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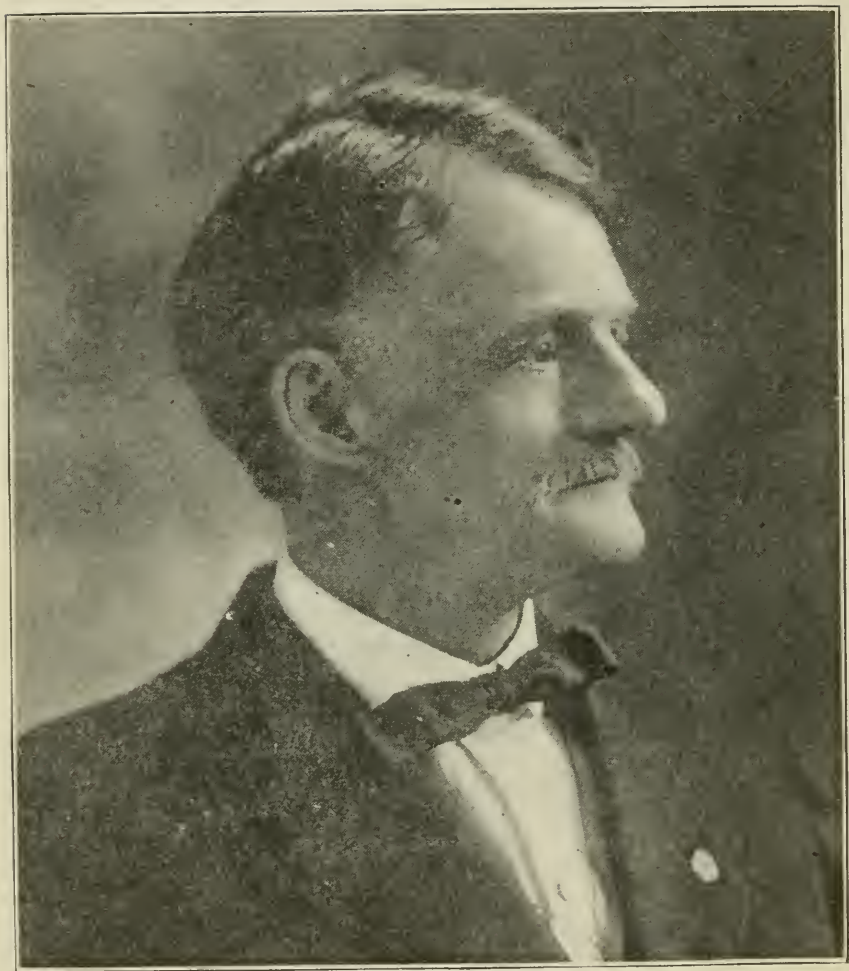
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Alfred B. McCown.

DOWN ON THE RIDGE,

REMINISCENCES OF THE OLD DAYS IN COAL-
PORT AND DOWN ON THE RIDGE;
MARION COUNTY, IOWA.

BY

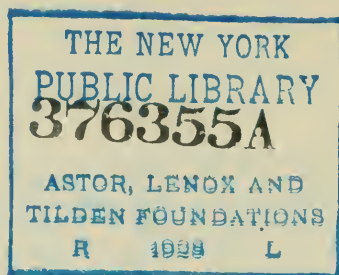
ALFRED B. McCOWN.

[Des Moines]

1909.

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DEDICATION.

To the friends of my youthtime, the boys and girls down in that old homeland, those bright joyous spirits who lent sunshine to the morning twilight of my existence; to those who shared with me the hardships, the toil, the gladsome hours in the home, the schoolroom, the field of sport and play, and to the sacred memory of those who ministered to our wants and fain would have guided our young feet in the paths of right, this little volume is dedicated.

ALFRED B. McCOWN.

Des Moines, Iowa,

May 28, 1909.

FOREWORD.

This little book has not been thrust upon the world to bring the writer into prominence. Such an attempt would and should meet with dismal failure.

Prompted by the memory of the goodly people who were the pioneers of that far off time, and the pride we all feel in the great work they did in the life they lived and the splendid examples left behind to guide succeeding generations, the fond hope that even the coming people in that goodly land down there may know something of the heroes and heroines, the kindly Christian fathers and mothers who played their parts so well in that homeland, that the children and children's children of those early toilers may not forget who planted and harvested and labored and prayed in the struggling days of the olden time, this little book has been given to the interested ones as a memorial of loved ones long since gone to their reward.

In bringing up the scenes of the past and in touching the lives of, and the parts played by these pioneers, the writer, so needful of charity of thought, has dropped the mantle of love over every life and every act and every deed, making up the story of the old world's work in that old community so full of history and love and disappointment and joy.

It is altogether proper we should have some kind of a record of this people, their struggles, their service to the world, a word of praise so oft denied when in the midst of life and struggle and toil.

This brief story, though coming from a mind untrained and a hand unskilled, may be the last and only tale of the places, of the people, of the incidents coming in the morning of life, to the boys and girls of fifty years ago, of the vanished hands that so gently led us along the way when life was new, and the old world so strange.

A. B. M.

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DOWN ON THE RIDGE

CHAPTER I

REMINISCENCES OF THE OLD DAYS IN COALPORT AND DOWN ON THE RIDGE

More than a half-century ago, when Iowa, the "Beautiful Land," was new I came with my parents, when a little boy, from our home town in the sunny southland to Marion County, this state, there to begin an untried and unknown future in what was then the new west.

Then the beautiful prairies spread out before my youthful gaze, and also the great forests of timber in all their primitive grandeur, the same as gladdened the hearts of the untutored children of the forests years and years before.

The Sac and Fox tribes not many years before had taken down their tepees and departed from the scenes that were fragrant with the recollections of the hunt and the chase. In many places their beaten pathway could be traced, telling of their journey from the hunting-grounds where their camp-fires had gone out forever; telling of the sad, sad look upon the place of their last war-dance and upon the bleaching bones of their dead, strewn here and there as solemn witnesses of the advancing tide of the white man.

In those good old days we had Coalport in the valley and Coal Ridge on the hill. The former was a little steamboat town situated on the west bank of the Des Moines River, as at that time it pursued its course seaward bearing upon its silvery bosom the burdens of men; the latter was a seat of learning, situated in the midst of a small settlement of God's noble men and women, driven there no doubt by the flood of the Des Moines River, which flood has never been equaled since the time Noah made that memorable voyage to the top of the mountain in that far away eastern land.

Coalport was a famous village. It had one little store, a saw and grist mill, a potter shop and a blacksmith shop. It had no postoffice, because of the strange stories that had reached the department at Washington that wild Indians were still in the neighborhood and that an occasional white man was burned at the stake. So the rural delivery man, like the priest and Levite, passed by on the other side.

But this town had a very rich bank in which very large deposits were made several years before, and, the depositors having long since died and their heirs been gobbled up by the Indians, some enterprising settler conceived the idea of drawing upon this bank for the benefit of the steamboats that twisted their way up the river from Keokuk to Fort Des Moines during the high stages of water following the rains incident to the early spring months. Hence these little steamers "coaled up" in the spring. During the summer months the banker sat on the bank and fished, and in the winter months he supplied the limited demand and filled in the time coon-hunting.

The notoriety of this little place was a matter of pride to its population, which consisted of about a half-dozen families, each of which boasted its large accumulation of children; for, in those good old days, there was

little else to do. The women had no clubs or reading circles, and so far as cards go not one of them knew the jack from the king; their only diversion was a wool-picking or a quilting bee, and as a rule one of these functions invariably ended in a fight, and a special meeting followed for the purpose of "churching" the principals in the scrap.

As to the male population they had no lodges to attend, and the only clubs they were familiar with were those with which they killed rattlesnakes that crept out of the "Snake Den" on the approach of warm spring days. If they ever went to a shooting match or a house-raising the event was sure to close with prayer.

Oh, the charm of a steamboat town! The Des Moines Belle, Ad Hines, Clara Hines, Charley Rogers and the Defiance—how their long hoarse whistles used to echo over hill and dale! To the young generation the music of these whistles was as sweet as the notes of the dinner horn. How the boys, big and little, used to run the old path from the schoolhouse over the hill and down the beaten trail, passing the old potter shop on the way to the landing, when they heard the "steamboat blow." They always yearned for a landing during the noon hour.

Time, and the railroad train! Time, and the shining mouldboard of the farmer's plow that tore loose the sod from the virgin soil, aided by the weeping clouds above, so filled the channel of God's highway that these floating palaces ceased to disturb the waters. It was then this struggling town lay down and died, since which time it stands like a candle with the light blown out.

Even the old river has now deserted its well-worn path that curved around against the big coal bank. It has stolen quietly away from the historic grounds of other days and years and centuries, and has taken a

DOWN ON THE RIDGE

shorter road on its way to the old ocean that surrounds our land.

Though the swift-running waters may forsake the scenes of other days, yet every inch of that old way, with its sand-bar and willow growth above, its deep bank below, with bar and dense old forests just over the way, its ferry-boat securely fastened to a great cable secured to either shore, the rocks and steep-faced hill below, the pottery under the hill, where good old Uncle Tom, a friend to every boy, fashioned tiny jugs for us, to add to the gladness of our boy life—all these tell a sad and joyous story of the coming and going, here and there, of those who played their part in this wide world's work.

They tell of the old swimming hole where we boys held clandestine gatherings and performed the most daring stunts. There we used to crawl out on the sunny bar and dry our hair before returning home. Among those old rocks when a little boy I lured the shy and cautious sunfish from his haunts. There on more than one occasion have I seen that goodly current transformed, as it were, into a modern Jordan, and it seems even at this distant day I can see a little company of God's people standing on the shore, and hear their glad songs go up to heaven, while one after another goes calmly out into the stream and gently and reverently lay themselves down with the Christ, and come up out of the water into newness of life.

There, fifty long and eventful years ago, a wondering boy, I saw my father and mother, together with several others, in a watery grave typify the burial and resurrection of the Master. There they stood in the middle of life. To me life was an untried road. To-day, of that little company, both on the shore and in the stream, every one of adult age has passed from the scenes of earth. A mother, patient and good and kind, surrounded by strange dead, sleeps in the midst of the mountains of

Montana; a father who labored and toiled and prayed, together with others of that little company, is resting near the scenes of his struggles; one, a little further on, clothed in his country's blue, went forth in defense of its flag twenty-five years later and, after an eventful life, full of tragedies, met a violent death and now sleeps in Kansas' southern soil.

Those scenes along that well-remembered bank came and went, until one day in the early springtime, a beautiful April morning, a harbinger of May-time with her sunshine and flowers and singing birds, another generation, save here and there those to whom God had been kind, gathered at the river where the same good old songs were sung, while one after another with whom we had lived and loved, and played "hide and seek," and "ring around rosy," and all those innocent games which go to brighten and sweeten the life of the young, yet unscarred in life's battle—they, too, waded out into this typical Jordan while glad hearts sent their prayerful songs to God.

O, the change since that beautiful scene! The long, long story of toil and laughter and tears, a funeral here, a wedding there, far-away scenes in strange and distant lands. tired hands and hearts struggling in the fierce heat of life's hard battle must not be told by me. It may be some day, sometime and somewhere, when there are no hearts to ache nor eyes to weep, the story will be told how those boys and girls, so full of fun and love and ambition, drifted apart, drifted into joy, drifted into sorrow, and, I hope, drifted into heaven above.

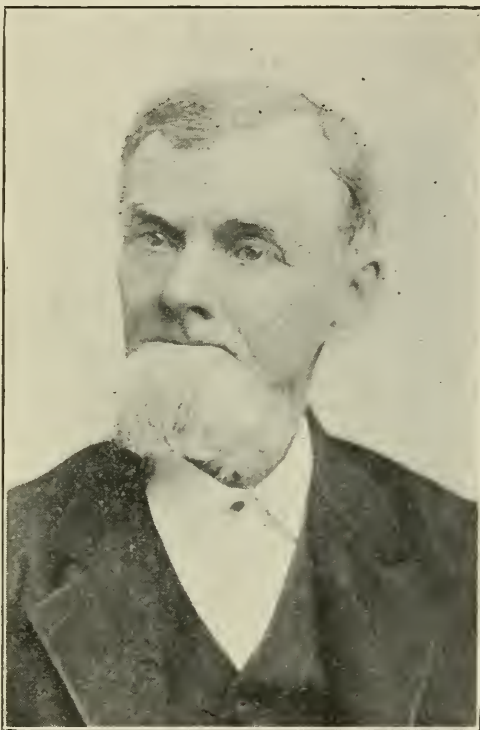
I said awhile ago that Coal Ridge was a seat of learning. The very name is associated with a little frame building about eighteen by twenty feet. It was made of native lumber. In the center of the room stood a wood stove which at that time was up-to-date, but in this day and age would be crude, indeed. I remember that on cold

days the boys were kept busy chopping wood, which they did by turns, like going to mill. The writing desks were wide boards attached to the wall by hinges and, when the copies were all "set" and the hour for writing had arrived, these boards were elevated to their proper positions where they were supported by sticks, leg fashion.

I shall never forget one copy my teacher prepared for me. He was always original, but his originality on this occasion almost provoked me. It ran like this: "Alfred Brown McCown: Do you do your work up brown?" That little sentence meant more than our youthful minds could comprehend. The boys and girls looked upon the whole proposition as a joke. So did I.

There is one thing I learned trying to write after copy. The first line or two was a pretty fair imitation of the original but the farther away I got from the copy the worse the writing, so by the time I had reached the bottom of my foolscap sheet the work was so poorly executed that a blind man could see that my work lacked a whole lot of being "brown." Just so in life's requirements and life's work. The farther we get away from those high ideals which shine out like beacon lights to guide our wandering feet into a better and sweeter life, the greater and more miserable our failure to do the things that bring joy and gladness into the heart.

For seats in this "deestriect" college we had slabs, flat sides up. These slabs were held up with legs, *a la* bench. For backs we employed the ones God gave us when we came into this forest. These seats and benches were made of the same height for both large and small. We little fellows climbed upon our benches where we sat humped up like Texas steers in a blizzard, our feet swinging in space. The big boys and girls sat with their chins on their knees. In this pitiable and torturing position these boys were expected to shoot paper wads at the



SYLVESTER McCOWN.

teacher when his or her back was turned, or for diversion write notes to their best girls. I venture to assert that that old schoolhouse sent out more curved spines into the busy world than any seat of learning in Marion County.

We always had our Friday afternoon "doin's"—recitations and stand-up-and-spell-down, etc. It was remarkable how many Marys had little lambs, while the number of boys who stood on the burning decks would make a small army, and

Twinkle, twinkle, little star:
How I wonder what you are;
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky,

was repeated by every boy and girl who had courage to pass through the ordeal.

My first and perhaps last great oratorical effort was pulled off in the presence of a large number of invited guests, they being the fathers and mothers and grown brothers and sisters in the neighborhood. Having inherited a timidity that would drive a full-grown man through a knot hole, it required every ounce of sand I could muster to bring myself into the performance of the stunts assigned me. However, I finally gained the platform on this occasion, when I proceeded to let these lines loose:

You'd scarce expect one of my age
To speak in public on the stage;
But if I should chance to fall below
Demosthenes or Cicero,
Don't view me with a critic's eye,
But pass my imperfections by.

I could go no further. With this effort I collapsed and sought refuge in a neighboring hazel brush. And now, more than forty years have come and gone, even a bloody

war came and went, leaving a trail of blood and tears, broken homes and wounded hearts; I have wandered in strange and distant lands, and still I am asking that the mantle of charity be thrown over my imperfections.

Sometimes we had commencements at the close of school. That is, after school was out we commenced to swim every day but Saturdays. I verily believe those little swimming holes, yes, even the leeches that lived in the mud, got lonesome when the gang was lured to other haunts. I know they were green with rage at times, because we had to make a hole in the skum to dive through.

I could even mention girls who were strangely infatuated with these old swimming holes. Many times we boys have watched them, at a safe distance, slide, otter fashion, from the top of the bank to the green scum below.

That old Coal Ridge schoolhouse could have told a long, long story; told how the young people came together to sing, when Jim and "Brud" and Nellie and others sang and whiled the joyous hours away; how they, like others before them, and in the good old days since, walked two by two, sometimes a long ways apart, down to the old "Snake Den," not to kill snakes, not to draw close to the great kingdom of nature, not to look with one broad sweep over a great stretch of country and with wonder contemplate the mighty handiwork of God, but with Cupid's fateful and sometimes fickle arrow to wound and kill an unsuspecting heart; to draw close together and with the strong arm of youthful love and the nimble finger of devotion weave the warp and woof of a new and untried existence, full of the sweet flowers that help to make the world a place where man can dwell, that cheer the life that would be only hard and toilsome, that awaken and cultivate and sweeten human existence, that



MARIETTA A. McCOWN.

bring the bridal hour away up into the higher and more beautiful ideals of home, or bring a long, long train of disappointments, of sorrow, and more than a single share of the earth's woes and the old world's tears.

No days like those old days, no trysting place like the old "Snake Den," no more lovers strolling two by two, hand in hand, along the old, well-worn road: but, high up on the rocks are the chisled names of some whose mission there was for the purpose of killing the snakes that so frightened their sweethearts when the good old Sunday came.

The old schoolhouse could have told of God's harvest of human souls. O, the prayers that went to heaven there! O, the flood of tears because a wandering soul refused that salvation so free, and yet purchased at such a fearful cost! Even now at this far distant day I can almost hear those pitiful petitions that went up to the hill of God and see those bitter tears that so long ago made sacred the very ground upon which the little house stood. When the prayers were all made, and the tears all shed, and the benediction had fallen over all, the big boys lined themselves up near the door, waiting for the girls to come out, so they could go home with them. Sometimes they did, and sometimes they got left, right in full view of the whole crowd. Poor boys!

And there was the literary society, with its paper edited by some wise "guy" who was supposed to tell all the happenings and some things that didn't happen in the community. Then a few of the orators took up these propositions: "Which is the most useful to man—a dog or a gun?" The dog usually won out, because when all else in this big wide world forsakes us God and the dog are our friends. Then again: "There is more pleasure in pursuit than in possession." Then it was that possession gained the day, for some of the very best debaters

were in red-hot pursuit of some pretty girls whom to win would be heaven, indeed. So finally the meetings closed and the boys went home with the girls, if they could, and if they couldn't at the next meeting of the society they took the other side of the question.

And then when the war-dogs were let loose, when the shriek of shot and shell brought human woe to the homes of the north and the south land, too, a soldier, dressed in the uniform of a captain, stood up in that old schoolhouse and told the story of the country's needs. Then young men yet in their "teens" and bound to homes by the strongest ties between earth and heaven went forth to defend their country's flag. It was then that the military spirit seized every boy in the school. Some one of the mothers made a flag, and I, being the son of a cooper, made a little barrel, open at both ends, over which I stretched a sheepskin. This served as a drum. We elected a little fellow (who afterwards became my brother-in-law) captain, all because of his wonderful knowledge of military tactics, and then it was march, march, to the music of a home-made drum, a home-made fife and behind a home-made flag. It was march, march, and charge on an imaginary foe, until many a "Johnnie came marching home," feeling that he had been shot in the leg.

Little we appreciated the dread ravages of real, cruel war; little we knew what was doing under the southern skies. And then when Appomattox had come, and the returning soldier boys were welcomed home, how little we knew how torn and sore were the hearts whose very hopes and loves reached over a great country until they hovered like a wounded dove over the lonely graves of the ones who would never return.

That old schoolhouse long years ago gave way to another near by, but my school days were now over. The old schoolhouse! Even the ground on which it stood is sacred to me. There I have seen weddings and won-

dered what they meant; there I have heard funeral sermons and my boyish heart could not comprehend why those tears. But a time was reserved for me, when the arrow of desolation pierced my own heart and let loose as it were a crimson flood of grief. Then I could see and know that this old world is indeed a vale of tears and this earth is full of woes.

This little schoolhouse by the roadside was to me my *alma mater*. In it I passed through the primary branches, then out into the field of strife for clothes, for food, for seven long years, when I returned to its friendly shelter to finish up in geography and the "three R's—reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic," two months one winter and three the next. No grammar, no rhetoric, no burnt wood, no foot ball; my school life was over.

Since then the world has been my schoolhouse and its people my teachers. For me strange but friendly hands have planted rich and fragrant flowers in the garden of my heart. Though it may be that I have received from ungrateful hands instead of the rose, the sharp thorn and the cactus, yet God and this big old world have been kind to me. I have an army of friends among whom I number men of standing and influence. I have a happy home, children and flowers and music, and when the springtime comes in addition to all of these I have the green fields, the pleasing foliage of the forest and the singing birds. After all, God is good.

I could go on, telling of a struggle here and a battle there in the world's wide way; of how we could almost hear the cannon's roar on the southern battlefields where men and even boys had gone, leaving boys and girls and mothers to till the soil and gather the corn. I could tell of many joyous seasons; the little parties where "Blind Man's Buff," and "Frog in the Meadow," brought joy and laughter from boy and

girl, while the mother dropped here and there a silent tear because of an absent one dressed in blue far away under the southern sky. I could tell the story of our growth as boys and girls; of how we grew into friendship and love; of how we in after years took our sweethearts to the "Fourth of July" at Knoxville, where we gave them red lemonade, fed them on crackers, dried apples and cheese, and watered them at the town pump, and watched them grow. I could tell of how the fateful hand led one here and another there, up and down this wide, wide world; of estrangements and affections, some of which have been blessings in disguise, while others came to wound and make the heart cry out in its desolation.

I could take you along with the rushing years and permit you with me to behold the havoc that time has wrought. The girls and boys, the heroes and heroines of those days, so full of tender and loving recollections, are boys and girls no more. Streaks of gray are here and there, telling of the rushing tempest of years. Even some of them are grandmas and "granddaddies." Some have drifted away out on life's sea and their little ships are lost to the world, while some have floated away and away into the summer land of God. Yes, the graveyards grow, but they are God's. Who is it that shall read these lines that does not recall some buoyant, engaging friendship of long ago? There were hours of sweet, confidential, heart-thrilling converse, when each was strong in the hope-inspiring friendship of the other, and when each believed that this happy state would never end. Alas for the evanescence of all earthly things! Some of these friendships long ago have died, and those who were such warm and loving friends have drifted apart. Love that came in radiant with the heart's gentle, softening dew; love that like the morning dawn gilds life's horizon and sends floods of light into every recess of the heart! Even some of those who one sweet day swore that love should live

forever find in the coming years that it does not endure. Even the old trysting places are forgotten, and the happy hours that sped so swiftly by in the old, old days are no longer cherished.

As I look back on those happy days I realize how little I knew then of life. The world was here with all its sin, but I saw it not. And no one could have shown it to me then. One of the saddest facts in life is that each one of us must go down into its dark depths and taste its bitter waters for himself. The great sea of human prejudice and passion surged at my feet as it does now, and I heard the lashing of its waves, but their discordant sounds were so blended with the symphonies of a happy youth that I thought it all entrancing music.

As I stand to-day on Life's mountain peak and look back upon the scenes of the years that are gone, my eyes are wet with tears because in a world of such overwhelming need I have done so little. In a world that is sick unto death for the bread of life I have not raised a voice above the clash and din and bedlam of the world's sad strife. I have lingered on the shore of the world's great sea of want and woe and picked up here and there a pebble with which I have slain no giant of error. I have stemmed the world's sinful tide, but have never plunged into its raging waters to save even one of the millions that go down each year to rise no more.

If it shall be mine in future years to leave some token here and there to guide wandering feet to paths of right, and cheer the fainting hearts of those who grow weary in the heat of life's fierce battle, I shall be glad.

CHAPTER II

THE STRENUOUS LIFE OF THE BOYS OF FIFTY YEARS AGO.

I do not believe that a person who is constantly looking back, a life which is content to live over and over again all of the yesterdays of its existence, ever fills that place in the activities of human usefulness intended by the master hand which moulds and shapes the destinies of individuals and nations. But, I do believe that an occasional glance over the scenes of other days, that a little note whispered here and there on the breezes that come from away over the hill, bring to us a softening and restraining influence. I believe the good things in the days away back yonder, crystallized by time, have very much to do with making the heart more tender, more kind, and life sweeter and the old world better.

As Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and all the scenes of Bible lands have been the mecca of the Christian world for years and years, so the old home and the old scenes have in the long, long past pulled and will continue to pull on the threads of memory and to thrill and throb the heart of some one, everywhere and every day, so long as humanity lives.

Don't you know that to the most of us these memories of other days away down on the old farm, where the cream was so thick and rich, the fruit so juicy, all tinted with the summer sunbeam and flavored with nature's

extract fresh from the laboratory of the unseen world; where every home held sacred its household gods; where no domestic altars were thrown down and destroyed by the slimy touch of an "affinity;" where young manhood was rugged and honest and true; where the girls were taught in the art of domestic economy, and their willing hands could make and serve hot biscuits that would tempt the taste of the most fastidious; whose rosy cheeks and winning manners ravished the heart of every young man—don't you know that through all these things and over that great stretch of time we cling only to the good things that come to us here and there like streams of sunshine, only the kindly words here and there pointing us through the cypress branches of despair to the bright star of hope? The evil things have from us only a passing thought; memory's wardrobe has room only for the good and the beautiful.

