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AND GREEN GRASS GROWS ALL AROUND



# And Green Grass Grows All Around

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by

Marguerite Lyon

Author of *Take to the Hills*

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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*To R. O. H.*

**WHOSE HEART IS IN THE OZARKS**



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AND GREEN GRASS GROWS ALL AROUND



## CHAPTER ONE

### *WE TAKE TO THE HILLS!*

U P TO the time we bought our farm I was quite content to let others write the books of the world and let me read them. But a farm Does Something to one. A city person who owns a farm, even a scant few acres of rocky hillside, just has to talk about it. At first we were fairly reasonable. We kept within limits, merely taking over an entire evening at a party, or buttonholing perfect strangers to show off envelopes full of snapshots—our farmhouse, our garden, our patch of kaffir corn, our sheep, and our sway-backed gray mare. But we got beyond that point. We wanted to tell the whole world. After a fire swept over our land, taking fence posts and dead trees but leaving the buildings, I began to put our experiences on paper. I told them in exactly the same spirit in which I'd sit down and write a long chatty letter to a good friend.

To my supreme elation, the publishers to whom I submitted my stack of typed pages thought the manuscript would make a book!

My Ozark story was in type, the publishers were writing me about the title, the captions for the illustrations, the copy for the jacket . . . and then I began to think what I had done! My heart sank to my shoes . . . and stayed there. For the first time I realized what an awful lot of personal things I had said on those typed pages! I felt like those people who

tell the stories of their lives to strangers on the train between Chariton and Davis City.

*Take to the Hills* was going to be published, and what, oh what, were people going to say! I woke up in the middle of each night trying to remember just what I had written. I had told right out how my husband and I, along in 1935, were two Chicago people facing a very personal financial depression. And that we didn't like it at all, because a depression of one-family size seemed even worse than the big depression, when everyone was talking about prosperity being just around the corner. I had told how we decided to buy an Ozark Mountain farm as a refuge for the time when we would have nowhere else to live.

I blushed to remember that I had told in print how we had given our carefully hoarded money to my sister and her husband, with instructions to get us an Ozark farm with no mortgage on it. I hoped I hadn't said anything discrediting to my sister, whom I love, when I wrote that she had paid our precious thousand dollars for a forty-acre hilltop farm, worth about \$350, simply because the floors of the log house were clean.

I had told how we had added needed land later. How I had held my job with an advertising agency in Chicago, while my husband went down to the hills to raise sheep and become "the Judge" to our neighbors when he was elected Justice of the Peace. And how we liked the local jams and jellies made of wild berries so much that the Judge decided to supervise making them in quantity and to sell them to the city trade. And that the Sunrise Mountain Farm Jelly Kitchens had been the result.

But what was really turning my hair gray was the way I had written about my Ozark neighbors! Not being an experienced novelist, when I had tried to give these people imaginary names, they became unreal and strange to me. So here

was a book coming out with real people written up in it, called by their real names—the people we'd elected to live among the rest of our lives!

For a while I was able to make myself believe that Ozark people would never read what I'd written. I said that our community wasn't very bookish. Our nearest town, Mountain View, Missouri, had no library, and I couldn't remember seeing any books anywhere except Aunt Lizzie's Bible and Verna Springer's cookbooks. But when the story of our Ozark farm took shape and became an honest-to-goodness book, with a jacket, title, and illustrations, I realized that sooner or later it would trickle back to the Ozarks and my goose would be cooked. I shuddered to think how the shy, quiet Ozark pride would react to being "writ up," no matter how kindly it was done.

However, I said to myself consolingly, I can be thankful for one thing! I changed Aunt Lizzie's name in the book to Aunt Mealie. Aunt Lizzie is most important to me. If she is still my friend, I'll just have to make the best of it with the others.

The weeks went on, and finally the book came out. The publishers sent me the first copy. I promptly hid it without reading a line. I knew Doc Good, our Mountain View druggist, had ordered a half-dozen copies to put on sale, but probably they wouldn't be shipped for a few weeks. And those few weeks would give me a breathing spell in which I could think up answers for the questions of my Ozark friends and neighbors.

On Saturday, after I became an author, I went to town. That means going into Mountain View, six miles from our farm. The first person I met was a tall, raw-boned legal light who never passed the bar exams but who is qualified to take on cases in justice courts for small fees.

I liked the chap. I put out my hand to shake hands.

He took my hand and said:

"So, I'm the guy that has to stop on the back stoop and take a swig o' corn likker afore I git myself into court!"

My friendly greeting was lost. My mouth dropped open. I remembered writing about a law case held in our living room. Virgil Crum had to come into my husband's justice court and prove ownership of furniture, radio and dishes repossessed by legal action from one Pinky Waters. Virgil's aged father, a flock of Plymouth Rock chickens, and a check for one month's old-age pension had also figured in that case. Pinky, a lady who was never invited to the quilting and other feminine activities of our community, had returned the old gentleman without question; the chickens had apparently wandered away of their own volition; and the old-age pension check had just naturally disappeared.

The gentleman who was standing before me looking down at me with an expression that might have been interpreted as a fightin' eye had been retained by Virgil Crum to defend his interests in the suit. I remembered that I had told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in my story, when I said that his brilliant defense of Virgil's case had consisted of two sentences, to wit: 1. "Wuzn't the goods his'n?" 2. "Okay, we'll waive damages." I had also been truthful in telling about the two drinks of corn likker on the back stoop!

I decided to laugh it off.

"Oh, that was just an old hill-billy lawyer," I said. "I thought him up out of my own head. That wasn't a handsome young barrister like you!"

"G'wan!" he said, grinning. "Everybuddy in this caounty knows I have to git myself a little bracer afore I goes into the court room!"

Feeling the need of a little bracer myself, I went into Doc Good's Drug Store for a drink of Dr. Pepper, our favorite

soft drink. I mean, I started into the drug store. Smack on the threshold of this usually quiet, dimly lighted place, I ran into one of the largest and noisiest crowds I had ever seen in any store in Mountain View.

I wondered if Doc Good was staging a sale on Dr. Pepper, or Ex-lax! I hesitated a moment. And in that moment I learned the bitter truth. I heard such cries as:

"Is my name in it?"

"Dawg my cats, here's a pitcher o' the Jedge that's the spit-tin' image o' him!"

"Hey, Bert McDowell, here's yore name! Danged if she ain't even talkin' about her own kinfolks!"

"Hey, lookit! A whole chapter about Doris!"

I knew then that the tables were turned. In *Take to the Hills*, I had discovered the Ozarks. Now the Ozarks were discovering *Take to the Hills*.

I backed carefully and quietly out of the drug store and hunted up my husband at the jelly kitchens.

"Listen, Robert," I said, trying not to look furtively around like a criminal bent on taking it on the lam in a gangster movie, "I think it's a good time to take that Arkansas strawberry-buying trip we've been planning!"

We went home, packed our bags, and gave Judy, the Boston terrier, a bath. Next morning at daylight the three of us, with Judy giving us a reproachful eye because she hadn't been allowed to have her morning hunt after the skunk in the Arnold Forty, went to Arkansas.

It was one of those beautiful days in late April, when the Ozarks are at their loveliest.

Mile after mile we drove through and over and around wooded hills where scarcely a house is to be seen. We saw the big pink hickory buds swelling like gigantic flowers. We saw the lacy green of spring willows interspersed with the waxy white or creamy ivory of dogwood and the red-purple of

the red bud. We heard the music of thousands of birds. We saw vistas of wide valleys below our circling highway, the trees so thick it seemed that we might walk on the tops. We looked far in the distance to ridges silhouetted against a vast backdrop of fleecy clouds and blue sky.

I was reminded of the story of the man who died and went to Heaven. There, so the story runs, he found many people chained to the beautiful golden streets in that Land of Milk and Honey. According to the story, he asked St. Peter why it was necessary to chain people in so beautiful a spot. And St. Peter replied:

“These people must be chained, or they’d try to get back to their native country. You see, these are Missourians, and it’s springtime in the Ozarks now!”

Yes, it was springtime in the Ozarks. We had to stop at Poplar Bluffs and buy ourselves white shoes. The sunshine was soft and warm and tender as a kiss. The Judge hailed the warm bright sunshine as his direct tribute from heaven. He sang, he shouted, he gloried in the wealth of blackberry and dewberry bushes we could see along the roadside. And as we got farther into Arkansas, down in the strawberry country, he called words of encouragement to the farmers working out in the strawberry patches.

“Grow ’em good, boys! We’ll be needing those berries in the jelly kitchens!”

Then he would fall to counting the cases of strawberry jam he and his helpers would put up in our Mountain View Jelly Kitchens.

“Seven million. Eight million. Ten million!” he would count. According to his plans, the whole world would be reveling in strawberry jam. He sounded for all the world like that glorious entrepreneur on the radio, Andrew H. Brown.

He was a whole triumphant procession in himself.

Judy caught his joyous spirit and went into conniption fits



at every sight of a rabbit sunning himself along the highway. When we stopped for gas at tiny roadside filling stations she would plunge deep into the strange woods, barking loudly as though telling the strange varmints what a terror she was in her own woods.

As for me, I rode along in complete misery, physical and mental. As always when I get upset about anything, I developed sore throat. So, smelling of Baume Bengué to high heaven, with a flannel scarf tied about my aching throat, the perspiration of sheer nervousness on my brow, and my heart full of worry, I rode disconsolately along.

Occasionally, in the midst of a musical interlude composed of my husband's loud singing and Judy's excited barking at a ground squirrel that had scurried across the highway ten miles back, I would croak:

"Well, thank goodness, I gave Aunt Lizzie a fictitious name!"

By the time we reached Bald Knob, Arkansas, I had begun to wonder if it wouldn't be a good idea for me to join a colony of migratory strawberry pickers, under an assumed name, and Get Away From It All!

At Searcy I retired immediately after dinner to the tiny hot room which was the only room not taken by the out-of-town strawberry buyers.

The Jedge and Judy stayed downstairs to visit with these shrewd men who had come in from all parts of the country to "deal" for the first of the luscious, plump Arkansas strawberries. However, as I learned from the desk clerk next morning, the pair from Sunrise Mountain Farm hadn't done much visiting. Worn by their long drive, and their exuberant spirits, they soon dropped off to sleep—the Jedge in a big easy chair, and Judy in his lap with her head on his breast. And according to the desk clerk they snored so loudly and in such perfect unison that strawberry buyers and growers,

traveling salesmen, and even the hotel help gathered around to listen in awe. They wouldn't have believed it possible for a man and his dog to hit the same snoring key and tempo and maintain them.

We had intended to stay there several days, but the Jedge is sensitive about his snoring, so we went on, sore throat and all.

Then in a week or so, the Jedge began to worry about getting back home to put the finishing touches to the new equipment in the jelly kitchens. My sore throat had grown less painful, and I was determined to go home and face the music. At least that's what I said aloud. Inwardly I was hoping that the proverbial nine days had cooled the neighborhood's interest in my book. On our way home, I said:

"Maybe Aunt Lizzie will never hear about the book."

"You hope, you hope, you hope!" added the Jedge.

Late that night, we drove into the familiar lane at Sunrise Mountain Farm.

Next morning I was up bright and early, to get the house in order. And, just as a matter of precaution, I made a batch of ice cream.

Early in the afternoon Aunt Lizzie came down the hill in her best calico dress and her big white apron that she calls her "fudge apron." We talked for a long while. I told her all about our trip, including what we had to eat, where we stayed, what this one said, and what that one said. And we each ate a couple of dishes of ice cream.

Then as the shadows were beginning to lengthen, Aunt Lizzie said:

"Margit! Kin I see that there book o' yourn? 'R do you want me to see it?"

Oh, I thought miserably, here it comes! Old Man Trouble is here! But I said blithely:

"Why, Aunt Lizzie! Of course, I want you to see it. I'm

going to give you my own personal copy that the publishers sent to me!"

I went into the bedroom and dug down in the bottom of a dressing-table drawer under the sweater I started for the Judge six years ago, and brought out my copy of *Take to the Hills*.

I went back to the kitchen with the book in my hands.

"See, here it is!" I said. "But before I give it to you, I'm going to autograph it for you!"

I made quite a to-do about getting my fountain pen and filling it with ink, all the time talking to Aunt Lizzie.

"Now I have written about you in this book," I said. "But I called you 'Aunt Mealie' and I called Uncle John 'Uncle Pete'! I wouldn't want to embarrass you for anything in the world. So if anyone," I continued, carefully dotting *i*'s and crossing *t*'s in the autograph, "says he read about you in a book, you just tell him he doesn't know what he's talking about. You tell him those were just characters that Margit made up!"

Aunt Lizzie kept saying, "Enh-heh, enh-heh!" over and over, apparently so eager to get the book in her hands she was not paying the slightest attention to my words.

At last I put the book in her hands.

She didn't even look at the autograph. But that was not surprising because Aunt Lizzie always said she never learned to read or write because it made her "so narvis" trying to remember all them little curlymacues.

She held the book in her hands, and put her feet up on another straight kitchen chair.

"My rheumatiz is kinda botherin' me!"

She opened the book at random and turned a few pages.

"Shet the door," she said. "I'm kinda sweaty!"

I shut the door. The suspense was killing me.

Then, peering up at me with a sly little grin that could

have promised anything up to and including murder, she said, "They's somethin' in here I'm a-wantin' to see!"

I shuddered. My throat began to get sore again.

I sat quietly while she leafed through the pages, one by one.

Finally she stopped at one page, and put an accusing finger on it.

"There!" she said, belligerently. "Jis' as I've hearn tell, you've got it all wrong!"

"Oh, Aunt Lizzie," I moaned.

I peered at the page.

It was the one which showed the picture of Aunt Lizzie (Aunt Mealie) rescuing her dog Brownie from the dog-nappers. In the drawing Aunt Mealie is standing, in mother hubbard and apron, with sunbonnet pushed back, with her gun pointed straight at the heart of the young driver of an old jalopy!

Even while visions of a libel suit ran through my unhappy mind, I recalled that the story was true in every particular. Aunt Lizzie had seen her dog kidnapped by two young couples in a ramshackle car. She had recognized one of the two boys. Taking her sunbonnet from its nail and her gun from its corner, she had trudged after them. When the neighbors, seeing the fire in her eyes, refused to accompany her, she plunged into the thick Ozark woods alone. And straight as a crow flies she had walked nine miles through the woods in the burning noonday heat, evading, God only knows how, the poison oaks, poison ivy and unpleasant snakes that live deep in the heart of our woods. At sundown she had come out of the brush along the roadside just as the young couples were approaching their homes! Pointing the gun at them, she said:

"Put my dawg down!"



"'Jis' as I've hearn tell, you've got it all wrong!"

Then, with the shrewdness of the unlettered, she had added in the voice St. Peter may use on Judgment Day:

"And *put 'im down easy!*"

That was the story as I had told it, and Ronnie Bean had chosen to illustrate the moment when she had stepped out of the bushes and pointed her gun at the car. That illustration was under Aunt Lizzie's accusing finger and I was hearing her tell me I'd got it all wrong.

"Oh, Aunt Lizzie!" I moaned. "What did I do? What did I do?"

She lifted her finger and pointed it at me.

I slunk in my chair.

"Yuh got me with my rifle," she said, grimly. "'N I had my shotgun that day!"

As the days went on, very little was said about my book. After all, books are relatively unimportant in the face of gardening, little chickens, new lambs, and strawberries to be made into preserves. Then one day when Aunt Lizzie and I were sitting in my kitchen while dinner simmered on the wood cookstove, the Jedge came in from town. He tossed me a handful of mail. I opened the letters and started to read them, but just then the gravy began to boil up in the iron skillet. I rose to stir it, leaving my letters lying on the table. The Jedge picked them up and ran through them until he found one with familiar handwriting. He took the letter from the envelope and read it.

"Listen to this!" he paused in his reading to exclaim. "Birdelle Cady writes that if they make a movie out of your book she wants to be Aunt Mealie. Think of that, Aunt Lizzie! A swell-looking club woman up there in Grand Rapids, Michigan, wants to make up to look like you, and play like she's you!"

I toyed with the idea of throwing the skillet, gravy and all, at my tactless husband. Knowing Aunt Lizzie's sensitive

nature, I was horrified! It was a ghastly thing to let her know that people everywhere were reading about her . . . talking about her! I could never make her believe they were not making fun of her.

Ignoring the daggers I was looking at him, the Jedge babbled on, happily and cheerfully, as usual.

"Yes, indeed, Aunt Lizzie! Think of that! You're being made famous, that's what! Everywhere, anyone that reads Marge's book'll wonder about Aunt Mealie. And that Aunt Mealie is you!"

I gave his chair a yank that nearly upset him and said, shortly:

"If you don't get out of the way so I can set the table we won't have any lunch today!"

After lunch Aunt Lizzie and I went down into the south woods so I could pick a bouquet of late violets for my green bowl on the coffee table. While we were hunting the violets, which had grown scarce now that their blooming season was almost over, Aunt Lizzie spoke:

"Margit!"

"Yes, Aunt Lizzie!" I said.

"Effen y're a-goin' to write to that woman up there in Grand Rapids, tell her you-ens wuz out a-pickin' vi'lets with Aunt Mealie!"

I knew then that all was well. Aunt Lizzie was proud to be Aunt Mealie.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CITY FOLKS COME TO SEE

WHEN some of the neighbors said Aunt Lizzie "went all high and mighty because she got writ up in Margit's book" they didn't speak the truth.

It was pure coincidence that Aunt Lizzie's home began getting repairs just then.

For years Aunt Lizzie had said:

"They ain't no use a-fixin' up that air house o' mine till Johnny gits that roof fixed!"

At such times you could tell by Uncle John's kindly blue eyes that he was smiling, although the actual smile would be covered with a straggly beard. For thirty years Uncle John had been smiling like that when Aunt Lizzie nagged him about fixing that roof. It was the masculine smile of tolerance one sees in city or country, the smile that says, "I'm really working on that job, but the little woman doesn't know it!" In those years, Uncle John "rivved" ten thousand shingles—without missing a single day at the creek when fishin' was good.

Then, at long last, the news went through the hills that the roof was being fixed. For several weeks I knew the actual repair work was under way, but I never dreamed that it would mean the conclusion of a thirty-year effort.

One morning I heard our chickens, ducks, guinea hens and geese scattering widely, scolding at being frightened



away from their breakfast. I looked out to see Lucy Conwell coming through the backyard. I moved my bread dough to the little shelf above the cookstove so it would be out of the draft, and pushed back the window.

"Gracious sakes, you're out early this wet morning, Lucy!" I called. "Better come in and dry your feet in the oven."

"I'd like to," she called back. "But I cain't! I'm a-goin' up to help Aunt Lizzie clean out her back room!"

That back room. It was the room where the snake had crawled through the hole in the roof and flopped to the floor, probably even more surprised than Aunt Lizzie herself. In the instant it had taken my neighbor to leap from her bed in the darkness, light a lamp and pick up her gun, the snake had wriggled into some hiding place—never to be found again. Personally, I had avoided that back room like the plague. The snake might have had a litter of little snakelets, I reasoned, that would be hidden in every crevice.

"Oh, Lucy," I said, weakly. "Remember that snake!"

"Well, effen he hain't got out by this time," said Lucy briskly, "he'll git his tail smacked out'n there today!"

I remembered something else. "But Aunt Lizzie has always said she wouldn't clean up that room until Uncle John gets the roof fixed!"

"Well, hit's fixed now. Him and Mr. Bates got the last shingle on yestiday, jis' afore the rain started!"

When I had cleaned up the house, and made the bread dough into loaves and a pan of pocketbook rolls ready for the final rising, I put on my boots and went up the muddy hill to Aunt Lizzie's.

Uncle John was sitting on a stump out in the yard, frankly admiring the new roof.

I stood beside him and told him that it was the most beautiful roof I ever laid eyes on. And I meant it! A handmade roof, like a handmade quilt, is true folk art in the Ozarks.

"They's eighteen hunderd rove shingles in that roof," he said, reflectively. "'N I riv ever'one of 'em myself. Many's the day I could a-bin fishin' down there at Jack's Fork, but . . . never mind! Lizzie's got her roof now."

"Yes," I said, "and it looks like it's up there to stay, too!"

