

BEYOND CONTROL

A Humorous and Philosophical Account of Growing up in Rural Pennsylvania

By

Harland J. Franklin

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TO:

My most understanding wife and children,
without whose help, courage and endurance,
life would not be worth the risks involved.

There are things of which I may not speak;
There are dreams that cannot die;
There are thoughts that make the strong Heart weak,
And bring a pallor to the cheek,
And a mist before the eyes,
And the words of that fatal song
Come over me like chill:
'A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.'"

Henry W. Longfellow

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FOREWARD

Harland Franklin was born in Bloomingdale, in northeastern Pennsylvania on the Wilbur Franklin homestead, in what we children called the “old house”. The old house still existed when we were growing up and the spiral staircase, wooden beams and small rooms are described by dad in this book. It became a home for rabbits, chickens, capons and even pigs. The cellar was used as a tin can dump from which my brother Charles and I reclaimed enough cans during World War II, to achieve the ranks of at least Captain in “Uncle Sam’s Tin Canoners.” Many of the episodes that dad relates in his book took place in and around Bloomingdale, especially on the farm.

Benton, about ten miles from Bloomingdale, is one of those little villages which seem to appear endlessly along the small roads and foothills of greater Appalachia. Its only claim to national fame is that Frank Laubach was born there, an outstanding teacher who took literacy to millions around the world. My father boarded at Benton with his step-mother and graduated from its high school. The diploma, which bore witness to this accomplishment hung on dad and mom’s bedroom wall, even if the great citation measured some two by three feet. Paper was cheaper in those days, and, after all, a high school diploma did signify a higher degree of learning than such things do nowadays. Benton always seemed like a nice, clean place, especially when we went there as kids for Sunday School picnics or to play baseball in the local stadium. It was the only field for miles and miles around that had dugouts, fences, and covered bleachers behind home plate. Nearby was a stream complete with a diving board and a rope on a tree to swing, Tarzan-like, out over the cold mountain water. If you want to spend time in a nice place, Benton is not a bad choice at all.

I know more about Mossville; mother was born there and we visited grandpa and grandma often on their farm. Even after they died there was always some relative living near Mossville to visit. And, of course, the graveyard was there to put flowers on and, on Armistice Day, flags as well. Mossville and Benton are only a few miles apart but in their day they might as well have been as far apart as New York and Philadelphia. Dad and mom attended different high schools and their families were unacquainted, mother’s family being Dutch. Dad’s have been traced as descendents of the brother of Benjamin Franklin.

In this book, dad has related some of his early life, but tells us nothing about his romance with mom. We know that they met at the Patterson Grove Methodist Campmeeting Grounds. This was a gathering place for young people and the performing arts of the time came there. Dad was doing a magic act at Campmeeting when they met and after they were married they lived there. In an old book we read that they were married in Honesdale, Pennsylvania, July 15, 1930, in the Methodist Episcopal parsonage and that Robert S. Boyce was the clergyman. Their one recorded wedding gift was a luncheon set.

In an old notebook diary mother relates this scene from her early life; “Jenny Viola Quick was born December 4, 1901. She was 5th of seven children, five of which were living, of Lloyd Marshall and Alice Recelia Quick. She attended school at Mossville...and in the fall of 1917 she began high school at Huntington Mills, then a 3-year term. Because of sickness in the family she did not complete the second year and graduated in 1921. There were four girls in her class, all wore white organdie dresses. She took the teacher’s examination at Wyoming Seminary and taught at Red Hill School 1921-22, 1922-23. In the summer of 1922 through 1927 she attended each session of the summer school at Bloomsburg State Normal School. She attended the first semester of 1925-26, and by returning to school the summer of ’26, and doing practice teaching she graduated with extra credits.”

What mom could not relate then is that she would teach school for over thirty years, take time out to have four children, and return to college as an adult to finish her B.S. degree at Bloomsburg. All of us children were born in a cottage belonging to mom’s parents at the Campmeeting grounds.

We know that 1930 was not an ideal time for marriage or work. Nevertheless, dad and mom began their “light housekeeping” by renting rooms at 30 Broad Street, in Montgomery, Pennsylvania. Dad worked on the State road for six weeks and they then spent the winter with Grandmother Franklin in Bloomingdale.

Much of dad's story revolves around Bloomingdale, so it is necessary to pause briefly and try to define its boundaries. I always knew that I lived in Bloomingdale, but to this day I have trouble verbalizing just where it lies. The best that one can do is to consult a map, which must be a supplement to existing ones of the area around Shickshinny. The scale is not important, but the landmarks are; once past the silo and heading east, you have just left Bloomingdale and are in Muhlenberg. I am not sure when you arrive in Harveyville, perhaps just near the old house of Mr. Harvey. All of these small towns had a common look about them; at least one church, a graveyard nearby, a one-room school, and country store. Bloomingdale was unique with a grange hall and furniture store, but otherwise the area is non-distinct to the casual passer-by.

As dad relates in his story, his mother died when he was born and he was subsequently raised by his grandparents, Wilbur and Della Franklin. His own father was an optometrist and watchmaker. He had remarried but died when dad was but eleven years old. Dad's own brother also died as a young boy, so he grew up in a home with old people. Their fighting and bickering, so humorously told in this book, masks a poor home environment. Dad had so much trouble with his grandfather that he left home later and boarded with his step-mother in Benton, to attend high school. He was a good student—one could say, in fact, scholar—but he was never able to attend college. He did complete a course in metal finishing at the Whitfield School, Detroit, Michigan, in March of 1929, and worked there for a short time.

Dad was small, about 5'6", but muscular and somewhat lean. Mother was as tall as dad and must have weighed at least as much as he. As long as I can remember, dad combed his hair straight back and was balding on both sides of the middle. He smoked continuously, various pipes, then later in life, cigarettes. One of the wonders of life is that he did not burn down the house because he often fell asleep with a cigarette smoking nearby. Smoking, coupled with work in the mines and foundry, combined to give him partial lung collapses when he was about fifty. I can still hear him coughing endlessly and he forever had a cold. I would not have been surprised to hear that he had died on any day of the last twenty years of his life.

But there are other memories, especially dad's intellectual curiosity. There were two main topics that were his favorites: philosophy cum religion and magic. He also took courses from the International Correspondence School, Scranton branch, for many years on a variety of practical studies. He finally pursued the electrical trade after he was partially disabled from the American Car and Foundry Company of Berwick, Pennsylvania, following the lung collapse.

His interest in magic developed through a friendship with George DeMott, formerly of Millville, Pennsylvania, self-billed "funny pantomimist juggler and clown." George, a true professional who travelled the circuit with his wife, encouraged dad to take his own act on the road. He also suggested that dad "type up those magic inventions of yours and submit them", then proceeded to tell him how and where to get his acts published. But dad never went on the road. He worked with mom in many locals shows and had a life-long interest in magic, especially card tricks and other feats involving sleight of hand. He was a member of the local magicians club at Wilkes-Barre, and often attended magical conferences. It is doubtful, however, if dad could ever have made it on the road. He was much too disorganized and operated his finances from one paycheck to the next. Without mom's income, balancing the checkbook, filling out the income tax, and so on, life would have been a complete financial disaster. Our house was a curious combination of buying things "on time", followed by a struggle to make ends meet until the next pay.

Dad came by philosophy quite honestly, as you can see from his book. The family trait persists to this day and I find myself reflective and pragmatic, yet with liberal doses of idealism. In dad's case his natural bent toward speculation was heightened by the unfortunate death of Jolene, their fourth and youngest child in 1937. She died at the age of two when she ran behind the car as dad was backing down the driveway. It is fair to say that this marked dad for life and led him into introspection and despair, culminating in mysticism and eventually, following the war, the adoption of a philosophical-religious cult called Rosicrucianism. For years he paid his dues and diligently studied its creed, achieving the highest degrees of the Order. I will not digress into a critical analysis of the organization because I know he would not have wanted this. Suffice to say, it became less and less important and he did not refer to it much in his later years. What his philosophical-religious reading did was to underscore his broad humanitarian and unitarian percepts, giving intellectual credibility to things he intuitively believed

but had not verbalized. He believed for example, that the mind held vast untapped reservoirs of power which could be released through meditation and study. Long before Eastern cults received popularity in the U.S., dad was familiar with them. Included in the collection of papers that dad wrote is a series of essays called "A Livable Philosophy", dedicated to his children and to the memory of Jolene. One of the main articles is "A Short Comparison of Religions", written in 1949, and outlining the regions and philosophical features of Hinduism, Buddhism, Sufism, Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Judaism, Mohammedanism, Manichaeism, Brahminism, Christianity, Egypt, and others. Egyptian thought and history figured predominantly in his thinking, such that he had an outstanding library on the subject and was somewhat of an authority on ancient Egypt in particular. Among the books that he cites for his studies are "The Golden Bough" by Fraser, "The Life of Paracelsus" by Hartman, "On Ancient Lore and Mysticism" by Carpenter, "Advancement of Learning" by Bacon, "Oriental and Egyptian History" by Breasted, "Jewish History of the First Century" by Josephus, "Egyptian History" by Budge, "Religious Life in Ancient Egypt" by Petrie, "Ethics" by Aristotle, "On Extinct Civilizations of the East" by Anderson, and "Ancient Chaldean History" by Berossus.

It was during the peak of his philosophical studies that I, as a senior in high school, became a Christian. From that time on we had many discussions, usually with only a margin of interest or understanding in what each other was saying. As I look back on it now, I believe that I was mostly concerned that the way a person physically lived reflected what he believed. Dad, on the other hand, could not stand "hypocrites" and knew the personal failings of most of the local church members. To him it was more important that one believed or reflected properly toward the "cosmic unity", God, or some other force. Drinking beer, smoking, swearing, or not attending church did not prove or disprove anything to dad. I know that I put much emphasis on external behavior, although I have since met fine Christians who used alcoholic beverages and who smoked. I also know many people who attend church and do not swear, yet who, based on Biblical truth, are condemned. But at the time, I judged externally and upon the basis of what I considered Biblical standards.

It is not difficult to imagine some of our discussions. I, the zealot, desperately burdened for my father. He, the wise sage, just as bewildered at the concern of his son. It must have been after one such discussion that he wrote to me on November 25, 1956.

"I am going to write a message that I believe you will understand. When I attempted to explain certain beliefs of my own, your mother (God bless her) intervened and I (as usual) went off the deep end. Of this I am truly repentant! When the conversation began and I had told you previously about the "Martinet Order" who are the champions of the true teaching of Christ, my intentions were to tell you much more. Karl, I have cried all night. Perhaps I shall never talk to you again in this life. Let this not trouble us. I (but only through trials and tribulations, even as Job) have long since accepted the Lord Jesus Christ. This was my intention to confess to you. If my approach be somewhat different than has been the usual approach, let us assume that I am (have been parenthesis) a Godless barbarian, which I have never admitted. Mother has a faith which often subjects me to inferior demons. Of this I forgive her." The reference to mom's intervention is true: she was a peacemaker who always defended us children. What surprised me in the letter was dad's apparent confession of faith. The letter also contained the disclaimer that "my precepts of Christ and Christianity differ from many, or most, dogmatic doctrines", as well as mystical reflections on finding God in the fragrance of a rose. Many years later, working among animists, I learned what dad probably meant.

It was two years prior to the 1956 letter that he wrote but apparently never sent, the following to a minister:

"I received my early religious training at the then M.P. church. I never joined this church. I never joined any church. In 1922, I gave my heart to Jesus at Hamline church, Columbia county. The things that have happened to me should not happen to anyone, but by the last stroke of disaster I was led to God. I sought, I found peace for my soul. I am a non-conformist....After we had lost our dearest—Jolene—there was no future. There was no reason. The only thing I could say or think was *WHAT* today I know! I have found the Lord! Still there are obstacles. I would be a hypocrite if I joined the B.P. church...."

Dad's home-spun philosophy and mom's example of community service undoubtedly helped me later in my own life. Dad abhorred racial prejudice before it was popular to attempt to understand the feelings of black society. He was not as convinced that the neighborhood was as tolerant. Despite this and other evidences of a lack of patience, dad was not bitter over the tragedies that came into his life. Although I heard him exclaim many times, "I didn't ask to be born", I also came across this observation in his notes:"

"We are not, no one, equal to pass all of the tests which God has ordained that we take. But he is a merciful God and has shown us the way to eternal felicity through His Son, Jesus Christ. Our joys and sorrows swallow up any compassion for others. This is not according to the precepts of Christ." This statement is not an idle one—we know that dad grew up with many testings. After his own father, Charles, died and his grandparents, Wilbur and Della raised him there was continuous friction. Earlier, dad's father, Charles, had written to his own father, remonstrating with him about domestic problems. He also alluded to a trait of son, Harland, when he said:

"God has created a like personality of you in my own living son, Harland. O that you could only see in his faults where you could improve on your own....If you could see through reasoning and control, and change those diabolical ways and actions of yours to ways of pleasing...."

Son, Charles, then goes on to outline a "few rules" for his father to cultivate and practice, including forgiving transgressors. He includes a touching, tender plea for his father to turn and "smile upon my mother" who had toiled for him for years but now stood with "one foot in the grave, broke down, working for you...". Finally the son concludes with an exhortation to his father to take his mother to church and pray to God for power and wisdom to change his father's "evilness to a more pleasant personality".

The trait that dad and Wilbur Franklin, his grandfather, shared, was a violent temper. I won't dwell on dad's temperament in adverse situations, it was well known to many. It was often followed by a quick trip to the local beer garden from which he would return, many hours later, in a melancholy and philosophical mood. Often, however, he would frequent the bar for an hour or two after (or during) work and return home mad, as if defying anyone to challenge his right to "have a few beers". Gradually alcohol had a more profound effect on dad. He did not appear to drink more, he just got drunk more quickly and more often. But these were in the later years and in between there are other things to note.

Uncle Jeb (dad's pseudonym for his grandfather) owned the homestead—some 75 acres or so in Bloomingdale. It was on this farm that we children grew up. The farm was not inherited by dad; in fact, he was earlier cheated out of it—as I recall the story—by an uncle. Not only did dad not get the farm, but he did not get money that was supposed to have sent him to college. Consequently, he was a frustrated scholar all of his life, with a certain complex about his lack of formal education. He also hated the uncle with a passion, although dad's cousins were among his best friends.

Uncle Jeb was "an inventor, mechanic, clocktinker, farmer and a pretty good philosopher," and so was dad: during his life he worked on the road as an equipment operator, in the mines, as a shear-operator in a foundry, and finally as a self-taught electrician. He also peddled vegetables, raised rabbits, taught himself magic, music (violin, piano, fife, trumpet, drums, composing), language (German, Russian), studied all kinds of mechanical and electrical correspondence courses, became an authority on Egyptian history, and generally was interested in everything.

My sister, Claire, recalls dad's interest like this:

"Dad had such a repertoire of card tricks he never did the same one twice. I remember rabbits hopping all over the stage when I watched him, instead of tending rabbits. I was always the one to have my hand cut off. It terrified me! A carrot above and below got cut in two. My wrist was wrapped in a silk and his patter made me want to faint. I was always amazed that my hand was still attached to my body when it was over—even after I knew the 'gimmick'.

“He always read. He never acted as if anything was too far over your head to discuss it with you! Books and magazines were everywhere in our house. He worked at the American Car Foundry Co. during the war making tanks. His shift was 4 til midnight. Mornings when I didn’t have school, he’d sit at the breakfast table and explain all he was doing. I didn’t understand what he was talking about, but I loved to hear him talk. He never talked down to me, so I’d feel very important and finally learned to make the proper noises at the proper time. He was a self-taught man with a broad scope of interests. Yet he would put himself down because he had only a high school education.”

I can recall dad sitting in his study—reading, writing, translating, practicing for hours on end. He would read to me as long as I would listen, usually something far over my head. I, like my sister, learned how to look intelligent and nod or grunt at appropriate pause points—something which did prepare me for linguistics in later life.

Mother, as I have said, was a patient woman. In this present liberated age any woman in similar circumstances would have divorced dad. His temper, his anti-community feelings, his drinking, were very different than mom’s people-oriented life. Her past students were her pride and joy. In dad’s electrical work, his past customers, according to him, never paid their bills and for the most part were unscrupulous. Mother liked to visit relatives; dad was convinced they were all idiots. Mother defended the sometimes wayward activities of her children; dad often saw rotten ungratefulness and accepted it with barbed humor.

I do not mean to imply that dad and mom did not love each other. Read dad’s pathetic letters when she was sick or after she died and you realize how dependent he was upon her. But people who get angry quickly often maintain a stern image. Dad’s tenderness is evident in his writing, and it was sometimes there in actions, such as washing dishes. However, most people would have described him as brusque. My wife, Joice, when she first went to Bloomingdale was petrified by him. I think Joice had a little trouble understanding the country ways of my people. Things were often pure bedlam and it is to Joice’s credit over prejudice or something that she married me.

