

Home Town Sketches

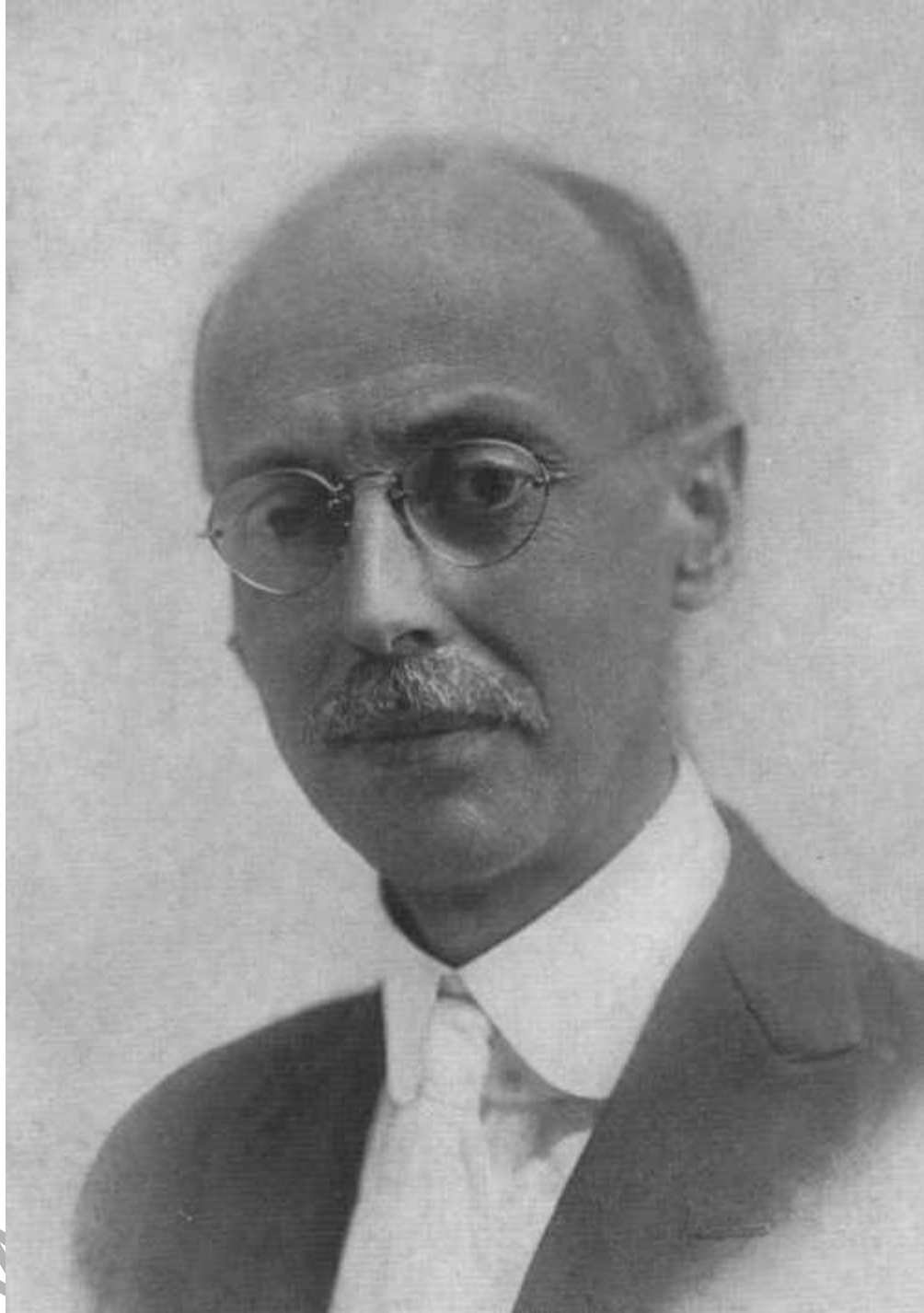
By

Emile R. Paillou

1926

THE STRATFORD COMPANY, Publishers
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

www.mogenweb.org/cooper



Emile Paillou

after that quotation to the effect that man is the noblest work of the Creator.

If just the memory of that vision is so satisfying imagine the feelings of our girls who, seated beside the knightly visiting stranger, drove through town behind those high stepping, prideful beauties, the cynosure of all eyes, masculine and feminine! As they passed the sheltered verandas they must have felt the waves of curiosity and envy

emanating from their less fortunate sisters who were restricted to converse of such lowly subjects as the cuisine, the sewing circle and perhaps foreign missions. At that passing pageant, gone was all interest in the commonplace. The air was electric with questions. "Who is Nellie's beau? Oh, isn't he handsome? Oh, oh, oh!"

The visiting beaux paraded through our lover's lanes were generally good to look upon, but seated beside one of our girls and behind those aristocratic duns, Aesop himself would have looked an Apollo. Indeed lover's lanes were favored only after less densely shaded streets had witnessed the triumphal march, for what would a triumph profit without witnesses?

The duns were only for joyous occasions. They were invariably hitched to the bride's carriage

[201]

and if one wished to "knock 'em dead" socially, one had only to go calling behind those prancing beauties. The fire department at full tilt could not rival, the duns as an exciting attraction. Today nothing short of a Zeppelin flying over Main Street could equal them in interest. At the present time there is really no way for the flapper of being charmingly and dramatically conspicuous. All cars look alike, a Pierce-Arrow limousine gets not a bat of the eye! The gem is perhaps as beautiful but the setting does not show her to advantage. Is it any wonder that the jeune filly resorts to desperate measures in order to obtain that attention which is her due?

Perhaps in Paradise the duns have become vocal and exchange reminiscences with Bucephalus and Rosinante. So here is a tribute to the duns. Right bravely have they served our boys, our girls and long will they live in our memories. May they prance and dance on the Golden Streets, may they play knee deep in the blue grass and the clover of the Elysian Fields and may they meet there the thousands of youths and maidens who so loved them here. Ah, but they were beautiful to behold, the duns!

[202]

The Schools of Boonville

I think Boonville was known as a "school town" before the '70's, but my earliest recollection of a school was Prof. Marston's Academy - that was heresy - my oldest brother was a student there. Later I believe Matt Singleton's was a worthy successor in the same location, on Sixth Street, one square south of Spring.

Then there was Farringer's School for Girls, not far away. I recall the stately young ladies as they marched up and down the school gallery. They appeared so mature to me. You know how sixteen looks to six!

And didn't Prof. Metzger have a school of music and penmanship - or was it Prof. Wettendorf who had the music school?

The two great schools of my time were Anthony Haynes' and of course, Kemper's Don't you recall' how you plumed yourself - examined every detail of your personal appearance before you ventured your self-conscious way past the masked batteries of Haynes' School - said batteries consisting of the bright eyes of those young goddesses domiciled there? The night, with its thousand eyes, had nothing on this school and if you won a smile en passant, you had

[203]

achieved. The wave of a dainty hand - oh, joy! And if she spoke to you, then indeed you trod upon air the remainder of the day, for the young ladies of Haynes' school were not of common clay!

My first remembrance of Kemper school was at the time of Prof. Kemper's funeral, upon which occasion I tolled the Court House bell, Kemper Military . School is known all over the United States and in many foreign countries. It is a big institution now in comparison with what it was in my time. Last year when I visited the school, I was astonished to find how much it had grown. I had expected to find some improvement but the great strides it had made in every way were remarkable.

I did not see "Tommy" Johnston. Yes, I know it does seem somewhat sacrilegious to so term Col. Thos. Johnston, but that's what his boys call him and I wish had been one of his "boys," so I feel privileged to call him Tommy and I don't know what he's going to do about it! He may take it out on my son if he shows up at Kemper next September.

[204]

"I Love Me"

It is permitted to admire one's children, but one must not do so too vociferously or one may bore one's friends. In the privacy of my office, I was looking over one of my "children"; the sketch of "Butter" in my first installment. I said aloud, "Pretty good, that!" and was immediately reminded of another egoist.

You may recall a one-time citizen of Boonville who might have originated the song, "I Love Me," had he put his thoughts to music, which he did not, but he did put them into words, to his sorrow.

This man was richly endowed. He had two legs, two arms, the usual complement of bones and muscles, all tightly covered with a skin of unusual thickness and surmounted by a dome of the same qualifications; with plenty of ready cash to indulge a bizarre sartorial taste, he went the limit.

Well, to the point. One day some friends called and found him standing before a full length mirror, posing in various attitudes. Not making their presence known, they observed him preening himself, and this is what they heard: "Pretty damn good looking I Yes, sir-hard to beat in Boonville, by Gosh!"

[205]

Gruesome

Are you one of those, who, as a child saw the body of that poor creature who fell to her death through the second story "well" in one of those old buildings just west of the Court House? I can see her as I did over fifty years ago, lying on the floor, with her hair streaming out of the bloody pool about her head. It was a mystery of which I never heard the solution.

And the mysterious murder in Howard County about the same time - remember the decapitated body found in a hollow log? We speculated endlessly upon the doom of the murderer, when he should be caught. My favorite punishment for him was the removal of his entire skin and then a liberal application of salt to his body. The Chinese executioner had nothing on me!

Harvey J. Smith, Conductor

Of all the Katy conductors of my time, I think only Harvey J. Smith, who is well known to nearly everyone in Boonville, is still on duty. I have known Harvey J. for many years as engineer, freight and passenger conductor and I have never known him to do an ungentlemanly act. He is

[206]

the kind of a man under whose care you would Put your old mother or little children-then you would go home perfectly satisfied that all would be well.

Harvey Smith has been railroading for about fifty-three years and if he has ever had a serious accident I never heard of it. Calm, kindly, unhurried, with his faculties under the control which comes from knowing his job, is it any wonder that passengers feel safe on his train?

There is going to be many a softened heart when the red flag finally waves for Harvey J. Smith. Here's hoping that eventuality will be postponed for many years!

P. S. Since the above was written I learn that Harvey J., as we affectionately know him, retired in August, the dean of all employees of the great M. K. & T. I had the pleasure of riding with him on his last run and he introduced me to some recent friends, of only 20 years' standing, as his friend for 40 years!

There Is No Fool Like An-

How bewitching is the modern girl and how bold! Or is it that we, who are "getting along" are just more susceptible to the feminine charm?

[207]

Now this is apropos of an incident taking place as I was walking the streets not very far from my home. A pretty girl, a total stranger, passed me and looked back, smiled roguishly, waited for me to catch up, put out her hand and immediately began a conversation.

Of course I was immensely flattered and she seemed such a joyous, spontaneous creature that I did not stand upon my dignity, but chatted and smiled with her. She told me all about her home life, her hopes and desires. She didn't seem to expect me to say much, but, strangely enough, kept her hand in mine in a most confiding way.

But the climax came when we parted. She looked at me so charmingly, and said: "I believe I love you!" and I replied, "I hope you do, my dear!" Then she ran off to join the other Kindergarten children and I felt that I had had a real adventure.

Henry and Katie

Is there a Boonville band at the present time? If not, how do the youngsters manage to get along without it? One of the joys of my childhood was the band. Don't you remember how you envied

[208]

handsome Henry Hain behind the big bass drum? Henry was a very young man then and does not look as much older now as you would expect. He married that good looking Katie Fox, you know. They are now grandparents and seem to enjoy it.

That charming letter of Mrs. Toll's in a recent number of the Advertiser recalls the days when she, as Miss Grace Kemper, was a Boonville favorite. I think Judge Williams expressed her status exactly when he remarked, as he did, to a group of young men-"No young man's life seems complete until he has fallen in love with Grace Kemper!"

Personally I came under the spell of her charms a short time before she left Boonville, so I did not have time to round out my life in the manner indicated by the learned judge. I'll admit, however, that I shared in the resentment we all felt when Phil Toll carried off the prize. Did Mr. Toll ever have the temerity to go back to Boonville? If so, did he realize that his very bones were in jeopardy? A jealous lot we were, and we did not take kindly to such young Lochinvars as was Phil Toll.

[209]

R. R. Thompson

An unsmiling man was "Uncle Dick" Thompson, as befitted an undertaker of those days; but he must have been very human or he never would have been called Uncle Dick. Mr. Thompson made coffins with his own hands, good solid walnut caskets that are probably still intact. He was my 'cross-the-street neighbor and he had two charming daughters, Cornelia and Fannie, who kept the place cluttered up with beaux - many of them young clergymen.