"'Torta be," chuckled Uncle John. "When me 'n' Mr. Bates was a-workin' up there yestidy, we figgered they was more'n a hunderd 'n' fifty-two years' experience bein' put to work. Mr. Bates, he's a old feller o' seventy-eight, but I'm jis' a young squirt! Only seventy-four!" He laughed, and cut a chew from a plug of tobacco with his big pocketknife.

Suddenly Aunt Lizzie appeared at the door of the lean-to, her thin gray hair straggling around her dusty face. She spoke to me above a load of old papers, torn cardboard boxes and other trash clutched in her arms.

"Poke that bonfar, Margit," she ordered. "Hyer's some more truck I might as well git shet of!"

She came cautiously down the steep stone steps and skirted the well curb, heading for the bonfire in the corner of the yard. Suddenly a moth-eaten coonskin dropped from her load of rubbish.

"Hey, Maw!" Uncle John leaped to his feet with unaccustomed celerity. "Yuh cain't burn that!" He pounced on the coonskin and thrust it under the bib of his overalls. "A feller downtown's a-goin' to make me a cap out'n it, soon's he gits around to it!"

He sat back on the stump, spat forcefully at a blue-eyed kitten slapping at a white feather, and mumbled into his beard.

"'Y doggies, that's wimmin f'r yuh! Savin' all kin's o' quiltin' tresh, 'n' throwin' away a puffictly good coonskin."

I tried to relieve the domestic tension by changing the subject.

"My, I'll bet you folks slept like logs last night, through

all that rain. Weren't you glad you didn't have to get up and fix those cans under leaks like you used to do?" I referred, of course, to the dozen or so tin cans of various sizes which Aunt Lizzie had kept beside the fireplace. When a cloud came over the ridge she would run for the cans and begin placing them under the leaks in the roof. So long had the roof been leaking that she knew exactly where to put the various cans—a little one here under a little leak, a middle-sized one there under a bigger leak, and the big oil can under a leak that really got down to business!

Aunt Lizzie threw the last of her trash on the fire and said nothing. Uncle John came out of his grouch and looked slyly at Aunt Lizzie. Then he laughed.

"Well, yuh see, Margit, it's thisaway! Lizzie's been so used to hearin' the rain a-droppin' into them tin cans that last night she couldn't sleep a wink. I had tuh git up and beat on a tin pan so's she could git her rest!"

With the roof fixed, and the back room cleaned up (with no sign of the interloping snake, so it was assumed he had slithered out through the crack around the chimney), Aunt Lizzie got busy on the rest of her house.

The front room was papered with a gay pink wallpaper. The back room got blue paper. And even the lean-to kitchen had its fresh paper.

About this time, the old-age pension checks, a godsend to these dear old people, began coming in. They had had difficulty getting the pensions started because of birth-certificate trouble. Uncle John had a birth certificate that was all right, but Aunt Lizzie had no proof that she had ever been born. To all intents and purposes she had just growed along the river bank, like Topsy. But the Judge got enough affidavits from people who had known her for years and years to prove that she was not only very much here, but thoroughly

entitled to an old-age pension. So the pensions put not only more material comforts into the home, but actually a new morale. Freshly washed curtains were put at the windows and other evidences of good home-making showed up.

Then, when corrugated boxes had been cut into strips and fitted into neat square frames around the doors, simulating woodwork, and painted bright green, Aunt Lizzie announced that there was still something else she wanted.

"What could it be?" Lucy asked.

She nodded her head impressively.

"I want an anolum like Margit's!"

I wondered where I kept my "anolum"! But the next time I went up to Aunt Lizzie's house I found out. She had a smart black and white linoleum on her kitchen floor. It humped in spots, where the floor was patched and rough, but it was bright and shiny.

Aunt Lizzie was making biscuits in her lean-to kitchen when the Jedge went up to her house for the first time after all her cleaning and curtaining had been finished. She poked her head out the window and called, "Robert! Take off yore hat, wipe y'r shoes, 'n' leave a dime on the well curb!"

It was just a joke. Aunt Lizzie was only letting him know how proud she was of her clean house.

But Robert pretended to take it seriously. He gravely wiped his shoes on the grass. He took off his hat and smoothed down his hair (all three of them). He took a dime from his pocket and with a great flourish shined it on his trousers. Then he placed it carefully on the well curb. After all this he went inside to praise the house in extravagant terms.

As months went on and my book about our Ozark farm got about, city visitors began flocking to Sunrise Mountain Farm. This was something we had not anticipated. It had simply never occurred to us that city people, after reading a book about a farm hundreds of miles away, would drive

down to see it. But many did just that. In fact, in the middle of the summer when I was in Chicago and Robert was down at the farm, he wrote:

“For the love of Mike next time you write a book, please write about the Fiji Islands or Timbuctoo. It’s an awful strain to have to wear a shirt all day Sunday for city visitors. Fifty-five here this week end!”

I think the bit about wearing the shirt was put in just to allay any well-grounded suspicions I might have. Many people who made that summer trip to Sunrise Mountain Farm turned up later to show me pictures they had taken there. And in many of those pictures there was the Jedge, dignified as all get out, but without a sign of a shirt!

And invariably these collections of photographs included snapshots of Aunt Lizzie and Uncle John. Apparently all the city visitors who had read *Take to the Hills* wanted to be taken up to see Aunt Mealie.

On their way up to the Tamsett home the Jedge would always explain that the “Aunt Mealie” of the book was really Aunt Lizzie. And as they approached the Tamsett home he would recite the orders that Aunt Lizzie had given to him that day. He would say, “‘Wipe your shoes! Take off your hat. And leave a dime on the well curb!’”

And the city visitors invariably did. Many of them left more than dimes—some even left folding money! I was glad to hear of this. I knew a little financial encouragement would help keep Aunt Lizzie pleased to see visitors. And I surely wanted them to see her in that frame of mind. I knew, too, that little pieces of change would come in handy for personal expenses that one’s old-age pension might not cover.

I mentioned these city visitors one day late in the autumn when I was at Aunt Lizzie’s house, looking at pictures that had been sent her by some of our visitors. “You know, Aunt Lizzie,” I said, “I think you’ve been awfully nice to endure

all this commotion this past summer! I think you were perfectly swell to let folks into your house, and to stand up hundreds of times to have your picture taken!"

"Well, Margit," she said, "I wuz glad to do it! I ain't had so many laughs in y'ars! Of all the fool questions them city folks could think up! They looked at the green peaches that was still green on the trees an' said 'O-oh, what big plums!' And one feller wouldn't believe a katydid is a real bug. He thought it wuz jist a joke about a country girl named Katy!

"Margit," she went on, with the air of one telling a great secret, "Margit, them city folks is the *greenest* things I ever seen in all my days!"

So while city visitors wore out their tires traveling to Aunt Lizzie's little mountain home, deep in the heart of the Ozark back-country, Aunt Lizzie simply stayed home and had the best laugh of all—the last laugh!

## CHAPTER THREE

### *YOO-HOO, BRENDA!*

SO YOU'RE going to get a cow when you leave the city and come to the Ozarks! Well, you'd better bring along a new set of recipes! All those nice little city recipes that require a half cup of milk or a tablespoonful of butter might just as well be left in town. Take it from one who knows, you'll welcome recipes that use lots and lots of milk. Instead of skimping on milk you'll be urging your family to use lots of cream on their breakfast Cheerioats. And more than likely you'll say, one day, "Darn it! What'll I do with all this milk!"

And suddenly you'll realize what a wonderful thing it is to be able to use milk generously and freely in planning your menus! You'll give silent thanks to the kind Providence that sent you to the Ozarks.

The cow situation at Sunrise Mountain Farm was a bit complicated from the start. When my sister Lucile and her husband lived on our farm, before we took over, they bought a cow at a sale. They took her home and she gave them five gallons of milk. *Once!* The farmer who wanted to sell her hadn't milked her for a week before the sale! They returned the cow and got most of their money back. The farmer charged them for the five gallons of milk. When I heard about it, I said gloomily that anything could happen when a cow was in the deal!

Since childhood I have had a cow complex. The Judge says it's because I'm afraid I'll gain five more pounds and look like one. But it goes back further than that. As youngsters my sister Pauline and I had to drive our family cow to pasture in the Fairgrounds. The cow was a Jersey and her name was Annie. Annie didn't like Pauline and me any better than we liked her. She moseyed along the roadside, plucking at choice morsels of grass or nipping off clover blossoms, with utter disregard for her small cowhands and their shrill commands. If we ventured with wildly beating hearts close enough to her flanks to tap her with a switch, she turned around to glower at us and shake her head threateningly. Usually by the second shake we had retreated a half block. But if we stood our ground she bellowed and made a step toward us. That was enough to send us scurrying clear back to Ike Phillips' gate, crying with fright. But Annie couldn't be left out on the roadside. Eventually we would pull ourselves together and go back to our cowherding.

Usually along about Dunc Lovett's gate Annie apparently remembered that the Fairgrounds had luscious green grass, too. Or maybe she recalled an unfinished conversation with one of the other "town cows" that grazed there daytimes. Without warning, she would lift her head from the daisies and start running pell-mell toward the Fairgrounds gate. If the gates weren't open, she would stand there impatiently, shaking her head and making threatening gestures at the small frightened girls who were doing their darnedest to open the big old gate.

Our parents could never understand why Pauline and I wouldn't drink a glass of milk or allow butter to be spread on our bread.

"With all this good rich Jersey milk," our mother would often say plaintively, "you won't drink a mouthful! Why,



there are children right here in this town that would love to have it!"

"Let 'em have it!" we would say coldly.

With this practically lifelong fear of cows and dislike of their product, cows were banned by me from Sunrise Mountain Farm. Besides, Aunt Lizzie's cows gave plenty of milk, and she was willing to sell it to us for a nickel a quart. Personally, I preferred to carry a bucket of milk rather than herd the cow that was carrying it. Pauline, who has spent considerable time at the farm, has felt the same way.

And it was fun to see Aunt Lizzie mark down our milk account on the calendar on her wall. It was a huge calendar, with the days set in big squares. Each day Aunt Lizzie would make a check mark which indicated the amount we had bought that day. Then once a week we would ask her what we owed for the milk. She would peer at her calendar and, with mouth working, compute the sum. Once, however, when we were bringing up little orphan lambs, the amount had increased so sharply that she was thrown off all her former computations.

"G'wan in yonder room, Pauline," she said finally. "It makes me narvis to be a-doin' this when anyone is around!"

Then a couple of years ago the Jedge decided we should get a half-grown heifer calf. He argued that the calf and I would get used to each other, and by the time she became a cow I would have lost all my distrust of cows.

"Why, you'll have her sleeping in by the kitchen cook-stove on cold winter nights, you'll be so fond of her!" he said.

Even leaving out the sanitary angle, I couldn't imagine a cow and myself under the same roof. But I agreed to the purchase. He began looking for a half-grown heifer.

He finally found one. The owner said she was the daughter of a pedigreed Jersey father and a mother who was all-

Jersey but just hadn't had any papers filed on her ancestry. Robert bought the calf and she was brought to the farm.

My husband argued that she was less than a year old. I said she looked awfully big for her age and she had That Look in her eyes. She had long knobby legs, and a sort of barrel-shaped body with a little head stuck out at the end of a long neck. She looked like animals I had seen in a runway at the Morrell Packing Plant, only not nearly so good! And besides, she was black as coal. I protested that this cow must have been the black sheep in her Jersey family for all the Jersey cows I had ever seen were yellow. The Jedge said I didn't know what I was talking about—that the farmer had told him some of the finest Jersey cows in the world are coal black.

I said I wouldn't believe anything anyone told me about cows, least of all an Ozark farmer with one to sell. And furthermore, if we had to have a horrid, fearsome cow stomping around the place and shaking her head at me, why, we should have a real Jersey cow that would give us decent whipping cream.

The Jedge had gone into one of his non-hearing moods. "What'll we name her?" he asked, gazing ecstatically at the black critter which had walked through the chicken's watering pan, scared the daylight out of the sheep, and was at that moment taking long licks off the salt block.

"Black Bottom!" I said promptly.

The Jedge gave me a withering look. "What would the neighbors think, if they heard me out calling: Heeeeeeeerreee, Black Bottom! Heeeeeereeee, Black Bottom!"

He began calling names, experimentally.

"Soooooo, Blackie! Soooooo, Bossie! Soooooo, Beauty! Soooooo, Bessie!"

At that the cowlet suddenly tossed her head to chase a fly away from her shoulder, and caught sight of us standing at

the gate. She stared at us. I detected a glare of utmost dislike the moment she laid eyes on me. But the Jedge was exuberant!

"See!" he said. "She knows her name right now! Bessie, come, Bessie! She's a good little calvie, that's what her is!"

Talking baby talk to a knobby-kneed black monster! I was disgusted and went back into the house.

So Bessie became one of the farm animals. She had a special stall in the barn. She had special food. She was given the range of the farm. And every day she was brushed. She liked being brushed. She would stand patiently, while the Jedge or Roy brushed her black coat until it shone. If they stopped brushing before Bessie felt the job was through, she would glare at them, lower her head and shake it threateningly. Then one could hear the brusher say, "Oh, you want to be brushed some more! Well, all right, little girl, I'll brush you all day if you say so!"

Yes, Bessie was treated like visiting royalty. But she was at heart an Incorrigible! If she had been born a human, she would have given social workers nervous breakdowns, and landed in the girls' reformatory without question.

She was wild as a hawk. She jumped fences and one time was lost two days while the Jedge scoured the fields for her. She couldn't be taught to lead, even though the Jedge bought her a new red halter that looked beautiful against her black coat. At the first leading experiment she broke loose and went about the farm two days, trailing the leading rein.

She wouldn't go into her stall at night, even though special food was waiting for her.

And she bunted. She bunted sheep, dogs, chickens and—most of all—the Jedge. Robert argued at first that her youth and high spirits made her bunt. Then he decided the bunting was a psychological outlet because she was lonesome.

"I'll make a pet of her," he said. "Like a dog! That's it! A *contented* cow!"

After that, whenever Bessie came up to the Big Pond to get a drink, the Jedge would attempt to get near enough to pat her and to assure her that she was among friends who wanted her life to be one long blissful summertime.

Bessie apparently anticipated that he might be going to brush her. She allowed him to come close enough to rub her ears. Then, when the brush was not forthcoming, she lowered her head and gave it a good businesslike shake. With that, Robert always got away fast!

I made no attempt at the let-us-be-pals business. I stayed safely inside the lawn fence whenever Bessie's black nose was in sight. But one afternoon I forgot about her.

It was a beautiful autumn day, when the hills about Sunrise Mountain Farm were rich with glorious colors. I had kindled a little fire in the outdoor fireplace, high on the hilltop of the Home Forty, and I sat before it on a big stone watching the gray smoke rise like a pale ghost against the blue sky.

Ridge after ridge of hills, reaching as far as eye could see, lay before me. As sunlight and shadow rippled across the colorful scene, it seemed that Mother Nature might be shaking a vast Oriental rug in slow motion as a farm housewife dusts a rag rug at her doorstep. I was lost in the peace and beauty of the Ozark landscape.

Suddenly I heard the Jedge calling from the farmhouse kitchen, "Look behind you!"

I turned my head. There, not two feet from me, was Bessie!

"Sit perfectly still," the Jedge called, like someone directing a mob scene. "She just wants to get acquainted with you!"

I sat quietly. The blood froze in my veins. I tried to

remember that some people love cows, that cows are gentle, domestic animals, just like our dogs and sheep. But I couldn't have been more frightened if a lion had been slipping up behind me.

I felt Bessie coming closer. She sniffed at my hair, at my leather coat, at the wool scarf around my neck! Stiff with horror, I sat rigidly, cold shivers running up my spine when I felt her warm breath on the back of my neck. Then all at once, she was gone. I breathed easier.

At that moment, I heard Robert call, in a loud, warning tone, "*Look* out!"

I turned quickly.

There was Bessie, about ten paces away, with head lowered threateningly, pawing the earth.

I had merely *thought* I was frozen with horror. I found that I could move faster than I had ever moved before. In less than the wink of an eyelash I was on the other side of the fireplace, calling loudly for Judy.

Judy came dashing up from her rabbit hunting down in the south woods. Just as Bessie, with head down and tail high, came at the place where I had been, Judy hurled herself at the heifer with a flood of Boston terrier invectives that sent her speeding over to the Big Pond.

"Keep her away from me, Judy!" I begged.

I heard the Jedge calling from the kitchen, "Aw, shucks, Bessie just wanted to play Duck-on-the-Rock!"

So a new home was found for Bessie—a home where she would have companionship of her kind. And we are told that, like many so-called Bad Girls, she grew into a very staid and highly respected member of her community.

Then, after Pearl Harbor, when more than ever we saw the need for making our farm supply our food, we agreed once more that we must have a cow. And since the Jedge still in-



I sat rigidly, cold shivers running up my spine . . .

sisted that Bessie's shortcomings were caused by loneliness, he said we should get not one, but two cows.

Because Cabool is a famous milk center in our part of the Ozarks, he put a cow-wanted ad in the Cabool newspaper. Within a few days he had a letter from a Cabool farmer:

CABOOL, MO.  
Feb. 1, 1942

Mr. R. W. Lyon  
Mountain View, Mo.

DEAR SIR:

In answer to your add in Cabool paper for a cow. I have a 3 yr. old registered Jersey cow, due to freshen Apr. 4/42 with her second calf. This cow is out of a club male and is with calf now by a club male. She milked 3 gal. per day with 1st calf on medium feed, I am just now turning her dry. She is free of T.B. This cow is nicely broke to lead and is gentle. I will take \$100.00 for her delivered to Mt. View. If you care to look at her drop me a card so I will be at home.

Yours truly,

E— D—

P.S. I also have a full sister to the above cow, four yrs. old past, which is now fresh. I will take \$100.00 for her.

The Jedge went hurrying over to see the cows. But the farmer wouldn't sell both cows. His wife wouldn't let him part with the one that was already giving gallons of milk. The Jedge promptly bought the other and drove home all excited. The next day the cow was brought to the farm in a big red truck. We hurried out when the ramp was put down, arriving in time to see the Jersey beauty descending with all the calm poise and grace of Ethel Barrymore coming down the staircase in *The Corn Is Green!* She turned her big brown eyes on us with assured tolerance.

"She's not the first blonde whose look has made me feel like a worm!" I said.

"And what a blonde!" said Robert. "She's a honey, all

right! A real, pedigreed, 4-H Club Jersey! Three years old! And come April fourth we'll be wading in Jersey cream!" He was ecstatic.

So the blonde cow became one of the farm animals, her gold and cream color standing out against the fresh spring green of the meadow like a pastoral painting.

Right from the start Danny (who now has the farm job Roy had held so long) and the Jedge took turns brushing the blonde and mixing feeding formulas to tempt her appetite. We pondered over names, hour in and hour out!

"Put a wreath of daisies around her neck, and call her Elsie," I suggested.

"Mr. Borden would be fit to be tied, he'd be that jealous if he could see our cow," said the Jedge. "Elsie! Fooey!"

Then, two days later we were in the living room when we saw the big red truck come swaying up the lane again. It swung into position in the barn lot. The farmer hopped down from the seat and began letting down the ramp!

"Say, what's this?" exclaimed the Jedge, grabbing his hat and coat.

"This must be where I came in," I said. "Seems like I've seen this before!"

Robert hurried out to the barn lot.

I peered through the kitchen window just in time to see a beautiful gold and cream Jersey cow come slowly down the ramp with utmost dignity. For a moment, I thought that the first cow had got out somehow and gone back to her original home. Then I realized that she was nibbling the new lespedeza up in the neighborhood of the outdoor fireplace, and that the newcomer was a second cow, slightly larger than the first one.

I hurried out to see what had happened.

The farmer was telling Robert that he had gone back from our farm and told his wife what a good home our cows would have and how nicely they would be treated. And she had



agreed to let him sell the second cow, too. So he had brought her over.

And—he added, as an afterthought—danged if he hadn't 'most f'rgot it, but he'd brought his wife, too. Yep, there she wuz, up there in the seat o' the truck, a-hynt them curtins! She'd come to see f'r herse'f effen that Sunrise Mountain Farm was as good as she'd been a-hearin'!

