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ORIGINALS

TIDBITS OF KENTUCKY FOLKLORE

BY

Gordon Wilson

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THE PREACHER AS HERO

If the preachers of America who have attracted folk attention were discussed adequately, it would require a stout volume. In the very earliest days the preachers were certainly very powerful in New England, more powerful than the politicians themselves, but with the exception of a very few none could be regarded as folk heroes. Probably Cotton Mather could be so regarded, but even he so availed himself of printer's ink that it was always easy to find documentary evidence as to what he was and what he thought. He was not the kind that appeals to the folk, anyway, for he was a good politician, a good local czar. Brainy he may have been, industrious he certainly was, but there was no hazy atmosphere about him that made the folk regard him as a saint or an incarnate demon. Jonathan Edwards almost became a folk hero, with his brilliant writings, even in what was becoming a lost cause, predestination. Turned out of his pulpit, he became for a time a missionary to the Indians, at the very period when he was writing some of his most logical and characteristic treatises. And then, just as fortune smiled again and he was called to the presidency of Princeton, he fell a victim to smallpox while still quite young. But his brilliant defense of a passing institution came to be looked on with sorrow by the very ones who would have glorified him if he had taken the other side. His contemporaries, such as Franklin and Jefferson, live on today in educated and illiterate lore alike.

It was really not until the great frontier preachers came along that the preacher assumed folk-hero proportions. Such picturesque characters as Francis Asbury captivated the East long before the spectacular preaching of Lorenzo Dow and Peter Cartwright in the West. The long, long rides of the early circuit riders and their incessant activity read today like fairy tales. Even the scouts themselves had hardly had such far-flung adventures. Lorenzo Dow's life sounds like a combination of the adventures of Davy Crockett and Mike Fink plus the missionary

journeys of St. Paul. Early in his career he became a half-mythical character, a sort of clairvoyant who knew everything knowable. Using his insight into human nature very effectively, he allowed people to glorify his astuteness and tell stories about his uncanny judgment. Contemporary accounts of him make him picturesque in every way: very tall and slender, athletic as an Abraham Lincoln in the days when he silenced the bullies on the frontier, bearded like one of the old prophets. A sort of lone wolf in religion, he refused to be bound by the rules of any denomination, but he wrought as a traveling preacher as if driven by the zeal of a first-century Christian. Cartwright had many of the same characteristics and an even greater sense of humor. He, too, knew human nature and cannily used his knowledge to help establish moral order out on the frontier. No wonder such men became almost as mythical as John Chapman, whom everybody knows now as Johnny Appleseed.

From these wide-roving preachers it was but a step to the preachers who really had a set circuit that they followed, such ardent evangelists as the ones Edward Eggleston described in his novel THE CIRCUIT RIDER. Poorly paid, subjected to every sort of humiliation by the bullies of the back country, worn out at an early age by incessant travel and improper food, victims of malaria and smallpox, they seem like ancient heroes battling the evil spirit of the marshes or the mephitic vapors issuing from a vent in a volcano. Few of them lived past middle age; a few years of this toil used up the best of them, who rarely could stand the long journeys of Bishop Asbury. But from their labors the crude frontier ceased soon to be the haunt of lawless fugitives from the more settled areas and took on some of the permanence of civilization. Today it seems a far cry from Lorenzo Dow and Francis Asbury and Peter Cartwright, but who can tell how much of their work, actual and mythical, survives in the stability of the communities where they labored so hard?

THE TEACHER AS HERO

Among the American folk heroes that have received some literary treatment the teacher does not rank very high, but there has been a great oral tradition that may some day be utilized for literary material. Many of the actual teachers who have made America book-conscious are almost as much traditional as historical. Probably no one is more a folk hero than William Holmes McGuffey, who literally taught most of America to read. Though a very flesh-and-blood man to his contemporaries in educational circles, he was to most of the millions who studied his books a mere name, a sort of Chibiabos the Musician in *HIAWATHA*, who

"Sang in accents sweet and tender,

Sang in tones of deep emotion,

Songs of love and songs of longing."

If someone had told us at Fidelity that the maker of our books was a real man, I feel that we would have felt slightly disappointed. McGuffey seemed to us like St. Paul and the other Bible writers; since he and they were dead before I was born, I assumed that they were all contemporaries, living in a glorious past when everything was perfect, when man had not strayed so far from his divinity as men seemed to have done in Fidelity and its adjoining neighborhoods.

In educated circles Horace Mann also assumed a prominent place that we are just now beginning to realize was his just dessert. I know no folklore about him, but my own school, a sort of grandchild or great-grandchild of his, developed from its earliest days a kind of folklore that must have been inspired by Mann and his followers. Older people that I knew at Western spoke of the old National Normal University at Lebanon, Ohio, as if it were "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Anecdotes about such great educators as Alfred Holbrook circulated daily. Professor A. W. Mell, who started the school that grew into Western, the Glasgow Normal School, was a living folk hero, an inspirer of youth, almost unreal even when he was with us in the flesh as a visitor

long after I became a teacher at Western. His most inspired pupil,
Henry Hardin Cherry, ^{acquired} ~~assumed~~ a folk-hero status long before he died in
1937. The tradition of the great system of colleges to educate teachers
was a species of hero-worship that caught and made many a man who other-
wise might never have been worthy of more than very local reputation.
I have felt since I first knew about Horace Mann that probably this
zeal, this reforming fever, ^{came} ~~stems~~ from him.

Too much has been made in some circles of the eccentric pedagogue
who knew little but taught it dogmatically for half a century. Probably
no one has yet done justice to the solid old teacher who taught the free
school in the fall and a subscription school in the spring and in his
time covered an entire county and helped in the education of two or three
generations. Teachers belong to a profession that has an immense turnover.
Those who remain teachers through all the years deserve to become traditions,
to become for many people the incarnation of the subjects they taught.
In the one-room-school days that all old-timers knew, nearly every
neighborhood had ~~known~~ the eccentric but often thorough instruction of
some ~~old-time~~ teacher who kept at his task, rod in hand, until he had
given many successive groups of children insight into Ray's Third-part
Arithmetic, Webster's Blue-back Spelling Book, and Harvey's Grammar.
Often such a neighborhood pedagogue went to seed on one thing: arithmetic
or grammar or American history. He had his own ways and tolerated few
others. In my part of the world he was always Southern in history and
winced when any Southern general was presented as less than a god. He
drove grammar rules into our heads, sometimes with physical strength,
but he rarely listened at our use of the rules afterward. By maintaining
orderliness in everything, he taught us more respect for authority than
all our knowledge of civil government gave us.

"Yet he was kind, or if severe in aught,

The love he bore to learning was ⁱⁿ at fault."

This is the teacher who has become the folk hero for many of us.

AGREABLE FANS / - /

In all the ten years and a half that these articles have appeared I have received literally hundreds of fan letters, all of which I have deeply appreciated. I have tried to answer each one, too, thanking ~~the~~ ^{the} writer for his words of commendation and also for his suggestions for future articles. Later, when my PASSING INSTITUTIONS appeared in print, other letters came from everywhere, all of them in the same appreciative vein. Here is what I cannot understand: not one letter or card or telephone call or word sent by a messenger has ever been curt or discourteous. When you think how many things I have written about and how many types of people have written ^{to me,} you can only wonder why some one ^{has} ~~did~~ not object ^{so} strenuously to what I have ^{said.} ~~written.~~

If there is any reason for this situation, I suppose it is to be found in my care to tell only what I can vouch for. I have sought no adventitious fame by writing about folk customs as many people like to believe folk customs are or ought to be. I have made no effort to curry the favor of any group of people, for I am democratic ^{enough} to discount most groups, anyway. I lived a perfectly normal life as a child on the farm near Fidelity, and when I write, I try to present my own experience, knowing that in no sense was it different from the ~~experience~~ ^{experience} of thousands of other people in my time and before. I am not running for office. I do not want your vote for anything. But I do crave your respect for my efforts to tell the truth. You may disagree with me on my way of presenting these simple little insights into folk life and folk customs; maybe you think that I should say they instead of I. But I am not writing about they; I am writing about the typical person, and I know of no better way than to identify myself with that typical person. Too many people, as I have said probably wearisomely, look down on the folk, forgetting that they are of the folk themselves and not some sort of mighty being elevated above just ordinary folks.

People often talk about a free press. That is what this column is. I have never received a single nickel for any contribution that I have made in the eleven years or nearly so that these essays have been appearing in some eighty papers weekly. They cost me no money, they bring me in no money directly, but they give me a chance to make hosts of friends that I would never have known otherwise. And, also, they give me a chance to air, in a slightly serio-comic vein, some of the views that have been taking form in my mind since I plowed my red mule back in the fields near old Fidelity. I felt then, and I still feel, that our little village and its immediate surroundings were good samples of human nature the whole world over. There were some local distinctions of a sort, but the best and the worst made the same sort of mound in the Fidelity Graveyard when they ended ~~their~~ struggle. In times of stress, too, whatever distinctions we pretended we had in normal times grew rather dim. A neighbor in trouble was just a human being like us; his crops in the grass needed our attention, or his burned-down house needed to be restored by more fortunate ones who lived in the same little world. Basically, I early learned, people are very much alike and are to be judged by the adaptation that they can make to a time and place rather than by accidental cheats of birth or worth or brains. Many a "cute, inglorious Milton," in Gray's phrase, I have known. Many a heartbreak I witnessed, for our hearts at Fidelity were made of the stuff that poets' hearts have much of. Few of the sufferers could tell their woe and thus relieve much of their agony. They lived and died silent, except for the plain, unvarnished words of daily life as they went about their tasks. I wanted then, and I still want, to be a partial spokesman for the many who could not write or speak. I may never succeed in this, but that ambition has been responsible for these hundreds of essays on simple things that made up the daily lives of millions of unknown and unnoticed people, people just like you and me.

"WHERE ARE THE SNOWS OF YESTERYEAR?"

Francois Villon, a French poet of the fifteenth century, wrote a poem with the haunting refrain of "But where are the snows of yesteryear?" He meant, of course, the evanescent things that all of us pin our faith to, the dainty things that made life glad in this rather hectic world. Without trying to read any other meaning into his haunting refrain, I want to use ~~his~~ ^{it} as a point of departure for another discussion on the oldest topic of conversation in the world--the weather.

Every winter some person with silvering temples remarks quite innocently that we do not have snows such as the ones we used to have, back when ~~that~~ he was a boy. Why, it was several feet deep and lasted for weeks. He remembers that it was so deep that he could not see over the banks on the sides of the walks that his father shoveled out. And trees cut down in that snow had startlingly high stumps when the snow melted and the stumps appeared. Occasionally I try to reason with these weather-wise people, but I usually get far more than I bargained for, especially when they begin to quote their fathers or other ancients long ago dead. Tacitly I have to give my support to the reports of great snows and lots of them, for who am I to dispute the word of Grandpap and Aunt Polly?

Now here is something that few weather-wise people seem to realize: a boy three feet tall by the side of a ten-inch snow is quite different from that same boy grown to be six feet tall and the snow still ten inches. Honestly, there was a freakish snow in 1884, or 1886, down Fidelity way that outdid all previous ones, but I was not around there then and have ^{had} to take the word of older people. It was a great legend when I was growing up as to the depth of that snow; no two people seemed to agree, right there a few years after such a great phenomenon had appeared. By now the old men and women who saw it when they were small children must have deepened that snow until it practically obliterated the landscape. Just a few actually got a yardstick and measured the snow; figures just refuse to lie, you know. But

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those who did not measure the snow still refuse to believe that it was only three feet deep, or was it four?

Now, for forty and more years I have been a maker of records: snows, rainfall, hot summers, cold winters, floods, strange appearances of all sorts, not to mention the coming and going of the birds and the blooming of wild flowers. When I tell my students that I have never passed through a winter in Bowling Green without seeing a dandelion in bloom every month of the winter, I am no more believed than ~~if~~ ^{am} ~~I~~ ^{when I say} ~~that~~ that Robins and Bluebirds stay here all the time. I have a way of gathering dandelions in winter and wearing them in my buttonhole, just to make my students take notice that winter is a passing fancy and spring is always just around the corner, like prosperity and success. This winter of 1945-46 has been very severe in spots, but at no ten-day period have dandelions failed to bloom on my yard ~~or~~ on the college campus, just as Robins have kept up their joyous calling right through the heart of the winter.

These people who love to find all the deep snows and all the low temperatures in their early days forget that we have had a Weather Bureau since the old ones of them were children and long before the days of the next-older. Long ago private observers found that winters run in a succession of cold or mild ones and that there was no monopoly on snow or low temperatures right after the Civil War. But, you know, my father, says my informer, was a careful observer and a truthful man; he was honest in his dealings with his fellow-man. He said that the winters in his youth were ever so much colder than they were when I was a boy, and I can tell my children and grandchildren that winters have warmed up a lot since I could first remember. What does an ~~old~~ Weather Bureau know about it, anyway? And, I would like to ask in Villon's phrase "Where are the snows of yesteryear?"

Cancelled 4-15-46 - A.M.
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ROBIN WINTER

The winter of 1945-46 has not been especially different from many other winters, so far as temperature, snow, rain, and such like are concerned, but it has been Robin Winter. Ordinarily, Robins remain in fair numbers through the winter but are in no sense obvious, for they are likely to retire to the swamps, where their types of food are more plentiful than around houses or in town. This time the hackberries and the red haws have been very plentiful, and the Robins have stayed in numbers comparable with those of summer. And right in town they have been recorded in numbers nearly every day. Literally dozens of my acquaintances, knowing my interest in birds, have telephoned or written ~~me~~ or sent word to me about what an unusual sight it has been to see a whole back yard full of Robins in January. Each time I have taken time out to explain that the Robin does not leave us in winter and that the only thing unusual about this year is that Robins are so obvious and so noisy. I doubt whether I have yet convinced any one that this bird is an all-year resident and not merely a summer resident, whose coming announces spring.

As I have so often said, most of the people who have written on birds in America have lived in the East, where the Robin is, indeed, a good sign of spring, much as our Brown Thrasher is here. The poets of New England and New York and the essayists, too, have so driven into American heads that Robins and Bluebirds are signs of spring that no succession of winters like the present one will get the idea out of heads. Merely because people find things in print, regardless of where the print comes from, they trust the printed page in preference to their own observation or that of others in their immediate neighborhood.

Back in 1893 something happened to the Bluebirds, so that for years the normal population of this species was small. I can recall how gradually the Bluebird came back to its earlier numbers. Nearly all my

life there has been no noticeable change in the number of Bluebirds from season to season or from year to year. But many of the older inhabitants still ask me very naively where the Bluebirds have gone. Then I reply that the Bluebird is one of our commoner species winter and summer, I am met with the same blank stare that I get when I say that Robins remain through the winter. Once get an idea into a head, through a printed page or through hearing Grandpap say something, and dynamite itself is powerless to remove it.

Since many people are conscious of every hawk they see, it is nearly impossible to explain that I see fewer hawks in a whole year of eager search than I see Slate-colored Juncos on a single winter day. Over a period of twenty-eight years I have taken a Christmas Bird Count, sponsored by the AUDUBON MAGAZINE. In these twenty-eight years I have seen, of seven species of hawks, a total of 226 birds, more than a third of the whole number being Sparrow Hawks. The lowest count of juncos for any year has been 93, with more than 200 as an average. That is, on the counts alone I have seen on the average as many juncos in one day as hawks on all the trips. And yet people who never counted birds in their lives would declare and practically fight over the great prevalence of hawks. If hawks were a tenth as numerous and as bad as they are pictured, every chicken hatched under a mother hen or in an incubator in 1946 in Kentucky would be gobbled up before it had shed its down. By that time the hawks might be catching young pigs or kidnaping children.

A member of the present General Assembly told me not long ago that hawks were all bad and ate chickens endlessly. I tried to speak a good word for the good hawks--and all of them are good except an occasional member of three species that remain here--, but I was hushed up as if I had uttered blasphemy. He KNEW, and his father before him had known, too. What else could I do in such company but change the subject and sigh ^{because} ~~for~~ traditional ignorance cannot be overcome in a few years?

SCRATCHING THE TICKET

Down at Fidelity, where everybody used to vote the straight Democratic ticket regardless of whose name was on it, people often referred to a vote-scratcher as if he were a left-over scalawag or carpet-bagger. In the First Congressional District as it was then constituted people just did not vote Republican in most of the counties. There were so few Republicans in my Fidelity neighborhood that it was nearly impossible to find officers for the November election from that party. There was actually a time when our postmaster had to be a Democrat~~er~~, back in the days of Theodore Roosevelt, because no Republican could qualify. Older members of our families probably did not intend to teach us as they did, but we often got the idea that Republicans in the world at large were universally ignorant. I fear that many of the generation that was mine continue to feel that way, especially since they have helped elect Woodrow Wilson twice and Franklin D. Roosevelt four times. And, as things have turned out, ticket-scratching seems not to have invaded that district to any appreciable extent.

Once when I was at home on a vacation, some years after I had left Fidelity to make my way in the world, the teacher of the local school thought he would liven things up a bit by having a debate on the relative merits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. He knew that I would take Lincoln, whether anybody else did or not. Sure enough, only my farmer brother and I would take the part of Lincoln and were literally snowed under when the entire house was called on to decide on the winning side. I was a little afraid that I would receive bodily injury for a time, for I spoke out in meeting and told the lifelong Democrats a thing or two and even mentioned that I had done the unforgivable, I had voted for a Republican, even though I was registered as a Democrat. I think some of the veterans of the Civil War would have

liked to raise the Rebel Yell and renew the Civil War. I may have been a bit undiplomatic, as I have very often been, but I at least let some of the brethren know that outside the range of hills that bounded their world there were a few people who had had an idea since 1865. I feared that I would never again be asked to speak in that school, but the very next time I was down there in school time, I was asked to speak again. Not more than five years after the ticket-scratching reference that nearly provoked a riot I heard a citizen of Fidelity in the successor to that very schoolhouse where I had stuck my neck out declare with considerable joy that he, too, had scratched a ticket; and no earthquake occurred; instead, several fellows, including some lifelong Democrats, nodded their heads approvingly. Just how far that idea spread and whether I had anything to do with it I will never know, but it was refreshing to see that even Democratic Fidelity could actually change its mind.

Now ~~this~~ is all a parable, even though it is the truth. Recently I had occasion to speak to a group of ~~very~~ patriotic citizens who are ~~Very~~ conservative, ~~that no very new ideas has yet caught up with them.~~ When I praised the daring and forward-looking philosophy of Thomas Paine, I could see some of the people, both men and women, wince, for they had been taught by revered ancestors to regard Paine as a downright villain, though probably no single person had ever read a line that Paine had written. Ancestors who bandied about the spurious accounts of Paine's private life and his beliefs have left an imprint on our American thinking that even centuries may have difficulty in erasing. If I may hope, modestly, of course, that people may remember longer than a single evening what I said about one of the great builders of our United States of America--the very word was Paine's own creation--, I will feel that sticking my neck out again may not have been too bad, no worse than an honest lick for Honest Abe at little old Fidelity thirty-odd years ago.

710 Pils
Poets through the ages have been accused of fleeing from the world to some protected place like an ivory tower, where they refuse to see the blackness and crime of a very real world. Older people often find themselves turning back to an imaginary time when things were better than they are now, when the stars were a little closer to the earth, when there were deeper snows in winter and more scary storms in summer, or, in Riley's phrase, "back where we used to be so happy and so pore." There are some of my friends who probably think that I, too, have idealized, a little too much, Fidelity and what it stood for nearly a half century ago. And yet, with the turmoil that has followed the war, it is fortunate that some of us have an ivory tower to flee to, even though we may be accused of failing to ~~see~~ ^{recognize} ugly facts and even uglier rumors.

All my teaching life I have been telling my students how very badly everyone needs a connection with the abiding, whether that is religion, great art, great literature, nature, or plain human affection. Now I need to say this over and over again to the people who are under my care. The world is wild with fear and rumor, with the overwrought nerves that war always leaves in its wake. It is easier to rush with the gang and forget how ~~some~~ things do not change overnight. But how satisfactory it is to tie oneself to some stout bit of the wreckage of our time and ride out the storm. A little plot of land, an interest in flowers, a love for plain ~~people~~ ^{people}, a memory of genuine people and times--how valuable these can become in times like these!

Fidelity grows a little more valuable as clouds deepen. Its importance to me in memory is much more than any other value it ever had for me. We felt ourselves left out of the big world when we lived at our little village, but, rather strangely, when we left for actual places in the unknown world beyond our hills, we found that the simple

philosophy learned behind the plow worked in more complex situations. And this is no addled dream of a middle-aged man. Look around you and see how many of the people whom you trust most fully had experiences in effective but simple living like us who tilled the poor fields around Fidelity. And that is why we love to turn back to the treasured moments when we were learning to live.

I hope that I will never become senile and actually forget that we were not always happy at Fidelity. There were tragedies that wrung our hearts; we felt ourselves often the victim of forces that we could not control; we, like Hamlet, suffered from "the pangs of disprized love, the insolence of office, and the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes." Sometimes we had difficulty in reconciling our faith and our works. But after all the heartbreaks had been forgotten, we realized that we had been in the presence of some great ideas, even though the bringer of these might be the mail-carrier who came to our village three times a week, or the greasy textbook that had descended to us from older brothers, or the meagerly-educated teacher who taught us brief extracts from great literature ~~in the rude little schoolhouse~~ in the rude little schoolhouse. We were ignorant of most of the things that people give good money for, but somehow through these experiences we got a few glimpses of eternal truth, which does not hide in great cities alone or among the great or powerful but sometimes, as Chaucer loves to say, is found in "a little ox's stall."

PLANTBEDS

Many things change, but the plantbeds of today are quite as they were in my earliest days. That fact in no way prevents the commonplace things from being perennially interesting. Every spring I marvel at the plantbeds that I see and the hundreds of smokes that rise within view of the mountain-like hill on which I teach. Some farmers, it is true, use steam now to prepare the soil by killing out the weed seeds and the insects, but still a much larger number burn beds just as I helped^d do at Fidelity.

Christmas is hardly over before the pungent wood smoke from a burning bed perfumes all the countryside. In this early-spring year of 1946 the burning started in what would normally have been bitter wintertime. Whole acres of beds, if they were placed side by side, have grown up in this tobacco-raising country. Every one of them is now dressed in white canvas and will soon be a mass of green young plants, tender but with a persistence about them that only tiny things can have. It will not be long until these almost microscopic plants will be thriving out in the fields, able to take care of themselves in sunshine and rain and insects and cold nights.

As interesting as the agricultural aspects of a plantbed are, I cannot help thinking more of it as a sociological institution. From the earliest days of our country tobacco has been a money crop. In many places it was and is the one money crop, year after year. If that crop fails, the family behind it will go hungry or ragged. If the weed sells for a fair price, there will be new clothes, and cancelled mortgages, and new farm machinery. George or Mary may be able to go to college, or the family may take that long-planned trip to see the relatives in Missouri. Much is tied up in the small plants of the plantbed.

There are some other things that plantbeds suggest. We used to sow mustard and lettuce and radishes around the edges, for these plants, too, will grow fast in such a favored place. These new spring greens gave us some much-needed vitamins after our long winter without ~~any~~ many fresh vegetables. Nowhere do these plants grow quite so profusely and so rapidly, pushing up the canvas and often necessitating the removal of it from them before the tender tobacco plants can stand the weather. We sowed cabbage and tomato seeds, too, for the plantbed was no ordinary institution; it was useful for nearly every farm purpose.

If I were a moralist, I would like to preach a sermon on the poor tobacco plants that remained on the bed after the others were set out in the open. The fertile bed was just the thing for the tiny plants in their early days, to give them a head start of the weeds and to hasten their becoming big and useful plants with their valuable leaves. But the plantbed is no place for a self-respecting tobacco plant after it is time to be out in the open field. Tall, spindling, worthless, these left-overs rarely attain to anything that any ordinary farmer would harvest. Probably I got that moral when I used to go by the rank growth of tobacco plantbeds in midsummer and would see the plants there as compared with those out in the fields. Anyway, there could be a moral there, if one wishes to find one.

THE COAL-OIL LAMP

By no means have coal-oil lamps ceased to be, but their great days are over. Even in the most remote rural areas the R. E. A. lines have penetrated, so that country homes and country churches now gleam with electricity quite as brightly as city homes and churches. I am afraid that some of the younger generation will never know how important coal-oil lamps used to be.

The care of the lamps was an art that may be lost along with that of making tallow candles. The oil had to be put into the bowls and the tops screwed down tightly. The wicks had to be trimmed carefully, so that the flame would be regular and bright. The chimneys had to be cleaned carefully, to add to the effectiveness of the lamp in the evening. Only small hands could be inserted into chimneys; hence it was a great satisfaction to me when I could no longer poke my hands into a chimney; that meant that I was getting to be a big boy and would have to do some other household chore besides cleaning lamp chimneys.

There were lamps and lamps. First of all, there were the small lamps with a handle and a reflector. These were used in my area in the kitchen. Some of them had a hole in the mechanism so that they could be hung up on a nail. The most ordinary lamp was the one that graced the table in the living room; it was the center of the whole evening's work or entertaining friends. In the front room there were two main types of lamps: the hanging lamp with its glass pendants and the table lamp with a big shade. Many of these fancy lamps were the Christmas gifts from Big Sister's beau. Only on special occasions were they lighted; they gave a soft, mellow glow that only parlors had in those times. The other lamps were likely to be unshaded and rather bright, according to our standards.

Of course, when someone was sick, we worked out a partial shade by inserting an envelope or other square of paper between the chimney and its supports. Only in very recent years have more elaborate lamps come into use, such as give out a brilliant light comparable with electricity itself.

There used to be a sort of feeling that night was pretty dreadful without some sort of light. That may have accounted for the custom of keeping a lamp burning all night, turned down low. The reason usually given was that it would be handy in case some of the children got sick. In much later times this dim light was useful in finding one's way to the telephone when some one called you or your neighbor. I have seen people who had electric lights leave a lamp burning every night, summer and winter, a left-over from earlier days. I have also passed houses on very warm summer nights when all the windows would be closed to keep out the poisonous night air, and also the lamp would be ^{burning} ~~burning~~, apparently to add more heat to the uncomfortable air. I can recall how reassuring it was when I would wa~~x~~ke up as a small child after a bad dream and see the pale light of the lamp still casting a dreamy half shadow over the familiar objects of the room. Probably waking up in a darkened room would have only intensified the late horrors of the nightmare.

The portable lamp or lantern still has its many uses. Again, though, it may succumb ultimately to the flashlight, as it has already done in many places. Just what later generations will do to feel big I do not know, for I was honored greatly when I could carry the lantern when we ~~want~~ to sit till bedtime with some of the neighbors.

Tallow candles, coal-oil lamps, electric lights--I have watched the whole cycle and have poetic associations with them all. Light itself is poetic, whether it is made in cruder, earlier ways or in more modern fashions.

TALKING LIKE GRANDMA

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For years I have taught a course in the history of the English language. To many of my students it is a revelation to find that Grandma was not necessarily wrong in many of her pronunciations or her uses of words, though she may have been a little old-fashioned. One of my students told me at the end of the term once that she felt the greatest value of the course was this new tolerance for her ancestors that she had acquired.

Suppose we take a few of the language habits of Grandma and see how they used to be correct. Every spring the Service Berry tree blooms brightly in our woods; later the berries make about the best jam you ever tasted. But Grandma called it Sarvice, and many of us of my generation wondered why we could not find the word in our dictionaries. The combination -er- in many words in England still ~~has~~ has this same -ar- sound; such words are derby, clerk, etc. Our good friends thar, whar, and hjar are parts of this same development, probably continued longer in the South because of the strong Scotch-Irish element in our early pioneers. Another word that seems strange to youngsters is varmint, as it illustrates the older sound of -er- and also a tendency to add -t to words, like clifft, skift, oncet, twicet, etc. Rather oddly, -t was added to amonges to give our modern word amongst, a perfectly good word today. Seed, knowed, and heared are not left-overs of correct usage, but they illustrate a tendency that has produced many such words, swelled, for instance, as the past tense of swell; the form used to be swole. And it is not too smart to laugh at the oldster who says three year ago, for a few hundred years ago that was the only correct way. We still say sheep and deer in the plural, words that came from the same declension in Old English. Long ago we used to laugh at

the elderly gentleman in one of our churches who called father fayther, not knowing, of course, that everybody used to say the same thing. I am reminded of the epitaph of Richard Mather, of Massachusetts, the ancestor of the Mather family in America. He had a famous son, Increase, who was once president of Harvard College; his grandson, Cotton, was the greatest of the clan. Here is the epitaph:

"Here lies the body of Richard Mather,
Who had a son greater than his father
And eke a grandson greater than either."

Believe it or not, these last words rhymed in those days, having an a sound. That is, Mather was sounded as Mayther, with the th soft, as in then. Father sounded fayther, and either was ayther.

Much has been made of Grandma's victuals. Grandchildren have often been humiliated by this word, forgetful that it used to be the essence of good manners, as far above food ^{as} and food is today above grub. But victuals fell on evil days and is now regarded as very old-fashioned, even coarse. Food was the correct word for ages before victuals was borrowed from French, but snooty people looked down their noses at it for a long time and refused to use such a common-place word. By a strange miracle food came back into respectable usage, and dressed-up victuals had to take a back seat. Who knows? It may be that Grandma, if only she might live a century or two longer, might be as much in style among her descendants as she was when she could spell down the whole school at Rabbit Ridge or Turkey Hollow, somewhere between the Civil War and the turn of the century.

SCHOOL BUTTER

Recently at the Kentucky Education Association meeting some one asked me what was meant by the old expression "School butter." I had to admit that I did not know, even though it was once a very common phrase and always provoked dire and instant punishment. If any of the readers of this column know any likely origin for the term, I would appreciate hearing from you.

Back at Fidelity in the early days of this century there was a tradition that any one who "hollered" "School butter" would be chased, caught, and punished severely. The usual punishment was to draw a bucket of water from the cistern and douse him. Some of my friends from other parts of the state record the same tradition, except that a horse pond was the place of punishment, with no preliminary undressing of the victim.

It must have been fairly common just before my time, but I can recall only one instance that I actually witnessed. One of our nearest neighbors, eminently respectable and even conservative, came walking by the schoolhouse one day at noon. Just after he got past the building and had started down the path to Fidelity, he uttered the offending words. Instantly every boy gave chase. He soon saw that the gang would catch him if he remained in the path; therefore he swerved through the woods, really putting up a fine race. But the boys got desperate and finally got him. They led or dragged him back to the schoolhouse and almost drowned him with water from the cistern. Rather sheepishly he took it in good humor. For some unknown reason the teacher, a man, did nothing

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BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY

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to interfere with the fun. I suppose that the tradition was so strong that the teacher felt that the patron of our school was inviting trouble to begin with. So far as I can recall, neither this victim nor any other one uttered the forbidden words after that.

There was a vague feeling that the phrase was insulting. I have asked many people whether this feeling appeared elsewhere and have always been told that it did, but no one has enlightened me as to the possible origin of the taunt and the punishment. I have felt that probably there was some veiled obscenity about the words, some meaning that was gross and insulting. Anyway, it was in no sense personal but applied to the school. Maybe it meant that the youngsters in school were softies or whatever the obscene equivalent would be. One of my friends, from an entirely different part of the state from Fidelity, says that even during books a cry of the words would bring instant response. Without so much as a "By your leave" the boys rushed away from their desks and ran down the taunter. I suppose that this has long ago passed as a custom, but some of us middle-aged ones remember it as formerly very much alive.

PICTURES OF THE HEREAFTER

Our Fidelity preachers, like all others of that time, spent much time telling us about the hereafter, though I fear few of them knew much about it. For all practical purposes, we could have left out their talking about heaven, for they spent most of their time and their poetic fancy on picturing the other place. Sometimes I think they almost improved on the picture, somewhat after the fashioning of painting the lily and adorning the ^{rose} ~~lily~~. Every conceivable image was brought up to show the sufferings of the damned. Some of these figures were, as you would expect, the traditional ones, given very ~~pl~~platitudinously and scarily. Some of them were in a sense original, an accumulation of years of thinking over the fires and sufferings in prospect. Only rarely did these gruesome pictures seem to do any immediate good, however, unless we got real poetic enjoyment out of picturing such fearful things. I could not see that any of our neighbors sniffed brimstone in anticipation before continuing on their ways of doing what seemed wrong to all of us.

By way of contrast, after ~~an~~ hour's tirade on the wrath of divinity on sinners, the preacher would add a few remarks, somewhat inane, on the joys of the other place. I could never see much appeal in these pictures, though, for they seemed too sissy after our viewing the he-man punishment meted out to the bad ones. The terrors almost seemed inviting, especially as they were to be shared, we were told, by the most of mankind.

Through the years I could not see that the emphasis on a better hereafter increased. We merely got the same old stories of fire enlarged upon and added to as our preachers heard others of their profession dilate on the same theme. The inane heaven did not improve, either, for somehow the preachers did not allow their imaginations to dally with the idea of future happiness as they did

with future punishment.

Our white preachers, however, were downright prosaic as compared with our colored preachers. When a colored brother told about hell in the church at Mt. Zion, the brethren could smell the burning flesh and hear the screams of the vile sinners. It was not at this church but it could have been that a preacher gave an unforgettable figure of everlasting torment by saying that if all the coal in the world were piled in a heap and all the wood and oil added to it and then set afire, a poor sinner sitting on the top of the burning mass would be as if in zero weather by the side of the fires of hell. Now that is poetic, whether it scares you or not. I have never heard anything quite that rounded and perfect, but some of the figures I listened to and trembled over were in the same general tone.

And that brings back one of the exquisite tortures of my childhood. On Sundays I heard of fire until I came to fear it. I lived in mortal dread that the earth would burn up in my time. But I was afraid to tell any of my family about my absurd fears, for I knew I would be laughed at. One of our Fidelity men, under the mistaken notion that burning off the woods would kill off the ticks, sometimes let fire get out and rage over the hills along Blood River. I can still see those hills outlined at night by the burning leaves and can call back a little of the fear that the world was going up in smoke this time for sure. Whether the pictures of hell fire did me any good or not I can never say, but they built up for me a misery that no language then or now could tell.

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CHILDISH FEARS

At the end of my last article I mentioned being afraid of the woods fires that were set by one of our eccentric neighbors at Fidelity. That was just one of the childish fears that were once exceedingly real and are not too deeply buried today to be forgotten.

In the pulp magazines that we read there were often stories of foundlings who had been ^{brought} ~~grown~~ up by respectable families. Early in my life, probably because I was the youngest child and rather small for my age, I got the insane notion that I was not a true member of our family. I did not mention such a thing, of course, for it would have been a source of laughter for months and ^{years}. Every visitor would have been told this crazy notion and would have wondered again whether I ~~were~~ not 'tetched in the head.' I cannot recall how long that crazy notion goaded me, but it must have lasted several years.

Then there was the fear of invisible things ^{that} might eat you up as you lay in your bed. After an evening of scary yarns told when neighbors came in to sit till bedtime I have gone to bed and covered myself up head and ears, in spite of warm weather, and lain actually afraid that the invisible goblins would start their feast. Covering up with a jeans quilt on a warm night is one of the warmest things I can think of doing. Of course, no preliminary of the feast ever occurred, but I must have lost several years of growth in these Turkish baths after hearing the traditional tales about ghosts, haints, and panthers.

Punishment was so often talked about and so often administered that I lived in fear of it, though I know now that what I got was never heavy. I early developed the idea that when someone went wrong, I would be blamed for it. I used to suffer the tortures of the Inquisition when a little fellow got up to say his piece and

forgot it. I just knew that the teacher would blame me. Some of the hard-hearted boys would laugh at the little fellow's discomfiture, but I did not. It was no especial sympathy, though, for my memory rarely failed me; I could recite all a long summer's day without a bobble and without slowing down. But it seemed certain that I would be called in for a severe lecturing for something I could not help. I suppose that this same fear made me live in hot water because my two older brothers just could not get along. They really enjoyed scrapping and seemed to fear no punishment from our parents. When they were switched, it hurt me, for I felt that I would be next. I never was, for this fear made me a cowardly little brat that early learned to avoid transgressing the letter of the law, though I will not say that I did not often violate the spirit.

Since Father was a doctor, I was always afraid that I would turn up with some of the horrible things that demanded his attention. I could just see myself with broken bones, or cancer, or tuberculosis, or infantile paralysis. I always looked pretty skinny and sickly anyway and could easily imagine myself "going the whole hog," as Davy Crockett would have said. Crutches, flaps over the eyes, poultices, blisters, bandages, and such like got mixed up even with my dreams and made me fear that I would turn out a combination of all that ever has happened to humanity. Somehow this has been my hardest childish fear to live down, for I can hear a lecture now on eyes and forthwith develop every known disease of the eyes. It is nearly disastrous to linger in a drugstore, for I can feel all sorts of symptoms coming on. I usually buy something that I did not intend to before I get out, remembering how certain places hurt or burned or felt painless. Frankly, I suspect that a large percentage of humanity is equally gullible, whether from a lasting childish fear or some other frailty.

MORE FORMAL TIMES

The young people whom I teach are very much surprised when I tell them that former times were ever so much more formal than the present. They seem to think that in the days of Grandma things were crude and therefore free and easy. Sometimes I find pseudo-historians who seem to think the same thing, forgetting that our present time is probably the most informal period of recorded history.