More Neighbors

The Gaunt and Homan families are no longer represented in Boonville, but were prominent for many years. Jesse Homan and Aunt Betty - remember? Their children were Mrs. Gaunt and Bill Homan. The Gaunt boys, Charles, Jess, and Will, were the grandchildren. I used to fight with Will, but Jess and I were closer than blood brothers, for we always went fishing together.

It was at this home that I first tasted Bates' sorghum, that ambrosial spread for biscuits. Jess told me in confidence that I could never hope to get a supply, as it was beyond the means of ordinary

[210]

folks. "Why," he said, "it costs five dollars a gallon;" I believed him and I still think it was worth that much.

Avoirdupois,-I'll Say They Had!

Austin Speed, who weighed four hundred pounds at his zenith, might well have been called the Dean of the Corpulent. Austin was conductor of the Boonville Branch train when it was considered a part of the conductor's perquisites to retain a certain per cent of the cash fares collected and, as Austin always gave discounts to cash passengers, you would naturally expect him to do thriving business.

The railways officials thought that Boonville folk should travel more; it did not seem reasonable that so few tickets were sold and so little cash turned in to headquarters, so they sent a man to talk it over with the conductor. "How is it, Mr. Speed, that you turn in practically no cash fares?" Austin, whose enormous bulk gave him dignity and impressiveness, replied with a serious countenance; "Well sir, there is only one reason. I permit no one to board my train without a ticket!"

[211]

Mrs. Thomas H. Steel was truly Amazonian in her proportions but, withal, handled her bulk with surprising grace. The Steels lived near the public school and one day a ball was

batted over into their yard where stood a big apple tree full of fruit. One of the boys who had never seen Mrs. Steel went over the fence after the ball and incidentally picked up an apple. Mrs. Steel came running out with a switch in her hand. When the boy looked up and saw what was after him, he seemed paralyzed by the apparition. He stood rooted to the spot, his mouth open, his eyes bulging. By the time Mrs. Steel got near him he recovered power of speech and gasped wonderingly: "Say, are you Austin Speed's sister?" Mrs. Steel saw the point and, laughing heartily, she filled up the lad's pockets with apples, then picking him up as if he had been a kitten, she dropped him over the school yard fence.

The rotund Matthew Thomas was not pugnacious in disposition but one day he offended a fellow citizen of ordinary size who threatened to give Matt a licking. Thomas looked at him and laughed, thus infuriating the smaller man who then endeavored to "land" on the Thomas jaw. But when he got near enough, Matt just threw out

[212]

his great belly and bounced the man back several feet. The man came back for more punishment and this occurred the second time. The third occasion sent the man sprawling on the ground, thereupon Matt put his foot on his prostrate foe to quiet him. "Now, listen once. If one more time you do dot, I butts you down and sits upon you, yet!" A roar of laughter from the crowd of onlookers brought the lowly one to his senses, so they all adjourned to Matthew's favorite saloon.

Jimmie Harrison, Engineer

How often do we hear the lament of the small community, "If we could only keep our children at home what a town we would have I" I suppose the nursery-man as he packs his beautiful young trees for shipment thinks longingly, "If only I could plant these trees here what a wonderful orchard I would have!" But neither the town nor the nursery may keep its children for the rural community is the nursery of the future urban population, its very life blood, without which the city could not be as it is.

I sometimes wonder if the little trees keep thinking of the rich nursery soil and of the loving funds that cultivated, pruned, watered and kept

[213]

them free from disease during their "childhood?" Don't tell me that trees do not think and feel! know better for I have talked with them. Many times have I received their thanks for loving care bestowed and if you do not understand tree language I feel sorry for you, but I'll not argue with you.

Among the thousands that Boonville has contributed to the outside world is James E. Harrison, as the formal record would call him-Jimmie Harrison as he is known by those who love him, and that means all who know him that play the game even half way fairly.

It has been many years since Jimmie bade goodbye to Boonville to start his career as nursemaid to a locomotive but everybody past fifty will recall that towheaded boy with his perennial smile and willing hands. He slipped away one day as a boy and came back a young man on a young man's quest, for when he went back to his job he took sweet-faced Lizzie McGowan with him to halve his sorrows and to double his joys.

That was thirty-six years ago. Today Jimmie is a "young middle-aged" man with the outdoor look upon him as well as the look which is the stamp of duty well done, life well rounded, that brings contentment. He is now master of a giant

[214]

locomotive and runs joyously through the glorious Ozark country, daily giving thanks for the splendors he is permitted to see which is one way of worship. To Jimmie the great engine is a live thing with the feelings and moods of femininity, with the same response to loving care, and Jimmie pets and manicures the great iron beast until it trembles in the joy of its power and yields its Titanic strength to the utmost in obedience to its brain - which is Jimmie Harrison himself.

Jimmie and Lizzie have ten children who adore their parents, a glorious American family. Have you considered the fact that the average family of pioneer stock is so small that it will hardly furnish the judges, jailors and asylum attendants required to look after the numerous progeny of the alien, the vicious and the unstable who are crowding in upon us? If so, then you will give thanks for those who, like the Jimmie Harrisons, deserve well of their country.

About Rab and People Who Might Have Loved Him

Many of us began reading good literature in the Seaside Library, that famous publication within the reach of a child's modest purse. All the

[215]

classics were included and to be found at John P, Neef's Book Store.

With the price, ten cents, you had to run the gauntlet of candy, ice cream, bananas, soda, oranges, gingerbread and popcorn balls. If your dime survived, there was quite a kick to be had in going through the stack of Seaside Libraries, making your choice of the treasures. You were so tempted to pick out a big fat one, so as to be sure you got full value!

I think that was the reason there were so many slim copies left of "Rab and His Friends," Dr. Brown's famous dog classic. I came across this number so often that finally it haunted me and I had no peace of mind until I bought a copy-but then I felt well repaid.

What a wonderfully good book store was Neef's and don't you remember how you liked to have Mrs. Neef serve you?

"I am enjoying your sketches very much. Be sure you write about So-and-So," said a dear elderly lady, formerly of Boonville. "And has he done anything remarkable, this individual?" "Oh, yes! He took a walk every morning of his life!" Well, that was remarkable, if he began early enough - say at about two months

[216]

Mr. Pinnell made modest claims as a repairer of umbrellas, but he was really a mechanical genius who could "fix" anything from a locomotive to a child's toy.

His next door neighbor and friend, Mr. Ginger, was also an artisan. I like that word "artisan," don't you? It means so much more than just a workman, although that, too, has its nobility. Mr. Ginger was a gunsmith, who loved his work and therefore did it well.

Could any one make a living now, in a small town, as a gunsmith?

Mr. Bendel was another of those humble folk who could do things with his hands. He made furniture and picture frames in his shop on North Main Street at the "dip" of the levee. He and the dour Louis Weyland, wagonmaker, were neighbors. What a stern, unsmiling visage had Mr. Weyland! But he made wagons that endured.

Picnic Bob and Muck Levins

What a joyous man was Bob Greenlease! He was most gregarious and would travel a hundred

[217]

miles to attend a picnic, hence his title-"Picnic Bob."

Bob Greenlease was almost a universal favorite, but I never liked him-for he lacked kindness and consideration for those less favored than him. self. I do not think that he meant to be cruel, but he was often so-in an intangible way.

Now Lewis Levins, "Muck," (how did he ever get that nickname, I wonder?) was just as joyous and just as gregarious as Bob, but he had kindness in addition. Lewis not only attracted to himself Bob's friends but many who could not abide the other man.

"Muck" was a useful citizen. He was for many years cashier at the Central National Bank and was prominent in social affairs in Boonville. During the Spanish-American war, he volunteered and was appointed Lieutenant by President McKinley and served in the Philippines. Lewis died in his prime, as did Bob Greenlease.

Skeleton Wanted

When my pet cat died, I was greatly consoled by the thought that now at last I would have a skeleton! So I buried "Minnie" with due ceremony

[218]

but not too deeply, as I figured on digging up her skeleton.

I waited three weeks rather impatiently, then took my little spade and went out to the garden, feeling sure that I would find a nice white skeleton where I had buried the cat. Alas! The mess I found had a most discouraging appearance and smell, so I gave it another week.

All my kittens were named Minnie, regardless of gender, and I must have buried a dozen before I concluded there was some mistake about this skeleton business. I learned that even six or eight weeks would not produce the desired object. Then I decided that cats did not have skeletons inside of them at all!

Rulo Hollow

Rulo Hollow! Does that name mean anything to you? If not, you do not know all about Howard County which is just across the river from Boonville. Perhaps you do know that Howard County was never as staid and law respecting as was her sister county to the south. In Howard they often took the law into their own hands when they felt that justice might be defeated.

[219]

One time John Galloway of Howard sent a man named Plunkett to the Jenkins Nursery in Boonville with a letter recommending the bearer as a salesman of nursery stock. He even loaned Plunkett a good horse, so much confidence did Galloway have in him. Galloway was a hard, domineering man, a good friend but a bitter foe. It was a brave man indeed who crossed him or betrayed his confidence.

Plunkett proved to be a crook. He sold some nursery stock and forged orders for more which he pledged in Columbia for enough money with which to buy liquor and then proceeded to "paint the town." Word was sent to Jenkins who notified Galloway; the latter came over to Boonville at once and interviewed Jenkins. "I am obliged to go to St. Louis today. I want you to make the trip to Columbia and get this fellow Plunkett; also my horse, no matter what it costs, and stop off at my place in Howard County when you return. We will take care of that bird in Rulo Hollow."

A negro laborer who was listening with protruding eyes and open mouth while Galloway was speaking, said later to Mr. Jenkins: "Boss, you knows Ise a Howard County nigger but does you know what dat means when he say dey tek care ob

[220]

him in Rulo Hollow? Dat means de catfish will be eatin' de meat often his bones de next day. Nobody what gets took to Rulo Hollow eber gits out alive. Plenty niggers hab been tuck in but dey neber has walked out on dey's own laigs and if Mr. Plunkett gits brot to dat place he am a dead man!"

The horrified nursery man made further inquiries into this story and found it well substantiated. He did not dare to refuse making an attempt to get Plunkett as he feared to offend Galloway but he was mightily relieved when he failed and neither Plunkett nor Galloway's horse was ever seen in that vicinity. I wonder if Rulo Hollow still retains its sinister reputation?

He Loved Fine Horses

All of us who are beyond middle age remember Dr. C. J. Burger who lived where the beautiful post office now stands. His paternal care of the sick was exceedingly soothing and he had a large practice in the city of Boonville as well as in the two counties. He kept three teams of the finest obtainable horses on the go day and night. That is, the doctor himself was always on duty; he took much better care of his horses than of his own

[221]

person, for he appreciated and loved a fine horse so he would never overwork it.

Dr. Burger, like most of his profession, was an easy mark. He would buy gold bricks, blue sky mining stock, in fact anything that "hadn't a chance." What a picnic he would have been for the modern oil stock salesman! He took a great delight in showing his beautifully printed stock certificates in green and gold, having a most childlike faith in humanity and believing stock salesmen to be human.

The good, unsuspecting doctor was not a good poker player-it was so easy to bluff him that I was often ashamed to take his money. But the stakes were low and sometimes he did succeed in standing me on my head, to his exceeding delight. Of course, Dr. Burger died poor, as was inevitable to a man of his character, but he did Boonville a good turn before he left us-he brought Dr. George A. Russell to succeed him.

A lady who reads these sketches does me the honor to inquire if I have written anything else and if so, where it is obtainable. Nothing but medical articles, dear lady, which would not interest you. Come to think of it I did write some love letters many years ago which were said to be

[222]

interesting and may still be intact. I might give you several addresses.

Turn Back, O Time!

Isn't it wonderful how unchanging some portion of an old town can be and how instantaneously memory responds to a stimulus, a memory that has lain dormant for over half a century?

I was walking down the west end of High street with my friend, Walter Williams. I stopped suddenly opposite a little old brick house with a stoop and steps leading up from the street. The Behrings lived there long ago.

