhere obvious, but wholesome changes in houses and farms and towns are everywhere. For example, the attractiveness of the front yard, one of the hallmarks of my end of the world, now seems popular all over the state. Smallish houses that formerly would have, maybe, had a morning glory vine over a porch now has attractive shrubs and flowers and a well-mowed lawn. Neatness and orderliness are no longer rare sights. In my numerous travels over all parts of the state I seldom see down-at-the-heel towns and farmhouses that look like relics of some previous geologic age. Not everything is beautiful and elegant, but we are on our way to better-looking places in which our people live.
SATURDAY AT THE STORE

At Fidelity and everywhere else in the older days Saturday afternoon was a sacred time, for the farmers stopped their work and gathered at the country store. Ostensibly they had come to buy some sugar and coffee and such other necessities, but they would have come anyway. In our little world it was felt that to hang around the store in ordinary week days was a sign of not being industrious enough. A few oldsters, eager to get in their share of whittling, discussing politics, and arguing abstruse religious questions, not to mention local gossip and traditional dirty stories, might be found there at any time. But grown men not yet getting old regarded this hanging around the store as a sign of thriftlessness, though they did not call it by that name.

On Saturday afternoon, however, it was a time-honored custom to drop everything and head for the store. My father frowned on this custom, for he feared that his boys would get the habit and hang around at other times or would learn too many things that were off-color. Not many fathers were so meticulous, and, therefore, the Saturday-afternoon crowd was made up of all sorts of men and boys. The whittling took on new vigor, young bucks jumped and danced and wrestled and engaged in pranks until the sun started to sink behind our small hills. Once in a while some candidate, and there always seemed to be one, would be on hand to plead for his candidacy. Extremely rarely a tent show might appear and add its excitement to the usual Saturday-afternoon events. But these were extras, not to be confused with the normal flow of events.

Long after I left Fidelity, now nearly fifty-three years, the show went on, with no apparent changes except that our Confederate veterans grew fewer in number and grayer. The jokes and arguments were the same; the whittling played as prominent a part as ever. Until I had a car of my own, and that was long after I left Fidelity, I had few opportunities
to see Saturday afternoon in action at the country store. When I finally
got a chance to visit places similar to my own Fidelity of the early
1900's, I found similar crowds and the same line of jokes, discussions
of religion and politics, and a remnant of the veterans of the Civil
War. Now, long after the passing of any local veterans of the Civil
War, the country store is by no means dead on Saturday afternoon. Of
course, lots of country people go to town or go fishing in some of the
many man-made lakes in my part of the state, or even take weekend trips
to see relatives or friends who live miles away. But there are still
left a horde of people who cannot so easily get away; the country store
still draws them. There are no longer any hitching racks at any of the
stores I am acquainted with, but there are parking places for all sorts
of cars, from the museum-type T-models to the very latest flashy models.
Many times the Saturday-afternoon crowd is practically silent, for
they are watching the television set in the store. Very much unlike
the Fidelity folks, they are eating ice cream and other delicacies that
used to be nine-days wonders in my day. Soda pop, however, is not too
different from what it was a half century ago; the big difference is that
it is always on hand and cold, thanks to R. E., and not merely served
on such special occasions as church picnics and Confederate reunions.
I have had the good fortune, in rather recent years, to mingle with the
Saturday-afternoon crowds and compare notes with the older loafers on
other days, when getting away from toil on Saturday afternoon was
like "getting money from home," in a well-known phrase. My one regret
about my recent visits to the country store is that I did not have a
portable recorder so that I could catch the actual conversation and
preserve it for philologists to study and treasure. If my luck holds,
I mean to do some of this very recording, knowing that I am working with
a hallowed institution that is not exactly passing but will change
noticeably in the immediate future.
How Folklore Gets Started

In the summer of 1959 I had many opportunities to see how some phases of folklore get started. My grand-daughter, while visiting me, asked me many questions about what used to be, sometimes getting history pretty badly scrambled. "Were there steamboats when you could first remember?" (Shades of Robert Fulton!) "Did you have electric lights in your home when you were a child?" (R. E. A. finally got to Fidelity some five years ago!) "Did you know any Revolutionary War veterans?" (Now that is a big one, since my great-great-great grand-father, aged 98 and a veteran of that war, died in 1840! These and many other questions illustrate how time, when a person has had only a small view of it, gets mixed up with all other time. Leif Erickson, Columbus, Washington, Lincoln—weren't they all part of America? If they were not contemporaries, why not? In reading books that were written in the Middle Ages and long after, one comes across just such scramblings of history, for all of it has taken place long before the minstrel sang of Troy as if it were a medieval town, with all modern methods of warfare, and of ancient heroes as if they had just attended a court function of the reigning monarch. Remember, even David Garrick acted Hamlet in the court dress of his own day. (I read in today's paper that a company of Texas actors, dressed as cowboys, is giving Shakespeare right this summer of 1959.)

So many strange things have happened in my own lifetime, however, that I almost am tempted to claim acquaintance with George Washington and the men of the Revolution. A dozen states have come into the Union since I was born, the life expectancy has doubled for us all, literacy has advanced phenomenally, means of transportation have somehow set the standard for human advancement or change. The world itself is so small that we are talking in big language about satellites and such like.
A tremendous new folklore could be built up if we somehow regarded the earth, as did most of the people alive hundred years ago, as being just what it had always been. Even Julius Caesar, in Shakespeare's play, wore doublet and hose, with no apparent comic effect. Imagine picturing a South Sea Islander of the remotest jungles dressed in formal attire and riding on a modern highway in the ritziest modern car! A news item in this very week concerned Dodge City and its lamentably calm life, with no two-gun men having fun. When I stopped two years ago to see its Boot Hill, I felt that the movies and the romantic historians had better stick to facts. It is next to impossible for any younger person to know what the old West was like, for every sort of folk addition has been made to it. Even some of my generation blamed Hamlin Garland for writing true-to-life pictures of a somewhat-sordid prairie life that he had known. People blamed him for not making all pioneers fit the better-than-life pictures that they had formed of those good old days. Touring through Garland's Iowa today, with sleek cattle grazing and fabulous cornfields producing and windmills turning and electric lines running everywhere, it is hard for even the history-minded ones to bring back the soul-killing pioneering of the prairie country.

Which is the real character, the one who actually lived and breathed and ate and slept or the one whom fiction and folklore have dressed up in the togs of folk heroes? Is Davy Crockett the actual pioneer politician, somewhat inclined to tell big stories, or is he the champion liar of all time, around whom every sort of exaggerated yarn clustered? I do not know. Most people will not, I am sure, take the trouble to know whether his stories about killing 105 bears in a single year are on the same level as his starting the earth to moving when it froze up in a bitter cold spell. In a way this is unfair to Davy, for his actual exploits are far ahead of any mythological mingling of him and Hercules. But who can tell the folk what to believe?
SELECTING A GRANDFATHER

Holmes once said that a fellow did well to select the right grandfather. I am afraid that most of us could not have done quite so well as he did in making this selection, but many of us could make out a good analogy for ourselves by telling our backgrounds seemed to make us what we are or have been. In telling of my own experience, I know that I am also telling the backgrounds of many of my contemporaries; you will pardon, I hope, the seeming egotism of this article, for it is about you as well as about me.

To begin with, I was born in a remote country area that had been little touched by modern changes. My family was conservative and had always been; they were not aware of this but lived a straight-laced but very consistent Scotch-Irish life, asking nothing of the world and not grumbling if they got little. My neighbors were plain, hard-working people, somewhat stolid and ordinary, but with some desire to know about great books and great events. Many of the old men had been pioneers, who had come all the way from North Carolina and had brought a rather full folk life with them, including their religion, their politics, and their slaves. The men in middle life were largely Confederate veterans, varying from rather well-informed readers of history to somewhat illiterate old boys who knew only the Civil War as it was related to their company. Nobody had a college education, nobody had even a high school education, but books circulated from house to house, and I often heard wise discussions of what many people had read. Though our neighborhood was pretty democratic, there were dimly defined caste lines, largely made by the people themselves, for high and low were found in the same families.

There was nothing of the aristocratic except in some big talk that was usually discounted for nearly every user of it. Our little school was the typical one-roomed, sorry building, with no teacher who had had
as much as a year of high school work. In spite of this, I repeat, there
was much respect for learning, though it was not always easy to tell the
true learning from the false.

To my father I owed much, for because he was a physician, I got to
see every kind of person in the whole world, it seemed to me then.
He was the doctor of them all and did not allow us to make fun of even
the humblest. Mother lost no time in showing us which ones were people
whom we could associate with and which ones must be treated kindly but
not as equals. At school whatever caste lines there were became pretty
thin, though older people knew and recognized them. Through my early
years I watched the procession of the halt and the maimed and the blind
and the half-witted come to Father for help. I soon knew many strange
stories about them, not from Father, who was very tight-lipped. By
degrees I saw the quaint customs of our neighbors and of ourselves and
actually put down some of them, along with my incessant tabulating of
species and varieties of plants and animals. All this took place before
I left fidelity at eighteen to make my way in the world.

As soon as I got away, I began to make comparisons and to discover
the many ways in which people could do the most ordinary things. That
opened my eyes to folk customs even more, and I again began to record
some of these oddities, for at first my folklore was largely confined to
exceptional people and happenings. Then came study and reading of in-
umerable books on folk tales and myths and anthropology and other
related subjects. I discovered that I had had a great folk background,
that almost everything I had done or known was distinctly folkish, even
when I imagined that I was being educated and bookish. When I finally
came to see the value of ordinary folk customs and not merely oddities,
I knew that I had found my niche in the folklore game. My purpose since
then has been to try to interpret how we ordinary people think and act
as we do, why we change so reluctantly, why we persist in our folkishness
when it would be easier to change. My backgrounds have finally paid off.
My granddaughter, whom I mentioned as having visited us this summer, asked me some strange questions about how we used to do the washing. She wanted to know whether I pumped up water from a well. Certainly she could not have pictured a time when pumps were practically unknown in Fidelity. We had a shallow well, on the side of the hill, but the water from it came up in a bucket and was drawn up on a windlass. We also had cisterns, but the water came up on a rope, pulled up by hand. But even then we nearly always ran out of water, especially when the well began to fill up with sand. That meant hauling water from a roadside spring, about a half mile away, at Sulfur Springs Church. Two or more big rain barrels in a wagon, with a covering of tow sack or some similar cloth to keep all the water from sloshing out, constituted our typical water hauling. In later days at Fidelity we had a metal tank that fit snugly into the bed of our family buggy. I hauled many thousands of gallons from the spring, in my last five or six years at home. We in our immediate area were quite fortunate in having a good, well-kept spring so close to us. Many people whom I knew had to haul most of the water needed for washing and for drinking from far away, sometimes from creeks. In recent dry years the water problem has been very acute near Bowling Green. Hundreds of ponds went dry in the three successive dry summers in the early 1950's; the Bowling Green water supply was called on heavily in many areas for drinking and household water. One garage man whom I knew made more money hauling water than he did in all his garage work put together.