Take clothes, for instance. In my younger days I was practically disgraced if I appeared in company without my ^{coat} ~~shirt~~ on. It was not only bad manners; it was almost obscene. For a young lady to be caught out without something on her head was equally disgraceful. Nothing good could be prophesied of such delicts as these. I can recall how for years I wore tight gloves and would have been regarded as far from dressy if I had left them off. I wore a laundered vest for years after I was grown, as who didn't? The buttons were removable when the vest had acquired enough wear to warrant laundering again. Sometimes I would forget to remove the buttons; in that case they would return in a pocket of the vest or in an envelope. Without that vest I would have been fairly well dressed but not exquisitely.

And how about manners? The stiff ways in which people used to say and do the most ordinary things are still laughable. The intention was good, for children were drilled in their manners until they (the manners, I mean) stuck. Boys who had to walk in front of one of the guests around the fireplace begged one's pardon so mannerly that I sometimes wondered whether they did not do this rudeness of coming between a guest and the fire in order to show off their manners. And when you gave anyone something, the profuse thanks almost overwhelmed you. I just wonder whether those people were any more thankful than some of the present generation, who are often accused of

thoughtlessness bordering on rudeness.

Probably nothing has changed more than courting, as I said a long time ago in this column. Can you imagine a fellow's writing a formal note asking for a date and receiving a similar formal one, pink and perfumed, from his lady-love? The calling of a mere beau could have all of the formality of a visiting earl or duke. To see the young lady meet her swain at the door on Sunday afternoon you never would guess that the ~~two~~ had been happy children together and had waded the creek and climbed trees and slid down the hills on sleds in winter. How tactfully she waited while the beau drew off his white gloves and extended his hand in what was supposed to be the most approved style! And how labored the conversation often was as the two turned through the family album or looked for the ninetieth time at the stereoscope views! And how formal was the beau's departure when it came time for him to get back to his home to help his pappy feed and care for the stock!

Much is made of table manners, and should be, too. In those early times there were manners also, though they might not be so called today. There was even more rigidity in the order of the courses, though they were hardly called that. A child that insisted on eating pie before meat was regarded as downright incorrigible. If anyone in my neighborhood had served pie for breakfast, in true New England style, it would have caused a stir equal to that when one of our middle-aged neighbors eloped, though married, with a younger girl. Just about everything had its formality, and those who refused to abide by the decrees of fashion were regarded as hardly worthy of respect. Crude our ancestors may have been in many ways, but their manners were much stiffer and more formal than ours are.

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TELLING THE TRUTH

Many times since I started this column, I have reminded the readers that I object strenuously to the false pictures of Kentucky that outsiders often draw. One school of writers who choose Kentucky to write about picture the whole state as a mere adjunct to a race course; another school prefer to make all of us peasants of the twentieth century living barefooted and running a still. I dislike to the point of disgust both unfair portrayals of Kentucky. Merely because somebody in New York City wants to believe us either aristocrats or peasants should be a poor excuse for any writer to falsify his accounts of us.

Most Kentuckians are as far from the idleness of the rich as they are from the hopelessness of the very poor. Most of us get up in the morning and go to work, and have to in order to provide food for ourselves and our families. Very few could remain at home in bed for several days, even, without feeling the pinch because of the stopping of the salary. This dependence upon hard work makes all of us respectful toward labor with hands or heads. Genuine idleness is scarce in our state, even though we could make out with a little more industry.

Sometimes I do not blame the outsider for his low opinion of us when I think how many of our writers seem deliberately to state only one side of our Kentucky life. A generation ago James Lane Allen glorified the state in many ways, but he helped build up the glamorous picture that is far from true. His contemporary John Fox, Jr., was a great promoter of the other tradition. Neither could be said to be representative of the area that he made famous in his works. In no sense was Allen a genuine Bluegrass personality; his retiring, scholarly nature was far from the easy life he

pictured in such warm colors. Similarly, Fox was no mountaineer; he had been reared elsewhere and came into the mountains as an outsider. Much of what both have written is accurate, but it has aided in the building of two untrue pictures of normal life here. The late Miss Roberts has written poetic interpretations of the state in novel form, so poetic that the great migration in Boone's time seems like a glorified Sunday School picnic. Maybe she in no sense meant to be true to history and social conditions but wanted to give the poetic side of adventuring in pioneer days. So idealized has Kentucky become in literature that two present-day realists, so realistic that mild-eyed idealists regard them as brutally frank, have difficulty convincing outsiders that they are genuine boys from the mountains and not city-trained writers who are using Kentucky as a field to experiment with. I refer, of course, to Jesse Stuart and James Still, both of whom know Kentucky and tell some of its best and some of its worst. Both are well known; both are young; both are fearless in presenting what they know. The unpleasant side appears often in the works of these two young men, as would be natural when you consider what they have seen and known. But in no sense do they picture Kentuckians, even the ignorant breed of them, as peasants, with all the fight and flavor bred out. Both writers are basically poets who know that poetry to endure must be alive and vigorous and not merely prettified words about dainty subjects. I wish that more writers inside our state and outside would be as honest with their materials as these two young men are. Kentucky needs to see itself fairly and not in a distorted light that glorifies or degrades us past recognition.

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POEMS BY EVERYBODY

Some years ago I published for some five years a small poetry magazine. To me were sent enough poems to put out every month a magazine as large as the best ones now on the market. The magazine died, not because of lack of material but because of lack of funds. This experience was just another one to remind me how many verses are written that never see print.

In every community where this ~~stuff~~^{essay} will come there are reams of verse in manuscript form awaiting a publisher and a reader. Some of the verses have been read dozens of times by the author or his best friends; some have been sent away to seek a publisher; some are secret outpourings of a poetic spirit that have never been seen by any eyes except those of the author. And, be it said honestly, some of these unpublished verses are as good as many that have found a species of immortality in print.

The astonishing thing about dozens of these home-made verses is that they are very much alike. Regardless of the background or education of the author, most of the poems fall into a kind of slap-dash meter that may or may not scan. The rhymes are there, of course, whatever else may be left out. Sometimes the rhymes are about the only characteristic of verse that one can detect. And here is another odd thing about these verses: they are nearly always didactic, that is, they are moralizing. Quaint or dainty ways of saying things seem to count for nothing; the big thing is the punch-line, which is practically always a trite moral that everyone has already heard a million times. Once in a great while some of these manuscript verses that I have read by the ton say something in a new way, an honest way, with all avoidance of conventional expressions. Fortunately, I have sometimes had a hand in getting

some of these into print in magazines or books, though I am in no sense a literary agent.

If I were a collector^C of verses like Miss Effie Gertrude Wilson of Marrowbone, Kentucky, I think I would go in for obituary poems, tombstone verses, and similar things. She has done some unusual work in rescuing from oblivion some of the Valentine verses of other days and has published some attractive articles on the subject. A patient search of county newspapers over a period of years would bring up some jewels that ought not to be lost. A very few times I have found some wonderful verses on tombstones, not the conventional ones that every tombstone maker apparently inherits but new home-made ones, as new as the last issue of the county paper.

Now here is a fact not often referred to in this column: I used to dream of being a great poet. But who hasn't? I wrote several that were published in school papers and a few that circulated in manuscript. Even today I feel that some of them were fair in quality and might have been worked into something readable. But a busy life as a schoolteacher, with its attendant graduate work and incessant paper grading, somewhat cooled my ardor as a poet. I dared far enough, though, to have a very sincere sympathy for the young poet or the older one who "seats himself and takes his pen in hand" and writes a doleful ditty for the county-seat paper and suffers a great shock when his priceless manuscript comes back or probably gets lost in the printing office. Writing poetry is a stage that many of us go through; not to have felt the urge to pen a masterpiece is to have missed some very nervous living. The next time you see a poorly-written verse in this paper, read it and laugh, but do not forget that you probably could do little better. The honest truth is that your unpublished manuscript may still be lying, gathering dust, in some place around your home.

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FIFTY YEARS IN SCHOOL ~~I~~

It is easy to forgive a fellow for being queer when he can say "Fifty years ago I did thus and so." Well, fifty years ago I started to school and have been associated with school ever since. If the first hundred years are the hardest, then I am half way through the hard part of school life.

Much is made of modern methods and up-to-date teaching. I appreciate the efforts of educators to enliven things by approaching school with a scientific spirit and trying honestly to discover how teaching can best be done. But we old-timers can sometimes remember when we witnessed good teaching in the lowliest places imaginable, in the unpainted little shacks that used to be called schoolhouses. My own rural-school teachers had little education, not a single one of them having the equivalent of one year of high school education. But some of the ways we were taught were so good that educators imagine themselves great innovators by reintroducing these methods today and creating a great stir among the profession.

If I were asked what is the chief difference between the schools today and the one-roomed school at Fidelity, I would say that the teacher of that time was a genuine hero or heroine in the eyes of the children and the patrons. The fact that a mere boy or girl could take charge of a houseful of youngsters only a little younger than the teacher and instruct them in everything from the multiplication table to reading "Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight" made most people marvel at human perfectability. From as far back as I can remember I wanted to be a teacher and have unconsciously followed the teachers that life has brought to me. My best and my worst efforts as a teacher could be said to be a product of the schools that I have known.

Eleven years in a one-roomed country school, not from being too dull to pass but from the fact that there was nowhere else to go, brought me nine different teachers, four men and five women. Only two of them continued to be teachers the rest of their lives: one remained a teacher of one-roomed schools until he retired; the other was able to work up to the position of city superintendent. One taught school while working his way through medical college; another used the school system as a starter to get his theological education. One of the girls, only eighteen at the time she taught me, ended her career after her year at Fidelity, but I can truly say that I never had a more stimulating teacher in all my career. As I think back now, I know that I had in those nine teachers just about every type of teacher that one could think of. Some worshiped spelling and saw to it that we spelled on all occasions; some regarded arithmetic as the only subject worthy of study; some taught history really well, with a slight prejudice, of course, to the South. But not a single one of them taught lazily or mechanically, even though three of them were to die of tuberculosis, two of whom walked out of the schoolroom, almost literally, into the graveyard.

Since Fidelity days I have had forty-six teachers, making a total of fifty-five, surely enough. Two of these teachers were in a private school that I attended for a half year, nineteen were in a combination high school-junior college that grew into Western, and the other twenty-five were undergraduate and graduate teachers in Indiana University. ^{only} a few of them had a chance, because of my having many courses under them or because of intimate association outside the schoolroom, to impress me as did the nine teachers in the little Fidelity school. It is not given many people to be so much to their pupils as my rural teachers were; for a whole school year they were our guides, our models, our best and noblest friends.

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MY FIRST PUPIL

When I went to school at Fidelity, there were no grades, no graduation, no passing, no failing--we just went to school. That meant that we good-sized boys and girls practically memorized our books; there was nowhere else to go and little else to do. After going over the same books for some four or five years, we had lots of time to spare for note-writing or mischief or loafing. Fortunately, some of our teachers knew of ways to keep us employed. Almost from my first day in school I wanted to be a teacher; that gave my teachers a lead in what to do with me in spare times.

As we had all the grades in our school, one teacher was kept pretty busy. Sometimes a large boy or girl would be called to help out. And there is where I got my first experience as a teacher. I must have been all of eight years old. I knew my letters and could read before I had started to school at six; by the time I was eight, I must have been a child wonder, for I recall that I was studying Harvey's Grammar along with the big boys and girls. Along in the late summer of that year Mark and Elmus started to school. They were good-sized boys, big enough to wear long pants or reasonable facsimiles of long pants. Elmus, the older, knew a little about reading, but Mark, a namesake of my country-doctor father, did not know A from B. My teacher set me the task of teaching Mark his letters. If I had known then what I know now, I fear I would have begged off. But youth is ever hopeful. I began my hopeless task. "What is that?" I would ask. "Don't know" he would answer, very naturally. "That is A." "A" he would repeat very nasally. And on we went through all twenty-six of the strange characters. The first day I thought he must know, for he repeated after me each letter, as if he knew and wanted to know. But the next day he did not recognize any of the crooked marks, in spite of my profound knowledge and my persistent teaching.

And so I had to start all over again. With a little prompting he could name two or three the third day. Whether I ever got Mark to recognize all the letters or not it is too late to find out. Maybe I was merely to give him a head start and then let the teacher finish up. Whatever the agreement, I fear I failed on my first pupil, for I am positive that he never learned to read. Probably, if he still lives, the twenty-six characters are as puzzling to him now as they were along about 1898.

But this failure in itself probably started me to teaching with a determination to do better on my other pupils. Thirty thousand have followed Mark; some of them learned about as readily as he; some caught on at once; some fell down a few times on grammar or spelling or punctuation and then rose to fight again. Several of the large number have lengthy titles after their names; hosts have degrees of some sort; and other thousands dropped out of school before graduation. But I love them all and wonder what they might have been like if I had not cut my eyeteeth as a teacher trying to get Mark, in the old Fidelity schoolhouse, to know the difference between A and B.

THE SCHOOL PICTURE

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Last week the weekly paper of my home county, the successor to the one in which my items first found print, carried a good-sized cut made from a picture of the school next to Fidelity. The date was 1902, and there were some 40 children with the one teacher, the very teacher who had been at Fidelity for her first school the year before. The occasion for bringing out this old, faded picture was that it contained, away over at the end of the first row of children, the figure of a commonplace country boy who has recently been appointed to a big job on UNO after having worked up to be the First Assistant Secretary of Agriculture of the United States! Poor little fellow in the picture, self-conscious in his cap and home-made clothes! Who could have ever guessed that he would be the most famous of the forty youngsters assembled in front of the schoolhouse? Certainly nobody in the group could have been wise enough to make any such wild prophecy. And now, forty-four years later, every living member of the school is radiant with glory, reflected glory, because one little boy, in no way prepossessing in 1902, has become one of the world's great.

And that, like everything else, reminds me. The making of the group picture of the school was an annual event that all of us looked forward to very much as we waited impatiently for Christmas and time to pull off barefooted in the spring. One of our photographers, the very one that used to take pictures in tents and thus got a chance to be the first to present my homely mug to the world, made it a rule to visit many schools every year in the late summer or early fall, after the boys who had been kept at home with the crops had started to school. All excitement, we lined up against the side or the front of the schoolhouse and waited nervously for the birdie to fly forth on its journey. We tried, if we had gone through this ordeal before, to look stiff and bored, but we could not keep our eyes off the queer camera on a tripod and the mysterious black scarf that the photographer threw over his head when he took a look, solemnly, at us. Most of us were stiff enough to have

our pictures taken and added to other stiff pictures in the family album or framed and hung on the front-room walls. But an occasional brat thought the whole thing funny and laughed in spite of the courteous request of the photographer and the bloody threats of the teacher. One such brat in Fidelity School, urged to keep still, giggled right out and as a result appears largely as a blur. If a close-up of him had been taken, it would have shown freckles as large as cowpeas and tousled sandy hair, just such features as you would expect on the typical bad boy. The rest of us wished all kinds of horror to befall the bad boy, but we bought the picture anyway and cherished it for years afterwards. I wish I could lay my hands on one of these right now, for I would like to know what I looked like in 1902, the very year that the to-be-famous lad was attending the school next to ours, with our former teacher in charge.

And then, as all good stories say, I grew up and went away two whole counties from Fidelity and began, in 1907, my own first school. A meek-voiced photographer from the little village where I was later to be the principal of the two-roomed school came by one day and lined us up against the back of the school building, because the front was too shady. Again, as if to prove that humanity is the same, in Fidelity or farther away by two counties, a bad boy giggled and practically spoiled the group picture. Again, I bought one of the monsters and for years took it around with me as I sought education. And then, in a fit of destroying useless articles, I tore the picture in two and burned it. And now, with history still repeating itself, I would give considerably more than I paid for the original to have a copy, partly to see what my school, now long disestablished, looked like in 1907, and partly to see whether I could recognize as myself the stern, learned, eighteen-year-old that was the teacher.

SCHOOL SWEETHEARTS

Since I have taught in college for more than thirty years, I do not need to be told that the bringing together of boys and girls under the same roofs day by day will cause permanent interest to develop. In fact, I hold it as one of the joys of my profession that I can see, year after year, the acting out of "love's old sweet song," or whatever poetic name you may give to the perennial romance of boy meets girl. Some of my friends accuse me, probably with some degree of truth, of being a born match-maker in my college. What do you expect of a teacher of normal, healthy young people if not an interest in their future? And isn't love a very big part of their future, or anybody's?

You see, I early got interested in school sweethearts. Fidelity was, as I have often said, just a small slice of the whole big world. That means that there were boys, usually huddled together on one side of the schoolhouse over in the woods, and girls, not too far away, on the other side. In spite of dire punishments promised and sometimes carried out, rudimentary love-making went on, right under the teacher's nose. I hate to think that the teacher was as dumb as we thought her to be, for I would accuse myself along with the teachers I have had. After all, what is a teacher to do, anyway? If every look in the direction of the girls' side of the house had met instant and cruel punishment, only about one day would have sufficed to kill off all the prospective men and women of Fidelity. Very flagrant violations of the rigid code of the school met punishment that ranged from downright cruelty to sheer fun. Sometimes the teacher actually whipped a boy for writing a note; sometimes the culprit was made to read his poetic and romantic effusion to the whole school; sometimes, and I had my doubts about the propriety of this, the teacher

made the boy sit by the girl to whom he was writing such sugary notes. I do not recall having ever seen any boy sicken and die from this punishment; sometimes I believed that he had planned the punishment long in advance, probably aided by the little girl. But not all notes were intercepted. Some got across by subtle help from disinterested parties and were received with outward gravity but inward exultation. This note, at Fidelity, promptly found its way into a crack in the wall, between the ceiling and the weather-boarding. It was a generation's accumulation of these successful notes that were finally revealed to the world when the old building was wrecked, and cheap paper tablets of the long ago could have been assembled from the trash that strewed the old school grounds for weeks. Probably a few of these precious ones may have found lodgment in collections at home, in one's very own box or drawer or tin box. And no amount of watchfulness on the part of the teacher ever stopped the steady stream of underground correspondence.

On the playground and on the way to and from school the youthful love-making went on, even though it may have changed often from one girl to another. He would tote her books and dinner basket or bucket, that is, unless the bigger and more hardened boys made too much fun. Sometimes he would have to thrash a rival or two, but that was only the basic savagery that crops up as much in civilization as in the jungle or in Fidelity. Even after risking one's life for the charmer, she might prove fickle and let some other boy carry her books. And then, after a few days of sulking like a Homeric hero, eyes opened again and saw other feminine charms that formerly lay hidden. And the world wagged on, with probably a dozen or two romances in the five months of the free school, with several more at Sunday School and at picnics. And, to complete the story, there has been no appreciable change since then, for college is quite like Fidelity.

OUR NEW BUGGY

In rummaging around in my office storeroom recently, I saw and brought home my old diary for June 9 to August 20, 1905. Turning through the very first pages, I ran on an arresting item. After a rather tedious account of spending a large part of the day cleaning out ditches (where and what kind I cannot now recall), I added: "When I got my ditches cleaned out, I came home and went to Fidelity. I sent an order for a buggy for Father." In spite of that breath-taking statement I slept that night and was able to work the next day, thinning corn and planting a late patch. No doubt I counted the days until the new buggy arrived, estimating, from former orders of various sorts, just how long it would take the letter to get to Chicago, how long it would have to wait to be opened, and how soon the buggy would be started from the factory, in Chicago or elsewhere. But life must go on, buggy or no buggy, especially when a sixteen-year-old boy is making a full-time hand on the farm and is writing an elaborate diary to boot.

There was no reason why time should have been heavy on my hands during the long wait for our treasure. Leafing through the yellowed leaves of my diary, I find that in that period all sorts of interesting things happened. We finished planting our late corn, we laid by the earlier patches, we put out our last tobacco for the season; there were great doings at Sulphur Springs Church, company of miscellaneous kinds came and went; it rained copiously and delayed some of our farming activity; one of our cows got lost and had to be searched for for several days in the almost-boundless bottoms; I found hosts of early-summer flowers and covered whole pages of my diary with notes about nature; I went to a singing school in a log schoolhouse called Macedonia and helped sing tunes pitched a mile above the ordinary; candidates came to Sulphur Springs to our annual Fourth of July picnic, and a young lawyer,

now a very successful man in Corbin, made his maiden speech as a candidate(unsuccesful) for representative from my home county. Surely that many events would be enough to consume the time to make a buggy from the raw wood. But all things come to him who waits, said a sentence in Harvey's Grammar.

On July 7, 1905, the great event is recorded thus: "This morning I saddled Mag(my sister's mare and for twenty-six years the old family nag that I have so often talked about sentimentally) and went to Murray after Father's buggy, which came several days ago. I got there about 10:00 A. M. and went up in town and got a set of harness from Frank P'Pool which Albert(my older brother) had already bought. We(that is, Albert and I) then returned to the depot and began to put up the buggy. Mr. King(the depot agent, I suppose) came about this time, and I presented the bill of lading and returned to the depot. (I wish I had a picture of myself presenting that bill; I am sure no king ever looked any more royal.) We soon set the buggy up and we hitched Mag to it and drove up town. I bought several small articles, among them some baker's bread(Hot dog, wouldn't you like to sample some of that bread right now; it was baked in St. Louis and shipped by rail, so that it was several days old when I got it; it smelled of hops and came in loaves bigger than any you ever see now.) , a lapsread, and a whip, and loading^{up} my things, I started home. This side (that is, the Fidelity side) of Murray a short distance I stopped and greased the spindles, which seemed to lighten the load considerably. I made several halts on the way and arrived here(home) about 4:00 P. M. I put the steps on the buggy and rolled it under the shed."

There you have it. That is the way to order a buggy, wait four weeks for it without mentioning it in your diary, and then telling all the little details that make childish diaries so dull or so interesting, just the way you look at them.

*See inside
4-7-46*

REPPRESSED COUNTRY BOYS

It is a custom to bewail the monotonous and secluded life of boys of a half century ago. According to some authorities, nobody ever came, work was incessant from daylight till dark, there were no diversions, and even food was plain and practically repulsive. I suspect that people who write thus have poor memories or deliberately fool themselves into believing their early lives dull and monotonous. Sometimes I, too, have let my voice falter and have seen some of my elderly listeners develop nose-blowing when I mentioned the hard lot of the poor country boy. If I had had political ambitions, I am sure that I could have secured the votes of some of these sniffing old fellows. I will not promise to reform, for I am a human being and have all the cussedness of the breed; it is possible that I will again talk hoarsely and try my arts on hardened old fellows in the audience.

But it is a relief to know that one boy's life was certainly not lacking in events. My old diary for 1905, when I was sixteen-going-on-seventeen, is voluminous in its accounts of where I went, whom I saw, what I heard, what I read, not to mention plain daily farm work. Suppose we look at the single composition book that records my life from June 9 to August 20, 1905. I am sure that most other healthy boys lived just such busy lives and probably thought them ~~as~~ humdrum.

Bear in mind that this particular period was no more active than others. First of all, I attended Sunday School at Sulphur Springs Church every Sunday except one, when an inopportune shower kept me at home. But I made up for this hiatus in my religious life by attending church services on the regular church day and then went nearly every night to a protracted meeting for two weeks. Company came every weekend, sometimes eight or ten people at a time.

Some of them were plain, commonplace relatives that everybody has too many of, but some were rather charming young people around my own age. In between weekends there was seldom a day when some one did not eat dinner with us, for Father's being a doctor insured that there would always be visitors, and usually hungry ones at that. One weekend some of our guests ate too much and remained for several days, unable to be taken home. A big family^{and its guests} in a small house, with every bed taken, including the one in the front room, ^{are} ~~is~~ hardly conducive to a fellow's pining for excitement. An exciting primary election came on, too, when representatives to the General Assembly were to be chosen. That meant candidate speakings, one of which occurred at the picnic at Sulphur Springs. And the excitement got more and more intense as the fatal day approached. My candidate, the young lawyer, now of Corbin, lost, but he put up a good fight. One Sunday afternoon I drove far up the creek to Macedonia and helped conduct a singing school. My copy of COMFORT came, and no~~u~~ doubt I wept on the installment of ST. ELMO, for it occupied twenty-two numbers along about that time. The annual wheat-threshing and its accompanying big neighborhood working came along, and my diary states specifically, down to the pecks, just how much grain I helped thresh. A tent show came along, with actual motion pictures and a graphophone to furnish music for some colored slides. I worked in a stand at a picnic and ice-cream supper given to raise funds for our church at Sulphur Springs. And then Fidelity School started, and I entered on July 24. Day by day I wrote down happenings of note at the school, the intercepting of love notes, the comic pranks of the little boy whose big sister I sighed over for a few weeks, and all memorable lessons in our brand-new books. I even took time out to have a migraine headache or two, a lifelong habit of mine. Who says that any boy's life was monotonous with events coming so thick and fast? I hardly see how I managed to live through it all.

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Aug 28th 46
Stenciled Aug. 15, 1946

CHICKEN HAWKS AND TOM PAINE

In No. 568 of this series of essays I spoke of not having had a single curt or discourteous letter from the people who read what I write. Then in 570 I spoke a good word for most of the hawks and in 571 praised the much-misunderstood Tom Paine for his help to America when it needed a good fighter. Those two unpopular things touched off the fireworks for some reader who forgot to sign his name to my one unpleasant bit of correspondence about "Tibdits of Kentucky ^{Folklore} Literature." Thus I cannot write him directly, but I will speak here, hoping that he and others may try to get a few new ideas of their own and not forever quote some legend or tradition that was disproved for reasonable people ages ago.

Folk prejudices are about the hardest of all to eradicate. If Grandfather casually believed something, often that is proof enough of its validity, without any further investigation or thinking. You see, Grandfather was a big man in his time, and big men think big things. It is true that he had no screens on his house and felt that doctors were wrong in attributing malaria to mosquitoes; he often, on Sunday afternoons, when the neighbors assembled for a visit, said that the Bible very plainly regarded slavery as right; he had never been twenty miles from home in his life; his education was less than a good eighth-grade one. All this is beside the point, for he was the grandfather of the offended person and was therefore a sort of super-man, who knew all the answers or at least the answers to all questions that ought to be asked. By the same reasoning, why labor to buy modern things, for poor old Grandfather, with all his wisdom, did not have them for the simple reason that they did not exist or were not for sale near his part of the woods?

Every true-born American loves to preach. I am in no sense a foreigner. But I have always been slightly opposed to preaching that is too direct. In the first place, such preachment usually meets ears that are already stopped to the remembered phrases and are not likely to open. Long ago I tried to wrap up some of my preachments in unfamiliar wrappings and have them unexpectedly explode right under the nose of the very fellow who was on guard against the standard or garden variety of preaching. Maybe that is playing the game against the rules, but what better place to laugh at your foibles and mine than in a perfectly disinterested column whose author expects no rewards, material or otherwise? If one person after reading one of my brief essays learned to regard a little more kindly some human trait that is neither very, very bad nor very angelic, either, then my daily or weekly lesson might have served some useful purpose. Frankly, and this is for the benefit of my nameless reader who wrote the curt note, I deliberately bring in occasionally some appeal for the downtrodden hawks that suffer from ignorance and prejudice and equally for the Tom Paines that tradition assigns to doubtful categories of Americans. When I defend Grandma's style of talking, I am aware that she deserves some consideration; but who wants to hear her grand-daughter, who has had all the advantages, use the same day-before-yesterday language? When I laugh at our antics as country hicks, I am laughing on ^{only} one side of my face, for there was little difference between the ones who laughed at us and the funny creatures that we were. In fact, the years have often reversed the fun, so that the joke is now on the fellow who laughed first. What I am trying to say in this little sermon is that it is a short-sighted person who imagines that he is far removed from the folk; he is right in the midst of folk thinking, folk prejudice, folk habits, folk words and phrases. High-and-mighty airs become none of us who live in any part of the state that I have seen; by searching you might find some of the mud from Fidelity on our shoes.

SIC TRANSIT

589 Aug. 29, 46
Stenciled Aug. 15, 1946

The words of the title are part of a very trite Latin line: "Sic transit gloria mundi," which means, as you already know, "Thus passes the glory of the world." It has been said or translated hundreds of times when somebody of power or prominence passed away or when some landmark, human or otherwise, left a vacant place where it used to be. And that is just what this little essay is to be about today, for in the passing of an elderly man pass~~es~~ some of the things that no future historian born after today will ever be able to recapture, however erudite he may be.

"They say that in his prime
Ere the pruning knife of time
Cut him down,
Not a better man was found
By the crier on his round
Through the town."

The death of the elderly gentleman was not in itself such a great event, for his weakened body had long been on the verge of the grave, and his mind long ago was senile. It was his philosophy that died with him, at least his philosophy in its entirety. Others who are younger, some of them much younger, will keep alive some of the queer dreams he dreamed about the earlier days, but no one human being born after the Civil War can ever wrap up in one body the essence of what hundreds have thought the South used to be and wasn't. Our late old gentleman was just too young to be in the Southern Army, but he imbibed the flavor of all that that army meant to people then and in the dreaming world that succeeded the war. Nothing^{else} had ever been the equal of the Southern generals, nobody^{else} had ever possessed the ideals of the Southern leaders. The most ordinary farms were, in this old gentleman's mind, matchless plantations. Rather inadequate houses, merely because they were in a state that owned slaves but did not secede, were mansions, much to be preferred to any farmhouse north of the Ohio River. A shabby horse or a mangy cow or a mongrel dog,

just so long as it was Southern-born or especially so long as it belonged to him, was pure-blooded, with enough famous ancestors to insure its immortality. Once he took two miles of slow driving in his trap to give me the ancestry--that is, immediate ancestry--of his horse and his dog, even though I wanted to say, slightly parodying the droll speaker in "The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County": "I do not see any p'int's about that horse and that dog different from any others." Every week we laugh, or do we, at Senator Claghorn, on the Fred Allen Show. This elderly gentleman could have given Kenny Delmar, the actor who created the Senator, enough material to run indefinitely.

Where is the South that we of my generation heard so much about? Some of it, the part that I saw, was just getting out of semi-pioneer conditions and was far from being impressive or grand. The fine houses that existed scantily in various parts of the state were already changing hands and passing out of the ownership of the family. Only an occasional~~ly~~ one had been bought up by some rich descendant as a sort of plaything, a sentimental plaything, but meanwhile, except for a few weeks or months of the year, the owner stayed away in a big city and made money so he could enjoy in vacation or on weekends the mansion that the family used to own. But mansions were and are scarce articles. For every one that ever existed in the heart of the South, as many people need to be told, there were dozens of less pretentious ones, ranging down to the merest shacks or cabins. And all that is South, and don't you forget it. By degrees some of the ~~younger~~^{younger} generation ~~is~~ are discovering that inheriting a tradition is hardly enough; there must be some usefulness and--out with it--some dollars and cents. In a way it is a little sad to find that all things pass, even the strange and beautiful myth about the South, but looking back longingly over one's shoulder at what used to be may not convert us into a pillar of salt as a similar act did Lot's wife, in the Book of Genesis, but it is not likely to make us aware of what lies on the road ahead.

COMMUNAL CULTURE

5
Sept. 10
Stenciled 8-29-46

Education is now, I sometimes think, pretty largely an individual thing, not alone graduate work but much of undergraduate and even high school. Everybody has a book and an individual task. Everybody has a newspaper or a magazine. Everybody has a radio and a telephone. Why call up someone on the party line to ask about the weather when you can find out every fifteen minutes of the day if you know how to turn the dial on your radio? And while you are talking, you might miss the perfectly side-splitting program of Somebody-or-Other and also prevent the fellow at the other end of the line from hearing the same program or one of his own pets.

When books were scarce and newspapers were almost non-existent, reading took on a more communal aspect. Sometimes a book was actually worn out from use, not hard use but constant use, by its owner and all his friends. If the paper of the book were of poor quality, and it's usually was, it might be badly torn or dog-eared before the precious volume finally disappeared as kindling. No one dreamed of burning up a story magazine, even the pulp-paper ones that came to some homes. After every member of the family had read the entire contents, including the advertisements, the magazine was passed on to people who were less fortunate, or it was folded carefully and kept in a file with other things too dear to burn.

No one household had many books, but nearly every one of any pretensions at all had some books, so that any wide reader could find a rather ~~W~~ representative group of books merely by passing on his own and accepting others from the neighbors. Abraham Lincoln's walking miles to return or to borrow books would have seemed perfectly normal in Fidelity, as just that sort of thing took place regularly. Novels, histories, books of poems, travel books, biographies, and even ancient classics found their way around, the finger-prints showing that

they had been read, whether understood or not.

The old custom of reading aloud was decidedly communal. Many people could not read well enough to enjoy the painful work; it was easy to sit and smoke or dream and listen to some good reader. Often there would be interruptions and comments that were in no sense poor. Children were not the only ones who loved to hear reading done; the oldest inhabitants listened with joy, often to the rereading of their favorites. As I have said long ago, my own memories of winter get mixed up with the sonorous lines of "Evangeline" or the thrilling events of some of Mary Jane Holmes's tearful novels, because I heard my older sister read as Mother turned the spinning wheel. When some of my friends have told me that they took turns reading PASSING INSTITUTIONS aloud, I have been glad, for probably many of the essays of this column were written with oral reading in mind. Certainly I could never have thought of some of the cadences, good or bad, if I had not unconsciously or consciously said the sentences half aloud as I typed.

And then there were many places where literature, ~~good and bad,~~ was discussed. At school we heard a lot about some of the things we read; sometimes ~~at~~ the neighborhood literary society, which met at homes through the winter months, discussed some genuine literature; and around the fire when neighbors came to sit till bedtime the books that everybody knew got many a retelling and discussion. We did not live in a vacuum: everything we did had a neighborhood or communal significance. In that way there were hundreds of things that even bookless people knew, though they ^{probably} ~~frequently~~ did not think of themselves as lovers of books or what books contained. Aside from discussions about disputed passages in the Bible there was always an astonishing breadth of view about these round-the-fire book or story reviews.

Viewed from the vantage point of forty years, there were entirely too many communal things, but by contrast our individual lives seem pretty selfish, our culture tenuous, our interests narrow.

Sept. 10
 Stenciled 8-24-46

There was a time when morals and manners and many other things were reduced to verse. Poetry is said to have been developed long before prose, anyway; hence it was only natural that anything that was to be learned "by heart" should be in rhymed form. The ancients often devoted some of their best poetic talent to composing poems of maxims about farming or bee-keeping or cattle-growing, as well as treatises on how to get along in the world. Though we do not consciously produce such rhymes any more, we still have hundreds of rhymed maxims that nearly everybody knows.

Take weather, for example. We have always known this bit of wisdom:

"Evening red and morning gray
 Will send the traveler on his way;
 But evening gray and morning red
 Will pour the rain down on his head."

Here is another one equally well known:

"Rain^{bow} at morning
 Shepherd's warning;
 Rainbow at night
 Shepherd's delight."

Bee-keepers know that

"A swarm of bees in May
 Is worth a load of hay;
 A swarm of bees in June
 Is worth a silver spoon;
 But a swarm of bees in July
 Is not worth a fly."

How could lovers of other times have lived and loved without rhymes? In fact, it is still thought that love and spring and birds and bees cause young poets to labor over verses. The old-fashioned candy kisses that we used to buy had little slips of genuine love poetry wrapped up with the gooey hunk of candy. The classic of all is, as you already recall:

"The rose is red,
The violet blue;
Sugar's sweet,
And so are you."

That is good enough for anybody except the sophisticated. My favorite rhyme, however, is, for this type of poetry:

"My love for you will ever flow
Like water down a tater row."

With ordinary geological conditions, I suspect that water will continue to flow down rows, tater or others, for a long time to come; hence this is genuine love, destined to last a long time.

What would Friday afternoon have been without traditional rhymes that we all knew from babyhood? Ten years ago I mentioned some of these time-honored verses and showed how they led up, by labored degrees, to the very height of elocutionary eloquence. Little boys said

"I had a little dog; his name was Rover;
When he died, he died all over."

Sometimes this was the first speech the little fellow ever said. It might be that he said instead:

"I had a little mule; his name was Jack;
I put him in the stable, and he crawled through a crack."

Sweet little girls said

"Here I stand on two little chips;
Come and kiss my sweet little lips."

Whole books can be written and have been written on traditional rhymes.

592
Sept. 24
Special 6
Sept 11, 1946

REVIVALS OF FOLK CUSTOMS

Many times in this column I have discussed left-over customs and language, remnants of other times and even of other places. These left-overs are in every way attractive to folk students, for they illustrate how our cultural patterns come and go, how some of our mores survive world-shaking changes. To know the origin and history of any ordinary human custom allies one in his thinking with geologists, in their seeing history so ancient that man's records seem only yesterday's afternoon's newspapers. To know the folk custom, to respect it, to see that it is properly evaluated by writers--these are a few services that the folklorist can render. But I cannot bring myself to think that any considerable portion of his time should be given to an effort to revive lost customs on any large scale, except as illustrations or museum pieces.

Some shallow thinkers, finding in customs that are now gone a fine flavor, feel that they would confer a great blessing on humanity by re-introducing what once thrived and then died of old age. If these enthusiasts could bring back the conditions that spawned the old custom, very rarely would they care to restore what has lived long and died peacefully. Isolated human institutions often seem much better than anything we now have. We look at them in retrospect or in a book and wish that we could restore everything of this nature and thus save only the cream of human achievement. Restorations like this, unless guided by wise people and even financed, soon fall of their own weight, again to become lost institutions. Museums, as such, are among our finest storehouses of knowledge, but except as they help us to understand our former times and give suggestions for bettering present-day conditions they are worth little. Because a few generations ago people devised certain types of clothes, or houses, or customs, there is no earthly reason why we should worship everything they did and try to bring back a false flavor by pretending that we are restoring some former time.