To-night, while I am writing—to-night, when the old world is still—I find the chords of memory tugging away at my very heartstrings as I run over the paths of the past, as I call up the familiar, kindly faces, and trace the names on memory's page of the pioneer mothers, who, down on the Ridge, labored and loved and builded in the long ago.

On memory's photograph I can see here and there their humble but contented, happy homes—the hewn log house, with only one room, a bed (sometimes two) closely fitted in the farther end, and a "trundle bed" under one, and in the other end a great big fireplace. I can see the old "backlog" and the blazing "forestick." In the corner is a ladder by which the attic was reached, where the popcorn and nuts were kept, and where sometimes the children slept. Near the fire stands a little table on which a tallow candle, molded by mother's hands, is struggling its very best to penetrate the gloom. A

pioneer father is reading Ayer's Almanac, because books were scarce, and, besides, he must know what kind of weather the morrow will bring forth, or in its fruitful pages discover a remedy for every ill to which man is subject. Just across the table is mother, her tired and weary fingers dancing to the tune of her smooth, bright knitting needles with which stitch by stitch she shapes and builds the little stocking for Nannie or the mitten for John from the yarn her own busy hands have carded and spun. It seems I can see her now, as she goes forward and back again alongside the flying wheel, and can hear her softly humming an accompaniment to the music of the buzzing spindle on which the yarn piles higher and higher with each forward and backward move. The children have tired of cracking nuts and have thrown some popcorn in the hot ashes under the "forestick" and are witnessing with delight the snow-white caps jumping hither and yon on the old stone hearth. And then when all is still the cricket under the big warm stone sends forth his rasping song. The little tallow-dip is still struggling away, while in the farther recesses of that little room all is darkness and desolation. But don't you know we thought it was light because it beat the grease lamp and old pine-knot?

Oh, you mushy boys of the twentieth century! Oh, you soft doughsticks! Born and reared in your modern houses, with every comfort the inventive mind of man can bring forth to comfort and please and soothe, you don't know what high life is; you don't know what toughens and hardens the sinews and prepares one for the fierce heat of life's struggle unless you have lived in a log house down on the farm, chopped the wood and rolled in the big "backlogs," eaten big white "corn dodgers," country sausage and spareribs and backbones that have never been submitted to the sandpapering process; and besides, with all these modern conveniences

you think you must bathe every day, while we kids, who lived convenient to the river, bathed only in the swimming season, and those who lived at an inconvenient distance from the river came forth like a flower and in the fulness of time were cut down, having but one real bath, which was not of their own choosing, and which was given at a time when they in their weak and helpless condition could not prevent.

But let us back to the night scene in the old log house, down on the Ridge. Aye, there was more than one log house down there, yet they were all much alike, and the scenes around those old firesides were very much the same. The little tallow candle has burned low. Father has learned when the next change in the moon occurs and the type of weather we are to have during the following month. Mother has "narrowed" off the toe of the stocking and securely locked the stitches. The crickets under the hearth have screeched Johnnie and Nannie into drowsy land. Papa prepares Johnnie and mamma slips the clean "nightie" on Nannie. The low "trundle" is pulled out from its hiding place under the bed, then come the good-night kisses, and those four life-lamps are handed into the keeping of their God while the sleepers go out and out on the great ocean of sweet, peaceful sleep, undisturbed by the prices on the stock market. The fire has burned low and is covered to preserve it for the morning. All is dark and still within, save the soft and gentle breathing of the sleepers, secure in that rest which comes to those who are at peace with God and all mankind.

Then when the morning sun comes and all nature is astir I see a pioneer father go forth to do his "chores." The hogs are in the woods, the sheep and cattle in the brush. I hear the clear ringing bell on the trusty old cow. I hear the familiar call, "Suke, Blackie!" "Suke,

Blackie!" and it is "Poohooie!" "Poohooie!" until the stock are all fed.

In those old days all stock had to be marked, every man having his own and distinctly different mark. If one cropped the right ear no one else in the township could use the same mark. One had a crop off the right ear and a hole in the left. My father's stock mark was a crop off the right ear and an under bit, or notch, in the left. It would have been an easy matter to have changed some of these marks on a hog or sheep found astray in the forest, but I am not sure that such a thing was ever attempted in those good old days. Why, if you had mentioned "graft" to those of God's noble men and women who laid the foundation so deep and sure under the social and religious life down on the Ridge, they would have taken from their resting place over the door their old tried and trusty long-barreled muzzle-loading rifles, thinking all the while you were speaking of a species of wild game.

Well, the feeding is all done, and here come mother and Mary and Martha, dressed in home made "linsey-woolsie," and calico bonnets, armed with buckets and gourds, for the milking must be done. Then it is "So, Blackie!" "So, Brindle!" and "Whackchebang!" and up with the gourd and after Blackie, over the hill and away to the woods, for it is fly time, you know. While all this is going on father is yoking up the cattle. He has gone cautiously up to old Buck and slipped the bow on the neck, inserted it into the yoke and turned the key, made of seasoned hickory wood. Buck stands like a lamb bound for the slaughter while father steps back and calls to Berry, Buck's old mate, "Come under, Berry!" and the gentle old ox sadly but patiently marches under the yoke that was not always light nor its burden easy. But the strong arm of this sturdy pioneer in the very midst of rugged manhood had grubbed out the hard, knotty "jack-

oaks," had cut, piled and burned the thick mass of hazel brush. With the same strong arms he had made the rails and builded his fence, six rails high, with stakes and riders, and now the virgin soil must be disturbed, the sod must turn its blackened face full up to the world's bright sunshine. Then God and the pioneer (who, I firmly believe, lived and walked together then more than men and God do now in man's mad race for gold and power), one sowing the seed and tilling the ground, the other sending the sunshine and the rain; one giving the other a home and love and life and strength and the harvest time, the other sowing in hope and faith, and then thrusting his shining sickle into the golden grain with a heart overflowing with praise to the God of love.

Then, when the sun had "reclined behind yon jutting knoll," the boys must go and drive home the cows. Their location must be determined by the familiar sound of the old cow bell, and

When the summer days grew cool and late,
We went for the cows when the work was done;
Down in the woods where the paths were straight,
We saw them coming, one by one.

Brindle and Blackie, Speckle and Bess,
Shaking their horns in the evening wind;
Cropping the buttercups out of the grass
While we followed them close behind.

I only wish I had space to tell of all these pioneers, naming them one by one. I wish I might tell of their struggles for home and country and men; of how some of them left their temples unfinished and went forth to grim old war; of how the shot and shell way down yonder under the southern skies shattered the altars in the home of the northland, and how, through all these years, scalding tears have never ceased to flow because of the temple unfinished.

Listen: I will tell you this much, if no more, that many and many a soul has been torn with grief as one by one these goodly people who walked with God every day went down into that quiet, narrow home in God's lonely acre. Of all that goodly company, the early pioneers down on the Ridge, all have answered the roll call of heaven save three: one of these now resides in a neighboring state; the other two have grown old and gray, and still live amidst the scenes of old days gone, only waiting and listening for the calling voice of God.

There were times in the history of the Ridge when it was, and with some reason, called a "tough old place." Indeed, there were seasons in the life of that community when it seemed that the ark of the covenant had fallen into the hands of the Philistines. There were times when it appeared that the fires which had heretofore burned on Christian altars had been forever quenched; that the fury of war had destroyed the pillars of peace and torn heart from heart and men from God. Even though at times it seemed that our Heavenly Father had withdrawn every visible symbol of his pleasure from the old place, yet after all it may be that some gentle guiding hand led its people on and on, that some master boatman safely anchored each little craft in the deep, silent waters of honest living and rectitude of conduct, for, during all the three score years that have come and gone, the coming and going of more than two generations of people, a people subject to all the trials and hardships, labor and toil and disappointments that come to vex humanity, though there have been times down there when the voice of prayer was no longer heard, when the songs of praise that in other days went up to the throne on high had died away in the stillness of night, yet in all this long, long time that good old Ridge has furnished the Marion County court no murder trial, produced no train robbers, no slander or breach-of-promise suits, and no divorce or

blighting betrayal cases have been recorded against her. No one has been lynched, no one has been tarred and feathered or carried out of the neighborhood "straddle of a rail." While there may have been hearts severely cracked, yet there has never been an elopement, nor has anybody's wife ran away with another man, down on the Ridge.

While looking away down the long line of neighbors and friends who furnished the activities in the old home place I see no angels, but I see a people, though sometimes estrayed from him whom Peter said he loved yet after all had not forgotten God, and every one, save those who are waiting in the silent vestibule that links earth to heaven, have made gallant soldiers in the wide, wide world's warfare. To-night while I write of the old days on the Ridge, I know, my friendly reader, that you with me are thinking of the old times and the old friends down there, or somewhere in this wide old world. To-night, while the winds outside beat against the walls of my city home, I am thinking of the scenes of by-gone days and months and years which with time's mighty tempest have made up all the yesterdays in our short lives. I think of those kindred souls who shared our joys and sorrows down in the country home when life was new and hope was as fresh and pure as the dewdrop on the rosebud kissed by the morning sunbeam; those pioneer fathers and mothers whose kindly cheer and wholesome advice pointed our young feet to the paths of right, paths that lead to God and heaven: those old pioneers down in the land of the old log house and the high rail fence, the blazing logs in the old fireplace, all come to me as a joyous starting place in life's strenuous race. They are to me like the "shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

But where are those pioneers? They fought a good fight. Pioneer life put iron in their blood and muscle in

their arms. No wonder, then, they returned from a victorious fight against oppression, wrong and human suffering, and at last lay down in their narrow homes, where the ever-returning rosebuds tell of a life beyond. "After life's fitful fever they sleep well."



GEORGE W. AND MRS. MARTIN.

CHAPTER III

“SQUIRE” GEORGE W. MARTIN AND “UNCLE” JOHN
EVERETT NOTABLE PIONEER CHARACTERS

The sun has sunk beneath the distant hills. Toiling men have been called away from their accumulated labors, and all the kingdom of nature seems hushed in the stillness of night. The bright old sun that rules the day is now shining on another land and on other people. Even the old moon has hid its smiling face, and the curtains of night are securely pinned down by the stars.

Now, while nature sleeps and dreams the hours away, while the old world is gradually but surely swinging away from the grasp of the old winter king into the zone of beautiful flowers, green fields and singing birds, let us draw our chairs close together and in the deep silence of the night listen to the story of the pioneer fathers and mothers who labored and toiled and builded, down on the Ridge in the long ago.

I would tell in simple words how they wrought with skill, industry and zeal; how these men and women builded for time and eternity and men. I would whisper into willing, listening ears something of their characteristics, and even at this far distant day catch the echo of a kindly word and take up the refrain of a cheering song as they come floating down and through the years.

Every one of that goodly company of men and women down there told you and me, in word and act and deed, how to live and think and do, but life was new with us then and we heeded them not. But after all, now that the swift current has carried us down the stream of life, how our thoughts go leaping and bounding back through the years until we stand in full view of the kindly hands that sowed here and there in the soil of our young hearts the seeds of the ever-blooming acacia which speaks so eloquently of that life that never dies.

They lived the simple life. Life though strenuous was to them a duty and not a task. Their implements were crude, their wants easily supplied. They shunned the mad, fierce race for gold. Then love's kiss fell light on every brow, and every home was strongly fortified against the siege of an affinity's wicked fight.

In this short story, telling of those who furnished the activities down on the Ridge in the long years ago, I shall speak more particularly of those who first came into the morning twilight of my life, the first of whom, with perhaps one exception, impressed my young life more than all the rest. This was George W. Martin, who had preceded my father a year or two into what was then the "far west," having come from the same neighborhood in what is now Mason County, West Virginia.

More than fifty years ago I lived with my parents in the very dooryard of my father's old friend, Mr. Martin, in a little log house about twelve feet wide and fourteen feet long, the first cabin built at the head or upper end of what was known as the Coalport Bottom, then a dense forest of magnificent timber, and known for years as the Day Everett place. This little "shanty" had been deserted by the Martin's for a more commodious and palatial residence built of hewn logs all "pointed" with lime mortar. It was about eighteen by twenty feet, with a little dark attic

lighted only by streams of light stealing through the knot holes and cracks in the daytime, and a tallow candle in the stillness of the night, when the boys, sometimes myself in the bunch, would take possession of this little dormitory by the ladder route which stood in the corner.

So the little "hut" was billed "For Rent," and into it we went, father, mother, and four children. It, like King Solomon's temple, was situated due east and west. A chimney and fireplace graced the east so that the morning sun could dart no rays into it. In the west end was a door, in the north a window. A table and a bed with a trundle bed underneath stood along the south wall. There may have been a small window in the south through which could have been seen the sun at its meridian height, which is the glory and beauty of the day; I do not know. Even if there was we could not have seen it, for then we had the ague so much we could not look anything in the face. In this little house we lived that cold winter of 1856. The snow was more than two feet deep.

My father chopped sawlogs in the timber which was so abundant then for seventy-five cents a day, taking his pay in meat and meal. Thinly clad and unused to the rigors of an Iowa winter, his hands and ears and feet were pierced and bruised by the icy hand of the old winter king. If he complained I never heard him; if in the midst of sickness and wounded by the cruel spear of poverty my mother walked in the deep valley of regret I knew it not; but years and years afterward she told how father longed, and how, when the old world saw it not, she wept and longed, for the old Virginia home where the sky was so blue, the sun so bright and the songs of the birds so sweet and friendships were so many and true. No wonder, then, an ocean shell, a tiny thing, borne miles and miles away, will still whisper into the ear a sad, sad song of its home so far away by the sea.

My father was also a member of the Coal Ridge Baptist Church, for which he served as clerk for a great many years. He was a fine penman and made a most excellent clerk, but he couldn't sing a bit more than a tree toad. However, he was a good father, worked every day, early and late, and nobody had any better to eat and wear than did we. My mother's hands, though weak and always weary until God, forty-six years afterwards, away out in the mountains of Montana, laid them tenderly across her faithful breast, helped my father day by day, and away after the supper hour, down by the old grease lamp, she stitch after stitch made our stockings and our clothes, humming the while some sweet little song telling of heaven and rest in the spring and summer land of God.

During the summer "Squire" Martin, as he was familiarly known far and wide, tended a small field of corn, raised his own vegetables, "hogs and hominy," was always content with the plain and healthful food, and kept a little flocks of sheep which furnished the wool from which his good wife carded and spun the yarn which when woven into cloth she patterned and cut and made, with needle and thread, with her own hands into garments of blue and checked for man and boys and girls.

The "Squire" employed the winter months either in teaching school, or in the capacity of township assessor or justice of the peace. He owed no one, envied no one. He was a self-made man in every sense of the term, and until the very last day of his life he never threw up the job, but kept on making. He burned wood in a great, big fireplace, big backlogs behind, a forestick and a little wood in front, and on a cold winter day one could warm on one side at a time just as many times as he cared to turn around. In the winter time on nights and mornings and Saturdays he chopped his wood for the fireplace. There were no cook stoves in those days. The "crane,"

with kettle of pork and beans, hominy or big greasy "back bones," or a great covered skillet or oven sitting over a heap of red-hot coals could be seen in nearly every home.

The "Squire" was supremely rich in physical treasures, and his heart and brain were fertile soil for the growth of anything good and beautiful. I used to watch from our little shanty with more than childish delight the big chips go hither and yon as the bright, keen-cutting blade of his axe sank deeper and deeper into the big log on which he stood. And now it almost seems I can hear that old familiar grunt, following each successive stroke of the axe.

And then, when a great big boy, I went to school and he was my teacher, and I heard him grunt again and again, following each successive stroke of a long birch rod, applied where it would do me the most good, for fighting a big overgrown boy named John Johnson, whose father was O. J. J. Johnson, who made axe handles for a living, while the boys, Bill, John and Steve, and "Patsy," the old woman, hunted the young-grown hickory wherever dispersed throughout the land, for the world was theirs and all the timber therein. And when the summer had come and the picnic was on, the old handle-maker shaved and scraped away on his clean hickory sticks while "Patsy" and the boys went to picnics, taking a large basket and a "measly" small cake, and returned in the evening bearing enough of the loaves and fishes to last until the next picnic. Well, this big John always licked me to the queen's taste; then, after all that, I had to stand up and take the finishing touches with a rod gathered with my own hands; and these finishing scenes were always intensified by those hearty old grunts, like those I heard from the little old house down under the hill when a little boy.

Well, I needed them then, but the "Squire" had a hard time convincing me of the fact. Now I sometimes wish, when this poor clay of mine goes wrong, my teacher away back on the Ridge could send me out again for a still longer and tougher rod (for I was a little particular away back there), and I know I should stand right up, if needs be with back even bare, and cry out, "Lay on McDuff, and damned be he who cries enough!"

The first trial in law I ever heard was tried before "Squire" Martin. This was a case of assault and battery. That sounded so funny to me. I didn't know any more than a mink what these terms implied. I had these words all mixed up with a barrel of salt and a ball bat. This case came before the "Squire" on a change of venue from a justice court in Knoxville Township, where it was claimed the plaintiff could not get justice. Van Bennett, whom many of my readers perhaps will remember, appeared for the plaintiff: the name of the attorney for the defense I have forgotten, but I think it was O. B. Ayres, a young attorney who afterwards became judge in his district. The case was ably fought on both sides, and as near as I can remember the "Squire" gave a full measure of justice to both.

George W. and Louisa Martin were both devoted members of the Coal Ridge Baptist Church, having been admitted by letter granted by the Harmony Baptist in Mason County, West Virginia, in 1854, signed by George Long, church clerk. During the seasons of religious revivals in that little old schoolhouse down on the Ridge these two people were always there. They came early to the meetings, which in those days were called for "early candle-lighting." The candles were sometimes stuck into a block of wood suspended against the wall. While the congregation were gathering these two people would sing. Why, I can hear them right now, singing that hymn they loved:

How happy are they
Who their Saviour obey
And have laid up their treasures above;
Tongue cannot express
The sweet comfort and peace
Of a soul in its earliest love.

Mr. Martin was a good man. His ideals were high and his life was clean and wholesome. He was passionate and impulsive, and no one knew it better than he. Once in a moment of passion I saw him lose himself. In less than one short hour I saw him again and he was crying like a child, like one whose very soul was torn with sorrow, as he hurried along, almost ran, to lay the brightest and the best jewels on the altar of another heart he felt, in a moment of passion, he had wronged. Give me the man, big or little, high or low, who can laugh and cry, one who can revel in sunshine and weep under the cloud. Such was the life and character and influence of my old teacher down on the Ridge in the days of old. No boy who came under his influence in that old schoolhouse down there ever went very far wrong, or stayed wrong very long.

Don't get tired, my friends: let us talk a little longer. Let us talk low and earnestly while we tell the story of another pioneer and his good wife,—J. S. Everett. He was "Uncle John" to people far and near. To those on beds of pain he was more than that; he was a father, a friend, yea, a saviour of lives stricken with disease. Though the passing generations may erase that kindly, helpful presence from the memory of men, yet every visit of Uncle John, in answer to the beckoning call of the sick, is entered up to his credit in God's old ledger in heaven. He visited and assisted the sick every day, furnished his own medicine and never made a charge, or asked for cash.

He, too, like "Squire" Martin, came from Virginia to the new west. He and his life companion, Elizabeth E. McCown Everett, feasted day after day upon the bitter and sweet incidents of pioneer life. They, like all the rest then, lived in a log house, and had only two rooms with a hallway between. When the elements had worn and beaten the "pointing" here and there from the cracks in that old house, my father, mother, and their four little ones quietly seated in a rough wagon box on an old wooden-skein, lynch-pin wagon, drawn by a yoke of oxen, drove by on their way to the little hut under the hill. That was fifty-two years ago, but I remember we stopped for a little call and to get a drink of water, freshly drawn with a pole balanced in a forked post set near the well. This was my first introduction to Uncle John and Aunt "Betty."

Little did I know then the important part these good people would play in my life and the lives of so very many of those who made up the activities of that community. He was one of God's noblemen. He builded him a home. He knew nothing of nor cared for the fierce battle for gold, but every day he made a small deposit in heaven. John S. Everett loved God and served him every day. He was a deacon in the Coal Ridge Baptist Church, in which capacity he served for many years. He never tried to approach the throne of his God without, in bitter tears and with pitiful pleadings, asking for mercy, forgiveness and love.

Many a time have I seen him on a bright Sunday morning in the spring time walking out on the farm, his arms apparently at rest, crossed behind his back, with old Prince, his faithful dog, close behind. He loved nature. He loved to walk in the woods and fields where God loves to meet and talk with his people. But one time this good man walked along down the rows of waving corn when his heart was sad and sore. It had been pierced

by the arrow of desolation, for a message had winged its way from the south saying that his firstborn, an only boy, had laid down his life under the southern skies, and, wrapped only in his country's blue, he slept.

Uncle John was passionate and impulsive, but at the same time he had a heart as tender as a child's. Like all good men he, too, could join in the chase and laugh and weep like a woman.

To-night while telling the simple story of these two men who laid the foundation so deep and strong under everything that is good down on the Ridge, I am wondering and thinking why my teacher of the long ago and Uncle John, everybody's friend, were not spared for more and more years in the old world's work. And then I close with the thought that it may have been they fell under the weight of life's awful tragedies. But, after all, God knows just when to call his workers home.

And now, as I look back over the short story so simply told, I see the traces of a vanished hand. A pang of sorrow mingles with my story as I write the words telling of the scenes and incidents and people of so long ago. I dare not stop to count the graves of those who have "crossed over the river" and are resting under the trees on the other side. Yet after all these years firm and secure this old world stands and guards the tombs of those who gave the old Ridge its birth and place among men. Among all my neighbors and friends and foes who have come upon the stage down there, and, like the fleeting swallow fluttered by, I, too, while my heart feels young and full of hope, must confess that I am slowly but surely passing over the hill. As I look back along the vista of years I cannot say that if some power would resurrect the past and place again upon the boards of my life the forgotten plays of the old days down there I would be a player. Life's road through this world is too full of

stones for our tender feet : there are too many keen and hungry thorns to tear and wound to make us desire the trip twice along the paths of this old earth.

CHAPTER IV

RECOLLECTIONS OF SOME OF THE PIONEER PREACHERS THAT LABORED IN THAT VINEYARD HALF A CENTURY AGO

Three times have we sat around the evening lamp and talked over the incidents in the old homeland. We have listened to the story of the old swimming hole, and the old schoolhouse by the side of the road; we have listened to the tale of the early pioneers and their struggles; we have seen tears there, and heard joyous laughter here; we have stood by the side of the narrow vestibule of heaven and closed the door on the dearest objects God ever gave and then took away; we have been silent witnesses to the growth of youth into manhood and womanhood, down there in the old home place; we have seen fruit ripen on the tree of never-dying love, and also plighted vows here and there crushed like a dry leaf and scattered by the four winds of heaven; we have witnessed the passing of the pioneer fathers and mothers who laid the foundation so deep and strong and secure under the religious and social structure in the old neighborhood that knew the boys and girls down there half-a-hundred years ago; we have seen it recorded here and there along the paths of the past how these dear friendships of my youth and of yours fell in the thick strife of life's fierce battle, and to-day in silent wonder we witness the tracings of the

brush in the hands of the invisible painter, how he touches the crown of those with whom we played and frolicked in the morning time of life, when the unknown years, so full of labors and trials and sorrows, were yet an unsolved problem.

When we think of all these things, when we see what the rushing tempest of years has done, we stand appalled at the very problem of life. What an enigma! What a mystery in this thing that brings us into an unknown and unheard-of world, and then a shower and sunshine, then a laugh and a tear, then love and hate and broken vows, and a last sad look upon the world, and the great unknown again!

I have tried to tell in simple story how these pioneers, with their brawny arms and hearts and nerves of steel felled the forest trees, builded their humble, happy homes, tilled the soil and helped one another. They helped to build the house, the barn. They helped to sew and spin and weave and knit and make the quilts. They helped to roll the logs, to chop the wood and husk the corn. They gave no "pink teas" nor played six-handed euchre for prizes. They gave no afternoon receptions for the display of fine jewelry, rich gowns and peekaboo waists. But these men and women down there lived for their husbands, their wives, their children, their homes, their friends and their God.

When I called you around my evening lamp this night I was intent on telling you something of the boys and girls who with me have been carried along with life's mighty tempest, something of life's battles, victories and defeats. But I reserve this thought for another quiet night, when the bright old moon breaks here and there through the silver. I will whisper into your willing ears the story of how they fought and won and lost.

Now, while you listen, I want to call up the spirits of those who were "hewers of wood and drawers of water" in laying the foundation of that spiritual temple, that character-building, down on the Ridge.

If Joseph and Mary had not dwelt there, no good thing like the Christ could have come out of Nazareth. Had not John S. Everett, Francis Everett, David Durham, James Caldwell and Henry Morthorn met on the first day of May, 1851, and in the house of Mr. Morthorn there erected the ark of the covenant and dedicated it to God: had it not been for the guiding hands of the above-named Christian men and their good wives: had it not been for the spiritual assistance of the Rev. Z. Ball, Deborah, Margaret and Mary Ball, Anthony Kesler, Stephen, Elizabeth and Susan Kesler, in 1853, W. F. and L. N. Amsberry and George W. Martin and their good wives, in 1854; had it not been for these people, who lived and prayed and preached the word, from whence would have come the good that has blessed that old home place, that long line of honest toilers in the old world's work? Whence the church house at the old cross-roads, the music of whose bell week after week still rings out the hour of meeting? These pioneer Christians sowed the seed of a spiritual life without which we could have had only moral death.

