The Kentucky Novels of James Lane Allen

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THE KENTUCKY NOVELS OF JAMES LANE ALLEN

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PREFACE

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To the Macmillan Company, Publishers, I wish to acknowledge information and materials received and, also, permission to use extracts from the published works of James Lane Allen.
INTRODUCTION

Kentucky, following in the footsteps of her parent state, Virginia, has given to America some of her most distinguished statesmen. She gave to the Confederacy its only president, Jefferson Davis, and to the Federal Union its war president, Abraham Lincoln. Housed in a noble pile of imperishable granite, on its exact original site, near Hodgenville, the humble log cabin in which Lincoln was born is now preserved as a national shrine. At Fairview a towering obelisk marks the birthplace of Jefferson Davis.

These two statesmen were born, one year between them, of the same pioneering stock. One moved north of the slavery line; the other went southward into the heart of the slave country. Thereafter their lives ran by contrasting, instead of by parallel, lines. But in temperament and in sentiment both remained forever Kentuckians at heart.

In the field of literature Kentucky has not been so outstanding, but far too little is known of the writers whom she has produced. In the field of descriptive narrative perhaps no more representative writer has sprung from Kentucky soil than the one chosen for this study.

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1 Irvin S. Cobb, Kentucky (New York: Doran, 1924), p. 40.
James Lane Allen has done for Kentucky, or rather a particular section of Kentucky, what Thomas Nelson Page has done for Virginia and George W. Cable for Louisiana. More than any other author he has made the Bluegrass region of Kentucky known to both his countrymen and Europeans.

"Both in rendering incomparably the prodigal beauty of his homeland and in portraying the vanished types of antebellum days, Mr. Allen is a rare artist."

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International Encyclopedia, Volume I.
CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM

James Lane Allen, the seventh and youngest child of Richard and Helen Foster Allen, was born February 18, 1849, at the old Poindexter place on the Parker's Mill road, near the Versailles pike and about seven miles from Lexington, Kentucky. When he was quite young, the family moved to the ancestral Allen place on the Cold Spring road, now Lane Allen Lane. This place has been rechristened Scarlet Gate, a name that Mr. Allen thought absurd. When he was four years old, the family estate passed out of the hands of the Allen family, and they moved to a small area of land which had come to his mother in the division of her father's estate. The new home where Allen was to complete his youth and begin his early manhood was only two and one-half miles from Lexington.

The Allens had been gentlemen farmers for three generations before the author's birth. They were originally Virginians of English ancestry. By blood and by marriage they were related in Virginia, and afterwards in Kentucky, to the

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Madisons, Paynes, Johnsons, Lanes, Conyers, and Clays—all historic families. On both sides Allen comes of Revolutionary stock. His maternal great-grandfather, Daniel Foster, was killed in the Revolution; and his widow, May McCullouch, drew a pension up to her death in 1833. Of this sturdy Scotch-Irish parentage was Allen's mother, Helen Foster, who was born in Mississippi, who was married at fifteen, and who lived the greater part of her life in Kentucky. His great-grandfather, Richard Allen, the first of the family in the state, had been quite wealthy, owning an enormous tract of land near Lexington. But before the birth of the author his father had lost not only his own fortune but that of his wife, and the family had become acquainted with such straitened means as it had never known before. Then followed the Civil War; the eldest son entered the army when but a lad; the father and second son suffered political banishment from the state, and then there was no chance to better the fallen fortunes of the family. When they returned, the prostration, distress, and ruin of the times met them.³

Mrs. Allen was a woman of rare charms and gracious manners. From his earliest childhood Lane Allen was much in her company.⁴ As his first teacher she took long walks in the country with him and told him about the birds and the trees. Allen says,

"On a Kentucky farm in those days a child

³ Nancy Houston Banks, "James Lane Allen", Bookman, I, 303–05.
⁴ Marcusson, op. cit.
was surrounded by a prodigal bird life of which but traces now remain. My earliest recollections of daybreak are now condensed into one surviving impression: that of hearing all round my father's house, beating close to the walls in every direction, such a sea of song as I think can no longer visit human ears."

His real learning at this period of his life seems to have come from his nearness to nature and from his love of the woods, the fields, the animals, and the birds. He delighted in the companionship of his mother, whom he adored; but, however sweet and admirable this intercourse of mother and son, the isolation from those of his own age was not altogether good. It developed solitary habits, since his mother could not be with him always, and a certain aloofness which manifested itself throughout his life. He says that the love of solitude and of brooding over nature made him an intensely serious youth.5 There were few children in the neighborhood—none that were congenial—and the shy, quiet, reflective, serious boy was thus thrown on his own resources, which were so ample that he was never conscious of isolation—strolling alone the branches watching the fish in the streams and the winged creatures in the trees, unconsciously studying all living things. He was perfectly happy, crossing no one's path and requiring that no one should cross his—always the most imperious trait in his character—following the negroes in

5 J. B. C., "James Lane Allen," The Courier-Journal May 16, 1897.
the hemp fields or when they were shucking corn, taking meals with them in their cabin, or listening as they sang. His love of music was always intense, and he was early an untaught musician. 6

"He grew up amid such scenes of sylvan loveliness that to watch the vivid panorama of nature in his books is to realize fully the deep impression that they made upon his youthful mind." 7

The trend of his mind was markedly literary from the first. In the garret stood a case of old books. Among these were a Bible bound in faded red Morocco and a small Testament, both filled with frightful pictures that used to hold the boy by a sort of horrible fascination. But one day, later on, he made the acquaintance of a volume which had charm without terror: A cousin introduced him to *Lalla Rookh*. From that time the poem was his favorite companion. His reading at all times was directed by his mother, whose taste was for the best books. He had few of his own and generally read what she read, the source of supply being the circulating library at Lexington. 8 Among the authors read were Milton, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Thomson.

It is gratifying to know that the mother lived to see some of the published work of this youngest child, for whom she was so ambitious. With much of her temperament he inherited

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6 Banks, op. cit.


8 Banks, op. cit.
ambition, together with the sustained directness of purpose and the tireless energy that reaches its aim over all obstacles. 9

For a year or two before the close of the Civil War he attended a country school; then in the autumn of 1865 he entered the Academy of Kentucky University, now Transylvania, from which institution he received his bachelor's degree. As salutatorian of his class of 1872, to the chagrin of every editor in town, he delivered his address in Latin; they wondered why such a fine speech could not have been given in the English language.

Finishing seven years of hard study, he entered upon a graduate course and received the degree of Master of Arts. It sounds like a simple story, but between the lines runs a record of ceaseless struggle such as few men know on the road to learning, never easy. Later, honorary degrees were conferred upon him by Bethany College, West Virginia, the University of Kentucky, and Tulane University.

Early in Allen's college career his father met with business reverses, but the young man struggled on in spite of discouraging obstacles. After his graduation there

9 Loc. cit.
11 Townsend, op. cit., p. 16.
12 Banks, op. cit.
13 J. B. C., op. cit.
ensued years of bitter struggle with poverty, for his father died soon after the family fortunes were wrecked; and the boy just out of college found himself not only compelled to make his own way in the world, but to care for those of the family left at home. His first work was teaching a district school, walking twelve miles a day, six going and six coming. He was paid, of course, but a pittance; but the Scotch-Irish sturdiness and the old pioneers’ spirit were strong in the young man; and turning from his big ambitions, he went into the dull round of rustic teaching with a determination that won success. The ensuing two years he taught in Missouri; he then returned to Kentucky to become a private tutor on the border of Bourbon and Fayette Counties. After two years as a teacher in Transylvania University he was called to the chair of Latin and higher English in Bethany College, West Virginia. Two years later he was asked to resign in order that a clergyman might take his place. Disappointed with a profession in which such a calamity was possible, he resolved to begin at once to devote his life to that to which he had always resolved to devote it in the end, literature.

His comparatively late start in this field caused many of his teaching colleagues to discourage him.

14 Banks, op. cit.
He laid aside the habiliments of a pedagogue, however, and took himself and his mother to the home of Mrs. Martin, at the corner of Woodland Park in Lexington, and there he wrote his greatest stories. The Martin house was white with green shutters, large front and side yards, forest trees, many green things growing in all directions, a colonial type of cottage, a fitting seat for an embryonic novelist.

Allen says:

"The cottage was then on the edge of town—opposite, across the pike, was all country, a woodland pasture, next meadows and fields and more distant pastures again. These...were my afternoon rambling grounds.

"They were anxious, struggling, high-strung, ambitious, consecrated years—storing-time years."