I never went home to stay much after my first summer in college—I worked in Michigan summers, went to school for a year in California, we were married and went to Papua New Guinea. When I was away I prayed a lot for dad. I wrote, sent books, but never interacted well when home. Dad was, however, proud of our missionary work. He deeply respected a scholarly organization, devoted to minority people and their problems. And, of course, he loved languages and was proud that I could go on and study like he wanted to. When we first were ready to leave the U.S. dad wrote us in this vein:

“I realize that I have been selfish in my thinking about your going so far away. You are young and this is going to be a great adventure in more ways perhaps than one. As the years go by you will have enriched yourself in experience worth more than material wealth. My viewpoints on life have changed with time, as will yours. I wish I could see everything as you do; however, if everyone had only one idea, this world would be very uninteresting. I have never believed that it is necessary to conform to set conventions. Styles of clothing change, and so does human behavior. I can remember when conventional behavior was far different that it is today. Fifty years in the future who knows? So, Karl, never feel sorry for me or for yourself which is more important...So you see you will be sailing soon into the setting sun, and we will be sitting here waiting for news from our son, which is a fairly terrible way of stating it.”

Dad always communicated well with us children by letter. He was creative and expressive and I once considered including some samples of his writing as an epilogue.

There were two or three occasions that dad had serious automobile accidents: on one trip to the hospital he required 37 stitches in his face. But it was another accident, this one in May 1971, that put dad’s life in perspective and forced a further crisis in his life.

In May, 1971, we were working in Papua New Guinea, in a remote village area. One afternoon a motorcycle drove up. The driver was the Lutheran missionary from his station eight miles away who had somehow been contacted and now told us to

report on our radio. There I learned that mom had been killed in a road accident. That was a shock! Mom had retired from teaching two years prior and was in good health. As I have indicated, dad had been in poor health since his first lung collapse in 1955.

I wanted to go home, but it seemed impossible. However, in July of that year, the photographer, Cornell Capa, visited our village and in a series of remarkable circumstances, bought a photograph from me for 500 dollars. This helped to send me on a 28-day excursion trip to the U.S. There, for the first time in my life, I read the Scriptures and wept with my dad. God in His providence softened dad's will through mom's accident. Dad's desire to see her again was one of the compelling factors, I am sure; the memorial service was another. But gradually his faith and trust grew over the next three and half years until he died. It is incorrect to imply that his life-style completely changed. In July, 1972, he wrote this:

"Since Viola passed away I've done a bit of thinking and a lot of soul searching and a lot of tears have been shed. At first perhaps in self pity but then, emerged a certain belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and my redeemer."

He concluded his letter:

"I do not believe in doctrines and dogmas, instead my belief is simple, a firm belief in God and Jesus Christ His Son, and our Saviour and 'when ye pray, pray in secret and God will openly answer you'. I am writing this to further confirm what I've written before. God has given me strength to somehow survive this terrible tragedy..."

There were many other times that dad recounted his faith to me before he died in 1976. There are also other things that I have chosen to skip over; his inner turmoil and subsequent conflicts, his friendship with a widow who helped him, his terse and satirical comments on friends and relatives. Time and circumstances color events and, like pain and disease, we are able to focus on the best memories. I omit events but I have not deliberately altered any recollections given here, nor do I claim that my prayers alone caused the positive events in dad's life. C.S. Lewis, fittingly called the apostle to the skeptics, and my favorite author, summarizes prayer well when he says:

"A man who knew empirically that an event had been caused by his prayer would feel like a magician. His head would turn and his heart would be corrupted. The Christian is not to ask whether this or that event happened because of a prayer. He is rather to believe that all events without exception are answers to prayer in the sense that whether they are grantings or refusals, the prayers of all concerned and their needs have all been taken into account. All payers are heard, though not all prayers are granted. We must not picture destiny as a film unrolling for the most part on its own, but in which our prayers are sometimes allowed to insert additional items. On the contrary; what the film displays to us as it unrolls already contains the results of our prayers and of all our other acts." (*Miracles*, Appendix B) Dad would understand the analogy to a magician.

I conclude with this: the Biblical relationship and analogy of father to son is one of the most profound we can grasp. We are told to honor our father and mother, that a wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a ruin to his father. True fathers give genuine gifts to their children, encouraging, comforting, and disciplining them. In dad's case his real father was not able to provide the gifts or encouragement that he should have, or that he wanted to. It took dad far too long to recognize that a heavenly Father could provide the same care in a personal, sustained way. I pray that others who read this book will not wait as long as dad nor receive His help as reluctantly.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

When my father, Harland James Franklin, died in January of 1976, he left a completed manuscript called "Beyond Control." He had contacted a publisher and had carefully illustrated many of the events which he described.

It seems, however, that my mother, Jenny Viola Quick Franklin (known as Viola), was not happy with the prospect of having certain relatives and friends read the more controversial comments on them or their environment. She preferred to leave sleeping dogs lie, knowing full well that their bark and bite were still present in her generation. So even while dad tried to overcome her objections by thinly disguising the names of the characters in his writing, the book and its subsequent revisions gathered dust for many years.

My sister, Claire Franklin Honeywell, has encouraged me to publish the book in memory of dad. Although I have written and edited a great deal, my work has been mainly in the technical field, on little-known languages around the world. It is with some hesitation that I write the introduction, but I feel the book should include some background about the author. Dad tells only a small part of a good story because he was not primarily interested in revealing details of his own life. He was old-fashioned and believed that even good friends should know how to mind their own business. But my writing it reveals the larger forest which dad had trouble seeing at times because of trees, logs, stumps, and an occasional thicket. My job is to put dad's story within a broader perspective, and to this end I have consented to write a lengthy introduction.

The discerning reader will see that I have not tried to create a picture of dad as a saint or a sinner. Rather, I have related events as I remember them, but not without bias and partiality. My perspective as a Christian seeing the hand of God controlling dad's life will be different than that of an atheist, agnostic, or, for that matter, of some Christians.

My conclusion about dad is simple: God is merciful, loving His children, and he is just. I hold this belief, even if I cannot always completely rationalize it. I also assume two other unstartling facts, growing out of the story. One is that God alone, through Christ, is responsible for salvation. As His ambassadors or representatives we have certain inalienable responsibilities and privileges, sometimes crediting ourselves with the work of the Master. But the reader who reflects on the larger story will see that God has a stake in all of us. A second fact, often unstated in churches, is that He alone is responsible to separate the tares from the wheat, because He alone is just. As long as we are mortal we cannot judge perfectly. Consequently our actions and words are most often based merely upon values reflected in our society, and not upon belief or faith. My own painful reading of dad's letters reveals time and again how I found it difficult not to judge.

I would like to thank my sister, Claire, executor of the estate, for giving me the manuscript and letters for this book, as well as encouragement to finish it. My brother, Charles, and his wife, Joan, furnished valuable pictures and some letters as well. But my wife, Joice, has done the most, typing manuscripts and putting up with my childhood disgressions. My children, Kirk and Karol, hope that they will not be permanent.

Karl Franklin

September, 1979

Duncanville, Texas

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Because one rural neighborhood is largely similar to another, the reader is more than likely to recognize their Uncle Billy, Aunt Fidelda, or Cousin Dinger, as the case may be. As Uncle Barney used to say, "If the shoe fits wear it!"

The days that are past and gone always seem to have been more rosy than the present. While this is not necessarily true, the present has a way of being more grim upon the surface than it really is, especially when it is reviewed in the evening before starting to worry about 'tomorrow'.

The tales which I have written actually happened. To my confused and bewildered neighbors they did not appear humorous at the time.

In my own neighborhood there are none who would resent having their halos beclouded, or their family skeletons rattled. This may not be the case in other more remote and less tolerant communities. For this reason, Uncle Gidley has become Uncle "Jim" and Aunt Kate will no doubt have her say as Aunt "Perbulba"....

A philosophy of humor when things seem to be all wrong is a greater asset than a dozen college degrees without it. Life without humor would be about as interesting as a ladies bathing suit less the lady. Of course one must set apart from reality, much as watching a stage presentation, to see any humor in a situation which to another means at the least a hurt ego.

So, this history was written when certain personages were yet on the earth plane, but others have departed to their just rewards in the happy hunting grounds of Valhalla. If certain things appear to be incredulous it is because life itself is rather puzzling at times.

Chapter 1

EARLY MEMORIES AND TRADITIONS

I cannot remember when I was not alive. Tradition has it that I entered this mortal coil in much the same manner as other kids, except that I lost my mother in the effort. I have never given up the idea that it was a useless sacrifice. Mothers are priceless, but kids come a dime a dozen, not that I would part with ours for millions!

The first days of this life were spent, so Cousin Kilroy has told me, in a small wooden box behind the kitchen stove, something like a little pup who has lost its mother. There is no doubt that my feeble squalling resembled a half starved whelp. If it had not been for the untiring devotion of Uncle Jebador and Aunt Pristina I should not have been stranded upon the sands of time, but would have long since been food for the worms. But, as Cousin Dudley Rinkengerkin would say, "O pshaw, let's get on with it!"

Outside the night was dark and stormy, but nowhere near as stormy as inside the rambling house. Uncle Jeb and Aunt Pristy were at it again, hook and nail, hammer and tongs! Whatever started these civil wars doesn't matter now, not that it did then. Uncle Jeb and Aunt Pristy didn't need a written agenda to start the pyrotechnics! It was always by mutual consent. If they were living today I'm sure that they both would be avid television fight fans. To be sure, after a time they would 'brake the arrow'. However they always had a pot of strong glue handy to patch it up again. When they buried the hatchet, each would place their own markers at opposite ends of a very shallow grave.

Uncle Jeb had a dearly beloved sister-in-law who quite often managed to get into his hair. Aunt Dot considered herself to be an efficient adjuster of family disputes. She should have had several diplomas in these matters because she was always interfering with her numerous sons-in-law. Oh, she had had enough experience! On one of these peacemaker (?) visits, (which were always the occasion for non-legal words) Uncle Jeb, having worked up a good head of steam, took off to a good neighbor's home, there to cool his ire, and especially to sound off about Aunt Dot. It wasn't too long after that that Uncle Jeb was hauled into the court of 'Judge Schneider'. The charge was slander in the first degree for calling Aunt Dot, "an old dried herring". However, Uncle Jeb had his manner of settling such matters with the law. A generous slab of pork given to the 'Judge' put oil upon the ruffled waters. Uncle Jeb was careful after that where he popped off steam.

Yes, folks had their fun in those days too! These days we sit and listen to horse operas over the radio and watch innumerable villans get killed off on television. But not then! When the 20th Century was yet in swaddling clothes, we got by with our own dramas of life.

Sure I was there and it wasn't so humorous then, in fact it seemed tragic, but in the mellowing of time, some of these things have become rather comical. As Ben Franklin said: "Today is yesterday's pupil".

My Uncle Jebador had a philosophy of life that many of us could profit by trying to imitate. When he was real mad, that is, after he had reached fever heat and the excess steam had escaped, he would start singing hymns. It has a degrading effect upon the subject of one's wrath and is a tonic for the personal ego to sing, "In that sweet bye and bye", or, "Lord lift me up and plant my feet on higher ground."

Now Aunt Pristina was not a woman that could be described as 'not complaining'. Aunt Pristy could find more fault (not that it wasn't there to be found) in ten minutes than lots of people ever find in a lifetime. I have noted the same tendencies in the natures of all of her relatives, not to mention myself and my fond offspring. If Aunt Pristy woke up without an ache or pain, I'm sure that she studied the "Household Medical Adviser" until she found something that would fit her frame of mind for that particular morning. The fact is that she would arise at five o'clock in the morning and work in the family vegetable garden, then help Uncle Jeb in the field. That was enough to make any woman complain!

Uncle Jeb wasn't too much of a prophet. He let the next day take care of itself. Somehow he got there just the same. Anyone possessing the temperament of our family should not own a tool any smaller than a steam roller. There were some fourteen buildings upon the old homestead and it never failed, if a tool was needed in one building it was sure to be in another. It is needless to say that much leg exercise was acquired in this manner. I believe that this was the prime reason why Uncle Jeb almost always sang hymns while he hunted for tools. Not being a hymn-singing man like my Uncle Jebador, I could not follow in his endless footsteps. So I have made life sweeter by having several less buildings and two sons to aid in the endless search. There was one good trait about our boys. When they used a tool it was foolishness to even start to look for it. That is why most of my equipment was always new.

Uncle Jeb was an inventor, mechanic, clock-tinker, farmer, and a pretty good philosopher. There was only one boughten lock upon the whole place. It was of such ancient vintage that it could well have been brought over by Peter Stuyvesant from the Old Country. All other locks were conceived in the well-ordered mind of Uncle Jeb. As an example of their ingenuity, to enter the "wagon shed" one had to know exactly where to look for a hammered bent wire that was formed to enter the keyhole in the door and engage a metal bar some six inches below. This in itself was no mean chore, it took much practice. To gain access to Uncle Jeb's private stock of home grown tobacco stored in the barn granary took Cousin Fider and myself many days of stealthful experimenting. Uncle Jeb always made several deceptive motions when anyone was watching him unlock this vault. It was a combination of pulling, yanking, kneeling, and pushing, along with the jerking of a well hidden leather thong that opened this door. Of course, as in all things, perseverance finally won out. I remember that Cousin Fider got mighty sick. It was pretty strong stuff, that tobacco!

HORSELESS WAGONS, AUTOMOBILES AND CARS

In the beginning were 'horseless wagons'; then they became known as 'automobiles' and finally evolved into 'cars'. It is a fact that some far-sighted companies did call their contraptions 'cars' as far back as 1908, perhaps even before!

"The American"...A car for the discriminating few...A car of special class which superbly realizes the scientific principles underlying complete security with AMAZING speed...Price, only four thousand two hundred and fifty dollars.

None of my discriminating family went so far as to buy an "American". In those days a buck was a dollar and mighty hard to get a hold on. It was a luxury to own any kind of an automobile in 1908. In these days, if there is anything left after we have made the payment on the car, we buy food. The days of eternal installments upon this and that had not yet arrived when Uncle Jeb purchased his horseless vehicle. He bought a Model T Ford and paid cash. And in the buying of the Model T many trials and tribulations were added to all of our lives.

Driving an early motor car was an adventure, an experience to talk about. The early motorist found few, if any, highways. There were none in the sense that we think of such today. They were called 'roads'; there follows an exact quotation taken from "The Automobile Blue Book"....1911:

"Left hand road, schoolhouse ahead (on left), turn left through covered bridge (53.3m) and across iron bridge (53.4m) Fork; bear up long grade with waterbars (55.4m) 3 corners; bear left with the travel (55.6m). End of road; turn left and next right, leaving poles (56.1m) Pine Summit, small hamlet, turn left at signboard along creek (62.4m) Go through covered bridge and immediately turn left through another covered bridge (63.0m) Up steep grade with waterbars. Descend narrow road between hills and creek, bad when wet, through bridge (64.9m)..." (ad finitum)

There would be more crack-ups than there are today (if that is possible) if we had to keep one eye on a book, another on the speedometer, another on the road, and the remaining one on the scenery described! Many a neck has near been broken by the 'waterbars' mentioned in the "Blue Book". These were not bars where one might quench the thirst, but devilishly contrived bumps running diagonally across the highway on hills. The express idea was to carry away the excess water during rainstorms. It could be that they functioned somewhat in that manner. However, meeting one of these waterbars, or 'sluice-ways' unawares could spell disaster to a car spring, or to the top of the head.

Late in the Fall of 1909, Uncle Jebador having learned to operate his Model T to the best of his ability, decided to see the world or at least that part of the world which lies directly South and just across the Mason and Dixon Line, known as the State of Maryland. It was there that he hoped (perhaps dreaded is the word) to meet various and numerous relatives of Aunt Pristina. The brave group consisted of Uncle Jeb, Aunt Pristy, Aunt Kris and myself. We, Aunt Kris and I, were solidly wedged between suitcases and other senseless articles on the back seat. At every bump in the road this paraphernalia flew in all directions, but most generally into my lap.

Having bought all of the available maps and secured as much free information about traveling conditions as was possible, Uncle Jeb, like Columbus, blazed a new trail to Harrisburg, Pa. Not that we were ever lost. He always was sure that we were some place in Pennsylvania, and headed south! As it was, Uncle Jeb more or less followed his nose. So, the trip was made in uneasy stages. After two days of almost steady driving, we landed at our destination.

