Time Like a Furrow

Essays by
James Hearst

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Iowa State Historical Department
Division of the State Historical Society
1981

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Several of the essays in this volume have been published previously in other forms. "Rites of Spring on the Farm" originally appeared in a somewhat different form as "Spring Rites on the Farm," in *Kansas Quarterly* 12 (Spring 1980): 91-97. Several statements made by the author in the essays originally appeared in other publications. Some appeared in "Young Poet on the Land," from *Growing Up in Iowa,* edited by Clarence Andrews ©1978 by The Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa 50010. Others were included in: Bill Witt, "A Conversation with James Hearst," *The Iowan* (Spring 1979): 14-22; and Judith Gildner, "An Interview with Iowa Poet James Hearst," *Midwest Review,* 2nd ser., 2 (Spring 1980): 38-45. Three of the essays appeared in a slightly different form in the *Palimpsest:* "We All Worked Together: A Memory of Drought and Depression," 59 (May/June 1978): 66-76; "Farm Life When the Power Changed," 60 (September/October 1979): 156-fol. 160; and "A Road through Summer," 62 (May/June 1981): 72-79. The three poems, "Protest," "Progress," and "Close the Accounts," have been reprinted by permission from *Snake in the Strawberries: Selected Poems by James Hearst* © 1979 by The Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa 50010. The title, *Time Like a Furrow,* was adapted from a line in "The Plowboy," from *Music for Seven Poems* © 1958 by the Iowa State Teachers College, now the University of Northern Iowa.

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Hearst, James, 1900—
Time Like a Furrow: Essays by James Hearst

I. Hearst, James, 1900- —Biography—Youth.
2. Poets, American—20th century—Biography.
3. Iowa—Social life and customs. 4. Country life—
Iowa. I. Title.
PS3515.E146Z475 818' .5203 [B] 81-13736
ISBN 0-89033-004-2 (cloth) AACR2
ISBN 0-89033-005-0 (paper)
Library of Congress Card Catalog Number 81-13736

For Paul Engle,
whose fields are clean and fences straight.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book emerged from a prolific but somewhat deceitful memory. It tricked me several times, but I put up with it as best I could. I received support from several people to whom I am most grateful. My friend and neighbor, Dr. Leland Sage, himself an historian of wide repute, brought me books and encouragement. My friend Carl Hamilton of Iowa State University made copies for me from manuscripts in the University Library and gave me valuable suggestions. Alan M. Schroder—the editor with whom I worked—cajoled, scolded, rearranged, repaired damage when I jumped the track, and helped shape the essays. My wife Meryl took on the task of proofreading, and she can spot an error at fifty paces that I wouldn't see if it kicked me in the shins. But I did my best, and the mistakes crept in by themselves.

All the experiences in this book are true and all the people are real. But I have at times used other than their real names to save embarrassment.

Foreword

KELLY'S WOODS

Kelly's Woods—our picnic grounds
on the banks of the Red Cedar River
five miles northwest of town.
The Beaver Valley Livestock Farm
opened its gates for us and we
drove along the fields past
Railroad Lake until we reached
the river. We tied our horses and
parked our cars outside the fence
and crawled through to a glade
open to the river, a forest of
tall trees at our backs. We built
fires to heat fried chicken and
coffee, we kids toasted marshmallows.
The whole family traipsed up there
several times each summer: aunts,
uncles, cousins, stray guests who
happened to be visitors.

Kelly's Woods—our doctor uncles
made us wait an hour after dinner
to go swimming. We waded out from
a long, sloping sandbar. If you cut
your foot it was on a clam shell,
not a beer can. My cousin wore
silk stockings and pulled up
her dress to show me her garters.
At fourteen I burned with the
fires of lust but when I sneaked
her off among the trees and we
lay hidden all I could do was
to ask her if she liked fish.

Kelly's Woods—too far up the river
for boaters but once a canoe slid by
with two young sprouts and their girls.
They spied my mother and aunt sitting
on the bank and called out vulgar names.
My uncle stepped out of the trees and
threw a chunk of wood in the water beside
the canoe. It splashed and soaked them
and they turned nasty and headed for the
shore to "beat the hell out of him."
But Lauritz, our hired man, who always
went on our picnics, had been target
shooting and stepped up with a rifle
in the crook of his arm. In his Danish
accent he said, "Ay tink you go now."
And they did.

Kelly's Woods—a kingfisher watched us
from a dead branch, a snake swam across
the river, head daintily erect,
butterflies hovered over the water.
We saw a hawk and called it an eagle
and wrestled each other to prove
we were right. We broke crusts
of fungus from a stump and built
an altar to burn as a sacrifice
a frog we caught. But my uncle called us
barbarians and we let the frog go.

Kelly's Woods—suddenly it was time
to go home. Tired, dazed with food,
sun and water we carried the baskets
to the fence and shouted good-bye, good-bye.
The woods aren't there anymore, maybe
they never were. We aren't there either,
scattered to city offices, retirement
homes, snug under headstones, memories
like darkened shadows of Kelly's Woods.

Balance Sheet: An Introduction

A balance sheet, however struck and for whatever purpose, sets out the only information it pretends to give, a record of gains and losses. But the items that make up this record must be set down with their values in order for a total figure to speak the truth. The records may have values that are not expressed in money terms. The bookkeeper who makes the record may use a different pencil than the one who draws up a financial sheet for the banker's files. There are accounts more revealing than the addition of figures, the sums of sales and expenses. There could be a balance sheet of time, one for achievement and failure, and one for change.

The financial balance sheet comes first to mind. In my grandfather's day, a drawer in an old desk held scraps of paper where someone had written, "Father sold hogs today and received $4.50 a hundred. He hauled them to town in a bobsled." Another slip of paper might say, "Father brought home a load of coal for which he paid $10.00, and a hundred pounds of flour, and a barrel of salt for the livestock." Sometimes the prices were mentioned, sometimes not. One entry says, "Some cloth for a dress for Mother, seemed very expensive." But we are not told what "expensive" meant in 1875. Perhaps the important financial balance sheet came after harvest, when the bank account showed money saved, or borrowed to pay debts.

My father showed spurts of record keeping. It seemed to depend mostly on how busy he was with field work. A man, after a long, hard day in the fields, may not have an inclination to jot down an expense—a trip to town for a spare part for a machine, or the sale of a young boar to a neighbor. Yet, after a fashion, Father did keep accounts. In a long, narrow, soft-cover book—it says

Close the Accounts

The putting away time shows up
on the calendar after frost prompts me
to turn the page. I grease sickles,
back the mower into the shed beside
the plow and planter, coil the hayrope
on a hook inside the barn, turn off
the water at the pump that runs to
the pasture, drain the tanks there.
This is the day to straighten barn doors
with new hooks and hinges, fold back gates
to the fields and let the cattle glean
the empty rows, to file away spring's
expectations with heart's discontent.
Labor has dried its sweat and written
its sum under the year's account. I
read what the granaries say, walk
through my autumn thoughts under a shower
of yellow leaves, my gains less than I'd
hoped, my losses more than I planned.

"Record Book" on the cover within a fancy scrollwork border—he set down the sale of a purebred bull calf, the price, and the name of the buyer.

One item in the record book reads, "80 hogs $1135.00." There is a yellow clipping from the Cedar Falls *Record* that says, "Today Charles E. Hearst delivered eight wagonloads of hogs to a livestock buyer at the Illinois Central stock yards. The sale totalled $1135.00." I remember that Father asked several of the neighbors to help haul the hogs to town.

On another page he listed, "Matt Jensen, hired man, wages $30 per month." In this same column might be "2 plugs chewing tobacco 35 cents," and "1 pr. overalls $1.90." Father would have bought these for Matt in town and deducted them from that month's thirty dollars.

There are several entries for a "pack of a dozen husking mittens $1.25." These mittens had thumbs sewed on both sides so that when the palm wore through, the mitten was turned over and the back made a new palm. A good husker would go through a pair of mittens in a day.

The documents in a lock box at the bank reveal that the gleam of El Dorado had led my father to disappointing investments. He bought a 160-acre farm west of Regina, Canada and two lots with a small house on them in Regina. He sold the farm years later for what he had paid for it. Even after his death, we received a small monthly check for the rent on the town lots from a real estate office in Regina. In the lock box, too, we found a certificate for shares in a Louisiana land company. I am sure it was a blue-sky company that clouded over once the stock was sold. And, though it is hard to believe, we found a certificate for one hundred shares of common stock in an oil drilling company formed to drill for oil near Cedar Falls. The only oil in Cedar Falls is in the service stations.

The passage of the Income Tax Act during the Wilson Administration showed the farmers that they needed more bookkeeping than slips of paper and cancelled checks to satisfy the IRS. Young men on the farms who had studied bookkeeping in high school

kept better records than their fathers. When my brother and I took over the farm, we used a double-entry system of bookkeeping with a daybook and a ledger. We joined the Northeast Farm Business Association and recorded such things as the amount of corn fed to each steer and hog, yields per acre, and actual farm expenses. These books were audited by the Extension Department of Iowa State University, and we learned how efficient we were and how we compared with other farmers in our class. Farming had become less a "way of life" than a business.

A balance sheet might be drawn up, too, for time—days, seasons, years—and here the gains and losses would be more difficult to estimate. His gamble with the weather engaged so much of a farmer's concern with time that his account would vary sharply from year to year. In a dry autumn when the frost did not come too early, we would have the corn all harvested by Thanksgiving. But in some years we husked corn (by hand) during Christmas vacation because an early freeze did not let the corn mature, so it would not keep unless frozen. Once, my father had the idea that he could grow winter wheat, and he came off well the first year. But the next year and the next and the next, the crop was winter-killed and, stubborn though he was, he admitted he was beaten. Another neighbor tried to grow flax. The field in flower resembled a beautiful blue lake, but by the time the seeds had set, the weeds had overcome the flax and smothered it.

There was no time for vacations when we were young. The serious business of farming did not admit such frivolity. We had to be content with the celebration of the holidays, especially the big family picnic on the Fourth of July. In the balance sheet of time, work took up most of the columns. The Bible says there is a time for this and a time for that, but we never read that there was a time to play, relax, and meditate. There was always that load of hay to be brought in before it rained. We behaved much as our neighbors did, and did not feel put upon because we had little spare time.

But we children found time to play. After the dishes were washed and wiped, the woodbox filled, the ashes cleaned out, the

chickens fed and watered, the eggs gathered, and the lawn mowed, we retreated into the country of imagination. The big maple grove planted by Grandfather—and it *was* big, forty rods wide and twenty rods deep—became Sherwood Forest, where Robin Hood sported with his Merry Men. We made bows and arrows and shot the King's deer and tripped up the Sheriff of Nottingham. Or we built a wigwam of horse blankets and poles and ate half-cooked sweet corn and potatoes by our campfire. At dusk the grove became kind of scary; no one knew what mysteries and monsters lay in its depths. We hit for the house before darkness came. These were good times, worth a page in the record book.

Another page could record how time wrote on people's faces with wrinkles and turned their hair gray. Age cannot be denied, and the day came when we had no grandmothers or grandfathers. Now and again, an uncle or aunt or cousin dropped away. But our mother and father were always Mother and Father, and age did not touch them in our eyes. But age moved us into older years, and we became inhabitants of a land where we took the consequences of our decisions and no one said that it didn't matter when we made the wrong choice. We hurried toward maturity as fast as we could, dreaming of the magic age of twenty-one, when we would be our own bosses. I wonder, do young people still feel fettered by the limits on their freedom?

Time carries you past the mileposts of the years faster than you imagine, and the day comes when you wonder where everyone went. The large family that gave you support and encouragement, that chastised you and dried your tears, all those relatives whom you took for granted have gone down the long road and disappeared. You stand naked in your aloneness and close the record book of time with sadness and regret.

Perhaps, too, there should be a balance sheet to weigh life's achievements and failures. I still remember the amused look on my father's face as he told Mother about one of Grandfather Hearst's escapades. Grandfather had been mowing hay with a team of mules. He brought them to the end of the lane where they would

around and around. A tumbling-rod ran from the rig, called a horsepower, to the sheller and turned its wheels. A man with a whip stood on a platform in the center of the horsepower and kept the teams moving. How I envied him, standing in authority over the horses, bundled up in a fur coat, turning, turning as the teams went around. The gasoline engine and the big steam engines that powered the threshing machines were on their way. But I do remember faintly the horsepower.

Education and technology have changed farm life. The information that is available to the farmer today is astonishing in its volume. He reads the farm magazines, of course. Estimates on livestock numbers come to him, as do the crop acreages and prospective yields, and the amount of agricultural exports. Extension services of the agricultural universities constantly publish price trends. The farmer has market reports coming to him by radio and television. He is taught "forward pricing," how he can hedge his crops and livestock on the Board of Trade and "lock in" his profits by buying and selling futures contracts. In my day, our banker would have had kittens with big furry tails and closed off our line of credit with a key if he suspected we were buying and selling futures. Now a banker will counsel a farmer on trading in the futures market as an ordinary procedure.

Many of the younger farmers today have studied land management, animal husbandry, price cycles, and the business of markets. But the farmer still plays many roles—land specialist, veterinarian, mechanic, manager, bookkeeper, dealer in crops and livestock. He either tests his soil for nutrients himself or sends samples to laboratories to learn his fertilizer needs. He uses complicated formulas for his livestock feed, and he innoculates, vaccinates, and medicates his pigs and calves. He attends meetings, conferences, and conventions in the hope that he will learn new answers to his problems. In addition, he is a father, a husband, and an active participant in church and community affairs. Some years he makes money, but farming is neither the easiest nor the quickest way to get rich.

Technology has given the farmer new and better tools to work

with. Men no longer work harder than machines. The high-horsepower tractors, the self-propelled combines and forage harvesters, the drying bins for bringing down the moisture in his crop, the new varieties of seeds, and the commercial fertilizers have given him the power and the material to increase his production. It has become popular to joke about the farmer in his air-conditioned cab, with hydraulic controls and monitors to tell him how the machine is behaving, but his push-button machines help put the food on our tables and stock the shelves of the supermarkets.

In our neighborhood, windmills no longer pump water, they no longer exist. Water is pumped by an electric motor. The tanks in the feedlots do not freeze over, because they are heated with bottle-gas heaters. The farmhouse has a bathroom, furnace, refrigerator, gas or electric stove, color television, and air conditioning. A septic tank takes care of the drains from bathroom and kitchen sink. There is a telephone, of course, and some farmers supplement it with a CB radio in truck or tractor.

Farm wives, if they aren't working in town, still have gardens. But they buy their bread and milk—and often their meat, vegetables, and fruit—in town at the supermarket. The family farm with a flock of chickens and a small herd of milk cows has passed into history, at least in our neighborhood.

The improvements in farm living make the old ways seem primitive by comparison. But they reflect some losses, too. True, the banker no longer says, as one banker told my father, "If you farmers would stay home and tend to business and not come running to town with your complaints, you'd get along all right." The banker today welcomes the farmer, helps him establish a line of credit, offers suggestions on financial transactions. There is often a farmer on the bank's board of directors. My brother served for years as a director on the board of our First National Bank.

I am glad to have been raised on a farm in the Midwest. To me, the Midwest is a land in its working clothes. Faith, food, and fiber abound here. We help feed the nation and parts of the outside

world, too. Our farmers are honest and responsible. These generalizations have their exceptions, I know, but they have truth in them. We have the contrasts of showplaces and rural slums, but not like in the cities.

Something has disappeared, though, that once had value. Our farm unit supported itself to a large extent. Our windmill pumped the water, the garden and orchard furnished our fruits and vegetables, we butchered and cured our own meat, grew and chopped up wood for heating and cooking, Mother baked our bread, often made our clothes. We chopped out the ice in stock tanks with an axe and built fires in the tank heaters with cobs and coal.

We enjoyed an independence not known today. Our talents of invention and repair rose to the surface when a new tongue was needed for a wagon, or a harness needed repair, or Mother asked for a hand to help with spring cleaning. We ruled the farm as our own domain.

Another loss may come from the amount of chemicals we pour into the land. Certainly we pollute the water and perhaps poison the land. Some of the fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides must seep into the water we drink, the food we eat. My old-fashioned ideas about rotated crops and fertilizer from the barnyard run counter to today's practices. The farm magazines and extension departments keep hammering away on how to increase yields through the use of more chemicals. A few radical farmers have come to the conclusion that organic farming may be the way to better things. May their tribe increase.

Another change has taken place. Since 1945 one and a half million acres of good Iowa soil have been overlaid with concrete for four-lane highways, shopping centers, mobile-home courts, and urban sprawl. (Wonderful term, "urban sprawl," it describes the trashy outskirts of our towns and cities so well.) This says nothing of the millions of tons of Iowa topsoil that float down the Mississippi each year. It takes a hundred years to make an inch of topsoil. Perhaps more grassland, more terraces, more strip farming, more contoured hills planted to row crops may save us if we

Progress

Own all the land you can get,
tile the sloughs, blast the rocks,
burn the trees in the grove,
level the hills and bury the creek,
you bought it to make it pay, didn't you?
Fence it, fence it, heavy gauge woven wire
with three barbed wires on top—show
who's the owner. You can act like
a king and say, by god, what shall
be done and not done, what field plowed,
(even the old sod pasture) and which
one souped up with fertilizer. It's
your land, isn't it? Poison the gophers,
trap the raccoons, shoot the crows,
all enemies of profit, whose farm is it
anyway? You give it the works and get
used to the mortgage on your back.
And won't you be surprised some
morning, oh, who knows when, but later on
some fine morning a man like you with a
gimp in his leg, and a tricky heart and
shaky hands will pound in a stake and nail
a board on it that says FOR SALE.

shake ourselves loose from the idea of making the immediate dollar and take the long look.

Then, too, farming has become somewhat of a closed profession. Unless a man inherits a farm or has a rich father-in-law, his ambition to be a farmer may wither on the vine. The hired man who, on thirty dollars a month, could save enough to start farming has become a mythical figure. The young man who would break into the farm world today needs huge capital resources.

I wonder if we can really own the land. We are here such a short time, but the land stays. By combining our work, sweat, worry, and hopes with the land we become part of it. We should be its stewards and share in its cycle of growth, death, and rebirth. We need to look hard at our feelings of ownership, and instead of being possessors of the land, we should be partners with it.

We might better approach the land in a spirit of reverence. It is not only a natural resource, but also a kind of spiritual inheritance, where we participate in more than the acquisition of material things. I like the Indian phrase, "Earth Mother."

We used to go out on Sunday mornings with my father. We would survey the crops and livestock, the garden and orchard. It was good to see them thriving to prove that we were good husbandmen. A man who works the land is more than a worker. He puts ground, seed, work, and weather together and creates something new, something that did not exist before.

PEOPLE

The Orchard Man

Grandfather came from a town meeting country,
a meeting house man with no give to his morals,
who built his own home in the middle west frontier
homesick for New Hampshire, its mountains and laurels.

In Black Hawk county in the Red Cedar valley
he laid down his corners and sighting from these
to a slow roll of ground he raised up a farmhouse,
a simple white farmhouse surrounded by trees.

But he never understood soil quite so fertile,
these plains of abundance seemed almost a sin
to someone brought up on New England economy
where the spirit was strong but the living was thin.

He knew about stones and their place in foundations
and fields small enough to be planted by hand.
He wouldn't acknowledge the length of his corn rows,
he was awed by a farm that was nothing but land.

He withdrew to an orchard encrusted with beehives,
with man more than honey his theme of research,
where he taught his grandsons with tough righteous spirit
the difference in duty to state and to church.

He taught them the habit of steadily breathing
the clear air of freedom to nourish the blood,
he taught them to listen to contrary speeches
and not give an inch from the place where they stood.

His principles never spared anyone judgment
though his eyes were less stern than the words that he spoke
when he was correcting a neighbor's opinions—
he was mostly disliked by respectable folk.

He never had any expense with decision
his will kept paid up his conscience account
no debt ever languished for his want of action
no matter how large or how small the amount.

The man who came begging got more than he asked for
while Grandfather helped him chop wood for his food
he examined his faith and his concept of duty
the tramp usually left us as fast as he could.

He liked to bewilder the trees in the orchard
by grafting strange twigs on their staid humble boughs,
while his sons and his daughters nagged at the mortgage
by raising black pigs and by milking red cows.

Grandfather kept to his apples and beehives
where his praise and reproof were our fear and delight,
he made up small sermons to accent the labor
he spent in deciding his world's wrong and right.

When he took to his bed Grandfather requested
that his grave be marked by a New England stone
as if he and granite had habits in common—
he died as he'd lived, unafraid and alone.

Two Traditions: Hearst and Schell

When I began a poem with the lines, "Grandfather came from a town meeting country/A meeting house man with no give to his morals," I meant Grandfather Hearst. He came out of the New England atmosphere through Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois to our farm in Iowa. He had a white beard and long, white hair, and I wondered sometimes if he was a saint, he was so strict in his behavior—and everyone else's too. He wore a worn cloak of Calvinism steeped in the dye of the Scotch Presbyterian Church. In the absence of a local Scotch Presbyterian church, he attended the Congregational church at Sixth and Clay streets in Cedar Falls. Grandfather never told me how he acclimated himself to the more liberal orthodoxy of the Congregationalists. Perhaps Grandmother Hearst had something to do with it. She was a more even-tempered and less restless soul and—though she came from Vermont and said "idear" and "Bah Hawbah"—we loved her wide, warm lap.

James Hearst, for whom I was named, was no Thoreau, but money did not head the list of his needs. He told me once, "The Hearsts have always been deacons and farmers and teachers and never accumulated much of this world's goods." There was a grim satisfaction in his tone, too. He did not shirk the responsibility of caring for his family—he never shirked any responsibility—to keep them well-clothed, well-fed, and well-educated. But money? He marched to a different music. He walked with pleasure the hidden paths of what he called Nature. I discovered this by an error in judgment.

I must have been about seven years old. Somehow I had acquired some heavy rubber bands. I cut a forked tree branch, persuaded Mother to cut out a small patch of leather from an old shoe

top, and made a catapult (or I said, "a slingshot"). Grandfather had built a house for purple martins, and each spring he fastened it to a pole just beyond the back door of his house. Every spring the martins came back and, to his joy, filled the house. I don't know how he kept the English sparrows from building in it, but he did.

With my new slingshot and a pocketful of small stones, I was ready for bear. Pigeons circled around, but too high for my firepower; the sparrows would not sit still long enough for me to take good aim. One fusillade at the cat and the cat absented herself. I was afraid to shoot at the dogs. But right before my lustful eye sat a martin on a perch of the martin house. I loaded my weapon and fired away.

I didn't have time for a second shot. My shoulder shrank under a firm grip, and there was Grandfather, stern of face and voice. I was his namesake and favorite grandchild, but it did not show now. "Never let me see you do that again," he said. "These birds are our guests. I invite them to come and stay with us. And I will not have you shooting at them as if we wanted to scare them away."

His tone was as stern as his expression, and I thought he wore a stern face most of the time. But his voice chilled me and I hastily stuffed the catapult into my pocket, lest he take it from me.

His words sank in, too. After I grew up and could use either rifle or shotgun with skill, I did not kill with any pleasure. The hunting fever never infected me. Predators that came for Mother's chickens—weasel, skunk, rat, crow—I could knock off without a qualm. I have shot ducks, pheasants, rabbits, squirrels for the table, but never with the lust to kill.

My father loved to hunt wild ducks and geese. Once he took me with him. We walked stealthily up Beaver Creek. It was a beautiful October day, all gold and blue. We crept under some trees that shaded a pool. I was in front of Father. The water in the pool looked black with a few yellow leaves floating on it. A mallard drake and hen swam slowly through the leaves. It was a picture from a story book. I leaned on my gun and watched until the ducks, warned perhaps by instinct, slowly flew away.

Father shook his head. He touched me on the shoulder. "Son," he said, "you are one hell of a hunter." But I think he was not displeased.

Sometimes, on a stormy winter evening, Grandfather would gather us all around the fireplace. After we had popped a dishpan full of popcorn and brought up some Juicy Pippins from the basement, he would read Whittier's *Snow-Bound* to us. We lay on the carpet at his feet, stuffed with popcorn and apples, drowsy from the fire. There were four of us—Louise, James, Robert, and Charles—and sometimes our cousins Helen and James McAlvin joined us. Chuck, the youngest, must have been only four years old. I doubt if *Snow-Bound* meant as much to him as the popcorn and apples. Grandfather read most of the poem, and it is a long poem. His voice did not drone on and on; he read with the intensity of appreciation. The poem meant something special to him, perhaps because he knew the Whittier landscape.

He made friends with Nature's children. I remember his pet crow named Scipio Africanus. It could talk. Someone asked Grandfather if he had slit the crow's tongue so it could talk, and he recoiled in horror. This kind of cruelty disturbed him; his morals may have been granite-faced but he was a kind man. He rescued two baby flying squirrels and they lived in his house. They loved to run up the curtains and peek their little heads out over the valance. They would sit on Grandfather's shoulder while he fed them cracker crumbs or walnut meats. They ran from us. I caught one once and it bit me. We let them alone after that. We seldom saw them, but we could hear them behind the curtain or under the cushions or in the woodbox.

He transplanted all the wildflowers he could find into the big maple grove. On a crisp spring morning it delighted us to find banks and clumps of wildflowers in bloom, hidden under leaves, behind trees, or throwing out their colors in small, open glades. He taught us the names of wildflowers, weeds, and grasses. We all knew this kind of botanical lore before we went to school. He loved trees and planted rows of them leading from the big grove to the farm lot.

He planted a large orchard of apple trees, cherry trees, and plum trees. South of the orchard he planted two rows of grapevines (we had enough grapes to start a winery) and next to the grapes a huge blackberry patch. He planted rows of currant bushes, a huge asparagus bed, strawberries enough to break our backs when we picked them, and a long row of rhubarb at the edge of the garden. He was a planting man.

He protected these plants and trees. Mother and Father built their house across the way from Grandfather's. A large box elder tree stood near the kitchen window. Mother so disliked box elder bugs that she persuaded Father to cut the tree down. The next morning Grandfather entered our kitchen, held my mother's face in his two hands and asked, "Child, do you know how long it takes a tree to grow?"

By the time I was old enough to trek around after him, Grandfather had given up active farming. My father took charge of the farm; his older and younger brothers high-tailed for Iowa City, where they took degrees in the medical school. Grandfather became a bee and orchard man. He must have had forty beehives out in the orchard. He made his own frames for the honeycomb, frames to load the supers. He had a little tack hammer, magnetized on one side of the head, that would pick up the tack and let him hammer it in place. He soaked the strips of frame in water so they would bend easier when he forced them to form a square. When he handled the hives, he wore a hat with a veil around it but nothing on his hands and arms. I would stand back a good long distance and watch the bees crawl all over him and apparently never sting him.

I followed Grandfather around as if he were my lord and master. Once, one of my aunts made me sit on a hassock for five minutes as punishment for some minor peccadillo (spinster aunts' formidable ways scared me into submission). Grandfather came by, took me by the hand, and said, "James, we are going to the orchard to graft some trees."

In agony, because I wanted to go with him, I said, "But I can't, I have to sit here for five minutes."

Seeming not to have heard me, he pulled me up and started for the door. I looked at him in awe; he wasn't afraid of Aunt Mamie or Aunt Jennie, he paid no attention to them.

Yet there was something formidable about the Hearst character. The Hearsts based their lives on principle and there was no leniency in those principles. True, we could lie on the sitting-room floor in Grandfather's house and read Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* without reproof, and we liked to because the carpet lay on a bed of straw that was renewed each fall after threshing. We loved the soft roll and spring underneath as we lay snug in front of the fireplace. The fireplace itself signalled a New England background. No one else in our neighborhood or among our friends had a fireplace.

A deep current of family feeling ran through all of us, but the dreary plains of Calvinism frosted our emotions. The outward show of affection never appeared. The family did not give or receive embraces, caresses, loving hugs and touches. Even the language was pared down to bare, clean essentials. At funerals of friends and relatives, grief gave us solemn faces but permitted no display of tears and breast beating. Emotions remained buttoned up behind stoic faces.

We were more Scotch than Irish and more New England than either. Our lives centered on principles of decency, good sense, high-minded thinking, and hard work. No one extolled work as a virtue, but idleness stood next to fraud and deceit in the catalogue of sins. Sex was beyond the pale; it lay under all our palaver as something unclean and degrading and unmentionable. Strange, too, on a farm, where fertility ranks as the leading spirit.

Duty—the word rang in our blood like a fire bell. We understood that once a task became ours to complete, come hell or high water, it became our responsibility. We never questioned, but slogged through our chores and moral purpose with the fear of damnation in our hearts. One did not tell lies, one respected the dignity of older people, one kept silent in adult company, and one filled the woodbox when it was empty without being told. We all accepted responsibility, and duty was bred into our bones. We didn't have New England forebears for nothing. Duty, account-

ability, responsibility, these words rode us hard. Sometimes I wondered if we did not overwork our sense of obligation. To this day I do not suffer gladly folk who do not keep appointments or come late to an agreed time.

The Hearst clan regarded education as a necessity. Almost all my uncles and aunts had taught school at one time. My Aunt Mamie (Mary F.) taught in the English Department of the Iowa State Normal School and retired late in life as a member of the faculty of the Iowa State Teachers College. A family legend assumed that someone either taught or attended the institution (which became the University of Northern Iowa) from the time it began until I retired in 1975. There must have been a few hiatuses, but not many.

We always had books around us, both at Grandfather's house and our own. We learned to read and were read to before we started to country school. Like attending church, going to school stood as a taken-for-granted responsibility. We never questioned it. Religion and education walked hand in hand with the New England conscience. Man, by being born, inherited an obligation to work and work hard.

It seems like a bleak land where I grew up, but truth includes more than this. We played our games, slid down shed roofs, made friends of all the young animals on the farm. Father took time from his busy life to play with us, and we loved to see him hit a ball so high in the air we could scarcely see it. Father hungered for playtime too; he never had enough games when he was a boy. And after Grandfather had gone, things loosened up at our house on Sundays. We played catch, even went swimming, and by the time I was in college I pitched a little semi-pro baseball to increase my scanty pocket money, and this was permitted, though frowned on.

Grandmother Hearst, Maria Hearst, came out of Vermont and belonged to the Dane family; one of her uncles was with Ethan Allen at Ticonderoga. She did not seem as rock-ribbed as Grandfather. She lived by principles and high-mindedness, too, but she showed no will to enforce them for other people. She seemed to say, "Let them find their own guiding lights."

She owned a quiet sense of humor, too. She told my mother soon after Mother and Father were married, "Katharine, let me make a suggestion. When James comes prancing in before I have dinner ready and starts to growl, I simply set the table. Once he sees the table set, he feels convinced that dinner is on the way. He sits down and reads, meek as a lamb."

No one was more hospitable than Grandmother Hearst. It was never too much trouble to set another place at the table for a visitor. And no matter if the meal consisted only of cornmeal mush and milk, there was always enough to go around.

Grandfather had one quirk that intrigued me. He never sat squarely facing the dining-room table, but always at an oblique angle. I asked Grandmother once why he did this, and she said, "So there is room on his lap for you children." Then, with a sigh she added, "James likes to read at the table and he sits so he won't soil his book or paper with the food."

When I was growing up, I seemed to live my life in two ways. When I laid down the rules for some game or project we children engaged in, my cousin, Helen McAlvin, would storm out with, "Quit being so bossy, you're just like Grandpa Hearst." But inside I lived a rich, deep experience in my imagination with the world the way it should be and not the way it was. I owe much of this inner world to the other tradition in which I grew up, the Schell tradition.

I never knew Grandfather Schell—Joseph Schell—until he came to live with us. I did not know or remember Grandmother Schell at all. She died of tuberculosis ("consumption" they called it then) before I was old enough to know who she was. It was when Grandfather Schell moved to our house that my friendship with him began. He showed as much courage and independent spirit as our New England relatives, but he lived more quietly. He was a gentle, warm-hearted grandfather who indulged his grandchildren without restraint.

Grandfather Schell was a pioneer, in his own way. As a young man, he left Bavaria and came to the United States. Born and

raised near the Black Forest, apprenticed to a cabinetmaker, he grew up with an artist's feeling for wood and the ways it could be shaped. A man of peace and a home lover, he rebelled against conscription. When he reached the age of military service, he refused to become part of the Kaiser's army and fled his native land. Since his parents lived in a small village, he knew little of the outside world, but, alone and with no language but his own, he crossed the ocean to a strange country. Perhaps this refusal to become a soldier marked the one time in his life when he made a badge of his courage. The Bavarians are not like the Prussians, he once told me.

When he arrived in the United States, he travelled directly to Montezuma, Iowa, where he had a letter of introduction to a German family in the furniture business. He worked in the store while he learned the customs and language of his adopted land. I do not know how many years he worked for this man whose name I do not know, but he saved his money and bought the store and became a merchant in this small town. To keep his hand in his trade, he repaired furniture and sometimes could be induced to make furniture for people with special needs and desires. He kept the store until his wife died, when he sold it and joined us at Maplehearst Farm.

He lacked the intensity of religious dogma of the Hearsts. He was born, baptized, and raised a Roman Catholic. He told me that all Bavarians named Joseph were Catholics. Perhaps so, he may have been joking; he liked to entertain us with little stories and fables he made up. Religion apparently played little part in his new life, for he married a German Lutheran, Anna Schmidt, and my mother attended the Methodist church in Montezuma.

Mother was the fourth of seven children. Her eldest sister, Louisa, died of consumption before she reached her twentieth birthday. A younger brother, Fred, who ran away from home, apparently died of consumption in Denver, though the family never was sure. From what Mother told me, Fred wanted to be a musician, a pianist, and his father insisted that this was no way to make a living. Rather than be, as he felt, indentured to the furni-

ture business, he ran away and the family never heard from him again. But a neighbor who saw him in Denver said he was in the last stages of the disease.

Grandfather Schell insisted on an education for his children. They not only finished high school, they went on to college. The small town protested at the idea and expense of sending girls to college. When my aunt Ida finished high school and decided to be a doctor, the superintendent of the high school stopped her one day and said, "Ida, you don't need to go to college, you know enough now."

But Aunt Ida enrolled in the medical school at the University of Iowa. We probably have no idea what a rough time she had. Both the students *and* faculty protested the appearance of a woman in the medical school. She suffered so much discrimination and provocation that she left the University of Iowa and obtained her medical degree from the Rush Medical School in Chicago. She received her diploma in the year 1902, one of the few accredited woman doctors of her day.

She set up practice in Milwaukee and had a large number of women and children for her patients. She was elected a member of the school board and made herself unpopular by insisting on the construction of one-story schoolhouses so that handicapped children and children with rheumatic hearts would not have to climb stairs. She won out, too, but the victory cost her many friends and patients.

Mother attended Cornell College at Mt. Vernon for two years and was then appointed secretary to the president of the Iowa State Normal School at Cedar Falls. Mr. Jarnagin, a newspaper editor and member of the Board of Education (later Board of Regents), suggested Mother for the position because, he said, "Those Schell girls are all smart."

Mother's sister Viola finished Cornell College and until she retired was secretary to the Iowa State Board of Public Instruction.

Perhaps a ferment and eagerness for more education dominated the times, I do not know. But I suspect that Grandfather Schell

determined to make the most of the opportunity to educate his children in a country where educational opportunities were open to everybody. In the Germany he came from, only the rich and well-born went to the colleges and universities.

Grandfather Schell must have been in his late sixties or early seventies when he came to live at our home. He set up one room in the basement for his workshop. I remember it had south windows, because the winter sun flooded the room with light. He constructed a long, heavy workbench under the windows. At one end he attached a wooden vise that he had made; he had even made the large wooden screw that pulled the jaws of the vise together when the handle was turned. He made places for his tools along the wall above the bench, though he kept his clamps and mallets and planes in his tool chest. A small stove stood next to the chimney, and it seemed to me that a pot of glue was always slowly boiling on it.

He had become somewhat hard of hearing, though he could understand our shrill, childish voices more readily than the voices of adults. He worked with his beloved wood and always had boards curing on brackets overhead. I still have the oak library table he made for Mother. Once in a while he would repair some wagon wheel or bolster where the pieces needed to be fitted accurately and with precision. But I think he scorned the rough, jackknife sort of carpentry that went on in the farm toolhouse.

When we discovered his skill with wood, we clamored for attention. He made real horse heads for our stick horses, painted and with glass eyes. He made us bow guns that we could put up to our shoulders and pull the trigger. These bow guns drove an arrow much faster and farther than our bows could do, and we had to take care where we aimed them. He refused to put points on the arrows, but even the hard knobs of wood could maim a cat or kill a chicken. I asked him to make me an around-the-corner gun and he said he would think about it.

We learned quickly to keep our hands off his tools. Here Grandfather showed a stern face and sharp tongue. He was our first experience with an old-country artisan, a person whose pride in his

workmanship was equal to his skill. So we watched him hour after hour, fascinated by the care and precision with which he put things together. Mortise and tenon joints, how carefully he fitted them. He used either glue or screws to fasten pieces together; I never saw him drive a nail except as a temporary stay. We learned for the first time what it meant to create something fine and enduring with the hands of a craftsman. He taught us that it is never too much trouble to do what you are doing as well as you can do it.

There was something warm and comfortable about Grandfather Schell. We could always go to him in time of need. When we had been scolded by Mother or Father we would run to him and know he would put his arms around us and assure us that it would be all right after a while. If the distress caused tears to flow, he would rock in his rocking chair, hold us on his lap or between his knees, and say softly, "Ja, ja, ja, it will go away." We found safe refuge in his arms and lap.

I don't remember that his speech carried much of an accent, but he would sing folk songs to us in German and tell us tales of the Black Forest. Apparently we understood him; we never asked for a translation. We knew something of the German language before Grandfather came to our home. Mother read *Grimm's Fairy Tales* to us in German, and I knew the German alphabet before I did the English one.

He was neat and clean about his person, though he did take snuff. He never went to church. Moments of loneliness and depression may have come to him, but for us children he showed a sunny, amiable disposition, and he did not attempt to correct our manners or improve our behavior.

Perhaps because he lived with us, Grandfather Schell seemed to belong to us children. Not quite of the family, yet someone to be counted on in time of need. I can see him in our living room, by the window in his rocking chair with Chuck on his lap (Charles was named Charles Joseph), humming some old German tune or reciting some poetry. I never hear Heine's "Du bist wir eine blume" without thinking of Grandfather Schell.

Mother enjoyed his presence. For one thing, he did all the little

repair jobs around the house that my father disliked and usually avoided. Once in a great while when Grandfather took us off into the land of giants and caverns filled with gold, of warriors with invincible swords, Mother would say, "Now, Father, don't give the children bad dreams." Bad dreams? We loved those stories, even if they were told in German.

Grandfather Schell died as quietly as he had lived. It seems to me he was with us one day and the next day he went upstairs and lay down on his bed and was gone. Mother wept a little. His body was returned to Montezuma for burial.

The house seemed empty for a long time.

The Schell family never took to the Hearst family. No show of antagonism or resentment, no one ever gave the cold shoulder on either side, but there lacked a rapport, a solid ground of friendship. Perhaps it was just the difference between the German and Scotch-Irish.

There was something of the clan about the Hearst family, with Grandfather Hearst as the chieftain. A glue of a kind of possessiveness held them together. They criticized, instructed, and supported each other. They rallied to give aid to any member in trouble. They rallied, too, to rescue severely any member who had fallen from grace, from the paths of rectitude as the family saw those paths.

There was no bickering or faultfinding in the Schell family. The ties were looser; each one went his or her own way without directions and comments from the others. They had more of the artist's need to work out his or her own destiny without consultation or reproach. They were in touch with each other in friendly but undemanding attitudes. They came when called on and offered their services willingly, but never without an invitation.

A rigid system of morals stiffened the backbone of the older Hearsts. Father belonged to a tribe that not only frowned on but forbade smoking, drinking, dancing, card playing, and idle chatter. These were the devil's temptations. Mother came from a culture less restricted in its covenants. She brought an appreciation

of art, music, books to our family. She did not have the same addiction to the infallibility of work as the Hearsts did.

The two traditions merged in the great stream of human values. We inherited a respect for the educated person who has the courage of independent thought and action. Prejudice never showed its ugly head. Until I was grown I did not know we were excluded from the society of people called Jews, Catholics, and Negroes.

Both grandfathers in different ways emphasized the sacredness of life. For them each living thing had the right to live. Grandfather Hearst would even hem and haw over the decision to cut down a tree. I learned that one does not trifle with the creative forces of nature. No one said it like this, but it was the message I received.

One tradition brought from New England the disciplined attitude of people who know that salvation does not come without work, thrift, and moral stamina. It brought a need to build schoolhouses and churches and to provide against hardship by enduring hardship. The other tradition brought from Germany the love of native culture, the admiration for men of genius—the music makers, poets, storytellers—for the knowledge of cultural monuments dedicated to all people who learn that the ways of life can become richer and lifted above the imperatives of earning our way with our burdens, burdens we are destined to carry until we die.

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Church

Even after I grew up and shed my feeling of guilt, Sunday mornings stirred my memory with the duty of attending church. The long finger of God pointed to my sins and omissions on this day, and I made my atonement by going to church. As long as Grandfather Hearst lived, come Sunday morning—winter and summer, rain and sun, come hell or high water—our whole family gathered gloves, handkerchiefs, Bibles, and contributions and drove five miles to the First Congregational Church in Cedar Falls. Grandfather never took salvation for granted. He belonged to the Scotch Presbyterian faith, but there was no church of that denomination in our town, so he settled for the Congregationalists.

Grandfather's kind face wore a grim expression as he led his flock down the aisle to the family pew. I stood in awe of the Scotch Presbyterian belief; no fire on Sunday and Sunday was always called "the Sabbath." Never any games or high spirits were allowed. But once in a while, on a rainy Sunday afternoon, Grandmother allowed us a game of jackstraws or a journey through Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* with its fascination, the illustrations of rack, fire, and thumbscrews. My father said that when he was young he was not even allowed to throw a corncob on Sundays.

Grandfather had helped build the church. With four horses hitched to a stoneboat he hauled the red stones to Sixth and Clay streets, where the church was erected. Rather small, it stood out as one of the most attractive churches in Cedar Falls. Its lovely stained-glass windows softened the light and broke it into many colors to fall on sinner and saint alike seated in the hard, stiff-backed pews. On a hot Sunday morning in the summer, the

varnish on the pews would soften and stick to the back of shirts and dresses. I liked to lean slowly ahead and hear the ripping noise my shirt made as it pulled away from the pew. It was one relief from the abject misery of sitting still while the voice from the pulpit droned on and on.

Usually Sunday mornings followed a familiar routine. Father and the hired men hurried through the chores. Mother and the hired girl prepared a breakfast that could be eaten quickly, and the dishes were washed and dried. Louise helped, but she was not yet old enough to trim lamp wicks and clean the chimneys. Mother and the hired girl peeled potatoes, fixed a chicken for the oven, cleaned and cut up whatever vegetables were in season, and set out the cherry or apple or pumpkin pies that had been baked the day before. Mother tried to have the food ready as soon as possible after we came home. The sermon lasted until twelve o'clock, it took an hour to drive home, and we were starved by that time. I remember that when we were very young, Mother would bring a lunch with us and halfway home we would stop and eat it.

But one Sunday our routine erupted in a series of crises. I don't know why, but it seemed that one mischief led to another. And it took all day for these small storms to work themselves out into the calm of evening. It was a hot, steamy morning, a few puddles left in the road from last night's rain. We scurried around making the usual preparations for church.

Father stropped his wicked-looking straight-edged razor on a leather strap. After he finished shaving, he called us to the sink and washed our necks and ears. I had shined the shoes and polished both the toes and heels. (Father always looked to see if the heels had been brushed, too, and if the mud had been scraped out along the soles.) Louise and I could dress ourselves, but Mother helped Robert and dressed Baby—we still called Charles "Baby," though he was three years old. He had long yellow curls that Father threatened to cut off every time he helped dress him.

I hated dressing up. I pulled on long black stockings that fastened to garters hung from a belt around my waist. I despised those stockings; they always wrinkled, would never stay smooth

and tight. Then I hitched up my short pants and buttoned them to my shirt. Two things baffled me: the top button of my stiff, starched collar and the buttons on my shoes. I never could find the buttonhook, and my nails split trying to button those shoes. When we were dressed, Mother gave the order, "You children sit still and don't move until we are ready to go." She went upstairs and lit a lamp and laid a curling iron across the chimney to heat. Then she made fuzzy curls over her forehead. I thought she looked beautiful.

The quiet downstairs lasted about as long as two shakes of a lamb's tail. Baby jumped up and started for the door. Louise, the little mother, caught him around the waist and lugged him back. She tried to pull him onto her lap, but she let him go when she saw how her dress wrinkled. She puckered up her face as if to cry and Baby sashayed across the parlor and out the front door. No one noticed, but soon Louise ran to the door and stared. She shrieked, "Mama, Mama, come quick, oh look at Baby!"

Mother came dashing downstairs, dressed in corset and petticoat. She looked out the door. Right by the steppingstone where people got in and out of buggies and carriages a muddy pool had formed. Baby leaned over, dipped his long curls in the water, then raised up and let the muddy water run down his white suit. He crowed with delight. Mother swayed against the doorway, covered her eyes with one hand and moaned, "Oh, no . . ."

Mother redressed Baby in a hurry, and he squalled at such rough handling. Then Father asked her to tie his tie. Finally, she slipped into her dress, put on a hat with quick jabs of hatpins, picked up her gloves and Bible, glared at all of us and said, "Are we all ready now and in our right minds?" She herded us out the front door. Father went to bring up the carriage; the team had been tied up to the corncrib.

The house where Grandfather and Grandmother Hearst lived was just across a wide yard from our house. We called it the "middle yard" because one driveway went past their house and one past ours from the road out to the barns. A hitching post stood in front of the house. Grandfather's horse and buggy were

tied there. Father looked across the yard to see if they were all ready when Grandfather came running out of the house in his shirt sleeves and wearing his bee hat. He pounded on a dishpan.

"Oh, for God's sake," said Father.

"Charlie!" admonished Mother.

"The bees are swarming," called Grandfather. "Charles, bring another dishpan to put them in. Hurry up before they fly away."

Mother pressed her lips in a thin line. We knew she was upset. She clutched her purse and Bible. "What's Grandpa going to do?" I asked and stood up in the carriage, fascinated by the whole business.

"He is trying to keep a swarm of bees from flying away," Mother said. Then she muttered to herself, "When will Charlie stop being an errand boy for his father?"

"What's that, Mama?" Louise asked.

"Oh, nothing, nothing, we'll be late again for church. No wonder everybody calls us 'the late Hearsts.' "

Grandfather placed a panful of bees in front of an empty hive. Father came bouncing over the yard with springy steps. He jumped into the carriage, grabbed the reins from Mother, and slapped the horses. "Git!" he said. The half-Morgans he drove were nervous, high spirited. They jumped into their collars, jerking the carriage. We felt our heads snap back, Baby fell off the seat where Louise was trying to hold him.

It was a moment of confusion for everyone except Father; he had his feet braced. He forgot to look around, especially beneath the carriage. When we swung into the churchyard behind the church, where the horses were tied, the team in a sweat and Mother cross, out from under the carriage bounded Carlo, tail wagging, tongue dripping. He looked so pleased I jumped down and hugged him.

"That confounded dog again," Father snapped. "I've a notion to beat the living tar out of him." He pinched Carlo's ear until he yelped softly. Father told him, "You get in that carriage and stay there." Carlo jumped into the space between the front and back seats and lay down.

"Nice doggie," cooed Baby.

Bob took a more serious view. "I guess he just wanted to go to church."

When we entered the vestibule we saw the congregation standing to sing the first hymn. "Thank goodness," breathed Mother. Father shook his head at the usher who wanted to lead us to our regular pew. He nodded toward the Sunday School room at the back of the church. It was open. The big sliding doors had been slid back and rows of folding chairs filled the room. It was almost filled, but people moved over and let us have the front row.

Father picked up a hymnbook, found the place, and was singing away as if he had been there all the time. But when he sat down the two little iron lugs that held the seat firm when it opened broke off. The seat swung down and Father with it, bang, on the floor. We all giggled. Mother bent over and whispered anxiously, "Are you all right?"

Father grunted and struggled to rise. Two or three men tiptoed over to see if they could help. The minister hemmed and hawed to kill time. One of the ushers whispered, "I wouldn't sit on that seat, I think it's broken."

Father came right out in his everyday voice, "Of course it's broken. Do you think I fell down on purpose?" It seemed so loud that all the people back there jumped. Then Mother glared at Father and he glared back and went to sit in another seat across the aisle.

I liked the anthem and responsive reading, and the collection plate interested me briefly as it slid past. But when the sermon began I yawned and slumped down in my seat. Then I picked up a hymnbook and tried to read the verses. (I was only seven but I read with the sixth grade at school.) But pretty soon Mother's hand firmly closed the book and put it on her lap.

I began to squirm, my feet barely touched the floor. The clock on the mantle seemed to be losing time. Then, out of the corner of my eye, I saw the edge of a Sunday School paper under the seats. I bent over and looked. It was the *Well Spring,* a paper for the intermediate grades. I pretended to tie my shoe and carefully,

quietly slid the paper out where I could see it. By folding my arms on top of my knees and resting my head on them I could see well enough to read. The story was about a boy lost in the north woods, very exciting. But I felt a hand pulling me up straight.

"Why are you bent over like that?" Mother asked, "Are you sick?" Then she saw the paper, made a quick swoop, folded it, and put it in her purse. She nodded at me as if to say, "You can read it when you get home."

Nothing now but to listen to the minister. He was expounding on the text "As ye sow so shall ye reap." I knew that already; anybody on a farm knows that. But now a new problem disturbed me. I felt the need to go to the bathroom. Nearly always I remembered to go to the privy at home before we started for church, but this morning I had forgotten. I knew there were two places in the basement, one marked MEN and one WOMEN. But to reach the basement stairs I would have to cross the room. I would walk in plain sight in front of all the people sitting back there. They would all know where I was going. I did not have the nerve. Maybe if I counted to a hundred by ones the urge would go away. No, it grew worse. I looked at the clock, quarter of twelve. I knew the sermon always lasted until noon, sometimes five minutes after twelve.

I wished I were invisible. I wondered if I could crawl along the floor to the vestibule and sneak outside. Why did God make going to church so much trouble? I felt the pressure rising to the danger point, an accident would be terrible. I swallowed, pushed off the seat, and walked across the floor on tiptoe. My face turned red, my neck felt sweaty, what a joy to be down the basement steps and out of sight. Then, what a relief.

I climbed on a chair and peeked out the window. There stood a row of horses tied to the railing. I could see Bess and Belle, and somewhere behind them in the carriage Carlo waited. The sight of the horses and thought of the dog gave me comfort; it lasted until I felt, rather than heard, the organ begin to play. I ran to the steps and listened. The congregation was singing the doxology. Now church would be over, people shaking hands and talking, no one

would notice me. Briskly, I climbed the stairs.

We rode home at a lively pace. Carlo bounced along beside us; he didn't have to hide under the carriage now. How that dog hated to be left alone. We were hungry and irritable from the long service. We pushed and snapped at each other. Mother took Baby up on the front seat with her. Father said gruffly, "Any more noise back there and someone is going to get it." We quieted down, we knew he meant it.

The hired girl had dinner started, so we did not have to wait long. She had stayed home to entertain her boyfriend. What pleasure to sit down at the table and, after Father had said grace, tuck in your napkin and wait to be served. Father asked what part of the chicken we wanted. I always said "the liver" because no one else seemed to want it and I loved liver. (Years later I learned that Mother liked liver, too, and I felt a twinge of guilt to remember how I had clamored for it.)

But what I liked the best was chicken gravy on bread. I knew that my mother made the best bread in the whole wide world. We had carrots, too, and whoever would not eat carrots had no dessert. I looked at Mother, gentle gray eyes and a high crown of dark hair, not black nor brown but more the color of a dark tulip bud with just a touch of red. Her cheeks were flushed from the wood range and the hurry of dinner. She sat quietly, her hands limp in her lap, while we squabbled over who had the biggest piece of pie. Sunday was not her day of rest. But we did lighten her burden a little. At suppertime, after the chores were done, we kids ate bread and milk and often Father popped corn and we had apples too.

After dinner we felt that the mishaps of this Sunday were behind us, but not so. The afternoon turned sour when we learned that Aunt Jennie was staying with Grandmother. Aunt Jennie was Father's oldest sister, not married, with a deep commitment to her religious beliefs. No doubt she saw her nieces and nephews as little ignorant savages and made it her duty to bring us into the fold. With the unconscious cruelty of children, we called her "Crank Jen" because we found her bossy.

This Sunday afternoon she called us together and announced that we would have Sunday School. We had already spent the morning at church. We begged our parents for help. But Father said, "Do what Aunt Jennie wants." After I grew up I suspected that my parents found this a way to be spared their children's demands for a few hours. Anyway, many Sunday afternoons we did "what Aunt Jennie wants." We memorized the books of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Twenty-Third Psalm, and the Sermon on the Mount. We heard the stories of Noah, Ruth amid the alien corn, Abraham and the sacrificial lamb, all the parables that Jesus spoke. Her face set in lines of duty, Aunt Jennie marched us through King Solomon's reign and the building of the temple. But Bathsheba was never mentioned. Nor did we learn that David danced before the Lord. Dancing carried the same taint as playing cards and smoking tobacco. Aunt Jennie did not lack courage, but there were some places in the Bible too swampy for youngsters like us to cross.

This Sunday afternoon we had a lesson in the geography of the Holy Land. We dug a place for the Sea of Galilee, piled up hay for Mt. Sinai, laid out a circle of stones for the city of Jerusalem. After that was finished we went into Grandfather's house and marched around the dining-room table singing hymns.

This was the day that Baby livened up things in a most unusual way. Where he learned the bad word I don't know. Father carefully censored his language around us. But we would hear the hired men sometimes smoke up the air with expletives. But no one dared say naughty words around Aunt Jennie. You just didn't, that was all. That is why Baby's outburst so electrified us and passed into family history.

We were marching around the dining-room table, Aunt Jennie in the lead beating time while we bellowed "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "Bringing in the Sheaves" with more sound than music. It was during a moment of silence between songs that Baby Charles burst out of line and galloped wildly around in a circle as fast as his short, fat legs would carry him, chanting in his high

voice, "Pop, pop, I let a fart. Pop, pop, I let a fart."

Our procession halted as if spellbound. Aunt Jennie—who was so thin and tiny that Father said it took two of her to cast a shadow—her earnest face aglow with her mission, reared back like a horse that had run into a fence. The coils of her thick, black hair (so long she could sit on it) tipped forward. The expression on her face changed from shocked incredulity to grim righteousness.

We stood frozen, amazed beyond belief. The smallest one, the weakest, youngest one, had dared offend the solemn discipline of Sunday afternoon. Baby Charles frisked gaily, wholly absorbed in his sport. Then we collapsed. We rolled on the floor in unholy glee. We must have gurgled like an overfilled drainpipe. We even crawled under the dining-room table to conceal our fits of laughter.

Suddenly Baby Charles must have become aware of the havoc he had created, for he fled out the door toward his own home and safety. Aunt Jennie tore out after him. But Baby Charles moved with speed, and when he saw his mother coming down the steps of our house he flung himself at her with such violence she staggered and sat down on the steps with her arms full of Baby. That was the last of the hobgoblins for that Sunday. But this last incident stayed in the family like an heirloom to be taken out and dusted off with bursts of mirth that outlived the occasion.

By the time I had reached high-school age, both Grandmother and Grandfather had died, and Aunt Jennie had moved to town to live with her sisters. Church going, which had been such a strict and regular routine in our family, deteriorated to an occasional attendance. Now we owned an automobile and could make the trip to church in fifteen minutes instead of the hour it took with horses. Electricity brought with it a toaster, refrigerator, electric stove, water pressure, hot water. The hired men lived in Grandfather's house. The Sunday morning paper was delivered at our door.