Naturally, Kentucky was the home of his first creations. Kentucky was always the land of promise. Amid the scenes of his earlier childhood, and with characters whose traits and temperaments he knew so well, he made his debut as a story-writer with a sketch called "Too Much Momentum," which was published by Mr. Alden in Harper's for April, 1885; two years later The Century accepted "Part of an Old Story." "Thus the tall Kentucky teacher was finally launched upon that much-discussed but seldom-seen literary sea. He was hardly more than a minnow now; but he had a little life in him, and he was

16 Townsend, op. cit.
17 James Lane Allen, Autobiographical Sketch.
wrestling hard for a toe-hold, which was the main thing, after all." These years that saw the first fruits of Allen's fancy were bitter years. He knew what it was to be hungry and cold; yet Allen's spirit was never crushed.

His first significant contributions were to Harper's, The Century, Continent, Independent, and Critic. Having crashed the gates of the greatest magazines in America, he once observed that it was harder to get into the pages of The Century than into the kingdom of heaven.

Allen had gone to New York in 1884 believing that there his creative urge would be best fostered. For six years he struggled unknown, dividing his time between New York and Kentucky. In the early nineties he lived for the most part in Kentucky, residing for two years in Cynthiana. In 1891 he made his residence in Cincinnati, and the following year he went to Europe in search of health.

His success began with the publication of his first book, entitled Flute and Violin and Other Kentucky Tales and Romances (1891) and including his finest short stories. Immaculate copies of the first edition are so scarce that they are difficult to find at twenty-five dollars the copy, a very good

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18 Townsend, op. cit.
19 Marcosson, op. cit.
20 Townsend, op. cit.
21 Marcosson, op. cit.
advance over the original price of one dollar and fifty cents. 22
There, in that plainly--fashioned book, you will find the
heart of James Lane Allen. He never surpassed its beauty, its
charm, its deep understanding of Kentucky life, Kentucky
history, Kentucky legend.

"The boy in "Flute and Violin" is not a
portrait from an original; the author hopes he
is an original from a portrait. There used to
be a boarding-house in Lexington where the author
fared and wayfared at intervals, and on the wall
of the dining-room of this house, opposite his
seat, hung a life-size portrait of a poor little
out-east lad. They grew to be great friends,
these two--the man regularly at his meals and the
lad forever hungry, forever ragged, forever friend-
less, standing there by the table from day to
day and perceived only by the man. These were
the first materials out of which the author tried
to create the little violinist of a century ago." 24

As to the violin:

"When a lad he experienced the ecstasy--
and the agony--of awaiting the day when he should
become the possessor of a new one, in place of the
old cornetalk. The first piece of music that he
ever learned was 0, Thou Fount of Every Blessing,
and to this day his flesh winces as he recalls
the fact that a certain note which was always
right when he whistled the hymn was wrong when he
flourished the bow.

"In looking over these tales, written sev-
eral years ago, the author feels like one who
goes back to walk across a land that he inhabits
no longer. They have for him the silence of
overgrown pathways along which feet pass never
again." 25

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22 Townsend, op. cit.
23 Loc. cit.
24 Allen, Flute and Violin, Biographical Edition
25 Loc. cit.
In 1892 appeared his next book, The Bluegrass Region of Kentucky and Other Sketches. It is generally agreed that this is the best account of Kentucky life ever written.

"They were not the superficial observations and impressions of the traveler that passed through, but they depicted intimately and sympathetically the life, customs, and institutions of the people."26

In the following year (1893) appeared John Gray, which was written in Lexington and Cincinnati and later incorporated in The Choir Invisible. It marks a transitional stage in Allen's work, from short-story to novel; it shows, however, his intention to keep to the Kentucky setting as was his original purpose.

About this time Mr. Allen established his residence permanently in New York. At last he was free, and all that he asked was absolute freedom to live his own life and liberty to do the work he loved. After settling in New York he returned but once to Kentucky, because, as he said, of the painfulness of noting the inevitable changes in city and district.

In 1895 appeared the "pastoral in prose" A Kentucky

26 Marcusson, Library of Southern Literature, p. 43.
27 Banks, op. cit.
Carc1ina. • • • has surely become an American classic. John Wilson Townsend says: "If James Lane Allen wrote a great book, A Kentucky Cardinal was, and is, that book."

Of course, there had to be a sequel, and it appeared the following year with the title Aftermath; during the same year (1896) appeared Summer in Aracdy. Mr. Allen's position in the literary field was not secure, however, until 1897, when The Choir Invisible was published. This book has been proclaimed by many critics as his best work and was dramatized in 1899. His next two novels, The Reign Of Law and The Kettle of the Pasture, reinforced the popularity the author had achieved through The Choir Invisible.

The Bride of the Wistletoe and The Doctor's Christmas Eve were written as parts of a conceived trilogy which was never completed. The Heroine in Bronze appeared in 1912. Other books of less importance are:

The Last Christmas Tree
The Sword of Youth
A Cathedral Singer
The Kentucky Warbler
The Emblems of Fidelity
The Alabaster Box
The Landmark

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In 1896 Mr. Allen spent several months in Washington, and Isaac F. Marcossan gives us the following glimpse of him during his residence in the capital city:

"Every afternoon, whether the sun shines or not, a tall dignified gentleman walks down the stone steps of a plain-looking private residence at 1421 K. Street, in Washington and disappears along one of the adjacent avenues. He is erect and almost soldierly in appearance; his hair is gray; and his moustache shows the white marks of time. There is a kindly but fearless look in the eyes that twinkle behind the gold-rimmed spectacles. The dignity of demeanor and innate charm of manner strongly suggest the Southern gentleman of a type fast passing away. This tall gentleman is the most celebrated Kentuckian in Washington and one of the most successful writers of fiction of the last decade of the nineteenth century, in America." [31]

Allen's closing years were apparently uneventful. They were years of retirement, hard work, study, and devotion to an invalid sister, six years his senior. His friends in Kentucky seemed to know little of him during these years, but on February 19, 1925, the New York Times contained the following notice:

"James Lane Allen, novelist and short-story writer, died yesterday afternoon at the Roosevelt Hospital from chronic insomnia. Mr. Allen was taken to the hospital only a few days before his seventy-fifth birthday, December 21. A short time before he was taken ill, the author had compiled a volume of his most popular short stories, which he was about to have published. Although the compilation was...

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31 Marcossan, op. cit.
completed, Mr. Allen refused to submit it to his publishers before he could edit and revise the text. His condition forbade this from the start. His health gradually declined and, finally, he sank into a state of coma a few days ago from which he did not rally."

The Courier-Journal of February 22, 1925, gives the following account of his funeral service at Lexington, Kentucky:

"The solemn pines bowed in the winter wind today as the Bluegrass soil rolled back to receive the body of James Lane Allen, Kentuckian, immortal author. A carpet of green, banked high with floral offerings; a long line of children, each with a blossom; a few words read by a minister of the Episcopal church—and a never-to-be forgotten son of the Bluegrass passed on to his final sleep."

"As was his wish, without words of praise and with simple services, final tribute was paid to the author who brought fame to his native region. Wreaths from all the public schools of the city and one from the Boy Scouts were among the floral offerings. Classes were dismissed from Transylvania that the students and faculty might do honor to the celebrated alumnus and former instructor."

Mr. Allen's birthday has been celebrated for years in the Lexington schools, and the school children of the city are devoted to him. The Kentucky Warbler was written with them in view, and Mr. Allen remarked that his happiness in the story was largely dependent upon how the Lexington children would receive it. 33

Ten days after the death of James Lane Allen his beloved sister, Mrs. Reed, also died in New York and was

brought back and buried beside him. She passed without
knowing that her stalwart brother had preceded her to his
long home beneath the seamless Bluegrass.

To us he leaves his living works; they are a token of
his affection—a monument that speaks while stone is mute;
a lighthouse casting "rays over the stormy sea of this life
from the calm ocean of the infinite," though the candle has
burned out.

Of a writer who does not in personal presence convey
a sense of power people sometimes say: "Ah, but you should read
his books." Of the late James Lane Allen the contrary was
more often said. He had, in a way, outlived his own literary
fame, but the fine dignity of his bearing, the delicate
scrupulosity which he observed in his friendships, never left
him and never failed to strike and charm all brought into
contact with him.