The first pastor of the Coal Ridge Baptist Church was Warren D. Everett. At the first business meeting of the church, held in 1852, W. D. Everett, David Durham and J. S. Everett were elected delegates to the Central Iowa Baptist Association. I am not able to inform you where the association met, but wherever it met the delegates had to walk or go on horseback; and, besides, the trip must have been one of danger and suspense, for the church had, by unanimous consent, voted a donation of \$1.50, all in cash, as a contribution to the expenses of the association. I have heard, and I rather suspect it is

true, that the first pastor of that good old church attended the congregation barefooted. I saw but little of him, for in a very early day he moved with his family to Corydon, Wayne County, where, after a long and useful life, he was gathered into the land where his father had gone before.

In those good old days this little band of God's people met and set up their altars in private houses or in the adjacent groves, God's temples, and there, under the shade of the trees; there where the thrush with its sweet, warbling notes turned the dense hazel thicket into music: there where the beautiful oriole whispered and chattered his story of love to his mate in the top of the wild cherry tree while they were building their swinging castles in the air; there, where the tuneful mocking bird, here on his short stay from the sunny southland, chuckled and laughed in the evening twilight, where the saucy bluejay screamed out his challenge to fierce combat, where every night the summer long the singing birds and the sweet wild flowers nodded their good-night to God; there these good people prayed and sang and worshiped the God of their fathers.

Among the early pastors of the church I mention E. O. Towne, of Pella, and Ball, who lived about two miles north of Knoxville, who served the church in the latter part of the "fifties." I remember it was in the spring of 1857, the Des Moines River had gone beyond its banks in the low land near where Uncle "Billy" Welch then lived, that the Rev. Mr. Ball waded out into the turbulent waters, and, raising his hands toward heaven, asked God to bless and make sacred that spot, even as he manifested his approval of a life scene away back yonder in Jordan's stream. Then while the waiting congregation on the shore sang

Oh, happy day, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away,

this good old servant of God led down into the water one after another, among whom were my father and mother, who in observance of that beautiful rite laid themselves down with Christ in a watery grave to arise in the newness and glories of a life dedicated to the Master's service.

Another one of the early pastors of that old church was, as he was called, "Tom Arnold." He was a man of most splendid physique, young and dashing in appearance, tall and straight as an arrow, hair as black as a crow and eyes made of the same material, while his voice was full and round and loud. In the winter of 1858-1859 this dashing young minister conducted a "protracted" meeting in the old schoolhouse which has already been described in these reminiscences.

In those days Christian ministers and church members instead of standing up got right down on their knees alongside the old slab benches to pray; and such prayers as went up to heaven there! While their bones ached when applied to that old puncheon floor, they wasted no time in telling God of things he already knew, nor what he had already done or intended to do, but right there, gathered around that old wood stove, while the storm king growled and grumbled outside and beat against the walls of that little old house, those people just simply went to their God like a trusting, loving child goes to his parents, told their Heavenly Father what they wanted, and asked only for hearts full of love and mercy, forgiveness, peace, and, some sweetday, a home in heaven.

When "Brother Arnold" doubled down on the hard, cold floor, hands clenched, head thrown back, and began to pray, he grew louder and louder until he could easily have been heard half-a-mile away. He prayed and preached as if God were deaf. But, after all, he was a successful preacher, and a baptising of converts was sure to follow

his meetings. These scenes usually occurred in mid-winter, when the ice was thick and heavy on the river. Where the water was the proper depth a hole was cut, and into this hole the candidates for baptism, one after another, were led by the big preacher. As a matter of fact I remember persons who, it seemed, took advantage of these occasions for their annual baths, or else they enjoyed the ceremony, because they were on hand and ready to be served every time a fresh hole was cut.

Another of the preachers of that time who served the people on the Ridge was the Rev. Mr. Sperry, father of E. F. Sperry, formerly of Knoxville, but now a resident of Des Moines, where he is an active member of the First Baptist Church.

I now call to mind another of the "divines" who exercised a pastoral care over that little flock down on the Ridge—the Rev. Mr. Whitehead, who lived then in Knoxville, where he owned and operated a woolen mill and had in his employ almost the entire Fee family and myself besides. But I played with the kid too much for a business proposition, and the preacher "fired" me.

You ought to have heard this fellow preach "hell-fire!" Don't you know when he got warmed up to his subject he would step to the front of that little two-by-four rostrum, like a star actor advancing to the footlights, and, looking down, would draw such a picture of that horrible place that we imagined we could see old "Beelzebub" tearing around down there, throwing dry wood on the flames. My! we kids lay awake the next two nights thinking about what that preacher said; and even when we shut our eyes we could see the dreadful picture he drew.

In telling of the many incidents which were a part of the religious activities of that far-off time down there, I would not throw in a single thought of jest or

humor on a subject so sacred and sweet and uplifting as prayer and song and sermon. I only mention these things as a matter of fact. And when I tell you this night of a preacher down there, not one whose rhetoric, oratory or power of expression swayed the little company, but whose high pitch of excitement so aroused the passions of the people that some of them would break into shouting and dancing with joy, refusing to be restrained until securely resting in the branwy arms of some young farmer whose soothing influence had a very restraining effect, you will have caught a vision of the different type of preachers, who came that way. Don't you know I knew some folks down there in Marion County who, during seasons of this kind, just before sailing their little crafts, always located, in advance, a place to anchor, where they safely rested, secure from war's alarms. I remember one preacher (now, I don't want you to press me for a name, for I shall not tell you), who, when warmed up to this subject, would become so excited that he simply tore the air with his arms, shook his head like an old African lion shaking the morning dew from his mane, and in the delirium of his excitement made gestures with his feet, and, to cap the climax, after the storm had subsided he quietly laid one leg across the pulpit and while talking low and earnestly took a shot at a knot-hole, missed it, and expectorated on the floor.

I won't say to you that all the preachers who came to the Ridge were called to be pastors of that church. Some of them were itinerant shepherds seeking the lost sheep of Israel and as many yellow-legged chickens as they might devour.

Rome had its Caesar great and brave, but stain was on his wreath. But I saw many of the old-time ministers down in the old homeland, whose very presence was like a halo of sweet perfume, and whose very lives were a storehouse of heavenly things, rich and sweet and joyous,

among whom I would not forget the Rev. E. H. Scharf, who afterward became president of the Central University at Pella. This pure, kind, scholarly Christian man believed in God and worked in His vineyard day after day. For a long time, he came every month over to the Ridge to bring cheer and hope to the people there, to tell them of God. Many times he walked from his home through dust or mud or snow, to tell the people of Christ and His love. He came away over there without script or purse or price. He humbly and thankfully accepted whatever was given, of money, meat or molasses. How sad, indeed, to those who knew this servant of God best, to remember the pitiful afflictions which fell upon him and tried him for days and months and years ere God made him well in leading him gently into the summer land of heaven.

Another saintly servant of his Master I must not forget. He journeyed this way only at long intervals and at the urgent request of the friends he knew down in the southland, and when he came among that people he always brought a message cheering to those who knew God, and telling those who knew him not of His wondrous love and power to save. Every time he preached he delivered two sermons. One was his clean, Christian life, the other his earnest, heartfelt sympathy in the great work to which he had dedicated his life. And when his work was done and God said one day, "Will Barnet, come and walk with me in the ever-blooming garden," he was ready to go. Though his people rejoiced to know that he had gone to such a goodly land, even yet there was a stream of tears along the way from Wayne to Marion when the good man lay down and died.

In telling this story of the past, in reviewing the splendid Christian work and character-building so faithfully and well executed by those kindly hearts and willing hands in the days of long ago, I sometimes wonder why

we, then, so little appreciated what they were doing in love and prayer and tears for us. But now that their life's work is long since done and the good seed sowed down there in these long and toilsome days, since added to the unnumbered years gone by, we see, all along the past, milestones telling how these goodly men and women marched around and around the walls of sin and shame and deceit and wrong until the old walls crumbled and fell, and above the noise of the crushed and tumbling stones was heard the still, small voice of God, saying, 'Men and women, be of good cheer, for the recording angel has counted my people down there and enough yet remain to guard the shrines you have erected.'

As the sun setting in the west at the close of the day calls mankind to rest from his accumulated and diversified labors and leaves a trail of light behind to guide the belated laborer home, so these good people down there on the Ridge, who labored and prayed and preached and loved and wept for us, though dead, and the homes they builded in the fierce battle of toil and tears have long since become the citadels of men and women and romping, laughing children who neither knew nor cared for the life story and sacrifice and labor of those pioneer farmers and preachers, who, with their strong arms and their abiding faith in their God wrested those early homes from the tangled thickets and forests of nature and erected altars here and there in that goodly land from which burning incense went up to heaven day by day—though dead they speak, and the writing angel in heaven through all the yesterdays of the days long ago has written and written and is still writing their thoughts, their acts and their deeds.

It is well, then, now while the old kitchen clock is about to toll the hour of low twelve, to go back and back along the years and refresh our fading memory with those

things that come to us over the way, sweet with the fragrance that is shed from the many-colored flowers that grow in the beautiful and ever-blooming garden of God.

To-night, as we wend our way on memory's path back over the hill of life and take one more fond look at the old home spot and in fancy listen to the happy voices of the long ago, we see the same dear fathers and mothers and preachers who prayed and sang and wept, who labored and laughed and were glad. We look beyond the desolate and deserted hearthstones that once glowed with light and happiness and love. We can almost see those kindly faces as they come across the flood of vanished years and sing once more the same sweet old songs they used to sing in the faded past.

These simple reminiscences of mine are not the dreams of childhood thought out on the banks of the river of song, where no blight ever destroys the blossoming fields and no storm ever beats our life craft against the rocky shore. They are not the dreams of youth, where lazy flocks bleat and herds of cattle low and tangle their voices with the songs of the birds, "the rippling of the waters, the murmuring of the breezes, the roaring of the rivers and the great waters of the deep;" where singing brooks leap far away from some bubbling spring and come romping and galloping through the flowery fields and tangled groves and then break into silvery pearls at our feet. But they are the rekindled memory of middle age, looking back on the phantom boats with tinted sails as they come floating down the river of life from the distant parts of memory-land. Now while we watch the pearly white sails dip in the rippling stream we loiter and rest in the shade with those we loved so dearly in the faded years, and feel once more the touch of vanished hands and the rapturous thrill of the songs and prayers of those who dared the desert waste of death to taste the sweets of glory.

It may be true that the bright morning star shall burn out in the sky, that men may follow the seasons into the limbo of forgetfulness, that some sad day in the coming to-morrows the names of these pioneer preachers and devoted, praying men and women down there in the old homeland shall be erased from human memory, but their gospel of brotherly helping, spiritual building and kindly influence shall live beyond the wreck of this world and the dismal crash of human creeds. Though their voices in prayer and song and sermon shall wake the echoes no more in the old schoolhouse, nor around the happy firesides where friends and brothers and Christian spirits mingled and loved and died, though their sermons and songs and prayers should die away in the stillness of everlasting night, though their life story should lie amid the ashes of their shattered hopes, yet to-night it seems to me I can feel the soft and gentle touch of their helpful hands as they return from that bright land above to comfort and to bless. Ah! the very thought of their presence brings a balm to our wounded hearts. God speaks to those of us who lived down there and tenderly reminds us that the influence of these goodly people whom we have this night brought back from the aisles of memory shall live as long as the earth has sorrows and tears, as long as this wide world has joy and gladness and sorrow, beautiful flowers and singing birds.

CHAPTER V

SOMETHING ABOUT THE OLD BOYS WHO WERE YOUNG MEN FIFTY YEARS AGO

I want to talk to you a little while to-night of the boys near my own age, or, perhaps, a little older, who mingled in the joyous throng down on the Ridge in the days long ago. To tell of the struggles of all these boys who grew to manhood's estate and went out into the world to fight life's battle single-handed and alone; to tell how they, every day, stood upon the "firing line" of life; how some of them climbed over the breastworks of the enemy to at last fall, but with their faces to the foe; to tell how they grew up and went out from the old homeland; to tell how the rushing years have hurled them over the mountain peak of life; to tell how hard the struggle has been to some, and how rapidly the hand of misfortune has written the story of joy and sorrow and affliction in the sad old book of fate, would require volumes of space.

Of the older boys who came more closely into my young life I would remember "Sena" Everett, my own cousin, John S. Everett Jr., Monroe Martin, Pratt Coffman, "Lum" Coffman and Cass Smith. Sena's many visits to our home were always hailed with delight. He had a happy faculty of adapting himself to company both old and young. He was happy; care rested lightly on his young brow. He loved the templed hills, the streams and the

forests. I remember, though now more than forty-six years ago, when only a boy, he placed his name on the soldier's roll and awaited the summons to the southland, where beneath heaven's unfading blue the mellow southern sun shone upon winding streams red with the blood of those who fought in the blue and gray and fell under the stars and stripes and the stars and bars. When the order came to move southward he came to our home to say goodbye, and as he went away, over the hill on the old path so familiar to him, he tossed a stone carelessly at a passing bird, and dressed in his suit of blue he passed out of my sight forever: and to this day no one knows where he sleeps under the southern grass and the dew, for, following a long, hard march under the southern sun, he laid his young life upon the altar of his country near Vicksburg's bloody field.

John S. Everett Jr. was a studious boy. He was one of the most inveterate readers among the young men of his age. So deeply would he become engaged in a book that during the corn-plowing season his noon hour often lasted until two or three o'clock, and he was sometimes found under the shade of a tree out in the field pouring over the pages of history or biography, while old "Fan," the faithful mare, nodded and stamped and fought the big horseflies. "Little John," as he was familiarly called, was a live character in the debating societies of that neighborhood, and was a valiant foe when met on the hustings. He, too, while yet in his "teens" enlisted in the service of his country and went south with his cousin, Sena, and others of the neighborhood, leaving his widowed mother and three sisters alone upon the little farm his father had carved from the bosom of nature in the early days. With the straggling remnant of these young fellows who went into the southland he returned at the close of the war, and soon afterward he entered the office of H. G. Curtis, of Pella, where he read law and was afterward

admitted to the bar. Following his admission he was married and began the practice of law in Mt. Ayr, Ringgold County. There he also served the people in other positions of trust until his death, which occurred several years ago.

Another coming very closely into my boy life was Monroe Martin. He was of course older than I, but he never grew big enough or old enough to turn down the little boys. He used to help with my little, simple lessons which seemed so hard to me, and sometimes carried me over a deep mud hole on the way to school. The winter snows have fallen and covered the ugly places of this old earth many and many a time since, but I can, this very night, looking back over the great stretch of years, see him as he used to look, so fair and straight and tall and clean, and on his face that little, playful smile that seemed to never wear away. Previous to his enlistment in the army he was examining a small revolver belonging to a friend, one of those guns that is "never loaded," when he accidentally discharged it, resulting in a painful flesh wound. I was very much alarmed when they passed our place with him on the way to the home of his parents. Soon afterward I ran all the way to his home to ascertain how badly he was hurt, and wondered if he would ever get well. But he soon recovered and went away with his regiment, and I never saw him again. Another bright, promising young man sacrificed upon the altar of factional strife. I can now understand why so many hearts down there were torn with grief, and why the weeping willow cast its branches across the threshold of so many places in that old homeland.

Pratt Coffman, though older than my class, was practically a boy with us. He was one of the "betwixt" and "betweens." Those a little older than he had gone into the army, and so it was merely a "ground-hog case" with

Pratt; he had to mix with us younger fellows or go it alone, and that was not his nature. It was not only a custom among us boys during the school term but a delightful privilege to go home with each other and stay all night. Pratt urged me to spend the night at his home on that old historic spot near the east branch of Competine Creek, to which I shall refer in a future paper. My parents having agreed to my going home with Pratt, I gladly accepted his kind invitation. I had to sleep in what we children called a "big bed." Either Pratt helped me to perform the "stunt" or in a restless moment I rolled out of bed. I had been used to sleeping in a trundle bed. However, I had a great story to tell the children at home the next evening. Pratt was tall and rather lean and big, and he had a heart just as long and big. He was a stationary engineer, was married to an Indiana girl, came back to Iowa and lived a short time in Des Moines and then returned to Hoosierdom, where he now lives.

Columbus Coffman, or "Lum," as he was known then, but in modern times "Daddy," was another one of the go-betweens, so it fell to him to either associate with us younger fellows or play with the big girls; that being out of the question, so far as the girls were concerned, he ran with us. Lum and Zack, whose good traits I shall speak of some other night while we sit around the evening lamp, surely knew something of the deep pathos of boy life without the kindly sheltering, restraining love and influence of a mother. To those poor boys a home without a mother was being lived and experienced day by day while the faithful father cooked and washed and mended and worked and toiled for them. Poor old Uncle Zack! His road seemed rough and hard, and his burdens many and heavy, but he fought a good fight and when four score years had marked their joys and tragedies upon his trestle-board of life he laid himself down in eternal sleep amid the waving fields of Monona County.

In the year 1872 probably, Lum, who had a short time before married Miss Panthy Cladwell, one of the Ridge singers and best girls, went to Monona County where, down in the Soldier Valley, then forty miles from nowhere, he purchased land and made for himself and family a home. He pioneered there. I do not know, but I have often wondered if their going to Eugene, Oregon, a few years ago, to make a home in a strange land and among strange faces, grew out of the afflictions that rent the hearts of these good people so sorely, down in the Soldier Valley.

Another of the older set was Cass Smith. If I should leave off the Christian name you would all know whom I mean. Cass was the son of a potter, and in due time followed the trade himself. It was a caution to see him make a jug. I imagine he found few, if any one, who could turn out as many pieces of ware as he could. Before he took up the potter trade he, among other odd jobs, baled shingles at the Welch factory, and he was the swiftest peddler of shingles I ever ran up against. He and I had the championship in that line of work down there. For the sake of peace I will agree that he and I won a draw in the race. Cass was industrious, always had the "mon," was neat as a pin, and if there was a girl in that community belonging to about three generations that Cass had not "gone with" I should like to see the color of her hair. He roamed around in so many "pastures green" that it seemed he was hard to please and would probably revel in bachelor hall for the rest of his life, but long after he had grown bald and forty he married, and lives in Grundy Center, this state.

In a little while when the spirit moves me, and the muses come and kindle in my soul the warm, bright blaze of the cherished past, I want to call around my little table the real boys who with me chased the bright-wing-

ed butterfly, and with them talk over the old days, when the pendulum in the clock of time seemed to us so slow, so low, as we waited and watched, while we builded castles in the air, down on the Ridge.

CHAPTER VI

BOY LIFE. THE DAYS WHEN THE BLOOM WAS ON THE PEACH.

I want to talk to you a little while to-night about the real boys of more than forty years ago. I would call around me for a brief period Frank and Charley Crouch, Tell and Zach., Gus and Mont, Lark and Joe and Dick, and while we are thus assembled and all the world is shut out, and the stars in their twinkling glee are making merry in the arching sky, and the new moon, like a huge powder-horn all polished and clean, hangs in the western sky, while the noise of the rushing multitude in their mad race for gold is hushed, all I crave, just for to-night, is that each be once more his own true self, free from the mask that all men wear, while we unfold and rehearse the plays put upon the boards away back yonder when life with us was new.

I am sure it will do you and me good, now that the blinds are securely drawn and the gazing world shut out, to go back to memory-land and bring out from the buried past those little incidents, little dreams, little tragedies and little bright spots that reached out their beckoning hands to us all along the way, lending cheer and sunshine to our young lives, and that now come to us as beautiful golden settings in the way back yonder of our life journey.



PRATT, S. AND R. T. COFFMAN
AND L. M. MARTIN.

Don't you know the pictures of boyhood painted on memory's canvas are the most beautiful in this old world's gallery? Sometimes there is a tinge of sadness in their coloring, but they are sacred to us and we love them.

Say, boys, don't you see that little schoolhouse just on the brow of the hill? the road near by? here and there great stretches of hazel brush and scrubby oaks with now and then a wild cherry tree off which we used to lunch? the slippery elms up in Aunt Mary's grove we, when the sap was up, skinned from the ground to the very top, and the long, white, fresh ribbons we made a full meal on, and the short, thick pieces we dried and played they were tobacco?

I know you lads will remember how we used to go, two by two, up to Aunt Mary's well for water. and how we drank from the old moss-covered bucket which hung in the well, suspended from a long pole sweep, and how, with a stick run through the bail of the bucket, we returned with the object of our mission. Time was useless to us. We stopped on our way both going and coming to make strict search in every hazel bush for a stray bird's nest, stopping the while to make with our naked toes the appearance of a snake track in the dust where an imaginary snake had wiggled across the road. When the schoolhouse was finally reached one of us would pass the water to the thirsty throng, remembering the big girls first, and, after all, be kept in after school for being nearly a half day going after water.

Now, I am not going to tell anything bad about any one of you boys, but I am going to tell you how because one time I put ink on my forehead, cheeks and chin, a punishment was inflicted to me then most severe, but would not be so now. The teacher put an old splint sunbonnet on me and set me down between two big girls, where for a full hour or two nothing was more fascinating to me than a small

knot-hole in the schoolhouse floor; and then you devilish boys called me "sissy boy" for a week.

It will be remembered how we played "blackman," and how we used to employ relay races in our efforts to catch Gus Everett, who had wind and endurance like a fox-hound; and even after Gus was finally captured it took the whole bunch to turn him over so as to give him the required number of taps on the back. We played "rollie-hole" and "leapfrog" and "blindman," and then we would gather up a bunch of the little girls and play "ring-around-rosy" and "frog in the meadow," and then it was a game of "mumble-peg," and to wind up we would "crack the whip," big boys at the head and the little tads on the tale end. You know what happened.

We used to slip away and meet at some agreed spot and go to the river for a swim, and when our lust for water had been satisfied we quietly crawled out on the sand-bar and dried our hair in the sun. Uncle Tom Smith in his seeing days said he knew those McCown and Coffman boys a mile away by their red, sun-blistered backs. How can we ever forget the old, green, scum-covered swimming holes down on Competine, and the time we found a bunch of girls enjoying one of those resorts, all naked as new-born babies fresh from storkland? They were playing baptizing. One of them was an expert in the play, and "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," down she sent them under the scum and up they popped, each with an old, mud leech fastened to her back.

The days and weeks leaped into months and months into years, and as we boys grew older we unconsciously drifted into larger and different sports. During the winter season we would get our last spring calves together in yokes and break them to draw wood, and it just beat all what monstrous loads we imagined we were hauling as

we distributed them here and there among the "war-widows" and in our own wood piles. Oh! the wild, joyous fun we had breaking those calves to the bow and yoke!

Now we began to turn our attention to the girls. The older boys being in the army, we fellows had our own way at our little parties and "taffy-pullings," and it was nothing to see one of these youngsters prancing around with a girl nearly old enough to be his mother. We thought we were heavy, and of course the girls were lonesome.

Then the dance craze struck the Ridge, and away we went. Of course the dancing in our community was merely of a local character and just among ourselves. If the gathering, which was always informal, at which no boys wore "claw-hammer" coats nor girls dressed *a la décollette*, happened to be in a fairly pious place we whistled for the dance; but if not a pious place, the fiddle was tuned up and the "nigger hoe-down," as the father of one of us called it, was installed, and it was "on with the dance and let joy be unconfined" until a late hour.

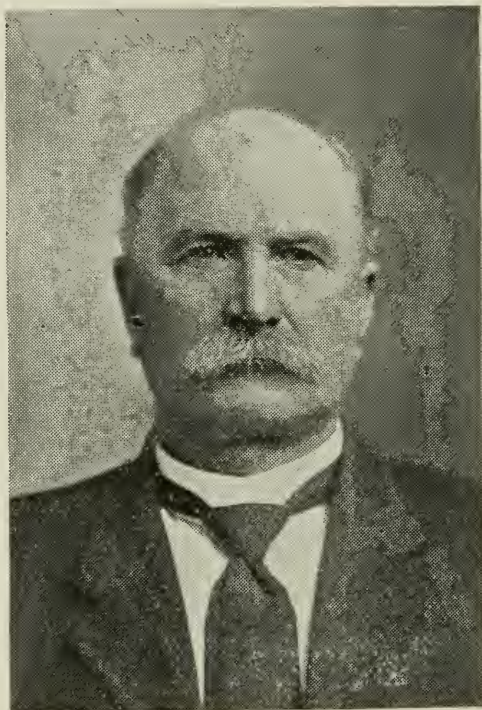
After all, there was not much real dancing done on the Ridge. But those of us who were real anxious to dance could be accommodated over on "Whitebreast Prairie," or up in the woods, or south in the "English" neighborhood. I remember one of you boys with me, went to a dance down there one time at which there were only about eight women, all of whom were married, grass or sod widows (mostly grass), and old maids, seventy-five per cent. of whom smoked "long green" in clay pipes. They smoked between dances and carefully laid their pipes away when asked to join in a dance, and at the conclusion of each change and sometimes while swinging them "on the corner" they would retreat to some secluded spot in the room to expectorate; and very often

accentuated by the little clay pipe and "long green," quantity cut a large figure in these evacuations.