In a moment we had the Forgotten Woman out of the truck, and she was telling us she had jis' come along to see f'r herself if her cow would have a good home, because she was such a good, likable cow, gentle and nice as a kitten.

We turned to look at the new cow. She was even more beautiful than the other, if possible. And, to make her even lovelier in our eyes, she was giving, so the farmer said, "'bout three gallons o' milk a day!"

The three gallons turned out to be nearer four—yes, four gallons of rich, creamy, yellow milk that gives us more whipping cream and homemade butter than we had in a year's time in the city. We give our neighbors a couple of gallons a day, and the dogs and cats drink their skins full every night and morning.

Last night the Jedge came in and plopped down in his easy chair beside the fireplace.

"Good heavens," he said. "What'll we do with all the milk when Cobina has her calf and starts giving milk, too?"

I looked up from the letter I was writing to Margaret Goldman of the Pure Milk Association, begging for recipes that call for lots and lots of milk.

"When *who* has a calf?" I asked.

"Cobina!" replied the Jedge. "Gosh, she'll probably give more milk than Brenda does!"

So come and meet them, friends—Brenda and Cobina, the two beautiful blondes at Sunrise Mountain Farm—and velvet-eyed Douglas MacArthur born April fifth.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *ROMANCE IN THE JELLY KITCHENS*

I NEED A stenographer," announced the Jedge.  
"Don't look at me," I said. "I work on my own stuff, such as it is!"

He began composing an advertisement for the Mountain View weekly paper. "Get a girl that's stingy with s's!" I prompted. The Jedge always puts double s in disappear and disappoint.

For several days the hills around Mountain View were scoured for a stenographer, with no luck. Any girl with a commercial education either had a job or didn't want one. Then at last, a stenographer was found—of all places—along the Ferndale road. She was willing, she said, to come over to Sunrise Mountain Farm and type the Jedge's letters for the modest sum of three dollars a day. However, she decreed, the Jedge would have to come for her and take her back home after the day's work was done. This rather set the Jedge back on his heels, having been accustomed to stenographers who arrive spick and span at their city offices by means of streetcars, buses, or the private cars that city stenographers manage to annex. However, those letters had to be written, and the Jedge was darned sick of pecking them out with one finger.

So the stenographer was hired. The girl was a tiny person, with an acidulous tongue and bright black eyes. The Jedge

piled magazines and a cushion on the chair and the girl went to work. Page after page of beautifully typed letters flowed from her typewriter. The Jedge had a jewel!

Day after day, during the jelly-selling season, the Jedge made the trip along the narrow hilly Ferndale road to fetch Miss Lilly Githers.

Then one night it rained.

The next morning the Jedge started out as usual to get Miss Lilly. But the little brooks that normally flow over the Ferndale road with a pleasant little gurgling sound had become roaring torrents. They zoomed, they groaned. They hissed and they roared. The Jedge turned back.

"Darn it," he said, straightening the car for the hundredth time when it slithered out of the rut, "I've got to get a real secretary—one that can get to work under her own power!"

The next time he went into West Plains he put an advertisement in the *Quill*. He sat back to wait for the replies. None came. He put another advertisement in the paper, with two more lines telling about the ease of the work, the short hours, and other general inducements. Still no reply. Mail from eager jelly dealers began to stack up. He typed out replies with two long bony forefingers.

Then, one day, a local Mountain View girl came into the jelly factory.

"Mr. Lyon," she said, "is it true you're a-wantin' a stenographer?"

"Want one!" exclaimed the Jedge. "I've got to have a girl to run this typewriter!"

"I know a crackerjack stenographer," she said.

"Fine," replied the Jedge. "Can you get her here this afternoon?"

"Nope," replied the Mountain View miss. "Not much chance of that. She lives in Wichita, Kansas!"

"Well, that's a fine how-do-you-do," said the Judge. "What good is a stenographer out in Kansas?"

"Well, this girl wants to come down to the Ozarks. Said she'd come f'r her room and board if she could git out of Kansas!"

"I'm a little doubtful about anyone that anxious to get out of Kansas!"

"Oh, don't hold that agin' her! She jis' wants to come to the Ozarks!"

"Okay," said the Judge. "Tell her to come on."

Thus it was that Betty Wood came to Mountain View. And all masculine Mountain View turned to look at her. Betty was tall, but not too tall, with curly chestnut brown hair, big blue eyes, and just enough plumpness to give her face a childish rounded contour and her figure the right sort of curves in the right places. In short, Betty would have been considered a luscious eyeful in any man's town. In Mountain View she was a sensation.

Although she had not turned twenty, Betty had been working four years, as cashier, salesgirl, typist and stenographer. In those jobs Betty had not learned all the answers, perhaps. But certainly most of them! Betty introduced Mountain View to a "line." With razor-keen wit, amazing sophistication, good looks, a startling collection of becoming clothes, Betty began making history in Mountain View from the day she arrived.

The Judge obtained board and room for Betty at the Commercial House. And three times daily, the day's quota of traveling salesmen and Betty sat side by side to eat their meals.

It was a sight to behold.

Betty usually came to the table late. Or perhaps the salesmen came early—since there is little to do in Mountain View except eat. When Betty opened the screen doors leading

from the lobby to the dining room, conversation invariably ceased. Now and then there was a shuffling of feet under the table, a gentle clearing of throats, or the clatter of a dropped fork.

Betty never had to ask for food at the table. Even the most domesticated traveling salesman felt it his duty to help her get plenty of food on her plate. Considering that anywhere from ten to thirty dishes of food invariably grace the Commercial House dinners, which are always served family style, it's a wonder Betty could keep her rounded slenderness. From every side she would hear:

"Have some meat!"

"These turnips are delicious. Have some?"

"Wouldn't you like some of these beans?"

"Pass the biscuits this way! I know the lady wants one!"

"Here's the cole slaw. Great stuff! Good f'r what ails yuh! But"—a quick smile—"I can't see anything wrong with you!"

"Here, try these radishes. They'll put curl in your hair—not that it needs it!" Another smile.

Betty would smile, revealing pearl-like teeth and a dimple in her rounded cheek. And a gulp would be heard around the table.

"Jedge doin' much business these days?" one of the local gentry would inquire.

"Oh, yes, we're rushed to death!" Betty would smile at the inquirer.

"Don't tell me those pretty little hands have to work!" one of the bolder souls would venture.

"Pretty little hands keep out of mischief—when they work," Betty would flash.

"But you must be awfully alone in a town like this! My, my, a girl like you—stuck here! Why you——"

"Yeah, I know!" Betty would counter. "I know I ought

to be in pictures! Those Hollywood fellows are pestering the life out of me!"

When Betty rose to leave the table after a modest meal, even strangers at the table would leap to open doors for her. The local men would wink knowingly at one another. Betty was as "distant" to "strange men" as any Mountain View girl.

Later, in the lobby, if Betty paused to glance over the evening paper, even the most bashful of the traveling salesmen would approach her with a muffled cough.

"Warm this evening, isn't it?"

"Not in here!" Betty would reply, with enough ice to cool the lobby.

"Must get awfully bored here—a girl like you!"

"Say, I believe this is where I came in," Betty would remark, rising and sauntering out of the door.

Or perhaps the conversation would run like this:

"Say, this is my first trip here! What is there to do in a place like this?"

"Well, there's the Anchor, where you can dance!"

Betty was always willing to be helpful with suggestions.

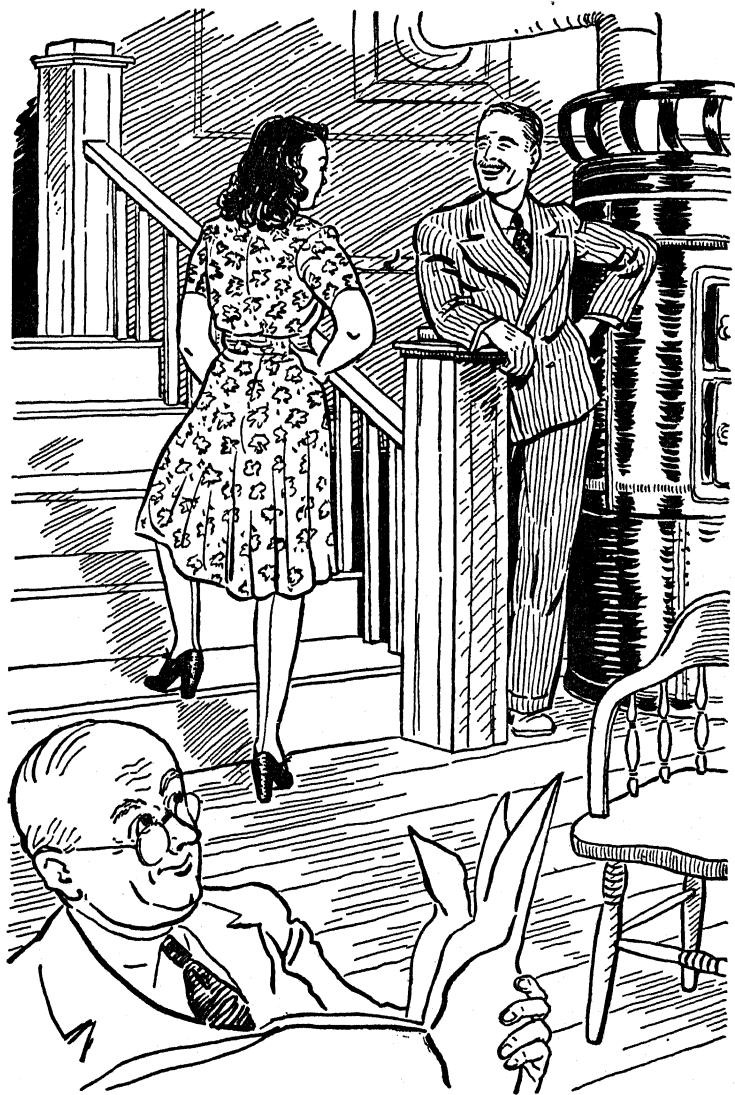
"The Anchor? Where's that?" This was the invariable question, even though the salesman had been covering the territory for years and had enjoyed his first dance at the Anchor about the time Betty learned how to put on lipstick.

"Why, it's about four miles out of town on Route 60!"

"I'm afraid I can't find it. How about . . . ?"

"Sorry, but I'm busy!" Betty would smile sweetly and head for the stairs.

With the local boys, however, Betty was different. No debutante could have asked for more popularity, for more adulation, more downright fun than Betty Wood enjoyed during that first summer in Mountain View. Even though Mountain View is a small town, deep in the hills, it had an



“What is there to do in a place like this?”

amazing number of good-looking young fellows and pretty girls home from college. The Younger Set accepted Betty without question. She danced until dawn night after night. She motored in topless, fenderless cars over miles of rugged mountain country. She picnicked beside sparkling brooks and icy springs. She swam in Jack's Fork. She ate enough hot dogs and hamburgers to last her the rest of her mortal days.

But she worked like a trooper at the jelly kitchens. She took dictation like a court reporter. And if her punctuation was a bit on the hazy side, and if she put *a*'s instead of *i*'s in "magnificent," the speed with which she got out the letters made up for such minor peccadillos. At least the Jedge thought so! Most days, when letters were finished, she would put the stack on the Jedge's desk and shout across the jelly kitchen:

"Hey, Jedge! Come and put your John Henry on these. I was out till 3 A.M. teaching astronomy to one of the local gentry! Think maybe I'd better go over to my room and get a little shut-eye before I go to that dance tonight!"

The Jedge would obligingly stop testing the strawberry jam or peach preserves to sign the letters.

On other days, when she was less fatigued by extracurricular affairs, Betty would obligingly hop to the job of putting the little paper caps over the tops of the jelly jars. Or perhaps she would stack the cooled jars in shipping boxes.

At these times, she would say, "Hi, Jedge! Where's my shipping-clerk cap?"

Yes, Betty had a line.

Occasionally the Jedge tried to find out if she was becoming serious about any young Mountain Viewer.

"No, Jedge," she would say, airily. "I like 'em all! All except one! And he's never looked at me, so we get along fine!"

Apparently the summer's flirtations were leaving no mark



on Betty's heart. As a matter of fact, I tried, in a genteel way, to find out just what a Glamour Girl thinks of a successful season. I asked Betty, as we drove along one day, what had been the most exciting incident of her stay at Mountain View. She modestly replied that she couldn't think of an exciting incident.

However, one day, when I was away from the farm, I received this letter from her:

DEAR MARGE:

The other day, you asked me what my most exciting moment in Mountain View was, and before I could think of an incident we dropped the subject and started something else. Since then I have thought of an amusing incident.

Tuesday at the jelly kitchens is always "black mail" day because we never receive much mail. I usually have that afternoon off and this is how one of those afternoons was spent. Betty Epperson and I had Thelma, Betty's sister, take us down to Radcliff (on Jack's Fork) with it understood that she should return for us later in the evening. We spent a lovely afternoon, swimming, hiking and chasing snakes—I mean being chased.

Late in the afternoon we built a big fire on the sandy beach of the river and roasted weiners and marshmallows. [Note: the spelling is Betty's.] We sat there not noticing the time, just talking, laughing, singing, etc., until it grew dark and the fire went out and still no Thelma to take us home. We were afraid to sit there and afraid to leave.

Finally, we got up enough courage to make a dash through the dark woods to the Eppersons' cabin. There we found some candles and enough covers to make up a bed for ourselves. When we finally went to sleep I dreamed of snakes and goblins all night long.

We awoke with the sun streaming in on us and the woods alive with wild animals running around. We got up and went for the earliest swim I ever took, six o'clock in the morning. We spent the rest of the day enjoying ourselves swimming, etc., because still no one came for us. It was just by chance that some people came out from town for a swim

late in the afternoon and took us home. I called Mr. Lyon at five o'clock and asked if he still remembered me.

"Oh, yes," he said. "You're my secretary. Why don't you drop me a card when you go on these trips?"

The days were wonderful and lots of fun, but I hope I never spend another night like that.

Sincerely yours,

BETTY.

It seemed to me a very un-thrilling incident. Somehow I had visions of Betty galloping a winded horse over hill and dale to stop a duel scheduled to be fought at dawn. Or, less romantically, giving a too-ardent fellow picnicker a swift uppercut and throwing him into Jack's Fork for good measure. And all Betty could remember was a lonely night!

As the summer went on, changes were made in the jelly kitchens' help. Our faithful Roy, who had been Vice President in charge of Buying Berries, Cutting Wood, Packing, Shipping and Time Keeping, left us for a city job.

Billy Boyd was hired to take his place.

Billy was a few years older than the gay college crowd. And by nature considerably more serious. The Jedge had had his eye on the good-looking young man for some time, and promptly began training him to do important work.

Billy took to the whole business just as Robert had hoped he would.

But the Jedge had a problem on his hands.

Betty Wood and Billy Boyd just didn't get along.

"Big Chief Nose-in-the-air!" said Betty, spitefully, of the new employee.

"Aw, Betty, don't be like that," said the Jedge. "Billy's a fine young chap!"

"I wouldn't know," said Betty, primly. "I'd never met him until he came here to work."

The Jedge talked to Billy.

"Listen, Bill! Don't high-hat Betty like that. Gosh, I'd hate for her to get mad and go back to Kansas!"

But Betty said nothing about going back to Kansas. About that time, she began to talk about going to Chicago when the jelly-making season ended. Day in and day out she talked about her dream of getting to Chicago to work. If only she could get to the city! If she could just get some of those good wages city girls got! If she could spend her Saturday afternoons at Field's, looking at beautiful clothes! If she could see the Art Institute! If she could go to band concerts in Grant Park! If she could just breathe the air of the Big Town! The Judge was all sympathy.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he promised. "If you will stay here until the end of the season, and get all the sales letters written to dealers, Marge will have her good friend Jane Vance help you get located in Chicago. She'll find you a place to stay, and help you get a job!"

He also promised that we would take her up to Chicago in the car at the end of the season. Betty went around with stars in her eyes. She talked of nothing but Chicago.

Letters fairly flew from her typewriter. The girls in the jelly kitchen grew equally excited. They worked fast and furiously to finish their work, so Betty could get to Chicago.

Betty wrote to my friend Jane, in Chicago, and Jane replied that she had lined up several good jobs for which Betty would be interviewed, and had reserved room and board for her at McCormick YWCA Hotel.

At last the jelly-making season was finished. The last letter had been sent to the farthestmost dealer. The special Christmas gift boxes made a colorful showing; thousands of them stood stacked head-high in the long factory. On the last day of work, like the last day of school, the girls came dressed in their best.

At noontime, the Judge took us all to the Commercial

House where a special table had been set up for our Farewell Dinner.

Billy was to have been in the party, but at the last minute he remembered something had to be done to the Judge's car, so he couldn't eat with us.

As we took our places at the long table the Judge was happy as a lark, at the thought of getting off for Chicago next morning. Betty sat at the host's right and her dimpled smile was bright as a light bulb. We ate baked chicken and dressing, carrots, beans, potatoes, lettuce, mustard greens, smothered steak, noodles and seven kinds of jam, before we tackled the dessert of apple pie. It was a party worth remembering.

After dinner (noon dinner of course) Billy brought our car around to the hotel so we could go out to the farm to pack our bags and prepare things for our absence in the city.

Betty came out on the hotel porch to see us off.

"Remember now, Betty!" said Robert, for the hundredth time. "We'll be past for you at five o'clock tomorrow morning. You have your bags packed and downstairs! Jane's expecting you in Chicago tomorrow night!"

Billy spoke up. "Reckon you don't want to go around by Arrol, then?"

"Oh, yes! I'd much rather," replied my husband. "But Betty wouldn't have any way of getting out to the farm."

"Aw, I might bring 'er out in the jelly-kitchen truck," said Billy, casually.

Robert was delighted.

"Say, Bill, that's swell. I hate to ask you to get up that early, but that's a shorter route up to St. Louis. Now, Betty, you be ready. Bill, you pick her up at five sharp!"

We left the two young folks on the porch of the hotel.

Next morning we were packing our luggage and Judy's

bed in the car when we saw the glimmer of car lights in the early-morning fog. We stood beside our car and shouted gay greetings as the truck came up the lane. The red truck stopped behind the gray car. Betty stepped from one side, Billy stepped from the other. Billy's hair was rumpled, his tie was askew, but he was smiling, from ear to ear. Betty's blue eyes were wide and shining. Her cheeks were glowing.

"We have news for you, Jedgie!" she said.

"You don't need to put it into words!" said the Jedge. "But I thought you two hated each other!"

Betty laughed gaily.

"It'll be Valentine's Day," said Billy. "We sat up all night in the Commercial House porch swing, talking and making our plans. In February . . ." His voice trailed off, as he looked at Betty, the Wonder Girl from Wichita.

The Jedge held out his hands. "Kids," he said, "I'm tickled to death!" He added, "Now you'd better go inside, and ask Jennie to make you a pot of coffee. And when you can get down to earth—would you mind keeping an eye on the jelly kitchens while we're away?"

With arms about each other, Betty and Billy crossed the lawn to the farmhouse terrace. We called Judy and got into our car, and headed for Chicago.

At the lane gate, the Jedge stopped the car and called: "Betty!"

"Yes, Jedgie!" came the reply.

"Did you ever intend to go to Chicago?"

"No, Jedgie!" We heard Betty laugh. "I had to pretend it to get Billy to speak up. "It was—just a line!"

And so they were married, at Sunrise Mountain Farmhouse, on Valentine's Day. And we're betting they'll live happily ever after—when this war is over!

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *HELP IN THE HILLS*

CAREER girls in the Ozarks are not numerous, probably because Ozark menfolks still believe that a woman's place is in her home. Or perhaps jobs are too few to give girls the career urge. I'm inclined to believe this explanation, since, given a chance, even Ozark girls go all-out for a career. Ellie Smith proves my point.

Ellie Smith was our housekeeper. Ellie lived with her mother and two children just a short piece down the Harlow Road. Ellie had a husband, but he wasn't in evidence very much of the time. There was some story about it; the husband had either been a product of a matrimonial advertisement, or he had drifted into the country as a personable itinerant and had stayed on to become Ellie's husband and the father of her two children. These children were eleven and twelve years of age at the time we first met Ellie.