Mr. Allen has been described as tall, splendidly-
proportioned, with magnificent head, a strong, kindly face,
and a manner which all Southerners like to believe was the
manner of a typical Southern gentleman. He appears to have

34
John Wilson Townsend, James Lane Allen (Louisville:
35
Loc. cit.
36
New York Times, February 20, 1925.
been very sensitive, avoiding publicity and furnishing the 37 outside world few facts about himself. With a fine reserve, in contrast to the majority of writers whose work is less lasting, he kept his private life from the 38 garish day of publicity. Those who knew him personally, however, agree that as a man he was most engaging and entirely devoid of any feeling for personal display. His own life remained a thing apart from his success; and as that success crowded him more and more into the world's "gaze", he remained the same dignified gentleman as when in the years ago he walked hand in hand through the Bluegrass fields with the children of his fancy.

A vast clientele knows him as the author of a book that has passed the hundredth thousand, but it is quite another thing to be in touch with the temperament of the man who created John Gray and the sweet sisterhood that has for its 39 ornaments Sister Dolorosa and Amy Falconer.

Paramount among his personal characteristics is his love for music. He caught the first melody in his childhood, when the note of the cardinal reached his ear in the

37 Dictionary of American Biography.
38 The Courier-Journal, date not available.
39 Marcosson, op. cit.
40 Loc. cit.
Kentucky forest-land. He loved bird life, cared for rural things and people, knew how to keep sentiment from dropping into sentimentalism, and believed in modern chivalry. His stories have derived something deeper than poetic impulse and atmosphere from nature; they have been largely shaped and colored by the penetrating influences of nature on character and temperament.

He was ever a tireless student and insisted that the study of every other art is of value in attaining to a knowledge of the art of fiction. He insisted that the novelist can rely particularly upon the analogies existing between literature and music as at times his surest guide in composition; music teaching him, among other things, as nothing else can, the management of major and minor motives and the treatment of spiritual discords and harmonies. His own habit in his description of a scene or a landscape is first to make a composition of it as an inward picture and then to write with his inward eye fixed solely on this. It is perhaps in this way that his dramatic scenes and landscapes acquire the qualities for which they have been invariably praised, harmony and vividness.

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41 "James Lane Allen," The Outlook, CXXXIX, 330 (March 4, 1925).
42 The Outlook, LXV, 455 (June 23, 1900).
43 Banks, op. cit.
John Bell Henneman says:

"Mr. James Lane Allen is an interesting case of evolution in literature. He derives from Southern literature and began as a portrayer of simple Kentucky landscapes and local life; he has attained to the point of view of world literature in the significance of his themes. He has dealt only with the native Kentucky soil, a soil and race from which he sprung and which he knows well; but his treatment and his art instinct have carried him from the particular to the universal. Thus it comes that no two of his volumes are alike or represent the same ideas and grade of development. Each has been an added experiment in a new field, a new effort in a different sphere of thought, a new success with fresh material. In this variety and growth and in his close touch with the literary and intellectual movements and achievements of his day Mr. Allen's position among Southern writers is unique." 44

"'Human life in relation to nature', as he himself has phrased it, is his most characteristic mark. A sympathetic portraiture of one and a lover's description of the other we always expect, but we may not know what is to be the especial phase of study and type development." 45

"Here most of all, it seems to me, Mr. Allen's peculiar strength lies. He has a romantic background to deal with, one that is historic as well as romantic, which he always observes with the clear eye and feels with the true heart; but he is also profoundly and intimately interested in human life—the life about him, life under many complex conditions, life as wrought through the workings of

45 Henneman, op. cit., p. 332-3.
elemental nature within us and controlled by the Spiritual beyond us. It is a natural and rapid step from history to the problems of contemporary life; therefore romantic and naturalistic tendencies alike combine in him.

"No wonder there came a cry from the sentimentalists; they did not understand how things as sacred and holy as love and marriage should have their underlying conditions subjected to analysis, and by one who at the same time was supremely conscious of spiritual beauty in nature and life." 46

Mr. Allen is a careful artist in style, and his speech, though prose, is often the utterance of a poet. Sometimes he is even too earnest in his art. And yet, in a day when the lack of seriousness in the domain of literature is as overwhelming as it is, this constitutes high praise. 47 No doubt the qualities derived from his birth and environment determined his career.

In the heart of the rich limestone soil and beautiful Bluegrass region of Kentucky lay the scenes of his early life. Here came the blight of war which befell his youth, the struggle with poverty, and then the still more bitter heart struggles for a literary career. It is, therefore, what he has lived and been bred in and what he knows that he has written about; and in describing the phases of this life there is no faltering and no uncertainty.

46 Loc. cit.
47 Henneman, op. cit., p. 334.
48 Loc. cit.
CHAPTER II

THE BLUEGRASS REGION OF KENTUCKY

The Kentucky Tradition

The name "Kentucky" is full of music and magic, and at home or abroad "My Old Kentucky Home" never fails to stir the heart and start the applause. There is a mesmerizing something in the familiar strain that enraptures and enriches the soul. The words and melody are loved in foreign lands and on alien tongues as at our own hearthstones. In some peculiar way the name of "Kentucky" has endeared itself to all the world; and while the people of Kentucky are probably no more hospitable than are the people of any other state, the very word has become largely synonymous with hospitality.

It has been said that "Kentucky is in the middle of the map"; certainly it is in the center of the highway map. Two-thirds of the automobiles of the nation are located to the north and northeast of the Bluegrass State. Kentucky roads welcome you to delightful journeys through a land that is unsurpassed.

2 The "Romance and Charm of Kentucky," Kentucky Progress Magazine, I, 21-22 (September, 1928).
for beauty and scenic variety.

"Once is not enough to visit this region. You'll come back time after time, once you have seen it. It has certain qualities of many foreign lands; visitors from various parts of the world find something here which reminds them of home:

"The Englishman feels he is familiar with the quiet rural beauty of the bluegrass; the Irishman finds the thoroughbred very close to his heart in his love of the runner; the Scotman feels at home in the Kentucky River country and foothills. It is picturesque, quaint, old-fashioned, and colonial."

The Bluegrass region, too, is a world within itself. In its varied color and topography, its preservation of the old and development of the new, it is like no other land. Yet all visitors find here something they seem to have known and cherished before." 4

John Burroughs, the great naturalist, was delighted with his visit to this region and says, among other things,

"In one way it is more pleasing than anything one sees in England, on account of the greater sense of freedom and roominess which it gives one. The fields are not so cut up, nor the roadways so narrow, nor the fences so prohibitory...There is nothing niggardly or small in the people or in their country. One sees none of the New York or New England primness and trimness, but the ample flowing Southern way of life. The farm-houses rarely stand near the highway but are set after the English fashion from a third to half a mile distant, amid a grove of primitive forest trees, and flanked or backed up by the many lesser buildings that the times of slavery made necessary.

"What vistas, what aisles, what retreats, what depths of sunshine and shadow! The grass is as uniform as a carpet and grows quite up to the holes of the trees. One peculiarity of the bluegrass is that it takes complete possession of the soil; it suffers no rival; it is as uniform as a

3 Kentucky Progress Magazine, December, 1928.
fall of snow."

Kentucky, in legend, song, and story, has stood out conspicuously among the commonwealths of the Nation from time immemorial. Back beyond the beginnings of crude frontier civilization Kentucky was so ideally a hunting-ground that no Indian nation possessed it, and it was the one spot in America held in common among them all.

Some of the best American writers and genealogists have pointed out the fact that the people of Kentucky may present the strongest claim to unadulterated lineage. The people of the state have a character as strongly marked by nationality as those of any state in the Union. It is a character extremely difficult to describe, although all the shades of it are strongly marked to the eye of a person who has been long acquainted with them. They have an enthusiasm, a vivacity and ardor of character, courage, frankness, and generosity, that have been developed with the peculiar circumstances under which they have been placed.

6 Brown, op. cit., p. 100.
7 Nancy Lewis Greene, Country Estates of the Bluegrass (privately printed, 1904).
8 Irvin S. Coff, Kentucky: The Proud State (New York: Doran, 1924).
"The bluegrass Kentuckians are the descendants of those hardy, high-spirited, picked Englishmen, largely of the squire and yeoman class, whose absorbing passion was not religious disputation nor the intellectual purpose of founding a state, but the ownership of land and the pursuits and pleasures of rural life, close to the rich soil, and full of its strength and sunlight. They have to this day, in a degree perhaps equaled by no others living, the race qualities of their English ancestry and the tastes and habits of their forefathers." 9

Nowhere in America is the life of the country gentleman more truly characteristic and genuine than in the Bluegrass region of Kentucky. American country life is a vigorous young national plant, with its roots deeply embedded in European soil. In no stronger characteristic does the New World show her kinship to the Old than in a steadily-developing taste for life in the open; for establishing vast country estates and hunting preserves, where an inborn desire to cultivate the soil, breed fine stock, or pass the hunting season in the heart of the country may be gratified.