Pointing, I said: "There originated the scene of my annual humiliation for several years! I was sent to that house to rent a sauerkraut cutter each autumn and I carried it home and back. I tried to do the task under cover of darkness, but always some people saw me and I fancied that they jeered at me, saying: "There goes Emile Paillou carrying a sauerkraut cutter!"

Very likely no one ever noticed it especially and if he had he probably wished he had that cutter at home. But sauerkraut was so distasteful to me and seemed such a plebeian mess that I was ashamed of my burden and terribly humiliated.

[223]

A sensitive child is so easily affected by "trifles light as-" sauerkraut cutters!

A Saga of Plenty

I was reminded, as I doled out the two or three apples, daily allowance of my own children, that my childhood came in days of plenty-practically no limit was placed upon our desires in the way of food.

I so well remember one day at school, when I was greeted with the usual demand: "Gimme an apple!" My reply was: "I've only got twenty if I had more, I'd give you one." It was usual for small boys to fill from the overflowing bins in the cellar, every pocket and the blouse, and none was ever brought back home.

Apples were thirty-five cents a bushel. We had not then destroyed our song birds, who kept down the billions of enemies which now infest the apple trees. It cost next to nothing to raise fruit. The spraying of trees was unknown-now apple trees must be sprayed four times a year and are as hard to raise as a sickly child, and so we pay ten cents for one good apple-and often it is just good looking.

Then the stores of walnuts, butternuts, hazelnuts,

[224]

pecans and hickory nuts in every household! These cost nothing but the joyous labor of gathering Huge loaves of homemade bread supplemented by an occasional treat of "Gross' French Bakers' Bread"-an event in most large households.

Many families had their own smoke houses as lid mine, and what a sight it was to gaze up at the darkened rafters, and count the hams, slabs of bacon, sausages and jowls, swinging in the smoky haze! It looked as if it could never all be eaten, this cured meat, and the fresh spare ribs, tenderloins, hogsheads, backbones, pig's feet, lard and "cracklings" stored in the coldest room.

I cannot recall that any of it ever spoiled were our winters so much colder in the '70s and '80s than now? It seems so to me, but the weather records say not. I know we got the carcasses in about Nov. 15th and the carving and the smoking began soon afterwards.

And the quantities of butter put in brine - the great store of winter vegetables in the cellar, a keg of Bates' sorghum and two barrels of cider - one to drink fresh, the other to "harden" and finally finish as vinegar. Now all this in a family of moderate means, but a big family of ten with the help.

[225]

We never bought any vegetables, these and all the fruit except apples, were raised in the home garden on the back of a lot of about one hundred by one hundred and fifty feet, by my grandfather, with no assistance from any of his grandchildren as he had no patience with inexpert help. I could extend this saga but I have said enough to indicate that those were, indeed, the days of plenty!

Hugh Brady's Big One

"I see Boonville is building a new bridge. That recalls a little experience I had near that city years ago when I was a younger man."

Thus spoke Hugh Brady, the veteran politician, boss of the Democratic party in St. Louis for so many years, and who "delivered" the city to Lon Stephens for governor.

Then Mr. Brady proceeded to tell me that he was at that time engaged as freight solicitor for steamboat lines. He would take a skiff and with a negro helper float down the river, stopping at hotels for the night.

Upon the occasion referred to, he actually swam down the river from Arrow Rock to Boonville, without getting in the skiff. He stopped at

[226]

the City Hotel and after canvassing the town, proceeded down the river.

"To my mind nothing compared with a trip down the river in a skiff as I took it. Beautiful scenery, constantly changing, good hotels each night, plenty of adventure with high water, swift, currents and floating perils, such as logs; a stout negro to do all the hard work and, best of all, the jug fishing! Why, a trip to Europe would not compare with it."

Down the river near Sibley's Island, Mr. Brady got a real strike on his "cork," a large jug. They tried to pull in the quarry but it almost pulled them in - even the skiff seemed to take on the speed of a motor boat. The fishermen steered and manoeuvred into shallow water, then saw they had a whale of a catfish hooked and now at a disadvantage.

Both men got out and then ensued a real scrap, in which Mr. Fish gave a good account of himself. Mr. Brady had a big gunny sack, and got behind the fish, trying to bag him, while his helper held on to the front end. After two hours' fighting they captured the catfish alive.

But there was plenty of evidence of battle visible. Mr. Brady was badly scratched and scored, while the negro was covered with blood

[227]

and had a broken leg when the giant fish was finally subdued.

At the next town they stopped and had the leg repaired by a carpenter-it being a wooden leg and they sold the fish, which weighed one hundred and seventy-five pounds in its stocking feet!

Walter Williams Apologizes

Have you had an incorrect definition of a word so fixed in your mind that it takes a surgical operation to remove it.? My word was "trite." I was easily cured, not by surgery, but by having a portion of a book read to me-no, it was not mother Eddy's, but father Noah Webster's, book that did the trick.

This is apropos of an incident that took place at the Advertiser office when Walter Williams was editor. The paper had published an item saying that a young man, whom we will call Henry James, Jr., had been in Boonville, "hobnobbing with his many friends," Henry being the son of a farmer of substance, living about five miles from Boonville.

Now Henry James, Sr., had a fixed definition in his mind for "hobnobbing" and his idea was that it meant bacchanalian carousal - in other

[228]

words, drunk and disorderly. So Mr. James hied himself to Boonville and called on the editor with blood in his eye. For had not his steady, sober son been "written up" in an outrageous manner?

In vain did Mr. Williams by soft answer endeavor to turn away his wrath, as he explained that hobnobbing was a perfectly innocent procedure. No, sir! Mr. James came for an apology and he would have that or blood. So the editor, having no blood to spare, had to agree to straighten things out in the next issue.

Do you know Walter Williams? Ever read or hear one of his apologies? Well, this time he just had to square himself and this is how he did it. The next edition of the Advertiser carried in prominent position this item: "Henry James, Sr., was in Boonville this week hobnobbing with his many friends."

I could tell worse ones on Walter Williams, but it is unsafe to stick a pin into the business end of a mule for, when you come to, you are likely to be looking up into the face of a white clad nurse at the hospital murmuring, "What happened?"

Now I don't mean to imply that our dear Dean is a mule-far be it from me-but he has a mulish attribute. He hits back. Besides, he did me a

[229]

great favor many, many years ago. He declined to publish a "poem" I had written. He did not refuse to print it but he simply didn't do it. I shudder to think what might have happened had he printed those verses-they were even worse than those that Eddie Guest writes, and that is going some.

Now, perhaps I have stepped on your poetic toes-I certainly have if you are among the misguided people who think the daily effusions of Mr. Guest are poems. Rhymes are not necessarily poems. As a poet, Mr. Guest is a great financier, for he cashes in at face value, which is more than a real poet does.

And yet who can say that Mr. Guest is not a great success? His jingling platitudes are read and enjoyed by countless thousands who would not read a real poem; one to which you yourself must contribute in order to obtain full enjoyment. It is better to read Guest than not to read at all, but no five foot shelf will ever contain his "complete works," for that would require at least twenty feet.

You know some ores will assay only a few grains of gold to the ton and, likewise, there is some golden verse in the ore of his writings, but

[230]

it is my opinion, which is not of much value, that the poems of Edgar A. Guest could be contained in one slim volume.

W. Sombart

Did you really know him? It is difficult, if not impossible for the young to estimate the older folk, that is because they are not on the same plane. But if the young could climb up, so to speak, or the more mature would reach down a helping hand; I believe we would all be happier through understanding.

Now there was C. W. Sombart who appeared to be a man aloof. He looked at you with the cold eye of business and you thought that was all there was to him-he was just the Sombart Milling Company.

One day, as a young man employed at the railway station, I went to Mr. Sombart's office on business and while waiting I noticed the portrait of Humboldt hanging on the wall. I had just become acquainted with the wonderful "Cosmos" of Humboldt's and in my enthusiasm, I "climbed up" to Mr. Sombart by commenting on the portrait of the great naturalist.

To my amazement he reached down the helping

[231]

hand of interest in my enthusiasm, and for an hour we talked of world literature and that leonine old face softened- wonderfully and never again appeared hard to my eyes, for I had caught a glimpse of the real man, such as I imagined few had seen.

The Sombart family was a great asset to Boonville. C. W. had a big house full of lively sons, a daughter and several nieces, all friendly folks. The peafowls that strutted and called over his premises, were the wonder and delight of all the children.

Frank, Robert and Henry, the younger children, whom I knew best, had a trick horse, "Shoofly," that could do circus stunts; did do them upon occasion and did them so well that an admission charge of two cents had to be made to keep down the crowd of visitors and at that there was standing room only!

Casper's Snake Story

Casper Koechner, who owned a vineyard and wine garden south of Boonville on Trigg's hill some years ago, was a quaint character who contributed his quota to the joy of living by his stories, his wine and by his very being. Casper,

[232]

as you might infer, was one of those good old Germans whom everybody liked. He was a huge man any way you looked at him, horizontally or perpendicularly, his latitude being somewhat greater than his longitude; when he stepped upon the platform scales the said

scales groaned and laboriously indicated three hundred and ten pounds if Casper was feeling fit, and as high as three hundred and thirty if the work had been light for some weeks. It is needless to say that Casper was good natured and always bubbling with laughter.

Now Mrs. Casper was his opposite in nearly every respect. A thin, wrinkled woman who abhorred jokes and who felt that Life was a sad affair and who seemed to think that fun and laughter were sinful. Her husband was a perpetual trial to her she never understood what she called his foolishments, but she bore with him as a mother would with "a bairn just a wee bit daft in his head." His pet name for her was "Mommile"; it would be interesting to know if she had a pet name for him. Casper's dialect doubtless made Jove himself smile. It cannot be reproduced in a manner to do him justice but here is his snake story as memory recalls it.

"Von day ven I was mowing grass der artchart

[233]

in, I finds me a pig black schnake, vich I kills her mit a clup. Den I links I just blay von choke on Mommile vich I knew was goming out quick to rake de grass up yet, so I wraps me der schnake round a leedle tree vonce and cover she up mit der grass where Mommile will see her ven she rake. Den I goes back mit my yob and quick comes Mommile mit her rake and rakes der grass up.

"Pretty soon I hear holler: 'Casper, Casper, a schnake vonce I Kill her! Kill her! Or soon she away gets!' Unt Mommile pounds mit der rake unt I holler: `Hit harden' unt she breaks der rake off by der handle hitting by der schnake. Den she says: `Dealt now she is, Casper, dot schnake!' unt I laff unt I laff, unt I say: `Yah, Mommile, she should be dealt-I kill her mit a clue two hours now already.'

"Mommile she look at me mit such a malt face as nefer vas, unt it is so funny I laff unt laff until I can't stop. Mommile she get madter and madter unt she come at me mit der rake handle in von handt unt shoves me der udder handt. So quick she pushes me unt so tirdt I am mit laffing, I fall ofer on der groundt unt roll near dot schnake. Mommile beat me mit der rake stick until it break. She looks roundt for somedings unt quick picks

[234]

up der schnake, unt Gott im Himmel, if she don't lam me by der headt mit dot schnak! Unt she say: `Laff some more yet, you old fool, unt you should dot schnake eat vonce - unt midtout cookings yet already!' "

Two Parish Priests

Father Henry Muir lived in a little white, one room cottage on the church "campus." It would take a Halcyon of "The Abbe Constantine," to picture this gentle soul, who was so good, so tolerant. He thought that even some Protestants would get to heaven!

That everybody loved him goes without saying, but it takes more than goodness and amiability to keep an organization progressing, so Father Muir, sensing his deficiency, asked that when his successor came to be considered a man of different type should be chosen.

When the good father retired full of years, his bishop sent Father Hoffman to take charge of the parish.

A greater contrast could hardly be imagined and the good ladies of the congregation, accustomed to the enjoyment of the social amenities with their

[235]

pastor, called to pay their respects, little dreaming of the reception in store for them.

"Well, ladies, what is your business?" demanded the young, stern-faced priest at the door. "We we have just called," stammered the ladies.

"Well, you just go home and attend to your household duties. I'm not receiving social calls and when I wish to see you I will send for you."

And that was the beginning of a strenuous regime, for Father Hoffman was a veritable Savonarola, a militant priest who spared no one, himself least of all.