Ellie was pretty, plump and a willing worker. She would turn out a washing without turning a hair. And having finished the wash, she would hang it out on the line even though a storm had come up and rain was pouring. Ellie was distinctly not the executive type. But she was a worker. She kept the house clean as a new pin—even the doo-dads on the whatnot were dusted regularly. Once, in talking to a neighbor, I said, "Ellie Smith works like a horse." The neighbor said wryly, "'Tain't no wonder! Her old dad used to hitch her mother up to the plow with a mule, and plow all day!"

After that, whenever her mother came over, I could hardly take my fascinated eyes off her. She was short and dumpy, like me. I always wanted to ask her if she hadn't been terribly afraid to be so near a mule.

But this story is really of Ellie and not Ellie's mother. Ellie's first taste of a career came when our jelly kitchens were established at Sunrise Mountain Farm. We employed a number of other women who came to the kitchens each day. The first hint of a career urge stirred in Ellie's breast. Here I am, she probably reasoned, stuck in this lonesome old farmhouse with all them other women out there in the jelly kitchens, wearing white uniforms, singin' and laughin' while they're stirrin' jam! An' me in here, in this big ol' house, lonesome as a dog!

Finally Ellie's grumblings reached the ears of the Judge. He made a deal with Ellie. "If you will continue to keep the farmhouse as neat as always," he said to her, "you can have a job in the jelly kitchens."

"Too!" he added.

Ellie took the two jobs in her stride. Each day she whisked through the house, getting everything cleaned up slick as a whistle. Then she went out to the jelly kitchens for her day's work, just like all the other factory help. Robert paid her a jelly-kitchen salary that made the housekeeper's salary I paid her look like peanuts. At the end of the season Ellie had grown stronger and apparently happier. Her husband, who had been out working in the Kansas wheat fields, came home and they lived happily through the winter. We were happy, too—for, rain or shine, Ellie would be at the farmhouse early in the day to help with whatever had to be done.

Spring came again. Our new jelly kitchens were established in the town of Mountain View, so we could employ more help.

"Can I have a job in town, Mr. Lyon?" asked Ellie.

The Jedge faced a problem. We needed Ellie at the farmhouse. But the jelly kitchens needed good dependable help, too. The jelly kitchens won.

So Ellie and her younger sister, a widow, went to town to set up bachelor-girl quarters in a rented room. I've seen Chicago girls going to take New York jobs. I've seen a Milwaukee girl study a book on will power until she landed a coveted job in France. But never have I seen such excitement over a career as that of Ellie and her sister!

They called it "moving into the city." To them, living in Mountain View (pop. 500) was the crowning achievement of their lives.

They rented a room in a small frame house a couple of blocks from the Commercial House. To that room they took handmade quilts and a straw-tick mattress. They took in canned goods and dried apples. They took in their best dresses. And after their first payday, they had permanent waves. At the end of the season the Jedge had a talk with Ellie.

"Well, Ellie," he said, pleasantly, "I suppose you can hardly wait until you get back out to the farm with your mother and two youngsters!"

"I been a-aimin' to tell you about that, Mr. Lyon," said Ellie. "I hain't a-goin' back to no farm!"

The Jedge rocked on his heels.

"Why, what are you going to do?"

"I've got me a job at the Commercial House," said Ellie.

So the best and most faithful helper-outer Sunrise Mountain Farm ever had left us for a Career.

The jelly kitchens at Mountain View made a great change in the lives of two other girls, living near Teresita. Noye Tune likes to tell how her twenty-year-old sister, Alice, came running up from the mailbox waving the weekly newspaper left by the mailman.



"A factory! A factory right in Mountain View!" she shouted. "We'll git us jobs!"

Mr. Lyon, they read excitedly, was asking for women workers who could pick the stems off berries and help make jam and jelly! Why, shucks, any woman in the hills over ten years old could hold a job like *that!*

Noye and Alice talked about it far into the night.

"We'll git us some o' that foldin' money we bin a-hearin' about," said Noye. And then with the practicability that even a sixteen-year-old must have in the hills, she asked:

"What about the farm here?"

"Aw, that's easy," said Alice. "We'll run it jis' as we've done since Maw and Paw died. We'll be home in time to feed the pigs and chickens! 'N's f'r the cows . . . well, we'll . . ."

Alice's plans suddenly bogged down.

"I know!" exclaimed Noye. "We'll trade Cousin Ed the cows for that Shivvy o' his'n. He hain't used it much nohow in the last ten years. Hit's been a-settin' out there in the barnyard 'bout long's I c'n remember!"

Before sundown they were sitting on Cousin Ed's porch.

Woe unto a stranger who would have tried to trade Ed out of his old Chevrolet. But the girls were cut by the same pattern as their cousin. When it came to dickering, they knew all the tricks, too. After hours of haggling they walked home in the moonlight, practically on air! Cousin Ed had agreed to take their two cows in payment for the Shivvy, and the girls had wheedled him into "throwin' in" a driving lesson.

During the next week, the car changed hands and the student drivers were given their lesson. After the driving lesson Ed stopped to chin a while with a neighbor. The neighbor chucklingly reports that Cousin Ed said, "If the's anythin' dumber than a woman, dog my cats effen I know what it is!"

Cousin Ed cut off a great chew of tobacco with his jack-

knife. After he had poked it into his mouth with his finger and chewed reflectively for a couple of minutes, he added, "'N' I hain't a-carin' to meet up with hit!"

On the day the jelly kitchens opened, Noye and Alice were at the door when the Jedge went into town. They were promptly hired and put to work. At the end of the day, Alice said:

"Mr. Lyon, would you come out and turn that critter o' our'n around and head hit f'r home?"

"Good heavens!" said the Jedge. "Can't you girls drive?"

"Oh, yes, sir," said Alice. "Cousin Ed showed us how to drive. But all we could remember wuz to put a foot down on that button stickin' up out'n the floor, and keep her between the fences. We plumb f'rgot how to gear them shifts 'r whatever!"

"Well, how did you get in this morning?" asked the Jedge.

"Well, we jis' drove 'er in in low!"

"Eight miles in low!" the Jedge said, in awe.

He gave the girls a driving lesson in the soft blue spring twilight, and headed them for home.

Next morning they were again on the job, bright and early.

"Well, how did the driving go this morning?" asked the Jedge.

"Oh, we done fine, Mr. Lyon!" said Alice. "We got her into second and jis' hightailed her in!"

The Jedge gave them another short but impressive lesson in driving. He had begun to wonder how he could ever have thought that running a jelly kitchen would be a simple matter of buying fruits and getting them cooked!

Late in the afternoon, it began to rain.

The Jedge remembered that Noye and Alice had to ford Jack's Fòrk to get home. Their lack of driving experience made that task hazardous in even ideal circumstances. And

to ford a mountain stream rushing madly down out of the hills during a pouring rain seemed to him out of the question. His anxiety was not entirely one-sided. They were good workers. He would have hated to let them drown.

"Look, girls," he said. "I hate to think of you two kids fording that stream. I'll pay your night's lodging over at the Commercial House."

"Oh, our chickens and pigs!" they exclaimed, practically in unison. "We wouldn't dast leave *them* out there alone!"

The Jedge mumbled that much as he loved chickens and pigs he valued the girls' lives even more.

"Aw, we'll git along all right," they assured him. It was downright embarrassing to have a man so concerned about a woman's welfare. It just isn't done in the hills. "We know ever' inch o' Jack's Fork, clean down to Sally Hole!"

They left the kitchens and slipped out into a downpour. The rain continued all night long.

But next morning there were the girls, in clean little cotton dresses and bright anklet socks.

"Gosh, I was worried about you girls!" said the Jedge. "How did you make out getting home?"

"Aw, we done fine, Mr. Lyon," said Alice. "Noye steered and I shifted gears, and we jis' went a-flyin'!"

"Could you steer around the mudholes?" asked the Jedge.

"Naw," laughed Noye. "We jis' treated 'em all alike. We hit 'em squar'n the middle!"

"How was the ford at Jack's Fork?" the Jedge wanted to know.

"Aw, that wasn't no trouble. We didn't try to git the car acrosst. We jis' parked it up in front o' Slocum's gate, 'n' waded 'crosst the Fork. 'Twa'n't more'n thigh-deep no place!"

"Waded! In all that darkness!" The Jedge was horrified. "And it's a good three miles from Jack's Fork to your house!"

"Aw, that hain't nothin'. Jis' two long walks 'n' a set-down," said Alice. "Only we didn't set down none last night!"

"And this morning? How did you get in?"

"Same way. We got up about four o'clock, and done our chores and fixed our dinners to bring to town. Then we walked to the Fork 'n' jis' hitched up our dresses 'n' waded across!"

"'N' when we got to that Shivvy 'n' started it up, she run sweeter'n a sewin' machine," said Noye. "I'm a-tellin' you, Mr. Lyon, there's the best car them Shivvy people ever made!"

"Yes, siree," said Alice. "We've got us jobs. 'N' we've got us a good car. Us Tune sisters is a-gittin' places!"

But while Ellie and the Tune sisters were becoming career girls, another girl was having a career snatched out from under her. After Ellie began working at the jelly kitchens in town, the farmhouse was often left alone throughout the day. This was definitely a risk because fire might devastate the whole farm with no one there to protect it. And Judy could neither be left to run loose on the farm nor shut up in the house all day.

The Judge decided it would be nice to employ a couple who would live on the farm all the time. They could have a nice little home of their own in one of the new farm buildings. It was clean and a couple of partitions would divide it into three comfortable rooms. Then while the man cut wood and tended the chickens and other livestock, the woman would take care of the house and maybe get an occasional meal for the Judge.

And most important of all, she would be on hand in my absence to greet the many, many visitors who came to Sunrise Mountain Farm.



"... Jis' hitched up our dresses 'n' waded acrossst!"

Most of these visitors were strangers from Chicago and suburbs, usually delightful people who were thoroughly welcome. If they came when we were at home, we practically fell on their necks and far into the night talked the usual Chicago chatter about the beauty of the moon on Lake Michigan and how hard it is to drive in Lincoln Park, with all those curving roads. To native Ozarkians these visitors were merely furriners, a-pryin' into someone's business. We wanted to make sure no one would get such a curt brush-off when he came to Sunrise Mountain Farm.

We talked it over and agreed that we wanted a native girl Ozarkian who could be taught Chicago friendliness. And she should have a husband who would do the outdoor work! We felt that it would be no task at all to get such a couple.

Robert put an advertisement in the Mountain View weekly newspaper.

Days passed. No one showed up.

Then at the end of the week, an ancient Model T came up the lane. A young couple, tall and gangling, got out and came into the house and perched on the edge of hard, straight chairs in the dining room.

"Now about that job o' yourn," said the man.

The interview began by the Jedge telling the man his duties first. He would be required to feed the stock and clean out the barns. Robert led the man to believe that all our chickens and sheep were practically housebroken. Then he told about the wood. Dead trees must be cut and hauled up to the barn lot, then sawed and chopped for firewood. However, most of the trees that would be cut, according to the Jedge, would be rotten, so they would be very light and easy to handle.

Things were going along very nicely.

The Jedge told about a little truck patch that the man would tend—just a few hills of beans, and some radishes

and onions. That was quite true. The Judge has never been one for extensive gardening. He still thinks that one tomato in a tin overcoat at the grocery is worth ten thousand on the vines. And maybe it is.

The man seemed to feel that the job would not be beyond his capabilities. Or maybe he didn't know where to spit his chew of tobacco and couldn't open his mouth to protest.

Then the Judge turned to the girl. He began telling her the duties she would have. She would be required to keep the house spotlessly clean. During my absence from the farm she would be required to fix a salad now and then for the Judge if he came home early in the evening. Because he ate no breakfast until he got into town and took his main meal at noon at the Commercial House, she would have no other cooking to do for the household. Her own and her husband's meals would be prepared and eaten in their own house.

She listened without a question.

The Judge continued: "The most important part of your work is to greet visitors that come to the farm. When my wife is away we shall expect you to act as our farm hostess."

At this the husband jumped to his feet. He swallowed visibly and with effort—apparently that chew of tobacco had been a big one! He snatched at his wife's arm and yanked her to her feet. He faced the Judge angrily.

"Oh no, she don't. You ain't a-goin' to git *my* wife to be one o' them! I've been a-hearin' o' them hostess things!"

With that, he strode to the door, dragging his wife along. And from the way he slammed the door of his Model T, we knew that one Ozarkian would never be a career girl!

The Judge was not downhearted. He protested that the idea of a couple on the farm was a sound idea. He advertised again. At long last a young couple was hired and came to the farm.

They brought their own furnishings to put up in the little house that had been renamed the gardener's cottage. To say their belongings were scant is terrific understatement. The terrace furniture came in handy. And then there was the matter of curtains. The wife wanted curtains. The Judge wrote to me, in Chicago.

"What kind of curtains?" I wrote back.

"Any kind of curtains, Jennie says," he replied. "Just so they're pink!"

"For goodness' sakes," I wrote. "What kind of a girl did you hire? Some dizzy little blonde who won't dust the dining-table legs?" But I sent down material for pink curtains. Very pink. And hoping to catch our new employee in a curtain-making mood, I also sent down green calico for new curtains in the farmhouse kitchen and breakfast room.

When I went down some time later, there was the neat little gardener's cottage, looking gay and friendly in the evening darkness with its soft lamplight glowing through pink ruffled curtains. I began to feel better about Ozark help, particularly when I saw the green curtains, neatly made and hanging at the farmhouse windows.

Next morning, I met our new housekeeper. Jennie was not the pink-curtain type. Her hair was long and stringy, and her face, though young, was decidedly on the weather-beaten side. She looked like what a beauty-cream copy writer hints about in testimonial advertisements. Sort of the "before" side of a "before and after" sequence.

Then Chester, Jennie's husband, came in! Jennie was consistent. She had a pink-curtain husband. Without doubt he was the prettiest male Ozarkian I've even seen! Maybe his hair wasn't exactly curly, but it gave one that impression. It was golden yellow and like his skin, it had that soft young look rarely seen outside Ivory Soap advertisements. I never saw Chester with his head covered.



But then I never saw Chester very much. He sat in the gardener's cottage and studied about things. Chester was probably one of the greatest hands at studying about things that the world has ever known.

The Jedge and I would call him in and discuss some immediate task. We would tell him exactly how it should be done. And why it should be done immediately. Then a couple of days later we would find that the task, whether it was cutting wood for the fireplace or cleaning out the chicken house, had not been touched. When Jennie came in to tidy up the house after breakfast, clean as a new pin in one of the maid's uniforms I had bought for her, she would be sent back to the cottage for Chester.

Some time later Chester would appear. He would come in, clean, shining and rosy-cheeked, his golden hair and blue eyes set off to perfection by the spick-and-span blue overalls. We would hem and haw for several minutes, getting up to the neglected task by the most circuitous route for fear of injuring the young man's sensitive feelings. Then, when the subject had been brought right out in the open, Chester would look at us with candor and sincerity in his beautiful blue eyes, and say:

"Well, I cain't rightly tell when I'll git that done. I bin a-studyin' about it!"

And often Chester would still be studying about the wood-chopping while Jennie was out giving a hunk of wood a few well-timed blows with the ax in order to have firewood for supper. My solemnly sworn edict that no woman would ever chop wood at Sunrise Mountain Farm was cast overboard. But then I had never foreseen that we would have a hired man who was both an Einstein and a Mister America!

The weeks went on. Chester must have been studying about something very important, indeed, the night he hit a bridge with our red truck. I'm not quite clear in my mind

about his accident because it came at a crucial moment. Maybe Billy Boyd did him wrong.

The Jedge was in Chicago, enduring that terrible "second day" after a major operation. I was with him when we received a telegram sent from Mountain View by Billy Boyd, the Jedge's faithful young helper in the jelly kitchens.

It read like this:

CHESTER GOT DRUNK AND RUN INTO BRIDGE AND BUSTED  
YOUR RED TRUCK THEN HIM AND JENNIE TOOK OUT ON  
YOU NOBODY IS AT THE FARM WHAT DO YOU WANT  
DONE WITH CHICKENS SHEEP AND BIG DOG?

I have always been sorry Jennie didn't take time to pack up the pink curtains and take them with her on that hurried flight. She must have loved them, too!

## CHAPTER SIX

### *THE JUDGE HAS A WEDDING*

IT WAS nearly midnight, and I was so weary I could hardly hold the wheel when I drove up the lane at Sunrise Mountain Farm. I was not surprised to see light streaming from all the downstairs windows. After all, a husband should wait up for a wife who has had an all-day drive. I hoped he had made a pot of coffee.

I had several anxious moments dodging Punch, who thinks the proper way to greet his family is to stand directly in front of the oncoming car, wagging his tail and grinning from ear to ear. I almost crashed into two cars standing at our front gate. One car was familiar. It was our red truck. The other was a stranger—with an Illinois license!

"Oh! oh!" I said to myself. "Company! I wonder how many eggs we got today!"

In the country when company comes, one's first thought is of food. Especially if it's city company. What fresh mountain air does to city appetites is something for a country hostess to remember, first, last and always.

I sounded the horn. People poured out of the house and commenced shouting. Five humans, another dog, and an assortment of cats. Up on the hill, the chickens woke up and cackled. Donny Duck grumbled. The sheep baaed. Brenda and Cobina moored.

"You're just in time for the wedding!"

"Wedding! At this hour? What is this? Crown Point?"

By the time we got up to the terrace, I had recognized our visitors. Billy and Betty. And from Chicago, Dorothy Pierce and Ralph McAvoy!

"Dorothy and Ralph!" My jaw dropped. "But I had dinner with you two in Chicago a week ago, and . . . and . . ."

"Yes, I know!" said Dotty. "We just made up our minds!"

"And we came down here so the Judge could marry us," said Ralph.

We went into the house. I started to drop into a chair, but one of the cats beat me to it. I perched on the edge, and said:

"But is this legal? After all, you live in Chicago!"

Everybody began explaining how Dorothy and Ralph had reached Mountain View early that morning after an all-night drive from Chicago. And how Billy and Betty had taken them over to the county seat for their marriage license. And how Dotty, who can win a golf match in front of a gallery, had been so nervous she couldn't sign the license for fully five minutes after she took the pen in hand.

"We've been waiting for you," they said. "We'll have the wedding now!"

"Wait a minute!" I begged. "For this wedding, we must have decorations!"

I tore upstairs to the south room, which gets the odds and ends. I'll never know how I found the big white paper wedding bell and the green and white streamers we had used three years ago for Bob and Dorothy Etienne's honeymoon visit! Dan Cupid himself must have guided me to the paper bag that held them.

I fairly flew downstairs and got out my own personal hammer and a box of tacks.

I paced off a safe distance from the blazing wood fire in the white stone fireplace, and pointed to a spot in the ceiling.

"Put the bell there," I said to Billy.

In a few minutes, the bell was in place with green and white paper streamers festooned from its top to each side of the room. The fire and the fireplace were the background. I ran to the buffet in the dining room and brought out two tall white candles and exchanged them for the faded blue ones in the silver candlesticks on the mantel. I had been wanting to do that for weeks, but Aunt Lizzie had given me the blue ones, and I was afraid her feelings would be hurt if I discarded them, or lighted them. I lighted the white ones.

"There," I said. "Now you can go ahead with the wedding!"

Our Chicago bridal couple took their places under the bell, the bride looking lovely in her blue sports dress with its fuzzy blue sweater! The best man and bridesmaid were the two young people of the Ozarks whom the bride and groom had met for the first time that day. The only onlookers at this lovely firelight and candlelight wedding were myself, two dogs and two cats.

The dogs took a real interest in the occasion, staring at the wedding party with eyes bright and ears alert. Judy probably thought they were going to dance. Usually couples standing like that are ready to begin dancing to the music of the radio. She likes to stand on her hind legs and have the Judge dance her around, too.

I was proud of the Judge's conduct of the ceremony. He really does a marriage nicely, even though he never seems to know what to do with his hands. He usually winds up by putting them in his pockets, which is sort of casual and undignified to my way of thinking. But he has memorized the words of the wedding ceremony and does them with quite a flourish. In fact, I detect a hint of what he must have been when he was member of a stock company. He

really "gives" in the wedding ceremony! And he gave his all to Dotty and Ralph's wedding, winding up with "by authority vested in me as Justice of the Peace of Date Township, I pronounce you man and wife!"