In seeking a wholesome release from financial cares in rural pursuits, hidden chords in human nature are touched, the existence of which was scarcely suspected, yet which, when once called into being, nevermore quite die out. And thus we have the truest type of the American country gentleman, one who conducts his country estate as an integral part of his life.

Many of the Kentucky country places were once slave

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9 James Lane Allen, The Bluegrass Region of Kentucky and Other Kentucky Articles. (New York: Macmillan, 1907), p. 33.
10 Greene, op. cit., pp. 9-10.
plantations and have never been sold by the families who first fixed their boundaries. The homesteads present when untouched by the hand of Time, a distinct style of architecture peculiar to the South. Broad, spacious, comfortable and substantial, the buildings are generally of brick or stone, set squarely upon solid foundations and softened, beautified, and completed by long-pillared galleries that often extend the whole length of the house—back and front—with stone steps leading up from gravel driveways. Such is the average Kentucky gentleman and his environment.

"By nature the Kentuckian is no rigid economist. ... His ideal of life is neither vast wealth nor personal distinction, but solid comfort in material conditions, and the material conditions are easy: fertility of soil, annual excess of production over consumption, comparative thinness of population.

"To be a farmer here implies no social inferiority, no rusticity, no bookishness. Hence so clearly interlaced are urban and rural society that there results a homogeneity of manners, customs, dress, entertainments, ideals, and tastes.

"You may assail the Kentuckian on many grounds, and he will hold his peace. You may tell him that he has no great cities, that he does not run with the currents of national progress; but never tell him that the home-life of his fellows and himself is not as good as the best in the land. Domesticity is the state porcupine, presenting an angry quill to every point of attack."12

11 Loc. cit.
12 Allen, op. cit., p. 188.
The romance of Kentucky centers in the Bluegrass; but, geographically, the Bluegrass must divide honors with the "Pennyroyal," the "Purchase," and the "Barrens." Of lesser significance, but inseparable from the other popular divisions, the "Knobs" must not be forgotten. To a Kentuckian these features of his state are as clearly defined as the "Panhandle" is to a Texan.

"Draw a horseshoe on the map of Kentucky with one calf at Louisville, thence passing through Bardstown and Lebanon, the toe just south of Danville, thence through Berea and Winchester northward to Maysville. Roughly, this will enclose the Bluegrass." 14

The peculiar characteristics of the region are due to the fact that the underlying rocks are limestone of a very ancient era, and their rapid decay keeps the soil constantly enriched. No amount of cultivation even without fertilizing, seems to exhaust it, and for pasturage the region is unequaled either in America or in Europe.

Kentuckians like to date the beginnings of their state as an abode of white men from the building of the little fort at Harrodsburg (1774). The surveyors and woodsmen of Lord

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14 Loc. cit.
Dunmore were driven back temporarily by the Indians, but Daniel Boone returned next year and planted his door-posts to stay. There have been American residents in Kentucky ever since.

The expedition of Harrod was the first move of the big push westward from the Alleghenies that was to go on for a century and more, till it filled the broad central valley with a population numbering almost the half of our total.

When Boone and his fifty companions withstood the attack of the Canadians and Indians in 1779, they fought, in their small but earnest way, a decisive battle that gave the middle West to the United States. It was not till twelve years later that Kentucky entered the Union. For a time it seemed that she might emulate Vermont and become an independent republic.

Kentucky remained a border state, in a political sense, during the conflict between North and South and preserved the stirring border spirit. She gave but a single son to the Presidency, but that one, Lincoln, possessed such gifts of character as perhaps no other part of the land could have bred. The birthplace of Lincoln and the land of Boone have an historic interest for all Americans.

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16 "Kentucky's Significant History," Outlook, CXXXVII, 420 (July 16, 1924).
17 Loc. cit.
"Hardly had the wilderness been won by physical hardihood as a foothold of physical safety before the people turned their eyes and their affections back toward the older settlements and, with incredible efforts, began to draw over the mountains to themselves the gentler elements of civilization, the symbols of the imperishable elements of the human spirit: respect for religion, respect for learning, respect for law, respect for fire and country, from every quarter reinforcing for themselves the solidarity of enlightened American citizenship."

"The first movement had been a conquest of the land for civilization; the second had been a conquest of the land by civilization. And throughout both of these movements, wherever the hand of man strove, the hand of woman strove; to whatever advance his foot reached, to that advance her foot reached; all that he dared, she dared; all that he endured, she endured."

Fayette County is located in the center of the eastern half of Kentucky and comprises the very heart of the Bluegrass country. It was settled in 1775 by William McConnell, and the first station was established here as Lexington in 1779 by Colonel Robert Patterson with twenty-five men from Fort Harrodsburg. At about the same time Grant's, Bryant's, Boone's, Masterson's, McLean's, and McGee's Stations were established by pioneers and their families from North Carolina and Virginia. 

Fayette County was established as a county of Virginia in November, 1780, and included more than one-third of the present state of Kentucky. The county is recognized to-day

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18 James Lane Allen, quoted in Kentucky Roadbuilder, op. cit.
as one of the richest and most fertile agricultural counties in the United States, 70.2 per cent of the land being in farms. The surface limestone soil is gently rolling with ideal drainage and has an average elevation of about 950 feet.

Lexington, the county seat and largest city, is the metropolis of the whole eastern half of Kentucky. In 1793 Lexington was a perfect type of the Virginia town of that period. The manners, tastes, and appearances of the people and the general characteristics of the place were Virginian. The grand old customs and distinguishing features of the Mother of States and statesmen, then impressed upon Lexington by her children, are happily not extinct. Having acquired as early as 1824 the title of "The Athens of the West," the city holds the distinction, also, of being the first capital of Kentucky, the home of Henry Clay, and the center both of the blood-stock region of America and of the "Garden Spot of the World."

Henry Clay, whose name is the most illustrious one associated with Lexington, came to the city in 1797 and made it his home for the rest of his life, a period of half a century. His home, Ashland, is surrounded by grounds that have the beauty of the Kentucky bluegrass added to that of the English park. Ivy

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20 Loc. cit.
22 Ibid., p. 420.
mantles the stately two-story center, sweeping away from the
lofty gable to the one-story wings on each side, which the
statesman built for his studies. Within, the rooms are low-
ceiled, spacious, and comfortable. Round about is a grove of
inspiring forest trees. To the rear are the negro cabins of
anti-bellum days, the stables, the paddocks, and the pastures.

Towerin~ above the city, in the cemetery not far away, is
the Clay Monument, 120 feet high, built of magnesian limestone
of this state, after the Corinthian style of architecture. It
consists of a pedestal, base, and shaft, topped by the celebrated
statue of the statesman, executed by Joel T. Hart.

Transylvania University was the first regular institution
of learning founded west of the Alleghenies (1789). The
influence it has exerted, both morally and intellectually, has
been immense, and its name is not only venerated and respected
in all civilized America but is well-known in Europe. Its
history begins with the history of Lexington. The name
"Transylvania" is a classical rendering of the "backwoods."

The University of Kentucky, which has grown out of the
Agricultural and Mechanical College of the state, established
in 1882, is located in the former city park in the southern
part of Lexington and consists of fifty-two acres of land laid

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23 Brown, op. cit., p. 87.
25 Ibid., p. 94.
out in walks, drives, and lawns. Two and one-half acres is devoted to field sports of the students.

Other educational institutions located at Lexington are Hamilton, Sayre College, and St. Catherine's. Other places of interest, historically, are the home of Mary Todd, wife of Abraham Lincoln, and the home of General Morgan.

After the fair and gracious women for whom the state is famed, there is, perhaps, no element so strong as Kentucky's reputation for the correct breeding and square racing of horses. The Kentucky Racing Association plant at Lexington has for nearly a century been the scene of horse-racing. This ancient track has traditions of its own which endear it to the heart of the Bluegrass, the true home of the thoroughbred.

Famous Bluegrass horse farms in Fayette County are Fa- away, home of Man O' War; Elmontorf, Idle Hour; Hamburg Place; Walnut Hall; Calumet Farm; Castleton; Cold Stream Farm; and Payne Whitney Farm.