I remember one time Pratt and I were at a dance in the same vicinity, and also Mel Fry, who lived in an adjoining neighborhood. From some imaginary cause the bunch down there were about to enter into a conspiracy to retire us three from active circulation, but, seeing we were desperate characters, even though in the minority, after due consideration concluded to allow us to roam in this forest a little while longer. Well, this little incident and one other pretty much like it settled the dance business with me, so far as I was concerned.

I now want to leave this testimony with you, my kind reader, that there is nothing good nor uplifting nor helpful, nothing that satisfies the soul nor polishes the mind nor makes the world better, in the dance. It never made a woman nobler or better. It never bound up a broken heart or wiped away a single tear. It never soothed a troubled breast or satisfied the longing of the human heart. The dance has never been a blessing to a human soul. It is the foe of happy homes and the foul destroyer of virtue. We danced in the face of open protest from those who sought to guide our feet in the right path. We enjoyed the dance, or thought we did. Joe and Lark and I thought we were reveling in delight every time Dick or Mont led out and balanced to their partners. Mont in these seances favored one foot and made the other do all the work, while Dick, though one of the very best of fellows, while in these stunts went at it like a Leghorn hen searching for worms for her young and tender brood. But as to the rest of us we were regular Chesterfields when in the giddy mazes of the dance.

To those in the adolescent age many things come and go that neither make nor mar their future lives. Most, if not all, of that goodly little company of boys and girls



H. M. HEGWOOD.

down there passed through the fiery furnace of temptation with no smell upon their garments. Every one of them has been a valiant worker in the old world's work. I cherish the memory of every one of that splendid group who were the boys and girls then.

Now, boys, the hour is not too late, and perhaps I shall never talk to you all together again. I am thinking of all our comrades of those distant days—the boys and girls with whom we rambled and played on the new-mown hay or on the stack of clean, bright straw. We remember the little girls we used to think so lovely and pretty or the boy who seemed so manly and brave, and now we wonder what has become of those youthful playmates, and where are the dreams we dreamed in those old days of happiness, which never came to us.

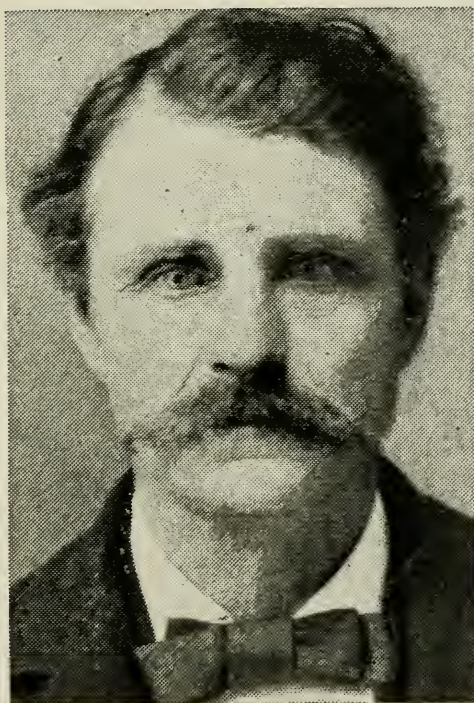
Of Frank and Charlie Crouch, only Charlie lives. Frank married Sallie Everett, one of the singers of the Ridge. Two boys, Harry and Emmet, cemented this home into one solid mass until one day, after a successful, winning battle in the world, while yet in the very harness, the working tools of life fell from Frank's palsied hands and he went into the over yonder land. Charlie lives in Knoxville. His children have never brought a gray hair to his head, and will never bring him in sorrow to his grave. He is a jolly man, serves God, and is a good citizen. Physically he is a monster. He moves among men like a huge ocean liner among a lot of little tug boats.

Tell left the Ridge rather early in his young manhood and entered a printing office where he learned the printer's trade, since which time I have seen little of him. It will be remembered that he returned to the Ridge sometime after his going away, bringing with him his pretty young bride. She was a sweet, little

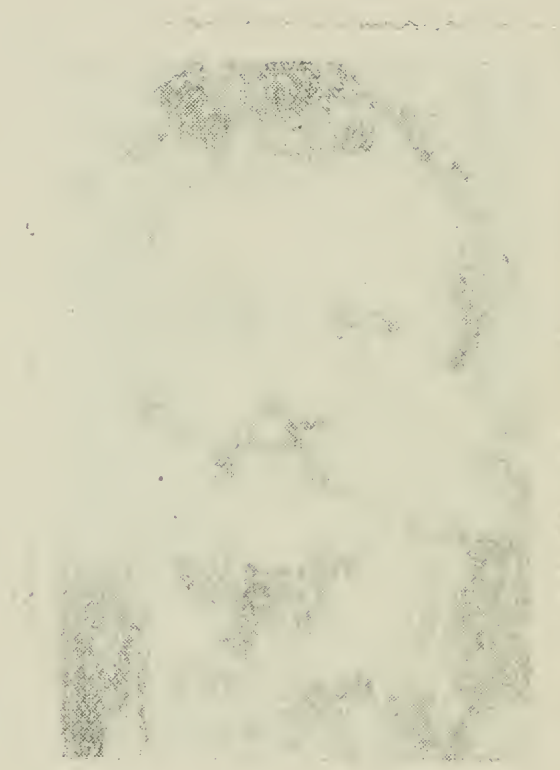
woman, daintily dressed in a not flashy but pretty green color. Only a few years at least did this boy enjoy his new home with its sweet binding ties, coming as it were from the sky land. She, like a rose plucked from the stem, perished and went out into the unknown. This boy's home gods were thrown down, and with only their remembrance burned deep into his sore heart he drifted here and there, and only a little while ago died in the Home for Printers at Colorado Springs.

Zach was the real chum of my young manhood down on the Ridge. He, a few years before, took supreme delight in calling me "Mr. McCoon," in pure derision, while I sat peacefully on a cane pile, intently waiting for the "stirring off" time when the lickings would begin. He licked me when I made for him, and on repeating the name was attacked and unmercifully skinned by me. He one time dragged his dirty big toe through the dust in the road and dared me to toe the line. I did it, and skinned him again. He of all the rest down there has been my true and tried friend through all the years. In our courting combats up and down the land he knew all my battles and I knew his. He came and in perfect trust poured out his heart to me, while with the same abiding faith I told him of my victories and defeats in that warfare in which most young men rush bravely up to the firing line, win or lose, sink or swim, survive or perish.

Zach early in the '70's went to Monona County and now owns a good farm right up against the town of Ute. He married Miss Ella Cummins, of that neighborhood, a most excellent woman, belonging to one of the best families of the county. For more than thirty years he and I have carried on a regular correspondence. Once in a great while our paths cross, but the tomahawk is deep in the earth's cold bosom buried; no more its thirsty edge shall taste the life-inspiring current, nor in dread conflict



ZACK COFFMAN.



cleave the proud citadel where reason sits enthroned; no more will his hands tear my eyes, nor my finger nails claw out his, but henceforth shall our mission be one of peace and good-will to all upon the earth.

Gus! How well I remember that chubby, fat cousin of mine, more than fifty-one years ago! The old Des Moines River was out of its banks most of the summer of 1857, and the consequence was my father's family had to live among the "scholars," or roost on top of Mt. Ararat, which stood just overagainst the potter shop. I stayed at Uncle John's as long as I could at one time. Gus and I were like ducks for water and mud. We made dams in the branch below the house and raised merry Cain. Sometimes we were water and mud from head to foot. Then Uncle John would threaten to lick both of us, when I would make a break for Uncle William Crouch's, just over the way. Then Frank and Charlie and I would go to the creek and have a round-up and sometimes get into a scrap, usually Charlie and I against poor Frank; then away I would hike to my grandmother's, down in the Ramey neighborhood. There she would get out her old "canthook" and yank out a tooth if one should ache, telling me all the while it wouldn't hurt, or set me to pulling weeds in the garden, and away I would go to Uncle John's again.

Gus loved fun. He loved to dance and sing and have a good time. Of all the singers down on the Ridge Gus stood at the head of the list. It is said that "music hath charms to soothe the savage beast." If so, and I know it is true, when Larry and Gus and "Panty" and Sallie sang hearts were softened that language could never have touched, never would have responded with an answering echo.

Gus, after arriving at his majority, graduated from the College of Medicine at Keokuk. He entered upon

the practice of medicine at once and established an enviable reputation. He practiced a number of years, during which time he married Miss Ella Momyer, an amiable, splendid girl. The fates were unkind to poor Gus. Disease came into his earthly house, locked the door and refused to retire. This cruel king with wanton glee numbered his days. He suffered on and on until with the scythe of time his merciless foe cut him down in the meridian of life, and to-day just a few words chiseled in granite tell the story of his birth and death. Mrs. Everett and Margaret, now blooming into sweet, young womanhood, still live in Knoxville.

Mont was one of the boys down there. We both remember how in the fall of 1862, after his father had gone south with his regiment, he and "Lade" and "Meck" and I gathered corn; how we rushed the team along and left the girls away behind, and how his good mother threatened to take the girls off the job if we didn't let up with our "tomfoolery" and imposition. We remember having gone to Knoxville one day where Mont bought a little juvenile book entitled, "Lord Bateman," and how that night, in the little old log cabin in the lane, seated around the old grease lamp, Mont read to Sandy and John, which was Mead and Lala, the wonderful story of that celebrated lord. How we used to pop corn down in front of the forestick in the old fireplace! Mont will remember that when we had gathered all his corn we, with Charlie Crouch, gathered Martha Hegwood's corn down on the river bottom, near the first Welch mill, and how we ran away from Charlie when taking the down row, and how mad he got. He would cry out "You daggoned fools!" Yes, he even "bellered" like a calf. Poor Charlie! We should ask his pardon even at this late day. I should dislike to do such a thing to him now, because if he should sit down on me there wouldn't be even a sign of where I went.

Mont dreamed of other fields than those of corn and wheat and hay. He longed for music sweeter than the lowing of the cattle and the bleating of the sheep, so he went to peddling pills and salve and colic remedies for the Baker Company of Keokuk. It was real refreshing to see him with his old gray mare and the little old buggy "hiking" about the country, perhaps saying to himself, "The more colic, the greater the sales." But, like the children of Israel longing for the fleshpots of Egypt, Mont longed for the music of the lowing herds, while a pen of hogs, to him, smelled like a bunch of bride's roses. He got married, made money farming, and now lives in Knoxville, sitting every day on the shady side of Easy Street. Mont is an honest Christian man, the atmosphere of whose home, under his protection, and presided over by his good wife, is surely refreshing and uplifting.

I remember how Lark and I when little fellows, even in our early "teens," used to ride stick horses. We held them up good and tight, whipped them and made them kick up. We galloped them down to the shore of the river and made them drink. We made them kick up again and squeal, and when tired of this sport we tied them to the old rail fence and played we were swimming in the tall smart-weeds that grew on the flat down near the old log barn built away back in the "forties" by Day Everett; and then for two days our eyes looked very much like balls of fire from playing in the weeds. Sometimes we would crawl into the loft of the old barn and help shell corn to take to mill, and then with the cobs we built houses and knocked them down, just like the many castles in the air we have built since which one after another have been cast down and destroyed by the gods of cruel fate. At school we used to have to stand at the head of the spelling class a full week to be entitled to a "head mark." Lark would be at the head of the class and I

would work up to him, and he would hold me right there till the end of the week. Then it was his time to climb the ladder when I would hold him off until my week was up.

Lark plowed corn with a single-shovel plow, covered corn with a hoe, fed pigs and sheep and did about the same kind of stunts we other boys did, until one day he went to Pella and took up the study of telegraphy in actual work with Murray Cox, agent for the railway company in that town. He soon mastered that branch of railroad work and became agent for the company at Prairie City, if I remember correctly. His rise in the railroad work was made in leaps and bounds. He came to Des Moines where he soon became superintendent of the D. M. N. & W. Ry., now the C. M. & St. P. to Fonda and Boone. Later he became general manager of the Iowa Central Railroad, with headquarters in Marshalltown. He found this road in deplorable condition; its road bed was little better than a wagon road, its rolling stock was on the "bum;" the engines were light and absolutely unfit to haul the traffic coming to the company. Lark dove into the work with all the energy he could muster. He improved the road; he put on new engines and equipped the road with first-class rolling stock. The road seemed to have entered into a larger and more useful field. But, when a man thinks his honors are still aspiring, he falls like autumn leaves. While Lark lay sick for weeks, entirely unconscious of the old world's strife, of wrong, of deceit, of treachery, he was, in my judgment, pulled down from the pinnacle he had so nobly won by the very hand he had held up and trained in those days gone by.

Though Lark and I seem to have drifted apart since the old days, yet I have always rejoiced in his victories. I despise the hand that inflicted the wounds, coming as they did from the very house of his friends.

Lark married Miss Ella Cox, sister of Murray Cox, so widely known. Two sons and a daughter blessed this union, all of whom are married and doing well. Mrs. Martin died a few years ago. After the sad breaking up of this boy's home he made his headquarters mostly in Chicago, where, after a hard fight in the old world's battles, in which he won many signal victories, and in a moment when it seemed that new trophies were already his, on the eighteenth day of September, 1909, he unexpectedly faded into eternal sleep.

CHAPTER VII

OLD FAMILIAR SCENES AND THE RAVAGES OF TIME

Let us talk a little while of another character ; another one of the real boys, one who was an active part of the Ridge life back there—Joe, nicknamed “Joe Baleel.” His young life, like those common to the times and community, began in the midst of toil and hardships and privations, yet his disposition was bright and sunny, and he was a general favorite among the boys. He shared the sports so common with the young fellows of the community. He was not extremely fond of the dance, still he rarely missed going, far and near. It was his supreme delight to be a wall-flower and watch the boys and girls in the giddy mazes of the dance, and, if he saw anything funny, go out doors and laugh. He and Mont and I used to meet at Granny’s in the little log house down the lane, where, sitting around the old fireplace, we filled our pipes with “long green,” dipped them under the forestick, and then smoked to the four corners of the earth. We blew rings in the clouds as they ascended toward the low ceiling or curved up the little stone chimney and went out in the stillness of the night, and while the cold north wind whistled and moaned and beat upon the little log cabin we three builded and builded castles in the air, and listened to fairy stories as they came out from memory’s storehouse, unfolded and told by “Granny.” She would

tell us of her old Kentucky home, of her girlhood days, of her journey to Illinois down on the Sangamon, where Lincoln grew and toiled and builded for the highest honor this land can give. She told of the early days down on the Ridge, of how she, with her own hands, helped to carve from the very bosom of nature the old home farm.

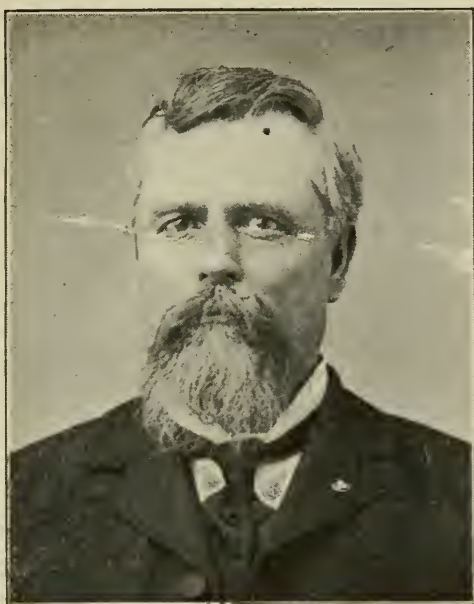
We boys drifted away from that old log house; the glowing coals on the warm hearth. One sad day the old place passed into other hands, and "Granny" made her home in a strange, new place. But it was never home to her; no place like the old home with the sacred ties of years ago, no home like that, all hallowed with joys and tears and laughter and song; no spot so warm and cheerful and bright as the one which sheltered from the world's fierce storms her growing children, and from whose friendly shelter some went to war and never came back; no home like that with its four little walls where the angel of death came in and went out in the days long ago. "Granny's" old home, like Babylon, has fallen. The well and the old moss-covered bucket have disappeared; nothing remains to tell the passer-by of the sad havoc time has wrought save the remnant of an old shade tree, planted there by "Granny's" own hands more than three-score years ago.

About 1873 Joe went to Monona County, where, buoyed up by the promise of better days and a home of his own, he wrought and planned and toiled. There he found a mate. One day she promised him she would help him build a home. Joe said, "Kate, I have nothing;" and Kate said, "Neither have I," and so they started even away out there in western Iowa, and together they prospered and were happy. Long years afterwards, when my wandering days had, like the bursting of the golden rays of the early morning sun which kisses the dewdrops from the flowers, melted into that peace and quiet and joy

which nothing but a home can give, Joe visited me in my own Des Moines home. The following month I visited him at his home in Onawa. The next day we lived over again the faded years gone by. When the eventide had come we said goodby, and in a few short months poor Joe, my boy friend and companion, laid himself down in that long, long dreamless sleep.

Now I am going to tell you something of "Dick," as we boys called him back there. I used to love to go home with him to stay all night. If it were in the winter time we slept upstairs; one whole big room, not plastered. But we nestled down in a big feather bed, under great woolen comforters, and it was some sleeping we did there. We did not think it was cold outside. If it were summer time we would crawl up in the barn loft and there on the new-mown hay we talked and talked until we unconsciously drifted away and away into the deep forest of dreamland. One time Dick's mother wanted some kind of work done, and Dick said that with my help he was sure we could do the job, for, said he, "Alf is as stout as a bear." Presently I said to Dick, "Do you know what makes me so strong?" "No," he said, "I really do not know." "Well," said I, "you will always find me at my best when I have a 'chaw of tobacker' in my mouth. Now, Dick, if you want to be a big, stout man right away, just chaw tobacker." But Dick did not propose to rush into manhood by the "long green" route. I soon found that the road that leads to the physical stature of a man does not run through a plug of "Battle Axe" or a twist of long green. I call to memory these lines I had heard "Lum" recite in school:

I'll never chew tobacco, no;
It is a filthy weed;
I'll never put it in my mouth,
Said little Robert Read.



DARIUS M. AMSBERRY.

Dick and I went to Knoxville to a show once on a time. We had the money to pay the admission to the main show, but had nothing to buy our dinners with. We were crazy to see the side show, so we agreed to carry water from one of the wells in the west part of the town for the privilege of seeing the stunts in these side grafts. After that, it was show life for us; nothing else would satisfy us. We dickered for enough rope to build a trapeze down in the ravine below the house by suspending it from the branches of a tree. We indulged in all the daring stunts incident to trapeze life. Then we got down on the bosom of old Mother Earth and went through contortions that were wonderful; why, even the saucy blue jays on the branches near by clapped their wings and cheered us long and loud!

Well, we soon began to peep over the laudscape of boyhood into the distant horizon of a larger life. There had been little, indeed, in our boy life to stimulate us to higher thoughts, to nobler deeds and greater achievements. While we both knew that upon our own efforts alone must depend the measure of our success, yet we counted not the weary rounds that quarry the stone in its crude and natural state and then finish and polish it for the builders' use. Like Mary of old, Dick chose that "good part" which could not be taken away from him. He decided to enter Central University at Pella, and came pleading for me to go with him, but his pleadings were in vain.

Me go to college! Me, a great big young man, my highest grade next to the primary class in a two-by-four schoolhouse; its furnishings, back-slab benches, a little old home-made desk for the teacher, one old smoky stove, an old water pail and rusty tin cup with a hole in the bottom, and every time one took a drink he had to put on a Grecian bend; where I got more "itch" than

education, and had to be greased every night and stood up before the fireplace to dry it in, and when it was all over wear a sulphur bag hanging down my front porch, suspended on a string, and nine times out of ten the sulphur didn't work and we had to go through the grease act again! Me, having grown up down in the deep woods among the old "hoot owls," the bats and the ring-tailed raccoons, go to Pella to school! Not me; I was afraid of the "Dutch!"

But Dick went to school. He studied, he fought and he won. He went to teaching school and I went to digging coal. He became as gentle and peaceful and useful as a Homer pigeon, while I sailed at the very point of the apex with the honking geese in their wild nocturnal flight.

Once on sailing away on one of these aerial tours I had gone down the old beaten road two-hundred yards, my earthly possessions in a fifty-cent satchel, when I heard my father's voice calling. I stopped, and on looking back saw him running toward me. I waited, because I never in my wandering days went out from my old home without carrying with me a sore and bewildered heart. I loved my home, though poor and humble. I will never know how many prayers went up to God nor how many tears were poured out for me by Christian parents while roaming away from the home fold. My father soon caught up with me and handed me a copy of the New Testament and asked me when far away to read it, and above all things never, never to gamble. Ten long wasted years I saw the world and sometimes fed on husks, but my promise I kept. I was thrown into all manner of temptations and among all kinds of people. I retained their friendship and their confidence, yet I never touched a gambling table nor dared to enter where I could not have taken my mother and sister with me.

Dick and I drifted apart. Once in my flight westward I was an hungered and thirsty when I settled down

in his Grand Island home, more than a generation ago and he gave me food and drink; since which time I have known little of him and many, many times wondered if he ever thought of me.

It was in October, the orchard month of the year. The golden sun looked through the hazy sky, and the busy rounds of a week of toil were drawing to a happy finish when a short, rather stout, fairly gray man approached my desk. I thought I was in the presence of a stranger, so many of whom come into my place of business. The leaping, bounding years, had done their work. The burden of proof was on him. "Amsberry, is my name," said he. Then we clasped hands across the faded years and I called him "Dick," as of old down on the Ridge. He went with me to my home. When he and we had gathered around the dinner table we lifted our thankful hearts to God in earnest praise for having brought our paths together once more this side of that broad, strange river.

After a joyful, refreshing hour we took the train for Knoxville on our way for one more day down in that old homeland—one day among faces mostly new and strange, yet upon the ground made sacred to us by ties of long ago. About nine o'clock found us in Knoxville where we immediately took the trail for Charlie Crouch's. We found Charlie still able to laugh, as well as delighted to see us, especially Darius, whom we had not seen for more than thirty years. We spent the night with Charlie and Lou, and the next morning went for a call on Mont and Martha.

After we had secured a team at the livery stable we were soon speeding along over the old familiar road, bound for Coal Ridge, the Cooper place near town, the old McClain farm, the Zugg place, the Luther Fast home, wall of which we saw developed and builded up so long ago;

then came the Compentine bottoms with its woods, its rippling streams, the bridge, the great bluff near by grown bald with age, the winding road along the foot of the hill, the little corn field nestled down near the creek, and here and there a stately elm or a sturdy old oak against whose sides the winds of more than a hundred years have beaten and driven the roots deeper and deeper into the earth. Then the old home spot where Lud and Adelaide in the early and middle daytime of life labored and toiled and loved. A little further on we passed the old spot where the little log house, "Granny's" pioneer home, gave shelter and cheer in the faded past, and then came the old home of those good people, John and Mrs. Hegwood, though changed in its outward appearance, yet the same home with its wondrous story of love and sorrow, of sunshine and shadow, of wedding feasts and the gloom and tears that come when a life goes out, tears for the little ones whose prattling voices were stilled down here but are full of laughter and song up yonder, real soul sorrow because a life-long companion has gone to a better land, yet cheered with the joyous thought of meeting some sweet day in the spring and summer land of God.

We drove on toward the old church at the cross-roads just beyond, to find that only one short week before the hungry fire gods had fallen upon it, and, save a few stones and charred timbers, nothing remained of that dear old sanctuary but a sweet memory sanctified by the tears and prayers and songs and sermons laid upon the altar there so long ago. In the very silence of the hour it seemed we could hear still voices coming up from where John S. and Elizabeth Everett, William and Emily Crouch, Sylvester McCown, John Hegwood and many others lay, calm and peaceful and still, saying, "Build! build another house in which to worship your God and ours, even as we builded away back yonder."

Then Dick and I drove to the little schoolhouse in the grove near by, tied our horses to a tree, and, Sunday school being in session, we entered and joined that little company of men, women and children. Although it was a joyous hour, yet our thoughts went in leaps and bounds away back over a long stretch of years to the same kind of a scene. We looked over that little band and not one face—no, not one—could we see who sat with us in Sunday school in the good old days ago.

Following the Sunday school hour came church services, with a sermon by the pastor, Jabez Beard, one whom I remember as a tow-head and never thought forty years hence I would find him pastor of the Coal Ridge Church. Jabez had one of the truest, one of the best Christian mothers I ever saw.

After the services, if Dick and I could have distributed ourselves, we could have gone to a dozen places for dinner, but we compromised by my going one place and he to another with the understanding that immediately after dinner we should meet and stroll once more, but not on the same old road, down to the old "snake den." Nearly forty years since we visited that old trysting place. The shady grove above which gave shelter to the singing birds, and under whose friendly branches happy lovers built castles in the air as they whiled the hours away, had been felled by the woodman's axe, and old Mother Earth returns to the husbandman with added interest everything committed to her care. The old well-worn path underneath the rocks over which we used to help our youthful sweet-hearts on a bright Sunday in the good old summer time, when we held their hands and they held ours, has been destroyed by fragments of stones thrown down by the hand of time.