Then Ralph kissed his bride in a way that made one know he had found the right girl! As I brushed the tears off my cheeks, because women must cry at weddings, I wondered if he had had any premonition that he was walking into the most important date of his life that Sunday last summer when his brother talked him into joining a foursome on a Lincoln Park golf course.

But I had scant time for romantic history! There must be a wedding supper. So while the bride was being kissed and the groom was being congratulated, I hustled out to the kitchen and set a pot of coffee to cooking on the oil stove.

As the coffee perked, I yanked out the big drop-leaf table in the dining room. It's seldom used because, company or not, we usually eat in the breakfast room. I hustled out the best tablecloth and napkins, too, and the Fiesta dishes.

Then into the refrigerator I went for the leftover chicken, the slightly dried gelatine salad, and the apple pie that hadn't baked well on the bottom. I figured that the bridal couple would be too high in the clouds to notice a baking failure! Betty and Billy didn't count, either, for they were thinking of their own wedding in the same setting and looking calf-eyed at each other. And as for the Judge, well he should have cleaned the soot out from under the oven, as I had told him to do. Then the pie would have baked as it should. But just in case those young appetites might go for pie, I whipped some cream and heaped it high on each wedge. I have found that whipped cream can, and often does, cover a multitude of cooking sins.

And to toast the bridal couple there were a couple of cans of tomato juice, cooling for future breakfasts. I brought

them out, poured the juice into a pitcher, adding a dash of marjoram and some salt. While it didn't have the kick of champagne, no one in that jolly wedding supper party needed it. In fact, they even thought the pie was wonderful!

Then, as we rose from the table, I suddenly thought about the bridal chamber! "That north room upstairs! I wonder if it's ready for company!" was my horrified thought.

Again I raced upstairs. The room was clean, and equipped with the whoosis and whasis that country bedrooms must have. After all, it was Sunrise Mountain Farm, and I'd never made any false claims about plumbing. I turned down the bedcovers.

Good Heavens! Could those be our sheets? They felt like burlap to the touch. Then I remembered that I had a pair of foundling sheets won in a laundry mix-up, or an Ozark trade made when I wasn't at home. I hastily took them off the bed and thrust them into another room. Another race downstairs and a frantic search through the linen cupboard for sheets worthy of the occasion. I might mention here that the sheet situation has always been a headache in the hills. Sheets disappear mysteriously, never to be seen again, or to be replaced with oddly torn or patched affairs that are a mere fraction of the big 108-inchers I buy in Chicago. I've always brushed it off as "one of those things" that one must swallow when one isn't always at home to look after things.

But here was a moment when sheets counted. And there wasn't a decent sheet in those linen shelves. I turned down the covers on the four-poster in our downstairs room. Ah! There were those new percale ones! Ellie had put them on the bed that morning after I had gone on my trip. I snatched them off, folded them carefully, and then walked sedately through the dining room with them, grateful that our guests had gone back to the living room. The mechanics of house-keeping are never pleasing when exposed to even ordinary

guests, and to let a bridal couple know their hostess was practically having nervous prostration over sheets for the bridal bed was simply unthinkable.

But in a moment I had the bed made up again, with my good silk comforters and as a subtle harmonious touch my Double Wedding Ring quilt for a counterpane. I went back downstairs.

Then in a little while, Betty and Billy left to drive back to town in our red truck. And the bridal couple went upstairs, to be alone at last.

I made up our own ravaged bed with a couple of the sheets that weren't good enough for company. Robert promptly retired. Judy gave a deep sigh, which said, as plainly as words, "Well, it's about time this household settled down for the night!" and went to her bed.

I lingered in the living room to empty ash trays, straighten rugs and plump up cushions.

"By the way, Marge," called Robert. "Did you—" he paused to yawn audibly—"did you have a good trip today? You looked pretty weary when you came in tonight!"

I dropped the papers I was folding and stared out into the night.

"Was that tonight?" I asked.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### OZARK QUILTS

JUDGING by the number of hand-pieced quilts that one sees in the Ozarks, it's easy to get the idea that Ozark women spend their entire time making quilts. But that's far from true.

Quilt making in the Ozarks is largely a spare-time job. Quilt jobs and quilt frames are generally put away in the summer, when gardening must be done and fruits, vegetables and meats must be canned. But as nearly as I can make out, quilt making is to the Ozark woman what fishing is to the Ozark man. It's a spare-time job so important it may lap over into the work-time job. And both fishing and quilt making may be forgiven—for one furnishes food for the table, and the other furnishes warmth and beauty for sleep.

Uncle John and Aunt Lizzie are my pet examples of fisherman and quilt maker.

Uncle John raises corn and a smidgen of other grains. He also tends his cows, milks night and morning, cuts wood and mends fences. And then he fishes. He loves to fish. He fishes early in spring and late in the fall. He fishes at dawn and at twilight. He fishes at noonday and midnight. He fishes in the sunshine, shading his eyes with a battered old straw hat with leaves stuck in the crown. He fishes in the rain, with a tiny rivulet running from the brim of a disreputable old felt hat and hitting his nose when he raises his head

to look downstream at a crony of his, who is also doggedly enduring the consarned weather.

In fact the morning after last Thanksgiving I had tasty little perch and sunfish for my breakfast. While the rest of us were eating turkey and fixin's, Uncle John elected to spend his Thanksgiving Day at the river. He caught a dishpanful of fish who would have been smart to go south for the winter.

Aunt Lizzie makes quilts early and late. She can take a tiny quilt pattern from a newspaper and copy it as exactly as if she had a blue print! She is an artist at combining colors and she can work out designs like an abstract painter.

In this she is no more adept than hundreds of other Ozark women. Their ability to sew tiny pieces of cloth into a design of complete regularity and beauty is amazing to me. From one tiny block the whole quilt must be visualized. And somehow they do it. And love the doing. Quilt patterns, quilt linings, and quilt paddings are the great topic of conversation when Ozark women get together.

Quilt patterns are loaned out, borrowed, copied or handed down. Now and then a new one shows up, but for the most part the old familiar patterns are most popular. The Double Wedding Ring and the China Platter are the favorites, but there are the Stamp quilt, with pieces not much larger than a postage stamp, the Cobblestone, the Wild Goose Chase, the Tulip, the Lone Star, the Magnolia Bud and many others that are close seconds.

Quilts in which the designs are appliquéed on a plain ground are not popular in the Ozarks. One meets up with one of these quilts occasionally in towns, but out in the country the quilts are usually made up of tiny pieces sewed together to make an intricate design.

Almost invariably the sewing is done by hand. With nose wrinkled in disgust, Aunt Lizzie showed me a quilt block

she had stitched on her sewing machine. Most of the machine stitching had been ripped out and replaced with hand sewing, but the few machine stitches left were most distasteful. Apparently machine stitching makes the quilt block less pliable. Then, too, hand-quilting is made more difficult by the many rows of tight machine stitching, that must be crossed and re-crossed. It is difficult to put a needle through the machine stitching, and where is the Ozark quilter who would make a quilting stitch a hundredth of an inch shorter or longer in order to avoid difficult needling?

The padding for a quilt is usually soft, fine, long staple cotton. When my Aunt Blanche McDowell made a quilt for me, I suggested that because our Ozark nights are cool even in summer, wool batting be used for the padding. She said she had never quilted with wool but she thought it would be all right. Then for the lining, or back of the quilt, I bought a fine percale sheet. It was a bad choice. Poor Aunt Blanche's fingers were worn raw by the firmness of the percale sheet and the increased thickness caused by the two layers of cheesecloth that enclosed the wool. The finished quilt is so stiff and firm it gives one the impression of sleeping under a nice warm board. However, the quilt makes a beautiful bedspread! So there's an idea for the person who is more interested in bedspreads than actual covers.

In the Ozarks, however, even the finest of the pieced quilts are purely functional. They are meant to be bedcovers. For that reason, one finds many of them lined with flannelette. The flannelette lining next to one's skin is mighty soft and warm on a chilly mountain night.

To me one of the most amazing things in Ozark quilt making is a woman's ability to sew by lamplight. The person accustomed to electric lights finds the common kerosene lamp little more than a warm yellow glow. Yet in such a glow, I have seen Aunt Lizzie piece the most beautiful and in-

tricately designed quilts, some of them having three to five thousand tiny pieces. And if that seems like an outrageous number, let me add that a week ago today I personally counted 9,844 hand-sewn pieces in a quilt top just finished by Grandmother Oliver, my eighty-seven-year-old friend. She had made every stitch by hand, and the quilting will be done by hand, too. But she can't get around to do the quilting until she gets her garden in!

After the quilt top is made of its many pieces, the quilt lining and padding are basted in place, and the whole is "quilted" with tiny, even stitches put through its entire thickness. Being a good quilter is one of the chief requisites of an Ozark homemaker.

Quilting in most homes is done on frames that swing from hooks in the ceiling. The quilt, with lining and padding basted in place, is sewed into the frames, and cords, reaching from the corners to the ceiling hooks, are adjusted so that the quilt may be worked on by one sitting in a regular chair. At first the frames must be extended to the full size of the quilt, and naturally this takes up most of an Ozark room. However, at night or when the family gathers inside the house, the cords can be pulled so that the quilt is drawn up to the ceiling, leaving the regular space in which to move about the room.

As the quilter puts the tiny stitches of her quilting in regular order along the edge of the quilt, the frames are readjusted and the quilted portion is rolled up. This makes it unnecessary for the quilter to stretch an uncomfortable distance over her work, and it also cuts down the size of those quilting frames, as the work progresses. The quilting may be an intricate design in itself . . . for instance the Feather design, which has kept its popularity for several generations. But often the quilter prefers to work out her own quilting design. For example, she may follow the pattern of the quilt,

setting her tiny stitches just inside each little patch of color. She usually knows what will set off the quilt to best advantage.

When I tell city people of Aunt Lizzie's quilts, I am often asked: "Where does she get all the material? Doesn't quilt making require a large amount of fabric?"

The answer is that it does. But quilt makers like other hobbyists always seem able to find the material with which to work. And I daresay no hobbyist living ever makes his materials go further than Aunt Lizzie extends her quilt makin's!

She has a system with quilt pieces that is the last word in efficiency. She has three or four quilts in the making at one time. Each of these will be pieced according to an individual pattern, and each will require pieces of different sizes. Therefore, Aunt Lizzie will take, let's say, a scrap of pink percale and cut from it first the pieces that must be of the largest size, for Quilt No. 1. Then the scraps that are left after cutting the largest pieces will be used for the next-size pieces, and these will be put into Quilt No. 2. When these have been cut, the scraps have become so small you or I would throw them away. But not Aunt Lizzie! She cuts them for the narrow pieces that are used in the Wedding Ring quilt, China Platter or Fan quilt. The scraps too small to be cut into rectangles are cut into squares for a Stamp quilt, or tiny octagonal pieces that make up a Cobblestone quilt. By this time, that piece of fabric with which Aunt Lizzie started is reduced to the merest wisps, probably trailing off with a sort of rat tail. But even these are not thrown away. They are saved and put into a Crazy quilt, in which pieces of all shapes and sizes may be combined in a helter-skelter fashion.

Sometimes when the Judge is watching her in one of these intricate cutting sessions he will pick up a raveling, and say, "Look out, Aunt Lizzie! You're being extravagant! Can't you do something with this?"

And for the most surprising feat of all, I nominate Aunt

Lizzie's amazing memory of her quilt pieces. She never forgets where a quilt piece was obtained. She will put her finger on a tiny piece of cloth no larger than a postage stamp in the middle of a quilt and say: "This here 'un's out'n Doris's dress!" Another will be from one of Mrs. Bates's dresses, and another will be from pieces a one-time neighbor sent to her from Kansas City, and so on until every piece in the quilt is identified. Many a time she has pointed out to me scraps of forgotten cotton dresses that I have long since worn out and used for dust cloths.

Time after time, Wibb Smart, one of our favorite Sunrise Mountain Farm guests, has brought Aunt Lizzie great boxes of fabrics suitable for quilt blocks. We wonder if Aunt Lizzie appreciates that salesgirl at Marshall Field's who takes enough interest in an Ozark lady's quilts to turn up as many as a hundred different colors and designs, at one hunt! But we know that Aunt Lizzie appreciates the fabrics, and that's what matters most!

Every scrap is put into her quilts with her usual frugality of cloth. When the quilts are brought out and displayed to Mr. Smart on later visits, Aunt Lizzie not only points out the fabrics that he has given to her, but can actually tell the time of the visit when he brought it. Although the Chicago pieces are mixed with many others from different sources, she will say: "I think this 'un's awful purty. You brought hit the y'ar Johnny had the misery in his lungs! 'N' this 'un you brung down the y'ar our cow had twin heifer calves!"

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *JUDY'S CRIME*

**J**HE story of Judy and the kittens really begins with the story of Judy's bed. Judy is our Boston terrier. She's a pedigreed dog, daughter of International Champion Flash Again. Probably she could have walked off with more dog-show honors than her illustrious father. But we couldn't think more of Judy if she had a roomful of trophies.

We bought Judy at a Chicago dog show when she was only six weeks old. From the first, she was the Judge's dog. I had chosen another Boston, a male with a white head. I thought the white head would be easier to see when we took our evening walk in Lincoln Park. Judy sat on her little haunches before the Judge and ate puppy biscuits by the dozen. That should have given him a key to her character. Judy likes her groceries frequent and plentiful. But the Judge said he had never seen a girl that wasn't hungry, so Judy became our dog. Since her predecessor, another Boston, had died of an unpleasant and fatal doggy disease, we asked that Judy's arrival at our apartment be delayed for a short time.

We said a month, but at the end of two weeks we were so lonesome for a dog we phoned to Kankakee and asked Mrs. Hayhurst to bring Judy to us the next Saturday. When Judy came the apartment had been fumigated to the last inch, there were enough rubber balls and squeaky dolls to make the loneliest puppy happy, and, to make her life quite complete, there

was Judy's very own bed. It was a regular dog-bed, with a nice thick soft pad covered with a washable slip. Then, to make it more alluring to a little girl dog who might like privacy, I had wired over the bed a large frame, like the skeleton of a covered wagon, and covered it with doggy-patterned percale.

Judy took to her new bed as a duck takes to water. It became her refuge in time of puppyhood trouble, her napping place, a safe hiding place for a treasured bone. Then, when Judy began trekking to and from the Ozarks with us, the bed became the symbol of her presence, like the owner's flag on a yacht. Wherever Judy goes the bed goes along. A place in the back seat always has to be left for Judy's bed, no matter how packed the car may be. When motoring becomes tiresome to Judy she leaps nimbly back from her spot between us on the front seat to her own bed. There she sleeps the miles away, with the air of a travel-weary person snug in a lower berth.

We have accepted Judy's bed just as we accepted walking the dog in early morning hours through rain and snow, having ankle-twisting rubber balls scattered underfoot, and enduring the nerve-shattering experience of stepping on a squeaking rubber doll in the darkness. We didn't realize how much the bed meant to Judy herself until one day in a flurry of vacuum-cleaning I set it outside the hall and closed the door. Judy looked at me with stricken eyes, and promptly was sick.

"Now see what you've done," said the Jedge to me. "She thinks you've thrown her bed away! Like you threw away my insurance papers," he added, getting in a well-placed dig. He went to the door, brought in the bed, and placed it under the window where I like to have my chair.

"Come on, Judy!" he said, coaxingly. "We won't let anything happen to your nice bed!"

Judy threw me a dirty look, gave the Jedge's hand a grate-



ful lick, and slipped into her bed with the long sobbing sigh of one who has just seen a terrible calamity averted.

Yes, indeed, Judy was the Jedge's dog from the start. The way they have understood each other has always been something to behold.

And then, a year ago, Judy was standing by while the Jedge made another bed at Sunrise Mountain Farm. It was for Mrs. Chips, the black and white cat, who was momentarily expecting another family. It was the dead of winter, and Mrs. Chips was a house cat given to lying long hours under the kitchen stove or in front of the fireplace. Certainly she couldn't be expected to bring her kittens into the world out in the barn, even though Ozark winters are fairly mild.

The Jedge filled a good-sized box with straw, covered the straw with a piece of soft blanket, and set it in the dining room. He put Mrs. Chips in it, telling her that was her own bed—a good bed indeed—for herself and her kitsy-babies. And she should stay in it!

Mrs. Chips, with the usual feline disregard for rules, promptly leaped out of the box, and went over to lie down on my best hooked rug. Judy stood in the middle of the floor and watched while the Jedge picked up the cat and put her back into the box, time after time. And every time the cat leaped out Judy would wiggle all over and give a short, little under-her-breath bark. The Jedge would say:

"Yes, Judy! Naughty old kitty-cat won't stay in her bed! You'd mind better than that, wouldn't you?"

Apparently Judy grew disgusted with the cat and her stubborn nature. She gave the Jedge a well-it's-your-problem-thank-goodness look and trotted into the bedroom, to slip into her canopied dog-bed and take a long, restful nap. When she came out of the bed she drank a midafternoon bowl of milk, and joined Punch in an exciting rabbit hunt down in the valley of Sunrise Mountain Farm.

And while Judy was hunting, the cat slipped into that dog-bed in the bedroom!

When Judy returned worn and weary from her hunting trip, and went to her bed for a nap, there in her own beloved canopied dog-bed were Mrs. Chips and three tiny squirming kittens only a few minutes old.

Judy's surprised bark brought the Jedge on the run. He quickly moved the cat and her kittens to the box he had prepared for them. He rushed the dog-bed mattress to the trash pile and substituted one of our good living-room cushions. He put in Judy's favorite coverings, the flannelette one and the new wool one, that had fortunately been placed on top of the canopy that morning. Then he said, coaxingly:

"There now, Judy, your bed's all right!"

But Judy would have none of it. She crawled under the armchair that has a ruffle to the floor, and refused to come out. She wouldn't eat supper. At bedtime, she crawled up on the davenport, gave a long, bitter sigh like one who has had to give up her own room to an overnight guest, and there she spent the night.

The next day was the same. While the mother cat washed and nursed her three babies, content in their warm, straw-filled box in the dining room, Judy hid herself under the Jedge's bed, shutting eyes and ears to the exciting farm world about her.

The Jedge coaxed and wheedled. He told her how pretty the kittens were, and that their mother wanted the nicest bed in the whole house for them. But Judy laid her ears flat to her head and turned her head away with nose in the air.

At last, in a supreme effort to make the dog happy again, the Jedge shouldered his gun and went out and shot a rabbit for her. Although stewed rabbit meat, served steaming hot from the big wood cookstove, is Judy's favorite meal, she sniffed at it, sighed, and refused to eat a bite.

Time after time that day on her way indoors or outdoors, with eyes front she walked stiffly through the dining room, only a slight trembling of her ears showing that she was aware of the mewling kittens in their warm box. She never gave them or their mother so much as a glance.

The next day Judy was still on a hunger strike, but the Jedge felt encouraged. She had condescended to come out from under the bed for longer periods. For hours she lay in front of the fireplace in the living room. And there she was when Mrs. Chips left her kittens, well fed and comfortable in their snug box, and went out for a little walk. The Jedge opened one of the doors on the terrace and let the mother cat out, telling her to hurry back and take care of those babies. He sat down to finish reading his paper.

Within a few minutes, Aunt Lizzie knocked at the door. The Jedge let her in, and after the first greetings were over, he said:

"Oh, Aunt Lizzie, come into the dining room and see our pretty kittens!"

He led the way to the box in the dining room and stopped short. There were no little kittens in the box! And there sat Judy, her head up, her ears alert, and her mouth in a prim little line looking up at him.

The Jedge was face to face with a problem in animal psychology. In Judy's intelligent little life, she had never destroyed anything. But there were no kittens visible and there sat Judy looking at him eye to eye. He recognized that look. It is the look Judy always gives us when she's trying with all her might to make us understand something that is very important to her. Maybe she wants us to go with her for a lo-o-ng walk over in the North Forty, where she is not allowed to go unaccompanied. Or she wants some more of that baked chicken in the refrigerator. Or she needs help in finding that delicious half-chewed bone.

The Judge said, quietly, "Judy, have you done away with those kittens?"

But Judy wouldn't talk.