"The Kentuckian invites you to come to Louisville in May--any May of any year will do--to witness the running of the Kentucky Derby. All of present-day Kentucky that can get there likewise is there. Out of every corner of the state the visitors pour in. Until she has seen a Derby run off, a Kentucky girl feels that she has not been properly launched on her social career. For the current year's debutantes, Derby Day is a sort of Universal, free-for-all, coming-out party.

26 Loc. cit.
27 Ibid., p. 68.
28 Loc. cit.
Here abide the Graces three,
In eternal harmony
Maiden, Equine, Julep—all
Linked in a convivial thrall. 29

One might spend weeks in the Bluegrass and still not see half of the many interesting places. Bryan Station Spring, Perryville Battlefield, Camp Dick Nelson, the Blue Licks Battlefield, and Boonesboro are among the historic places which one might mention.

At Frankfort the visitor will see the beautiful new State Capitol; the Old Capitol, with its priceless State Historical exhibit; Daniel Boone's grave, overlooking the picturesque Kentucky River; and Liberty Hall, designed by Thomas Jefferson.

On the bank of the Kentucky River, in Frankfort, is a brick manor house, built in 1796 by John Brown according to a plan furnished by Thomas Jefferson. The house is like a far-descending echo of colonial Old Virginia. At Spring Hill, in Woodford County, is the home of Nathaniel Hart, who had been a boy in the fort at Boonesborough. In Lincoln County is the first stone house built in Kentucky, "Travelers Rest"; it was built in 1783 by Governor Metcalf for Isaac Shelby, first governor of Kentucky.

A few miles down the Kentucky River from Camp Nelson,

30 Wilder, op. cit., p. 43.
31 Allen, op. cit., p. 194.
High Bridge, the highest railroad bridge of its kind in the 32 world, spans the river 317 feet above the water level. Only one mile from High Bridge is one of the most comfortable and restful spots in Kentucky, Shakertown. Southward along the picturesque highway from Lexington to Shakertown is Harrodsburg, the oldest town in the state. The next town southward is Danville, location of the famous Centre College and home of the "Praying Colonels."

Berea College, nestling in the foothills of the Kentucky Mountains, is widely known for its wonderful achievements in providing education for the mountain boys and girls of Kentucky.

"My Old Kentucky Home" at Bardstown, scene of Stephen Collins Foster's immortal song, has become a national shrine 34 and has an appeal to every American.

On every road leading out of Lexington are many places of beauty and interest, but only one other may be mentioned. It is known as the Abbey of Gethsemane and is located in the heart of Nelson County, about seventy miles from Louisville. To the stranger, suddenly happening upon it, it would seem to be a bit of old France transplanted between the Kentucky hills, for

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33 Loc. cit.
34 Isaac F. Marcusson, "The South in Fiction." The Bookman, XXXII, 370 (December, 1910).
it is a stone quadrangle with fountains and courtyards, 
sentinelled by noble elms and hung with a brooding peace. Every year strangers come there, led by the lure which they found in "The White Cowl," by James Lane Allen.

"The Trappists have but two convents in the United States: this, the older, and one near Dubuque, Iowa, a colony from the Abbey in Ireland. From various countries of the Old World men find their way into the Abbey of Gethsemane, but among them are no Americans. Repeatedly the latter have joined the order and have failed to persevere up to the final consecration of the white cowl. The fairest warning is given; one is made to understand the entire extent of the obligation he has assumed; and only after passing through a novitiate, prolonged at the discretion of the abbot, is he admitted to the vows that must be kept unbroken until death. The death of the nearest kindred is not announced to him. Forgotten by the world, by him it is forgotten. Sorrow may not depict itself freely on his face. If a suffering invalid, he must manifest no interest in the progress of his malady, feel no concern regarding the result. In his last hour he sees ashes strewn upon the floor in the form of a cross, a thin scattering of straw placed over them, and his body extended thereon to die; and from this hard bed of death he knows it will be borne on a bier by his brethen and laid in the grave without coffin or shroud."35

In the Courier-Journal of February 23, 1935, appeared the following:

"Brother Nevard, sixty-one years old, a member of the Trappist Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemane, died today of influenza, the sixth victim of the disease since it became epidemic a week ago. Twenty-four of the eighty members are now affected. Bishop John A. Floersh of the Catholic Diocese of Louisville, has arranged for two nurse-physicians of the Alexian Brothers' Hospital, Chicago, to go to Gethsemane and assist Dr. Greenwell in handling the epidemic."

James Lane Allen As Interpreter of the Bluegrass

James Lane Allen once remarked, "Behind all that I have written lie the landscapes of a single neighborhood." Of the Bluegrass pastures "so like the loveliest landscapes of Saxon England," of sylvan slopes with loveliness unique and local," he wrote; for it was this carpet upon which men lived their lives, this scenery of the great dramas upon which, in his boyhood, he rejoiced to trace "quality of gracefulness in the labyrinthine courses of the restful streams, in the free unstudied succession of meadow, field, and lawn," said he.

"The question is often asked, how can a man in a city write of a country far away that he has not seen for years? But that country is never far away, and the man looks over into it unceasingly. He has but to lift his eyes to see it as clearly as he sees the people in the street."37

In almost all of his works Mr. Allen shows the influence of his early environment; and although most of his life was spent in the north, he never sundered himself from the Kentucky land, which, according to critics, he portrayed with a charm of personality seldom encountered in the books of his fellow-authors of the Southland.

36 "James Lane Allen," Kentucky Roadbuilder (Louisville), March, 1925, 6.
37 James Lane Allen, quoted by Townsend, op. cit.
"Why make a description of the Bluegrass region of Kentucky? What one sees may be only what one feels—only intricate affinities between nature and self, that were developed long ago and have become too deep to be viewed as relations or illusions. What two human beings find the same things in the face of a third, or in nature? Descriptions of scenery are notoriously disappointing to those whose taste in landscape is different or who have little or no sentiment for pure landscape beauty. So one coming hither might be sorely disappointed. No mountains; no strips of distant blue-gleaming water; no cascades; no grandeur, no majesty; no wild picturesqueness. The chords of landscape harmony are very simple; nothing but grace and repose, delicacy and elegance. One might fail at seasons to find even these. This is a beautiful country, but not always; there come days when the climate shows as ugly a temper as possible. Not a little of the finest timber has been lost by storms. The sky is for days one great blanket of gruesome gray. In winter you laugh, with chattering teeth, at those who call this 'The South,' the thermometer perhaps registering from twelve to fifteen degrees below zero. In summer the name is but a half-truth. Only by visiting this region during some lovely season, or by dwelling here from year to year and seeing it in all the humors of storm and sunshine, can one love it."

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Allen, op. cit., p. 15.
CHAPTER III

ALLEN'S EARLIER KENTUCKY NOVELS

A Kentucky Cardinal

Until the publishing of A Kentucky Cardinal James Lane Allen's work had been almost exclusively in a minor key. A pathetic strain, having no note of morbidness in it, vibrates through his earlier stories and had come to be recognized as an inseparable element of the artistic beauty of his work. A Kentucky Cardinal has shown that this is not true, that the use of the minor key was simply the result of the Author's earlier views of art. This story is without a shadow, and its fresh, delicious humor is as sweet as the pathos of those that preceded it. Of literary art so fine that the highest critics have called it a classic, it possesses some additional quality which has endeared it to the average reader who cares little for the classic for its own sake.¹

It is a pastoral poem in prose, noting the procession of the seasons. Here was the heart of Nature laid bare; here wrote a novelist who at the same time was a disciple of Thoreau and Audubon. Indeed, the spirit of Audubon hovers through the book as his person had traversed these scenes in

¹Banks, op. cit., pp. 303-305.
earlier days.

As we turn the page, everything speaks of one intimately present at Nature's processes; the freezing and the thawing, the depths of winter's cold and the glistening in the sunlight. The very similes are taken from Nature's laws and appearances, and this fact continues true of all Mr. Allen's work henceforth. This love and close observation of Nature leads him into the study of the laws underlying the physical universe. Nature and humanity become united. There is the poetry of the country in the prodigal gifts and appearances of Nature; there is the prose of town in the communion of men.

"The longer I live here, the better satisfied I am in having pitched my earthly camp fire, gyspy-like, on the edge of a town, keeping it on one side and the green fields, lanes and woods on the other. Each, in turn, is to me as a magnet to the needle. At times the needle of my nature points toward the country. On that side everything is poetry. I wander over field and forest, and through me runs a glad current of feeling that is like a clear brook across the meadows of May. At other times the needle veers round and I go to town—to the manured haunts of the highest animal and cannibal. That way nearly everything is prose." 