Grandfather's "Sabbath" disappeared in the rolling clouds of time along with the big Sunday dinner and the scramble to get the

children ready. My brother Bob and I often did the chores by ourselves to give Father and the hired men a day off. We could cook our own breakfast, too, if Mother wanted to sleep late. Sunday had become a day of rest instead of a day to be dreaded.

I suspect Grandfather was the prime mover for our "religious" Sundays. Brought up in a strict Calvinistic tradition, he had been taught that regular church attendance was the road to salvation. He was my mentor in my early childhood. He instructed me in the ways of grafting new shoots onto apple trees, and how to make frames for his beehives.

I regarded him with awe and wary affection. It pleased me, when I grew up, to hear stories about him that showed his more human side and its irony and humor. One day when I was in the Cedar Falls National Bank, the president, Frank Miller, called me into his office. "Did I ever tell you about the horse race on Sunday morning between your grandfather and Deacon Miller?" he asked.

I shook my head and muttered my disbelief.

"Oh, it happened all right," the banker continued, "I was there. I went to your church. Deacon Miller was no kin of mine, we just had the same name. He lived on the corner of Clay Street and Twelfth, about a half-mile south of the church.

"One Sunday morning, it was in the summer, your grandfather and grandmother were coming to church. Now, James Hearst always drove a lively horse on that spider-wheeled buggy. He knew how to drive, too, kept the reins tight enough so that the horse knew somebody was there. Well, they came along at a brisk trot just as Deacon Miller and his wife wheeled out of their driveway.

"Now, the Deacon had a neat bay mare and he was proud of her footwork. She was a pacer, you know, those horses that look as if they're wobbling from side to side when they run, usually a little faster than a trotter.

"Your grandparents made their how-do-you-do's to the Millers and kept right on trotting along. Blest if the Deacon, not to take anybody's dust, didn't come sneaking up from behind until the buggies were about even. Your grandfather didn't look to right or

left, but just eased up on the lines a bit. That long-legged grey roan of his stepped out at a good lick. So the Deacon touched his mare with the whip and she took off.

"Grandpa Hearst never batted an eye, he just gave that roan a slap on the rump with the lines. I'll bet your grandmother grabbed him by the arm and said, 'For shame, James, and on the way to church too.' But maybe she didn't either; the old lady had some sporting blood in her.

"They came down Clay Street neck and neck, dust flying, shiny wheel spokes blazing in the sun, never a glance at each other, never a word. The roan began to pull out ahead and the Deacon gave his mare a cut with the whip. She jumped but she was doing all she could. Gradually your grandfather pulled out in front and turned into the churchyard about a length ahead of the Deacon.

"James calmly helped your grandmother down and then went to the hitchrack to tie his horse. The Deacon was hopping mad.

" 'What do you mean,' he shouted, 'racing on the way to church? It's a sacrilege, that's what it is.'

"Your grandfather never blinked an eye. He seemed solemn and concerned for a man who had just come to church hell bent for election.

" 'Why, Deacon,' he said, 'you know I wouldn't race horses on the Sabbath. I was just trying to show you not to put your trust in earthly things.' "

Frank Miller chuckled. "I was just a kid, but I remember a lot of the church folk about died laughing. The Deacon wasn't liked by some people. Your grandfather, he was something."

On the way home I thought, I wish I had known my grandfather better. Maybe I was scared of him. He must have enjoyed jokes and things like everybody else. And in retrospect those dreary Sabbaths began to lose some of their gloom and even shone a little with the colors of human endeavor.

Relatives

About the time my visit to this world allowed me to distinguish between faces and rooms, I discovered a multitude of people whose numbers swelled and diminished from time to time. They trooped in and out of our house, surrounded me, overwhelmed me, and often paid me some attention. I fled to Mother's arms for protection. "But they are your relatives," she told me. Big, noisy, laughing loudly, they frightened me. They smelled funny, too.

Gradually, I grew accustomed to them and learned their positions. There were two grandfathers but only one grandmother. There were four uncles who were doctors and who smelled funny, one uncle who farmed and who smelled like we did, a bustling group of women who were aunts, and some little people—a few no larger than I was—and they were called cousins. When the whole family gathered for an occasion, they crowded everywhere in the house and my place of refuge lay between the bookcase and the piano, a kind of corner, safe from tramping feet.

After a few years, I found Grandmother a great comfort. As soon as I learned not to be afraid of our dog and the Plymouth Rock rooster, I ran back and forth across the yard between our house and hers several times a day. Grandmother's kitchen seemed twice as large as ours, and she kept a rocking chair near the heavy black wood-burning stove. Her lap made a nest for me, and I liked the slow rhythm of the rocking chair and the way her arms folded around me. It gave me the feeling of owning a special place; I remember quarreling with my sister over whose turn it was to sit in Grandmother's lap.

No one who has never had a grandmother has any idea of the consolation found in Grandmother's lap after I had been scolded at home. Grandmother didn't talk as we did, she made an "ah"

sound of her "r's." My sister Louise talked just like her until she went to school. Mother said she was a down-easterner, though she claimed Vermont as her birthplace.

The parlor in Grandmother and Grandfather's house opened its double doors—hidden by strings of glass beads—only for such special occasions as Christmas, christenings, and funerals. At Christmas, Grandfather's tree touched the ceiling and glistened with tinsel and strings of popcorn and cranberries. It boasted real candles that made the dark room shine like Aladdin's cave. A rose-colored carpet covered the floor, a pump organ stood in one corner, and on a shelf on the organ rested a stuffed horned toad. We doted on that horned toad, and on rainy days if we were very, very good we could hold it for a few minutes. In the closet stood a real bow and arrow with a leather quiver and feathers on the arrows. Grandfather had bought it from the Indians in New Mexico, and one arrow had bloodstains on it. The arrows had sharp arrowheads made of stone. We could look at this treasure, but never play with it.

Two of Father's unmarried sisters lived part of the year with Grandfather and Grandmother Hearst. My memory stumbles occasionally on the journey back to childhood. It seems to me they were always there. But this could not be true because Aunt Mamie (Mary Frances) taught in the English Department at the college. And Aunt Jennie (Jennie Kate) lived in the room she rented close to the church. She lived with the McAlvins, too, part of the time. She thoroughly confused Uncle Gregg when she went off to bed by way of the front stairway and came noiselessly down the back stairs into the kitchen, where he thought he was alone. He would jump and swear and rush around saying that the house was full of ghosts.

Aunt Jennie possessed odd ways and habits, but she had her creative side. She invented Kleenex long before it was on the market by smoothing out the tissue paper that oranges were wrapped in and using them for handkerchiefs. She invented a foot warmer for people with bad circulation, a sort of wire hive with an electric bulb in it that hid under the covers of the bed. She taught

school when she was young, and Father said that in spite of her slight build, slender body, thin face, she put the fear of God into her unruly pupils.

She belonged to the order of the truly religious. If she had lived in medieval times, she would have become a nun, not sheltered in a cloister but out like St. Theresa performing good works. She found the First Congregational Church, of which she was a member, to be lax in ritual and sacrifice. She fasted, did Aunt Jennie, for the world's sins and her soul's sake. Prayer seemed more important to her than eating and sleeping, and she conducted her own vigils, named her own holy days. Her reverence for her father and mother passed our understanding and, grubby little ruffians that we were, we mocked her for her transcendental air.

But she could be as practical and merciless as a chain-gang boss with her nieces and nephews when the time came to harvest berries and grapes. She nursed a flock of turkeys, too. Once she sent my youngest brother, Charles, crawling into a blackberry patch to bring out the eggs of an errant turkey hen. Poor Chuck found himself trapped between an indignant turkey and a spray of barbed blackberry vine draped across his rear end. He could neither go ahead nor retreat. He bawled for help and Aunt Jennie shooed away the turkey and Chuck brought out the eggs.

I am grateful to Aunt Jennie for her determination to teach her nieces and nephews the lessons from the Bible. Every Sunday afternoon she gathered us for a session of study. No one but another teacher will understand how delighted I was, many years later, to twit my college class because they did not know who the Witch of Endor was and I did. I wished they all might have had an Aunt Jennie, if for nothing else than to understand the Biblical references in western literature.

My Aunt Mamie was religious but it did not show. She taught in the English Department of the college for years, and after she retired from that she taught Bible classes in the Department of Religion. She helped mold my character. I remember so many good things for which I am indebted to her. When a concert or a performer or a lecturer came to the college, Aunt Mamie bought a

ticket and sent it to me. I would put on my Sunday clothes with a pair of overalls over them for protection, saddle a horse, and ride down to the college. Timidly I entered the big auditorium, timidly offered my ticket to the usher, timidly crept down the aisle to my seat. There I sat, a tousle-haired country boy, stiff in unfamiliar clothes, suddenly rapt in a world far removed from throwing down hay and feeding the pigs.

I heard Galli-Curci, Paderewski, the Chicago Symphony, saw Houdini, the Shakespeare Players, heard Ellis Parker Butler and William Howard Taft. I ate it all with a fierce appetite, with little discrimination between the artist and the entertainer. After the show I rode home slowly, trying to keep the magic of the evening as long as I could.

I never thought of sending my verses to an editor. But Aunt Mamie packed up several and sent them to *Good Housekeeping,* and the editor bought one. I didn't really believe it until I saw the poem in the magazine. It was featured, a full page with a border of vines and leaves. I owe Aunt Mamie for my beginning. She read my first drafts and made comments. She encouraged me and sent me books to read on prosody. Then came a time when I outgrew her; her Victorian sensibility seemed out of tune with my Iowa mud and farm sweat. I stopped writing the romantic dream of far-away places and looked about me for poetic material. This apostasy must have hurt her feelings, but she never spoke of it. She delighted in any success that I had. She went to the editor of our daily paper and persuaded him to print a column of small items I condensed from magazines called "Things to Talk About." This kept me writing when poems were out of reach.

Another of my aunts—one of Mother's sisters, named Ida—took a medical degree and set up practice in Milwaukee. Aunt Ida was a large, hearty woman with eyes that looked right into your depths. We kids were a little afraid of her because of her calm but serious eyes. She sent us presents and books, loaned my father money, invited us to visit her. One summer Mother packed our suitcases and we all went to Milwaukee. Aunt Ida took time to show us the town. We saw the zoo, watched a hundred-car train

loaded with nothing but beer pull out of one of the breweries. We went to Fox Point and swam in Lake Michigan. We ate supper at Whitefish Bay, and my wizened puritan soul gasped to see German families at a table where the father drank beer. Any alcoholic drink stood near the top of a category of sins in our home. But here everyone accepted it and had a good time. We even joined in the singing.

I scarcely remember Mother's oldest sister Emma, who married Uncle Frank Gersbach. But Aunt Viola, who for years served as Secretary of the Board of Public Instruction, often visited us. We liked her; she sent us books and magazines, wrote us whimsical letters. She gambled on the Board of Trade and would take an onion to her favorite restaurant because she could not get onions there. She had the stuff of a rebel in her, and we admired that part of her especially. She troubled us when it came time for her to retire. She would not retire, and hung around the State House muttering threats under her breath against the people who had supplanted her. But she finally gave up and died peacefully.

Aunt Mary Schell, when she stopped teaching and had nothing to do, became a mental problem, a depressed and anxious woman. She kept house for Aunt Ida (the doctor) for a while and then came to live with us. We teased her into hunting and gathering the eggs and working in the garden. The outdoor work eased her and gave her a better appetite and she slept nights. She was a charming hostess when Mother was away and guests came to call. She had read widely and enjoyed lively conversations.

Mother's brother George lived in Burlington and ran a furniture store. I saw him only once. When Bob died he came to the funeral. I remember sitting on the front porch. To change the subject from the funeral, Father and his brother Dr. Will told stories of the poor investments they had made. Their losses ran into thousands of dollars, especially Uncle Will's. Then Uncle George Schell spoke up and said, "I lent a man five dollars once and he never paid it back." Something about the way he said it, something about the contrast of the amounts involved, or maybe it was the tension of the day, but we all burst out laughing. I don't think he

understood the joke—if there was one. We saw his daughter Georgia several times, but Uncle George Schell vanished from our lives. He had a son, Edward, a lawyer who worked for the Treasury Department in Washington, D.C. He wrote to us a few times but I never saw him.

Aunt Helen Hammer was Father's youngest sister. The Hammers lived opposite the campus; their house stood where the campanile now stands. Aunt Mamie lived with them part of each year. Aunt Helen owned one of the most cheerful natures I have ever known. She made everyone who met her grow an inch taller, step to a livelier music. She had a hard row to hoe. Uncle Frank, her husband, gave up farming, sold the farm he had inherited from his father, and built a house on the edge of town. He owned ten acres and he raised truck garden stuff—cabbages, onions, carrots, sweet corn, strawberries—and sold his produce to the stores. He kept three Jersey cows and bottled and sold milk. It was a thin living, and I am sure the rent Aunt Mamie paid for her room meant a great deal to their economy.

We kept our car in their yard when we attended town high school. I lived with them when my brother had diphtheria. Whether or not they received anything for my room and board I do not know; I hope they did. I helped Aunt Helen with the dishes and occasionally delivered milk for Uncle Frank. I felt at home, I basked in a generous welcome, no question but that I belonged there. Such warmth and friendliness even penetrated into my collegiate soul and my gratitude showed, I hope, in my easy way as a member of the family.

Uncle Frank, perhaps because of his digestive irruptions, possessed a dismal outlook on life. One crisp fall morning when I parked my car in the Hammer yard, Uncle Frank was splitting wood. Touched by the splendor of the day (and my own importance) I hailed him. "Wonderful day, Uncle Frank."

He looked at me sternly. "James," he said, "it's a weather breeder."

And once, years after Aunt Helen died, Uncle Frank tried to dispel his loneliness with a lovely woman near his age. I said, in

what I thought was a sly way, "Uncle Frank, I hear you are having heart trouble."

He shook his head grimly, "No, James, it's my bowels."

He had his pride, too. His house stood many steps above the sidewalk, and I offered to put in a railing for him to cling to on wintry days. He stared at me and said, "James, I did not get to be eighty years old listening to you." Of course, he was right.

The Hammers had one daughter, Marjorie, a few years younger than I was. She knew she lacked good looks, but she more than compensated with her vivacious talk and wry humor. Her lively, carefree disposition overcame her flat, pale eyes and a face full of freckles. But she was more sought after by girls than boys, and I think this gnawed at her pride.

My other aunt on the Hearst side was Aunt Clara McAlvin. She and her husband and two children lived in Waterloo, some ten miles from the farm. When we drove to the McAlvins for Christmas dinner with team and bobsled, we wrapped up in horsehide robes and we heated bricks and a soapstone to keep our feet warm. Uncle Gregg McAlvin, one of my four doctor uncles, maintained a big practice as well as his position as chief of staff of St. Francis Hospital. It seemed to me that Aunt Clara stood as the ideal of a doctor's wife. She opened her heart to everyone. Her house took in anyone in need of help. I once crawled into her living room at three o'clock in the morning after a long ride from Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, where at a YMCA camp I had fractured a cartilege in my knee. The Illinois Central train only went as far as Waterloo, and I limped across the bridge and into the McAlvin living room. Aunt Clara heard me and put me to bed.

She met the problems caused by an eccentric, volatile husband with serenity and love. Uncle Gregg had been orphaned early in life, ran away from a cruel uncle, punched cattle on the King Ranch in Texas, and decided to be a doctor. By hard work, long hours, and a good mind, he finished a four-year college program in one year. He graduated from the medical school at the State University of Iowa. He paid his way by performing feats of strength in the taverns along the Mississippi River. A wonderful

man, but hard to live with. Aunt Clara anchored him in place and withstood his violent explosions of temper.

She made beds for all of us cousins on the living room floor so we could get up early and watch the circus unload. She had beautiful brown eyes and a soft, warm voice. The McAlvins lived with us on the farm for two years while Uncle Gregg kicked the dope habit. He worked right along with father in field and barn without complaint. He pitched hay and shoveled manure, and went back to his medical practice a free man. Aunt Clara stood fast by his side, always encouraging, always his defender and support.

Dr. W.L. Hearst, my uncle Will, stands out in my memory as a sterling example of the old-fashioned general practitioner. No snow was too deep, no night too cold, no sleep too sound to keep him from his patients. He and his long-legged driving horse, Tom, made the rounds of both town and country. Uncle Will did not, as our doctors do today, limit his activities to office and hospital. He went to see his patients. He took out appendices on kitchen tables, tonsils and adenoids beside the sink, brought babies into the world in the mother's bedroom, watched over typhoid, diphtheria, smallpox, and pneumonia patients with a doctor's pitiful supply of medications and the sword of the Lord. He mowed down enemies of the human spirit as well as those of the body.

He was a heavyset man, almost six feet tall, physically strong, brusque, and short with his words. But it made you feel better just to have him enter the room. He fought long and hard to save his patients. He would sit crouched by the side of a child sick beyond help with pneumonia and literally compel life to stay. He was a hard loser; he expected his patients to recover. He could not stomach whining women and weak-kneed men. He expected, when a life was at stake, for everyone to stand firm.

His driving horse, Tom—a big, rangy bay—amused the townsfolk. Uncle Will lived about six blocks from the livery stable. When he returned from a call, especially at night, he wrapped the lines around the whip, got out, and said, "All right, Tom, go to the barn." And Tom would walk to Washington Street, turn right,

and trot to the stable. If the whistle was blowing for a Rock Island train (in those days the freight went through town like a blast of wind), Tom waited until the train passed and then crossed the tracks. We inherited Tom when Uncle Will bought an automobile. He became Mother's driving horse. Tom had his little tricks. When Mother started for town, Tom groaned and limped, and at first Mother felt sorry for him. But when the time came to go home, Tom tore out of town like a three-year-old. When we bought a car, we turned Tom out to pasture, where he grazed peacefully until he died.

Uncle Will and his wife, Aunt Jennie Curtis (we called her that to distinguish between her and Father's sister Jennie), came to a parting of the ways. This shocked the whole family. Divorce in those days wrote its words in letters of shame, especially in the Hearst family. But they became unable to endure each other's company. I never knew what precipitated the action. I know Uncle Will made no bones about his stubbornness, and Aunt Jennie Curtis tended to be emphatic about "higher things." The children—William, Francis, and Marian—went with their mother but later came back to live with their father. By then they were in school or working most of the time. Young Bill became a newspaperman, Francis a doctor like his father, Marian died young of a cerebral thrombosis. Both the boys turned into successful men. Bill owned and operated two newspapers and a radio station, Francis developed a large practice and, while he owned his mother's temperament, he imitated his father in becoming a friendly counselor for his patients as well as their doctor.

Uncle Will purchased one of the first X-ray machines in Cedar Falls. It added to the mysteries of his office, this huge wooden frame with a glass window. Inside this case stood a large wheel; it must have been four feet in diameter. Uncle Will said it worked by static electricity. He might just as well have said tibialis anticus for all that meant to me. I regarded it as a dangerous machine, not to be investigated, not even to be stared at too long.

Once, when a brood mare, twisting to look for her colt, jammed

me against the manger and badly sprained my wrist, Father took me to Uncle Will's office to have my wrist X-rayed. My fear of the machine overcame the pain in my wrist, but I had no escape. Uncle Will set the wheel whirling and a bluish light appeared in a glass bulb. I can't remember any film. He passed this bulb over my wrist and said there were no broken bones.

No one knew much about radiation in those days, and Uncle Will refused to be careful about things he could not see. He was too healthy to care about X-rays. After a few years, the fingers on both his hands showed bad burns, and finally he had to have plastic surgery on his hands.

After years of loneliness following the divorce, he married Emma Jessen, Superintendent of Sartori Hospital. They lived in pleasant accord with each other until Uncle Will died one night of a coronary thrombosis. He was sixty-seven years old.

My diving accident came at the end of a college year, at a fraternity party up the river. I dove off a boat dock into shallow water, a high jackknife dive. The result was two years in the hospital. I had four doctor uncles hovering over me, but Dr. George E. Hearst became my doctor. I can never repay the debt I owe him. We went through the terrible time together, and Uncle George stood by me all the way. In spite of being turned often, I developed hypostatic pneumonia with Cheyne-Stokes respiration and abnormally high temperatures. It seemed more than I could bear, and just once I broke down and whispered for the relief of death. Uncle George glared at me and said, "For God's sake, brace up." I never faltered again. My nurse called him from his recreational haunts many times, and he always came, and at once. He brought famous doctors to see me and give advice, from the Mayo Clinic, from Boston General Hospital, and from the Army, where Uncle Will was a major in the medical corps. He never let me give up hope. I never could tell him how much I loved him.

Uncle George was slim and tall, six feet and a few inches. As a child he had had what was called a "white swelling" in one hip. He said it had undoubtedly been a form of tuberculosis. He limped slightly. No doubt this gave him bad moments, but we nieces and

nephews thought it made him look distinguished. He remained a bachelor until he passed fifty, and he enjoyed a lively way of living. We knew he played poker, drove expensive cars, kept company with lovely women, and hunted and fished in Canada. All of this added glamour to his personality. I am sure we suspected him of sins he never thought of. But his friends were "sports" who attended prize fights, horse races, stayed in the best hotels in big cities. We doted on him because he carried such an aura of pleasure, in contrast to our dull puritan lives.

Mother often asked him for Sunday dinner, and we heard talk of a world beyond the farm. Once in a while he brought one of the college men with him, an athlete, and we basked in the knowledge of knowing one of the heroes of the day. He had one of the first cars in the town, and he would let us ride a half-mile with him on his way home; we walked back thrilled with an automobile ride.

Uncle George was the youngest of the family, and Father said he had been spoiled. He said, "If George can do anything illegal rather than legal, he'll do it." George took a small boy's delight in circumventing the rules and regulations of society. On a hunting trip to Minnesota he changed license plates so that he could buy a resident hunting license. He brought geese home from Canada without a permit by posing as a game warden who had just sequestered the wild fowl from a malefactor. He maneuvered himself into restricted places—parties, receptions, first nights—without an invitation simply by, as Father said, "sheer guts." It was the excitement of pulling it off that made the game interesting. I never heard of him being caught, either.

Father said that once, when Uncle George was a teenager, he went gallivanting with one of the Field boys—from the famous Field farms—and came home without his horse. Next day, someone told Grandfather that his horse could be found tied behind the Congregational church. George never said, and Grandfather never asked, what had happened.

Late in middle age he married Sarah Grau and they raised two fine children, a boy and a girl. He died in his early sixties of a coronary thrombosis following surgery on his lame hip. I never

forgave that death; it robbed me of my best friend.

Uncle Mike was my fourth doctor uncle. Michael Thielen, an orphan, grew up in my grandfather's family. I don't think Grandfather adopted him. He probably paid for Uncle Mike's medical education. For years we kids thought of him as a member of the family. Of course, he was, too. We thought of Uncle Mike and Aunt Anna as blood relatives, and we always thought of their four children as our cousins. Uncle Mike settled in Grundy Center, twenty-five miles away. Until we had cars, we did not see the Thielens very often.

Uncle Mike should have been an Irishman. He seemed to boil over with the comic sense of life. He had a wonderful sense of humor and a delightful way of telling tales about the foibles and crotchets of his fellow human beings, though the stories were never malicious or cruel. Uncle Mike enjoyed a large practice, his patients were devoted to him. It added spice and liveliness to our family gatherings when the Thielens appeared. He died young, too. None of my doctor uncles or my father lived beyond their sixties.

It gave me status to have four uncles practicing medicine in northeast Iowa when I was a patient at the University Hospitals in Iowa City. I was not aware of this until one head of a department, in a shouting match with me over treatment, said, "I'm not going to make a mistake on you and have my name kicked all over northeast Iowa by your uncles." I swelled up a bit after that.

Cousins? I swam in a sea of cousins—first cousins, second cousins, third cousins, cousins once, twice removed. There was, on the outskirts, Rollie Patterson, who lived in New York, a wheel in the Presbyterian Church. He visited England for six months and acquired an Oxford accent that he never relinquished. He patronized us dreadfully, not realizing how Father and my uncles teased him into pompous nonsense. I barely remember his parents. But Father laughed about Aunt Jennie Patterson and her strong temperance views. She claimed to be nervous and took a nerve medicine that made her cheeks red and her eyes shine—about half

alcohol, Father said.

Uncle Henry Patterson, an old man and deaf, took a nap out in the yard one Fourth of July. I lit a firecracker and put it under his chair. I crowed with delight when the old man leaped from his chair with a cry of terror. Uncle Mike grabbed me by the seat of my pants and shook me, "Don't ever do that again to the poor old man."

James McAlvin was my age; we grew up together. He worked on the farm during summer vacations. He seemed more a brother than a cousin. You could always count on Jim in a fracas; he came in with fists swinging whenever we found ourselves in trouble. He and I wrecked a booth at a carnival once because the man cheated us. We let a wagonload of boards roll through the booth. "Lucky you didn't kill someone," the Chief of Police said.

We all grew up together. I pity children who do not grow up surrounded by relatives. Uncles and aunts praised and spanked us, cousins played with us, life seemed like an endless picnic with all the dinners and gatherings of the clan. My childhood was secure and safe, only I created my own unhappiness.

Poplar trees shoot out lateral roots, and the roots send up shoots to become trees themselves. But they stay tied to the mother tree. My immediate family seemed a little like this; Mother, Father, my sister and two brothers and I made a close-knit group. We cared about each other, and we helped each other. No matter how tense the inner stresses, an outer binding of affection held us together. This was partly because we lived on a farm and felt isolated from the town, partly because we lived among Danish neighbors—some of them immigrants—and we did not share in their church services, conducted in the Danish language, nor their celebrations, mostly because our parents set the example. Too, we grew up in the arms of many relatives, who fenced us in with family ties. But, for whatever reasons, we were a family.

I took it for granted that all families resembled ours. It shocked me when, in high school, I went home with a friend and he said, "If the old man is drunk again, we may not have much supper."

And another friend came home from school to an empty house because his parents were divorced and his mother worked as a cleaning lady at the college. These views into other homes shook me and I fled, in my mind and literally too, to the security of our home.

Mother began her life in the little town of Montezuma, about eighty miles south of our farm. She fitted in the middle of five girls and two boys. One of Mother's childhood experiences struck me as a shame on adults for the way they deceive children. It made me burn with indignation every time she told it. Mother laughed about it, but she still kept a note of resentment in her voice.

A carnival had come to town, loaded with attractions for a small girl. Her father gave her a dime to spend, and she indulged herself in thinking about ways to spend so much money. For a small girl, a dime was almost a fortune in her day. She could change it to a nickel and five pennies and buy candy and ice cream, or a balloon; oh, there were so many choices. But she travelled past a sideshow with the picture of a mermaid on the canvas and a pitchman urging people to step inside and see this great wonder. He charged an admission fee of ten cents.

Mother said she stood outside and yearned to see the mermaid. Perhaps some fairy tale had been read to her with a mermaid as one of the characters, a story with illustrations. But it cost all the money she had, so there would be none left for other things she might buy. Finally, her desire overcame her frugality and she paid her dime and went inside. There in a glass case reposed a small wax figure of a mermaid. Mother said she ran home crying, not so much because she had lost her ten cents—though that hurt, too—but more because she had suffered the humiliation of being cheated. She had hoped mermaids existed, she believed in fairy tales, the sideshow pictured a beautiful mermaid on its canvas front, the man urged her to "see the mermaid." And it turned out to be a cruel joke.

She told the story to us a number of times, trying, I believe, to teach us not to let our imagination lead us into such betrayals. Outside, the adult world preyed on children. I bristled with anger

each time, ready to defend my mother.

The Schell family insisted on education for their children. Mother spent two years at Cornell College and came to Cedar Falls as the first secretary to the President of the Iowa State Normal School. This is where she met Father and gave up the pothooks of shorthand for the clinging hands of children and the demands on a farmer's wife. Mother knew nothing of housekeeping and cooking, but she learned. She told me she had a private cemetery in the garden where she buried all the unpalatable results of her cooking. But she became one of the best cooks in the family.

Mother must have had a time of inner doubt while she tried to adjust to her articulate, noisy, new Hearst relatives. The Hearsts were a bossy lot, always giving orders and advice. They never missed a chance to instruct, to make decisions for someone else. The Schells kept to themselves; they did not meddle with the problems of other folk. Since she had never lived on a farm, all farm experiences were strange to her, and I'm sure she received shovelsful of advice and admonitions from her women relatives. But, by the time I was aware of any such distinction, Mother could hold her own without bursts of temper. When we clambered into school age, the whole family seemed close-knit and at peace.

I often wondered what role Father played in the early days of his marriage. He felt a loyalty to his own family, but Katharine was his wife and he loved her. Father had an even temper and a friendly view toward family, friends, and neighbors. Rarely did I see him boil with anger; he could be firm and resolute, but his way did not lead to outbursts of intemperance. When Uncle Gregg went on a tear, and he had a hair-trigger temper, Father withdrew until the scene cooled down. Then he made known his stand. But he stood back of Mother always; she did not lack support in her silent skirmishes with the dominating Hearsts.

In spite of her innocence, Mother became an experienced farmer's wife. At first she must have felt that she faced challenges beyond her strength and understanding. What we children knew almost by instinct, Mother had to learn. For instance, she thought a corn husker rode in the wagon and just reached over and

gathered the ears from the stalks. It shocked her to go out with Father, climb out of the wagon, put on a husking hook, and start slinging the husked ears against the bangboards. Farm work, she found, wore you down with its insatiable appetite for sweat and muscle.

Mother never flinched, or if she did she kept her dismay for private moments. She raised four children, cooked for hired men and for cattle and horse buyers who just happened in around dinnertime. She cleaned, filled, and trimmed kerosene lamps and lanterns, emptied slop jars, mended and darned clothes. She helped in the vegetable garden, canned, made jelly and preserves, dried sweet corn, and fried down the lard when we butchered a pig. She tended a fine flock of purebred Plymouth Rock chickens, with prize roosters purchased from a Mr. Hemmerling in Waterloo.

She washed and ironed. She ironed linen tablecloths and napkins; we used them every day. On a farm we used linen tablecloths! She ironed with "sad irons" heated on the cookstove. I have known her on summer mornings to leave her bed at four o'clock to get the ironing done before the day became hot. She hung out clothes in freezing weather, her hands chapped and rough from the water and cold. When we grew old enough to go to school, she packed four lunches immediately after breakfast so we could start our mile-and-a-half journey and not be late. And on holidays she took her turn at having the relatives for dinner, sometimes thirty people, adults and kids.

She found time and strength to cultivate a flower garden. I remember sweet peas climbing a stretched chicken wire, pansies and ferns on the north side of the porch, a trellis full of honeysuckle vines, where hummingbirds came and delighted us with their antics and colors. She helped found the P.E.O. Club, belonged to the Tuesday Club (a study club), accepted the presidency of the Ladies Aid of the First Congregational Church, helped in the early days of the Farm Bureau and became its county chairman.

She taught us to read before we went to school. I shall never

cease to be grateful for the evenings when we curled up beside her chair and she read to us. Grimm's and Andersen's fairy tales, *Mother Goose, Alice in Wonderland, Black Beauty, Beautiful Joe, Robin Hood, Gulliver's Travels*—we lived in a marvelous time during those evenings.

When we advanced in reading skills to read for ourselves, Mother subscribed to a magazine entitled *St. Nicholas* and her sisters sent us books for birthday and Christmas presents. What wonderful aunts we had. I remember, to my shame, when a serial ran in *St. Nicholas* and I brought home the mail, I hid the magazine in the haymow so I could read the story as soon as I finished my chores. My sister and brothers did not let me off easily for that sneaky trick. Mother saw to it that we read what she called "good books." I won a copy of one of Horatio Alger's books for knowing the most Bible verses in our Sunday School class and Mother threw it in the stove. "I'll not have you reading such trash," she said.

We never lost the habit of reading. There was a set of Sir Walter Scott's Waverly novels in our meager bookcase, and I went through them like a bookworm on fire. Even when I grew up I felt bound by rules of chivalry and must have been a puzzle to some of my "dates" who had a more earthy conception of boy and girl relationships. I read Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* and for a long time thought that was Shakespeare.

We memorized poems, too. After I grew up I would help Mother with the supper dishes sometimes, if the day's work had not worn me out. Mother would say one stanza from *The Wreck of the Hesperus* and I would say the next. To this day I know every other stanza of Longfellow's poem.

Father read, too, but mostly the Chicago *Tribune, Wallaces' Farmer,* and the *Breeders Gazette.* I doubt if he ever read a novel. He attended the Iowa State Normal School for two years, which is where he met Mother, and taught country school for a year. Father's hands could scarcely grasp all he had to do when he took over the farm from Grandfather. He still listened when Grandfather spoke. Uncle Will and Uncle George kissed the farm good-

bye when they scraped together enough money to let them enroll in the medical school at the State University. Father stayed on the farm, farming was in his blood, but Grandfather still liked to give the orders. It irritated Mother. "Charlie," she would say firmly, "stand up for yourself. You don't need to jump every time your father crooks his finger."

But Father owned a slow, even temper and did not protest. Besides, he had been raised under Grandfather's thumb. Father always found time to play with us boys when we were small. He wrestled with us, taught us to stand on our heads, spin cartwheels, play skin-the-cat, and throw and catch a ball. One Christmas he gave us two pairs of boxing gloves, and we learned the "manly art of self defense" with both tears and a bloody nose. Years later, in college, I boxed with one of the younger faculty members who worked out occasionally with the "pros" over in Waterloo. I caught him off guard and decked him, but I was so pleased with my success that I dropped my hands and he retaliated.

I think now that Father never played enough when he was a boy. He did not have time. Grandfather always had another job for him to do. But he played with us and we loved to have him. He lacked enthusiasm for competitive athletics. He did not encourage me in my basketball, track, or baseball endeavors. Yet, he shone with pride when the College High football team on which my two brothers played almost won the state championship. They lost to a Cedar Rapids team in the final contest.

He loved to hunt. He donned his hunting coat and cap and grabbed his 12-gauge pump gun and some shells whenever the call came. He hunted rabbits, squirrels, prairie chickens, wild ducks, and geese—pheasants, too, when they became established here. We had many a meal of wild game and we enjoyed them. Mother learned to cook game; to this day I can taste the gamey flavor of wild ducks. On a stand in the woodhouse he kept a nest of shotguns and rifles, boxes of shells on a shelf. He owned two handguns, but they were hidden away and forbidden. We boys learned to shoot as soon as we could hold the guns.

It takes strength to lift up and hold steady a 12-gauge shotgun.

It must be held snug against the shoulder, too, or the recoil will leave bruises. My first experience with a gun happened one warm afternoon in May. I came home from school and went down to the field where Father was planting corn. He had the gun with him to see if he could get a crack at the flock of crows that harassed Mother's chickens. I was eleven years old. Father told me to watch for a pocket gopher digging a hole along the fence row. Pocket gophers are a nuisance; they leave mounds of dirt in meadows that dull the sickle of the mower when the hay is cut.

I had never seen a pocket gopher dig a hole; they usually stayed hidden under their mounds of earth. I lay down and pulled the gun to me, pumped a shell into the barrel and waited. Sure enough, about ten yards down the fence row I saw a furry head pop out, dump his pockets of dirt, and disappear. Pocket gophers have pockets on either side of their heads that they fill with dirt as they dig. Then they come to the surface and eject the dirt. That is the way they build their mounds.

I lay there and sighted down the gun barrel. I propped one elbow against the ground to steady the barrel. I was too green to know how to hold the stock tightly to my shoulder. I sighted on the half-finished mound of dirt. Suddenly the head popped out. I pulled the trigger. The gun made a louder bang than I expected, and the stock whanged back against my shoulder bone so that I had a lame arm for days. Evidently, when I pulled the trigger I pulled the gun slightly off my aim. No dead gopher lay in the hole and it did not show again. I limped home with my sore shoulder. Father nodded and grinned when I explained my hurt. "Hold it tight next time," was all he said. I did, and became a pretty good shot.

Father worked hard. He could and did load twenty loads of hay a day, standing on a swaying wagon and pitching the hay up to the end of a sixteen-foot rack, at the same time building a square, well-shaped load. It took strength and skill. I tried it and nearly smothered under the hay rolling out of the hay loader. Father lacked a half inch of being six feet tall. He weighed about two hundred pounds. His arms and legs fitted tightly to his body, short

coupled, he knew how to use his whole body for heavy jobs.

Yes, he worked hard. Maybe he inherited from Grandfather some of the New England belief that the devil finds work for idle hands. But Father never showed the impatience, the sharp demand for immediate action, that was built into Grandfather's character. Father seemed more like Grandmother, slow to anger, even-tempered, a person who looked for the good in people and things. All his life Father worked hard. Not until he became the president of the Iowa Farm Bureau and moved to Des Moines did he let up on his muscle power.

He expected us to work hard, and we did. He imposed on Mother sometimes by asking from her more than she could do. When livestock buyers or lightning-rod salesmen came by, Father would ask them to stay for dinner. On short notice Mother would have another man to feed, and perhaps she had been washing or ironing and did not have enough food ready for guests. Probably Father acquired the habit of hospitality from his mother. Grandmother could always put on an extra plate and stretch soup or baked beans a bit. But Mother wasn't like that; she needed notice in advance and, besides, she liked to choose her own guests. We all knew that these men from outside expected Charlie Hearst to feed them. He had that reputation and Mother resented it.

We all worked hard—too hard, I think. The demands of the farm forced boys into men's work before their bodies, muscles, bones, and attitude developed enough to cope with the work. We needed more time for play and just the idling around that boys do. My sister may have felt some of the pressure, but she stayed in the house and Mother protected her. Mother couldn't protect us; we were hell bent to take over men's work without any urging from Father. No one drove us, but Father should have tamed our eagerness and guarded our youth. Still, the work was there to be done, someone had to do it. In those days men worked harder than machines.

When Father had his office in Des Moines, he discovered that other men and their families did not work from morning until dark. It came home to him that perhaps shorter hours meant better

work and more satisfied workers. He began to caution us, asked us to slow down. Tractors and cornhusking machines made their appearance, and Father encouraged us to buy any labor-saving device we could find. We did not need a second notice.

As I grew into my middle and late teens, Father shifted more and more responsibility my way. My shoulders did not accept the burden graciously. Relations between us stretched at times. Oh, I hoed my row, as Mother would say, but I wanted freedom to make my own decisions, and I wanted more time to play. It occurs to me that oldest sons usually grow old before their time. It wasn't until my diving accident that the load slipped off and fell into the hands of my youngest brother, Charles. By that time Bob was fighting a losing battle with a malignancy.

We drew together as a family after Bob's death and my accident. The inner tensions faded away and we joined hands to help each other. My father and I were good friends in the years before he died. He had abandoned the father-authority role, and I had outgrown my boyish rebellions. We all showed our mettle when the Depression struck, and we united to keep our farm and home and family ties.

Charles and I had the farm under control by the time Father died. We had paid off the heirs, fenced the farm with woven wire, put in a drainage system of tile, laid cement platforms in the feed yards, and installed a bathroom in each house for the hired men. But the worry, anxiety, strain, long hours of work when the house burned, Bob's death, these things all left scars on us that will never be erased.

My sister Louise no doubt walked a lonely path, being the only girl in a big family with three rambunctious brothers. She did not share our rough ways, our horseback riding, tree climbing, camping out activities. No tomboy, she preferred the less strenuous chores of housekeeping and cooking to the raucous outdoor games we played. We loved her and tried to be affectionate, but we teased and tormented her too. Once, playing the role of executioner, I set her favorite doll on the back of a chair and knocked its china head off with the stove poker. Mother reminded me not to do it again,

reminded me in such a way that I had no intention of ever doing it again.

Once, our veterinarian, Dr. Brody, gave each one of us a miniature musical instrument made of chocolate. Mine disappeared in a hurry, but Louise kept her little violin in a drawer of her dresser, wrapped in tissue paper. When I discovered this, temptation plagued me. I could think of little else. So one day I ate it. It made me feel so guilty I offered Louise my dessert, but she spurned it. Her hurt went deeper; a piece of pie would not replace a violin made of chocolate.

Louise began taking music lessons at an early age. I used to hitch up our little Arabian, Dot, and take Louise to town, where a Miss Curtis gave music lessons. She kept up her music lessons even after she taught in the college here, and became quite an accomplished pianist. She was a godsend to us during the Depression, when we had so little to cheer us, when Bob slowly disappeared before our eyes. She played and we sang. She brought out her friends from the College and they sang. Mother and Father would listen and sometimes join us. When, today, someone complains about the idiotic lyrics in the popular songs, I remember we sang, "Ja Da, Ja Da, Jada Jada Jing Jing Jing," and "On a beach, awicki wicki." As the French say, the more things change, the more they remain the same.

My debt to my sister is beyond estimate—all those afternoons at the hospital when she read to me, all the books she brought home from the college library and returned. She brought home the library lists of new books and helped me select the ones to read. Singlehandedly, she provided me with an education in literature, philosophy, and science. She never complained of being too tired or too busy to bring home books for me. On weekends she brought home her friends to give us all lively evenings. And she turned in her salary check to the farm account when the Depression pushed us into debt.

Louise lived at home, mostly, while she taught in the College here, and she helped us weather illness, depression, drought, and low clouds. After Father died, she married and went to live in

Seattle, Washington, where her husband taught in the city schools. Louise taught in a private school there. When they retired they built a home on Puget Sound on the Olympic Peninsula. One incident seems characteristic of her. My brother and his wife and my wife and I planned to meet Louise and her husband in Aspen, Colorado for a vacation. In those days Aspen wore its sleepy mining-town air. We had some doubts about the quality of the motel, so Louise investigated our rooms. We had indoor plumbing, hot water, new single beds, waxed hardwood floors. "My God," Sis said, "this is the way to rough it."

My brothers were younger than I, Bob two years younger, Chuck four. We played together, but I needed more opposition than they could furnish, I was too quick and strong. I must have imposed on them. I twisted their arms behind their backs to get my way until Bob said one day, "Go ahead and break my arm, but I won't do it." The enormity of my bullying suddenly came home to me, and I stood shamed in my own light. I never did it again. Bob outgrew me. He soon stood taller and weighed more than I did. One fall day when we were in our teens, we wrestled and Bob put me down. I still remember with chagrin his satisfied chuckle as he sat on top of me and said, "Now will you be good?"

Bob's size and willingness to work made him my equal in the farm work. Father assumed he could do it and Bob did. But he should have had a couple more years to harden his muscles and grow into manhood. He could match me stride for stride, though, and he hated to do the dishes. He wanted to be with the men.

When very young, Bob felt the need to set fires here and there. Once, he climbed onto the kitchen table, gathered a handful of matches, and walked out to the barn. Here he piled up straw and set it on fire. I doubt if he realized that barns do not accommodate themselves to straw fires. Fortunately, one of the hired men stamped it out. After this, folks watched for repeat performances. This compulsion lasted about a year. Then Bob found another outlet for his displeasure. He placed a handful of shotgun shells under all the beds; how he expected to explode them no one knows. Chuck caught him at it and Bob offered to spare his bed if

he would not tell on him. Chuck promised not to tell, but that night when he went to bed he peeked underneath and there were the shotgun shells.

Bob liked contact sports. He played tackle on the high school football team and barrelled into the opposing line with a kind of fierce pleasure. Occasionally, he carried the ball on a tackle-around play and, while he was slow, like a freight train he gained momentum with each stride, and when he hit the line he always gained yardage.

After a year in college he began to complain of swelling and pain in his neck. After exhaustive tests at the University Hospitals, the diagnosis read lymphatic sarcoma. The tumor was removed but the cells had spread. He received the best treatment known in those days. For two years he slowly withered away. We could hardly believe his casual courage. He never complained, never asked for pity, never said "Why me?" but endured his decline with immense fortitude.

I read to him in his last months. His fraternity brothers came to visit him. The family of aunts, uncles, and cousins made visits to him like visits to some shrine. Bob never whimpered. Mother, her heart broken, maintained a stoic attitude of encouragement. We could scarcely bear it when he died, one of the best of us, the first to go. Mother and Father stopped going to church.

I played the role of older brother mostly with Charles. Bob and I lived on a more or less equal footing so far as strength and ability went. But Mother needed help with her chores, and Chuck, being the youngest, became her right-hand man. He gathered the eggs, fed the chickens, brought in the wood, cleaned out the ashes, and dug in the garden. He remained as chore boy for Mother much longer than he wished. But Mother needed help, and she hated to let go of the youngest. And Chuck was obliging and did not complain.

He suffered a severe case of pneumonia when he was about three years old. A private nurse came to be with him. Miss Bishop worked tirelessly with her patient; we always thought of her with admiration. When at last the crisis passed and Chuck was allowed

to get out of bed, he cried because his legs would not hold him up. His doctor, Uncle Will, said he must exercise. So Bob and I, one on each side, dragged poor Chuck around the yard trying to get his legs to support him. We shared an anxiety that, unless we helped him, Chuck might never walk again.

Chuck seemed to have an easier time learning than the rest of us. He probably had a better mind, and no doubt he learned from hearing us discuss our schoolwork. He played end on the high school football team and made one of the selected teams—all county, all state, I forget now. Tall, rangy, long arms and quick reflexes, he knew how to play his position. He gave up football in college because he carried too many burdens. Father had gone to Des Moines, Bob had gone, the hired men we had then needed supervision. I had come home from the hospital, but I was still too weak to get around by myself. All this in addition to his schoolwork piled up on Chuck until he finally gave up college one quarter short of a four-year degree.

Chuck might have preferred a different arrangement, but he stayed on the home farm to help me. He would have made an excellent teacher. He lifted me in and out of cars, up and down steps, in and out of friends' houses, to concerts and parties. Finally I trained myself to walk around the house, get in and out of the car alone, go up and down steps with a railing or strong arm for support. But Chuck or one of the hired men had to lift me on and off the tractors.

We went into partnership on the farm. We sold Father's herd of purebred Shorthorns and bought Texas and Wyoming calves and yearlings. We raised hogs, limed the ground for alfalfa, bought modern machinery, pulled the farm up by its bootstraps. When we began operations we drove a beat-up, second-hand Ford, one of the hired men drove a Cadillac. I remember how conspicuous we felt when we bought our first Packard. But we got used to it, as one of our friends told us we would.

We took care of the land. We rotated crops, hauled out and spread tons of manure, dammed gullies, established grass waterways, used chemical fertilizer sparingly. We ground and

mixed our own feed for cattle and hogs. We ground alfalfa to cut down on the amount of protein we had to buy. Mostly we ground ear corn for the calves and yearlings; it was easier to keep them on feed than if we had fed them shelled corn. We joined the Northeast Farm Business Association and discussed our plans with the field man and had our books audited. Every month we hung a fresh sheet in the machine shed for each tractor, to keep track of the amount of gasoline, oil, and diesel fuel we used.

It was still home, a place where we lived, but we made farming a business. We often disagreed, Chuck and I, sometimes with anger, but we ran the business with a minimum of friction. Mother kept house for us, and we three shared a host of good friends and attended the lectures, concerts, and plays that came our way. Always we had been blessed with friends from the college faculty. Grandfather and Professor Bartlett (for whom Bartlett Hall is named) were friends. Professor Bartlett was head of the English Department. Mother's work as Dr. Seerley's secretary formed another tie with the college. Our family took root here, we were friends with each other, and we made a place for ourselves where we wanted to live.

Hired Hands

The farm always needed hired men and hired girls. We took this for granted. To us the farm of relatives, hired help, pet animals, all became a whole family. Grandfather and Grandmother lived just across the yard, Aunts Jennie and Mamie lived with them, and during the summer our cousins, Helen and James McAlvin, lived with us. Always uncles, aunts, cousins came and went. We never thought of hired men and hired girls as being "hired."

One occasion, like lines in a woodblock, cut deep into my childhood memory. South of our house about half a mile, on what we called the "Rinker eighty," stood an old house and barn. The place stood on our land. We children didn't know who Mr. Rinker was. He seemed like a myth to us, though I'm sure my father knew him as a neighbor and a real person.

When I was a child a family named Anderson lived there. Mr. Anderson hauled milk and cream from the farmers in the neighborhood to the Fredsville creamery. Twice a week his wagon or sleigh went by, loaded with milk cans. He drove a worn, scrubby-looking team, the harness held together with twine. He may have paid my father some rent, but I doubt it.

Mother thought the family shiftless; I guess they had reduced their needs to accommodate a limited amount of energy. I remember the growing size of the manure pile by the barn, which no one ever seemed to haul away. Mrs. Anderson did not have stove-length wood for the stove; she just stuck one end of a long branch in the stove, rested the other end on a chair, and shoved the wood in as it burned.

There were three Anderson boys: Peter, Christopher, and Andrew. Andrew was the eldest. Nature performs some strange tricks with her genetic sleight of hand. Pete and Chris (he was

called "Stub Chris" because of his small stature) followed the easy-going life of their parents. They never exerted themselves beyond the need of the moment; it was easier to brush away the flies than shut the door.

But Andrew marched to another tune. He worked for us when Father needed extra help. We children adored him. He tolerated our childish jokes with patience and good humor. He kept himself neat, always thanked Mother after a meal, could be depended on to perform well any task Father gave him. He liked to work with animals and knew how to control unruly horses without abusing them. His personality and character would open most places to him.

One Sunday in summer, just as we returned from church, a neighbor boy galloped into the yard on a sweating horse and shouted, "Andrew's drownded! He drownded over in the gravel pit by Dike!" Dike was a small town about six miles away.

We sat frozen, still as stone monuments. Then Father leaped from the seat, tossed the reins to Mother, and shouted "Tie the team to the windmill, Katharine!" He ran to the barn, slipped a bridle on Belle and—riding bareback in his Sunday clothes—raced out of the yard. We slowly got out of the carriage. Mother tied the team and we all went into the house.

I don't know what Father thought he could do. If Andrew was drowned, he was beyond help. I'm sure Father felt the need to *do* something for Andrew's sake—Andrew was like a member of our family. Maybe he thought he could still try artificial respiration. I just know he rode out of the yard, as my brother Bob said, "Hell bent for Christmas."

Mother put dinner on the table and solemnly we ate it. She just nodded when we asked questions. "Wait until your father comes home." We tried to bring the experience of death as we knew it among our pets and other animals into our home. We found it confusing to believe that Andrew would never again be around for us to tease.

Father returned about two-thirty. He put the horses in the barn and sat down at the table. Mother had kept his dinner warm. He

shook his head at our questions and ate in silence. We sat by the table and watched him.

Finally he said to Mother, "It's true. I was told that after church a group of boys decided to go swimming. They went to that old gravel pit north of Dike. A hot day, and they all wanted to be first into the water. Andrew jumped in, and the boys said he never came up. If he had a cramp or if the shock of the cold water stopped his heart, we don't know."

Mother asked, "Didn't someone try to save him?"

Father shook his head. "It was pretty hard to find out what did happen. The other boys cried and couldn't talk much. I don't know how many of them could swim. It's a treacherous place for nonswimmers, deep water, the sides go straight down. But it's the only decent place around there to swim."

We children sat around and listened, and soon it was time for chores. Mother and Father went to see the Andersons. We gathered the eggs, fed the chickens, filled the corn baskets for the horses, and brought the cows home from the pasture. Nothing unusual about chores, the same ones waited for us every evening. But the day's loss stayed in our memories for a long time.

A succession of hired girls and hired men arrived at our house straight from Denmark, often through the good offices of Martin Holst, the publisher of the *Dannevirke,* a Danish newspaper in Cedar Falls. The only English that one of our hired men, Matt Jensen, knew was "goddam" and he used it on all occasions. My father said grace at every meal and Matt would repeat, soundlessly, the words Father spoke. He came home late one night, or early one morning, from Waterloo. As he passed the Johnny Call farm, one of the peacocks let out a screech. Matt's horse was in a lather when he got home, and he solemnly told Father the next morning that the Devil had come after him. He did not believe it was only a peacock. Matt was short, thick bodied, round faced, and full of energy. He could do the work of two men and gloried in his strength.

Matt smoked a short-stemmed pipe. One day Mother found two

of her sons, James aged six and Robert aged four, with pipes they had made by nailing a small block of wood onto a narrow strip. We pretended we were making fence, and Mother heard us say, "Set the goddam corner post," and "Hand me the goddam wire stretchers."

She told Father, "Matt has got to stop swearing. You should hear the boys." Father was amused. Mother was not. He spoke to Matt, who was shocked when he learned what he had been saying. He was a rather religious young man.

One hired man became a member of our family. Lauritz Nielsen, former coachman to the king of Denmark, came to America to seek his fortune. Mr. Holst sent him out to our farm. We adored Lauritz. He went to church with us and to all our family picnics and holiday dinners. We exchanged Christmas presents. Once he gave me a real leather riding whip with a thong on the handle.

He taught me lessons in horse care. A strict taskmaster, he taught me how to handle colts, how to adjust bits in a bridle, what kind of bit to use for a horse with a tender mouth and for one with a hard mouth. He showed me how to trim forelock, mane, and tail, how to pick up a horse's hoof and, with a curved hoof-knife, clean it out and cut down the frog, and how to trim the hoofs with a pair of pincers. He taught me to use a kind word but a firm hand, to sit in the saddle like a man, not some hobbledehoy. By the time I was sixteen, I was breaking all of our colts to the harness and plow, all because Lauritz had taught me secrets from the Great Book of the Horse.

One Fourth of July when our parents would not get up early so we could begin to shoot off firecrackers, Lauritz took one of the 12-gauge shotguns and fired a couple of shots under our parents' window. No wonder we loved him.

Mother felt free to leave us with Lauritz if she went to a meeting or luncheon. He prepared the meal and made us say grace before we ate. We were not supposed to drink coffee, but Lauritz set out coffee cups for all of us. Then he looked sternly at us and solemnly warned, "Don't you tell your mother or she give us all a good

spanking."

But Chuck was too young to keep secrets, and the minute Mother drove into the yard he rushed out and said excitedly, "Guess what we had for dinner!" Then it all came out and Mother pointed her finger at Lauritz and he hung his head in mock dismay.

After Lauritz left us, he went up into the Wisconsin forest to work for a lumber company. He bought a wooded farm, married a schoolteacher, and came back to work for us again to earn money to pay for the farm. His children were born on our farm, and he and his wife named them after us.

We always exchanged Christmas letters. The Nielsens prospered, and the children grew up and married and had children of their own. Many years later, after Lauritz had died, my wife and I were vacationing on the north shore of Lake Superior and we decided to drive over to Ladysmith, Wisconsin to see Lauritz's widow. Alice looked well and comfortable surrounded by her children and grandchildren. We still hear from her at Christmas.

We never questioned our close relationship with our hired men as we grew up. But when World War I began, that huge vacuum sweeper the draft sucked up most of the available farm help for the Army. Father hired whoever he could find to help us on the farm. Only then did we become conscious of the difference between a farmer and his hired help. We had grown up—I was seventeen—and the kind of help we hired made me aware of where the authority lay.

In the spring of 1918, when we had searched in vain for help, a tall, slow-spoken, sharp-eyed man showed up looking for work. He said his name was Irv Mann and that he came from Tennessee. We never knew how he strayed this far north into Black Hawk County and finally to Maplehearst Farm. He had a pleasant wife and one small child.

We hired him, but we discovered that Irv found our ways of farming at odds with his the first morning he began to work. In his twangy mountain speech he asked, "What air we all a-goin' to do today?"

Father said, "We will cultivate corn."

"All right," Irv said, "where's the hoe?"

We stared, then compressed our lips so as not to laugh. Hoe one hundred and twenty acres of corn? That would be the day. But Irv was willing. He tried to get the hang of using horse-drawn cultivators, but he had trouble getting his team to follow the corn row and he kept adjusting the cultivator shovels.

Irv found chores another problem to solve. He never talked much about his background in the Tennessee hills. We knew he came from small beginnings. He said that one mule and a patch of ground on the mountainside gave him his farming experience. But he tried hard to learn our ways. His tall, slightly-slouched body, his chaw of tobacco, his peaked straw hat, bobbed around the barns and granaries with the aimlessness of a man who had lost his way. He had never thrown a breeching harness over the broad rumps of horses that weighed almost a ton each.

His family raised just one litter of pigs—"fur eatin' not fur sellin'," he said, and "We didn't have no cow most of the time; it cost too much to feed her." He was not lazy or deceitful, he wanted to work our way. But his tradition and experience made him a foreigner on an Iowa farm. His talk and ways taught us something of people who were not like us or our neighbors. Our relationship never relaxed into the easy way we were used to.