Just about all that I remember of the Maryland of that time is turkey buzzards, Negroes, sweet potatoes and sand. A goodly portion of the time spent in that State was having the Model T pulled out of sand holes or out of deep slippery ditches. There wasn't much difference one way or the other. They both cost good money. I remember that on the way back home, by the way of Philadelphia, we slipped into one of these deep ditches. We were miles and miles from a hotel. It was raining cats and dogs and we were hungry and wet. As in all good stories there was a farmer (whether he had a daughter or not matter little in this tale). Uncle Jebador crawled from the bemired machine and sought the good husbandman's assistance. This was readily granted when Uncle Jeb paid a small fee of two dollars for the privilege of being lifted out of the ditch by the farmer's hefty team of horses.

"How about putting us up for the night?" Uncle Jeb inquired. "Well," said Mr. Lemons (that was his name), "we can't put you-all up for the night, but" he continued, "my hired man lives down the road a piece and he will put you all up for the night."

The hired man turned out to be a very black Negro, who possessed a wife and numerous kids. We slept upon the floor. I say 'slept' advisably. I'm sure that I was almost from the first, unconscious from fright. The fact that I was alive when I awoke in the morning has given me an unshaken faith in the Negro race!

When we reached the city of Philadelphia, Uncle Jeb picked out a hotel to his liking (which was entirely from outward appearances). Bag and baggage, we were proudly installed in our rooms. The only drawback to this arrangement was that Uncle Jeb didn't bother to ask the clerk about the small matter of rates. When he got around to this task, the rest of us were deep in the arms of Morpheus. Suddenly there was a commotion at the door. We were awakened by loud, but restrained expressions of profanity. Uncle Jeb waxed great in his wrath. The next thing that I remember we were parading down the street with our coats pulled over our night-clothes to another less pretentions, and less costly hotel. Whatever Uncle Jeb's point was, he won it!

The remainder of the journey back home was made without too many incidents. Unless you might call driving over mountain trails made for horse and wagon travel only, and such things as faulty spark plugs and weak coils, incidents.

Expense wasn't a vital problem of travel in those days. To be sure, we ate and slept off the goodness of some of Uncle Jeb's relatives, not to mention those of Aunt Pristy. From a little note book, which Uncle Jeb had jotted down some of the items bought on this memorable expedition, the following is copied:

Night

Gas 6 gal.

Turnpike toll

Gas at Elkton

At Nine Points

Sweet potatoes, book, paper 0.55

Underwear 0.50

Gas 5 gal. 0.55

Rehobeth, stayed all night 2.50

5 gas at Lewis 0.48

4 bu. Sweet potatoes	2.80
Maryland	2.00
5 gas	0.50
Turnpike toll, crackers	0.22
Overnight, 7 gal. gas	1.55
Pike toll	0.40
Willow Grove	1.50
5 gas, lot, oil, overnight	2.35
	20.09

Think of it, ten days vacation and about 700 miles for twenty dollars!

Patience is a virtue, it has been described as “The art of saying cuss words in silence”. In many ways my Uncle Jebador was not silent, but he was very patient. It took strength, resolve, fortitude and lots of imagination to get an old hand-cranked model T Ford to start when the mercury was hovering around zero. If started before everyone concerned was exhausted, it was a good Ford. Of course, there were Fords and Fords, just as there are people. Each one of us has a different temperament, so did the old Fords.

There was a ritual connected with the starting of Uncle Jebador’s old Ford truck. To begin with, the night before the critter was to be pled with to come to life, all of the crankcase oil and three pails of water were placed upon the kitchen stove. Early the next morning the rear wheels were jacked up to clear the floor. The hot oil was given as a green transfusion to the crankcase and the radiator was filled with scalding hot water. All was now in readiness for the ordeal. As a final gesture, the carburetor was always bathed in hot water and a “Hot Shot” battery attached to the ignition system. All these things having been done, the would-be driver approached the cranking stage of the ritual with a semblance of hope in his heart. After a long and arduous assault upon the motor with the right arm rapidly whirling the crank, the engine might emit a faint cough. If it did show signs of starting, the cranking would be renewed with new vigor until at last the intermittent flow of life became a roar of internal strife.

The supreme acme of stubbornness and originality in the action of Fords was reached by Uncle Jeb’s truck on a cold and bleak wintery morning. All of the necessary arrangements had been made. The thing was resting with both hind wheels off the floor. Uncle Jeb steeled himself for a long tough session with the crank. But this time (and for the only time in all of its long and cantankerous existence) it gave birth to life at the first turn of the crank, with a roar of defiance.

As Uncle Jeb rushed past the port side to try and reduce the internal pressure, the enemy came to earth with a crash. Both hind wheels were spinning furiously as they simultaneously hit the floor. Then, like a wild bull, the truck headed for the great outdoors where shone the light of freedom. All this was not accomplished without inflicting numerous brushburns and abrasions upon Uncle Jeb, the object of its wrath. Making such graceful right and left hand turns as was proper to miss obstacles, like trees and buildings, the old devil took a backhand swipe at the household water supply. It proceeded to knock over several large upright stones which were in its way. It then bore straight ahead, the cab reaching out and ensnaring a guy wire to the smoke stack of the old shingle mill, bringing it down to the ground with a crash. This series of depredations should have been quite enough to satisfy a mild tornado, but not the Ford truck! It, having tasted freedom, traveled on. Like some people, it didn’t appear to be ever satisfied. Having been missed by the smoke stack, which certainly aimed to hit it, the truck

crashed through two board fences. Then with open fields ahead it drew a new lease of freedom and really took off for new adventures.

Where all this might have ended, heaven alone knows, if Uncle Jeb had not by this time regained his equilibrium (if not his temper) and taken after it in hot pursuit. Observing its imminent capture, the critter made a U turn and headed directly toward its tormentor. Then realizing that the resistance was futile, it gave up the ghost and stalled!

“Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord.” It was with keen delight that the remains of this derelict was sold for junk some years ago.

In the early days of the automobile some mighty queer looking vehicles came into evidence. In fact, they were first called “Horseless Carriages” because they looked like a wagon less the horse. Some even had a whip and socket, so complete was the horse age inscribed upon the consciousness of man that he could not trust a conveyance that did not bear some resemblance to that animal.

Father acquired one of these “Horseless Carriages”. It had seen better days when it came into his possession, but it would travel, after a fashion. It was called “The Holsman Horseless Carriage”. There was a two-lunged motor under the seat, and the cranking was done from the side. When (and if) it started it made a racket like a bevy of motorcycles on the spree. The thing was steered with a sort of tiller arrangement which swung upward out of the way when entering or leaving the contraption. With good luck and a tailwind, this car could make around fifteen miles per hour, that is, downhill. Uphill was another thing. If it reached the top of any sized hill it was because of the unusual clutch system. This consisted of merely moving the whole drive shaft ahead or backward. An endless tarred rope on both sides of the carriage fed to a larger belt wheel bolted to the inner side and fastened to the wooden spokes of the high hind wheels. When the motor was about to stall while going up a grade, all that was necessary was to grab the four foot long clutch lever and ram on the brake with the foot (the gas fed from the tiller like a motor-bike). When the two-lunger had gained enough speed, the clutch would gently be pulled back and the thing would jump ahead a few feet. In this way a fairly long grade could be overcome, not to mention the driver.

Sometime later, my father decided to make a car himself. Today it would resemble the product of a disordered dream, but in those days anything that would move even a few feet under its own power was a wonder. I remember that my Uncle Jebador cast an exceedingly doubtful look upon the whole proceedings. It was no small wonder. Father had amassed a pile of junk from the four corners of several counties. There was an old, and I mean old, “Stanley Steamer”, sundry parts from a “Rambler”, the remains of the “Holsman”, and various cogs and gears from Lord knows what’s. With this mess of unsightly trinkets he actually constructed a hybrid quarter breed which worked, that is if father stayed with it. It took a lot of staying as I remember, too!

Some very humorous things happened to owners of cars. They didn’t think it was funny though! Now there was the time that my Cousin Creepy stayed too long at the same hotel, well, it could have been different hotels. He always maintained that the road was so foggy that he couldn’t see. I, for one, never doubted him. As I remember there was snow on the ground at that time and it is just possible that Cousin Creepy thought that it was fog. Anyway, he had tire chains in the car and he very carefully jacked up the car and put on his chains. Thinking that everything was now taken care of, Creepy hoisted himself into the car and gently let out the clutch. But the car could not be moved so finally he hiked two miles and hired a farmer to pull him out of the ditch with his tractor. When the farmer reached the car he became pretty mad, at least out of sorts, so to speak. The poor sap had forgotten to let the jack down! I’m sure that Cousin Oscar wouldn’t want this yarn told and that is why I have named him “Creepy”.

I mind the time that a friend of mine became overcome by the magic of spring. He drove out on a dirt road where he could sit and listen to the song of the Spring Peepers. The mating song of the frogs was to him like a symphony, all nature taking part. It did something to him, something like the moon does to youngsters (and oldsters). It is a kind of madness. As he sat

there with a far away mystical look in his eyes, he was impelled to drive yet farther toward the peeping of the peepers. So he drove right up to the front door, as it were. Here again he stopped and listened to the voice of nature, especially bullfrogs and peepers in particular. As all dirt roads, and those near swamps more so, have a way of 'sinking' in the spring when the frost goes out of the ground, our listener to the call of the wild was sinking with his ship. However, he was unaware of it. The concert having not passed its peak of peeping, my tired but happy friend bethought himself of home, yet meditating upon the lesson of nature. He was rudely brought to a state of reality when he attempted to move his car. By now it had settled into the mud until the axles were resting in mire. Many times we overlook the obvious while attempting to delve into the unfathomable.

Chapter 3

HALLOWEEN

O.R. Lamb has written: "Humor has been defined as the salt of life. It is a caprice of our natures, or rather that quality which give to ideas a ludicrous or fantastic turn, the effect of it being to excite the pleasurable emotions which we exhibit in laughter or mirth."

Uncle Jebador was definitely not in a humorous mood. Indeed he was excited, but not to laughter. His favorite plow was found suspended from the top-most branches of a chestnut tree, not that Uncle Jeb knew where it was at that time, nor for a long time after.

Halloween, "Holy-Evening" as it was originally known, used to bring forth all of the pent up hellishness which we, as kids, had kept dormant by the restraint placed upon all civilized citizens, a fear of punishment. On this one night in the year it seems that all thought of such punishment was forgotten. As children we were not any worse than those of today. (Today you can go further and faster to do worse.) But there wasn't anything else to do. So we celebrated in a manner that many of the older persons found hard to endure.

One of the stock tricks was to remove the wheel from a wagon and hide them in such unlikely places as on a roof top, under the hay in the barn, or take them away to some other locality where they would be exchanged for others of different sizes. This never failed to cause a lot of confusion.

Some years back the teenagers decided that a cow was a dumb creature and needed higher education. So they placed one in the principal's office in the local high school. The school board, including the principal, took a rather dim view of this procedure. Several seasons after, to commemorate this noble attempt at bovine education, another animal of the same species was forcibly propelled into the spacious halls of this same building. There she remained for two days. She was expelled in much the same manner as her ancestor. And for that reason cows remain as dumb as ever in these parts.

There was always something about an outdoor toilet that caused young hellions to concentrate their evil intent upon this very necessary building. The unanimous decision seems to have been, at least upon Halloween night, that these privies looked better when laying in a horizontal position. This practice of upsetting 'outhouses' was a questionable joke. They were a very necessity to rural Americans.

It took planning to upset some of these structures. Some owners with a memory of their own misspent youth, and perhaps remembrances of the previous year, tried to avert the calamity by armed force. My Cousin Elmer once told about such an occasion. A gentleman loaded his shot gun with salt, then retired to the seclusion of his pride and joy to await the moving gang. As he sat there in contemplation, deep in his own dour thoughts, the arms of Morpheus reached out and embraced him in slumber. His dreams were rudely interrupted and shattered when his 'house' crashed down, door undermost.. He was finally rescued from this embarrassing position by other irate, but less misfortunate good neighbors.

The pinnacle of all heights of such business was reached in a small town thirty years ago. Never before or since has anyplace been uprooted to such an extent. With the coming of the dawn the eye was greeted with destruction upon every hand. There they stood in majestic aloofness. Gone from their home moorings. Gone but not forgotten! Privies stood at various angles where there had never been one before, or never should have been. To the left and to the right, on the town square, on the post office porch. It was a sight to bring tears to the eyes of the most sophisticated man, woman or child. It was obvious that while these two, on the square and on the post office porch, were the only ones in an upright position, they could be of no service, either publicly or privately!

This is one of the major mysteries of yesteryear that has never been settled to the satisfaction of all by the local 'courts' held in the village store. While there wasn't any hidden meaning as to who and to what was alluded, there was no agreement as to where the objects came from, and who placed them where they were found.

To start with, it was another Halloween prank, yet it stirred up such a stink in the community that no less than a bad wind storm could have cleared the atmosphere. The cat was captured in a remote district. The lantern was purloined from a road construction job, while a sheaf of buckwheat was gleaned from a nearby field. The many signs (most of which were very uncomplimentary) which surrounded this masterpiece of devilry were concocted under the direction of several solid citizens of the village. This was headed by a young fellow with a low conception of "peace at any price".

In the youthful hours of the morning the sheaf of buckwheat was carefully and silently set in the center of the highway at the village corners. At the summit of the buckwheat sat the red lantern. At the base, snugly snared by a length of bale wire, howled the black cat. While from all around appeared signs with arrows pointing in the direction of the person, or persons, home to which it alluded. This was an unthinkable act, and I'm glad that I was in it!

When the "Klu Klux Klan" was openly in existence many years ago, one of their chief shenanigans was to burn a high cross. While the cross was burning, a charge of dynamite would be exploded scaring the daylight out of children and old persons. There is absolutely nothing like being awakened in the middle of the night by a dynamite blast, whose echoes reverberate through the hills far and near. As a firm believer in the freedom of man, I never could understand a good reason for the Klan's being in existence. So I never donned the hooded bedsheet. But to do the Klan justice, I can gladly say that fully seventy five percent of the dynamite and crosses were the artistic handiwork of young devils, much like myself. The results from the early morning blasts were sometimes more than they bargained for when they sailed forth.

There was one gentleman who (not that he was scared) loaded his 'cook' into his wagon, bag and baggage, and returned her to wherever he had found her. A guilty conscience often moves one to repent, if not in words, in actions. Many such repentances have been hustled on by innocent diversions, like burning crosses and firing dynamite.

TIPSY MEMORIES

When I was a boy, places selling alcoholic beverages were called “saloons”. They had half-doors which swung in and out. There was a reason for this. A drunk could be ejected without the formality of opening the door first. Instead the bartender just tossed the bum through and the doors worked automatically.

These days there are several different types of “tap rooms”. One goes to laugh with people at some of them; then there are others where one goes to laugh at people. Some beer gardens specialize in television entertainment, such as the ring side fights. Others overcome this needless expense by staging their own fights (as a rule between the bartender and his loving spouse). In such a dive, it is quite easy to get into the act, along with patrons, the public and the police.

Those of the more elite or classy joints call themselves by nice names but are no less potent. “The Place Night Club”, “Charmein”, “Chez Paree”, are some of the titles to these establishments. Of course at some places one just wanders in and the barkeeper says, “Chez when”. The beer gardens of the more friendly type are known as “Joe’s Place”, “Village Tavern”, “Crystal Café”, or whatever. No matter what the name might be, a goodly portion of humanity pass in and out of its doors. There are more secrets told in tap rooms than there are in the files of the F.B.I. Most of the information that is heard in those places is reliable in direct proportion to the amount of alcohol consumed. And many of the frequenters haven’t the mentality to grasp any other situation more complicated than a beer glass.

Uncle Jebador always had several barrels well filled with apple cider in his cellar every fall. Not that Uncle Jeb would have been involved in the liquor traffic. No sir! His sole idea was to dispose of it to saloon-keepers before it became alcoholic in effect. Whatever happened to the cider after Uncle Jeb had delivered it was none of his affair.

There were always two or three barrels left to become vinegar. If left to its own devices, apple cider starts to bubble quite merrily after about three days. This ‘dance of the devils’ then will continue for a period of ten days or more, during which time sundry chemical changes are taking place for better or worse, better if left entirely alone. After all this ‘working’ has been accomplished, it is known as ‘hard-cider’!

Just why it was ever called hard cider is more than I was ever able to figure out. I have known several worthies who were always gulping it down in what appeared to me to be a very easy manner. Then too, it has been noted, if hard cider is taken into the system in too large quantities, too frequently, it comes back up in an easy fashion. However, I’ve noticed that the disgorger often acted in an uneasy manner. Perhaps this is where the name ‘hard cider’ originated.