A great many types of folk education have developed in recent years, some of them good and others hardly. The Vicksburg Pilgrimage, picturesque and educative to those who know what to see, to many who turn their eyes backward rather than forward becomes a glorified view of a South that never existed or existed as a small part of a mixed blessing and curse. It is true that there were some great mansions in parts of the South, mansions that should be kept for museums, but the mass of the South, then as now, was poor, and had to live by work and endurance of climate and malaria and insects. The modern mansion, with modern additions to living conditions added unobtrusively, has a way of giving a false conception of just how well our ancestors south of the Ohio lived. Pretty hostesses in fine old costumes sweep through well-kept gardens, out of sight of wretched hovels and cabins that no amount of backward-looking can erase. If the visitor to this elegant annual event will keep a level head, no harm will be done, and his knowledge of certain phases of earlier life will be greatly increased; otherwise he will face the present actuality with disappointment and do, what so many Southerners have done, long for the good old days before 1861.

In a similar way I view with amusement efforts on the part of semi-educated people to revive folk customs, apparently to give flavor to things. One acquaintance of mine fondly believes that his singing of music~~al~~ hall songs of forty years ago, songs printed and sold over the counter and rattled away on a tinny piano, is a type of folk music. He disdains true folk songs that were transmitted orally long before then; frankly, just because these songs of his came into his life when he was a young blade, he fancies them the very essence of folk feeling and folk culture. I sometimes wonder whether some of these faddists would like to junk the old car and return to horses and buggies, to screenless kitchens, to malarial summers, to illiterate millions whose present-day descendants have the advantages of a standard education.

593
Sept. 24
St. Louis Sept. 11, 1916

A FEW GENERATIONS

When you stop to think of it, none of us and our families have been long in America. Even the F. F. V. and the Mayflower descendant don't have to exhaust the most elementary arithmetic to find the family back in the Old Country. Last night as I was composing myself to sleep, it occurred to me for the first time how short a time ago my own family came to America, even though it used to seem a very long time. About 1760 David Wilson and his twelve sons and one daughter landed in Pennsylvania and soon after then ~~found their way~~ ⁱⁿ North Carolina. There they lived until the Revolutionary War was over, and then the large family found its way into Tennessee in 1786. There it remained, so far as my line is concerned, until after the Civil War, when my father "came out to Kentucky," as they used to say. Now that may seem rather far back, but my great-uncles and great-aunts, who lived down until I was grown, knew the first American-born member of the clan, their grandfather, Jonathan. In fact, my own great-grandfather, born in 1799, died just the year before I was born, so that all my older brothers remembered him well. Boiled down, that means that some of the oldest people whom I knew could very well have known my great-great-grandfather or even, probably, his father.

This is no effort on my part to impress the D. A. R. or the S. A. R., even though two of my great-great-grandfathers were twin brothers and Continental soldiers. It is just another way of seeing how short has been the time, even since 1760. Viewed rationally in present-day terms, it is like my being able to tell my grand-daughter in a few years that I knew and knew well a man who was born in 1811 and that he lived so long that I wrote his death notice for our county paper. That is, he was older than three of my own grand-parents and would have the same relation to my grand-daughter as the first of the clan had to me, so far as time is concerned. You who are now mature

will see with me how close we are to the pioneers. And that makes me wonder all the more at the enormous number of things that have occurred within the memory of some long-lived person whom I have known and the oldest person he may have known. From the most primitive pioneer conditions through the Revolution, through the westward expansion, through the slavery troubles and the Civil War, through the rounding out of our country to the west, through the two great World Wars--there is a span for you. It is no wonder, then, that there are customs that have had trouble in dying and disappearing in our new country. From tallow candles to Electric lights is my own little range of memory; when my parents were born, we still did not have the great Southwest; my daughter was born near the close of World War I; my grand-daughter, in the midst of World War II. If only we had lived in the same place throughout this period of nearly two hundred years in America, I might seem as near to David and his son Jonathan and grand-son Marquis de Lafayette as I do to the second Jonathan, my grandfather, and the second Marquis, my father.

Somewhat we expect people to differentiate rapidly in our new land. It is startling to see very distant cousins in some families that resemble almost as much as brothers. The variety called Wilson or Jones or Brown is hardly of the same validity as Brown Leghorns or Duroc Jerseys or Aberdeen Angus, but a physical feature of prominence, like a bold nose or sandy hair or lantern jaw, sometimes gets fixed and remains age after age, so that Sandy may be as good a name for the seventh generation in America as it was for the last one before ~~that in~~ ^{the family left} Scotland or northern Ireland. Of course, it is hardly fair to say that a certain cut of thinking may be transmissible, but if the transmitter were a Presbyterian Scotch-Irishman, even the laws of biology concerning transmitted characteristics might break down.

It is a safe bet that many of us could get lost in our ancestral homes on the other side of the water and soon be recognized as members of the ancient clan. After we have been here a few hundred more years, we might talk more sensibly about how we have changed, but not yet.

594 Oct. 8, 1906
Serialized Sept. 14, 1906

CULTURE IN HYMNS

Aside from the poems in our old school readers our best source of poetry in Fidelity was the old hymns that we learned almost as we learned to talk. Hymnbooks themselves were not at all common or any kind of songbooks until shaped-note books began to come in with our singing-school masters. But going to church often and hearing the old hymns lined and sung gave us a drill in learning words and music that few of us realized was important. Then around the home our parents sang the old-time hymns as they worked, some of the hymns rather gruesome for the cheerfulness of our parents. Maybe the tunes added something that the words never could bring. It was a distinct loss when the hymns passed away for two or more decades except as the visiting presiding elder or an elderly preacher insisted on having the congregation sing the old songs. Then the elderly people rose to the occasion, and some of the younger ones, who had failed to memorize the hymns in their very early days, had to listen to the drawling tunes, far less spirited than the quick Sunday School songs that we had learned.

I suppose every community had its favorites among the old hymns. Certainly many of the ones I have learned since I left Fidelity never were sung that I can recall in the services at Sulphur Springs or Fidelity or Mount Carmel. In turning through the Methodist Hymnal in its latest edition I recognize not a single hymn that we used to know until I come to No. 23, "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing," and the air was not the one we used. It is not until we reach No. 92, "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear," that we again find one that we knew at Fidelity. Many of the intervening hymns are equally old and equally stirring, but for ^{some} reason that I cannot now determine we just did not sing them and had never heard them elsewhere. When I went away to teach school, I heard first some of the standard hymns that seemingly I should have known always.

This ignorance on our part in no way kept us from knowing many of the classics: "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," "There Is a Fountain Filled With Blood," "A Charge to Keep I Have," "Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound," and so on and on. When the preacher lined the hymn, we did not need to be reminded of the tune, back in the days before the church organ; we all knew just where to begin and where to leave off, to suit the words as they would be given.

In spite of the fact that a good many church hymns are not especially good poetry, some of them make up in loftiness of conception ^{for} some of their deficiencies of subtlety. I must confess that I still love to hear a whole hymn read aloud by a good-voiced, old parson. In that way we get again the full effect of the hymn as a poem, a thing that probably not one in a thousand gets otherwise. Take "How Firm a Foundation," for instance. As a lofty religious poem it has few equals, and in some of its phrases it rises to genuine beauty. From early life I have enjoyed the stanza that goes thus:

"E'en down to old age all my people shall prove
My sovereign, unchanging, unchangeable love;
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in my bosom be borne."

I suppose that the sweet old faces of the singers on some Sunday morning in our little church made those words sacred, faces that long ago ceased to shine in this world. And I cannot forget how often this solemn, strong old hymn has been sung at the funeral of strong, solemn men and "mothers of Israel." There was not much sweetness in the hymns we sang, but there were strength and assurance. And into our hearts came unconsciously some of the rugged philosophy of the stately old hymns that formed a big portion of our religious lives.

THE ONE-ROOMED CHURCH

Oct. 8, 1946
Stenciled Sept. 14, 1946

In the fifty-one years since I started to school at Fidelity many strange things have happened in education, but probably the most significant has been the passing, in many areas, of the one-roomed school. It is true that in ~~many~~^{some} counties there are still many of them left, some of them right now without teachers, but the movement is decidedly in the direction of consolidation. Some of our counties have entirely done away with the one-roomed school, as Daviess County, for instance. The passing of the last small~~ly~~ school in that county was a significant event, great enough to warrant a Courier-Journal article illustrated with the picture of the school, its last teacher, and the few children left. That teacher was one of my students, a good one, who must have made a very distinct contribution to that neighborhood as the school population dwindled and finally justified the abolishment of the school. There was undoubtedly a bit of sadness when the door closed for the last time, for it marked the passing of a day that nearly all of us remember tenderly. The remaining children there and in many another abolished district are now in the larger consolidated school, with many more opportunities for a wider acquaintance with books and people. This passing institution, like so many of the ones that I have loved, just indicates that we grow and that what was formerly good for us may no longer serve our needs.

As a member of a large city congregation I have often wondered why the consolidation of rural churches could not be attempted as a movement parallel to that attempted in schools. Every county has one or many starveling churches that often do not have as many members as they had fifty years ago and sometimes no services of any regularity. Many a Methodist preacher, for instance, has eight such churches and tries to keep them going just as they were in days when rural communities were more populous. Occasionally a country church is today far ahead of

what it used to be, but that is decidedly the exception. The automobile has taken the people to far-away town or city churches or somewhere besides church. Strong old bulwarks of country churches, like our Fidelity Mr. Maddox, are decreasing in number steadily. When death took these old-time leaders, there were seldom younger people trained to take up the burden. So decadent have the country churches become in some places that I once discovered that a county in which I was visiting did not have a single religious service on Sunday night, in fine late-summer weather at that. I could not find out what percentage of them had morning services of some sort. In my own county in this very year of 1946 a new country church of real pretensions has been built, which practically created a sensation. Many of the churches of the same denomination in the same county have hardly had a new coat of paint in many years and are attended by a decreasing number of people. If consolidation could save the school interests as we changed from compact little communities to our present system, why might it not help the country, one-roomed church?

An old-timer like me cannot help feeling sad at the passing of an institution as fundamental as the rural church, but some Scotch trait in me reminds me that even a church must meet expenses and that it is hardly fair to expect to get a young man to enter the ministry and then starve to death on some overworked circuit or group of small churches. There is genuine pathos in seeing a deserted graveyard and the site of an old church grown over in weeds and bushes. One such I often pass as I go south of town to see water birds in the spring. Once it was the meeting place of well-to-do farmers and their families, in an excellent neighborhood, then and now. In the graveyard are buried people who were prominent in the pioneer and later days. But a live church is only a few miles up a good gravelled road, and neighborhood boundaries have widened since the church now gone was in its heyday. Slowly many such events must be taking place in our state, as the too-small church organization gives way to consolidation, call it by whatever name you wish.

LESS SELF-CONSCIOUS

596 Oct. 22, 1946
Stenciled 10/16/46

One of the things that have developed in recent years, very noticeable to me since I started this column in 1935, has been a greater appreciation for folk things. Somehow people are too sensitive about their origins and feel that by no means could their ancestors have been crude and hardy pioneers. It is fairly common for many of the people whom I have known to try to make you believe as they ~~xxx~~ believe, that their ancestors arrived here in America fully educated and cultured, that they did not have to undergo the long, hard climb to affluence and education. Of course, such people are either ignorant or deliberately dishonest with themselves and us, for a mere sample of historic sense would soon convince the most stubborn that pioneer days and conditions were hard on everybody, that not many survived except the tough ones who could stand it all. Poets and novelists have often contributed to this idealization of earlier times by refusing to see clearly the actual, hard conditions. Then it is a trait of human nature to glorify itself, especially when there is no chance for checking up.

By degrees, though, the thinking people everywhere have begun to take stock of themselves and their families and to see that progress is a slow and uncertain thing. Not to view the past historically is to be blind to virtues and vices alike. Our ancestors were in many ways as fine as we, in a few ways better, but it would be a queer person who felt that in every way they excelled us. If that is true, then all their and our efforts to lift us above the dead level have been fruitless. I still find people, however, who cannot see any time but the present and who, therefore, make everything of the past exactly as it now is. Thus a man above the average of the pioneer community is still a great man today, regardless of the standards of the time. A more sensible way is to see the man in his age and judge him accordingly.

The Wilsons and the Robertsons, my families, must have been much like thousands of others. All came ultimately from northern Ireland. North Carolina was the place where they took root in American soil. There they were average people, it seems, just like your folks. When the lure of free land in Tennessee and, later, in the Jackson Purchase became too great, they left their fairly-stable homes and took up pioneering again. Undoubtedly that meant in some of the families a step-down from more civilized communities back home. That some of them failed thereby to secure as good an education and as broad an outlook as they would have had if they had remained in North Carolina is certainly obvious to one who studies history. On the other hand, their coming into a new land, where few people had more than the most meager training in books, gave some of the them, particularly the Wilsons, ^{a chance} to become considerably more important than they had been back home. The tragedy of pioneer life was that the new generation, born out in the woods, often failed to become as well fixed educationally as the elders. Sometimes it took a generation or two for the family to reassert its enlightened leadership. Both families suffered heavily from the Civil War, which was not too far beyond the pioneering in the Jackson Purchase, so that my mother's brothers and sisters lost much of the opportunity that might have been theirs if the war had not occurred. Few of her family had more than the most meager education, since such was not obtainable in the prairies of Calloway County in the first two thirds of the nineteenth century. That any desire remained to better their intellectual condition is a wonder when you stop to think of it, for pioneering and civil war are in no sense conducive to advance in education. However, even in these simple families there remained at least a respect for learning that showed itself in every generation and ultimately had a chance to find some little gratification. It was the third generation and the fourth after pioneer days before any one was able to get even a high school education, and, of course, until then a college education was unthinkable.

GATHERING PLACES

597 Oct. 22, 1946
Stenciled 10/16/46

One of my graduate students has become very much interested in studying the places of some county where people have congregated since earlier times. Every county that we know would make a fascinating subject for study. A map showing the places and a paper indicating the rise and popularity of them would be a great addition to our knowledge of folk customs.

Springs everywhere have always been great centers of interest. Some of them became the water supply for the family, especially when they were located by or near a good house site. Others became quite early neighborhood places, where picnics were held or where a church grew up or where camps were held. Our Sulphur Springs, a little more than a mile from Fidelity, combined many things, for it was a place for camps and picnics and also was the location of our Methodist church until the threat of Kentucky Lake made it necessary to move the building to the village. In addition, it was the source of water supply in dry seasons after the cistern had given out and even the bored or dug wells might have shrunk. There we took our horses to water, as it was much easier and more sanitary than an mere horse pond would have been. Platforms where speakings could be held and even crude benches remained from year to year until they rotted away. Confederate reunions, ⁿcandidate speakings, neighborhood picnics, young people's Sunday-afternoon gatherings all used the stand and the benches. The spring, so far as Fidelity neighborhood was concerned, was an institution.

Some of these springs early became summer hotels or camping places. Nearly every county had one or two such, most of which have now ceased to be. But the old spring, probably choked up with weeds or bushes now, still puts out its water supply, quite disreputable in appearance and giving no hint of its former greatness. I have

visited many such places, both while they were popular and after they had begun to decline. I have sometimes camped at or near some of the former great places that had completely disappeared but have still kept a memory in the community.

Places that become known to the sight-seer are also important in this study of folk gathering places. A bluff, a hilltop from which a great view is possible, a "lover's leap," a haunted spot associated with early history or tradition--all of these I have known and visited. Our Devil's Pulpit, near Fidelity, was a rock-crowned hill with a wide prospect; hence the visitors always were taken there. Pine Bluff, on the Tennessee River, now overlooking the Kentucky Lake, attracted many a picnic party from the earliest days and is today the site of some cabins of people who live in the county seat. Nearly every community that I have known has an authentic "lover's leap," with an impossible story attached. It might seem that self-destruction by rejected lovers was once more prevalent than now. Our haunted house, which I have told about elsewhere in this column, was always viewed by us and our visitors with a bit of light laughter, because we always saw it in broad daylight; just how we would have felt after nightfall I never tried to find out. Many a time I have half-consciously taken boys on walks with me in order to lead them by the tree on which a man was hanged by a mob long before I ever heard of Bowling Green. I have always heard that such a tree would die; nothing was said about how long it would take to accomplish this fact. Anyway, the haunted tree is dead, but I fear the illnesses incident to old age had more to do with its demise than any unpleasant association attached to it.

Wouldn't you like to have map of your own county worked out in detail, showing all these gathering places and sights to show wide-eyed or skeptical visitors?

RIDING SKIRTS

Today I asked one of my teachers, not very young though several years younger than I, whether she had ever seen any riding skirts. She said that ^{she} had and then described really some sort of divided skirt that had a small vogue thirty or more years ago. I told her at once that she misunderstood. She had not even seen any skirts such I was referring to when she had visited a museum. I told her that my brother had counted forty-one on a pole near the stile-block at Sulphur Springs church and explained what a riding skirt really was.

Maybe you don't remember, either. When ladies rode horseback, they naturally tried to protect their dainty dresses. What more natural than to wear over the skirt a long skirt of some sort that would take all the dust or mud or horse hairs and leave the dress-up skirt clean and presentable? Usually these riding skirts were of hard-woven black cloth and were full and long, long enough to cover the feet, even. When the lady had arrived at her destination, such as Sulphur Springs church, she alighted from her steed and then took off the protecting skirt, leaving it lying on the stile-block or hanging, as my brother saw so many, on a pole near By. Now wasn't that a nice and discreet thing for a lady to do, for clothes cost money then as now, and who wanted to have her Sunday-go-to-meeting skirt all mussed up?

Riding skirts, I might add, soon disappeared after side saddles went out of style. For a few brief years daring young women wore divided skirts and rode man fashion, but buggies, and, all too soon, automobiles, ~~soon~~ made it unnecessary for a lady to ride horses, anyway. I can recall how shocked my home town was when a middle-aged lady rode astride up and down our sedate streets, dressed in what was called a ~~shocking~~ disgraceful costume--a divided riding skirt. Dire things were prophesied of her, and I suppose that they have

come true, for the old lady died of extreme old age several years ago. But, for that matter, so did the older ones who felt so shocked.

I asked my faculty member whether she had ever seen linen dusters, and she said that she remembered them clearly. Somehow I always associate the two methods of keeping clothes presentable for country church or visiting. I can hardly recall the time when every young man wore a linen duster, but I certainly saw a number of preachers wear them when they came down the long, dusty roads to Sulphur Springs. I think I regarded them then as a badge of the profession, a sort of clerical robe that would be allowed for Methodist, or Baptist, or Christian preachers. I had never seen an Episcopalian or Catholic preacher, but I had read that they wore robes and had even seen some tiny pictures of them in the big unabridged dictionary. Older people told me that, not long before I could remember, all dressed-up young men who drove open buggies wore them and were, therefore, in the height of style.

Sometimes I wonder how much such things were regarded as necessary and how much they were merely the decrees of style. Not to have worn a linen duster would have made a preacher look so queer that I suspect that he clung to it just as many a person clung to hats until a new generation grew up that knew not hats. My own thirty-five or more years of bareheadedness has convinced me that it is a little hard to brave custom, though one distinctly profits by it. When I first left off my hat, I was questioned as if I were a lunatic, which I was probably thought to be. When somebody could not restrain his curiosity and asked "Where is your hat?" I often asked back, even in 100-in-the-shade weather: "Where is your overcoat?" That usually settled it, though I cannot vouch for what the other fellow thought.

Riding skirt, linen duster, a summer hat--what next will go?

594 599
Nov. 5, 1946

TALKING VERSUS ORATING

Today in studying the style of Benjamin Franklin I mentioned to my class the old-time oratory that Franklin rebelled against two centuries ago and that lasted down into our own time. Many of my students could hardly believe that anybody ever took seriously the grandiloquence that used to be regarded so highly. When I tried to show them how an old-time orator worked, I got laughter rather than applause. I could not help feeling sorry for the dead-and-gone speakers who used to make us tingle along the spine and who apparently enjoyed so much the sound of their own voices.

When I first started to school away from home, there were several required courses in what was variously known as elocution, reading, and public speaking. The squeakiest-voiced young woman might be forced to talk like a big, strong he-man, and none of us were supposed to laugh or wonder why. There were a half dozen styles that were driven into our heads, though for the life of me I could not tell oratund from ordinary in most of the voices. But we drilled and drilled and pretended to enjoy each other in proportion to the unnaturalness of our readings. I have attended enough exercises of that sort to entitle me to a string of medals or a bit of forgiveness for many bad things I have done. My part of the world held on tenaciously to this older form of public speaking until most of the rest of the world had dropped it. Tones, gestures, postures--how many times we practiced them and hoped by their correct use to "win friends and influence people," in a later overworked phrase. Some of us failed to arrive with our affected intonations and wooden gestures and got disgusted with the whole thing. And thereby hangs a tale.

By degrees, even in our little restricted world, we learned that our affected tones and manners were out of style elsewhere and that we were only making ourselves ridiculous. Some of us, but not all, adopted a plain, conversational manner that was as informal as ~~conversation~~ ^{talk}. I for one did just that thing and was soundly scolded by an older member of our faculty for being too familiar with my audience. This elderly gentleman felt that a teacher should be aloof, dignified, learned in appearance and in speech. I respected his own scholarship, in spite of his formal manners, but I did not turn back to the affectation that had soured on me. It must have been ten years before that old gentleman quite recovered from having to see a college teacher talking publicly as if he were a mere guest in a private home and not a great man on exhibition. Today if someone were to come to our convocation and speak seriously some of the high-falutin' stuff that used to be the rule, our students would regard the orator as a deliberate humorist and would laugh uproariously. That very thing happened a few years ago when a representative of a business and professional women's club spoke at our chapel: the speaker put on the airs that were once quite the thing and got the roundest applause as a humorist. Until this day she probably thinks she was being cheered for her fine attempt at oratory.

Public speaking is still here and should remain, but it has lost most of its old-time glamor. People need to learn how to speak, now as much as ever, but they need first to have something to say rather than an artistic way of speaking without disturbing the brain cells of the listeners. There are certain tricks of the trade, of course, but they are not found in books and cannot be taught very effectively. The great speaker of our time develops his own style and talks in his own way. If he uses gestures, he accidentally or naturally uses them. If his tones change, he is at best only partially conscious of the fact; he has something to say, and he says it in his best way.

Nov. 19, 1948

From the earliest days of the English language there has been a tendency to say things in double fashion, "time and tide," for example. Some scholars have said that our ~~tendency to use~~^{of} two words for one was greatly influenced by our borrowing so many words from French and other languages and using our native or simple word along with a more learned one. However, this double usage was present long before French influenced our language much. Our language feeling seems to demand an extra word, as if to make things more plain or more dignified. Certainly a desire to intensify a word is old, as witness our double comparatives and superlatives. Even Shakespeare and many another writer has used such expressions as "most unkindest" or "more recenter." It is small wonder, then, that the folk use such expressions.

The language of remote areas and some not so remote are still full of doubles. People use a "chopping ax" and shoot "with a "shooting gun." A woman who has lost her husband is, almost everywhere, including the Bible(I Kings 17:9), called a "widow woman." So common is this expression that it probably causes no notice when the passage about Elijah is read in church. Some of our neighbors used to call a widower a "widow man," certainly a good match for "widow woman." "Good providers," as they used to be called, saw to it that their families had plenty of "ham meat." I hope that they are still doing just that, though I fear that meat of any sort is a bit scarce or dear. So many people, with or without education, say "off of," "inside of," and "outside of" that a case might be made out for these words. In some areas only women milk the "cow brutes," for such a task is regarded as sissy for he-men. Everybody knows "hound dog," and there is some excuse for the double word when you consider how many kinds of dogs there are besides hounds. "As hungry as a hound" sounds downright literary; "as hungry as a hound dog" sounds really

hungry, or , better still, "hongry."

Some years ago one of my graduate students found the double negative the most common error among his rural high school ^{students,} That is to be expected, for his rural county retains many of the older idioms of the language. The double negative has, like lots of things now out of style, excellent ancestry. It was present in the oldest form of the language, it was used extensively in Middle English, and it was by no means to be laughed at until recent generations. In another way I might say that the double negative has ^{existed} ~~been~~ ages longer than the single negative, though style decrees now that one is enough. What would you do for flavor if an unwashed, barefooted youngster, riding a mule barebacked, ~~should~~ should say on being asked what he had been doing: "Not much of anything"? Or what would you think if the same boy declared that he did not have any money for the picnic?

One of my best friends is a dentist, a "tooth dentist," if you please. I would like to know the workings of the mind of one of his patients when he asked the dentist where he might find a good "eye dentist." Maybe "dentist" means to the unthinking a sort of specialist. Thus there might be a "throat" dentist, an "eye" dentist, an "ear" dentist. If "Pharaoh," the name of a man, becomes the name of a ruler--and "Caesar" ^{had} ~~that~~ that same history--why not "dentist" for special doctor, who treats not all of you but certain specified parts?

The tendency to use doubles is by no means dead. The teachers may rage against the double negative, but certain expressions have become highly literary, though they are in every way closely related to the crude doubles that suggest to many people the folk.

Nov. 19-1946

Long, long ago in this column I told how we of Fidelity used to get up early and go to town on a big day of "trading." Many people have told me that they had had similar experiences and have laughed with me at the adventurous times we had when we went all the eleven miles to the county seat, with a load of tobacco or some wheat to be taken to the mill or just to buy up spring or fall things for ourselves and the family. Numbers of people seem to forget that going to town has in no sense lost its importance for thousands of people in Kentucky, however far away Fidelity may seem to many of you who read this column.

My own town, with its fifteen or sixteen thousand people, is so typically Kentucky on Saturdays that a one-day visit here would furnish a great writer with a whole "passel" of material, enough for several books. It is not necessary for any unusual event to be in the offing; people just come to town, in a time-honored way, to see and be seen. The fact that horses and buggies and wagons are nine-days' wonders here makes no difference in the nature of the crowd week after week. The fact that Bowling Green has about doubled in population since I first came here also makes no difference. After all, what is a county seat for if not for a gathering place for all the sovereign voters and their families?

There are numerous places where the people assemble. Of course, the courthouse belongs to the county; there you can expect to find a fair-sized crowd, but in general it is made up of older men, with a great fondness for discussing politics and chewing tobacco. The blind girl who runs a soft-drink stand is kept busy handing out Coca-Colas and R. C.'s. The county officers and their helpers push their way in and out of the crowd, knowing full well that each person in the way is a voter in some rural precinct and may have a dozen other votes in his hand. The hardware stores attract a great many more. A few purchases are necessary, but it is fine to meet in the store other fellows from the outlying sections of the county. Down at the stock yards collect many

more, having some sales to make or some purchases of farm stock. On some Saturdays a real jockey row develops down near the old cemetery, but this is likely to be rather tame except in fall and spring, when it is necessary to sell surplus stock or buy work animals for the coming season. Every type of store attracts to some extent, so that the merchants know that the country people, who have sold some stock or some crops, have come to town to "trade."

But our unique place is down on College Street, where almost a whole side of the square has, for many years, been the rural loitering place. Several businesses, including a ten-cent store, recognized this tendency to congregate there and long ago located close by. A dry goods store, somewhat after the fashion of the ones that we used to know, also is on this side of the square and does an enormous country trade. Within a few steps is a picture show that caters to the group who love to keep up each Saturday with some breath-taking Western serial. I must say, though, that often a return showing of some famous film attracts just about everybody, urban or rural. On Saturdays it is hardly possible to squeeze through the crowds on this side of the square. I have often found it better to walk in the street, just beyond the parked cars. Men, women, and children, even babes at the breast, ~~stand~~^{are} everywhere. The popcorn man does a good business in his little nook by a stairway. The photographer upstairs is ready for customers always. Ice cream and sodas are being constantly handed out at the ten-cent store counter. If any one in a sophisticated area of the state, who imagines that my articles are largely about folk customs that died with Free Silver, will be my guest some Saturday, I will convince him that human nature has changed very little since the days when we made our way to the county seat in the farm wagon for a long, hard day of "trading."

Dec. 3, 1946

DISCIPLINE

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Today, in teaching a Sunday School class of men, I used as an illustration of finicky rules the infinite variety of rules that we used to have in country schools. I mentioned, too, the apparent feeling that a switching was good for nearly everything that ailed growing youngsters. One of my listeners, after the class was over, challenged a group of us near his age by saying that he would almost bet he was the only one that had never had a whipping in a country school. I took him up. I, too, failed to make just that distinction, though I must have stayed after school or stood in a corner many times, now gladly forgotten.

We talked about why this distinction failed to materialize for us. My friend felt that the certainty of a repetition of the school whipping after he got home, with interest, probably deterred him from running amuck. I feel that the spectacle of the other fellows' getting lickings had a deep moral effect on me. I know now that many of the boys who took their medicine so calmly really were heroes to themselves and to the rest of us, but in my childhood I fancied that they were totally wicked and might have to sizzle in the hereafter as well as smart in the here for breaking the school rules. The bad boys whom we thought to be past reform have, usually, done pretty well as citizens; only a few of them have kept up their irresponsibility and are today, though middle-aged, just the same spoiled brats that they were in the Gay Nineties.

As a teacher who has lived through many waves of fads, I often find myself wondering at the philosophy of the old-time school. We expected rigidity and usually got it. The parents were sold to the idea of discipline (pronounced on the second syllable always). Most of us were told, rather cold-bloodedly, that if we got a licking at school, we would get another one at home. And most of us, through fear of our parents or fear of the hereafter, behaved quite well. The dare-devils who broke

all the rules really had some poetry about them, for they were not satisfied with a static world where everything is regulated. To take a licking at the hands of the teacher and to show the marks she made on you was one of the few chances some of my schoolmates ever had to be in the limelight.

Just how bad were we, and how much good did the constant emphasis on discipline accomplish? I cannot say, but I incline to the belief that most of the discipline was a tempest in a teapot. Some of the teachers I had were practically modern, in that they never tried to scare us, practiced common sense in dealing with youngsters, and sometimes actually ignored what brats did to attract attention and maybe punishment. Some of the patrons were afraid that these teachers had gone crazy and that the school would walk away with them, but again I must tell the truth and say that these more modern teachers were the best I had, the ones I love to remember forty and fifty years later.

It is ^{not easy} ~~hard~~ for the people to get out of their heads that humanity is hard to drive. Reformers, at Fidelity and elsewhere, often felt that getting a law on a statute book would solve most of our human ills. Many a man boasted in other years of how he had reared his children to fear the hickory, some of them with grown children that were in no sense a credit to that or any other parental philosophy. ~~About~~ the worst offender in a community way, if you think of his irregular morals, always aired out his philosophy as a parent, sometimes while he was too drunk to ride his mule back to his shack.

It would not be fair for me to sit in the scorner's seat and say that I was above this old-time emphasis on regulating everything. In my schools in 1907, 1908, and 1909 I held a tight band and fairly sailed into offenders. I was painfully old in those days for a fellow who had never voted. I wanted to be known as much older than I was and also wished to be praised for the strict way in which I ran my schools. I know now that I failed miserably and have tried to forget some of the offenses against common sense that I perpetrated almost daily. And yet, I was praised by my patrons for my discipline (still accented on the second syllable).

Dec. 3, 1946

THE LITTLE ONE-ROOMED SCHOOL

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Much is being made these days by publicists of the one-roomed school. Our state papers seem to have suddenly waked up to the fact that such an institution exists. Nearly all of the ills that flesh is heir to have been laid at the door of the one-roomed school, usually by people who never attended one and know as much about it as they know about the ends of the earth. It is a pity that we are not at least as fair to this little-respected institution as we are to criminals; when a man ~~was~~ is accused of something ~~bad~~ and cannot hire a lawyer, the court appoints one for him. I am volunteering to say something for the little school with all of its faults.

As an educator of forty years' standing I would be foolish if I proclaimed the one-roomed school as the very best of our institutions. On the other hand, it is at least decent to give a little praise to any one or anything for past achievements. That is just what our rather obvious critics of Kentucky schools seem determined not to do. The time was not many years ago when it was a one-roomed school or nothing for most of our citizens. By no means were all small schools, though poorly equipped, failures. A very large percentage of the teachers were reasonably good and often downright excellent. In the shabby little buildings with poor equipment or none some of the brightest minds were taught the fundamentals of learning and were able to make places for themselves in the bigger world, often as good places as those acquired by more highly favored persons. For sheer devotion to their work I have never known any greater heroes and heroines than some of the teachers in our state. They did their work for small salaries, they did not have free fried chicken as country preachers did, they seldom could get enough money ahead to travel farther than the county seat, but they gave richly and deserve all our respect.

A great many critics have mentioned the lack of sanitary facilities in our country schools, forgetting that many of the homes have not progressed that far yet. I am not defending the crudity of our schools, but the criticism of our system has begun at the wrong end. Who established the schools anyway? Certainly the teachers and the children had nothing to do with it. Out in the woods or in a hot place by the roadside is the school and is to be taught. Boards of education, acting under the state department of education, send a teacher out to the impossible situation and then wonder why a mere eighteen-year-old girl with an emergency certificate cannot work wonders in a brief seven-months term. The community that originally grew up around the schoolhouse has long ago made wider boundaries for itself, since cars came to be. Nearly every local institution has been superseded or has been peacefully laid to rest. The small school lives on, once a vital necessity. In many counties efforts to consolidate such left-overs has met with bitter opposition, often from the very people who love to poke fun at the backwardness of the school itself. Lack of roads in many areas has retarded consolidation. A too rash rushing into transportation has in some places given the whole progressive idea of a central consolidated school a black eye. What are the children to do meanwhile? Some people seem to think that children can wait until the slowest neighborhoods catch up with the most progressive.

Any view of Kentucky education should take into account the almost phenomenal rise in financial support for education within the last few years. A doubling of funds within a decade is not to be sneered at. And even the small schoolhouse in many counties has many more opportunities than it formerly had. At least until plans can be put into effect to replace the small school with the larger one it is only patriotic to see to it that even the remotest child can attend school. And no amount of airing conditions in rural places will do any good unless the authorities act to the limits of their power. Meanwhile the child and its one-roomed schoolhouse are merely the victims.

Dec. 17, 1946

All sorts of people have left records of reading in their youth. Some have delighted to tell of how they received some great book as a present and forthwith became lost to all the world while they read it. Others have told of borrowing from a neighbor a book that transformed their lives. But I do not recall having read of any one who told of reading on the floor.

In our big family and little house, space was decidedly at a premium. It was not always possible to find a place to read away from the noise and bluster of a doctor's family, where someone was always coming and going. It was hardly possible for every person to have his own table or desk, where he could keep his books and do his reading. Consequently, I found it very convenient to read on the floor. Again, to save space, I would lie under a bed and let only my head protrude. Lying flat on my stomach, I would pore over books that I could read or, earlier, books that contained maps or pictures.

When I was just a little boy, Father subscribed for the WOMAN'S HOME COMPANION at a time when a world atlas was given with each subscription. I fairly wore that atlas out in my under-the-bed reading and studying maps. It was about the size of the big geographies that my older brothers and sisters used at Fidelity School. Its fine print was a little hard on young eyes, particularly as people circulated in the room, but the charm of its facts and its numerous maps beguiled hundreds of hours that otherwise might have been weary.

There is an art in being able to read on the floor. First you must know how to prop up your head with one arm and turn the pages with the other. You must know how to be comfortable on your stomach and not have your legs go to sleep while you are lost in Russia or Australia or Argentina. Probably the greatest skill is required in being able

to concentrate on your reading while the family mills about you. It is no small art to be able to avoid being stepped on as the littlest member of the family.

I suppose that reading on the floor grew out of our earlier playing on the floor. Every child that I have known, in shacks or near-palaces, has liked to play on the rug or the bare floor. No amount of civilization seems to make newer generations of children less likely to play thus. Early we had small books, like my old linen Alphabet of Animals, in which I learned to read. We soon graduated to elementary school books, with their wood cuts, and in this way bridged the gap from mere pictures to the more difficult art of reading.

Of course, reading on the floor was a daytime task, for no light could reach us from the coal-oil lamps at night. Besides, it was dark under the beds and suggestive of the frightful things that we read about. Sometimes in our day reading or looking at pictures we might grow tired. It was easy to withdraw our heads from out among the people and take a peaceful nap right among our books. That habit still obtains for me, for I love to doze in my chair and wake up to start all over again on the interesting or necessary book that remains open before me.

It was easy, too, to make the book or atlas an excuse to remain in the midst of things and listen to the conversation of the big folks. Without appearing to be the least bit interested, I gathered the gist of what was being said and meanwhile imagined myself traveling into the remotest countries that the atlas mentioned. After all, can you imagine any better place to read than this semi-private reading room, out of the way for the most part but near enough to see and hear all that was going on?

Dec. 17, 1946

THE SETH THOMAS CLOCK

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This little essay is in honor of the Seth Thomas clock that ticked away the minutes in my childhood. It happens to be the only antique that I own, ^a constant reminder of a long time ago. It is quite fitting that I should write about it here, for this is its one-hundredth birthday, as it was bought in 1846, two years before Mother was born. In 1871, when she and Father were married, the clock, already regarded as old, was purchased from its original owners. Wherever they moved from then on, the old clock was always a part of the cargo. Two or three places at Providence (not the town in Webster County but one in Calloway County), two places in Fidelity, and finally in the house in the woods between Fidelity and Sulphur Springs the old clock lived its life, if that is the correct way to describe a ~~object~~ that seems almost human.