A crisis came, as it was bound to do. One day in the first part of June, a warm, humid day, we were cultivating corn. Father had gone to a meeting and when he was away I, as the eldest, acted as a sort of foreman. We all worked together, finishing one field and going on to the next. Cousin Jim worked for us, as he had for several summers. We each had a team and cultivator; that meant five teams in the field.

We four young men played tricks on each other as we rode through the field. One wheel of the cultivator always travelled in moist earth because it was next to the row just cultivated. Earth stuck to the rim, building up, and became a kind of earth tire. As we worked our way through the field, we would reach over, brake off a chunk of dirt, and heave it at one of the others. Mostly we

missed because we didn't dare take our eyes off the hills of corn passing between the shovels. But when we hit, the victim yelled and we all laughed. It hurt, too, to have a clod whack you between the shoulders.

That morning we all stopped at the end together and rested the horses a few minutes. We drank from a jug of water hidden in the grass by the fence row. Irv sauntered over to me. He had an ugly glint in his eye. "You boys are mockin' me," he said, "and I don't have to stand fur it."

"No," I said, "no, Irv, we are laughing at each other." Then I explained our little game.

He wouldn't listen. "It ain't fair, you boys mockin' me. You think I don't know it, but I ketch on."

By this time I had grown irritated. "Listen," I said, "we aren't mocking you. We have never made fun of you. You know it, too. Now you take your team and cultivator and go over to the next field and stay away from us. You don't have to work with us."

He spit out a wad of tobacco. "You'll mock me behind my back. But I'll go because you told me to."

At noon Irv silently watered his team and put them in the barn. I warned the boys to stay out of his way and not talk to him unless he spoke first. After dinner he hitched up his team, and as he left for the field he said, "My woman said I don't have to stand fur it."

Father came home in time to help with the chores, and after supper I told him about Irv's resentment. He listened, then said, "You're sure none of you said anything to tease him?"

"No," I said, "we didn't mess with him at all."

"Then I'll go and see him. Maybe we can straighten this out."

When Father came back he wore an amused expression. "He says you make fun of the way he talks, says you laugh at him. Mrs. Mann tried to persuade him that he might be mistaken but Irv won't give in."

Father looked at the sky, the way all farmers do just before dark. He wrinkled his nose. "He says 'I don't have to stand fur it.' I really think, Jim, that he is trying to find a way to leave. It's been

hard for him to adjust to our ways."

Then I had an idea. "Dad, let him go. We four can handle the work if you will help with the haying and oat harvest. Hell, let him go."

Jim and my brothers nodded. Bob said, "We can swing it." And swing it we did.

This was the summer that my cousin James McAlvin and I neared our eighteenth birthdays, preparing to enlist in the Army. My two younger brothers, Robert and Charles, stood up as sizable young men. Bob was two years younger than I was, but already he was broader and heavier, and Chuck was almost as tall. This gave Father four able hired men right there.

Father ran the grain binder and loaded hay from the hay loader—that's a tough job. We sent two bundle wagons to the threshing ring, Bob and I took one, Jim and Chuck the other.

That summer was my first experience with authority. When Father was away, the boys looked to me for orders. But I did not like the feeling of separateness. I could make the decisions, but I felt more comfortable when we all just worked together. Apparently, my role in life was to work, not plan and decide.

We always had hired girls on the farm, but they seem less vivid in my memory, perhaps because we boys centered our attention on "men's work," outdoor activities. Scrubby little male chauvinists that we were, the housework, garden weeding, and chicken chores seemed somehow beneath our masculine concern. Oh, we all served our time, helping with the dishes, helping Mother with the garden and the chickens, but we resented it.

We wanted to share the world where men laughed, sweat, swore, chewed tobacco, a world where horses had to be harnessed, cows milked, pigs fed, machinery greased. Until we could swing a shovel or handle a fork, our presence must have been a nuisance, but Father and the hired men tolerated us. No one scolded us more than we could bear.

Most of the hired girls, like the hired men, came from Denmark. Some spoke English, some a little English, some none at all. Like

the hired men, they became part of family life. They ate at the table with us, went on picnics with us, accompanied us to church—though they usually stopped at the Danish Lutheran church, where the services were conducted in their language. Mother called on one of our former hired girls years after she left us and found her prosperous. She had a hired girl and, to Mother's amusement, she made her eat in the kitchen. She explained to Mother that that is the American way.

Ida Hansen, one of the hired girls, came directly to us from Denmark, through the good graces of a neighbor who was her cousin. She was a tall, rangy young woman whose chapped hands and calloused fingers bore the marks of outdoor work. Evidently, in the old country she had worked on a farm, out in the fields. She walked with a loose stride, easily caught us when we tried to run away. Her quick, violent temper exploded in unusual ways, though she treated us with kindness.

I think now that housework, being cooped up inside, may have triggered some of her outbursts. Her inability to talk to Mother, to understand what Mother wanted her to do, must have been frustrating. She worked hard and recovered quickly from her temper flare-ups.

One day Ida opened the kitchen door and threw a whole pan of potatoes out into the woodshed. Mother, curious, asked her why she did it. And Ida said in her broken English, "Oh, Mrs. Hearst, I just get so mad, so mad, I must do something."

She went out into the woodshed, picked up the potatoes, washed and peeled them, and all was clear sailing again. She once put a goose with the entrails still in it in the oven to roast for our Sunday dinner. Before we went to church Mother had asked Ida if she knew how to roast a goose. "Ja, ja," she said. We ate macaroni and cheese for dinner.

Ida was fleet of foot and strong. My youngest brother, Charles, hated to take naps. Every day, just as we finished dinner, Chuck would shoot out the back door and leg it across the yard to Grandfather's house. Ida ran after him calling, "Charlus, you come back or your mama give some big spanking." Chuck always

hid in the same corner on the back side of Grandfather's house and Ida always found him.

She married Hans Thompson, one of our hired men. We kids did not know they were courting. We just knew that after supper Hans would sit on the back steps and play Danish folk songs on his accordion. Ida snuggled up beside him. Carlo, the dog, would howl ecstatically, and we would run around like crazy, pushing each other and yelling until Mother made us come in and go to bed.

It is a wonder that on thirty dollars a month—the going wage for a single hired man—Hans Thompson could save enough in a few years to buy four horses and the implements he needed, rent a farm, and start farming. Father gave him an old disk and a harrow, but Hans bought the rest. He longed for the land, to have a piece of ground he could work by himself, and he got it. I hope all went well with them.

Astrid came to help Mother about the year I turned thirteen. Her round, dimpled face, cheery smile, round, plump body, and quick hands gave the kitchen and the entire house a light-hearted atmosphere. She fascinated me, and at night after dinner I would help her with the dishes. She giggled and splashed soapsuds at me for my awkward attempts at gallantry. One day Mother took me aside and said, "It is nice of you to help Astrid, and I'm sure she appreciates it. But remember, James, she works here and is dependent on us for her wages. Never take advantage of someone who is under obligation to you."

She might just as well have said, "Cool it, son." I got the message. I remembered that advice. I look with disgust at the men who make free with their clerks and secretaries, young women dependent on them for their wages.

One cold winter night, a shabby car with only one headlight glowing crept into the yard. Rags stuffed in broken windows, defeated fenders, and a torn top made it look like a relic from a junkyard. A thin young man with a haggard face came to the door and asked if we had any work he could do. His wife sat huddled in the car. He said that their only child, a baby, had just died. They

had been farming in South Dakota, but had lost their farm through foreclosure. This was during the Depression. That is how Art and Elsie Jensen arrived at Maplehearst Farm.

Our two tenant houses were occupied by our regular help, but we had a spare bedroom so they stayed with us. Elsie was small, quick, an expert housekeeper and cook. She was neat as a pin and sharp-eyed for tasks that needed to be done. She had courage, too. After a few weeping spells when she felt the misery on her, she bustled about with a merry face and made us feel glad she was there.

Without a doubt, Elsie surpassed in skill and ability any of our previous hired girls, but then, she had had a home of her own. Her corn meal muffins and Dansk beef gave us something to look forward to at mealtime. We found our clothes fitting too tight. She and Art soon lost their haunted look. They seemed like guests—neat, clean, quiet.

Art knew about farm work. Strange how a farm soaks up any surplus help. That winter Father died and Art took me to the hospital several times. He showed me a small rubber hose that he used to siphon gasoline out of other cars when he had no money to pay for it. "That's how we got here," he told me.

The winter of 1936 turned out to be one of the worst I remember. Many consecutive days of below-zero temperatures, and snow so deep you wouldn't believe it. The snowplow man would call the neighbors on our road and tell us when he would open the road so we could get to town for groceries. Then he would wait at the city limits and plow open the road again so we could drive home.

Art and Elsie lived with us all winter. In the spring, through a relative, Art rented a farm in Missouri. They moved, and we did not see Elsie again. Art came back the next winter with a truckload of posts he had cut. We bought the posts and he stayed all night. He said Elsie was well and that they had a lively baby boy. The farm, he said, was kind of a hillside place, but they were making it go. He expected to find a better one after he had saved a bit of money. We received a Christmas card from them the next year,

but that was all we heard from them.

Elsie was the last of our "hired girls." My brother and I married, Mother lived in an apartment in town. We had had many other girls, whose names I no longer recall, help us in the house. Some stayed a long time, some left soon, but all except one kept us comfortable and clean. One girl filled her suitcase with our silver and clothes and disappeared. We could afford one mistake to compare with all the clean, healthy, friendly, hard-working girls who had made their home with us.

Dansk

We lived in a neighborhood full of people of Danish descent. Some of the parents had emigrated from Denmark. Except for the Frank Shoemakers, we were surrounded by Ericksons, Hansens, Nelsons, Bergstroms. Iowa collected ethnic groups—the Norwegians at Decorah, the Dutch at Pella and Orange City, the Frisians at Doon, the English at LeMars, the Bohemians at Cedar Rapids, the Irish and Germans at Dubuque. Cedar Falls seemed to be a gathering place for the Danes. It was often referred to as "Little Denmark."

At one time Cedar Falls boasted the publication of three Danish newspapers. One of them, the *Dannevirke,* published by Martin Holst, was a national Danish newspaper with the largest circulation of any Danish publication. We admired Mr. Holst, and we were in awe of him too. He walked with such an erect carriage, hair slightly curled at the ends, very neat in his dress, sometimes twirling a walking stick. It was the Holst family who furnished hospitality for the many Danish ministers passing through town on their way to parishes out west. And it was by the good offices of Mr. Holst that we received a supply of hired girls and hired men fresh from the old country.

Out of necessity, my father learned to speak Danish, speak it enough to communicate with the hired help. Once, though, he tumbled. We started for church in the family carriage. Ida, the hired girl, decided to stay at home. On the road we met a young, husky Dane walking toward our house.

"Ah," said Mother, "this is why Ida didn't want to go to church."

A bit farther on we found an overshoe in the road. Father picked it up and put it in the carriage. When we reached home

after church, Father took the overshoe and showed it to Ida and explained in his best Danish that we had found it in the road. He asked her if it belonged to the young man who had called on her.

Ida turned away from the stove where she was cooking our dinner, cheeks blushing furiously. She said "Ja, ja" in a timid voice and took the overshoe.

The next day Gertie Hansen, Ida's cousin, called Mother on the phone. She said, "Mrs. Hearst, I want you to know that the young man who called on Ida is a very nice young man."

"I'm sure he is," Mother answered. "We have no objection to Ida having company."

"But Mrs. Hearst," Gertie said, "Ida understood Mr. Hearst to say that if he came again he would kick him out of the house."

Whenever Father made a point of his ability to speak Danish, we reminded him of his conversation with Ida.

I was a small boy when I first learned that there were people called Danes. Between Cedar Falls and Dike was a small village called Fredsville. In those days, besides the church and parsonage it contained a general store, a blacksmith shop, and a creamery. A fire destroyed the business buildings, and now only the church and parsonage and cemetery are left.

The Danes there celebrated what they called "Midsummer's Day." No doubt the origin of the day goes back to pagan times, when folk propitiated the gods of the harvest with a time of rejoicing. Like so many pagan ceremonials, it had to do with food, with crops, with the hope for an abundant harvest.

It impressed me, the occasion did, as it would a six or seven-year-old boy who had never seen such a frolic. There was a platform decorated with varicolored bunting. On the platform sat an orchestra—a fiddle, an accordion, and a horn. People who were dressed in their native costume danced folk dances on the platform. Mounted on a bench were four or five kegs of draft beer, and a steady stream of customers with mugs in their hands came and went. It was a colorful, exciting event for me, but I was a little frightened by the strangeness of it and I clung close to my father.

Father must have known the people there, for he returned their greetings by using their first names. They urged him to have a drink of beer. One man in a native costume asked me if I wouldn't like a glass of beer. It scared me; beer was one of the deadly sins at our house. We didn't stay long, and I asked my father on the way home who those people were.

"They are Danes," he said, "celebrating one of their holidays."

There are no Midsummer's Day festivals any more. No doubt the third generation of these immigrants has become too American for old-country customs. A few years ago, a group of people of Danish descent attempted to resurrect the past and bring life again to the old tradition. They organized a three-day exhibition called "Danish Days." Old costumes were dug out of trunks, folk dances were rehearsed, food stalls were set up with Danish food for sale. There was a parade and speeches and an evening celebration with fireworks. And the committee, pleased but exhausted, agreed it was a success but too much work to repeat.

One of the characteristics of the Danes we took for granted. Several neighbors had the same names. There were several Hans Petersens, Jens Thuesens, Peter Hansens. They used expressive nicknames to distinguish them. One Jens Thuesen who wore glasses was called "Four-eyed Jens." Another man who used a hearing aid was "Telephone Pete." "Hay Anton" was a hay-buyer, "Slough Jim" lived beside a creek, "Stub Chris" was short. There was "Lawyer Jacobsen," "Shoemaker Larsen," and "Preacher Nielsen."

We Scotch-Irish Americans found country school a fearsome place at first. The Danish children all knew each other, went to the same church and the same birthday parties, weddings, and funerals. At recess and the noon hour they left us to ourselves and spoke Danish so we could not understand them. I know how it feels to be in a minority group. But gradually the barriers disappeared, and soon we played prisoner's base, ante-over, and one old cat as if we belonged to their ways.

We did not share in their confirmation ceremonies. When the Danish children were confirmed in the Lutheran faith they were

given gifts, their parents had parties or an open house, it was an occasion. It made our membership day in the First Congregational Church seem a little shabby. We stood up in front of the church, the minister spoke a few words, gave us each a small Bible, and that was it. No new clothes, no gifts, no parties.

We had two Danish Lutheran churches in town. The original church split over the desire of some of the younger members to dance, play cards, and enjoy themselves. The atmosphere grew so heated that a group of them withdrew and started their own church. The old members of the original church still refer scornfully to the "dancing Danes."

Our neighbors farmed their land with the conservative practices of the old country. Their farmsteads were neat and clean, fences kept up, weeds mowed. But they looked askance at our early experiments with alfalfa and hybrid corn. They smiled behind their hands, as if we needed a bit of advice from older heads.

When we were just youngsters, early in the century, a street fair was set up on Main Street in town. Someone suggested the idea of a tug-of-war between the Danes and the Americans. A fever of betting and speculation rose high, and a great jostling of challenges and bragging took place. On the appointed day the Americans pulled the Danes, and weeks passed before tempers subsided and friendly words were spoken again.

But the last real donnybrook took place when the Catholic Daughters of America organized a concert series for our community. Their big drawing card was the famous Metropolitan Opera tenor, Lauritz Melchior. Melchior was a Dane right from Denmark. He no sooner landed in town than a struggle began. The Danes wanted to take him to their bosom, but the Catholic Daughters replied that they were paying for his appearance. The Danes demanded that he sing a solo in their church. Here Melchior intervened. He said he could not sing a solo because of his contract, but he would come to church and "sing loud." He gave his concert Sunday night. The Irish and Danes turned out in force and filled the auditorium. After the concert, at a party where Melchior, a huge man, carved a few thick ham and turkey sand-

wiches for himself, someone said, "We hope you will come back again soon." Melchior answered, "When I return to Cedar Falls again I will be a very old man."

The ethnic distinctions have long been blurred. Nobody but one of the older generation would even know now what the term "greenhorn" meant. But when it was used in our childhood it often provoked bad feeling. It was a derogatory word, a pejorative term. No one speaks the language now. The *Dannevirke* gave up the ghost years ago when the list of subscribers dwindled so far as to make publishing newspapers in the Danish language a losing business. But there was a time when the distinction between being a Dane and being an American was a little sharper. I would like to give as evidence an account of a conflict that took place one noon at a threshing dinner. I learned something about the distinctions that day, and something about my father, too.

The rain the night before and the August sun that day made the air steamy, it wrapped around us like a wet woolen blanket. No threshing today. "Muggy," I thought, "a stinking day." Even the chores before breakfast made me sweat. Father and Hans, the hired man, carried the milk pails to the well house. My two younger brothers came from the hog house. Time for breakfast.

Mother bent over the kitchen stove. I could smell the eggs and bacon. The table was set for breakfast.

"Wash clean," Mother said as we took turns at the kitchen sink. "I just put on a fresh tablecloth." She used linen napkins and tablecloths every day and did not complain about the amount of washing and ironing. Her dark hair curled around her damp forehead. I thought she was pretty. I felt grown up at sixteen, but never thought about my parents' ages, they were just Father and Mother.

Mother brought in the platter of fried eggs and bacon, then the coffee and toast. Father served the plates. Louise, my sister, stayed in the kitchen and toasted more bread on a long fork over the fire where one lid of the stove had been removed. It was the usual breakfast, though sometimes we had fried potatoes, sometimes pancakes and sorghum, in the winter oatmeal and prunes.

But we had fresh applesauce now; the Duchess apples, the Whitney crabs, and the sweet harvest apples were all ripe.

"Boys," Mother said, "fill the woodbox, I have to iron this morning." She sighed and brought in the heavy sadirons from the woodshed and placed them on the stove. She must have dreaded firing up the stove to heat the irons on a hot day like this. She would unfold the ironing board in the dining room, where it was cooler. We finished our meal and hurried outdoors.

I thought, no threshing today, maybe we could go fishing. But I knew this was just a rosy dream. Always a farm has work waiting.

Father said, "I have to go to an elevator meeting this morning. Jim, get a couple of scythes and you and Hans can cut weeds along the fence rows. Bob, you and Chuck mow the lawn and help your mother."

Father did not know the word in Danish for "scythe." He turned to Hans and swung his arm like a man mowing a field. Hans watched for a moment, wrinkled his forehead, opened and shut his thick, stubby fingers. "Ja, ja," he said. Then he swung his arms like a man practiced in mowing. He grasped one of the scythes, took a whetstone, and beat out the music of sharpening a blade as lively as if he were beating on a kettledrum.

"He's done this before," said Father. "Jim, come over to the grindstone, your blade looks pretty dull."

Always on a muggy day when it was too wet for field work, we cut weeds. "What a life!" I said and whacked away. The corn stood higher than my head and kept out any breeze.

Swarms of gnats kept me company, the heat rose in waves. I hung my shirt on a fence post, stuck a whetstone in my back pocket, and buried the jug of water under a pile of grass to keep it cool. I swung at the row of weeds growing up between the corn and the fence. One careless stroke and I caught the end of the blade in the woven-wire fence and nearly tore my arms off. I hated this job; Father always saved it for a muggy day.

The hemp stalks were tough as leather. I named them after people I disliked and whacked them down. I had the neighbor's cows for company in the pasture on the other side of the fence.

Who would want to be a farmer and work like this all the time? Resentment made my adrenalin flow and I worked harder. I never thought of lying down in the shade of the corn for a nap. This was my job to do, so I did it. The old man always ran off to town when there was a tough job to do, I thought. But this was not true, and I knew it. Father's performance the day before yesterday had proved that. Gosh, I was proud of my father. Funny thing, it took a good deal of provocation to rouse Father, but when he decided to stand his ground, boy, he stood.

The fracas had taken place at noon, just after we had eaten a huge threshing dinner. The women in the threshing ring tried to outdo each other when it came to feeding the men. I was strong enough to haul bundles and I was there when it happened.

Ours was a large threshing ring, and we hired one of the larger outfits to do the work. The Case steam engine pulled an Avery separator with a 46-inch cylinder that could knock out four thousand bushels of oats in a day. That is one hell of a lot of grain.

I didn't need my mind to cut weeds, so I counted the number of men it took to keep the machine busy. Let's see, there were eight bundle haulers, four pitchers out in the field to load the bundles, two spike pitchers at the machine to help pitch off loads. Every time I came up to the machine I noticed the warning printed in big letters on the divider board of the feeder: WATCH OUT OR I WILL GET YOUR FORK. What a racket it would make if a fork stuck in a bundle and went on into the cylinder and concaves. It would probably tear some teeth right out of the cylinder.

Then there were two grain haulers with wagons, two men to help shovel off the grain at the granary, one or two men inside to pile the oats back, a couple of men stacking straw (and what a dirty job that was, behind the blower), and the engineer, separator man, and water boy. Twenty-six to twenty-eight men, all hungry, hot, and sweaty. Maybe not the water boy, he just had to pump his tank full of water and haul it back to the engine for the steam boiler. No big job.

It happened at noon. Everyone was lying around in the shade for a little rest before the engineer blew the whistle. The nosy little

Petersen kid started it. He asked, "Who wants to pull pitchforks?"

He always stuck his nose into men's business. A couple of the young bucks sat up and one said, "Where's the fork, kid?" So the kid ran out to the barn to get one. We were threshing at his dad's farm, so he knew where to go.

Here is how the game works, it is pretty simple. Two men sit on the ground facing each other. They put the soles of their shoes against each other's. Then they grasp a fork handle held just above their toes. At the word "Go!" they pull, and the one who pulls the other guy off the ground wins. Get two strong fellows at it and you hear the tendons crack. It is an innocent kind of contest, used a lot when a group of neighbors works together. It gives the young guys a chance to show off their muscle. After a morning's work on a hot day and all the food you can eat, this is OK if you are young and full of vinegar.

That day, some of the older men sat up and watched, some didn't even stir. The heat rose in waves, trees drooped, a couple of thin clouds drifted past. The dog lay in a hole he had dug under a lilac bush. A swarm of gnats hovered overhead, opening and closing. Then the game took a peculiar turn.

Last spring a stranger named Soren had moved into the neighborhood. He seemed to have plenty of money and he sure threw his weight around. Even the other Danes spoke of him as having what they called "the big feeling." He bought his farm, didn't rent it like most farmers starting out. He had a full line of machinery and livestock, too. And he bragged that what he had was better than what anyone else had. And on top of that he kind of sneered that he could outwork, outjump, outwrestle anyone he'd ever met.

I said to myself, "I hate guys like that and I'm a little scared of them, too." I can put up with it when someone brags and struts around but never tries anything because he is just a bag of wind. But when a man tells you over and over how good he is, and then he really is that good . . . It scares me a little.

Soren looked fat but he wasn't. He was all muscle. And, like many heavy men, he was light on his feet and quick as a cat. He

didn't stand so tall, maybe five feet eleven, but he must have weighed around two hundred and fifty pounds. A red, round face always sweating, thick lips turned down in a sarcastic grin, straw-colored hair, clean shaven, piggy blue eyes that did not smile.

He didn't seem to have a neck; his head was glued to his shoulders by two rolls of hairy flesh. And hands, my god, hands like hams attached to thick arms covered with stiff bristles. His fat fingers stayed half-curled as if they were ready to grip something. His squat, thick body seemed sort of menacing. His high-pitched voice drilled into your ears, and he talked in little explosions of words.

Soren watched the boys pull each other off the ground. Then he grunted, sat down and said, "Come on, let a man try this."

One of the young hired men took him on, and Soren pulled him with one hand. His mouth drooped in his sarcastic smile and he snorted, "Two of you. Come on, boys."

He put a board across his feet so two pairs of feet could push against his. Two well-built young fellows sat down, braced, and really put their backs into it. He pulled them, but he used both hands.

"Ain't anybody around here got any guts?" he shouted. "Come on, you little kids, I'll pull three of you." He did, too, but he had his work cut out for him. The sweat dripped off his chin and his arms bulged like blown-up paper sacks.

Then Soren became so excited it made him furious. "Ain't there any men around here?" he bawled. He ranted, practically pawed the ground like a bull.

Nobody said anything. Pete Nielsen gazed up into the sky as if he expected the answer to float down on wings. A couple of older men frowned. One of them bit off a chew of tobacco.

Old Pete Nielsen eased over to Father. He asked quietly, "Are we going to put up with this loudmouth?"

Father showed a tight smile. "Look, Pete, he is really your man. You Danes ought to handle him, because we don't want bad blood in the neighborhood."

But Chris Madsen turned to Father and said in a loud voice,

"Come on, Charlie, pull him."

It is true, Father was known around the neighborhood for some of the things he could do. He could lift the end of a hayrack off a wagon by himself. He could shovel oats faster than anyone else. He could go out and husk a hundred bushels of corn a day, and he could load hay on a sixteen-foot rack against the wind without stopping the hayloader to rest.

He wasn't a large man but he was solid. He knew how to handle himself, how to lift and hold. He had the knack of making himself hard to move, as if he were rooted. I had seen him stand firm and gentle a wild-eyed sixteen-hundred-pound three-year-old colt. Once, when we kids were out in the barnyard and the bull made a pass at us, Father jumped the fence, stuck his fingers in the bull's nostrils, and backed him into the barn.

He had thick shoulders and powerful arms set close to his body. No one would call him big in the way Soren was. He was trim, well put together, probably weighed a hundred and ninety pounds, stood just under six feet. He had a slow temper, he didn't like fights and hot arguments, but you couldn't crowd him, either.

Soren bellowed and bulled his challenge. Charlie Olsen, the engineer, got up and said, "Time to blow the whistle and start up."

But Chris Madsen held him by the sleeve and said, "Wait a minute, maybe we can tame this windbag."

Then Nels Olsen, who was no relation to the engineer, spoke up. "How about it, Charlie?" Nels Olsen was one of the older men, a kingpin among the Danes, elder in the church, director on the board of the Danish insurance company.

This really grated on Soren, to have a man of Mr. Olsen's standing speak up. His red face shone crimson and his eyes sparkled with fury. "You Danes are all scairt! You got no guts! Awww, a bunch of rabbits. I can lick you all with one hand in my pocket."

Then Tovey Andersen stuck a pin in him. "Can you lick the Americans, too?"

Soren worked himself up until he slobbered when he talked. "Damn right!" he yelled. "No American can stand up to a

Dane!'' He looked right at Father. ''You be careful, Charlie, or I pull your arms off.''

If this got under Father's skin, he didn't show it. But Nels Olsen said sharply, ''None of that kind of talk, Soren. Behave yourself. This is a game, not a prize fight.''

Then Mr. Olsen turned to Father, ''All right, Charlie, if you are willing.''

Father went over and sat down opposite Soren. They put the soles of their shoes against each other's. I could hear the locusts singing in the trees. I smelled the dust and sweat of harvest in the sun's peaceful glare. Far off, a train whistle floated a fading scream. One of the young boys sat up on his heels and pulled up blades of grass.

Mr. Olsen stood over the men with the fork handle ready for them to grip. ''Wait,'' he said, ''wait until I give the word.''

Father seemed slight and trim sitting opposite big Soren with his red, dripping face. I felt like a little kid, and I wanted to cry out, ''Don't do it, Papa!''

But I sat tight-lipped, made a show of brushing a cricket off my shoe. In the distance I could see a field dotted with shocks of oats, all yellow and shining under a sky that seemed so deep that silence probably lived there. I saw Charlie Olsen pick up his grease-stained hat and fiddle with it. He scowled as if to say, ''It's time to start the machine and quit this boys' play.''

Behind me I heard someone say softly, ''Ja, if Charlie pulls him, it makes the Danes look bad.''

I wanted to yell at him and ask, ''Who started this?'' but couldn't, as the quiet grew as oppressive as the heat. My throat choked on words I wanted to say to stop Father. Gus Refsuage grinned at me; he and the others knew there was more at stake than just two men trying to see which one was the stronger.

Mr. Olsen lowered the fork handle. ''Get ready,'' he said.

Father and Soren shifted and braced their feet. Then they reached out and wrapped their fingers around the fork handle. Soren let go and wiped his fingers on a dirty handkerchief. ''Sweat makes slippery,'' he said.

At last they were ready. "Go!" shouted Mr. Olsen, and stepped back.

As he had done before, Soren reared back, throwing his weight into the pull. Father did not budge.

I wondered, how does he stand it?

Soren threw himself back again and almost broke his hold. The fork handle hung in the air, stayed right where it had started, over the men's toes. Tension, like the stillness before a thunderstorm, began building up in the group of watching men.

As if he couldn't stand it any longer, one of the young men whispered, "I believe Charlie has got him going."

The men stared at the straining arms. I could sense a struggle in them, too. They wanted the bragging Soren brought to his knees. His brassy arrogance upset the neighbors, made them feel small, as if put down somehow. Yet, deep in their blood beat the pulse of pride in being a Dane. The old viking gods demanded victory.

I clutched my straw hat so tightly I tore the brim. My whole body shared the strain with Father. I had a terrible need for Father to win.

Now Soren showed signs of surprise. His scornful look changed to one of concern. He began to gasp and his body swayed slightly from side to side the way a cork works out of a bottle. The fork handle did not move.

I stared at Father's face. It wore an enquiring look, mouth half open, eyebrows lifted as if he were about to ask a question. But the sweat just poured down his cheeks. I saw a ripple under his shirt, just a tremor, as if the muscles had started to move with a steady, wavelike motion. He's beginning to work, I thought. My god, how can he hold on?

Still there was no change. The men seemed caught in a spell. A bee buzzed by. The scene might have been painted on canvas. The onlookers stared with mouths half open, hands clenched in pockets or hooked in overall suspenders. The few minutes stretched into hours. The intensity of the two straining men spread a kind of apprehension over the group, as if each man's fate depended on the outcome.

Suddenly it ended. The heavy flush drained from Soren's skin. He turned pale, the flaring nostrils pinched together, on his lips a bubble formed and broke. He cried out and pitched forward on his face. He moaned softly.

"Ruptured, by god," said one of the men.

Soren slowly got to his feet, bent over like an old, arthritic man. He stumbled toward his car clutching his lower abdomen.

Everybody drew a deep breath. Like men in a trance they watched him go. I saw Father stand up and put on his hat. I heard him say in a strained, husky voice, "We have hurt a good man today. Let's get on with the work."

Mr. Olsen said, "Charlie, blow the whistle, start the machine."

As if they had been caught in some forbidden act, without looking at each other, as if shamefaced, the men gathered their straw hats and walked toward the threshing machine. I heard three sharp toots of the whistle and I ran to hitch up my team.

I stopped to whet my scythe blade. I was proud of the old man ...of my father, I corrected myself. He hung in there when the chips were down. He played the game for all he was worth. I guess I can cut a few weeds without complaining. The neighborhood would remember that day for a long time.

The years have fled into the past where even memory stumbles over its own mistakes. Our Danish farmers of the first generation, the emigrants, brought customs and a culture from their native land that gave a foreign atmosphere to our neighborhood. They worked hard, kept their farms neat and well managed, lived a close family life, and were good neighbors. But the years grow fat on change. Our new world has become older and the older generations have given way to the young. Few folk now remember when there were "Danes" and "Americans." The melting pot of our country pours us all into the same mold. We may wear a coat of many colors, but the patches are now sewn into one garment. We may sometimes feel in ourselves the faint reminders of our ethnic origins, but we speak the language of our country, and say America.

The Movers

The east wind whips the skirts of the snow
with a passing shower,
and over Iowa on the first of March
wheels churn hub deep in the mud
or grit their teeth across the icy roads.

Home is only a shadow
flying down the wind in a
twisted swirl of snowflakes,
travelling down the road in an old lumber wagon
drawn by two shaggy horses
whose bones are too big for their flesh.

Even the wild goose
is not so homeless as these movers.
Peering ahead through the sliding curtain
of March rain they pass
with the furniture of home packed in a wagon.
Past corner, past grove, to the hilltop they go
until only chairlegs point from the skyline
like roots of trees torn from the earth.
And they are gone...

This, the parade of the landless, the tenants,
the dispossessed,
out of their Canaan they march
with Moses asleep in the Bible.

Who will call them back, who will ask:
are you the chosen people, do you inherit
only a backward glance and a cry and a heartbreak?
are you the meek?
But the early twilight
drops like a shawl on their shoulders
and sullen water
slowly fills the wagon ruts and the hoof prints.

The Movers

Moving day was the first day of March. The movers were tenant farmers who were changing farms, hired men changing jobs, married hired men who had become—or hoped to become—renters, all moving along country roads with their household goods packed in a wagon. "This, the parade of the landless, the tenants, the dispossessed." The parade took place each year and had been an annual event in the United States, according to historians of farm tenancy, since about 1850. Most good, free land had been taken up by that time, and the opportunity to buy a farm was limited by such obstacles as land speculators who held options on large tracts of land, grants of land to railroads, grants of land to colleges, tight money, and high interest rates. Individual farmers who lacked borrowing power found it difficult to buy land from the managers of huge tracts of land. And so they became renters.

But we knew little of this in our neighborhood when I was a boy going to country school. All the farms in our neighborhood seemed to belong to the people who lived on them. Most of these folk were first generation Danes, often immigrants, who brought enough money, or had friends with money, or could borrow money to pay for their farms. No doubt most of the farms carried mortgages, but such questions never arose in the mind of a country school boy. I just took it for granted that the Ericksons, Hansens, Bergstroms, Nelsons, Madsens, Refsuages owned their own farms.

One farm did have an absentee landlord. It was owned by Henry Drohman, who managed a farm implement store in Cedar Falls. Hank Drohman was a kind, easy-going landlord. He rented the farm to the Miller family. Mr. Miller suffered from tuberculosis and died soon after they moved to the farm. But Mrs. Miller, a strong and sturdy woman, and her three young sons farmed the

place until the boys finished country school. We knew they were renters. In another case, a married hired man lived in the school district and his son came to school. To us, these families owned neighborhood rights the same as the rest of us. No one made mention in my hearing that they were different.

I first became aware of rented farms when some of the older farmers moved to town and rented out their farms. In those days, it was the farmer's ambition—and especially his wife's—to make enough money so that they could leave the farm and move to town. The amenities of farm life did not include paved roads, electric lines, or automobiles, and many farms had no telephone. The farm wife often found her life a lonely one, and hard work made her old before her time. She had children to care for, a flock of chickens to tend, a large garden to plant and weed. She canned vegetables and fruit, helped butcher hogs and cattle, sometimes worked in the fields. These early families did not stint on the number of children that they had; often there were as many as twelve or fourteen children to be fed, clothed, nursed, and sent to school with a lunch pail.

No wonder the farm wife looked worn and tired and often gaunt and weatherbeaten. One farmer said to my father, with a wink, "Why, Charlie, anybody knows you can't buy and pay for one hundred and sixty acres with one woman." No wonder a farm wife felt free from bondage with electric lights instead of kerosene lamps and lanterns to clean and fill each day, and with indoor plumbing instead of a privy and water to carry from the well—farm women have carried how many thousands of gallons of water from the windmill to the house. We had one of the few farms that had a storage tank with pipelines that ran to both houses, the barn, the cattle yard, and the hog house. The farm wife who moved to town could attend church circles and shop downtown whenever she felt like taking a walk. She walked on sidewalks and drove on paved streets and no longer had to wash the separator each day and smell manure on the boots in the woodshed.

For the men who moved to town, the anticipation may have

been as great as for their wives, but the reality fell short. Ole Johnson, Chris Christiansen, and Peter Hansen all built substantial houses in town. But they found themselves laid off, out of a job, with nothing to do but mow the lawn, tend a handkerchief-sized garden, carry out the ashes. Almost any day, they could be found at the Rock Island or Illinois Central stockyards, thronging the weight house, hanging over the gates, looking at the livestock, and trying to join in conversation with the men there. They seemed bewildered by their empty lives, time hung heavy on their hands. They brought their appetites to town but not their activity, and they grew fat, short of breath. They died, and their widows survived them for many years.

They were a trickle in the parade on March first. They rented the farm to one of the sons. When Papa died the son either bought out the other heirs (his brothers and sisters) or rented the farm from them, or, if the family was not agreeable, moved away to another farm. In our neighborhood, renting had begun.

It puzzled me why March the first should be moving day. Often the day lived up to the reputation of March in Iowa—a month born in a bleak, raw wind that showered sleet, rain, and snow on frozen, muddy roads. A pleasant March first was an exception. It seems to me now that the day represented the end of winter farm sales and the time to prepare for spring work. It marked an end and a beginning.

Later, when the parade began, I learned some facts more unpleasant than the weather. Some renters had the farm sold out from under them without warning and were forced to move almost at a moment's notice. Some hired men lost their jobs because of a sudden disagreement over wages, housing, working conditions, or just a mean-spirited farmer who exercised his authority. As the Irish foreman said, "It ain't so much what I got agin ye as the power I got over ye."

Few laws protected the renter in those days. He signed a lease that was usually good for one year, and no time was specified when his landlord must renew it or refuse it. No doubt some

landlords, disgruntled ones, kept the renter in suspense until the last moment and then either turned him off or raised the rent. Today, a renter must be notified by registered mail before September first of the preceding year if a change is to be made. And many married hired men have contracts with a bonus agreement and the right to one or two months' notice and severance pay. They are also under social security and federal unemployment insurance.

In our area, the lease a renter signed was usually one of three kinds. With cash rent, a renter paid a certain amount for each acre in the farm. In a crop-share agreement, he shared expenses and the harvest with his landlord. Finally, there could be some rather complicated livestock and crop-share agreement, where steers were fed and hogs raised for market. Often, an inferior farm—one with light soil, a stony pasture, and a creek or two—rented for cash rent. On good farms the lease tended to be one where the landlord shared risks and profits with his tenant. A tenant who was a good farmer might stay on the same farm for years.

We had a good example in our area of a pleasant and profitable relationship between a tenant and a landlord. Art Hansen, an excellent dairyman, farmed the Merner farm until he retired. He was known statewide for his fine herd of Holstein cows. The Merners were lawyers in Cedar Falls. Sometime during his career as a tenant on the Merner farm, Art bought a farm of his own. But he rented it to another farmer. He preferred to stay on the Merner farm; his lease and working agreement with his landlord were too comfortable and profitable to relinquish.

One of the farms near us, on the other hand, had a new renter almost every year. The landlord charged cash rent and put nothing back into the farm. The soil was light and a gravel pit or quarry had been dug in one field. The county paid the landlord ten cents a load for the gravel hauled to spread on the roads. Two branches of a creek met and ran through a pasture dotted with stones. The dilapidated fences needed continual patching to keep livestock from straying. The buildings were ramshackle, doors of the barn hanging by one hinge, paint faded, boards warped. The windmill had lost its wheel, so the tenant had to furnish a gas engine to

pump water. Weeds were everywhere, and there were no buildings to store machinery.

In the house, the floors sagged, windows without shades stared with empty glances, the faded, loose wallpaper drooped from the ceilings in some rooms. Cracks between the sills and foundation let the wind whistle through, so each winter the renter banked the house with manure to keep out the drafts. The house smelled of mouldy woodwork, of sour corners like unwashed bodies, and most cheerless of all was a gray feeling of decay and abandoned rooms.

Usually the renter arrived with his household goods packed in a wagon, driving a herd of scrawny cows, with a few chickens of indeterminate breed in a chicken coop tied to the top of the load. The machinery that he brought the next day was often worn and in need of repair. It seemed the farm, the farmer, his family, and his tools all had run down and were on their way to nowhere.

The landlord was a businessman in town. When he died his widow sold it and the new owner moved in. You wouldn't know the farm now, with buildings painted and repaired, new fences, creekbed tiled, rocks buried, and the house with a cheerful, contented look.

The rapidly increasing price of farmland helped increase the size of the renter class. Married hired men who had saved their money looked for farms to rent, which sent the cost of renting slowly upward. Ownership of a farm began to climb out of reach of the many hands stretched toward it. Later, the depressed prices after World War I and the deep depression of the early Thirties drove many owners off their farms because they had a mortgage they could not pay. All these farms, which were now owned by banks and insurance companies, were for rent. I have read *Farmers Without Farms,* by Donald L. Winters. It is a study of agricultural tenancy in nineteenth-century Iowa. I find that his conclusions define our experience: that tenancy is neither exploitation nor a signal of distress nor a sign of poverty. It is part of the land-use system and exhibits one way that capital—and lack of capital—

may be managed in the production of basic human needs. Time after time, farmers decided to use what money they had to stock a rented farm rather than buy land that would leave them without the means to work it efficiently. Editors of farm magazines repeated over and over the advice that one of the worst choices a farmer could make was to put all his capital in owning land without reserving enough for working capital.

We saw that happen in our own neighborhood. During the rapidly rising prices of farmland from 1912 to 1918, many farmers bit off more than they could chew. The lure that each acre would be worth more tomorrow than it is today tempted some farmers to extend their holdings by mortgaging the property they had to make a down payment on new land. Consequently, when the bottom dropped out of the markets in 1920 and 1921, these men lost everything. The thin edge of ownership crumbled with the drop in prices.

We did admire Will Isley, one of our neighbors, who had pledged all his resources in an eighty-acre farm at what were then exorbitant prices. But he refused to be driven off, and he managed to meet the demands of his mortgage holder by raising and selling shepherd dogs. He won out, too, and kept control of his land. But he was an exception to the fate that beggared many farmers.

On our own farm, my father still owed a great deal of money on its purchase, but he owed it to his brothers and sisters, who chose not to disturb our security until times improved. My brother and I found it amusing that one of our hired men drove a Cadillac while we used a secondhand Model T Ford. The man had been a big farmer who, in an effort to become even bigger, lost everything but his household goods and his automobile. The sudden drop in farm prices in the early Twenties turned much of the farm world topsy-turvy.

It reminded me a little of the story of a Kansas farmer who, because of drought and depression, could not pay his hired man at the end of the year. So he gave him the farm and worked for him as a hired man. After that they alternated, one year the owner, the next year the hired man. Many farmers of that period would have

found the humor somewhat bitter after being forced into bankruptcy and, if they could find a farm to rent, tenancy.

Many farm economists have a pet theory they call the "agricultural ladder." Briefly, it assumes that a man will work as a hired man until he has enough money to rent a farm. He rents the farm until he has accumulated enough capital to buy a place of his own. Like most theories, there is solid evidence both for and against it.

In our neck of the woods, early in the century, we took it for granted that our hired men would rent a farm when they left us. That they would buy a farm later on was not so certain. In those days, the greatest step was from renting to ownership. Some of the renters did buy farms, and others did not. Today, many hired men choose to remain hired men; the risk of renting a farm, with its large capital requirements, is not worth taking. If their employer acquires more land, either by rent or by purchase, they may end up as farm managers with a good house, lawn, garden, salary and bonus, and a good school available for their children. And they'll have this without the worry of wondering whether they will be able to meet the payments due for taxes, insurance, maintenance, and the ever-pressing interest and principal payments each year.

In my boyhood we felt no social stain attached to families on rented farms. We exchanged work with them, sat by them at school and church programs, played with their children at school without any awareness that they did not own land. Who knew, they might become the owner the next year or the next.

We lived in an area of top-grade soil. The problem was not one of production, but of prices. If we had lived with sharecroppers in the red-soil hills of Georgia, the social situation might have been different. But we lived in a well-to-do neighborhood as far as land resources go, so there seemed no political, social, or moral strings attached to renters. On the economic stage we all played much the same part.

We knew some farmers, however, who seemed chronically dispossessed. Each year on March first they packed their household goods and drove their livestock to a different farm. They never

had enough livestock and machinery and feed to come out ahead after a year's work. They didn't lack industry, they weren't shiftless, but somehow they were born losers. Yet they kept on farming as the only way of life they knew. They started at the bottom of the agricultural ladder and stayed there all their lives.

The Andersons, who lived near us, might be taken as an example of the "landless and dispossessed." My father said that they "scratched around in the dirt a little in the spring" and managed to plant some crops. But the seeds were not virile, or the weeds grew too fast, or the machinery broke down, or the horses had lame shoulders—for one reason or another they ended the season with half a crop. The boys worked in their spare time for the surrounding farmers, the father had a regular income hauling milk to the dairy. But they subsisted year after year, and for all I know they may have been as happy and more carefree than the rest of us who hustled to our work.

The parade of tenants no longer passes along country roads on March the first. The date is no longer a moving day. Farmers that changed farms or moved away made the move last fall. And they moved in a truck, too, not a wagon "drawn by two shaggy horses whose bones were too large for their skin." The farmer today is a businessman, whether owner or tenant, and rather than pursuing "a way of life" (a term dear to Victorian editors) he follows a profession and keeps balance sheets of profit and loss, assets and liabilities. He has been forced to his bookkeeping by the lending agencies where he has a line of credit and by the Internal Revenue Service, greedy for his income taxes.

The change in attitude toward tenancy amazes me. I ride out to our former farms and discover that the land is being used by a young farmer who may live next door or he may live fifteen miles away. He is hungry for all the land he can rent. He has a forty-thousand-dollar tractor to pay for and perhaps an eighty-thousand-dollar combine. The more acres he farms, the more his costs diminish on his tools. It is not all due to the "big feeling," as my Danish friends used to say about an overly ambitious or boast-

ful man. To make a good living for his family, he needs a big operation, unless he runs a specialty business such as raising feeder pigs or a melon farm or asparagus business.

He needs five or six hundred acres of land to farm, and a thousand would be better. He loads the four, six, eight-row planter on a trailer, puts his tractor in high gear, and covers fifteen miles before breakfast. He rents on a cash basis, usually with a banker to extend him a line of credit. Does he think renting is a sign of exploitation or poverty or poor management? Ask him, and he will laugh and ask for more land to rent.

Now we have men (mostly younger men) who hold down an eight-hour job at the John Deere Tractor Works in Waterloo and farm eighty or one hundred and sixty acres on the side. They are tickled to death to find land to rent. For them, renting is a privilege not easily come by, no sign of lack of capital or stigma of poverty.

Today, the production from rented land equals or surpasses that from land owned. The young renters with a line of credit to back them often take more risks in spending money for fertilizer, herbicides, and pesticides than older, more settled owners. And there is not the push on the part of the young farmers to own more land as long as they can rent enough acres to support their investment in machines and seed and fertilizer.

True, we have rural slums in parts of the county and marginal or substandard farming that furnishes only a subsistence living to the people who work the land. But these "farms" are usually isolated fields along the river or small areas where the sand blows on dry days. The folk who live there have lost out in the struggle for existence, and tend to settle for the niggardly returns from their work.

When I joined the staff of the Department of English Literature and Languages at the University of Northern Iowa, my brother Charles and I dissolved our farm partnership. He took the home farm, a half-section that still included my sister's share. I took a two-hundred-acre farm that lay beside it. One of our hired men, Carl Hundley, who had worked for us for about ten years, lived on

my part of the farm. I rented the farm to him and his wife, Norma. We had an involved lease including livestock and crops, and Norma kept about a thousand hens for eggs. We fed out Wyoming and South Dakota steers and raised three to five hundred hogs a year. After Carl had rented the farm for about ten years, I sold it to him.

He had improved the farm greatly as a renter, put in new fences, cleared a pasture of stones and put in crop rotation, built a new cattle barn and corncrib, and planted a fine windbreak. He deserved the farm. But this is the only example I know of in present times of a man moving from a hired man to a renter to a landowner. The "ladder" theory has become almost obsolete these modern days.

Faith and Feuds

The neighborhood experience, rooted like a tree in our farms, spread its security over us all. We worked together, played together, quarreled, argued, gossiped, and at times we did not love our neighbor as ourselves. But we knew we could count on each other, that if a call for help came, we would answer it. No one was ever so disliked or so independent that we would not come to the rescue if more hands would help restore order. As a child, I knew the assurance of a welcome at any neighbor's house, an interest in my welfare that existed beyond our line fences.

This neighborliness did not have the close, intimate embrace of family feeling; days passed without more signs than a wave from the field or a shout of greeting as we passed on the road. Yet we depended on a trust that when support was needed, support would come. I am not describing a mutual aid society, but a loose yet faithful bond of concern that held us together.

It surfaced when a neighbor fell ill and we helped with his farm work. It could be sensed at funerals, at school meetings, at box socials, at the annual picnic of the Benson Creamery. It was present when the neighbors gave a farewell party and gift to their young men who marched off to battle in World War I. It took form when we helped a neighbor shell and haul his corn to market, at threshing time, in the silo ring, in any of the ways farmers worked together early in this century.

We kept in touch with each other and maintained a friendly relationship of helpfulness. No deep and lasting feuds ever developed. When conflicts arose, we tended to compromise and find a solution that worked. The hot words exchanged one day were forgotten the next. The necessity of being united in time of trouble accounted for our concern for each other.

Belief

My neighbor and I have stood in the sun
And talked and left some work undone.

We could have spent the half of a day
If we were not busy, this pleasant way.

For seldom it is that we can see
Each other when we both are free.

When we are working upon the land
Our speech is mostly a wave of hand,

Except we shout across the fence
To give the gesture sustenance.

And I am certain we should do
More to encourage a word or two.

We should stand often against the sun—
And what of the work if it isn't done?

For we are two neighbors who like to share
A friendly word in the open air.

And we should talk swiftly against the time
When crops and men and women and rhyme

Shall be as quiet to us as stone—
The time of forever we spend alone.

We did not live in an unselfish devotion to an ideal, like a religious community. We had our days of trial. When Henry Nelson's scrub bull broke through the fence and bred one of my father's purebred Shorthorn cows, there were words exchanged about whose fence was at fault and who should repair it, and "keep your bull out of our pasture." But somebody fixed the fence, and after that Nelson's bull expended his ardor on his own herd of cows.

We had a wild and woolly time once when one of our Wyoming yearling steers jumped the fence into Jay DeNeui's cornfield. That steer defeated every effort to dislodge him. Imagine a forty-acre field of corn with the stalks eight feet tall and a wild steer that can hear you before you can see him. We hunted him like a beast of prey, finally with guns. We could find his tracks, where he had bedded down for the night, where he had eaten Jay's corn. We could even hear him, but nary a glimpse did we get of him.

Finally, we hired an airplane to fly over the field so we could spot him and signal back to the ground crew where he could be found. The pilot caught a glimpse or two of him, but the noise of the plane drove the steer to frantic races down the corn rows, and no one could say exactly where he was. Defeated, we gave up and told Jay to shoot him if he ever laid eyes on him.

One morning the phone rang and Jay's voice said calmly, "I got him." Early in the morning the steer had come up to drink, and Jay had drilled him between the eyes with his .22 rifle. Then he bled him and called us. He had him butchered and put in our locker. Then we walked through the field with Jay and tried to estimate how much damage had been done. We wrote him a check for the amount and felt relieved. The story did not die; it grew and became a kind of folklore. Even J. Frank Dobie, the western writer, wrote a story about it, and our willful steer became famous. We ate him, but he had not been on feed long enough to finish out, and he was tough and stringy.

Once, when the threshing crew worked at our place, Father had an altercation with Pete Erickson over one of Pete's hired men. Apparently the man complained that he was being overworked and protested so vigorously that Father asked Pete to send him

home. This was before my time, but I heard about it. Pete spoke cool words of greeting for a while, but if there was a grudge, time washed it out and Pete remained a friendly neighbor.

When Lauritz Nielsen left us for a farm of his own, he got in a jangle with Jim Cunningham. The squabble turned warm, and one day Lauritz stopped Jim as he drove by and tried to pull him off the wagonbox so he could beat up on him. The next day Lauritz received a letter from a lawyer warning him about the penalties for assault and battery and advising him to let Jim Cunningham alone. I guess he did; we heard no more about it, and Lauritz usually told us his troubles.

The worst ruckus that I remember was when Paul Neale moved into the neighborhood. He rented the Tostlebe farm, and it had a silo on it. He wanted his silo filled. He said so. We neighbors who owned silos had bought a silo cutter on a co-operative basis. Each one of us bought a share, and the share was depreciated each year. If someone moved away, we bought his share and sold it to the next tenant or owner. We agreed not to lease or rent the machine, but keep it for the people who owned it. Fred Bast explained this to Paul Neale before silo-filling time, and Neale agreed to buy a share. But no money accompanied this agreement. We waited and waited, but no sign came from him. The week before we started filling silos we met one evening at Fred Bast's farm to discuss the problem.

We decided to drive to the Tostlebe farm and confront Neale with our decision. Either he buy the share in the silo cutter or he could hire someone else to fill his silo. It must have been about ten o'clock when we drove into his yard. There were several cars and a half-dozen men. Neale was in bed, but his barking dog brought him out in the yard to face us. Too many people talked, and I suppose we shouted in order to be heard.

Finally, like an animal backed into a corner and baring its teeth, Neale spoke in anger and perhaps fear. "I don't like a bunch of men in cars driving into my yard at night and threatening me. If you all mean trouble, you get out of here. I ain't going to stand for all this yelling at me. If you don't want to fill my silo it shows what

kind of neighbors I got.'' He turned and walked back into the house.

Somewhat shamefaced, and in silence, we started our cars and drove home. The next morning, since I was secretary of the silo machine co-operative, I called Neale and told him we would fill his silo. I said we had just tried to explain the rules we had to keep the machine from being worn out by people who had no responsibility for it. That afternoon, Paul drove up and paid me cash for his share.

I see Neale's side of it. A newcomer, he must have wondered about a group of boisterous men crashing into his yard at night and rousing him from bed. We didn't mean any harm, but our methods were wrong. One or two of us should have gone to Neale in the daytime, explained our position, and asked him to sign a note for his share if he was short of money. Neale joined us with his team and wagon, and all the silos were filled.

It seems like a petty matter now. But two hundred and forty dollars was a serious amount of money in those days, and we had been left holding the sack once by a sharp-nosed tenant. We were not about to fill anyone's silo again for nothing. But I doubt if Paul Neale ever forgot his rough introduction to our neighborhood.

We had a short rumpus at a school board meeting once when Fred Stukenburg and Jay DeNeui flared out at each other over some religious question that had no business at a school board meeting. It irritated me and I said sharply, ''Let's stick to school matters, that's what this meeting is for.'' Both men sat down and were silent and the trouble never surfaced again.

When I was a boy, our neighborhood carried on a continual feud with the Board of Supervisors. We wanted our road graded and gravelled so we could stay out of the mud. Time after time delegations would meet with the supervisors to press for relief. We did finally get some help, but it took years. I remember when my father asked old Mr. Tostlebe to go with him, Mr. Tostlebe said in his German accent, ''Ja, I vill go, but I do not tink ve can help nor

hinder."

This became a saying in our family. If we were asked to help in what seemed a useless project we would say, "I'll agree, but I don't think I can help or hinder."

We also had a running fight with the Iowa Public Service Company. Representatives of the company assured us that if we gave the company permission to put up their poles on our roadsides, the company would see to it that we would get electricity to our farms. We gave the permission but the electricity never came. Men talked of court action, but we did not think we had the resources to stay in a court fight with a big utility company. We finally got our electricity when the Cedar Falls Municipal Utilities ran a line out our way. My uncle Will was on the city council then, but Clark Streeter, the superintendent of the utilities, should be given credit for giving the farmers an electric line. He said it would tie the farmers more closely to the town, and he was right. No modern improvement was ever more welcome on the farm than electric current.

I grew up in a neighborhood where we helped each other without question. If Chris Christiansen shelled a crib of corn, we went with our teams and wagons to help him haul it to town. If we needed a rock split with dynamite, we called Marius Hansen, who was skilled in such matters, to come and do it. We helped drive cattle to town for neighbors, and they helped us.

One year, late in November, we decided to run some of our fodder through a corn shredder. We blew the shredded cornstalks—called stover—into the haymow, and the ears of corn filled the wagon boxes. About two weeks later, Chuck came into the house with a worried look on his face. "That stover is getting mighty hot in the mow. There must have been more snow on it than I thought. I'd hate to have a fire start from spontaneous combustion."