In character portrayal a contrast is necessarily suggested between the two sisters, intended rather as symbols of widely-

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2 Henneman, op. cit., p. 340.
3 Ibid., p. 341.
differing types. Sylvia is a "little half-fledged spirit, to whom the yard is the earth and June eternity, but who peeps over the edge of the nest at the chivalry of the ages and fancies that she knows the world."

But the chief characterization, wherever the first person is used, lies in the revelation of the gentleness, firmness, sensitiveness, and unconscious selfishness—all combined in the creation of Adam Moss. Georgiana is pale beside him, though we catch here and there sincere glimpses of her, too, as in the merry twinkle and good humor of her words when she is growing stronger, words which playfully repeat the first ever passed between her and Adam: "Old man, are you the gardener?"

In its idyllic charm, in the exquisite and tender unfolding of its romance, in the kindly humor which illumined it, and in the very music of its style, this story set a new mark for our fiction.

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5  Ibid., p. 47.
6  Henneman, op. cit., p. 343.
7  Marcusson, op. cit., p. 44.
Aftermath

There had to be a sequel to *Kentucky Cardinal*; the public demanded to know the end of the love-story of Adam and Georgiana—prototypes, we'd like to think, of the author himself and of one of the women who came into his life and went out at about the same point that she entered. So Mr. Allen supplied the sequel so quickly that, for the first time, he produced a story that was not printed in a magazine before going between boards.

Some people have wished that a sequel had never been written. In *Kentucky Cardinal* the winter of bachelordom, thawed by the springtide of love and a consequent new life, was blossoming into the summer of joy. The conclusion is *Aftermath*, the autumn and winter of life come again, the fall of leaves and of hopes, and the funeral dirge. The idyllic sweetness has passed away with the flowers. There remains only a feeling of resignation: "If God wills, when I fall asleep for good, I shall lay my head beside hers on the bosom of the Life Everlasting.*

Like its predecessor, *Aftermath* is a story commingled with Nature's woods and seasons. It is also written in the first person and is again of Adam Moss. His own bereaved home and

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8 Townsend, op. cit., p. 15.
9 Henneman, op. cit., p. 344.
10 *Aftermath*, p. 263.
that of the birds furnish the "universal tragedy of the nests."

Tenderness and delicacy of expression are occasionally crossed
with boldness of utterance, the saying of things that are
thought and are true, but are usually left unspoken. Where
this is necessary and vital, our author may be applauded for
his frankness. That it is not always so is the ground upon
which the severest attacks upon Mr. Allen have been made. Chief
among Nature's mysteries, sex questions manifestly interest
him, poetically and scientifically. Al He is defended, however,
in the following article:

"Never once in any of his books is there the
faintest indication of bad taste or any touch of
the erotic, in spite of the very human passion which
he often portrays. The purveyors of fiction that
try to be desperately wicked and frequently succeed
only in being ridiculous had better read Aftermath;
if only to get it burnt into them what love really
is. No man could know the tiny book without
having one grain of impurity removed, some little
desire for true beauty of spirit driven to a
deeper hold on him; and the same statement, we
think, can be made irrefutably of all Mr. Allen's
romances. No greater praise could possibly be
given to an author when such gifts of influence
over feeling and motive are aided by a most
impeccable grace."12

11
Henneman, loc. cit.
12
The Academy, "James Lane Allen," Courier-Journal,
date not available.
Summer in Arcady

Summer in Arcady was originally printed in the *Cosmopolitan Magazine* in four parts, from December, 1895, to March, 1896, and was entitled "Butterflies: A Tale of Nature." It was also a tale of love, and rather strong medicine for timorous folk—including the editors of Harper's and The Century.

This story was the very first of Allen's works to meet with a violent storm of protest. The scene was, for the most part, Slickaway, where he first taught "the young idea how to shoot"; the neighboring surroundings; and, finally, across the Ohio to the ancient, tiny town of Aberdeen. Nature and sex—his famous formula—was here first compounded in "The Romeo and Juliet of Kentucky and Southern life."

The story traces in the lives of a Kentucky boy and girl the rise, the sweep, and the subduing force of that elemental impulse which is the deepest mystery of nature, and which in the old mythologies found manifold symbolic representations.

It marks the most distinct turning point in Mr. Allen's career; it shows a new objective method of treatment, that of detachment of the object for purposes of study and reflection. It is a story of inheritance of Nature's gifts and Nature's mysterious workings. There is a struggle of spiritual with

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15 *The Outlook*, LXV, 455 (June 23, 1900).
material forces. The poet still feels Nature, but the reasoning mind is now objective and holds calmly aloof as it studies the workings of Nature, where man is but one of its creatures and often its cruel sport. It is the turning of the romanticist into scientific and realistic habits of thought. 16

The story deals more with the physical forces of Nature.

The hot summer's day is typical of the setting, the burning passion of Nature on all sides:

"Nature is lashing everything—grass, fruit, insects, cattle, human creatures—more fiercely onward to the fulfillment of her ends. She is the great heartless haymaker, wasting not a ray of sunshine on a clod, but caring naught for the light that beates upon a throne, and holding man and woman, with their longing for immortality, and their capacities for joy and pain, as of no more account than a couple of fertilizing nasturtiums." 17

Summer in Arcady is thus a story of the eternal mystery of sex attraction—of the primary forces and passions stirring in man, but becoming controlled and guided, nevertheless, by some physical restraint toward higher purposes.

Grant C. Knight, of the University of Kentucky, who has written his doctor's dissertation upon James Lane Allen, discussed in an article in Letters Allen's change from romance to realism. He says,

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16 Henneman, op. cit., p. 345.
18 Henneman, op. cit., p. 346.
"It needs no very accurate critic to remark the sharp change in Allen's subjects and manner from 1893 on... It is doubtful whether any one had exhibited such delicacy of feeling, such playfulness of humor that shades off into seriousness, such purity of tone as the reader finds in A Kentucky Cardinal and Aftermath and later in the noble orchestration of The Choir Invisible. To go, therefore, from the daintiness and refinement of Flute and Violin to the sensuous warmth and passion of Butterflies is as surprising today as it must have been shocking to Allen's admirers at that time. But there could be no doubting the imminence of a decided change in literary style; and Allen stirred by this knowledge, resolved to break with his past and experiment with the new realism, which was, after all, as old as Henry Fielding.

"Readers not too-well acquainted with Allen's fiction and who have been misled into thinking of him as the writer of sentimental and innocuous tales of idyllic life in Kentucky, may well be startled to discover... a frankness in picturing a scene of seduction not surpassed in our literature prior to the twentieth century and a daring in symbolism not equaled up to that time."

When the story was published by the Macmillan Company as Summer in Arcady, Allen had modified some of the passages. Mr. Knight says that there is no doubt, whatever as to Mr. Allen's position. To him, as evidenced in Summer in Arcady, human nature was a battleground for the two opposing forces: that of the physical and that of the spiritual.

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19 Grant C. Knight, "When James Lane Allen Turned to Realism," Letters, 11, 9-10, 12-14 (November, 1928).
CHAPTER IV
THE CHOIR INVISIBLE

Much of the material of the earlier story, "John Gray," had been reworked into a longer and much better story. The agents of Allen's publishers were on their way to California for a thorough advertising of the book as "John Gray," when he received a message suggesting that the story be given a new name. "We can reach our agents by wire before they get to San Francisco. But if there is to be a change, we must have the name at once," the message said. "Give me two hours," replied the author. Going to his room at 68 Madison Avenue, he bowed his head upon his desk. Suddenly the words of George Elliot's famous poem came to his mind. "I have it," said Allen, and two hours later the title of his most successful book had been telegraphed to San Francisco:

"O may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence

.....

....feed pure love,
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty,
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused;
And in diffusion, evermore intense,
So shall I join the choir invisible,
Whose music is the gladness of the world."2

1 Næcossen, op. cit.
2 George Elliot, quoted by Townsend, op. cit.
One is charmed and held by the clear, healthy atmosphere in which the story begins:

"The middle of a fragrant afternoon of May in the green wilderness of Kentucky; the year 1795."