She went into the living room and flopped down on the hearth rug and shut her eyes.

"She looks to me like the cat that et the cream," said Aunt Lizzie, suspiciously.

"But there'd be—er—something around, if she had killed the kittens!" said the Judge.

"Mebbe so. Mebbe not," replied Aunt Lizzie. "She might a-broke their backs!"

The Judge shuddered. Then he said, optimistically, "Perhaps she's just hidden them some place. Let's try to find them before that mother cat gets back!"

"Where's she in the habit o' hidin' things?" asked Aunt Lizzie.

"Every place in the house," said the Judge. He told about the time we had found the very, very dead mole cached under a cushion on the davenport.

"Then we'd better git to lookin'," said Aunt Lizzie. "How about that bed o' her'n?"

"Oh, no, any place but that!" said the Judge, firmly. "She's never allowed the cat in the bedroom since the time she caught her getting up on my bed. All this trouble started because Mrs. Chips went in there and had her kittens in Judy's bed!"

Since the dining room is the central room of our home, they knew Judy could have carried the kittens almost anywhere within the house without being seen from the living room. The Judge and Aunt Lizzie searched high and low.

In a few minutes the mother cat came to the door and mewed for admittance. The Judge let her inside. The cat trotted to the box where she had left her kittens. She stared into the empty box. She gave a loud anguished wail.

Then she turned an accusing look toward the Judge. He

tried to tell her he had had no hand in the kitten-napping. He lifted her in his arms and stroked her soft fur, telling her her babies were somewhere about, well and happy!

He added, "I hope, I hope, I hope."

But Mrs. Chips scrambled out of his arms.

She stood before him and said:

"Meeeeeeeeee—oowwwwww? Meeeeeeeeee—oowwwwww!"

Like an inquiring reporter bent on getting an answer to a controversial question.

She went on her own personal hunt for the kittens, searching in every nook and corner where a cruel human might have hidden her babies.

Judy, like the murderer in a first-rate mystery story, was entirely free from her suspicion. When the cat came into the house, she arose and sauntered into the bedroom, to flop down on the rug in front of her bed.

Mrs. Chips, in her search for the babies, poked a sniffing nose into the bedroom door. Judy lunged at her with the bark she reserves for old sows on the highway trying to root under our pasture fence. The cat backed away, with back humped into an arch and tail like a bottle brush.

"Now, look, Judy," said the Jedge, "Mrs. Chips has trouble enough without you getting snippy. You come on out here, young lady, and help us find those kittens. And if anything has happened to them it's going to be just too bad for you!"

Aunt Lizzie stood in the bedroom door and looked at Judy.

"Y'say them kittens wuz borned in the dog's bed!" she asked.

"Yes, they were! And that must have been the last straw for Judy. She's never liked cats anyway, and to have them born in her very own bed—well, I know just how she feels!"

"I don't know as to whether you do 'r not! Anyway, I'm a-goin' to look in that bed o' her'n!"

Aunt Lizzie went over to the canopied dog-bed. She

stooped over to peer under the canopy. Judy scrambled quickly inside.

"That's the first time she's been in it since the kittens were born!" said the Jedge.

"Jis' the same, I got a feelin' she's got them kittens hid in that bed. Alive 'r—dead!"

The Jedge shut his eyes and swallowed visibly.

"Call her out o' that bed," said Aunt Lizzie. "I ain't a-goin' to git my hand bit offen me, pawin' around in back o' her!"

The Jedge called Judy. The dog hesitated a long moment, then came creeping out from under the canopy, in slow motion.

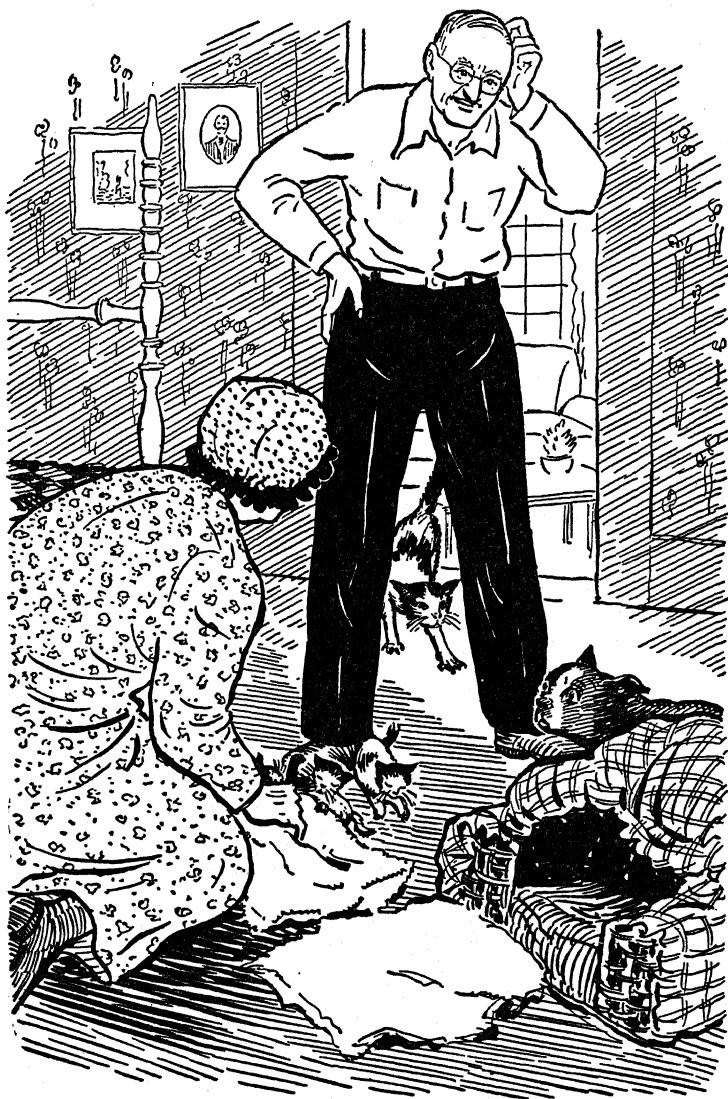
Aunt Lizzie reached under the canopy. She brought out a light flannelette blanket. She reached under again. She brought out the big soft hand-carded wool comforter that I had made for Judy's Christmas gift. It was in a tight wad, as though it had been wedged into the corner of the dog-bed.

Aunt Lizzie shook it gently.

Three tiny soft warm little kittens tumbled to the floor. Three tiny pink mouths opened as the kittens mewed their protests at having their naps disturbed. Judy yapped sharply. At that instant, the mother cat bounded into the forbidden room, as countless human mothers have leaped into danger to protect their babies. The Jedge caught Judy in his arms and held her close.

The mother cat wasted no time in name-calling. She gave Judy a look that seemed to say, "I'll see you later!" Then she picked up one of the kittens and went back to her own box. Aunt Lizzie picked up the other two and followed the cat. The Jedge, bewildered by the turn of events, stood by.

"Y'see," said Aunt Lizzie, as she put the kittens in the box with their mother, "when them kittens wuz borned in Judy's bed I figger she thought she had a right to 'em! The minute



Aunt Lizzie shook it gently.

the old cat left 'em she went 'n' got 'em. She ain't been mad at the cat. She's been mad at *you* f'r takin' 'em out'n her bed!"

"Well, I'll be dog-goned," said the Judge, wonderingly.

"They's lots o' things men don't understand!" said Aunt Lizzie.



## CHAPTER NINE

### DOC GOOD'S BACK ROOM

*I*N A city, during normal times, one buys what he wants if he has the money to pay for it. In the Ozarks one buys what he wants if the local store-keepers have it!

For instance, I wanted awnings for our breakfast-room windows. Standing on a stepladder, I measured the length. Then, holding the tape measure on a slant out into the air, I was wondering about the width when the Judge came around the corner of the house.

"Look!" I called. "Do you think we should have the deep awnings over these windows and keep out all the sun? I'm afraid it will spoil our view of the hilltop!"

"Go right ahead and have fun measuring," he said. "Make any decision you like!"

"But this is serious!" I protested. "Come on, give me a little of that advice you usually ladle out so generously!"

"By the time we get awnings down here from the mail-order house the sun may be in total eclipse!"

"Mail-order house, my eye!" I said. "I'm going into town right now to get these awnings. I'll have them up by tomorrow morning."

He gave a loud ha! ha! ha!

"Certainly, I can put them up myself," I said. "Why, these modern awnings come with all sorts of fixings. Anyone who can drive a nail can put them up!"

"I'm not denying that you might put them up," he said. "But try to find an awning in Mountain View."

"Then I'll find some awning cloth," I said. "I'll have Roy put up frames and then I'll tack the awning cloth to it."

"Try and find the awning cloth before you make your plans," he advised.

I went into town. There were no awnings in town. And even Mrs. Charles of the Charles Grocery and Furniture Store, who is smart and has been around, didn't know what awning cloth was.

I went back to the farm, very, very disconsolate, and walked around the Home Forty wishing we could grow bamboo or palms or something that would give us shade for those windows.

As I neared the woodpile I saw the stack of old metal roofing that had been an eyesore since it was torn off the barn. But this time I saw it with new eyes. I hurried away to find Roy.

After I had overcome his usual protests that it wasn't possible to do any such a fool thing as that, he put up wooden frames above the windows. After he had nailed the metal roofing to the frames, I got up on that much-abused step-ladder and personally painted red, yellow and green stripes on the metal. The edges were finished with black scallops, to give the effect of scalloped awnings. The undersides of the metal awnings were painted a cool shade of green to lend a woodsy glow to the breakfast table.

I'm passing this tip along to anyone who wants to make use of it. That old metal roofing has lasted three years, and requires painting with good enamels only once a year.

But sometimes substitutes cannot be contrived so readily. Take the time the Jedge and I were invited to a dinner party at the Commercial House. Our hosts were Doc Good and Lar-

ry, his wife. We were both anxious to go. We like the Goods ever so much, in fact Doc is the Judge's best friend. Larry has a delightful Southern accent and she's bright, peppy and alert, with a flair for antiques. She was a schoolteacher before her marriage a couple of years ago.

When I dressed for an earlier engagement in town that day, I discovered that my nail polish was missing. I was sure I had brought some good polish down from Chicago, but search as I would, I couldn't find it. I called Robert and asked him if he had seen my nail polish.

"Nail polish," he said stupidly. "Now don't tell me you're going to polish those nails you're driving into that corner cabinet!"

"No, no! It's polish for my fingernails. I know I brought some down from Chicago last week. . . ."

"I didn't know you ever wore any!"

My jaw dropped. I remembered the reams of advertising copy I had written about husbands being simply cuh-rushed if wives let their hands look ugly and red! Here I'd been wearing red nail polish for five years and my husband hadn't even noticed it.

I held up my hands. "See!" I said. "It's this red stuff. Look, it's worn off at the tips of my fingernails. I need to put some more on. Now! It comes in a little bottle."

"Like a cold-cream jar!"

"Well, it's round like that! It's more nearly the size of an iodine bottle!"

He put on his cap. Judy came out of her bed and wiggled happily as though saying, "Let's get out of here!"

"No," he said to me, as he opened the door, "I haven't seen it!"

I hunted until the last possible minute had passed. Then I went into town. I drove straight to Doc Good's Drug Store.

I asked for nail polish.

Doc waved me to a shelf full of nail polish and accessories. It was too cheap to be even fair quality and the colors were shrieking. I chose one about the shade of a bright new fire wagon. I went back to the soda fountain.

"May I sit up here at the counter and put this on my nails?" I asked.

"Go into the back room for your beauty-parlor work," said Doc. "That's where all the girls pretty up when they come downtown."

I went into the back room, to a pleasant jumble of packing boxes, broken-down chairs, old almanacs and apothecary jars and bottles half filled with pink and blue pills, banked around Doc's big old-fashioned roll-top desk. The last time I had been in that back room I had bought a discarded ice-cream parlor table with a white top and four wire chairs, which the Jedge scorned until a month later he saw a set like it illustrated in *American Home*. I looked hopefully around for something else that Doc might have thrown away. But aside from the apothecary jars that could become lamps, I didn't see anything usable. I sat down at the big desk and opened the bottle of nail polish.

It was a ghastly color, the orangey-red that is so unflattering to tanned hands. Added to that, it was so old it was thick and gummy. I disliked going back and complaining about it before the customers at the soda fountain. I sat looking at the stuff, wondering what to do. And just at that moment I spied a smooth, round bottle of nail polish standing on the desk. It was not the kind Doc sold in the store. It was city nail polish! The dollar kind. The bottle was half full.

"Larry's nail polish!" I thought. "She's used it down here and forgotten to take it home!"

I picked it up and looked at it.

The color was very close to my own special favorite, so

close in fact that I would feel quite at home with it. It made the other kind look even worse.

"If I use this nail polish that I just bought," I thought, "I'll be self-conscious all evening. Every time I catch a glimpse of my nails I'll think I'm wearing someone else's hands!"

Satan was coming close enough to give me a little shove!

"Shucks," I thought. "Larry wouldn't refuse a friend a little squish of her nail polish!"

I opened Mrs. Good's bottle of nail polish. Slowly and carefully I patched up the ragged tips of my nails. After they dried, I gave each fingernail a full second coat of the polish. I looked around the room while they dried. Funny I didn't feel like a thief! The polish looked very nice.

I left the back room, said good-by to Doc on my way out, and went on to my engagement.

Hours later, as I was hustling into my dinner dress getting ready for the supper at Commercial House, the lost was found. When I started to put on my blue shoes my lost nail polish dropped out of one of them. I remembered having packed it there when I left Chicago.

But there was no time to change polish, with the Jedge in the car out at the gate, sounding the horn at infuriatingly frequent intervals.

And anyway, my nails really looked quite nice, with Larry's polish. I finished dressing and hurried out to the car.

The supper party, like all meals at the Commercial House, was a huge success. Our places at the table were marked with little hand-painted place cards in the shape of a book, labeled with the name of my new book! They were done by the clever young schoolteacher, who had panned my book in the local paper because I had written about Ozark country folks instead of the town people who have college educations. To this day I don't know whether the place cards were evidence

that all was forgiven or a hint that one is kissed or killed with equal facility in the hills. A big corsage of pansies and ferns, ingeniously worked out on a framework of wire, was at my plate.

The guests were younger than the Judge and me, most of them being smart, bright young schoolteachers or young folks just out of college, and we loved their gaiety. Our supper was served in the long dining room at Commercial House after the regular supper was over, so we had the place to ourselves. After we got over our first formality and began eating fried chicken in our fingers, as we all did at home, we had a wonderful time.

Suddenly Don Edwards commented on the beautiful color of the nail polish his supper partner, Janice Ferrell, was wearing. Janice put out her pretty hands, and said, "It is a nice color, isn't it?"

And suddenly every man at the table began to take an interest in his lady's nail polish.

"What's yours?"

"And yours?"

"Now, let's see yours!"

The girls laughed and put out hands. I looked at them, gasped, and dropped mine in my lap.

The Judge turned to me. "Did you find that nail polish you were looking for this morning? Or did you come out bare-handed?"

I could have murdered him.

I put out my hands.

That made the circle complete.

Every girl at the table was wearing exactly the same shade of nail polish!

Doc was right when he said every girl in town prettied herself up in that back room!

## CHAPTER TEN

### COMMERCIAL HOUSE FOLKLORE

WHEN you come to Mountain View, you can't miss the Commercial House. It is a large frame house built in a friendly L-shape, as though it were literally bending itself double in a great welcoming gesture. Its squat height of two stories makes it seem even larger and more rambling than it is.

The Commercial House is a landmark in this part of the Ozarks. For nearly seventy years it has played a vigorous part in the life of the hills. It was built to accommodate lumbermen, those husky giants who came into the community and tramped or rode countless miles over hills and valleys, estimating and buying the timber in the great virgin woods.

This was a hard-fighting, hard-drinking crowd, who gambled for high stakes in the big lobby of the hotel until dawn. Often the cooks coming to prepare breakfast would find a few hardy souls still seated at the big round gaming table in a smoke-filled room. The big table is still there, but it holds nothing more sinister than yesterday's newspapers from St. Louis and Springfield.

Those days are recalled with awe when old-timers talk of the bygone days when Mountain View was a thriving, bustling center in the heart of the lumber country.

And always, when talk turns to the rich history of Mountain View, the old-timers recall the story of Sally and the Drummer.

Sally McAllon was a dining-room girl in those good old days. Mountain View was still a thriving country town, although the lumber industry was dwindling as the great virgin forests of our hills were cut away. The Mountain View Hotel, as the Commercial House was called, had not yet felt any decline. Indeed it was rumored that in another year or two the proprietor planned to install indoor plumbing!

Tuesday was the busiest day of the town's week—it was Drummer Day. Every Tuesday, drummers came flocking into town on the Current River Special, which arrived around six-thirty. The mid-morning Local brought still more drummers. Then up and down the little main street merchants would be so busy looking over their stocks and placing orders they could scarcely attend to business.

The drummer could be spotted in a glance. Dressed like a dude in a plaid suit and stiff collar, with his plug hat tipped rakishly on one side of his head, he would lounge at a counter, notebook in hand, and sample cases open at his feet. The proprietor would wait on customers and give orders to the salesman at the same time! Lynn Walker, who had seen a circus, said it always reminded him of the seal act. The proprietor would keep on with his business, just pausing now and then to fling an order to the salesman as the trainer of the seals occasionally throws a fish to quiet the noisy seal at the end of the line.

"Yes, Miz Belvel! Mornin', Miz Kemp! How's your maw, this mornin'? I bin a-hearin' she's powerful porely. Yep, this is bad weather for rheumatiz. . . . Don't know's I've ever seen so much rain this time o' the year in these parts! What'll you have t'day? Yep, jis' got some in yesterday! Best-lookin' taters I've ever had this early. Growed down there along the Current River by Old Man Robb. Well, you-uns won't be buyin' 'em long. Yer own orta be ready to eat 'fore long. 'N' some sody? Want that kind with them bird pitchers in



the box? Kids is crazy about them pitchers! I bin a-hearin' they trade 'em like marbles. 'N' some flour. Reckon you want about a hunderd pounds with Lucy's kids there a-visitin' you. Kids that age eat powerful lot of biskits.—Oh, yea, Al—” turning to the salesman—“put down a dozen cans o' bakin' powder f'r me. Fool women around here are gittin' so they's crazy about bakin'-powder biskits.—I'm glad yore still a-usin' sody, Miz Belvel! Seems like a biskit ain't got no taste to it effen it hain't got sody in it. 'N' a spool o' white thread, No. 50—Oh, hey, Al, put me down f'r a dozen spools o' white thread, 'n' a dozen o' black, assorted numbers. That orta last till fall! Wimmin ain't got much time f'r sewin' in summer, with gardenin' and cannin' time and all”—and so it would go.

All day Tuesday Al and his brother drummers would “work” the town. They would spend the night at the Mountain View House. Then early Wednesday, they would go over to Summersville. But because Summersville didn't have a good hotel, they would come back to Mountain View for another night's sleep before continuing on their route.

For this round trip to Summersville three or four drummers would band together and hire the livery stable's best team of horses, a pair of tough, rangy buckskins. Little George Holden, in a ragged coat smelling highly of the stable, his cap pulled low over shining eyes, would come driving up to Mountain View Hotel just around sunup to get his passengers for the day.

Way back in George's family tree, Lynn Walker surmised, was a king's coachman. No ordinary man, with hill ancestry, could drive a team of local horses up to the horse block with such a flourish. George would swing the horses wide, then turn them sharply, with a loud creaking of the carriage, much jangling of harness, loud calls of “Ho! Whoa! Back up!” and crisp snapping of the whip. Then the horses would stand, panting and steaming in the foggy morning, dancing just

enough to seem eager to fly over hill and dale. Diminutive George would sit with feet braced against the dashboard, lines wrapped about his hands, apparently having all he could do to keep his fiery steeds quiet.

The drummers would hurry out of the hotel lobby, with toothpicks sticking out of the corners of their mouths, buttoning coats, turning up collars, and jamming hats lower on their heads. They would leap into the carriage and adjust lap robes while they wisecracked with George about his crowbaits.

Without turning his head George would solemnly assure them his team could trot every mile between Mountain View and Summersville! Yep, egad, even that stretch up Buck Holler!