It put us all on edge. The next day the mow was even warmer. Chuck said, "We better get it out of there. If we let it get too hot and try to move it, the minute it gets air it will burst into flame."

Chuck stopped Pete Erickson, who was going past, and asked

him to look at the stover. Pete climbed up in the mow and climbed right back down. "Better move it," he said, "right now. I'll get my hired man and you call Harvey Krumlinde and Marius. With you and your man I think we can get enough out so it will be safe."

They worked all afternoon pitching the shredded cornstalks out of the barn and hauling them away. The stalks were hot, but not yet combustible. About a third of the stalks were left in the mow and spread out so they would dry.

"Once," Pete said, "I got in a hurry to make hay and put it in the barn a little too green. It got awful hot, but I shut up the barn tight so the air couldn't get to it. But in the spring when I was pitching some down for the cows I fell through a hole in the haymow floor. There was a round arch about six feet high, all charred. The hay had smoldered, but it never caught fire. It taught me a lesson, I can tell you."

We always helped each other with threshing and silo filling. The threshing ring has become part of early farm folklore. The interesting thing is how we all roughly estimated how much help we owed each other. A man with twenty acres of oats to thresh shouldn't send as much help as a man with eighty acres. It all worked itself out, and no one felt cheated. Silo filling worked the same way; a man with a thirty-foot silo didn't send as much help as a man with a fifty-foot silo. No one complained of overhelping or of being underhelped; some sort of rough justice prevailed.

One incident brought the whole neighborhood together for a bit of work. All country schools face south; they are on a north-south axis. In our schoolhouse the seats faced south too. The schoolhouse had three large windows on each side, east and west, to let in the light. The day came when someone in the County Superintendent's Office decided that facing the light was not good for the children's eyes. The order came out that all the desks were to be turned around so the pupils would face north.

On a Saturday morning the men of the neighborhood began the work. And work it was, too. Each desk was screwed tightly to the floor. They all had to be unscrewed and re-screwed again. The

men set to the job with their screwdrivers. It was a good example of neighborhood solidarity. All the seats had to be loosened first, so the small first-grade ones could be put where the big eighth-grade ones had stood before.

It took all day. The women brought in the noon meal and the men ate in the schoolhouse. I remember one big man lovingly fingered a desk and pointed out, "Here are my initials that I carved when I was in school."

This brought a flood of reminiscence, but the screwdrivers never stopped turning.

When it was finished Jim Bergstrom said, "I hope it helps their eyes, but we never went blind facing the other way." Yet all the men felt they had done a good thing.

The neighborhood responds to its duty of attendance, too, when one of its members passes away. A funeral is a responsibility to be taken seriously, and everyone—Protestant, Catholic, agnostic, whatever faith or belief we have—we all go when one of us dies.

Our longtime neighbor, Fred Bast, bought a farm several miles west of the farm he had rented for so many years. But he did not live long to enjoy it. The day of his funeral reflected the occasion. A heavy, somber sky muted the colors in field and pasture. Even the air lay a shade of mist over the land. We gathered at the Bast home. The women went inside. The men, dressed in their Sunday clothes, stood outside in little groups, some smoking, some staring at the ground. A word or two was spoken, but most of the men kept silent. It was not a silence of grief or sorrow, but one of respect that we had come to pay our friend who had left us.

A woman came to the door and said, "It is time now." We all took off our hats and trooped in. The casket displayed in the living room held our eyes as we all found a place to sit. The undertaker had placed folding chairs in all the downstairs rooms. Everyone found a place to sit down. The men seemed uncomfortable but resigned to the service. Their tanned, strong faces reposed in solemn expressions. A few nervously fingered their hat brims.

When the service was finished we all filed out. The tension relaxed; as soon as the hearse drove away, we started for our cars.

But now a hum of conversation arose as the things farmers talk about broke our silence. The neighbors had done their duty. I thought of the last three lines of a poem I wrote when my father died. I think it expresses the spirit of the neighborhood at the funeral of one of its own. The poem ends,

> When a neighbor dies there is nothing to say
> But we leave our fields on a certain day
> And offer our hands to lay him away.

Thus we come to terms with what the word "neighbor" means to us.

Toward a Better Life

As far back as I can remember, our family took for granted the need to be educated, to improve our lives by learning. My father felt that farmers, because of their limited knowledge, were at the mercy of men who knew more than they did—livestock buyers, grain buyers, bankers, and implement dealers. These men knew current prices, interest rates, supply and demand. Railroads picked the farmers' pockets with their favors for certain shippers, the unequal freight rates, movements of freight cars at harvest time.

Struggles with the railroads and the political outcry of the Grange and the Populists have been recorded by many historians. But through my father's work in farm organizations we became involved with him in efforts to bring light and information to the farmer, to help him overcome some of the forces that controlled his destiny. Through my mother and father's work in farm organizations, too, we brushed elbows with some of the prominent political and financial leaders of those early days.

I remember a bright winter day, Father and Grandfather in long fur coats leaving the house. I asked Mother where they were going, and she said, "Your father is going to read a paper on the advantage of raising purebred Poland China hogs." The year must have been about 1905. The meeting was in La Porte City, fifteen miles away. They travelled by team and bobsled to a meeting of the Crop Improvement Association.

Whether Father made any converts that day is not of record. But this started, for me, an interest in the farm groups that gathered to learn more about their business. A number of Crop Improvement Associations formed in Black Hawk County. We

attended Farm Institutes held in Cedar Falls and Short Courses concerned with various farm activities. The local Commercial Club helped defray the expense, and farmers paid a tuition or admittance fee.

There were Farm Institutes much earlier than this. Carl Hamilton, vice-president of Iowa State University, says that "President Welch and Professor Roberts in 1870 held three-day institutes in Cedar Falls, Council Bluffs, Washington, and Muscatine." This must have been the beginning of the Extension Program, though it was not yet officially called by that name.

Kenneth Thatcher and Donald B. Groves, in a book about the Iowa Farm Bureau called *The First Fifty,* state that, "In 1906 the legislature agreed that educational assistance should be taken to everyone engaged in farming and $15,000 was appropriated for an Extension Department at Iowa State University. Perry G. Holden was made superintendent of the department with a staff of people trained in the fields of soils, livestock, farm crops, home economics, and dairying."

I went with my father to a Short Course given at a Farm Institute in Cedar Falls and heard P. G. Holden explain and plead for new varieties of corn. Like an evangelist, he exhorted the farmers to plant new, improved varieties of seed corn. It is said that he organized "Corn Gospel Trains," railroad cars set up as lecture rooms, but I never saw one. We all attended the Farm Institutes—Mother, Father, and we children. It seems to me it was P. G. Holden who introduced us to Reid's Yellow Dent, *the* superior open-pollinated corn in its day. We quit raising Silver King (a white corn) and a low-yielding yellow corn and planted nothing but Reid's Yellow Dent. One thing we missed was the dramatic effect of a red ear lying on a load of Silver King. The trouble was there weren't any girls out in the field to kiss, anyway.

We attended most of the meetings. My father, along with some other farmers, was a prime mover in organizing these meetings. I rode our cow pony to a knot-tying demonstration one evening. About thirty boys and young men from the neighborhood showed up. We each brought a ten-foot piece of rope with us. A raw Feb-

ruary night, freezing rain made the roads treacherous. I ducked out of the meeting early because I thought my family would worry about me. The horse wasn't shod, but she was surefooted and we reached home safely, but no galloping or cantering on those icy roads. To my chagrin, the family took my arrival without a sign of anxiety. Father said, "I suppose you rode home with Art Hansen." I shook my head, too hurt to explain I had left the meeting early on their account.

In 1912 all the farm clubs and farm improvement groups united in the Black Hawk County Crop Improvement Association, with my father as president. It immediately changed its name to the Black Hawk County Farm Bureau, the third Farm Bureau in the state. Clinton County was first, Scott County second. The name "Farm Bureau" came from Binghamton, New York, where the Commercial Club divided responsibilities among various bureaus, a Bank Bureau, a Manufacturers Bureau, and a Farm Bureau. The name stuck; soon all the counties in Iowa had Farm Bureaus. In cooperation with the Extension Department at Iowa State University, the Farm Bureau hired a county agent. The cost of his salary was shared by the Farm Bureau and the Extension Department. The county agent travelled the roads of Black Hawk County in his Model T Ford, preaching the gospel of better farming, better lives for farmers. Soon there was also a woman in the office, a home demonstration agent, who spent her days with farm women and their problems.

Our county agent, A. A. Burger, pleaded with farmers to vaccinate their hogs against hog cholera, test their dairy cattle for tuberculosis, lime their land, and grow alfalfa. One year, I think it was 1915, an early freeze caught the corn before it matured. What would the farmers use for seed the next year? Several carloads of corn were shipped in with dry, mature ears, and A. A. Burger, A. G. Larsen, and Charlie Bley set out to ear-test the corn for seed.

It was a huge task. One building in town was converted into a testing place. Hundreds of pigeonholes were built and numbered, and each ear was placed on one of the little shelves. Six kernels ex-

tracted from each ear were placed on a rectangular piece of cloth with squares numbered to correspond with the pigeonholes. Then the cloth was rolled up, soaked in water, and put in a warm place to give the kernels a chance to sprout. It was called the rag doll method.

When the county agent was shelling off the butts and tips of the ears, one farmer exclaimed, "Leave them on, or next year the ears won't have any butts and tip kernels!"

"That's right," the county agent replied, "maybe we better plant a few cobs, too, so the kernels will have something to grow on."

Father served two years as president of the County Farm Bureau. Then he was elected vice-president of the State Farm Bureau. Mother served as president of the County Women's Association. We children began to feel like orphans. Father was in demand as a speaker at the annual county Farm Bureau meetings around the state. He was not a dynamic or forceful speaker, but his desire and eagerness to improve the quality of farm life shone through his words and it reassured the faithful and made converts even of the skeptics.

Although we three boys were in high school and my sister in college, more and more of the farm work rested on our shoulders and that of the hired men. We didn't resent it, but it crowded our days. We were so often late that the principal had our excuses made out before we reached school. It was three and a half miles to the Campus High School of the Iowa State Teachers College, and we drove, pushed, and shovelled our used Model T Ford through mud, snow, ice, and storm. Occasionally, when we thought of it, we envied the town kids who got up just in time for school and could stay after school for basketball practice. But the work had to be done and we did it, up at five o'clock in the morning to start the chores, home at four to help with the evening chores. We earned our way, all right.

We had the same problems that all farmers had, plus several of our own. I suppose the overriding problem that faced us (with no solution in sight) was the fact that we farmers had no say-so in the

prices we received for our products or in the prices of what we bought. Worse yet, we sold on a wholesale market and bought on a retail market. But the main trouble was that we had to accept prices set by someone else. This single fact more than anything else inspired farmers to organize co-operative companies for both buying and selling their products.

My father and a number of our neighbors organized a Farmers' Co-operative Elevator. Here we could sell our grain and buy feed and coal. Its policies followed some of the Rochdale principles—named after Rochdale in Great Britain, where the co-operative movement had started. The Farmers' Co-op did not cut prices on feed or increase the prices paid for farm produce. It stayed competitive with other grain and feed businesses and did not try to undercut or overbid prices. The early co-ops did just that and ended as failures. The established businesses could bust a co-op in a price-cutting war because most co-ops were underfinanced.

Where we came out ahead was in the patronage refund checks we received. These were based on the amount of business transacted. Father also helped start a co-operative oil company and here, too, we received patronage dividend checks as a refund for the business transacted.

We had one stormy time. Our elevator manager played poker with some flour salesmen and, to pay his losses, he had to buy two carloads of flour. He got his walking papers at once, but for weeks the members of the Elevator Board were out scouring the country trying to sell flour. Peter Lund, one of the directors, managed the elevator for several years until a new manager was found whom the Board could depend on.

Another incident in connection with the elevator involved a time when Father broke one of his own rules and paid for it. He always insisted that we should never let a team stand without hitching them to a substantial post, tree, rail, or whatever was at hand. But one day when he hauled a load of shelled corn to the elevator to sell, he just left the wagon on the scales and stepped inside to get a weight ticket. The team, a young Belgian gelding and mare, took off the minute he stepped in the door. Down the street and across

the Cedar River bridge they went at a full gallop, the load of corn rocking and swaying behind them. They turned down East Third Street. In the middle of the street stood a large, round steel tank for watering horses. One horse tried to pull out to one side, the other horse to the other. They ran smack into it, the end of the tongue struck the tank squarely, and shelled corn flew over Third Street in a wave. We did not let Father forget this.

Father's work with the co-op helped the farmers in the neighborhood, but at home things were going downhill. Chuck quit college to come home and help run the farm. He had only a quarter to go, too, for graduation. But our situation was critical and he knew it. We had hired-man trouble, too. We couldn't seem to keep good, dependable help. Perhaps we were too young to know how to work with hired men. Overwhelmed with debts, we worked hard and probably set impossible tasks for the men to perform. But we were desperate.

Father offered to resign his position with the Farm Bureau and come home and help us. But we refused that. We were proud of him and of his leadership, and we felt sure we could work out our own problems. We wore the assurance and confidence of youth like a coat.

The fences around the farm looked like the end of the road—posts rotted off, wires down, holes a sow could walk through where gullies had washed under the fence. We took one of Father's monthly salary checks, plus credit at the co-op, and built a woven-wire fence around the whole half section. We used creosoted posts with thirty-six-inch woven wire and three barbed wires on top. Now we could turn out the livestock and know it would stay at home.

All this time we kept nudging Father to the left of center. We argued that the Republican-supported tariff worked against the farmer. What good is a tariff, we argued, when a third of our crops are sold on the world market? All the tariff does is raise prices on what we buy because it keeps out foreign competition.

We told him the free enterprise system applies only to the farmer, to keep him poor. Industry and finance have tariffs and government support to protect them.

I think now that we wanted Father to be more like Milo Reno, the flamboyant leader of the Farmers' Union and later of the Farmers' Holiday movement. Milo Reno was said to face his audience and shout, "Any one of you sonsofbitches who don't like what I'm doing, get up here and look me in the eye!" But Father showed no trace of the evangelistic, dramatic methods of the Populist Front. He worked within the limits of the current political and economic conventions. He was no solitary crusader, no Savonarola to shout his rebellion and end by being burned at the stake.

No, Father worked with people toward positive achievements. He did not rail against the system and try to tear down what already existed as a system of production. On marketing committees and money stabilization committees, he took a positive stand —not always a popular one, but he wanted to make better what already existed.

I have before me notes that Father made at a meeting on money stabilization. The committee was composed of farm leaders, members of the Federal Reserve Board, and bankers. There is a cautious and careful note by Father on the risk of tying the dollar to a commodity index rather than the gold standard. He disliked the gold standard because of the way it worked against farmers and labor, but he wondered what effect a "commodity" dollar would have in the international money markets. I can feel his mind working, "Is the experiment worth the risk?"

It seems to me that the early days when Father worked for the Farm Bureau were full of anxiety. The problem had two horns. One was the ever-pressing need for money, for dues-paying members to keep the organization afloat. The other was the effort to prove that this organization was here to stay and would not fade away as the Grange had done, nor become a political machine as Townley's Non-Partisan League had done. Father must have felt like a missionary out to preach the gospel of farmer strength

through organization.

There were plenty of doubting Thomases. When it came time to consolidate the state Farm Bureaus into a national organization, the opposition strengthened. Carl Hamilton has told me that J. W. Coverdale and James Howard, who became the first secretary and the first president of the national Farm Bureau, supported the formation of a national organization. But they found an opponent in Henry C. Wallace and his editorials in *Wallaces' Farmer.* Wallace was not against a national organization, he just did not believe it was possible. He said, in effect: What has the cotton farmer of the South in common with the farmer in the Corn Belt? He proposed regional organizations made up of districts with a common economic interest.

Father talked to Wallace on several occasions and reminded him that all farmers had in common the need to set their own prices and to secure a better life for themselves and their families. I don't know that he convinced him, but Wallace withdrew his opposition, and the national organization was born and struggled for life.

Father resigned as the president of the Iowa Farm Bureau at the annual meeting in the winter of 1936. He had served in that office for thirteen years. He was immediately elected president of the Iowa Livestock Marketing Association. But he came home a sick man and died on March 9, 1936. That winter made history for the amount of snowfall and the number of days when the thermometer registered below zero and stayed there. We struggled through the cold and snow to reach the hospital.

Father was not a man for office work. All his life he had been a farmer and an outdoor man. He never got used to the confinement of the office. He came home nearly every weekend and walked and drove around the farm to inspect the fields and livestock. Often he took the train. He would send a telegram if he came by train. The Western Union operator, Mr. Morton, would call up at suppertime and say, "Your dad is coming home tonight, so meet the train." That kind of small-town neighborliness has long vanished from Cedar Falls.

Father absorbed the farmers' troubles; he could not cast them

off, he did not have a thick skin. After the collapse at the end of World War I, farm prices stayed depressed all through the Twenties. Foreclosures became as common as bank failures did in the early Thirties. By then, as someone said, there weren't enough trees around the courthouse to hang the mortgage foreclosures on.

Father received pitiful, appealing letters by the basketful. He answered them, but he couldn't forget them. He helped secure legislation that established the Federal Land Banks and the Production Credit Agencies. But there was just not enough money to go around, and farmers who showed the most promise of paying back the money got the first loans.

Some of the businessmen in town referred to Charles Hearst as "that radical." But Father was far from a radical—he was a lifelong Republican, a delegate to the Republican National Conventions. The Iowa Republican Central Committee even asked him to be their nominee for governor. But Father turned it down; the Hearsts are not politicians.

But he did join with other midwestern farm leaders in fighting for the principal of parity prices for farm products. Twice, farm leaders managed to get the McNary-Haugen bill passed by Congress, and twice President Coolidge vetoed it. This bill, which was something like the domestic allotment plan, proposed to sell surplus farm products on the world market at world prices but to raise the price of domestically-consumed products to the parity level by means of a tariff, or fee, on the entire crop.

At the Republican National Convention in Kansas City in 1928, midwestern farm leaders tried to secure the nomination of Governor Frank O. Lowden of Illinois for President. Governor Dan Turner of Iowa placed Lowden's name in nomination, and Father was Lowden's floor manager. But when Andrew Mellon arrived with the Pennsylvania delegation in his pocket and Hamilton Fish controlling the New York delegation, the nomination of Herbert Hoover was assured.

Senator George H. Moses of New Hampshire referred to the midwestern farm leaders as "sons of the wild jackass." It amused us—George Peek of the John Deere Company, Bill Hirth from

Missouri, Senator George Norris from Nebraska, Governor Lowden—these men "sons of the wild jackass"? And my father?

It must have puzzled Father to find his two sons staunch Democrats. I reported on the Democratic National Convention in 1928 for *Wallaces' Farmer* and assured the Iowa farmers Al Smith had come out wholeheartedly for their solution to the farm problem. But Al was a Catholic, and he was from New York City, and he said "raddio." Father said that if you wanted to be elected to office in Iowa you should be white, Protestant, and Republican.

Father's faith was sorely tried in the 1932 election. By that time he had been elected vice-president of the American Farm Bureau (the national organization) and chairman of its legislative committee. When he interviewed the presidential candidates to determine their stand on the farm problems, he came home bewildered and angry. He said, "When I asked Mr. Hoover how he stood on farm legislation, he answered, 'Mr. Hearst, I pulled myself up by my bootstraps. The American farmer can do the same thing.'"

But when he went to Hyde Park to interview Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mr. Roosevelt said, "I know there is a serious farm problem, and we are going to find ways, with your help, to solve it." We suspected Father cast a vote for Roosevelt, but he wouldn't tell us and I can't prove it.

After my father's death, we withdrew from the national farm scene. My brother was president of the Black Hawk County Farm Bureau and a director of the Chicago Producers Commission Association, a farmer-owned co-op operating on the Chicago livestock market. But with Father's death, we felt we had made our contribution to farm organization work, and we had work at home to occupy our attention.

Father's funeral brought home to us the importance of his work and the influence he exerted as a farm leader. The center of the church was packed with farm organization men from all over the Middle West. Letters poured in from national figures who could not attend the funeral. I have a letter from Governor Lowden that begins, "I am so sorry, so sorry, what a good man he was."

After the funeral on a miserable March day, Aunt Helen and

Uncle Frank Hammer held a kind of reception for the out-of-town people. I sat on the stairsteps with V. W. Hamilton, who was then the secretary of the Iowa Farm Bureau and later a member of the Board of Regents. He said to me, "Your father killed himself working. It should be a lesson to all of us. You can only do what is within your ability and range. Your father tried to cope with national problems, and they broke his heart."

In his day, Father was most interested in education for the farm family. He wanted a better life for farmers. He was less interested in the businesses that the Farm Bureau is involved with now. I think that if he were alive today he would be a bit disturbed and wonder if the Farm Bureau had not missed the real road. He was in favor of the co-operative movement, but his main interest was in improving the quality of farm living through information and education. He served his generation.

We All Worked Together

I think it was the family spirit that carried us through, we did all work together. Everyone suffered from the drought and Depression, but our troubles also concerned illness and death. And this is where people suffer the most and are the most vulnerable. But the drought by itself caused enough anxiety. It came right after the worst of the Depression and piled another burden on the bent shoulders of all of us farmers. A description of it, though, lacks the abrasive wearing down of the experience as a mirror image lacks the presence of the person.

The worst of it began for us in 1934. I remember how the dust settled so thickly on the pastures that the cattle would not eat, and cows, calves, and steers wandered about, bawling their hunger. We found it hard to believe. We all knew about dust storms in the dry plains of the Southwest, but for drought and wind and dust to sweep, like a plague, over the fertile fields of Black Hawk County seemed a bad dream, not real. But it was real, all right.

We endured it for three years. I think it was the dust that gave Mother the shivers. She stuck paper strips along the window sills, rolled rugs against the doors, but still it sifted in, dry and fine as talcum powder, but gritty to taste and touch. The dust left a film on dishes in the cupboard, on sheets folded in drawers, on woodwork and chairs, on people's faces and hair. Outside, if the wind blew, visibility would be cut to a few yards. Autos ran at mid-day with their headlights turned on. Drifts of dust piled against fences like snow, sometimes two and three feet high. Years later, after the ground had been plowed and planted many times, the stain could still be seen where the drifts had been.

Spring came with no rain. That was the first sign. The winter snow melted and ran off during a sudden thaw in March. The

water could not soak into frozen ground, so it ran off down gullies and creeks. Even then, on the bare and frozen ground the wind chiseled furrows and filled the air with dust. In April and May the ground baked in summer temperatures. Farmers stirred the ground as little as possible, and the damp patches dried almost before they turned up. But we sowed the oats, harrowed in the clover, and planted corn when the time came. This is what farmers do.

An old farmer once said: the time to plant corn is at corn-planting time. Crops are planted in their season. This wisdom lies deep in the farmer's blood. When spring comes he rises early, looks at the sky, tests for wind and temperature, and impregnates the earth with seed. He is his own almanac.

In the spring of 1934 we came in at the end of the day exhausted from the heat and flying dirt, and feeling there was no sense in what we were doing. In some places in the field where the dust devils came whirling, seeds were pulled right out of the ground. In other places the seeds lay dormant in dry earth. It takes moisture for any roots to grow, but my brother Charles did not dare set the corn planter deep enough to reach the damp earth because the seeds would smother. So we hoped for rain and plowed and disked and harrowed and planted just like our neighbors, without knowing what else to do.

Late in May a few showers fell and some of the kernels sprouted. But in July, when the corn needs an inch of rain every week, even the clouds burned off. The sun fired the stalks that had grown and left them waving dead, white tassels with no live pollen. The ears turned out to be stubby cobs with a few kernels on them. That fall, we chopped one hundred and twenty acres of corn to fill the silo, when eight acres should have done it.

The corn had to contend with more than the drought. Hordes of chinch bugs marched out of chinch bug country to attack it. Think of a voracious appetite surrounded by legs and equipped with a mouth and you have a chinch bug. It feeds on corn in its tender, succulent stage and leaves the corn rows in tatters, flapping like rows of scarecrows. I saw them as barbarians swarming over the

field in cultivation. We tried to defend our fields. We took posthole augers and dug holes along the edges of the fields, holes a foot deep and about a rod apart. We half filled them with creosote. We trapped a lot of the bugs, and only the first half dozen rows of corn suffered. Once the plant became mature—stalks tough, leaves hard and shiny—the chinch bugs went away.

But more mischief came. Grasshoppers, like the locusts of the Bible, clouded the skies and settled on our oat fields. Grasshoppers have a nasty habit of eating just the small stem that fastens the oat kernel to the stalk. We were left with a field where empty heads of straw waved in the wind and the ground was covered with kernels. Chuck said, "We ought to have a flock of turkeys and let them clean up the fields."

Alfalfa was the one crop we had that did not wither. Apparently its roots dug deep enough to find moisture. It stayed green, bloomed, made two cuttings of hay. The grasshoppers did not harm it, I don't know why. But when we cut the last few rounds in the center of the field, grasshoppers hung from the alfalfa plants in bunches, a strange yield for a hayfield.

July was the worst month. Day after day the temperature rose above one hundred degrees. When we came out to the fields after dinner, the machines were almost too hot to touch. We wound the iron steering wheels with tape to protect our hands. One day at noon as we quit for dinner, one of the men jumped on my tractor fender to ride to the house. He jumped off faster than he jumped on. "Hell's bells!" he yipped. "It's like sitting on a hot stove."

In September rain came, rain that should have fallen during the summer. It had been a starved, withered, dried-up crop season. People just did without, and we all tried to hold together our livestock and machinery. A worn-out feeling slowed steps and lowered voices. No one died of despair, but we were glad when the year became history. We harvested what crops we had, feeling that we had done all we could.

The drought had followed the Great Depression. That was really a time that tried men's souls. One of our neighbors once said,

"When you break a horse's spirit, he's no good anymore." I wondered if it was the same with men. I thought about it one night, sitting at the desk in my study. All of us—father, mother, brother, sister, and myself—involved in sweat, worry, debt, trying to keep the farm going. It seemed to me like a law of diminishing returns; the harder you worked, the less you received. I saw no way out.

Depressed prices for farm products existed years before the stock market break. Most city folk did not realize that since the end of World War I farmers had been ground between the millstones of high overhead and low prices. Many farmers blamed Herbert Hoover for pulling the rug out from under them when he withdrew support for the prices he had guaranteed. When the war was over, Hoover no longer needed hogs, corn, butter, eggs, sugar to feed the troops and our allies. So prices fell and stayed low all during the Twenties.

By 1930 our family reached out all its hands to stay alive. We knew we had the muscle, and we proved it. Father's paycheck from his job with the Iowa Farm Bureau helped bolster the bank balance. My sister, Louise, taught school and her check, when she got one—during the Depression schoolteachers were not paid regularly—went to the same place. Mother made cottage cheese, and she sold it and eggs to the Blue Bird Restaurant in town. I had a small check from my army insurance. Chuck ran the farm, tried to keep worn machinery in action, the pigs healthy, the hired men paid. Farm families suffered from the Depression in a way that was different from town families. When a factory worker lost his job and paycheck, he knew where he stood—probably in the bread line. A banker knew where he stood, too, and when his bank closed its doors, unable to meet its obligations, he jumped out of a ten-story window, or shot himself, or just went home and shrivelled into a sick old man.

But on the farm the situation was not as clear. Farmers knew about debt. Most farms had a mortgage on them, the machines were not paid for, the livestock had been bought on loans. In normal times these obligations were paid off with money from the sale

of crops and livestock. Now, with such low prices, the money failed to appear when loans, bills, and interest came due. We ate what we produced—no one went hungry on farms. But the effort to hold together all the things they had worked for sometimes marked a man and his family for life.

One day Chuck and I received a phone call from a man who had once worked for us. He had been working in the John Deere factory in Waterloo. John Deere paid better wages than a farmer paid. Now he felt the abrasive touch of unemployment. "Come and get me," he said over the phone. "I'll work just for my food. I ain't going on relief."

Already our two hired men worked on pretty slim wages, but they each had a house to live in and food to eat. Chuck said, "What will we do? We haven't work enough for another man."

But we cranked up our Model T Ford and drove to Waterloo. I will never forget the sight of empty parking lots, taverns closed, the factory dirty and silent. No smoke from the forges, no hurrying men, no railroad cars shuttling in the yards, no clatter of machines, nothing but emptiness and the stale, brassy smell of poverty.

We found Herman standing in line at the Salvation Army headquarters. "I knew you'd come," he said, "but I thought maybe I'd get a bowl of soup."

We took him home, fed him, and turned him over to Mother. She needed help in the garden—trash cleaned up, spading done, lawn mowed. "Do you want to stay with us?" she asked.

"No," he said, "I'll walk. It ain't but four miles. I'll come every day. Why, Mrs. Hearst, I don't know when I've eaten a piece of meat."

"What about your wife and children?" Mother asked.

"My wife, she works at a little cafe and eats there. The kids get a free meal at school. She brings home scraps for the kids' supper."

That's the way it was. Herman walked out in the morning and back at night. Mother's cooking filled out the hollows in his cheeks, and the sun soon changed his factory pallor. We had plenty for him to do—on a farm, work has a habit of appearing when-

On Relief

Our glances met as glances meet
And sharp as salt was my surprise,
I saw as I went down the street
A man with want-ads in his eyes.

For Sale he offered to my sight
Without the usual signboard's flash
A man bewilderment and fright
Can mark down cheap when prices crash. . .

The factory quiet as a rock
And all around the heavy smell
Of men locked out as surplus stock—
His eyes like posters told it well.

And though his gestures still were staunch
With every glance his eyes returned
A man with no more ships to launch
With no more bridges to be burned.

ever there is a spare pair of hands to do it. He kept the lawn mowed, the garden weeded, the chicken house repaired, and he chopped down a couple of dead trees. He screwed new hinges on sagging barn doors, shored up loose window panes with putty, and reshingled a spot on a shed roof where a tree limb had fallen during a thunderstorm. When summer came, he worked in the fields loading hay bales and shovelling oats from the combine. Late in the fall, Chuck found him a job with a farm machinery dealer, and he walked four blocks to work instead of four miles. He earned enough to feed his family. Perhaps President Roosevelt did not lead the country into the promised land, but he pulled the economy out of its rut, dusted it off, and began to make it run again.

The terrible days of Depression put marks on people never to be erased. Families found themselves penniless when the banks closed. These were good, hard-working people whose entire savings disappeared like smoke. Retired farmers begged for jobs as janitors in schools and churches, as night watchmen in factories. One morning I heard on the radio that one of our neighbors had gone out in the field with a shotgun and killed himself so his wife and children could have his insurance. The mortgage on his farm had been foreclosed. He had nowhere to go.

"What's the good of foreclosing a mortgage?" Mother asked. "The bank or insurance company can't sell the farm, can't even rent it and expect to get the rent."

"But that's the way things are done," Chuck said. "It's an old custom to kick a man when he's down."

The Farmers' Holiday movement spread like an epidemic. When a farm was foreclosed and the farmer's goods and livestock sold at auction, the neighbors made it a "penny sale." Everything the auctioneer offered for sale brought the bid of one cent. When the sale ended, the livestock, grain, machinery, and household goods were returned to the owner for pennies. And one look at the hard, determined faces of the men surrounding the auctioneer discouraged any outsider from raising the bid. In western Iowa a judge

tried to stop such a sale with a legal writ and found a rope around his neck and the other end over a tree limb, and there were plenty of hands to pull it tight if it had come to that.

Creameries were picketed, cans of milk and cream dumped into ditches, tons of butter destroyed. It was violence born of desperation in an attempt to call attention to the farmer's troubles.

One July morning I drove two miles north to the Benson Creamery to see with my own eyes what was going on. About a half mile from the creamery a truck slowly moved across the road and blocked me. Two men with rifles got out, and I was shocked to see old Einer Clausson and Jake Miller.

I said, "What in hell do you guys think you're doing?"

Old Einer looked me right in the eye. "You ain't going any further, Jim. No one but us members can go down to the creamery. What are you doing over here anyway, you boys don't milk?"

"I just came over to see if what we heard is true."

"If you heard we was dumping milk and cream, you heard right. Right now that creamery is a dead horse."

I shook my head. "You, Einer, and you, Jake, with guns for god's sake. Are you really dumping the trucks?"

"You're damn right. Just look down that road. See that big new truck upside down in the ditch? You think the fairies did it?"

The truck lay on its side, and you could smell the milky suds that filled the ditch. I looked down the road past the creamery and there was another group of men with guns. I said, "Do you really think this kind of monkey business will raise prices?"

"We can sure raise hell, and maybe some of the big bugs will get it through their thick heads that we're hurting out here."

I thought about it. "I suppose the papers are sending out reporters and photo men?"

"You bet," Jake said, "and more are coming. Now, Jim, you get out of here before you get in trouble. This ain't any business of yours, no skin off your nose."

It seemed ridiculous, but I didn't want to laugh. I said, "Go to hell, Jake. You're going to shoot me?" These men were my neighbors.

For the first time Jake grinned. "I might have to if you get fractious."

"Well," I said, "I'm all for you if this will help. But I think you have things bass ackward."

"Listen, boy," Jake said, "you go get you forty cows to milk night and morning, seven days of the week, and find the milk isn't even worth the feed. You can get damned tired of pulling tits."

I shifted into reverse. "OK, I guess I'm in the wrong pew. Good luck."

The Farmers' Holiday movement did startle the newspapers into headlines, even the staid *New York Times.* The farmer's predicament began to haunt the public—and Congress. It helped elect Franklin D. Roosevelt.

When I drove in the yard Chuck had started for the house to wash for dinner. At the table he asked, "Are they really doing it?"

"They're doing it, and they mean business, too."

"Crazy as coots," Chuck said.

"That may be, but our friends Einer and Jake are on patrol with guns and they aren't kidding."

Mother asked, "Do you suppose the National Guard will be called out?"

Chuck said, "Probably some jackass will blast away and kill somebody. Then they'll run for cover."

I didn't think so. "Not these boys, they aim to stay until the whole affair gets national publicity. That's what they're after. They know dumping a few trucks of cream won't bring up prices."

"They give you a bad time?"

"They thought I was nosy. We aren't dairymen, they made a point of it."

Mother said, "You should have told them what you boys got for the last load of hogs you shipped to Chicago."

"After freight, commission, and trucking, just about enough to wad a shotgun," Chuck said in harsh tones.

"I never thought of it," I said. "I doubt if they'd listen. They're all hepped up over the dairy situation."

We ate slowly, thinking about our neighbors out on the roads with guns. Mother said there was strawberry shortcake for dessert. It lifted our spirits a little.

Chuck poured cream on his shortcake. "Those bastards in Washington can't get the sleep out of their eyes."

Mother said in a choked voice, "We have been through this before."

I didn't need to be reminded. A little over ten years before, just after World War I, farm prices took a nose dive while city folk whooped it up on the stock market. Even our own banker said, "If farmers would stay at home and tend to business and stop complaining, they'd be all right."

Our memories ran back over the years. It had been late in May 1923, the corn was planted, the oats up, the cows out to pasture. But the taxes had not been paid for over a year. How could they be paid? There was no money. Robert was now slowly dying of cancer, and I was just home from a two-year stay in the hospital after my diving accident. Imagine the money it took to pay hospital and doctor bills. How could a farmer already in debt for his farm stand so much expense? And farm prices had dropped in a well once the war was over, when no longer "Food Will Win The War." One son dying, one on crutches, both in their early twenties. How could Father and Mother rally from crushing blows like that? It must have hurt Father to walk into the bank knowing he owed so much money and could borrow no more. And so the taxes were not paid.

During World War I the government had urged farmers to plow up every acre of land they could find, raise all the hogs they could, and it would guarantee prices. When the war ended the government forgot prices, forgot the huge food factory that now had no buyers for its products. Fertile Iowa land went begging. No one wanted to buy it. In the city, people bought stocks on the feverish stock exchange, all hoping to be rich.

A family is not always crushed under the weight of misfortune. The family ties grow closer, ties of courage and strength. Louise and Charles assumed duties they knew must be carried no matter

how young and untested they were. The family did not sink into the quicksand of despair. Louise brought her friends home, and they filled the house with music and talk, jazz, cheese on rye, and spiked near-beer. Chuck dropped out of college to run the farm and help look after his two invalid brothers. Family life pulled itself up by its bootstraps.

One day, we received notice that the Sheriff would serve papers for nonpayment of taxes and offer part of the farm for sale. This seemed a humiliation that Mother and Father need not suffer, so on the day the Sheriff was to come Uncle George took time off from his busy medical practice to take them out to lunch. The Sheriff, who was a friend of Uncle George, agreed to come while they were gone. The three brothers offered to act as a reception committee.

That day the weather seemed ordinary. Neither the cattle nor the hogs behaved in an unusual way. Leaves moved in a light wind. The windmill wheel turned slowly. The sun shone with the same light it gave to the battles of the Somme and Gettysburg. Peas and carrots in the garden grew in the straight or crooked rows in which they were planted. But it was a portentous day for us as we three brothers sat at the dining-room table and ate our lunch.

The dog barked as a car drove in the yard. A tall, lean man without a hat stepped out, picked up his briefcase, walked briskly to the front door. Chuck opened it. "I'm Cap Wagner, the sheriff," he said. "This isn't my idea of a good time, but I wish you young men would listen while I read this summons to you."

He opened his briefcase, took out some papers, put on a pair of spectacles with silver rims, and in a dull, low voice read the summons. He folded the papers, put them in an envelope, and tossed it toward the center of the table. "OK," he said, "that's it. Give the papers to your dad when he comes back."

He went over to Bob and put his arm over his shoulder. "How are you getting along, young man?" he asked. "You're having a tough time and I admire your guts."

Bob's voice trembled, "Will the farm really be sold?"

The Sheriff shook his head. "You have a year to redeem it.

Don't worry, Bob, your dad will get the taxes paid. It's just that the law says we have to do it this way. Remember me to your folks. So long." And he was gone.

It was a day burned in our memories. To lose part of the farm would be more than the family should have to bear. The farm was home. It was part of our life, like our own flesh and blood. I remember when a man we knew who lived in town called up Father and asked him if he was going to pay the taxes or would the 80 be for sale. We young folks took an instant dislike to the poor man and always treated him coldly after that.

Years later, when Bob was gone and anxiety and grief had dulled, we thought of this as the low point in our lives. Eventually, the taxes were paid and the land redeemed. We just dug in and faced what had to be faced and survived. But no one who weathered the Depression ever escaped without a kind of obsession for security.

A couple of good crop years and we were on the way up. We had discovered that working together made all the difference as we faced illness, death, felt the abrasive touch of despair. It was the working that kept us going. President Roosevelt once said, "There is nothing to fear but fear itself." That may have been just a political ploy, but after he said it, there was hope.

One morning, a couple of years after the worst of the Depression, I was out in the field disking in oats in a field along the road. Einer Clausson drove by with his milk truck and we waved to each other like the neighbors we were.

RURAL CHILDHOOD

Country School

We lived on Rural Route 3 in District 7, and on the wrong side of the road. We all started to school at the age of six and walked the mile and a half to school in all weather—cold, hot, wet, dry, thunderstorms, blizzards. We walked a half a mile north on our crossroad (now called the Hearst Road) to the main road—27th Street—and then a mile west. We lived on the wrong side of the road because by law we had to attend the west country school. This meant we walked against the traffic, what there was, of neighbors on their way to town. And when school let out in the afternoon and we started for home, we met them going home. We had no chance to catch a ride coming or going.

Art Hansen, whose family lived just south of us, lived on the east side of the crossroad and consequently went to the east school. In our imagination he caught a ride every day. Sometimes he drove to school with a horse and buggy, and we knew he would have let us ride with him. But we were made to understand that the law was the law and we must abide by it. So we grumbled and wondered why Grandfather Hearst had been so shortsighted as to build his house on the west side of the road.

Sometimes we cut across the field to shorten the distance, but one of us always went home the long way to bring the mail from the mailbox on the main road. When we complained, Father told us that when he was young he had to ride a horse to town to get the mail because there was no rural delivery. Well, we muttered to ourselves, at least he rode. Once in a while during a rainstorm or blowing snow, Jacob Bergstrom would come pick up his girls, and we rode with them until they turned off at their crossroad about halfway from ours.

Once we rebelled. The day turned stormy, and by afternoon the

rain poured down. All the children had someone come for them, all except us. The omission was not to be endured. My sister, with hurt pride, ran over to the Madsen house, diagonally across from the schoolhouse, and phoned Mother. After about an hour's wait, Father showed up in a horse and buggy. We all piled in. All the kids got rides, we told him, their folks didn't want them out in this kind of weather. Oh, we rubbed it in. Father did not say a word. I think it was the only time someone from the farm came for us.

Only once did any of us turn back because of the weather. One winter morning, a stiff northwest wind cut into us when we left the shelter of the grove, and we told our youngest brother to go back to the house. The three of us walked backward against the wind. Louise froze one cheek, Bob froze his nose, and I froze both ears, but we got there. We huddled around the big-bellied stove and the teacher held snow against our frozen faces.

Now, looking back, it seems a bit cruel that we were allowed to start out on a morning like that. But the chores on the farm on a cold morning demanded attention. Father and the hired men chopped ice out of the stock tanks, thawed out the frozen pipes, and started the tank heaters. It took time to make a fire in a tank heater out of cobs and coal with a dash of kerosene on top. I am sure Mother took it for granted that we would turn back if we found the going too cold. We were never urged to go to school if we felt sick or had a lame foot. But we were just youngsters who took attendance seriously, a stoic acceptance of what we thought we had to do.

The schoolhouse consisted of one big room, entered through the boys' and girls' cloakrooms, one on each side. In the cloakrooms we left our caps, coats, overshoes, and lunch boxes. The schoolroom had three windows along each side, blackboards behind the teacher's desk, a roll of maps over one blackboard, and a poor, skimpy library on a small bookshelf. We had just a dictionary and a few worn books. A wheezy pump organ stood in one corner and accompanied us mournfully when we sang—when we had a teacher who could play it. Five rows of desks filled most of the rest

of the room, ranging in size from the little ones in front for beginners to the full-sized ones at the back for the eighth grade students.

When I first started to school, the desks were double desks; two pupils sat at each one. One of the punishments handed out to a boy was to make him sit with a girl. In my first year at school, the big boys attended only during the winter months. I mean grown men, twenty years old, who wore vests decorated with watch chains. This was the only time they could be spared from farm work. They scared me with their rough, muscular ways. One winter day, overcome by boredom and in a spirit of bucolic humor, they opened a window and tossed the teacher, a man, out into a snowdrift. I was terrified to see authority so brazenly challenged. But the teacher brushed off the snow, came back through the girls' cloakroom, closed the window, and carried on as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

In the spring of my first year, one of the big boys, Sam Nelson, told me to hit the back of the schoolhouse with a baseball bat right behind the teacher's desk. She rushed out, furious as a setting hen, and demanded the name of the culprit. Sam stepped up and said, "I did it."

The teacher scolded him and said, "You stay in for recess for a week, Sam Nelson."

Sam laughed, walked off the schoolgrounds toward his home, and never came back. I felt guilty for a long time.

On the opposite corners of the schoolgrounds, at the back, stood the boys' and girls' privies. They were pathetic coops that stunk to high heaven.

When the enlightenment came, single desks replaced the double desks, and they all were fastened facing north so that the light now came in over the pupils' shoulders. A drinking fountain and paper cups replaced the chipped porcelain pail and tin dipper. When I became a big boy in the eighth grade, it was my job to keep the drinking fountain full. I was allowed, during school hours, to cross the road to the Madsen home and bring back a pail of water. Mrs. Madsen often asked me to come in and have a cup of coffee with her. I was careful not to stay too long, lest the teacher revoke

the privilege.

Another privilege was the chance to clean the blackboard erasers. Usually this fell to the little kids. They did this at recess and, unless the weather turned bad, outdoors. They banged the erasers together to knock out the chalk dust, and two or three children whacking away in unison raised quite a dust. They liked doing it. Other minor rewards included going to the coal house for a bucket of coal, or collecting papers and taking them to the teacher's desk. One thing we all appreciated: on a cold morning, Nels Madsen would run across the road and light a fire in the stove to warm the room before we arrived.

We had some exciting moments. Once a mouse ran across the floor and had the teacher standing on her desk clutching her skirts. All of us "big boys" rose en masse and launched an attack on the beast. The mouse took refuge in the pump organ and we could not reach it. So we carried the organ out the door and set it on the platform. When we brought it back into the schoolhouse at noon, the mouse apparently had escaped, for we never saw it again.

Another time, an old man drove into the schoolyard. He rode in a rickety old wagon with a canvas top and pulled by a scruffy-looking horse. He unhitched his horse, staked it out, and started a small fire on which he placed a kettle. He wore a ragged beard, long scraggly hair, a peaked cap, and a long, torn, dirty, sheepskin coat. He made camp while our teacher—a young lady about nineteen years old—peered anxiously out the window. We left our desks and peered out too. Pretty soon, stories began to circulate among us about the evil deeds he might do. Suggestions of robbery, kidnapping, even murder, made us tremble, and we told the teacher we didn't dare go home when school was dismissed.

But our worries vanished when Mr. Madsen, who was president of the School Board, ambled over and talked to the old man. After a brief conversation, we saw him stamp out the fire, hitch up his horse, and drive away.

All eyes and mouth, we ran home to tell about the awful man in the schoolyard. "Old Klaus," said Father. "He camps in schoolyards, in the schoolhouse if he can get in. Harmless, a bit cracked

in his noggin."

"Ugh!" said Mother. "Dirty, maybe infested with lice. What do the authorities mean, letting him travel around like that?"

We did have visitors, though, real visitors. Once a year the County Superintendent of Schools called on us and listened to us recite. The teacher never knew when this inspection would take place. When the day came, she seemed to get nervous and kind of fluttery. Mother visited the school once or twice a year out of a sense of duty, "to see what was going on." It embarrassed me when Mother showed up. I tried to be such a proper student that once I upset my inkwell, and the teacher had to clean it up. Sometimes the mothers of other pupils came, usually in the afternoon, and took their children home with them. Mothers drove in a horse and buggy in those days.

School days fell into a regular pattern. If the teacher could play the organ, she pumped away and we sang songs such as "America," "The Old Oaken Bucket," and "Swanee River." If the teacher could not play the organ, she would read a chapter from a book to us instead. I remember how excited we became over the *Shepherd of the Hills.* Most of our teachers were young girls who were just out of high school and who had finished a twelve-week course in normal training. Once or twice we had a man for a teacher, but men failed to understand the needs of little kids. One of the eighth grade girls would take them to the privy, blow their noses, help with overshoes and mittens.

The singing or reading took place right after the teacher rang the bell to start the school day, which began at nine and ended at four. We had a fifteen-minute recess morning and afternoon, and an hour at noon. Our school year was eight months long, with November as a corn-husking vacation.

I do not see how the teacher managed to find time to teach all the classes in grades one to eight in one day. She taught us arithmetic (we memorized the multiplication tables), history, geography, reading, grammar, and art. We often had a spelling contest on Friday afternoons, and we learned to diagram sentences. I can still see those lines on the blackboard with the little branches hooked on.

The method fascinated me, but I never understood it. When my turn came to go to the blackboard to diagram a sentence, I put in the lines where they made a pleasant arrangement and wrote words on them. The teacher tried her best to explain the places for adverbs and adjectives; when she came to relative clauses she lost me completely.

In geography we constructed a topographical map of the United States. We made a paste of flour and water and shaped mountains and dug channels for rivers. We memorized the capitals of all the states and the names of the ninety-nine counties of Iowa. In history class we memorized the names of the presidents of the United States and the dates of their administrations. History seemed a succession of dates, wars, battles, and generals.

I read everything our poor library possessed. Someone had donated Foxe's *Book of Martyrs.* How I shuddered over those grizzly illustrations. Sometimes I would hang over the dictionary, reading words, looking at the pictures of flags, and—quickly, with a guilty face—thumbing through the H's for the word "whore." I never found it.

My taste of glory came when our teacher, Miss Lundell (a lovely Swedish girl with a head of pretty auburn hair), asked me to make poems out of the stories in our reading text, *Lights to Literature.* I doubt that any teacher ever found herself confronted with such doggerel. But she praised me for it! How could Shelley have found more magnificent pleasure? Biting my tongue and constantly sharpening my pencil, I turned the stuff out by the page. Miss Lundell must have been thankful when the school year ended.

We filled recess and the noon hour with our games. Mostly the boys and girls played together. We played ante-over over the schoolhouse, dare base, and crack the whip. The latter game required all the kids to take each other's hands and form a line, with the big boys at one end and the little kids at the other. Then we ran, and suddenly the big boys would dig in their heels and hold fast, and the line would swing around them like the spoke of a wheel. The speed at the end was so great that the little kids would fly off, rolling and screaming. No one ever got hurt, though I

don't know why not.

The social life of the neighborhood centered in the schoolhouse. Here we all gathered for the programs, the box socials, the festivities of the holidays. The large, bare room broke out in decorations appropriate to the occasion. The energy and inventiveness of the teacher determined how much transformation took place in the schoolroom. It never took on the sparkle of Aladdin's cave, this open room with its dusty blackboards, dingy curtains, and roll of maps and dictionary. But a teacher with enthusiasm and a few appropriate symbols could make it shine in our eyes.

On Washington's Birthday she drew a cherry tree on the blackboard with colored chalk, a tree loaded with glistening red fruit. We tried to make a log cabin for Lincoln's Birthday. We collected twigs from the schoolyard, trees for logs. But the project failed for lack of enough glue to hold the logs in place. So we settled for a real ax buried in a real chunk of wood.

Valentine's Day proved no problem at all. The teacher provided colored paper, aluminum foil, scissors, and paste, and we made a mess of the schoolroom constructing valentines. But we were happy in our work as we cut out hearts and pasted them to pages on which we scrawled "Happy Valentine." Then we wrote the names of the recipients on the pages and our teacher acted as the mailman.

Easter? We all drew colored eggs on the blackboard and the one judged best by the teacher stayed up for a whole week. But we didn't really make much of a fuss over Easter. The teacher usually said this celebration belonged in church, not in school.

But Christmas brought our expectations to a peak of excitement unsurpassed by any other holiday. Even the picnic at the end of the school year couldn't hold a candle to our anticipation of the Christmas program. The Star of Bethlehem shown in our eyes for weeks before the longed-for day, and we walked back and forth to school on rabbit feet, as if we could run through time to satisfy our anticipation. The schoolroom glistened with our adornments, for this was the program when all the adults came to watch us perform

the ceremony of the holiday. We strung popcorn and cranberries on long strings at home and brought them to school. The teacher found a stencil for holly leaves and berries, and all the blackboards bore a trimming of green leaves and red berries.

We struggled to learn our parts for the program. It became the only topic worth discussing as we trudged our way to and from school. Of course, we had Christmas at home to look forward to, but this only seemed to intensify our preparation for a kind of rehearsal by the school program. We lived in a trance, wrapped in the seriousness of the part we would play when we stepped through the open curtain in front of the audience gathered to watch us perform. The hours of practice, the hidden presents at home, the thought of the church service only emphasized the mystery of this festival we dimly felt but did not understand.

One Christmas program stands out in my memory. The day before Christmas we practiced for the last time "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and "O Holy Night." A Christmas tree was set on a table in the corner and trimmed with popcorn chains alternating with cranberries. It had real candles clipped to the outer ends of the branches. Herman Miller had found a cedar tree growing wild along the fence, sawed it down, and lugged it to school. It was just the right size.

Nels Madsen brought a wire from home, a wire long enough to reach across the room. He fastened it to hooks that had been screwed into the wall on opposite sides of the room. He pulled it as tight as he could and on it he hung the brown curtains used to conceal the area where we performers stayed. Nels had the instincts of an engineer. He ran some small ropes through rings so that the teacher, concealed behind the curtains, could open and close them without moving from where she stood.

Not many classes met that day. We bubbled with excitement and rehearsed our parts in the nativity scene. I was one of the wise men, and I wore a long cloak Mother made from a shawl and a peaked cardboard hat covered with brown paper. In my treble soprano voice I helped sing out "We Three Kings of Orient Are." Our thin, reedy voices barely reached the back of the room. The

table where the tree stood had been decorated with a white cloth, and on it lay presents. We knew what they were; the teacher had wrapped a little sack of candy and nuts for each pupil. But it was exciting just to see the presents, anyway.

"Now, don't forget your parts," the teacher warned us. "And remember, I want the audience to join in singing 'O Holy Night' so don't start to sing until I give you the sign."

So many things to remember. We went home in a swirl of confusion. I scarcely ate my supper. Along with my sister and two brothers, I had to get dressed for the occasion.

When we reached the schoolhouse, it was already half filled with people. Nels had lit the big gas lamp that hung from the middle of the ceiling, and it buzzed quietly and lit up the whole room. By the time the program was ready to start, the room was packed. Mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, babies, hired men, everybody came. The women sat at the desks and the men ranged themselves along the wall. We all knew that out in the cloakroom reposed baskets of food and drink for refreshments at the end of the program.

We lived in a fairy-tale world that night. Nothing was real. The schoolhouse transformed itself into a gay and glittering scene where we actors played our parts in front of a packed house. We tiptoed around in back of the curtain and talked in piercing whispers. When all was ready, Miss Appleby drew back the curtains, plumped down on the organ stool, and the whole school, monotones and all, crashed into "Adeste Fideles." The evening had begun.

One after another we appeared at the opening of the curtains and recited or sang our parts. Where there was group action, like the nativity scene, the curtains were drawn wider, and all the actors not in the scene shrank back against the walls to keep from being seen.

The enthusiastic applause from the audience stimulated us to great, undreamed of efforts of performance. We played our roles with the intensity of all our quivering voices and bodies. The usual mishaps occurred; one little girl forgot her lines and, even when

prompted by the teacher, could not finish her piece. She retired in tears. But nothing stopped the program. We entered into our roles with serious intent and determined effort. When we finished, the school children and the audience, with Miss Appleby pumping away for dear life on the organ, rendered "O Holy Night." It was a crashing climax to the evening.

Then the curtains were swept back and we joined the audience. Miss Appleby carefully lit the candles on the Christmas tree. A few mothers stirred, rose, and went out to the cloakrooms to begin unloading the baskets. The men moved away from the walls and clustered in the aisles, and a few fathers came up to where we children milled around, proud to be so important. They shook hands with Miss Appleby, who stood red-cheeked and smiling among her pupils. No one noticed the Christmas tree.

Suddenly Thorvald Nelson shouted, "The tree is on fire!" Evidently, one of the candles had turned in its holder as it burned down and a branch had caught the flame. Instantly, the whole tree blazed up and flames reached toward the ceiling.

For just an instant the people froze in silence and stared at the fire. One child sobbed in a long quavering, "Oh . . ." No panic developed in the packed room. No one stormed toward the doors. Almost as if they had rehearsed it, Mads Madsen and my father stepped quickly to the tree. Mads jerked the window wide open. Father picked up the tree by its base and shoved it out the window into a snowdrift. Some of the presents spilled on the floor. We children picked them up and put them back on the table. Mother asked Father if he had burned his hands and he said he hadn't.

Mr. Madsen said, "Quick work, Charlie." I am sure most of the adults shook with a small fear at the thought of all the people trying to escape through the doors if the building had caught fire. Just one rush and the doorways would have been blocked with struggling people. The children were farthest from the doors.

After the refreshments, and after we had received our sack of candy and nuts, we all said over and over, "Thank you, Miss Appleby, Merry Christmas!" We all went home. The school Christmas party was over.

A creek ran through the fields about a quarter of a mile from the schoolhouse. It formed a large pool in Mr. Madsen's pasture. In the winter we all went there to skate during the noon hour. We laid sticks on the ice about four feet apart and parallel to each other for goals and—with curved tree limbs and an old tin can—we played "shinny," our variety of hockey. Many a whack we took on ankle and shin, and there was often a weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The chime of the school bell didn't carry as far as the pond. When the noon hour drew to a close, the teacher hung a white towel on the black door of the schoolhouse. Someone always spotted it, and we took off our skates and trudged back to an afternoon of classes. In those days we had never heard of shoe skates; our skates clamped to the soles of our shoes. More than once, somebody walked back with the heel of his shoe in his pocket, torn off by the skates.