All my childhood it sat on the mantel in our living room, ticking rather rheumatically. Long before I left home, it had become so worn internally that it had to be propped up on one side to make its old wheels catch. Many a person who was not accustomed to its idiosyncrasies noticed its leaning like the Tower of Pisa and told us, as if we did not already know the clock and its oddities. Because of this one-sided position, I suppose, the tick and the tock were somewhat foreshortened, so that it was more like tick-tock, with the accent on the second syllable.

The original heavy weights are still in the old clock, even though they have not been in use for thirty years or so. The dial still has the place where the enamel is peeled off, where Father, in trying to warm the old wheels by holding a firebrand near the face, ~~had~~ unintentionally melted ~~off~~ off the paint or enamel. The original diamond-shaped design of the glass of the door is just as I remember it in our

home near Fidelity. I used to try to attach some meaning to this design, but I have forgotten what it was.

There are no drugs in the clock now, as it sits on a bookcase in our living room, but the custom of keeping scraps of left-over drugs in clocks probably gave me some of the queer feelings I have about Seth Thomas clocks wherever I see them. It was a forbidden object for children to touch or handle, partly because of the value of the clock as a mechanism and partly because of the danger from the drugs. All the wild tales of suicides who resorted to the miniature drugstore in the clock must have been deliberately told to scare us away. Try as I may, I can hardly summon up these spooky feelings from the past, but I remember that I would have hardly touched the clock on a bet.

Winding the clock always interested me as a child. I had usually gone to rest on my trundle bed when Father wound the clock as his nightly duty. That was left to him, even though he might be away on a far-away call. There was a feeling of sadness when Mother or one of the older children had to wind the clock, for it meant that Father might not get home that night or not until after we had all gone to sleep. I felt uncommonly big when I was allowed to stand up in a chair before the hot fire and wind the weights up. The heat of the fire and the fear of the drugs, I suppose, made me turn the crank fast. No amount of poetizing can make you feel, I know, the poetic thrill that I knew when Father wound the clock.

The striking device is still as musical as ever. How lonely I used to feel when I heard the clock strike when everybody else but me was sound asleep! The wood of the clock, always covered up by innumerable layers of paint and varnish, has been restored to its original walnut and mahogany colors and is really beautiful. All the years that the clock was wrapped up in its coats of paint and varnish have sat well on the old object, for it has thus been protected from wear. In a way I am seeing it as nobody has seen it since the 1840's, when the natural color of the wood was felt to be sufficiently beautiful without a daub of paint. Thus times and styles change and change back again.

Dec. 31, 1946

ELEGANCES

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For years I have wanted to write about certain elegances that even humble homes like ours at Fidelity used to treasure. I realize that I need a course in interior decorating before I attempt such an essay, but I see no immediate chance of my getting such a course. Anyway, here goes an account of nice things that we prized highly.

Just when the marble-topped table came into our family I do not know, but it was the oldest thing in our front room. It was practically covered up with other things, not so elegant, but underneath it all we knew there was a slab of real marble, polished and fine. Not to have had a marble-topped table would have branded us as pretty far down the social scale.

Over the table, which was called a center table but was really in a corner, hung the pride of my sister, the hanging lamp that one of her numerous beaux gave her. It had a wide-spreading shade, with glass pendants that were rarely still. When the lamp was pulled down and lighted, the glass pendants tinkled, and the light reflected for minutes from them as they turned or swayed. The light ^{of the lamp} was soft and mild, just for a light and not for reading, even the big print of the family Bible, which lay immediately below.

That family Bible was another elegance, for it must have cost Father some hard-earned money. It was eighteen inches long by a foot wide and four or five inches thick, even before it had become slightly sprung from the flowers pressed between its pages. Unlike many Bibles, it had dozens of illustrations, from the creation of the world to the Last Judgment. These were the pictures that I used to think were photographs, like the ones in the companion volume of hallowed memory, the photograph album. I still recall the odor of the ink of that book and will carry with me all my life the strange association of

that smell and those pictures.

The mantel in the front room had several elegances. Around the full length of the board ran a lambrequin, stamped in what was supposed to be a morning glory design. On the ends of the mantel stood vases, elaborate things that the older children had won by being excellent spellers at Fidelity School. Right in the center of the mantel stood a quaint little doll dresser that my sister, born in 1873, had treasured as a child. Just today my daughter was enameling that little dresser for my grand-daughter. Since 1921 it has been a part of my home, the legacy to my daughter by my sister in her last year of life.

Over in the corner was the wash-stand, another marble-topped bit of furniture. Of course, there were washbowl and pitcher to match, and there were also a hobnailed glass set: pitcher and drinking glasses, on a tray with a rather youthful picture of Julia Marlowe. On the wall on either side of the wash-stand were some rustic picture frames with corners crossed like fence rows. In the frames were teen-age pictures of the two brothers four and six years older than I. Though they grew up, as people have a way of doing, the rather stilted pictures remained, to remind us, I suppose, that youth is immortal. Of course, the wash-bowl and pitcher were for decorative purposes only except when we had real company, that is, company that would occupy the front room itself.

It is unnecessary to say, except for youngsters who were born too late to know the value of elegances, that the front room had the best lace curtains, the newest rag carpet with matched stripes, the padded brick to keep the door back, the only rocking chairs on the place, the best cane-bottomed chairs (those in Mother's room were bottomed with home-made splits). With objects in constant use around the typical modern home, few can understand the elegance attached to such treasures as I have mentioned. It was a poor home indeed that did not have a few marks that the family had taste and desire to show it.

Dec. 31, 1946

Charles Lamb, in "Old China," tells how he and his sister saved their pennies and denied themselves over a long period in order to buy some books that both of them had seen for sale in a second-hand store and how they finally decided rather late at night to make the splurge. They stayed up most of the night looking lovingly at their new treasure. Probably to the bookseller, even, the book was in no sense worthy of any great sacrifice, but to the two skilled booklovers it was a treasure that warranted any sacrifice, even of food itself.

More and more as I grow older, I am reminded of this desire ^{for} ~~of~~ something that seems worth all the money you spend for it. Antique-dealers have a great time in my town. Objects that children were ashamed of are prized highly by these same children grown up. One of my teachers tells me that her father bought at a sale a bed for seventy-five cents. That was twenty or more years ago. Later some neighbor offered and gave him three dollars for it. The first owner then relented and bought it back for five dollars. An original like it today would bring right here in my home town seventy-five dollars rather than the seventy-five cents it brought a half generation ago. And it is decidedly a matter of good investment, the way things go now, for you to get hold of some genuine antique and hold it in order to feel rich or, if you want to speculate, trade it.

Every house in the Fidelity neighborhood had something that had cost more than the family budget, strictly speaking, allowed. Usually this object became at first a sort of white elephant and was a subject for conversation when relatives or select company came. By degrees, regardless of its true worth, it became a prized possession, if for nothing else at least for its having been bought in a fit of wild spending. And the funny thing is that that same object today might be worth a king's ransom, judging by the prices offered for glassware, or antique beds, or swinging

lamps.

In our household there were several things that were too good for ordinary use. Besides the front-room furniture and bric-a-brac, there were the silver knives, forks, and spoons, for instance, which only real company could bring out from their hiding place. When people just dropped in for dinner, as they did about seven times a week, they had to use the ordinary steel knives and forks with wooden handles. These knives, especially, were best for that sort of dinner, anyway, for they had edges to them and could cut fried ham and similar plain, simple things. Chance company, too, had to eat off the oilcloth or the red table cloth that was our daily kind. When the big shots came, out was brought the silverware, for the company but not for the children at second table. And the linen tablecloth appeared mysteriously and was usually noticed, too, for our guests knew that they were being made much of as regal company.

Back in the safe among the spices and extracts and such were some bottles of cake coloring. Ordinary cakes, which were gobbled by the hungry boys without ^{their} probably tasting a single bite, did not need any fancy color or icing. Along about Christmas the ~~XX~~ dainties appeared. Usually there were so many kinds of cakes that even the boys got all they could hold, of plain white or yellow ones and the fancy-colored ones. However, that in no way stopped our appetites for plain ones, even the quick-made ~~cakes~~ ^{cakes} that Mother always called "puddings." And there was also a loyalty to ginger cakes and teacakes and sweet muffins and all such things, although we were well aware that the dainty ones were supposed to be something swell and unusual. Gilbert K. Chesterton has said that children would be happy if there were no Christmas, since they would be happy anyway, but that oldsters are the ones that get the real kick out of Christmas. Maybe it is the same way with cakes, for boys are not to be pitied when they can get only plain cake rather than all the fancy kinds that Christmas brings.

Isn't it still true that we have back in the buffet somewhere a few bits of silverware or a bowl or a plate or two that are for dress-up times?

Jan. 14, 1947

It is vacation time again for me, a time when I try to acquire enough ruggedness of strength and verve to last through another year of teaching. Since my teaching occupies all of the year except a few weeks in late August and early September, it takes a rather large amount of vigor to stand the mental strain from enrollment to commencement. And I have found that the best thing I can do to acquire that strength I am usually so badly needing by then is to get as near to primitive things as possible. I usually manage to camp out alone for a few days; I walk over farm lands where corn is at its best; I loiter along the banks of our streams; I make a trip, when tires are available, to distant, primitive places. And, it hardly need be said, I find myself reviewing ways and means of putting into the vacation days as much permanent good as possible.

Vacation itself is a fairly new thing in our American life and was frowned upon by most of the older people I knew. When I first left Fidelity, forty years ago, I discovered, much to my surprise, that the people in the county sixty miles west of where I lived had already learned that it was well to interrupt work occasionally and have a free weekend to fish or camp out. The excellent fishing area probably was largely responsible for this forward-looking theory. The farm family with whom I boarded went one Friday afternoon after my school was over (a bit early) to one of the streams that empty into the Mississippi. It was my first camping trip and rather memorable. For one thing, those Mississippi Bottom mosquitoes are about the hungriest critters on the face of the earth. We had no protection against them, as the family owned no tents, no mosquito bars, not even a mosquito repellant. The women folks slept in the wagon bed, while the boys and I crawled, literally, under the wagon, to escape the heavy dew that dripped down from the trees. We didn't sleep, but we pretended we were having the time of our lives. There was

nothing short, though, about the full-sized meals that my landlady prepared out in the woods, and my landlord had brought a whole case of soda pop, which soon melted away on that hot weekend. We thought we were fishing, but we didn't even get a bite. The stream was rising from a summer rise on the Mississippi and was furnishing the fish with new food from farther up the basin. But we boys roved over the wide bottoms and saw strange things among the sloughs and the Indian Canal of prehistoric times. I know that I taught better the next week, especially after I had had three or four nights of sleep to make up for the total loss while we were renewing our youth in the woods.

It has seemed funny to me for many years how hard it is on some people to take a vacation. They know so little about resting that they do as my friends and I did so many years ago: they use up their energy and lose sleep, probably thinking they are putting one over on nature by sacrificing regularity for a few days or weeks. The average person I know has to rest up for several days after he has had a vacation. Maybe it is routine that we all are trying to escape from. Some of us have learned to rest in a routineless way, but the most of us are absolutely lost without our alarm clocks, our watches, our radios.

Weekend or summer vacations have had a way with me of producing strange news when I was away, deliberately or accidentally, from radios and even newspapers. My dentist friend and I were spending a week in the Great Smoky Mountains in 1939, away from things; as we drove out to civilization again, the first thing we found ^{out} was that Germany had attacked Poland. My family and I were in Florida, with no newspaper in sight, when the British made their heroic escape from Dunkirk. A college friend and I were at Fallowers Bend on a weekend camping trip when Russia was attacked by Germany. Maybe some people fear that the world may come to an end while they are on vacation; hence they want their radios on and as loud as possible while they stop in a tourist camp or camp in the wilds. Vacations are funny, anyway, and are still in the elementary stages.

Jan. 14, 1947

In my last essay I discussed briefly how poorly most people take a vacation, since we have not yet learned, as have some of the Europeans, how to make a vacation as busy but as valuable as possible. It has occurred to me that most of the vacationers of Fidelity were ashamed to admit that they even believed in such things. Trained from infancy to believe that the benighted human being must toil endlessly, it was necessary to build up some practical ideal to justify a half-day fishing trip.

In Fidelity ~~days~~ fishing was pretty good in Beechy Fork and Blood River. They were decidedly hook-and-line streams, for they had many a drift that interfered with seining. There is probably nothing equal to fishing for killing time and being a poet. But our hard-and-fast philosophy made us imagine that we were fishing to catch fish, to help out the family larder, to justify our failure to worm and sucker tobacco until sunset Saturday night. After you get your can of worms, though, and find yourself on a creek bank, who cares whether you catch a big one or not? You have hoodwinked your conscience and your parents, too, and can now rejoice in dolce far niente, as the Italians would say, "Sweet do-nothing." Most of the people who went fishing in our little creeks actually had kidded themselves into thinking themselves practical ~~practical~~ fellows who were bringing in the fresh meat. Only the boys knew and would not tell, for they wanted to keep up the pretense while they enjoyed the break with the daily routine of the farm.

The loafers' joint at Fidelity ~~was~~ pretended to be ~~an~~ accidental. George or Jim or Bill just had to have a plowpoint or a hamestring or a plowline; that was enough to justify his taking some time off on Saturday afternoon and going to the store. If his wife asked him to buy something for her, the kids, or the house, that was all the better; his

conscience was at ease all the time he was whittling pine planks with the other fellows in front of the store. If you had suggested that he had had a needed vacation, he would have declared that only duty and a very stern one at that had taken him to Fidelity. And he would have been the first to condemn the city fellows who came with their families to Sulphur Springs to spend, amid the mud and the mosquitoes, a hot summer weekend. It was necessary to pretend some important reason for "taking out" from work and meeting the other tired farmers.

It was easy to justify an all-day-dinner-on-the-ground occasion like a Quarterly Meeting, for that was religious. Many a farmer shaved, put on some hot clothes, and sat respectfully through the long programs morning and afternoon, probably believing that he was setting a fine example to the young and living up to expectations as a pillar of the community. If he had confessed to himself how he rejoiced at this providential stoppage of routine farm duty and how he was silently smacking his lips in anticipation of the mutton or beef that would soon be served, he would have blushed so red that the preacher and all the neighbors would have thought him caught in some secret sin. And I wonder whether the preacher would have been so fervent if some tasteless sandwich and plain water had been served at the conclusion of his most heated harangue.

Visiting relatives, especially older ones, were another thing that seemed to be a matter of duty and could not be frowned upon by the most meticulous work-worshippers. Many a fellow got a reputation for being loyal to his parents by visiting them often, when, if the truth were told, he was tired of his wife's cooking and tired of the daily round of the farm on the other side of the county from Pa and Ma.

Just to take a vacation for its own sake was unheard of forty years ago at Fidelity, but there were, and still are, many ways to thwart an over-sensitive conscience.

Jan 28, 1947

Old-fashioned teachers used to talk a lot about nature and nurture, that is, about the things we learn without suspecting and the ones that we are forced to learn. Of course, they thought these first things I mentioned were intuitive, that we just knew them without learning them. Formal education used to be so strait-laced that it certainly did seem far away from the ordinary happenings in one's life. Consequently, many people regarded common knowledge picked up at random as born with you.

In Emerson's "The American Scholar" much is made of the teaching power of what he calls Nature. By that term he means what we learn without being formally enrolled in anybody's school. And that is what I want to talk about today.

Of course, you are tired by now of Fidelity School, to which I went from 1895 to 1905. It was there that I learned what was expected of us in those days: reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, physiology, civil government, history, geography, grammar. Everybody thought that these things, and only these things, were educative. Since I could memorize anything, from the alphabet to ^{the names of} all the bones and muscles, I was regarded as a star pupil. I could spell the longest words in the spelling book and could name the capes at the end of every land in the world. I could say the multiplication table so fast that it sounded like the whirring of a great wheel. I could cover the painted-planks black-board with dates from history. I could bound every state, give its capital, trace the course of all the main rivers, and locate mountains and bays and seas ad nauseam. I thought, and so did my teachers, that all these were education. And people far wiser than any of us at Fidelity thought so, too. I early got a reputation for being a very learned boy and was proud of my title. But I could not swim, I could not turn a handspike, I could not walk on the acting pole from one tree to

another, I could not even stand on my head. Then and now I regretted these vacancies in my education, though I did not know then that they were to be regarded in any sense as a part of my growing life.

Since I was handicapped physically and could not do many of the things that boys should do, I at least kept out a keen ear for what the big folks were saying. And that constituted the "Nature" part of my education. Every visitor who came, and they were numerous beyond words, had something to say. I caught up his words and stored them in my mind. First and last there were many views of life to be brought to our home beyond Fidelity. To enumerate the comers would seem like one of Walt Whitman's poems, but you should know that there were clock tinkers, pack peddlers, candidates, preachers, school teachers, brats from the city, relatives ad infinitum, drivers of rubber-tired buggies, drivers of wagons with spring seats and a bed of hay in the back for the kids to sit on, people on horseback, people on foot, saints, sinners, sick, well, ailing, "cyored," pretenders, heroes, villains, etc., etc. I wish I had Whitman's power of clinching with an apt phrase my forty-years-later impression of many of these. But each had a story, telling it consciously or unconsciously. Each had a point of view on life and either mentioned it or just lived it. Adventure, crime, gossip, folklore, travel, book-learning, humor, what didn't some of them know? And I absorbed and absorbed until for a few hours or days I had relived all that I had heard. However absurd seemed some of the tales that I heard, I loved them all, to their endless repetitions. And though I have lived among books all my life and have read more than should be the lot meted out to a criminal, I still cherish the unplanned contact with folks that I got at Fidelity more than all my reading of books. I hope that I have profited considerably from the tons of books that I have read and still read; my grades and degrees came from my reading of them; but the ungraded lessons in humanity that were mine have given me something that no diploma will ever record.

Jan. 28, 1947

"I WILL LIFT UP MINE EYES" 611

One of our most trite sayings is that you may take a boy out of the country but you cannot take the country out of the boy. Wise people never attempt to work any such unnatural miracle as even trying to make a country boy anything else. - But unwise ones work away futilely, making themselves and everybody else miserable, in their efforts to standardize all of us. Now I was raised, raised, that is, as Senator Claghorn would say, in the hills, not especially large ones and not very far from the flat-topped plateau that occupies most of the Jackson Purchase. Probably because of the flatness of that area our hills looked pretty big, particularly when roads were bad and horses had a hard time getting our wagons or buggies up the hills. Hills, however large or small, work a strange power on people who have always known them. Put a hillbilly in a flat place, and he practically smothers; he wants to get up on an eminence and see over the ordinary things that are so stifflingly low. I suppose that people who have lived in mountainous country feel the same way but on a larger scale. I have found that I adjust much more easily to mountains than to plains; I suppose that my childhood rearing is responsible.

It has been my good fortune to know hills most of my life. On the few occasions when I had to be away from them, I wanted to climb a tree or a water tower or anything else that would give me a sense of landscapes. When I taught my three country schools, I was restless and discontented, for there were only the merest semblances of hills anywhere to be seen. I suppose that the location of one of my schools, on what was locally called a hill but I would call a mere bank, partly satisfied my longing for views. When I went back to that schoolhouse five years ago, I just could not find the hill on which is used to sit; the hill and all the surrounding country seemed to have been run over by a gigantic machine and flattened out. But aside from these three years I have seen hills almost every day of my life. I teach on an isolated knob, not so very high but with excellent views of the

landscapes on every side. I can look out of my office window and see farther than I ever traveled before I left Fidelity for good, forty years ago. So close that they seem within a long arm's reach are places that were so far away before cars came into use that I had rarely visited them. By going up on the tower over my office I can see, on a clear day, knobs that are thirty-five and forty miles away, several of them recognizable as famous lookouts in neighboring counties. No season has a monopoly on the beauty of what I can see as I go to school or as I glance out my window. The innumerable hills in view, though none rise even so much as nine hundred feet above sea level, satisfy daily longings for hilltop views.

When I can get away to our own mountains or those of other states, I find myself at once a genuine citizen, for all you have to do to make a mountain is to pile a few hills on top of each other. And throughout the last decade and more I have had the good fortune to see many mountains and to climb a few big ones, too. I have camped on or at the foot of mountains, I have seen them in moonlight and bright sunshine and fog, I have watched them fade into the purple haze of late afternoon or stand out boldly in the bright morning sunshine. It required no formal introduction to mountains for me to be at home with them. The meager little hills around Fidelity built up the feeling for a rugged landscape that no amount of living elsewhere could ever erase. When you have once climbed a hill and got the feel of it, the hills are in your blood for keeps.

Feb. 11, 1947.

Henry David Thoreau says, somewhere in WALDEN, in speaking of a beautiful day: "The whole body is one sense." On the ideal summer day on which I am writing this essay I could echo his words, for the cool brightness of the day, coming as a relief from some severely hot and sultry weather, stirs up memories that must be a lot like yours.

Other August days somewhat like this one crowd up to be recognized like the spirits in the ODYSSEY that tried to drink the blood of the sacrifices that Ulysses made in the Land of the Dead. It is mid-summer at Fidelity a half century ago. I have arisen a little later this Sunday morning, because there is no hurry to get to work in the fields, and Sunday School is a long way up in the morning. Heavy dews hang all over the weeds, a fog still creeps along the creek bottom a few dozen yards away. Corn is in full tassel, and the air is full of its odor. Six miles away the sonorous whistles of the CLYDE and the TENNESSEE sound over the hills as the two packet boats reach Shannon Landing about the same time, to repeat the same meeting again on Thursday. Grapes are ripening in the garden, some of the earlier summer apples are still to be seen in the orchard, and even the fall apples are reddening. The few birds that have not quieted down in their moulting season fly about in our patch of woods or strike out for more distant feeding grounds across the creek bottom. A wide-awake languor holds me; I do not want to sleep, but only sleep and dreams are like the dream-like unreality of the day. It would seem positively natural to escape from the body at such moments and soar above the fields just as the vultures are so silently doing. It seems a sacrilege to speak, for the hushed silence or barely audible silence, as one might say by twisting one of Milton's passages, is too holy to be broken. It is hard to tell which sense is taking in the perfect day, since all the five or whatever others one may have are active at once, bringing in their quota of sensations from the world in which we seem to be floating or swimming, in which

we "live and move and have our being."

More than any one would like to admit there is a love for the sacred beauty of such days. Many human~~y~~ beings who have never learned to like storms or bleak wintry days have unconsciously felt the harmony that these rare days can bring. It is a mistake to assume that only the poets have felt such ecstasy. They, by gift or by hard work, can express what the~~r~~est of us would like to say, but their words would fall on deaf ears if you and I and the millions of unnamed, unnoticed ones all around us had not longed for the power of saying what all so long have felt.

From time to time^{in this column} I have paid a deserved compliment to lovers of beauty who had to hide their real emotion for fear they would be laughed at or even threatened with worse punishments here and hereafter. Weavers of beautiful rugs, makers of patchwork quilts, growers of flowers in cans and cast-off kitchenware are all akin to the dreamers of dreams on still, bright midsummer days, when "the whole body is one sense," when we go and come in nature, again slightly changing Thoreau's words, as if we had found some strange way of thwarting the laws of gravity, as if we had slipped one over on Time himself.

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In all these more than eleven years that I have been writing this column, I am sure that the regular readers of it--if there are any such--have wondered how much of what I have said about Fidelity is true, how much is merely typical and used to carry my point. I will admit that I love to clinch a moral, but I am quite as ardent a lover of historical truth. I have always hated sham, as a true son of Fidelity. The many times I have raged against unfair pictures of Kentucky should convince anyone that it is truth of the genuine kind that I like best. I hope that my generalizations and morals, such as they are, have not been weakened merely because I have tried to tell the actual truth, not some imagined truth that ~~some~~ poetic minds regard as better than anything that ever happened.

It was so long a custom of writers to picture the things they loved in a too-fair light that those who do otherwise are usually regarded as wet-blanket throwers or sensationalists or whatever ~~bad~~ bad word you want to use. The whole South has suffered more from its sentimental friends than from all its enemies. When actual realists try to present things as they exist in the South, all the old-line Rebels, political ~~and~~ and sentimental ~~and~~, raise a cry of "Unfair and untrue." Magnolias and cotton fields, happy darkies and the Big House, heroes of Shiloh and Bull Run, pretty Southern ladies and gallant gentlemen--how dear they are to hosts of people who never tried to see the real condition of people outside a few favored families!

I have just come from a visit to the area around Fidelity. I tried to keep my judgment, even about the places I once knew. How easy it would be to declare that of all the places that God made, Fidelity ranks highest! But "years that bring the philosophic mind" have taught me to see fairly clearly and to dare to express what I see. Fidelity was and is rather off the beaten path. It never was and never will be rich; it has few

left-overs of more-favored times. The time from pioneer days until the Civil War was too short for any ~~good~~^{grand} ideas to get a big hold on the hard-headed people that had settled there. There never was too much good soil on that whole side of the county; there is ~~much~~ too much sand for a field with any tilt to it to last long without gullies. Since dark tobacco has ceased to be such an important crop, people have reluctantly turned to more diversified farming or have moved away to the cities. ~~The little high school that grew up at Fidelity long after I had left home has been discontinued because of smallness, along with some fifty other high schools in the state.~~ The population of the section is ^{Probably} smaller than it was nearly a generation ago and will undoubtedly still further decrease as farm machinery makes it possible for fewer people to operate the farms. The roads are much better, but that very fact makes it easy for people to get away, just as has occurred in hundreds of other places. The new Kentucky Lake, with its marvelous fishing attractions, with surely bring many summer visitors but very few permanent residents. There is no doubt that the population as it now exists will be better off financially as time goes on than it was in my childhood.

All this is sober fact, in no sense colored merely because the area was the one in which I was born and ^{lived} the first eighteen years of my life. Customs have changed, the self-sufficient neighborhood is no longer possible or even desirable, small farms that support their quota of people seem to be going the way of many other customs, new architectural styles are making their way into the remote neighborhood. All these statements come to the same end: the Fidelity that I knew was no better and no worse than the one that bravely still sits on its small hills. What was adequate for me and for my generation is unthinkable now; there is no use for me and other old-timers to imagine that with our own childhood departed from the earth all that is worthy of experiencing.

Now here is the parable: "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever." Fidelity or Palestine, how true, how true!

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Stenciled 2/21/47

"Other Little Children"

"On goes on the river
And out past the mill,
Away down the valley,
Away down the hill;

"Away down the river,
A hundred miles or more,
Other little children
Shall bring my boats ashore."

I hope that these familiar lines from A CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSES will bring many a fragrant memory to you who read this, whether you were reared on Stevenson's charming child poetry or came to know it when your own children were at the age when they wanted you to read to them. They have come back forcefully to me in these days when I have been reading to my little grand-daughter from the rather badly-used copy of Stevenson that served its time a quarter of a century ago, when my daughter was being introduced to these immortal child rhymes.

In my last essay I indicated that Fidelity is able to take care of itself, even though it, like all other little villages, has lost most of its self-sufficiency. If I were a selfish old codger, I would be alarmed because things do not follow the same pattern in Fidelity that they used to when I was young. The small hills that used to shut in our little world and beyond which we went as to the ends of the earth, the boundaries that used to seem as permanent as old families and our system of social life, have ceased to be boundaries at all and are hardly considered as existing. You step on the starter and are over the last hill in fifteen or twenty minutes, with no necessary getting out of the buggy to give the horse greater freedom as he goes up the winding, rough road. In that community live other children, quite as much alive as any of us who used to live there, who are blissfully unconscious that any one else ever struggled there and wished for wider horizons. Many of the things that I wished for are theirs to enjoy or to reject, and they seem to show about as much joy in rejecting them as in ~~enjoying~~ ^{accepting} them. Many

a family has allowed the high school to come ^{and stay} ~~and go~~ without ever graduating any of its members, though it is commendable in hosts of my former acquaintances that they ^{have} ~~gave~~ their children everything that the newer times offered. It is a much-traveled group of people that you see now in Fidelity, especially since the war is over and boys have come back from places that even our old geographies did not list. Besides that, nearly every family has relatives in Detroit (accented on the first syllable) and has, therefore, traveled that far. Merely going to the county seat--now a half hour's trip at best--is no longer a thing to brag about.

The thing that made me feel smallest is that no one generation that ever lived at Fidelity used up all of its appeal. Right at the edge of the village today is an arm of Kentucky Lake, an expanse of water that would have made my eyes bulge when I was a child. The hills remain, so wooded that it actually seems that only small areas have been cleared. Other boys can and will find happiness in roving these same woods or in hunting on fall nights for 'coons and 'possums. If they come on paths that I made, why should they know? Why should any dead past hamper the living present? Poetry of a high order has been written about those same small hills, but few of the people who climb them know anything about it. The actual poetry is still there, just as poignant to the inhabitants as to any one who was ever able to express it in words.

I suppose that it is a human failing that we would like to patent the very air we breathe, especially if we ^{had} discovered some of its rare qualities. I am glad that I do not have any patent on Fidelity air. I hope that it will be as invigorating to future lungs as it was to lungs long ago mixed with the gravelly soil in the old graveyard and to other lungs that still breathe the air elsewhere. Columbus discovered America, I often remind my students, but he didn't and couldn't have had any greater joy in his discovery than I have had, though I came four hundred years later. And Fidelity is another world that will need to be constantly rediscovered.

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HOW MUCH LAND?

I have just come back from a late-summer jaunt over every section of the state except the mountains. Everywhere I went I found excellent crops, in August, 1946, for this has been a great season. Tobacco was being cut in many places, early corn was practically hard enough to gather, and most of the corn crop was made beyond the reach of drought. Other crops, especially soybean or cowpea hay, were equally good. Hundreds of acres of the corn I saw was hybrid and bore large ears on medium-sized stalks instead of nubbins on sapling stalks. I was impressed with the quality as well as the quantity of crops in the state this year.

And that gave me this topic for this week's essay. I could not help contrasting our former pioneer wastefulness of the soil, our rush to get many acres under cultivation, even though some of them would produce next to nothing. Many a time in other years I have seen the poorest hillsides plowed annually until they became a series of gullies, and yet what they produced in that time would not have amounted to a fourth of a respectable crop. After the top soil washed away or had been exhausted by wasteful methods, cultivation and lack of rotation went on, for pioneer philosophy was a disease that was and is hard to stop. We used to say that certain fields would not sprout peas, but I have rarely seen such fields helped to restore their fertility until recent years. In our section in the Purchase, Japanese clover got an early start, so that long before it was well known elsewhere, our ditches had begun to fill up and grow over. Older people told us that the foreign plant got started down there from seeds from hay shipped in to feed Union horses during the latter part of the Civil War. Be that as it may, I do know that some of the gullies that I used to play in can now be cut over with a mowing machine without the driver's knowing that the field ever had an ugly gash in it. But too few areas were so blessed as ours.

The eager rush for land continued down until lately in my present county. Two men that I have known bought land and kept on buying until they were literally "land poor." Fortunately for one of them, oil was discovered on his hundreds of acres, and he died well off. The other man bought up second-rate acres until he became a pauper literally, for he borrowed money on his wide-spreading farms until he could not meet his obligations and had to give up everything he had. He died two years ago with not enough money to pay for his funeral. These two men illustrated how ^{serious} ~~the~~ the land fever often became. The first old man pastured hundreds of his acres until they washed into gullies. Only the breaking up of his estate into usable blocks has kept it from becoming a waste land comparable with areas in the more arid regions. I never saw him do anything to restore the fertility to soil that had been, even after I knew his farms, reasonably good. "Give me land, lots of land," as in the popular song, seemed to be his motto.

My recent drives took me into the Bluegrass and right near farms that were left a hundred years ago by people who had plenty of this world's goods but were not satisfied with their ancestral acres. They went farther into much poorer areas and bought up huge estates, which, as you could guess, somehow failed to prosper. The lands they left in the Bluegrass are today picture farms, wide-spreading and profitable; the ones they tried to hew out of the wilderness are among the poorest that I have seen. Hamlin Garland, almost alone of our writers, has shown how this land-madness drove people away from land that could have been kept good. Sidney Lanier, our Southern poet, died too young to preach many times his doctrine that "Thar's more in the man than thar is in the land," but his poem "Corn" reads, in poetic form, like a report by the experts in Southern agriculture. He sees the scars of gullies on what used to be fertile fields and laments that a one-crop system has so enfeebled the people who could have been self-sustaining. It does me good to see that

our Kentucky farmers are belatedly putting into practice his doctrine of well over a half-century ago. There are hopeful signs that with similar thoughtfulness over a period of time some of the poetry about the farm down South may become literally true.

March 11, 1946

"He Laughs Best"

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Stenciled
3/3/47

Tonight as I came back from the postoffice, I went by an antique shop of some pretensions on one of our cross streets. The lights were on, inside, though ^{the shop} ~~it~~ had been closed for the day. I stood outside and looked long and long at the array of things for sale, and, frankly, I got a lot of ~~of~~ satisfaction, largely for the boy I used to be. You see, nearly everything I saw was like the objects that adorned our simple, plain country home and dozens more like ours. There were hanging lamps, table lamps with shades, Dresden shepherdesses, glassware of several famous patterns, corner cupboards, dressers, wash-stands, etc., etc. My mouth fairly watered to see so many things that I knew and loved, things that normally I supposed, until a few years ago, were just junk. And there is where the satisfaction came in, for all my childhood I felt inferior and often associated some of my down-and-out feeling with our ordinary stuff, in the dining room, the front room, and the living room. Some of the older families had heavy antique furniture that had been brought by covered wagon all the way from North Carolina, furniture that made our things look cheap and new-fangled. At least, that is how I felt for many a year of silent suffering. I regarded those things just as I did my clothes, as makeshifts but in no sense appropriate. And now, bless you, those things are offered for sale in an antique shop with price tags that made my eyes open wide. Why, I used to be right in the midst of luxury and did not know it! Our little boxed house, weatherboarded and ceiled, was a sort of art gallery, with us children unconsciously wandering around among the treasures like the children in Voltaire's CANDIDE, who in the Land of Eldorado played with great slugs of gold for quicits. And all my feeling of inferiority was beside the point, after all.

And that makes me wonder whether a lot of our snootiness is not often misplaced elsewhere besides in furniture. Primitive virtues are nearly always looked at condescendingly as if we had outgrown them and rightly so. We love to apologize for what our ancestors did or did not do, forgetting that we are judging them by standards that were not then in existence. It is just as foolish to misjudge them on a downward scale as to preach them up merely because they were dead and gone before any of us arrived on the scene. The historical sense is pretty weak in most of us. We have a great deal of trouble remembering how far we have come in some ways since primitive times but also how we still have the same basic wants, the same temptations, the same heart-burnings, the same fears and joys. Too often we make too much of mere outward forms of things, forgetting that it is just as impossible to judge an ancestor by his clothing in terms of present-day dress as it is to hold him up to ridicule for not thinking a hundred years ahead of his time. After some of the thinkers of each generation are gone, we suddenly remember that they anticipated some of our startling discoveries and maybe used the very things that seem directly from heaven itself and ^{are} so appraised by contemporary ballyhoosers. Why, Father knew about vitamins and practiced the knowledge, too, long before the elusive things had a name; some of my rural teachers practiced methods that today have made ~~made~~ fortunes for some people who fondly imagined themselves to be the originators. A genuine historical sense is the greatest enemy of snootiness and also of cynicism. Slowly, slowly comes a new idea into the world, rejected or half-heartedly received for whole generations; after that it seems as everlasting as the hills themselves and as old. Not to know how things grew puts one into the credulous condition of the smallest child or the simplest yokel. And now I can hold up my head and say that the "stone which the builders rejected," the common furnishings of houses at Fidelity, has lived on until it is recognized as valuable and fashionable, too.

617 March 11, 1946
Henderson
3/3/47

"This Is None of I"

A nursery rhyme I used to read to my children tells of how an old woman went to sleep by the roadside, and a practical joker came by and cut off her petticoat. When she awoke, she was greatly puzzled and exclaimed, "Lawk a mercy on me, this is none of I." Now that is how I felt in the summer of 1946 when I drove up and down the one street of Fidelity, seeing no one I recognized and very few people at all. It was tobacco-cutting time, and everybody except a skeleton force for the stores was out in the fields or barns. I entered at the school building, turned down the main street, and ended my brief half-hour pilgrimage by visiting the graves of Father, Mother, and the rest of the family, in the graveyard at the end of the village. Primarily I wanted to get one more glimpse of the village before putting the finishing touches to my book FIDELITY FOLKS and wanted especially to see whether my memories, "recollected in tranquillity," as Wordsworth suggested, were accurate enough. The short trip convinced me that for all practical purposes I had done justice to the village as I knew it, though most of what I had known long ago ^{had} ceased to be, people and buildings alike. Why, when I stood at the family burial plot, my eyes roved over the adjoining plots and caught the names of many a person I used to know. The dates seemed strange, too, for many of the young people I had known had died well after three score years and ten. ~~And~~ Where had I been all these years, where are the years themselves that have passed, all forty of ^{them}, since I lived near Fidelity? And yet, though this was my native ground, I felt like a person from another world looking down on things that maybe had been dreamed some time in another existence. My Fidelity, the one that remains unchanged in my memory, was not like this. It had the same street, the same names, the same buildings or whatever was left of them; but it was, too, an ethereal thing, a village not

made with hands. My Fidelity, the village of the last of the nineteenth century and the first six years of the twentieth century, seems to have vanished like the heavenly visitors that so often appear in the Bible and in the classics. Even while I looked at the quaint little seedy village that must be very much like itself of forty years ago, I almost seemed to get a mirage in the clear blue sky above of such a village as will never appear again on this earth. And I tried to pinch myself to establish conclusive evidence that I was not dreaming ~~rather than~~ ^{but} viewing with natural eyes the place where I once lived and moved and had my being.