Uncle Jebador and Aunt Pristina had unearthed the hatchet. They were at it again and the air was filled with unkind words and phrases. Cousin Ebanizer, the village smithy, had been calling on Uncle Jeb more frequently than usual and Aunt Pristy was more than suspicious. Every time that Cousin Eb came, there seemed to be something which had to be moved in the cellar by Uncle Jeb. In the midst of all these moving and shoving sounds, Aunt Pristy was sure that she had very often heard the sound of cider trickling into a glass. Her suspicions were fortified when Cousin Eb fell against the breakfast table, spilling no small amount of dishes and food about the place.

Uncle Jebador had an eye for business; the horses would soon need to be reshod. But Aunt Pristina looked upon the whole matter, including Uncle Jeb and Cousin Eb, with an exceedingly hazy and frosty countenance.

One might gather that Cousin Ebanizer was a no good bum from the preceding episode. This was not the case at all. Cousin Eb was a very kind hearted and thoughtful man. I can’t help but remember the winter that his kids had an epidemic of

the “old fashioned measles”. No man could have done more for his family than did Cousin Eb. I can still see him wading through three foot deep snowdrifts with an empty jug under his arm!

“The kids have started with the measles and they’re real sick, I’d like to have some cider to bring out the measles. That’s why they’re so sick. They ain’t broke out.”

Cousin Eb had tears in his sorrowful eyes as he related all of their symptoms. Of course under these circumstances, even Aunt Pristy couldn’t say, “no”.

It took a jug of cider, about twice a week for two weeks, before Cousin Eb had the situation well in hand. To make sure that he himself did not come down with the dread disease, Cousin Eb always quaffed a few glasses while he helped Uncle Jebador fill the jug!

There is little doubt that a second, and perhaps even much worse epidemic of some kind or another would have broken out right upon the tail of the first. Aunt Pristy, in her determined way, put an abrupt (if it was unkind) end to the cider tipling. This was done by the simple expedient of pouring twenty-five pounds of common table salt into the barrels. Cousin Ebanizer actually cried when he tried the first and only glass of that medicine!

Yes, they were at it again, hook and nail! Uncle Jebador went clear off the deep end. He even forgot to sing hymns when he discovered that not only one, but three barrels had been thusly tampered with.

Aunt Pristina was a woman of convictions, but Uncle Jebador was a hard man to convince. The ensuing weeks of salty speeches are better left where they are, buried in the musty vaults of the past!

EDUCATION

During the early part of the twentieth century most of the boys and girls who dwelled in the country did not graduate from school. Instead, they 'grew' out of it. Some of these little brats were 17 or 18 years old before they, or their parents, decided that they had had enough education. So, it was no wonder that school life was made miserable lots of times for the small fry. Sometimes, though, we had our own fun. We once had a teacher who was pretty quick to 'fly off the handle', as my Uncle Bile used to say. One of the older boys had done something of which she did not approve.

"Go out and cut me a whip", she ordered me. She had a steely look in her eye by which I knew that it was a command not to be trifled with. At the same time I could not but notice certain threatening looks and motions coming from the older boys. What to do? Well, I compromised by cutting a 'gad' about one inch in diameter, and around eight feet in length. This was presented to the teacher with as grave a countenance as possible. Somehow this broke the ice. She had a smile, and wrath was transformed to humor.

Some of our teachers turned out rather well, considering what they had to put up with from the kids they taught. I recall a teacher who is now a medical doctor, specializing in cancer research. As I remember him, he had a very 'compelling' manner. He did things on the spur of the moment, such as throwing a bunch of keys at some girls who were whispering. He missed, but he didn't aim to miss the miss. Whispering had a disconcerting effect upon him. It really did things to him, and he in turn did things. There was the time that Cud Miller, who liked to talk in school no little, was caught in the act. To be fair about it, Cud had been warned twice before, but paid no attention to the gathering clouds of doom upon the teacher's brow. At the third instance, Cud was ordered to the front of the room.

"Shall I whip you?" The teacher asked this overwhelming question three times, to which poor Cud gave no reply. The teacher must have taken this frightened attitude as one of defiance. Anyway it might have been. He gave Cud the worst wopping that I ever saw anyone receive. The poor guy carried deep welts upon his back for a long time. Oh, yes, they arrested the teacher, but in those days the teacher's word was the judge and his arm the law.

We used to play a game for our recreation that was a combination of dry land hockey, tag, and mayhem. Each player was armed with a three foot club, and more or less bravery. To start the game, a circle was drawn on the ground, large enough to accommodate the players, who were spaced some four feet apart. Each player made a hole in the ground with his stick and in the center of the circle a pit was dug about eighteen inches in diameter.

The idea of the game was to keep the boy who was "it" from knocking a tin can into the central pit. When a player would remove his stick from his hole to bat the can, someone else would immediately steal his hole. During the ensuing scramble it was very easy to get a few teeth knocked loose, if he was lucky and received no mortal bruises. Very few who played this game came through without at least minor wounds.

One of the least productive of all high school activities is the questionable art of cutting classes and "skipping" school. This takes some measure of nerve, but little, if any intelligence. There can be no doubt that all boys wish that they were someplace else, when the first breath of early spring is in the air, than in a stuffy school room. To those who have overcome this urge to merge with nature I have respect. For my part there were times when I lost control or contact with those finer instincts and joined others in the crime of "ducking" classes. It always seemed to me that our principal knew by intuition when we were figuring on taking off. Because of this uncanny divination on his part, the "Dare Devils Four" was organized. Its purpose was to outwit him who would frustrate us. We always left plenty of evidence as to which way we had traveled, then went the opposite direction. There were lesser lights who tried to imitate our strategy, and I'm glad to say, they were generally caught. It made

the principal as happy as a mosquito that had just passed its first blood test to capture some poor truant. We were pursued but never seized, that is, not until the next morning.

It would be then that the principal would announce, "I wish to see the following boys in room three, immediately after chapel...". It was in 'room three' that many of us were decorated with demerits so richly deserved.

In time, "The Dare Devils Four" activities became such that a cabin was constructed on an island in the middle of the creek. To gain a foothold upon this island, it was necessary to climb a tree and walk a single wire bridge, holding on to another wire above the head. When the other side was gained we climbed down a ladder, which was then removed. We were let pretty well alone, especially by the fairer sex!

Chapter 6

PATENT MEDICINES

Even as short a time ago as 1916, there appeared an advertisement that read: "If you must take medicine try ATLAS COMPOUND, the GREATEST tonic on earth...the cheapest medicine on earth, price only fifty cents per box of hundred tablets." While this stuff didn't promise to CURE, it did promise, "One box will often help cronic cases." Just what this tonic was supposed to help cure was not clearly stated. There were a host of other "helps" and "panaceas" brewed for man and beast. "Swamp Root", "Blood Root", and all sorts and kinds of liniments were among them.

While there are still "patent medicines" upon the shelves of certain rural stores, their day of greatness has long since passed. Also their advertisements have been toned down to present day intelligence.

Uncle Jebador was a firm believer in "patent medicines", but only insofar as they had proven (at least to him) beneficial. That perhaps is the reason that he took the agency to sell "Bliss Native Herbs". It was a good racket in those days, a repeat business, and one hundred percent profit on every box!

"Bliss Native Herbs – They regulate the bowels, purify the blood, stimulate the liver, and flush the kidneys." This and more was claimed in the small printing on the box. And last but by no means least, "two hundred tablets for one dollar."

If there was anything in a pill being nasty and bitter, then these were without any doubt the greatest in existence. Their size and general contour resembled nothing so much as rabbit dung. Therein lies a tale.

Even with "Bliss Herbs" stuck under her nose every night by Uncle Jebador, Aunt Accendecca had a sense of humor. Uncle Jeb always insisted that everyone within reach needed to sniff the pills even if they could not bring themselves to the point of actually swallowing them. Their odor was tainted as their flavor, if that were possible.

Aunt Accendecca, who was living with Uncle Jeb and Aunt Pristy that winter, had nudged Uncle Jeb and his pill box gently away, night after night. Like any normal person she finally tired of this nonsense and decided to do something about it. She did! There was a blanket of snow upon the ground, and it wasn't a difficult matter to track a rabbit to its playground under an apple tree. It was there that she gingerly extracted a "Bliss Herb" box full of rabbit dung from the well packed snow. This, she placed in the cupboard, removing Uncle Jeb's pills from sight.

Uncle Jebador always performed his pill routine just before he was ready to retire. It was almost like a ritual, this pill business. In the darkness of the kitchen, he would reach up and open the door to the cupboard. Then he would flick open the Bliss box with his thumb. The pill would then be placed into his mouth to chew. He never drank them, he ate them. As was his custom, this night was no exception. However, there appeared to be something wrong. Still chewing, or perhaps tasting is a better word, Uncle Jebador advanced into the front room, near the hanging lamp. And there, where he could see the better that which was to be seen, he extracted the mess from out his mouth and with the thumb and first finger of his right hand. There was a strange, rather wild expression upon his face. It was something of surprise, unbelief, distaste, and certainty!

Looking over the top of his gold rimmed spectacles at Aunt Accendecca, he said, "That pill tasted like rabbit dung!" Then after a second look at the mess in his hand, "Dod-blast-it, it is rabbit dung!" Uncle Jebador, with a voice of finality said, "Accendecca, you had something to do with this!"

"Why, Jebador!" innocently remarked Aunt Accendecca, "You don't really believe that I would do such a thing, do you?"
"You're darn right I do!" said Uncle Jeb.

Aunt Pristy took Aunt Accendecca's part in the argument, so again they were at it, hammer and tong!

Chapter 7

THE ANCIENT SHOPPING CENTER

Much has been written concerning the old rural stores. Many of them were emporiums, where not only articles of all descriptions were on display, but they were also the gathering place of local loafers. It was there that some mighty unbelievable yarns were apt to be spun, each in his turn out-doing his predecessor. Questions of local, state and national interest were argued to the complete satisfaction of all present. Sometimes these 'courts' became near a riot, because the personal feelings of no one, either present or absent, was given undue consideration. "Kirby" Milner's wife used to chase the whole lot out, hot after them with a broom, when she felt that the situation warranted it.

While the country store, which is described hereafter, may not have been an exact example or the common run of them, it was, to say the least, unique. One had to 'edge' his way to the counter. To walk squarely might have at least produced a bashed shin bone. There were so many crates and boxes piled without the least semblance or order or reason, that what small opening remained resembled nothing so much as a dangerous narrow trail in a nightmare. Once these ramparts were scaled, anything from epsom salts to harnesses could be purchased. Later, even Model T parts were available.

Mr. Oscar Tutridge wasn't the acme of neatness as a store-keeper, but he had a hard head for business. Once, I recall that he sent my Aunt Diantha a dun letter for eight cent! Oscar didn't very often know just where a lot of his merchandise was located. If the customer had the time and inclination to wait, Oscar was sure to find it in some dark corner or another. The village post-office was also established in the far corner of the store room. Surrounding and almost completely filling it were enormous piles of old pamphlets, newspapers, and heaven alone knows what else. I tell you, it was agonizing to observe the debris that Oscar had to move every time he had occasion to write a money-order for a customer. It was something like "Fibber McGee's" clothes closet or cupboard. Everything fell in utter confusion when Oscar stood up.

After many years of prosperous business, two gentlemen of the Hebrew persuasion appeared upon this scene of jumbled commodities. Being from New York City, they had little ken of country stores, so it was that, after examining several top boxes brimming full of quality merchandise, an offer was made by them to buy. Oscar named his lowest figure and they grabbed it like two starved trout jumping for a fly on a hot summer afternoon.

For the next month there was a steady procession from out the back door. Each in his own way carried empty bales and boxes to be consigned to the flames. Then they held an auction in the local hall. The articles which were up for sale were of such ancient vintage that they should have been donated to a museum of early American clothes. After this last attempt to regain their vanished fortunes, the New Yorkers, poorer but wiser, gave up the ghost and limped back to wherever they had come from.

Oscar was again at his old stand behind the counter. Within a short time the place was as messed up with empty boxes as it had been before. No, Mr. Oscar Tutridge was not the neatest storekeeper, but he was an honest man. There were other mean persons in those days who were not as honest. (I've heard that there still are.) Oscar taught several such people that honesty was the best policy, with him anyway. For example, my cousin, Matilda, once accidentally got a half pound stone rolled up in her homemade butter (this could easily happen). At any rate, she brought the roll of butter to the store and traded it for a bill of groceries. Oscar sold the butter to another lady, who discovering the deception, brought both butter and stone back, she being in a wrathful mood. Some time later, Cuz Matrilda stopped in to buy a pound of beans. So Oscar sold her the beans, stone and all!

There was another local character who brought a pound of butter to Oscar, which she wished to exchange for someone else's. "A mouse fell in my cream pot and drowned", she explained to Oscar. Being the honest man that he was, he took the mousey roll of butter into the cellar and exchanged the wrappings. This satisfied Oscar, and too, the lady, who fondly believed that she would be eating mouseless butter.

THINGS THAT GO “BOOMP” IN THE NIGHT

“From geisties and geilies and things that go boomp in the night, dear Lord protect us!”

Some of the most weird and terror inspiring yarns ever spun have been related about haunted houses. There has always been, and no doubt, there always will be a deep fascination in tales concerning the unknown. For the most part such stories are unbelievable. It must be admitted that there have been some mighty peculiar happenings which have taken place, according to the report of others. When dishes float out of a cupboard disregarding all known laws of gravitation, or doors open and close without human agency, while rocking chairs and tables behave in a strange fashion, that isn't a thing to be taken lightly. All these things and more have been told to me, but it has never been my experience to have met face to face with any 'haunts', except those of my own imagination.

Many years ago, I had occasion to travel by foot through a deep woods. The night was as dark as pitch, and the road was as lonely as the night was black. As I emerged from this path of almost total blindness, I suddenly saw a white apparition just ahead of me. This uncanny shape could not be bypassed. There was no other way to go. To return the way that I had come was out of the question, so I stopped. I could feel the hair straighten on my head as I stood rooted in terror.

In cases like this a young fellow either gains courage, or turns and runs, thus becoming a complete coward. It is one thing to be cautious when there is a known danger, but it is quite something else to run because of fright. That is being afraid of fear.

Well, I was no hero, but I won that battle! After a time, it seemed a long time, curiosity overcame the first shock of apprehension. I slowly advanced upon the thing, which by now had circled and was almost opposite me in an open field. It moved fast, then slowly, now hovering above the earth, and then settling with the odor of smoke. That is exactly what the specter was, smoke! Moving like a will-o'-wisp with every damp current of air, it had scared the daylight out of me!

It appears to be very likely that everything has a natural cause. The natural law governing the phenomenon may not be known to man, but as Shakespeare has written, “There are more things in heaven and earth than we have dreamt of in our philosophy.”

The 'old house' yet stands, isolated, lonely, and seldom entered by human beings. It is living out its few remaining days, little resembling its appearance of more than a century ago. Many is the time that I, as a kid, legged it away from its brooding silence as fast as my young limbs would carry me. And not without good reason! The stories that Aunt Pristina used to tell me about that place would be suddenly brought to memory with the slightest creak of a door, or the rattle of a siding board made by the summer breeze.

“Old Ephrium Pitch built the old house and lived in it the rest of his miserable life!” Aunt Pristina would always begin the yarn in that way, then she would continue, “He was the meanest man that the Lord ever let draw the breath of life, they say”.

Right here is a good spot to mention that 'they say' is the most difficult person, or persons to track down and pin the origin of any gossip upon that ever existed. They are as nebulous as a disembodied oyster, and about as reliable.

To continue Aunt Pristy's stories: “Why old Ephrium used to work all day every Sunday. He did it just because his wife was such a gentle Christian woman. He did it to spite her, they say. If she'd say anything to him about working upon the Sabbath, he would abuse her something awful. One time he put an ox yoke around her neck and drug her all over the house. Another time he kept her tied up a whole week. Oh, he was a terrible wicked man, they say. Once, he broke her big toe with

the fire tongs. He did that, they say, because she was so tired that she went to sleep before she had done the supper dishes. Every time old Ephrium would get mad he would take it out on her, like picking her up and dropping her on the floor, then dragging her around by the hair!”

To Aunt Pristy, the boompings in the night were sufficient proof that these indignities, ‘they say’ had been heaped upon the poor frail figure of old Ephrium’s wife, were only too true!