Once, Herman Miller and I persuaded all the kids to skate up the creek as far as we could, so of course we couldn't see the towel. We returned to the school an hour late and faced a stern-faced, angry teacher. After a short lecture on our delinquent ways, she insisted on punishment. Herman and I, to our credit, stood up and said the fault was ours and no one else should be blamed.

"Very well," said Miss Lundell, "you two will come to the front of the room and I will strike your hands with a ruler." It was a big, heavy ruler, too.

We looked at each other, Herman and I, to see who would go first. With a sort of Custer's Last Stand expression, I dragged myself to the front of the room. "Open your hand and hold it out, palm up," said Miss Lundell firmly.

I held out my right hand, put my left hand behind my back and wiggled the fingers at the kids. But no one laughed; it was a serious moment. Miss Lundell hit me a couple of licks, and I discovered she couldn't or wouldn't hit very hard.

I pretended it hurt, rubbed my hand on my overalls as I grimaced, and held it out again. I looked her in the eye and grinned. She backed away, hand over her mouth, and suddenly she laughed. There was no more punishment. But there were no more

late pupils, either. After that we saw the towel. She had made friends of all of us.

We played baseball in the spring. Two of the big boys would choose sides. A bat was tossed to one of them, and the other captain grasped it above the first captain's hand. Up they went, hand over hand, and whoever had the last hold made the first choice. The girls usually played in the outfield, although we had one girl who could stand behind the plate and catch as well as our best catcher. I can see her yet, squatting behind the plate, socking the mitt and yelling, "Pitch 'em here!" But most of the girls couldn't play very well, and sometimes we boys played by ourselves, "work up" or "one old cat."

In the spring of my last year in country school I found the wildflowers of romance. Perhaps it was my temperament, perhaps the influence of the novels of Sir Walter Scott (to which I was addicted at the time), perhaps a reflection of my parents' moral standards, but I tended to take a chivalrous attitude toward girls and women. Even now, at my age, I still feel the urge to be courteous and protect my women friends.

Not long ago, in one of the university classes I was teaching, I said, "I was born out of my time. When I was your age, I treated the girls I dated with much the same manners as I used with my mother and sister. I missed the freedom you have. I wasn't all over my girl in the back seat. Girls may have found me a little dull."

It was a graduate seminar. One of the young men said, "You wouldn't be any different today than you were then, Mr. Hearst." Maybe not, maybe not, I thought. One grows, like a seed, the way he is programmed.

Anyway, that spring I found love. For the last quarter of a mile on the way to school, I walked with Esther Nelson. I let my two brothers go on ahead so I could walk with Esther. A kind of intimacy grew between us, and soon I was transfixed by the arrow. I asked my mother if I could have a few flowers to give to Esther. No doubt Mother recognized the signs, but she only nodded and went on with her work.

Shyly I gave them to Esther and shyly she accepted them. It developed as the shyest love affair that can be imagined. Once in a while we touched hands and smiled. Once we walked home through a field of hay, clover in bloom, bobolinks singing. That would have been the time to tumble her. I never even thought of it. I seemed all a-tingle with a mysterious affliction. I never kissed her or held her hand. I stroked her hair once when we played "run sheep, run." I remember she blushed and smiled.

The school year ended and romance with it. We had a whooping big picnic on the last day of school, with lemonade and ice cream. Most of the mothers came, but none of the fathers. The fathers stayed in the fields to finish corn planting. That was the end of country school for me.

At the end of the eighth grade came the anxious time when we pupils who had graduated took the county examinations to see if we were qualified to go on to high school. The teacher had drilled us, and we had studied the old exam questions sent out by the County Superintendent. Mothers asked us questions. The dreaded day came when we went to the schoolhouse with the eighth grade graduates from other country schools.

A stranger from the county office took charge. At nine o'clock in the morning, just as in regular school days, we sat at our desks and questions were handed out. Questions in literature, history, geography, arithmetic, citizenship. The examination took two days. We received the questions for each subject after the previous questions had been answered and the papers handed in. We had an hour's rest at noon; we brought our lunches. When we finished one set of questions, we would tiptoe from the room and wait outside for the next batch. In the arithmetic test, I saw Butch Morgansen from Benson hand in his paper long before I had finished. I sighed to think how smart some people were.

Then came the waiting period, waiting for the grades to be mailed out. No one worried more than our teacher. Poor Olga Lundell, she must have wondered if all her efforts had sifted enough knowledge into the heads of Julia Madsen, Edna Shoemaker, and James Hearst to enable us to pass the county examina-

tion.

I am sure the questions seemed twice as difficult as they were because of my anxiety. My concern was for my parents and my teacher. For myself, I could have failed the test without a qualm. Who wanted to go to high school and be thrown in with a bunch of town kids? I did not share my parents' assurance that my next step would be high school.

When I came home at the end of the first day of examinations, Mother asked me casually (too casually), "How did it go?"

I waved a careless hand. "All right."

"Were the questions hard?"

"About what you'd expect."

But we both quivered. Mother knew I could pass if I would. The problem was whether I would become nervous and write down anything that came into my head instead of attending to the question. My stubbornness saved me. If Butch Morgansen and Roy LeValley could stick it out, I could too. So I sat and wrestled with what were rather simple questions. I even swaggered to the drinking fountain right in the middle of the history test.

We all passed. As a present to us, Miss Lundell took her three eighth grade students to the photographer's for a picture of the four of us. I have it yet. How young and innocent we look, even Miss Lundell with her lovely auburn hair, all of us smiling.

My grades were not bad, high in English and history, average in arithmetic and grammar. But now I was committed. High school loomed ahead. Fate led me to the Campus High School at the Iowa State Teachers College. I was growing up. I would wear my "good clothes" every day—no more overalls and bare feet. Good-bye to knickerbockers and those hated long, black stockings that never stayed up.

My first days in high school bothered me. I was thrown into a hurrying throng of boys and girls who seemed to know what they were doing. I had to register for classes, find out the names of teachers, discover where classrooms were. I was overwhelmed with all these duties. It was a small high school, but to me it seemed a crowd of strangers whose faces changed each minute.

At last I became a member of a home room, knew my way to classes, the names of my teachers and some of my classmates. What surprised and pleased me was my ability to keep up in my studies. Good old District No. 7, the country school had taught me more than I knew. High school classes posed no problems; I had worried in vain.

But it was a long time before I forgot the one-room school with its funny water fountain, stinking privy, tall elm trees, and the games. My years there remain in memory as some of the best years of my life. We formed a kind of family, we country children. The big youngsters looked after the little ones, we all played together, heard our classes together, endured weather and our sorrows together. And I shall never forget the pretty, anxious face of Miss Lundell.

A Road through Summer

The end of May, the last day of school, we walked home a little drunk with freedom. Our first declaration of independence was to take off our shoes and walk home barefooted. We scuffed in the deep dust of the road, crying out when our tender feet stepped on a stone or we stubbed a toe against a rut. Three of us, brothers, Jim and Bob and Chuck. A whole summer of vacation stretched ahead of us like a wide field with no horizon, a lake of infinitude, time always the present moment. The three months seemed to have no end, intoxicated as we were with this release from the school year.

A row of mailboxes stood on the main road where we turned off on our crossroad toward home. We looked, but our box was empty; someone had been to town and picked up the mail. Usually we would stick the mail through the bib in our overalls so we wouldn't have to carry it, it left both hands free. But today we were spared that chore.

The crossroad slanted down to a cement culvert and then sloped up past the big maple grove to the houses. Grandfather had chosen the top of the slope to build on. We could see clear to Waterloo and the smoke from the John Deere foundries.

At either end of the culvert there were pools of water, dotted with long, soggy grass stems. We stopped to examine them. Sometimes we would see a water snake—thin, whiplike, alert for insects—that wove its way swiftly into the culvert when we stirred it with a stick. Today when we looked we saw no snake so we paddled with our bare feet in the water. We stooped and saw a school of tadpoles darting around in the grass. We poked at them for a while but finally I, being the oldest, said, "We better go on home and get at the chores."

We were always hungry when we came home from school. That day, Mother had baked gingerbread, and we each had a piece and a glass of milk. Then Chuck went out to feed the chickens and hunt the eggs. Bob and I went to the barn to fill the mangers with hay and the feed boxes with ears of corn. We gave old Queen ground corn because her teeth were all worn out. Then I jumped on Beauty to go for the cows, and Bob carried swill for the pigs. Vacation or no vacation, the chores had to be done.

Summer settled in with hot, humid days. Everybody said it was good for the corn. The family owned eighty acres of land a mile and a half west of the main farm. The east fence ran right along the side of the schoolyard. A creek ran through it, and the land was mostly in grass for pasture. All the cows and calves, except for a couple of milk cows, stayed in the pasture all summer. Every week I rode over on horseback to count the cows and calves, to see that none were sick or having trouble calving. The heifers hadn't had their calves yet.

One day I stopped to visit with Nels Madsen, who lived across the road from the eighty. Nels said, "Herman and I dammed up a pond in your pasture and we've got a swimming hole eight feet deep at one end. We have a diving board too. Do you think your father would care?"

"Naw, he won't care. How did you make the dam?"

"We cut sods and laid them up like a wall, then put boards against them and braced them with fence posts."

"Will it hold?"

"Has so far. Good place to swim."

When I brought the news home, my brothers could hardly wait to try out the new swimming hole. There were few places for farm boys to swim in those days. The river was five miles away and it took almost an hour to get there with a horse and buggy. The sand pit was almost as far, and it was forbidden territory since Andrew Anderson drowned there. Old John Mommer, who owned it, had NO SWIMMING signs stuck all over. He had a mean dog, too, and he kept an eye on the place.

Our cousin, James McAlvin, who was my age, came to spend the summer with us and help on the farm. We called him Cavo. He got his nickname from Chuck's inability, when he was small, to pronounce the name "McAlvin." Chuck said, "McCavo." We shortened it to just Cavo. It was an easy way to keep the two Jameses separate. Cavo had a fertile mind. "Let's hitch Trix to the coaster wagon," he said, "and make fish poles, and all go over to the crick."

Trix was one of the ponies, a good-natured but mischievous little animal. We had a big coaster wagon; it would haul three cans of cream. We removed the tongue and fastened a singletree in its place. Trix was too small for the driving harness, so we made her a breast collar and tugs from some discarded harness in the tool shed. A pair of old hitching straps were long enough for the lines, and she had a riding bridle.

We cut thin maple branches for fish poles. Chuck invented a reel. He found one of Mother's empty spools, put a tenpenny spike through the hole in the spool, and drove the nail into his pole. It was a large spool, one used for holding yarn. Then Chuck bent a small nail into a crank, which he fastened to the edge of the spool. It worked fine. We all imitated it. We dug some white maggots out of the manure pile for bait and put them in a tin can.

There was just barely room on the wagon for four of us. I sat in front and drove, my feet braced on the singletree. Bob was next and then Chuck, they carried the fish poles. Cavo sat at the back and held the bait. He had the most exciting seat; any sudden jerk of the wagon and he fell off.

There was one hazard. If the wagon wasn't pulled all the time and the tugs kept tight, it rolled up on Trix's heels and she would kick back right in my face. So we solved the problem by driving her at a dead run the mile and a half to the pasture. Away we went, Trix galloping furiously, neck and tail stretched out, heels kicking up gravel in my face, the wagon careening from side to side, four boys hanging on as best they could, whooping and yelling.

One of the neighbors told Father, "You ought to put a stop to it, Charlie. Those boys will kill themselves." But we never did.

When we reached the pasture, we turned Trix loose and settled down to fish along the creek in the pools where the creekbed curved. We caught shiners, once in a while a bullhead, all small. When we had about twenty on a line, we hung it in the water and went to the swimming hole.

It was bigger than we had hoped, about ten feet across and twenty feet long. Near the dam it was deep, over our heads. We pulled off shirts and overalls and jumped in.

There was a diving board just as Nels said. We dove and swam and splashed for at least an hour. The pond had a mud bottom. It also had bloodsuckers. When we climbed out we searched each other's bodies for them. Usually we found them between our toes, sometimes fat and swollen. We pulled them off, dressed, caught Trix, and galloped for home, trailing our fish behind us.

We cleaned the minnows and Mother fried them and we thought they tasted wonderful.

We were old enough to help shock oats. Father sowed early oats that had short straw, and the bundles were light and easy to handle. One of our neighbors, Nels Johnson, sowed late oats with long straw. He was from Denmark and stubborn about neatness and order. He even swept his dooryard with a broom. It was a pleasure to see his fields of oats when his three boys finished shocking them. Each oat shock stood straight like a little house, each one capped with a bundle broken over it like the slanting sides of a roof. They all looked exactly alike. We tried and tried but we never could make our shocks look like the Johnsons' shocks.

One day Bob found a bumblebee nest. Bumblebees nest underground. There is one hole for entrance and exit, and the honey is stored underneath the surface. Bob said the honey that bumblebees make is sweeter than that of honeybees. We were eager to try it. Bob piled straw over the hole and touched a match to it. Almost immediately the bumblebees started swarming out, shooting up into the air, then leveling off for parts unknown.

When we thought they were all gone, we kicked the ashes away and dug into the ground. The honey is stored in little sacs, not in

honeycombs the way honeybees do. Each one is about the size of a little fingernail. We dug them out and ate them. Bob was right, the honey tasted sweeter than ordinary honey. Some of the sacs had the bodies of young bees in them. We tried to avoid eating these, but we probably got a bit of protein with our dessert. We did this whenever we found a bumblebee nest. We never seemed to be stung, but our faces were smeared with honey and ashes.

One of our jobs was to water the horses left in the barn during evening chores. We had a pony stallion named King that we had borrowed for the summer to breed our pony mares. He was a feisty little horse, always looking for a chance to cause trouble. One evening Cavo came running to me in distress. "I took King to water," he said, "and he broke away from me and ran down the road!"

I nodded. "I should have warned you to watch out for him. While you stand there relaxed as he drinks, he will suddenly jerk away and run out toward the road."

Then I added, "If I catch on quickly enough, I hang on to the halter rope and lie down and let him drag me. He gives up after he's dragged me a few yards, too much work. I get pretty dirty, though. I'll go catch him."

I hurried to the barn and slipped a riding bridle on Dot. She was a large pony or small horse, part Arabian. I jumped on her back and galloped down the road. About a half mile away I saw King off on the roadside eating grass. The minute King saw me coming, the little stud began to run. But I crowded him against the fence; Dot was twice his size. Then King, aware of the closeness of the mare, commenced to snort. Dot laid back her ears and struck at him.

I slapped her neck. "Let him alone, I'll fix him." I jumped down and grabbed King's halter rope. I tied the reins over Dot's neck, slapped her on the rump, and said, "Go home." She trotted off down the road.

Then I turned to King. "You ornery little cuss! Wait until I find a stick." I saw a mulberry tree about two feet high growing in the

fence row. Birds eat mulberries, but the seeds don't digest and they fall out in the droppings as the birds sit on fence posts. There seemed to be mulberry trees in every fence row.

I pulled it up by the roots and jumped on King's back. I held the halter rope in one hand, the switch in the other. I slashed King across the rump. The little stallion stood on his hind feet and squealed his anger. Keeping a tight grip on the rope to keep from sliding off backward, I whacked him across the ears. That brought him down to four legs in a hurry. He headed for home at a gallop and home we went, me whipping him all the way.

Cavo asked, "Will he behave now?"

I shook my head. "Not him, the switch was too small to hurt him." Then in fairness I added, "He needs exercise. He just stands in the stall all day. No wonder he wants to run. If he were a little bigger, I'd ride him after the cows. The trouble is, he's so stubborn you can't make him do anything he doesn't want to do."

One day Father had to go away for an all-day meeting. He said, "If you boys will haul twelve loads of manure for the day, you can quit."

As soon as he was gone I asked our neighbor, Fred Bast, if we could borrow his manure spreader. I drove a team down to get it. Bob, Chuck, and Cavo brought in four more horses from the pasture and harnessed them. Now we had two spreaders. While Chuck drove the loaded one out to the field to spread the load, Bob and Cavo and I loaded the other spreader. By noon we had hauled our twelve loads. After dinner we hitched Tom (our long-legged driving horse) to the buggy, picked a small pail of Whitney crab apples, gathered our fish poles, and drove to Norris' Siding, where the Cedar River formed a backwater along the railroad tracks. It was a four-mile drive, but we were in no hurry; we had the afternoon to spend.

Chuck caught a carp, Bob a snapping turtle, Cavo a sucker, and I just drowned worms. This small catch did not concern us; we splurged in our idleness. We went swimming, but the bottom was muddy and squishy and we didn't stay in long.

On our way home we crossed the bridge that arches over the Illinois Central tracks. We heard a train whistle, so we stopped in the middle of the bridge and waited. A locomotive hove into sight around a curve, hauling a long train of swaying, banging freight cars.

We waved and the engineer tooted the whistle. We spotted a brakeman walking on top of the cars. As soon as he came within range we threw apples at him. He caught one, held it in his gloved hand and smiled. The conductor stood on the rear platform of the caboose as it whizzed past. We all threw apples at him, too, but the train went faster than we could throw, and the apples all fell short. But he took off his cap and bowed. We yelled and slapped each other on the back. We got home in time for chores. It had been a wonderful afternoon.

One night late in July a thunderstorm rolled in and poured out rain in bucketsful. The next morning in the sunshine everything glistened and sparkled. Mother's hollyhocks lay on the ground, flat as if they had been tramped on. Even the grass was beaten down. Bob said, "Let's go look at the crick, I'll bet it's on a tear."

We rounded up four ponies and rode over to the pasture. Father wanted us to check the cows and calves to see if any had been struck by lightning. One of us hopped off and opened the gate and we all rode through.

Bob was right, the creek was on a tear. Out of its bank, about five rods wide, it came downstream in a flood. In the middle, the swift current even made waves as it flowed past. The dam at the swimming hole was washed out and the fence into Miller's pasture hung by a strand of barbed wire. Oat shocks and boards bobbed past as if sucked into a whirlpool. It was an awesome sight.

We must have been out of our minds to decide to go swimming. But the temptation of adventure proved too strong. Bob jumped in first. The current caught him, turned him upside down, rolled him over and over. He yelled for help. Cavo leaped in, grabbed Bob by the arm, and swam with him to the bank ten rods downstream.

Then Chuck waded in, but before he could turn back the rush of water pulled him under, and when he came to the surface his face showed fright. He couldn't yell, his mouth was full of water. He started to go down again. I dove in and reached him, pulling him up by the hair.

"Take it easy!" I yelled. "Don't fight me!" And I made it to the bank pulling Chuck with me. We four boys stood there, half drowned and thoroughly scared. Cavo and I, older and stronger, felt helpless before this rush of water.

I pointed. "Look how close we are to the barbed wire fence. We could have been hung up on that if we hadn't got out when we did." We looked and shivered. We put on our clothes and rode home, sober, glad to be home.

Both Chuck and I had our birthdays the first part of August, and Mother decided we should celebrate them. "We have worked hard this summer and we need a holiday," she said. "Let's go on a picnic."

Father shook his head. "No picnic now," he said, "we must finish threshing first."

But he didn't know Mother, or else he had forgotten her determination when she had made up her mind. She said in a firm voice, "Something always comes first to crowd out a holiday. I don't intend to let it happen this time."

As soon as Father and the hired men had rattled out of the yard with hayracks and grain wagon, Mother made her plans.

"Today is Chuck's birthday, and we are all going to Cedar River Park for a picnic. There is a bathhouse there and lifeguards, and we can all go swimming in the river."

It was nine miles from the farm to Cedar River Park, just beyond Sans Souci, close to Waterloo. The question was how to get there. Our driving horse, old Tom, was lame and out to pasture. Mother said, "James, find a horse we can hitch to the buggy."

I wondered what in the world I would do. But then the spirit of Mother's decision excited me. I said, "Jean is in the barn, but she

has never been driven single or hitched to a buggy." Jean was a big, iron-gray draft mare.

"You hitch her up," Mother said, "I will drive her."

So we hitched Jean with the driving harness, leather flynets and all. We backed her into the buggy shafts. She was an amiable, docile horse, but she must have felt bewildered in her new position. Mother said, "Louise and Charles and I will go in the buggy and take the picnic things. Cavo, you and Bob and Jim can ride horseback."

Mother and Louise made deviled eggs and sandwiches. The birthday cake had already been baked. At last we were ready to start.

What a cavalcade! Jean, her broad beam and heavy legs looking a bit naked in the driving harness, ambled along with the buggy. Bob rode Dot—half pony, half horse—Cavo rode Trix, and he had his work cut out for him. The hair on Trix's back was slippery as grease. She would gallop steadily as if she meant to go someplace, then suddenly stop and put her neck down and Cavo would slide off down her neck. We all rode bareback; our western-style saddles were too big for the ponies.

I rode Brownie, a three-year-old that had not been ridden before. In size she was about halfway between Trix and Dot. She didn't like the bit in her mouth, and she backed and pranced but didn't try to throw me.

I said to Jim McAlvin after we had laughed at his tumbles over Trix's head, "Cavo, take a stick and give Trix a good belt across the rump. She knows she is being Miss Smarty Pants." That straightened her out, and we had no more trouble.

Father said he wished he had had a picture of us. Big, clumsy Jean hitched to the top buggy, we three boys on various-sized ponies following behind. It must have been a sight. But we arrived. We tied the horses to the hitch rack. We had brought a rope to tie around Trix's neck. She had the knack of slipping off a bridle or halter.

We carried the baskets to the picnic table, and Mother and Louise spread newspapers on it and set out the food. We were

hungry, and the lemonade, ham sandwiches, deviled eggs, and birthday cake hit the spot. There were pickles, too, and apple butter. After we cleaned up, we went to the bathhouse and bought ice cream cones from the food counter there. We rented a couple of rooms and we all put on swim suits, even Mother, and went in the water.

When three o'clock came, Mother said we better start for home. It would take almost two hours and we had to be back in time for chores. It was one of the best birthday parties we ever had. We owed it to Mother, who showed us how to improvise to meet a difficult situation. When we told Father he looked at Mother and said, "Katharine, you do beat the Dutch."

Came the middle of August and the Ringling Brothers Circus arrived in Waterloo. Aunt Clara, Cavo's mother, asked us to come to Waterloo to spend the night, so we could get up early the next morning to watch the circus unload. Counting Cavo's sister, Helen, that made six of us young folk, so we boys slept on the floor of the McAlvin living room.

The alarm clock sounded at four-thirty. We got up at five o'clock in the summer on the farm, but here in town it seemed an ungodly hour to get up, put on our clothes, and stumble outdoors. Aunt Clara drove us to the siding in their Chalmers automobile. This was a real treat for us. Uncle Gregg slept late because, being a doctor, he was called out so often at night.

The air was gray, misty, chilly. It made me feel melancholy. It felt more like fall than summer. The days were shorter, too. It reminded me that vacation was almost over. How had it gone by so quickly? It bothered me to have all those days, the whole summer, disappear before I had time to enjoy it all.

Then, appearing out of the mist, I saw a fancy circus wagon pulled by six horses, and behind it an elephant pushing with its head. I forgot my feelings. This was the circus, I could even smell it, and excitement rose in me.

The parade marched down Fourth Street, so we went up to Uncle Gregg's office on the sixth floor of the L & J Bank Building

and watched from there. It was nice to be out of the crowds on the curbs and be able to see, and it was pleasant to be out of the sun on such a hot day. We laughed when we looked down into the bandwagon and saw that none of the bandsmen had pants on. They wore their fancy red and yellow coats and ornamental caps, but they knew they were so high above the street no one could see if they had pants on or not. They never thought of people looking down from office buildings, and they were trying to keep cool. It was a long parade, with a steam calliope blasting away at the end of it.

After lunch we all went to the circus. We enjoyed it, but it was kind of an anticlimax after watching the circus unload and the parade. We went back to the McAlvins before we started for home. Uncle Gregg brought some ice cream and we ate that before we left.

Cavo stayed home. He didn't come back with us. We knew then that summer was almost gone. A few more days of freedom and then school would begin. It seemed too sad to think about. We boys did our chores, ate supper, and went out and lay on the lawn. We lay there until it was time to go to bed. We didn't say anything, we didn't need to. We knew it had all gone—summer, vacation—gone into the past, and all we could do now would be to remember it.

Protest

Now as imperceptibly
As evening closing into night,
    As a young heart growing old
Is the wheatfield's sturdy green
    Shading into harvest gold.

The beauty of the color is
Not the thing which I protest,
    Gold is good when green is done—
But the summer in the sheaves
    Marks a season gone.

A Ride to Town

Winter spread out acres of snow, hung rows of icicles. On the chickenhouse, with its low roof, icicles sometimes reached from the eaves to the ground. Robert liked these long ones, pointed as nails. They froze his hands, but when he broke them they shattered like glass. Cold reached everywhere, under your earflaps, inside your mittens. Mostly the wind came with it. Horses wore winter coats, the colts pawed the snow and ran in circles. Bob watched them from the kitchen window. He stayed at home because he was too young to join his brother and sister, who went to school. Besides, today he was going to town with his father. It seemed like Christmas or a birthday to go to town with Papa. He breathed on the window and rubbed a hole in the frost so he could see outdoors. Even the dog, old Carlo, was excited; he tunnelled in the snow and raced across the yard. Robert felt like that.

But first he had to eat his dinner and take his nap. Who could sleep? His mother tucked him in and left him with a quiet word. Later, when he got up, she helped him put on his coat, overshoes, and mittens. Then she hugged him tight and kissed the top of his head. She pulled his stocking cap over his eyes and then turned it back. "You're my big boy," she said, "you'll be all right." He loved his mother. She did not hug and kiss him like this very often. Of course he would be all right.

He heard sleighbells and ran to the door. His father came in wearing his long fur coat. Outside, Bob could see his father's favorite team, Bess and Belle, hitched to the bobsled. "All ready, Bob?" His father scooped him up and tossed him in the air. Then he looked over Bob's shoulder. "Katharine, we'll be home in time for supper. Better have some broth ready, or warm milk."

His mother kissed him again. "My brave boy," she said. Then

to his father she said, "Don't forget to stop for Helen and Marjorie. Helen is going to cut out a new dress for me tomorrow."

Father said, "Maybe Marjorie can be company for Bob, he'll probably need it."

The floor of the bobsled was covered with clean straw with a blanket and horsehide robe spread over it. But Robert stood up in front with his father and hung on to the side of the box, which was as high as his shoulders. He thought, a bobsled is like two big coaster sleds tied together, one behind the other. He knew what a coaster sled was; he and his brother played with one. Maybe this could be his sled too, bobsled, Bob's sled, he chuckled. "What are you laughing at, Bob?" his father asked. But Bob just ducked his head and smiled to himself.

The whole world seemed smoothed over with snow, and in the fields thousands of little fires sparkled and burned in the sun. Bess and Belle blew out smoky breaths, the snow creaked under the runners, the sleighbells jingled. Bob clutched his father's coat and spread his legs to keep his balance.

When they reached town, his father stopped in front of the grocery store. Chains ran between posts along the curb where the horses were tied. People seemed like giants in their long fur coats and high overshoes. They tramped along the sidewalks, and Bob heard his father call greetings, first to this one, then to that one. His father touched his hat and said, "Good day, Miss Johnson." Bob knew her, she came sometimes to help his mother sew. Once she stayed for a week. Today she hid in a stiff fur collar and held a muff over her face. The muff looked brown like the fur on her collar and was round.

Bob liked the grocery store; he could smell bananas and oranges and a spicy smell like the cinnamon his mother sprinkled on apple pie. He liked Mr. Gibson, too, who gave him a piece of horehound candy to suck. Bananas hung down in a long stalk, a barrel of sugar stood beside the counter. Mr. Gibson wore a white apron and a green shade over his eyes. He carried a pencil over his ear. Bob wondered what made it stay there; he kept watching it, hoping it would fall off.

He sucked his candy. His father and Mr. Gibson talked. People interrupted them and bought things. They pushed Bob back against the wall, they tramped around, they all seemed so big. All Bob could see were overcoats and overshoes. He smelled wet fur. It scared him to be hidden in the corner. A man threw a cigar butt, still smoking, right at his feet. Bob shoved through the overcoats and grasped his father's hand. He heard Mr. Gibson say, "All right, Charlie, I'll have the boys carry it out. And you want a hundred pounds of flour, too?"

"And fifty pounds of sugar, Carl. My sled is right outside here."

He took Bob's hand, "Come on, son, we're going up to see Uncle Will."

The sidewalk still swarmed with people, huge people, in long fur coats. At the hitching racks the horses stood with their sleighs. Occasionally there was a single horse with a cutter. Most of the horses were blanketed. It was winter, even for horses. Bob knew a horse can't stand still long in cold weather without getting stiff. He looked proudly at Bess and Belle, covered with blankets. He liked knowing that his father took good care of his horses.

He hung back a little, but his father kept a firm hold on the small, mittened hand. He didn't like to go to Uncle Will's office. It smelled like medicine. He didn't need medicine today, he felt fine. He knew his father went upstairs to Uncle Will's office sometimes just to talk to him. Probably that was why they were going to see him today. Then Bob would play with the magazines on the center table and watch people come in. Once Miss Chicksaw let him poke the keys on her typewriter. That was fun. Mostly he sat on a black, shiny sofa, his legs sticking straight out, and waited. Today he and his father climbed the long stairs and turned into the hallway. A long stairway for short legs, and Bob felt all tuckered out. A dark hallway full of strange doors with frosted glass windows. The one marked "W. L. Hearst, M.D." stood partly open. They went in. The waiting room was empty and dim. A gaslight over by the magazine table kept off the dark. Even Miss Chicksaw had gone, her typewriter snug in its oilskin cover. Bob laughed. "Yes?" his

father said. "It looks funny," Bob said, "like a green turtle." Then he added, "Asleep."

Uncle Will came out of his private office. He wore a white coat and had a shining circle attached to his forehead. He said, "All right, Charlie, in here."

The room frightened Bob. Glass cases all around with bottles in them. A tray of shiny things like scissors and knives, a stiff, square chair with levers attached. Now the men noticed him. Father took off his coat, stocking cap, and mittens.

"Leave his overshoes on," said Uncle Will. "It won't take long."

What won't take long? Bob wondered. What are they going to do? Uncle Will was shorter than his father, but fatter and strong. His strong hands grasped Bob under his arms and boosted him into the chair that was like a machine. Uncle Will pumped it higher and tilted it back.

"Now, young man," he said, "open your mouth and let me look at your throat." He pushed down on Bob's tongue with a flat piece of wood. "Ummm," he said, "looks like a bunch of grapes." He turned away and Bob closed his mouth.

"Hold his legs, Charlie, and his hands," Uncle Will said quietly. Then, "Just open your mouth, Bob, it won't hurt much." He flashed a light on Bob's face so bright he had to close his eyes. He wedged something in Bob's mouth so he couldn't close it. Bob heard a rattle in the tray of instruments.

Suddenly Bob felt an awful pain, the sharp edge of a scraper scraping the back of his throat. He tried to scream, to kick out, to jump from the chair. He was choking on something warm running down his throat. Uncle Will took the things out of his mouth and pushed his head over a white bowl. Water swirled in the bowl.

"Spit it out," Uncle Will said. The water turned red. It was blood, his blood. Bob shuddered and tried to vomit. His throat hurt terribly, raw and scraped.

Uncle Will sat him up straight again. "Once more," he said, "we are almost through." And before Bob could even cry out, Uncle Will forced his mouth open and scraped again and again

with that curved scraper.

Bob tried to yell, to grab Uncle Will's hands and beg him to stop. He moaned, his whole body hurt. His own father held him down. His own father. He whimpered and tried to turn his head away but they were too strong. He sank into a darkness of pain choked with blood.

Far away he heard Uncle Will say, "I think we got them all. Get him to spit out that blood and take him home. He will have a sore throat for a few days. Give him soft food. Let me know tomorrow how he is."

"Papa, Papa," Bob moaned. He felt himself wrapped in his overcoat, and mittens pushed on his hands.

"There, it wasn't so bad, was it?" said Uncle Will. This enormous lie was beyond answer. Bob looked at him as if he had never seen him before. He wanted to go home. What an awful man Uncle Will was. Bob hated him. He was so strong.

Papa picked him up and carried him. They must have gone downstairs, because he found himself in the bobsled covered with a blanket. He heard his father speak to the horses and then they were moving. The sled runners squeaked, the sleighbells sang, one horse snorted.

"All right, son?" his father asked. Bob could hear him, but he could not answer.

He snuggled in his blanket, trying to hide from the way he felt. The straw rustled in many small voices as if to tell him that he was in his own place and on the way home. He dozed, felt blood and goo running out of the corner of his mouth. His whole body jerked when he tried to wipe it off with the towel Uncle Will had given him.

Sometime they must have stopped, because the next time he opened his eyes he saw the peak of Aunt Helen's hood against the sky. It was dark, the stars made silver dots in the dark. He could hear a mumble of voices above the soft sliding sound of the bobsled. Someone wiggled beside him and whispered, "Does it hurt awful?" It was his little cousin Marjorie. What was she doing here? He didn't want company, he didn't want anybody to ask

him if it hurt. He wanted to go home.

They went on and on. Couldn't the horses go any faster? He ached all over. His throat tasted raw clear to his stomach. He was afraid to swallow, but sometimes he had to, and he would gag on that awful edge of soreness and make a small cry. Marjorie pushed against him and tried to put her arms around him. He pushed her away. How could she know how much he hurt? He looked up and, over the edge of the boards, he saw the black branches of the trees that overhung the road from their big grove. They were almost home.

He stood trembling in the warm kitchen; the light blinded him. But, oh, the comfort of his mother's arms. She held him tightly, murmuring soft sounds. She took off his overcoat and stocking cap and overshoes. The kerosene lamp made a yellow glow. The stove breathed out warmth. He smelled something cooking and he gagged.

The kitchen seemed crowded and alive. His father's shadow moved on the wall like a giant. Aunt Helen and Marjorie pushed around him. His father said in a loud, excited voice, "Why, he was as brave as a soldier."

Bob wanted to shout back that it was all a terrible lie. He had been tricked and tortured. He was not a soldier but a little boy, too weak to fight big, strong men. But no words came, just feeble animal cries.

Marjorie stared at him and said, "His mouth looks all bloody." He wanted to hit her but he couldn't make the effort.

Then he was on his mother's lap, and she held a dish of ice cream. "Come on, Bobbie," she said, "try a spoonful. Maybe it will make your throat feel better." It hurt to swallow, but the cold ice cream dulled the knives in his throat. It was slippery and it took the taste of blood out of his mouth.

The lamp on a bracket above the stove dazzled him. He heard people moving around. His mother said, "I'll put him to bed now. Helen, you and Charlie get things ready for supper, slice the bread and take the potatoes out of the oven."

She took Bob by the hand. "Come," she said, "I want you to

go to bed.'' She whispered in his ear, ''You will feel better tomorrow and I will bake a get-well cake for you.''

She undressed him and slipped on his fuzzy, warm sleeper with feet in it. And the next thing he knew he was in bed.

''I will leave the lamp here, but I'll turn the light down,'' she said. ''And here is a little bell, Bobbie. Ring like everything if you want something.'' She showed him the silver bell with a black handle.

''See,'' she said, ''like this.'' She rang the bell and it made a tinkly sound. ''Pretend it is the fire bell and you are calling all the firemen. Here, you try it.'' Bob took it in his hand and shook it. A few notes fell out.

His mother said, ''You can do it.'' She stooped and kissed him. He tried to smile. ''Go to sleep now. I must get supper for Papa and Aunt Helen.''

He lay there holding the small bell. He was home now and perhaps he wouldn't hurt so much. He curled into a ball. He felt sick, not only because his throat ached so much but also because his own father had helped do this to him. It shocked him to think that his father had held him while Uncle Will scraped his throat. Father had told him, ''Always tell the truth, Bob.'' Yet his father let Uncle Will lie to him and didn't say a word. Men were too big and strong for little boys. He lay there terrified, defenseless, alone.

The Grove

"Here come three men a-marching, a-marching. Here come three men a-marching for the rance-pantz settee." We three boys, arms locked together, advanced boldly out of the grove singing this song. Our visiting cousin, Marjorie Hammer, who wanted so badly to play with us, would wait until we came within a few feet of her and then she would try to seize one of us. But her move was a signal for us to break and run for the safety of the trees. Marjorie never dared enter the grove, not beyond the first row of trees. But then, we didn't dare go into it very far, either.

We played this cruel, childish game half the afternoon, until Marjorie was in tears and we tired of our "a-marching." Besides, we were afraid she might tell on us, and we would be lectured on our duty to a guest who had come to play with us. We made up the words to our song and had no idea what the "rance-pantz settee" meant. It fit the rhythm of the song and we liked the sound of it.

Chuck must have been about four years old, Bob six, and I was eight. At that age I was supposed to know better than to tease our cousin until she wept. But the fascination of being pursued and being able to find shelter among the big trees tempted us beyond good manners. We liked Marjorie; it was fun to have her chase us and escape by hiding.

We did not penetrate far into the grove. It was one thing to accompany Father and the hired men with sledges and horses in the wintertime to bring back loads of wood for our stoves. But it was quite another to venture by ourselves into the darkness and mystery when the trees, in full leaf, kept out the sun and shaded the aisles in a dim twilight. It was scary, even to an eight-year-old.

One of the hired men warned us about what might lie in wait in the middle of the grove. He said he had heard strange animal cries

and seen a cloven hoofprint. We scoffed, "Oh, that was just an old cow that got loose and ran through the grove."

But he maintained a solemn face and said the print was too small and sharply dented for a cow's hoof. He didn't say it, but we knew from Sunday School who had cloven hoofs. The sense of mystery excited us; we liked being scared.

It was a big grove for the open country where we lived. It measured forty rods in length and twenty rods in depth, and the trees grew close together in their rows. They were maple trees. Grandfather Hearst had brought the seeds from Ohio and planted them to make a windbreak for the farm buildings. Nearly all the farms had a few trees on the north side of the house and barn to blunt the edge of winter winds, but no one had such a forest as ours. If you went in among the trees alone, you could hear strange sounds, limb rubbing on limb, a falling branch, a whisper of leaves. And once, on a still day, for no reason at all that we knew, a big tree crashed down not five rods from where we huddled and scared the bejesus out of us.

When we grew older the grove became our favorite playground. After we had read the Robin Hood stories it was transformed into Sherwood Forest. We slipped in among the trees, the notch of our arrows on the bowstrings as we searched for the King's deer with a cautious eye out for the Sheriff of Nottingham. Our bows and arrows were not playthings, either. We cut four- and five-foot boughs from ash and willow trees, peeled them, and let them cure. They were half as thick as our wrists and it took strength to pull them. We made arrows out of the straight saplings that grew out of the stumps of old trees.

We embedded tenpenny nails in the heads for points and wrapped them tight with the fine wire from old broom handles. We split turkey feathers and bound them to the arrows with thread from Mother's sewing basket. We had a lethal weapon in those arrows. A few are still hanging in the underside of the barn roof, where we shot at pigeons and the arrow points buried themselves in the sheeting and we had no way of recovering them.

We did not bring home much game. We shot a young crow that

had fallen out of the nest, and we bagged a couple of gophers. We shot at rabbits and squirrels, but they all escaped without damage. I remember Chuck pulled the nail out of his arrow and hit a neighbor's dog that had come gallivanting into the grove. The wire-wound head made a heavy end and the dog ran home howling.

Our Indian incarnation lasted longer. Any time of the day, especially about twilight, we moved among the trees on noiseless feet, alert, wary, reading signs left by the enemy. We were older, no longer intimidated by mysteries in the depths of the grove. I must have been about twelve years old, old enough to bang away with Father's twelve-gauge shotgun if the occasion warranted my use of it. We still used bows and arrows, and Bob could bring home a rabbit if he could creep up within bowshot range.

We cleared a space near the edge of the grove and built a wigwam. It was a shelter large enough for a man. We cut ten-foot poles, stuck the butts in the ground in a circle, and tied the top ends together with a rope off the twine sacks. We covered it with horse blankets and made a dark and cozy room. We tried building a fire inside, but the smoke did not rise through the top as stories of the Indians told us it would. It filled the wigwam and drove us out, tear-eyed and coughing.

So we built a fire outside. Apparently we were trusted with fire. I don't remember that either Mother or Father forbade us the use of matches. We were careful. We cleaned away the leaf mold and sticks and made a circle of stones. Inside the stones we made our fire. We decided to cook and eat our own dinner. Chuck dug a hill of potatoes and I scrounged some ears of sweet corn. We fashioned a small bucket of maple bark the way Indians did of birch bark, but ours leaked and finally disintegrated. We "borrowed" a tin pail for drinking water, which we got from the mouth of the neighbor's tile. We left the sweet corn in its husks and the potatoes in their skins. We shoved them into the fire and waited.

And we waited. The sun arched past noon and still our dinner was not cooked. Finally, in desperation born of hunger, we raked our dinner out of the coals and ate it. The corn and potatoes were only half cooked. They burned our fingers and mouths. We ate

them without butter or salt and boasted what a good meal we had. But it did not fill our stomachs, and we trooped up to the house for a handout from Mother. The next time we tried it, we put the potatoes and corn in the fire early enough so that they would be cooked through. And Mother gave us some wieners and bread-and-butter sandwiches to fill out the menu.

We considered ourselves seasoned frontiersmen. When the Scoutmaster from town brought out all his troops to camp in our grove and prepare their noon meal, he invited the three of us to join them. We watched the boys struggle to build their campfires. We scorned their clumsiness. Chuck scraped a few leaves into a pile, leaned a few sticks over them, and built a fire for one group that could not get a fire started. The small amount of food they carried discouraged us, so we went back to our house for dinner.

We lorded it over these town boys. Here was our chance. In town, dressed in our good clothes, without the comfort of overalls and workshoes, we felt ill at ease and uncertain of our behavior. But here in the grove we had the town boys at our mercy and we acted superior. I even loaned a Scout my jackknife so he could whittle some shavings to start his fire. It was our day, and we made the most of it.

In the spring the grove delighted and amazed us with a wealth of wildflowers. Before we were born, Grandfather had collected and transplanted many of our native wildflowers to a few open spaces in the grove. The wildflowers spread; no livestock was allowed in the grove to harm them. As soon as the warm days came, we ran down to seek out spring beauties, Dutchman's britches, yellow and purple violets, pasqueflowers, anemone, and trillium. Once my sister Louise found a dog-tooth violet, and we all shared in the thrill of such a discovery.

We stepped carefully among the wildflowers, picking up dead leaves to peer under them and see what was hidden. Sometimes an old stump would sprout great clumps of brown fungi, which we assured each other were poisonous. The violets spread, sneaked through the fence, and soon carpeted the roadside with their blue and purple color.

When we were young, Mother often read to us. Once, she must have read a story about a New England sugarbush, about tapping the trees, collecting the sap, boiling it down to make syrup, and "sugaring off." This sugaring-off business seemed to consist of pouring out hot syrup on the snow where it would harden into maple candy. This story stayed alive in our grubby little memories, and one February we announced, "We are going to tap some trees and make our own syrup."

"But," Father said, "these are soft-maples and the sap isn't as sweet as it is from hard maples. You would need to boil a lot of sap to get much syrup."

We were not to be put off by such adult reasoning. Our minds and hearts were set on maple syrup from our own trees.

The first thing we did was to collect a few maple boughs about an inch and a half in diameter. We sawed these into six-inch lengths. We interested Louise in this project. She took our maple stock down to the basement, where Grandfather Schell had his workshop. He had what seemed to be an infinite variety of chisels. Louise persuaded him to take a curved chisel and make a little trough out of each piece of maple bough. Then we cut notches in the ends to hang pails on. We ended up with about two dozen spiles.

Next we took a two-inch auger and, selecting our trees, we bored a hole that slanted upward into the trunk a few feet from the ground. We drove our spiles into these holes with a hammer. We hung pails on the ends of the spiles and waited for the sap to run.

It must have been about the middle of March. I know there was snow on the ground, for we wore overshoes and leggings. Our main problem was to find twenty pails to catch the sap. Mother had about a dozen empty lard pails, which she let us have. We washed them with soap and hot water. We each had a pail in which we carried our lunch to country school. We contributed them and substituted cardboard boxes for lunch pails. Then, in our junk-yard, Bob found some two-quart cans that had held canned fruit for our table. We punched a hole in each side of a can near the top and hooked a wire in the holes for a handle. This took several feet

of Father's smooth No. 14 wire, but we used the toolhouse and its contents without pause.

When we came home from school the next day, Bob ran ahead to see what had happened to our sap-gathering project. He yelled, "Sap's running! Some of the pails are almost half full!"

Sure enough, we had sap. At some of the trees it almost streamed out—drip, drip, dripping at a steady rate. We were in business. We didn't expect so much so soon, but we organized quickly to meet the crisis.

We had a big coaster wagon, and in the winter we took off the wheels and put on runners. We made a sled of it, useful for handling baskets of corn or wood from the woodpile. Now we rushed around as if our pants were on fire. I fastened a singletree in front. Bob threw a breast collar on Trix, one of the ponies, and hitched her to the sled. Chuck hurried to the house and staggered out lugging Mother's copper washboiler. We persuaded Louise to join us, and we all trekked down to the grove.

Louise led the pony among the trees. We boys ran from pail to pail and emptied the contents into the washboiler. When we finished, the boiler was over a third full. "Gosh," Chuck said, "think of all the maple syrup."

I said, "Can we carry that boiler in the house and set it on the stove without spilling it?"

"Sure," Bob said, "you and I can do it."

We did, too, but it was nip and tuck going up the woodhouse steps. I had the back end, and I had to boost it onto my shoulder to keep the sap from slopping out.

We hoisted it on the stove and stood back and admired it.

Mother looked at it, but if she shared our admiration she kept her feelings under control. "Now what?" she asked.

"Oh, we have to boil it down until it makes syrup," we chorused.

Mother assumed an attitude of defense. "You mean I have to keep that boiler of sap on the stove all the time until the sap thickens to syrup? How will I get meals and cook?"

"Mother," I begged, "you're just joking, aren't you? You

knew we'd have to boil it down somehow."

"I suppose so." Mother fought a rearguard retreat. "How much more will there be?"

"We're going to fill it up," Chuck assured her. "There's lots more sap in the trees."

"How can I keep the fire burning unless I have wood?" Mother asked.

We chorused, "Oh, we'll bring in wood, we'll keep the woodbox filled."

We did, too, but the boiling down took longer than we thought and put quite a strain on our good intentions. The next day we cleaned up an old enameled dishpan to empty our sap pails into. When we poured it into the boiler on the stove, it filled the boiler about two-thirds full.

But the sap evaporated enough so that there was room next day for another dishpan full of sap. Then Mother put her foot down. "This boiler is almost full. The house is steamy, look at the windows. I can't have this boiler on the stove forever."

We stared at each other. What would we do? We asked. Father said, "In the woods they have a regular house where they boil down the sap. They do it in big, flat pans."

Well, we didn't have a house in the woods with big, flat pans. We just had a washboiler, a cookstove, and a somewhat reluctant mother. We had just refilled the boiler several times to take up the room left by evaporation. As it so often does, the yeast of our early enthusiasm had subsided, and like many young people we weren't geared for the long pull.

One evening toward the first of April, Father said from behind his paper, "If I were you, I'd close out the sap business. The sap will stop running pretty soon. When you pull out your spiles be sure to cover the holes to keep out the insects and rot. Wrap the trunks with some of the building paper in the toolhouse."

The great sap-gathering corporation closed its doors, but the boiling-down process lingered on for another week.

When Mother thought the syrup was thick enough, she poured it into a quart jar. We gazed at it in dismay. It did not quite fill the

jar. It contained bits of leaves and bark. "Is that all?" we asked. After all that sap—gallons of it—to end with a scant quart of dirty-looking syrup. "Is that all?" We couldn't believe it.

But we ate it on our pancakes, leaf bits and all, and boasted how much better it tasted than bought syrup.

"I told you kids," Father said, "that the sap from soft maples won't do for syrup making. It is too diluted. A real maple sugar-bush has only hard maples."

We still bragged about our syrup, though. We collected and stored the spiles and pails ready for next year. But the next year for tree tapping never came. We had other things to do. And I'm sure Mother did not regret our abstention.

I wonder now that mothers are able to endure as much as they do. All through that sap-boiling process, Mother kept a fire on the stove, never complained that half the stove was covered with the washboiler and the house was steamy with the faintly sweet odor of a mist. Our mother never discouraged us in our many ventures, often encouraged us if they seemed sensible to her, endured the wild ones.

In our older years, in our teens, we helped the men cut up the dead and fallen trees in the grove. The appetite of the stoves for fuel called for a steady supply of sawed and split wood. And every winter the grove furnished some fallen and dead trees. It was quiet in the trees, not much wind, the snow level, not drifted. The horses hitched to the bobsleds breathed out puffs of steam.

I was given a single-bitted ax and told to trim the branches from a fallen trunk. I longed to grab one of the double-bitted axes and chop down a tree, to be able to make the chips fly by cutting above and below the mark on the tree. I did whack down one sapling and Lauritz looked at it and said solemnly, "A beaver has been at work here and gnawed down a tree."

One summer a tornado walked through the grove and pushed down over a hundred trees. That year, as Chuck said, "We had wood to burn."

The grove did not seem dimished by the loss of all those trees.

When we had hauled them away and burned the brush, we did not notice that they were gone. The grove persisted in occupying its place. The silver maple is supposed to be a comparatively short-lived tree. It matures, ages, and dies in seventy-five or eighty years. Grandfather planted the maple seed in 1869, and the grove is still there. From a distance the stand of trees looks as solid and thick as it ever did.

When Chuck and I took over the farm, we planted hundreds of oak and ash trees in the aisles between the maples. Not many of them survived. No doubt the competition with the older trees for sun was too severe and they withered away. A few of them made it, and they now stand isolated among the maples, thriving as best they can by their own inheritance. No doubt, time will choose them as the last survivors.

The trees have outlived three generations of people. Half of them may be hollow with dry rot. But each spring they mass clouds of green leaves. The crows still roost there, and pheasants nest along the edges, but the wildflowers are all gone. It was a magical place where we children conjured up ways of living the experiences of our imagination. The grove furnished us with the mystery, terror, and delight of stories children tell themselves about a time when they roamed through their illusions of a world no one else ever made.

CHORES

Learn by Experience

It may be that as the twig is bent so is the tree inclined. On a farm, learning sometimes occurs in strange ways. The ritual of planting, cultivating, and harvesting only confirms an instinctive belief in an order of things. Like the catechism, it repeats a deep conviction a farmer confesses.

One warm May day when I was six years old, I walked down to the field where my father was planting corn. He had stopped at the end to reset the checkwire and fill the planter boxes with corn. He pointed to the road about a half mile away and I saw a carriage drawn by a dapple-gray horse turn down our crossroad. I knew my favorite cousin was coming to see me, a boy my own age who brought the ways of the town with him.

To this day I don't know if my father thought he would corrupt me or I him. He called me to him and asked, "James, how many bad words do you know?" Pleased to be asked, I gave him my entire repertoire. I can see him yet. He took off his hat, wiped his forehead, and said, "I guess that's all of them." I was six years old and had not yet been to school.

So today, when some good man or woman says, "We must protect the children," in regard to some disputed book, film, or painting, I regard them with pity and skepticism, wondering at their innocence.

The day was never long enough on the farm to finish all the work. I learned this early in my life as I began to learn what the work cost in skill and energy. At first, among the men, I was underfoot and a nuisance and I found myself shoved or lifted by the arms and told, "Mama wants you." But I outgrew this when I could run errands and take orders for picky little jobs like picking up spilled nails or cleaning the currycombs.

My grandfather's pet crow, Scipio Africanus, loved bright things. One afternoon, Grandfather brought home a package of tenpenny nails from the hardware store in town. Perhaps one of the nails broke through the package and one or two dropped onto the buggy seat. But Scipio spied them and, while Grandfather put up his team and unharnessed them, the nails flew on black wings all over the yard. What better work for a small boy than to run after the bird, collect the nails, and bring them back to a covered nailbox.

My town friends (we called them "townies") thought that on rainy days farmers did not work. Perhaps they felt that way because on rainy days they often saw farmers in town at the blacksmith shop or the harness shop or the hardware or grocery stores. But on our farm these were the days to catch up on harness and machinery repairs. Father and the hired men brought the heavy harness from the barn to the toolhouse. I hopped around trying to keep out of the way and yet see what was going on. My two younger brothers roosted on nail kegs.

The harness filled the long workbench that faced the windows. Rain pattered on the roof and ran off in a miniature waterfall at the end of the eaves. Pigeons bowed and strutted on the ground by the barn, where grain had spilled. A rooster, looking drenched, perched on a wagon tongue.

Lauritz picked up a tug that was worn at the staple where it attaches to the hame. "A sewing job," he said. "Where is the needle and thread?"

I thought he was joking. "Aw, you can't sew leather."

"You can't? Then I just bet I am crazy, because that is what I am going to do."

Lauritz still had a Danish accent, but I liked (and sometimes felt hurt by) his deadpan irony. I watched him reach to the top shelf for a spool of thread. He unrolled about a yard of it, then doubled it. "Hand me the wax," he said to Father.

To me he said, "This is what a harness maker calls a 'waxed end.' Take heavy linen thread like fishline, double it, and run beeswax over it until it is smooth and sticks together. See?" He

drew the doubled thread through the wax in his hand.

Later, I found a waxed end to be just the thing for mending a torn baseball cover. Now, I peered under Lauritz' arm and watched him punch holes in the heavy leather with an awl. Then he threaded a heavy needle and pulled the thread through the holes. "Not like your mama does," he said, "but it sews good for leather."

I liked the smell of harness, sweat from the horses, neat's-foot oil, the odor of the leather itself. I watched Lauritz bend the thick tug through the staple and sew it in a tight loop.

Sam, the other hired man, hung a collar on the anvil and beat it with a wooden mallet. "It's too stiff to fit well, rubs sores on the horse's neck. Maybe I can limber it up a little." When he finished pounding, he riveted a new buckle on the collar where the old one had torn loose.

The riveting machine fascinated me. You put in a copper rivet—long or short, depending on the thickness of the leather—put the pieces to be joined between the jaws, screwed down the top jaw to hold the pieces tight, pressed the handle, and—bingo!—the pieces were joined. The flat head of the rivet was on one side, on the other the hollow tube of the rivet splayed out like the spokes of a wheel.

Father laid out two broken hitching straps and clamped one in the riveting machine. "Let me push the handle," I begged. Father stood back and I bore down with all my weight. Nothing happened. Father held his hand over mine and gave a little push. I could feel the rivet go through and squash out. "A little more beefsteak and mashed potatoes," said Lauritz, "it goes then."

My brothers, Bob and Chuck, played with the heavy horseshoes hanging on the wall. I pulled out a maul and stood the handle up straight. We tried to toss the shoes over the handle. The light grew dim. The toolhouse seemed quiet. "Everybody's gone to do chores," Bob said. "Let's feed the ponies and hit for the house."

The afternoon had ended, the day's lesson, too. Tomorrow, if the rain stopped, the men would work outside.

When I was growing up, I did not know how to stand up to my father, and my resisting and resenting worked in hidden ways. But once I did come to grips with him, and we both learned from it. Back of the woodshed, down past the chicken house, lay a triangle of ground. For years we threw trash in it—tin cans, a broken lantern, an old broom, a piece of drain spout, a few discarded toys. One day in the spring I asked Father, "If I clean out that lot, can I have it for a garden?"

This did not show, as it might seem, a desire on my part to clean up an unsightly spot. I hated clean-up jobs; I often told my brothers that "kids do all the dirty work." No, I needed more money than the occasional dime or quarter my father gave me. I was willing to work for money to buy a baseball mitt and an air rifle.

"All right," he said, though he was a bit surprised by this kind of ambition. "Take the two-wheeled cart we use to feed the hogs. When you have it full, either Lauritz or I will haul it down to that old well in the pasture and dump it. I've wanted to fill in that well for years." Then he added, "Wear gloves, don't cut your hands on rusty cans."