Emerson says that there are two Concord Rivers: one winds in and out among the hills and meadows of Concord, the other flits through the poet's brain. And there are two Fidelities, one as real as the other. One sits still on the small hills not far away from a great arm of Kentucky Lake, with about the same number of people as the earlier village had; the other one lies deep within the memories and the emotional depths of such wanderers as I, who have carried the image of the little village through years of "soil and toil and care, from raven tress to thin gray hair." And I am prepared to defend this second Fidelity before any critic of human life and experience. Not to have this image would be to confess that only physical things live and impress us. Never in historic~~al~~ time could you have weighed and measured the Fidelity that will last longest in my memory; the other one is just as obvious, just as corporeal as any village in the world. Maybe the real is a combination of these two divergent pictures of things that used to be.

March 25, 1917

CRADLES

Just a few days ago some tourists came by my house with the customary luggage all over the car but with an unusual addition, an old-fashioned box cradle. Somehow the idea of a box cradle and that of an automobile did not seem harmonious. One suggests a time reaching back to pioneer days and beyond; the other represents time as recent as one can imagine. In fact, cradles of any kind have almost vanished from the face of the earth, I am told. Modern health specialists, who have done away with drinking gourds and slates, have said that rocking a baby addles its poor little brain. And trotting a baby in a straight-backed chair is now under the ban, too. It was otherwise when we were growing up, and even the health specialists cannot prevent my rehearsing some of the things that may of us still living, addled brains and all, remember with pleasure.

The oldest cradles that I can remember were made of a goods-box with rockers added. The great advantage of this was the baby was easy to reach, and, besides, he did not hurt himself if he jumped out. I was particeps criminis once, rather unavoidably, in the desecration of a box cradle. One of our neighbors, feeling that restlessness that often attacks middle-aged people, sold his farm and moved his large family to Oregon. After the sale was over, there was left only the box cradle that had rocked his ten children. Nobody wanted it. I took it home and used it for a cow trough for years. Sometimes my conscience hurt me a little for thus degrading a box to which a certain amount of sentiment still clung.

As people rose in wealth and respectability, the cradles rose, too. Then came the highly ornate ones, with all the flutings and knobs and carvings that made the Victorian Age famous. It was in such a cradle that I was rocked, a strongly-built one, for it had rocked some

nine before me, and it still had much service to render to some of the grandchildren. Long after childhood days were over, I wanted to get back into that cradle when I was sick. It and the trundle bed are always associated in my memory as emblems of childish dreams, whether of day or of night. I just cannot remember the last time I slept in a cradle, but I felt like a very big boy when my sister, two years older than, begged to be put into the cradle when she had chicken pox. Mother had to build up the bed with feather beds and such like, for Sister stuck out beyond the confines of the cradle. I recall that a checkerboard, properly padded, was added to make the bed long enough. It must have hope, as some of our neighbors, and yours, would have said, for Sister is still very much alive.

But the cradle is going or gone. Cribs, baby beds, and other things have taken its place. And rocking a baby to sleep is condemned by old maids of both sexes who write books on how to raise children. Now we get children ready for bed and lay them away in a dark room, without even so much as addling their brains by trotting. No wonder we hear so little nowadays about nightmares and sleep-walking, when children are not allowed to eat anything but proper food and can lie and sleep without being emulsified by shaking in a cradle.

March 25, 1947

"UNDER THE PUDDING PAN"

"Lady bug, lady bug, fly away home;
Your house is afire, and your children will burn;
All but one, and her name is Ann,
And she crept under the pudding-pan."

This old nursery rhyme may be just nonsense, as practical-minded ones would say, but to an impractical fellow like me it is a sort of child version of things in general. Things are always on fire, and most people and ideas are consumed, like the unfortunate children of the lady bug. But a few, like Ann, escape in every time and place and keep the tribe from becoming extinct. Fads and changing forms are deadly to a very large part of the human race; those who escape creep under the pudding-pan of something that is bigger than temporary affairs.

Every year some fresh inroad is made on poetic ideas. Some would-be benefactor of the race tries to explain away some of our cherished dreams. Why, occasionally some one has the temerity to be blasphemous against Santa Claus, that one remnant of the mystical. Fairies and elves were long ago routed; I suppose a few still hover around a Negro cabin. Ghosts have been driven away, quite as much by the poor imitations of them on Hallowe'en as by our practical-mindedness. Cemeteries occur so commonly in the midst of residential districts that it is hardly fair to suppose that the dead would want to walk in plain view. Only rarely are we childish enough to allow ourselves to be afraid of the dark. Pray, let us keep Santa Claus, for his own sake and as a reminder of the fairies and elves and other poetic things that we have lost. Some people wonder why we do not love poetic ideas as we once did; I am afraid that this is due to our wonder^{ing} whether, if styles changed, we could trade in our old ideas for a set of new ones, and at a bargain, too.

But in spite of the rush to acquire the latest in everything, from motor-cars to ideas, some people refuse to get "het up." The bells may ring, the fire trucks may dash by, the radios may blare, wiseacres may declare that there is no hope for the impractical. But, strange as it may seem, the dreamers have always survived, and the practical ones have sunk without leaving a trace, spurlos versenkt. Who owned the best house in Athens when Homer, a blind beggar, sang on the streets the strange, wild story of Helen and Achilles and Ulysses and Hector? How barely Ferdinand and Isabella missed oblivion, the oblivion that has enwrapped so many sovereigns, who, like Ozymandias, thought that their names would never die! Merely because they as befriended, somewhat reluctantly, an unknown sailor, their names remain alive. And how many drachmas would some forgotten Greek millionaire have given to be remembered in our time as we remember Homer and Socrates and Aeschylus and queer old Diogenes! These impractical ones, in nursery language, "crept under the ^{Pudding} oydding-pan" and escaped the disasters that overcame their seemingly more fortunate countrymen.

*Take Mrs Richards a copy -**April 8, 1947*

It used to be regarded as inevitable that country people were just "country hicks." That was what was expected, according to the jokes and plays of the time. Or, if you like another term better, a country fellow was a "hayseed." He was usually shown in cartoons and in plays with a straw hat with some scraggly hair sticking out through a hole in it. He was either barefooted or wore lob-sided brogans. His face wore an expression midway between that of Millet's Man with the Hoe and Bergen's Mortimer Snerd. The finishing touch was a straw held lightly between the teeth. When he talked, he talked as only a stage character can talk, though millions supposed that he was the true-blue article (pronounced articklee, with much of the accent on the second syllable). And for years many people seem to have felt that that settled Rube or Silas or whatever name would best fit a straw-chewing country feller, a sort of happy moron who could not do any thing else but farm.

Judging by some rather unfortunate articles in print about Kentucky, one would think that the same idea still prevails. Metropolitan papers still feature Kentuckians as if they were either only beginnings in the upward struggle for civilization or were degenerates who had slipped back to semi-savagery. It seems surprising when these same degenerates or primitives rise up and ask to be heard.

Now the plain truth about our rural areas today is that, while self-satisfied urban people like so many of us have been going on contented with their conception of country life, there has arisen a new country life that resembles popular conceptions of it about as much as Li'l Abner resembles the typical Kentuckian. Even the remotest counties have active 4-H Clubs, and Future Farmers of America clubs, and Homemakers Clubs, and Utopia Clubs, and Farmers Unions. From a

very intimate connection with these organizations as a well-wisher and an honorary member of some of them, I have come to feel that there is nothing else like them for what they have done and are doing for country people. I have attended literally dozens of their meetings and have yet to find one that is as stiff and formal and dry as many another meeting I have attended that was supposed to be made up of the elect. I have had my thinking pepped up more from such country-people's clubs than by any other series of organizations. They are live, purposeful, nearly always well managed, connected, and in no way self-conscious or self-important. The best thing about them is that they are made up of people who enjoy being together, who have common problems, who are not trying to climb socially, and who ask no odds of anybody. The growth of fine young people in these organizations is one of the wonders of our time. In my classes year after year the 4-H Club boys and girls shine in their poise and independence. Formerly I sometimes found farm children who somewhat hesitated to say that they had grown up on the soil; that just does not happen now. It has been years since I have heard a college youngster lament his rural rearing. As compared with social life in small towns and even many large cities, that of country boys and girls of today is away ahead, thoroughly adequate for wholesome living. When I think of the degenerate thing called social life that I used to meet in villages when I was a public-school teacher, I marvel at the good times that earlier generation missed by not having these organizations.

I wish heartily that some of the highbrow critics of rural life in Kentucky would go to the country itself and see what is going on rather than take their cue from urban critics who know little or nothing about ~~the subject~~ ~~what is going on~~. And I can assure the snootiest critic of rural Kentucky that his presence in a typical farm organization group would in no way disturb the equanimity of the people present; they have seen much finer people than he in their meetings all over the land.

OLD FAMILIES

My town has undergone rapid changes in the nearly forty years that I have lived in it, but no one change has been so marked as the passing of the importance of old families. Bowling Green was still clinging desperately to the Civil War in 1908, when I arrived here. Over and over we were reminded of this and that family, especially if the family had had prominence in pre-war days. Outsiders like me had to talk about something else, for what were our families beside the great ones ~~we~~ were hearing about? It was not long, however, before our town took on a cosmopolitan air because of the influx of people from everywhere. The two colleges and the small factories have added to our town citizens from nearly every state in the Union. And we rarely hear about old families now. The faculty of my own college has ~~as teachers~~ has only three people who were reared in Bowling Green, and even one of these was actually born elsewhere but moved here early. Regional speech, such as used to be common here, is pretty hard to find. A remark about an old family would now be greeted with a blank stare.

The provincialism that used to be deified is gradually passing in many parts of the country. The intermarriage of sections during our recent war is a good sign; nearly every part of our land, especially the South, needs new blood. Stagnation of ideas has often resulted because people had nothing to talk about except ancestry. Inbreeding of ideas may be as fatal as biological inbreeding.

While many people have stopped thinking and stopped growing, a new democracy has grown up all around us that laughs at our older pretensions. When some of my students hear of great ancestors, they always want to know wherein the greatness consisted. Could these

great ones do unusual things for the public good? Were they intellectual giants? Did they know how to make dollars grow? If they were so great, why did they let land wash into gullies? Why did they cut down the forests and waste natural resources, so that their fond descendants have to start all over again? If they had such great minds, why did they not start the solution of some of the staggering problems that confront us today? Where is the great civilization that they built up? Only occasionally do I find some youngster who has been so stuffed with ancestral nonsense that he thinks that his folks created the world and the rest of us are merely late-comers or intruders.

To me one of the most tragic things in our state is the thing that so often gets into the pictures: I refer to the great mansions and palaces of other days. In general these great houses, impressive but hard to take care of, are not occupied by any of the fond descendants. The civilization that produced them was not able to continue them. They stand as mute reminders of a type of grandeur that we, frankly, could not afford. Our Southern civilization was based largely on a false assumption. Even now, with more modern methods of business management, the plantation as it was conceived of in earlier days would be hard to make pay. In its actual time it was normally a failure. So that even when the great manor houses grew up, they were evidences of poor business judgment, which built not more wisely than it knew but more extravagantly than it could afford. Sometimes I grow tired of hearing these old houses so praised. My folks had them, too, just like yours, but I did not get any of them, for debts had to be paid before I was born. The older generations lived up their share of good things and mortgaged the future, too. My generation had to start at scratch, not alone because the Civil War destroyed the older system, but because the older system did not pay its way. A great mansion in many instances may represent the buried hopes of a would-be great line.

April 22, 1947

THE PATH

We hear little about paths now, especially since roads have become better and cars can take us "over the hills and far away." There was a time when paths were one of our chief means of getting anywhere. The roads themselves were little more than trails and were muddy in winter and dusty in summer. Besides, roads were relatively few in number, and we needed to cut across fields and woods when we started anywhere and did not want to exhaust ourselves merely by walking.

The path I remember best was the school path. We went up through one of our fields, by the tobacco barn, climbed the fence, and then set out through a half ~~of~~ mile of woods to the schoolhouse. Every day along this path was an adventure, for the trees, the wild flowers, the birds, and the four-footed wild creatures were a part of that half mile. The path was in no sense a direct line; it wobbled up through the woods, over the crest of ^a small divide, down another slant, across a brook, and finally up the last hill to the one-roomed schoolhouse. In the brook, or branch, were bright pebbles, good for slingshots and also good to take to school to learn how to count. Along the path grew hickory and pawpaw, which make the best whistles and bark whips in the world. And the path had two branch paths that brought many other children, from further up the creek. Child love-affairs and jealousies or even feuds often made the path as representative of human faults as great water courses or caravan routes of olden times.

Another path led across the field to our second-nearest neighbor's. Sometimes this path was plowed up, when the field was in corn or tobacco, and we had to find our way through the growing plants. By harvest time the path was always hard-patted-down and looked as if it had not been disturbed by the plow. Part of this path led across another small branch, where marsh plants grew, and where frogs croaked in spring.

and queer-looking ice spicules formed in winter. In this little branch bottom we found tracks of wild animals in the mud in summer or in the snow in winter, showing that the wildest creatures imaginable came almost to our very doors in their nightly prowling. Sometimes this little hollow could be mighty dark when we had been to spend the afternoon at Mr. Bob's and had stayed rather late. An occasional owl would greet us there and make our hair rise on end. Part of this was a sort of primitive fear that all of us had for anything in the wild; part of it was symbolical of the parental scolding that we expected when we had got home, because of our staying over time.

A path I very much liked wound around the hills to the home of my best boy friend. It started out from the school ^{path} just beyond the tobacco barn and looped around the hills, sometimes in the woods, sometimes at the edge of fields. At one place it touched the bank of the creek, where the stream had washed out a cut in the edge of the hill. There is where I used to find the eels in spring, building their nests in the cold, clear water on the gravelly shallows. The hills by the path seemed tall, but now I know they were only steep. On their tops were hundreds of chestnut trees, always inviting in October after frosts had loosened the nuts from the burs. Again there was a chance of seeing wild creatures right in their own haunts, unforgettable glimpses of impressive facts about nature. I love the memory of this path because it was the one along which I walked when I first found the writings of Henry David Thoreau, in a book that my friend's sister had lent me. She was a school teacher and had lots of books, lots so far as our little world was concerned. In one of these I read as I went home late one Sunday afternoon the vivid account of the battle of the ants, which Thoreau witnessed while he lived at Walden Pond.

Henceforth that range of hills became for me the very ones that surround Walden. And the little old path, long in disuse, was a way out to strange lands beyond the hills, lands perennially new because touched by the pens of great writers who know no death.

April 22, 1947

DIGGING IN THE DIRT

One of the readers of this column has suggested that I write an essay about digging in the dirt. I am glad to accommodate him, for some of my happiest memories are about playing out on the ground at nearly all seasons of the year.

Now digging in the dirt is not necessarily a part of mud-pie making, though it may lead to that type of cookery. Digging in the dirt is just for itself. Of course, you can make roads and bridges and tunnels; you can construct mountains and lakes and oceans; you can just dig, getting as much dirt as possible all over you. Sand will do in a pinch, but it does not leave enough dirt on your body. The modern sanitary children that dig and play in sandpiles will never know how much they missed by not having some real dirt to play in.

Roads form one of the best things to make out of dirt. Since in our part of the world all creek bottoms were swampy and marshy, we had to have levees across them on which to build roads. That gave us our cue in making play-like roads. Sometimes we built roads two or three feet wide and added bridges a foot or so long. One such road that a bunch of us boys built at school was still there, twenty years later, for we had heaped up a pile of dirt, one of the safest ways to raise a monument. Most of our roads were in no sense so pretentious, however, and hardly lasted beyond a few days of play.

Every child goes through the tunnel craze. A steep bank is just the place for a tunnel. If you can get enough of the dirt out, you just must have a flue inserted, for what is a house without a place for a fire. I have seen hundreds of roadside houses of this sort, with a joint of crazy stovepipe sticking a few inches above the ground, a thick smoke coming out, indicating that all was well within.

Clay banks offer another fine place to play in the dirt, for all of us loved to coast down such places. If we could find a small plank or a broad chip from where crossties had been made, we slid down in style. But it was not necessary to have anything that nature and Mother had ^{not} supplied. We just sat down on the dusty or muddy bank and slid down, forgetting the sure consequences of such unsanitary practices. Apparently we, and others, learned little from the spankings we got, for every inviting bank had its crew of boys, and often girls, who defied parental authority and got gloriously dirty. Children are still fond of dirt, I know, for not long ago, while the bus on which I was riding waited for a ferry boat, I looked out and saw four brats sliding down a very dusty bank on some inadequate pieces of cardboard. The little fellows were as dirty as pigs and as happy. And then I knew that humanity does not change so very fast.

Sometimes we had a free-for-all in our playing in the dirt. Maybe one of us made a mountain or some other choice bit of landscape. Some other brat tore it down. Then there followed a bit of dirt-slinging, enough to fill up all the eyes and get dirt on every square inch of our already-dirty clothes. Sometimes a real fight developed, with hair-pulling and biting, always accompanied with screaming and threats to tell Mammy. One of my former playmates, now a very decorous middle-aged woman, used to pick up handfuls of dirt and cover her head with it. I have seen her so filthy that you would have had trouble in determining what color she would have if she were washed. The women of Fidelity prophesied dire things for such a filthy child; she became an object lesson for us all. And yet she grew up and kept clean and has not killed anybody that I have ever heard of. The clean ones who used to be horrified at her probably wish that they had done some such forbidden thing as put dirt on their heads to show that they were still untamed children of nature.

May 6, 1947

"THY SPEECH BEWRAYETH THEE"

Through many years I have studied and taught language and have always been interested in local speech or dialect. Probably nothing has been more discussed and less understood than the actual differences between the speech of one area and another. Casual observers often believe themselves able to tell, like the professor in Shaw's "Pygmalion," just where someone has come from. Most of such wiseacres are to be trusted only as far as you could throw the proverbial bull by the tail.

There is no Kentucky speech as such. Whoever thought so should travel around a bit, and he would find many species of language here. There are a few areas that are distinctive, but no single one of them is large. Some months back I discussed the "Island of the Old South," the area in Logan, Christian, and Todd counties that really speaks a broad Southern, as broad as that of Georgia. No other single area does this, however; in fact, Southern in its true form is rare elsewhere in Kentucky and is largely a matter of an individual or a family. The rest of the people in the state speak various sorts of Middle Western and left-overs. Most of us speak Middle Western, with a few words and expressions from Southern, like "you-all," "reckon," "carry," etc. Our tones, though, are rarely Southern; our r's even more rarely so.

A large part of the state, and not the mountains alone, speaks a variety of English that is decidedly a left-over from older times. People who have investigated this speech in our mountains naturally conclude that only there does this Elizabethan vocabulary, and, often, tones, survive. Nearly every county in which I have visited has some of these same left-overs, varying from a very few to a large vocabulary. It has been the custom for younger people to sneer at this speech, not aware that it bears the same relation to our present-day speech that antique furniture does to our latest models. Only a scholar can appreciate the flavor of this true-blue English dialect.

Much is made by some people of our dropping our r's. Frankly, most Kentuckians do not drop r's. On the contrary, they add them more often than they drop them. The people who talk genuinely Southern do soften their r's, but educated and illiterate people in general keep them. Words ending in vowels quite often add an r. Ida, Ada, Emma, fellow, pillow--many, many times they appear as if spelled Ider, Emmer, Ader, feller, piller. And they are only a few of the many words than acquire an r. In western and southwestern Kentucky, with the exception of the region already described, r's luxuriate, where they appear in spelling and where they don't.

The Kentucky voice is another thing that does not exist. There are about as many kinds of voices here as in any other place in the world. A few--a very few--have pleasant, soft voices, like the stage Southerner's voice. Most of us have voices lacking in resonance, often with a decided^{ly} nasal tone. Most of us talk fast or certainly a lot faster than Southerners are supposed to. A special variety of the Kentucky voice is found in the Jackson Purchase, with a ring that is hard to describe. It is not a drawl, because it is too fast for that. It has a flat tone. My own voice is, I fear, very much of that type. Certainly, it is commonly heard among the people where I grew up. Irvin Cobb had it, almost to perfection. I know many another person not so famous as he became who has a similar voice, not resonant, not pleasant, but capable of being heard over any kind of noise.

The whole subject of regional speech is badly misunderstood. There are so many variations in even the best-known dialects that only a very careful scholar can separate them. In fact, it is almost true that each one of us talks his own language; sometimes that speech resembles what others say, sometimes it seems like nothing else in the world. I would like to test some of the wiseacres who think they can detect our state speech; I know that I would soon tie them in knots.

May 6, 1947

PILLARS OF SOCIETY

With the coming of better educational facilities, of radio, and of daily mails, the local wise man is not so prominent as he used to be. I cannot help feeling sad at the passing of such a great institution as the village wiseacre. For untold ages he has been a figure of society; in older times he was almost the only visible evidence of the Law and the Prophets. Age itself seemed to carry with it a ripeness of judgment that no age has today. To say that it had been decided by the Elders used to be almost the same as quoting a law, of nature or of man.

Through my lifetime I have watched with a good deal of pleasure the activities of the pillars of society in open country, village, and city. Every community had one or more such celebrities; many places were fairly overrun with them. And the best part of the matter is that most of them were in every way worthy of the local respect that they had developed through years of sage advice to people in trouble. Some of these pillars of society were financial wizards: they could give sane and sage advice about when to buy and what to pay, when to sell and when to hold back your products. They were sought when one was about to buy a farm. Frequently these financial experts were in no sense moneyed men, but they were the cautious kind that helped others make money and save it for a rainy day. Other wise people were asked advice about family troubles, though not often did the whole neighborhood know about it, as was almost sure to be the case when money was concerned. Fortunately, these intimate matters were discussed with tight-lipped people who knew how to keep a secret. In my capacity of visiting school teacher in dozens of communities I have seen the pillar of society that is a stalwart in educational and religious affairs. There is no neighborhood without at least one man who can be depended on to keep

things going. If money is needed to supplement the school budget, Uncle George is called on as a matter of course, just as every petition circulated in Philadelphia during the life of Franklin had his name at the top. Uncle George's name clears the new idea from any type of suspicions and guarantees that whatever money is raised or whatever work is done will be thoroughly accounted for. A starving little church needs a new roof; Uncle George cannot put up enough money for it all, but with his name to start with, the church gets its roof in record time. Parent-Teachers ~~Societies~~^{associations} have taken over many of these functions of pillars of society in school affairs, but not every neighborhood function has had such stalwart supporters as the P. T. A. It is still necessary in many places for a single person to start all new efforts and to keep them going.

In our view of ^Csociety we too often forget the service rendered by these valuable citizens. The few selfish local leaders have often made people distrustful of really able neighborhood leaders. We hear a lot about aristocracy, usually the wrong kind, the kind that assumes greatness without assuming the responsibilities of greatness. This type of aristocrat wants adulation and worship, but he prefers to let someone else do all the dirty work of keeping things going. The sort of neighborhood pillar of society that I am talking about does his part without knowing it and never dreams that he has done anything unusual. If he were asked, he would probably say that he was working rather selfishly for his own children or his own family and that there was no heroism in what he has done. In our ardor of worshipping supposedly great men we often forget these stalwarts of little places that have labored long and well, seeking no earthly reward and probably never dreaming that what they have done is worth anything here or hereafter. Having known hundreds of them, I, for one, want to add my small bit of praise for the good work that they have carried on.

May 20, 1947

DISTANCES, THEN AND NOW

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Yesterday on a bird walk I turned to the left when I should have turned to the right and thus got lost. I wandered around in perfectly strange territory and ultimately walked twelve miles when I had planned to walk four or five. Today I feel no ill results and would be willing to try it again. My wandering over so many miles made me think back to a time when boys might plow from daylight till dark or hunt by day or by night across the better part of a whole county but would not walk two miles for anything. Why, there were and are places within five miles of Fidelity that I have never seen, that is, up close, in spite of the fact that some of them were in plain view from the corner or some higher elevation. For instance, there was the brick house where lived the girl I used to talk to after we got our party-line telephone up. I saw that house hundreds of times every year, but I never so much as passed it until after I had been away from home for ten or eleven years and was at home on vacation. Today, when I am more than three times as old as I was when I left home, I would think nothing of walking across those bottoms to places much farther away than the red brick house. In fact, I do just that thing every Saturday. I recall that when I walked some four or five miles up the creek from Fidelity, many of the neighbors had another reason for believing that maybe I was "tetched in the head." The whole area around Fidelity is so small that I really ought to go back down there and walk all over it, to show myself that it was a mere parish, not a complete world. Maybe that would destroy my childhood illusions too much and make Fidelity seem too small.

I suppose that the basic objection to walking, then and now, is that it looks like working, while hunting doesn't. That accounted for the going to the pasture and running down a horse in order to ride him a mile or so. You could walk behind the plow, but horseflesh had to suffer when your mother wanted you to go to the store or after the mail.

My study of birds and its attendant walking is surely for fun; hence my ability to cover long distances with no noticeable fatigue. Some of the country I walked over yesterday can be reached only on foot, or, precariously, on horseback. Only a man in an airplane could get the general lay of the land, for deep gorges dissect the area, with dense woods over much of the section. I cut through gorges, climbed cliffs, walked along dry water courses, and sometimes had the good fortune to find an old road, long deserted but still open enough to aid me in getting through the woods and underbrush. My old neighbors would have preferred a plain road or path, though it might have taken them miles out of the way; that in turn would have called for a horse, and therefore walking would have suffered.

Throughout this series of articles I have mentioned barriers, actual or imagined. I am more and more impressed with man's tendency to regard even the tiniest natural boundary as actual. A mere little brook comes to be crossed only at widely scattered places. The intermediate places are as little known to most people as the jungles. If a primitive path or road ran along a ridge, then traffic still goes along this cow path, as in Sam Walter Foss's famous poem about Boston, and few ever try to find a more direct route. Just south of Bowling Green there existed for generations a compound bend, or S-curve, on US31W, a crooked, dangerous left-over of stage-coach days. The state highway people and even the national engineers left it and kept it blacktopped until just a few years ago. You almost met yourself coming back on it, as on some mountain roads, and yet it was in almost level country and seemed as silly as any curve could be. All over the state there were just such left-overs, sacred, though dangerous, reminders of days when vehicles went leisurely down the roads, when time meant little to any one, when horse and buggy or surry was enough. The passing of that compound curve made me wonder why we hold to some things, uncomfortable and even dangerous, when a little work would make something better for all time.

May 20, 1947

BOWSER AND THE WILDCAT

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Here is a yarn right from Fidelity, one that Colonel Major of the Columbia Broadcasting Company asked me to send to him.

Al Stubblefield had the best dog in our neighborhood; I know, because Al said so, every time he had a chance and sometimes when he had to make a chance. Bowser was the name of the great dog. Just what kind of dog he was I cannot say; I doubt whether Bowser himself knew how many strains of shepherd, collie, foxhound, bloodhound, terrier, and plain dog he contained in his ornery body. But, ancestry aside, Bowser was what all hunting dogs would like to be. 'Coons, 'possums, rabbits, squirrels, and birds sooner or later became part of the menu at Al's house. Nearly always he had some sort of animal up fattening, and on the barn and on the smokehouse were skins of various sizes and colors nailed up to dry. When you saw Al at Fidelity, he nearly always had a skin or so to turn in on his account. Many of us wanted to borrow Al's Bowser, but he would sooner have given us his wife and children. Everywhere Al went, Bowser, like Mary's little lamb, "was sure to go." The longer this went on, the more jealous we became, for we hated to see Al get all the breaks. Meanwhile Bowser had lost his youth and most of his teeth, but his instinct for game persisted.

Now Bowser had a whole series of barks and whines that told Al as plainly as language what kind of game was in the offing. A few of us could guess what some of them meant, but only Al could interpret all the sounds. Even when I would be in the school over in the woods near Fidelity and would hear Bowser yelping, I knew he had a 'coon or a 'possum treed. It was nearly more than I could stand to sit there and study my geography lesson when I would have so liked to go to Bowser and see what he had run to cover. A few times he would let out some terrified sound that portended, maybe, a fox or some fighting animal.

One spring not long before I left Fidelity I helped Al clear a newground down in Beechy Fork bottom. Bowser was always having a great time, even though his great age had slowed him down considerably. His treeing things often stopped our work, but my pay of forty cents a day went right on, even though I spent a lot of time helping Al cut down a tree to get a fat 'coon or a grinning 'possum. That same spring there developed a mighty scare at Fidelity about a wildcat that somebody or other saw or thought he saw near Al's newground. The dogs of the neighborhood would bark mysteriously and sometimes take refuge under the houses after nightfall, growling and barking bravely. One morning I got to the newground before Al and Bowser arrived. I heard a mighty rustling in a big brushpile and made sure it was the wildcat. My hair began to rise up. When Al and his dog got there, I told Al about the suspicious noise. Work did not begin until we found out what the varmint was, especially since Bowser fairly outdid himself with his wild barks and howls. We started to move that brushpile. Bowser would try to help, by catching hold of some of the limbs and growling savagely. He never stopped that excited conduct, even for a minute. A squirrel appeared in one of the trees, but Bowser ignored it completely. We worked feverishly and a bit nervously, too, for the wildcat might get one of us. When we got all the limbs moved except two or three bushy ones that had leaves on them from trees cut the preceding summer, I heard something coming out. Bowser backed his ears and dashed into those limbs as a sort of final act to his long life of catching or treeing or pursuing animals. We waited breathless until he came back out, with the smallest field mouse I have ever seen.

June 3, 1947

Uncle Bill Clark was the biggest natural-born liar I ever knew. He had never been to school and could not have acquired any of his lying from books. He had traveled a little, that is, as a Confederate soldier, and killed hundreds of Yankees, but after the war he stayed pretty close to his little farm over on Pan'ter Creek, except for his Saturday-afternoon trips to Fidelity. Because of his advanced age, he occupied one of the chairs of the loafers' j'int and was a sort of charter member of the liars' bench. Nobody dared contradict his yarns, for it was feared a little skepticism might break the old fellow's heart or at least cause him to quit his inimitable entertainment. Since Uncle Bill was such a brave man, it did not pay to doubt his stories; why, doubting would cast a cloud on his army record, and all of us were true-blue Rebels, glorying in the bloody deeds of the old fellows who somehow lived through the four long years of the Civil War.

Uncle Bill did not have much of this world's goods, beyond a wife and several children. But his mare Daisy was the one member of his family that we always heard of. She was the pacingest animal that ever ate corn or fodder. She really was a trim animal, pretty small and easy to keep. Uncle Bill was himself a small man, probably not weighing over a hundred and twenty pounds, and all of that was sheer muscle. When he came riding into Fidelity on Saturday afternoon, he assumed all the dignity and Civil-War dare-deviltry that had made him a brave cavalryman so long ago. We would look up from our whittling and envy him, but no word of ours would let out what we really felt. We probably made some catty remark about Uncle Bill and his Daisy that would not look pretty or decent in this essay. When he had tied Daisy to the hitching rack(which happened to be Ed Jones's fence), he came bounding along like a much younger man and joined the perennial whittlers.

Some of us would soon spin some monstrous yarn and declare by all that was holy that it was the God's truth. That was just a trick to get Uncle Bill started. It was not especially hard, however, to get him to recount some of his war experiences or~~x~~ his mighty mare. As he grew older, he loved most of all this yarn.

Once he had been up into Henry County to Swor's Distillery to get a jug of apple brandy, for Uncle Bill took a little wine for the stomach's sake in true Biblical fashion and sometimes took even a little more. Now Swor always gave his customers good measure in their jugs and also treated them to a free drink of his best. Uncle Bill got his jug filled and then filled his skin with Swor's Best. These attentions to the inner man were getting in their best work by the time Uncle Bill had got back to the Big Hill just south of Fidelity. Daisy pranced along the dusty road as if she, too, had had a swig of Swor's Best. Uncle Bill rode along, feeling gay and proud of having the best hoss-flesh on the east side of the county. Just as he was giving Daisy her fanciest tryout as a pacer, he looked from the top of the hill and saw seven covered wagons going down the hill, on their way west. Now Daisy was a spirited animal, according to Uncle Bill, and resented any interference. Uncle Bill pulled hard on the reins when they approached the first wagon, but Daisy was going at too rapid a pace to stop. The road was too narrow for her to go around. Seeing that something drastic had to be done, Uncle Bill kicked her in the flanks. She paced right over the seven wagons and landed, none the worse for her marvelous experience, right in the dusty road ahead of the last one, still pacing for dear life. "And she never missed a lick, I gannies," concluded Uncle Bill.

June 3, 1947

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UNFORTUNATES

Whatever else we may have learned in the last forty years, we certainly have learned to take better care of the unfortunate ones who because of birth or disease did not get an even break. I have a hard time convincing my students that there was ever a time when the mentally unfit, especially those who were born that way, remained right in the midst of the others and were accepted as casually. I am not now referring to that old institution of the village idiot, an institution about as old as humanity, I suspect; nearly every village has somebody who seems slightly off, even though he usually can take care of himself. The ones I refer to were much more unfortunate.

Before the state had adequate facilities for the care of the feeble-minded, families accepted these unfortunates as part of the suffering to which we are all heirs and did the best they could with these subnormal people. Since Father was a doctor, I saw every one that lived near Fidelity and more besides. Naturally these people were likely to be weaklings also and often sick. They came, then, to be examined. I never learned to take them as casually or even so joyously as did some of my playmates. One of the best mimics I ever knew could do the part of a half-wit in our neighborhood so well that I feared sometimes, especially after I had been to Sunday School and heard how we get punished for misdeeds, that my friend might become a halfwit himself in punishment for his faithful imitation of one. Many of my neighbors even remembered the halfwitted things this feeble-minded youngster said and passed them along to other families and even to those who had left Fidelity for the Far West. I sometimes laughed, but I am afraid that I more often shivered a little when a moron stated in his moronic way what he thought about all the "weary

weight of this unintelligible world."

In general the actually crazy ones were sent to Hopkinsville to the state hospital, but a few families objected so strenuously to this that they kept their unfortunates and even brought them to the village or to church or other public gathering. One remarkable case, not too far from Fidelity, was of a young woman who lost her mind long before I could remember. Her parents, and later her brothers and sisters, refused to send the girl away. She was kept in a room especially built for her, for she was dangerous. She grew into maturity and was said to be perfectly normal in appearance but always wildly shouting the names of people she had known in her early youth. For thirty-five or forty years the county voted a sum for her people to take care of her. Long after I was in early middle age she was still living, though I can recall that I first heard of her when I was only six or eight years old.

Our champion crazy-man story, probably an old folk tale that has been told everywhere, concerned a bit of poetic justice that a crazy man used. The county court had decreed him insane. Two men, one of them the father of my nearest neighbor at Fidelity, were appointed by the court to take the man to Hopkinsville. The only means of transportation then was a farm wagon. The man was put into a spring seat of the wagon, with a good strong man on each side. At the end of the first day of travel the sane men agreed to stop at the first house that would take them in. They explained to the landlord their condition and said that, since the man was not dangerous, they would assume responsibility for him if they could be lodged in the same room. The landlord took them in, and nothing untoward happened. The next afternoon, when they decided to repeat this same ceremony of getting to stay all night, the crazy man beat them to the draw and proclaimed the other two as insane, but that he would assume all responsibility if the landlord would take them in. According to the yarn, it took some fancy explaining to establish the sane as sane and the crazy as crazy.

June 17, 1947

THE BIRTH OF FIDELITY

This paper is not designed to be historical, at least so far as the actual little village is concerned. The few brief facts about the origin of the village can be told, largely copied from Collins's HISTORY OF KENTUCKY, that repository of so many facts about the state. It was settled in 1819 or as near that date as possible, for it was a thriving village within a year or two of that date. It had an earlier name than the one it bears today; it was incorporated in 1835 and again, under a slightly changed name, in 1868. In 1877 it had a "population about 150; had 5 stores, tobacco factory, wagon and carriage factory, 3 mechanics' shops, 2 physicians, church, and academy." All that is history and interesting to any one who comes from Fidelity or who likes to know how and when villages came to be.

But I want to tell how I created Fidelity, not the village itself but my Fidelity, actual but dream-worldly. In the dark days of World War I, when Germany was making her last desperate effort to reach the Channel Ports, influenza broke out in my college and stopped work for two weeks or more. I could study birds for a good part of each day, but there is a limit to walking, even for wild-eyed ones like me. One day while I was thinking about the old village, I began to write a story with that village as a setting. I wanted a name and thought then that Fidelity had actually been the name of my native village. I continued all that forced vacation to write stories, some of them actually from that section, others localized there, for had not I created a new village? Pathetically, not one of those mind children has yet found its way into the world of books or magazines, though I nearly wore out the manuscripts sending them everywhere. But I found Fidelity anyway and am glad that I salvaged that much out of my literary outburst.