When I first remember the ‘old house’ it had four rooms downstairs. Then by climbing a steep, dark, winding stairway the upper floor was reached. This was more dismal, if possible, than despair itself. The small amount of daylight that entered came from a fraction of a window, which had tiny dust-covered panes of glass. As there was no ceiling, the barren log rafters seemed to brood no good, as if they were hiding some stark secret. Even the spiders had given up the struggle for existence, and the ancient cobwebs suggested a phantasy of shrouds, as they swayed and danced eering with every wisp of air. If this were not enough, arrayed in the greatest confusion, and covered with the mildewed smudge of the years were the remains of by-gone wardrobes, venerable newspapers, and all of the rest of the arrangement that went to make up a setting fit for a nightmare of horror. It was a pleasant place for a young boy to use as a playroom, especially on a dark stormy day.

If the upper story wasn’t amply hideous, there remained the basement. Here in a darkness as black as a coal mine dwelt demons of every imagination. I did not often descend into this dark, cold, tomb-like cavern. When I did, the stories that Aunt Pristy had told seemed to echo from the walls. Was it the voices of those from beyond, or the other side of the wall dividing life and death?

Originally there had been an open fireplace on the northern side of the downstairs. This had long since been torn down and the cavity boarded shut. The four rooms were, taken together, a small enough place in which to live. However small, the mysterious goings-on which took place in the dead of the night appeared leviathan to such a high-strung woman as Aunt Pristy.

One night, (Aunt Pristy always started the bedtime story this way) your Uncle Jebador had to go away. I went to bed pretty early, I don’t know just what time it was, but I was awakened by a wild, drawn-out terrible yelling, or screaming. I can tell you, I was wide awake then! The room was chilly, as if there had been a cake of ice in it, but it was on a hot summer night.”

Aunt Pristy would pause with a far away look in her eyes, which came when she related these hideous experiences, then having regained her composure she would continue.

“After that first fearful racket I didn’t hear a sound for a little bit. And then right out in the other room there was an awful thud. It sounded as if a sack of flour, or grain had been dropped from the ceiling to the floor. It was heavy enough that it shook the house. It could have been a body.”

Here she would stop. It was obvious that the passing of the years had not dimmed the memory of those fantastic ghostly details of that night, or of the other similar experiences when ‘it’ or ‘they’ had come back to re-enact the tragic acts of their grim and unhappy lives.

‘Then,’ she would go on, ‘then out there I heard other sounds. It was as if someone, or something was dragging a heavy object over the floor, and across the room towards the old fireplace, or where it used to be, and then back and around and around the room. Then all at once the most pitiful, pathetic moaning came from somewhere or everywhere! “O....OO...OH...OOOOH...OO..O AHHH!’ It got fainter and fainter until there was dead silence.”

Aunt Pristy would add as an afterthought, “I think every hair on my head stood on end. And when your Uncle Jeb came home we looked high and low” – here she would pause again.

Then someone would always ask, “What did you find?”

She would reply, rather on her guard, "Well, we never found anything. Nothing was disturbed."

"Another time," said Aunt Pristina, "there was a crash in the middle of the night. It seemed to be all over the house, but it was loudest in the cellar way. If you have ever heard tons of tin pans falling down steps, that is what it sounded like. Your Uncle Jeb and I got right up and lit the lantern. We searched from the attic to the basement but whatever it was, we never did find a thing."

The only thing to have done in my case would have been to sleep the rest of the night in the barn with the cows.

"Now there was another strange sound that we used to hear." Aunt Pristy would continue anew. "It was like a flock of chimney swallows fluttering down the fireplace. But there wasn't any fireplace. Not only that, there wasn't even a chimney! Summer and winter, we heard this. One Sunday we had just sat down to dinner. Joe Williken, who used to live around here, was visiting us that day. Just as we were starting to eat, Joe started up from his chair, his face getting the color of chalk.

"What was that?" he asked, his voice trembling.

"Oh that? That was chimney swallows," your Uncle Jeb told him.

"Chimney swallows In the middle of the winter, oh no!" He pushed his chair back and couldn't eat a bite; he was so scared!

Chimney swallows fluttering in a chimney are foreign to my ears. From descriptions, I suppose that it is a combination of a roar and a rustle.

In later years, I'm afraid that I may have ridiculed some of the ghost stories that Aunt Pristy told. This would make her very indignant, and she would say, "If you'd heard and seen the things down there that I have, I guess maybe you wouldn't be so funny!"

Yes, the 'old house' has about lived its life. Of late years it has been used for a chicken pen, a hog sty, and general trash dump. Late in the night we used to hear the pigs 'boofing' as if they were disturbed. Who knows? Do animals have extrasensory perception beyond that of human beings? Could they see and hear this 'thing' that to Aunt Pristy was so real?

As the 'old house' must have been about the most miserable and cold place to live in that anyone, human or otherwise, could ever hope to get away from, it is just possible that Ephrium was trying to do Uncle Jebador and Aunt Pristina a good service and frighten them into building a new home. That is what they finally did. But that is another story.

THE NEW HOME

After long and bitter years of hardship Uncle Jebador and Aunt Pristy decided to build a new home. They planned and created patterns of it from the cellar to the attic. Then when the actual construction had been started, they threw away the plans and models and built by the signs of the zodiac and pure intuition!

According to the best authority available, it started out to be another 'house of seven gables'. Somewhere in the shuffle two of the gables were lost in the confusion. Exhaustive research positively has proven that the house wasn't built, it expanded from the internal disputes arising during its attempted construction.

Where there should have been a small room, investigation proved it to be quite large. And where there should have been plenty of space, intensive searching found only a small room. Even the ceiling outsmarted Uncle Jebador. It grew beyond his reach, and he was a tall man. All these things combined in a united front to establish an air of frustration upon the premises, from the foundation to the rafters of the roof.

When the time came to complete the second floor, three bedrooms were built. Three more evaded Uncle Jeb the rest of his long life. They were there someplace, of that he was convinced. But where to place them and how to cope with the bitterly slanting roofs and sundry other engineering problems eluded his skill but not his imagination. One of these chambers has been discovered since Uncle Jeb has departed to his eternal rest. The whereabouts of one of the others has been fixed as due north from a standing position six feet from the head of the stairway gazing east. Where the remaining bedroom might repose is a question, which in all probability, will be handed down to posterity.

As an afterthought, it seems that Uncle Jebador added an out-kitchen. It certainly could not have been forethought, which would have taken a certain amount of close study, or reflection, neither of which was applied. Beneath the kitchen there was a cellar. It came to be known as "The Little Cellar".

In the east by south corner of the "Little Cellar" Uncle Jebador created a bath tub. It was constructed entirely of concrete, with a complete disregard to the human anatomy. To use this diabolical contraption, even on the hottest summer night, required huge quantities of hot water. If the thing wasn't anointed ten minutes before plunging into it with this substance, the cold concrete would play havoc with those parts of one's framework unfortunate enough as to come into contact with its surface.

The out-kitchen itself was of little use. It was too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter. There was a stovepipe in the western end which led from a dilapidated kitchen range across the room to a hole in the chimney. This was mostly a matter of much smoke, as the chimney had a miserable habit of clogging with soot.

The inner, or real kitchen was composed of a cooking stove, a sink, a built-in cupboard, and Aunt Pristina. Since she was rather plump, she had barely enough room to do her work. When Uncle Jebador, as was his like, would open the oven door and toast his tired old feet after being out in the cold, there just wasn't any elbow room left at all for Aunt Pristy.

So, Aunt Pristy and Uncle Jeb were at it again! This tiny dark kitchen was a 'bone of contention' all of the rest of Aunty's life. She never could quite understand how it had got that way, in a house which was otherwise large. And Uncle Jeb, well, he didn't like it any more than Aunt Pristy did, but then there it was. And that was all there was to it! After much nagging and prodding by his ring pardner, Uncle Jeb cut panels out of the kitchen doors and filled the blank spaces with translucent glass. This had the effect of pouring oil upon the turbulent waters of marital bliss until storms arose, the clouds of which were never very far under the horizon.

On the southwestern part of the house was a rather small repository built for the express purpose of rest. To reach this haven of siesta was only a step from the kitchen. In all probability it would never have reached maturity if the kitchen itself had not become so tiring.

The dining room was to the north of the kitchen. It was large enough. Just how Uncle Jebador expected the tiny kitchen to cater to the wants of a dining place of such proportions is a matter of conjecture.

The heating insulation of the house was such that five folding doors could be hurriedly closed at the first sign of winter, thus eliminating the dining room from the rest of the domicile. After this operation, the kitchen served a double purpose, or perhaps three, that is if you could count both of Uncle Jebador's feet as only one.

The front room was the only one that resembled any semblance of sanity. It was made large enough, but it was used only occasionally. This was due, no doubt, to the fact that Aunt Pristina would have become utterly lost, after the kitchen.

Just aft of the front room was the 'south room'. This was very, very seldom used. It was there that the pictures of numerous past progenitors of future generations reposed in solemn, indeed haughty splendor. It took only a few moments of one's time in that place before goose flesh would arise upon the surface of the body. These portraits loomed like a chamber of horrors in a wax museum.

Uncle Jeb always planned to renovate the house and build an open stairway. But he never clearly made up his mind how this could be accomplished with propriety. He knew that the nakedness of the joist and rafters might very well offend the modesty of some future guest when their eyes would catch this view. So the stairway was left as it was first conceived, with a door at the foot of the stairs. Every winter Uncle Jeb dreamt how he would finish off the upstairs and the open stairway, and every summer found some more important thing to be done.

The water supply was furnished in the first place by a large pump, hand operated. This was in the out-kitchen and invariably froze solid in the wintertime. Whether frozen or thawed, it was a man killer. And it was far easier and faster to grab a couple of water buckets and race to the spring at the foot of the hill than to try to pump it. After a few years the hand pump gave up the struggle entirely. Then the 'fill and carry it' method was used for several seasons. This proved far from amusing, especially upon a severely cold morning!

Another wacky arrangement which followed close upon the heels of the hand pump was a 'hydraulic ram'. This was not a he-sheep, but a combination of this and that which supposedly would push a required quantity of water up a hill. It worked for a few years after a fashion. Then Uncle Jebador found himself back where he had started, with a water bucket in either hand.

Historical evidence has proven that there was a contraption installed just outside of the 'old house'. It consisted of an endless wire rope strung from the house to the spring. This gadget ran upon a system of pulleys, and had some unknown way of grasping a water bucket. When it reached the water it would dive in and come back up the hill, the operator pulling, hand over hand on the rope. It appears that there were several drawbacks to this madness, the chief of which was the fact that half of the water slopped out before it reached its destination.

Even the flues had their own difficulties in thrusting their necks through the welter of misplaced sticks, studs, and rafters. The most unkind thrust of all being given to the front room chimney which led to the outside air by means of a truly tortuous path. It was built in a staggered manner from the second floor, thus it was able to avoid cross-braces and other items of construction. Every time that it rained, water poured out from various broken joints. This had a dampening effect upon the room below, if not upon the happiness of Aunt Pristina, especially because the water was discolored with a residue of black soot. Uncle Jebador was always going to have the thing repaired, but all this was never accomplished. When it didn't rain the flue didn't leak, and when it rained no one could stand upon the roof. Many years later by half wrecking the attic, not to mention my patience, a new and straighter chimney was finally built.

PRECAUTIONS

As has been intimated before, my Uncle Jebador was quite an inventor. And while he was a progressive man, I have heard certain envious rascals say that he was “tight”. Now that isn’t the way that I figured him at all. I always chose to believe that he was merely thrifty. Of course in his case, ‘thrifty’ might well have been spelled with a capital letter.

Federal banks were as staunch in those days as they are now. That is, for the common run of men, but not for Uncle Jebador. He had several well hidden vaults where he kept his petty cash and his excess greenbacks. Of course, the only interest that these caches ever drew was from a certain unprincipled scoundrel. He withdrew compound interest, plus the principal.

These ‘banks’ of Uncle Jeb’s didn’t have iron bars, but an iron bar with a sort of shepherd’s crook on one end was needed to make a withdrawal. However if one didn’t know where to look, hooks, wires, or bars were of no avail. There was a certain loose board in the second floor of the wagon shed. Once it was located and lifted out, all that remained to do was to reach the length of a long arm into the hole and grasp the iron hook. With it in possession, regions otherwise inaccessible were reached. At the end of the ‘reach’ the hook came into contact with a wooden cigar box; it was within this that Uncle banked his money. By a combination of pulling, snaking, and dragging it could be finally brought into view. All that remained was to lift up the box, open it, and there you were!

The occasion when Uncle Jeb had been away and returned from wherever he had been, only to discover that someone had broken the bank, was an event to remember. He roared and bellowed so hard that he could have been heard for a mile on a quiet day, not that there were too many quiet days!

It should be explained that the villain was brought to a speedy justice. The judge being Uncle Jebador.

At some unexpected moment someone may find a small fortune neatly packed away, perhaps in an old shoe under the eaves, or behind an old and forgotten relic in the attic. Several years ago we did find fifty-some cents in dimes and nickels, evidently the remains of a former cache now insolvent. However, we did not blow the roof off the house with dynamite to make sure that there wasn’t any more swag. This unkind act was left for other persons, in another neighborhood. As for our house, may it rest in peace!

With all the precautions that Uncle Jebador used, grain would vanish from his granary. One time he trailed a bag of oats for a mile. This feat of detective business was not heroic because the bag had a hole in it from which a few grains would trickle with every step.

It was not because Uncle Jeb didn’t have good neighbors that he took so many precautions. It was rather that he wished to keep them honest.

MUSIC HATH CHARMS

One of the first things that I can remember was the 'lamity-bang' of drums and the high pitched piping of fifes. Cousin Ebanizer and most of the numerous cousins on mother's side formed the "Blumenthal" Drum Corps. Of course, there were other lesser lights who contributed to the uproar. I still shudder when I recall the infernal racket which issued from that valiant band. They might well have been the forerunners of modern bebop, especially the drum section. Of course, almost anything went in those days. And it was no worse to listen to than the local gossip which can become a strain to the ears also.

On one of the occasions that the Drum Corps made their appearance at a picnic to furnish the music (?), my Cousin Ebanizer, who played the snare drum, became slightly inebriated. For some unknown reason he took a violent dislike to not only the cymbals, but at the same time, to the young fellow who was wielding them. In his exhilaration, he threw both the cymbals and the cymbal player into the creek, which flowed by the park. The cymbal player was fished out but the crash disks were not. Long, long after, when I had reason to be at this same park, I was sure that I could still hear their crashing. Perhaps the fish, or their slimy cousins, the eels, were having a concert. Who knows?

Uncle Jebador used to play the fiddle for his own amusement, and my amazement. That is why I bought a cornet as soon as I could earn enough money. It gets in your blood. Later, I, too, played the violin, but I never could fiddle like my Uncle Jeb. He had a technique all his own. He played with the instrument laid across his knees.

In high school we formed an orchestra, a very eccentric orchestra. As we didn't have individual scores we all tried to read from the piano sheet music. This naturally meant that our organization was quite compact, in more ways than one. The young lady who drummed the ivories "just couldn't stand it" if someone accidentally touched any part of her anatomy. The chaos resulting from all this was often punctuated by feminine squeals and tearful explosions. The clarinetist improvised upon the compositions of others, sometimes in harmony with the orchestra as a whole. At the least he could keep out of reach of the pianist.

Almost every community of any size used to have some kind of a band. They were hauled from place to place in a 'band wagon'. This conveyance was constructed to carry around fifteen bandsmen and their instruments. I was constructed to carry around fifteen bandsmen and their instruments. I remember one trombonist who got a 'little high' and decided to serenade the quiet countryside while journeying home from a concert. Everything went well until he blew a real blast upon the thing. In so doing the lengthened pipe happened to extend between the spokes of the rear wheel of the wagon. The driver had to stop while soloist gathered up the remains of his battered horn.

I recall coming upon a scene on the highway where a more than joyous member of that same ancient order of bandsmen was holding up traffic by standing, or rather swaying in the center of the road, trombone in action. He was surrounded by several of his friends who were singing to the somewhat dubious accompaniment of the trombone. "He will not let me fall, sometimes He'll let me slip, but He will not let me fall!"

I am not certain that someone didn't slip or slump before the meeting broke up, because the remainder of the crew were busily engaged in ladling out beer from a keg roped to the back of the wagon. Yes, there's been sin in every age, clime and condition. Today, there's no use of toting beer-kegs around. There's a filling station just around the bend.

My Cousin Oscar used to tell about the band in which he tooted a cornet. They played for picnics, church suppers, Halloween parades, and just for the heck of it. More often than not, they used the toes of their shoes as music racks while they sat on the ground and leaned their backs against accommodating trees.