It took two whole Saturdays, but I cleaned it out. I even took a sickle and cut the weeds. On Monday the teacher was sick, so I had a free day. "I'm going to plow it and work it up," I told Father. "It's my garden."

"You will need to use a walking plow," Father said. "There isn't room to turn with a bigger plow. Take Dolly and Topsy, they're steady. Think you can do it?"

For a twelve-year-old boy who had already handled six horses on a gang plow, this deserved no comment.

But I learned that a walking plow revealed new problems. Without wheels to support and guide it, I had to lift it, steer it, and keep it at the right depth with the handles alone. I did not have the skill or the strength, and I puffed and pulled and swore and beat poor Dolly and Topsy on their broad behinds. Instead of a neat row of furrows, the lot wore a churned-up face. "Like an old sow rooted in it," Lauritz said.

But I hitched Topsy to one section of a harrow, put a board

across so I could stand on it to add weight, and drove back and forth. Lucky for me, the ground was mellow and I worked it down as smooth as Mother's garden.

Father nodded approval. "What are you going to plant?"

I answered, tight lipped, "Something that will sell."

Father thought a minute, then said, "How about popcorn and cabbages?"

I had not thought about what to plant. I just wanted to raise something I could sell and make money. Father said, "I've got an errand in town. I'll pick up the seed and plants and be home by dinnertime. Then this afternoon we'll make garden."

I felt just a shiver of apprehension.

"Want to go with me?" he asked. We had a big, heavy Haynes four-door touring car. We kept the top down in nice weather. Father said it took two men and a horse to erect that top and fasten it to the windshield. We put a boot over the top when it was down, and this required help from most of the family, plus a few hard words. I had driven it once or twice.

"Naw," I said, in what I hoped was a man's voice, "I've more work to do."

I brought a couple of stakes from the toolhouse, a ball of twine, and a large hammer. I drove in the stakes, one on each side of the plot, and stretched the twine between them. Then, with a hoe I made a shallow trench along the twine. I moved the stakes and repeated the trench marking until I reached the point of the plot. Now I had my rows marked out.

"Too close together," Lauritz said, as he passed on his way to the hog house.

I thought, who's doing this? But I didn't say it. Lauritz had almost as much authority as Father, even though he was a hired man. He had been with us for years.

"Too close together," Father said, when he came out after dinner. I carried a bag of popcorn seed, Father two flats of young cabbage plants.

I jammed my straw hat down tight over my face, stuck out my lower lip, and said nothing. I walked down a trench trailing a line

of popcorn seed, then patted the dirt over it. I did the same thing in the next shallow trench. This would show him whose garden this was.

"Son, those rows are too close together. They need room. They have to breathe."

I kept my head down and never said a word. I went right on planting in the rows I had marked.

Father said, "I better get a hoe and set out those cabbage plants for you."

My whole body burned an outraged *No!* Whose garden was this? Who cleaned up the mess, carted off old tin cans, cut the weeds? Who spent all his spare time working like a dog to make the place fit for a garden? My eyes flooded with angry tears. This made me mad, too; I wanted to be calm and face up to Father, man to man.

I turned like a small, trapped animal and said in a squeaky voice, "Whose garden is this?"

Father looked surprised. "I'm just trying to help you."

But Father hadn't spent time grubbing out a mess of junk when he could have been playing ball with his younger brothers. My arms had been nearly torn off trying to plow it; I still smelled the stink of the weeds. Now he wanted the fun of planting it.

I swelled up like a poisoned pup at the injustice of it all. I threw my hoe against the chicken house and tried to say, "The hell with it." But I couldn't bring it out. I ran to the house, into the kitchen, slammed the door.

Mother looked up and arched her eyebrows. She was cutting out cookies from a sheet of dough. "Must you slam the door?" Then she noticed my angry eyes, thrust-out lip, clenched hands. "Why, James, what's the matter? I thought you were planting your garden."

I didn't want to cry, god I didn't want to cry. I told myself, don't be a crybaby. "I guess it isn't my garden after all." I loaded the words with sarcasm. "It turns out to be the old man's garden."

"Don't talk that way about your father. Now quit acting like a

sulky child and tell me what the trouble is."

"Dad is out there doing the planting. I wanted to do it. I cleaned up the mess, didn't I?"

Mother sighed and rubbed the flour from her hands. "Of course you did, and you did it well, too. Your father was proud of you. He said it was the first time you had ever tackled something and carried it through to the finish. He said it was a dirty job, too. Now quit working yourself up with self-pity. Go out there and plant your garden."

"But he's doing it. He even tells me how to do it."

"Your father is only trying to help you. Come with me."

We went down the back steps together, then I lagged behind. We approached my garden and Mother called, "Charlie, come here a minute."

My feelings still bruised, I muttered, "Let him go."

Father wandered over, hoe in hand. "Now what?"

"James is upset because you're planting his garden. He wants to do it. He feels it belongs to him because he did all the work."

"Dad said I could have it."

Father shouldered his hoe. "That I did. I just thought Jim might like a cheap hired man. Why didn't you speak up?"

I scraped a shoe against my ankle. It wasn't that easy. Father was always the big man and his authority was not to be questioned. His yes or no decided things. But I was growing up, and I could make up my own mind and take some responsibility. I needed more freedom. But I did not know how to say it. So, instead of talking frankly to my father, I sulked and refused to answer and did chores with a grim face. This garden planting brought matters to a crisis. It was the first time I had rebelled in earnest.

I thought to myself, he said why didn't I speak up? What did he expect me to say, "Get out of my garden"?

All summer I smarted over the domination of my father. But the garden flourished. I kept it hoed and weeded. My father did not speak about it. I hoped he might say how good it looked. But our contest of wills, if that is what it was, remained unbroken.

The success of my garden helped dissipate my sullen moods.

Some of the worms in my mind curled up and died. No new antagonisms brought us to combat. The steady growth of the new corn and cabbage plants mellowed my resentment. Somehow the earth rewards the man who works with diligence, and brings peace to the mind, and heals wounds of the spirit. Besides, hard work and sweat takes some of the bounce out of a person, and I worked in the garden in the evening after a full day in the fields.

One evening, as I hoed out foxtail and smartweed that seemed determined to grow in my forsaken corner, Father stopped to look at it. "It's turning out all right. The rows weren't too close after all. No worms in the cabbages, either. One more good rain and you won't need to worry."

These words were a balm to my spirit. I had felt mean for holding a curtain of grudge, day after day, between Father and me. I managed a stiff and surly attitude at the table, at work, even at church and a family picnic.

But now Father had praised me, or praised my work (it came to the same thing, so closely did I identify with my garden). But I didn't know how to give in, to accept the olive branch Father held out to me. I got stuffed up with emotion, tears leaked into my eyes, I said gruffly, "It's going to be OK."

I hated not being able to lean on my hoe and carry on a manly conversation with Father. So I blustered, "It takes work to make a crop." Then I felt like a fool for making such an obvious remark.

Father smiled and said, "You're right, son, and your garden shows it."

Clouds can't threaten all the time. Either it storms or it clears off. When the time came to harvest my popcorn and cabbages, I was stumped. Where do you sell stuff like this, and how do you go about it? I mulled over the problem and finally, hat in hand, so to speak, I went to Father. "Dad, how am I going to sell what I've raised?"

It was evening, after supper, Father was reading the paper. He must have known the hatchet was being buried. He put down his paper. "If I tell you, do I get a commission on sales?"

Was he serious? Then I saw him smile. "Sure," I said, "how

much?"

"Try Jennings and Philpot's grocery store. That's where your mother buys most of our groceries. Ask for Mr. Jennings and see if he will buy your cabbages. About the popcorn, stop on College Hill, knock on a few doors, and ask folks if they want to buy any."

I hitched our little Arabian, Dot, to the buggy, loaded my produce, and started out. My first stop was on the Hill at the house where my Sunday School teacher lived. Mr. Perrine came to the door. He asked, "How much do you have?"

I told him and named a price. "All right," he said, "I'll take all of it. Mrs. Perrine can use it for Christmas presents."

I learned a lesson at the grocery store. Art Jennings told me to bring all three baskets of cabbages down to the basement. He took the heads out one by one and weighed them in his hand. He stopped with one and tossed it to me so suddenly it bounced off my chest. "Trying to put one over on me?" he asked, his voice severe.

I didn't understand. "Why, no . . ." I stammered.

"Pick it up and feel it."

It was light as a feather. "No good," Mr. Jennings said, "worthless."

I was humiliated. "But I didn't know it," I said.

"It's your business to know it. When you sell something, make it an honest deal. Unless you really are a slicker trying to pull a fast one."

I know I blushed. I fiddled with my cap. "I'll remember that," was all I could think of to say. I was glad to get away, to take my three baskets upstairs and get my money.

I drove home. The sales had been made easily, but I had had enough bargaining for one day.

After I put Dot in the barn I leaned against the doorway and looked at the pictures in my mind. The trash in the lot, the lumpy plowing job, the earth after I smoothed it, the first signs of growth. I wished I had not been so grumpy with my father. I was too touchy, I thought, but Dad is too bossy.

"How did you come out?" I heard Father say behind me.

"I made fifteen dollars."

"Do you think you were paid for your work?"

"Yeah, I guess so. . . . Dad, Mr. Jennings found a bad cabbage. He acted like I was cheating him."

Father said, "Art knows his business. He knows he can't afford mistakes. If he breaks one egg, he has lost the profit on that dozen. One hollow cabbage head, and he comes out the little end of the horn."

"I wasn't trying to cheat him."

"But did he know it? You'll find out, Jim, that a good businessman takes nothing for granted. That's how he stays in business."

I looked at him, grateful for the explanation. I dared to be businesslike. "All right, Dad, what do I owe you for rent for the land?"

"About as much as I owe you for cleaning out the trash pile. Let's call it even, shall we?"

Still, I wasn't satisfied. "But you did part of the work."

Father looked at me with that steady look of his and said, "Jim, let's chalk up something to experience."

Now what does he mean by that, I thought, does he have to act so superior? I commenced the familiar boiling of resentment. But I told myself, keep your mouth shut.

Father said, "Some things we learn the hard way."

Oh, for the love of Mike, I thought, another sermon. But a few hours later I discovered my deep feeling for my father. It was evening. I fed the hogs. Bob threw down hay for the horses. Chuck helped Mother with the chicken chores. Lauritz and Sam had come in from the field and led their teams to the water tank. Lauritz always took off the bridles so the horses could drink without the bit in their mouths. Everything was going on as usual.

Suddenly I missed Father. I knew that one of his jobs was to snap the leading stick in the ring of the bull's nose and lead him to water. I peered into the box stall. The bull wasn't there. I ran to the barnyard. There I saw Father crouched in a corner where the silo joined the barn. The bull was stabbing at him, but every time

he made a pass at Father his horns stuck either the silo or the barn. All the bull needed to do was to turn his head sideways and he could spear Father like a sausage on a fork.

Father yelled when he saw me. "Get back! Sultan's on a tear! Find Lauritz and bring the dog!" Beside him lay the broken leading stick.

I didn't even hear him. Father in danger, this turned my world upside down. He was the authority, he kept control. I couldn't bear to see him down in the dirt, cringing back when Sultan struck at him. A kind of madness shook me to see my father in distress.

My yell must have turned into a scream and I ran up behind the bull. I grabbed his tail and twisted it as hard as I could into a knot, all the while kicking his testicles and screaming. The bull backed up and whirled around. But I hung on to his tail and whirled right around with him. I twisted and twisted his tail and jammed it against his rear. He bellowed with pain and tried to turn on me, but I hung on and kept behind him.

Dust rose, foam dripped from Sultan's muzzle. Into this commotion our collie appeared. "Sic him, Carlo, sic him!" I screamed. The dog made a feint, then slashed the bull's nose. This settled it. The bull threw up his head and galloped for the barnyard gate, Carlo snapping at his heels. He crashed through the gate and ran for the pasture. I just stood there, exhausted, covered with dust and manure.

Father picked up my hat and gave it to me. His face was pale and drawn as he said, "You shouldn't have done that. Sultan might have killed you."

I looked at him. This was Father all right, still giving orders. But I could answer him. I said, "He might have killed you." And Father nodded.

Later Lauritz said, "Why didn't you get a pitchfork or a piece of two-by-four and beat the hell out of him?"

Now it was my turn and I took it. I said, "Some things must be learned from experience."

The farm animals did not frighten us. It wasn't so much that

familiarity bred contempt; we never were without reminders that certain animals must be approached with caution, others could be counted on to be friendly. But we fed them, cared for them, cleaned out stall and pen, and fear did not enter into this association of man and beast. We youngsters believed that the animals trusted us and we trusted them, with safeguards in the case of the herd bull or a sow with a fresh litter of pigs.

Our approach to the farm animals developed from the attitudes of both our grandfathers. Different as they were in personality and upbringing, they shared a belief in the kind treatment of animals. When Grandfather Hearst threatened to take away my catapult because I had shot at his beloved martins, he still permitted me to shoot at pigeons because they dirtied the hay in the haymow. But after I broke a window Father put a stop to that.

Grandfather Schell did not have the Scotch-Irish temperament of the Hearsts, but he also emphasized the sacredness of life. For both grandfathers, each living thing had a right to life. They taught me that one does not trifle with the creative forces of nature. They did not state it so explicitly, but I received the message.

One day I discovered that if I stood on the spring of a rat trap, my weight would press it down enough so that I could stretch open the jaws and set the trigger. I snapped it with a stick a couple of times, then looked for bigger game. I spied our dog, Carlo, asleep in the sun. I crept up behind him and thrust the trap against his tail.

The effect outdid my expectations. Carlo howled, leaped to his feet, ran around in a circle. Then he faced me with a growl and with teeth bared.

This was good old Carlo, who let us pull his ears, ride him like a horse, wrestle with him, even make him wear a straw hat at a tea party. Well, good old Carlo faced me as if I were a stranger, snarled at me, and slowly crept toward me. I turned and ran.

"Grandpa!" I yelled. "Come quick!"

Grandfather Schell was working in the basement. He climbed the outside basement steps, his glasses pushed up on his forehead. "Was ist, meine liebe Kind?" he asked.

"Oh, Grandpa, Carlo got the trap on his tail and he won't let me take it off."

Grandfather walked up to Carlo, patted him on the head, and removed the trap. "Now how did Carlo, all by himself, get this trap on his tail?" he asked sternly.

"Why," I explained, "I set it and he kind of backed into it."

"No lies, no lies," Grandfather said, "it makes it worse. To hurt Carlo is a bad thing. It is a sin to be cruel to animals."

I tried to take the lesson to heart. But life is full of pitfalls for the young, and I fell from grace again on another occasion. A big old sow broke into the vegetable garden where Mother was working. Mother drove her off with a hoe. But, to give aid to a woman threatened, I shot the sow with my bow and arrow. A problem arose because the tenpenny nail wired to the tip of the arrow drove into the sow's ham and stayed there. She squealed and ran toward the hog house, the arrow waving up and down as she ran.

When Father came to supper that evening he handed me the arrow. Not a word was said, but I knew there would be no more shooting pointed arrows at animals.

We grew up on friendly terms with animals. Besides the farm dogs and a fluctuating number of cats, we tried to tame wild things. A number of baby cottontails briefly inhabited a box fixed up like a hutch with a screen fence around it. But the rabbits always escaped, either over or under the fence or in a leap from our hands.

Several young crows tried out for the position of talking crow. The impetus for this came from our knowledge of Grandfather Hearst's talking crow, Scipio Africanus. Scipio was full of mischief. He hoarded trifles in a secret place—the handle of a cup, a marble, half of a shiny black comb. When he meddled beyond forbearance, Grandfather put him in a coop with a setting hen. There the crow huddled on his back in a corner, claws thrust out, yelling for his life. The hen, feathers ruffled, head cocked back, squawked and pecked at the crow. But the arrival of the threshing machine frightened Scipio more than anything else. The moment the steam monster puffed into the yard, Scipio took off for the

shelter of the grove and stayed there until the machine left. The young crows my brothers and I captured never learned to talk. They just grew up and flew away.

One day, when Chuck was plowing, he found a baby civet cat, wet and shivering. He brought it home and warmed and dried it. We fed it milk with a medicine dropper. When it was satisfied, it would curl up on its head and sleep. We named it "Carl Weeks" after the perfume manufacturer in Des Moines. Tame as a kitten, it would sit on our laps and drink its milk. A civet cat wears a striking coat of silky black fur dotted with white stars. It does not have stripes like a skunk, but it possesses the same weapon.

Chuck asked Dr. Moles, our veterinarian, if he would deodorize it. "Not on your life," he said. "Don't forget that these animals are as potent when young as when they are mature." He scratched his head. "We had a convention in Cedar Rapids, and one of the federal men tried to show us how to take out the glands of a skunk. I don't know what went wrong, but he stunk up the whole place."

Not to be defeated, I called Dr. Winfield Scott, a professor of agriculture at the College. "No," he said, "I couldn't do it. But why bother? These animals make excellent pets and you will all be safe because the civet cat knows you. Be a little careful when strangers come, though, and watch out for your friends." He chuckled.

This spelled exile for Carl Weeks. Mother said, "We can't risk it, folks coming in all the time."

As soon as we thought he was old enough to forage for himself, Carl Weeks went back to the meadow where he came from. There was regret at his departure; he had been a charming and affectionate guest.

One of our hired men's boys raised a pig as a 4-H project. He made a pet of the pig, washed it every day until it shone pink and glowing. It followed him around like a dog and was clean and modest in its habits. But it never lost its curiosity; it tipped over pails and investigated gardens. It took first place in its class at the 4-H Fair.

But when autumn weather turned crisp and sharp, Bill, the

father, gave in to temptation. No doubt dreams of savory slices of ham and browned pork chops danced in his head. At any rate, he slaughtered the pig, cut out and cured the hams and bacon, ground the sausage, and rendered the lard. The deed lacked favor with the family.

Bill came out of the house one morning after breakfast, shaking his head. "I passed the sausage to George and he said, 'No thanks, Pa.' And John said, 'I couldn't eat any.' And Wally just shook his head, and then they all began to bawl." Bill looked puzzled. "Just for a pig. But I won't do that again."

We romped with the calves and played with the colts. But the colts fled from us the minute the mares came in from the fields at noon or evening. They leaped at their mothers over tugs and singletrees to find the udders full of warm milk. They butted their mothers to increase the flow, their curly tails swinging like pendulums.

Father seldom lost his temper, but he could not bear to see horses mistreated, or any animal, for that matter. I remember one steamy June morning, the last time the corn would be cultivated. The corn leaves rubbed the horses' bellies now. The maple grove stretched along one end of the field, throwing its shadows across the first few rows of corn. Father, the hired man, and I all stopped to give the horses a rest and to drink from a water jug hidden in a clump of grass to keep it cool. The horses tossed their heads and switched their tails at the flies. Sweat ran down their sides under the flynets. We backed off the seats and flexed our legs. I felt stiff from riding the cultivator's steel seat with my legs stretched out to manipulate the shovels.

I yawned and walked over to where the jug lay. I picked it up, slopped out a glug of water, rubbed my hand over the mouth of the jug, tossed it up on one bent arm, and let the water gurgle down my throat. I watched the hired man drink. He had worked for us only a week.

The man was short, stocky, dark. His arms and legs were thick, his face heavy-jawed but smooth-skinned. His head swivelled on a

stubby neck. His voice surprised me; it was high-pitched and loud. He seemed to know farm work, but he was unhandy. He did things the hard way without any style.

Father said, "Lift the collars, give the horses' shoulders some air."

I hoisted up the collar on Topsy and removed a few strands of her mane. She had scars on her shoulders grown over with gray hairs. Once she had had collar sores. I wondered how she got them. Every night in hot weather the horses' shoulders were washed, sweat scraped off the collars, any skin break covered with ointment. If the sore did not heal, the horse stayed off work a few days. Each horse had its own collar, fitted to the size and contour of its neck and shoulders.

I took off my hat and stood in the shade. I heard the new hired man scream, saw him jerk King savagely by his bit. Then he ran back to the cultivator and picked out a heavy wrench from the tool box. He beat King over the head with the wrench. The horse reared back, tangled the tugs, crushed a singletree.

Father yelled, "Stop that!" He marched over and grabbed the wrench. The men glared at each other, the hired man's hands opening and closing as if he might strike with his fists.

I thought, "Let him try it, Dad will break him in two."

There was no fight. The hired man yelled in his high-pitched voice, "He tried to bite me!"

Father shook his head and looked puzzled. Finally he said, "I don't believe you are the man for this job. Come to the house and get your things. I'll pay you what you have coming."

I never saw him again. When I remembered the incident, I thought: animals were not maltreated on our farm.

As I grew older, my experience with animals widened its horizon. One night Father roused me and asked me to dress and come down to the hog house. I must have been about thirteen years old. I rubbed sleep from my eyes, fumbled into my mackinaw, slipped down the muddy lane to the hog house. The March wind chilled me, but inside the building I felt warm. A heavy red sow lay on her

side in a pen. Father knelt beside her with a lantern. All around me I could hear the sounds of other sows with their litters. Huge, distorted shadows danced on the walls. I slid down beside Father, glad to feel his rough jacket, hear his low voice.

"This sow is in trouble," Father said. "She can't have her pigs." The lantern shone on a pail of warm water that smelled of disinfectant. "You have small hands."

I looked at the strong, thick fingers, wide palms, hairy backs of Father's hands. No doubt about that.

"Now listen," Father said, "the pigs should be born head first. If one gets turned around inside the mother or sideways, it can't come through the birth canal as it should." I listened, bug-eyed, to this lesson in obstetrics. The sow heaved and grunted, contracted in a spasm, relaxed.

"Wash your hands in the disinfectant, then grease your hand with cold cream so you won't hurt her. I want you to feel in there and find out what the trouble is. If the pig is wrong end to, we better call the veterinarian."

I washed my hands and smeared on the cold cream. I eyed the sow warily. "She won't hurt you," Father explained patiently. "I'm afraid she will give up and quit trying."

I shut my eyes and thrust in my hand. It was warm and slippery inside the sow, and a sucking pull seemed to drain the strength from my hand. "A little farther," Father urged. "Do you feel anything?"

I could feel the nose and mouth of the pig, its teeth sharp as needles. "I can feel its head," I panted. "It isn't turned around, but the legs are doubled back."

"Here, let's try this." Father showed me a piece of stiff wire with a small, sharp hook bent at one end and a loop at the other. "Slide this up gently and hook it right under the jaw of the pig. Drive it through the skin so that it catches on the bone. Don't worry about hurting the pig."

I tried to slide the wire into the sow, but my hand seemed limp; the terrible suction washed the strength right out of it. Everything was so slippery I could hardly hold the wire. I reached the pig's

nose and found the soft spot under the jaw. With what little strength I had left, I shoved the hook through the skin and locked it behind the jawbone. I withdrew my hand, flexed my fingers. "Got it," I said. I could hardly move my hand.

Father thrust a finger through the loop end of the wire and pulled slowly, gently. He patted the sow. "Come on, try." The sow struggled in a kind of spasm. Father pulled. Again she heaved. Again Father pulled. The pig's head popped out, then the body. "That's a girl," Father said to the sow. He placed the pig against her side. It wiggled, found a teat, hung on.

"Isn't it hurt?" I asked. Father shook his head. We watched eight more tiny pigs, wrapped like sausages, one right after the other, come into the world. Father picked off the covering membrane, blew in their noses, laid them beside the sow's udder. Soon they were nursing, bobbing their heads up and down.

"I cleaned off the afterbirth," Father said, "though they would have kicked free by themselves."

"What are those strings hanging down from their navels?" I asked, yawning. I was tired.

"Umbilical cords. The pigs will step on them and break them. Don't worry, nature has been having pigs for a long time without our help." He looked at me and gave me a push. "Go back to bed, Jim. Nothing more for us to do."

That was the first of many such experiences. My brothers and I took turns getting up at night to check mares about to foal. But, except for the mare that lay too close to the wall of her box stall and broke the neck of the colt as she pushed it out, we had no trouble with the mares.

We owned eighty acres called the Thompson eighty—I suppose because Grandfather bought the place from a man named Thompson. It lay about a mile and a half west of the home farm. It had two tillable fields, but mostly it was pasture with a creek flowing through it. Tile outlets or springs may have fed the creek; by the time it reached our land it had grown to a good-sized stream.

Early in June we drove our herd of purebred Shorthorn cows

and their calves to this pasture and left them there all summer. Once a week I rode to the pasture, brought a block of salt when needed, and counted the cows and calves. I checked them for any signs of sickness or injury, bloat, swellings, or cuts. Where the creek entered and left the pasture, the two fences washed out in every flood, and a calf could easily wander through our temporary repairs. So I checked that out, too.

Usually I made a tour of inspection on Sunday mornings or, if we went to church, on Sunday afternoons. It did not take long. I would sling a saddle on our little Arabian and gallop to the pasture and be back in an hour. If the cows moved a lot, I had a devil of a time counting them. The calves might be bedded down in long grass and I had to roust them out to count them. If it rained during the week and we could not work in the fields, my brothers and I would ride over for a swim. We might meet some neighbors and palaver a while. I would do my counting then.

Heifers with their first calves sometimes had problems. In calving time, I carried a short rope wrapped around the saddle horn when I went for the cows. The cows had to be checked every day. I remember my first experience helping a heifer.

It was a spring evening, warm for April, soon after a rain. Frogs shrilled in the pasture. The grass was wet, the ground soggy. I felt surrounded by birth. Walls of opening eyes, sucking mouths, shaky legs, and bawling, squealing, squalling sounds. Everywhere I looked, something new appeared, bloom on an apple tree, kittens in the haymow, a nest of cottontails. I once told Mother as she sorted eggs for the incubator, "I think we are the begats."

The reins wrapped around the saddle horn, Beauty delicately picked her way down the crooked cow path. She snatched a mouthful of fresh grass from a hummock. I leaned back in the saddle and watched a hawk swing in wide circles. Forty rods ahead I saw the cows, closely bunched as they leisurely ate their way across the pasture. A few calves had been let run with their mothers, and they lay in woolly knots by themselves.

Then I saw a heifer off by herself, over near a small grove. An animal off by itself is always suspect: illness, accident, having a

calf. She had been lying down, but she stood up when the horse approached. She looked wild, scary, head raised, ears outstretched. I noticed the arched tail and water bag hanging from her. No sign of the calf.

I tried to circle her but she kept turning to face me, stiff-legged. I tied Beauty to a post, took my rope, and walked toward the heifer. She tried to run but stumbled, dropped to her knees, rolled on her side. She bawled. I knelt behind her and watched a minute. She strained, tried to scramble to her feet, fell back, broke the water bag. I reached carefully into her swollen opening and felt the legs of the unborn calf. It was coming the right way, front legs first, head lying along the legs.

We better do something pretty quick, I thought, or the calf will smother. I pushed back the distended lips and grasped the leg of the calf. I pulled. The heifer strained. My hand slipped off. But I had gained a little ground. Both soft hoofs of the front feet appeared. I thought, either it is a big calf or she hasn't got the muscle to push it out.

I made a double half hitch of the rope and slid it over the front feet. This gave me a grip that would not slide off. I braced my feet against the heifer's back haunches. When she strained, I pulled. I pulled again and again, trying to work with the heifer. Soon the nose appeared. "Come on," I said, "get your head out."

Then the head burst out and the rest of the body slid out easily. I quickly stripped the membrane from the calf's nose, stuck my fingers in both nostrils to clean them out, wiped off the calf's tongue, and sat back on my heels and waited. The heifer staggered to her feet. I moved back. She licked the calf. It twitched an ear, kicked its legs. The mother licked it with long, sweeping swipes of her tongue. She nudged the calf, it struggled, she pushed it over on its belly.

The calf lay still a minute, then with a sudden heave reared up on its hind legs. A cow gets up hind legs first, a horse does just the opposite. The calf knew how to do it without instructions. I shook my head in wonder. It wobbled a bit and fell flat on its side. It raised up on its hind legs again, spread them for a firmer founda-

tion, then up on the front knees, body weaving back and forth. One front leg lifted and thrust out a foot, the other followed. The calf stood quivering, stretched out but still standing. Jerky as a puppet, it fumbled toward its mother's flank.

The heifer eyed it anxiously and turned her body away. She kept licking the wet, curly hair. The calf, now more in control of its legs, shoved along her side. It meant business. She stood still as the calf nosed for her teats. It stumbled and fell down.

"Hang in there, Bud," I said as I cheered the calf for its efforts. It got up again, not so wobbly this time. It crowded against its mother's body, nosed around with tongue outstretched until it found one of her teats. Then it went to work, its tail wagging for all it was worth.

"Now you're railroading," I approved. "Now you've got it made." I knew it was important for the calf to ingest the colestrum, the first mouthsful of its mother's milk.

All this time I sat back on my heels, immobile, no more alive than a rock or a stump. I have seen a heifer, confused by her first calf, suddenly spook, tear off across the field, and refuse to own the calf. More than once I have hoisted the calf across the saddle and—leading the horse and blatting like a calf—persuaded the heifer to follow. Once we had her in the barn we could introduce her to her child and hope she would accept it. Once the calf began to nurse, the relationship was established.

On the other hand, I have seen and marvelled at a newly born calf, a half-hour after its arrival, suddenly take off across the pasture in great galloping leaps, the mother chasing it and bawling anxiously. I have no idea what instinctive fright or terror set it off. Some fear deep in its dim bovine memory must warn it to take flight. I tried not to handle a calf after it was breathing and struggling to get up, lest the smell of a human being drive it to madness.

Always I was confounded by the miracle of birth. It seemed so incredible. At first there exists just the cat, dog, sow, cow, or mare with a swollen belly. Then after spasms, contractions, straining, there appeared a replica of the mother wrapped in a protective membrane. A miniature model, complete in every detail, it

discards its shroud and becomes an active form of life on its own. It breathes and seeks nourishment, instructed by instinct to perform as it should.

No matter how many times I witnessed it, the act of birth seemed a wonder beyond measure. True, it was messy, sometimes bloody and prolonged, but no words can describe the exhilaration of birth. Somewhere in its cells the newborn finds the instructions to make it act like the animal it is. This miracle of reproduction made me wonder if life itself shaped all different forms to bear its heartbeat. Rarely, only rarely, did I see an anomaly, a two-headed calf or a pig with no anus. I suppose nature, too, makes mistakes. But time after time the image of the species appeared whole, clean, active, ready to live the existence waiting for it. To be alive and to be able to pass on life as a miracle of creation, it was enough to have seen it happen.

I sat still until the heifer walked away, the calf trotting by her side. No more than half an hour had passed for all this to take place. But sitting here would not do the chores. I walked over to where my horse was tied, wrapped the rope around the saddle horn, tossed the reins over Beauty's neck, and swung into the saddle. I rode off to look after the rest of the cattle.

As I rode off I wondered about birth and the life force. Other calves would be born, grow to be cows, and have calves of their own. Perhaps this is the immortality of the species. Life perpetuates itself. Maybe no energy is ever lost; after death what went away re-appears in another form or a new form. Maybe this is immortality for people, too. I rolled the idea over in my mind, poked at it, tested it, as if it were a new thought that needed to be examined.

Hard Jobs

At times, the farm seems like a living entity with its own appetites and imperatives. The farmer drives himself to find an answer to the many questions asked. By turn, he poses as a mechanic, veterinarian, geneticist, agronomist, bookkeeper, manager, and husband and father. But he keeps a strict eye on his main endeavor, the production of crops and livestock. He may call in expert help to lay out a drainage system, contour his fields, advise him on feed formulas, or plan new buildings, but his chief concern centers on what he has produced when the year ends. Some work extends him to the limit of his strength and skill; there are hard jobs to do on a farm. Years later, he may be reminded of them by an arthritic hip or a leaky heart.

One day, after threshing, Father decided to clear the stones out of a small pasture. He wanted to add the pasture to a larger field and be able to plow it. Ages ago, glaciers had spread stones liberally in this small field. We built heavy stoneboats from two-inch plank, hitched four horses to each one, and rode to the pasture with our spades, shovels, log chains, and crowbars. Any stone shows a resistance to being moved that is exceeded only by the stubbornness of one larger.

We started in. The smaller stones we rolled onto the stoneboats without much effort. We dug around them with a spade, levered them out with a crowbar, and rolled them with our hands onto the stoneboat. It made a heavy load; the four horses dug in to pull it. We hauled the stones to a fencerow along the road and lined them up there out of the way of our farm work. The larger stones separated boys from men, all right. Father and the hired men would dig around the stone and try to loosen the grip the earth had on it

by rocking it in its socket with a crowbar. Then they attached a chain in what they called a "rolling hitch," fastened the end of the chain to the doubletrees, and, if all went well, the horses rolled it out of the hole to level ground.

Sometimes the chain slipped off, accompanied by high-powered language. Or the rock would decide to stay snuggled in its bed. Then we dug away the earth on one side and made a kind of ramp to slide it on. One rock thrust a rather small point through the ground, but when we dug down the sides kept sloping out, rooting deeper and deeper. "My god," Herb said, "does it go clear to China?"

Father grunted. "Looks like it. We'll have to blow it." I thought Father could do anything—I was about twelve years old—but he would not handle dynamite. He asked our neighbor, Marius Hansen, to blow the rock. After dinner, Father drove to town for dynamite sticks, fuses, and caps. The caps look like shells for a .22 rifle but they spell danger. A neighbor boy had scratched the inside of one with a nail and it blew his hands off. "You can toss dynamite around like sticks of wood," Marius said, "and it won't go off. It takes a sudden hard shock from the explosion of the cap to set it off."

He laid the dynamite sticks on the stone in a circle, inserted a cap in one of the sticks, and pushed a length of fuse into the cap. Then he covered the whole thing with a cap of mud. "This helps drive the charge down into the rock, and not just go off gollywumpus," he explained. Then he lit the fuse and we all ran back about ten rods. The explosion blew dirt up in a cloud, and a small piece of stone sailed over our heads. The ground seemed to shiver slightly. We all ran up to see what had happened. The rock lay there, split in pieces. "Nice job," Father said.

"You can get her now," Marius said. "If you find any more like this, let me know."

He scooped a thumbnail load of Copenhagen snoose and stuck it under his upper lip. He asked, "Do you remember old man Woodman, who lived near Norris' Siding? He cut down some big cottonwood trees. You know how hard they are to split.

"Well, old man Woodman bored holes along the tree trunks and filled them with black powder. You know, powder kind of pushes, it doesn't blow everything to hell like dynamite. He opened up them logs pretty easy. One day he ran out of powder so he packed the holes full of brown sugar and saltpeter. He kind of forgot what he was doing and used a steel chisel to pack the stuff in the holes. You have to pack that combination pretty tight to get any good out of it." Marius grinned.

"He told me this himself. He was pounding away, pounding a steel chisel with a heavy steel hammer. A spark must have dropped down, because he said that chisel rose right up through his hands about twenty feet in the air. Good thing he was leaning back or it would have bored a hole in his noggin."

We all laughed as if it had been a big joke, but it scared me. Explosions shook me up, even firecrackers. Yet I helped set off a big blast once that gave us a little publicity.

That was many years later. Carl Hundley and I had decided to clear the stones out of a pasture so we could plow it. At the far end of the pasture stood a rock about three feet above ground with a flat top large enough for a family picnic. It looked too large to move, so we planned to bury it. We hired a dragline and a big Caterpillar tractor from Assink Brothers. The dragline dug a hole right beside the rock, a big hole; we went down at least thirty feet. But even then we did not come to the bottom of that rock. But we still figured we could tip it in. So the dragline operator hooked his bucket over the side so he could pull, and the bulldozer moved up to the other side to push.

Somebody said "Go!" The motors roared, diesel fumes spouted in the air, tractor treads slipped and slithered. The rock did not budge. The men with the machines called it a day, filled in the hole, and trundled back to town.

"Let's see if we can blow it," I said to Carl. "Maybe we can knock off the top and get it down to ground level so we aren't always dodging it with our machines." We didn't call on Marius Hansen, not us. We bought ten pounds of dynamite (twenty sticks), a couple of caps, and some fuse. We opened the heavy

waxed paper on one stick of dynamite, stuck in the cap with a fuse attached, and built our mud pile.

It was a big charge. We used a long fuse and backed clear to the fence after we lit it. We waited. Then came a dull, heavy thud, echoes from everywhere, the ground shook. We examined our rock. There were a few chips broken loose on top, but not a crack in it. "Maybe we didn't give it a big enough boost," I said. Just then we saw Norma, Carl's wife, running down to the pasture.

"What do you guys think you're doing?" she called. "Mrs. Cawelti over on Twelfth Street phoned that the windows in her house broke after that blast."

Carl and I looked at each other, then at the rock. It's still there. We never touched it again. We paid for a few new windows.

It wasn't manure as manure that wore us out, it was just that the work never ended. Vaguely, I suppose, we assumed that manure belonged to that part of animal feed that the animal body did not use, part of the hay, corn, oats, and linseed meal. I sometimes thought of the farm as a huge digestive system. We hauled in feed from the fields and hauled the waste back to the fields again. It had been repeated to us by word and book that spreading manure gave back to the land some of the fertility the harvested crops took away. We put our backs into the heavy, malodorous work because it had to be done, and we knew that a field thickly covered with manure renewed itself in tilth and vigor. But it was heavy work and it stunk.

Cleaning the barns, hauling manure, seemed an interminable chore, there was so much of it to do. We cleaned the horse barn and cow barn and box stalls every day. We piled the manure outside the barn, and when we had spare time hitched four horses to the manure spreader and hauled load after load to the fields. We tried to reduce the piles late in winter, when the snowdrifts had melted but the frost still kept the ground solid. Once the frost went out of the ground, wheels would sink to their axles. We tried not to pack the ground when it was wet; it never worked up well afterward. We had the time, too, late in winter, before spring planting

time came around.

I hated cleaning out the calf pens. After the calves had tramped repeated beds of straw into hard-packed layers, it took muscle and resolution to pull loose the result. Usually we picked a mild day late in March and we all tackled it together—Father, the hired men, and we boys. Often we wore rubber boots. If we wore shoes, Mother made us take them off in the woodshed because of the rank smell of ammonia. One of the hired men said it cleared out your sinuses.

We used a litter carrier in the cow barn. A trough-like container with a round bottom, it ran along a strong steel cable fastened to a pole in the barnyard. A metal dog that was clamped to the cable tripped the full carrier when it reached the pile. The post end of the cable stood a bit higher than the end fastened to the barn, so the empty carrier rolled back to the barn of its own weight. There we turned it right side up and snapped the catch into place. It took a good run and a healthy shove to send a full load out as far as the trip.

After my brother Charles and I took over the management of the farm, we decided we lacked enthusiasm for purebred cattle and we sold the Maplehearst Shorthorn herd at a dispersal sale. We used the cow barn as a farrowing place for brood sows or a holding pen for sick calves and steers from the Texas and Wyoming feeders we shipped in. The cable hung in place for years until we took it down, cut it into short lengths, and used it for reinforcing cement platforms in the feed yard.

Before we had bathrooms in our houses, we used outdoor privies. They had to be cleaned once a year. Somehow this job went against the grain with me. I could, with sympathy and concern, clean up a calf with diarrhea or give an enema to a constipated colt or sow, but to handle human waste seemed just not my thing. We cleaned out our privy and the hired men cleaned out theirs; it seemed a reasonable division of labor.

A broken tile taught me how messy Mother Earth can be when she is bloated with water. Near the bottom of one of our fields, close

to the place where our tile line emptied into a small creek, we noticed a fountain of water shooting into the air. We investigated and found the ground all around it swollen with water. The young corn plants, yellow and dying, made a sore on the green field. "Broken tile," said Father, "get your boots on, Jim, and help me."

Father carried a tiling spade that had a long, narrow blade and a kind of trowel with a long handle. I trudged along carrying two eight-inch tiles. "What happened?" I asked, when I could get my breath.

"Maybe a defective tile broke from too much water pressure and mud plugged the outlet. More likely, muskrats came up the line and built a nest in there."

Mud came halfway to the top of my boots. Father in his hip boots attempted to dig down to the tile. Mud clung to the spade, wouldn't shake loose, nearly tore Father's arms off. I am sure if I had not been there he would have said some of the things he felt. He tried to trowel out the mud. By this time I was stuck, I could not move either foot. My boots sank deeper in the ooze. I still had the tiles, but I set them down and they began to sink.

Finally Father dug down to the broken tile, mud all over his clothes, face, and arms. The handles of the trowel and spade, slippery with muck, slipped out of his hands when he lifted. Water kept running into the hole. He reached down, found the pieces of broken tile, and threw them toward the fence line. He poked around in the blocked tile and found an armful of sodden grass and sticks.

"Muskrats," he said with disgust, "might have known it."

"Are they still there?" I piped up in the innocence of seven years.

"In this goop? This was their winter home."

"Can't you stop them?"

He wiped muddy hands on muddy overalls. "With a wire mesh over the outlet. It must have broken away. Now stop asking questions and bring me those tiles."

I forgot I was stuck, and when I tried to step forward I fell flat

in the mud, my face buried in it. I thought I would drown. Kind of panicky, I shoved with both hands and my arms sank to my elbows. Then Father hauled me upright by the back of my shirt collar. Mouth, eyes, ears full of mud, my hands thick with it, I snorted for breath, kind of blubbering at the same time. Father jerked out my shirttail and wiped my face. Then he pulled me loose, and my feet came out of my boots. He carried me to high ground, waded back, yanked my boots loose, and threw them toward me. Then he took the spare tiles and fitted them in place. He packed mud around them to keep them level, then scooped mud back into the hole.

"We'll fill that in when it gets drier. Water's running all right now." He picked up his spade and trowel. "Come on, let's go home." Off we went, mud from head to foot, my clothes soaked, I shivered. We tramped toward the house like a couple of trolls from Scandinavian mythology.

The soybean harvest caused me some unhappy moments. Usually this came in late September or early October, if the days had been dry enough to bring down the moisture in the beans. The sun shone warmly on days of harvest when the beans were dry enough for the combine to thresh them. This should make for a pleasant day in the fields. The tractor hums along, the combine works easily (no growls or grunts from the cylinder to protest wet straw), beans shelled out whole, all the way it should be. I'm talking about a combine the tractor pulls, the small six- to nine-foot sickle bar, the kind we used before the big, self-propelled jobs came on the market.

The tractor operator sits sideways on his seat so he can watch the reel and sickle bar. He must keep the machine on the rows, and sometimes that's a tight fit if the head just barely reaches two or three rows. Often I rode with my hand on the lever that raises and lowers the front end, especially if the stalks were tangled and down and the guards just scraped the ground. Nothing gives a combine more distress than to pick up a rock about the size of a man's fist and feed it into the cylinder.

So I kept my head turned to watch the machine. The dry pods shattered into a fine dust that hung over the machine like a swarm of gnats. Now, if the wind blew straight down the rows, for half the round a tail wind blew dust, chaff, and dirt right into the operator's face. Goggles helped, but fine splinters of straw and dust still worked into my eyes and filled my clothes so that I itched as if I had been shocking a field of barley. My skin broke out in a rash, especially under my arms, around my waist, and in my crotch. But the eyes, the poor eyes, would be sore and inflamed for weeks. Now I look at the tight, air-conditioned cab on top of a self-propelled combine and wonder if I was born a generation too soon.

In the early years of my life, we cut and shocked corn for fodder. We made those "wigwams" cartoonists love to draw as symbols of Indian summer. Heavy, unwieldy bundles of cornstalks stretch a boy's muscle. But we tried to help. The hired men used a "horse," a pole with one end raised on two braced legs. The first bundles of a shock were placed against this so they would stay upright. Then ten or twelve bundles were leaned against them. We wrapped a rope around the top and pulled it tight and held it while twine was tied snugly around the top to keep the shock standing. Then we released the rope, pulled out the "horse" and went to the next row of bundles. Boys could be used to haul on the rope and run around the corn shock with one end of the twine.

If we had time in the fall after corn husking, Father and the hired men hauled the corn shocks from the field and stacked them near the feed yard. But if snow and wind and cold came too soon, the shocks stayed in the field. Every other morning, before we went to school, we three boys hitched a team to a bobsled, took an ax, spade, and pitchforks, and brought in a load of corn bundles, which we dumped in a circle on the ground for the cattle.

If the snow and ground thawed and froze, the ends of the stalks froze to the ground. We chopped them loose with an ax and spade. A winter morning, twenty below zero, a brisk northwest wind made us wonder why anyone lived on a farm. One thing made the job bearable. We often found a rabbit under the shocks and, if we had brought the twelve-gauge shotgun with us, we brought home

meat for supper. Sometimes we were so chilled we couldn't pull a mitten off fast enough to get a finger on the trigger. Then the rabbit ran free, bobbing his cottontail over the ground like a bouncing ball. We found nests of mice under the shocks, which gave us some exciting moments. If our dog came with us, he had a field day chasing mice. We put up a silo and that ended the corn shocks. But I shall always remember those bitter winter mornings as we hacked away at the frozen stalks.

Sometimes on a farm a series of small molehills of mishap will rise into a mountain of frustration. One fall, when we wanted to begin corn husking, we took a day to prepare so that the next morning, bright and early, we could really cut a fat hog. We set up the elevator and ran it a few minutes to see that nothing had happened to it since the year before. We oiled the chains, greased the bearings, lined up the jack, and staked it down. We greased the wagons, pumped up a couple of low tires, and tested the unloading aprons. We used barge boxes on the wagons with unloading aprons instead of a hydraulic hoist to raise the front end.

We went over the tractors carefully, slipped the power take-off shaft onto one to pull the corn picker. We greased the picker, tightened a few gathering chains, set the snapping rollers. We swept out the corncribs and nailed on loose boards. Floyd ground an extra load of corn for the steers so the chores would not delay us.

We went to bed that night feeling that everything was buckled up, nailed down, shipshape. The morning dawned a little misty, just right for corn picking—the husks came off cleaner in damp weather. Then the day began to go sour. First, I backed up too sharply with a wagon and broke the tongue. Then, when Carl ran out the tractor to hitch to the corn picker, we saw that one front wheel wobbled, which meant the bearing was shot. Chuck jumped into the car to drive to the implement store for a new bearing. When Floyd drove the feed wagon out of the yard, two of the steers slipped through the gate, playful as kittens. We spent an hour rounding them up.

Then our neighbor to the south drove in and said his tractor was stuck in the ditch, and would we pull him out? Our wheeled tractors were hitched to wagons, picker, and elevator so Floyd went to get the track-tread diesel. The motor started but would not keep running. Funny thing about diesels, those jets that shoot fuel into the cylinders under tremendous pressure won't tolerate a speck of dust. So we cleaned the filters, disconnected the fuel line—we were using No. 2 furnace oil—and blew it out. Then the engine took hold and Floyd drove off on his errand of mercy. A few minutes later, Chuck drove in and we discovered that the parts man at the store had given him a bearing for a different model tractor than ours.

We ate an early dinner and everything went the way it should all afternoon. But all those interruptions had frustrated us and irritated us, and made us short in our talk. By evening, though, with four hundred bushels of corn in the crib, we had come to terms with our feelings.

Each one of us has limits beyond which he will not be pushed. The hard jobs on the farm—the dirty, disagreeable, unpleasant ones—create great opportunities for dissension. But the work must be done by someone, and we tried to keep within the bounds of strength and patience.

It cannot be explained nor can it be understood: the satisfaction of a successful day's work out in the field in the open air with birds, rabbits, and gophers for companions. How pride shines in a man's face when a field pushes up green tips on schedule, or when a carload of steers almost tops the Chicago market. The elbow room, the largeness of space in which farmers live and move, gives them a largeness of mind and, while they may not feel they are their brother's keeper, they forgive their brother's errors. Of course, no one but a saint is without some prejudice, bias, intolerance (and I never met a saint farming), but farmers live lives free from many of the petty slights, insults, and personal grudges that occur when people are crowded together.

After I grew up, I occasionally spent an evening playing poker

with my friends. It seemed to me a mild hazard to win or lose up to fifteen dollars compared to the risks a farmer takes. He buys several carloads of calves in the fall from a Texas or Wyoming rancher, feeds them all winter, absorbs the death loss, and expects to sell them at a profit the next summer. He does this on borrowed money and still sleeps sound at night. No one but a farmer would take a chance like this and remain confident of success. He also assumes favorable weather, so that what he plants in the spring will make a crop in the fall. And he knows about hail, drought, flood, and insects, too. He waits out the months to see if his luck will hold and pay him off.

After all, farmers are the great gamblers and true creators. With tools of seed, earth, and work—and an eye always on the weather—they bring into being something that was not there before. For this much, let us be thankful.

Wood Gathering

Turn history back a few pages and find the account of a time—say, B.G. & B.O. (before gas and before oil)—when we used wood for heating. The cookstove and the furnace had to be fed if meals were to be cooked and the house kept warm. This meant that a harvest of wood had to be gathered each year, sawed and split and piled ready to burn. This was a winter job, when the fields were all locked in their beds of snow and ice, and during the short days the men spent their time doing chores, mending harness, and making ready to bring in the wood for the next season.

In those days, the farm depended on wood for more things than heating the house. We cut and cured ash for eveners, neckyokes, doubletrees, and wagon tongues. Smaller pieces, trimmed and smoothed, became hammer and ax handles, a frame for the grindstone, and new legs for the workbench. Sometimes we squared-up oak logs for beams or sills in a machine shed or hog house. The demand for wood never ended. But to us children the main use seemed to be for the house. Our awareness here came from the armsful and basketsful that we carried from woodshed to kitchen and cellar.

When the logs were hauled home, we piled them in what seemed to us a huge pile. The big ones went on the bottom and the smaller ones on top because Father and the hired men could throw them into place. Then, late in February or early in March, Father asked Eddie Bowles to bring his saw rig and cut the logs into stove-length chunks. This took most of a day. The saw itself measured about four feet across, the circumference cut into wicked-looking teeth. One side of a frame held the saw fastened to an axle, a long shaft that crossed the frame. On the other end, a small belt wheel received the belt that drove the saw. Up in front was a massive one-

cylinder gasoline engine with two big flywheels.

Eddie Bowles was black, the first black man we had seen. But his color did not interest us as much as his ability to handle the engine and the wood. He sat at the dinner table with us and captivated us children with stories of his life in New Orleans. But his real importance for us came when he adjusted his carburetor, turned on the gas, opened a petcock to relieve the compression, and turned those big flywheels around and around until the engine coughed a time or two and then settled down to regular explosions, shooting gas out of the open petcock until Eddie closed it. Then he slipped the belt over the small belt wheel and, while the big wheels were spinning, slipped it over one of them. You had to be skillful and quick to do this. "A good way to lose a finger or two," Eddie said.

Then Father and the men carried the logs, one at a time, and laid one end on the platform just back of the saw blade. Eddie took hold of the end, measured with his eye the right length for a chunk of stove wood, then all the men pressed the log forward into the saw. After a few logs had been sawed, Eddie spread the sawdust around where the men stood so no one would slip on the ice and snow. "You can't be too careful around a saw," Eddie said. That's why he always stood closest to the blade and handled the chunks of wood as they were cut off. He gave them a toss onto a rapidly growing pile, or if the chunks were too big, he laid them on the ground beside the pile. He moved the rig several times to keep even with the diminishing pile of logs. This gave him room to throw the chunks, too, because the chunk pile built up pretty fast.

From that day until field work started, anyone who had a spare moment grabbed an ax and split the chunks into pieces to fit into the kitchen range. The bigger chunks we saved for the furnace. Each one of us had his own chopping block and ax. Father and the hired men could split a chunk in two or three pieces, then hold the pieces with one hand and slab off the right size for the stove. We boys struggled manfully, but the wood never split as easily for us as it did for the men. Only after a hard freeze could I set up a straight-grained maple or oak block and slab it off as the men did.

Cottonwood drove me crazy, its coarse fiber so enlaced it wouldn't split but had to be forced apart with wedges and a maul. "You get warm twice," our neighbor, Fred Bast, said. "Once when you work it up and then when you burn it. Cottonwood . . . " and he shook his head.

We heard stories while we all split wood. I remember one about a man who, as he swung his double-bitted ax, caught it in the clothesline behind him. This so deflected the swing that the ax cut into his leg and severed an artery, and he bled to death. Father said that when he and his brothers split wood in the spring, they kept a muzzle-loading shotgun handy to shoot at the migrating flocks of ducks and geese. When they missed, they just rammed a little more powder down the barrel of the gun, on the theory that the shot hadn't carried far enough. He said that one afternoon they were working on the woodpile when Mr. Rinker, a neighbor, stopped in. As they chatted, a flock of ducks slowly swung over and Mr. Rinker called, "Give me that gun!" He blazed away but the charge was so heavy the recoil knocked him flat. He got up, marched to Grandfather, who had just come out of the house, and blazed out, voice trembling, "James, those boys will blow themselves to bits with that gun!" Grandfather took the gun and returned it to its place in the woodshed. There was no more duck shooting from the wood pile after that.

The first move in wood gathering sent us to the big grove at home. We drove the teams on the bobsleds up and down the aisles of trees. We loaded the logs from the fallen trees onto the sleds and chopped down and loaded a few trees that seemed dead or were hollow from rot and ripe to fall in the next high wind. We boys trudged along with the men. Our job was to pile up the branches trimmed from the logs in a series of small piles to be burned when someone had the time to tend the fire. Meanwhile, they made an excellent hide-out for rabbits. We would bring a gun and the dog, and one of us would jump on the brush to scare out the rabbits while the others tried to bag one for supper.

These logs from the grove formed the beginning of the log pile

that would supply us with fuel for the next year. But we needed more wood than that. Soon after he settled on Maplehearst Farm, Grandfather bought ten acres of timberland along Beaver Creek about seven miles northwest of the farm. Most of our wood came from this timberlot—the ash, oak, and even walnut. We begged Father to wait until Christmas vacation so we could help him bring home the wood.

Even the preparations excited us. We offered to turn the grindstone to sharpen the single- and double-bitted axes. We helped collect the log chains, the wedges, the two-man crosscut saw, a crowbar, and of course our skates. The bobsleds were stripped down, with only a four-foot pipe at the ends of each bolster to keep the logs from rolling off. Then we sacked up feed for the horses and urged Mother to hurry while she prepared lunch for the men and for her three sons. We could not come home at noon; it was too far and took too much time. There are not many hours between morning chores and evening chores on a short winter day.

It was a cold, dark day, about fifteen degrees above zero. A brisk northwest wind whistled through the grove and tatters of it blew around the farmstead. Right after breakfast Father told us, "Help Lauritz and Matt get the teams out and hitched to the sleds. Hitch the light sled with the box on it behind the big bobsled that King and Jean are hitched to. Get all the tools and chains and put them in there."

We ran around like turkeys. We enjoyed this part of the winter—with school out and Christmas coming—and today we would spend the day in the woods. We lugged sacks of hay and corn and oats and stuck them in the sled box. We hung our skates around our necks so we wouldn't forget them. "How about taking a gun?" I asked. "We might scare up a rabbit or see a muskrat or maybe a mink."

Father shook his head. "No guns. This is business today. Besides, you can't see far enough in the woods to know what you might hit. Hart Madsen or the Nielsens might be cutting wood on their timberlots. No guns." We didn't argue; we didn't think he would let us take guns, anyway.

Mother gave us the basket with the food in it, and we took a big blue-enamel coffeepot, an old one, to set by the fire and heat the coffee. (No thermos jugs in those days.) She was probably glad to have a day to herself. Louise was visiting friends in town. Mother might, I thought, even sit down and play the piano. She hadn't done that for a long time and I wished she would.

The horses trotted easily, the sled runners slid smoothly over the packed snow on the roads. The horses did not wear sleigh bells, but the chains on the ends of the tugs jingled faintly. We hid down in the box to keep out of the wind. We had a ways to go.

When we reached the timberlot, we pulled into an open glade among the trees and unhooked the small bobsled with the box on it. We climbed out. It was strangely quiet in the woods—no wind, the snow lay even, not in drifts. We looked at the snow-covered ice on Beaver Creek and wished we had brought a scoop shovel with us to clear the ice. We could skate through the snow, but it wasn't as much fun.