Gone was all gentleness, easy going, financial laxness and compromise. P's. and Q's. had to be minded. Weekly thunderings from the altar roused the people from their lethargy. Did any bad boys cut up in the rear pews the eagle eyes would mark them and down would charge the surpliced priest, ears would be boxed before the entire congregation, and never again did those boys misbehave in church. No one went to sleep during services under the new discipline.

It was an awakening indeed. A new parish house was built, also additions to the church itself.

The parochial school was reorganized and put in charge of a teaching sisterhood, to whom the

[236]

priest gave up his beautiful new home, taking poor quarters for himself in the neighborhood.

Practically forced contributions were exacted for improvements, but there was no fund raised to which Father Hoffman did not give of his own meagre salary.

He was not so beloved as was his predecessor but he was respected and feared. Many times he was sent for to quell riots and stop quarrels among the bridge workers. If words did not suffice, action would come and they knew it. In a very few moments he would have order restored, and the rioter "s penitent.

But all this strenuousness took toll of the man - in five years his hair was gray and at thirty-five he looked fifty.

It took many years for his parishioners to learn of the yearning kindness that existed under the rough exterior and to know that Father Hoffman shed bitter tears over his failure to win the affection of his people. His harshness was but a means to an end.

He declined to live a life of ease, so when he had affairs running smoothly, he applied for a transfer and was sent to St. Louis. He will be long remembered in Boonville and justly so, for he gave her the best years of his life.

[237]

A Typical Englishman

What a typical Englishman was ex-cashier Wadson of the Central National. His hair parted in the middle, clear down to his neck, a neatly dressed, handsome man, who walked the streets, never looking to the right or left, speaking to no one. A few drinks, however, would thaw him out, it was said, and then he was almost human. He was purchasing a bowl and pitcher one day when a farmer came in the store and seeing the bowl near a pail of water, he poured water into the bowl and proceeded to lave his hands.

Wadson stared at him coldly for a moment, then taking both bowl and pitcher, he threw them out of the window, then without a word, he stalked away.

Queer folk, these English!

A man of mystery was Walter Drew. He came from - no one knows where. He opened a shoe store on Main Street, continued in business for ten or fifteen years, taking his part in Boonville life. A courteous gentleman, patient and kindly to children and other animals, a cheery merchant well liked by every one.

Well, one day he pulled up stakes and dis-

[238]

appeared and no one knows where he went. He, apparently, just dropped off the earth. Has any one ever had a letter from Walter Drew?

The Sense of Undiminished Wonder

You may have noticed my intention to indicate how boys amused themselves in Boonville and, doubtless, other towns during the period covered by my sketches. If I have been able to show that boy life was interesting and fairly full, I will have succeeded in my object.

The activities of my own childhood were somewhat restricted by a frail physique, so a huskier child had many more pleasures added to those which I enjoyed but I doubt if he had keener joy in all 'round living than I had, for Nature always tends toward compensation.

So if Master Husky had more of the animal pleasures that come from the use of strong muscles, he was probably short on mental joys which he did not miss, thanks to compensating Nature. As for me, the sense of undiminished wonder was, and is still, mine and I say unto you there is no gift from life to compare with it, that sense of undiminished wonder!

[239]

Modern and Victorian

Our own children cannot imagine that their parents were once in the swim of romantic youth. My younger son, after answering four successive calls on the telephone, from as many girls and conversing to his evident satisfaction, turned to me with vanity spread all over his beaming face. "Did the girls call you up like that when you were my age, father?" I had to answer in the negative, as we had few or no telephones at that particular date and they wouldn't have, anyhow, as it wasn't being done in those days.

The boys did all the calling up when the phone arrived. It was still the day of chivalry. If a girl gave you a flower, you pressed it to your lips, then between the pages of a book, to be kept for aye. Once Grace Kemper borrowed a postage stamp from me at the railway ticket office, returning it next day on a sheet of her monogrammed, delicately scented letter paper. I kept the addressed envelope a long time; it was the only one I received from her until just the other day she wrote me a delightful letter about my sketches and I recognized her hand writing on the envelope! I am afraid to mention the intervening number of years. You know, you "getting along fellows,"

[240]

how Grace had us all eating out of her hand. Well, do you think her flapper daughters would believe it?

-But Don't Do It!

Did you know that if you stood on the eminence just north of High Street and west of Seventh, with a willow switch of the proper resiliency, tipped with a ball of fresh clay, you could make life miserable for passers by, down almost as far as the river? Fact. It has been done.

You can also-break windows, spatter doors, and cause much commotion in the lives of dogs, mules and chickens-all with a minimum of danger to yourself, if you do not laugh too much.

But, if you do get caught, those willow switches will be put to other use. That also has been done. However the pain wears off and in the course of time you forget all about this ending of an otherwise perfect day.

Bold Harry McGowan

Harry McGowan was an old sailor and you know a sailor can fit into almost any emergency. One time when the river had been frozen over all

[241]

winter, the ice suddenly broke in the spring, carrying steamboats down the river and wrecking several of them. One steamer had been left without a watchman when the gorge started and was at the mercy of the elements and obstructions in the river.

Urgent telegrams came from points above, warning us of the boat's danger; but who could venture out on the sea of floating ice to the rescue? Who but an old salt like Harry McGowan!

When the steamer came down it was seen she would pass under the central span of the bridge, so Harry got a stout rope ready, let himself down from the bridge, dropped on the deck as the boat floated under, took the wheel and guided the valuable vessel to safety. I believe Harry collected a nice bit of salvage money for the job, let us hope so-he earned it!

"Suke Lily"

A few days before writing this sketch I asked a friend if he remembered Matt Thomas. "No, why should I remember him?" "Is it possible that you have forgotten Suke Lily?" "Oh, no, but I had forgotten that he had any other name!" So now I am certain that many other busy old

[242]

boys will be glad to read about this unique character, too interesting to be allowed to pass into oblivion.

A great cask of a man was Matthew Thomas, inn-keeper of the early days of Boonville. Globular in form, waddling in gait, this genial three hundred pound Boniface was a quaint character of a type no longer extant. With the passing of such folk is diminished much good cheer and joviality such as this sad world can filly spare. Matt had a cow yclept Lily and it was sight and sound for great entertainment to see and hear him pursue the creature with alternate curses and caresses in his endeavor to persuade her to contribute her quota of milk so essential to the Thomas menage. Matt would stealthily approach the cow, who always ran at large, and when near enough for confidential relations there would rumble from his cavernous chest the endearing words-"Suke Lily, suke Lily!"

But Mrs. Cow, who had her own ideas as to "suking," would turn suspiciously about and seeing the milk pails, she if defying her master would kick up her heels as to collect his toll. Down the alley with Matt roaring after, Lily, suke Lily-damn you!" to the excruciating joy of the small boys who never

[243]

failed thereafter to greet the mountainous innkeeper on the streets with the derisive cries of "Suke Lily, suke Lily!" and thus was his rather plebeian name displaced by a more distinctive appellation. After all, distinction is that for which we all strive and few attain.

Matthew Thomas was a worshiper at the shrine of Gambrinus and, leaning up against Herman Schnaack's bar, he would proclaim the greatness of America. "Der United States iss der greadest country in der vorltd! Here iss effery man ass goot ass eflery oder mans, and a damn sight better yet!" All that Matt needed was a cassock to make an admirable Frier Tuck-he had a natural tonsure.

The Thomas Hotel will never be forgotten by those fortunate enough to have been entertained by the hospitable Mrs. Thomas, who was the brain and solar plexus of the inn. A man who dined at the Hotel Thomas forty-five years ago told me that he still remembered the menu of the dinner for which he had paid twenty-five cents. Read it and weep! Oyster soup, fish, roast pork, roast beef, turkey, prairie chicken, baked ham, potatoes, cabbage slaw, peas, beets and string beans. For dessert, ice cream, apple dumplings, pumpkin pie,

[244]

fruitcake and custard. All the cider and milk and buttermilk you could drink, with tea and coffee as a matter of course Such a dinner could not be obtained today for five dollars. There were no dainty "portions" served. It was all there and plenty for everybody. Why, it sounds positively baronial!

Peter the Great

A valuable as well as a voluble citizen is Col. Jim Ross, the auctioneer, whose Hibernian witticisms are ever flowing and sparkling like the poet's brook. Gifted with a strong imagination, a glib tongue, a retentive memory and an elastic conscience, Col. Ross is always the center wherever he "lights" and you can always differentiate between his particular group and all others, for his auditors are invariably laughing.

No doubt you all have looked upon this entertaining citizen as above reproach, I am sure I myself did not suspect him until recently but I consider it my sad duty to expose this fellow. I dislike exceedingly to set down the fact but my evidence permits of no contradiction or evasion, Mr. Ross is a grafter! Can you believe it? You

[245]

know "a man may smile and smile and be a villain still," and yet we must be charitable towards Col. Jim; rather let us blame the man who led him astray, for Jim was young, innocent and respected until that gentle old Fagin, H. W. Jenkins, the nurseryman, took him in hand and made an expert grafter of him to the profit of all lovers of trees and shrubs.

One fine spring day when Ross and Mr. Jenkins were digging some young apple trees for the market, they noticed an extra well shaped tree in the row which proved to be a "stray" or seedling. Now be it known that a seedling tree is anathema to nursery-men. Only one apple or peach tree in thousands may prove even passably worth planting and time alone, ten years or so, will tell. But this was such a beautiful little tree that Jim was loath to obey orders to destroy it and asked that the tree be given him. "I don't care what you do with that tree just so you don't get it mixed up with the others," said Mr. Jenkins.

So Ross took the tree away and "heeled it in" by itself. Some days later Henry Bates, the Sorghum King, came to buy some trees. Ross took his order and then said: "Mr. Bates, here is a new Russian crab apple named Peter the Great,"

[246]

showing him the seedling tree. "There is the only one of its kind in the United States."

"A French nurseryman sent this tree to Mr. Jenkins but we have no place for it here so this is a chance of a lifetime for you to get it. The tree is well worth five dollars." Bates, who was always looking for rarities in horticulture, eagerly snapped up the bargain; but when Jenkins missed the seedling, he made inquiries as to its disposal and upon learning that Bates had been victimized, he upbraided Ross.

"Well," said, Col. Jim, "I labeled that tree Peter the Great. I had a right to do that as the name is not in use. I told Bates it was a new variety and that is the truth. I also told him that it was the only one in the United States, which was short of the truth, for it is the only

one in the world. I said it was worth five dollars and you can't prove that it won't be worth five hundred dollars as every new plant is an experiment and this one may turn out to be the finest apple in the world. You know Bates is always looking for something unique and he certainly got it this time. Suppose it does turn out to be a sour old crab apple, Bates can use some of his sorghum to sweeten it up!"

[247]

Adam Eckhard

"Mistah Eckhard, I wants me a two poun' potah-house steak, and I pays you Sattidy shore!" A swift, appraising glance, then quick decision. "No, you don't, Jim, what you want is ten cents worth of liver. Here it is and you are a lucky nigger to get it."

Adam Eckhard was the original advocate of the "cheaper cuts" for the impecunious, and therewith went advice based upon such sound philosophy that should have proven of high value to the recipients, but was merely the casting of pearls before swine in most cases.

And yet, who can say the pearls were utterly lost? A rough talker was Adam Eckhard - even a ferocious man with his tongue where hypocrites and shams in general were at issue, but under the hard exterior was a heart as soft as that of a woman.

He was our next door neighbor. I fought and played with his children. When I got the worst of it, I took it out on his windows, and when his boys got licked, then our window panes suffered. The glazier was a frequent caller in our neighborhood.

[248]

Never did I see such open-handed hospitality extended to children. It seemed to me he had a thousand bushels of apples in his cellar, and great stone jars of cookies stood constantly within reach of small hands.

Fate certainly gave him a scurvy deal in return for his uprightness. His wife, an invalid for years and whom he tenderly cherished, died. His children one by one, were cut off in the flower of youth; only one daughter remains.

I saw Mr. Eckhard the year before his death and I found him a very old, lonely, brokenhearted man. It was some time before he recognized me. Then he took me out to the stable where he kept a superannuated mare in luxury. She came right up and nuzzled him. He put his old arms about her neck and the tears streamed down his cheeks. "Dixie," he said chokingly, "we are the only ones left, but it won't be for long-it won't be for long."