After a supply of water was at hand, it had to be heated. Every self-respecting family had a big iron wash kettle, in which water was heated for the wash water and then for the boiling
of the clothes. A big iron kettle, plenty of water, and a quantity of homemade soap did wonders. I have never known how big a washing of soap is, but it certainly was a pretty good-sized quantity at our house. My part in wash day consisted of getting or helping get the water, keeping the fire going around the kettle, and then helping hang out the innumerable clothes--on miles of lines, on the garden fence, and just about everywhere else. I got a real thrill out of that early work around the house that remains to this day. I love to hang out clothes and to bring them in when they are dry and sweet-smelling. I got broken in early and have not forgotten my early wearings.

In our neighborhood there were no wash houses that I remember, distinctive outbuildings in colder states than Kentucky. One of my folklorist friends in Pennsylvania has written extensively on the wash house and has printed many a picture showing the permanent stone buildings that were built by the early German settlers. In cold winter weather many households did the washing in the big kitchen, where there was a fireplace big enough for the wash kettle. In winter the water problem did not get serious, for the cisterns were full then, and it was not hard to draw enough water to take care of the weekly wash. Hanging out clothes in very cold, windy weather was another task that was not too pleasant, but the lines full of clothes flapping in the cold wind looked as much a symbol of man's determination to keep his civilized state as the house itself. Just last week, in a mountain county, I saw the iron-kettle sort of wash day just as I recall it from the 1890's and rejoiced that I knew all the rules of the game and could, if necessary, return to the former ways of washing clothes for a big family.
PERSONAL REMEDIES

In investigating the folk medicines used in the various parts of the state, my students have found that practically every older had his own personal remedy, one that would cure just about everything. One old man whom I knew prescribed turpentine for ailments as varied as sore throat and cuts on the hand. A teaspoonful of sugar moistened with turpentine was, for him, a sure-shot cure for anything wrong with the inside of the mouth and throat. He would have sneered at a posthumous child's blowing his breath into an infant's throat, but turpentine was something else. A physician we once had for our family used the same bad-tasting tonic for everything, so much so that I used to tell my wife that the prescription would be the same for ingrowing toenails, falling hair, and rheumatism.

Down where I was raised, malaria had its summer home. Not to have chills and fever every summer was too heavenly to be expected in this world. Most of us down there took quinine until we could hardly walk straight, and that is still regarded as correct. We got to taking various kinds of chill tonics, also; I am not sure how many of these were merely disguised quinine and how many were pure quackery. It got so, in Fidelilty and elsewhere, that people would take a dose of chill tonic to start the day off with. I suppose that we had so much malaria that we did no hurt to ourselves by getting in a dose of medicine before theague came on. If anyone yawned or sneezed or felt lazy, chill tonic was the sure cure.

I have read quite recently a book called FOLK MEDICINE, in which the author, a New England eye-ear-nose-and-throat specialist, prescribes apple cider (or vinegar) and honey for just about every known ailment. He feels that the Vermonters are such hardy people and live so long because they take only home-made remedies and none
of this poison stuff fixed up in drugstores. His book suggests another one that should be written: SULPHUR AND MOLASSES, or HOW TO LIVE TO BE A HUNDRED. I am sure that honey, cider, molasses, and even sulphur have very valuable medicinal properties that even the same doctors recognize, but I somehow doubt whether they would do much good for some of us with falling hair or ingrown toenails.

If quaint remedies seem common today, you should read about the quackeries that ran riot a century and more ago, when just about every neighborhood had at least one spring that contained, if not the Elixir of Life, at least some minerals that tasted bad and, therefore, should cure folks of their ills. Just about every such spring had, sooner or later, a big, ramshackle hotel built near; people went from miles around to drink the water and eat at the hotel. Others, who could not spend so much money or get away from home, had these precious waters brought for them in jugs or bottles. I have drunk from many such springs and wells, to taste the very essence of immortality; but somehow most of the waters so highly advertised must have come from a coal mine, to judge by the taste. Maybe the guests had to eat a lot to get the bad taste covered up.

Tar water, a century ago, would cure everything. It contained the equivalent of all our modern vitamins and minerals; many a physician prescribed tar water as a panacea for everything. Other doctors recommended dripping water as curative; especially water impregnated with minerals. Folks as well as you and I are but feeling terribly bad went to such places and sat by the hour under the dripping cliffs, rejoicing at the curative effects of water. Maybe a bit of soap and a towel might have helped, but I find no record of such mundane things in the famous water cures.
IN CAROUSEL Billy, the barker, while dreaming about the boy who is to call him dad, wonders what the boy will do in the world. He mentions such matter-of-fact likelihoods as being president of the United States but dismisses that idea with "But he wouldn't be that unless he wanted to." Later he suggests that the boy might be a Barker at a carousel and adds, significantly: "It takes talent to do that well." I am sure many a younger person had a hard time interpreting the position and prominence of a Barker, as shown in the operetta. Now, some of us older people could enlighten them a bit, for it was likely to have been one of our secret ambitions—to be a Barker at a circus or a tent show. Dressed in some loud clothes, smoking an expensive cigar, walking with a well-feigned swagger, the Barker struck envy into the hearts of many a country boy who had a half dollar to spend recklessly at the circus. We could not have been told anything about the hard life of the Barker; he seemed in the very heaven of accomplishment.

But it was not merely a show or a circus that had a Barker. Restaurants often had a very great one to stand outside and advertise, especially restaurants that were located near a railroad depot. One at Cairo, Illinois, used to advertise the Blue Front Restaurant in a way that would have given Rodgers and Hammerstein new ideas about creating a character for a typical Barker, even a better one than Billy Bigelow. This Barker had a gong, the very prince of noise-makers. He pounded that gong and said his spell; people went into the Blue Front, too, partly because of the high-class Barker outside; I was one of them and can still remember it after all this half century.
Another famous barker advertised the restaurant at the L. and N. station at Bowling Green, a long time ago. When I first arrived here, in January, 1908, the noise of the train was drowned out by the gong of the colored man who added his own voice to the invitation of the gong. It would have taken a man very full of good food or possessing a very strong will to turn down the inviting sounds of the gong and the barker.

But barkers were to be found everywhere. My generation seems to have thrived because of them, or they because of it. A Sunday School picnic just had to have a barker to advertise the fine home-made ice cream and the 5¢ cigars and the chewing gum. Again, a cigar came in handy for the advertiser. I think the very best one I ever saw was at Sulphur Springs, not far from Fidelity. No circus man ever seemed more at ease while he said his say. I was working, sometimes, in the "stand," selling the wares he cried so loudly and so musically; I would gladly have traded my menial job for his much-more-important one. Maybe I could not have done well, however, for I never learned to smoke 5¢ cigars; no one would have wanted to resuscitate a barker who had passed out while trying some of the wares he was praising.

Long after I was grown and a father, I attended a P. T. A. in another state and got many an insight into older days, such as a minstrel show, a barker for the bazaar, several excellent impromptu clowns (who ordinarily were bankers or lawyers or doctors). One of the end men of the minstrel show was, after the paint was removed, a barker par excellence, after a much-cheered role of Mr. Bones in the age-old team of Tambo and Bones. In private life he ran a dairy, but he could have made a name for himself in either a minstrel show or as a walking advertiser of things to be bought. But even barkers are no longer so well known; a dairy certainly can furnish some life-giving food, whether people have any entertainment or not.
EATING AT THE HOTEL

Today at dinner my wife and I got to discussing how eating at a hotel used to be the mark of a great fellow. Ordinary folks in those days could eat at a restaurant or at a lunch counter at a grocery (cheese and crackers, oysters and pepper sauce, and the other standard menus), but if you ate at the hotel, your name might very well appear in the next week's county paper, showing that you were a "guest," whatever that was, at the Podunk Hotel! A fellow could almost afford to go hungry for weeks at a stretch in order to achieve such distinction, for it was really a distinction. I confess that I used to read the list of guests at the hotel in our county-seat town and often marveled that some rather poor fellow from Fidelity had his name among the high-falutin names of drummers and other gentry who made the hotel possible. While I am confessing, I had better add that my small amount of money and my stinginess, a la Scotchman, prevented my name from appearing on the guest list until long after I had left Fidelity and was back at the county seat for some educational gathering. Maybe the distinctive list had been discontinued by then, anyway.

We used to have a neighbor who barely, and sometimes not even that, made ends meet. But he would not have eaten at a restaurant on a bet. He walked into the dining room of our main local hotel like a titled nobleman and ordered his dinner with a swagger that showed how very important a man he was and how very important an institution a hotel was as compared with a restaurant. When I read Mark Twain's THE GILDED AGE and his later THE AMERICAN CLAIMANT, where a swaggering, self-important man from out in Missouri made his appearance in public memorable, I knew my man; I had lived near him.
The only thing in our small world that was as distinctive as having eaten at a hotel was to have put your horse into a livery stable and parked your buggy near by. Folks that were folks did that; the buggy got a chalk mark on it for identification. For weeks that mark remained, a plain advertisement that the owner had domiciled his critter in a livery stable, even though he himself might have had to come back to the stable to eat his own lunch out of a shoebox. I suppose that this chalk mark in its day gave the same sort of uplift that decals give today. Some cars that I know are so plastered with stickers that they remind me of some very famous soldier or athlete and all his medals for saving the country or dear old Siwash.

Is there anything, however, that can give today the distinction that small things used to confer upon lucky people who had "been about"? Just any old rattle-trap car may have been to Canada or Mexico; Pap and Grandpap, after being born and raised out beyond the end of the dirt road, have been everywhere worth mentioning; the merest shack has a TV antenna raised above it. And who wants a buggy or horse today? In a recent 1000-mile trek across our mountains I saw and made a record of two teams of mules, not on the road but in fields beside it. Not a horse-drawn vehicle did I meet or see. Even in some rather remote places that are reached only by gravelled roads there were only cars, most of the time much more expensive ones than my own. What can boys brag about, especially when they want to overawe their pals? Nobody seems to care whether or not your daddy can whip the other fellow's dad. No boy that I ever heard of ever bragged about his father's intellectual prowess. There must be something still around to excite envy comparable with what we felt toward the fellow who had eaten at a hotel or been to the Chicago World's Fair or done some other feat like these.
IGNORANCE AGAIN

My two recent articles on the ignorance of so many of us who refuse to believe folk knowledge have attracted more attention, I believe, than any similar two in recent years. Many people have told me or written me that they had often thought how much ignorant people knew but had just never said so. That is one of the purposes of these articles: to say what a great many people have thought but did not take time to write down. That is about all a folklorist is, anyway, just a putter-downer.

Folk knowledge or imagined knowledge is more highly regarded by the folk than the most abstruse learning is regarded by the scholar. The scholar often knows that learning is wholly a relative thing, and he certainly knows that what is acceptable now may soon be superseded by greater knowledge. But the folk believe and know that what they think is the real thing, not a matter of temporary knowledge. Some new medicine, for example, is avowedly, an experiment that only the wildest-eyed scientists would regard as the last word in medical research; but the teas of Grandma, the pills made by some neighborhood quack, or even some magic worked by wart-removers or curers of thrush just remain permanent, as if foreordained.

In other spheres besides medicine this same sureness of the folk looks bright and actual by the side of scientific assertions. History, for example, is a very different thing handed down by father to son as compared with genuine and painstaking research. Almost every day some item in the newspapers, particularly the Point of View columns, shows that there are certainly two histories: the one the writer believes in and the other one. I am surprised that there is not a more vocal attack on the airplane, the atom bomb, and the other accomplishments that man has to his credit in late years. Maybe the chief enemies of these modern things are not given to writing but could
argue you down at the country store and prove that most of them are non-existent and the others are signs of man's depravity.