In the hard, uncertain years that followed World War I, I clung to the name and soon began to give it, in my own mind, at least, a sort of symbolical meaning. Fidelity came to mean to me the past that all of us cherish, a sort of Golden Past, "back where we used to be so happy and so pure." I found myself comparing the people I knew in my new-found world of college life with the plain, unvarnished ones in Fidelity. A group of educators somehow had to pass muster before the loafers' ~~joint at~~ Fidelity. And it was often the case that I remembered in this way personalities that had made Fidelity memorable. By degrees I began to classify the influences that were unconsciously exerted upon my childhood. Once when I was called upon to give an after-dinner speech--one of the most frequent events in my public life--, I decided to speak as accurately and as feelingly as possible on "The Old Family Nag," and thus was born unconsciously the whole series of essays that grew into PASSING INSTITUTIONS. My long association with folklore again called for a speech, and I described Aunt Jane, our local ballad singer; and from that first character sketch grew what is now my FIDELITY FOLKS. Years have gone into this column, years that I have greatly enjoyed, partly because of the memories that I have called back but chiefly because of the response that thousands have given to my memories of my little Fidelity that was so much like all other Fidelities the world over. I find myself using it, too, as an ivory tower into which I can escape from a troubled world. I know that my Fidelity is probably not the real one, but for me it has been a reality that transcends actual facts, just as our emotional experiences always seem so much greater than bread-and-butter facts. I sometimes wonder just who I would be or what I would use for an illustration if I had not grown up at Fidelity, if I had not kept a diary of happenings in that remote little place, if I had not stumbled upon the name that has opened so many doors for me in hundreds of human hearts. And so I salute again the little village, the one that actually stands on its poor hills and the better one that is a state of mind.

June 17, 1947

MY SUPPORTERS

It would not be fair if I ^{did not,} ~~failed~~ once in a great while, ~~to~~ pay my respects to the hundreds of people who have helped me make this little column. The column itself is much older than it seems to be, though it actually came into existence in September, 1935. Long before then I had been ~~e~~xperimenting with passing institutions as subjects for after-dinner speeches and as illustrations for folklore addresses. I know that ^I ~~had~~ [^] worried my own family thousands of times by telling and retelling my champion pieces, especially when some new person came to visit us who had never heard my yarns. Then the column began, and from the very first week of it I have been getting letters, cards, and personal messages, not to mention sassafras roots, sorghum molasses, cracklings, and similar good things; as well as recipes for mud pies, the words of pieces we used to speak and of which I could recall only a line or two, suggestions for more papers, and good, warm appreciation for talking about down-to-earth things. I have answered every letter and card I have received and have thanked every person for upholding my column in this way. Again I would like to do jyst that very thing, publicly.

It has amused and pleased me when I have looked over some hundreds of letters that have been accumulating since September, 1935. We school teachers have the fatal habit of arranging things into categories. Well, here are some of the kinds of people who have written me, all of whom I appreciate deeply. First of all, there are the old folks, people who remember away back, some of them even farther than I do. Some of the letters from these people have caused a moisture in my eyes. One dear old lady, once a Kentuckian, but long ago a citizen of a Far-Western state, begged me to hurry up and write a book, so that she could own a copy before she died of old age. I managed to get my PASSING INSTITUTIONS out in time for her to own a copy and to send to the company for a half dozen more to give people in Utah to show them that

her accounts of life back in Trigg County, Kentucky, were accurate, because I was reared in an adjoining county and could testify to the truth of her memories. One other very old lady, whose trembling hand wrote me a highly cherished letter, gave me intimate instructions on how to make various kinds of mud pies and concluded with these touching words: "Well, I'll have to stop writing, for I have called up so many memories of seventy-five years ago that I am crying too hard to write." And some very old gentlemen, too, were not ashamed to admit that they, too, lived in remote places and had never forgotten human customs hallowed by long use.

Another type of fan is middle-aged, one who did not experience most of the things I write about, but who has heard Father and Mother talk about them. These fans thank me for giving their parents so much joy and for substantiating their now-fading memories. When I wrote the essay on "Hog-callers I Have Known," the old gentleman whom I mentioned by name as the best hog-caller I had ever heard was greatly pleased with my mentioning his melodious voice. He was too old to write me, but his daughter about my age did so and told me how beautiful a singing voice the old man still had and how he laughed at my account of his sonorous voice carrying so far in the edge of the Mississippi bottoms back in 1908-1910. That old man's grandson sought me out when I spoke at one of the colleges of the state and introduced himself to me as the descendant of the famous hog-caller.

It has done me a lot of good to have mere children write me. Many of them say that "Miss Lucy" or "Mr. George" or some other teacher had recommended my column as illustrating earlier phases of Kentucky history. Several of them have told me that they had kept a scrapbook of my essays and were reading them in certain courses in history or social science. One little girl told me that she lived in her grandfather's old house and could see daily many of the kinds of furniture that I talked about. This essay may seem egotistical, but it is certainly not meant to be; it is a sincere "Thank you" to hundreds of people who have helped me.

July 1, 1947

THE TEACHER, UP AND DOWN

It is a trite saying but just as true as it ever was: "This is a funny world." And one of the funniest things about it is the way a teacher's stock rises and falls when salaries change. In my early days at Western many of my fellow-townsmen looked at me as if I were a freak, wasting my energies on teaching when I could have made a lot more money in some other business. Then after the depression came on, some of those same snobs would make cutting remarks about how our faculty were drawing good state money and wasting it doing nothing. Right now we are in the doghouse again, with the most ordinary farmer or apprentice mechanic drawing more money and spending it, too, for whatever one can buy now. I am a bit too old to be snubbed so violently by the same crew of snobs that used to look down their noses at me, but a newer generation has grown up that can show contempt in a fashion that would make their parents' snobbery look like sugary compliments. If it were not so tragic, it would be downright funny.

And that, like other things, has set me to thinking. Our teachers at Fidelity did not know much, since none of them had a high school diploma or even so much as one whole year in the ninth grade. Most of them were neighbor girls and boys or similar ones from the surrounding sections. But we looked up to them as if they were really somebody. They had a social standing assured them that some people would be glad to obtain after a lifetime of hard work and striving. We really expected too much of them in knowledge and conduct, but our faith in them gave them a push in the right direction that often made really distinguished people of them by the time they had become middle-aged.

Now what we were doing, honestly, was respecting knowledge and culture and even its humblest symbols. We knew that our teachers were not scholars or so very unusual, but we knew that they were devoting

some years or a whole lifetime to the pursuit of knowledge and honored them for this devotion and consecration. Just yesterday a boy might be just a common clodhopper, plowing a stubborn mule; after he had taken an examination and secured a certificate to teach, he was something else and would remain so until the end of his days as a teacher, or a physician, or a preacher, or just as a plain pillar of society on the farm. No matter what he did later, his schoolmaster's life clung to him and helped him out of many a difficulty. Many a plain man, long after he had ceased to teach, was "Old Professor So-and-So" to hundreds of his former students. We still remembered that he knew how to get along with boys and girls and that he knew a lot of things that our parents did not know.

Right now school teaching is a pariah of professions. We who got caught early are remaining in the profession, but many a later convert is turning to just any old thing to make a living. I hate to see the profession so starved that these bright younger people just cannot make ends meet by staying on in the teaching game. We teachers, too, have to eat, even as do mechanics and doctors and lawyers and plumber's assistants. And who can blame the individual teacher who has to lay down his books to earn a mouthful for himself and for his family? But isn't it a shame that those who love to teach, those who have spent a small fortune getting ready to teach, have to sweep floors or wend iron or paper walls or sell class rings to keep soul and body connected?

There will come a time, I know, when a turn of things will be in order, when teachers will again be accused of being members of a idle group, drawing money and wearing good clothes and even driving cars. But I fear that so many of the stalwarts will meanwhile have starved to death or been forced out of the profession that we shall have ^{to} start _^ all over again. A teacher's reward, a subject I have often dilated upon, is truly great, especially if he has money to pay the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick-maker.

July 7, 1947

CONTIGUOUS AREAS

Nothing exists by itself. That is trite but true. Sometimes it needs to be said again and again, to remind people how no one lives alone, no spot of earth is surrounded only by infinity.

Take Fidelity, for instance. We sometimes thought ourselves unique. As some wag has said in every generation since the world began, we knew that we lived in the center of the world, because anyone could see that the horizon came down at exactly the same distance all around us. People who lived up the creek or out in the Flatwoods or farther on down toward the river were outlanders, as our older language would have phrased it. Besides, Fidelity was on the map, but many of the country stores, especially those that did not have a postoffice, were not even mentioned. And Fidelity was the distributing place for a whole big area, where mail came from the county seat and was sent by Star Routes down to Lax and Hamlin and Hyman and similar points. And the roads out from the river, or most of them, come through Fidelity before they started to the county seat. Even people from over the state line in Henry County often came trading to our village or came down to visit their more fortunate relatives, more fortunate because they lived in Kentucky, first, and in Fidelity, second. It gave us a feeling of importance to see these evidences of Fidelity's being the center of things. We referred to places up the creek or out in the Flatwoods or down toward the river as if they were "east of the sun and west of the moon," in the Norwegian phrase.

But suppose someone really believed this and decided to limit all of the blessings of this world to Fidelity. At once ~~there~~^{they} would have trouble, for every Fidelity family had ties elsewhere. Out in the Flatwoods lived the distant cousin of mine who is now the registrar of Western; over on the other side of the county, the snooty side, we thought, lived dozens of relatives on both sides of my family, not to mention

relatives of every other family around us. All of us had relatives that we bragged about and plenty that we did not mention first. Some of the big bugs lived among us or so far away that no local jealousy could touch them; some of the other kind lived near and far, too, and were always a bit too obvious when they walked up to us at Sulphur Springs Church on Quarterly Meeting Day, when dinner on the ground was about to be staged, and addressed ^{us} in a loud and unctuous voice as Cousin This or That. We had read of the earth opening and swallowing people sometimes and halfway wished it might repeat the trick, getting us or our relatives in the cataclysm.

I live in a big town, as towns in Kentucky go. It would like to be a city and would like, sometimes, to spread on some city ways. But when farmers are scattering manure out in the country, we are still so close to the soil that the odor drifts right into the city itself. And down every street drives the traffic from the soil: wagon loads of burley tobacco (several millions of dollars' worth of it), truckloads of stock and corn and wheat and barley, and many a farm car bulging with products that are to be sold in my good-sized town. Fortunately, our newspaper knows how much our town depends upon the farms and sees to it that the farm news gets good headlines, for the rise or fall in the prices of farm products will determine whether our businesses stay open through troubled years. And our service clubs know, too, where their bread and butter come from and have lost that snootiness that once pervaded town life, ^{which} that felt itself above the sordid things of the country. And if you were to cut across any block in Bowling Green, you would find some relative of hosts of country people or people from the small supporting towns, just as at Fidelity you could always find somebody's relatives in every other section you wanted to laugh at. Just as Fidelity had its up-the-creek and flatwoods areas, so Bowling Green has close by Scottsville and Russellville and Morgantown and Brownsville, not to mention Rhoda and Allen Springs and Woodburn and Auburn.

July 15, 1947

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CHIMNEYS

One of my friends has just recently built a massive stone chimney for a country cabin. In its construction I had a little part, as on several Saturdays I helped hand up some stones for him to lay in place. When it was completed, it was one of the finest pieces of workmanship I have ever seen. It has used most of the stone from four old chimneys, the greatest single thing being the very large jamb rocks, hewn out a century or more ago by careful workmen and long the marvel of the community where the old fireplace warmed three generations of a famous family. With this new lease on life, it is good for another century or even two, for it is put up with such skill and good mortar that it would take some of the innumerable years of Horace's famous ode to destroy it.

From my earliest days I have loved chimneys and have seen just about every kind that can be made. The most primitive cabins around Fidelity had stick-and-dirt chimneys, a mere pen of sticks laid up somewhat after the fashion of a log cabin itself and plastered over with mud. One such chimney had the whole outside made of thick-set bunches of marsh grasses. It lasted the best of any such I have ever known, for it was still in good condition after the cabin was deserted. An old-time tragedy that youngsters will hardly understand was the chimney's getting on fire. Once I ran nearly half a mile through mud and water along a mere trail-road to help one of our neighbors put out the fire that was burning down his chimney. The mud on the inside had gradually fallen away until the bare sticks appeared; a particularly hot fire did the rest. We washed down a lot more mud when we threw buckets of water down the chimney, but we at least saved the rest of the sticks until further plastering could be done.

Brick chimneys were the rule around Fidelity, even with rather poor

cabins or cottages. Red clay was plentiful, too plentiful. It was easy to make some forms, mix up some mud, and make enough bricks to build several chimneys, all in a single summer when farm work was slack. One of my boy friends earned his first money by "offbearing" bricks, that is, taking the forms ~~out~~ after the mud had been pressed into them and carefully removing the bricks where they could dry enough to be baked. Some of the best pieces of building I have ever known were some of those brick chimneys that survived the tragic fire that was usually the end of the old houses to which they were attached.

In my present area the stone chimney was and is a local institution. In the area just north and west of Bowling Green there is an outcropping of sandstone of the Chester variety. Old-timers laboriously cut out the stone for some of the finest chimneys you ever saw, chimneys as artistic as any brick chimney and much more a part of the dull-gray, unpainted houses to which many of them are attached. But this sandstone broke easily under heat; hence it was necessary to line the fireplace with brick of some sort, at first ordinary brick, later firebrick. Both this type of chimney and the brick type often had many variations, such as the big central chimney in a huge house, with fireplaces on two sides and even some more on the second floor. A gaunt chimney standing where a house has burned is all the more impressive if there are fireplaces out in space for the former second story.

When the Shakers lived in Kentucky, in Mercer and Logan Counties, they built on their houses their double symbolic chimneys. Many of these old brick buildings are still standing, showing how well these earnest, though fanatical, zealots did their work. I often pass their massive buildings at Shakertown near South Union and wonder at the skill those people acquired in a rude age, how much they anticipated some of the best things in our present-day buildings.

Stick-and-dirt, brick, stone--every chimney was a sort of badge of respectability or lack of it. You just cannot hide your rank, even with brick or stone or sticks and mud.

July 15, 1947

"THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT KENTUCKY"--I

"What's in a name?" asks Shakespeare, and then he adds, "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." He may be right, that is, if a rose had not been known for ages by that name and had not attracted so much poetic imagination, so much rich feeling, so much genuine appreciation. Any name may mean nothing of everything; it is altogether what associations it may acquire through a long period of time. What a word meant originally and literally may have nothing to do with its later emotional meanings. Every country is full of names that in themselves are inane, no more poetic or appropriate than a number or a grunt. But the emptiest name of them all, when touched with poetry and history and memory, becomes a word to charm with.

What does the word Kentucky mean? For almost two centuries people have advanced various definitions, none of which seem wholly satisfactory. The two most common ones are "dark and bloody ground" and "great meadow." Just what the word meant to the early Indians, the name must have been confined to only a small part of what is now the whole state. If the Great Meadow tradition is to be believed, then the name applies largely to the Bluegrass Region in central Kentucky; certainly the Dark and Bloody Ground tradition would have included little beyond the same area. Only as a matter of serious learning for its own sake does any one try today to find out the original meaning, to the Indians or to the early settlers. ~~Regardless~~ Regardless of its origin, the name today has acquired a meaning that in no way resembles either of these two traditional interpretations. The central plain, or Great Meadow, is only a small part of the present state; to the east is the larger mountain region; to the west and south another larger region, called the Cavernous Limestone Region, or the Pennyryle, with a fringe of Knobs separating it from the Bluegrass; again to the west is the Western Coalfield, with the Jackson Purchase in the far western end of the state. As time has gone on, from

the days of the earliest hunters, the name has been spread over areas not then known or explored, areas that are just as proud of the name as the longest-known section in the central part of the state.

Even the most irregular notch in the boundary line has within its narrow area people who are just as zealous Kentuckians as can be found anywhere else. Here are two cases in point: Just south of Franklin, Simpson County, there is a sawtooth notch in the Tennessee-Kentucky line, said by local tradition to have been bought and paid for by a Kentuckian who did not want his acres to be in Tennessee. A barrel of whiskey is supposed to have been the price of this irregularity in the boundary. Down in Fulton County, when the southern line was run for the Jackson Purchase, the New Madrid Bend became a part of Kentucky rather than Tennessee, though a contour map will show that the surveyors had to bend their line slightly ~~southward~~ to go below the great southward loop of the Mississippi River. That great, unstable river long ago washed through this dividing line and left the bend entirely cut off from the rest of the state, so that to reach it you would have to go through Tennessee, by driving down around that same great bulge of the river, or would have to cross the river twice and go across a small section of Missouri. But here is proof that Kentucky is Kentucky, whether a barrel of whiskey secured a certain line or a mighty river washed out man's ineffectual markers. ^{It is said that} Some years ago, when a movement was on foot to add this bend to Lake County, Tennessee, the furious Kentuckians threatened to use their ancestral prowess at straight shooting if any Tennesseans invaded the sacred precincts of Kentucky. Probably few of the people now living there know that Mark Twain chose that bend ~~for~~ for the setting of his Shepherdson-Grangerford feud in HUCKLEBERRY FINN, but all the ones I know down there would declare they could resort to any sort of tactics to preserve their state alliance. And the New Madrid Bend and the sawtooth notch in Simpson County remain, with ardent Kentuckians fenced in behind them.

July 29, 1947

"There's Something About Kentucky"--II

Loyalties are hard to understand. Just a few generations ago it was immaterial whether a certain place in the wilderness was a part of this or that state, for space was everywhere, and people were scarce. Once draw a boundary, though, and at once people begin to think that there is something eternal about it, just as the neighbor in Robert Frost's "Mending Wall" regarded a stone fence as a permanent contribution to his little world, even though there seemed no earthly need for any type of fence at that particular place, between a pine forest and an apple orchard. And by our early drawing of boundaries we of Kentucky own the Ohio River on the north to what used to be low-water mark, so that today we own the island that is Dade Park, even though the former channel north of it has been silted in until only a few stretches of shallow sloughs remain of what used to be the Ohio River. In the same way our boundary goes to what used to be the middle of the channel of the Mississippi River. Thus we own Wolf Island, which is now joined to Missouri. To follow the map of Kentucky around its hundreds of winding miles of boundary makes us wonder again what's in a name, a name that is so tenacious that it holds together places that seem in no sense a part of the state.

Such boundaries as the rivers on the west and north and part of the east are in many ways fairly understandable, after making allowances for changing currents in the streams. But the southern boundary is just a man-made line, made in such modern times that no mythology can be formed about it. Actual men, not demigods or heroes, surveyed the line, an approximate extension of the one run between Virginia and North Carolina more than two hundred years ago. This line does not follow the winding course of a stream, it does not follow the equally winding watershed between two great river systems; it runs approximately east

and west, splitting hills in two, cutting across the same winding stream many a time, going through even a small pond or sinkhole with a kind of cold-blooded mathematical accuracy. And yet, in spite of this arbitrary line, people on each side of ^{it} feel a loyalty to a plot of ground as if the boundary line had been drawn long ago by a demigod or the Almighty Himself. The loyalty to that line was strong enough in the 1860's to make one side of it the Confederacy, the other the Union. And, though we have grown much better informed about our neighbors than we used to be, state loyalty is still strong, almost equal to the loyalties in countries where a boundary line is ancient and where there are different religions or ideologies separated by it.

What is there about the name Kentucky, regardless of what it used to mean to Indians or the primitive settlers, that warms the hearts today and makes any of us born within the rather irregular outlines of the state proud of our origin, in no sense ashamed to share the glory or reproof of the name? And, though state loyalty is common everywhere in America, why should Kentucky have more than its proportional part?

July 29, 1947

"There's Something about Kentucky"--III.

Tradition has had much to do with the charm of the name Kentucky, for the state was for generations the West or the halfway house to the West. When settlers began to come into the Dark and Bloody Ground or the Great Meadow, whichever derivation of the word you prefer, they came as freemen, defying the orders of a despotic monarch to leave the wild area unsettled. Land-hungry, as they always were, they saw opportunities to grab great estates, with river frontage, with great tracts of valuable timber, with unbelievably rich soil. The religious impulse that led some of the Atlantic Coast people to seek America and the later Mormons to seek Utah had only the smallest part in settling Kentucky. People wanted "land, lots of land," as in the popular song, and they came to seek it. Truthful and exaggerated accounts of the great advantages to be gained here spread back to the old settled areas and even back across the ocean. Kentucky became a name to charm with, literally, for some of the earliest visitors, like Imlay, spread through printed books the glory of our soil. People in settled areas left good land and conveniences, as they were then understood, and came into a wilderness to start all over again, to face the dangers of Indian warfare and the far more dangerous enemy, malaria. Not all the newcomers stayed, but the discouraged backtrailers failed to discourage the eager hordes that came through Cumberland Gap or down the Ohio River. The area, completely wild in 1774, had grown into a state populous enough to be admitted as the fifteenth state in 1792 and was soon the halfway house to the farther West and the ~~the~~ southern part of the old Northwest Territory. And for years and years after the remotest parts of the state were settled the crowd surged through the state, in covered wagons pointed west.

Wherever these travelers went, they always remembered Kentucky, where they had stopped or tarried or left some of their relatives. On both sides of the state, then, the glamorous stories of Kentucky remained and remain, intangible but somehow romantic to this day.

But this early romance cannot account entirely for the appeal of Kentucky. Soon the state was doing its share in national affairs. Almost at once our politicians attracted attention everywhere. Even before Kentucky acquired statehood, in the battle of King's Mountain, in the late days of the Revolution, the backwoodsmen of Kentucky and Tennessee gave a good account of themselves. Early scientists and historians came to see the fabulous new area and added much to the knowledge of the world. Imlay, Filson, Alexander^{der} Wilson, Audubon, Rafinesque, Flint--how many we could name who studied our natural history and our great men! Mammoth Cave soon became known everywhere; hundreds, often through great difficulties of travel, found their way to see the wonders of the new subterranean world. So interested in marvels--big bones, underground cities, barrens, vast rivers--did many become that people lost sight completely of the later stages of the settling of the state. Today it is nearly impossible to find any connected story of pioneer life in Kentucky except in the Bluegrass.

Every great event^t since 1774 has had a Kentuckian in it. Our soldiers have given a good account of themselves from King's Mountain to Okinawa. Our state has long been a breeding ground for great men, who as young men or as mature men sought a newer and better opportunity elsewhere. But no Kentuckian, regardless of his success or fame elsewhere, forgets his origin. Whether he comes back on a visit or lives on the memories of his childhood here, the state and the very name assume strange and poetic meanings. If I could condense into a single poem the patriotic love for Kentucky that has~~as~~ been shown in the hundreds of letters that have come to me from ex-Kentuckians who have read this column, I would be the most distinguished poet the state ever produced.

August 12, 1947

"There's Something about Kentucky"--IV

I know it is no failure on the part of writers to realize the faults and deficiencies of Kentucky that makes them dream so fondly of the old, old place where things seem so wrapped in dreams. Last summer an eminent scholar from another state visited me. He had been born in the edge of the Bluegrass but had left that ancestral area when he was only twelve years old. In his sixty years he has traveled all over the world and is as familiar with many foreign capitals as most of us are with our home towns. He has attained to great honor in his special scholarly field and has a world-wide fame. And yet, on his way down to see me, he stopped at the old burial place of his fathers and picked out the spot where he wants to be buried, years hence, let us hope. Explain that ex-Kentuckian's emotions, and I will then be able to tell you why Kentucky means so much to people who live today within its borders or who were born here.

Loyalty to one's homeland is, of course, a universal emotion, but it seems a little stronger in Kentuckians and ex-Kentuckians than in any other people whom I have known. We hear a lot about school spirit and often spend some good time trying to work up some outward forms of it, to impress our rivals in athletic events. But no single high school or college in or out of Kentucky was ever able to work up the spirit that nearly all Kentuckians feel for their own little neck of the woods, and it is just as much Kentucky to a person living on a bleak mountain or in the marial swamps as to the owner of the finest stock farm in the great central plain.

Most of you, like me, just woke one morning and found yourselves Kentuckians, by right of birth. Like me, your ancestors, immediate or remote, may have come from elsewhere, but your spirit and loyalty are in no sense to be measured by this. My father and four generations behind

him were from Tennessee; my mother was a first-generation Kentuckian, as both her parents had come as pioneer children from North Carolina. And my father, as a country doctor, did about a third of his practice in Tennessee, as we lived only four miles from the imaginary line I mentioned before, latitude 36° 30', a purely man-made boundary. In truth, a third of my subsistence came from outside the state, but it was converted at once into a Kentucky loyalty that was as keen as if I had been born and reared as far inland as one can go in the state.

Though reared in the Jackson Purchase, I have spent most of my grown-up years in the Cavernous Limestone section and have become so accustomed to its geological features that a series of well-defined valleys, such as the ones I grew up among, now would strike me as odd. By degrees I have come to know fairly intimately every geological and historical section of the state. When the name Kentucky is pronounced in my presence, I see the low hills of my old home neighborhood, but I also see the broad expanses of the Pennyryle and the Bluegrass, the hills of the Knobs and the Western Coalfield, the mountains of eastern Kentucky. The Tennessee River was the first big stream I ever knew, but I have found a place in my emotions for the Kentucky and the Mississippi and the Ohio and the Green. The smallest creek that rises in Kentucky or flows across it is mine, mine to love and defend, mine to regard with strange wonder and appreciation. And I am a very typical Kentuckian, conscious of things that we need but still awake to anything that looks or sounds like Kentucky. As I grow older, I wonder why more of us do not recognize that our remarkable loyalty and state pride should find more expression in tangible benefits to our state. It is silly for us to be forever praising a name and doing nothing to make it keep its ancient glory or acquire a newer one. Only when we do something to protect or further this romantic name and its significance are we worthy of being Kentuckians.

August 12, 1947

LOCAL ARTISTS

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Many of us still lament that so many artists of other times died without the least suspicion that they were artists. They lived and died with probably only a local reputation, when they should have been known all over the nation. What they did was regarded as necessary and ordinary, but later artists, with wider knowledge and experience, know that great artists passed this way. Nearly all of us have known a few of such local artists, with small reputation except in a very limited area.

Take cabinet makers, for example. Nearly every neighborhood used to have woodworkers who could turn out a full set of furniture, a wagon, a buggy, or practically any other piece of workmanship. Some of these home-made things would today command staggering prices at anybody's antique shop. In spite of the rage for antiques, there are still hundreds of these pieces of workmanship hidden away in humble homes, often unappreciated or all battered up with long usage. Among the many achievements of Abraham Lincoln, only a few people seem to have been impressed with his ability with saw and hammer and plane. If any of you have seen some of the furniture that he helped his father build, such as the pieces on display at Rockport, Indiana, you will have to admit that, along with his many other abilities, he could do rather well as a rural artist with wood.

Quilts, as I have said several times in this column, show a type of artistry that all of us have passed by unheeding. And yet, think of the intricate patterns that have been worked out by many a humble woman, who would have laughed had you called her an artist. Every spring when I pass by humble homes and see the elaborate and beautiful home-made quilts airing on the clothesline or the fence, I want to doff my hat to the unconscious artist who created them.

Every spring takes me into many parts of the state that I normally know very little. I greatly enjoy these commencement trips, for I get to see people in action, and I also have a chance to see how people in many parts of the state have developed their own ways of building their houses, of setting out shrubs and vines and trees, of decorating their homes. Just recently I spent a day in a rural home that showed an unsuspected artistry in the arrangement of the rooms, in the ceiling planks, and in interior decoration that surprised and pleased me. Frankly, the owners of the house did not realize that there was anything about their ordinary dwelling that could possibly attract attention. Every day for thirty years they had lived within that house and its walls and had probably longed for something else. Many a wealthy person whom I know would gladly give big money for the simple, unadorned artistry everywhere present in that house. It has been my good fortune to visit in that same neighborhood many times, in houses that vary in their exteriors, but I have found some of the same fine workmanship and good taste in every one of them, evidently a neighborhood artistry that has been transmitted through generations of builders.

Some time there will be a genuine evaluation given of our excellent baskets that are made in Hart and adjoining counties. It is a real pleasure to see these bits of handiwork adorning houses far away. The roadside sales unquestionably have brightened many a place that normally would not have been graced by this sort of graceful invention. The families that make these baskets have always made baskets, just as the families of potters not far from Fidelity always made pottery. The family artistry has been preserved and improved, so that it has furnished a standard of excellence and has also given successive generations a means of making a living.

It is not too much to say that there is no neighborhood so poor or so remote that it does not contain some artist, some worker with his hands.

August 26, 1947

LEAF HATS

While I was camping at Mammoth Cave National Park in June, 1947, my companion and I set our tents right in the midst of a whole area of loosestrife, a plant known by name to few of you who will read this but known anyway to nearly all of you. My companion asked me what the plant~~s~~, with its pretty green leaves and its last-year's dead stems, reminded me of. I would never have guessed that he would know, for the dead stems were always used around Fidelity and elsewhere as pins to put hickory or pawpaw leaves together to make leaf hats or dresses. The stems are small and very stiff; thus they are easily used as pins. They show very little in the finished product, also, like good sewing. And while we stayed in our camping place overnight and up into the next day, I remembered other times, with leaf hats and dresses.

Our poor old hills around Fidelity grew several things quite well. There were hickory bushes and trees, for instance. Wherever a hickory tree had been cut down for an ax handle or for firewood, rank stump sprouts sprang up, always with oversized leaves. These same sprouts also made good bark whistles and whips. A few hickory leaves pinned together made the foundation for a hat, which might then be decorated mightily with anything in the woods or fields that struck our fancy. Timothy stalks, wheat stalks, bushes of flowers, small "sarvice" limbs with fruit attached--all of these natural things caused us to become milliners easily. Few prettier pictures occur in my memory than some peaches-and-cream childish face beneath a leaf hat, especially if the little girl were "putting on airs" and pretending to be a fine lady. She would parade up and down in the woods playhouse, reminding us of the prettiest young women we knew and of the fairy ladies that we caught glimpses of in our rather prim schoolbooks.

Sometimes, with the combined efforts of several boys and girls in the playhouse, we made a whole dress for one of the girls, with pawpaw and hickory leaves set together in many fascinating patterns. Occasionally some of the girls would bring actual pins from the house and anchor some of the leaves so that the leaf dress would not sag or fall down. We had read stories about wood nymphs and fairies and elves and unconsciously transferred all of the mystery of these beings to the little girl of our own present world, particularly if she were one of those fleeting but none-the-less-real childhood sweethearts. Clad in her robe of green, with a green hat to match, and with airs like a court lady, the youngster seemed to divine by a sort of sixth sense that she had overstepped everyday reality and was for a while our own little queen. No amount of later temper or dirty face or grubby hands or running nose could quite efface the fleeting beauty of that moment, for me, at least.

"BY THEIR FRUITS"

In the early days of my life at Bowling Green I came by train from Paris, Tennessee, and passed through the quaint Shaker settlement at South Union. Always I marveled at the fine land there and the sturdy buildings. By degrees I came to know something about the history of this communal settlement but, like so many others, did not realize its significance until it disappeared in 1922. Ever since then I have wanted to kick myself for not being more inquisitive about the place and its people while it was still alive.

Just today I finished reading an excellent book on that old religious village, "BY THEIR FRUITS," written by one of my former students, Miss Julia Neal, who started the book as a feature article in my class in Advanced Composition some years ago. Through the years her researches have grown until the present ~~manuscript~~ book as a manuscript won a large prize for its author and has now been published. In it the more than a century of Shaker living is preserved for the scholar and for the casual readers who would like to know more about the many phases of our Kentucky life.

From 1807 to 1922 the Shakers lived in the area, one of the finest agricultural spots in the state. Taking advantage of the great religious revival of the early years of the last century, they came in from the East to establish a new colony. Shrewd business people from the start, they soon acquired many acres of good land and farmed after a fashion two or three generations ahead of their time. Balanced farming as we now know it, pure-bred stock, selected garden and field seeds, sturdy and vigorous furniture--these were basic in the life of South Union, the name the village bore from its early days. For more than a generation the village was almost completely self-sustaining, somewhat disdaining the use or purchase of things they could not make.

They soon developed a market for their products, many of which were taken down the long rivers to New Orleans or peddled along the way. Preserves and jellies, packages of seeds, Shaker furniture, hats, herbs--their cargo was varied and nearly always easy to sell. The two or three who went on the flatboats disposed of their cargo and their boat and came back up the river on a steamboat, never losing the "one thing needful," their name for money. With the coming of the railroad through their village just before the Civil War came another avenue of trade, so that their long boat trips were no longer necessary. They shipped their products all over the country, products that were wanted for their honest workmanship. Until the very end of the village the sale of Shaker products went on, with no diminution in quantity or quality.

In spite of what seems to ~~what they called~~ ^{the} "world" ~~that~~ that is, non-Shakers, a fanatical religion, their faith sustained them in the early days of hardships and misunderstanding, in the strained days of the Civil War, and in the days when the settlement was dying for lack of new recruits. The earlier dances and mysticism passed away in the latter part of the nineteenth century, but the quiet soberness and devotion to hard work lasted until the end. The basic philosophy of celibacy naturally cut down growth in membership after the days when the village offered one of the few places of quiet and protection in the early pioneer ~~days~~ ^{times}. Hundreds of "winter Shakers" took advantage of the pious goodness of the brethren and sisters and gained thereby a home for a few months, only to leave for the "world" when spring came round again, but some of these very transients respected the group all the rest of their lives and made the hardships of the village less humiliating in a world that could not or would not understand the Shaker philosophy. Miss Neal has certainly caused to live again the long, interesting history of the communal village, right here in the heart of western Kentucky, where most of us think ourselves so free from -isms, so practical, and so normal.

PULLING OFF SUNDAY CLOTHES

Today as I came into my house after attending church services, I suddenly reminded myself of a good old custom that many young people will not remember, but all of us oldsters will. As I came through the front door, I began to take off my coat, loosen my shirt collar, and start removing my Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes. And I saw instantly a whole series of Sundays at Sulphur Springs Church when we did just this very thing, as a part of the Sunday observance.

You see, young readers, Sunday clothes cost a lot of money, and ready money was a very scarce article. Consequently, we had to make our dress-up clothes last a long time and still look good. Our mothers had coached us through the years to take good care of our clothes and to see that they were always neat. Week-day clothes could get mighty dirty or even ragged, but that was to be expected. We had the excuse that our work caused our clothes to get soiled, but we were never in any way particular to keep dirt off them. Working in a newground or a tobacco patch is not exactly clean, anyway. But on Sunday, things were different. We were told at church that cleanliness was next to godliness. Somehow that doctrine did not make me particularly comfortable, for my being clean was far from being pleasant. My big sister had scrubbed me up before I started to Sunday School, fairly rubbing the hide off my neck and ears and sometimes making me wash my dirty legs again after I had given them a hasty cleaning, getting off the larger particles of soil. Then, clad in my freshly starched and ironed "body," with the sailor collar all spread out behind, and with my straight knee-length pants on, I walked quite sedately to Sulphur Springs, resisting the impulse to climb trees along the way, crawl through rail fences, or wade the dust or mud down the road. If the Sunday brought our circuit rider,

I stayed on through church services, becoming more and more uncomfortable but trying to keep my neat suit at least presentable when I got home. Sometimes the very bad boys, as they were called, got out after Sunday School and waded in the creek, but that was wicked at our house and likely to spoil my Sunday clothes, too. I endured the long, long sermon and hastened home, unbuttoning on the way, so that I could get into some less dress-up togs at once. Usually by the time I was inside the house, I was stripped down to my underwear or to nature itself and was ready to slide into my hickory shirt and my cottonade pants. Slaves set free may feel happier than I did, but I would have to be shown instances of such happiness to believe them. But the fun of getting out from the humdrum farm life made the efforts to get ready and to stay clean worth all the trouble and chance errors they caused.

One of our nearest neighbors had the most perfect system of changing into play clothes after Sunday School that I have ever known. Her family ran to girls, all of whom would look like dainty flowers in our Sunday School class, all fluffly-ruffly, starched, and scrubbed. But even as the family buggy went by our house on the way home, the little girls had begun to untie and unbutton the Sunday clothes. And that was largely responsible for the faultless dresses that they always had on when things took place at Sulphur Springs or elsewhere. When I think of those neat little girls, grandmothers now, I wonder whether they transmitted to their descendants the same business-like way of keeping Sunday clothes neat.

Of course, when I became older, I could stay dressed up all Sunday afternoon and could even pass through the front room if I did not stay too long or make myself obvious, but now I am thinking primarily about a much earlier stage, when it was a task to keep a small child neat.

September 9, 1947

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SHOES TOO SMALL

One of my readers suggested some days ago that I had not yet spoken about the good old days of trying to wear shoes several sizes too small for actual feet, or, as we used to express it, trying to wear shoes that fit the head rather than the foot. Now I did mention, several years back, the painful task of putting on brogans in the fall after the feet had been free all summer, but that was seasonal and not a regular habit. What my friend referred to was a basic feeling that feet are disgraceful if large, that a big foot betokens a coarse boor, that dainty feet and hands denote aristocratic origins. I suppose that these were the principles behind the custom of squeezing the foot into a shoe that pained one from the day of its first wearing. It was customary for people to complain of their feet, and rightly so, when you consider that few feet had been correctly fitted. And that went for men as well as women, for it was almost a family disgrace for some tall, big boy to wear a number twelve. Frankly, there were a good many people in other times who had feet smaller proportionately than are feet today; I am quoting shoe dealers when I say this and am not merely trying to feel too kind toward older people. But even the smallest feet were often subjected to painful squeezing every time the shoes went on. Now getting a foot into a brogan or a boot is no small job anyway, when the footwear is plenty large; when the boy has been working in the wet and has a hard brogan to wriggle and force his foot into, there is nothing quite so painful.

One thing that made the tight shoe even more uncomfortable was the lack of correction of worn-out heels and run-over shoes. To

walk all day on a pair of shoes that lean away out of alignment is a good way to produce permanent injury to one's feet and legs, not to mention his gait or his posture. I have seen many a person so wear out his shoes that the heel would be down to the uppers on one side but as good as new on the other. No wonder many of us liked to go barefooted as long as we could keep from being ashamed of our bare feet!