Morals and Cocoanuts

We are all born amoral. Virtue, meaning conformity to law, must be acquired by the painful process of living. Sometimes the acquisition takes several generations, a little progress by

[249]

each, but often a setback of a generation or two that have found unsuitable soil, experienced crippling or killing frosts or were stunted by the drought of unfavorable environment.

Once while playing in the old Court House yard with some companions, I found a portion of a spoiled cocoanut, which, strangely enough, gave us a desire for a good one. Taking up a collection we obtained the price and delegated our biggest boy, eight years old, to purchase a nut at Kyle's Grocery.

Upon his return we feasted-yes, but somewhat according to present hygienic dictum, which says, "Stop eating while you still are hungry."

Pretty soon it occurred to some bright mind to return a portion of the spoiled nut to Mr. Kyle, and to claim that he had sold us damaged goods! It worked, the messenger returning with another cocoanut, which we proceeded to devour.

Not yet having heard the story of "Wolf! Wolf!" we made a third essay, taking a large piece of the spoiled nut as evidence, and having the caution to send a new messenger who returned in triumph bearing the third cocoanut and the information that Mr. Kyle had remarked to the clerk, "I tink dat whole damn lot of coke nuts is spoil' !"

[250]

I think not one of us had any idea of wrongdoing, but as ignorance of the law excuses no one, not even a child when it is nature's law, I got my punishment - which tends to morality. For fifty years I could not bear the sight of cocoanut in any form - pie, cake, candy or pudding! It is only within the past two years that I have felt that my sentence had expired.

Yes, I'll take a little piece of that beautiful cocoanut cake-thank you!

I Go a-Fishing

When you read this, if it be along the first part of October, I will be down in Phelps county floating on the green waters of the winding Gasconade pursuing the fighting bass, the lightning-swift jack salmon and the meek, sheep-like crappie. If you are of the nonspitting sex, I hope you are tolerant and patient with those who love the gentle art of angling, for is there not a relationship between angling and love! If you have loved or been loved, was not there necessarily some angling done thereunto-pertaining, as our legalistic friends might say?

For eighteen seasons I have gone on my annual quest piscatorial. I know every rock and log in

[251]

my part of the river. The Gasconade always greets me with her effulgent October smile, for I have never seen her at any other time. Doubtless the river is beautiful in other seasons, but to me it would seem like meeting a new friend, very pleasing, of course, but could it be so delightful as greeting an old one?

I get a bit irritable toward the "center" of September and those who love me say, "Never mind, he just hears the Gasconade calling." I really do, for I dream that I am arranging for my boat, minnow traps and my faithful guide for several weeks before I start and I have a longing to get out of the crowds to the unpeopled Ozarks, where perfect peace awaits me.

I have written to my guide, not to ask him if he can take me, that would be superfluous, but to tell him I am coming. No matter what he is doing it will be postponed and the excuse he gives is: "The doctor is coming and he engaged me last year!" I have such a good, loyal guide as you will infer. And not because I give no trouble, far from that; you will understand this when I tell you that I am exceedingly hard on guides. They must take me to places difficult of access and involving labor prodigious. For example, my boat must be dragged over shallows and through

[252]

rapids for two miles. Heavy anchors must be handled frequently, for all fishing is done from the boat.

I know all the the choppers, rafters and fishermen, having treated the eyes of their children in my cabin. These mountaineers are perhaps uncultured, but they have a certain pride and are very sensitive. They crave information and so ask questions. "The Atlantic ocean must be a pretty big river, isn't it, doctor?" "I hear they have machines that put out fires in the city-is that so?" They ask many questions about the stars, which are so near and so brilliant in that high country.

I am a lazy fisherman and not at all a scientific angler. Into my boat at 7 a. m. and back home at dark, day after day. The "season" is over when I get there; the summer tourists and visitors are gone; the mosquitoes and chiggers are dead. I usually have the river mostly to myself, for business picks up and workers must be home by October.

I stay about ten days-golden Autumn days into which I crowd enough fishing joy to last a year. And on my last day I say to Ed: "Now let's fish in the most beautiful place in the world!" Then we do go there and we will do no more

[253]

fishing after that, for it is time to go back to the city, so I reluctantly unjoint my rod, lay it reverently in the boat and take a long last look, which is always dimmed by the tears that will come to my eyes and a catch that will constrict my throat, as I say goodbye for another year!

Aunty McPherson and the City Hotel

For more than sixty years the City Hotel was kept garnished and swept day and night to welcome the wayfarer of high or low degree, from Senator Thomas H. Benton to the humblest of John Smiths. And were there ever more charming inn keepers than Edward B. and "Aunty" McPherson?

The cuisine of this old hostelry was famous throughout the Mississippi Valley and the stately hospitality of Aunty McPherson drew thousands of travelers to Boonville, for it was indeed a privilege to be Aunty's guest. You felt that she was really your charming old relative and so you felt at home, as indeed you were at home under that roof.

Aunty McPherson was a very early riser and any guest who was awake at four o'clock could have heard her tapping cane in the court yard and

[254]

her orders given in peremptory voice to the sleepy negro help, who both feared and adored their mistress. She was often heard to say, "It's hard enough to get along with, but it is impossible to get along without these niggers!" Poor Aunty used a cane to steady her gouty feet but the darkies had their own idea about the use to which the cane would be put in case of insubordination.

In my day Mr. McPherson had gone to his reward but Aunty queened it as of old. Her New Year's reception was the social event and no one who was favored with an invitation could ever forget the grande dame at the head of the receiving line, eclipsing by her stateliness even the bevy of Boonville's glorious young womanhood who assisted her.

How she loved and understood young folk! She seemed constantly to renew her own youth by her associations with the adolescents who, doubtless, unconsciously contributed to her of their superabundant vitality. It was not only as hostess that Aunty McPherson was useful. One of my earliest recollections is that of seeing her in curl papers in the kitchen actually preparing food with her own hands.

So lavishly was her table provided that the City Hotel never paid any dividends in her days. It

[255]

was her home and yours, and she felt that a home was not expected to pay dividends, hence did not bother her head about it. In fact she considered herself quite wealthy and it was her favorite hobby to alter her will in favor of the friend who did her the latest kindness.

Many, many years later when I was in New York I was introduced to the famous surgeon, Dr. William Todd Helmuth. "From Boonville, are you? Can you tell me if Aunty McPherson still runs the City Hotel.? It has been forty years since I was in that town but I have never forgotten that wonderful hostess." And a wonderful woman she was indeed!

Lone Wolf

We used to take Indian stories much more seriously than boys do now. We had to, when the newspapers, periodically announced "Apaches again on war path!" "Blackfeet off the Reservation-Many Settlers Killed-Troops are in pursuit!" Well, we boys read it all and we played Indian. We even had our secret Indian names. My own was Ghost-That-Lies-In-The-Woods.

Last year I visited Boonville. I was mooning

[256]

around the old Public School building, unrecognized and unrecognizing, when a totally unfamiliar person approached me with extended hand. "Hello! Ghost-that-lies-in-the-woods!" he said, and I replied instantly: "Lone Wolf:"

It was Hugh Roberts whom I had not seen for thirty-five years!

Dan Davidson

If your mother told you fifty years ago that Dan Davidson was coming to town, you knew it meant that you were to stay in your own backyard. To my youthful intelligence the coming to town of Dan Davidson meant putting up the shutters, locking the doors, turning out the lamps and a general suspension of all business activities. I know now that it was a case of the incompatibility of the mixture of a good man and good liquor in undue proportions-both were spoiled and the community was disturbed by the resulting dare devil on horseback, who would even ride into the stores, to say nothing of chasing people off the streets.

But Dan Davidson came to realize his errors in time to live many years as a useful, respected,

[257]

peaceful citizen. I doubt very much if he ever knew that his name was used with which to frighten little children.

Guinea Sam, V. D.

Guinea Sam was a "blue gummed nigger," shot from a cannon in the wilds of Africa. He landed in Boonville none the worse for his long trajectory.

This is what Sam always said - said it so often that he believed it. He accounted for his safe passage by his Voodooism. Yes, sir! Guinea Sam was V. D., doctor of Voodoo, past grand master of magic of the blackest kind.

Woe to the individual upon whom Sam lay a "spell" - he could wither an arm, blind an eye or bring on any kind of a "misery" so he never lacked for a clientele in East Boonville, where the dwarfish, wrinkled, white - woolled old negro lived and wrought his incantations.

He always wore brass hoops in his ears and predicted that a great storm would carry him back to Africa to die - and perhaps a storm did take his spirit home, who knows!

[258]

C. H. Brokmeyer, Merchant

What a restless, active man he was! What was the name of that broken nosed mulatto he had so long ago as delivery man? You may have heard his famous order to this helper- (Was it Louie?) "Louie, mach de candle on de gas, then go round the stable once, and tie de horse loose!"

For years "Brock" prided himself on the fact that he would buy anything, or sell anything you asked for. A traveling man put up a five dollar bet that he could ask Brokmeyer for something he could not furnish, and with the man who accepted the wager, went to Brock's store.

"Mr. Brokmeyer, I understand you can sell a man anything he calls for?"

"Yes, what can I sell you today?"

"Well, I want to buy a pulpit!"

"All right, I got a good one I sell you at a bargain," answered Mr. Brokmeyer.

It seemed that sometime before he had sold a country church a new outfit and had taken their furniture as part payment, so he could not only furnish a pulpit but pews as well.

Mr. Brokmeyer did an enormous business. What the success of the establishment would have been without its Buddha in the person of Henry

[259]

Holtman, I cannot say; but always this symbol of commercial wisdom sat enthroned at the managerial desk, trusted implicitly by the owner, ever justifying the trust. Men may come and men may go but Henry Holtman seems immutable.

Our Girls

My pen falters as I attempt to pay a tribute to "our girls" of Boonville as exemplified by the N. S. Cooking Club, which was famed beyond our own state borders in the later eighties. We, the expatriates, always agree that never have we known of a comparable group of charming young women, and that they have all retained their characteristics as matrons, gracing each community so fortunate as to include one or more of the club members.

We comment upon the fact that these, "our girls," have maintained the very high plane upon which we in our chivalry placed them. Certainly we ourselves have been and are the better for having come under their influence, as they gave us high ideals of womanhood.

May their own sons and daughters prove worthy of these mothers!

[260]

At the Old Telegraph Office

I believe that our Western Union telegraph office in Boonville during my apprenticeship was unique. The manager was Charles W. Hazell and a wonderfully good telegrapher he was, but he had to be driven in order to do his best work that is if there was a cracker-jack operator at the other end of the wire, Charley Hazell always rose to the occasion.

Ordinary telegraphy did not interest him very much, fortunately for the "cubs" he always had in the office and who had to run the business while Mr. Hazell looked after his other interests. This gave us needed practice, not only in telegraphy, but in office management. We must have done fairly well as I never heard much complaint.

We had a jolly crowd when I started in to learn the telegraphic art. Oscar Miles, "Spieler" Miller and Bouse O'Bryan were the seniors, about full fledged so they took wing shortly and gave good account of themselves in many crack offices. Will Miller did Associated Press work for many years.

These old timers proceeded to initiate me into the mysteries of telegraphy. One of the first things I learned was that each operator had his

[261]

code name or "call" consisting of one or two letters. For instance Miles had for his call the letters "Ea." O'Bryan used "Sa." Now if you can make these letters fit as the initials of two divinities who lived at the west end of Boonville you will see how presumptuous were these two lads.

The departure of the seniors left the office in charge of Ed Spahr and myself. I believe there was another boy there but his name escapes me just now. The office was located in the basement of the Central National Bank and just outside, facing a window, George Sibley had his watermelon market.

Our problem in telegraphy was a simple one compared to the one in melonology; the latter required much study of the occult, not to say the abstruse. After mastering general principles we experimented in the influence of mind over matter and discovered or developed some strange facts.

Among other things we discovered that in order to coax a watermelon through the window, one of us had first to exert malicious animal magnetism on George Sibley while the other devoted his psychic powers to the big melon which slowly but surely yielded to the attractive force which separated it from its companions and facilitated its "descensus" into the "avernus" of the devilish

[262]

young cubs, said avernus being the big burglar proof vault which was also investigation proof.