The life of the pioneer period, when nature was slowly making room for men and recovering in vital influence what she lost in undisputed authority over field and wood, is set forth under the spell of a country of soft and beguiling loveliness. The story is of Colonial and Revolutionary Kentucky; particularly pervading is the consciousness of historic evolution which has made Kentucky what she has been and is at her best. There are the feelings of more than a century’s past and growth; the thought of Kentucky’s lovely stand on the borderland of the great Western wilderness; the recognition that after the original thirteen colonies the first new state to be added to the westward was Kentucky, admitted to the Union in 1792; the emphasis that the Anglo-Saxon pioneer had pushed his way through the fastnesses of the Allegheny mountains and was destined to occupy the great Mississippi basin and thence pass from ocean to ocean; and that this was the beginning of the movement for expansion and for nationality. It may be considered, in a sense, an anticipation of the

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Outlook, LXV, 445 (June 23, 1900).
historic novel. Historical and romantic in type, it is psychological in spirit and descriptive of Nature's appeals. While its setting is drawn from pioneer conditions in Kentucky's history, its interest centers in the development of human character and destiny; it is really a soul study and conflict in a faithfully presented historical environment.

It is as if the author would say: There were high and noble souls then in the laying of Kentucky's foundations, and high and noble generations have sprung from them.

The contrast between the two women, Amy and Mrs. Falconer, her aunt, is the central thought of the book; the plot of the old story, "John Gray," serves merely as an introduction. In the deeper psychological spirit of the new setting the heart and soul of the movement centers in Mrs. Falconer. The direct influence of the great book she lends to John Gray (Sir Thomas Malory's narrative of the conquest of others and of self by King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table) became the great motive power in building up his character and life.

In her parting from John Gray she had held out to him all the ideals of manhood, for in having put into his hands the book "out of her own purity she had judged him."6

As time passed, changes came into her life—and with those changes her final confession to herself of her love for him.

4 Henneman, op. cit., p. 348-349.
5 Loc. cit.
6 Henneman, op. cit., p. 350.
Her first thought, "I shall understand everything when he comes," shadowed into "I shall go softly all my years." "It was into the company of these gentler pilgrims that she had passed; she had missed happiness twice."

At last with the receding years came young John and came the letter, and with it the revelation she had known was hers: "If I have kept unbroken faith with any of mine, thank you and thank God."7

"In the country of the Spirit there is a certain high table-land that lies far on among the outposts toward Eternity. Standing on that calm clear height, where the sun shines ever though it shines coldly, the wayfarer may look behind him at his own footprints of self-renunciation, below on his dark zones of storm, and forward to the final land where the mystery, the pain, and the yearning of his life will either be infinitely satisfied or infinitely quieted. But no man can write a description of this place for those who have never trodden it; by those who have, no description is desired: their fullest speech is silence. For here dwells the Love of which there has never been any confession, from which there is no escape, for which there is no hope: the love of a man for a woman who is bound to another, or the love of a woman for a man who is bound to another. To walk there is to be counted among the Unseen and the Alone."8

For many readers Mrs. Falconer will remain one of the white-shining figures of American literature. She is a masterpiece of womanhood—a perfect woman, strong and tender, whose life has been one long disappointment, but who wears her sorrow

8 Allen, op. cit., pp. 299-300.
like a crown of glory and whose memory lingers like the rich
fragrance of a rose. In the perfection and purity of her
character one finds an inspiration, and after the book has
been laid aside, a gladness remains, as an echo of the ebb
and swell of grand, sweet anthems in the heart.

It is the humanness and the humanity of the story which
make the strongest appeal. Mr. Allen is striving to come
nearer to the divination of the human soul, to apprehending
man with his conflicts and contradictions and his truth. The
book pulsates with the sense of a nation's destiny and the
spiritual testing of individual lives.

The story is pure, human, tragic, with the tragedy and
triumph of strength and weakness, of right over wrong, and
inspiring with its note of high faith in the right and the
divine supremacy of goodness.

It is written in pure, sonorous English and has a per-
manent worth as an expression of the quieter, more spiritual
experiences of the race.

This sense of the dignity of life and the individual,
with its faith and its struggle, with its reticence and proud
assertion, with its aristocratic grace, has its own necessary

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9 "W. H. F., unidentified clipping, Kentucky Library.
10 Kenneman, op. cit., p. 351.
11 Unidentified clipping, Kentucky Library.
12 Albert Elmer Hancock, "The Art of James Lane Allen," The Outlook, LXXIV, 953 (June, 1909).
manner of speech. The style is created by the sense of these things and, in turn, reflects them and communicates them. Mr. Morton says, in his article, "We do not write such sentences now as James Lane Allen wrote."

The Choir Invisible brought Mr. Allen world-wide recognition, setting him forth as a true novelist. Edition after edition appeared, the sales finally reaching, according to his publishers, well over 450,000 copies. The book compelled the quick admiration of people in foreign lands, being translated into French, German, Japanese, and many other languages.

\[\text{David Morton, "The Sun Rose Then Also," The Bookman, LXXII, 450 (January, 1931).}\]
\[\text{Townsend, op. cit., p. 17.}\]
CHAPTER V
THE REIGN OF LAW

The Reign of Law is a tale of Kentucky hemp fields, and it is claimed that the prologue on Kentucky hemp enhanced the author's reputation and earned for him the distinction of being acclaimed "one of the greatest writers of descriptive prose ever born out of Europe." It is a tale of love and of evolution. "How it did arouse the irritabilities of the Brethren! And how the controversy did help the publishers to put the book across with a saving of thousands of dollars in advertising invoices!"

James Lane Allen said, "I possess no mental picture of my father older than that of sowing the hemp seed. Backward and forward, backward and forward, across the soft brown earth he rode, sowing the hemp."

The essay on hemp with which he introduces the story is familiar to almost every school boy and girl in Kentucky and has surely become a classic.

"Hemp in Kentucky in 1782--early landmark in history of the soil, of the people. Cultivated first for the needs of the cabin and clearing solely;

1 Clipping from the Courier-Journal, date not available.
2 Townsend, op. cit., p. 20.
3 "Autobiographical Sketch," op. cit.

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for twine and rope, towel and table, sheet and shirt. By and by not for cabin and clearing only; not for tow-homespun, fur-clad Kentucky alone. To the north had begun the building of ships—American ships for American commerce, for American arms, for a nation which Nature had herself created and had distinguished as a seafaring race. To the South had begun the raising of cotton. As the great period of shipbuilding went on—greatest during the twenty years or more ending in 1860; as the great period of cotton-raising and cotton-baling went on—never so great before as that in that same year—the two parts of the nation looked equally to the one border plateau lying between them, to several counties of Kentucky, for most of the nation's hemp. 4

"Some morning when the roar of March winds is no more heard in the tossing woods, but along still brown boughs a faint, veil-like greenness runs; when every spring, welling out of the soaked earth, trickles through banks of sod unbared by ice; before a bee is abroad under the calling sky; before the red of apple-buds becomes a sign in the low orchards, or the high song of the thrush is pouring forth far away at wet pale-green sunsets, the sower, the earliest sower of the hemp, goes forth into the fields." 5

Far from being unnecessary, the opening prelude is but the overture to the wells of passion following like the processes of the tides and sun, the strains of which are constantly heard through the entire piece. And there is the same apparent contradiction, yet two-fold aspect of nature in the book—the poet's combined with the scientist's.

5 Ibid., p. 8.
6 Henneman, op. cit., p. 352.
There is the underlying recognition of the part the settlement of Kentucky has played in the development of the country and the part that hemp has had in Kentucky's history. Nature and Life, their union and their relation—these are typified by the hemp:

"Ahl type, too, of our life which also is earth-sown, earth-rooted; which must struggle upward, be cut down, rotted, and broken, ere the separation take place between our dross and our worth—poor, perishable shard and immortal fiber. O, the mystery, the mystery of that growth from the casting of the soul as a seed into the dark earth, until the time when, led through all natural changes and cleansed of weakness, it is born from the fields of its nativity for the long service."8

The hero of the story is the descendant of the pioneer who built a church on the edge of a farm that there might be therein freedom of worship forever. An opening chapter deals with religious toleration, wideness of appeal, and openness to new thought; and this note is held continuously throughout. Following the two preludes, one of nature and the other of history, the story opens with the big raw-boned boy of eighteen cutting hemp. The date was the end of old and the beginning of new things in Kentucky and everywhere in the Southern States, among many signs being the opening of the university at Lexington the following autumn. It was the day of revolutions, of new expansions and undertakings, new directions of activity and thought, in the South specifically and in the world gen-

7 Loc. cit.
8 Allen, op. cit., p. 23.
erally. These two movements, the local and the world-wide, 9
Mr. Allen seeks to bring together.