Into this sophisticated atmosphere, where the city reached right out and shook hands or at least rubbed elbows with the country, came Sally McAllon.

Sally was a country girl, with the stern upbringing of a pair of righteous, God-fearing parents. Sally, with her Junoesque figure, her milk-white skin and golden hair, was a puzzle to them.

Indeed, Sally was a puzzle to herself. She resented the strange urges within her that sent her blue eyes roving over well-dressed sophisticated traveling men. Always in her clean country mind were the warnings that she was to pay no nevermind to them traveling men.

"All of 'em," she had been told, "was up to no good."

Thus it was that when Sally came swinging through the door between kitchen and dining room, with her round white arms lifted high to hold the great trays heaped with steaming food in heavy crockery dishes, her own heart beat no less rapidly than the hearts of the drummers at the long table.

Sally, waiting on tables in Mountain View, knew the same exhilaration and exultation that a successful stage star enjoys

in a popular show. But Sally was just as brief an interlude in the lives of most of the drummers as a good show.

As Sally found to her considerable annoyance, most of the drummers were quite old men. Forty, at least. Most of them were married, and brought out worn photographs of their wives and children if one gave them half a chance. Although they made smart-alecky remarks in the dining room, they were content to spend their evenings totaling up orders, writing letters to the wife and kids or playing cards with their fellow drummers.

The heart-throbbing excitement, the thrilling romance Sally had expected to find in her hotel job, seemed sadly lacking.

Then Bert Chaffee came.

Bert had bold black eyes and a pert little black mustache. He wore the latest style in clothes. He had definitely been around. Standing with hands clasped behind his back, hat on the back of his head and cigarette dangling from one corner of his mouth, Bert could teeter on his heels and tell stories that would keep a crowd roaring for hours. It was he who sat in front of the local hardware store one night and saw a good citizen buying a ham from a farmer who had brought it into town.

"Look at that feller," Bert said, pointing to the man headed for home with the ham. "Look at him! 'Takin' a ham home to his family. 'N' I'll bet he ain't got a drop of whisky in the house!"

Yes, Bert Chaffee was a card.

Sally thought so.

And what Bert thought of Sally was neatly expressed the first time he saw her come into the dining room, with her golden braids crisscrossed above her smooth brow. He gave a long, low whistle. Instinct told Sally her big moment had come.

It was Tuesday noon. Sally knew Bert would be back for

supper around five-thirty. If he asked for a date, she would be ready for him.

When the dinner work was over, Sally went upstairs to her room at the hotel. She took out the little hoard of savings she had hidden in her mattress. She wrapped it carefully in a handkerchief and put it into the Peggy-from-Paris pocket-book which she wore attached to her belt. She went uptown and bought the treasure she had been eyeing for the past two weeks. A split skirt.

To wear with it Sally bought a taffeta petticoat in bright Nelrose color. It was a beautiful combination. The black taffeta skirt, skinny and tight, fitted snugly over Sally's rounded hips. And it was split a full eight inches at the hem, allowing a triangular bit of the bright, rustling, shining rose-colored petticoat to peep through.

The proprietor of the store, with Sally's interests at heart, urged her to buy a serviceable cambric petticoat with a wedge-shaped piece of taffeta cunningly set in to show through the split of her skirt. But Sally would have none of it. Her heart was set on a taffeta petticoat that would rustle bewitchingly as she walked. And here was the very petticoat in her favorite color! What if the taffeta petticoat would crack in due time? It was a humdinger while it lasted.

With the skirt and petticoat selected, Sally turned her thoughts to a blouse. White shirtwaists were spurned. Sally grew hard to please. Then at last the store owner brought out the pride of his collection, a thin, candy-striped blouse. It sheathed Sally's voluptuous figure as though it had been made for her. Even the fixed gathers at the back of the waistline were just right. Sally picked up the dangling strings attached to the gathers and tied them about her slim waist with supreme satisfaction. She loved every detail of the blouse. And most of all, she loved its glowing colors, rose stripes on an off-white background.

Sally hurried back to the hotel with her packages and put them in her room.

While supper was being served the cook snatched up a cup half full of a pinkish liquid.

"What in the name o' time is this?" she asked Sally.

Sally replied tartly:

"None o' your business!"

"Humph," said the cook. "'S if I didn't know! A-paintin' yore cheeks that brazen red! Effen you wuz a daughter o' mine, I'd turn you-'uns acrosst my knee afore I'd see you a-fixin' up that-a-way!"

Sally snatched the cup which held a half dozen red-hots dissolved in hot water, and thrust it far back in a tall cupboard. She bit at her lips.

"There y' go," said the cook. "Bitin' yore lips to make 'em red. It serves you right effen you do spoil the shape of yore mouth. Them city dudes hain't a-goin' to notice you nohow!"

The cook bent over a panful of creamed chicken that was being kept warm in the oven and stirred it vigorously, muttering about girls who don't know when they're well off.

Sally gave a sharp retort about not having been born yesterday! She assured the cook that she knew how to hold her own with men. Then, quite aware that her red cheeks and scarlet mouth would attract the attention of anyone not wholly blind, she went into the dining room with her tray.

Just as she had expected, Bert Chaffee was seated at the end of the table nearest the door. His bold black eyes met her blue ones, and Sally thought happily of the handsome new clothes in her room. She would need them!

She waited on the table in a trance. Bert ate so slowly, he was the last one in the dining room. The other drummers, winking at one another, left him alone with Sally.

When Sally carried her last trayful of dirty dishes back to the kitchen, she had a date.

"There, you see," she said to the cook. "Someone did notice me. I have a date with Mr. Chaffee!"

"Better look out f'r these travelin' men," said the cook sourly. "They ain't none o' 'em up to good!"

Then, curiosity getting the better of her, she asked:

"Where air you-'uns a-goin'?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Sally jauntily, tucking a stray wisp of golden hair into a braid. "Maybe we'll go to a dance out in the country. Or we might try roller skating in Bickel's Auditorium!"

Privately, Sally hoped it would be roller skating. That would enable her to kill three birds with one stone. Her new outfit of Split Skirt and Nelrose Taffeta Petticoat, plus the Candy-Striped Blouse, would show the town belles a thing or two. Second: her appearance with a handsome drummer might make a certain young man declare his intentions. After all, a girl can't go through life crocheting yards and yards of lace for pillowcases, dresser scarves and table cloths, without some assurance that it will eventually be needed. Third: a weekly date with a handsome young black-eyed drummer might be just what was needed to put zest into a girl's life.

Sally had finished her kitchen work at 7:30. She tore upstairs to her room and hastily dressed in her new grandeur. At eight o'clock she sailed into the lobby, with the new petticoat rustling deliciously under the taffeta skirt. Although the spring evenings held much of the chill of mountain nights, she wore no wrap. Not for worlds would Sally have covered the glory of that candy-striped blouse.

Almost at the instant she swept down the dusty stairs to the lobby the proprietor came in.

"Chaffee says to tell you to come on outside. He cain't leave the team!"

Sally took one look outside. There was Bert, with the best-looking horses the livery stable owned hitched to a single buggy with high wheels.

Sally was sorry Bert didn't come into the lobby to see her in all her glory. But, she thought gratefully, the street light was working that night. She switched through the door, rustling like a wheat field in a drought. The candy-striped blouse rose and fell with the pounding of her romantic heart.

"Salleeeeeee!" Bert's long-drawn greeting was the greatest compliment Sally had ever received. His eyes were fairly popping from his head.

When Sally climbed into the buggy, showing considerably more of the petticoat than the Split Skirt hid, she had a fleeting moment of gratitude that she had not bought the cambric petticoat with the silk wedge. Then in an instant Bert was in the buggy beside her, and they were whirling down Main Street.

Bert was so effusive in his compliments that they were well past the skating rink before Sally remembered that she had intended to steer him into it. They were headed due north.

It was a beautiful evening, with a big silvery moon shining down on the spring hills. All the sounds of a mountain evening were sharp and clear. The song of the frogs, the distant baying of dogs after a rabbit, the rustle of leaves along the roadside as little wood animals scurried to cover, the soft *clop-clop* of the horses' hoofs along the sandy road, an occasional ring as they struck a rock, and the squeak of the buggy. To Sally, the sounds and the beauty of the mountain night were too familiar to be noticed, much less remarked upon.

But Bert remarked over and over that it was the most perfect night of his life! Beautiful weather! A good road! A good team! And—a beautiful girl by his side. The loveliest girl he had seen in his life. A girl who should be on the stage.

Then, when the horses had settled down to a head-nodding walk up a steep hill, Bert took the lines in his right hand and slipped his left arm around the shoulders of the candy-striped blouse.

"No!" said Sally, definitely, shrugging away from him. "What do you take me for?"

"Aw, now, Sally," begged Bert, "I don't mean no harm. I was just afraid you might be kind of chilly . . . and I . . ."

"I'm all right," said Sally.

"You're all right—in looks," said Bert. "But your heart's just one big chunk of ice. Come on, beautiful, give Uncle Bert a little smack!"

"I'd have you know, *Mister* Chaffee, I'm not that sort of a girl!"

"Well, all right," said Bert, resignedly, leaning back against the tufted leather seat of the buggy. There was no more conversation. Bert was apparently indifferent. Sally was seething with disappointment and indignation.

The horses plodded onward.

Six miles from Mountain View the team stopped without command at the favorite rendezvous of all local spooners, the spring beside the Jack's Fork bridge.

Great oaks and sycamores made the shade dense and black. There was the musical sound of clear water rippling over rocks. And far out in the water, the reflection of the moon was as distinct as though another silvery moon were shining upward through the water.

"Beautiful!" said Bert, looking at the stream. "And you're beautiful, too, Sally. Come on, little girl, be nice to me!"

He laid the reins across the dashboard, and put both arms about the candy-striped blouse. Sally couldn't shrug herself away this time. She felt the little black mustache against her cheek. Sally was silent for a moment. Then she said:

"Maybe it would be fun if we got out of the buggy and walked along the edge of the water. The crick's awful pretty tonight!"

"Great!" said Bert, excitedly. "I'll bet we can find a nice spot to sit down and rest!"



"Maybe we will!" said Sally enthusiastically. "But, look!" she added. "Don't you think it'd be a good idea if we turned the team around so they'd be headed f'r home? We can tie 'em to that saplin' over there!"

"You're a bright girl, Sally," said Bert.

He turned the team around in a wide sweeping curve that had been grooved into the hard rocky earth by hundreds of mountain lovers. Then he drove the team alongside the sapling, left the lines hanging loosely over the dashboard, and hopped nimbly out. He held up his arms for the lovely Sally.

That was the moment Sally was waiting for! She rose to her feet. She seized the lines in one hand and the buggy whip in the other. As Bert stared upward in amazement, she laid three stinging lashes of the buggy whip smack across his upturned face. Then she swung the whip over the backs of the startled horses, and yelled with all the force of her young hill-trained lungs. The horses went galloping up the steep winding hill, the buggy careening wildly from side to side.

At the top of the hill the horses slowed down. Sally took one look backward at the moonlit road, and although it was quite empty she took no chances. She urged the horses onward. Bert might catch a ride with someone and overtake her. The miles seemed endless!

"And how'm I goin' to get this team into their barn without bein' seen?" she worried. "I dassen't get into town alone, driving a livery rig, at this hour! Must be all of eleven o'clock. I wouldn't have a shred of reputation left by noon tomorrow."

But there was the team to consider. No farm girl would abandon a team! Still worrying, Sally drove into the quiet deserted town streets.

She avoided Main Street, and, by driving roundabout, reached a side street two blocks from the livery stable. Then she climbed out of the buggy and wrapped the lines carefully



That was the moment Sally was waiting for!

around the buggy whip. "It takes an extra minute," she thought, "but they mustn't get tangled." She gave the near horse a sharp spat on his flank and said: "Go home, boys!" The horses started up.

Standing in the shadow of a big oak tree, with heart beating wildly, she watched the horses trot confidently to the livery stable. As though guided, they made the wide turn that took them inside. She waited, peering from behind the tree, until she saw their friend George come out and look up and down the street. She knew, without hearing, that he was cussing Bert Chaffee with heart and soul for turning the horses loose to come home alone. Then, holding her head high, Sally swished to the hotel and marched up the stairs to her room.

Next morning Bert did not come to breakfast. When it was time to go to Summersville, he limped down the stairs in dusty, disheveled clothes, a footsore, weary man. The other drummers began questioning him about the three red welts across his face.

"Aw, some o' the local fellers took me out on a Snipe Hunt last night," he explained. "I fell into a blackberry thicket!"

The hotel proprietor grinned knowingly.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### *HE AIN'T KIDDIN', SISTER!*

EATING regularly at the Commercial House in Mountain View is a liberal education in Ozarkiana. Here at the big table, where town and country folks mingle to pass beans, potatoes, salt, biscuits and platters of native foods to each other, tongues are loosened and you'll hear tales of past and present life in the Ozarks. If you're a stranger with a hint of shyness in your make-up, you may feel that some of the stories are being told for your benefit and that you are somehow being taken for a ride by these innocent-looking folk. Alice Bielfeldt, one of our Chicago guests, is sure of it.

We were having the big noonday dinner at the Commercial House—Alice, Eleanor Parks, my mother, and the Jedge and I. To all of us except Alice the sight of dozens of dishes of food being served family style to a dozen Ozarkians at the long table was a familiar sight. With sly smiles at her amazement but with quite casual ease, we handed dish after dish to her, urging her to help herself to this and this and this until her head was swimming. I heard her murmuring:

"It must be a dream! I can't possibly be seeing cole slaw, mashed potatoes, turnips, cottage cheese, chicken gravy, pickled beets, fried chicken, boiled beef, fried sweet corn, succotash and wilted lettuce, all on my plate at one time!"

Then from each side and across the table, plates of corn bread, hot soda biscuits and hot clover-leaf rolls were handed

to her. She was so busy accepting them she couldn't start on her plateful.

I helped myself to honey, and remarked conversationally:

"My grandfather was one of those persons whom bees never stung!"

"Shore could use him down here, a-huntin' bee trees," remarked the tall tanned farmer on the opposite side of the table.

He repeated:

"Yes, ma'am, we shore could use your grandpaw down here! We wuz a-huntin' bee trees jis' last week!"

"Bee trees!" exclaimed Alice. "Don't tell me bees grow on trees in the Ozarks!"

"Not on 'em. In 'em!" said the farmer. "Didn't you ever hear tell of tracking down wild bees?"

Alice winked at me—another Ozark tall tale!

"Wild bees, eh? How do you find them?"

"Well, first," said the man, "you toll in a few wild ones! And then they lead you to the others!"

"Sounds very simple," said Alice, with the air of Jack Benny when he says he can "go along with a gag." "You just whistle for them, perhaps?"

"No, you've got that mixed up with hunting wild turkeys. We whistle for wild turkeys, but we put out refreshments for our bee party!" He laughed. Alice laughed. I could imagine her telling this story in Chicago—her friends would enjoy hearing about the Ozarker who was such a card. Imagine! Refreshments for wild bees!

"Yes, sometimes we make just plain sugar sirup," continued the Ozarkian. "Sometimes we put sweet anise in it. It smells good! We spread it all over some leaves, and then we sit and wait f'r the bees to come up and git it. You see, we pick out a bush in the neighborhood where we've been seeing wild bees!"

"And then when they come up to eat the sirup," chirped Alice, "you put salt on their tails!"

"No'm! Flour on their backs!"

Our guest was startled but game.

"What? No talcum powder!"

"Reckon you could use talcum powder, ma'am, if you're a-mind to, but we jis' use flour!"

More diners came in and seated themselves. We handed them dishes and platters of food, and spoke about the crops.

"Getting back to that bee with the flour on his back," said Alice suddenly. "I'm anxious to know what happens to him!"

"Oh, that's not a him," said Lynn. "That's a she-bee! Flour helps us time her!"

"Now don't tell me you can estimate her speed by the amount of flour she fans off her back with her wings!" said Alice.

"No, ma'am. We jis' set still and wait for her to come back after more of the sirup. We can tell how far away the bee tree is by the time she's away. Funny things, bees! They always fly straight to the hive. That's how we can find the hive, by following one that has a load of sugar sirup!"

"Go on," said Alice, giggling. "You mean you fall in behind a bee and go hep, hep, hep! after it!"

"Not quite so easy as that," said the farmer seriously. "You see, ma'am, the bee starts off with a load of sugar sirup. We keep on a-watchin' her as long as we c'n see her. Then when she's outta sight, we go to the last bush we saw her pass by, and put some sugar sirup on its leaves. Then next time she comes to that and stops to take on another load. And we watch her again, and mooch up to another bush! May take all day to track her down! But, sooner 'r later, we see her go into an old holler tree. And we know that's where the hive is!"

"And you play knock-knock until the trees bark and the bees are scared to death." Alice was still frivolous!

"No'm, we just cut down the tree and dig out the honey. Maybe git thirty 'r forty pounds. Maybe more. May be ten y'ars old, but it's still good. The' ain't nuthin' to beat wild bee honey! Well, got to be gettin' along!"

The farmer rose from the table and left the dining room, with toothpick in mouth.

Alice laughed delightedly.

"He actually thought I believed that story about tracking down wild bees!"

"Didn't you?" asked my mother, daughter of the man whom bees wouldn't sting.

"Of course not!" said Alice, still laughing.

"Well, that's too bad," said my mother. "Because that's just the way wild bee trees are found!"

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### LYNN WALKER

*L*YNN WALKER is going to be terribly surprised when he opens this book and finds himself described as Mountain View's leading citizen! As a matter of fact, Lynn wasn't born in or around Mountain View, which makes him a "furriner" to his last breath. But he must have been born with the spirit of the Ozarks, an ineradicable love of its humor, its lore, its mystery and its fascination. Probably like the Jedge he loves the Ozarks with one breath and would like to wring its collective neck with the next one. But we're practically newcomers, having been Ozarkians only since 1936, whereas Lynn came into these hills as a young man.

In that coming he showed young Lochinvar a trick or two. Young Lochinvar, according to the poem, came out of the West riding a white horse, and in the twinkling of an eye seized the fairest young maiden in the whole countryside, hoisted her to the saddle and galloped away with her.

But Lynn had a better idea. He drove his horse hitched to a smart rubber-tired trap. The horse was a better-than-average racer, who had outlived his usefulness on the tracks but not in roadside racing among country boys who were willing to put a price on their own horses' noses. And when Lynn spied the fair young maiden, Clyde Ethel Anderson, daughter of a famous Ozark physician, he didn't have to bother hoisting her to a saddle. Clyde Ethel, as she will tell



you herself almost any day at dinner at the Commercial Hotel, was so dazzled by the smart rubber-tired trap and the grace of the racer that she climbed right into the trap without even a boosting hand on her elbow! And while young Lochinvar's bride, to my knowledge, was never quoted after she became Mrs. Lochinvar, Clyde Ethel will tell you that the rosy glow hovered around her romance until she found herself washing the mud off the rubber-tired trap and currying the horse. But this is just to introduce you to Lynn.

The best way to know Lynn and incidentally to get a true picture of the Ozarks is to meet him at dinner at Commercial House, here in Mountain View, and ask him to plan you a float trip.

A float trip, you should know, is a down-the-river trip with fishing as the nominal reason—but getting-away-from-it-all by far the more important reason.

Lynn will tell you how boats are loaded with provisions, and how you travel down Jack's Fork until it joins the Current River—fishing, enjoying the scenery, snoozing and eating huge, well-cooked meals at camping time! He will tell you how to choose a good gravel bar on which to camp, and explain that the smooth gravel makes an ideal flooring for your tent. He will promise that the mosquitoes lurking back in the brush won't come near you because of the breeze, and that you will be lulled to sleep by the voice of Ol' Man River. He will not hedge if you ask what happens if a sudden rain comes up back in the hills and the river rises suddenly. He will tell you that you must jump up and sling your stuff into the boat pronto. In fact, he may even hint that you may be obliged to wade out to your boat.

He will tell you of the bass and jack salmon and other delicious pan fish you will catch in the stream, and how good they are cooked over an open fire and eaten when appetites have been made ravenous by a day's journey down the river!