There used to be lots of fun in comparing the rural fellow who went to town and saw the sights and the complacent city fellow who lived right in the midst of wonders and never batted an eye. From extended travels in Kentucky and neighboring states in regions where we used to feel that humanity was slightly behind the procession, I have concluded that there are probably more of these backward people in the good-sized towns and cities. Rightly or wrongly, it is a pretty shabby cabin that does not have a TV antenna sticking above it; probably the rest have radios, anyway.

I'm talking about folk ignorance; I am in no sense limiting my remarks to the poor or the illiterate. Some of the so-called educated people whom I have known in my more than a half century in the schoolroom have been just as unconvincing and unconvincible as the remotest outlander of other days. Long ago in this column I mentioned "young fogies" as a reminder that even young people often come to college with their minds already made up on all subjects. They are determined not to learn anything, in any subject, that differs from what they learned as very immature children in some cross-roads high school. If the truth were told, their teachers probably had similar ideas and warned their graduates against imbibing new ideas at college. I have heard, in well-to-do homes, enough arguments against colleges to make the government close the whole sorry spectacle of education and be done with it. I used to think that my generation of college boys and girls had the hardest time ever in trying to overcome a general hostility toward learning; but I have come to feel that even the youngest students today have still a big battle to fight to acquire or keep an open mind. Learning is always modest; ignorance is always assured and positive.
STANDARDIZATION

Life is a struggle between individualism and standardization. A person who leans too far to one side or the other is likely to be regarded as queer. With all our varied origins, it is amazing how standardized most of our folk customs are becoming. Even younger people have urged me to chronicle the passing of so many of our customs because they feel that it will soon be impossible to recreate the immediate past, not to mention times long ago. In the very nature of things, some standardization is imperative. Our population is constantly on the move; it would be tragic if everybody had to remake his customs whenever he moved away a few miles. But it is refreshing to find people who refuse to give up all individual ways of doing things. Today it is possible to be outwardly standardized but inwardly as individualistic as any pioneer might have been. People who have plenty of money often spend some of it in acting like themselves and letting the other and more standardized people do as they please. It is difficult for ordinary people, like you and me, to be individualistic; sometimes we run into conditions that would threaten our jobs or our local standing if we did not seem to fit in. On the other hand, some of our contemporaries are so leveled to the standards that they are almost indistinguishable as people and seem robots or automatons.

Since the tourist traffic has become so great, local areas have found that customs and foods and other folkways sometimes will bring more money from travelers than just standardized things. Imagine Florida or California or Texas or New England with only standardized foods! If you have traveled in New England and not seen seafood dinners everywhere, you must have been blind. Imagine Florida without its tropical foods! Years ago I stopped at a restaurant in the swamps of Louisiana. Most of what I ordered was just commonplace food, which I
have forgotten. But for bread I had a bun, which tasted like nothing else I have ever eaten. I should have asked what to call for to get another one some time. Many people whom I have talked to have met the same bun, but they, too, forgot to find more about it. When I think of the Mississippi Delta, I can taste that exotic bun and wish for more. I must confess that my plan to have a codfish dinner went awry at Gloucester, Massachusetts, some years ago. I had felt that I could not pass up that town with a genuine fish dinner. But long before I got to a restaurant, the odor of fish satisfied my craving for any actual fish dinner; I ordered a steak. I was not so squeamish at Astoria, Oregon, when I was visiting my daughter there. The day I arrived, she had caught a 39-pound salmon and dressed it herself. The next day I satisfied my hunger with great slices of fresh salmon, enjoying the idea somewhat better than the food. I am a bit ashamed to confess that I did not like it better, but, after all, outside folks have to learn to like our Southern cornbread and we to like the Northern sweetened type. It is so much easier for restaurants and such places to serve a standardized menu that many fail to advertise their local delicacies. But those who dare often acquire a big name.

Of course, clothes are so standardized that business suits are the same everywhere. Only play clothes might differ somewhat, but the differences are being done away with every season. The stiff formality of some years ago seems strange to my younger friends; they cannot understand why a restaurant would forbid any gentleman to enter unless he was properly attired, especially in a coat and tie. Only once in my life, in New Orleans many years ago, did I suddenly notice that people were staring at me. The temperature was 99, there was no air-conditioning, and I did not even have a coat with me on my journey to the grave of the original of Evangeline. Nobody said anything, but I concluded that my clean shirt was just not enough. Nothing, however, interfered with my downing a huge Creole dinner.
DIGGING FISHING WORMS

In early September, 1959, I camped in the Great Smoky Mountains for a number of days and learned again how very damp things can be over there. One night as we were setting our tent, we moved some flat stones and uncovered a double handful of night crawlers, big, fat ones that any fish would risk his life to get a nibble at. My partner and I at once remembered the places where we used to dig worms, back on the farm in what is now Mammoth Cave National Park and away at Fidelity, down in the Jackson Purchase. Even though he is only half as old as I, he recalls the fine worms we used to find around the chicken trough. In my zeal for collecting strange things, a zeal that contents itself with the idea and not the things themselves, I have wanted to collect chicken-watering troughs or other similar things. In Fidelity neighborhood a standard chicken trough was the ash container of an old woodstove. When the step stove gave way to the flat-topped stove, the old battered-up, discarded one was often relegated to the back yard or the shedroom of the smokehouse. I have smoked many a year's meat from parts of our old discarded step stove. The ash container of this same stove served all of my later childhood and maybe for years later as the chicken trough. Why we called it a trough I do not know; everybody did. Chickens have a way of splashing water a lot when they come to drink. That kept the ground wet around the trough and guaranteed a steady supply of fishing worms. Sometimes we got pretty greedy and so exhausted the supply that it would take a few days for enough other hungry worms to come to take their places, but the actual supply was never gone. Then we would turn over flat stones that had been collected to help in building and add to our can of worms. A few left-over backlugs at the woodpile could be counted on the yield some additional ones. But the biggest, the fattest, the very best worms somehow found their way to that
splashed-over chicken trough or else fattened on the moist earth around it.

Another collection of things could be made if we would pool our memories of what we used to hold the wriggling worms that were destined to be bait for the actual fish we would bring home on a twig or the very large ones that got away. Since Father was a doctor, we had a variety of cans and bottles for our worms. One preparation of quinine, that old stand-by in malarial countries, came in wide-mouthed bottles, which were useful for worm containers and for just about everything else. Another form of quinine came in a small square tin box, just right for a one-man fishing expedition. When Father and I went together, we would each have a can of worms; when he would catch more fish than I, I was tempted to steal some of his worms out of the magic can. Knowing Father as I did, I just did not do anything of the sort. I hope the Puritans were wrong when they said that our punishments in the Hereafter would be just as severe for things we wanted to do as for those we actually did; maybe some very hot fire is awaiting me for wanting to raid Father's can of worms. In the cartoons the worm-container is always a tin can that had been left over from the kitchen. Tin cans down our way were often treasured possessions and were not polluted by a handful of wriggling, smelly fishing worms. Various sizes were used to help out in the kitchen; some three sizes were for biscuits, according to whether these same biscuits were for hungry boys or less hungry grown-ups or fashionable company. But that was not all, for cans were saved to hold salt and other things used in cookery, for garden seeds, for fried-meat grease to be used later in seasoning. My mother hated to see any tin cans thrown away without having any further use. Imagine what the world would be today if we did not have our cans hauled off every few days! In my collection of worm containers I certainly could have many a shape and size of can or bottle. I cannot recall having seen any such collection, any more than the suggested collection of doorstops, from covered tin cans to padded bricks or even especially made pottery doorstops.
Civilization has a way of making us all alike, ironing out our slight differences. It is easier to get along with folks in this way, but we do lose a lot of picturesque individuality. Since I have taught grammar all my grown-up days, I have an apology that I could not have given to most of my classes: I somewhat hate to uproot old ways of saying things merely because the procession of civilization has passed by. We call such words, rather learnedly, obsolete or obsolete, according to whether they are going out of use by the correct ones in society or are almost entirely gone. It is just these words that seem most full of flavor to a folklorist or philologist.

When I was camping in the Smokies in the summer of 1959, we very foolishly left outside one night our small camp icebox. A bear discovered it and raided it. His noisiness waked us up, and our yells at him waked up many of our neighboring campers. In spite of losing some meat and cheese and butter, we had a good laugh at our antics. The next morning, among the various campers who came by to talk over the raid, an old man, camping with his son, asked my partner: "Why didn't you ketch him by the year and whup him?" That sentence was worth all the money we had paid for our lost groceries, including the two fried peach pies that the bear apparently had for dessert. Over and over we enjoyed the old man's picturesque language, an echo of what my partner and I both known from infancy. It is probable that we will remember the bear longest for the words of the old man rather than for the loss of our food.

Always I have tried to impress upon my students in my advanced courses in the English language that unadorned, unconscious language is far better than some stiff, dressed-up diction that seems as unreal as dyed hair. To me there are two kinds of good language: the kind I have tried to teach is correct according to the best users of our time...
and is the trade mark of the well-educated man or woman; the other kind is the perfectly unconscious kind, used by the unschooled but keen-thinking people whom I have known in such numbers all my life. The prim, over-correct type that some so-called educated people use is just nauseating, like false modesty or false morality. The two good kinds express well what is to be said. One kind, the kind that we are forever seeking, tries to say well and simply and smoothly what is to be said, not necessarily ornately or learnedly. That type of language is useful for getting things said. It often has a tendency to avoid figurative expressions and may become almost too plain and common-sense. The other type is often colored with homely comparisons, with quaint old pronunciations, with unconscious modern uses of old words and old pronunciations and old meanings. If a person has been kept away from this native lingo, he may regard it as crude, too frank, too full of similes and metaphors. We others, and that includes most of my contemporaries, grew up with this old type of language in our "years" and have no more difficulty in understanding it than we do in understanding the ordinary language of educated or even bookish people. We folklorists must confess that we glory in this folk language and are ashamed of ourselves often for not being bold enough to use it in the same way as the less well-educated speak it. Among ourselves, when we know that all the listeners are attuned to the folk lingo that we all know, we let ourselves go and trust that there are not present any severe critics who might imagine that we do not know any better. Not too many people here are at ease in two entirely different languages. In Europe, where there is such a welter of languages, it is necessary for even average people to know one or more besides their own. But there are thousands or millions of us who are perfectly at home in our own two languages, the one we have painfully learned in school and society and the one that we recognize and enjoy from our natural, picturesque friends who have never had our opportunities but who can talk and talk understandingly and well.
Striking a Balance

Recently I have been making out a sort of balance sheet for myself as a lad at Fidelity and my other young years. When I was young, I felt that I had lacked many a thing that seemed valuable, judging by the endless candidates that I heard talk. For one thing, my parents, though poor, as they were supposed to be in any success story, were honest and highly respected, even reverenced locally. That would not have got me very far in politics, for it indicated that I did not have much need of office. Then I was not born in a log cabin. There were plenty of these earlier houses around, and my father as the local doctor acted for the stork in bringing probably half of the population to log cabins. No, our house belonged to the next-highest form of structure—the boxed house, with ceiling and weatherboarding added. That gave added distinction, but I still felt pretty small when I contemplated the few frame houses I knew and the one lone brick house. They brought so much distinction that I felt plain wicked with envy. No politician in my youth had half a chance unless he was born in a log cabin. Next, I did not have to walk two or five or ten miles to school. It was only a scant half mile across the small hills, "through the woods," to our one-roomed little schoolhouse, a distance that meant nothing as compared with even one game of Hare and Hounds played at the noon recess. Some of my fellow-students at Fidelity did walk a mile and more, but I cannot recall that this added chance of fame ever brought any of them anything. A further condition often referred to by famous men was the inadequacy of the teachers; mine had plenty of inadequacies, but they were men and women far ahead of the average heads of families in our school district and were therefore highly regarded; there was not a drunken brute or tacky person in the lot; most of the teachers taught a few years, married, raised families, and died at the proper times, still respected and
loved. One became a well-known physician, another a Methodist preacher, another a lifelong educator in Texas, where he went shortly after he taught me. I am afraid that I could not get a vote of sympathy from any of this.