Some of the amateur bands and orchestras that the writer has played with were not much better. I recall driving thirty miles to play in a Halloween parade. It was raining cats and dogs when the parade got under way. "Number nine", the leader shouted. To us in the trumpet section, being the deep rear, this order arrived as "Number three," modulated by the 'rump-rump-rump', of the drums. So, with the trombones and the baritone and basses tooting "Number nine" and the rest of us proudly blasting away at "Number three" we bravely went on our way. This continued for several measures of the march, until the tuneless assault upon the ears of the spectators finally reached the attention of our leader. He, with an air of wrathfulness useless to describe, gave us his opinion of us in no saintly or pious terms.

He was a character, our leader. It didn't matter how far up, or how down the social scale a member of the band might believe himself to be, if he were in error it was pointed out to him in profane and pointed speech. The rehearsals were as good as a circus. Only it was well not to attract the ire of his highness by smiling. I remember one time when he stopped us in the midst of a number by wrapping sharply with his baton upon the music stand. "Elmer", said he, "That sounded like hell. Who in the ... ever in...told you that you could play E flat with the third valve down?"

I finally graduated to an "Orchestra"; as our drummer was pleased to call it. As the music which we played became more and more difficult, the players became in direct proportion more temperamental. Thus it was that through the years we lost now and then a timid soul, only to be replaced by other musicians better or worse. It wasn't so much the ability to play an instrument well that kept this organization together, as it was the capacity of the individual to take the ribbing which our conductor handed out to all.

We journeyed to the State Farm Show, where we were entered in competition as an amateur musical organization. We came home with the light in our eyes, also the prize money! I will wager that there are few people who remember our valiant attempts at the "Light Cavalry Overture" and other more or less difficult numbers. There were few who ever found out that the prime cause of our being the winners was that there was no other orchestras entered that year. We had no competition!

Far more enjoyment for the orchestra, if not the wild beasts of the mountains of Pike county, Pennsylvania, was the concert which we played on a certain Memorial Day. The only audience was the birds, the bees, the flowers, and pile of clam shells alongside of a half empty beer keg! That was a party! The evening before, we had played a concert at a church. There can be but small doubt that our reputation dropped in an irrevocable degree that night, because upon the front bumper of one of our cars reposed a beer-keg.

Did the reader ever find it mandatory to appear before an audience displaying a black eye? This is a very disconcerting thing to be forced to do. It happened in this way: Our conductor, who I shall call "Da", was a very nice guy in spite of the things some others have had to say. We were supposed to play at a two day function. Da decided that the drummer, himself, and I should make a vacation out of it. We pitched our tent upon the banks of Kitchen Creek, which flows from the scenic wonderland of Pennsylvania, known as Ricketts Glen State Park. All went according to schedule, until I tripped on a tent rope in the darkness, nearly knocking myself out in the ensuing fall, and the black eye was sustained. To be sure there were other cuts and bruises, but the eye was a thing to look at and then stop and ponder. It was on the morrow that I, being such a sensitive soul, refused to appear in public and play my violin. Da said, "Now look here, neither of the other two fiddle scratchers can be here, so you are it." So, I compromised, and played in the concert. If my back was turned to the audience while I jerked tears from the spectators' eyes with the mournful tones of my violin, it was because I, myself, was not in a mirthful mood.

Chapter 12

CHARACTERS

"O wad some power the giftie gie us

To see ourself as ithers see us!"

Robert Burns, "To a Louse"

Uncle Jebador and Aunt Pristina were just about to have noon-day lunch when there was a timid tapping upon the door.

"Come in!" said Uncle Jeb., and needing no second invitation, Samuel Phyle slithered into view. "Had your dinner?" asked Uncle Jeb, ignoring a right mean look from Aunt Pristy.

"O, I didn't come here to eat," said Sam as he rapidly peeled off his tattered coat and hat and made a beeline toward the nearest unoccupied chair at the table.

Samuel was a hard man to forget, especially at meal time. And he was just as difficult to find if there were chores to do. But eating time could be depended upon to bring him, something like the 'call of the wild', or the homing instinct of the bumblebee.

Some of Uncle Jebador's unkind neighbors, defeated Sam's unique plan to secure free eats. This was by the simple, but effective procedure of keeping a sharp lookout. Then quietly locking the door at his approach, and remaining 'quiet as a mouse' until he had 'knocked himself out' at the door. All this was without doubt a very unchristian like system, but it was effective.

Now Samuel wasn't as dumb as he looked. One or two doses of this medicine was a sure cure. By the time that Sam could walk to the next source of a likely free meal, all that would be left of it would be a kind word. By any philosophy a kind word is more easily prepared than an extra portion at the table. It is cheaper, too!

Samuel had a bald head and a rather large, hooked nose. The clothes which hung about him were donated by various means, such as trash heaps and the good offices of the neighborhood population. He had the look of a man who had seldom known the touch of water to his hide. Usually his approach, if the wind was right, could be detected some distance away. Mr. Tutridge, the local merchant, always gave Sam the dust and crumbs from the bottom of the cookie boxes. Soda crackers were the only staple that I ever saw him purchase, that is except tobacco. He smoked a vile corncob, which he tried to hold in his toothless gums.

Romance had entered Sam's life with Lucy. Religion appears to have been a compelling factor in their existence. I have been told that they held prayer meetings regularly at the shanty in which they lived. The young men of that time always gathered with Sam and Lucy for these weekly rounds of prayer. The word 'rounds' is used advisedly. It is understood that a jug of hard cider went around the group from one to another. The more frequently it went around, the more intense became the religious ardor. After getting their hosts into a frenzy of "Amens", one or two of the hellions would climb up the roof and place a flat stone over the chimney. When the smoke became too thick the prayer meeting would terminate, with the pious young fellows wiping the tears from their eyes. That was one way to get ready for the smoke of the judgment day!

Aunt Pristina used to put up a tough argument about the kind of help that Uncle Jebador hired during the busy season of haying and harvesting. Poor old Samuel was merely one of them. Another worthy member of the same tribe was known as "Kamp". At least that is the name Sam used in addressing him. Sam would get a small pitch-fork of hay about half way up the side of the hay wagon, then he would yell, "Here you go, Kamp!" Old Kamp would nearly fall off the wagon trying to reach down

and lift up the hay. Many times it didn't reach the top, but fell back on the ground. A comedy skit argument then would follow which might well put to shame many of radio and television artists of today.

Kamp was not a robust person. His bones seemed so close to the surface that it might be said, 'it was a waste of skin to cover them'.

Jack Snaggel was another hired man. He worked for Uncle Jeb a long time and stayed in a room in the old haunted house. Jake came from a large brood, who (as Uncle Jeb used to say) were all struck by the same club. In his case the club must have stuck him several times. He was a very devout man. Many times I have seen him reading his Bible upside down, in the dark! This he did in a high pitched voice. Not a word of which could be understood. And at the finish Uncle Jeb would add a fervent "Amen".

Jake's knowledge of the "birds and the bees" was rather elementary. When Aunt Pristy asked him how many children his sister had, he considered for a moment before he replied "O...I gers she harz about a derzen; she hars one erbout every six mernth, erz often's the law'l erllow!" Poor fellow, he passed away many years ago, in an insane asylum.

Now there was Joe Michlitis, or as he insisted to be called, Michlitis Joe. He worked for Uncle Jeb part of one summer. In fact he would have been there the whole summer if the boys in the white coats had not gathered him again to their bosom. They took him "Home". In reality, Michlitis Joe wasn't too much different from the rest of the men who throughout the years were employed by Uncle Jebador. That was the reason that he was caught off his guard, Uncle Jeb that is, not Joe. Joe was merely caught as a matter of civic duty.

"Old Tom" was another of Uncle Jeb's friends. If he was shown what to do several times he could master simple duties. He went about these chores from morning to night singing a completely tuneless, wordless ditty. It went something like, "Di di diddy diddy di...". Aunt Pristy used to complain to Uncle Jeb that she was going crazy from hearing it.

If Charles Dickens were living he could have found material for many more characters than he ever created in the ones that I have known. Wherever people live, there have been, and there still are certain persons who stand out from the rest for one cause or another. Some have a wacky idea of humor, such as the Lang brothers.

They were called Bim and Bud and came from a prolific family. What Bim couldn't think of to do that was devilish, Bud could. There was the time that their sister had a new boyfriend calling on her. They usually made a new boyfriend's first visit interesting. This was no exception.

A new born calf died. This in itself was no cause for mirth, or for mourning. Calves die every day, and in any other household it would have been buried with dry eyes and forgotten. Bim and Bud had other pans. They secretly toted the dead beast into the house and hid it behind the sofa. In due time the boyfriend arrived and was led into the parlor, by his sweet young thing. After a while Bim walked through the room, avoiding the sneering looks that his sister cast in his direction. About every two steps he would stop and lift his nose into the air, like a hound sniffing out a coon in a tree. In a short time, Bud came into their presence and followed the same routine. These trips continued until their sister got as mad as "Dreckt-dahame", as the Pennsylvania Dutch say. "What is the matter with you two?" she asked in a mean tone.

"Don't you smell something that has a peculiar odor in here?" Bud demanded.

"No, I do not, and I wish you would leave me alone!" she replied, by this time ready for murder.

At this they started to search the room, upsetting almost everything that happened to be in their path. As can be seen by now, the end of this yarn is, that the calf was found and proudly carried from the scene.

These boys did not always confine their activities to the inside of the house. They were a long ways ahead of their time in many ways. Now the Bikini bathing suit, the Kinsey Report, and such things as nudist camps had not even been thought of at that time. If they had been, they would have not been fit subjects for filling in idle conversation. Those were days when women wore three or four petticoats. An occasional glance at that part of the female anatomy known as the 'ankle' was a sneaky thing to be done by any man.

Bim and Bud each played the violin, (almost everybody of importance fiddled in those days) one way or another. Bim and Bud chose 'the other'. It was upon a hot summer Sabbath morning and the carriages, buggies, and spring wagons were already passing by their home, bound for Campmeeting. It was then Bim and Bud decided to practice upon their fiddles. In order that they might not miss seeing the procession of good people going to church, they secured a ladder and climbed to the peak of the house roof. There they began their practice. As the weather was so oppressively warm, they discarded all of their clothing except what God gave them when they came into the world.

Imagine, if you can, trotting down the highway with a finely curried horse and a buggy all shone up until it reflected the love light that shone in your eyes. Proudly you squired your best girls to church. Even in these sophisticated times, the sight of two nude young men sitting upon a rooftop playing violins might slightly dampen our ardor. Such squirrely doings might cause laughter now, but in those day one did not dare to notice, that is, in mixed company. The only thing that one could do under circumstances such as that would be to point to some imaginary object to the left of the awful scene, and say, "Isn't that a large cloud over there?"

In the meantime you might be able to grasp the whip from its socket and belay the poor old nag, who in surprise would spring to a fast gallop. This, however, would demand so much of your attention that you might not notice the covert glance that your honeybunch has stolen at the deplorable doings upon the roof. Yes, these boys were ahead of their day!

My cousin, Fester and his wife, Aggie, used to call upon Uncle Jeb nearly every Sunday. Cousin Fester wasn't a liar, not exactly, but his statements and stories had to be well sifted to find the truth! He had had many and varied experiences throughout the years. Some of them no doubt were true. Uncle Jebador had a way of sitting cracking his knuckles when something didn't ring true to him. I'm sure that his fingers were two inches longer every time that Cousin Fester left. Sometimes he even went to sleep in the middle of a yarn, but this didn't bother Cousin Fester a bit; he talked on and on. Some place and somewhere, someone must have doubted Cousin Fester's stories. He always ended them with, "Now, by God that's so! Ain't it Aggie?"

Poor Aggie, sometimes she would forget that she wasn't home and reply. "Now Fes, you know that's a lie!"

When I was a kid, "Aunt Lizzie" made her rounds about every week. No one would have said that she was 'crazy', but she was darn queer! Hardly anyone would bother to have her around today, but at that time any type of entertainment was better than none. Aunt Lizzie's aim was unfaltering. She could hit the coal skuttle several feet away with scarcely a splash. Yet to mention the word 'tobacco' to her was an insult. "Chewing gum", Lizzie called it.

The things she used to tell about our neighbors were very interesting, if not always true. These bits of scandal used to cause trouble when they were repeated to the wrong persons, in the right places.

Just about the last time that I remember seeing Lizzie, she had stuffed pillows inside her clothes and was traveling about her regular beat, announcing to all and sundry, "I'm going to have a baby!" Lizzie was sixty some odd years old at the time.

These were a few of the storm tossed victims on the sea of life. And it were well to end on that note, except for Uncle Burl. He always came calling whenever he and his missus were on the warpath This must have been quite often, if the number of calls was a barometer of marital storms. Uncle Burl's oft repeated statement was a classic, "Some men get themselves good women, but my wife, she's a hell of a set!"

Uncle Jebador used to allow, "Burl's a bigger liar than Tom Pepper, and he was kicked out of hell twice for lying!"

Pliny, the ancient historian, relates that Scipio Africanus was the first Roman who shaved every day, not that it matters. Taxes have even been imposed upon facial awnings, in direct proportions to the wearer's rank. I would imagine that this is where hidden taxes originated. James 1, of England introduced a fantastic extravagance which clipped the beard into as many shapes as the old-fashioned box hedges. Wearing of beards have been considered signs of dangerous character. In other times they have been the height of fashion.

It is my personal opinion that beards were a rather sneaky way to keep from washing the face. Then again, most of the old fellows that I knew who wore beards also chewed tobacco. There never was a faultless method found to safely guide tobacco juice through a bushy set of facial foliage. Those who enjoyed this exotic habit of "Chawin Tobacker" could be easily spotted, especially if their whiskers were grey or white.

When I first saw my Uncle Jebador after he had shaved off his disguise I didn't know him from a load of hay. Of course, he didn't resemble a load of hay without the beard.

Uncle Theodore (everybody used to be called Uncle or Aunt) was an avid tobacco chewer. He also loved to have his niece play "Red Wing" on the piano. He never tired of this melody. I mind one hot summer evening when several of us had stopped to rest on the porch of a neighbor. We had just come back from a dip in the old swimming pool. It so happened that Uncle Theodore was inside and "Red Wing" was in full flight. As he sat there in rapt attention, the tobacco juice must have collected at a fearful rate. At the final chord he hurriedly opened the screen door and emitted a stream of tobacco juice into the darkness.

"Play that again, will you?" he requested his niece.

In the meantime, Uncle Theodore was not aware of his unerring markmanship, however uncommendable it may have been. Poor Jim! The whole mess caught him squarely in the right ear!

Just as Uncle Theodore was sitting down to listen to "Red Wing" all over again, (and incidentally working up another quid of tobacco into a sizeable would-be bath) his nephew, who was with us, yelled "Uncle Theodore, you spit in Jim's ear!"

"Eh? Wall now, I didn't know there was anybody out thar!" he said and hurried back to his "Red Wing". Yes, I guess that every age has had its hazards, more or less.

Pliny doesn't state whether Scipio Africanus chewed tobacco; he leaves us in the dark.

THE SPECIALISTS

No historical sketch of rural America can be said to be complete unless a fleeting glance is given at the old family outhouse. This rather necessary accessory to the main house is passing from the picture at a frightful clip. And it may soon become as extinct as a unicorn. Whether the Smithsonian Institution has any of these gadgets of ancient Americana is not known.

Recently a Mr. Pat Pending came up with an invention. This may bring back the former popularity of the old shanties. More about Pat Pending will follow.

In the old apple orchard, under the spreading Pound Apple tree still stands 'Aunties'. Uncle Jebador and Aunt Pristina always spoke of "it" in that way "When you come back from aunties bring an armload of wood along!" That used to be a command.

It would be difficult to forget about such a place. Especially if one has made a midnight dash when the temperature was near zero and the north wind was sweeping the snow into huge drifts. Every foot of progress appears to be, on such a trip, many times as far. I can remember my Uncle Felix tearing out from the warmth of the house. Into a wintry gale he sped at a fast spring, only to trip his toe in a snowdrift with disastrous results! Those were the happy days?

Uncle Jebador, being a practical man, built two outhouses. One was located on the western side of the old hen coop, well out of sight. With a little thought one can grasp the ingenuity of this strategy. When Nature blew her bugle, one could either advance or retreat, whichever seemed expedient.

Like everything that Uncle Jeb had ever built, the new outhouse was no exception to his general rule of engineering. It was equipped with almost everything, including outdated Sears and Roebuck catalogs. It was to be different than all others. And, for all that I know of these things, it was.

Nearly all such buildings were slap bang affairs with cracks between the single boards, out of which one could observe the doings of the outside world. Ceilings were an unknown luxury, and the thrones were unsightly objects void of covers. All of this improved after the manner of Uncle Jebador.