It was with difficulty we wended our way along that ancient ledge of piled-up stones in search of the name of this dear friend and that, chiseled in the old gray stone so long ago. The merciless tooth of time has gnawed away the names of some until no more their identity and date can be deciphered. Here and there on the cold, silent rocks may be found the names of those we had long since forgotten. We found inscriptions down there on those old rocks serving as a tombstone for some who sleep under the southern grass and dew. There are lovers' names in couplets, telling the sweet story of how two young hearts stood there side by side in the faded past. Then we turned with a last fond look away out over that great stretch of country round about, and wondered how much of joy and sunshine has come to them and how little of sorrow and heart burdens have been theirs, all along their drifted paths. Darius' name we could not find, while mine cut on that great rock of ages thirty-nine years ago is still there, and no one has ever chiseled his name so high on the face of that old rock.

We left this old spot probably never to be seen again by us, and going away we carried with us all we could gather up in memory-land, and then drove down the big hill into the old river bottom. We passed the very spot where, though the old home is gone, L. N. Amsberry, one of the early settlers, and useful in the activities of the church and neighborhood life, after a hard-fought battle in the old world's fierce strife, one day when the roses of June were quietly sleeping in the snowdrifts of winter, laid down the implements of warfare and went home to the God he loved. We drove on down the way and called on our old friends, Bailey and Neeley. There we said "How do you do?" and saw the finest bunch of babies at Joe's you ever saw. We said goodbye, and away we went up the hill to see Jess and Gertie and Will and

Laura, and, last but not least, the best mother-in-law in fourteen states, Grandma Hegwood. We then bade farewell to the old Ridge and away we went. Happy day! Happy visit! Blessed memory! Kindly people!

Darius was not through with his visit in old Marion, so I left him with Sallie and Emmet, who had kindly volunteered to take him to visit other friends. I returned home Monday. The next day Darius came over to the State House to say goodby. We walked slowly down that long, tiled corridor and out on the broad granite steps to the north. Twice we said goodby and twice our hands met in silent grasp, and when the last word was spoken we knew that his heart and mine had beaten in unison with the hand. The dividing line fell and we found each alone again. Darius returned to his home in Broken Bow, Nebraska, where he holds a good government position, and where he has lived a useful and happy life.

Don't think, my friends, that in unfolding the scenes of the old days down on the Ridge we are content to live in the buried years back there. But it does seem to me after all that:

There are no boys like the old boys
 When we were boys together,
 When the grass was sweet to our brown, bare feet
 That dimpled the laughing heather;
 When the pewee sang in the summer dawn,
 Or the bee in the billowy clover,
 Or down under the hill the old whippoorwill
 Echoed his song over and over.

There are no girls like the good old girls;
 Against the world I'd stake 'em;
 As rosy as a peach and clean of heart
 As the Lord knew how to make 'em!

They were rich in spirit and common sense,
And piety all supportin' ;
They could bake and stew, and hoe the corn, too
And they made the finest courtin'.

Where are the girls of yesterday ?
Pink-cheeked from the brush of morn,
Hoarding nature's rare wealth,
A bounding heart and good health,
Pulling shucks from the yellow corn.

It will do you and me no harm, but it may soften the heart to go back just for to-night only to the scenes which make the starting point in our young lives. Back to the old churchyard, into that silent city along whose streets reposes the sacred dust of the dead. Perhaps father and mother sleep there side by side, with a single stone marking the place beneath which they rest. And may be father waits for the heart he left behind, or mother peacefully longs for the final reunion of all the sweet home links. The grass has for years grown over their silent beds. There are many neglected graves down there. On the hillside overlooking the winding stream where once state-ly oaks tossed their branches in the wind are sunken graves overgrown with grass and heaped with debris, that no eye has seen or friendly hand caressed for years, and their names have long since dropped from human speech. And then we turn aside to other scenes, to other days down there, and plead again for the dear old days, saying in our hearts :

Give me back the dear old days,
All the boys in line.
The "Boy Stood on the Burning Deck,"
And "Fair Bingen on the Rhine ;"
" 'Twas midnight in his guarded tent, "—
We spoke it high and low ;
While Mary trotted out her little lamb
Whose fleece was white as snow.



CHARLES N. CROUCH.

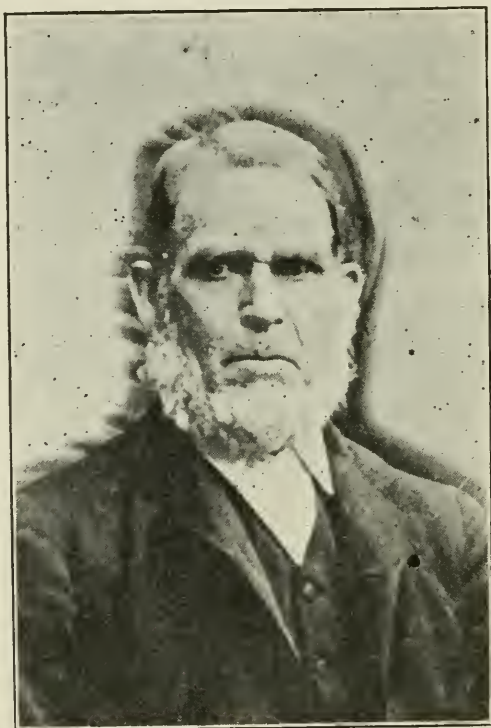
Give us back the dear old days,
The pathway through the dells,
The old schoolhouse by the roadside,
The sound of the cow bells
Tinkling down in the woods;
The song of bird and brook,
The old McGuffey reader and
The blue-backed spelling book.

While you and I and everybody like to talk over the incidents, joys, sorrows and tragedies of others days, we must not, can not live altogether in the past. To-day is ours; yesterday is already in eternity; while to-morrow may never come. As we have looked over these boyhood pictures perhaps tears have come, but they will do you or me no harm. The road from our youth to this night may have been long and toilsome. Perhaps it is strewn all along with mistakes, with many heart burdens, but I am sure it has done us good to go back to memory-land, back to the times that touch the heart line, back to other days of happiness, before the clouds and burdens of life were known. But after we have counted the rough and thorny places all along our life journey there are lots of good and joyful things to cheer us in this queer old world.

There are those of our little company of boys down there who have not gone down in that dreamless sleep, yet we are going rapidly over the hill. We have lived to know that this old world is not an enchanted isle in the midst of the ocean blue, where no storm can ever come. The lessons of the past have taught us to turn away from the thorns and keep our eyes upon the beautiful flowers. The past is only useful as a sweet memory and the lessons it may bring to us that make for good. Yes, boys and girls, there is lots of cheer in this big old world, and though sometimes the storm has raged all day long the rainbow comes after the showers. As for me, I know

not what the coming years may hold, of winter days and summer clime, but this I know, when my misspent life grows old I feel sure it shall be light at evening tide.

A little more work, a little more play, a few brief flying years; a little more joy and smiles and tears, and all the little company of boys making up this story will have gone beyond the gates. Just a little more toiling in the world's fierce strife; some years of toil along the road that leads to a loaf of bread; some cheery words we said unthinking, that made a sad heart light and the world so bright; while God, who never sleeps or wearies, is watching overhead; a little more of laughter and love and song, then we shall say "Good-night."



WILLIAM A. CROUCH.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AMSBERRY AND CROUCH FAMILIES. TWO UNCLE "BILLIES"

There were so many good people who were a part of the activities down on the Ridge that to take them up one by one as they appear in the old galleries of memory would, I fear, tire my readers; but I hope not. I feel, just as sure as I live to-day, that I have not drawn back a curtain revealing a single sacred spot, a stone, here and there marking a place where once stood a pioneer home in which love was so sweet, and the patter of innocent feet so full of joy; not a single turn in the old paths over which we bounded in the glad old days; not a girl or boy of the happy past have I brought into the bright sunshine of memory; not an old pioneer whose toil and prayers and songs and tears were the bright jewels in the uplift of that old community down there, but has awakened a glad interest in every one still remembering the old homeland, as well as a reproduction of similar life pictures to those who treasure up like scenes and dear old spots, once their old homeland.

I am thinking this very minute of Uncle Billy and Aunt Polly Amsberry. Away back yonder William Amsberry and Polly Everett lived among the stone and wood-capped hills of New York. I do not know when or where these two people were married, but I do know the very

spot on which they lived down between two hills away back in West Virginia, whither they had gone many years before emigrating to Marion County, this state. They both sprang from splendid old families in the Empire land. Down there on that creek, a branch of "Little Sixteen," which means it was sixteen miles from the mouth of the Kanawha River in the then old Virginia, these people gave to the world William F., L. N., Frank, Almira, Allen and M. J. Amsberry.

Besides tilling the soil down there on the hillsides and narrow little valleys, Uncle Billy worked at his trade as a shoemaker while the boys hustled among the clods and stones and briars and sassafras.

Uncle Billy was very popular, and knew everybody for miles around. A public road wound its way from over on the "Big Sixteen" and other places as well, down the little creek, passing alongside of the old woodyard in front of Uncle Billy's house.

In those days back there everybody traveled on foot or on horseback. Young men taking their girls to church or other places took them on behind and sometimes rode up the steepest hills so the girls would have to throw their arms around them to keep from slipping off behind. Very few young men down there had not been severely hugged while on one of these journeys. The first horseback ride I ever enjoyed was behind my mother on the way from my Grandmother Hayes' place, a few miles below Uncle Billy Amsberry's home, down on the rim of the river valley. This journey was made on "Old Charlie," the gray horse brought to Iowa afterwards by Uncle William Crouch, about both of whom I shall have something to say in this series of reminiscences.

As I was saying a moment ago, Uncle Billy was very popular; so much so, one after another riding by on the

road described above would rein up his fiery steed and hail Uncle Billy with "Hello!" while he pounded and pegged away on an old cow-hide boot. This hailing him so often while at work got to be a sign of distress, so he gathered up his bench and tools and went out and sat down by the roadside, where he stitched and pegged and pegged and stiched, ready for the next "Hello!" man that came that way.

In 1855 Uncle Billy, Aunt Polly and all of the family (except Frank) were happily situated in the Ridge neighborhood. Uncle Billy built a home which is now a part of that recently owned and occupied by the late Lud Reynolds, out near the brow of the hill overlooking the valley of the Des Moines. Uncle Billy and part of his family and Uncle William Crouch and his little family came together from Virginia to Iowa, bringing with them old Mike and old Charlie, two faithful gray horses. Charlie was the larger of the two, and, besides being a pacer from away back was addicted to the colic, which seized him about every third day. Old Mike was a little trimmer made and as tough as an old pine-knot away back in Virginia land. I remember how with old Mike, before the advent of the real threshing machine, they used him to tramp the wheat from the bright golden straw laid like a big wheel on the ground, on which the old gray horse went around and around. The wheat and chaff were then gathered up and the chaff separated from the wheat by the aid of the windmill. This was just a little northeast of where Lud's house now stands.

Uncle Billy continued his work at the bench in his new home in the Hawkeye state. This bench, in the winter season at least, was situated in the southeast corner of the living room near the old fireplace. Looking over that great stretch of years to the way back there I see an old home picture. I see the bright, red blaze flitting here and there through the spaces in the old log fire; I hear a

stray cricket under the warm hearth singing his good-night song. Aunt Polly, with snow-white frilled cap, sits knitting by the light of the fire in the fireplace; Uncle Billy is pegging away on the sole of a shoe, working by the light of a tallow candle. The old gray cat lies curled up on the warm hearth near Aunt Polly, and while her fingers are keeping time with the dancing needles the old cat purrs and dreams and sleeps and purrs. This old cat was peculiarly favored, having ingress and egress through a half-circle hole made in the bottom of the door.

H. A. Amsberry went back to Virginia, and, returning, brought with him Mary Blain as his bride, and soon was in his own home down in the Ramey neighborhood, which place he still owns, where he and his good wife have grown old and scarred in life's terrible fight.

"Jimmie" Amsberry with his parents lived in the old home place, where he and old Mike with God's help made corn and hominy, while Uncle Billy pegged and stitched away. My father would send me to Uncle Billy to have my boots repaired. I would sit by the old log fire and wait while the repairing was being done. I would draw my boots off in the old bootjack made to fit both little and big boots, and hand them to him. He would look at them and exclaim, "Humph! Burnt, burnt under the forestick! Nice way for a boy to do!" and it was scold at me until the job was completed.

I was at his place one time on a similar errand, when I found Pratt Coffman having his boots repaired. He had snagged a hole in one while running after a rabbit across a piece of breaking full of hazel roots; and with Uncle Billy it was growl, growl, while he pegged away, "To think a boy could be so thoughtless as to snag holes in his boots!" Poor old man! He didn't mean anything by his scolding, but simply wanted to impress upon the minds of the young-

sters to be careful, as a matter of economy to their fathers. But we could not see it that way then, so we always approached Uncle Billy with fear and trembling when on these errands.

The years of these two old people were long and busy and useful. When God had numbered his days and the door in his life's highway was closed to the stream of golden sunlight that kisses the dewdrops from the rosebud and the tender blade of grass, when Uncle Billy's speechless form lay in the center of a large gathering of neighbors and friends down in that old home, the Rev. Mr. Whitehead stood up and read, "Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth as a flower and is cut down. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months is with thee." Then they laid him away in the most forlorn, God-forsaken spot in Marion County, where a rabbit never dared to go nor even the song birds with their notes of cheer ever came to sing the gloom away. In a few more years Aunt Polly was carried down to the same deserted spot, and there the bodies of these two good old people went back to the dust from whence they came. The last time I ever saw those two graves down there, side by side, an old rail fence and a well-worn cow path ran diagonally across the sunken roof of their narrow homes.

W. F. and Harriet Amsberry, early settlers on the Ridge, were actively interested in church and school and other useful activities in the community. I remember when this family lived in a little log house in the shade of a big cottonwood tree just back and a little north of the new frame house built later, nearer the road which ran in front of this home. I know of no family in that vicinity who entertained the minister preaching for the Coal Ridge Baptist Church so often as those people. Many, and many a time have I known of Will going and

returning with the Rev. E. H. Scharff, of Pella, while that good man preached the glad word in the little old schoolhouse by the road. Few places down there seemed so near to me as this good Christian home.

Will Amsberry did not care to join the mad chase for gold, yet he looked carefully after the temporal needs of his family. In the role of a Nimrod he was in his glory. I believe he killed the last deer ever slain by a hunter in Marion County. This was long after deer hunting was abandoned down there. He heard or knew of the haunts of one of these fellows, south of where Bussing's mill used to be, down on English Creek, so he got down his old rifle and went after him and brought him home. His good wife, Harriet, remembered my father's family and sent a liberal supply of this luxury for our table.

In addition to his hill farm, Will owned one of the first river bottom farms wrested from the deep forest of native timber which then covered that entire valley, with the exception of here and there a little "clearing," in which stood a small log house, a little field of corn surrounded by a high rail fence, "staked and ridered." Here and there could be heard the familiar tinkling of a cow bell, and then a bunch of "razorback" hogs could be seen busily engaged in piling high the rich black soil in their search for nuts and sweet, tender roots; then a band of sheep at rest on the green rug of nature, while the lambs skipped and hopped about in joyful glee, and wherever the old bell-wether went the sheep were sure to go.

What wonderful changes down there have the tooth of time, the white man's axe, the firebrand and the plow wrought! Now that entire stretch of bottom land once so dense with grand old trees is one vast farm, rich and fertile as the valley of the Nile.

William F. Amsberry was, without any particular effort, prosperous until the lean years following the panic



EMILY CROUCH.

of 1873, during which time the low prices of land and products made many men poor, and robbed not a few of their little homes purchased at a fearful cost of labor and human sweat. This old pioneer, already marked with the scars of pioneer strife, now standing on the western slope of life's strenuous old hill, found his home mortgaged for nearly its then value, left the old place which had sheltered him and his loved ones so many years, bade a long and forever farewell to the sweet and joyous associations of the years gone by, and with his family went to Custer County, Neb. There after a few more years of toil and tears and tragedies these two good people laid themselves down in that sweet, sweet sleep from which none ever wake to weep.

L. N. Amsberry and Jane Coffman Amsberry, his good companion, were two more of the grand people of the olden time down on the Ridge. I was young, and probably for one of my age over-observant, but nevertheless honestly so. But, to-night, floating back in the old swing of time to the days down there, pausing for a moment under that family tree, it seems that the rays of domestic sunshine never shone with a more dazzling brightness than that which kept the blaze of love burning so brightly upon the altar of these two hearts. Amid all the joys that came to them, their hands and their hearts were scarred with the cruel instruments of conflict all along the way of life.

Nort, no man ever made a fight more noble than he. He was resourceful in methods. If one failed he buckled on his armor and went again into the fierce battle, stout-hearted and brave. His heart went out in deep sympathy, and his hand and arm were nerved for action in times of sickness, trials and tribulations which came into the homes of his friends and neighbors. He fought too hard in life's battles, and one day, all pierced and bleeding

with wounds, he fell. I stood by his side for a few moments that day, although I knew it not,—it was a strange presence to me, God's heavenly ambulance came down, attended by angels who, with tender hands, bore his body to that sweet hospital in the skies, where every wound is healed and every tear is kissed away. A few years afterwards Jane with her family of boys and girls went to Custer County, Neb., where they all live save one, Greene, who died a few years ago. Poor Jane, —she who used to give me a nice big red apple or a cookie back in the faded past,—weighted with years and sorrow, is only awaiting the beckoning call over yonder.

Jimmie, as he was known so long, several years ago sold his Ridge land and home and bought a farm in Warren County. He has since retired from active farm life, and lives in the little town of Milo. To Jimmie the tragedies and trials and afflictions of this world have come thick and fast. Into few homes have the arrows of desolation been shot with such sad results. Adeline, I remember the very day she came to his home a bride. I know of the sweet ministrations that came from her kindly hands through all the years until the "great white plague" turned out her life lamp. With a very grateful heart I look back over the eventful years now gone, and pay a loving tribute to her memory for the many loving ministrations and kindly help and cheer so freely given my poor afflicted sister, who long years ago went into that silent land and was tenderly laid away in the Garrison cemetery, north of Knoxville, where she sleeps under the grass and the dew.

My simple little story of those who down in that old, old home land builded for home, for humanity and for God would not be complete without a feeble tribute, at least, to the memory of that godly and kindly man and woman, William Crouch and Emily Hayes Crouch, his

faithful helpmeet down through all the years of joy and tears which came to them since those two hearts were joined, away back near where the chasing waters of the Kanawha join with the babbling song of the Ohio on its journey to the sea. More than sixty-three years ago these people side by side began the journey into a long and unknown future. They were full of youth and strength and vigor and hope. If they could have lifted the curtains that shut out the view of the coming years with all their heaping load of toil and care, they still would have been brave. Never, like Saul, king of Israel, would they have thrown their bodies upon the keen sword of disappointment and fear. Two human hearts so completely and so sweetly united as were these could and would have found, as did theirs, sweet content in the midst of angry storms and rolling waves on life's old ocean, because none of these could obscure the bright sunshine of domestic bliss which, in these two hearts, every day and all the time stood at its meridian height, which is the glory and beauty of every true home. The highest tribute I can pay my old uncle and aunt is this: Though not blessed with an abundance of this world's goods, their long married life was truly one grand sweet song.

William Crouch with his wife and little family, came to Iowa in company with Uncle Billy Amsberry, having made the trip on a steamboat from West Virginia, landing at Keokuk, from which place they came by wagon route to Marion County in the year 1855. He brought with him the old gray horse Charley, an all-round animal for everything,—a good saddle horse, easy pacer, trusty in every respect; this old fellow was possessed of one defect and that was purely physical,—he had periodical and severe attacks of colic.

Uncle lived then in a little log house west of the Everett home, standing near the road then running

diagonally across what is now the east part of the Poffenbarger farm, beginning at the northeast corner near the Aunt Mary Everett home and crossing Competine Creek west of the old Caldwell place. On the southwest corner of this little pioneer house extended a log probably two feet from the wall. This projecting log was used sometimes for hanging hogs for dressing when the butchering season was on, and during the intermediate period was used for "drenching" old Charley in his colicky spells, by drawing his head up by the aid of a rope thrown over the projecting log and then applying the various remedies through a long-necked bottle kept for that purpose. During one of these spells this good old horse, on whose friendly back I rode, away back in Virginia, laid down and went where no colic ever comes.

William Crouch was one of the most industrious men I ever knew. His hands were never idle, and Emily kept pace with his industrious strides. I never saw two people more honest, sincere and true. Uncle William built the chimneys for many of the pioneer houses down there, and laid many of the foundations for barns and later and better homes; while Emily made the warm woolen cloth a full yard wide, and many a good, soft blanket for neighbors and friends. He laid the foundation of cut stone for the Coal Ridge Baptist Church nearly forty years ago, donating his labor. On the cornerstone he cut these letters, "W. A. C." It is said that when that old temple of worship was destroyed by fire in October 1908, most of, if not all, the stones in that old wall save this one square block cracked and crumbled with the heat. I rejoice to-day to have the promise that that stone, hewn and laid with his honest hand of toil so long ago in the foundation of the old church, will be appropriately set in the foundation of the new building rising, Phoenix-like, out of the ashes on the sight of that so full of sacred memories.

No two people ever lived down there who, without ostentatious display but in warm, true Christian kindness loved away more tears and heart-aches than William A. and Emily Crouch. When this kindly Christian man, so full of years and toil, let fall the working tools of life I am just as certain that as the sun reclining now behind the billowy clouds in the far-away west will rise again to gild the morning with its golden tints this kind-hearted man went straight home to God and heaven and eternal rest. It was mine to witness the sadness that comes when two hearts long bound together as one are torn asunder when a life goes out. Emily never recovered from that awful blow which left her alone with her God. No child could cheer her back to joy and smiles, but one day God laid his loving hand on her pale brow, then took her tired, wrinkled hands in his and led her gently to William, in the sweet fields of heaven, that enchanted isle somewhere, where no storms nor tears nor grief nor pain can ever come.

CHAPTER IX

AUNT MINERVA REYNOLDS AND FAMILY. PIONEER CHARACTERS OF EARLY DAYS.

Of all the people who were a part of the activities of the early days in that part of Marion County from whence comes my story of the far-away past, of those earnest hearts and striving, toiling hands who laid the foundation of the social, moral and religious life down there, none deserve a greater meed of praise than Minerva Reynolds and her stalwart sons and daughters.

"Aunt Minerva," as she was so long and familiarly known, was the widow of Silas Reynolds, who went into the over-yonder land away back there amid the templed hills, the rocks and rills of the western part of the then unbroken state of Virginia, ere a stream of blood drawn on the crest of the Blue Ridge mountains marked the place that divided that grand old domain into two sovereign states. She with all her children save Morty (who had preceded her, coming to Muscatine County the year before,) came to Marion County in the early part of 1846, where they settled in the Des Moines River valley.

Most of the people making up the scattered communities of that time were southern folks, and there was found in their make-up a train of hospitality not usually found now, since the chase for gold and graft and place and power have robbed men of so many of those little amenities that sweeten life and bring so much of cheer along the way.



MINERVA REYNOLDS.

In those days most if not all of the doors opening into the little cabin homes dotting here and there Iowa's fair land were hung on heavy wooden hinges and fastened with a latch of seasoned hickory, which was operated by the aid of a leather or deerskin string through a hole in the door. This string was operated from the outside, and before the family retired for the night it was drawn inside, thus leaving the home secure from intruders. In the old days when the wild Indians were on the warpath these doors were barricaded on the inside for protection from a possible attack of a war party of these dusky warriors, and an additional strength of defense was provided by loop-holes through the heavy log walls, which not only furnished an outlook through which the enemy could be located but through which their trusty old rifles could be brought into use when occasion required. But when the tomahawk had been deep in the old earth's cold bosom buried, and sweet peace with its victories had come to these pioneer people, the barricade was removed from the door and the latchstring hung on the outside as a token of welcome to the passer-by, the wayfaring man seeking a home in the then new land.

The latchstring in the door of the pioneer home of this goodly Widow Reynolds was always on the outside. Her home was a refuge for the staggering homeseeker and a friendly hospital for the sick and homeless. One day a newcomer with his wife and little family passed that way, seeking a spot whereon to lay up three stones—one for home, one for mother and one for heaven. Aunt Minerva had known these people away back where the winding Kanawha bears upon its silvery bosom the burdens of men. Uncle John Everett, his wife and little children, were tired from their long and weary journey westward, and this widow gave them rest; they were thirsty and she gave them drink; hungry and she gave them food; sick and

she ministered unto them. Although she knew it not, this kindly widow gave her mite. She cast her scanty food upon the waters; and then in the long after years, beside her bed of pain, Uncle John administered to her, if not to relieve, yet to smoothe and ease her tired soul away on the wings of peace and rest.

After the fashion of most young people Aunt Minerva's children soon began to leave the old home nest to make homes for themselves, and in due time the old-fashioned cradles rocked to and fro where those young home-builders built castles in the air while their ambitious feet raced joyously along on the paths toward coveted achievements.

Morty married Miss Nancy Nossaman, belonging to a good family, old and most favorably known in Pella and vicinity. Sometime afterwards Morty bought and improved a farm beyond Whitebreast Creek, just west of the Coal Ridge neighborhood, near the site of the Ross water mills. The dam and the old mill have long since disappeared. I have a very distinct recollection of that old mill. Once upon a time in midwinter when the snow was deep and the temperature nearly down to zero, though the sleighing was fine, my brother and I went to that old mill, taking a sack of corn on a little hand sled, going all the way from the Coalport bottom.