When I became a larger boy, I lacked lots of things. With a weak back, I did not do very well as a wrestler or a diver or an acrobat on the acting poles at our school. Now, there was a genuine loss, for anybody, politician or other. I have always wanted to show off as did the other boys at Fidelity and would be glad to risk a hospital bill if I could walk on my hands, even at this late date. Still later, after I was beginning to develop a grown-up voice, I wanted to "carry a corner" at a barn-raising, to wield my ax skillfully and make the other fellows sick with envy; but no such chance ever came to me, a puny stack of bones until I was grown. I left home at eighteen to go to school and teach, and my chances of carrying a corner migrated to the Limbo of Things. That is pretty full, I imagine, of similar longings and outlived arts. Now many a boy of my acquaintance owned a rubber-tired buggy and high-stepping horse; I didn't. My only animal was a little red mule; I was all of thirty-six before I ever owned a vehicle of any kind, a T-Model Ford. Many boys, too, owned a pistol, which they toted in their hip pockets; I didn't. In fact, I did not want to, for I dreaded Father, who sternly opposed pistol-toting; besides, I was too Scotchy to spend money for anything that was not absolutely necessary. In spite of all these lacks, I grew up, went away to other fields, and began to lose some of the envy for the other fellows who had all these blessings. Now I can say that I surrender all my native rights to a log cabin, to a rubber-tired buggy, to a pistol, to carrying a corner, even to skinning a cat gracefully. I am not wholly satisfied with what I have had as substitutes for all these things, but a fellow cannot have it all, even a high-stepping horse. But who, now, wants a horse?
FORGOTTEN FAMOUS PLACES

Every year some place that used to be prominent in the news drops out of people's thoughts, just as some actor who used to be in everybody's thoughts dies practically unknown by the younger generation. Recently I spent a whole day with other bird students in the neighborhood of Cheek's Tavern, once famous as a stage-coach tavern on the old Louisville and Nashville Turnpike. The present building has been restored by the well-to-do owner, a building that was erected in 1838 to take the place of a still older one that was already famous—or infamous—in 1810, when Alexander Wilson, famous ornithologist, stopped at it long enough to visit its well-known cave, where the tavern-keeper, a Minorcan, by his own account, was accused of secreting the dead bodies of guests that he had murdered. As on a previous occasion, I entered the cave but found no bones or anything suggestive of earlier and wilder days. I suspect that there are hundreds of people in Robertson County, Tennessee, where this old tavern stood, who have heard of the place and who would be surprised that legend had once attached to such a beautiful spot.

Today I picked up a very dusty, dog-eared little book when I was rearranging some of my possessions, recently transferred to my home from my office. It bears this rather overdone title: A NEW SYSTEM OF GEOGRAPHY, ANCIENT AND MODERN, FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS, ACCOMPANIED WITH AN ATLAS ADAPTED TO THE WORK, by Jedidiah Morse, D. D., and Sidney Edwards Morse, A. M. The date is 1828, but all the data seem at least ten to fifteen years older than that. There were seventy-five counties in Kentucky then, as compared with the ultimate 120. Lexington was listed as the largest and wealthiest town in the state, though the authors suggested that Louisville, the second town in size and wealth, was likely to be a future metropolis because of its river trade with Natchez, New Orleans, and St. Louis. (The 1820 population
of Frankfort was 1679; of Lexington, 5279; of Louisville, only 4012. Such modern good-sized cities as Paducah, Owensboro, Ashland, Covington, Newport were not even mentioned. Of course, the Jackson Purchase was not opened until 1919; hence Paducah could not have advanced very far. Smithland, however, at the mouth of the Cumberland, is listed, as are Maysville, Russellville, and Augusta. Years ago someone in Paducah told me of a letter that some elderly Paducahan owned that was addressed to someone at "Paducah, near Smithland, Kentucky." Thus time passes.

It is interesting to know what things were stressed as early as 1820 in the state: the odd cavernous limestone area and its numerous caves("In the southwestern part of the state, between Green river and the Cumberland, there are several wonderful caves. One, called the MAMMOTH cave, is said to be 8 or 10 miles long"); its two great colleges that still exist, Transylvania and Centre, though the latter is not given that name; the great fertility of the central areas of the state; the numerous salt springs("Salt is obtained from them in sufficient quantities to supply, not only this state, but a great part of Ohio and Tennessee"); the cliffs along the Kentucky and Cumberland rivers; and the new canal that was about to be opened around the Rapids of the Ohio at Louisville.

All of this sounds a strange mixture of things we know and distorted legends and memories of aged people. The tides of life rise and fall; sometimes we are right in our guesses of what will happen next; sometimes we show how human and ignorant we are by betting on the wrong horse in history or economics as at the racetrack. An eminent woman lecturer in Kentucky some years ago wrote about famous places that are still known, but she failed to check on her more recent books and articles; some of the spots she mentioned are completely gone, even though they once did attract, as watering places, for instance, great crowds of pleasure-seekers. It always comes as a surprise to find that some torn-down old shack is all that is left of what used to be a fashionable resort, patronized only by the elite, the wealthy.
SOME FOLK RICHES

Last week I somewhat cynically listed the things that I did not have, in my boyhood at Fidelity, things that politicians used to make much of. Now I want to enumerate some of the folk riches that I shared with my generation, riches that will seem, possibly, quite as valueless as some of the things I listed last week.

Though we lived the other side of nowhere, I had a little red wagon that Santa Claus brought me. No rich boy could have been any better off. Somehow a little red wagon gave distinction, so much so that I have never known a man who had owned one who was not proud of his priceless treasure. One of the saddest things I ever heard said was by a middle-aged man who confessed, almost tearfully, that he had never owned one. His father, a very practical man, said that his boys could make themselves a wagon if they wanted one; they did just that, but what is a home-made wagon by the side of a little red wagon? This same man said, proudly, that each of his children in turn had owned a red wagon and would not have to grow up to feel ashamed of themselves.

Though there are hosts of people who will not feel that I should be proud of the next blessing, I am proud anyway: I attended a one-roomed country school. There was nothing else to attend, but I feel that I was blessed by being born when and where I was. At such a school you are thrown with all sorts of children, of all ages and all varieties of intelligence. You can take the measure, not only of the children of your own age but of everybody. I can still recall very vividly something from each period in my growing up in Fidelity School, from my first days as a timid, spoiled little boy until I should have been through high school, if there had only been one. For most of those years I might have been called "teacher's pet," for I dearly loved that little pitiful school and stayed around it until I had memorized my textbooks. Not long after I started to school, since I had learned to read by some
means besides being taught, I was asked by each successive teacher to help teach smaller ones. Goliath was a giant, but he did not feel as big as I did when I tried to instruct some little fellow a few years younger than I was. We did not have grades in those days; so I cannot talk about times when I was in this or that grade. We had readers; anybody knew where we were by our telling about the fourth or fifth reader. What we learned in that one-roomed school may not have been what we should have learned, but it was usually presented enthusiastically and eagerly grasped and reviewed with the folks at home.

Since we lived near a creek and near extensive woods, I waded in the creek and climbed trees and picked up hickory nuts and gathered blackberries and made bark whips and whistles and...; same what a country boy who lived at the edge of the woods could do, and I did it. I did not have to walk a long distance to be with nature; it was right at my elbow. When I got big enough to work on the farm, I rode my mule to distant fields and made note of what was going on. Wild flowers and birds and such wild animals as we had passed in review before me. Scholars have made much of the definition of a college as a professor on one end of a log and a student on the other. How about the credits that we country boys made in morning air and sunsets, in snow and ice and frost, in woodchopping and hay-making? Poets have spoken of driving home the cows; ours came of their own accord, since they ran in boundless unfenced bottoms. But we rode our horses to the creek or the spring, sometimes attended by a miscellaneous group of other colts and mules. Going to the spring was almost like going now to a super-market, for you were likely to see other boys with their stock at the spring and exchange neighborhood gossip or the latest funny yarn. And, always, the weather and the plants and animals were around, just as they are everywhere but not so much a part of one's life as of the country boy's. Say, wasn't I rich?
HISTORY, GOOD AND BAD

Every day I run into something or somebody that makes me realize that there are certainly two kinds of history or maybe many more. Suppose that you, gentle reader—as old-time writers called the ones who condescended to read what was written—could not read, had never attended even a day of school, and that your ancestors for miles back were like you. What would history, something written down in a book, mean? How much of it would you believe? Especially, if Grandpa was still living, equally illiterate, wouldn't you believe him in preference to any book put out by city fellers?

In my long life I have known just about every aspect of literacy and illiteracy. Hosts of the estimable citizens of the Fidelity neighborhood could not read and write, but, for that matter, long since I came to Bowling Green, there were more than 3500 people in Warren County in the same boat. Among the illiterate at Fidelity, the ones who could not read and write were usually silent, but among the children, such as I, with my big ears wide open, they had their own private opinions of what the so-called educated ones called history, just as they had their opinions of what the doctors prescribed or what was sold at the local drugstore. What was an actual date, such as the opening of the Jackson Purchase to settlers in 1819, when Grandpa said that his pappy settled there before 1800 and could prove it? Once, many years ago, I heard, at the annual meeting of the Kentucky Folklore Society, a woman of a famous central-Kentucky county declare that her ancestor was already settled on his own farm in the Bluegrass in 1769! None of us said anything, but we longed to page Dan'l Boone and get his opinion of a settlement that early in Kentucky history. And yet this woman was reasonably educated and was in no sense breaking down mentally. She just knew, she said, that many of the dates of Kentucky history were
The line of demarcation between history and folklore is a tenuous one, so tenuous that most of us average people could not separate the two in doubtful cases, even though we regard ourselves as literate and even somewhat scholarly. If a historian writes without knowing this shadowy realm between fact and fiction, he will never present his folks properly and honestly. I have read histories written by able and patient scholars that could have been written about sticks and stones rather than about people; laws, datable events, big names that could be authenticated, all were there, but the great American people, living and trying to think, had been left out. In a way, those histories were as distorted as the folklore versions of the same happenings. Fortunately, I have also read some excellent histories, somewhat more recently, based on the theory that history also must know something about the folk mind, must record events that can be dated and suggest events that may or may not have taken place but were powerful influences in the very serious aspects of history.