There was a double back for ventilation. The other three sides were double boarded for insulation, The throne itself was just the right height, for relaxation. A small window was placed in the eastern wall at a discrete height. In the ceiling, a flue-like hole led upward. At the north and south gables, square holes were cut. They were covered with screen to keep out the wasps, which they never did.

After much measuring and careful deliberation, Uncle Jeb decided upon a three-holer, two large and one small. These were not the common species. They were things to please the eye of a connoisseur of poetic creation, form fitting to the last degree of calculation.

At the dedication certain mechanical difficulties developed. Even though ventilated with all then known to Uncle Jeb and science, the thing couldn't have been said to be exactly a rose garden. In the course of time various changes were made which directed the air upward, instead of downward. The least of these being the plugging up of the flue in the ceiling. Also, the concrete slab on the western end crumbled into dust with the passing years, thus making the ventilation complete, especially in the wintertime!

Pat Pending was a specialist who came out of the past and faded into the mist of the future. Pat was nuts. Just plain wacky. There can be no doubt of it. There are photographs, and the private statements of several well known people to prove it.

Pat imagined that he held the key to peace in his skinny hand. If not world peace, at least he held peace of mind for those unfortunate human beings who still have to face the whims of the weather when making pilgrimages to outhouses.

To begin with, Pat Pending introduced himself locally by writing a series of letters purporting to be from a firm of patent attorneys located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. These letters described his invention as "A wonderful and simple devise, so simple that a six year old can operate it, and if you don't have a six year old, two three year olds will answer the purpose. The letters went on to state: "This devise will air condition privys, both on the hottest day in summer, and the bitterest winter day. Night and day, it will remain a faithful friend.

The days sped into weeks and months. Then it happened! Pat Pending came into our midst, baggage and contraption. He resembled nothing as much as bewhiskered aristocratic scarecrow. And the contrivance which he unlimbered was the screwiest, ultra-modern super gadget that ever tortured the bewildered eyes of man. The man who wrote the song. "The Thing" must have surely had this gigger demonstrated to him in an unguarded moment!

It was part radio, part auto, a suggestion of vacuum cleaner, and the Lord knows what else. A whole rack of accessories, including, wrenches, pencil sharpeners, a supply of sandpaper, Fuller brushes, and an ancient copy of "Buffalo Bill" was attached to the thing. But this was not all. There was the booklet of instructions showing exactly how to operate the whole mess of levers, dials, and switches. Besides this, there was "The complete history of the back house." This alone, so Pat declared, was more than worth the price of the whole works. "Lots of folks don't know how these things got started", Pat liked to tell anybody who might listen.

How I ever became involved in the nefarious doings of Pat Pending was perhaps due to my inherent fervency of helpfulness plus the fact that a few moments conversation with Pat had the effect of a complete loss of memory. He tried to sell me the "Paraultra Fixuizer" as he called it. When I explained to him that we no longer utilized the little house in the orchard he broke down and cried like a child. So before I realized the seriousness of the situation, I had promised to be a 'go-between' for him, at least that is the way that I recall it. However, it happened it was the beginning of my downfall. Where I used to have friends, today they are merely slowly nodding acquaintances!

The first place where I arranged for Pat Pending to make a demonstration was in a corncrib. This was due to the fact that people are prone to be slow in making changes from their ordinary paths, and this thing wasn't ordinary. On the other hand, it may have been because this outhouse was too small for the proper installation of the contraption!

I am sorry to report that I was not present at this portrayal of Pat Pending's ingenuity. I have, however, been informed from the rest of the attending authorities that it did everything that it was supposed to do. This was all (after all) that his guarantee promised.

When the outlying districts heard about the demonstration, they came from far and wide, old and young, wise and foolish, rich and poor, to see this most unbelievable invention.

A red light flowing on the panel showed that the machine was ready and willing to go into action. When the dials were turned a diversity of sounds issued from the bowels of the contraption. The instructions commanded the subject to be seated upon the object labeled "SEAT", (all parts were labeled, to try to clarify the situation) first removing object labeled "COVER". When the victim settled himself upon the "SEAT" a hideous roar deafened the ears and a tornado of wind was directed into his face.

Mounted upon the top was a bell, "To ring, so that all may know that you wish to be left in solitude, alone". A flip switch was to be flipped, at which an intense buzzing sound came forth from the insides of the thing, something like a nest of hornets rudely poked with a stick! "There were lengthy instructions in the booklet, the last of them, but not the least, being about the operation of the "WIPERTRON". Pull out the rod, (marked "ROD" to the third white mark; this will trigger the atomic pike and startle the wipertron into instant action. When this was done, a loud explosion took place within the devilish apparatus, and smoke rolled out of it like a house on fire. On the panel a spigot marked, "FLUSH" could be opened, out of which water to drown out any ensuing fire was to be drawn.

Pat Pending took extreme care that his invention was not stolen. If anyone were so foolish as to open the convenient lid of the "Paraultra Fixuizer" to look at its inwards, they received a severe electrical shock!

How long, and to what length of civil strife all this would have led is a matter of conjecture, if it had not been stopped prematurely. Somehow, it came to the notice of the patent office that Pat Pending was missing from his usual place in their records. They immediately notified the Feudal Bureaucracy of Instigators. And before you could say "scat", Pat Pending was back where he belonged, in Washington.

I have heard from secret sources that Pat is now in Patigonia with a marvelous new invention. It is believed to be the acme of perfection, the pinnacle of all. It is a machine to skin fleas, quite similar to Eli Whitney's cotton gin.

If Uncle Jebador had only thought of the Paraultra Fixuizer in his day, it is probable that life on earth would now be much different. The atomic age would have been ushered in without the bomb!

ANIMALS

“Flory”, “Dolly”, and “Old Frank” were the old standbys; there were others before, and there were quite a few afterwards. Uncle Jebador was a horse jockey of sorts. This ancient art is approached today by the used-car salesman. There are many tricks in both trades, like the line: “This car was owned by an old man who never drove over thirty-five,” or “They both cried like babies when they sold it.” However, the horse jockey of the past resorted to lower grades of humor than this. Even though a horse couldn’t stand up for more than five minutes when left to its own devices, after the horse trader, or ‘jockey’ had administered to the equine pensioner a dose of ‘dope’ the oldster would kick up his or her heels and the uninitiated buyer would get neatly stung. Uncle Jeb must have run afoul of one of these gentry when he bought “Bob”. Bob was a ‘cribber’, a horse that clamps his teeth on a board or some other convenient projection and sucks himself full of air, creating a sound similar to the braying of a jackass, and bloating himself so much that he can’t eat his oats. This does not improve the working qualities of a horse, or the humor of the owner.

Flory and Dolly were a team of blacks. They were as much unlike as the north wind and the south wind. Flory was of the gentle disposition. Aunt Pristina used to drive her, and any horse that Aunt Pristy could drive had to be docile. Dolly was a mean, spiteful, high spirited critter, who even in her dotage used to try to bite me every time I chanced to pass in front of her. She had several “run-aways” to her discredit; one of these fast rides carried me along as an unwilling passenger. There is absolutely nothing like being a party to a run-away horse, that is, if you’re being towed along with it. I carry scar tissue in my left eyebrow as a lasting memento of this beast, who left her right shoe print there when I was about eight years old. Uncle Jeb took a very dim view of the situation the time that Dolly tore the “shafts” out of the buggy. I had unhitched one side and was just about to walk around to the other side when Dolly decided to walk away. Well, the left buggy shaft fell out of the holder, nudging Dolly in the ribs, and before I could say, “Whoa” she was off like the wind, trailing pieces of harness and buggy behind her, with me in hot pursuit. I caught her, and “it” from Uncle Jeb.

The last horse swap that I remember Uncle Jebador making was for a team of dapple greys. They were apparently quite gentle in disposition, but Uncle Jeb found out too late that they were allergic to locomotives. He had stopped to weigh a load of loose hay on the weigh scales along side of the railroad track, upon which there stood a steam locomotive. While he was in the office getting his “weigh bill” the locomotive took the opportunity to “pop off” steam. This was too much for the team of greys, who wheeled sharply to the left and in doing so turned the wagon wheels under the “hay ladders”. This raised the front end of the wagon up so that the “king pin” and the front wheels, axle, and wagon tongue (not to mention the horses) were loosened from the remainder of the hay wagon. They lit for home at a fast clip; only by the bravery of some man or men were they stopped short of their goal. After that Uncle Jeb was careful, but I was’t. I was mowing a field of hay several months after this episode, when one or the other of the greys decided to stop and eat a while, so I said, “Get up, sst.” The next few moments were full of action. To start with, I was laying upon my back behind the mowing machine and team, who were cutting at a furious speed, and were again bound for home, but I overtook them before any real damage was accomplished. I was very careful in their presence of my language after that.

At one time, and merely a short time, I can assure you, I was a mule driver in the coal mines. A mule is about as unpredictable as a pin ball machine; about the only difference is one shoots the balls in the machine and sometimes, if one is lucky, wins. On the other hand, to win against a mule requires far more skill than a mere pin ball machine operator generally has at his command. A special brand of profanity is, as a rule, acquired by mule drivers. This takes much practice to perfect. Once a mule wins a battle against you, you might as well give up because he will remember just how he did it whenever the occasion arises.

While I was mule driving in the mines most of them were 'greenies', that is, young mules that had never worked before. They were pets while I had them. As soon as they were 'broken' they were taken to some other parts of the mine where the work was much harder; it didn't take them long to learn all of the ways to escape work. I've seen mules that were clubbed who merely laid down and refused to get up, clubs or no clubs.

On one occasion I had a mule that made up her mind that she wouldn't work that day and she wouldn't pull a pound. I coaxed, threatened, and belayed her with chunks of coal. Still she stood there as if in a trance. Finally, the "driver boss" came upon this scene of wild shouts and confusion. "What's the matter here?" he asked. "She just won't move," said I. Well, he walked alongside her head and said, gentle like, "Giddap" and she took off as though someone had shot her in the rear with a load of birdshot. I'll never forget the look of derision which the boss tossed at me, when he said, "Did you say that she wouldn't pull?" No, I don't know a thing about mules, and I'm too old to learn now.

Chapter 15

MAGIC

No man should consider rounding out his life, no matter what his position, without trying his hand at the art of magic. Many books have been written about the actual methods, or “modus operandi” of the art. Few, if any, have tried to explain how a man “gets that way.”

There is a zany, insidious, psychological drive that often causes men to forsake friends and even reason. Sometimes an expanded ego is a reasonable excuse for these actions; but for the most part, a magician has a complex that is merely a symptom of an incurable malady. The bug whose bite causes this more or less insane fever has never been isolated, nor is there a lasting cure known.

It was during one of Aunt Pristina’s recitals of the ghastly carryings on in the ‘Old House’ that it occurred to me. I never saw or even felt the thing bite me. That is how subtle the fever strikes.

The thought came into my mind that the ‘hant’ might be coaxed to move into the new house. It might just be possible he was lonesome. There was something that kept me from expressing my idea to Aunt Pristy. Later developments showed that she would not have approved, of it a bit!

First was the problem of capturing the ‘hant’. It wasn’t easy, but a magician can accomplish almost anything, or a reasonable facsimile. A few carefully concealed gimmicks, along with several lengths of thread and fine wire, cunningly hidden, were all that was necessary, except a good measure of pure nerve. The trap, thus equipped was set in the attic. The controls were close at hand in the front room. There, too, several framed patriarchs, whose baleful glaze leered down at me, were pressed into unwilling service by the same devilish devices.

All was now in readiness, but there still remained the problem of raising the “hant”. Things like this cannot be done on the spur of the moment. The signs must be exactly right. In the problem at hand, for example, it was necessary to be sure that Uncle Jebador and Aunt Pristy were placed in juxtaposition with relation to the medium, who lurked in the background.

So it was that on a dark and stormy night, while Uncle Jeb and Aunt Pristy were idly setting in the front room, and I was innocently occupied by reading a magazine, that the ‘hant’ appeared. Suddenly there was a series of rumbles. Then a terrific crash resounded in the upper reaches overhead. Uncle Jeb, being the analytical man that he was, first suspiciously looked me over, then with an air of resolve on his bewhiskered face, he went into action. With the kerosene lantern grasped in one hand and his trusty six shooter in the other, he climbed the stairs. In the meantime I had the opportunity, and took it, to reel in the spirit control. After a time, during which there issued sounds of old chairs, lumber, and what not being tossed around in the attic, Uncle Jeb returned. Now mind, he said not a word to me, but there was faintly quizzical stare in his eye when he looked at me. Just as peace and quietness had again descended upon the household, one of my great-great grandfathers shook his frame against the wall, as if to rid himself of a fly on his nose. At the same time great-grandma, on the opposite wall, as well as the opposite side of the family, firmly shook her head in disgust. This was too much for Uncle Jeb, who grabbed his forefather, that is, his picture, and inspected it very thoroughly. Aunt Pristy went through the same routine with her family.

It was during this family reunion that I made my escape from what I had good cause to believe might be a rather bad evening for me.

For some unfathomable reason Uncle Jebador never took kindly to the art of magic, nor not in particular to any of his side of the family practicing it.

I can remember one old lady who always moved away as far as she could when I was about, murmuring very much aloud, "He's sold his soul to the devil." The old Pennsylvania Dutch used to heat an iron red hot. This they would plunge into cream in a churn when the butter did not 'gather'. The purpose of this was to chase the devil out so that he couldn't interfere with their work. I never had a red hot poker aimed at me, but I don't doubt that there have been several persons who would have liked to.

There have been some performers of magic who fostered the opinion that they were in league with the evil one. Almost every one has enough meanness instilled in them without trying to gain the reputation.

This performance of magic can have some humorous consequences. I once advertised that. "He will attempt to shoot an examined bullet through an initialed playing card which a lady will hold over her heart. The bullet will penetrate both the card and the lady, shattering a pane of glass at the lady's back..."

Everything went as normal as usual until I explained the situation in somewhat this manner, "I shall fire a marked bullet from this gun, which I shall present for your examination. On this playing card, the ace of clubs, I wish some lady or gentleman to place their initials, so that it may be identified later....Now as you can see in this frame, (here I pointed to a stand upon which reposed in majestic splendor a gaudily decorated frame, in which hung suspended by two golden cords was a pane of window glass) is an unprepared pane of glass. I shall set the stand in the center of the stage...." The rest of that sentence never was finished. The trick itself, however, was finished. As I neared the center of the stage, there was a resounding crash, and the pane of glass flew into a thousand pieces, without benefit of either gun or bullet!

That is perhaps the reason that so many fine men and women take up magic as a hobby! It's quite a lot like life, you never know just how it will turn out. It's fun anyway!

DEPRESSION CITY AND OTHERS

Most of the population in this section of Pennsylvania do not appreciate how outlandish the names of some of our towns sound. They are often mistaken for prehistoric cuss words, or a Glubbodubrib calling hogs. As a matter of fact, the whole business can now be safely laid on the Indians, who have long since departed. Shickshinny, Mocanaqua, Nanticoke, Wapwallopen! Now they are words to conjure with: why should the master of magic say such silly things as “Abracadabra”.

Shickshinny means “Five Mountains” in the ancient Indian dialect. And they were not kidding, they are there. I have heard them called other things too! Some of my good neighbors have even suggested that it would be good to give the whole business back to the Indians.

Nanticoke was named after an Algonquian tribe from Maryland who were dark in complexion. Many of the present population of Nanticoke, it is to be noted, are quite black at certain times. This is not due to any known relation to the Nanticokes, but rather to the fact that it is a coal mining town.

The tracing of the meanings of names could get quite involved. For instance, there is Mutton Point. I suppose some sheep named this one. Then there is Sweet Valley, which is located upon a hill. I understand that it used to be called “Pleasant Hill”. Then it came to be known to uncomplimentary neighbors as “Wrangle Hill”. So it is quite understandable like Mohammed, if Pleasant Hill could not move to the valley they would bring the sweet valley to the hill; thus Sweet Valley.

Then there was Depression City.

During that sad state of affairs in the early thirties, known as “The Depression”, my Uncle Sam contributed no little to those of us who did not possess a bank account. Many of the more fortunate, but in many cases, less thankful persons liked to call this period, “The Recession.” Whatever it was called, or is now recalled cannot alter the miserable conditions that were then everywhere evident.

In that time, B.O., Before Autos, (perhaps bad breath, if the fumes bother you) religion was taken much more seriously by more people than at present. Many underlying factors contribute to this, but it is merely mentioned in approaching the place under consideration, a Methodist Campmeeting Ground. It came later to be known as “Depression City”, and was peopled by flying squirrels, bats, and bedbugs, both before and after its capture by the depressionists.