Fault may be found in the structure of the book that the
true story rests in the first half with the catastrophe.
There the book could have ended, and would have ended did Mr.
Allen belong exclusively to the realists. But he feels that
there is something positive beyond, more to be experienced and
more to learn in the essay after truth. With the dramatic
end of one story another immediately begins. While dramati-
calely the climax has been passed; yet, for the removal of the
sense of incompleteness, a conclusion must be added. Out of
the ashes of the old life and old faith a new structure is to
rise—a dwelling spot for love, which must bring forth ulti-
mately the best sort of life and the highest, because rational,
ideas of faith. "The everlasting truth is gradually unrolled
that it is the patience and tenderness and faith of woman
whereby man, at length, finds spiritual regeneration and sal-
vation." 10

Mr. Allen, when he first wrote The Reign of Law, which
combated the narrow religious views of the past, was met with
determined opposition from President McGarvey, of the College
of the Bible in the University of Kentucky. The arguments
may be passed by, though the little pamphlet which contains
them is suggestive. What needs to be pondered over by the

9  Henneman, op. cit., p. 353.
10  Ibid., p. 356.
student of conditions in the South is the presence of a conservative theology which is not yet willing—or at least was not in 1900—to take full cognizance of the intellectual trend of the age. There is a compromise between the dogmatic theologian and the dogmatic infidel whom Mr. Allen took for his hero. Yet the reaction has to come in the course of intellectual progression.

The story has not only the extraordinary beauty which gives Mr. Allen's work a place by itself in our literature; it has also great spiritual depth and unusual grasp of thought. It is knit together by an interior logic which is the more impressive because it is completely absorbed in the artistic process. It lies in the very heart of the story and is part of its organic life. It is primarily the work of an artist to whom the dramatic interest is supreme, but the artist is also a close, courageous, and reverent thinker, the beauty of whose work is not spread over its surface "like a delicate filigree, but issues out of its depths like the blooms which rests on the face of the world."

The character of Gabriella is drawn with a few bold, adequate strokes; a noble woman whose thought rests on the highest faith of religion, by direct perception, and whose feet are not caught in the tangle of theology. She has the

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12 The Outlook, LXV, 455 (June 23, 1900).
radiant vision of the great-hearted and the pure-souled, and
she is as truly the mediator in the history of a soul as are
Shakespeare's adorable women in so many of his plays. Some-
time, somewhere, she declares, they must come together in
faith; if they do not, he will need her the more.

Mr. Allen has never relied upon incident for the interest
of his stories; in this work he has told the story of two
human souls: a story conceived and expressed in terms of the
deepest experience; wonderfully condensed in style, and yet
without mutilation of the thought; touched throughout with that
exquisite beauty which reminds one of Hawthorne.
CHAPTER VI
THE METTLE OF THE PASTURE

In 1903 Allen wrote another novel of Kentucky, The Mettle of the Pasture, which he dedicated to his sister, the sole surviving member of his household at that time. It is a love story of great beauty, saturated with the atmosphere of Kentucky to a remarkable degree and destined to be known in years to come as his "last Kentucky novel." In its morals and values it is, perhaps, the most old-fashioned of all his romances. Like The Reign of Law, it was bitterly assailed in some quarters and in others praised.

Mr. Allen's work has been conspicuous for its homeliness of universal tragedies and the subdued charm of its music. The Mettle of the Pasture shows the same traits with additional powers. There is in this book the devotion to landscape, the interpretation of nature in terms of modern science, the studious research for "parallel passages" in the life of nature and man, the idyllic love of sensuous beauty transformed into the definition of spiritual things; all these are wrought out again for us with the artistic scruple of a poet for the perfect line.

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1 Townsend, op. cit., p. 21.
2 A. F. Hancock, "The Art of James Lane Allen," The Outlook, LXXIV, 953 (August 15, 1903).
The theme of the book is the double standard of purity for men and women. Ronald, the lover, forced by honor and the sacredness of his love, on the betrothal night confesses the one single slip of his youth; for his character will not permit him to base his expectant happiness on a lie. The girl, who loves him with all the intensity of faith and pure devotion, recoils as from a hideous nightmare. She rushes away, contemning him as a man would contemn a woman of similar record. The one act was, to her, an indelible, inexorable stain. In a later interview she lashes him with an apparent self-regarding bitterness that is undoubtedly heartless. Some reviewers cannot understand the paradox of the brutality and the love, but the consistency lies in the fact that they are both expressions of her intense affection. The paradox of the brutality and affection is as consistent as the swing of a pendulum, and those who cannot see it are incapable of understanding the most profound emotion.

"For here it was one of the moments when we are reminded that our lives are not in our keeping and that whatsoever is to befall us originates in sources beyond our power. Our wills may indeed reach the length of our arms or as far as our voices can penetrate space; but without us and within us moves one universe that saves us or ruins us only for its own purposes; and we are no more free amid its laws than the leaves of the forest are free to decide their own shapes and season of unfolding, to order the showers by which they are to be nourished and the storms which

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Hancock, op. cit., p. 954.
Mr. Allen has concluded his story in the only possible way for an optimist. There is mercy for the repentant sinner. Even as Christ abased himself and came down to suffer the indignation of men and the martyrdom of Golgotha that divine love might be manifest as the ruling passion of God; so the girl, after three years of wandering over the world, after finding everywhere the record of woman's humiliation before man's impurity, returns to reveal the triumphant glory of earthly love and through that to open the gate of the man's earthly salvation.

Rowan Meredith is the most truly heroic man that the author has given us. He has that superb dignity of silent suffering which commands respect. He has, too, a superb sense of honor; he chose to lose with truth rather than to win by deceit. But the lesson of his brief span of years was well learned.

"Life of my life," he said with that lesson on his lips, "sign of my love, of what was best in me, this is my prayer for you: May you find one to love you such as your father found; when you come to ask her to unite her life with yours, may you be prepared to tell her the truth about yourself and have nothing to tell that would break her heart. By the purity of your own life guard the purity of your sons for the long honor of our manhood."  

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5 Hancock, op. cit., p. 954.  
6 Allen, op. cit., pp. 446-447.
In dramatic interest *The Kettle of the Pasture* is an advance upon anything Mr. Allen had done. Even though he adopts the digressive method, the main narrative, while hanging fire, absorbs the reader's imagination; in fact, it gains by the suspense and by the temporary diversion of attention.

Hancock, *op. cit.* p. 955.
Conclusion

No state, perhaps, offered more varied beginnings and backgrounds for the makers of her literature than Kentucky. Across her bosom swept the tide of early colonial conquest that surged onward to the winning of the West; into the composition of her people mingled the blood of the Puritan and the Cavalier that blended into a sturdy race. Yet, in his apprentice-days, Mr. Allen once voiced the opinion: "Kentucky has no literature." This was wrong; Kentucky has always had a literature, but her love of literature has been latent. Perhaps no man in his generation did more to stimulate that love than did James Lane Allen.

He has created Kentucky and Kentuckians as things apart from the outside world, a miniature republic within a greater republic; and no one knows the land and the people other than imperfectly if one cannot see and feel that his conception is clear and sentient. "With a light but firm touch he has caught the shimmering atmosphere of his own native uplands and the idiosyncrasies of their people with all the fidelity with which the camera gives back a material outline."

James Lane Allen has been dead ten years, but the first full-length biography of him has just come from the press. It is written by Grant C. Knight, Assistant Professor of English, University of Kentucky, and is called James Lane Allen and the

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1 Marcosson, op. cit., p. 360.
2 Townsend, op. cit., p. 4.
Genteel Tradition.

It seemed to one of James Lane Allen's admirers that little had been written of him since his death—therefore this tribute is passed on:

Voices

To James Lane Allen
By Virginia Stait.

"I should like the memory of my life to give out the sound of a flute"—The Choir Invisible.

I am not dead, I think,
But all unlessoned where the dead should know.
For every pipe that plays is still the link
For thought to come and go.

The lyre strings are dear
And bring me to a halting place of dreams
That every convoy takes down every year,
And every ghost redeems.

And all the organ tones
Of ancienity still pass my narrow door,
And I march with the chords one longer owns
When longer heard before.

And harp by harp I keep,
With falas that the day and night have sung,
Unto unmitigable things of sleep,
Unto wales restrung.

But oh, the flute to me
Brings the abiding-places of the past
As close-as close—as shipwreck to the sea,
Or flesh to dust made fast!

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Virginia Stait, "Voices," Literary Digest, LXXXVIII, 32 (January 9, 1926).
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