"Unhook one team and fasten a log chain to the doubletrees," Father said. "Let's snake out the trees that have fallen across the creek first." Father started to unload the axes and the saw. Pretty soon we heard the chop, chop of the axes as Lauritz and Matt whacked away at the roots of the trees lying across the creekbed. When the trees fell they pulled out one side of their roots, but the other side stayed in the ground and had to be chopped loose. I saw Topsy and Dolly haul one big elm out of the creek, breaking the ice as they pulled it up the bank. I saw Father trim off the branches, and Lauritz brought the saw and he and Matt started to cut it into a length they could lift onto the sled. About eleven-thirty Father said, "Jim, cut up some branches and start a fire. Bob, you and Chuck get the horse feed out of the box and bring it over to these trees. And set the coffeepot close to the fire, Jim."

I asked, "How will we water the horses?"

Lauritz picked up a handful of snow and pushed it against my face. "It melts into water," he said. "Try a mouthful."

I jerked away and brushed the snow off my face. Sometimes Lauritz made me mad.

The men took off the bridles so the bits would be out of the horses' mouths and put halters on them. They tied them to trees and spread the hay and oats and corn on the snow. The horses seemed perfectly contented.

Father rolled a couple of logs over by the fire I had built and opened the lunch basket. We sat on the logs and ate our lunch. Mother had included a quart jar of milk for us boys; we didn't drink coffee. We had roast beef sandwiches and apples and cookies. After we finished, we all sat by the fire in a state of stuffed somnolence. Matt got out his stubby pipe and lit it. Lauritz took a chew of tobacco and solemnly offered me a chew. I had tried it once and it made me sick. Now I could hardly stand the smell. Lauritz shook his head. "You should try it, Jim, it keeps down the worms."

"Ugh!" I shuddered. "That awful stuff."

Pretty soon Lauritz stirred. He said to Father, "Well, Charlie, if we are going to get home before dark, as the old woman said to her pig, we can't sit here."

Father sighed and stood up. Lauritz was like one of the family; you'd think sometimes he was our uncle or something.

The woods lay hushed. We could hear our own voices, the jingle of harness as the horses moved, and in the distance a crow cawed. Chuck and I cleaned up the papers and stuffed them into the fire. Then Bob carried handsful of snow and killed the fire. We put the lunch basket away in the sled.

Bob said, "I'm going to walk up the creek and see if I can find any deer. It's too much like work skating in this snow. I saw some tracks down at the edge where the ice is broken."

Chuck went with him. I stayed and took a single-bitted ax and began to trim branches off the trees the men had felled. Pretty soon I had my jacket off, then my mittens. I stopped to rest and leaned on the ax handle and watched Lauritz chop down a dead oak tree. He had worked in the north woods and it was a pleasure to watch him swing an ax. He could carve his way into a tree and make the tree fall just where he wanted it to. He didn't seem to work hard at it, either—a cut above and one below and out flew a

big chip of tree.

About three in the afternoon, Father called to me. ''Bring the crosscut saw, Jim.'' It was a saw about eight feet long with a handle on each end. ''Lauritz and Matt are both busy, could you pull one end of this?'' I felt the door of manhood open. Father wanted me on the other end of a crosscut saw?

''You bet,'' I said. ''I think I can do her.''

At first it was easy—back and forth, back and forth, see saw, see saw—sawdust piled up underneath the log as the saw bit into the wood. If the log tipped in and pinched the saw, Father drove in a wedge to hold it apart.

After a while the fun part wore out and I began to labor. Each time I pulled the saw back it had a heavier drag. It whipped the pith out of my arms. Tree after tree, just to satisfy the appetites of cookstove and furnace. I closed my eyes and imagined that my arms had fallen off. But I was too proud to quit. I heard Father say, ''Jim, I don't mind if you ride, but don't drag your feet.'' Then it was over.

Father called, ''All right men, let's load the sleds now.''

Matt pulled out the iron pipes on one side of the sled and the men lifted the logs and rolled them onto the bolsters. ''The big ones on the bottom, Charlie,'' Lauritz puffed. ''The lighter ones we can sling on top.''

Even with this planning, it took all three men, a good swing, and a *Yo-Ho!* to finish the top of the load. Then the men wound a log chain around the logs and pulled it tight. Matt said, ''The damned logs start to shift and we got trouble.''

Father whooped for Bob, who came trailing in with the story of a raccoon he had seen, but no deer. The men hitched the horses to the sleds. We pushed and grunted to hook the small sled behind one of the loads. ''All the tools gathered?'' Father asked. ''Axes, chains, wedges, crowbar, halters?'' He put the saw in the box, the teeth protected by an old horse blanket. ''We're ready to go then.'' He climbed up on the load of logs, took the lines, and spoke to the horses.

Dusk sifted in through the trees. Only four o'clock, but already

the day had begun to fade. We pulled out of the timberlot and onto the road. The men stopped to check the loads. "Going to be dark soon," I offered.

Lauritz said, "Now if we just had a lantern, you could run ahead waving it and say to everybody, 'Here come the big loads of wood for the Hearst farm!' You got nimble feet, Jim. Do like in the old country; the town crier yells 'Look out for the Hearst wood!'"

"Aw, he does not," was all I could think of for an answer.

Stars were out by the time we reached home. The men drove the loads of wood beside the log pile and unhitched the horses. Stiff and chilly, we climbed out of the sled box carrying our skates. Bob and I gave ours to Chuck, "Take 'em to the house. We got to help with the chores."

When the chores were done, the barn doors fastened, and the good-nights said, we trooped to the house. How cheery it was, and warm. The lamplight shone with a yellow glow, and supper bubbled on the stove. We all had stories to tell as we sat at the table and gorged ourselves on stew and dumplings. Mother listened and smiled as if our tales were the most exciting things she had ever heard. Then she looked at Father and nodded at Chuck. He sat there with the fork slipping out of his fingers as he nodded off to sleep. It had been a long but wonderful day. How better to end it than to come in to a warm, softly-lit home, with Mother putting supper on the table. What more could anyone ask?

It stays with me, the memory of that day. Now I saw a different kind of log with a different saw, but I can still hear my father's voice saying, "Jim, don't drag your feet."

Spring on the Farm

The mixed emotions which I hold this spring
Grow from the farm's offense
Of tracking muddy footprints where the inward eye
Supposes dreams but finds that commonsense

Will be more use to me out in the slush,
The wet March cold,
Where I hang my breathy wreaths of flowering sweat,
Trying to get the mare inside before her colt is foaled.

I know the sap is running, the maple trunks
Shine black as mud
Where I am spreading straw to give her footing
And get her to the barn, like all flesh and blood

I'm a fool in some ways, but I know that spring
Comes down to this:
For me, O Lord, the chores, always the chores of birth,
Calves, pigs and colts, with kittens on their own
And chickens in my lap as frost heaves from the earth
And skies drip down, and patience and pain are sisters.
I gawk in relief at a rippling wedge of geese—
The farm isn't always like this but today it is.

Rites of Spring on the Farm

Spring on the farm began in March, the month of freezing and thawing, mud, slop, and iron ruts. When the frost went out of the ground, the feed yards seemed to have no bottom. The bunk where we fed Father's young bulls stood near the silo. These were purebred Shorthorn bulls, old enough for service and for sale. Every night and morning, one of us threw silage down the chute into the silo house. Then we filled a bushel-and-a-half basket, hoisted it to our shoulders, and waded out to the bunk. The mud oozed halfway to the tops of our rubber boots, and each step required a strong pull and careful balance. Once my foot was so mud-bound that when I tried to step, my foot came free of the boot and my foot, in a clean white sock, plunged into the mud.

The yearling bulls fought for the first mouthful of silage. When we reached the bunk, we spread the silage along its length, pushing and swearing at the horned heads blocking the way. Those galvanized iron baskets full of silage bore down on my shoulders, and warding off hungry, playful bulls while I waded in the mud and balanced the basket called for strength and skill. Many a time I banged the empty basket against some shoving, greedy head as I tried to clear a path back to the silo for another load.

In spring, our crossroad became a swamp of mud and melting snow. Sometimes the main road seemed no better. Once, going home from the annual school meeting, we backed up in the car all the way because the ruts were so deep we could not turn around. But then, after a thaw, a sudden cold snap would shape yards and roads into badlands as hard as cement. We would worry about the spring seeding and the fruit trees. If the thaw lasted long enough and the sap began to rise, the sudden freeze would burst the cambium layer just under the bark and kill the fruit tree. Out in the

fields, if the alfalfa had begun to grow, the freeze broke the crowns loose from the roots and boosted them a few inches above the ground until the field looked as if a flock of crows were sitting there.

If there were too many "crows," the field would grow no hay crop. Then we plowed it and planted corn or we disked it heavily and sowed another forage crop, such as sudan grass or even oats to cut green for hay. We waded around in rubber boots and quoted the saying of Mark Twain that anyone who could live through the month of March would get through the rest of the year.

But sometimes March broke the pattern. The sun warmed the air, gentle winds from the southwest (little more than strong drafts) dried the ground, except for a few frost boils, and we walked dry-shod and with no mud-stained jackets and overalls. The work seemed easy, no struggle to do the chores. One such March, we finished all the seeding before the first of April. In another March, we drove a load of heifers to town to the stockyards (before the days of livestock trucks) and one of the animals died of a heat stroke.

But, rain or shine, certain tasks demanded our attention. We moved the fanning mill to the granary to sort out the seed oats for sowing. We shovelled oats into the hopper, someone turned the crank, and the oats sifted down through various screens, which sorted them according to size. The large, heavy kernels fell into a box at the bottom to be emptied into a sack. The smaller kernels dribbled out of a spout into a basket. But the main feature of the mill was a large wooden-bladed fan that revolved at high speed and blew out the dust, impurities, chaff, and lightweight kernels. It really was a fanning mill; it fanned the oats.

If we found much fungus from the crop the year before, we poured an arsenic compound into the hopper to be mixed with the oats, to coat the kernels. We wore gas masks while we worked to keep the stuff out of our lungs. But the fan blew it into the air, and for a few days we went around with headaches and with a bad taste in our mouths.

We used an endgate seeder to sow the oats. A large hopper fed

the oats into two propellers that whirled in opposite directions and broadcast the seed over a distance of nine corn rows. The machine hung from the endgate of a cart with two large wheels. A chain running over a sprocket wheel attached to one of the cart's wheels furnished the power. A small hopper attached to the large one held a mixture of timothy, red clover, and alsike clover seed to be sown for the hay crop the following year. A team of horses pulled the cart. Father liked to use his team of half-Morgan mares that stepped off at a fast pace and could be trusted to follow the corn row while he shovelled oats and grass seed into the hoppers. We hoped for a windless day when we sowed oats, so the spread would be even.

When tractor power took over, we seeded oats and grass seed with a grain drill. This machine makes little furrows in the ground, drops in the seed, and covers it lightly. It doesn't matter if it's windy or not. Seed sown broadcast has to be disked and harrowed to cover it. The ideal situation is to have a wet, two-inch snowfall. When the snow melts it pulls the seed into the ground. An inch of spring snow is worth two tons of manure per acre because of the nitrogen it brings with it.

In those days, a field needed to be turned over with a plow before it could be planted. Ground that had been in corn one year was not plowed until spring, and the old cornstalks covered it. The light, horse-drawn disks would not cut them small enough to keep from plugging the plow. Even the sharp plow coulter would not cut them, and the stalks tangled in the plows. One of the frustrating moments at plowing time comes when stalks plug the plow about every ten rods. So we burned the stalks.

One morning after a sharp frost, Father drove across the fields hauling a length of railroad rail, a team at each end, and broke the stalks loose from their roots. A hired man or one of us boys (when we were old enough) followed with a dump rake and raked the loose stalks into long piles. When they were dry (and we kids prayed for no rain), we would go out at night and burn them. It was exciting. All over the country, piles of cornstalks were burning. We ran from row to row with flaming brands made by

wrapping gunny sacks around old broom handles and soaking them with kerosene. Father had a metal torch; when you blew into the hollow handle, flames would shoot into the air. He had carried it in a Rough Rider parade when Teddy Roosevelt ran for the presidency.

This was one of the great evenings of the year, setting fires at night, running and whooping like Indians from pile to pile, waving our torches. When it ended, we crept home—tired, smoke-stained, sometimes with an overall leg burned or eyebrows singed. We washed the soot off our faces and went to bed. It was kind of a Walpurgis Night where we played the part of demons.

Now we know what an acre of cornstalks is worth as fertilizer. Farmers chop them with a stalk cutter and plow them under. Or, if straw is scarce, they can be baled and used as bedding for barns and sheds and returned to the land as manure. But they no longer disappear in flame and smoke, showing us to be spendthrifts of what we owed the land.

Nature prepares seeds to grow in moist climate. Even shelled corn in the bin swells and grows moist at planting time. At times we shovelled it from one bin to another to dry it, so it would not mold and decay—a good rainy-day job to keep the boys out of mischief—or we sold it or filled the self-feeders and feed wagons with it.

Father liked to begin planting corn by the tenth of May and be finished by the twentieth. We had enough horses for the work, but the weather did not always cooperate. We used a two-row planter set for rows forty-two inches apart. We also attached a check wire to the planter with knots on it forty-two inches apart. This wire ran through a fork arrangement on the planter, and the knots tripped the fork and dropped a hill of corn into the ground behind the planter's shoe. It dropped two kernels, three kernels, four kernels, however the machine was set.

The wire ran from one end of the field to the other and was fastened to stakes driven into the ground. Every time the planter turned at the end of the field, the stake had to be pulled up and set

over behind the planter so that the wire kept its place beside the machine. The purpose of this knotted wire was to make straight rows across the field as well as lengthwise, so that corn could be cultivated both ways to root out any grass or weeds that dared sneak in line with the corn rows. Today herbicides take care of the weeds. I am sure many young farmers would not know a check wire if they saw it.

I mentioned Father's team of part-Morgan mares. Both were bays, long-legged and with slim, small heads; they were tough and willing workers. They took a long stride, and on a good day Father planted twenty acres of corn. None of the neighbors could do as well. At each end of the field Father jumped off the seat, pulled the check wire stake out of the ground, pulled it tight behind the planter, and drove it into the ground with a push of his foot on a pedal fastened to the stake. Then he fitted the wire into the fork and snapped it in place. Next he swung the marker over to the unplanted side. The last horse-drawn planter we owned had two markers; as the planter turned, one went down and the other raised—marvels of automation.

The marker consisted of a rolling disk at the end of a long arm. The disk cut out a little furrow so the driver could straddle it on the next round and be sure he kept the right distance from the rows just planted. He held the center of the planter tongue over that mark to make even rows. At the end of the field, he filled the planter boxes with seed. The test of a good farmer was to be able to drive so that the corn rows were straight as a string. One of our neighbors, whose eyesight was failing, found his rows crooked and curving when the corn broke through the ground. He explained, "You can plant more corn in a crooked row."

My job, as soon as I was old enough to handle four horses, was to harrow ("drag" as we called it) the ground Father had planted. This, I was told, smoothed the planter tracks so that the next rain would not make a ditch of them and wash out the corn. To me it seemed a job to keep boys from play. But all the neighbors did it, too, so it must have been part of the complicated pattern of spring farm work.

We practiced a standard rotation of crops. After a field had raised corn for two years, it received a "rest" by raising oats one year and hay the next. Now, with herbicides to keep down the weeds and with artificial fertilizers, no one bothers to rotate crops anymore. This seems to me to be a mistake. I wonder if someday the land will rebel and refuse to grow crops. Mother Earth needs to be cared for, and stuffing her with chemicals does not seem the way to make her fertile and fruitful. When I see the creeks and rivers turn brown with earth after a hard rain, I am shocked and angry that more grass and cover crops are not being used to protect the topsoil. It takes almost a hundred years to create one inch of topsoil.

In the house, a different kind of spring planting took place. Mother had two 250-egg incubators in which to hatch our chickens. We accumulated the eggs we would need in wire baskets —the best-looking, medium-sized, uncracked eggs. The incubators were cleaned and sterilized with boiling water mixed with carbolic acid. Kerosene lamps warmed the eggs, and the lamps had to be cleaned and filled with oil, and the wicks trimmed. The eggs lay in little pockets in trays that we scrubbed and dried. The lamps burned for about a week in the empty incubators to see if the temperature rose to the right level and held there. Here is where Mother ruled, and her word was law.

Next we scraped the residue of last year's chickens from the small chicken coops. These small coops had been built by a carpenter following Mother's plans. They had slats across the front so that the little chicks could run in and out, but they barred any inquisitive fowl that wanted a place to stay. To clean them, we used boiling water and carbolic acid, and a stiff broom and hoe. We children hated these chores. Chickens were stupid, smelly, difficult to raise. To us, the only good chicken came to the Sunday dinner table on a platter.

Once the eggs were in the incubators, Mother kept a sharp eye on them. She turned the eggs every third day by hauling out a tray, placing a spare one on top, and turning over the whole shebang.

The lamps heated water, which circulated under the trays of eggs and kept the temperature steady. Those were the days we walked and spoke quietly around Mother.

But on the day the chickens began to hatch we all gathered in front of the incubators. We could peek through narrow glass windows and see the chicks struggling out of the shells. When they had all hatched—those that were going to hatch—the incubator seemed crowded with yellow puffballs on toothpick legs, cheeping in a never-ending chorus. Mother put them in the coops with old setting hens to give them warm shelter. We children filled the chickens' water cups and sprinkled feed on the boards in front of the coops. We marvelled at the speed at which feathers formed. It took only a few days for the chicks to begin to look like little chickens, no longer cute little balls of fuzz.

Then began the watchful guard. Every night the coops were shut tight to keep out rats, weasels, skunks, and cats. In the daytime, danger lurked in the sky, where crows and hawks waited to drop down and seize a baby chick. More than once, I have seen Father come running for the shotgun when some sky marauder had set the old hens to fussing and clucking and spreading their wings.

Once, when I was older, a crow dropped down and killed a chick. I shot it through the kitchen window. It meant new glass for the window, but that crow had cawed his last caw. Crows have a canny knack for self-preservation, though. Whoever would shoot a crow must get up early in the morning. Once, out in the field, I saw crows harassing a young jack rabbit. I herded the rabbit with the tractor toward some wild grapevines on the fence where it could take cover. After dinner, I hung a shotgun on the tractor fender and nary a crow showed up. One of them doubtless spotted the gun and passed the word along. They must be able to see a mile.

After the chicks were taken out, we cleaned the incubators for the next hatch. We hauled all of the infertile eggs, rotten now, out to the field and buried them. Once, moved by who knows what spirit of deviltry, we played baseball with the rotten eggs.

My cousin, James McAlvin, worked for us that summer and it

may have been his idea. Jim had a resourceful mind. We found a piece of board, whittled a handle at one end, and used it for a bat. One of us took the pitcher's stance and tossed an egg to the batter. With that wide board for a bat we couldn't miss. We took turns. Four of us. The eggs made a wonderful *splat!* when we hit them and often sprayed egg on the batter. My younger brothers, Robert and Charles, took their turns, too. If the pitcher gripped the egg too hard, it broke in his hand, but there was always another. It was a most satisfying game. Weary at last and with all the eggs smashed, we returned to the house. The putrid odor announced our coming, and I can still see Mother's wrinkled nose as she smelled us.

It was a warm May day, so we took clean clothes and went to the cattle tank behind the corncrib. We stripped off, washed first ourselves and then our stinking clothes. I suppose Mother put them through the washing machine again, but we washed off most of the egg and eggshell. I remember it as a glorious wallow in filth.

The miracles of spring revealed themselves almost daily. A farm exposes the facts of creation as if life itself spoke. Perhaps it does. We shouted our discoveries: a litter of kittens hidden in the haymow, a hatful of baby chicks hatched out in the raspberry patch by some old biddy that had stolen a nest, cheeping young turkeys guarded by a mother so fierce we kept our distance. We scratched the necks of young colts and felt them nibble our shoulders in return. We romped with young calves if their mothers were confined to the barn, chased baby pigs if the old sow would let us.

This sounds like pleasure, and it was. But the dirt, the manure, and the blood were also part of it. We scraped out chicken houses, cleaned calf pens, carried bedding to the pig pens, mixed slop, and threw down hay. We threw the little pigs that died in the manure spreader to be hauled to the fields, buried dead chickens, hauled a dead calf out to the field for the crows to plunder. These chores belonged to the farm, and we accepted them as part of the day's work.

Death seemed natural, everything that lived must die. We grieved, of course, for the death of a pet kitten, an old dog, a favorite horse. But we did not cry out against it, nor accuse God of robbing us. The inevitable happened; on a farm death stands a close companion to birth.

I remember a swale, between two fields near the end of the farm, where I found the bones of a large animal. Father told me they belonged to a horse or cow that had been dragged there because the ground was frozen, or there was no time, or for some other reason it had found no grave. Now the rendering works hauls off dead animals, and bone piles and burial mounds no longer show in the fields.

But birth aroused our enthusiasm, something new, another life brought into being. When I grew old enough to help, I squatted with my father beside a lantern in the hog house on cold spring nights to help a sow unload her burden of pigs. We three boys would set the alarm clock on two-hour intervals and take turns getting up to observe a mare ready to foal. We knew how to loop a rope around the legs of a calf that protruded from its mother and pull in time with her rhythms to bring the calf safely to birth. I have seen my mother assist a chick from its shell when the shell seemed too hard to break clear and stuck to the small body. We learned to strip the placenta and mucus from the noses of just-born colts and calves to let in air as they struggled to breathe. We knew that all young colts have curly tails, and that calves could be led into a pen by letting them suck your finger.

We hoed and weeded the garden, mowed the lawn, cut weeds in the fence row, cultivated corn, and ran the rotary hoe over the soybeans. We mended fence on rainy days, or built a new one if the old one could not be fixed. Or we tore out a barbed-wire fence and put in a new one of woven wire to make the field hog tight. And before we knew it, the time came to make hay, shock oats, and get ready for threshing.

Once winter ends, the seasons roll by with an increasing velocity until the last furrow is turned, the last ear of corn gathered and stored. Time does not count in hours and days, but in the

appointed time for each farm movement. Like clouds rising from the horizon, the weather or work moves across our sky. The farmer is a prisoner of the seasons, locked into the needs of each task as it appears. He is both a victim and a favorite of the weather, which may give him all its advantages or turn against him.

The difficulty of trying to move a corn picker or combine through a field that the rains have made a sea of mud is beyond description, even using all the bad words. A tractor will bury itself in the mud without a qualm. More than once, our wide-track tractor has gone to pull some neighbor's machine from its deep decline. In the days of horses, when we needed to make every day count, we used a "jerk" team in the muddy fields to get the wagons of bundles to the threshing machine.

The spring's imperatives make the season exciting. The days come and go, linked in a chain of events pulling them toward a conclusion. Either the seed found a place to grow or it failed. The time to plant corn is always at corn-planting time, and no farmer ever lost his way in the schedule of his needs. No assurance of a good season comforts him, because he does not believe it. He knows that too much rain may fall, that drought may wilt his crops, that hail may bring hammers of catastrophe, that lightning may kill his cows, burn his barn, split the elm at the corner of the yard. He knows what he must do with his days if he expects a harvest in the fall. Spring pressures push him to field, stall, and pen as he tries to bring to pass the creation of something never before in existence. He knows that the seed cannot wait, the earth must be turned, the weather reckoned with. He knows the risk of delay, so if the weather turns in his favor on Sunday, he spends his absence from church in his own kind of worship out in the fields.

The land waits on his performance, and he makes his way as best he can to encourage summer's growth and autumn's harvest. The crop never equals the one he holds in his mind's eye, but there is always next year. I remember what one of our neighbors said after he had shipped a load of steers to Chicago. We asked if the price pleased him and he answered, "About what I expected but

not as much as I hoped."

The dust in our eyes as a burning July wind wilts the corn tassels will make us wonder if we have offended the urgency of life. He has his work cut out for him who dares direct the ways of living things.

Farm Life When the Power Changed

The change in the kinds and application of power came slowly at our farm. In my boyhood, the farm supported itself as an independent country bound to the outside world of town and city only by the roads. We lived in a rich harvest of food. The yield of garden and orchard filled every nook and cranny of storage space, every Mason jar, each jelly glass, the wooden pegs in the smokehouse. We boys were Mother's hired men to help weed and pick and bring in all the vegetables and fruit needed for a family of six, eight, ten, depending on the number of hired men and hired girls that lived with us. No one ever went hungry, but almost everyone complained of the work necessary to bring the produce to cellar and bin. It was a kind of autumn of discontent and a winter of fulfillment.

As soon as his boys were old enough to operate the farm, Grandfather Hearst went his own way. He planted a huge apple orchard (at least it seemed huge when it came time to pick the apples). It contained about seventy-five trees. He found room for early and late cherry trees and four kinds of plums. To this day I can still smell the odor of plums rotting and fermenting under the trees and hear myself gasp as a cherry limb broke and sent me with my pail of cherries plummeting to the ground. This may have been before nurseries began sending out apple trees grafted onto hardy wild apple roots. I'm not sure. But, for whatever reason, Grandfather loved to graft twigs of one variety onto the branches of another. He confused one tree with six different varieties growing and bearing apples on its boughs. He planted some varieties I have not seen for many years: the yellow, spicy-smelling Grimes Golden, the Black Oxford (whose seeds rattled when you shook the apple if

it was ripe), the Oldenburgs (hard as baseballs and about as tasteless, but they lasted until June). Then there were all the usual kinds: Russet, Snow, Duchess, Jonathan, and—cherished above all others by us children—Whitney Crabs. He even planted a Whitney Crab in the pasture, and when I went for cows I stopped and picked a pocketful. When the low-hanging crab apples were gone, I stood on the little mare's back to reach for more. Once she went off and left me hanging from the branches, strange fruit for a tree to bear.

The blackberry patch—four rows, each ten rods long—never failed to load us with its shiny black fruit. And then there was the raspberry patch, and two kinds of currants, red and white, and two long rows of grapes, early white ones and the purple Concords. Sometimes, if the grapes hung too long and a rain came, they split open. A few days of sun fermented them, and we children used to go out and watch the goldfinches and warblers, slightly drunk, cheeping and fluttering along the ground, too intoxicated to become airborne. We never tried to catch them, though; we respected their right to freedom.

A row of rhubarb, first fruit in the spring, how we looked forward to it. We used it for medicine when we played doctor, dipping the stalks in sugar we stole from the kitchen. We wove the leaves into hats and wore them pinned together with twigs. An asparagus patch large enough to support ten families, a strawberry bed the same size (Mother hated the strawberry bed because, she said, it harbored garter snakes). And the vegetable garden—row after row of carrots, beans, peas, celery, radishes, lettuce, onions, turnips, parsley, and parsnips that you left out all winter and dug out of the ground in the spring (I still can't stand the stuff). The hired man plowed the garden and smoothed it. Then Father, with a twine string stretched between two stakes, marked out the rows. We came along with Mother and sowed the seeds and onion plants and covered the rows and waited for rain.

Mother had a flower garden, too. Sweet peas climbed a trellis of chicken wire, pansies peeked out among ferns along the porch, where climbing roses festooned each post. She grew phlox, too,

and delphinium and a few asters and nasturtiums. How did she ever find the time to do so many things?

A Calvinistic streak on the Hearst side made work an escape from temptation. It also taught us that wasting food was a sin. I am sure many folk of our generation felt that way. On the farm we all knew the work of raising, harvesting, and preparing what we ate, the whole year of growing in which we invested our muscles and minds. No one who sweat and worried as we did ever let good food perish. I suspect that deep in the veins of all of us rides the spectre of hunger inherited from our forefathers, who often starved in a cave with their families if the winter stretched too long and game disappeared. Or, just a few generations ago, the pioneer who plowed the sod, cleared the land, and built his log hut, had first of all to provide for himself and family. No, we did not throw away good food, even the jars of spoiled fruit or vegetables or meat found their way to the hog troughs. We cleaned up our plates. To this day it disturbs me to see children careless with their food and without reprimand from their parents.

In these days of the supermarket and packaged foods, no one knows how many hours of work went into preparing our winter supply. We dried sweet corn in the sun, cutting it off the cob, spreading it on the southward-facing porch roof, and covering it with netting to keep the flies off. In winter the hard, dry kernels, when cooked and creamed, gave a special touch to many a meal. I can still imagine that taste like nuts baked in cream. We made sun-cured strawberry jam, the berries spread on an old table that had each leg in a can of water to keep the ants from crawling up to the fruit. The canning—jellies, preserves, watermelon and cucumber pickles—boiled and sizzled on the big range. The potatoes were always dug on a Saturday so the children would be home from school to help pick them up in baskets to be dumped in a wagon. Then they were stored in the cellar in the potato bin. What an earthy smell they exhaled. And in the spring we would spend a day sprouting them—breaking off the long white sprouts, lest they flourish in the dimness and leave us a soft, shrunken potato. One year, Mother read somewhere that the way to keep dahlia bulbs all

winter was to store them with the potatoes. We dug up the dahlias and put them in a small pile in the potato bin. But in the spring we could find no dahlia bulbs, and everyone remembered the strange-tasting, yellow-colored mashed potatoes we ate one winter evening for supper.

Each fall, usually after corn husking, we butchered a hog. We children watched in a kind of morbid fascination how the pig, with a rope around one hind leg to keep it from running away, was gently herded toward an improvised platform beside a barrel of steaming-hot water. Then Father shot the hog in the forehead with a .22 rifle and, after it collapsed, the hired man stuck a knife in its throat to bleed it. Some of the neighbors, when they butchered a hog, saved the blood and made blood pudding, but we drew the line there.

Then Father and the hired man, each grasping a hind leg, sloshed the hog up and down in the steaming water until the bristles softened. Then they hauled it out on the platform and scraped off the bristles. There it lay, a great pink and white body with the head still on, like some monster hauled up from the depths of the sea. A stick, pointed at both ends, was inserted through the tendons of each hind leg. A rope from the middle of the stick ran over a pulley, and the pig was hoisted into the air, hanging head-down, the nose just inches from the ground. Father gave the long butcher knife a couple of swipes on the whetstone and cut the skin from stem to gudgeon. But before the guts rolled out, the anus was cut free and tied with a string so no fecal material would spill out on the meat. The heart and liver were taken out and placed in a large white pail. We never saved the kidneys, though sometimes we had a hired man who wanted them. Father cut the head off and sawed the body in two, right down the backbone. Then the carcass hung overnight to cool.

Cut up the next day, the ham and bacon sides went to the smokehouse, the meat from the head was sliced and used for headcheese, scraps and strips of meat were run through the grinder for sausage, and all the fat was divided into chunks to be melted

down for lard. Oh, what a greasy day it was in the kitchen, the boiling kettle sending up clouds of stinking smells, the kitchen table slippery and piled with chunks of fat yet to be rendered, the floor stained and spotted with grease, and the shiny pails into which the rendered lard was poured. The decks of the *Pequod* were never awash with more grease than our kitchen at butchering time. But when the day ended, with the lard and sausage packed away and the green hickory sticks smoldering in the smokehouse, we could be thankful for a winter's supply of meat.

Occasionally we slaughtered a heifer, but mostly we bought a side of beef from one of the neighbors. The cows and calves in our purebred Shorthorn herd brought more money when sold for breeding purposes than in the butcher shop. When a cow grew too old to be useful, we shipped her to the packing plant to be made into sandwich meat—one of the "canners and cutters," as the trade calls them—no stringy old cow meat for us.

Mother raised purebred Plymouth Rock chickens. She bought roosters from a Mr. Hemmerling in Waterloo, who had what she thought were the proper bloodlines in his chickens. The Plymouth Rocks grew to be big, solid chickens, and when a hen quit laying she became the meat course for our Sunday dinner. We children waited for the day when a rooster outlived his usefulness and ended in a kettle on the stove to be boiled all day because he was so tough. Then Mother made noodles, rolling out the dough so thin that you could almost see through it and hanging it on the backs of the dining-room chairs to dry. She cut it into very thin strips and cooked them with the chicken broth. The rooster, tough or not, made a feast we could hardly wait to devour.

A backward glance shows me that Mother must have found more hours in a day than women do today. It seems a kind of miracle that she could accomplish all she did. Without a vacuum cleaner, refrigerator, or electric lights, she ran a taut ship. True, she often had a hired girl to help her, and as her children grew older they pitched in to hunt eggs and bring in baskets of wood. But she also had hired men to cook for as well as her own family. We always ate in the dining room, a linen tablecloth and linen napkins on the

table, and all these had to be washed and ironed by hand. I am ashamed to think I complained about running the washing machine on Monday morning, while Mother sorted the clothes, rinsed them, and hung them on the line even in freezing weather. How I wish she could have had the electric washer and drier we have now. My father worked hard, put in long days of labor, taught us patiently how to harness a horse, milk a cow, help a sow deliver her pigs, but he vanished into the barn before the threat of helping in the house. Mother depended on her children and a hired girl—when she had one—for help.

Father built a fire in the range when he came down in the morning. But Mother got up, dressed by lamplight, sometimes in a frigid upstairs, and came down to prepare a substantial breakfast for her family and the hired men—oatmeal, fried eggs and bacon, sometimes sausage and pancakes, coffee, and toast made by holding the slice of bread on a long fork over the flames of the range when one lid was removed. Then there were four lunches to pack in lunchboxes by eight o'clock so we could march off a mile and a half to school. She made the beds, filled the kerosene lamps and polished the chimneys, filled the lanterns and wiped out their chimneys, and had dinner ready by twelve o'clock.

But this was routine. She kept a big flock of chickens, grew flowers in a flower garden, tended the vegetable garden—with help from Father and us—put up the vegetables and fruit in jars and cans, mended our overalls and darned our socks. She found time to read to us when we were little. She was president of the Ladies Aid in the Congregational Church and a member of the P.E.O. She drove a horse to town for the meetings and brought home groceries and books from the library. She taught us manners—savages that we were—and tried to instill an appreciation of good books, good music, good pictures, and good speech in our grubby little souls. So, by precept and example, we learned to take off our caps in the house, wipe our feet before we came in, control our appetite until everyone was seated and served, keep quiet in church, and not to speak until we were spoken to. Courtesy, said Mother, shows a civilized, educated person.

Practice it, she said, and she meant it.

Almost without being told, we knew that we must help with the work, the everlasting chores, the things that had to be done. We might complain, but we did them. As soon as we could, brother Bob and I graduated to barn and farm work. Here Father took over and taught us the work of the farm. Bob was two years younger than I but he was bigger; he could sling those heavy breeching harnesses over the rump and back of ton-sized work-horses as well as I could—or as well as I couldn't, we had to grow into that job. We milked cows, fed the pigs, carried corn, and threw down hay. But so did all the other boys in the neighborhood; we just followed farm custom.

Before we grew large enough and strong enough to do the work ourselves, Bob and I teamed up. Bob drove the horses on the cultivator, I managed the shovels. We husked corn as a pair, and many a time we caught up with Father or one of the hired men and made them turn out and let us through. We went threshing together, two of us on the same bundle wagon, and we not only kept our place but we also hustled some of the older men who did not enjoy being hustled.

Slowly a metamorphosis took place in farm life. We did not know it, but technology was about to shove aside the way of life that we knew. The heavy work horses and their harnesses, complicated in the summertime with fly nets (how we boys struggled with them), the horseshoes (sharp caulks for winter, smooth plates for summer), the breast-strap driving harness with its fancy leather fly net, saddles, riding bridles, halters, and currycombs—all moved slowly into the past. It's hard to let go of the past. The hot days cultivating corn, when we stopped every round or two and lifted the horses' collars so the air would cool them. At night, after we stripped off the harness, we washed those shoulders and examined them for sores. We could make the ten- and fifteen-foot blacksnakes we used to drive the cows home from the pasture crack like firecrackers and snap flies off the barn door. How the riding horses hated them because, until we learned to handle them,

we sometimes whacked the horse we were on over the ears. We used to steal the fine leather strips from the driving horse's fly net and weave them into the ends of the cattle whips for crackers. The only trouble was they cracked off, and we didn't dare take many or we would have been called on the carpet by Father.

The change came slowly at first. Our neighbor installed an acetylene plant—no more kerosene lamps and lanterns. Another neighbor bought a Waterloo Boy tractor (the forefunner of the famous John Deere) and a two-bottom plow. Bob died of cancer, I was in the hospital from my diving accident; perhaps this hastened our moves. One Sunday I came home for dinner and Chuck drove up to the house on a Cletrac, an endless-tread tractor, and a three-bottom plow went with it. We sold some of the horses now; the ponies had been sold long ago. Our house burned down and we optimistically wired the new house for electricity. As I mentioned in "Faith and Feuds," the manager of the Public Service Company, an old friend of Father's, had promised us an electric line if we would permit the company to erect its poles along our fence. Father gladly gave the permission but the electricity never came.

We shrugged it off, all but Father. He felt that he had been betrayed by the manager, his friend, the best man at his wedding. But Uncle Will, to his surprise, found himself elected to the city council. He suggested that the Municipal Utilities run a line out 27th Street. The manager, Clark Streeter, promoted the idea as a way to unite the farm people with the town. These political theories did not mean a thing to us—we just wanted juice in our lines in the house. Sure enough, the day came when the posthole diggers began to move out our way. Because Iowa Public Service took one side of the road, the Cedar Falls Municipal Utilities had to go on the other side. This meant the telephone lines had to come down and be put up on the electric-light poles. We owned our own telephone lines and phones, no problem there. But Northwestern Bell did not seem happy to have lines coming into their switchboard that hung under electric lines. Finally, safety fuses were agreed upon and the problem was settled.

Every time we drove to town we watched the progress of the line of poles. Every Saturday when he came home from Des Moines, Father walked around the house and snapped the switches as though electricity came by osmosis. The day came when the switch at the plant sent the juice out through the wires and the lights came on.

Farm life took on a new dimension. Not even the telephone changed our way of living, thinking, and acting as did the coming of electricity. This break with the past gave us an entrance to the modern world. Later, we learned some of the risks involved in our loss of independence. But right now farm life bloomed with an aura of light that came out of a wire, a bright spreading light, not the dim glow of smoky lanterns and old-fashioned lamps. Iowa State University sent a man from the Extension Department to show us the cost and voltage of toasters, refrigerators (goodbye old icebox!), vacuum cleaners (goodbye brooms!), and motors to run washing machines, milking machines, and the pump at the well head. We kept the windmill for years, mainly because the radio antenna was fastened to it, but the storage battery that powered the radio gave way to the new electricity. Mother approved of this; the battery had leaked once and the acid ate a hole in her carpet. After that we put the battery in a metal tray, but it was too late for that carpet.

Horses still counted on the farm. The tractor plowed, disked, and sometimes harrowed. But horses pulled the oat seeder, the corn planter, and the wagons filled with hay, corn, and oats at threshing time. For several years the horses pulled the wagons beside the corn picker that the tractor powered from its power take-off. But the move to supplant horses with power machinery had begun. We used a light team on the chore wagon. But we found it more to our liking to grease and oil the machines than repair harness and take care of horses. Only one team was shod now for winter work. We bought a grinder and a belt, and hitched the tractor to the grinder, and ground our own livestock feed. A few trucks began to haul livestock to the stockyards and packing house. We no longer rose up at daylight to drive a load of steers on

foot and horseback down Main Street to the Illinois Central stockyards. We hired Matson or Schneiderman to haul them.

The next quantum leap for us came when my brother Charles and I traded our last four work horses (and cash) for a small tractor, a disk, and a combine. The day of neighborhood threshing was done with.

It sounds easy to say it, but the move jarred and jolted and scraped feelings. Perhaps major changes are never made without resistance and harsh criticism. Tradition pulls like a magnet on the ways of people who have lived long with their prejudices and customs. Farmers by nature are conservative folk. Some of our neighbors laughed behind our backs at us for planting hybrid corn. They stayed stubbornly with the open-pollinated varieties until the difference in yields made them look ridiculous. Years before, when we hauled lime and spread it so we could grow alfalfa, one neighbor came to see us and explained that "you boys" are killing yourselves and your hired men, too, with all this foolishness. In those days we shipped in the lime by the carload, spotted it on the College siding, shovelled it off into wagons, and hauled it home with horses. We borrowed the township dump boards so we would not have to shovel it off. It was hard, back-bending work and sometimes we wondered if he wasn't right in saying, "Timothy is good enough, let this newfangled stuff like alfalfa alone." But when he saw us take off three cuttings in one season, he started growing the "newfangled" stuff himself.

The change in threshing caused some hard feelings. The original threshing ring took in a lot of territory. The machines we used could knock out four thousand bushels of oats a day. The big steam engine could pull the hind end off creation and the separator, with its forty-six-inch cylinder, could thresh out the oats as fast as we could throw in the bundles. Sometimes we used two spike pitchers, and that meant four men throwing bundles into the machine. We exchanged help with each other, and in a big ring like that there was always plenty of help. But when the gasoline-powered tractor appeared, the days of the steam engine came to an end.

Now, though, a smaller separator was needed; the tractors did not have the power to handle the big machines. This meant a longer time spent at each farm to thresh the grain. So the big threshing ring broke up into several smaller ones. Now we had to stretch to find enough manpower. We hired extra help when we could, but men who could put in a day's work out in the sun in August were not easily found. Then the bickering began. If one man with twenty acres of oats threshed his crop in half a day, why should he put in more than half a day helping the rest of his neighbors? But his help was needed, and when he did not show up, the rest of us worked harder than we should to fill the vacancy. The twenty-acre man had the argument on his side, but there existed an obligation to stay with the work until it was finished.

Our crop was the largest, Art Larsen on the Jewell farm came next. When the machine reached our farm, only a skeleton crew showed up. Art was mad. He had sent four men and so had we, which made plenty of help for the small jobs. Whether it developed with the times or for whatever reason, neighborhood cooperation went a little sour. We said to Art, "Never again."

He asked, "What will you do?"

We said, "Try one of the small combines."

This move had no precedent. Large combines had been used for years on the western plains, where the dry ground supported them and the wheat stood up dry and hard. Small, one-farm combines had never been tried in the Middle West, where it rained often during the harvest season. But now the implement companies made a tentative attempt to manufacture a small combine the Midwest farmer could use.

We bought one of the early machines. (Art, by the way, bought one soon after we did.) Our experience with it could fill a book. In the first place, we did not let the grain stand long enough to thoroughly ripen. We tried to combine it at the same time that we cut it with a grain binder, forgetting that it cured in the shock. Then, too, the tractor did not have enough power to pull the combine and operate its machinery from the power take-off. (The second combine we bought had its own motor, a V-4 Wisconsin

air-cooled engine with thirty-five horsepower.) When it rained, we started to combine before the grain was completely dry. Then the cylinder would plug, and a man could break his back trying to turn the cylinder back a few inches so he could pull out the wad of damp straw. More than once we pulled the combine up to the house, damp straw hanging from it like wool from the jaws of a sheep-killing dog. But we learned, and we managed to harvest the crop.

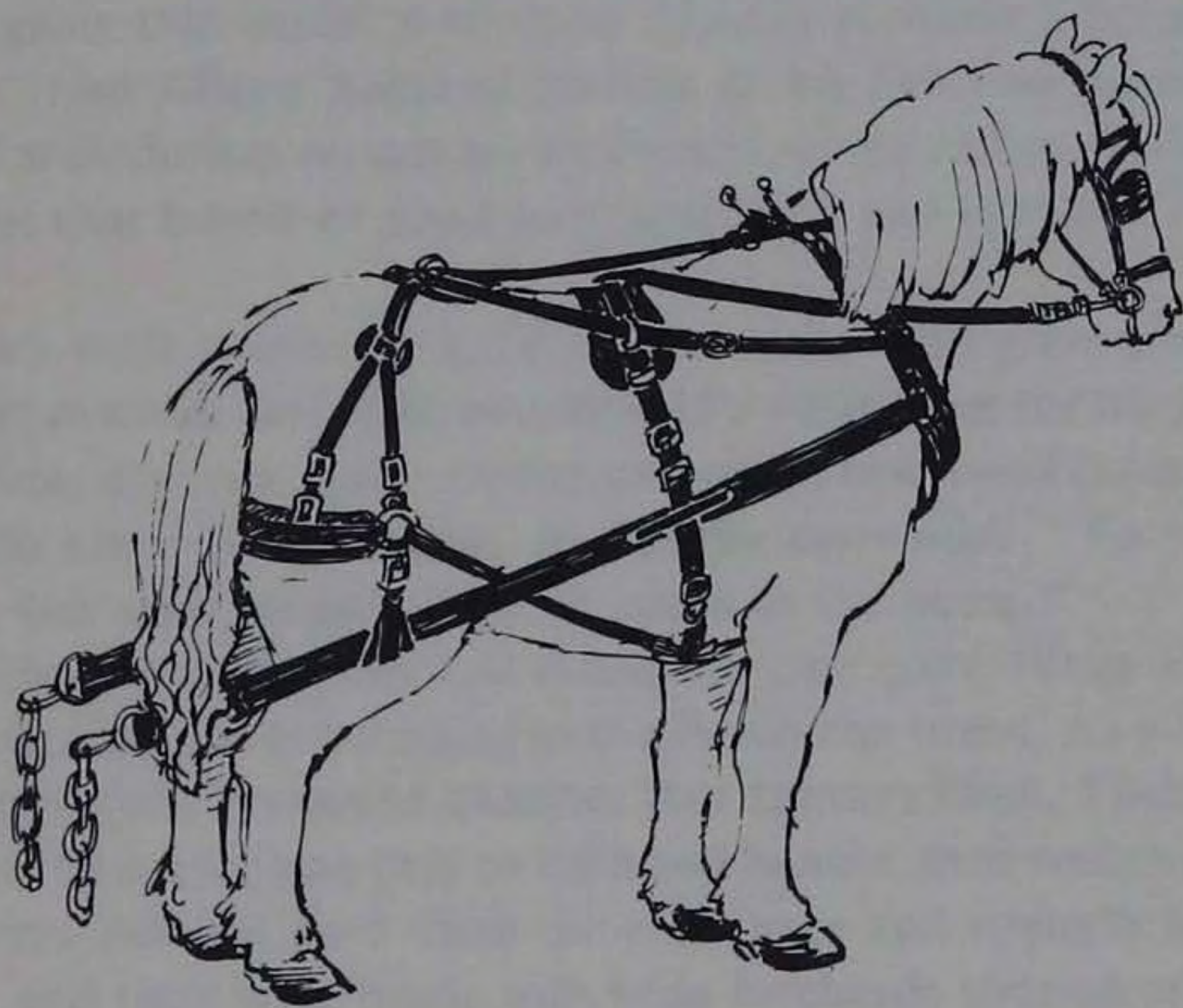
This ended the threshing ring. In a few years, anyone who did not own a combine hired a custom operator to come in and combine his grain. When the country schools closed and the buses from the town school district came out to take the country children to the town schools, the neighborhood lost its center and never again became the close-knit entity it once was.

The coming of the power machinery and electricity to the farm did away with much of the hard arm and back work farmers knew. And it lightened the load of the farm wife beyond measure. It angers me a little when I think of the endless steps farm women walked carrying water from the well. Women in town just opened a faucet. Farm women might have had the same benefit if an enlightened government or private corporation had sent electricity to the rural areas years earlier.

Of course, something was lost, too. The neighborhood had become a number of private homes and farm operations, the group feeling disappeared, the cohesion of people in a kind of social entity had dissolved. Too, the independence of the farm eroded. Now a single copper wire took the place of the woodpile and windmill. The farm itself no longer existed as a self-sustaining unit. The helplessness of the farm when the electricity fails came home to me after an ice storm, when the city fire trucks hauled water out to the farms for the livestock until the lines could be repaired.

But the destiny that fires the boilers of technology does not ask if change makes better or worse lives for people. We may call it progress, but in the back of our minds the feeling persists that the cost of the changes must be reckoned with too.

HORSES AND MEN



Horse Power

Land, horses, men, and women combined to fill the barns, corncribs, and granaries and feed the hungry mouths of the farm's citizens. We depended on the strength of animals to work the fields and pull the load and transport us to our destinations. Horses? We had ponies, driving horses, a riding horse or two, but most of the forty head of horses that we ran were draft animals.

A draft horse resembles the sound of its name. It is a work horse, an animal big enough and strong enough to pull the wagons and plows, the disks, harrows, and planters, and do all the hauling and tugging that needs to be done. Usually it means a horse that weighs from fifteen hundred pounds (a bit light) to a ton. An animal with the legs set out on the corners, as my father would say, and one that boasts of good teeth and wind and eyes and intelligence.

In our work horses we liked the horse that had good manners but that came up on the bit and showed a willingness for the job. It took care, patience, and training to make a rawboned three-year-old into a responsible horse. As Lauritz once said: "To train a horse, you must know at least as much as the horse."

We saved brood mares and raised our own colts. When I was a youngster the mares belonged to the Percheron breed. As a breed, the Percherons possessed qualities that farmers liked. Their mild disposition made them easy to train and handle, their well-muscled shoulders and legs gave them the endurance and strength for the work, and their large heads with wide foreheads showed promise of their domestic tidiness. They had clean legs, unlike the Clydesdales with their shaggy fetlocks, and were neither the largest nor heaviest of the draft breeds. They submitted to routine easily and lacked the excitement of resistance to commands.

By the time I was old enough to handle horses, we were breeding our mares to a Belgian stallion. This gave the colts more bone and muscle; they grew into larger, heavier horses. They also inherited a spunkiness and a spirited outlook that kept the driver alert lest his team run away with him. The change in color appeared as the colts (not all, but some) turned a blue roan as they matured. The Belgians were not as dependable as the Percherons; you didn't doze off with slack lines while driving a team of Belgians, but they showed more stamina and drive.

We children always made pets of the colts. They amused us, staggering around on their long legs, their curly tails wagging. We scratched their necks, and to reciprocate, they turned and nibbled our shoulders. Once in a while their teeth would close down on a mouthful of our shoulders and we yelled and pushed them away. It amused us to watch them spread their front legs, like a giraffe, when they bent down to snatch a mouthful of grass.

Colts played a large part in the exciting time of birth on the farm. We let them out of the stalls after their mothers had gone to the field to work. They tore around the yard, shied at the chickens, tried to nose the dog that snapped at them, and let us play with them. But before noon they became hungry, and the air filled with their cries. When the men drove in to unhitch for dinner, the colts rushed to their mothers and began to nurse. They meant business. They climbed over the tugs, shoved the harness aside, crowded up against their mother's side, tails wagging furiously, heads thumping the udders to ask for a faster flow of milk. They were a nuisance to men trying to unhitch the teams and lead them to the water tank. Over and over Father scolded us, "Can't you keep those colts in the barn until we unhitch and stable the mares?" But we would forget, and the next time the teams came in, there were the colts, raring to go.

We raised four to six colts every year as replacements for horses too old or worn out to work. Draft horses used for hard work have things happen to them—sore shoulders, cataracts over their eyes, spavined legs, stiff joints—they age just as people do and suffer some of the same ills that come with age and hard work. We did

not sell our horses. When they could no longer work, Father retired them to the pasture and straw stacks, where they lived out their lives.

When my brother and I took over the farm and decided to mechanize fully, we traded off our last four draft horses for a combine and tractor. We felt like traitors; we had sold our old friends into slavery. I spent many hours afterward wondering if we should have put them away rather than let them go into some other farmer's barn.

The colts, when they reached three or four years of age, had to learn to wear a harness, endure a bit in their mouths, and pull the load they were hitched to. We had played with them so much when they were nursing that, even after years out to pasture, they still submitted readily to being handled and brought into the barn.

I remember a day in March before spring work in the fields started. We brought in a mare and a gelding (the "horse" colts, the males, had long been castrated and were called geldings). Rough hair, matted manes and tails, splayed hoofs, they looked wild and woolly. The halter disturbed them; they did not like being tied to the manger. Father and Lauritz curried them, scratching out the mats of winter hair. After the first shudder, the two colts seemed to enjoy this. Then their manes and tails were combed and clipped.

Next came trimming their feet. This they resisted—reared up, pranced around—they did not want one leg lifted up and held while a curved knife cleaned out the frog and pincers snipped off the long hoofs. So Lauritz put a twist on their noses. It was a short loop of rope run through a hole in the end of a stick. The noose was slipped over the end of their noses and the stick turned until the noose tightened. It hurt, and the pain made them forget the man busy with their feet.

Sometimes Lauritz held them, sometimes I did, when I was old enough. Father or Lauritz trimmed their feet. The hind feet were the trickiest; a good kick could send a man flying. But these two colts made no further protest once the trimming started.

Then we put them in a stall by themselves. Father said, "Throw a harness on them, but fit the collar first." This was important. A horse pulls with his shoulders, and the collar must be the right size and shape or the shoulders develop big, ugly sores that are hard to heal once they appear. So we tried a half dozen collars until we found one that fit. Then Lauritz lifted a heavy breeching harness off the hook. "Stand back, you kids," he said. "The colt, he may not like this."

He threw it over the colt's back. The colt shuddered, bent his back as if a weight had been laid on it, then straightened up and tried to shake it off. Lauritz put a bridle over the halter and forced a bit in the colt's mouth. He chewed on this like a youngster chewing gum, then tried to spit it out.

By this time Father had an old, trusty mare harnessed and hitched to the bobsled. Lauritz led out the colt, shoved him into place beside the old mare, fastened the neckyoke that held up the tongue to his collar, and fastened the tugs to the doubletree. He snapped the lines to the bit, fastened a long rope to the halter, and stood back. Father got into the sled and gathered the lines and said, "Get up."

The old mare started, of course, but the colt hung back, pranced sideways, tried to break the tug rubbing on his leg. Lauritz slapped him on the rump. The colt bucked a little, made a jump forward. The sled was no load at all, and soon the colt kept up with the mare. Suddenly, frightened, he crowded against her, but she nipped him good and hard and he straightened up and moved along. Soon the team began to trot, Lauritz running alongside holding the rope, just in case things got out of hand and Father couldn't control the rumpus.

Then the colt was unhitched and put back in the barn, and the young mare went through the same performance. The harness was left on them for several hours to accustom them to it.

Breaking a colt did not always go this smoothly. There were colts with a mind of their own and an angry response. We had broken tongues, tangled harness, harsh words from the men, and a quick retreat for us. A sixteen-hundred-pound colt, standing on

his back feet, striking with his front feet, and shaking his head in a wild spasm of displeasure brings out a small fear and severe words from the men. No horse on our farm was ever beaten; Father simply would not tolerate it. But an unruly horse got jerked by the bit and slapped with the end of the lines.

When I was twelve years old, Father decided (after some coaxing) that I could handle six horses on a gang plow. Four horses were hitched abreast and a lead team hitched out in front. When Father or Lauritz used this hitch, they put a spirited team in front, to keep their tugs tight and also because they were out of reach of the driver.

But not for me. No, I took—by orders—an old team for the lead team "so they wouldn't run away with me." What a miserable life they led me. Draft horses! I had draft horses, all right. Four broad, thick behinds ambling along, and out in front a team that slacked off, stepped over their tugs, refused to pull their share. I yelled at them, threw clods at them, went around and hit them with a cornstalk. I bawled sometimes, in frustration. Huddled in a sheepskin coat, cap down over my ears, I must have looked like a fat dwarf attacking huge beasts.

But sometimes old Topsy and Dolly would step out smartly and all went well and I sat watching the earth roll off the moldboards while I tried to figure out how many rounds it would take to plow the field. With two fourteen-inch plows, I cut a fifty-six-inch swath each round. Let's see, the field is forty rods wide, there are sixteen and a half feet in a rod. . . . Around in my head the figures would go while I watched my horses and hoped the plow would scour so I wouldn't need to stop and clean it.

One day in spring, it must have been a Saturday because I was not in school, Father sent me out to disk the fall plowing so he could plant corn. It was a warm, pleasant April morning, with the killdeer piping as they ran along the edge of the field and a few pheasants slipping through the grass at the fence row.

I must have been seventeen years old, doing a man's work at that age. I hitched four horses to the disk, pulled the levers to

angle the blades, and started out. Then I noticed that Flora was lame. I stopped, unhitched her, tied the other horses to a fence-post, and led the lame horse back to the barn. "I need another horse," I told Father.