One such recent history, dealing with the Old Northwest, is careful to document every possible reference, in the manner of a great scholar; it also opens, with no apology, the doors to folk thinking, folk theories of our history and government, folk blaming of crop failures on the political party in power. Even this type of reference is documented, too, for the undercurrents of American history have had their exponents, too, though often laughed at the time of their writing. Imagine some of the historians I have known if some one had suggested that quaint folk characters like Bill Arp and Petroleum V. Nasby and Artemus Ward should have their say about the Civil War and its problems! But it would be a historian hardly worthy of the name if he failed to realize that these and other folk creations expressed some of the basic beliefs of the time and should be listened to in our making a final judgment of our history.
"YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN"

"Should you ask me, whence these stories? Whence these legends and traditions With their frequent repetitions."

Thus Longfellow began his HIWATHA. And thus I might have begun this column twenty-five years ago, for it is easy to see that I, too, like the great poet, often repeat myself. And it is equally easy to see why. Every year comes around with similar seasons: seedtime and harvest and cold and heat and winter and summer. And it is a matter of course to have certain thoughts at certain seasons. For example, it is winter as I write this essay, and winter brings a more restricted life for many people, a greater love for houses and fires, and, most of all, Christmas. Just now the new chimes on the tower of Cherry Hall, our Western class-room building, were being tried out with snatches of Christmas carols. How easy to drop back decades and see the "Christmas like it used to be," or, what amounts to the same thing, our memories of it from experiences formed when we were little tads and not the big grown-ups that we now are.

While the chimes ring, suppose we do go back and see the strange brightness of our Christmas in what was really a pretty drab world. With all our failing memories which prompt us to imagine that life was once much more poetic than it now is, let's be honest and see how our childhood worlds were so small that a tiny little thing like a shiny new red wagon or an exceptionally long Roman candle or a better-than-average lump of candy seemed like heaven itself in pure enjoyment. Life was far from being the animated thing we have now, for it was in no sense child-centered except at Christmas. At other times we heard a lot about human depravity and the weary lot of us all, but even our remote Fidelity warmed up at Christmas and actually seemed to forget for a while that "earth's but a desert drear."
Just any boy with a little help could make himself a wagon, with wheels sawed out of a log and capable of making irregular tracks in the dust and mud; but it was beyond the range of anybody I knew to make a little red wagon. With all the values that I have learned about in my more than the proverbial three score and ten, I still feel that a little red wagon measures something that lifts man above the brute, that adds artistry and comfort and social prominence. How much I pity the poor children, boys, especially, who never had a red wagon. If you got it when you were small, you could be pulled in it by older brothers and sisters, who probably were far too big to ride in it anyway. And no boy that I ever saw was too small to pull his wagon a little and load it up with things that he liked and owned. It was a mean older brother who interfered with Little Brother and his little red wagon. Then, as the owner of this fabulous carriage grew larger, he, too, might be the horse-power as he drew his wagon, with some smaller or more favored passenger. There is nothing like being a man with a carriage ready for a girl friend, whether that carriage be a little red wagon or the most recent creation in a car, American or foreign. If I had to choose among the many, many things that Santa Claus or some of his helpers have given me at Christmas, in all the years that I can remember, I know that my first choice would be my little red wagon, which arrived, unless my dates have got crossed up from being so numerous, at Christmas, 1893, the same Christmas that brought my little linen ABC book, ALPHABET OF ANIMALS. The red wagon lives only in memory today, a very tender memory, but the little book, with still some colors in its pictures printed on linen, retains a show of color that helps to distinguish the zebra, "the last in the show," from the elephant, "which you may ride." But I would be too big to ride in that wagon if I had it and do not have any of grandchildren near enough to be passengers.
JUST WATCH ME!

Recently I have been thinking about things we used to do to attract attention, to show off. No human being is ever quite free of this rather childish fault, and it does not hurt us to laugh at humanity and ourselves at the same time.

Somehow there is no institution today quite like sitting till bedtime, partly because this event allowed young and old alike to "strut their stuff." I early learned to do stunts with strings, like making a crow's nest, or a Jacob's ladder, or other things that I can still do but cannot name. I never learned card tricks, but some of our neighbors could make a card vanish quite in the style of magicians I saw later, after I had left Fidelity. I was pretty limber in my early life and could pick up a broomstraw with my lips from the floor, without using my hands, either. And I could bend my thumb back and touch my forearm. But my crooked legs made me fairly burst with envy when Uncle Carroll, Mother's brother, could twist his legs into all sorts of queer-looking shapes, locking his foot around the other leg. I could not stand on my head or walk on my hands, but others could, making me violate the Tenth Commandment violently. I knew lots of riddles and catch questions that I would spring on the less informed, always with a sort of triumph because I could do something they could not do, they with their ability to walk on their hands and stand on their heads and turn cartwheels. Once one of my brothers made a sensation by filling a glass with water and then emptying into it a whole pocketful of nails without causing the glass to overflow. And he could pick up a boiling teakettle from the fireplace and hold his hand under it. I never tried this, even though I know now the secret of the magic act; I dreaded anything very hot or very cold. But I could whirl a bucket of water and not spill a drop, in spite of Mother's frightened
looks and actions. Sometimes when I said, "Just watched me," I lost my nerve and made a spectacle of myself.

All of this was kid stuff, of course, but our elders often joined us. They showed us some pretty clumsy tricks of sleight of hand, they involved us in tongue-twisters, and they sometimes entered into our own more youthful games and beat us at our own contests, much to our joy that big folks would help us out. But grown-ups had other things with which to show off. They could and did bring out all the scary tales they had hoarded up, stories of haunted houses, panthers, ghosts, and crazy people. All the bravery I had had when I was showing off began to cool, and I began to draw up my feet from the floor into my chair, to protect them from seen or unseen critters. Besides scary stories most of our elders could tell great yarns about their elders, most of whom seemed to have lived in more virile times, when a man was a man—when he wasn't a sort of demigod. Uncle This or Grandpa That really did some great Herculean tasks, the equal or superior of anything we had read about in our books. Usually the neighbor who was most mouse-like had descended from some heroic giant of a fellow who put the Injuns in their place or, more recently, practically annihilated the Yankee army at Shiloh. Since we younger ones were not at Shiloh or in the pioneer clearings, we could only believe that what we heard was true history, unwritten but deserving of being in every textbook. Some of the neighbors would also drag out some forgotten ancestor who might not have been a regular Dan'l Boone but who was somebody in the early days, who owned lots of land, lots of slaves, and a big fine house—away back in North Carolina. I had not been in North Carolina then, and, again, I could not dispute his words. I only hoped that I had had some such ancestors, also back in North Carolina, where the Robertsons and the Wilsons had lived before coming to Kentucky and Tennessee. Standing on your head and bragging about great ancestors are pretty much alike; not everybody can do either very well.
In my years of being associated daily with scientists I have heard of new names for diseases about as fast as they were given. It has been a little hard on me, though, for I fear I have forgotten what these same high-falutin aches used to be called, back in Fidelity and Podunk. What has become of "bilious colic"? It used to be common and could be talked about, even by refined ladies. Of course, it and lots of other ailments were treated with calomel. And where is calomel itself? I do not recall having seen any reference to it in contemporary articles in years and years. There are not even dire things prophesied for the users of it, as used to be true back in the days when every doctor prescribed it for nearly everything. I suppose that "risings" still rise, but they have so many names that one word would not do for them. Maybe there are just not so many of them anyway, since so many new drugs have been invented to rub on or swallow or have squirted into the blood stream. "Carbuncles," too, seem on the way out, but they stayed around long enough for me to have, some twenty-five years ago, a series of them until some shots discouraged them. One of our small boys at Fidelity heard that big word and promptly called it "tarbuckets," a name it bore all the rest of my days there. I have stood by a number of times and watched my father lance a rising or a carbuncle and felt no especial sympathy for the sufferer, for everybody had them.

Where is "toe itch," that uncomfortable disease of barefooted boys? Was "dew poison" the same thing or another ailment? With either one ahold of you there was nothing funny about it. Now toe itch yields quickly to a home-made remedy. Just tie a yarn string around the affected toe and wait for results; of course, you could medicate the string but that is not necessary. A sore toe used to be a sort of badge of being a boy. Not to have one probably meant that
you might be a sissy. I can remember how people asked small boys about their sore toes and sometimes took a look at the progress of the disease or cure. A typical gag of the time was that some boy would promise to show his sore toe to somebody who would do something for him: "Gimme that apple core, and I'll show you my sore toe." Since shoes are so common, do boys have sore toes or even toes?

I must have been nearly grown before I actually knew of a case of appendicitis. In general, internal operations were feared so much that they just did not exist. The only early one I recall was a last-ditch stand to save the life of our local "Captain," really a first lieutenant in the Confederate Army. Doctors from the county seat volunteered their services free, for the old gentleman was highly regarded though dog poor. Medical attention was far too late, and the old fellow died the next day after the internal operation that attracted attention all over the Fidelity area. I fear the unsuccessful operation delayed for years many an appendicitis operation that would have saved lives or health. All sorts of names were common for what we would call today acute appendicitis, from plain stomach-ache to abscess, but the fear of the doctor's knife usually prevented any operation.

"Janders" is what lots of people called it. Though never common at Fidelity, it did exist, as it still does under the more dignified pronunciation of "jaundice." The first case I ever saw was a very advanced one, with the most unnatural yellow color of the young farmer that I have ever seen. We used to say that it even had colored his hair yellow, but I am inclined to believe now that his long, scraggly locks had merely sunburned. What Father gave him for his janders I do not know, but I'll bet it was calomel, at least. Anyway, he got well and lived to be an old man; he may still be living. But few people today would know what "yaller janders" meant.
OUTWARD OR INWARD?

A great many people who write about folklore fail to understand that folkish people often have treasures within that a mere outsider can never know. Often folkish people live in circumstances below what may be the norm of their times. Some writers have a tendency to overplay this condition and imagine that only dull or even pathetic lives could arise in such a setting. I fear that a lot of good sympathy is often wasted on our contemporaries who seem to have less than we in money and travel and wealth and philosophy.

In my long years I have known many, many people who could be called the folk, and most of them were not to be pitied. It is true that they lived in a world quite different from the accepted one of people of better houses and books and lands. There is no doubt that some of the folkish ones are genuinely cynical because of their lot in life, but that percentage must be small if my experience with them is normal. You and I read books and discuss things that we find there; we listen to accepted classical or other dignified music and feel a little proud of ourselves that we know music and can speak as ones having authority; we know many of the great literary stories of the world and rejoice at our having acquired them. All this is good and in many ways evaluates our education. But the folk have their stories and their songs and their heroes, maybe not so tangible as ours but nevertheless genuine and life-like to the imagination. I wonder who of your acquaintances is as real to you as Barbara Allen is and has been to thousands of people. History as we know it gets somewhat distorted or vague in ballads and folk tales, but it often gains a symmetry that we associate normally only with great works of art, in which the artist is allowed certain privileges of rearranging his materials after his own heart's desire. What does a folk singer do if not just that in singing his version of some well-known
ballad, varying it ever so little but still giving it his own stamp, as plainly as a musician of world renown colors his music to suit his purpose or, maybe, his own heartbreak. We praise this in a skilled musician or a great novelist or a great dramatist; why not in a great folk singer, even though he may be an artist on a slightly different level?

Many a time I have listened to a story told by an elderly person in inimitable fashion and envied her artistry, which was probably utterly unknown to her. And I never failed to get the high points of the story, the dramatic scenes, the pathetic ones that often drew tears from the teller. I have also seen singers who so lived in their songs that they, too, rejoiced or wept at the right places, with no apparent consciousness of their being so lost in their songs.