Within the city limits, what was lacked in local government was more than balanced by the art of gossip. Not that the citizens were ‘nosey’, they were just almighty curious. Every move that was made became of the uttermost importance to one’s neighbors. As there was no organized police protection, this primitive condition was largely overcome by another good citizen and myself electing each other as patrolmen pro temp. Our duties were for the most part conducted in the small hours of the night, and consisted of giving ‘receptions’ to arduous paramours. An extremely interesting account could be written about this one phase of life there. It might be entitled, “The Love Life of the Human Male Under Trying Circumstances”. To be sure, like many other officers of the law our duties were, to say the least, resented. The things which we saw and heard in the line of duty would give little rest to the many good ministers who preached the gospel there so long ago.

In such a closely knit society, with people being what they were, (for the most part human) there was very little difficulty in getting into trouble. I mind one time when I sent a borrowed rope home with my small son. The rope had been employed to hold up a curtain for a magician friend, who gave an entertainment at the ‘city’. The rope departed in one piece, what (if anything) happened to it after that never was revealed to me. It just could be that sonny tried to emulate the cut and restored rope trick that the magician had so marvelously accomplished. It is all a matter of conjecture. There can be no doubt

that something happened the next morning! A committee of two, each being the other's brother-in-law, argued the case at no end with me using bitter and less than legal terms. Where all this might have ended but for the timely arrival of my fellow police officer is not known, for no one showed the least sign of compromise.

The hardest thing to give in this life is, 'in' and another old quip is quite true, 'never send a boy to the mill'.

Besides the human element there were almost countless forsaken cats and a goodly number of mangy curs who chose to hole up in Depression City for the duration. They were a contributing factor to many events which left dull moments on the old stamping ground. The prevailing religion slowly lost its Methodism and became one of confusionism.

There was the aged tomcat who carried his head at an oblique angle. Some time in his long and battle-scarred career he had come into contact with fate. His feeble ability to exist depended upon the slender scraps which he was able to glean after the curs had done their scavenging. It was finally decided by a secret council of two that old tom would fare far better if he were dead. The execution was carried out with dispatch, but it was a shot that was heard around the city. In a matter of seconds, the women, being what they were, females, poured from every nook and cranny. Like a swarm of angry bees, was their descent. And bringing up the rear came their drones, each in his own way following the dictates of his queen. It was only the proximity of the sheltering door of Cousin Bill's cottage which saved me from this blitzkrieg.

Most of the erstwhile would-be pugilists later congratulated me upon both the execution and the marksmanship. That is, when they were out of ear shot of their spouses, who owned and operated vicious tempers. They were good cooks, these females, at least they knew how to bring their husbands to a quick boil.

Then there was the tale of a certain dog. What's more, the tale concerns his tail. It was the custom of this cur to visit our midst, to the terror and added confusion of the regular army of canines and cats. His presence was not urged. After he had been run homeward several times with no lasting repentance, it was decided that a more drastic sentence must be pronounced and put into execution. The male portion of the city being secretly gathered in session, it was voted that any means which might lead to a good end would be acceptable. After much thought, it became evident that turpentine, a rough stick, a length of strong cord, a tin can, and a certain amount of nerve was the best strategy. Having secured the cur and our paraphernalia we smuggled ourselves away from curious females and began operations. These were simple. First the stick was rubbed over the posterior of the unwilling creature. Then the turpentine was administered. After that the cord with a tin can at the end was tied firmly to the canine's tail and we left him go. And he did! Seemingly he went in all directions at one and the same time. As he went each leap became longer and his howling stronger. It was at this moment that an angry buzzing could be heard above the furious carrying on of the pup. Those of us who had foresight melted into the protection of the ever surrounding brush and trees. In the meantime the bedeviled cur ran, skidded and slammed into trees, cottages and what not. All the while he was hotly pursued by a valiant band of females, whose only thought was to try and loosen the tin can. In this they were not successful because the hound, mistaking their tender thoughts for more malice, only ran the faster. With baffled howls of rage and pain he was at last homeward bound! It should be mentioned that never, never, were we bothered by that particular dog again. As some of the local wives remarked, (in much more sharp language) "That was a dirty trick!"

It cannot be said that the official board of directors took too well to heart these and other near riots. In fact, they viewed the whole setup with a fishy eye.

So it is that today Depression City is as deserted as a gold rush town. And again the bats, the flying squirrels, and the bedbugs hold forth in mighty triumph. Sic transit gloria mundi!

BUGS, HUMAN, AND OTHERWISE

Aunt Pristina was 'madder than a wet hen'. As soon as her afternoon caller had at last gone home, she minutely inspected the chair upon which the caller had perched. Her inspection was not without just cause, nor was it unfruitful. Aunt Pristina found exactly what she expected to find. A bedbug!

Not even the apparition of a visitor direct from Hades, in the middle of the night, could raise the hair upon my spine so fast, or as straight, as even a faint odor suggesting the presence of a bedbug! The sight of one of these bloodthirsty creatures, especially if he has been surprised in a stealthy attempt at ambush, drives me into a state of distraction. Per chance he has outwitted my defenses by lurking in absolute motionless and hunger until I have been gathered into the arms of forgetfulness. Then he commences attacking in force of numbers until, in the half conscious frenzy of self preservation, they have been driven away in droves from their happy hunting ground. If this has happened all thought of future rest and sleep has fled, carried away by this wingless bug of the night!

Aunt Pristina apparently was a match for any bug, human or insect. In my case, the hatred for this cosmopolitan bloodsucking, wingless, depressed bug of reddish brown color and a vile odor grew from less discriminating surroundings.

A bedbug can seemingly live for a period of many years without benefit of food. In this condition they grow extremely thin and flattened. So, it is entirely possible for a bug to fasten itself to, or onto a piece of clothing or furniture. It is only when, after having raised a huge brood of hungry welps, or whatever a young bedbug might be called, that the housekeeper suddenly discovers that she has acquired a difficult situation. There are, however, certain remedies which I shall later describe in detail.

I mind the first introduction to this vile creature of the night. I had slept at this place before, and although there was a 'breaking out' on my arms and legs the next morning, I was too innocent to realize that these spots were tracts of part of my anatomy which had been perloined during my hours of fitful slumber. And my host did not enlighten me in the least.

It was an old house, and rather small. I retired upon the only available spot, an ancient day-bed. As there were no electric lights, I laid my electric torch within easy reach. Just as a stage nearing sleep had been arrived at, there were a series of crawling sensations that drove me fully awake. A rapid examination revealed nothing. Again I tried to reach slumberland, this time with the torch in hand. When the sensation was at its peak of activity, I suddenly threw the covers back, and beamed in the glare of the light were hundreds of them scattering like a flock of sheep before a dog, bedbugs!

This experience so unnerved me that I chose a place upon the bare floor as far as possible from the scene of my tormentors. Never again did I find the courage to sleep in that house.

There was a memorable occasion when we decided to make a picnic of it and spend the weekend in our cottage. After bedding our progeny down for the night, we too retired. Fate was against us. We had, a short time before, rented the cottage to a party for several months. They moved out leaving us sundry trash, less the rent, plus bugs. As everything grew quiet the bugs grew restless. Having been on short rations for months, they were in no need for joking, but made a united and determined assault in columns of eight.

The mattress upon which we reclined had been left (as a booby trap) by the before mentioned tenant. After a few attempts at routing the furious onslaughts of the wingless nighthawks with no sign of victory, I quickly rolled up the whole vile, writhing mess and tossed it out of the window. Before the enemy could recover from this master strategy I hurriedly dressed and scampered down the stairs, fully convinced that I should find the mattress slowing crawling, like a sort of juggernaut, back to

the festival. It was still there, so I dragged it across the driveway. Then having thoroughly saturated it with kerosene, I applied a lighted match.

From the glare of this funeral pyre I could see myriads of bugs skeltering back and forth in frenzied macabre parade.

Once more, we slept upon the floor!

There are numerous defenses that one may use against bedbugs. Some are good. In the first place don't acquire them. However if you do, one of the following methods might be utilized to get rid of them:

1st Spot them with a flashlight, then shoot them down, one by one. This has an element of sport that should appeal to all lovers of the hunt.

2nd Swallow poison. The bugs will die like flies from sucking your contaminated blood. This method was seldom used by normal people.

3rd Set each leg of the bed in a pan of kerosene. Be sure that there are no loose feathers upon the floor. Bugs have been known to construct rafts, almost anything, to cross safely over man-made moats.

4th Install a sprinkler system loaded with bug dust. This will be triggered by the weight of a bug. It will be found that it is necessary to maintain a constant body weight to use this contraption with any success. Too much supper, for example, would destroy its equilibrium.

5th Stake out a herd of cockroaches in the bed. These insects are natural enemies of the bedbug. They are intelligent beasts and easy to acquire.

6th Burn down the house, but be sure to sift the ashes for lingering bugs with tough hides.

All this information is given gratis because I hate bedbugs. If any, or all of these methods are ever tried by the reader, do not report to me. See your favorite psychoanalyst.

There is another species of insect whose bite is known to be septic. It has been known, among other things, as the "Thumber". This insect may be of either or both genders, but as a rule the male predominates. It can be found with little effort alongside the major highways of North America. The insect is easily recognized by certain rather unique motions which it makes with its flippers. It has an elongated thumb-like appendage which generally points in a horizontal position, in the general direction in which it yearns to fly. Being wingless, it can't fly and is necessarily parasitic in its methods of locomotion. Truckers and other unsuspecting drivers usually are its victims.

Several of these bugs have secured free rides from me. One in particular kept making a 'clicking' sound, giving me the impression that at least this specimen had been sired by a cricket. He, for it was a male I could see, had no sooner crawled into the car before he became obnoxious by deeply probing his probiscus into my personal affairs. The contents of the glove compartment were the first casualty to meet his uncontrollable appetite concerning the affairs of others. It was at this point that I decided that he must indeed have a sixth sense. With the closest observation I could not detect the slightest evidence of the other five! It was with a sign of relief that I allowed him to escape through the open door, yo-yo, cricket, and all.

Happily, there are many species of "Thumbers" which should be protected. They don't walk to reduce, but are reduced to walking.

The last insect that we shall take up in this lesson flies only by night, the darker the better. The species is composed entirely of males, of high interest but low principle. They are sometimes discovered near boudoir windows, and even perched upon ladders. They have come to be called "Peeping Toms".

There was once one of these insects in our midst that carried a ladder more than a mile through the snow in order to gaze into the boudoir of the lady of his choice. That which he saw must have been pleasing. In later years he courted her in a more conventional way and they were united in holy matrimony!

All this might never have become common knowledge if the lady under observation had not, upon hearing strange and scraping noises outside her window, let go with a nerve racking scream of terror. This being the case, the ertswihle peeper abandoned his high perch and took off in rapid flight.

Soon a posse was organized, complete with lanterns, guns, and men. The hunt which followed, as they trailed him through the snow, has gone down in local annals as a case of incredibility. It is still believed that the territory covered by Peeping Tom in the short time consumed was an impossible feat. Be that as it may, they were led on a chase that would do credit to a seasoned red fox. The flight ran up hill, down hill, through swamps, across creeks, and finally back to the peeker's own door, which he had passed in the first leg of the chase. The posse being what they were, scared, called it a day!

Several years later a group was holding 'court' in the local store. And the subject of the mysterious peeper came up for discussion. One worthy citizen, who had taken part in the chase, made the remark; "If I knew who it was I'd lick him yet!"

This courageous remark had no more than been uttered when the huge figure of a man arose from among the loafers. Drawing back his bare fist, he smote the heavy stovepipe such a blow as to almost press it together.

"Well, by G., here he is!" quothe he. There appeared to be a lot of business to be taken care of elsewhere, for the court adjourned en bloc with no decisions handed down!

The Peeping Tom may be put to instant flight by hurling slops, of a rather dirty nature, upon him. This failing, red paint may be used. One must have a sense of humor to not use a shotgun. Neither slops nor paint is as lethal as lead, but it's more fun.

RELATIONS

Someone has said, "God gave us our relatives, but thank God we can choose our friends."

These tales would not be complete without a description of a visit which I once made, accompanied by Uncle Jebador, to some backwoods cousins.

The house itself was a huge affair, painted a dismal color, and not appearing the least bit hospitable. One of the many brothers met us at the door, the rest just sat.

Each sat in his own private chair in his own private corner. And all appeared deeply engrossed in their own thoughts, or troubles. Each and all, with the exception of two, seemed to be oblivious to one another, to the world, and especially to me.

The blazing logs in the large open fireplace cast glimmering reflections over the already darkening room. The room was a giant of a thing, large enough for a small ballroom. The home must have been built in those days when lumber was cheap. It contained enough to construct two or three fair-sized houses.

Almost everything, including the brothers, had the appearance of antiquity. Even the chairs groaned with every movement from the agony of their ages. The pictures on the wall spoke of another generation, the genealogy of whom were portrayed by each brother by their very mannerisms, from their permanent positions in the special corners. The only occasions of movement that I could detect which seemed to be worthy of consideration were quick shifts of their bodies from the right to the left, or vice versa, the better to emit an unerring stream of tobacco juice into the cheery fireplace. After this, unless the heat from the large logs did not reach too great an intensity, they would again sink back into oblivion.

Just when the silence would become unbearable, one or the other who had before shown signs of speech would venture a remark. To this I would eagerly reply, hoping to awaken the others from their siesta. It was evident that my enthusiasm was entirely lost upon them.

It would seem that the only room that was ever used in the house was the kitchen, which answered the purpose of dining room too. Of course, there was a large front room, but this was used entirely for funerals, the curtains never being raised. To be sure, there were other rooms someplace, perhaps bedrooms. But it appeared to me that they were more or less a useless luxury. From the nature of the men it seemed a waste of energy to climb a flight of stairs to go to bed when the same result was obtained from their nests in the living room.

As if to recompense for the laziness of their brothers, two maiden sisters toiled unceasingly in the kitchen. The younger of these looked to be so frail that it occurred to me, a sudden gust of wind would without doubt carry her into the next county. What she lacked in physical avoirdupois she made up for in ambition, and speech, the word of which must have sprung from an inexhaustible source. To have to listen to her for a few moments, one did not blame the speechlessness of her brothers. They long since had realized the futility of further attempts at conversation!

Each of these men had two names. They were seldom called by the real one. Thus, there were Pete, Dudley, Buck, Deacon, Jake, Bell, and Sis. I was never able to tell who was which of these mountain boys.

Lest, (when and if) my children should read this with affront because they have not been made major characters, this shall be attended to with dispatch.

There was the time when my eldest son cut his hand on a rock. He related that he had fallen and in an effort to save himself his hand came into contact with a sharp stone. Facts were revealed several years later to dad. Eldest son had borrowed his father's .32 revolver which he discharged accidentally, plowing fissure through left palm.

Same eldest son neatly (?) patching bullet hole inside house with Scotch tape, then painting to match surrounding wall and moving chair from its accustomed spots to hide handiwork.

Younger son pitching rocks at elder brother with much vim and vigor. Elder son nimbly dodging and going away at a fast clip.

Same younger son making a determined effort to stone a butterfly out of the sky, thereby demolishing window in home in the attempt.

Same younger son (now much older) teeing off with golf ball and making hole in one, in one of dad's shop windows.

Same two sons, plus sister playfully tossing burning matches at each other. Result? Well, let's forget about it. I'm sure that they would rather!

Father of the same two sons, plus sister, helpfully showing how to pitch softball. With first pitch neatly tossing ball through his garage window.

Oh well, look who taught him!

All things, good or bad, must come to an end. If, among others, I have failed to mention Uncle Snagwit, or Cousin Slothot, it has been from forethought, not through forgetfulness. Some things are hard to forget, but silence on many subjects is admirable.

It is something like when Uncle Felix was going to write a family history. He stopped suddenly and completely when he discovered that his Cousin Jagger had been strung up for horse stealing until he was quite dead.

Each of us is a character who plays his or her span of acts upon the stage of life. If we would just stop and think, we are quite beyond the control of our neighbors. And what is more to the point, they are beyond ours.

When the governor on the old steam engines went haywire, the thing literally ran away, beyond control. Many of us have blown our stack in much the same manner. For the most part things like these are humorous, to the other fellow.

"Preach about the other man, preacher

The man we all can see!

The man who drinks and beats his wife,

Who helps his mates to fret and shirk

When all they need is to keep at work...

Preach about the man, preacher!

Not about me!"...

From "To the Preacher"

By Charlotte Gilman.

This has been about the other fellow in the main. I'm not too sure how Aunt Pristina would prize it, but I'm quite positive that Uncle Jebador would be very appreciative. And if he was not, the probabilities are that he would get the whole thing off his system by taking off for the barn, lustily singing "In that sweet bye and bye".