On the farm described above Morty and "Nan" lived a good many eventful years, saw their children come and go out from the old home. Sometime in the early "eighties" Morty sold this place and moved to Missouri, where, after a few more years of strife and toil, they laid down the working tools of life and went to their well-earned rest.

Carroll, after a short period of adventure, seeking gold out on the Pacific's golden shore, returned to Iowa and



JOHN AND MRS. HEGWOOD.

married a Miss Eliza Karr, belonging to a family of pioneers who had settled on Whitebreast prairie in an early day. Together these people built a home in Appanoose County, near Centerville. During the war period they sold their farm down there and bought the place and built the house now owned by Mont Hegwood, beyond Competine. Tiring of this place, they soon afterward sold and returned to Appanoose County where they purchased another home in which they lived for a number of years, when they finally went to Smithfield, Illinois. There with his boys he engaged in mercantile and banking business. After a few more years of striving these two old pioneers, surrounded by a successful group of sons, laid themselves down in eternal sleep.

Jane Reynolds married Tapley Hegwood, an early comer in the community. The early part of the married life of these people was spent largely in the neighborhood near where the town of Harvey now stands. After the war they bought the James Caldwell place, east of Competine Creek and west of the old Parks place. On this place they lived for a number of years, after which they sold out and went to Missouri where, near Stansberry, they bought their last home in this world. There after playing a part in the many tragedies which lay in hiding for so many, many people Jane after days and months of suffering took her pains and griefs to God and laid them down in the happy forgetfulness of glorious things. "Tap" now lives in Oklahoma.

Leah F. Reynolds and John Hegwood were married in 1849. He came from Illinois, down on the Sangamon. He knew Lincoln; saw him in his plain, humble way building for the greatest honor that can come to an American citizen. In a little log house, close to the road near the Baptist Church building, these young folks lived and loved and toiled. On the hearth of this little

log cabin home six children came and played. In this happy pioneer home the cradle rocked to and fro; here mother's nimble fingers shaped and fashioned and built the warm woolen stockings, or with thimble and needle made garments large and small, the little lullaby songs were sung, and the cradle rocked away until little wondering eyes were closed to the world so strange to them.

John Hegwood was a picture of physical manhood, tall and straight and big. No day too cold, no day too hot for him to walk a long and weary way to work and toil for fifty cents a day for food for wife and child. But one balmy day in April, 1861, the leaping, bounding breezes, fragrant with the blossoms of the southland, freighted with the sweet notes of the southern song-birds, came dulled with forebodings of war and bloodshed and tears, and then men everywhere went out to fight their brother man. It was when this husband and father put on his country's blue the first shadow fell upon the threshold of this home. Then that mother with her little band of children took up the weary rounds of life alone. No boy could then fathom the heart burdens which laid their blighting weight upon so many, many homes during those cruel years of war; then when every bit of longed-for news came upon the footsteps of dread, fearing a life had gone out on a bloody southern field.

The breaking of this home circle and the dread of war's avenging hand was not the only burden that came into that little home. One time when all was Oh! so still, an angel came into that lonely, waiting home, and when this strange visitor had quietly slipped away little Morris, too, was gone. On downy angel wings his little soul was borne away into the spring and summer land above. Then this lonely mother with the sweet promises of God wiped away her tears and fought on and on in the world's fierce strife.

The years dragged along on weary feet until Appomattox came and with it the missing link, and together again these people took up the battle of life. They built a new home farther towards the west; nestled on the bosom of a friendly grove it stood. The little log house with its sweet memories and seasons of childish glee and mirth and joyous shout, that little home with its strange scenes of bitter grief, was torn down, and now it stands only as a memory in the castle halls of the past. In that new home other children came. The patter of little feet again was heard. Then came the solemn marriage vows that united two hearts as one, the wedding feast and the going out to begin a strange, new life. The footprints of Time left his tracks upon the brow of these people, and, though it seemed that the harvest was only in the bloom, yet one day that friendly grove in which the song-birds, morning, noon and night warbled their songs of cheer to burdened men, was clothed in the deep hush of silence, for a soul had gone home. John Hegwood, the pioneer boy, the soldier man, the true friend, the kindly husband, the gentle father, the sick one's tender nurse, was dead.

Lutisha, the youngest daughter of Aunt Minerva, married John DeMoss, a son of one of the early settlers on Whitebreast Prairie, in the neighborhood of which they lived for a number of years, and there this pioneer girl died.

Morris L., or Lud, as we all knew him, first came into my life away back yonder. I remember the occasion very well, indeed. He with Welch's boys was jumping on that little plat of ground near where the old potter shop stood. He wore a red woolen shirt, so common in those days. In jumping Lud was hard to beat. However, I saw little of him until after his marriage to Adelaide Adams, a daughter of Simeon Adams, a native of Kentucky and an early settler on the Ridge. Following their

marriage these people lived west of the road between the church and the new schoolhouse as they now stand. Later Lud bought the land adjoining the Hegwood properties on the west, and there they made a home.

Of the younger set perhaps I knew Lud better than any one else. My father, being in the milling business, employed Lud with his team for quite a long while. With Kit, a sorrel with flaxen mane and tail, and Gray, Lud hauled logs and lumber and shingles. With his team he furnished the power for the shingle factory. With Kit hitched to one sweep and Gray to the other and Lud in the center with his whip, they went round and round and the faster the team and Lud went round the faster the shingles flew from the keen knife as it danced up and down. My father with a long "prod" lifted the steaming blocks from the great boiling vat, my brother held the blocks to the fluttering knife, while I with nimble fingers threw the shingles into bales and securely bound them down.

I would go with Lud to help him plow his corn so he could return to my father's work. I would plow with Kit and Lud with Gray, each with a single-shovel plow, both horses wearing muzzles made of hickory bark to prevent their taking an occasional bite of corn blades as they toiled along under the blazing sun. Kit was a proud old nag and extremely jealous of her rights. To touch her when she was doing her share at the doubletree meant a balk that was fierce in its results. At least half the load had to be unloaded, then haul part of it to the top of the hill, unload that and return for the remainder of the load. I helped Lud during one of these stunts. I was about eighteen years old, and was then afflicted with asthma and consequently wheezed like a leaky steam chest. On account of this defect Lud called me "Downing," the name of an old wheezy hardware dealer in Pella at that time.

Lud always when working for my father ate his dinners with our family, consequently he came very much into our home life. A strong cord of friendship was woven around the hearts of each one of us that has stood the test of all the years. Later Lud bought the Uncle Billy Amsberry place near the brow of the hill overlooking the rich fertile valley of the Des Moines River. There he made his home with Addie by his side; there his children grew to manhood and womanhood; their grandchildren came to greet grandpa and grandma; there my father's old friend lived while the weight of years bore down upon his failing shoulders and dragged the lines of time upon his brow; there this pioneer boy of nine and Christian man of ripe old age served his God and loved his fellowmen; there his children watched while he took a last fond, lingering look upon the things of earth and those he loved so well, and when his light had gone out here they knew he had only stopped just over the way where no earthly day can be so full of sunshine and joy and rest.

To-night my heart is sorely bruised while I pay a tribute not to mine own alone but to my father's old friend. While I look through tears to that little company down there gathered round the open door through which this husband, father, brother and friend has entered into his eternal rest, how glad I am to know that near together in the same church yard my father and his friend have gone to a house purer and brighter and cleaner than the snow that so gently caresses their silent homes.

John, the youngest of this pioneer family, I saw very little of until his return from the war. He was tall and very slender. We knew him as "Long John." But I never could quite make him out as tall as a certain fellow down there would have him, who said he reminded him of a "tall oak, twenty feet without a limb, knot or wood-

pecker hole." Not long after his return from the army John married Sarah Thompson, daughter of Garrison Thompson, an early settler in that community. John was rather crafty in a business way, and could get along in the world where anybody else could. He was kind of heart, but withal queer and odd. He would fight without coaxing, yet never went about with a chip on his shoulder. He sold his land adjoining my father's place and went to Nebraska and afterwards made his home in Oklahoma, where a short time ago he fell a victim of heart trouble, and while away from home and wife and children his life went out.

To-night I am filled with sad recollections of the many changes that have come down there while these things have been making history. Father, Lud's friend, has long since gone down to his grave. Of the three little tow-headed brothers who played about the old shingle mill, the story of their lives can only be brief and sad. One lives on Nevada's silver crest, one wandered away and is lost to human speech, the other drifted away from his drum, his little gun and the toys I delighted to buy, and at last lay down with the dreamless dead overlooking the Golden Gate through which great ships go out on the Pacific's tumbling waves. Mother, the best and truest friend I ever had, sleeps in the gold and silver crested city of Helena, Montana, where no tear of love can ever fall upon her quiet home, nor friendly hand caress the spot where her dear dust lies hid from the gazing, wondering world. Ah! Even now it seems I can hear her sing those lullaby songs so soft and low.

No songs that come to me in dreams
In after years can bring
The same sweet memories as those
My mother used to sing.

And in those dreams I see her face
 And catch the glad, sweet smile
That drew my boyish love to her,
 So free from sin or guile.
I see her rocking to and fro,
 Her voice so sweet and low ;
In melody the angels chant
 The songs of long ago.
When evening's shades were gathering,
 And shadows long would creep,
'Twas 'Hush, My child, lie still and slumber !'
 Gently lulled me off to sleep.
And with these melodies I see
 The old home fireside,
With mother seated in her chair,
 Before the hearth so wide.
But sweeter yet is borne to me,
 As shadows dance and leap,
Those old-time songs my mother sang,
 To lull me off to sleep.

In going back into memory-land I can but see what dreadful havoc the great reaper has wrought on the lives of the goodly men and women who laid the foundation for the homes down there. Of all that little company of pioneers away back in the "forties" only Mrs. John Hegwood remains, standing as a living witness of God's goodness. She stands away up on the towering mountain top of life, a gracious, kindly sheaf of ripened grain. Every day she lifts her heart to God in humble prayer. Without God and her children she might indeed cry out in her loneliness. The reward she so richly deserves will some sweet day be hers.

I now return to the heroine of this simple story, Aunt Minerva Reynolds. She was robbed of her health and strength for many weary, weary years, yet the force

of her guiding hand was ever felt and her wise counse worked for good in that pioneer family of young men and young women. Ah! she was truly a "mother in Israel." I never knew her when the blush of health rested upon her cheek. Though bowed down with the hardships incident to pioneer life and broken health, she was a woman of high ideals and most noble purposes. Though confined to her bed for many weary, tired months, her time went on and on until nearly ninety years had heaped upon her frail shoulders the burden of a long and useful life ere she went home.

Some say that God employs the accumulated years of pain of a suffering one to serve a purpose all his own. I do not believe it. But I do believe that the Christian forebearance, fortitude and patience of that good woman, pained and tired though she was, comes to every one who knew her, fragrant with beautiful lessons of patience, a glorious example of submission. Hers was a very beautiful old age, after all.

CHAPTER X

THE BOYS AND GIRLS OF THE RIDGE, AND THE SCENES OF BYGONE DAYS

I do not feel that I can close these reminiscences of the old days down on the Ridge without taking up the thread of events and incidents touching more fully the boyhood and girlhood stages in the lives of the boys and girls of the period in which the plot of my story of the olden time is laid.

I trust that I shall be pardoned when I say that even the first paragraph of what I hope to tell you about the scenes and incidents of those far-away days threatens to throw open the floodgates of grief, even in view of the fact that most of the incidents connected with the early life of the young people of the time that appeals to us so forcibly now was full of joy and sunshine, notwithstanding so many and many of us did not know it but insisted on looking away through the fog of coming days and years, which to our young lives seemed to stand between us and the bright, golden goal of peace, contentment and delight.

I can not, neither would I if I could, prevent a train of saddened thoughts as they come to me breaking over the horizon of the good old days long gone. Though that old homeland which furnished shelter and food and friends to my parents in the noonday of their lives; there, where children came, and young men went out into the world to meet the enemy alone; there, where the sister and

sweet, confiding companion of my boy life one sad day in August more than thirty years ago, while I was wandering in strange and distant lands, just quietly and peacefully walked over the border-land of the world, which had been to her so full of suffering and pain, into the ever-blooming fields of heaven, and now only a modest marble slab remains down there to tell the story of her short life; though it was written in the book of fate that my fight in this old world's battles should be made in other fields; though for all the years that make up a generation of men, my home and shelter and joy, and my share of the world's grief has been mine in another land;—yet, after all, the hardships of my boy life, the mills of poverty my parents trod in the early days, the graves of my people down there, make tender and soft my very heart; and though it may be many a day, if ever, I shall see again those old roads and the dim outlines of the paths over which I used to run and leap and play when a boy, yet I am bound to that old homeland by ties too sacred to be broken.

If, in this simple story of those who lived and loved and labored and played in the days back there, I shall refer briefly to a few of my personal experiences, I know I shall be forgiven by you. I have not whispered into your ears this little story of other days and years, calling you and me over into that dear old memory-land, to gain notoriety. I would much rather live the simple, quiet life. I would rather hide myself under some peaceful, blooming bower, fragrant with the perfume of home, sweet home, and revel in the tranquil stream of domestic bliss than to wear the robes of office or mingle in the mad race for gold, stabbing the innocent and even forgetting the whiteness of the winding sheet, if only I could win. I would rather be a little daisy, blooming down in some quiet, peacefull, shady nook where the golden sunbeams could steal in and kiss from my cheek

the teardrops of the morning, and listen to the music of the singing birds and catch the refrain of true and honest praise from the lips of the lowly woodman as he passes by, than to be an American Beauty rose, blooming in a public flower garden where the multitude pass by to flatter, and then be plucked and my beauty laid low in places of sin and shame. What I shall say of myself was pretty much the experience of most of the boys who began life with me, down on the Ridge.

I began to labor early in the game of life; in fact, I began to work before I had really commenced to play. All the years of my life since have been a ceaseless round of toil. The farm, the shop, the woods, the railroad section, down in the deep mines digging "dusky diamonds" and in the sunless office my life battles have been fought. I have not grown rich, nor did I care to. I have toiled too hard in this old world to finish up trying to wiggle through a needle's eye to gain entrance into the better world above. I only count it fortunate for myself that I had to work. God intended that men should labor when he said, "By the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." Though sometimes my bread has been eaten at a fearful cost of sweat, yet the bread was so much sweeter. A loafer is not only a poor excuse in the economy of God's great plan, but he is a nuisance everywhere in the paths of commerce and trade and labor.

When only eight years old I engaged to a Mrs. Davenport, who lived near by in a small field opened up in the deep woods, to assist in making sorghum, my recompense being a quart of the product per day, worth probably ten cents. I remember how, when ten years old, I gathered wild blackberries and carried them to Knoxville, where I sold them, and with the receipts bought a straw hat to wear to Sunday school, which, with a linen coat and pants my mother made and the pair of shoes I

wore into this world, completed my toilet. Really, when I walked into the little old schoolhouse the next day I was embarrassed. I thought I was the envy of all the boys.

But one of the happiest days I think I ever saw was one bright winter day; the snow was deep, the sunshine was so cheerful that all nature was glad. The plump little quail was abroad in the land. Fortunately I was prepared for the occasion, having had a trap already made and set, so when the old sun had started on its journey over the hill, down by the old "snake den," I placed my pants down in my red-topped copper-toed boots and waded the deep snow out to the back of the field to see how fortune had shuffled the cards, when to my supreme delight I found the old figure-four triggers had played fair for me. There were fifteen birds in my trap, and one trying to get in; this lone bird, finding he could not secure passage on that boat, and seeing me, made his escape into the hill country.

The next day I carried my fifteen quails through the snow to Knoxville, seven miles away, where I sold them and with the proceeds bought a copy of McGuffey's reader, and walked back home against a cold north wind, where I arrived about sundown, tired, hungry and cold. A short time in front of the blazing logs in the old fireplace, where, turning around and around brought warmth and cheer, then a good hot supper,—old-fashioned country sausage, nice, sweet corn-bread and milk that would make a city kid green with envy, and I was ready to take up my new reader, and, with my smaller brothers and little sister sitting close beside, aided by the light of a tallow candle my mother with her tired hands had moulded in the old tin mould, I read:

The lark is up to meet the sun,
The bee is on the wing;
The ant its labor has begun,
The woods with music ring.

It has been many and many a day since I saw that little reader, but the picture illustrating the lesson I can see now away back through all the years. It showed the fields, the flowers and the happy, singing birds in the tree and on the wing; it showed a youth in the morning time of life standing in the midst of the beautiful handiwork of God. Out over a stretch of earth's fair landscape, the sun with its myriad streaks of light was breaking over the horizon and chasing away the stars.

It was down there on the Ridge where we boys and girls learned the first lessons in love, laughter and song, and read the first chapter in the world's great book of tragedies. There we boys "broke" the yearling steers to work in bow and yoke, and performed some of the most wonderful teaming feats. There we boys, and girls, too, dropped and covered and hoed the corn, buoyed up and encouraged by the promise that when our work was done those of us boys who were faithful might go to the old "swimming hole" or go a-fishing, and the girls could each have a new hair ribbon or sun-bonnet.

Down there we bound the sheaves of golden grain beneath the harvest sun and at noon time nodded in the shade to the tune of the harvest fly. And in the summer twilight, while the birds were singing their retiring songs and the old whip-poor-will was awakening the echoes in the deep, dark woods, these same boys and girls, out under the shade of the old apple tree, tied up hearts with a golden thread drawn out on the spindle of love in old Cupid's mill, where hearts flutter and beat while the spindles go round and round. Of these sheaves so delicately bound down there some were tied with the fickle ribbon of sport to be untied before the spreading of another net; some have been loosened down by the water's edge, down by the shore of that ever-rolling river none can see and live. Of the ungrateful hands that unbound some of these life sheaves some were stained with the heart's red blood and some

could not be seen, for grief had blinded the eyes of sorrowing souls with tears; while one here and there went to live with God.

It was there we saw the first railroad train, after the old D. M. V. R. R. had stretched its long streaks of rust into Pella, which town at once became the Mecca for commerce far and near. The trains on that road then probably made twelve or fifteen miles an hour, but to our youthful imagination they simply flew like a wild pigeon through the air. We boys would gladly have paid a dollar a mile, had we had it, for a ride in one of those old coaches which now would not be good enough for a "smoker," but I heard an old lady say: "I wouldn't attempt a ride in one of them cars for anything, because I know I would be seasick."

It was in Pella we boys first had the exquisite pleasure of seeing a show. How we did hang around that lone elephant, and wonder why it was he had two tails, and laugh right out every time he stuck one of them in his mouth! We were simply amazed at the monkeys, and the girl in a great bunch of short skirts standing on one big toe and the other foot pointing toward heaven, palm outward, while the horse on which she stood went galloping around and around, was a wonder to us. I could not understand how she could stick to that horse, just what mysterious power held her on, with only her toe touching, while I, astride and with both hands firmly twisted into his mane, would always fall off every time a horse went out of a walk. But when the old clown came out with his trick donkey hitched to a little cart and went through a few stunts, we just simply went wild, and the Sunday school lesson for the following Sunday all went glimmering in the circus ring.

Following that show some of us boys went immediately into training. We tried somersaults backward and

forward ; we erected a trapeze on a horizontal limb down in a shady, secluded spot, and performed wonderful feats on that. We made a hard fight and lost.

Some of us never missed a show. How we got the price I do not know. We usually walked to town, carried water to get to see the side grafts, and paid our way into the big show. For dinner we usually filled up on dried herring, crackers and water from the town pump. We walked home in the evening, or begged a ride from some farmer who had taken "Liza Jane" and all the children, "just to see the animals," and "blowed himself" for two dollars and six-bits, collected for eggs his wife had sold.

But I want to tell you now that in after years, when riper, bolder days had come and fortune had shed her smile upon us broad and deep, we boys hitched up to th old farm wagon and with spring seats or boards for seats went to Knoxville, saw the show and all the side grafts, filled our girls up on crackers and cheese, candy and red lemonade, stayed late and drove home in the night, drove slow, and drove the fartherest way around, and had the girls do the driving because they liked to! Practice had made some of these girls very proficient in the art.

My friends, seriously speaking our advantages were very meagre. However, in most of the girls and boys down there was an inherent love for music, for things beautiful. How unfortunate, indeed, that some of them couldn't have postponed their beginning in life until a later period, so as to have enjoyed the privileges of to-day! O how much faster and farther would they have marched up the hill of life! But this I know, we made the most we could of the advantages, circumstances and opportunities the day and conditions then afforded. I lay down this challenge, that no community in Iowa has given to the world more professional men, more business

men, more successful farmers and teachers, more honest, Christian people or better wives or mothers or mothers-in-law than has that old neighborhood, down on the Ridge. In a conversation with L. M. Martin one time on this subject, he remarked: "Blood will tell." Now, I know that the good old blood our pioneer fathers and mothers brought from "Old Virginia" in the long ago was good, blue blood.

I said awhile ago that love for music was inborn in the most of the girls and boys down there, but their opportunities for cultivating these faculties were very limited. These musical instincts were natural, because the only music the neighborhood afforded was the song of the birds in the springtime and the awful squeak of the old wooden cane mill in sorghum time; or, when some old fiddler hauled down his fiddle and bow and gave us "Money Musk," "The Arkansas Traveler," or "Pat Mulligan's Wedding." There was not much dancing down there unless we could dance these same pieces or something else without the fiddle. Dancing was all right, but the fiddle was off. If we could find some one, and I was usually "it," who could whistle

Charlie, he's a good-natured lad;
Charlie, he's a dandy;
Charlie, he will use you well,
And treat you on good candy:

or The Girl I Left Behind Me." A cotillion would be made up at once and then it was:

O, the merry swings and whirls,
Of the happy boys and girls,
In the good old cotillion long ago.

O, they danced the Highland fling,
And they cut the pigeon wing,
To the music of the whistler long ago.

It was "Swing your partners, and all promenade!" while the whistler kept up his whistling :

If you love me as I love you
We'll have no time to tarry ;
But will have the old folks fixing around
For you and me to marry.

I suspect, I know, some of them did get married and many a "Susie" has not known the taste of candy since. Some men think their wives' tastes pass through a sudden and lasting change immediately following the wedding ceremony.

Dancers are expected to pay the fiddler, but these being whistling dances the whistler got nothing but dry cracked lips; and, besides, it took the balance of the night to reduce the pucker in his whistle.

The first organ we young folks ever saw was a little bit of a dinky thing not much larger than a cracker box which was brought into the neighborhood by one Dan Van Ness, a music teacher from Eddyville, who had secured a class on the Ridge who were anxious to cultivate their musical talent. He brought with him his daughter who played, and, besides, being pretty, we thought she could sing. Anyway, every time she played and sang we thought we were in heaven and were being entertained by one of God's angels playing on a heavenly instrument. There was, then, during the course of these lessons, and for a long time afterwards, such a wave of music as has never been equaled in any rural community in this fair land of Iowa.

Show me the community where its young people come together to sing and laugh and drive the clouds and tears away, and I will show you a people whose ideals are above and beyond the reach of the gross and sordid things. The sweet strains of music have moved and

melted multitudes into tears. By its sweet notes tired and weary armies have been marshalled into battle array.

Music will soften where language will fail us ;
Feelings long buried 'twill often restore.

Don't you know that while we applaud the singer of to-day and the musician who lets his hair grow a foot and a half long, their singing or their playing does not appeal to us like the music away back yonder ?

Oh ! give me the old songs, the kind we used to sing ;
When the dew was on the flower and the bee was on
the wing.

O, say ! Don't you recollect :
Them ol' sweet hymns that used to float so high
'Peared like they shook the winders in the ever-
lastin' sky ;
Fer, when we heard the preacher say : "Some brother
pitch the tune !"
We allus knowed "Amazin' Grace" was comin'
mighty soon.

Then somehow or other the songs of to-day do not go down into the heart like the old songs : not like the old songs we heard at mother's knee before the evening prayer was said ; not like the old songs our parents sung in the early evening twilight, the sweet mellowing cadences of which mounted round after round the mystic ladder that reaches into the highlands of heaven. Don't you, my dear friends, this very night, remember the good old songs we used to sing away back on the old home playground ?

King William was King James' son,
And from a royal race he sprung.

How we bowed to the east and bowed to the west,
and then picked out the girl we loved the best ! And while we kept going around in youthful bliss we knelt beside a lassie there and stole the first sweet kiss. I'd

like to sing "King William" now just like we used to sing, when life was like a primrose just bursting into spring. Somehow I like those old songs. Don't you?

"The Old Elm Tree," "The Maple on the Hill,"

"Some Twenty Years Ago, Tom," and "Dear Old Whip-poor-will;"

"A Starry Night for a Ramble," "The Miller and His Mill."

"Mollie Darling" and "The Poor House Over the Hill."

O my friends of the long ago, wherever you may be this night, I tell it to you again and again, that as I look back upon the scenes of my early recollections down there in the old homeland I am softened and subdued into a sweet, pensive sorrow which only the happiest and holiest associations of bygone years can call into being. There are times in my life and in yours, no doubt, when grief lies heaviest on the soul, when memory weeps, when gathering clouds of mournful melancholy pour out their floods and drown our very hearts in tears.