Mr. Hazell was of a strongly religious nature and disapproved of our "demonstration" so we had to extend our psychic experiment to include hypnosis in order to induce Charley to share these luscious watermelon hearts with us. Need I tell you that we never failed?

The Dreadful Experience of John Doe

One of the things that made life rather strenuous during my early days as night telegrapher at the M. K. & T. station was looking out for the safety of John Doe, scion of a respected Boonville family, who persisted in filling his tank with fire water which surely made him "heap bad Injun." Then he would go to sleep on the platform, in the freight house or on the railroad track - it didn't make any particular difference to John, when he had "arrived."

I bore with him long and patiently for his family's sake and because he was a really good fellow and a skilled mechanic when he was sober. One night, however, when he had on an extra cargo and was dead to the world, I determined to teach Mr. Doe a lesson. We had received a consignment

[263]

of coffins that day, so with the help of the baggage master, Joe Tuttle, I put John in a coffin and on a truck in the freight room. Then I made a good stage setting by placing boxes around the coffin with a row of lighted candles on each side.

I then whitened the sleeping man's face with flour, tied his legs together, stood up some milliner's dummies that we had on hand as sentinels, spilled some ammonia water on his chest to hasten his revival and retired to my adjoining office to await developments.

In course of time I heard cries of distress and calls for help. Hurrying to the scene I saw horror and fear depicted on John's face as he sat up in his coffin.

"Lie down, John, you are dead now and your troubles are over," I said to him. Tears streamed from his eyes.

"Oh, am-am I dead?" he whimpered. "Yes, John, you died last night and will be buried tomorrow. The devil came after you but I persuaded him to wait until you were buried."

With a piercing shriek of despair John Doe broke his bonds, sprang from the coffin, upset the candles and dummies and fled as if a thousand devils were after him. And he remained sober for a whole year!

[264]

Whimsicalities

A queer affair, this process of living with one's fellow creatures. Our contacts so often ephemeral, like ships that pass in the night, might be made enduring to our mutual advantage by a better understanding. But, after all, "there is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we may," and so we probably re-establish contacts sometime when it is so written that we should.

There is such a thing as capacity for friendship.

Unhappy is he who has no friends. The very dogs avoid him and the little children are instinctively repelled. Yet, the friendless one may be an individual who keeps his doors locked - if you find the key or break through the window, you may find a soul in the house!

How many real friends have you, and how long have you possessed them? Is it not a wonderful thing, this friendship which begins in the sunrise of childhood, runs through adolescence, young manhood, middle age and endures through the descent on the western slope toward the setting sun!

A Gentleman of High Degree

I had a visit from a distinguished former citizen of Boonville recently, Henry Winston Harper,

[265]

A. M., M. D., Ph. G., LL. D., Fellow of the Chemical Society (London), Professor of Chemistry, Dean of the Graduate School, University of Texas. Yes, sir. The owner of all those impressive titles came into my modest office and I said, "Hello! Harry Harper" - just like that.

Doctor Harper's attainments make the common run of college men look like 29 cents, speaking facetiously. Originally of frail physique, the doctor was condemned to meet an early death about forty years ago, so he took a big club and hiked out to meet him half way.

I do not know what happened to the other fellow, but Dr. Harper is more robust, youthful and gingery than he has ever been - he is a proud grandfather, too. We did have a conversation about goats and monkey glands, but there was nothing at all personal in it.

Watermelons

Do you recall that time when you swam over to Sibley's 's Island in the Missouri River and that on your return trip you pushed ahead of you a long, fifty-pound watermelon? What made that melon the sweetest you ever tasted? Was it because it was an especially luscious melon? No! It was

[266]

because you saved George Sibley the labor of transporting that melon by boat and wagon to market and because, when you were halfway back you heard a shot and saw a splash of water about ten feet from you that made you dive to the bottom to avoid the contents of the other barrel!

But George did not fire the second barrel and he didn't try to hit you with the first. He was just administering discipline so you wouldn't do it too frequently. He would have sold you that melon for ten cents but that would have spoiled the flavor, of course.

George Sibley was of Indian-Negro blood and had characteristics of both races; his name was synonymous with good watermelons which he and his family raised on his sandy island where melons grew to perfection.

Are you under thirty-five? Then you are too young to have eaten the Sibley watermelons and you have missed something. Something? I will change that to many things; Mrs. Beck's ginger bread and Bates' sorghum, for instances. I hope you feel compensated by the movies!

Mrs. H. G. Hurt, of Los Angeles, writes: "Of course you do not know me, but I have often heard my father, Robert Rankin, speak of you,

[267]

and my grandfather was William Rankin, of Rankin's Mill, where you must have fished many times. (As indeed I have.) I want to tell you how much I enjoy your sketches in the good old Advertiser, especially the one about judge McFarland and Mrs. Lay Reynolds. I have often wondered how Doctor Paillou looks and now my wish is granted, for the Advertiser containing your picture has just come. How I loved the old farm and Boonville! I have a painting of the dear old mill, known to all old time fishermen as Rankin's Mill, near me as I write to you."

Eugene Paillou, Citizen

Louis Philippe, Citizen King of France, contributed a citizen to Boonville; one who, having no patience with the monarchical idea, joined with various and sundry of the discontented of Paris in 1848 and behind barricades they demonstrated their determination to remove either the second of Louis' titles or his head-preferably the latter, for France has the same idea of a good king as America had of a good Indian.

Among the barricaders were Gustave Dore, the great illustrator and Eugene Paillou, the humble citizen. The King's dragnet encompassed

[268]

both and together were they placed in a prison cell to repent or to ferment at leisure. There followed interesting days which are now history; then these two were liberated - one to continue his artistic triumphs, the other to turn his back on his beloved France over which loomed the shadow of Louis Napoleon.

After some five months at sea on a sailing vessel the promised land was reached at New Orleans, which name had a pleasing sound to Gallic ears. Up the wonderful Mississippi to St. Louis, which did not please. Then a sojourn at Springfield, Illinois, where he was neighbor and friend of the great Lincoln, one of the precious memories of a lifetime.

Boonville in 1860 was much spoken of as rival to St. Louis in the future. Enormous activity on the Santa Fe Trail, also on the river at Boonville and Eugene Paillou at once decided upon his future home, spending there the happiest days of his life. A quaint but interesting figure, quaint because unique as to nationality - the only Frenchman in town. Interesting because of his individuality and his passionate love of democracy - the people, following his idol, Lincoln.

It is not for me to detail the life of my father in the town which he loved to his last day. I

[269]

doubt if any could picture him understandingly for I myself did not appreciate his really strong character and influence until too late, as usual. Not a day now passes that he is not in my mind and his homely philosophy is always on my tongue. If the dead live again only when they are thought of or spoken of, as Maeterlinck says, then he lives daily.

One day a family of "movers" passed through Boonville, offering a cow for sale, a half Jersey hence diminutive in size. Starved and worn to the "bag of bones" condition by her long journey, the animal did not find a ready purchaser. She seemed more a joke than a cow. At last she was offered for five dollars and bought by my father to the amusement of the sophisticated bystanders. The new owner proceeded to lead and drive his acquisition to her new home.

The journey through the streets furnished much amusement to the idle, especially when "Cherry" tried to go back to the covered wagon. The joking comments were many, but all good natured. "Where are you driving her to? The boneyard?" "No," answered the patient cowherd, "To the bonne yard, my own!" That one went clear over the heads of the spectators, but the next one registered. "Say, Mr. Palloo, did you buy that cow

[270]

for milk?" "No, sir, I bought her for coffee!" Well was his judgment justified; for coffee, for milk, for cream, for butter and even for the lowly fertilizer which made our wonderful garden a sight to behold - all these did Cherry give and, as good measure, a number of calves to carry on her line. She was the friend of the family and playmate of the small children for many years, so well did she respond to loving care. If I ever own a cow her name will be Cherry, or rather "SukeCherry," for that is what we always called her.

The Subconscious, the Maje and Jim Stevens

There are several ways of imposing your will upon people, all effective. One way is by passive resistance, another by pounding the table with your fists, making assertions in a loud tone, repeating upon every occasion as do the politicians. If you speak loudly enough and often enough you will be taken at your own valuation by the great unwashed, who are always in the majority. Russia under the present regime is an example of how an entire nation has been handled in this manner.

Passive resistance is exasperatingly successful. An individual, generally a woman, will go to bed

[271]

and remain there as an invalid for years and years. "A hopeless cripple, bedridden for twenty years." "Completely paralyzed for thirty years," etc., you have heard of them. Is she really ill? Yes, in a way. What has happened? She has simply disconnected her motor machinery and lain down on her job - passive resistance that deceives many physicians.

The machinery is all there, the patient may be a victim of her subconscious self; she often is but generally it is half and half. The status quo becomes pleasing to her, she literally enjoys ill health and she will not call up her reserve energy to re-connect her motor nerves. This type of invalid may be cured in one of several ways. A shock does it. A sudden alarm of fire with no rescuers in sight. Generally, however; she is cured by one of the semi-religious cults "after all doctors have failed" but the process is always the same. Her reserve energy lying unused for so many years is suddenly called upon, she responds subconsciously and behold, a miracle!

Another form of passivity is illustrated by the third cousin-in-law who pays you a visit although you have sent him neither bid nor bill for it. He stays and stays until your stock of patience is at

[272]

last exhausted and you call up your reserve energy, or spunk, and throw him out.

Do you recall that suave old Confederate Major Wilkes whose trajectory crossed Boonville's horizon in the early eighties? He consumed large quantities of alcoholics, of dope and of his friends' forbearance before he finally became a social outcast. He was so charmingly polite, so well educated that folk bore long and patiently with him but the breaking point did come at last.

Then at the start of a terrible winter he favored farmer Tuttle, southwest of town, with a call. He readily accepted a hospitable invitation to stay all night and he must have had a polar night in mind for he showed no signs of moving for three months. So entertaining did he prove that neither the good natured farmer nor his more combative wife had the heart to call up their "reserves" in resistance.

But Maj. Wilkes, which is not his name but it will serve as well, proceeded to pay for his entertainment which fact is unusual in the species. He got out the old school books, the dictionary and the Bible, then Mark Hopkins had nothing on the "Maje." He drilled the Tuttle children in their studies through all those snow-bound months, he corrected their deportment, their table

[273]

manners and I doubt if farmer Tuttle was really imposed upon, considering the culture acquired by the family.

Jim Stevens, well known to all old-timers of Boonville, was a man of education, but he had not the broad culture or suavity of Major Wilkes. He was a taciturn man when sober and garrulous in his cups. He imposed himself upon the family of Mrs. Ruth Davis, living south of Boonville, for many years - sponging upon his friends for the small change needed to keep his "engine" going. Jim was considered an otherwise inoffensive nuisance

and doubtless Mrs. Davis' big mother heart would not permit her to turn him out of doors. One day, when his cylinders were rhythmically functioning, Jim began brooding over what the world owed him and hied him back to the Davis domicile.

Summoning his "landlady" and his courage, he delivered his ultimatum. "Madame, I have been here twenty-five years, hic! and I expect to be here twenty-five years longer, but I want a settlement, hic! If you owe me anything I want it right now and if I owe you anything, it's aw right, hic!" I am happy to add that Jim got his settlement. The long-suffering Mrs. Davis called up her reserves, connected her motive machinery which proceeded

[274]

as its first function to deluge Jim Stevens with a pail of ice water. I hope it continued to function with a new broom and a turn of the key from the inside.

St. Joseph's Hospital

Who would have dreamed of a hospital in Boonville even as late as 1890? Certainly not any of the local medical men then ministering to the sick. And now, behold! Saint Joseph's Hospital, where you may have your appendix or your kimono cut out, each being vestigial in character - with a bit of allowance for the kimono which you will permit if you are long suffering with a painful appendix or are curious enough to delve into etymology. If not, then this is not for you, so pass on, you are not missing much.

I have read the history of this hospital and it reads like pioneer stuff. Hopeless, less so; hopeful, more so, and final accomplishment. Sounds simple enough, doesn't it? But the labor, the discouragements overcome, the slow emergence from practically nothing more than an idea to a fully equipped hospital with modern appointments, these accomplishments indicate the workings of a master mind.