The very idea of a grown bare foot was repulsive to many dainty people. However cute babies' feet were with the little pigs that went to market and the rest, grown-up feet were supposed to be ugly, indecent, even unmentionable. I have heard people speak of having seen the bare feet of grown people as if it were an event barely this side of criminality. I wonder what some of the old ladies I used to know would do if they could see the sandals of today, when actual toes are showing, when the nicest girls and even mature ladies go swimming barefooted or sometimes are seen in backyards without a sign of shoe on. And they do not run screaming into the house when a man appears, either. And people actually talk about feet, as if they were connected with the rest of the body and were not unseemly things that should never be mentioned.

When I was teaching in a far-western-Kentucky village nearly forty years ago, I roomed with a merchant. One night when I went with him to his store when he had work to do, he rather shame-facedly showed me a pair of No. 10 ladies' shoes, with high tops and buttons. He said that one of his customers, a well-to-do farmer's wife, had such a large foot that he had to make a special order for her. He felt that it was a bit indecent for me to see such large shoes and pledged me to secrecy. Since the wearer of those shoes died at an advanced age many years ago, I suppose I am freed from my pledge. What I would like to know, however, is how many women in that same county today would have great difficulty getting their feet into those same No. 10 shoes.

"OF THE MAKING OF MANY BOOKS"

In the many years that I have taught in college I have often been impressed with false emphases in reading. Many educators seem to think that the human mind is capable of stuffing itself with all sorts of things, endlessly. Consequently, some of our teachers in high school and in college give lists of books to read that would stagger a scholar, not to mention a poor high school or college student. The idea is intended to be good, but I am afraid it often defeats its own purpose. Do not misunderstand me: I still hold that a really educated person knows many books, but he has acquired his knowledge of them slowly and by a long period of absorption. But there is something to be said for the reader of a few great books, a real reader, not a mere scanner.

There were things in our life in Fidelity and elsewhere that are not to be laughed at, even by learned people in the big world that we used to dream about. The actual selection of books was rather poor, but what we read became a part of us, for we read slowly and often read our small stock of books over and over again, especially in winter, when associating with people in workings or in community gatherings was somewhat reduced from the fullness of summer. It was a rather rare thing for a home not to contain, in the midst of many cheap or sensational things, some really good books. With no one to tell us what to read, we read everything with the same assiduity, living for a period of time even the cheapest plots of novels, or the most lurid or sensational ones, or wading half-blind through some deep, scholarly history of ancient or modern times. But we read, and then we discussed our books with each other, until it became the mark of an educated person to know our stock of reading matter.

Sometimes a long, long memory comes to me when I see copies of books that passed around from reader to reader a half century ago. Just this week I was looking through a copy of Dryden's poems when it suddenly dawned on me that it was the same edition that I saw in my childhood, when my school-teacher brother bought a book to give as a prize to some eighth-grade child. I wish I knew what became of that volume and how much it was ever read or read understandingly. It might be surprisingly thumb-worn if it is still in existence, though I can hardly imagine any person in Fidelity ever getting that far along in his reading. But some of us read poetry for its ring rather than for its contemporary meaning or its place in literature. If we loved Poe's most meaningless rhymes, why not read the trim, smart stanzas of Dryden?

When I was a boy in the middle 'teens, one of my purchases was a copy of Thoreau's WALDEN. I read that book until I nearly memorized it, so that I could almost have finished any sentence in it that you had started. I took it everywhere with me and grew to feel that it was MY book, that Henry David Thoreau had written it for me. I almost imagined that I was a reincarnation of Thoreau, sent into my little neighborhood, which bore the same name as his, to call people back to simplicity. The years since my childhood have made me cease to be a man of one book, but I look today upon that great American book as a liberal education in itself. I knew a few of Thoreau's backgrounds then, enough to appreciate some of his local allusions, but I had no genuine feeling for his time. Fortunately, my teaching career has intensified my love for that time and has brought me hosts of books that have clarified Thoreau's life and philosophy. But there is still more appeal in that one little book than in all the books that it has caused to be written. The one or the few have formed a basis for a lifetime of interest and reading. I had ^{only} a few books, but some of them were eternally good.

CYCLES OF TEACHING

In my more than a half century in the schoolroom as pupil and teacher I have seen emphases change until it is almost ridiculous *to see* how many of them are back right where they were in 1895, the year I began my formal school education. In the earliest days the teachers emphasized reading more than anything else, and that is the very latest thing. Concert reading, now regarded as something brand-new, was old in use when I started to school at Fidelity. Interpretative reading, regardless of how far we may have missed it in our school days, was constantly emphasized by nearly all my rural teachers. Day after day the teacher, overwhelmed with so many classes to teach, tried to make us see how natural reading can be, but we still would sing-song our poems and read one word at a time in our prose. The teacher was doing her best, though, and is appreciated now, a generation after her seemingly futile efforts to make reading mean something to us.

And spelling was emphasized, too, even if in ways sometimes funny. We spelled every word orally, pronouncing each syllable, and wasting a lot of good time, but we learned something about syllables in the meantime. We also defined many a word, rather primly, since we had memorized the definition, but we learned many a new fact this way. "S-t-y-l-e," style; manners. "S-t-i-l-e," stile; steps over a fence. Improve on that if you can. I note that there is great emphasis today on spelling words that are often confused. In most of the workbooks used in colleges there is a big section on spelling that repeats most of the things we used to do in our little remote school. But there was a time when educators, or the reasonable facsimiles of them, condemned just about every phase of the spelling we used to do so long ago.

Other old-time emphases were on arithmetic, on history (pretty largely dates), on grammar (largely diagramming and parsing), and on geography (largely place geography, as it is called today). Educators railed against the foolishness of grammar until we grew up a generation that did not know a noun from a verb and cared less. And now the grammar emphasis has returned, if our textbooks are any guide to emphasis. No placement test for English in college today could get to first base without grammar, and technical grammar at that. Place geography is regarded as something quite up-to-date now, and even a few dates in history seem very much in place in all texts that I have seen. As new courses were added, sometime we almost forgot that basic learning was of value. One year we were told that extra-curricular activities trained people more than all the books in Christendom; another year we felt that not to have a sanitary drinking fountain would result in barbarism and pestilence. For a while it seemed possible that nothing but play should have a place in education; teachers sat up at night devising schemes to make learning attractive by seeming to be dead easy and full of action and play. Now, I must admit that all these fads have added something to our conceptions of education and that some of our older practices were time-consuming and wasteful. But "There is no royal road to learning," I used to read in my textbooks. The teachers whose memory I cherish most highly taught just plain texts in plain subjects, but somehow they injected into the dulllest lesson something that made learning attractive. Some of them had the smaller children doing action songs and plays, but we soon felt that it was the mark of a real man to solve John Jones's Estate in Ray's Third-part Arithmetic, and no mere child's play. Sir Roger de Coverley's coat, you recall, went out of style and came back in twelve times while he wore it. Educational fads repeat themselves nearly that often. Some of us conservative ones merely sit still and wait for the next wave of popularity to make us stylish.

Oct. 7, 1947

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"DIDN'T IT RAIN?"

No Negro spiritual has appealed to me more than "Didn't It Rain?" which is a Negro version of Noah's flood. When a good chorus of colored people sing that spiritual, you hear the rain and know that there was really a flood. The idea of the flood has taken a great hold on many minds, probably because in our American life we have so often been subjected to dangers from high water. In the forty years that I have lived in the cavernous limestone area I have somewhat forgotten how serious heavy rains used to be at Fidelity and elsewhere in regions of surface streams. But the great flood of 1937 gave even us a feeling of helplessness when our few streams and our numerous sink-holes so stopped traffic that there was only one road open into our town for a few days. And that flood has probably left a deeper stamp on our whole state than any other weather that has come within my lifetime.

When I lived on a small hill overlooking a creek bottom, a mile east of Fidelity, every rise in Beechy Fork was an event. Those Jackson Purchase streams are small, but they are in shallow banks, with very wide floodplains stretching out on either side. A rain that the cave area would hardly notice would cause great damage to our fences and crops and might sweep away the results of a whole year's hard work. Cattle or other stock caught in the bottoms after a freak flood might be washed away. Because of our immediate connection with this danger, every hard rain became an event that we dated time by. A hard summer rain, particularly on the Fourth of July, was sure to cause much damage to our creek-bottom crops. We also thought that lightning struck oftener down in that section than elsewhere. After many a summer shower we found a tree that had been hit; very rarely some building was struck, but we feared each storm would bring a disaster to us. And all of us

were frightened nearly to death when a storm came up. We had heard of all the accidents that had ever befallen our whole section and naturally thought of these when the lightning flashed. If we were at home, we got on a feather bed for protection and worried about the men and boys who would have to take the rain in the fields or else get under a tree and thus invite lightning. When you are trying to endure a heavy summer shower right out in the woods or fields, an inch rain can seem like a big portion of what floated Noah's Ark.

It pleases me and also amuses me to see how weather is still a great bit of news. Flash floods, late frosts, very hot weather-- anything slightly off the beaten path gives the cub reporter something to write about. This July, 1947, has been a freakish month, one that has often furnished even a good-sized article on the weather. The temperature went down to 46 one night and rose to 95 one day, with the coolest ^{July} weather the month has ever brought to my town and its adjacent area. The news photographers all over America have made good money with their pictures of snow in July, at Cleveland, Ohio, for instance. The month ended with a flash flood and electric storm that damaged many farmhouses and barns and injured hundreds of shade trees. Even we in the cave region ~~felt ourselves~~ suddenly felt ourselves akin to the youngsters we used to be, when a dark cloud in the west made us run for the house and the featherbeds. With all our advantages over our former selves, in paved roads, grounding of tall buildings and telephone poles, and bridges across streams, we can be made to feel in such nights as July 31, 1947, that we are not too far away from primitive man in the deep, dark woods, with dangers from floods and storms. Our civilization is, after all, only a pleasant kind of veneer.

HYBRID CORN

It is customary for us to look backward to the Good Old Days, when virtue~~s~~ was rewarded, when crime was punished, when people were neighborly and thoughtful, when most of the human race was made up of great personalities,

"And every goose a swan, lad,
And every lass a queen."

I suppose that we owe ourselves some sort of Never-Never Land to which we can escape from the ordinary reality that seems often so oppressive. On the other hand, while we are dwelling on some imaginary period of greatness above the ordinary, why not look about us at things that are right now building up a glory that future generations will look back to as the Good Old Days? In this way we can anticipate what our children or our children's children will revere as a time when humanity did well, when for a brief moment men got a glimpse of their possibilities.

Let us take hybrid corn, for example. Is it not something to rave about? Right here in our own troubled times, when even Polyanna herself would have difficulty in finding unalloyed sweetness, plain farmers are demonstrating that man can rise above himself. Old traditions have fallen rapidly before the obvious good sense to be found on the side of the modern farmer. Regardless of what Father or Grandfather did or did not do as farmers, plain men like you and me have dared to try their luck with the most scientific of scientific things, and with demonstrable results that bring money into the pocket. Men whose education has been scanty as well as those who are well trained in scientific farming are planting hybrids and need no optimist to appraise the result. When a strain of corn can withstand drought and other ills that corn is heir to, it can be seen in a single season how advantageous ~~it~~ is to plant this strain. Many of our

advantages are so slow of development that it takes a long, thoughtful life to appraise them, but hybrid corn is one thing that can be judged accurately in a single season such as this one has been. I have driven by hundreds of acres of about as fine corn as can grow in this part of the world and have literally smacked my mouth at the luxuriant fields and their prospects for plenty and prosperity in our farming area. I have rejoiced at the good fortune of my farmer neighbors and have shared with them the success that attends wise living and adapting oneself to conditions.

All this seems nearly unbelievable to even me, with my feet always on the soil literally, for there is seldom a week of my life when I do not walk across several farms. It used to be a slow process to convince farmers of the value of any forward movement. The farmers themselves were partly to blame for this, but many others should share some of the responsibility, for almost the whole world seemed to regard the farmer as fair game, to be cheated into buying all sorts of useless or harmful gadgets. Today the farmers, through their organizations, are, in the main, too wise to get stung by some seller of faddish things. Practical business sense is showing itself on our farms more than in any other single place in our country, if I am any judge or if we are to believe what we read. From an age-long effort to farm in a worn-out way that Father and Grandfather had used in their pioneer or semi-pioneer days the modern farmer, constantly informed by the county farm agent, the newspaper, the bulletin, and the radio, keeps in daily contact with the best authorities in his field and need not be ashamed to stand before any group of professionals in his modern ways of life. May we not say that such a time as this may very well be regarded as the Good Old Days in actuality, a time when new and useful ways of increasing the yield and quality of farm crops was not merely a dream but an actuality?

Oct. 21, 1947

ROOFS

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Some future historian of our folkways will be sure to have a chapter or so on the significance of roofs. To the casual observer this may sound far-fetched as a phase of folk customs, but suppose we take a preliminary view of the subject.

In the earliest days of America it was a task to build a house, for the cross-cut saw had not been invented, and sawmills were still in the future. Houses were covered with rived-out planks, thinner than the hewed puncheons that formed floors, that is, when there were floors. Without nails to fasten them down, it was necessary to peg down each one or to peg down a pole that would hold a whole "course" of these timbers in place. Of course, in some places, particularly French Canada, thatch roofs appeared and still do, but the board roof apparently was our first one.

With the coming of square or other nails and the crosscut saw, home-made boards became the rule. I can remember when many of the houses were covered with these boards. I have helped make boards, that is, I piled them in straight piles or stacks while Father made them. It had already become slightly old-fashioned for residences to be covered with these home-made boards when I could first remember, but all barns and outbuildings were covered in this way on through my days at Fidelity. For some reason the length of the board set the standard of style: if it were quite long, then the house seemed tacky; but a short board, particularly one that had been dressed down with a drawing knife, was almost stylish.

Shingle roofs became common, even at Fidelity, before I was born. A house so covered was good for many, many years of ease about the rain. Only a few well-to-do people indulged in the expense of shingle roofs on a barn; that was looked on as unnecessary extravagance. I can remember how we felt slightly ashamed of the houses that still

had home-made boardd for a roof, especially if the boards were curled up at the ends.

Then the little one-roomed schoolhouse at Fidelity was built, it had two extravagances: fetched-on desks and a ~~corrugated~~ metal roof. For years that must have been the only metal-roofed building in the whole area. Those corrugations were deep and could catch a ball easily if a small limb had fallen crosswise of the roof; that necessitated a trip up the bellpost to dislodge the ball when it had got caught during an exciting game of antny over. Metal roofs did not come into use as much in Fidelity as in our mountains and those of Tennessee.

Not long before I left Fidelity, the tar paper roof became the thing, though for a long time we had only the dullest colors imaginable. So useful and easily attached^a roof was bound to be popular. The making of home-made boards soon became almost a lost art. From drab colors the tar paper has become our most used form of roofing today, with its added use as siding. And there are about as many grades and styles of it as could be wished, so that tar paper as such is no standard of style, good or bad.

Metal roofing has taken a new turn lately, and some of our buildings shine with bright new aluminum as well as the more ordinary sheet metal. It is not at all unusual to see even cabins roofed now with metal roofing, which once would have been the mark only of the very classiest houses.

Except in towns or on very expensive country houses slate does not appear much in this part of the world, though common else^uwhere. Tiles, too, are scarce except on large buildings. Various types of tar-pebble roofs are pretty well limited to large, flat roofs of business buildings. Our distinctive roofs have been the pioneer timber, the home-made board, and the shingle. And the superior feeling that used to come because of a special type of roofing seems now to have oozed away. A roof, whatever its social value today, has its greatest value in keeping out the rain.

Oct. 21, 1941

This morning I walked down town with an older citizen who has watched for more than sixty years the growth of our town. As we passed various houses, he told interesting things that have happened to them. One had part of its roof taken off by a Civil War cannonball; another once stood two blocks away and, though, brick, was slowly moved to the place where I have always seen it; several of the finer houses, he said, are basically log but have been weatherboarded over. I was surprised to learn this, for I had assumed that there are very few remaining log houses in my town. Thus these ancient ones have lasted until they are again fashionable; it would not be surprizing if some owner of such an antique were to remove the weatherboarding and recreate the old log house. On my return journey from down town I passed a lot where a genuine old log house is being put up, an elaborate old thing that will be distinctive in our town for ages to come. And thus goes the style of building.

This experience has given me food for thought and moralizing. How many of our present-day customs are weatherboarded over! Outward styles have changed, but underneath the same old virtues or even vices remain. High-falutin' younger generations object to Grandpa's tastes but are not able to eradicate them completely. They resort to weatherboarding or whitewash or varnish or paint. Take antique furniture, for instance, with its layers of paint and varnish that have to be taken off before the genuine wood is reached. Probably we have covered up more customs and manners than we have covered logs and antique furniture.

There have been so many social changes within my own lifetime that I marvel at our capacity for change. In education, for instance, I know college graduates whose parents could not read and write; as I have said several times in this column, Ph. D. degrees are commoner today than high school diplomas were when I left Fidelity forty years ago.

In no sense am I belittling the backgrounds of my own generation when I say these things, for it has been a joy to see the growth of education on all levels. But something should be said for the sound old logs that often hide behind the modern weatherboarding. Many an educated person whom I have known grew up in a home that had little education, but there was always present an appreciation for learning, an eagerness to know. The young man who drove me home from down town today, when we passed the old log house that is going up again, is leaving in a few days for a great graduate school to complete the last lap for his Ph. D. He has grown up in this town, with every advantage known. His father is not a college graduate but has seen to it that his four sons and daughters have had a college education. A successful business man, hampered in his earlier days by lack of opportunity for education, he has shown how permanent is the core of his household, maybe sound old logs of another time. Whenever I go out to remote places to speak at commencements, I am always impressed with the seriousness of the parents, who through trying times like these have put their children through school, years beyond what they have had themselves.

Reformers who would like to wipe out all evidence of our past and start all over again are foolishly trying to do what is against nature itself. The true reformer begins, as he must, with what he finds. This is not always promising and may be discouraging. But human nature being what it is, capable of growth, there is enough encouragement about it to challenge any one who seriously wants to make humanity better. Who knows how excellent a core of sound building material may lie behind the modern exterior, good or bad, of your neighbor's son or daughter?

Nov. 4, 1941

Our past in America is so close to us that it would seem unnecessary or even foolish to mythologize our origins. But we know so very little about our history that we are always inventing wild and fantastic tales about our ancestors and the events of early American life. Only a few level-headed people have taken the trouble to find out the truth and have remained sane on the subject. Since there are so few records about most people, it is easy to imagine great things to fill in the gaps. And there is where the ancestor-worshiper shines.

The recent opening of a great treasure of Lincoln letters very well illustrates how little we know, even about historic personages. Scholars and historians had expected great things to be found in the collection but were left with many questions about Lincoln still unsolved. If a person so famous and so much discussed as Lincoln still has a whole cluster of myths attached to him, what can we expect of your ancestor and mine, about whom we know so little beyond his name and his birth and death dates? It would not be unfair to say that most of what we know of our ancestors could be written on a few postal cards, with plenty of question marks after each assumed fact. In a few families there have been records kept that are reliable, but the reading of a typical famous family history leaves one wondering wherein the greatness consisted, if we are to judge only by documentary evidence.

One of our earliest myths had to do with the gentle blood of the early Virginians. And hosts of people have gone through life thinking that merely having a Virginia ancestry guaranteed gentle blood. It has remained for a great Virginia scholar, Dr. Wertenbaker, to disprove this fanciful myth. One of his interesting discoveries is that a sizable portion of F. F. V. inheritance is Pennsylvania German, as his own name would indicate. If all the German blood were removed from the famous Valley of Virginia, I fear there would not be a great deal left.

Another myth concerns the remarkable ability of the early people in Virginia and Kentucky and elsewhere. With a nose for smelling out such things, I have yet to find that humanity had then any more than a fair proportion of the good common sense that humanity nearly always has. People talk learnedly about the marvelous education of some of the older people, when, if the truth were known, ability to read and write ~~was~~ looked upon then as almost miraculous. My being reared in a semi-pioneer area had many drawbacks, but it established in my mind the truth of what I have just said: that any learning was regarded as great, that to be able to read passages from the Bible or the Constitution when most people would not have known their own names in print was nothing short of miraculous. I can recall when a diploma gained by six months in a business school with no high school background was ranked with an A. B. from a standard college. Since I never saw an eighth-grade diploma before I left Fidelity, I am sure that a piece of sheepskin saying that John P. Doe had satisfactorily completed ~~e~~ight grades of public school would have looked fully as imposing as my father's medical diploma, with its ununderstandable Latin phraseology. This is in no way to deride the natural ability of the people who did not have our modern educational advantages, but it is a plea to see things in their proper setting.

Still another myth has to do with wealth. In forming this myth we often look backwards with present-day values. When we think of owning several hundred acres of valuable timber land, we smack our lips at the wealth that our ancestors rolled in. But who wanted to buy trees in those days, trees that were standing on good farming land and had to be chopped or sawed or burned down to get them out of the way? Even I have been to log-rollings where we heaped up great sawlogs of yellow poplar and set fire to them. How much ready money could the great land-holders put their hands on? Who would lend them enough to make ends meet? How many people, even then, had their acres paid for? These are just a few queer myths that we have indulged in.

Nov. 4, 1941

Last week I took a fling at some of our cherished American myths, myths that many believe as if they were extracts from Holy Writ. For the most part no one is particularly hurt by believing these childish interpretations of history, unless he assumes an arrogance because of his fancied superiority. To a student of genuine history rather than mushy sentimentality most of this myth-making seems funny; it smacks so often of senility and idleness, with their consequent dreaming of impossibilities. While we are thinking about these myths of gentle birth, great learning, and wealth, let us think a while about the equally great myth of the moral superiority of our ancestors.

I grew up to think that my own generation ~~were~~^{was} a set of pygmies as compared with the elder race. Over and over we were reminded that Grandfather This and Great-Aunt That would not have done thus and so. Since most of us thought only of the Sunday School picnic idea of pioneering, we never dreamed that the hardships of pioneer life might have taken their toll of moral values, too. The silly thing now is that hundreds of grown people, who have been exposed to history and who certainly should know a little about human nature, still cling to this childish worship of the good and great people whose puny descendants we are. Slightly paraphrasing the words of the great quack psychologist Coue, we felt that "Generation by generation in every way we are growing worse and worse." A little historical sense would correct some of this if only we would use it.

Dr. Warren H. Wilson, in his masterly study QUAKER HILL, has shown that even so quiet and basically moral a people as the Quakers were, in the glorious pioneer times that we rave so about, sordidly immoral. I knew Dr. Wilson personally and can say that in no sense was he a sensationalist: he was not trying to be a muck-raker a debunker. In pursuing a study of the solid old Quaker settlement where he served for

many years as the pastor of a union church, he was merely stating facts that were documented as well as any historical fact that we know.

In Miss Julia Neal's recent *BY THEIR FRUITS*,^a study of the very successful Shaker settlement at South Union, between Bowling Green and Russellville, there are plenty of evidences that immorality was common, though frowned on by the Shakers and punished accordingly. Just where these myth-makers get their conception of the pioneers as snow-white I have never known. Frankly I suspect that they have never grown up.

Some years ago I was attending a teachers' institute at Greenville. The instructor was one of the most successful city superintendents of the state and in addition a serious student of history. In one of his addresses he was stressing the tendency to regard all past events as great, all present ones as silly or puny. He mentioned the myth of our honest ancestors, who did no wrong and conceived no wrong. He drew himself up to his full six feet and thundered, "And yet my grandfather boasted of having voted for Andrew Jackson seventeen times in a single election!" I hope that many of the ancestor-worshiping people who were present that day have remembered his words.

It is the custom of many present-day novelists to belittle every act of the pioneers, to make them much worse than they really were. I do not sympathize at all with this extreme, no more than I sympathize with the oldster who speaks in a broken voice about "My Dear Father." If we could remember that the radical debunker is trying to read only present values into history and that the myth-maker is deifying all that happened before he was born, we will see that both are false to the true spirit of history. Your ancestors and mine probably averaged pretty much as their descendants do, in other times and places. Some were ahead of the procession, some were behind, but most of them were no better and no worse than the average. That may be hard on our cherished myths, but it is probably the plain truth.

Nov. 18, 1947

While I was camping out in the summer of 1947, I overheard a workman telling some of his friends of a marvelous event that took place at his neighbor's the night before. The neighbor had suspected that a rat had been rummaging around in the stovewood box and had set a steel trap for it. What he caught was a snake, the like of which it would take Baron Munchausen himself to duplicate. It had a horn on its tail and another one on its head. "I've seen plenty of hoop snakes," said the truthful farmer, "but that was the first time I ever saw a snake with a horn on its head." I listened in assumed ignorance for more marvels, but this was all I heard. But what more would you want?

Very cautiously I asked about the hoop snake and was told this yarn. The narrator had seen a hoop snake strike its horny tail into an oak tree, which forthwith died. What amused me most was his assertion that more than a hundred and fifty people came to see the tree. Of course, that settled it. If a hundred and fifty people see a thing, it is so; good men and true in such numbers as that cannot lie. All this scientific stuff about hoop snakes as pure myths is slapped head over heels by such testimony. I made no effort to dispute his words but let him say all he would say just as naively as he could talk. I wanted to get some more evidence of folk psychology.

Just how long hoop snakes will take their tails in their mouths and roll furiously toward a person or an animal or a tree is more than I, a mere mortal, can guess. Evidently Pliny the Elder, with his collection of old wives tales about nature, would be perfectly at home in south-central Kentucky right now, though he died in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 A. D. The mediaeval moralists who wrote marvelous things about animal conduct and its moral symbolism would also be at home in many of our side hollows. It sounds alluring to find such philosophy in an old, old book, written back in ancient Rome, but it is hard to know how to

evaluate such folk knowledge when it is delivered by a fellow who drove to work in a car, who has electric lights and a telephone, and who takes a daily paper.

This marvelous snake story makes me remind my readers again that none of us are very far removed from primitiveness. The presence of quackery in many fields is an evidence of our gullibility. I am told by my students every year that the odorous asafoetida bag still exists, that many people they know keep a buckeye in their pockets to ward off rheumatism, that all sorts of expedients are resorted to to prevent or cure disease. As long as our primitive religionists handle snakes, it would hardly be fair for you and me to brag about living in a great modern age where superstition means little or nothing.

So long as superstition harms no one, I see no especial reason to get hot and bothered about it. Eminent people, even, have their pet fears and practices. They are hedged in by restrictions of their own making and are fearful of the unseen powers. If they get a delight out of their primitiveness, let them have it. I have no quarrel with my acquaintance for his marvelous superscientific observation of hoop snakes provided he works well and supports his family. I could wish him to be a little less gullible, but he probably will remain the simple child he has always been. His children may escape much of this superstition by being thrown with people above the level of their father and his very primitive background, but it may be that they will so revere his memory that the hoop snake will live on another generation or two, to drive its poisonous spike into inoffensive oak trees. I hope, though, that when he has sickness in his family, this same fellow will see that his wife or children get the best of care from a good doctor rather than a tea or some such thing from some neighborhood granny. If he gives his children a chance, let him believe in strange snakes and their unbelievable venom.

Nov. 18, 1941

MAKING PROGRESS

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Last week I reflected, rather sllily, on the superstitions that are hard to kill, coming to the conclusion that no especial harm is done if merely believing in marvels. This week I want to take another tack. I am about to start another college year as I write this article. In a few days I am to enroll several hundred new freshmen, boys and girls from every kind of home in Kentucky and its neighboring states. Some of these children will come from homes where there is little education but where Father and Mother have longed for more than they were ever able to obtain. In general, these students will be easy to teach, for I will be teaching eager minds, minds that realize how vast is the field of knowledge and how little of it they have as yet acquired. Some will come from homes that feel that education is largely perfunctory, a sort of brushing down of the race horse before the big day. It will not be easy to teach such minds as these children will bring; they will probably lack intellectual curiosity and might easily accept any old superstition about life so long as it required only the minimum of effort and change from a placid life. It will be a joy to me to throw out baits to both kinds and see whether the human race desires to be static or is still eager to find new ways.

One of the advantages of having taught for forty years is that I can look back and see thousands of changes for the better in most of the people whom I have taught. For every static person, satisfied with what Father believed or knew or with what comes most easily, there are dozens who have made more progress in their individual lives than their families made in ten generations behind them. Many of my most successful students came from homes of poverty and ignorance but got something under their skins and "went places" in their chosen work. Thousands whom I taught came from homes where the education of the parents was only that of the one-roomed school; hundreds of these people have graduated from college and from technical schools. That accomplishment in a single generation

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makes me marvel at human capabilities. Many a simple cottage or even a shack was the only home that some of these people knew in their early days, but now their work is known over large areas. Age-old superstitions and prejudices have vanished for thousands in a single generation; our young people, in general, are much more forward-looking than their parents ever were. Not all college students have done marvelous things, but the actual change for the better in most of them keeps me cheerful toward a world that will be run by the younger generation.

Every year I marvel at the wide tolerance of youngsters, especially when compared with the narrowness of some of their backgrounds. Only an occasional student makes himself obnoxious now by harping too strongly on his great family, or his religion, or his politics, or his possessions. The few who have ever done this silly stuff stand out like sore thumbs, not because they were numerous but obvious. While some of the middle-aged and old have gone on cherishing silly loyalties to dead pasts, our youngsters have grown up in a world of democracy that has given them values far ahead of what most of their parents knew. Hampered as our schools are, they have been giving to our boys and girls an understanding of problems that their ancestors failed to solve:

And so, as I enter my classroom this fall, I will be hopeful for the next generation, much more hopeful than I am for the one that I represent. I do not mean that all the puzzling things will be solved by these boys and girls, but I know that they, encouraged by us older ones and allowed to work out as much as possible their own ~~ways~~, will add something good to human achievement that we have often failed to add. And the best feature of it all is the fact that most of them are already ages ahead of you and me in their ability to get along with each other, to endure, or to sympathize with, the slight queeresses that we all have.

December 2, 1942

It used to be common for newspapers to print cartoons of country yokels at the county fair or else in the big city being taken in by the slick and sharp city fellows. All sorts of stories are told of innocent fellows who bought the city hall or the park or some other bit of property for a mere song from some city slicker. That idea has come down even to our own times, when country or small-town people are accused of having paid small sums for the Empire State Building. My favorite yarn of this kind is the stock one of the country rube who was counting the pigeons on the courthouse when he was interrupted by a city boy, who told him that it was illegal to do so and that the fine was a dollar for each pigeon counted. The yokel confessed to having counted three, paid his three dollars, and then went down the street laughing because he had beaten the letter of the law.

All of this sounds, and is, laughable. There have been times when some similar things may have taken place. Country rubes may have acquired title to several courthouses, for all I know. But here is the funny thing about our folkishness, a funny thing that persists in spite of automobiles, radios, newspapers, high schools, and travel. Every town is the rendezvous for quacks who prey on the primitiveness of people. Before me as I write is an advertisement of a charlatan who is making plenty of money right now in my own town. She is the seventh child of a seventh child, so she says, for seven generations. I am the tenth child of a ninth child; so what? If I had all the records, I might be able to match her claim and more. But I am not running a fortune-telling game and have never capitalized on such things. When Owen Glendower boasted that he could call spirits from the vasty deep, Hotspur Percy said he could do the same thing, "but would they come for me?"

Another bit of folklore in this same advertisement says that

the clairvoyant was born with a double veil. To most people that means nothing. Anatomically, that means that part of the membrane around a baby stuck to its face, giving rise in ancient as well as modern times to a belief that such a person was marked as a prophet. Frankly, I had never heard of a double veil before I read of Madame Whoosis and her great pretensions to wisdom. But to many people, right here in my own town, that will be the last word. To her trailer this night will flock all sorts of people, black and white, ignorant and semi-learned, and even a few of what we might with good grace call learned. Some will go for fun, just to find out how it feels to have a fortune told in a semi-lighted trailer; others will go in a half-belief, a little fearful that there might be something in it all but afraid to be seen in broad-open daylight; most will swallow everything that it told in vague terms that might easily fit any human being since the world was made. But even the Greeks had a custom like this, for their sibyls, or prophetesses, made vague statements that had to be interpreted by attendant priests. Anyway, there will be a lot of puzzled people tomorrow in my town, people who are rejoicing at the prospect of a great success in love or marriage or business but who are afraid to trust too implicitly the wonderful promises made by the dark lady in the dimly-lighted trailer. And the same dark lady will probably be counting her easy dollars and devising more schemes to bring in the shekels. Who said that we used to be superstitious and gullible but have grown wiser? If I could find that boy who bought the county courthouse, I honestly think I would offer him double his money to let me in on his deal.

December 2, 1949

STANDING UP AND STAYING IN

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Somehow I do not bear so much these days of the dire punishments meted out in school to the bad boys and girls. Of course, my own children are grown and have graduated from college; maybe things have not changed so much as I think. But if I were back in the Fidelity I used to know, I would soon find out what types of punishment were being used in the little one-roomed schoolhouse. In fact, we used to judge the teacher far more by the punishments meted out than by the amount of learning acquired by the pupils. Since there were no grades, no promotions, no graduations, no diplomas, maybe it was just as well to emphasize the marks of discipline. Infractions of the numberless rules formed one of the few diversions we had; anyway. Punishments gave lazy, bad boys a chance to be noticed and to be temporarily famous in our sheltered little world.

The commonest punishment was that of being made to stand in a corner, in full view of all the other brats. Sometimes the teacher would make the offender turn his face to the wall, but it was more humiliating to have to face the whole room. If the offender were genuinely bad, he usually could devise all sorts of ways of attracting the attention of the children in the seats, particularly when the teacher was holding a class and facing away from the criminal. Most teachers that I knew would add some other penalty for this effort to gain attention. We were often told of cruel teachers who made children stand with their noses inside circles drawn on the blackboards, but I was never a witness to any such cruelty.

Staying in was far worse punishment than standing up. When you stood up, you had an audience that could not run and play but were still under the watchful eye of the teacher. But when the others "ran storming out to playing," in Whittier's words, it was heart-breaking to have to sit in your seat and read something very dull or write some foolish thing

a few hundred times. Outside you could hear your fellow-savages splitting the air with their joyous yells; some of the heartless ones might look through the windows at you ^{and} make faces; nobody ever offered to share your lonely vigil. Sometimes a cruel youngster would rejoice that he kept the teacher from any rest by compelling her to remain inside to watch him, little realizing that she was probably glad of a chance to be quiet for the fifteen minutes of the recess period, even though she had to keep an eye on a bad boy. No particular stigma was attached to staying in, but it was dreadfully inconvenient to lose a game of Wolf Over the River or Antny Over or Dare Ease.

Away back before my time the fellow who stood up also wore a dunce cap or sometimes sat on a dunce stool. We still knew of these old customs, but none of us had ever seen such a demonstration of dignified cruelty. I suspect that the old-fashioned dunce got as much joy out of his being singled out for punishment as did many a boy that I have known ^{who} ~~to~~ violated a rule deliberately in order to get to appear before the whole school for a while. If I were a moralist, which I am probably, anyway, I would like to say that some of the people who are long past the one-roomed-school/ stage of their lives/ still like to do something naughty in order to be made examples of, and right in public, too. At least, some of the bad boys I knew at Fidelity, who had to have attention regardless of how they obtained it, are still bidding for notice, often in ways as easily fathomed as those used in the little old schoolhouse.

December 16, 1941

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AT FIDELITY

65C

Our Fidelity folks were musical, not in such a way that outsiders who had had training would have noticed it, but down deep inside where no snooping observer can see. And we had our musical instruments, too. The world of modern orchestras and bands was far away, but we could make music anyway and enjoy it.

Large or expensive musical instruments were few. Some old-established families had pianos, big square things that were pretty to look at, but they had not been tuned since the Civil War or since they had been put together; consequently, the noise they made was rather tinny, but we could usually ^{have} ~~drown~~ ^{ed} out a dozen such instruments when we sang. Considering the relative poverty of Fidelity neighborhood, there were a good many organs, very elaborate things, as all old-timers will recall. Every organ was a sort of community instrument, as we would gather round it and sing on all sorts of occasions. I am still antiquated enough to enjoy singing round the organ with young and old people.

A good many men and boys had fiddles, a few had banjos, one or two had mandolins, and there was at least one bass fiddle in the neighborhood, which was used in "Doodle" Daniel's fiddling band. The typical evening music was a duet or trio consisting of a fiddle and a banjo or a guitar or both. We often sang with these instruments, songs that varied from the "quick and devilish" kind to church hymns. Sometimes a fiddler but more often a banjo picker would sing ~~and~~ and accompany himself on his instrument.

Aside from these regular instruments there were French harps, which nearly every boy could play. In fact, it would have been a mark of great lack of skill not to be able to play such a simple instrument. We early learned how to cup our hands and thus vary the sounds of our French harps. The colored boy on the radio who does such marvels with his harmonica with a gourd attachment would have been welcome in our

section, for he had improved on plain hands by adding a permanent feature that can give all sorts of wails and whoops by proper use of the hands on the mouth of the gourd.

A few boys could play a jew's-harp, but that is a skill that I never acquired but always wanted to have. Of course, nearly all tunes on the jew's-harp sound alike, but it takes a certain amount of skill to keep the buzzing sound going without hurting your teeth or getting your tongue caught.