O beautiful isle of memory, lighted by the morning star of life, where roses bloom by the wayside, where the robins sing among the cherry blossoms, where the old river ripples along toward the sea! There are echoes of songs that are sung no more, tender words spoken by lips that are dust now, blessings from dear and kindly hearts that are still; there's a useless cradle and a broken doll, a sunny tress and an empty garment carefully and tearfully folded and laid away; there's a lock of silver hair and an unforgotten prayer: a mother and father, a brother or sister, a friend of my boy life is sleeping in that returnless land.

There are few people who do not look back with more or less pleasure upon the days of their childhood. Those

days may have been marked by poverty, by hardships, by many privations, but childhood and youth care nothing for these things. There was a young life looking out upon a world that was new and full of wonder; the great, round, red sun sinking to his rest beyond the western hills, the full or crescent moon, the glittering stars shining down from their lofty thrones, the cloud, the tempest, the green grass and beautiful flowers, all living things—these filled our young lives down there with awe or gladness. And then there was the trust of childhood which lends to the young life its chief and most valued charm. There are the loves of youth-time which come back to us like perfume of fragrant flowers across the gulf of departed years. Those early loves may be broken, but scarcely, if ever, entirely forgotten. Not many but think of their sweetheart lassie or boy lover away back in the morning of life, when every day was like the morning sunshine, while they day by day builded castles in the air. All these things make boyhood and girlhood beautiful as we look upon it in the deepening twilight of memory.

And yet in spite of the charms that attended us in the faded past few of us would be willing to go back and begin our lives at the cradle and live them over again. Too well we know the thorns that infest life's pathway and the bitterness and grief and tears that are mingled in the cup of joy. It was beautiful, indeed, to have been a girl or boy once and to have had the experience of youth-time, but we do not care to purchase this blessedness again at the price of traveling once more life's rough and thorny way.

CHAPTER XI

THE WELCH AND DAVENPORT FAMILIES. PROMINENT FIGURES IN PIONEER LIFE

Among the early settlers of the Ridge community I am quite sure it would be of interest to a great many of my friendly readers to bring out of the shadows of the past the Welch family, who were a part of the pioneer life down on Coalport bottom. These people came originally from North Carolina. They settled near the west bank of the Des Moines River. Being in the midst of a mighty forest of magnificent timber they soon erected a saw mill and began the manufacturing of lumber, a thing of necessity then to the many newcomers.

The frame of the saw mill building was of massive square timbers mortised and pinned after the fashion of the times. It had an upper and a lower story. Into the upper story the logs were drawn on a heavy carriage run on an incline of trestle work, the carriage being drawn by the aid of a large rope and windlass. The method of sawing lumber in those days would seem very unique compared with our modern methods, by which many thousands of feet of lumber are cut in a day. This old saw was called a "Muley." It looked very much like a large cross-cut saw, worked straight up and down through the log, and each and every board that fell from the surface of the slowly-creeping timber told the story of a long and tedious trip against the gnawing teeth of that old saw.

A little later a circular saw and proper machinery were purchased and installed down on the ground floor, and a set of millstones with hopper and spout and all the necessary equipment for grinding corn and a kind of a grind at wheat was put in place on the upper floor. To this mill many of the pioneers brought their corn, carrying it on horseback. In those days "corn pone" and "pioneers" were synonymous terms, and sometimes it was hominy instead of corn pone.

I want to tell you right now, you latter-day saints and sinners, you do not know what real life is unless three times a day, day after day, you have sat down in front of a plate loaded down with corn pones, made of meal, a little salt and lard and perhaps a goodly supply of old-fashioned saleratus. A real corn dodger is from four to eight inches long, made something like a big goose egg, then flattened down a little on the terrestrial and celestial sides, with deep impressions of the fingers therein, baked in a heavy skillet or oven placed on a bed of coals and covered with a heavy iron lid well heaped with the same kind of fuel. These big brown boys taken out of the skillet real hot and pulverized in good rich milk and eaten from an iron spoon produced the type of soldiers whose physiques and endurance excited the admiration of General Sherman, who, during the civil war when reviewing a long line of western men, asked the colonel of his regiment, "Where did you get that fine bunch of men?" the colonel said: "Raised them out west on corn dodgers and beans." But the youngster of this day and age must have "cream puffs and pie and puddin'". As a matter of fact, if one of the boys back there had landed on a fellow like these, in just one minute there would not have been enough left of him to make a square meal for a buffalo gnat.

William Welch built, of native lumber, what for that period was a very large and commodious home into which

Betsy and the boys and girls, of whom there were a goodly number, went and set up the family altar. Just west of this new house was a small log shanty about 10x10 feet in dimensions. It was entered by one small door and lighted by one little pinched-up window of four panes, 8x10 inches, and in one end was a fireplace. In this shanty lived Joe Kinney, reputed to be the laziest man living, without the aid or consent of any other man on earth. This man, if I may be allowed to call him such, placed his bed alongside of the north wall with the bed near the chimney. In the morning his wife would get up and start the fire and old Joe would reach for his long-stemmed pipe, load it up with long green, plunge it into the red hot coals under the forestick, light it and lie there and smoke like a steamboat.

On the north side of the Welch home was a long narrow room in which were groceries, minus all the modern health foods, one pound of which is guaranteed to contain more actual nourishment than a ten-pound cut of the best beef put on the market by the biggest beef trust in America. The merchandise kept in this little room was shipped by boat from Keokuk. The boat landing was at the end of "Western Avenue," which extended from the Day Everett place on the west to "River Street," fronting the waters of the classic Des Moines. Here the "Des Moines Belle," the "Ad. Hines" and "Clara Hines" and other floating palaces used to head in on their way to Fort Des Moines.

This Welch house was originally intended for a large merchantile stock, but, owing to the fact that of the small number of people living in the community, nearly if not quite all got their clothing from the sheep's back and reveled in such substantial luxuries as corn dodgers and bacon, Uncle Billy Welch was wise enough to confine his stock largely to salt, saleratus and chewing tobacco. As a matter of fact the tobacco trade was very dull, because

most of the men (and some of the women) chewed and smoked long green, while as to nails they went like tar through a very small gimlet hole on a cold day in January, for most of these pioneers when they wished to fasten a rail or pole to a post "withed" it on with a young hickory sprout twisted until it was as pliable as rope. So, in addition to the nail trade, the rope business was also paralyzed. He, however, kept a small roll of rope in stock for the vigilance committee organized to hang horse thieves, but to the best of my knowledge the only thing ever stolen in that pioneer neighborhood was a ham of meat, and I always had serious doubts about that little transaction. The party missing the ham maintained from the very beginning that he knew the color of the hair of the man who got the ham by the size of his tracks left on the smoke-house floor. That statement may have been true; but if the supposed man who purloined that ham was hungry he was certainly entitled to something to eat, because he that hath shall have it taken away from him, and he that hath not shall get all he can.

Uncle Billy Welch and his family were the most well-to-do people in the entire community, and with all very fine people. They were kind and thoughtful and helpful to the poor, struggling along trying to get a toehold in the business activities of the county, which, owing to the lack of shipping facilities, afforded no market for farm products. Hence the farming activities of the neighborhood were at an exceedingly low ebb. The farmers raised just simply enough to afford food for themselves and for their stock, which was few in number, so to get in all the time they hunted deer and "coons" and employed the extra days shaking with ague. Why, I have seen people down there trying their level best to keep from freezing to death in the merry month of August.

"In dog days," when every dog has his day, I have seen the ague victims go to bed about ten o'clock A.M., heard them call for all the bed clothes in the house, and finish up with a feather bed on top, weighted down with chairs and benches and three-legged stools, and even then the old fashioned bed rattled like a "horse fiddle." When the freezing frenzy had subsided the very fires of hades seemed to be let loose and the suffering victim could drink the river dry. Some of these poor pioneers down there had the ague so long and so severely they grew so thin that in these shaking seizures you could hear their ribs rattle, while some carried oil cans to oil their knee joints. In one family down there a young man had an annual chill which lasted from New Year's Day until the week after Christmas. If one should meet his father and enquire after the health of the family he would invariably say, "Oh, they're all well except Joe, and he has the damned agie."

Away back there many of the pioneer fathers went to Keokuk or Burlington to mill, or pounded their corn into meal on a flat rock, or else boiled the corn until it was soft and ate it like a cow. Aunt Betsy Welch used to tell how over in Illinois they used to go many miles to the mill and returning would bring back flour, shorts, bran and corn meal. She said they always ate the best first and finally wound up on bran. There came a time, however, when those people lived on the fat of the land. During the war period they purchased the L. N. Amsherry place on the hill. Sometime prior to this they had, together with Jonas Leiter, bought and installed a new and modern mill plant near where Joe Neely now lives. Mr. Leiter soon after retired from the business and went back to Pella, leaving the mill in full control of the Welch families, then including Uncle Johnnie Welch, a brother of William, and his boys. In

addition to the lumber productions they also made shingles for both of which there had sprung up a ready demand that continued until the advent of the railroad into Pella, bringing the pine products from the great pineries of the north.

In those days among the luxuries that were scarce, and one which most boys crave, were nice big red apples. Uncle Billy Welch, as was his custom, would send teams down into Jefferson and Henry counties and bring back a wagon load or two for the winter's use. Aunt Betsy, knowing the appetite of the average boy, never forgot to give me a bountiful supply when I happened around, and I never forgot to happen around good and plenty. By reason of these little kindnesses on the part of Aunt Betsy a few of the boys soon acquired a keen relish for that kind of fruit.

In the course of time Uncle Jack Reynolds had succeeded in developing the only bearing orchard in that community. Uncle Jack had also cultivated a very fine taste for apples, and besides was very jealous of his rights. It was said he enjoyed the game of taste or smell; that is, he would select a very fine apple and was kind enough to let the boys do the smell act while he would do the eating. We boys submitted to this thing until we became raving anarchists, so laying aside our moral rectitude, if we ever had any of that article on hand, a few of us many a night dragged ourselves on our bellies for more than two hundred yards to a certain tree previously located, where we proceeded to fill up on apples and carry some away for future use. These we hid in the deep woods, buried with leaves alongside of a log. Then when grim old winter had come and covered up all the roses of June, when those friendly old apple trees seemed so firmly held in the embrace of the old winter king that the blossoms and fruit and song birds would never come again, we knew where the old apple hole was.

Down in the orchard Uncle Jack would bury the tempting fruit and leave a small opening through which he could thrust his arm and hook out the fruit. This opening he kept filled with straw, and over all he piled the pure white snow. We boys, like the pretty little squirrel who, on a bright winter day ventures from his tiny home in the heart of a big old oak and goes straight to a nut hidden beneath the snow, knew where the old apple hole with its juicy treasure was located, all covered with the frozen tears of heaven, down there under the leafless branches of an old apple tree. There with the aid of a rod from the end-gate of a wagon, pointed for that purpose, we quietly pulled those juicy old fellows from their hiding place, one by one, and nobody saw us but God and the man in the moon.

I want to say to you that there was one person down there we boys would not have taken one single apple from if they had been piled high in the road, and that was good old Aunt Betsy Welch. Uncle Billy Welch's family were actively devoted to the things that furnish uplift to human life; they catered to the æsthetic, the beautiful things dedicated by the Creator for our use. They were not satisfied like so many are with any old thing, but believed that it was part of God's plan that his children should strive for the very best of everything; that they should by honest methods lay hold of everything which would add beauty to life and home, that would appeal to higher ideals, and stimulate to higher thoughts and greater achievements.

God himself set the pace and gave his approval to the attainment of the best and most beautiful things of a material kind that enhance pleasure, increase innocent enjoyment, and lend a refreshing charm to all. He never made anything that was not beautiful. Everything shows that the touch of the brush was in the hands of

a skilful artist. The beautiful plumage with which he clothes the singing bird, whose sweet morning songs bring so much of cheer, the beautiful flowers with their many-tinted colorings and their many varieties of fragrance growing all along man's pathway, the buds and blossoms and fruits, the green fields of waving grain, the golden harvests, the rosebud kissed by the morning sunbeam, the blade of grass bearing upon its tender tip the silent tears of night nodding a kindly welcome to the morning sunshine—all, all appeal to us for the best we can give to society of beautiful things, of kindly surroundings, of all the material things which add to the pleasure and happiness of mankind and enlarge and expand the æsthetic sense.

God furnished in detail the plan and sent the widow's son, whose skilful hands beautified and adorned the first temple erected to him as a place of worship. All of God's "blue prints" tell of beautiful things. He emphasized his disapproval of things distasteful when he said: "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass." He knew that a team of that character could plow, but he also knew that a team of that kind would not be attractive. He knew just what sort of a man would drive a team of that kind. Then why should man be supremely contented with the things which bring no awakening response for better things, for the things which cultivate and enlarge the mind and that fit the soul as a livingstone for that temple on high, that city whose very streets are said to be paved with gold?—a figurative illustration of things beautiful. Our places erected for worship should be the very best we can do for God. Think of the dazzling beauty of the temple on Mount Moriah, whose magnificence and glory came from God's own hand.

The Welch family were called proud because they provided themselves with everything within their reach which God had made for man's comfort. They were not

proud, they were not aristocratic. Their hearts were large and warm and kind, and their generous hands were helpful in time of need. From their generous hands the thirsty had drink, the hungry food, the sick their cheerful presence. I speak feelingly of these people. It was they who administered these things to my own people away back there when cruel adversity wove hearts into the warp and woof of a common sympathy; when not the glitter of gold, nor hunger for popularity, nor strife for place and power, prompted any man or woman to be kind and gentle and good and true, but where the golden rule was the only law, and the God of our fathers the only God.

When profit no longer hovered over the operations of that old mill the Welch family sold their home on the hill and the old mill down in the valley and moved to Pella, from which place Uncle Billy and Aunt Betsy long since went over into that dreamless land. Their children drifted around and around in the whirlpool of life's tragedies, one here, another there. The old mill in its declining state passed into other hands, but like men, whose destinies are recorded on the page which tells of decay, it, too, passed away. The cheering difference between the passing of this old mill, whose iron and steel and wood crumbled away and sought shelter in the friendly bosom of old Mother Earth and the old pioneer fathers and mothers, who down there were awakened from slumber in the early morning by the shrill whistle of the mill calling mankind from refreshment to labor, is the one beautiful thought that though their flesh and bone went back to dust there was within a supreme intelligence, something called the soul, so full of God and life that it can never, never die.

In these reminiscences I would not for many, many reasons forget the Widow Davenport. This good old woman and her children, of whom there was a goodly

number, lived down there in the strenuous days of the early fifties. Politically she just suited my father, and socially she came up to my measure. If I had acquired the smoking habit Mrs. Davenport and I should certainly have had a joyous time. She smoked long green and kept it in a little cloth bag with a puckering string around the top. This she kept hanging on the back post of an old-fashion high splint-bottomed chair. She smoked only once a day, and that was from "rosy morn until dewy eve." Once I tried to get into her class by learning the soothing habit of indulging in the pipe. My father also smoked, so one day when he and mother had gone to church out in the old schoolhouse mentioned so often in these reminiscences, I proceeded to load up the fragrant old thing, and soon the blue rings were chasing each other on their way to the god of smoke. I simply reveled in blissful ignorance of coming events. Soon my revelry was hushed by the most hideous stomach-tearing spasms ever visited upon a sinner here below. Then I learned early in life that the world is round, for it simply went over and over and me with it. I was under the impression I was going to die, feeling all the while I would rather be dead than endure that unholy existence long.

In due time my parents returned from church to find me crucified, pierced in both hands and feet by my folly. Great beads of cold sweat stood on my brow, while my stomach felt like it was going up in the air like a kite. My mother knelt down beside me and, with that kind, sweet sympathy which only a mother can feel, placed her tired hand on my clammy brow and begged me to show her my tongue, which, though cold and palsied, I finally succeeded in shooting through my teeth for her inspection. In her gentle, kindly way she asked me where I felt the worst, when I raised my feeble hand and gently laid it on my poor revolving stomach. She then diagnosed the case, and I heard her say to my father, "Alfred has

eaten too many plums." I let it go at that. Through all the remaining years of their toilsome lives I held fast to my secret.

I was then a little past eight years old, so went and engaged to the Davenport people to assist in making sorghum on a princely salary of one quart of the product per day. This I carried home for the children to soak their corn pone in. They extracted the juice from the stalks by running them twice between two squeaky wooden rollers run by a horse hitched to a sweep. My job was to sit by the mill and receive the flattened stalks as they came from the mill and to carefully lay them in a nice straight pile, which when large enough was carried around and run through the mill again after the rollers had been keyed up a little closer. So you see I had a juicy as well as a very lucrative position. I had only one pair of pants and they were made by mother of old "Kentucky jeans." It was but a few days until those pants became so thoroughly soaked with juice and "skimmin's" that they were so stiff that on retiring for the night I simply slipped them off and stood them against the wall till morning. On getting up I stood them down by a chair on which I climbed and jumped off into them, and then walked away like and old armored Roman warrior.

Mary Davenport, daughter of the widow, was my first school teacher. I have never forgotten that girl, though it has been many, many years since I saw her. This was a subscription school. My father subscribed the required amount of tuition for myself and my oldest brother, the amount to be paid in flour. My father was then engineer at the Welch mill, for which services he received any old thing to eat. I remember when Tom Davenport came to our house for the flour, a hundred-pound sack. When with the assistance of my father he threw the sack over his shoulders to carry to his home, a

half-mile away, he joyfully exclaimed: "Now we shall have a jubilee at our house." There were Pete and Tom and Henry and John who have long since passed from memory down there.

The Davenport family were good folks, people of more than average intelligence and mental attainments. Their ideals were high and their home life simple and pure. The Widow Davenport was in many respects a most remarkable woman. She came from a very good old southern family. Her ambitions and ideals found lodging in most if not all her children. Mary, my good "school-ma'am," married L. O. Donley, a wealthy farmer and once treasurer of Marion County. Parmelia was married to a Mr. Forsythe, a druggist in Pella, now dead, and she lives in Des Moines. Lydia—I can tell no more; let the tragedies that came to this girl be forgotten. Nancy until this very night seemed forgotten by me; of her coming and going if alive to-night I know nothing. Maria is now the wife of Judge George W. Crozier, of Knoxville, representative to the Thirty-third General Assembly from Marion County. These young men and women with their mother moved to Pella just after the incidents told in this story. There Mrs. Davenport, full of years and crowned with faithful service in the cause of her master, went, long years ago, into that rest she so richly deserved.

"Old Dominion." Cruel old war with its dripping sword had not then severed the state in twain, nor were her beautiful streams made red with the best blood of her people. He was born on his father's plantation, known at that time as the "White House." This stately old place was situated on the James River. The staple product of this plantation was tobacco, which was shipped in large quantities to Richmond. Reuben Coffman's father was a native of Germany, and that thrift so peculiar to the German people was possessed in a marked degree by Uncle Reuben, as he was known to so many young people down there. Later the family, under the hope of acquiring sufficient land for all, moved over the Blue Ridge Mountains into the western part of the state, down on the Kanawha Valley. There young Rueben met and in 1823 married Julia de Robins Reynolds.

Miss Reynolds was said to have been a very pretty girl, blessed with a vivacious temperament, full of sunshine and joy, all of which splendid virtues followed her all along her lengthened years. The pent-up tragedies and heart burdens of the leaping years and the fading, passing family circle could not rob her of those charms that let so much of sunshine in, even when more than eighty years had heaped their accumulated burdens upon her. Down on the Kanawha Valley those people lived, where Reuben farmed and also engaged in boating on the river. Boating was a great industry in those days. It was customary to transport great cargoes of salt, tan bark, hoop poles, etc., down the river to Cincinnati and other Ohio ports, as well as to far-away New Orleans. Flat-boats were used in this branch of commerce. Sometimes these boats were sold at the end of the journey and the boatman returned on steamboats or walked back home in order to save their wages or profit.

To this Virginia home the gathering years brought sons, Clark, Morris, William, Shull, Lovell, Van, Pratt and

Tell, and daughters, Leah, Louise and Harriet, all of whom grew to adult age, and cradles rocked in other homes ere Time's reaper threw his sickle into the fields of wheat. Conditions were such in that country that it was next to impossible to acquire desirable land. So despairing was the opportunity for becoming a landholder that having heard favorable reports from Uncle Jack Reynolds, a brother of Mrs. Coffman, who had gone to Iowa sometime before, Mr. Coffman and his son Morris came to Iowa in 1853. Being favorably impressed they returned to Virginia and in the autumn of 1854 the entire family, which then included two sons-in-law, George W. Martin and Paschal Hopson, and their six children, set out in prairie schooners on their long journey of eight hundred miles to Iowa, the new west. They arrived in Marion County in October and went at once to housekeeping in a hewn log house known as the "Day Everett house," situated at the extreme upper end of the Coalport bottom, then a vast forest.

Mr. Martin and his little family were "at home" in the smokehouse, a two-by-four log shanty, and when this family vacated that palatial mansion under the northern skies my father and his family, six in all, went in and possessed it, and there for several long months it was a willow upon which my parents hung their harps while their bleeding hearts and calloused hands reached out and out over that great stretch of country dividing them from their old home and friends so far away. But in after years when God had smiled upon us and our native land was all baptized in blood they were glad that some friendly guiding hand had led them out of the Egypt of their birth ere they had seen with tear-dimmed eyes the awful carnage of war.

Uncle Reuben acquired land situated on the east branch of Competine Creek, where he and his boys pro-

ceded as quickly as possible to cut the timber and haul the logs to Pella, where they were sawed into lumber and hauled back to the Ridge for building their new Iowa home. They built this house to the north of the branch, situated on the brow of the hill gently declining to the south-west and north. This new western home was a story-and-a-half building with a fireplace in the south end and a kitchen addition on the west. Around this home Uncle Reuben planted a grove which furnished shelter for the song birds who with each returning springtime came and set up housekeeping for themselves in its friendly branches. Here these songsters soon learned that to awaken Uncle Reuben and Aunt Julia they must contract the habit of singing at an unusually early hour.

This house faced the main road running south, and in the front yard here and there, in addition to the accumulated duties coming to this pioneer woman, she found time to plant seeds and to cultivate the growing, blooming flowers, to lend fragrance and cheer to laughing health and fevered brows. They painted this house white, and it was the first new white house I ever saw in Marion County. To wrest this new home from nature's lap meant many weary days of toil and sacrifice. There were rails to split and haul from the river bottom, and fences to build, brush to grub out of the ground, hazel thickets to cut down and the brush to pile and burn, and then the unlocking of the virgin soil, then the planting season full of promise. This breaking of the soil and hauling they did with cattle. The hauling was done either on a sled in the wintertime or on an old wooden skein, lynch-pin wagon in the summer. The fertile soil they turned over with a huge breaking plow with massive beam to which were hitched three or four yoke of oxen, turning over with the soil myriads of hazel roots in great clusters. Then it was harrow, harrow with a wooden harrow made like the letter "A," filled with iron teeth made by the local

blacksmith. The boys would follow after the harrow and gather up the loosened roots and pile them heaping high, and when thoroughly dried they were burned.

Uncle Ruben's timber was situated on the river bottom north of where the Welch people lived. To reach this timber the Coffman boys went down the road to the river and thence north. In doing so they passed the Barnes house on Maint Street in Coalport, where my father lived forty-nine years ago. I remember very distinctly their passing our place on their way to the timber, just as the morning sunbeams danced on the ice-clad brow of the hill beyond, the oxen moving patiently along, crunching the frozen snow beneath their feet, the whole scene occasionally awakened by the crack of a big long whip plaited of deer skin attached to a stout, flexible hickory pole. Some of these ox drivers were very expert in the use of the whip. They prided themselves on being able, in the summer season, to kill a fly on an ox in the lead team five times out of six with the sharp cracker attached to the whip.

Each added year set with industry brought further improvements, extended conveniences and richer promise for declining age to these people who away back under Virginia's blazing sunshine looked toward the new west for a full realization of their happy dreams. With all of their children here save Clark, and joyous, laughing grandchildren nestled near, these two people, now happy as they stood within reach of the castles they builed with such consummate care and hope, looked into the unborn years for that comfort and cheer they had so nobly earned. Clark, the oldest son, unused to the rigors of Iowa winters, in 1856 returned to Virginia, and then for the first time this father and mother began to realize what a drifted family means, a broken, distorted chain.

Living more than two miles distant from these people, which in the days of ox teams was a long way off, I was

denied the opportunity of letting them into my boy life, yet I have a very vivid recollection of how these good old people looked. Uncle Reuben was just a little past three score years old, yet to him they were toilsome years. Every day and every year he lay bound on the altar, a sacrifice to those he loved. I digress to wonder and wonder how many parents are martyrs even to those who call them father and mother. But, after all, how willingly we approach the sacrifice for those we love!