[275]

Every piece of mechanism, every engine, bridge, building or great engineering work must first exist as a germ in the microscopic cells of a man's brain in that dark, bony box he carries upon his shoulders. There it must ferment, incubate, being subject to billions of vibrating impulses which give it the form and substance to withstand the light as it pours out from the fingertips through a pen into the complete plan and specifications with which anybody can build a machine, a bridge or a hospital. The work, the creative work has been done, the rest is mere detail.

It seems to me that Dr. C. H. VanRavenswaay is the particular "hen" who incubated the Boonville Hospital. I do not know the doctor personally but I do know that he is a man of vision. Doubtless he was ably seconded by other physicians and by several priests but I am tempted to give the lion's share of the credit to those devoted women who did the

drudgery of pioneering work in the hospital and who are still carrying on, the Benedictine Sisters, captained by their chief, Mother Agatha.

Personally, I have small sympathy for those of the cloister other than the teaching and the nursing nuns. I have no patience whatever with those who spend their years pestering God in endeavor

[276]

to have Him change or suspend His immutable laws to conform with transient needs, fancied or real. Doubtless many, better informed than I, do think that the world is kept from destruction by prayers and self-denial, but this state of mind makes no appeal to me, I simply "don't get it."

But I do know something of sickness and of suffering. I know that sick people are as little children. I know something of hospitals great and small; I know you can get very good nursing for so much per diem and that sometimes the nurse gives you much more of her skill and kindness than you can pay for with money. I will concede even more to the lay nurse. However, could I choose my own nurse in the hospital, I would take one of a nursing sisterhood, for it has been my experience that they give you an intangible something much oftener that you get it elsewhere. Say that it comes from a religious impulse if you will, but that is only a part of it. I would call it vocation plus avocation, the love of a duty and a pleasure in its performance.

Hunting the Hail Ridge Ghost

Do you believe in ghosts? You would have believed in the ghost of Hail Ridge school house.

[277]

There was a mass of evidence in corroboration of statements made by prominent citizens and, if you were still skeptical, all you had to do was to go out to Hail Ridge on any dark night and see the ghost for yourself.

The first report of the phantom was from a horseman who passed the school house at midnight and saw a tall, white form waving its arms and heard it moaning. As he whipped up his mount, the rider heard a blood-curdling shriek; looking backward over his shoulder he saw the spectral form sink into the earth and then all was quiet.

Next, Boonville's fox-hunters added their testimony. A party consisting of Big John Smith, fir. P. L. Hurt, Jim Ragland, Tobe Bradley and Joe Combs reported having seen the ghost and having heard it moan. Their dogs saw it first and came cringing back to the feet of their masters refusing further service in the hunt. When these substantial citizens spread the news and when the country folk deserted that road altogether at night, passing

it in fear even in the daytime, then everybody took notice and were convinced that there must be something in the ghost story.

The ghost of the Hail Ridge school house formed the sole topic of conversation wherever

[278]

men and boys foregathered. Soon there was organized a posse of ghost hunters captained by Joe Combs. Everybody who could shoot a gun, ride a horse or drive a buggy enlisted in the expedition, determined to lay the ghost at the risk of their lives. The very number of the people of the party lent courage to the most timorous.

The night chosen for the adventure was ideal. There was a young moon which gave just enough weird light to keep up the army's spirits, aided by the contents of various bottles and jugs in the commissary. The cavalcade proceeded toward Hail Ridge and stopped a few hundred yards from the fated school house where the ghost had always been seen. Men talked in whispers, keeping their straining eyes on the terrain.

At exactly midnight, when the tension had become unbearable, a low moaning sound was heard coming from the place that all were watching. All at once the earth seemed to open and slowly the white apparition issued there from, standing at last in full height of twelve feet, waved its arms and gave a blood-curdling cry! The stunned spectators then saw it slowly sink into the earth until only the hooded head was visible from which there issued the most dreadful moans like those of a soul in torture.

[279]

"Run for your lives!" commanded Captain Combs, and the panic stricken army lost no time in their get-away. Horsemen, buggies, spring wagons and footmen rushed pell-mell in a headlong attempt to leave the vicinity in the shortest possible time. The routed hunters dared not look backward until the lights of Boonville came into view. Soon the men were gathered in their favorite saloon endeavoring to fortify their shaken morale, telling the story over and over to all who would listen.

But there was one man who refused to run with the crowd, John Rayle, who lived over the brow of College Hill. John was a pale, sickly young man, evidently the victim of tuberculosis. He afterwards went to New Mexico for his health. The hunters were too much interested in their own boasting to have missed Rayle but pretty soon John appeared in their midst with a great burden in his arms which he cast upon the floor before the astonished spectators. "There's your damned old ghost; now give me a drink!"

The "ghost" proved to be a twelve foot scantling with hinged arms, all covered with two bed sheets sewn together. With roars of laughter the conspirators came forward and told how they had built the ghost and hid it in the empty cistern of

[280]

the Hail Ridge school house. It was an easy matter to make it rise from the earth and sink back into its grave. The confederate, hidden in the cistern, had only to raise and lower the specter and pull on a cord to make the arms wave. He had been chosen for his gift of emitting bloodcurdling shrieks and right well had he acquitted himself. That was fifty years ago. But the Ghost of Hail Ridge school house has never been forgotten.

Mephitic

When I was agent at the M. K. & T., Joe Tuttle and myself had a railroad velocipede which we used as a pleasure car and which carried us into many an adventure.

You can imagine it took quick thinking when we would round a curve in a "cut" and almost run into a locomotive speeding in our direction. On several occasions we did not have time to stop but just tipped her over, spilling to one side, barely clearing the whizzing engine but not missing the loud and deep curses of the engineer.

Once we left our car out on the track to go into the telegraph office in order to find out if we had a clear road. Now there were always envious on

[281]

lookers at our departure as we never dared to lend the car for fear of confiscation in case of accident.

While we were telegraphing for information, Ed Spahr and one of his friends made off with the car. There was no way to catch them, so we had to make the best of it and the best of it was when they returned in an hour, evidently in great distress.

And no wonder. They had run into a pair of skunks who disputed their passage in their usual pertinacious manner and who deluged the unfortunate boys with a spray of their odoriferous byproduct, a weapon that no living creature can withstand.

Ed and his friend went sorrowfully home to bury their clothing, while we took our excursion in an opposite direction, hoping and praying to escape a similar experience. We did escape it, possibly because, the car being already well scented, the skunks thought it bore members of their own tribe!

Gabriel Grubb

Gabriel Grubb was the first Constable I remember and the picture I have in memory is that of Gabriel on the defensive. He had arrested two

[282]

negro women and they had turned on him with their fingernails. He picked up an old hoop-skirt (think of it!) in the alley, west of the court house, and beat them into submission with the wiry weapon. I never had much respect for Gabriel Grubb after that scene.

Ye Olden Tyme Beere Saloone

I noticed the name of Merstetter a few days ago and that recalled the good old times of the B. V. D. when Mr. Merstetter kept a saloon in Boonville. B. V. D. stands for Before Volstead, the D - standing for what we say when we think about it - if you get my meaning. The saloon was the dispenser of a curse and a blessing, hard liquors that kill and mild alcoholic beverages that rejoice, the heart of man.

The Prohibition law has abolished-what? The blessing, good folk! Does any reasonable individual actually believe that it has abolished the curse? No, it enhanced - augmented that curse a hundred times. Yes, I know excellent people will deny it but none so blind as those who will not see - except those who drink the devilish stuff which now passes for whiskey - they are literally blind, for most "bootleg" is made of wood alcohol, a

[283]

deadly poison to the optic nerve, which is the nerve of vision.

But I don't want to give you a lecture - I want to amuse you by telling about Merstetter. Connoisseurs of beer know that the freshly tapped keg yields the most delectable beverage and that the tapping is accompanied by the sound of blows from the mallet driving in the bung. This sound could be heard a block away and was a signal to the initiated, conveying information of import.

Well! Upon some occasions, strange as it may now seem, business would dwindle at the Merstetter establishment. Then the foxy proprietor would deliver sundry resounding whangs of the mallet on the keg. The result was like that of the Muezzin's call to worship, only in this case all the knowing ones swarmed to the shrine of Gambrinus, whose high priest was Merstetter!

The Town Drunkards

If you expect to see any of your old friends listed under this heading you are going to be disappointed. Strong drink was almost as much of a curse in the period 1870 to '90 as it is today, according to my information. There were six open saloons and several wine gardens as well as

[284]

two or three drug stores where the church-going tippler could get his hard liquor without scandalizing his fellow citizens, which is not as bad a way as it may sound. John Barleycorn is no respecter of classes. It was not unusual to hear, "Dr. So and-so is a fine physician when he is sober" and our county jail has sheltered inebriated lawyers and journalists as well as the common run of humanity. But this was only in the final stage of alcoholism, when all self-restraint was gone and the victim was a hopeless wreck.

It was amongst our colored folks that the ravages of liquor was most manifest. Primitive people always do suffer more from alcohol and disease. Witness the fact that chicken-pox, which is a mild affair in civilized countries, becomes a virulent disease, comparable to small-pox, among the aborigines. In the course of our civilization we have established a comparative immunity to its more severe aspects. A white man under the influence of liquor exercises some restraint, but do you recall the old Saturday nights of Boonville when the downtown streets were practically at the mercy of the blacks?

Along about 1880 the dawn of self-control and temperance became visible, not only in Boonville but all over the country. About 1885 the railroad

[285]

issued information to the effect that preference would be given to temperate men and that drunkenness would be considered sufficient cause for discharge from the service. Society frowned upon hard drinkers who thereupon lost caste. The blue ribbon movement, the W. C. T. U. and local option, whereby liquor could be banished from any community, all these made great impress and gave impetus to temperance. Everything pointed to success along these lines except, perhaps, one damnable fact, the liquor interests were using disreputable means to force the sale of an increased quantity of their product.

I think the saloons of Boonville were comparatively decent places. While the families of saloon keepers were not a social factor in our lives, people like Joe Barth, Gus Dengolesky, Charles Culverhouse and Herman Schnaack enjoyed a certain good will among their male fellow citizens and did what they could to restrain those who drank to excess. But of course saloon keeping was not an altruistic occupation and the temptation of profit certainly put the brakes on the saloon keeper's efforts towards moderation. It was in the cities that the evil of the saloon sank to its lowest depths and furnished the last straw for the prohibition camel's back of patience with the slow,

[286]

educative movement that was surely solving the problem.

I do not know if the camel wears shoes, but his keepers certainly cast a sabot into the machinery of that mill of the gods which was grinding exceeding fine. Perhaps it was necessary under the circumstances, just as it was assumed to be essential in France and Russia to destroy all government before establishing a new one on different lines. Destroying a government, which is only a manmade affair, is a comparatively simple

matter although, an exceedingly painful proceeding for contemporaries involved. It seemed so simple to say by law that no liquor should be made or transported in these United States from now on, in fact it was easily said; but, in general, when a thing is easy it is wrong.

My son, who is approaching manhood and trying to get his bearings in the body politic, asked if I thought that the law of prohibition should be repealed. My reply was, "Yes, either that law or the law of fermentation, take your choice." But he still persisted. "Do you think it impossible to enforce the Volstead act?" "No, not impossible, if you accept the dictum that nothing is impossible, but it is so nearly impossible that it is inexpedient and the result of enforcement would leave us a

[287]

nation of slaves under fanatical keepers until the whole works blew up." The boy still argued that we did not abolish the law against murder although it seemed impossible to stop murder. "Yes, that is true, and there lies the gist of the whole matter. Murder is a crime, over indulgence in liquor is a sin. The first is a matter for the law, the second one for religion or ethics."

Reader, are you one of those individuals who have no knowledge of the actual state of affairs under prohibition, who refuses to believe the daily printed evidence, under the delusion that the great American press is "bought" by the liquor interests? Do you refuse to believe because you do not wish to believe? Then, my dear Mr, or Mrs. Ostrich, prohibition is a success. The demon rum has gone back to hades where he belongs. Your manly young son and your sweet young daughter are perfectly safe. "God's in his heaven, All's right with the world!" "It that so?" drawled a listening, sophisticated debutante, "Like hell it is!"