Maybe to you and me the song is just a ballad, somewhat like hundreds of others we have read or heard sung. The singer may find it a bit of moving history, which to her may seem as real as her own sorrows. When I have heard Negroes sing blues, not the music-hall variety but the kind we heard in the cornfields at Fidelity, I felt like crying as I hoed my tobacco or followed my mule and plow. Before we think that the Negro was merely showing off and pretending a sorrow he did not actually feel, just swap places with him and sing "Nobody Knows the Trouble I See" or some of his blues.

We have history, art, music, literature—everything that formal learning can bring. The folkish person has some of these, of course, but he probably has ten times as much legendary, traditional lore as all that he has learned from books or bookish people. It is not fair to rule out his depths of feeling and his artistry merely because they do not seem to fit our pet schemes.

"So runs my song, but what am I?"
"An infant crying in the night,"
"An infant crying for the light;"
"And with no language but a cry."
"THE NORTH WIND DOOTH BLOW"

Often it has seemed remarkable to me how much weather lore, good and bad, the people of Fidelity knew or believed in. Living all their lives on the farm, interested in planting or harvesting their crops, careful not to lose their meat by butchering it in weather not proper for preserving it, they watched the signs, they talked among themselves, but chiefly, I suspect, handed down customs that were ancient when America was settled. Some of the lore was sound and scientific, though they would hardly have known what was meant by that. Some was just folklore, no better and no worse than most of the folk remedies practiced among them.

There was a time when sophisticated people felt that talking about the weather was tacky, a good evidence of the shallowness of the people so talking. Some of this smart-aleck attitude was an outgrowth of rebellion against some local prognosticators who were revered in spite of their rather poor batting average in telling what was going to happen. Some of it was an effort to get away from the perennial topic of conversation, such as any ignoramus could and did constantly use. Now, a generation later, the weather is in just about everybody's daily experience. Millions watch their radios and TV's for an indication of what the day is to bring forth, not only when they plan a trip or some outside work that rain or snow might interfere with, but on all sorts of other days. There seems to be a great thrill for nearly everybody to know that our little local weather picture is just a small part of a big sweeping "front" that is moving across the country. It is not regarded as low-brow for someone to mention that the temperature yesterday was 36 below zero at International Falls, Minnesota. That reminds me of the interest we had in hearing from up the creek or out in the Flatwoods when a
Big snow came or the temperature skidded below its usual winter low. There was a sort of disgust and envy when we heard that up on McCullough's Creek Uncle Briggs Witherspoon's thermometer registered two degrees lower than the one at the Fidelity postoffice did, in the cold winter of 1899-1900. What right did Uncle Briggs have to cheat us out of being the coldest place in our part of the world? Of course, nobody would admit that his thermometer, if he even had one, might be cheap and unreliable; thermometers were mysterious things, anyway, and hardly to be criticized. Right now, in my sophisticated good-sized town, people compare notes on their thermometers with something of the zeal that we used away back in the sticks and also away back in the twentieth century.

My mother astonished me by telling me that her father could name some of the planets as he saw them and many of the constellations. So far as I know, he could not read and write or maybe barely so, for he was a pioneer child who moved with his parents early from North Carolina into the wildest parts of Middle Tennessee for a very few years and then, in 1819, on into the Jackson Purchase. If he got any schooling, where did he get it? Also, where did he get his knowledge, such as it was, of the stars? Again, I suspect that this was a carry-over from astrology days back in northern Ireland and southern Scotland, where the family had come from. Knowing the planets was merely good sense in those days, for everything and everybody was under their influence. It paid to know your way around. If you planted your crops under the wrong sign, you paid for your daring or your ignorance; that should not happen again. No wonder your pork spoiled; you butchered your hogs under the wrong sign. Now, long after the mass of humanity has ceased to believe in astrology, people still watch the weather as a sort of fascinating daily show, sometimes pitting their folkish guessing against the knowledge of the paid and trained weather observers of the government.
SKILLED HANDS

Long ago, when I first began to praise folk industries, some of my folklorist friends looked at me as if I had gone crazy for imagining that making a split basket or curing a country ham could possibly have anything to do with folklore. To many of these people, folklore was something published in a book, usually about some primitive races away off on the edge of the world. By degrees the folk scholars have come to see the value of folk handiwork and to assess it along with songs, stories, myths, and such like. Lying in front of me as I write, by our front door, is a section of a rag carpet that I helped weave in 1904 or 1905. That is, I helped by tracking carpet rags, helping Mother dye many of them with local dyes as well as with "boughten" dyes, helping "put in" the carpet from the setting up the spools of twine for the warping to the actual running the first shuttle through the divided strings, and, as a sideline, winding the bobbins or shuttles with the rags in the approved fashion so the rags would be most easily unwound as Mother or my older sister actually wove. Where did we learn all this? In a book? Not my mother, who had woven or helped to weave enough yards of rag carpet to cover what seemed to us like acres of space. Her mother taught her, I suppose, and so on back to the primitive mother who first conceived of a rug to put on the bare ground in front of the fire in a cave or out in the gusty open air. Infinite numbers of people were standing, shadowy, behind the loom as I poke the threads through the eyes, people who had helped in this long process of weaving. Some of the shades might have marveled at the up-to-date though home-made loom on which the carpet was to be woven, for they probably had to work out something far more primitive in the early days of civilization. That section of rag carpet just about epitomizes a whole chapter in civilization, a folkish chapter at that.
Everywhere along our roads are signs telling us that at this
or that place genuine country ham is served, or whole Kentucky hams
can be bought. Some people whom I know make their living by buying
up country hams and selling them to tourists. It is a profitable
business, for hundreds of the purchasers are eager to know what this
country ham as advertised is like; others are ex-country people who
live in the city but still love the memory of the ham that they ate
as children; some are taking hams back to skeptics in other parts
of the country, who doubt whether anything edible can be as good as
country-ham fanciers say this Kentucky product is. Who cured those
hams? And where did the knowledge come from? Why cannot the great
meat-packing houses develop a genuine country ham that would fool
the experts? All of us who live in or near the country know dozens
of people who cure hams by no recipe written down in a book but
by a custom handed down in the family from away back. When I was
a child, I am sure that I would have laughed outright and cruelly if
anyone had suggested that curing hams was an art. I didn't especially
like ham anyway, and somewhat shame-facedly ate my lunch at school
when a slice of it was placed properly inside a biscuit. And everybody,
literally, knew how to cure meat; maybe I thought that such knowledge
was born with you and did not have to be learned. Hadn't I helped
with the meat from the hog-killing to the fried or boiled servings on
our table? It was simple process, easy enough to do, and only a
half wit would have made any mistake in doing it. Now we know that
only skilled hands can do such things well, that no amount of mere
bookish knowledge of curing hams can take the place of the traditional
knowledge that father gave to son, from the days when hams were
first cured even to this very day. I wonder at this folk art
more and more as I grow older, for it is an art, a very great one.
When we at Fidelity, sixty and fifty years ago, contemplated life, we did not realize that we were standing between two worlds, in Matthew Arnold's phrase. To us it seemed that things were as they had been for a long time and would continue to be. In some ways we had advanced very little beyond the days of the early pioneers. Even what advancement had been made was pretty well stopped in its tracks by the Civil War. My own mother used to tell how she and her sisters had to learn the household arts that had been common in their mother's day but had somewhat passed away. Shut off from many of the necessities, people had to learn to start with nothing and make out. Mother carded cotton that had laboriously been freed from its seeds by hand, as in the days before Eli Whitney. People had to seek out salt springs and try to get enough salt to save their winter meat. Grandfather even dug up the floor of his old smokehouse and dissolved out as much salt as he could in his frantic effort to protect the hog meat that stood between his family and meager rations. After the war was over, many of these revived primitive things, and many others that did not show signs of passing, lived on, down into my own time. The spinning wheel was as much a fixture in most homes as the cook stove itself. Many a home still had cooking vessels to use on the open fireplace; I have eaten many a meal thus prepared, even after most people owned a step stove. Farm machinery had slowly changed, but far more corn was planted by hand when I could first remember than planted by drill. I can still feel the wonder of seeing a mere machine dropping the grains and covering them up and of seeing one of the earlier reapers, which cut the wheat but left it to be bound by men who followed the strange new invention. Of course, there were better machines elsewhere, but they were slow about getting into our neighborhood. About the last year before I left home, 1906, a sure-nuff binder cut wheat in our area, causing
many an eye to bug out. And, along about the same time, I heard that a steam-power thresher was in an adjoining neighborhood, but I did not see it. Ours was still the picturesque horse-drawn "power" and the noisy thresher itself. And I might go on for article after article, as I already have done, telling of the quaint, old-fashioned life that was the ordinary thing in 1906 but which soon gave way to modern ways of living.

In the same way we could not know, as none of us were geniuses, that we were living in a transition time nationally, that trying time that spread from the end of the Civil War until the turn of the century and almost to World War I. Mechanization was virtually unknown, horse power was literally what we had, unless you also mention elbow grease and strong backs. We lived in little units, hardly conscious of the big, over-all pattern of the country as a whole. Weather, for example, seemed what we could know of in our creek bottom or along our ridge. We saw the whole world in terms of our crops; when tobacco began to suffer as a crop because of changing markets, we felt that our greatest prop as farmers had been removed. Before adjustments could be made, there was a great turnover in our rural population, for tobacco farmers, especially the younger ones, decided that there was nothing left for them on the farm and forthwith left for the factories of Detroit and other northern Middle Western cities. Some of our counties lost a tenth or more of their population. It was a long time before the people back at Fidelity could feel that they might stay there and not migrate to the ends of the earth. I wish I had some sort of magic by which I could determine how many of the seventy people who lived on my square mile about 1908 moved elsewhere. Certainly the population twenty years after I left home was less than half of that figure on the same area. Probably more people left Fidelity itself than that percentage.

Maybe the descendants of those earlier ones who remained can now see how our little Fidelity is a sort of thermometer or barometer of what is going on in a bigger world than the one bounded by our hills or creeks.
Recently I have been digging through some records and a lot of memories to get some autobiographical things that I want to write down for myself and my descendants. One thing that impressed me was that I have had so many teachers. Maybe I owed it to humanity to teach 36,000 students in my more than a half century of teaching in the schoolroom.

It came as a great surprise that I had had 55 teachers, from the first one at Fidelity in 1895 to the last one at Indiana University in 1929. Surely, if a person can be influenced by the teachers he has had, I should be something much greater than I have ever been or can hope to be. Through no mere sentimentality I look back upon my country teachers--nine of them--with a good deal of affection. So far as I know, only one of them is now living; the last few years have taken many, and a few died long ago--three victims of tuberculosis. In spite of the actual number of credits that those nine people may have had, they were without exception educators. About half of them were not much more than the requisite eighteen years of age when they taught me. Not one except my last man teacher was over thirty, and he was not much above that. They had read enormously for people who did not have so much as two years of high school education; they had wide interests for that time and made our little Fidelity schoolhouse a symbol in my mind of learning. I can recall vividly some of their ways of teaching; I ought to, for I unconsciously followed some of their methods in my country schools and, later, in college. I cannot say that they were conscious of having methods of presenting learning, but by some method they did present it and made it attractive. They were poorly paid public servants, but in our neck of the woods teachers were looked up to, were regarded probably the most highly of our whole area. Nearly every doctor or preacher or lawyer had first been a teacher and had often made his mark in that way before entering the profession that was later
identified as his. Our poor soil was not sufficient to offer food and
clothes and spending money to the rather large population that lived on
it. Some of my friends used to say that our little area grew black
tobacco and schoolteachers. When I went to Hickman County to teach
my first school, I recall that there were nine teachers in that small
county who had originated in my county, Calloway. With the kind of
teachers that I had, all from Calloway County itself, it is no wonder
that many of us younger people decided that we wanted to be teachers
and be as important in our world as these boys and girls were at
Fidelity.