He wrinkled his nose. "Do you suppose you could handle the four-year-old colt in the stall with Flora? I'd like to work him a bit and get him toughened in."

"Why not!" I said, with all the assurance of a young man.

So I took Prince (we children named all the colts), threw a harness on him, and led him out to the field. Lauritz was harrowing the field where it had been disked, and he stopped to help me hitch Prince to the disk. "Better use four lines," he warned me. I was in the habit of using two lines for a four-horse team. I'd snap one end of the line to the outside horse and cross over the other strand and snap it to the bit of the inside horse. I followed Lauritz' suggestion. We maneuvered Prince into place, and I got up on the seat and started the team. Three of the horses moved ahead. The colt did not budge. The disk slewed around and the horses stopped. I slapped Prince sharply with the lines. He gave a mighty lunge, dragging the disk and the other horses with him. Then he stopped and backed up, but when he felt the evener against his back legs he lunged ahead again. He stood still, trembling. I spoke quietly to him and tried to start the team again. The three older horses moved ahead and the colt, after hesitating, made two big lunges.

Lauritz left his team. He came over and stroked the colt's neck and spoke to him in Danish. Then he said to me, "I'll lead him and see if he won't pull steady."

Lauritz held Prince by his halter and walked beside him. The colt began to walk in time with the other horses. Lauritz said over his shoulder, "He never learned to pull. He doesn't know how it feels yet."

I kept on going, the colt steadily pulling ahead. The muscles in his hind legs quivered. After an hour of work, he was so wet with sweat that, where the harness rubbed him, the sweat formed ridges of foam. At the end, I stopped and unhitched him. He had had his

Three Old Horses

Returning to the gate at close of day
the horses walk together all the way,
one is a solemn roan, the others gray.

I watch their feet plunge softly in the snow
giving a plain account of where they go
but not revealing much of what they know.

The three of them are winter owners here
though who sold out to them is still not clear,
there's a farmer back behind it all, I fear.

They spend their day in nosing over some
problem beneath the snow, at dusk they come
as all do on a winter's eve, toward home.

They nuzzle at my sleeve and kiss my face,
and feel that they have said with this embrace
we welcome you to your accustomed place.

We walk together through the open gate
in quickstep for the early dark seems late
to those who know where food and shelter wait.

Heads deep in hay they soberly concur:
all grass is flesh, and nod as if it were
a truth with which I could make quite a stir.

And so in peace within their stoic shed
they let me choose at will what I am fed,
and while I watch the night they sleep instead.

lesson for the day. I tied the team to a post, led Prince to the barn, unharnessed him, and rubbed him down with a gunny sack. Then I harnessed Fannie and hitched her with the other three horses and the work went on.

Usually the draft horses were not nerve-haunted like the driving and riding horses. They were the power units on the farm—large, heavy, dependable, and built for work. We took good care of them, not only because they moved our loads, but because horses are friends of man, with loyalty and intelligence.

Every morning we curried them and brushed down their hair. We fed them well, used ground corn for those so old their teeth were smooth. We fed them enough oats to supply the protein in their ration and kept fresh straw in the stalls. When we unharnessed the horses after a hard day's work, we washed their shoulders and cleaned sweat from their collars. Horses whose hoofs had a tendency to split were kept shod.

In winter we turned the whole caboodle out to graze in the stalk fields and to eat oat straw from the stacks. A horse can maintain itself with this rough feed if it isn't working. And a horse will paw down through snow to find dead grass to eat, unlike a cow, which will stupidly stand still above snow-covered feed and starve to death. We shod two teams of horses with caulks on their shoes ("sharp-shod" we called it) and kept them in the barn. These were used to pull the wagons at chore time and wagons or sleds to town for loads of feed and coal. They could pull on icy roads and in snow-packed yards because the sharp caulks on their shoes bit into the icy surface.

Horses occupied a special place on the farm. Without their help, the farm work stood still. They not only furnished the power but also the transportation for us. They became a special category of concern for farmers. In some ways they seemed to have a wisdom older than ours, and for the most part they helped us willingly with our work.

To steal a horse was almost like taking away part of a man's

livelihood and family. And in the early days, horse thieves flourished. The Big Woods east of Janesville were reputed to be a hangout for a gang of horse thieves. I remember a story about a group of farmers who caught one thief and hung him in the Big Woods.

A group of farmers formed what they called the Horse Protective Association. My grandfather belonged to it. They were deputized and could make arrests and capture thieves. To my recollection, Grandfather was never called out to pursue a horse thief. I am sure he would have gone if called, for Grandfather was a man for law and order.

I remember Grandfather's belt of cartridges and holster that carried a six-shooter—it was a .44-90, a regular cannon. I tried shooting it once. We kept a vinegar barrel in the backyard with a bottle stuck in the bunghole to keep out the flies. I took six shots at that bottle, but the revolver had such a recoil that I couldn't hold it on target. The bottle never shattered. The belt and gun constituted a bit of history of the time when farmers stood together to defend their property. Without telephones or automobiles, I suppose word of lawbreaking ran from farm to farm through the lips of a boy or girl on horseback. Like Paul Revere, they sounded the alarm.

We phased slowly from horse power to machine power. Our first tractor was an International 15-30, a big, clumsy, noisy machine. No doubt, all of us who drove those early tractors had our hearing impaired by the exhaust blatting away all day long. We used this tractor to plow and disk and, with a belt, run the grinder. We still used horses for planting, cultivating, hauling manure, and pulling the hay and chore wagons. We still used horses on the grain and corn binders, too.

One winter night, with my father away, Mother woke me to say that a man and woman were stuck in a snowdrift a half mile south of our house. The man, one of our prominent citizens, was married, but not to the woman he had with him. She, poor soul, sat huddled in her fur coat, fearful that Mother would recognize her.

And, of course, Mother did.

I dressed, put on my mackinaw, overshoes, and mittens, got a log chain from the toolhouse, and tried to start the tractor. Nary a pop would it make. After I had cranked my arm tired, I harnessed Fannie and Flora, found a pair of doubletrees, and the man and I traipsed down to the car. I hooked the chain to his back bumper, hitched the team to the doubletrees, and spoke to the horses. They eased into their collars, braced their feet, and pulled the car loose from the drift. I brought the team home, unharnessed them, and went back to bed. The man paid Mother three dollars. The next morning, half joking, I said, "The tractor didn't want to go out on a cold night. I don't blame it."

But I really was only half joking. Deep in my blood runs a belief that machines harbor a malicious attitude toward mankind. You can find proof of this over and over. When the pump won't pump, the tractor won't start, the washing machine sits silent, or the furnace is cold, it is nearly always on a holiday or a weekend, when help is almost impossible to find. Come Monday morning, everything is in working order. I believe it was E. B. White, one of the editors of the *New Yorker,* who said that, when his Model T Ford refused to function properly, he let it rest in the garage for a few days, and then it would heal itself. You must play the lackey to machines and humor them.

True, machines make work easier, go faster, and do a better job than the simple tools we used with horses. They make it possible for an enterprising farmer to tend a thousand acres with little or no extra help. It salves his ego to farm BIG. But I was in the Amish country the other day. They still use horses. Their farms are small —forty, sixty, one hundred acres—but the people look healthy, well kept, and wear a serene expression. There must be other satisfactions in life than the determination to be the richest farmer in Fairview Cemetery. I watched an Amish farmer husking corn by hand; he had a team of horses and a wagon with bangboards on one side to throw the ears against. It was a warm, sunny day. He worked swiftly and easily, ripping back the husk and breaking off the ear in almost one flowing motion. I did not envy him, but I

know the confidence of being able to gather your crop with your own hands. The pleasure lies in doing what you do as well as you can do it.

The English poet Edwin Muir wrote a poem called "The Horses." The argument of the poem is that after the next dreadful war the land is devastated, radios stilled because there is no more electricity, no sounds, an empty landscape. A few people plow with oxen. Then a tapping is heard, hoof beats, the horses have come back and offer themselves to mankind to help them once again and to re-establish "that long lost archaic companionship." And the poem ends, "Since then they have pulled our ploughs and borne our loads/But that free servitude still can pierce our hearts."

Bridles, Saddles, and Buggies

One April morning, a Sunday morning (I remember because we got out of going to church), Lauritz said to Father, "Ve yank off the shoes this morning, ja?" We took it for a sign that winter had given way to spring when the horseshoes came off. We kept two teams sharp-shod all around, on all four feet, for farm work. Father led them out of the barn, one at a time. Lauritz picked up a foot, held it between his knees and, with a short crowbar, levered off the shoe. The nails pulled out because the heads of the nails were imbedded in the shoe. One at a time Lauritz pulled off the shoes.

The shoes from each horse were tied together with twine and the horse's name written on a piece of cardboard attached to the shoes. We hung them on the toolhouse wall. When tractors came in and horses went out, our toolhouse wall carried dozens of horseshoes, the heavy, sharp-caulked winter shoes, the light, flat shoes for driving horses, and several pairs of pony shoes.

We boys enjoyed this performance on a Sunday morning in spring. All winter the horses had walked with heavy iron shoes nailed to their hoofs. Now, suddenly the weight disappeared, and when the horse walked off it lifted its feet high, as if dancing, until its muscles grew accustomed to the lighter load. We pulled each other's shoes off and imitated the horses.

When the last horse turned back into the barn, I said to Lauritz, "What about Tom and Bess and Belle and Beauty, don't their shoes come off?"

He patted my head. "You use this for something besides wearing a cap, maybe? You run barefoot in your mama's garden, nice soft dirt. You run barefoot out on the gravelled road, hard, stony, it makes a difference. Tom and Bess and Belle and Beauty go on

the road."

"Well, I know that," I said, trying not to show my confusion.

"Ve leave their shoes on." And Lauritz walked away.

So I learned that riding horses and driving horses belonged to a different class than the heavy draft horses. By the time I could harness a horse I had learned about other differences. No heavy breeching harness with brass-tipped hames and a heavy collar for driving horses. The harness consisted of a breast collar—a wide, thick strap fitted to the horse's shoulders and held in place by a light strap over its withers. The tugs were light in weight and had holes like buttonholes to fasten them to the singletree of the buggy, not several links of heavy chain as on the thick tugs of the work horse's harness. The back pad was held in place by a girth around the horse's belly and a crupper under its tail. The lines came back through rings on the back pad.

The bridle was different, too. It had blinders and two bits. A small bit fastened to the check rein that went over the horse's head between the ears and fastened to the back pad. This held up the horse's head. On a fancy turnout the horses' heads were checked so high they could scarcely see. "Cruel," Lauritz said, "cruel, and it makes the horses look foolish." The other bit was the regular bit that the lines snapped onto for driving. Sometimes it was a wire bit if the horse was unruly.

All horses, like people, have individual characteristics. But, by temperament, the driving and riding horses show class distinctions. Generally they display a nervous, sensitive, spirited nature. One moves around them quietly and with care. They need to be handled with a kind hand. They like to have their personal idiosyncrasies recognized, too.

These horses are light in weight, have long, slim legs, thin bodies, and often small heads. Belle and Bess were half Morgan. Tom, a long-legged, rawboned, driving horse, probably had some purebred (racing) blood in him. He could pull the buggy along at a good clip and he seemed tireless. He responded gallantly to Mother's light touch on the reins, and carefully backed the buggy

away from the hitching posts in town. With us, he could be stubborn as a mule, tough-bitted, ungenerous with his talents. He was Mother's horse, all right.

Beauty was a riding horse. She weighed only about nine hundred pounds. A bright bay, trim, touchy in her habits, but easily gentled and friendly. She was my horse.

Our buggy represented the good solid stamina of a respectable farmer. Heavy, well-built, with a black body, dark dashboard, and whipstock. We children thought it reminded us of a long Sunday sermon. We yearned for an outfit such as one of our hired men owned: a light buggy with flashing wire wheels, the rims a deep yellow, the body of the buggy dark red, the dashboard shining patent leather, a fancy whip in the whipstock. Oh, it dazzled us. The top folded down to give a dashing appearance. His chestnut mare wore rosettes on her bridle, the harness was polished, the buckles shone like silver. No automobile could give such an impression of motion alive and fleet, of the eager sparkle to be off, held under tension by the check of discipline.

My awareness of the distinction between work horses and driving horses came to me early. Grandfather Hearst drove a light-footed team named Rex and Regal. He, and he alone, drove this team on his errands. Father told me years later that they were a feisty team, that Rex would spook at anything—a leaf blowing across the road, a bird flying over, a dog barking. "But," he told me, "your grandfather liked a team that showed spirit and made him keep a tight rein. If Rex cut up too often, your grandfather let him have a couple of strokes with the whip; that straightened him out."

We used shafts on the buggy for a single horse. But once in a while, if Father had miles to go, we would drive out the pins that held the shafts and put in a tongue so he could use a team. We took the tongue from the carriage; we always used a team to pull the carriage. The carriage had side curtains with isinglass windows in them. When we were buttoned in behind them with a laprobe over us, we could be very snug. Father carried horse blankets in the boot of the carriage, and if the weather was cold he blanketed

the team as they stood tied to the hitching rack behind the church.

We had three saddles in the barn. A heavy western-type saddle with a horn and a high cantle, a saddle about half that size but of the same pattern for our half-Arabian mare, and an English side-saddle my aunt used. Years earlier, Aunt Mamie had ridden from home to the Iowa State Normal School in Cedar Falls to get an education and a Bachelor of Didactics degree so that she could teach in the English Department there. Long after she had given up riding, the saddle still hung in the barn. We kids tried it a few times and thought women must have been crazy to use a saddle like that.

Then we had ponies. I must have been about twelve years old when Dot came to Maplehearst Farm. She was half Arabian, smaller than a horse, larger than a pony. She probably weighed between seven and eight hundred pounds. We could drive her or ride her. She developed into an excellent cow pony; once she got the hang of what was wanted, she could follow an errant steer or cow through all its twists and turns and keep right on its tail. She was in demand, with me on her back, to help the neighbors drive cattle to town.

When we bought her, Dot was in foal to a Shetland stallion. Her first colt, named Trix, seemed to us a gift from heaven. One morning Bob and I woke up and there was Father in the room with a strange creature in his arms. "It's a big dog!" Bob yelled. But when Father set it on its four quivering legs we saw it was a tiny pony colt. It was such a little colt compared to the colts from the draft mares. Bob put his arms around it and lifted it off the floor. "I must take it back to the barn," Father said, "or Dot will be upset."

Father turned Dot and her colt out in the yard. Good old Dot—that let us ride her, curry her, sit on her neck when she ate grass to have her toss us up on her back—she would not let us near her colt. So we just sat around the wire enclosure Father had put up and worshipped.

Trix lived up to her name. She shook hands, walked on her hind

legs, climbed stairs—it startled Mother one morning to find her in the kitchen. What irritated Father was Trix's ability to unlatch barn doors and open gates. Several mornings we woke up with the lawn full of horses and cattle. Finally Father issued an ultimatum: "Keep that pony tied up or I'll sell her. If these loose animals get out in the cornfield some night, we would be in trouble." It took skill to keep her tied up because she could untie knots, too.

Later, we "borrowed" a Shetland stallion named King from George Call, Johnny Call's son, and bred both Dot and Trix. Mr. Call said, "Keep him, I've no use for him, but I don't want to sell him."

So King came to live with us and helped us acquire twelve more ponies. Except for Dot, the ponies were all small, Shetland sized. When my cousin, James McAlvin, came to visit us, we played pony polo. We took the heads from croquet mallets and put long handles on them. Then we bridled four of the smaller ponies and we were off. Usually Chuck and I faced off against Jim and Bob. We had no saddles, so every time we swung at the ball we fell off our mounts. We were so awkward with our swings and lunges that sometimes we clipped our pony over the ears with the mallet. With the superior wisdom that horses have, the ponies soon learned to run with their heads down. This added to the falling-off action.

By the time we reached high school age, we had outgrown the ponies. Father had to keep at us to take care of them, trim manes and tails and hoofs. They were a nuisance, too, twelve ponies sneaking out of stalls, through gates, running wild. One winter we kept them all in a big calf pen. Dot stayed with us until she died. But one day Father sold the rest to the Clyde Miller circus. And none of us boys shed a tear. We had had the pony experience.

Anyone who has handled horses knows the excitement of handling a well-trained team, one that steps out with purpose, pushes on the bit so you feel it in the reins, and acts as if the horses are proud to serve you. Compared to this magnificent body of blood and sinew, an automobile is a hunk of iron—dead, inert, unresponsive —which, when called into action, stinks up the air we breathe.

The First Pony

This is the way it started. It was fall, the day damp and overcast, the town grimy, people in a hurry, or so Jim thought. He seemed puzzled, too. His father had asked him to go with him. Usually it was the other way around: he asked his father if he could go. The experiences stored up in his twelve-year-old memory did not explain this.

So far they had done nothing out of the ordinary. They had stopped at the grocery store for a list of things that Mother wanted. They left the team at the blacksmith shop because one of the horses had lost a shoe. They had been to the bank, where Jim listened to the dull, never-ending conversations between his father and the bank president. How he hated to visit the bank. Who cared for all this talk about crops and prices and the weather, and did the roads shape up after the gravel was spread on them? And just when Jim thought the talk was finished and his father started away, old Wilbur Hostrup would say, "Oh, Charlie . . ." and they would start in again.

One thing roused his curiosity. In the harness shop where his father bought two heavy tugs for one of the harnesses, he had asked a funny question.

Jim liked the harness shop; it smelled of leather and neat's-foot oil. Farmers gathered there on rainy days. He liked Chris Ingersen, who owned the shop. He was a small man with sharp elbows and knees, a wide, thin mouth in a round face, and a nose just long enough to keep his glasses from falling off. A crown of fuzzy hair circled his bald head. He sat cross-legged on a table, punched holes in harness to be mended, sewed up a bridle or hame strap or whatever he worked on with a "waxed end."

Today Hans Hansen, Henry Nielsen, and Alfred Jepsen were

there, sitting around. They were all neighbors, friendly neighbors. Solemnly Hans Hansen offered his plug of chewing tobacco to Jim. "Bite off a chew," he said. "It will help keep down the worms."

Al Jepsen patted Jim's behind and said, "Don't believe him. It ain't the tobacco, he's too mean for worms." Everybody laughed.

Today Jim saw his father poke around the shop and then ask, "How much for the saddle and bridle, Chris?" This puzzled Jim. They had a big western saddle at home, one with a high cantle, heavy stirrups, and two wide girths of woven horsehair. Jim never used it; he didn't have the muscle to throw it over a horse's back. He rode bareback. The saddle his father pointed to was brand new, light colored, built like a western saddle but half the size. It hung on a hook. The bridle beside it had long reins and a jawbreaker bit—a riding bridle, no blinders.

Chris squinted and pursed his lips. "I dunno, Charlie, I guess about thirty-five dollars for the outfit."

Nobody showed any interest. His father turned over the girths and looked at them. Then Henry told the story about a man who wore a saddle on his back because his wife, who was a witch, caught him with one of the hired girls.

"Come on, Jim," his father said, "we better go home before we get corrupted."

"Ja," Hans Hansen said, "I bet Jim he knows more about such things than you, Charlie."

Chris clucked his tongue. "Such talk, and in my own shop. When are you lazy loafers going home?" Everybody laughed and Jim and his father left.

But it stuck in Jim's mind. What did it matter what the saddle and bridle cost? They had a saddle at home. The streetlights flickered and glowed, dark was setting in early. Time to go home. "Come on," his father said, "let's go down to Weisbard's Livery Stable. I want to see Frank a minute."

Jim knew the livery stable. If the weather was real bad when they came to town, his father put the team in the livery stable for shelter. It cost twenty-five cents for the afternoon. His uncle Will,

the doctor, kept his horse in the livery stable all the time. When he had to make a call, he'd notify the livery stable and one of the horse jockeys would hitch up his horse and bring it to the office or house.

When they first entered, the livery stable smelled more of foxes than horses. Just inside the big double doors where the horses and wagons and buggies went in, Weisbard had a fox in a cage, a live fox with a sharp nose and bushy tail. The cage was a long wooden box, half-open in front and the open part covered with hardware cloth. The other half was boxed in and dark. But the fox paced endlessly back and forth, into his dark closet and out again into the light. Jim stopped and stared at the animal. He had seen it many times before, but the fox fascinated him, its endless journeys, its graceful turnabouts, the bushy tail swishing.

Sometimes it would stop to drink, its narrow red tongue lapping briskly, and then off on its travels. Jim wanted to turn it loose. He giggled, thinking how people would stare and jump and yell if the fox came running down Main Street. The door to the cage was fastened with a padlock. The musky smell filled the stable entrance.

"Come on, boy," his father said, "or we won't get home tonight." Like the old woman and her pig, Jim thought. His father became irritated by what he called Jim's dreamy ways. But "Come on"? Well, "Come on yourself!" He didn't want to see Frank Weisbard, but he moseyed after his father down the long alleyway, past the stalls, until they came to a box stall.

"Be with you in a minute, Charlie," Frank Weisbard said. He stood in the feed alley talking to a man.

His father opened the door of the box stall and said, "Well, Jim, what do you think?"

Jim stared. The stall seemed dark, but Jim could see the small, spotted horse. So this was why his father had wanted him to come to town. He stared but said nothing. He and his brothers and sister had long wanted a pony. But this was a small horse. "She for sale?" he asked, with as much of a man's voice as he could manage. He could tell she was a mare, her bag and teats seemed

swollen. Now he knew why his father had asked Chris Ingersen about the price of the saddle.

He kicked the straw bedding, trying to be a man. "She isn't exactly a pony," he said.

But his father was talking to Frank Weisbard. "Yes, she's in foal," Frank said. "You can see it. Bred to one of Johnny Call's Shetland stallions."

Jim knew about Johnny Call. He was an old man who owned a whole farm full of ponies. He drove them in parades, six of them, two abreast, hitched to a shiny, red pony buggy with yellow wheels and rubber tires.

"I don't know much about her," Frank said. "She's half Arabian, about six years old."

His father walked into the stall, grasped the pony's upper and lower jaws, and forced them apart. "Six or seven," he said, looking at her teeth.

"She's sound," Frank said, "eyes OK, legs, wind . . . I'll have one of the boys run her up and down the driveway if you want to listen to her wind." He beckoned to a man who was opening some bales of hay. "Lester, trot this little mare up and down here a couple of times."

Lester took the halter rope and clucked to the pony. "Come on, come on," he coaxed. She threw back her head and braced her feet.

Frank slapped her rump and she trotted out of the stall. "Sassy little gal, huh?" he said.

When Lester handed the halter rope back to Frank she was breathing easily. "After a stiff gallop she snorts some, but there's nothing wrong with her wind."

Out in the light Jim noticed her eyes. The iris was a pale blue, not white. It gave her a scared look. She was black and white in large patches, with a white dot between her eyes. Her mane and tail were a yellowish white, her tail an odd size, skimpy and short. He rubbed her nose and she knocked his hand away. He didn't know if he liked her or not. She stood high enough for a small horse.

"What do you want for her?" his father asked.

Frank Weisbard shoved some straw around with his feet, stuck his hands into his pockets, squinted at the mare. Frank was taller than his father, but his shoulders sloped down and made him a bit stooped. He wore a stained felt hat on the back of his head, and Jim had never seen him without an unlit cigar in his mouth. He rolled the cigar around between his lips, took it out and spit, and said, "How's sixty dollars?" He continued, "You couldn't have her for that except that she's in our way. Too small for the business, too big for my kids."

His father swung his hat first on one side of the mare's head and then on the other. She blinked both times and cocked her ears. "Her eyes are OK," Frank repeated.

"I see," said his father. "Fifty-five, Frank, and we'll take her home right now. Throw in the halter; there's nothing at home small enough for her."

Frank said, "I'll split the difference. You'll be getting her for fifty-five and two-and-a-half for the halter."

"Come on, Jim," his father said. "This isn't our day to do business." He started down the driveway. But Jim hung back, he couldn't bear the disappointment.

Frank turned to Jim and gave him the halter rope. "Lead her out, she's yours. I'll settle with your old man."

A conflict of emotions almost paralyzed Jim. From the depths to the heights in a minute. His voice squeaked. "Come," he said to the little mare and pulled on her halter rope.

It was dark outside. A chilly wind blew papers and dust down the street. Most of the snow had melted under the March sun. "She isn't shod," said his father. "Watch out for patches of ice."

Jim sat in the back of the wagon and led her. He could scarcely breathe in his excitement. He felt important, too, to think his father had asked him to come with him on such crucial business. She led easily, trotted when the team trotted, slowed down when they did. Once a dog ran out and barked. She shied and nearly tore the rope out of Jim's hands. His father stopped the wagon long enough for Jim to get a fresh grip on the rope. "Don't wrap it

around your wrist,'' his father said, ''or she might pull you right out of the wagon. Let her go if you have to.''

Jim whispered, ''I can hold her.'' He wouldn't let go even if she dragged him back to town.

They tied her in the barn in a single stall. She looked small beside the Belgian work horses. Maybe she would do for a pony after all. As if he had read Jim's thoughts, his father said, ''You'll grow up to her. She's big enough to ride after the cows and pull a buggy. She's not a plaything.''

They went into the house for supper. As they walked, his father said in a teasing voice, ''Shall we tell the folks now or wait until morning?''

But Jim was overwhelmed by the thoughts of ownership. They swelled up in him until he almost burst with pride. A huge sigh, the sigh of a tired man, drifted out. His father patted his shoulder. ''All right, you tell them at supper.'' Jim couldn't have kept it; it was too big a secret to hold.

It was good to come in to the lighted kitchen. Jim did not like the dark; things happened too unexpectedly. His mother said there were baking-powder biscuits and creamed chicken for supper, his favorite food. He washed his hands at the sink after his father. How would he say it? His mother smiled—ha, she knew.

''Carry in the plates, Jim. Louise, call Robert and Charles. Let's have supper while the food is hot.''

You had to wait. No matter if you were busting out, you had to wait. After the napkins were spread in laps, after grace had been said, then talk could begin. His father, about to serve the plates, glanced at Jim and nodded. Jim jumped in his chair. ''Guess what we've got in the barn!'' he shouted.

''Shush,'' his mother said, ''not so loud.''

''It's a pony, we brought it home, I led it, it's ours. Papa bought it from Frank Weisbard . . .'' He couldn't stop.

Robert and Charles gave him jealous stares. They had had to stay home. But it would be their pony, too, it would. They grew excited too. ''What color is it?'' Louise asked.

Jim tried to describe the pony. ''And she has a white dot in the

middle of her forehead."

Louise clapped her hands. "We'll name her Dot," she said. Jim felt cheated; he wanted to name her. But the whole family agreed with his sister, and he knew that "Dot" seemed just right. But he was being left out, so he shouted again, "She's in foal, she's going to have a pony colt!"

"James, please, no shouting at the table." His mother looked stern.

"I ain't shouting!" he shouted.

"Son, keep your voice down. Do as your mother says or leave the table." His father spoke quietly.

He felt a rush of self-pity bring tears to his eyes. Why did everybody pick on him? He had exciting news to tell. Didn't anyone want to hear him talk about the new pony? He knew a sob, thick in his throat, wanted to come out. It made him feel ashamed. He wadded up his napkin and jumped from his chair. "I don't have to be . . ."

"You sit right there and finish your supper, young man." His mother meant business. "I know you are tired and excited, but don't misbehave."

He crawled back on his chair and had to eat humble pie right in front of his younger brothers and sister. A minute before he had been the big man.

"Can she be rode?" Robert asked, eyes alive with curiosity. "Ridden," corrected his mother.

In the center once more, Jim picked up his fork. Gosh, he was hungry. Hot biscuits and chicken, he could have all he wanted. "I guess so, Bob," he answered. He spoke with his mouth full, but for once his mother didn't say anything.

Jim couldn't know that someday Dot and her foals would bring into the farm world thirteen ponies, mostly Shetland sized. Nor could he know that when the three boys reached high school age the ponies would become a burden and a nuisance, and that one day their father would sell them all. He would not have believed it, anyway.

Horse Medicine

Most of the time on our farm, the horse doctor turned out to be Father. It always seemed to me that at least one of the forty horses we ran needed attention. Before the days of autos, the veterinarian (who had his office in town) made his calls with a horse and buggy. It would take him an hour to travel the five miles to our farm. Besides, we did not have much money, and why pay a veterinarian if we could do it ourselves? In those days, the resolve to make do with what you had dominated farm life.

One summer evening Lauritz led out a bright bay gelding and stopped at the windmill. He was a four-year-old colt. Lauritz threw the halter rope over the first horizontal board of the windmill tower and pulled the horse's head up as high as he could. The horse stood there, neck stretched tight, nose in the air, eyes rolled back. Father climbed up a few steps of the windmill ladder until he was on the same level as the horse's head. He had an old beer bottle full of "medicine." He wrapped his thumb and forefinger around the horse's lower jaw and forced its mouth open. Then he stuck the neck of the bottle in the side of its mouth (to avoid the teeth) and slowly emptied the bottle. Lauritz slowly stroked the horse's neck to help him swallow. And swallow he did, or he would have choked. Then Lauritz let his head down.

The horse sniffed the ground, blew a snort through his nostrils, shook his head, and looked up. Lauritz led him back to his stall. I asked Father, "What was in the bottle?"

"Medicine," he answered. Later, I found out from Mother that part of the medicine was melted lard. But lard mixed with something that gave the bottle a funny medicinal odor. I picked it up afterward and sniffed it. I never knew what ailed the horse; I

was too young for men's knowledge. I suspect he had overeaten and the "medicine" helped clean out his guts.

We once had a hired man whose sole prescription was kerosene for anything inside or outside of an ailing horse. We never tried it.

On another evening, after work, I saw Lauritz lead out an old mare and hoist up her head by pulling the rope over the windmill frame. Again Father climbed a few steps on the windmill ladder. He held a cylinder of paper in one hand. With the other he held back the mare's eyelid. He put the paper cylinder close to her eye and blew gently. Some white dust flew out around her eye. Then Father repeated this for the other eye. After he took the mare back to her stall I asked Lauritz, "What's the matter with old Dolly?"

"Moon blindness," he said.

"What did Father blow in her eyes?"

"Sugar," he said. I never knew if he told the truth or just teased me. Whatever it was, it did not help. The old mare ended her days almost totally blind.

When I grew a little older, I served my apprenticeship as an assistant veterinarian. We had a mare named Queen—deep chestnut, clean limbed, with some trotting-horse blood in her—who could stir up a case of colic on practically one mouthful of wind. Her belly would swell, guts rumble, eyes sink, and she would try to lie down and, I thought, die. The first time it happened, Father called our veterinarian. Dr. Brody said, "Keep her on her feet and walk her around the yard until she begins to expel gas. She'll be all right."

Guess who walked her around the yard? Up and down the road we went, Queen and I. Now and then she groaned and tried to lie down. I kicked her in the belly with my bare feet and jerked on the halter rope. Then we would start walking again. She had a sick smell. After what seemed like hours and miles of walking, the wind would go out of her, her belly shrink, the smell disappear. She would cock her ears and snatch a mouthful of grass from the roadside. Then I would put her in the barn and tie her to the manger. Queen and I had ended another pilgrimage.

At the time, I thought she took sick just to plague me. She

seemed to have an addiction to colic. I was convinced that she got sick every week all summer. Father suggested I ride her, but she stank so bad I preferred to walk.

The care of animals fills many pages in a farm boy's experience. I followed in the footsteps of the men and knew by instinct that I learned best by doing, not by word or precept. My sister learned to play the piano by practice, and I guess I found this the way to work with horses.

As I grew older, stronger, more sure of myself, I imitated Father and the hired men in the ways they handled horses. It may have been a feeling of overconfidence that helped teach me a cruel lesson. I was never sure that my neglect caused the trouble, but the fault may have been mine, and the uncertainty festered in my memory for a long time.

When Father and the hired men watered the horses left in the barn, or on a Sunday morning when all the stalls were occupied, they untied the halter rope from the manger, backed the horse out of the stall, and turned it toward the barn door. They threw the halter rope over the horse's neck, slapped it on the rump, and let it find its way to the water tank. Then they went to the next stall for another horse. This method saved time and steps. Usually the horses came back to their own stalls. If any laggards paused by the way for a mouthful of grass or a rub on a conveniently situated tree, someone would shout at them or go bring them in.

The youngsters, the colts that were old enough for light work, did not receive such casual treatment, but the older horses knew the way to the tank and back again, and then they entered their stalls to be tied to the manger. When I helped with the horse chores, I imitated the men, especially with the older horses I trusted to find their way to the tank and come back.

This is the way I learned. At chore time I stuffed the mangers with hay and sprinkled water on the hay for Dolly and Topsy, because they coughed a lot if the hay was dusty. I dragged a basket of corn up the feed alley and stopped at each stall to fill the feed boxes—six ears of corn apiece for King and Maude, four apiece

for Prince and Flora, three for Beauty, a couple for the pony. I had to be sure the halter ropes were tied tightly to the mangers after the horses had been out to water and that the door to the feed alley was closed. If a horse got loose and found its way to the feed alley and a basket of corn, it might founder itself from overeating. These rules grew into habits.

"What's founder?" I asked once.

Lauritz explained carefully. "A fever, it goes to the front feet. It comes from eating too much too quick. But don't worry, your mama keeps you from founder."

I persisted, "But what happens?"

"The hoofs grow out funny. A horse is not much good after founder." Lauritz did not add any more details.

I found the explanation pretty tame compared to the real thing. One night someone did leave the alley door unlatched. I did, or did not, tie the halter rope securely. It was Black Rose, our fast driving mare. I remembered taking her to water and letting her find her own way back, but did I come into the stall and tie her? I went to water another horse, but did I go back and tie Rose? I could not remember.

Dr. Brody looked her over and shook his head. "Pretty filly, too bad she foundered herself. Not much I can do."

But he fed her some pills that he said would clean out her guts. "At least she won't have a bellyache."

"But Dr. Brody," I cried, "she will be all right, won't she?"

Dr. Brody gave me a sharp glance. "No, son, she won't. She will never pull a buggy on a hard road again. Oh, she can work a bit on soft ground, but she is pretty light for farm work."

He took my hand, "Here, feel the fever in her front feet."

He closed my hand around the top of her hoof and I could feel the heat, all right.

After he drove away, Father and Lauritz built a box in the front of Black Rose's stall. They filled it with soft cow manure. Father said, "It's an old country remedy. I doubt if it does much good."

"Ja, but maybe," Lauritz argued, "it pulls out the fever. Like the mashed onions your mama wraps around your arm when you

have a boil."

I had never had a boil, or an onion poultice either, but I tried to look as though I had. "We try to cool her feet," Lauritz said. "They hurt her. Poor little girl." He stroked her neck.

But the cow manure "poultice" worked no miracle and Black Rose, exiled to the pasture, hobbled around on splayed front hoofs. One day she hooked a front foot over a barbed wire in the fence and nearly sawed her leg off trying to break loose. She damaged the leg badly. Though ordinarily Father would have kept her pensioned in the pasture, this was more pain than she should have to bear. Lauritz took her out behind the barn and shot her.

I wept in my thoughts. She belonged to the farm family. It seemed a little like losing a close relative. We made friends of the animals we were most familiar with—our dogs, cats, ponies, the driving mare. It saddened us to lose any of them. But I carried an additional burden of guilt. Was it my fault that Black Rose, loose in her stall, nosed her way into the feed alley? The feeling dulled as the months passed.

For a long time after we lost Black Rose, when I watered the horses I watered them one at a time. I held the halter rope all the way to the tank and back and tied it securely to the manger, no more throwing the rope over the horse's neck and letting it go its own way. But did I, or did I not, tie up Black Rose that night?

A horse exhibits strange contradictions of character. In some ways horses have a remarkable intelligence, in other ways they are as dumb as an ox. If the grass in the pasture is eaten down and the grass across the fence waves long juicy stems, a horse cautiously turns its head sideways, slips it between the barbed wire fence, and chomps away. Having eaten all the grass within reach, a horse in its impatience will sometimes paw at the fence. Usually this is done by a two- or three-year-old colt; older horses know better.

Here is the stupid part. Once a horse puts a foot over the bottom wire, instead of lifting it up and drawing it back, the horse begins to saw the foot back and forth, pulling back with all its strength. The barbs cut in, of course, which frightens the horse, and it saws

harder.

We kept a close watch on the horses and if we saw one standing alone, close to the fence, we investigated. I would ride down through the pasture—it was a mile long—get off my horse, and try to lift the bloody leg up over the fence and free the horse. But sometimes the horse was so frightened and hurt that it would rear and plunge at my approach. Then I went back for help from either Father or one of the hired men.

I am speaking of draft horses, our Percherons and Belgians that would weigh a ton each when fully grown. Father had a team of half-Morgans that was his team, and we had a driving horse and a couple of riding horses. I don't remember any of them, except Black Rose, getting caught in the fence. Perhaps we did not turn them out to pasture. We always kept one riding horse close at hand so we could round up the cows and other horses.

We had a chronic problem of sore shoulders and necks during the heavy work times. We tried to fit the collars so that they would be comfortable, and we added additional padding for horses with sensitive skins. But, in spite of our care, sores developed. We washed the sores with a mild disinfectant, covered them with salve, and beat the collar with a wooden mallet to make it softer. If the sores did not heal, we gave the horse sick leave and substituted another in its place.

This sometimes made for queer combinations, oddly matched teams. I remember trying to disk with a four-horse team composed of three horses that were used to each other and a three-year-old colt not used to anything—harness, bridle, bit, or work. It took all of a man's religion to be patient at such times.

A crucial experience with horses came in the summer of 1936, the great drought year in the Midwest. That spring and summer, the temperature stayed in the high nineties, often breaking one hundred by midafternoon. Both men and animals suffered from the everlasting heat, the sun, and the scorching winds.

My brother and I managed the family farm then. We had one tractor, a McCormick-Deering 15-30 with steel lugs on the wheels.

It burned kerosene mixed with a small jet of water. It took a trial-and-error method of adjustment to find the right mixture of water and kerosene. But without the water the engine ran too hot and burned the valves. It had to be started on gasoline.

It was not a row-crop tractor, so we still cultivated corn with horses. The heat seemed more intense as we went through the corn on the last cultivation. The stalks stood as high as the horses' bellies and no breeze came through. We shortened the hours in the field to save both ourselves and the horses.

An epidemic of equine encephalitis spread through the Midwest that year. Horses died by the hundreds. There was such a demand on the rendering works to take away the carcasses that they refused to answer the phone, and farmers had to bury their horses. The veterinarians worked themselves into such tired men that they, too, could not be reached by telephone. The moon must have had blood on it during those months.

But heat prostration and sunstroke killed more horses than encephalitis. On the day before our crisis, Chuck and I asked the hired men if we could be in the field at four in the morning and quit at ten and not go back to the field until late afternoon. This would save us from being in the field during the hottest hours. They agreed to try it.

I took Mother into town that morning for groceries and we drove in the yard about nine-thirty. Chuck came running to meet us. "King and Kit are both down in the cornfield," he said. "They aren't dead yet, but they're about done for."

On hot days, because I did not sweat easily, I wore a soaking-wet bath towel around my neck. The evaporation cooled me off, an individual air-conditioning system. This gave us an idea. Both the hired men were home and their horses were in the barn. Ed Purvis said, "Once a horse is down, he won't ever get up again."

But Chuck cranked up the tractor, hitched it to the stoneboat, and all three men hurried to the field. Unless you have seen it, you do not know what an awful sight it is to see a big, strong horse lying on its side with the harness on, barely breathing.

The men stripped off the harness (no easy job with a heavy

horse lying on part of it). Chuck drove the stoneboat beside Kit, and the men rolled her over on it and hauled her home. Then they went for King, a huge blue-roan Belgian. They brought him back and rolled him off beside Kit. The horses lay in the grass beside the well house. Chuck started the pump and began to spray water on them.

Feelings bled a little to see one of our best teams—horses we had worked with for years, raised as colts from our own brood mares —lying still, unable to move. Perhaps it was because we could always count on our horses; when we asked something from them, they gave it. Tears filled my eyes.

The water out of that hose must have been about fifty-four degrees; it raised goose pimples on my arms. Chuck kept on spraying. Sometimes one of the men took his place and Chuck tried to rouse the horses.

After a couple of hours of this cold bath, Kit suddenly rolled over on her belly and stood up. She trembled, and she stumbled when she tried to take a step. But in a few minutes, with a bit of coaxing, with Chuck on one side and Bill Adams on the other to steady her, she staggered out into the yard. They left her in the shade of a big maple tree.

It took another hour before King roused. He got up slowly, but he got up. Chuck took him by the mane and led him under the big maple with Kit. They stayed there in the shade for the rest of the day. When night came we put them in their stalls. But they worked no more that summer.

One hot summer day, after horses had vanished and the machine shed housed tractors, cultivators, a combine, and an automatic baler, I remembered King and Kit. Our concern for them seemed as great as if someone in the family had been struck down. There was a rapport between men and horses that had its own mystique.

These days we surround ourselves with machines. We hide sweat glands under deodorants, save them from work with air conditioning. Chrome, glass, and metal show us the road to salvation in comfort removed from the earth to which we owe our existence.

We no longer are friends with the earth and its creatures—like horses, like ourselves.

The Death of Beauty

Sooner or later, Jim thought, nature demands her pound of flesh. He walked into the woodhouse and climbed the steps to the platform where the guns were kept. He rummaged through the cartridge boxes and found a shell with Number 4 shot. He took down a twelve-gauge shotgun, emptied the magazine, and slipped in the shell. The ones he had taken out, with small Number 7 shot, he put back into one of the boxes. Then he picked up the shotgun and walked out toward the big barn.

It didn't seem so long ago that Beauty had been a colt, a reddish bay filly with not a white mark on her. She had the clean, neat legs of a race horse, a small, stylish head, and a limber, effortless stride like water flowing. Small for a horse, too light for farm work, she became Jim's property by adoption. Jim taught her to shake hands, walk on her hind legs, and obey the touch of his hand on either side of her neck so he could ride her without a bridle. She had one trick that Jim especially liked to show off. He would unfasten her halter but leave her in the stall. Then he would go outside, walk about forty or fifty feet from the barn, and whistle a bar from the "Stars and Stripes Forever." Beauty would back out of her stall, head out the door, and start toward Jim at a gentle gallop. As she went past, he would grab her mane and swing himself up on her back. It never failed to astonish guests.

One day at a farm sale Jim's father had bid on and—somewhat to his surprise—bought two frightened little colts. When he brought them home, the children promptly christened them Beauty and Bouncer. A year or two later, Jim's father saw that they would never be heavy enough for farm work. Their sire had been a stallion from a stable of trotting horses, and how they landed in a farm sale, no one said. Jim's father sold them to a

neighbor who wanted a pair of small, fast horses to hitch to his buggy. But when he came to take them home, Jim and his brothers and sister formed a human chain across the road, just kids really, bawling their eyes out.

Pete Erickson turned to Jim's father and said, "If the kids feel like that, Charlie, I can't take them away." So they stayed, and Beauty grew up under Jim's hand.

It is like a day of decision, Jim thought, as he walked toward the barn with the gun. Maybe you shouldn't let yourself care so much. For animals, or people. But down inside his mind he felt the terrible pull of affection his family had for each other. Once he heard their banker say, "The Hearsts fight like Irish politicians among themselves, but let an outsider touch one, and the whole clan have their swords out."

Jim never thought of his family as fighting. There was a sharp word of discipline now and then; both Mother and Father could say "No" on occasion and, Lord knows, he and his brothers used to get into it once in a while. But nothing lasting, no one bled from anger. They were a family.

But would it not be better to keep aloof from the tangles of love and caring? This was a day for the question all right.

The pasture lay empty. It was November and it should have a herd of horses running there. He remembered one fall when the horses were turned out after the corn husking was finished. The gate at the bottom of the pasture was opened so the horses could go out into the stalk fields. Horses could live all winter on the husks and stalks and missed ears of corn.

One of the mares was going moon-blind. She could not find the open gate. The other horses had whisked through, heads and tails carried high, jostling and kicking like kids just out of school. The mare had a little vision, but she could not find the gate. She trotted up and down the fence and whinnied softly, anxiously. One of the light-gray geldings heard her and came back to the gate and led her through.

This happened each day when the horses were turned out. Jim's whole family stood in the yard to watch. It warmed the heart to see

the young gelding come back and lead the old blind mare through the gate. But that was not all. One night snow fell, a thin layer but it covered the ground. When the old mare whinnied, the gray horse came back but she couldn't see him, gray against snow. So she called again and again. This time a dark chestnut mare came back through the gate. The blind mare could see the dark shape against the snow and the problem was solved.

Jim remembered how the family had watched this and wondered at it. The predicament of being blind seemed overcome by a sense of triumph as if, Jim thought, help came when it was needed. After the family's astonishment and surprise, his mother said, "If animals can solve a puzzle like this, we shouldn't be afraid for our lives." It was an assurance that stuck in Jim's memory.

All the stalls in the horse barn were empty now, except the box stall where Beauty lay. She shivered in the crisp autumn air, even in the barn, and Jim kept a blanket over her. He helped her up now, twice a day, to eat a handful of ground corn and linseed meal. He urged her to walk to the water trough to limber up her legs, stiff with arthritis. Half the water trough extended into the barn so Beauty did not need to step over the doorsill to go outside. She could hardly see; cataracts hung heavy over her eyes. But she always had a welcome whicker for him, and Jim would jump over the manger and stroke her neck when she called.

Then a mood of sadness that was close to tears would shadow him. It embarrassed him. A horse was just a horse, wasn't it? Not a person, not one of the family. But he did not win the argument, because the choke in his throat persisted. It hurt him to see Beauty so sick and lame and blind. She, in her dainty, four-footed way, pranced through his days and dreams as a member of the household. Years ago, the whole family wore a long face and the kids bawled when Carlo, the collie dog, was struck by an automobile. But Beauty was special, his own concern. If tears fell, it was in a secret part of himself. On the outside, he tried to exhibit his experience with a world where life came and went, birth and death, as inexorably as the seasons.

He set the gun down against the windmill ladder and drank a

cup of water. It was clear and cold, it had a clean taste, better than the water from the storage tank. Only Beauty drank at the horse trough now. It seemed strange to have the barn and pasture empty. It made the farm more remote, businesslike, indifferent to cherished things of which men were the caretakers. He could go through the barn and name the horses that once had stood in the stalls—"Rex and Regal," "Fannie and Flora," "Bess and Belle," "King and Jean"—he could go on and on. All gone, died, sold, traded, vanished for good.

Two tractors squatted in the machine shed beside a baler and combine. They supplied the other side of the change, and were nothing but metal and wires. Turn a key in the tractor and it wound itself into power with a blast from the exhaust. Turn the key again and only a silent hunk of iron remained.

Jim had handled horses all his life. At the age of twelve, his father had sent him to the field with six horses hitched to a gang plow. When he made a round he had plowed a strip fifty-six inches wide. He used to figure out how many rounds it would take to plow a field forty rods across. It kept his mind busy as the furrows turned over. Or he would bend over and watch the earth rise, curl, and fold over off the plow's moldboard with the same fascination he found in fire and running water. It was a never-ending movement of sameness and change.

The lead team was always livelier and flashier than the four solid draft horses behind. They had to be because they were out in front beyond the reach of a slap of the lines or a flick of the whip. When they hung back, Jim thought it was out of pure orneriness. He would reach over and break off a clod from the earth rolling off the moldboard and throw it at them. "You damn fools!" he yelled. "You lazy damn fools!"

On a good day, he enjoyed the ride through the field, black dirt flowing off the plow, four wide rumps jogging in front of him, the lead team stretched out, pulling their weight. The sun warmed his back, meadowlarks burbled, occasionally a rabbit tore off across the stubble. He sang at times, sure of his ability to handle the work as well as a grown man.

Time slides by on greased tracks. He hung the cup on the hook by the pump handle and looked at the gun. He thought, what a simple, protected life children lead—play and games, birthday parties, decisions without responsibility, always someone there to wrap up a cut, kiss a bruise. We all had chores to do, but we could quit if we were tired. He grinned, but we didn't quit.

At the age of twelve he plowed all day, brought in his team, watered and unharnessed them. It took about all his muscle to pull off the harness from those huge backs and hang it up, to work the collars off over the horses' heads because it was easier than unbuckling them. He had to climb in the manger to do it, and the horses teased him. One evening, he had worked the collar half off Flora's head when she started tossing her head and throwing him against the partition. But his father stepped into the barn just then and said sharply, "Flora!" and she turned meek as a lamb.

Days pressed like flowers in memory's book. He could do a man's work now, because he was a man. But farming had changed, the work was different. Fifteen tons of hay in a day with a hayloader and horse-drawn wagons, fifteen tons in about two hours with an automatic hay baler, and easier on the back.

But machines required attention of a different kind. All the parts had to be adjusted for good performance, oiled, greased, belts and chains tightened, gears fitted and meshed. And, Jim thought, a machine would not stop if you were caught off guard. You had to be very careful. It seemed sometimes as if the machine wanted to rip off fingers or an arm. The old threshing machine posted a big sign on the feeder: WATCH OUT OR I WILL GET YOUR FORK. The modern combine said nothing. It just rolled along, sickle clicking, cylinder humming as it beat out the grain, the strawwalkers sifting out the oats and dumping the straw out the back. But it waited for the careless finger or jacket. Even the belt on the blower had been known to grab shirt-sleeves.

Jim picked up the gun and started for the first barn door, still playing for time, absorbed in his thoughts. Once a machine had you, it never let go until someone shut it off, or the hand or arm disappeared. One time, the universal joint on the grain elevator

caught a flapping overall leg as Floyd, one of the hired men, stepped across it. Before he could yell for help he was stripped naked as a jay. Good thing the overalls were old and ripped easily, or Floyd might have had two broken legs.

A machine has no life. It just squats there, a contraption of metal parts in need of power to make the wheels turn. Not like a horse, where muscle and bone and deep, full eyes and cocked ears and long tails showed a spirit and breeding you couldn't match with anything else.

On Sunday mornings, when he was a kid, if he could beg off from church, he would go out to the barn with Lauritz and hold the horses while Lauritz trimmed their hoofs, clipped their foretops, and combed out manes and tails. Jim would pat their noses and tell them to stand still in his gruffest, deepest voice and jerk the halter rope to show them who was boss. And Lauritz would say in his Danish accent, "Easy, don't be smart. A horse makes just as well as he is treated."

He propped the gun in a corner just inside the barn door and went to the box stall. Beauty was down again. He rolled off the blanket and patted her neck. His father entered the stall and looked at her. "Here," he said, "let me give you a boost." Together they pulled, pushed, and lifted and brought her to her feet. The effort made her tremble, but she nuzzled Jim in her habitual way, looking for a lump of sugar. Jim stuffed one in her mouth. "You sneaky beggar," he told her and rubbed her forehead.

His father touched Jim on the arm. "You want me to do it?"

Jim shook his head. Damn it, he could feel tears in his voice. Why was he so emotional? But his tone did not waver when he said, "No, Dad, it's my job." He felt his father's arm across his shoulders, a rare gesture for his father. But today they shared something, father and son.

"Shall I lead her out?" his father asked.

Again Jim shook his head. "I can manage OK. She's used to the gun, all the times I've carried it riding out after crows."

"Take her out in the field back of the barn," his father said,

"so your mother won't hear it."

Slowly Jim turned Beauty around in the stall. "Come on, sweetheart," he said, "get those legs moving." He led her down the alleyway to the open door. She turned her head toward the tank. "You want a drink? OK." But she only ruffled the water with her nose.

She stumbled at the doorsill, dragging one front hoof over it. "Careful," Jim said. He supported her head with a tight grip on the halter rope. She finally cleared the sill with all four feet.

"Take off her halter," his father said, "she'll follow you."

Jim picked up the gun and laid his hand on Beauty's mane. "Come on, come on," he told her, "you want to take all day?"

"Oh, Jesus," he told himself, "I'm worse than Judas in the garden."

He led her limping and stumbling down the lane to the fields. He talked to her as if they were old comrades meeting after a long absence. "Remember how many times we galloped down this lane after dark? Just for the hell of it? Just so I could unwind before I went to bed?"

As he spoke he could feel again the rush of the wind, the night noises, leaves rustling, cries of startled birds, and the excitement of being alone in the dark on a fast-running horse bound for nowhere.

Sometimes when they came back he would ride her up to the house and turn her loose while he went to bed. She would graze across the lawn and finally go back to her stall. She never broke into the feed alley or ran down the road, as most horses did when they had a chance.

For no reason, Jim suddenly remembered the pony stallion they'd had years ago. He was a mean little cuss, a bull-headed snorter, the one who, when Jim took him out to the tank to water him, would suddenly jerk his nose out of the water and take off for the road. Jim, who was about twelve then, would hang on to the halter rope. But the stud could run faster and pretty soon Jim would fall down. But he'd hang on, and after the stallion had dragged him a few rods he'd stop and start eating grass, meek as a

lamb. And Jim would get to his feet, all dirt and grass-stained, scratches and raw spots on his arms and face.

Jim shook his head sharply as if to wake himself. Whatever made him think of the pony? The sun shone with such warmth you forgot it was November. Jim and Beauty ambled down the lane. The arching trees bent leafless branches over the road. No wind. Then he heard his father call. Jim said, "Whoa, Beauty, stand girl," laid the gun down, and jogged back to where his father stood.

"Would you want her skin for a robe or coat?" his father asked. "There's a place in Dubuque that tans horsehide and makes it up into whatever you want."

Jim shook his head. "No, I don't think so." He smiled in a grim way. "I don't think I could touch her with a skinning knife."

Father said, "I could do it."

"No," Jim kept his voice firm. "No, it's too much for you and, besides, I don't want that kind of reminder."

His father stared at him absently, as if he, too, remembered something far back in years past. They just stood there. The collie ran up and sat at the feet of Jim's father. A flock of pigeons circled the barn roof.

Father asked, "Shall we bury her?"

Jim set both feet on firm ground. The memories, the sadness, the flood of emotions dimmed before the necessity of action. His eyes met his father's, steady and clear. "No, call the rendering works, it isn't a funeral."

His father nodded, called the dog, walked back toward the barn.

Jim stepped briskly down the lane. He picked up the gun and grasped Beauty by the mane. He pulled her into moving. Slowly they passed out of the lane into a cornfield.

The stalks in the field lay flat and broken where the cornpicker had left them. A few buttonweeds leaned brown and empty by the fence. A warm afternoon for November, the air golden in Indian summer.

"Easy," Jim said, "don't trip on these cornstalks." He led her

to the top of a small rise of ground. From here you could see the whole neighborhood, farms all the way to the horizon. Empty fields, everyone had finished the corn harvest.

Beauty lowered her head and grazed over the dry stalks. She nibbled a husk and blew out her breath in a sudden soft sigh that made dust swirl.

Jim stroked her back. She had stopped trembling. A flock of crows further down the field wrangled over something, probably a dead rabbit. "Good day to hunt crows," he told her.

A single crow flew overhead, and as it passed them it uttered a hoarse yell. Abruptly, Beauty raised her head, cocked her ears, half turned toward Jim.

Then he shot her right behind the ear. The flat clap of the gun silenced the crows' yammering. She collapsed without a sound except that made by her falling body. Jim stepped back quickly to keep from being caught under her weight.

He jerked the repeater arm of the gun, ejected the spent shell, and blew smoke out of the barrel. He closed the gun with a snap and released the hammer.

"God damn it," he said. He walked toward the barn without a backward look.

James Hearst's works as a poet and a writer have been based on his life as a farmer—not a gentleman farmer, but an Iowa dirt farmer. Born in 1900 at Maplehearst Farm southwest of Cedar Falls, he has known both the pleasures and pains, the successes and failures, of a farmer's life. With ten volumes of poetry and innumerable individual poems published in other works, Hearst is known primarily as a poet. But he has influenced Iowa's literary life, too, as a teacher of creative writing—for thirty-four years at the Iowa State Teachers College (now the University of Northern Iowa) and for ten years in Colorado at the Aspen School of Contemporary Art. Hearst has retired from teaching but not, as this volume illustrates, from writing.

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Display type—Allan Kornblum/Toothpaste Press, West Branch, Iowa

Printing and binding—Wallace-Homestead Company, Des Moines, Iowa

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