It was not necessary to have fashionable musical instruments in order to make music. I early learned to blow tunes on my hands and can still do so. I did not feel that I was at all unusual until I saw this same skill highly advertised in a great university glee club, where one of the boys amused large audiences by his skill. When everything else failed, there was a comb and some tissue paper. Four or five children with different sized combs and different sized voices can evoke plenty of noise and near music from combs. Often I feel lost in reading literature written in England and Scotland, for the little ways of living over there differ greatly from ours. But in Stevenson's "Child's Garden of Verses" I felt immediately at home when I found this line:

"Bring the comb and play upon it."

He, too, little Scotchman that he was, had played just as I had in Fidelity, which is and was a "fur piece" from Scotland.

Given a desire to make music, anybody can become a musician of sorts. We could have used at Fidelity the elaborate instruments that we had read about but rarely seen; since we did not have them, we did the next best thing by making music in our own way. It gave me a great thrill in 1939, when I made the commencement address at Fidelity, to find that the children and grandchildren of the boys and girls I used to know are real musicians, not only from our limited Fidelity point of view but recognized as such by capable judges in regional and state contests. Who knows how much of their skill may have been aided by our long, long practice on the few instruments that we had?

NAME IT AND TAKE IT

and when asked what it was,

When we used to have something that seemed to defy classification, we would say, "Name it and take it," ~~when asked what it was~~. For years I have been amused sometimes and annoyed often by people who assume that anything that is out of the ordinary is folklore. A great deal of attention has been attracted by certain writers who fondly proclaim themselves folklorists but who basically still do not know something unusual from something definite. An acquaintance of mine persists in thinking that songs that were popular when he was a boy, which was not too long ago, are and were folk songs. They were just ordinary music-hall songs like the hosts that are being sung today. The style that they illustrated is now somewhat out of date for most of them; hence they seem like genuine folk songs to people who should know better. The folk had nothing whatever to do with them. Song-writers brought them out, singers and comedians made them popular, and then a different set of customs became the style, and the music-hall songs became only a memory to the generation that knew them. In no sense were they transmitted orally after they had appeared in sheet-music form; they had no opportunity to acquire any touch of the folk. It would be just as sensible to call the newspapers of the same time folk documents.

Last night I was listening to a highly-advertised folk-music program. Some of the numbers were genuine folk music, transmitted by word of mouth through long years and rendered in folk fashion. Some were these same folk songs badly garbled by modern shouters who think that merely "hollering" slightly off key gives a true folk flavor. I long ago learned to discount this sort of nonsense and am not particularly peeved when I hear ~~this sort of wheepee~~ ^{it}. But the comic thing on the program was for a hillbilly of the

true breed, so far as voice and method are concerned, open up on one of the current hit tunes, a song so present-day and so Hollywoodish that it could not have existed prior to 1940. By what stretch of the imagination that song could be included on a folk program is more than I have yet worked out. Just because it is nonsensical and catchy and somewhat lacking in tune, I suppose it appeals to musicians of a sort and seems about as folksy as some of the other stuff they scatter to the ends of the earth.

Folklore, as I have many times indicated, has two enemies: highbrows and lowbrows. Highbrows are suspicious of anything that seems to indicate that they might have some ordinary clay in them. Folk customs to them are ways of the unwashed, the ignorant, the people on the other side of the railroad tracks. This toplofty attitude has done much harm to a serious study of folkways and still blocks the scholars who could and would preserve and interpret for humanity the valuable contributions of the unknown and innumerable horde of people who have developed the ways we now use. The lowbrow makes folkways a laughing stock by his clowning. He prefers to laugh at what gave him his own start in life, to sneer at the commonest and, therefore, the most basic customs that humanity has developed. Neither group has an historical mind; neither knows or cares to evaluate influences that have made us what we are. It is a great step forward when people begin to realize how ancient are the most ordinary ways of doing things, how hallowed by antiquity our every-day customs are. If only we could have a wave of genuine interest in folklore at all comparable with our kindred interest in antique furniture! By degrees, maybe, this sort of thing will be developed, and we will then no longer look upon our folk heritage with sneers or horse laughter in our manners.

Every year I make a mental note of how fast humanity is changing its outward ways of living and sometimes find myself envying Methuselah, who probably did not have to change his habits throughout his fabulously long life. To have lived as a grown man through two great World Wars, in which rapid advancement was made in every type of scientific study, makes one seem like his own "grandsire carved in alabaster." Just yesterday I heard an eminent chemist summarize the great changes that have come about in science since 1914, the beginning of World War I. He left me gasping for breath, for I knew his records were accurate and not used to make us all feel that we are living in the greatest age of the world. After an impressive summary of our advancement, he did what a mere scientist often fails to do: he warned us of how we have created dangerous weapons unless we at the same time create a type of world thinking to use them sensibly. I hope that I will not appear, then, a man rapidly growing older if I take this great man's point of view with reference to human mores.

Emerson has said that we boast of our progress and then do not progress. He was not to be taken too literally, but there is much of common sense in what he says. With the increase of our speed in living we are increasing our speed in losing our minds, of acquiring queer diseases brought on by rushing from pillar to post. There is a strange oddity about the fact that our life expectancy has almost doubled since I was born and that our nervous disorders have taken a great rise, too. That we are in the main healthier is true; it should be true that we have learned better how to live.

In the last century, when machinery was rapidly changing the tempo of British life, many of the reformers stood boldly against the tendency of the times, some even advocating a complete return to

primitive times. People railed against all new things, the good as well as the bad, but most of humanity adapted themselves to what was new, however much they may have longed for the "fleshpots of Egypt."

It is certainly ^{not} my purpose in this column to encourage people to turn back the clock, to deify any period in human history. The number of times that I have laughed at ancestor-worship would show that I have no such Pollyannaish idealism^{ing} of things long past. However, I do want to go on record as an advocate of a slight conservatism, which does not throw out the older customs merely because they are old and accept new ones because they are the latest fad. It is necessary to live in the midst of changes; none of us can insulate ourselves against them. However boldly we may try to head off some new customs, we are not likely to succeed any more than my old friend of twenty years ago, who refused to accept the roasted coffee of modern times but clung to home-roasted coffee such as his mother turned out, now well over a hundred years ago. A sensible appreciation for good customs and gadgets, regardless of their age, might stop many a case of heeby-jeebies that our modern nervousness often breeds. As funny as the antique craze can sometimes become, it may often have the effect of a sedative in a highly nervous world. If owning some broken-down piece of furniture or a bit of glassware can calm you so that you will not develop high blood pressure in your younger days, indulge in even the most fantastic forms of antique-hunting. And the interesting thing about it all is that you will acquire some bits of household furnishings that will remain good through whole eons of fads. If I were asked to state one of the best results of the study of folklore, I would say that it helps to stabilize our thinking about values, that it keeps us from starting again every generation or every new season as if all that humanity has done has been a titanic mistake.

Before you feel too sorry for old Methuselah, just remember that he could use his customs a long time without fear of becoming out of style.

STATISTICS AND FACTS

When I was a student, forty years ago or so, I heard almost daily that farm life was going to the dogs, that urban life was being built on the ruins of the country. I heard often schemes to induce people to "return to the soil," as the catch phrase had it. For some years I actually felt that the great calamity was about to happen, that we would starve to death. And now, what a difference!

All the time these old-timers were fearful of ^{our} future because customs were changing, a new agriculture, based on genuine learning and sound economics, was developing. Merely because the outward forms of it differed from what older people had known, many thought it slowly dying as a great challenge to humanity. But within a few years tangible evidences of better farming ^{were} ~~was~~ everywhere about us. Old fields that were abandoned when I was a child have been redeemed by modern scientific farming and made to contribute their share to human welfare. The most fertile fields that I knew did not at their best produce as much as many of the less favored ones do now. On a farm that would have constituted a single pasture thirty years ago now is produced enough for a good-sized family.

When I began to teach school, forty years ago, a high-school graduate out in the country away from genuine city life was unknown in Kentucky. My generation had to go away from home to secure the very elements of education. Think how many country children today have the advantages of as good high schools as exist in our land. If I were to find myself lamenting the lack of opportunities of school children of today, I would more surely lament the condition of the children in a small town than that of children in the open country accessible to a high school. The fact that so many people have secured a basic education four years beyond the grades as we used to know them does not in itself make educated people, but it

forms a basis for a liberal education that college and life can and will bring.

It is surprising how much country life has improved its comforts and conveniences, even though it is still far from perfect. But what about the ragged edges of our towns, even those which, like mine, boast of their culture? Every time I drive out into the state, I am impressed with the R. E. A. lines, which in a very few years, years hampered by war conditions, have reached nearly every section of every county. Refrigeration alone is worth all the money that R. E. A. lines cost, in improving the safety and variety of foods eaten on the farms. Radios have penetrated just about every kind of area, even beyond the electric lines. The remotest country man or woman or child knows what the world is saying and often knows enough about public affairs to embarrass you and me, who live and have lived for many years in the city.

The thing that disgusts me often is that hosts of people of my age are still thinking only of the crude days that we spent in the country a half century ago. Having left the farm as young people, they may rhapsodize about it and plan to return to it in their old age, but meanwhile they remain as far from farm life and the understanding of farm people as possible. As I have said many times in this column, the various farm organizations strike me as about the most alive groups now in existence. They are practical rather than theoretical. They get things accomplished and are able to see the achievements of each other at stated intervals. The farm population is smaller than it used to be but is certainly still adequate to its tasks. One of my oldest acquaintances, who has been a successful farmer longer than I have lived, told me recently that every day of his life he has needed to know the most abstruse secrets of chemistry to carry on his farm. He said that a farmer cannot get too good an education, that every day will offer use for the most abstract phases of knowledge. And that from a man who has had little formal training but who has grown up with the farm as it has adapted itself to changes.

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TREES IN THE YARD

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A sudden windstorm in the early spring of 1947 toppled over one of the largest trees in Bowling Green, a real remnant of the first trees that grew up after this area ceased to be a prairie, after the settlement by white men kept down most of the destructive grass fires. I could not help feeling a bit of sadness at the passing of this giant oak, which for years has been carefully guarded by its owners against diseases, and ^{against} mutilation by unthinking people. I began to think about trees in the yard, trees that have meant so much to our houses and to our memories.

Some years ago, when I vacationed in New England, I was struck with the beauty of American elms two to four feet in diameter, which seem to be common everywhere. Old houses, reminiscent of the Revolution, such as the one where I stayed in Lexington, Massachusetts, stood far back from the winding streets, with wide, rolling lawns in front. Every one of them had American elms, with graceful umbrella tops, as impressive as any trees that I have ever seen. No other tree seems capable of giving such a distinctive setting to colonial houses with green shutters.

In Fidelity and in the surrounding country there was seldom a yard that did not contain some of the native trees, standing right where the seeds had sprouted: oaks, hickories, chestnuts, ^{and} ~~with~~ such delightful things as the wild crabapple that grows down there in profusion. Nearly all yards had, too, some maples that had been brought as small sprouts from the creek bottom and set out, some of them a long time before I could remember. Cedars were so scarce that it was regarded as distinctive to have a big, wide one in the front yard. A sure mark of old-house places was an old cedar, almost as definite a mark as the patch of wild plums. Beech trees grew only in the bottoms around Fidelity, but since I left there, the nuts have gradually been taken into the hilly country, and now

beautiful young beech trees are found among the commoner oaks and hickories on the uplands. For quick growth nothing beats a box elder, but most of the ones I have known were short-lived. However, I recently saw one in the yard of a lovely old country home that was merely a skeleton of its former self but was reputed to be well over a hundred years old. It had outlived two generations of people who had made that place their home.

One of the odd things about people and trees is that sometimes excellent forest trees, already large and healthy and thoroughly adapted to the soil, are cut down when a house is built; then very small and very young native maples or else nursery stock are started, with ages ahead of their being shade trees in any real sense. One such place that I knew had a row of tiny sugar maples out among the stumps of fine old oaks. Now, forty years later, the maples are beginning to take the places of the oaks in making shade, but the children who grew up in that yard are now middle-aged and never knew before they left home what it was to have grateful shade around the house in the hot days of summer.

Just across the street from me is the campus of the college where I have taught for thirty-six years. No part of it is any more beautiful than the small area that used to be the campus of the last Ogden College, for ^{the last} twenty years a part of Western. Years ago a great variety of native and nursery trees were set out and carefully protected. The old gentleman who caused most of this to be done died many years ago, but his handiwork lives on, a small campus that is a virtual arboretum. Norway maples, gingko trees, cypress, water maples, sugar maples, oaks of several species, rugged pines, native and English lindens, and many others are near neighbors, each with its distinctive ^c leaves and fruits, its shape pattern. What was a bleak lot when the Civil War was over is today one of the beauty spots of my town because of its many, many trees.

"THAT GOOD PART"

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One of the great satisfactions in growing older is to see the tangible results of wise living on the part of acquaintances and friends as contrasted to unwise living. When you are young, it often ~~seems~~ seems that the world is in league against the individual, as Emerson says so many times. If the individual is tough enough, the world itself has to yield a bit and accept the individual for his real worth. Fads come and go, so fast sometimes that young people have a hard time keeping up with the procession, "keeping up with Lizzie," in the words of a phrase of some thirty years ago. A few young people in every generation refuse to follow all the fads and wake up as middle-aged people with far more permanent holds on life than the others have who have run after every new thing that has become fashionable. Again and again I am reminded of Sir Roger de Coverley's coat, to which he stuck so long that it had been in and out of style twelve times.

As a college professor I have had numerous opportunities every year to see the difference between the wise and the unwise choosers. Every fall a new crop of freshmen drift into our college, on the surface very much alike but underneath the surface as varying as people can be. In the first few weeks of college it would take a clairvoyant to see the difference between those who choose for today and those who are making permanent choices. In a few terms of college, however, the weeding-out process starts and continues indefinitely. Some of the very ordinary ones of the first term in college prove themselves capable of adapting themselves to conditions and growing with the years. Others remain perpetual freshmen, getting no farther than first base, or second, at most.

But it is not merely of college life that I want to talk today. Down Fidelity way we used to have some queer people who refused to get "het up" at every changing custom. They were laughed at, openly or behind their backs, for being such oddities. But the laughter did not

cause them to become like the rest of us. And the world wagged on, and some of those strange people were right up in front without ever having tried to be. They had chosen "that good part" early and had followed their own noses so long and so well that they had even beaten the ones who spent most of their time trying to get ahead. Their long-headedness, which was usually regarded as hard-headedness, had enabled them to plan for years ahead and not be thrown off the track by a mere matter of here and now. In FIDELITY FOLKS I have paid my respects to several of these people who had foresight; others I have not mentioned because of the fact that they are still living. I would really like to paint a few brief pictures of these long-headed ones just to show the fussy ones that being anchored to something permanent will ultimately bring you out in front. But good manners forbid.

One such person long ago quit cultivating his steep hillsides, sowing them down permanently. While his neighbors went ahead clearing land that should have been left in timber, he kept his steep hillsides from eroding. Today the neighborhood marvels at the foresight he showed long before soil conservation became a very necessary and popular thing. When gullies were as numerous as old fields themselves, another farmer I knew put check dams in some of his gullies and allowed Japanese clover to do the rest. And many of his gullies in which I played as a small boy are completely filled up today, with no sign that they once were threatening the very life of his fields. One middle-aged woman I knew in Fidelity clung to the fine old furniture that her parents had brought into the area from North Carolina in a covered wagon. Her neighbors feared that she was "tetched in the head" when she kept on using her heavy old furniture when others were buying all the newer stuff. Today the cranky one could obtain a small fortune from the old, old stuff that her neighbors used to make fun of. Somehow it does not take much grit to lay hold of a good thing and wait until its real value becomes apparent. And I am not merely talking of a conservatism that refuses to change,

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The boy on the farm when I was young had to be just about everything; consequently, he was seldom an artist in anything. When a fence had to be built, he helped, whether it was a rail fence or the later paling or wire fences. When a roof had to be covered, he made or helped make the boards and then nailed them on. Ordinary carpentry was his every-day practice. Some of us were exceedingly awkward with tools and were not allowed to do anything that required skill. Thus chicken coops and horse troughs came to mean, to me, at least, the most ordinary sort of work that any moron could do.

Nearly always at Fidelity there was a pile of lumber lying around, often rotting because it was not stacked rightly. Lumber was plentiful and cheap; hence we paid little attention to it. When we wanted a plank for some purpose, we tore up a pile of lumber and got something suitable, leaving the rest open to the weather or even the dirt. It was just such planks, now worth big money, that I would saw up into the right lengths for a horse trough. Sometimes my lines were a bit crooked; but a few stout nails could hold the pieces together, anyway. Our horses had a great way of gnawing the troughs or kicking them to pieces. It was not necessary, then, to be too particular about the carpentry we used. I often prided myself on my horse troughs, but no one else ever complimented them.

With plenty of chickens to shelter in the nesting season, we had to have many chicken coops. I early learned how to saw the framework for a coop. I fudged considerably in putting on the planks, for home-made boards were just the thing for this, already the right length. Some of my chicken coops, like my horse troughs, were hardly works of art, but they served for years. Many a rural preacher got a full meal of fried chicken from the inmates of my coops. What more could you ask in a useful or artistic object?

It hurt my feelings when I was not allowed to show other feats of carpentry. It is true that I could nail on planks that my brothers had sawed, that is, after they had used a few impressive words to remind me of what I was doing. But nothing requiring actual skill ever fell into my hands. To this day my fingers are largely thumbs, capable of making useful rather than artistic horse troughs and chicken coops but hardly to be trusted in more careful sawing and nailing.

It is a mistake to assume that there were no artistic fingers or hands in Fidelity. Long before my clumsy efforts at carpentry the Union Church was made right there by skilled workmen, yellow poplar being used throughout. Nails were not so commonly used then; hence mortised joints were to be found where sills and uprights came together. Planes in the hands of local carpenters smoothed away the roughness of sawed lumber and left surfaces that glistened from long use as well as from the original planing. Later buildings showed much of the same skill, nothing to brag about but useful and sturdy. Everything from the framework of the houses to the shingle roofs showed patient skill that was good for that time and place. Only after I left home was it at all customary for an actual carpenter to be employed to erect the ordinary buildings of the farm or even the houses themselves. I can recall how strange it seemed when I was down at Fidelity on a visit once, many years ago, to learn that a local carpenter had the contract--imagine that--to wreck a store building, salvage the material worth using again, and then erect one of the stores that still adorn the hill at Fidelity. That was a long way from the older days, when a man built his own house or barn or store or had a neighborhood working that did most of it in a single day. Maybe my skill, or lack of it, in making horse troughs and chicken coops was not to be laughed at, after all.

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"OUT OF THIS WORLD"

Sometimes I am in the society of people who seem to be completely "out of this world," in a current slang phrase. They do not seem to know that there is earth or dirt or work or ignorance or filth or anything ordinary. They have so dedicated themselves to aesthetic things that they walk a little above the earth, with their heads in clouds of enjoyment and aesthetic delight. Somebody else does their washing and scrubbing and dish-washing and ironing and cooking. They live, as favored ones on earth, too good for what the rest of us have to do. They would not dare mention earthly things, for fear of contaminating their rosy dreams. Sometimes they rush from one orgy of aesthetic enjoyment to another, never sated with being above the great unwashed portion of humanity. As to having had any connection with such common-as-gully-dust things as those I write about--no, siree!

And that again reminds me of something. Tolstoi, the great democratic prophet of Russia, often warned his generation of the great culture that ^{the} Russian intelligentsia believed in and practiced so much, at the expense of the common muzhik, or peasant. Tolstoi said that a culture that could not include everybody in some fashion was not culture and was a menace. Whether the revolt against czarism brought his warning to pass I will not begin to say, but one wonders sometimes whether Nemesis, the goddess of evening-up, does not laugh when we forget the commonplace things in our heritage. I hope that we as a nation will never need a great holocaust such as has transformed Russia from the old to the present-day.

Ethologically we are all of pretty much the same material. When any portion of the human race pretends to ^{be} better than the rest, the only way to convince the majority of us is to deliver better living, better cooperation with humanity, better daily policies and actions. Any culture that fences in a small segment of humanity and tries forcible feeding is likely to die by its own efforts. Rightly or wrongly, the effete civilizations have always fallen before the hordes of the untamed, even the unwashed. Sometimes it has been a great revolt against impossible conditions; sometimes it has been plain plundering of soft, undefended people. The progress of the race thus suffers a setback, sometimes a veritable Middle Ages, when ^{the} culture of the masses has to be built up slowly from a very low level of ideals.

How good are our customs? How much can they endure without falling? Can we absorb the numerous cultural contributions of our heterogeneous racial backgrounds and still maintain a cultural stand against less valuable customs? I do not know. My own impression after teaching dozens of children of later immigrants makes me believe that we have greatly underrated the contributions of the people who arrived here after the days of my ancestors and yours. There was a sturdiness that our ancestors brought; maybe ^{it} it would be better to call it stubbornness. Anyway, it could stand the rigors of pioneer life and pioneer religion and still keep its sanity. It could fight a foreign enemy or a local one and still have kindness of heart left for the needy. However, your ancestry and mine lacked a good many things culturally that many of the late-comers have brought, if we only knew how to utilize their contribution. The present-day American culture is vastly different from the one our fathers knew, but who is enough skeptic to fear the customs of our children and our neighbors' children? Or are we still "too good for this world" in viewing our lives in terms of those of past generations or of more highly favored places?

SHRUBS IN THE YARD

A few weeks back I mentioned in this column the sorts of trees that have made our yards distinctive. Today I would like to add my bit about shrubs, the shrubs that I like, and I am sure that a very large percentage of the readers of this column like, too.

This afternoon my wife and ^Idrove out with two guests to see the late-fall colors in the near-mountainous country that lies just north and west of our town. We made a great loop, down through the hilly country between Barren and Green Rivers and then back on Kentucky Highway 71, crossing the Barren River at its mouth. On this trip we passed many of the most distinctive communities of my county and its nearest northern neighbor, Butler. There were new homes nearly everywhere and many old ones that have already been used for one to three generations. Everywhere, except in the yards where the actual building is still going on, there were shrubs, the kinds we used to have in our yard at Fidelity, the kind you, too, have in yours. Some of them had already lost their leaves, but others, like lilacs, were almost as green as they were before frost. I could not help rejoicing at living in a time when old-fashioned shrubs for the yard have so much respect and so much care.

Imagine a country house without its attendant lilac bushes, as I said so long ago in this column. The very nature of the lilac, a slow-growing shrub, implies a planned beauty in dooryards, for forward-looking people had to plant for the future when they set out lilacs. Children and grand-children cash in on the foresight of their ancestors. One French lilac that I passed today is seventy-five years old at the very least and now covers a space comparable with that of a good-sized shade tree. Every spring it is for days a wealth of color and perfume that ties us back with a past that already seems remote. Lilacs just do not spring up overnight and

become landmarks; they have to devote years to becoming the great old memories that many of them are.

Quick-growing forsythia is seen in many yards, a pretty shrub at any season and especially early in the spring, before the leaves appear, when it is covered with its yellow profusion of blossoms. Early spring also brings the gorgeous apple blooms of the japonica, and the late fall brings the sweet-scented apples in their mellow ripeness. Althea may seem old-fashioned to many people, but a hedge of this old standby can soon be developed in almost any kind of soil. I love the snowball bushes that still flourish in many yards. They remind me of their wild kindred, wild hydrangea, and their aristocratic cousins of later development, such as the hydrangeas in Southern gardens. I am quite partial to the calycanthus, or sweet-smelling shrub. Never any too hardy here, it thrives in the wild state in the Great Smokies. I recall my surprise the first time I found whole thickets of it growing like weeds by the roadside. I wondered how my old neighbors would have regarded such an unexpected sight after their long years of efforts to keep their calycanthus bushes growing and blooming. And old-fashioned roses, big as shrubs, have by no means lost their beauty and place in our lives. Sturdy as pioneers, resistant to many of the diseases that attack their delicate modern relatives, they look like the plain, common, but genuine values of ordinary living in the open country. And there are others, in the words of my freshmen when they run out of something to say, "too numerous to mention," all of them contributing to the vigorous wholesomeness of the country dooryard.

For years I have intended to write an essay about the Saturday-night bath. For some reason or other I have kept putting off this pleasant duty. Today, when I read a section of the Duke of Windsor's memoirs, I decided not to wait any longer. In spite of his being a prince and only a few years younger than I am, he, too, was brought up on the good old custom of a weekly all-over bath, and in a portable tin bathtub, at that. Sometimes I feel rather far away from royalty, but that confession on his part makes him almost kinfolks of mine.

Bathing of any sort was somewhat of an ordeal at Fidelity and elsewhere when water was scarce and hard to draw from cistern or well. Of course, there was the hurried and rather sketchy ablution early in the morning, especially sketchy on cold mornings when only cold water was at hand. When we came in from the fields at noon, we took a good hand-and-face-and-neck scrub, with home-made lye soap. When we went barefooted, we went through the motion of washing our feet before going to bed. The handiest thing for this, as I have so often said, is a tub in which salt mackerel has been shipped. My doctor father liked salt mackerel as well as other strong-tasting foods; consequently, we always had a foot tub. On Sunday mornings when we were little, Big Sister took the cuff of some long-handled underwear for a washrag and rolled the dirt up on our exposed parts. I always accused my Big Sister of rubbing off the hide itself when she made me ready for Sunday School. The worst part of this washing was her rubbing my neck the wrong way; this may have loosened some more dirt, but it positively hurt. Even the memory of this weekly agony still remains.

But these washings were at best only partial and were looked upon as routine duty. It was a debt to society when we bathed

all over. It is true that a washpan is a bit small for such a big job, but a washpan full of soapy water can accomplish wonders. Sometimes we got the bowl of the washbowl-and-pitcher set in the front room and thus had a few more cupfuls of water to wash off a week's accumulation of dirt and dead skin. In summer, especially, we sometimes heated up a lot of water and poured it into a washtub. Now, a bath in a washtub is really something; if you are small, you can splash around and imagine yourself everything from a duck to a hippopotamus. It probably was because of this splashing around that Mother usually had me to take such a bath out in the yard behind the house, where I could not be seen by people coming for the doctor. In winter we usually could dispense with this big amount of water and calm our consciences merely by using a washpan.

My favorite Saturday bath was one that combined real pleasure with painful duty. We boys would go to the creek, ostensibly to take a bath but really to splash and be veritable water animals for as long a time as we could. We took with us a big hunk of Big Deal soap, strong and ill-smelling. That was often for the looks of the thing, though, for most parents at Fidelity regarded swimming for its own sake as rather wicked. I am pretty sure that we often brought back our Big Deal soap unused, but we had been in some very cold, clean water for an hour or two. Sometimes the water was so cold that we had to get out of the washing hole and run up and down the sandy shore. A favorite trick was to rub ourselves all over with sand, unconsciously rubbing off some dirt in the process. This restored our circulation enough for us to run back into the washing hole to get rid of the sand. Eight or ten such stunts should have wrought some needed changes in the cleanliness of our bodies. But too often we ran home in a game of tag and were dripping wet with sweat by the time we got there. Anyway, no parent was so cruel as to compel us to resort to a washpan or tub after a whole afternoon in the creek.

People who are under forty, especially in towns and cities, may have considerable difficulty in believing that so~~o~~ many of our so-called modern conveniences were entirely absent or virtually unknown when I left Fidelity at Christmas, 1906. We have a way of taking for granted that what was here when we could first remember had always been here. As I so often say, a genuine historical sense is lacking in most people.

Suppose we enumerate some of the modern conveniences that few people had forty years ago. Screens for houses were barely coming in in most parts of Kentucky then. Where I stayed when I taught my first school, in 1907, there were screens around the kitchen and dining rooms, but elsewhere, even in my own room, they were lacking, though two big horseponds were within a few yards of my windows. Many of my old neighbors at Fidelity fought screens as bitterly as they had previously fought Yankees. Every time I hear some fatuous person bragging about Negro cooks on the fine old plantations, I cannot help thinking about this lack of screens and other things.

Just before I left Fidelity, the parcel post law was passed. What would country or city people do today without parcel post packages? When the law went into effect, there was a perfect orgy of buying from mail order houses. Formerly we had had to instruct the company to ship our stuff by express or freight; now we could go to our own mailboxes on the Big Road and get our packages. You must remember, also, that thousands of the rural free delivery routes of today were not in existence until long after 1906. But at nearly every crossroad there was a tiny postoffice, where the coveted parcel could be picked up.

Telephones were by no means common in 1906. I still rejoice that I was one of the crew that put up the first telephone line east of Fidelity. I got to use the party line for nearly two years before I left the farm. Remote as Fidelity was, there were plenty of places where the telephone did not extend until long after I helped introduce the contraption to our end of the county.

The first automobile I ever saw was in a show window at Clinton when I arrived there on December 27, 1906, to begin my education. It was not much bigger than an old-fashioned cart minus the shafts. People passed that show window in droves and made all the known wise cracks about the horseless carriage. A little later I saw an auto at Paducah that had come down to meet the train. And the thing actually started, after a deal of coughing and a fit of St. Vitus dance. When I arrived at Bowling Green, in 1908, there were just three cars here, and how they did scare horses! As late as 1913, the year I got married, it was not at all rare for country boys to throw rocks at passing automobiles, as if the machines were some unearthly things that must be outlawed.

In 1927, when Lindbergh flew alone across the Atlantic, the number of radios in my town ~~was~~ very limited. I recall that I happened to be at the home of one of our faculty members on a matter of business that day, when someone turned on the radio and accidentally found Charles Lindbergh talking. I think that was one of the first broadcasts I recall having heard. Of course, there had been many previous ones, but I had not heard them. My own first radio dates from 1932, quite late in world history, of course, but school teachers are not and have never been blessed with much money.

How queer all these things must seem to any younger person who reads this column! But maybe you, too, will soon be recalling how many new gadgets have come into use since you were only a child.

HAY IN THE WAGONBED

When families were large and conveyances were scarce, it used to be a good old custom to put a generous amount of hay or straw in the wagon bed, cover it with a jeans quilt or two, and let the smaller members of the family ride thus in state to church. Of course, Mammy and Pappy sat up front on the spring seat, with the littlest one in Mammy's lap or sitting on the seat beside her. Now, there are worse places to ride than this padded cushion^h in the wagon bed. You have lots of room to roll around when the wagon hits a rough spot. And you can ride in a whole lot of ways: sitting, lying down, on your knees, or a combination of all these. When the long, hard day is over at church, after the morning sermon, the dinner on the ground, and the afternoon service, you may want to lie down and nap, intermittently, all the way home. If the service is a night one, you are more than likely asleep when the program ends, away along in the night, and have to be carried and laid on the cushioned wagon bed. When you get home, you can hardly remember the next day about ever having gone to church at night.

When buggies and surreys came in, youngsters soon began to feel inferior when they rode on a quilt in the wagon bed. They longed to see the day when the family could be prosperous enough to own a surrey, so the younger generation could be on an equal footing with the neighbors' children. Sometimes the family never owned a surrey, but the boys, as they got big enough, could ride some of the younger horses and mules and thus avoid riding in the wagon bed. The family buggy could carry all the members of a small family, by tucking in a small one or two in front and letting two or more stand up behind. This was infinitely better, from the point of view of the youngsters, than riding in a wagon.

Riding on a quilt over some straw is always associated in my mind with another contemporary custom, that of taking a pallet to church to spread out for the drowsy ones when the night service dragged on into the small hours ~~of the night~~. I have seen the aisles of a country church virtually stopped with pallets, their occupants sleeping right on through deathbed accounts and graveyard scenes, blissfully unconscious of their sins and the dire punishments awaiting them. It was often a scene of confusion when the call came for mourners, for it was necessary to roll the sound-asleep children in near the pews to allow room for the procession. At the conclusion of the services, ~~at~~ long last, in the Duke of Windsor's words, there was ~~a~~ deal of wrestling to get the limp little fellows transferred from the church floor to the wagon bed and its soft sleeping place.

It was once felt to be much more dignified to ride in a straight-backed chair in a wagon than to sit in an undignified way on the quilt and straw. I have often wondered at the jolting endured to keep up appearances. In spite of the hatred the children had for the quilt, I much prefer it to the bouncing and other antics of the chairs in the wagon. Of course, if enough spring seats could be found, real comfort was attainable, but spring seats were not too plentiful at Fidelity. Besides, a soft, easy ride to and from church might have been conducive to soft morals.

Recently, when I was asked to speak on the program at our annual Founders' Day, I looked over some of my old diaries to try to recapture some of the flavor of older times. Though I was concerned primarily with the history of my own college, I could not help wondering at some of the passing institutions of communities like mine or like yours. I ran across several references to lyceum programs, programs attended by a large number of our fellow-townsmen as well as by the school people themselves. And some of these programs were really very unusual, judged by standards of that time or this.

The lyceum season began in the fall by or before Thanksgiving and ran on until late spring. We had no football or basketball then and few other distractions. Radio had not been heard of. If you heard a great musician or a great lecturer, you had to dress up and attend a program, for which you paid a reasonable sum. Picture shows were just coming into popularity, but many people had not yet formed the habit of attending them. It was looked upon as slightly frivolous to attend a picture show and even more so to talk about one in a social gathering. But there was something highbrow about the lyceum; nobody was ashamed to mention having heard some wonderful program at the local lyceum course.

In looking back over those years, two-thirds of a generation ago, I am amazed at the variety and quality of many of the things we saw and heard. Such eminent speakers as William Jennings Bryan and Edward Amherst Ott appeared regularly on lyceum programs. There were musical numbers the equal of anything we can hear over the radio. Such entertaining features as the Swiss Bell-ringers and magicians and yarn-spinners, like Ralph Bingham, enlivened the course and kept it from being too highbrow.

Closely akin to the lyceum proper and sometimes a part of it was the traveling theatrical troupe, often of international fame. I saw Sir Philip Ben Greet in several Shakespeare plays a⁵ parts of lyceum programs. A dozen other companies appeared in our town or neighboring college towns. Even great symphony orchestras from the East came to us, bringing the flavor of the big cities. Opera stars, direct from the Metropolitan, sang to us and found^{us} often a very appreciative and understanding audience. One great singer was said to have been somewhat chagrined when she landed in Bowling Green and saw what a small town it was but was thrilled when her program got such high acclaim. I recall how she sang encore after encore when we showed her that even we countryicks knew good music when we heard it.

My students of the current year sometimes laugh when I tell them how we used to take our dates to these highbrow programs. The popular notion seems to be^{at} that young people in love or trying to be cannot appreciate anything except some ball game or a moving picture. With numerous musical organizations always available, with a radio ready at a second's warning to bring the best or the worst in melody, and with cars already cranked up to go to Louisville or Nashville to see and hear the truly great, these younger people sometimes fail to see how we had to grab our culture where we were. The astonishing thing is that we managed to get a pretty good sample of the various kinds of culture, thanks to the lyceum and its kindred programs.

PERSISTENT FOLKWAYS

Recently I have read Townsend Scudder's CONCORD: AMERICAN TOWN, a fascinating history of Concord, Massachusetts, and its part in American history since its founding in 1635. The author has especially taken up the events of national scope in which Concord people had a part. It is astonishing how many able people and virile ideas have come from that little town, less than half as large as the one I live in. What town or city would ~~would~~ not be proud of such writers as Emerson and Thoreau, such sculptors as Daniel Chester French, such botanists as Ephraim Wales Bull, the perfecter of the Concord grape? However, this is not the impression that is greatest in the book, however important maybe Concord's contribution to our national life. As I read, especially the later chapters, I was more and more impressed with the powerful effect of the old traditions and customs of this quaint, historic little New England town. Regardless of the racial or linguistic origin of the people of Concord today, they are all genuine Concordians, inheritors of the great names and great events of the place. The thirty-five boys who died in World War II who had called Concord home bore names that only about half the time echoed the original names of the Puritan settlers. Decorations for bravery included foreign-born boys from many parts of the world, especially Italy. Concord, as I recall from a visit there in the three/hundredth year of its life, has many citizens who speak New England English brokenly but they speak it rather than their native languages, and their children are as much New England in all folkways as the descendants of the Bulkleys, the Hoars, the Emersons themselves.

As a teacher of language I have often been impressed with the great influence on our speech by the earliest settlers, in Virginia

and Massachusetts especially. Those early comers not only acquired land and set up homes; they established a trend in speech that exists to this day. Thousands of later immigrants learned to speak in the manner of the first settlers. The schools consciously and unconsciously perpetuated the speech of the founders. So persistent has this custom been that people four generations away from New England retain some of their ancestors' distinctive pronunciations; Tidewater pronunciation of ou in such words as house seem never to die out. Even the rate of speed used in these two areas persists, so that the quick, deep New England speech and the equally deep but much slower speech of the old-fashioned Southerner are typical wherever found.

Wherever the New Englanders went as emigrants, they took with them their distinctive customs, so that a village in southern Michigan may look almost exactly like one in Massachusetts or Maine. The organization of government, in the same way, follows the New England pattern. The Southern county seat town is repeated in the nearer Middle West faithfully; there are towns in southern Indiana that could be moved south of the Ohio River and reestablished without being detected as foreign. A state like Indiana or Illinois illustrates these two major factors in our American civilization very well. Starting at the Ohio River, one finds no especial change from Kentucky or even farther south; then, beyond Indianapolis, he is in a new world. The tempo of life is different; the buildings reflect a different origin; localisms of expressions sound slightly strange or like something in a book, so far as a Southerner is concerned. In spite of an enormous infiltration of Pennsylvania Germans, many later Germans, a good many French, and hosts of later migrations, the earliest impressions remain, actually changing the late-comers from the South or the East or from foreign lands into the established pattern.