When I finally got a chance to do high school work, away from home
and under college conditions, where the pace was swift and the casualties
numerous, I already had a standard for teachers that I had unconsciously
formed at Fidelity, before and after 1900. Many of the teachers I had
for my high school, college, and university work would have passed my
standard learned from the nine country teachers of my early life. Some
would not have passed, even if they had lived a thousand years. They
lacked the outlook on life of those country boys and girls who taught me
and often seemed unwilling to find any other than their own narrow
views of knowledge. I must confess that I was happiest when I sat in
classes where the teacher had come from some such back-country place as
Fidelity, but had gone on to college and university, but retained the
wholesome love of knowledge that should be the first qualification of
anybody who wants to teach. One of my greatest college teachers
knew two dozen languages as well as few of us know English, but he
was the good-pal sort of fellow who never forgot that he grew up in a
Middle Western country neighborhood and did not know an English word
until he started to the local school. His German ancestors had held
tightly to their native language and customs and somewhat resented his
having to give them up. He really did not give them up but added to
them and loved to reinterpret his backgrounds in terms of his German
parentage and his Middle Western life as a linguist. He would have loved
Fidelity and my earlier teachers.
Through the years that I have been writing about Fidelity I certainly hope that the readers have not got the idea that our natives were Dogpatch primitives, as many people seem to think the people of remote places used to be. Our natives were of several types, of course, like the people who live in your town today. There were some very ignorant, primitive people, not far advanced above the earliest pioneer stage, but their numbers were never large in my day. Just about everybody was able to read and write, though there, as well as in most other places, many people did not try to read anything after they had painfully learned their letters and could call over words one at a time in the reading fashion then approved. Probably half our homes took a weekly or monthly newspaper or magazine of some sort. And even the homes that did not have such evidences of civilization had listeners who loved to hear someone who could read well intone the contents of the papers or even whole magazine stories or installments of novels. The group of readers was, when all things are considered, pretty large, people who read for ideas and pleasure and to keep up with things. When a new book got loose in our neighborhood, it was fairly worn out within a short time, whether it was a novel, a history, a book of geography, or even a textbook different from the time-honored ones that descended from older to younger members of a family, like Ray's Arithmetic and the McGuffey Readers. So avid were many of us about books that we read just about everything we could get our hands on. Just after the Spanish-American War some book salesman came into our area and sold a big, cheap-paper book on our new Spanish possessions. I practically memorized it, as did many others around me. We discussed the new ideas avidly, too, and sometimes must have seemed pretty funny to ourselves, for we took definite sides in everything. Our local postmaster-druggist got the agency for a large illustrated book called
CONQUERING THE DARK CONTINENT, which ultimately a great many of us read. There I learned about David Livingstone and Henry M. Stanley and many others who braved the jungles to reach the natives of Africa. In later years I learned that our cheap big book was, in nearly all places, accurate and fair-minded.

And people could talk, too, about great world events. Hadn't many of the older ones served in the Civil War and seen far-away places? And didn't many of them have relatives back in North Carolina who still represented to them an older, more stable civilization? And didn't my own father come from an old-settled place in Tennessee where his ancestors had lived since the early 1780's? And didn't a good many of our older men and women have a knowledge of books all out of proportion to their actual years of schooling? Most strange of all was the moderate or even advanced views of these better-informed neighbors on such troubled questions as the rightness or wrongness of slavery. I heard in my own home, when the older neighbors and Father would talk, as wise views of the many-sided wrongs of slavery as I have ever read in books. These men had seen the horrible system accepted and had lived with it; they had lived through a period when it was abolished legally; they were not ashamed or afraid to tell of the evils of a system so famous in the South, a system that many people in places far larger than Fidelity were still defending.

And those were great times in politics. I can remember the Bryan-McKinley campaign of 1896 somewhat dimly. A few Free Silver hats appeared among some of our ardent Democrats. There was an echo or two among the ex-Confederates that here was a chance to right some of the wrongs of older days, but there was some bitterness because Cleveland had not been sectional enough to suit some of the old boys. Around the firesides and around the stove in the country store our government got aired out, sometimes pretty effectively, sometimes a bit comically, but the people, however poorly educated, were trying to fit in, to be a part of a bigger world than we could see from a hilltop.
FEELING SUPERIOR

There is something in human nature, and in brute nature, too, that makes us like to be or to feel superior. One of the most interesting studies I have ever heard a report on told about how, in a master cage of twenty pairs of canaries, it soon was obvious that one male could and did peck every other bird in the cage and was not pecked in return; he was head man. Then the others trailed behind him in their being able to peck, until one poor bird, a female, was pecked by every other one and had no comeback. This is known among bird students as "peck sequence" and is well known among several species of birds. A similar thing is the "hook sequence" among cattle, where one animal lords it over all the rest, and various degrees of lording is done by other members of the herd. It is funny, of course, but it is so much like us or we like them that it causes some long thoughts.

Everybody has known a bully. His earmarks are similar wherever he happens to be. Most of the time he is basically a coward, but with a bit of bluster or chest-pounding he has his way, unless some of his victims team up on him and give him what is coming to him. As a boy I knew some bullies that were true to the breed: loud-mouthed, arrogant, cruel-minded, eager to overawe little fellows who could not strike back, but usually avoiding the fellows of their own age. Fortunately, I did not suffer much at their hands, for I had two older brothers who were just honing for a fight; they took care of me so far as bullies were concerned and sometimes acted the bully with me for good measure, as big brothers have a way of doing. I can still feel the strange, almost pathetic shivers that I would have when one of these local bullies strutted by and looked with disdain on the little boys, who often would be servile to him to avoid pinches or harsh words. That was our Fidelity version of kickbacks.
But bullies did not disappear when I left Fidelity. I ran into them in the schools I taught, in college, and even in university. Occasionally I had one for a teacher, a fellow who might have driven mules and done no harm, but he should not have been allowed to act as teacher and bully his way through life. I have found them in politics, in the church (horrors!), in social groups, and on the highway. When a fellow ran into my parked car, away back in T-Model days, he wanted to fight me and make me pay from his bending his fender on my parked car. When I calmly stood my ground, he got into his car and drove on pretty fast, not that I looked dangerous, but a huge-fisted attendant at a garage near by was looking on and had seen the whole happening; no bully would have tackled that iron-fisted and iron-jawed fellow without wishing he had done otherwise. But that brief run-in with a bully took me back to my boyhood, when bullies sometimes got away with everything except murder.

Back in my earlier days it was fairly common, according to the newspapers, for elegant ladies to go slumming. Dressed "fit to kill," riding in whatever was the most stylish carriage of the time, and properly equipped with the right look of superiority, they drove through the worst areas of their cities and felt that they were away above the unwashed rabble. That may seem pretty far away to some of the readers of this column, but ask Grandma whether she ever heard of such nonsense. Our Fidelity version of this same haughty invasion came when couples in rubber-tired buggies came among us from neighborhoods far away (ten or twelve miles) or even from the county seat and watched us as if we were animals in a zoo. I have often wondered what the animals think as we gawk at them. Anyway, the slummers or the haughty buggy-riders were just bullies, though called by other names, trying to get ahead in the peck or hook sequence. Birds and cows and people do not change so fast, after all.
"DASHING THROUGH THE SNOW"

Today, in mid-winter, as I walked along the streets near a school, I began to get some idea of the memories that older people have of the great winters of their boyhood. Last night we had four inches of wet snow, some of which was melting when I got up this morning and most of which has thinned down considerably. That made it just right for snowballs and snowmen, too. I escaped unhurt as I went through barrages of snowballs, not aimed at me but at other fellows or popular high school girls. Some little girls and boys were also helping out and will grow to be old folks, declaring that the snow was much deeper than snows normally get in this latitude. You see, making snowmen or playing snowball becomes such an entrancing show that a fellow is forgiven if he exaggerates a little. Here am I, a wet-blanket thrower, with documentary proof in my old diaries, to take issue with Grandpa and all the others who remember deep snows that just never came. Twice in my life, and one of those winters was spent in central Indiana, I have seen snow more than a foot deep on the level. Chapter and verse will be given on application, just like the names of the folks who used to write testimonials about perfectly wonderful patent medicines. One such snow, a freak that did not spread more than a few miles on any side, occurred in the winter of 1909-1910 in extreme western Kentucky, when I was teaching school. I had to dismiss my school for three days because the snow was very deep, that was really a snow, and the newspapers recorded it, too, with smaller falls even north of us. The other one came in the famous winter of 1917-1918, but that was in Indiana. But, to listen to most people, there must have been two to ten snows a winter that exceeded a foot in depth. With no desire to accuse any of my folkish friends of exaggeration, I would like to see a contemporary account of all those great snows, like the water marks that my friends at
Mammoth Cave have nailed on a tall tree, with dates attached. But dates such as these would undo folklore and make weather too much a matter of accuracy. Let it snow ever so little, it will go down in most memories as something great, to be exceeded only by greater depths that Grandpa recalls accurately, whether the Weather Bureau agrees or not.

Records are the enemy of folklore. Suppose some one had kept an accurate record of any kind of weather or of corn planted in this or that phase of the moon or of the famous prophesy of the katydid; do you think that you might prove something? One of our Fidelity neighbors, but only one, so far as I can now recall, planted his crops, butchered his hogs, gathered his crops, and even cut his firewood by the almanac. To save my life, I cannot remember any great difference between his crops and ours, and ours were planted whenever we could get the ground ready or could get the proper help to harvest. But that did not matter to our neighbor, though he was not arrogant about it. He probably felt sorry for us because of our lack of following the signs.

One of the best studies I have ever read concerned a testing of water witches, actually financed by the United States Government in one of our Southwestern States. Water witches, largely of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Arkansas extraction, were told to do their stuff; scientifically trained geologists were also set the same task. Neither side won; it was a draw battle. Sometimes the water was forthcoming; sometimes it just did not work. All sorts of excuses were offered by each side; you can regard them as valid in accordance with your own faith or lack of it in the power of some people to find underground water. Maybe some of the water witches were fakes and were not actually descended from famous lines of water witches, for this uncanny power is said to run in families. Both experimenters got paid for the wells that produced water but had to take the rap for the dry holes.
A Christmas present from my journalist son-in-law was Stuart Holbrook's GOLDEN AGE OF QUACKERY, a review of the various investigations that have been made of the claims of patent medicines from time to time, as well as of some related quackeries. Mostly this "golden age" ended when the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 became a law.

Before that time a bit of sugared water with some bad-tasting stuff mixed in with it, especially with some corn liquor to preserve it, sold by the gallon or the barrel. Those were fat times for the wandering medicine shows as well as for the country and city drug stores. Any claim could be made, so that a given remedy might cure just about everything from falling hair to ingrowing toenails, from "catarrh," whatever that was or is or has been, to blood that needs thinning down after winter has passed and spring has come and the sound of the singing birds is in the land.