I shall never forget one occasion on which Uncle Reuben through a little event impressed himself on my memory. To tell the story I must of necessity divulge the innocent ignorance of the writer. It was the Fourth of July, 1861. A big celebration was on in a little butternut grove in Rousseau, just north of the Kent mill. Everybody was there, big and little, old and young. Patsy Johnson with her bushel basket, in it a cake about the size of a saucer—coming, and heaping full of loaves and fishes—going, was there. An ox was roasted and many delicacies came in baskets. The stars and stripes were everywhere, and fire-crackers chirped and barked under every bush. Somebody brought in an old fiddle. He twisted its ears, thumped on the tightly-drawn strings, then drew his bow and sent up a call loud and long. Soon upon the green sward the sun-burned boys and red-cheeked girls were gaily whirling around in the giddy mazes of the dance, while the old fiddler weaved back and forth to the tune of old “Money Musk.” From the platform somebody read the Declaration of Independence, and some young orator, I think it was Van Bennet, flew the American eagle. Among the refreshments sold was ice cream, but I did not know what it was then. Uncle Reuben was a persistent patron of the particular booth where this strange luxury was sold, and every time I passed that way I found him busily engaged eating that white stuff, of which he evidently was very fond. I cautiously approached as nearly to him

as I could without intruding, in an attempt to relieve my mind of the awful mystery which had settled down upon it. Following a few moments of careful study I arrived at the conclusion that I had never before seen a person eat butter that way. I had always been taught to spread it on bread with a knife and very little did me, but here was Uncle Reuben eating dishful after dishful with a spoon.

I never saw Uncle Reuben when he was a young man. He came into this strange, happy, sad old world long before I looked across the turnpike road into the placid waters of the old Kanawha River which ran near that little West Virginia town where I was born; but in his face, though heavily marked with the pencil of Time, I could see behind the faded scenes of years the outline of a young man of becoming appearance, a fit soul and heartmate for one so fair as Julia Reynolds when life was new and the world so full of sunshine and promise.

The passing of the old world's soldiers tells the story of how men toil and strive and fight in life's fierce strife, and how, when the battle seems almost won, almost ready to sit down in the peace and quiet of an undisturbed old age, surrounded by children and friends and love, they just quietly pass over the river that divides this from that strange country over there. So passed Reuben Coffman when sixty-three years had left their wounds upon him. This man, upright in his life, a good, quiet, peaceful citizen, a man who builded for the world, a man who left no scar of wrong upon the old world's face, a man so full of love and sympathy, one day in 1865 went down to that rest he so richly deserved, and now he sleeps on the brow of a hill on his old pioneer farm near the home for which he gave so much of toil, now long since gnawed down by the tooth of Time, and the friendly soil which yielded to him so much of interest on everything com-

mitted to its care has gone into strange hands, and the birds, which sang so sweetly in the springtime in the shady groves where life and hope had a dwelling place are startled away by the strange sadness which envelops that sacred spot.

Uncle Reuben and Aunt Julia surely builded for the world. Besides the new homes that came out from theirs, four sons they gave to the country's service. Clark, the oldest, volunteered in a West Virginia regiment, and Morris, Lovell and Van went into Iowa regiments. The tragedies of war fell heavily on this family. Morris, who had been so much of help in the old days, on returning from the south was never Morris again. How strangely sad the changes on the throne where intellect so brightly sat supreme! Van never recovered from the ravages which befell him under the southern skies. He sought relief amid the hill where he first saw God's sunshine and first heard the warbling of the southern thrush bird, but the book of fate held the story of his short life, and there amidst the hill of his native land he went out into the other world.

The two sons-in-law of Uncle Reuben coming west were George W. Martin, a goodly man of whom I have had something to say in these reminiscences, and Paschal Hopson. "Pack," as he was known, was a blacksmith, having learned the trade back in Virginia where he married Leah Coffman. This family lived in the village of Coalport, where Pack worked at his trade in those primitive days, when by hand he would make horseshoes from bar iron and also the nails with which he fastened them on. I used to watch him in his long leathern apron, his sleeves rolled up above his elbows showing his strong, round, muscled arms. I watched him with the lever work the big leather bellows and saw the flames shoot high on the forge while the increasing heat prepared the



JULIA COFFMAN.

iron for the tongs and hammer and anvil, then with wonder I saw the bright hot sparks fly like shooting stars here and there while the "village blacksmith" shaped the horseshoe around the anvil horn.

I shall always remember an incident which happened in this shop. It was in the early spring of 1859. In those days boys, if they were fortunate enough to have a pair of shoes must make them do until the barefoot season returned again. My winter shoes had gone out of business sometime, and if I ventured out in the village I must skirmish around for something to wear. On this particular occasion, it being a rainy day and the mud rather deep, I found a pair of my father's old boots in which I hustled over to Pack's shop to watch the sparks fly. There I found a strange visitor. To those who knew him he was "Uncle Jimmie Karr." This character lived on Whitebreast Prairie. He was a lover of tobacco and began early in the morning with an ordinary chew ; to this he kept adding a little now and then during the day to freshen it up, laying it aside during the noon hour, repeating the process during the afternoon. By the time the evening shades had drawn nigh his jaw looked like it had a well developed cancer on it. Then he would remove this accumulation of the chewed weed and carefully lay it away to dry for Hetty, an old maiden daughter, to smoke. Uncle Jimmie had been married several times, and seemed to never grow tired of the job. On this occasion he pretended to be in search of cabbage plants. Everybody knew that there were plenty of these plants over on the Prairie, but Uncle Jimmie thought a widow living a few miles beyond had the only plants in Marion County. Well, he soon observed me in my usual place, when, taking his knife from his old jean pants, he said : "See here, youngster, I guess I will take your ears off!" Upon which I made a dash for home, and when I hit the

deep mud I ran right out of my boots and left them sticking there.

After a few years Mr. and Mrs. Hopson moved into the Iola neighborhood and afterwards went to Pella. Pack was always a money-maker, and with his good wife Leah they gave to the world a splendid family, all girls except one. Ann and Mary lived in Kansas. Ann married Will Lee and Mary married Warren Whaley, while Flora is married and lives in Des Moines. Frank, long since a grown man, has drifted out of my knowledge. Pack and Leah moved, a number of years ago, to Kansas, where, full of years and weighted down with the old world's service, they closed their eyes to the scenes of this life and went to a better world beyond.

Louise, wife of George W. Martin, whom I have mentioned before, I knew far better than any of the Coffman women. Having lived near this family so many eventful years, their family life and our own came very close together. Our parents were friends down in old Virginia, so out in the new west they were friends again. Many a long winter evening this good man and woman spent around our blazing fire in the old fireplace, and there talked over the events of the faded past away back yonder, talked of the present, talked of the future, not of the accumulation of gold but of the bounteous treasures waiting for them in that better world above.

I remember Louise Martin as one of those splendid mothers, one who made life and home and church and society worth while. To the world, to God, and to her children she gave valiant service, and when her good husband had quit the field, the schoolroom and the home for that sweet rest above, she gave her remaining years to her children, yet living all the time full of confidence in the promises of Him whose praises she sang so many, many times in that little old schoolhouse down on the

Ridge. So one sad day—no, one sweet day—full of years, weighted down with life's tragedies, yet full of faith, she went into a world radiant with never-ending sunshine.

Harriet Welch was a sweet and charming girl when Uncle Reuben and Aunt Julia brought her to the Ridge. I remember the very house she lived in as a bride. I remember her home in the village of Coalport. After that she did not come much into my life, yet I think of her as a kindly woman, earnestly devoted to her husband and little ones. Beadle seemed devoted to her. It seemed that her very wish was anticipated. Children laughed and played down there, every sunbeam stole in on a happy home, and every star twinkled in glee as they peeped in on the scene. I can not, neither would the angels, tell more. Harriet, so quiet, so uncomplaining, so patient and so kind, has all these years been beautifying and adorning a home away above the stars, and some day it will be hers.

Will Coffman I knew better than either of the Coffman boys. There never was a man of better native qualities of heart and mind than Will, plain, open, unaffected, kind and trusting. To me it always seemed too bad that his lines in life should fall in such sad, sad places. I saw much of him in his last days. He always seemed glad to see me, and always felt better after having dropped a kindly word of cheer into his life, so full of sorrow and disappointment. I always carried to him some of the luxuries the world had denied him which he always accepted so gratefully. I do believe that God, after those sad years and his tragic end, has already recompensed Will with better and sweeter things.

Shull Coffman was always a home boy and then a home man. He was married to Nancy Davis, daughter of Aunt Polly Davis, one of the best women in this world. "Nan," as we called her, was one of the best girls that ever went into a home of her own down there, and when

Shull and she went to housekeeping both took up the work of homemaking as well. He was industrious and thrifty and kind in his home. They lived on the extreme south end of the Coffman homestead, where together these people labored and loved and looked forward to easier days when, by industry and economy, they would come with the fruits of their toil to enjoy their hard-earned reward. But in the midst of childish joy and laughter, when looking away down the road of life to coming castles built in happy pleasing mood, we lose sight of the tragedies and afflictions which lie hidden along the way. How glad a thought it is that this is true! So while these people, Shull and Nan, were planning for material reward, a resting season in life's hard strife, Shull was taken away and poor Nan was left to endure coming afflictions which have been hers. She now lives in Knoxville.

Lovell Coffman, after returning from the war, married Eliza Bodine, a daughter of Peter and Amanda Everett Bodine. This newly married couple shortly afterwards moved to Pella, where Lovell was employed in the mercantile business. They afterwards made their home in Des Moines, whence after a number of years they moved to southern California. Lovell was never very strong after the war service he gave to his country, so the battles of life were always hard ones to him. Not long ago, worn and weary, he gave up the fight, and away out there on the golden coast he sleeps the sleep that knows no waking.

Don't you think, my kind reader, that in telling of this pioneer family who played so much a part of the social and religious life down there my simple story shall end without a parting word about Aunt Julia, who saw so much of life and in her always happy mood did so much to bring sunshine and cheer to heart and home. Her sunny disposition, like the sun's golden rays, brought light far in advance of the full-born day, so the cheering

influence of that kindly, happy woman always heralded her approach. To all who knew her her presence was an inspiration. She laughed away sorrow. She led and compelled her associates to gallop away from care. Yet she was never frivolous nor unmindful of serious things; while her heart had often been torn with grief, yet she never cared to hang her woes on the hearts of others. It was a part of her world work to make others glad. She played her part on the stage of life and played it well. She never wounded a single heart nor looked lightly upon another's woes. God, it may be, prolonged her life for the example it furnished and when eighty-eight years had written their story of joy and gladness and tears upon her life page, when the evening twilight had sent a farewell salute to the departing day, Julia Reynolds Coffman was with God.

CHAPTER XIII

MENTION OF SOME NOTABLE CHARACTERS OF THE RIDGE WHOSE NAMES HAVE NOT PREVIOUSLY APPEARED

In the beginning I had intended to tell only the story of the boys of my own class who became a part of the community life on the Ridge. After doing this I found it extremely difficult to relieve myself of the connecting links running back into the lives of the people who back there brought the community from primeval life into a busy useful workaday world. So I have taken up and briefly told the story of those whose part in the activities of those far-away days were more prominent in my memory.

I sometimes wish I had undertaken to tell more than I have related concerning these people; something more of the girls of whom there certainly were a goodly number; of Lois Martin, who "spelled everybody down" for miles around, and how she and Sallie later devoted so much of their lives to the moulding of thought and character and usefulness in life; of this one and that one who found here and there a life mate, either for weal or woe, and drifted here and there in the great tangled forest of life; and how some of them have lived in sunshine and others in the shadow, and of others who have gone into that eternal sleep. But I had a lingering thought that if I undertook to tell of the girls I might get myself into trouble, not on account of any wrong I might tell, because

as a whole no purer girls ever mingled with the birds and flowers in their mission of love and helpfulness in the old world's work than the good old-fashioned girls down on the Ridge; but in telling of their part of the life down there it would have been necessary to divulge, among other things, their ages!

It would require a large volume to contain what I should like to have said of the people of whom I have written, and a much larger one to contain what could have been said in relation to the early settlers down there, their sacrifices, their life work, and their growing aspirations for better things and more of the emoluments of ease and comfort growing out of their labors, freely bestowed upon their children. So, in the summing up of my story of the people who lived down there in the long ago, I shall only briefly allude to those not heretofore mentioned, that some day, when this simple story of mine is in book form and illustrated with the pictures of those pioneer people we think of in such loving memory, most if not all of that pioneer group may be recorded and not lost to human speech.

There was the Bodine family, who came to that community about 1857, when they took up their temporary residence in a little house at the foot of the hill near the old potter shop. Here they lived until a home was prepared on land "Uncle Peter" had acquired adjoining the Uncle Jack Reynolds place on the south. These people were born, grew up and were married in New York state where some of their children were born. In this new western home these people lived and gave a family to the world. Uncle Peter was a typical Yankee, industrious and thrifty. "Aunt Mandy" was a sister of J. S. Everett. She was a woman of strong character and of rare intelligence, of good education and high ideals. She was always active in religious work, and her influence

for good was felt through all the years of her active life. In this farm home they lived until worn out in life's conflicts they laid themselves down in dreamless sleep.

The Davis family came from Virginia in an early day, and though they made a home not exactly in the Ridge neighborhood, yet they became a part of its life. Mr. Davis died soon after coming to Iowa, and left "Aunt Polly" a lone widow in a new land with seven children to call her mother. Mr. and Mrs. Davis were religious folks, "Aunt Polly" being over-zealous in the Master's work. Back in Virginia this good woman lived close to the Methodist creed. These people believed sprinkling to be the proper mode of baptism. Mrs. Davis arranged with her pastor back there to sprinkle James and Henry, bounding, mischievous twins, the solemn ceremony to take place at her home. These chaps caught on to the arrangement and determined to make trouble; so, laying in wait, they observed the minister approaching when like rats they crawled under the house, from which hiding place they were coaxed out with long poles. I am not vouching for the truth of this story, but will refer you to Jim if you care to have it verified. This good woman down to a ripe old age lived a Christian life, and was in waiting when God took her home.

James Caldwell and Maria, his wife, were early settlers on the Ridge. I do not know whence Mr. Caldwell came, but I do know he was a good man and came to Marion County in a very early day. He was one of the organizers of the Coal Ridge Baptist Church more than sixty years ago. When I first knew these people they lived on a farm lying south of the Uncle John Everett place, near Competine creek. Mr. Caldwell was a patient, easy going, honest man. He worked hard but lived at the wrong time to accumulate a competency on his little arm. He was an ardent lover of the rod and line, and

was a most devoted disciple of "Izaak Walton." I think he could sit on a bank longer, fish pole in hand, without a "bite," than any man I ever knew. His prayers in church were eloquent only in their sincerity, and the burden of every prayer was that his children should be reared in the love and admonition of the Lord. Mrs. Caldwell was born in Virginia, and was a relative of the Greenlees and also the Everetts. They had a large family of children, and, besides, Mrs. Caldwell was more or less ill all the time, so theirs was indeed a hard struggle in life. The last years of their lives on the Ridge were spent in the Nort Amsberry home on the hill, purchased by them from the Welches, and then the place where Lud and Adelaide lived so long and where Lud died. The arrow of desolation was shot into the hearts of this father and mother many, many times down there. More than one time the angel of death came in that home. No wonder then that frail mother's heart was torn and wounded and life seemed almost a burden to her and pain her constant guest. She in her frail condition was bowed down under the weight of sorrow and misfortune, while he, being stronger and more philosophical, bore his burdens just between himself and God alone. These people left the Ridge in the latter part of the seventies and went to Monona County, where Joe had already established himself, and out there under the winter's snow and the summer's grass and dew these pioneers sleep, and while they sleep they rest.

Of the Uncle Jack Reynolds family I know of only one living— Jim, as we called him—who now is ripening for the harvest. Uncle Jack was a brother of Aunt Julia Coffman, and was a pioneer on the Ridge. Both he and his faithful wife, Ruth, long years ago went into that dreamless land. Two sons these people gave to their country's service, John and James. When the war was

over and peace had come to bless our land these young men returned to their old home by the side of the road. But the awful sacrifice had already been made; though some guiding hand had brought him home to his old father and mother and friends, fate's cruel decree had gone forth and so John, fresh from the blood-stained southland, withered away like a passing rose, and his soldier comrades bore his wasted body away, and laid it down in "God's Acre" out among the green growing oaks.

The Hardings were also among the early settlers there. They owned the farm where Wes Poffenbarger now lives, the east part of the farm then being prairie grass and hazel brush through which ran the road leading to Knoxville by way of the old Breese neighborhood on the big "hog-back." I played with the Harding boys at school in the old playground. Bill and John and Joe were great boys, rugged and strong. Bill and John went into the army, where John died. These boys were too young for war, but their country needed their services and they gladly went. About the close of the war Mason Harding sold the old farm and bought another home near Knoxville, southwest of town. Joe lives in Knoxville, and in many respects is the same old Joe of former years, although Time is leaving his footprints upon his brow.

While I have mentioned Simeon Adams in these reminiscences, yet I must make special mention of this old pioneer and his estimable wife, Aunt Mary. The first I ever heard of this family was when they lived on the Taylor place on the hill. The sad incident which brought this family into my life then was the death of their little daughter, who had met a tragic end by being burned by exposure to the flames of a burning brush heap. These folks were Kentucky people, but came from Indiana to Iowa more than fifty years ago.

Uncle Simeon was a typical pioneer character. He loved the woods. In nature's kingdom he took supreme delight, and his trusty old rifle was the idol of his heart. When a boy I was afraid of him, but when I grew up and had an opportunity to draw near to him and learn his nature it was then I learned the tenderness of his heart. Though a man of sudden impulse and passionate temper, yet after all his heart was warm and true, and no cry for help ever went up to him in vain. In his last sickness I saw him. He laid his fingers on the very spot where he in his suffering said the fateful arrow of the unseen archer had buried its poisoned barb.

Aunt Mary! Good old soul, harmless as one of God's angels, everybody liked her. She came from a good old Kentucky family. Her name was Mary Fossee, a favorite daughter of Colonel Fossee, once a prominent figure in the political and social life of his state. A goodly number of years ago Colonel Fossee moved to southern California, where I had the pleasure of visiting him, out some miles from Los Angeles. He was then ninety-two years old, tall, straight and dignified. He was a man of great intelligence, and for one of his years very entertaining. The old colonel asked many questions concerning his Mary, and then his eyes, so bright for one so full of years, would be dimmed with tears. Now, several years ago, after so many years of struggle, Uncle Simeon and Aunt Mary are resting in the old churchyard down on the Ridge, where loving hands have marked with enduring granite the spot where side by side they rest.

Two more characters I would bring up from the faded past, and then my story is told: Lewis M. Woodyard and Lawrence G. Kimberling. Much alike and yet widely different were these two men. Both of these men came from Virginia when young fellows hardly old enough to go into the wide, wide world alone. "Lew," as he was always known in the early pioneer days, lived very much

with Francis Everett, a brother of J. S., and an uncle of Lew. Lew married Sarah Hayes, a sister of my mother, who had come from Virginia with Nellie Hayes, my grandmother, and family, who had settled on land in an adjoining neighborhood. Aunt Sarah was a pretty woman, but in a few short months consumption faded the roses from her cheeks and her life went out, leaving the young husband and a sweet little babe homeless and motherless. Grandmother took the motherless baby and tenderly cared for it.

Left without a home Lew, on the discovery of gold in Pike's Peak, was seized with the gold fever and fitted up a team, and with others ready for gold, went to the newly-found Eldorado. Going it was "Pike's Peak or bust!" and returning it was both. Lew was not what you call shiftless, but he was manageless. He was always digging into something, but accomplished nothing. He was naturally honest, but often powerless in the practice of that commendable virtue. His word was as good as gold if he could get the gold. The poor fellow made a mint of money in his time and died poor, but, better than all else, honest at heart. Lew was a great, big, stout, tender-hearted man. Adversity slashed him with a cruel blade for more than seventy long and eventful years, and then, covered with wounds, he fell.

Larry! I wish I could tell you the brief story of this man just like God would have me tell it. In a great many respects he was a remarkable man. Unstability was the distinguishing feature which robbed him of an influence in the world unparalleled as a messenger of God. Twice baptized and received into the church down there, with an earnest yearning to do the things God would have him do, yet, Peter-like, he always warmed by the fire and let the cock crow on and on and repented every time. Unschooled though he was, yet ordained a minister, I

have never heard a flow of prettier language, filled with more rhetoric and easy, natural oratory than that which fell from this man's lips. He had a winning manner and everybody liked him. He married Elizabeth Reynolds, a daughter of Jack and Ruth Reynolds, and they lived in the beginning of their married life in Coalport, in a little frame house facing the river. It was painted white and trimmed in blue. It was a teeny little house, but it made a home for him and Betty. Once they lived near the roadside just north of the Bodine home, where Larry farmed a little patch of ground and worked at the carpenter's trade at odd spells. Larry was popular with the young element of the community. He was actively interested in music, and through his influence and efforts music became a prominent feature of church and social life in the neighborhood.

Poor Larry knew his weakness as well as anybody else. In his work as a preacher, in his pleadings for a higher and a better life, he often admonished his audience to do the things he told them to do rather than the things he did. After all he did nothing very bad. He was a preacher and still a human being, made of the same yielding material as other men; yet a standard of righteousness was prescribed for him by which none else was tested. His heart was as susceptible to the tender impulses as the heavenly harp to the sweep of an angel's wing. After all the powerful sermons he preached, after all the tender pleading prayers he sent up to heaven down there, after all the beautiful pictures hung on the riverside where he buried so many of the young people with their Christ in the flowing stream of that modern Jordan, after all the hands and hearts he bound with that beautiful tasseled cord that circles round the sacred altar where two lives are joined, after all the songs he sang that seemed to waft one's very soul to the throne above, after all the messages of cheer and hope and comfort he brought in

the hour of gloom when a life had gone out—God tells me to say that after all these things the Ridge is better for his having lived there.

I should have been happy indeed if in these reminiscences I could have given much more space, telling in detail of the old pioneer people who did much for God and humanity. In bringing up from the shadow land the characters of the past I have necessarily brought in my life pictures both the sunshine and the shadow of human existence. While sadness did come into those quiet rural shades, yet joy and gladness were regnant in woods and fields and glades. Somehow there was a simple honesty and faith that reigned down there. Men trusted men, religion was of the old "Simon pure" kind, each to the other seemed good and true, and God was served by truly upright and trusting hearts. No man in those glad days could have made me believe that any man was other than what he seemed to be, and to me all women were as pure and true and unsullied as the virgin flowers that so gaily decked the woods and hills and fields.

While we note the many changes that the rushing years have made in that old home-land, what a glad thought comes to us that, after all, this thing we call life in its varied influences for good or ill does not end at the grave. There leap from the silent villages of the dead down there beautiful lessons and splendid examples that mould a world and make mankind better. Out from the silent homes where our people sweetly sleep can never come the glad and cherished words as of yore, yet from out their quiet rest comes a helpful remembrance that no intervening years shall ever chase away. These people took life like men and women whose hearts were brave and strong and good. They took it as though it was—as it is—an earnest, vital affair. They took up their work just as

though they were born to the task of performing a glad part in the old world's battles.

The achievements of our fathers and mothers down there who builded so well bring this thought to me to-night, that the richest legacy we can bequeath to the generations succeeding us is an honorable life and a worthy example which sanctify and increase all other bequests. What are millions of dollars and libraries and other gifts without virtue and Christian life to sustain them? If the lives, the motives and the methods of the philanthropist do not stand the test of time, the verdict of history, the buildings they have bestowed will mock them after they are gone and be their condemnation and not their praise. Those with pure hearts and Christian lives and clean hands, like George W. Martin, the Everetts, W. D., J. S. and Francis, and their good wives, as well as scores of others, alone can make sacrifices to their God and their fellowmen.

A letter received recently from L. M. Martin, one of my boy companions of the good old long ago, says: "The longer I live to study men and women the more I am convinced the place to lay the foundation for not only physical, but moral strength, is in places like the 'Ridge.' The early days had their hardships, but on the other hand we certainly had our full measure of innocent amusements and joys. The old-fashioned spelling contest, the school picnics, the singing-school, the neighborhood parties, and, last but not least, the old-fashioned dances, all contributed to our pleasure while we were building a physical foundation that has stood us well in hand for the many years of both physical and mental work."

These well said words of Lark's confirm what I have claimed concerning that people and that homeland and their influence upon the generations following them. I shall be very glad, indeed, if what little time I have taken out of my busy life to tell of joyous boyhood days down in

the old homeland and of the dear dead who come in the twilight of the land of the faded past with their kindly, gentle presence, and of those who have drifted away somewhere under the stars, has brought out of memory land only the very best we ever knew of all that group of people who did so much for humanity, finished their work and then went to their eternal reward.

To-night, in full view of the dead and buried years, let me leave this parting thought, a testimony of my gratitude to our God for a childhood home, though humble and poor it was, yet hallowed by a Christian mother's love and a father's restraining influence and care. Within old Marion's border three score years ago there were no palaces. The hardy pioneers who had come from other lands to carve out for themselves a name in the new west were not rich, but most of them trod the wine-press of adversity and toil, yet they were rich in bravery, honest and true, and were happy in the greatest wealth that ever crowned a human life.

Only a few more words and my story of the Ridge is forever closed. Each of us has but one earthly life to live. It will do no good now to stop and bemoan our losses, our failures and our sad mistakes of the past; our only chance lies in the future. If I do not live to write another line, I want these words to linger with you long after I am no more. My mistakes are mine, and for them I have suffered. My disappointments and failures have been mine, and for them I have paid the bitter debt. I have no enemy on earth that I do not now forgive. However cruel have been the wrongs done me I lay them down in sweet forgetfulness, and remember not the hand that inflicted the wounds. If we linger along the shore of peace and forgetfulness and love, there will be sunshine in our hearts in life's darkest storms, and angels will hover around our beds when love's last gentle kisses come with the final goodby.

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