Frank Koontz Entertains

Frank Koontz, who comes from a family of grocers, is now a traveling salesman for a wholesale

[288]

grocery with territory in Kansas and Oklahoma. His father was Hiram Koontz, who purveyed prunes, potatoes and pickles to our parents in the brave days of old. Frank, as many of you know, is blessed or cursed, as you prefer it, with the faculty of ventriloquism and frequently entertains himself and tortures some other fellow by the exercise of his peculiar gift.

Upon an occasion, while traveling, Frank noticed that the train conductor was a grouchy individual who vented his ill humor upon the passengers, on every possible occasion. In the forward end of the coach was a pile of luggage whose owner was in the smoker. As the conductor passed by there issued an angry growl from a large box. The conductor

proceeded to investigate but as soon as he began moving the baggage he was greeted by a series of such ferocious snarls that he backed hurriedly away.

Calling the porter he gave his orders: "Find the owner of this stuff and tell him to get that dog out of here and into the baggage car." The owner arrived protesting that he had no dog. "I know better, you have a dog in that box. Now open up and get him out of here at once." The man without further argument opened the indicated box which contained nothing offensive. The

[289]

puzzled conductor appealed to nearby passengers but none were disposed to help him out, so he growled out an apology and left the coach.

"Ha, ha, ha!" said the imaginary dog and Frank was soon surrounded by his admiring brother salesmen. One by one they shifted to the car ahead, now favored by the conductor, and awaited an opportunity for administering further discipline. A sour visaged lady of all too certain years was seen to enter the lavatory near which the conductor was seated making up his accounts. In a few moments shrieks and cries for help were heard from inside the lavatory. The conductor sprang to his feet and tried to force the locked door. Calling his porter, they together broke the bolt and were confronted with a furious woman who asked if they had gone crazy.

The bewildered conductor began to smell a mouse, especially as a "dog" growled at his heels. He made his peace with his passenger and Frank Koontz swung off at the next station. When the train had pulled out one of the traveling men told the conductor "how come." The irate conductor immediately pulled the bell cord and stopped the train. "I'll go back and kill that fellow if I hang for it!" he swore. He was persuaded to go ahead, however, so Frank's life was saved.

[290]

Upon another occasion Frank attended a negro burying in Boonville with several friends who knew there would be something doing. And there was. As the coffin was lifted from the hearse at the cemetery, one end of it slipped from the grasp of the pall-bearer and a muffled voice from inside the casket admonished: "Look out, boys, be careful" The colored brothers looked at each other, their eyes protruding, their faces grey with terror, but, distrusting their ears, they proceeded to carry the dead man to the grave.

The straps were adjusted so as to lower the casket and dust as it was starting down the sepulchral voice came out in warning: "Easy, boys, easy!" Simultaneously four pall-bearers let go their holds and the coffin fell to the bottom of the grave with a bang. The whole funeral party of colored folk stampeded and upon Frank and his friends devolved the task of finishing up the undertaker's job.

The Brave and the Beautiful Smiths

It is said that God must love the common people-he made so many of them. Then He must have a peculiar affection for the Smith family, too, for the famous "Smith Factory" is in

[291]

active operation, turning out Smiths galore. And is it not a good old name, this same name of Smith? They don't seem to worry about being identified as any particular Smith, they let us do the worrying, if any. Some folk think you might as well not have a name as to own that of Smith, but not so-you cannot submerge a Smith, not so that he will stay submerged. I think the very fact that he is disguised with or by that homely name inspires a Smith to distinguish himself.

Boonville has and had its quota of the family. There was Captain Leslie Smith, for example, you could not fail to identify the Captain even without his title and I am told that his son, Richard Smith, won about all of the honors within reach during the World War. It was even rumored that Foch wanted to make him a Marshal of France but young Smith balked at the ordeal of the accolade, so he did not make that grade. Well, the son of Captain Leslie and Fannie Thompson Smith would probably have worn even that honor with becoming modesty.

Then there were the "Judge Smiths," who lived near to the Captain in the neighborhood of the Kemper Military School. The judge was of the Probate court for many years and his wife was a saintly creature with an appreciation of the good

[292]

things with which the Creator has endowed this world, apparently for our enjoyment. Mrs. Judge Smith was an invalid, or was so considered. She slept in a wonderful old four-poster bed with "tester and canopy." During the day she sat by her window near a fireplace which was adorned by a pair of marvelous andirons kept shining like new gold by her own hands.

A prayerful woman she was indeed. She spent much of her time communing with her maker. Did she lose her needle? She prayed that she might find it. Did she glance over at the Kemper School boys at play? She prayed for them, and doubtless most of them needed praying for with a dire need. The negro cook would often come for instructions while Mrs. Smith was kneeling in prayer. Without arising she would turn her head toward the servant and give her directions about the dinner, what china to use, what food to serve and then she would go right on with her devotions, perfectly unconscious of any incongruity, as indeed there was none, for she spoke to her heavenly father as simply and unostentatiously as to an earthly parent.

After many years of invalidism Mrs. Smith got the "invalid complex." She had to have all her meals served in her own room. Her night-caps

[293]

must be all of the same pattern and material or she would take cold. She could not change her breast pin without taking cold. That ornament, by the way, was one of those large rectangular affairs containing locks of family hair under glass, a common memento in those days. When Mrs. Smith went to church she must have a foot-stove, and either the judge or a little darkey girl was sent ahead to sit in her pew that the seat might be warmed for her.

Upon one occasion when at church she saw the minister, Rev. O. W. Gauss, feeling in his pockets rather nervously for something which he did not find. Mrs. Smith decided that it was a handkerchief that he needed, so when Mr. Will Trigg passed the collection basket she placed therein a dainty, folded kerchief and requested that it be given to the minister, who smiled broadly when he received the contribution. Evidently she had correctly guessed his need.

"Boonville's beautiful Smith girls" - as they were known far and near, were of this household. There were five of them but only one now survives, Mrs. Madeira of Kansas City. Every Thursday Mrs. Smith held a prayer meeting in her own room. It was always attended by Mrs. Frederick T. Kemper, Mrs. Bush (who was Miss

[294]

Josie Pinnell's grandmother) and a few other faithful friends. Mrs. Smith was an educated, broad-minded woman; she loved young people and she saw no harm in dancing, which was anathema to church people of those days. Altogether she believed that youth and beauty were placed here for biological purposes and she combated the idea that because a thing was beautiful and enjoyable it was therefore wrong. In brief, she believed that God's children rather than those of the devil, should monopolize the good things of life and she conceded to the devil only that which was manifestly his own.

Curing Ess Nichols

Dr. Guinea Sam had "patients" to consult him from many distant states as his fame extended over the land, especially southward where Voodoo is endemic and its gravity appreciated. Guinea Sam's method of treatment was unique. He dug, or rather had his patients dig, what might be called an exaggerated post hole. Into this hole the victim was buried in an upright position and the earth shoveled around him up to his chin and there he remained for seven days to complete the cure.

[295]

No patient was permitted to describe his "treatment" to outsiders on pain of a return of all the old symptoms. The fact that many deaths from pneumonia followed Dr. Sam's

treatment during unfavorable weather, was suppressed in so far as possible, as faith in Voodoo and fear of Sam was strong even to the end.

Ess Nichols, a popular negro porter for Walz and Brenneissen, was suffering from a mysterious ailment. He consulted Guinea Sam who promptly diagnosed the trouble as voodoo and predicted fatal termination unless treated immediately. Ess' ailment was not serious but Sam's verdict made it so. The poor negro visibly began to fail and rapidly became emaciated and cadaverous. His story and condition appealed to one of Boonville's young physicians, Dr. Edgar Miles, who determined to save poor Ess.

Meeting him one dark night, Dr. Miles had a long conversation with the stricken black man. "Ess, you are a mighty sick nigger." "Yas sir, I shore is, doctor," replied Ess. "Unless you can find some one to cure you, Ess, you are going to die." "I knows it, doctor, Ise a dyin' nigger right now. Ise got voodoo and only Guinea Sam can cure voodoo and iflen he cures me, I dies of ammonia after Ise cured." "Now look here, Ess, I'm

[296]

the only man in the world that can cure you without you dying of something else afterwards, but you will have to do exactly as I tell you and never speak to anybody about it so long as you live. You do want to live, don't you, Ess?" "My Goda-mighty, doctor, I shore don't wanta die. Ise willin' to do anything what you says:' "All right, you come to my office at exactly midnight tomorrow and I'll start your cure."

Promptly at the stroke of twelve Ess Nichols appeared, his face shining with hope. Dr. Miles had prepared a mixture of two of the vilest smelling drugs on earth, valerian and asafoetida. This he poured down Ess' neck, all over his body, saturating his woolly head and his clothing. "Now Ess, you are proof against ghosts, hants and voodoo. Go right out and walk three times around the graveyard. Don't be afraid, nothing can hurt you now so long as you don't tell anybody what has been done to you. Keep these clothes on for seven days and seven nights and don't let water touch you except to drink. Come back at midnight in just seven days." "Yas sir, yas sir, doctor, Ise gwine to do jes as you say if hit kills me."

Secure in the charm of the doctor's prescription and assurance, Ess made the circles of the cemetery without harm and next day appeared for duty

[297]

at the store where he made his odoriferous rounds to the great distress of the innocent bystanders. The gentle Nick Walz and his partner bore patiently with the affliction for two days, then they questioned the porter. "Ess, are you dead and just trying to save the cost of a funeral? Why, you smell like a slop bucket full of pole cats." But not one word would Ess answer, for was it not forbidden?

Dr. Miles finally took Mr. Walz into his confidence and Ess was given five days' vacation with pay to stay away. At midnight of the seventh day Ess appeared at the office of the doctor, who got a whiff of his own medicine and he didn't care for it. "Don't you come near me, Ess for that voodoo might jump onto me," said the doctor in self-defense. "Now you go dig a hole like a grave near the river and bury all your clothes. Then take a bucket of soft soap and sand and scrub yourself from head to foot. Hold a piece of drift wood between your teeth, standing in the river, and when you have scrubbed the last inch open your mouth and the voodoo will be on the driftwood and will float down the river and you will be cured. Put on clean clothes and come back here exactly at noon tomorrow."

[298]

Ess faithfully carried out his instructions. He appeared promptly on time the next day and the doctor sprayed him liberally with perfume, to Ess' great delight. The invalid rapidly improved from that moment and in a month he was as happy as a clam and fat as a 'possum. Never did Dr. Miles meet his grateful patient without putting a finger to the lips in token of silence and never did old Ess fail to affirm by vigorously nodding his head. He carried the secret to his grave.

The Pioneer and His Cervical Region

Throughout American literature we see references to our pioneers as "stiff-necked," and indeed who but a stiff-necked pioneer could survive in view of the fact that he received so much in that rigid region! Pioneering has joys all its own-it must have, and joys that are not feelable except by those patient, laborious, far-seeing and stiff-necked individuals who make up the rolls of pioneers and of prophets crying out in the wilderness, which is another branch of the same family.

Now take music and poetry, having so much in common. Fifty years ago in the small Missouri community he was a bold man indeed who would pose as a musician or a poet. A woman could do

[299]

it with better grace, for a crack more or less in the feminine brain was not so apparent. But a real man would be advised to take treatment from his family physician as soon as the ailment showed signs of chronicity.

As a prophet crying his message in the wilderness of Missouri, as a pioneer with an unyielding isthmus connecting his body and head, I would name Prof. A. H. Sauter. Everybody stand up and bow your head in honor of Gus Sauter, who still functions in your midst. Excuse Mr. Sauter from bowing his head-rigid, you know, for more than fifty years. He will bow from the waist in the good old style befitting the musician.

What a stock of enthusiasm he must have had in the beginning for it is not yet exhausted. Was there ever an organ brought to Boonville that was not dedicated by Prof. Sauter?

Was there ever a choir that he did not direct? He played at christenings, at weddings and at funerals-often on the three occasions for the same person. Always in demand, he seldom or never disappointed.

But this man did more than play. He was the fountain head of music in central Missouri. He had the missionary zeal, not satisfied to be a musician himself but ready to urge music upon any one showing a spark of interest therein. He made

[300]

www.mogenweb.org/cooper