Since I was eighteen the year this famous food and drug law was passed, most of my memories of Fidelity go back beyond any regulation of the claims of just any nostrum. Barns were painted with marvelous news of sure cures for cancer, catarrh, biliousness, consumption, and the rest. Patent-medicine almanacs hung in every home, and big, colored calendars announced the weather for the day, the likelihood of storms, and, as if an aside, the merits of this or that laxative or woman's remedy. Some of my old neighbors swore by the calendar as by the drugs. It would have subjected you to insult if you had suggested that the stuff that was being bought was worthless as branch water.

That the lure of patent medicine is still around can be proved by my late goitre friend who bathed his goitre daily with some burning stuff that cost a dollar a bottle. Fortunately, goitre did not end his days, and that makes the nostrum still available to any of his
acquaintances, who certainly would not want to use a remedy that did any damage.

Some of the book by Holbrook deals with the antics of the old-fashioned medicine-show folks. The famous poet James Whitcomb Riley once went with a medicine show, sang and played his guitar, recited well-known pieces from the school readers, and then got to making up his own Hoosier-dialect poems, like "The Old Swimming Hole," "Out to Old Aunt Mary's," and "That Old Sweetheart of Mine." Maybe the fellows who bought the worthless stuff did America a favor by encouraging a folk-like poet who lived at a time when lots of country people had moved to town but still had nostalgic memories of the old home.

And, it is a matter of record, the remedies sold so widely seldom had any very serious poisons in them, even though their alcoholic content was often pretty high. This was somewhat protected by the awful taste that some of the remedies had, for it was felt that it helps better when it tastes bad. Some remedies offered perfectly ruinous offers, too: six bottles for the price of five, and sometimes tremendous cuts until it looked as if the poor medicine men would starve to death at their trade and not be around to offer any more fine free shows. I managed to see only one medicine show and deeply regret that I did not get to see all its features. I had stepped off a train and was met by a friend who was to take me out to his country church to speak on Saturday night and Sunday morning.

Just at the edge of the crowd that had come down to see the train was a wagon, in which stood a man with a very long mustache and an equally long coat; in his hands he held a bottle of the priceless stuff that he was practically giving away. Just behind him stood a blackface comedian, banjo in hand and ready to sound off on some plantation melody. But a black cloud was coming up, we were to get to my appointment in an open T-Model, and I had to leave the medicine show alone. Thus it passed out of my life just as it entered. I had missed my chance and probably needed a whole bottle of what was being sold.
OLD, OLD PEOPLE

Equally insistent are the older people who can conjure up memories of very deep snows and those who knew very old people. That there have been some few in each generation who lived beyond, and sometimes far beyond, the average is obvious to any one who will frequent any old cemetery. But to assume that people in general used to live longer is contrary to tombstones, family Bibles, and thousands of documents. Many times this strange belief in great age is based wholly on neighborhood tradition that could be checked on very easily by resorting to the legal records I have mentioned.

Here are some interesting facts about the ages of our Presidents George Washington died at sixty-seven; John Adams and Thomas Jefferson really did live long, dying at ninety-one and eighty-three, respectively. But the aged Harrison was only sixty-eight, Polk only fifty-four, and Taylor sixty-six. Robert E. Lee, to name another famous old man, was only sixty-three, and Daniel Webster only seventy. Go down the residential street where you live or at church services next Sunday count the men and women you know who are past seventy. Here is another test of age: How many couples in your childhood celebrated their Golden Wedding Day, even those who married very young? In one issue of the daily paper of my home town there were pictures and write-ups of four such couples recently. But I can recall only one such couple in all my early years at Fidelity, my Great Uncle James Wilson. Still the tradition goes on that folks just used to live longer. One of the old, old ladies I used to know was described thus: "Why, she was old and toothless when I could first remember." That settled it; she must have been a hundred when she died. The tombstone gives her age as a scant seventy-two. But right now I could walk down town every day and encounter from one to a dozen grown or old men who would
maintain, even profanely, that we are getting weaker and shorter-lived every generation. I always want to tell such people about Sir Roger de Coverley, as pictured by Addison and Steele back in the early seventeen hundreds: The old, old man, very feeble with age, just would go to London on business but had to return, worn out with life, soon to die at an advanced age; he was all of fifty-six! Individuals, as I said before, do sometimes last on and on and have done so in most periods of history; but in general we know more people past three score and ten than any other age you can read about.

And that brings up another folk tradition: The bigness of people of other times. Again, there have been off-sized people in most generations, but it is not necessary to consult a learned book to discover that our average of height is far above that of our earlier memories. At Fidelity my father, barely six feet, was always spoken of as a near-giant. In fact, there were only three or four other men whom I knew who were as tall as he and only one a little taller. Apparently the height down there has not shown such changes as it has in some other places, for at my oldest brother's funeral, some years ago, only my own son and three sons of another brother were six feet or more. In one of my earlier years at Western the six or seven boys in attendance who were six feet tall or a few inches more lined up and walked down the aisle at chapel. The wide-eyed surprise at such giants was comparable with that of my girl student who encountered three escaped elephants as she was driving the family, all asleep, home from a vacation in Virginia. If we went into the actual measurements of some of our pioneer and later heroes, I fear we would make the great men seem pretty puny. Washington and Lincoln were tall men, for a fact, and so was Jefferson. But the great Alexander Hamilton, our financial wizard would have been "Shorty" on an present-day college campus. And the big, big men, who weighed two hundred, how small they seem today, when there are hosts of ordinary fellows who top the scales at many pounds more than that. Even I, once so short and skinny and still so short, have weighed more than 200 for most of my mature life. "There were giants in those days."
DIFFERENT LEVELS OF FOLKLORE

For several weeks I have been laughing at folklore on a slightly different level from what most people regard as the lore of the "great unwashed." And the things that I have ridiculed are even more prevalent in beliefs than some of the crude pioneer superstitions and primitive-man tactics. It is because of their being so common and often accepted that we hate to admit that we well-heeled and well-groomed ones are folkish. Our modern life tends to value accuracy more and more in most spheres, but there are still many nooks and corners where folkishness prevails.

Since hard-top roads have come in, and especially since road numbers grace just about every road that can be driven over, it is no longer necessary to describe a certain distance as "a fur piece." When I was a very young boy, I went with one of my cousins to get a colored girl who was to be a maid for a family in Murray. My cousin, a very fashionable young man, drove a Stanhope buggy, the kind that stood high off the ground and could get over a good many stumps. We asked for specific directions to get to the cabin where the girl lived; and Uncle Charlie, our colored wiseacre, gave us enough directions to reach the moon in a rocket. The trouble was that nobody, not even Uncle Charlie, could have followed his right and left turns, his "pafs," that is, very small, little-used roads. Fortunately, that high-slung buggy went over gullies and stumps and up and down steep banks; we got there, after several hours of driving, but I would be stumped to tell anybody just where and when to take this or that "paf." By degrees we are learning to direct better, but only a few years ago I traveled over a good portion of two counties to reach a country church in time for the funeral of one of my friends. I defy anybody to unravel the directions I got. But there is hope, for now we think in terms of miles and not a mere folkish measure of
In areas where land was surveyed into townships, as at Fidelity, it was fairly easy to tell about going north or south or east or west. Out on the plains, not so much cut up by streams, it is easier still. But in my present part of the state, and in my home town, nothing seems to be located according to the compass. Telling someone to go north or east is puzzling and confusing. Even if our streets were laid out diagonally, it might help, but they are off center by a few degrees. Our north-south highways do not always run as named. But I know many people, even here with no section lines to follow, who are just as sure that they are giving accurate directions as I know they are not. Consequently, some place east of Bowling Green may be northeast or southeast or some of the numerous in-between directions of a ship's compass. But try to convince the next fellow whom you stop to ask directions.

When I was a boy at Fidelity, there must have been a dozen bushels. Some few people consulted an almanac and weighed out what was called a bushel, others had their own private way of computing, and some took a basket called a bushel basket and let that be the final measuring container, not matter how far off—usually below—it might be. In the same way we could never agree on what was a gallon, for there were many kinds of gallons. And what, pray, is a cup, as interpreted by the average person who is not measure-conscious? I have seen nervous people almost come to blow and have heard of actual fights or killings over what constitutes accurate bushels and pecks and gallons and yards. By the way, do you know how to measure a yard with your arm and your nose? Turn your head as far away from the cloth to be measured as you can; stretch the cloth as far out as your fingers will reach; the place where your nose touches the cloth is a yard, and that is that. I have seen cloth measured like that.
"ERE IT PASSES"

Whittier wishes that his barefoot boy could know his joy, ere it passes. So much is made of "take warning and govern yourself accordingly" that I almost hesitate to write this essay. But it is a plea to the younger generation to take care to preserve, in a museum or in the attic, some of the things that will show what manner of people were around in the strange old 1950's. Many writers of today, and not just fellows who write for the fun of it, are begging everybody to keep some records, for the information it may give their descendants and for the historical accuracy it may also give. Here is a sample of what I am driving at.

My folks were just good average Scotch-Irish immigrants, who came to America in the middle of the 1700's. They settled in North Carolina, and then, later, the younger generation moved on into what is now Tennessee. Now, 1750 is not far back at all, but there are pitifully few documents to prove what I have said, though it can be proved. They, like lots of other pioneers, were apparently too busy to set things down or to write letters showing the family history. What I would give for a letter from one of the earliest of the Wilson clan to one of the group back home! And how I would cherish even a small letter written back from Middle Tennessee in the 1780's to the old folks back at Charlotte, North Carolina! There is some evidence that several of the clan had, for that time, a fair education; therefore, they could have written and maybe did write, but where are their letters? One faded letter would be worth more than a month's rustling around among courthouse documents to see whether this or that one of the family bought a piece of land or sold one. I am not belittling documents as such, for they are priceless, but I want to know what my ancestors were like besides names attached to a deed or
will or mortgage. Some of them were great holders of land, "land poor," as was the word. But, so far as I know, none of them had portraits painted, and they lived before M. Daguerre perfected his picture-making scheme. Hence I do not know what the earlier ones looked like, and the stiff poses of later ones, with their heads in clamps to hold them still, certainly cannot represent the most real phases of their lives. Therefore, I want some writing, unposed, unplanned; a reminiscence or two by some old-timer would also help. But, for a large percentage of my ancestors, and yours, too, I suspect, we know very little and can imagine anything we please.

With no desire to appear big or important, I have set down, for the private consumption of my descendents, the few necessary facts about the family; I have added a few extra pages that try to show what living conditions were like and what quaint old times seem to have been, as viewed by me a whole lifetime later. In the matter of dates I have been as accurate as is possible, so that my little private autobiography can thus have a legal value if necessary. Still, it is a slimmer view of what I was like or what my time was like; but at least it is a start toward understanding the strange old days of long ago, when they have literally become that.

For those who can afford the space and the care, there is always a chance to do some valuable keeping rather than collecting by protecting and keeping clothes, furniture, and bric-a-brac. Furniture is sturdy and can stand many years of neglect in the attic; but clothes are usually pretty fragile and need more care. Some of us have moved around so much that we had to reduce our tons of things; thus many valuable possessions have gone the way of all forgotten things. And the need for room as the children come along causes many a priceless but worthless relic to be neglected. A living dog is better than a dead lion, I suppose, but there comes a time when it would be great to have at least the lion's skin.