And all that he tells you will be true, as you will find for yourself when you make the trip. And in his conversation at the dinner table you can get some idea of the tales you will hear from him, if you are lucky enough to get him to accompany you as your Ozark guide when you float lazily down the Current River.

You will hear how Ozarkians know it will be a hard winter: if corn shucks are thicker than usual; if the breast of a wild-goose bone is blue; if hornets' nests are built high; if animals grow a thick coat of fur, early in the fall.

You will hear that potatoes should be planted in the dark of the moon, but that instances have been known where potatoes planted in the light of the moon have been twice as good as any other.

You will hear that there are very few poisonous snakes in the Ozarks, the cottonmouths and copperheads being the worst. But you will hear tall tales of whip snakes that grow seven or eight feet long, with red tails like the lash of a buggy whip. You will hear, too, that they run with heads two feet high from the ground, and are so quick they are gone in a flash. And because native Ozarkians love to bewilder the "furriner," you will hear the tale of the whip snake that whipped a little girl! And another tale of some fellow, miles back in the hills, who "had the pants whipped offen him" by a ten-foot whip snake! You will also hear of hoop snakes that put their tails in their mouths and roll like a hoop. There really are whip snakes and hoop snakes, but as Lynn will tell you, these are myths just made up for fun.

You will hear that clapboards put on the house in the dark of the moon will lie flat and snug. But clapboards put on in the light of the moon will curl up.

You will hear that not all dogs are good coon dogs. The best coon huntin' dog is one that shuts his eyes when he goes in after the varmint.

You will also hear of slow-track dogs, trained to follow deer. A slow-track dog is one that makes no noise, and never runs after his quarry. He simply strikes the trail and goes along at a walk. When he sights a deer in the distance, perhaps after an all-day tracking, he begins looking back at the hunter. (When our Boston terrier Judy looks at us, with her mind on her dinner, or bed, or going outdoors, we call it "giving us the eye." Perhaps she had a good slow-track dog in her list of ancestors.)

And while your mind is fastened on this phenomenon of the slow-track dog, you will realize that you are hearing another story about a man who "follered a slow-track dog all day, and finally shot a buck weighing two hundred and fifty pounds. . . . And when Jim Ballew saw the buck, he said: 'Well, that was a lucky shot, and a peculiar one. I killed a buck jis' 'xactly like that, only a little more so!'"

And before you have time to ask who Jim Ballew was and how he got into the story, your guide will be telling you the story of the backwoods preachin' man who used to make corn liquor back in the hills during prohibition. The making was not unusual, but his delivery method was highly individual. He put the beverage in Mason jars and brought it to town in egg cases. He peddled his wares all over town, delivering them right to homes where a jug of liquor would have been a raised-eyebrow matter for the neighbors, but where eggs, delivered by a preachin' man, were innocent as flowers.

In another moment you will be hearing of the two men who were coursin' bees, and who found themselves quite by accident close to the preachin' man's house. So they went to his home and asked "the woman" if "her man" was "to home." She said he warn't, but he was 'spected 'fore sundown. So the men lounged in the dooryard, getting thirstier and thirstier. And finally the preachin' man came home. They asked him if he had anything he could sell to ease parched throats. He

'lowed as how he did, but dang the luck, he didn't have any jars to put it in. He was plumb fresh out'n jars. So the thirsty gentlemen, with true Ozarkian resourcefulness, asked: "Has your wife got any canned peaches?"

"Oh, yes," was the reply. "Maw's got a lot o' canned peaches!"

"Well, we'll buy a half dozen jars," said the men, adding, "and bring out a crock!"

So they bought a half-dozen quarts of canned peaches, emptied them out in a crock, and said to the bootlegger:

"Now, take these six glass jars and fill 'em up with y'r best! Let the kids eat this crock o' peaches!"

And while you are wondering what Maw thought about six quarts of her canned peaches being dispatched at one fell swoop, you'll find that your Ozarkian guide has got off on another story. He will tell you about the time Al Cunningham and another feller were driving alongside the river down at Eminence in a buggy. According to the tale, they got about six miles down the river, and Al said to his companion:

"Bill Jones lives about in here. Let's stop and give him a drink!" You will be wondering about Bill Jones, and you will suddenly realize that your narrator is telling you about Bill Jones's wife.

"Bill Jones's wife," you will hear him say, "was a Chilton. The Chiltons were old-time Virginians and the smartest people that ever come into the Ozarks. If you meet a Chilton, even if he's in rags you'll know he's got more sense than you or I will ever have!" You will make a mental note to remember that name, Chilton, and then you will find that your narrator has gone back to the original story of Al and his companion stopping at Bill Jones's to give Bill a drink.

"And when they got there, it was late at night, nine or ten o'clock. But Bill and his wife fixed up a swell supper of fried chicken and corn bread baked in a skillet in the fireplace,

with coals in the lid. And then nothing would do but Al and the other feller must stay all night. About that time, Bill's old uncle and aunt came in from som'ers but no one thought much about it. And 'long about then Al and the other feller went to bed. And in about a minute, Al said:

"By dang! This bed's WARM!"

And so it was. Bill and his wife had given up their own bed to the aunt and uncle, early in the evening, and the aunt and uncle had been ousted when the two friends stopped to give Bill a drink! That's Ozark hospitality!

You'll hear about gigging fish, too. Lynn will tell you how mud platforms are put on boats, and how a fire of pine knots is built on the mud. The light shines on the water, the fish come up to see the light, the fisherman sees the big fish, and promptly spears them. You'll hear how one simple Ozarker was gigging fish one night on the Current River when his boat caught fire from the bonfire on the mud platform. And your guide will say:

"And danged effen he didn't row his arms off, gittin' his boat a half mile up the river to a place where he knowed a spring was, to put the fire out!"

You'll hear about Stegall Mountain and hunting wild turkeys. You'll hear how the favorite turkey callers are made of a wing bone of a turkey with the marrow taken out. But you'll also hear about wild turkeys that grew too smart to come at a fake call like that.

But as the turkeys grew smarter, so did the Ozarkians. One Ozarkian outsmarted the turkeys by putting a cowbell around his neck and "stomping" around in the bushes. The turkeys thought he was just an old cow stumbling around in the woods looking for tender leaves and sprouts of grass. They came up, unfearing as tame chickens, to become meat for the Ozarkian's table.

You will hear how smoked turkey breasts and corn bread

helped early-day homesteaders on Jack's Fork to live through the winter months, back in the days when there were no other provisions to be had. And how smoked turkey and corn bread were always carried when men had to walk great distances.

And while you're getting all enthusiastic about the Ozark people as a whole, your guide will suddenly slip into the story about the old man who had two "ornery boys." The old man was ill, according to your guide's story, and one of the neighbors was sitting up with him. In the night, the old man died. The neighbor called upstairs to the two boys, who were asleep in the loft. In an instant, they skinned down the ladder, landing on the floor with sharp thumps. This amazed the neighbor no end. Judging by their indifference to their dying father he hadn't expected them to rush to the bedside of the corpse.

But one of the boys grabbed the old man's pipe. "I'm a-goin' to have his pipe!" he shouted.

The other one grabbed his tobacco. "I'm a-goin' to have his tobaccy!"

You will hear of the settlers who began coming into the Ozarks as early as 1820, and how our particular region in Southern Missouri was peopled with settlers from Kentucky and Tennessee, largely of Scotch, Irish and English descent. And even in these days, until Pearl Harbor, when an Ozarkian talked about the War he usually meant the War between the States! Possibly even now you will hear the story of the Colonel in the Rebel Army, coming through our part of the country on his way to Pea Ridge, who picked up a tall soldier in a Confederate uniform in Pine Holler. The soldier claimed he was on a furlough and produced credentials to prove it. The Colonel looked at the paper, and said:

"'Tain't wide enough, 'r long enough, and 'tain't got enough writin' on it. Git in the wagon, suh!" And thus one soldier went willy-nilly back to the war with another outfit! And to this day, the Ozarkians talk about it.

You will hear what a great rushing stream Jack's Fork used to be, and what a dependable stream it was before the woods were cut off, making the run-off too fast. You will hear how it was once teeming with black bass, the best "eatin' fish" in the land. You will hear that the Current River is now being restocked, but few Ozarkians have any faith that tampering with nature will come to any good.

You will hear that seven packloads of silver were brought into the hills by Spanish miners, and buried in the Ozarks. Lynn will probably tell you there's nothing to it. It's just a story, he will say! Then, in the next breath he will have you pop-eyed with the story of the strange mounds "as big as a house" over in the vicinity of Birch Tree, and only three feet or so above the level of the fields. You will hear of the little creek that runs between these strange mounds. And how anyone could, in other days, roam about in that region picking up arrowheads, tomahawks and mortars! You'll be wondering if the finds indicated something unusually important about the mounds, or if the things just happened to be found in a region where the end of the glaciers had left strange deposits of rocks. You'll want to ask more about Indians, but your guide will have switched to wolves.

He will tell you that he has never seen a wolf alive . . . because they are so wary of humans! Then in an instant he will make your blood run cold by his tales of wolves' howling, and how they have murdered livestock. He will tell you how to build a wolf pen, like an inverted pyramid, and you'll resolve to remember it so you can tell your cronies at the nineteenth hole! But in a moment he will be off on another story, and you will be listening with all ears.

Maybe the story will be about Judge Evans, a Circuit Judge who had Jim Turner, an ex-Rebel, up in court for stealing hogs. Lynn will tell you how Jim came into court, with his ragged pants and little short coat, until you'd almost believe

your guide had been in court at that very time. And you will learn that each day the Clerk of the court would read off the case: "State Versus Jim Turner, Grand Larceny!" And always, Jim would say:

"Judge, y'r Honor, I hain't ready yit!"

Finally, after this had gone on for days and days, the Judge said:

"Now, Mr. Turner, the Court has been very lenient with you. But today we must hear this case, whether or not you are ready!"

Jim stood before the Judge and shifted his cud of tobacco to the other cheek. With the air of one who has made a profound decision, he said:

"Well, Jedge, I've been thinkin' the case over. And I want to tell you, I'll be willin' to drap it, if you is!"

And from that start Lynn will tell you tale after tale of the old days when Circuit Court sessions drew hundreds of spectators from as far as fifty miles. Court sessions were held at county seats late in the year, after crops were harvested.

Lynn will tell you how people came, in covered wagons and all sorts of conveyances, days and days before Court opened, and throughout the Court session families would camp all around the holler, their campfires twinkling through the autumn haze like a vast circle of giant fireflies. All through the nights there would be the sound of singing and shouting and revelry. Young folks would have this opportunity of meeting and courting. Horses would be traded, horse races would be run, and now and then one man would run off with another man's wife. Occasionally there would be a murder.

You will sit with mouth agape to learn that these things happened within the lifetime of the man to whom you are talking.

And if you take that float trip, long after you have forgotten the sudden storm that sent you racing from your camp



on the bank of the stream, yes, even after you have forgotten the delicious fish, fried over that campfire, you'll remember the stories of your Ozark guide.

In fact, if you aren't a born fisherman, you might even spare yourself the discomforts and inconveniences of the float trip by asking Mrs. Welchel of the Commercial House to serve you some fried fish. Then you sit and eat them while Lynn tells you his Ozark stories.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### *CLYDE ETHEL'S FLOAT*

*W*HILE I'm wondering whether to choose boysenberry cobbler or lemon cream pie for dessert at Commercial House dinner, Clyde Ethel Walker comes in and seats herself at the long dinner table.

Clyde Ethel's arrival is a signal for the waitress to hustle in with more corn on the cob, boiled navy beans, mustard greens and stewed chicken. And Mrs. Whelchel herself, in a clean print dress, brings in hot clover-leaf rolls, fresh from the oven, and a bowl of piping hot chicken gravy. Clyde Ethel doesn't eat all these . . . the hustle and bustle represent the honor due to Mountain View's First Lady.

Clyde Ethel is the Mountain View postmistress. And get this straight, Clyde Ethel is no ordinary small-town postmistress. She's brainy and quick-witted. And Uncle Sam knows it. Dozens of autographed photographs of important government officials, including one of President Roosevelt himself, hang in her spick-and-span office. We Mountain View women have always been proud of Clyde Ethel. We know her good looks and assured manner reflect credit on our town when she runs down to Washington to attend a political meeting concerning post offices, or to speak at a postmasters' convention. And we like to see the pretty dresses and citified hats she brings back with her.

Clyde Ethel's father, Dr. T. M. Anderson, was a Mountain View doctor for more than fifty years. He died at the age of

seventy-two. He might have lived many more years had he not caught pneumonia on a simple routine call. He had to walk four miles into the woods and back (a total of eight miles) in a driving snowstorm to attend a mother and twins. Had Clyde Ethel been a son Dr. Anderson would probably have had a doctor-son to succeed him. When Clyde Ethel was fifteen, Dr. Anderson began taking her on calls with him to dress the babies he brought into the world.

But Clyde Ethel wouldn't consider nursing as a profession. She was bright and alert, and before she was out of her teens she had got into politics. To Clyde Ethel goes the honor of being the first woman enrolling clerk in the Missouri State Senate! She held this job three terms, and she can recall the offer of at least one bribe for every one of those terms. She refused them all, but who made them she won't say. She has held the offices of Chairman of the Organization Committee of the Democratic State Committee, County Chairman of the Women's Democratic Committee, Chairman of the Fourteenth District, and many other political positions for many years. She was assistant postmaster for nine years while her husband, Lynn Walker, was postmaster. And for eight years she has been postmistress in her own right.

Her name, Clyde Ethel, is a combination name. Ethel is a family name, Clyde is the name of a hotel from which her father once wrote to her mother. The name of the hotel, Clyde, looked so pretty on the stationery, the young mother added it to the name of her baby daughter!

Clyde Ethel didn't let marriage interfere with her career. While other mountain girls settled down strictly to home life, after "getting hitched," Clyde Ethel promptly cut into carpet rags all the mother hubbards that had been given to her as wedding presents. That was indicative of Clyde Ethel's attitude toward life—of her desire to be up and doing—as staunch a character as her father had been.

Clyde Ethel and my husband have fought a political battle, tooth and nail, from the moment they laid eyes on each other.

Secretly, however, the Jedge admires our postmistress. He likes her for her courage and her go-getting spirit. And he is pleased that our small hill town has a post office clean as a whistle, with potted plants in a shining window, and pens one can write with! He likes the smart way Clyde Ethel dresses and the way she adheres to rules and regulations. But he never lets her know it!

Shortly before Mr. Willkie's defeat Clyde Ethel succeeded in having her post office moved from a dark dingy place into the clean bright room it now occupies. The Jedge went in for his mail and looked around admiringly.

"Well, Mrs. Walker," he said, "it's mighty good of you to get this post office fixed up so nicely for us Republicans to take over after the election!"

But election has come and gone, and Clyde Ethel is still doing a good job in the post office.

I'm always glad when Clyde Ethel comes to the Commercial House when I am lunching there. She has more time to talk than when I try to visit with her in the post office. And her talk is well worth hearing, whether it concerns something of a political nature or Ozark reminiscences.

Today, at dinner, I happened to hit on a story in her life that I never expected to unearth. I never dreamed that Clyde Ethel had made a float trip.

I said, just by way of making conversation, "Robert and I have been talking about taking a float trip down Jack's Fork and on the Current River to Van Buren."

"Don't!" says Clyde Ethel bluntly, helping herself to mashed potatoes. "It's no trip for a woman!"

Clyde Ethel's big husband, Lynn Walker, who is just finishing his dinner so he can get back to the post office and

take Clyde Ethel's place at the stamp window, shifts uneasily in his chair. He looks at the Jedge and winks.

"I was just a bride," says Clyde Ethel, "when we took our float trip. Lynn thought it would be a nice trip for us. And to make the party complete he asked one of his kinfolks and her husband and little boy to come along with us!"

Clyde Ethel looks pointedly at her husband, who flushes under his tan and looks down at his plate.

"I take it a few things went wrong with the trip," remarks the Jedge.

"Everything was wrong," says Clyde Ethel. "The day we drove over to Eminence a rabbit ran across the road. I knew right then we were in for bad luck. But I didn't know the half of it."

"You got to the river all right?" I ask.

"Oh, yes, we got to the river. We had a nice big boat and we had it loaded with provisions. Then all five of us got in and started down the stream. We hadn't gone more than a mile before we hit a low spot! The menfolks and I had to get out and push!"

"Get out in the water!"

"Sure! Lynn made me get out with the men! But the other woman, she stayed in the boat. I didn't say anything. I figured I hadn't been in the family long enough really to express myself to his kinfolks! And what a trip that was! The river was lower that summer than it's ever been since. Every few minutes we'd have to get out and wade . . . and *push*. The stones cut my feet. The water was icy cold on my legs. The sun was hot on my back . . . heavens, how hot it was! By the end of the day, I was tired enough to drop!"

"Well, it must have been nice to camp that night, under the stars, and get a good rest!"

"Rest, nothing!" says Clyde Ethel. "When we camped I

had to get supper. All day long the boys had been catching fish from the boat. And come suppertime, it was up to me to cook them. With smoke in my eyes!

"Then one night a rain came up. The kinfolks had been too—well, too shiftless to pack up a tent and bring it along. So when the rain came we gave them our tent, on account of the little boy. Lynn and I took our cots over to an old corncrib standing near the river. Along in the night the birds' nests up on the beams began falling down. We turned flashlights up to the rafters, and then we took out in a hurry! We found copperhead snakes had come inside and were crawling along the rafters, robbing the birds' nests! When they had eaten the eggs or the young birds, they just pushed the nest to the floor and went on to the next one! So we spent the rest of that awful night in the boat."

"But what about the scenery along the river?" asks the Jedge. "Wasn't it beautiful?"

"Maybe!" says Clyde Ethel. "I was too tired to notice. And I've never been back since."

"Go on, Clyde Ethel," I beg. "What happened after that rainy night?"

"Well, the next thing that happened was Sunday. The kinfolks said we'd have bad luck if we traveled on Sunday. They wanted to stay camped all day. Lynn said Sunday was just like any other day in the woods. And as for me—well, I thought the worst luck in the world would be prolonging that trip an extra day. I was all for starting out and getting it over with as soon as possible.

"So we started out early that Sunday morning. Pretty soon we had to get out and push, as usual. And then came the worst of all. All at once I stepped into a hole and went down over my head. When I came to the surface and scrambled out of that hole I was the maddest person that ever stepped foot in that river.



"Unless she gets out, I ride, too!"

“‘Look here,’ I said to all of them. ‘I’m tired of this business of walking while *she* rides.’ I pointed to the other woman and said, ‘Unless she gets out, I ride, too.’”

“Good for you!” the Judge says. “Did you get into the boat?”

“Yes, I did,” continues Clyde Ethel. “I flopped into the boat. But of course that made the boat too heavy. It simply couldn’t be pushed over the rocks. The menfolks said we’d have to get out. Well, I sort of felt better after having had my say, so I got out, meekly enough.”

“And the other woman?” My curiosity is aroused. “Did she get out and walk?”

Clyde Ethel’s stalwart husband gets up and pushes his empty chair close to the table.

“Got to be gettin’ back,” he says.

Clyde Ethel gives him a look, and goes on with her story.

“Oh, yes, she got out! But *her* husband carried *her* over the rocks!”

The waitress brings my dessert. It’s boysenberry cobbler, heaping with whipped cream! The Judge reaches over and yanks it deftly beyond my reach.

“Lay off those calories, woman! What if I have to carry you?”



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### THE MOUNTAIN VIEW STANDARD

EVERY issue of the *Mountain View Standard* is a treat. It differs from most country newspapers in its clean make-up and its freedom from the typographical errors common to many country newspapers. We can thank its editor and owner, G. S. Wattles, for its excellent physical appearance. Mr. Wattles was Mountain View's school superintendent before he bought and began operating the *Standard*, which had been in existence in one form or another since 1908.

Mr. Wattles is a wise editor. He knows that names make news. And he lets his country correspondents chop straight at the facts and let sentence structure fall where it may!

City people may hoot at the folksiness of our country correspondents' columns. But let them hoot! What those items mean to the people named in them can't be told in mere words. If a city person can imagine his name being put in the *Congressional Record*, spouted over the air by a notorious Broadway columnist, and plastered on the front pages of the biggest city dailies, he can get a fair idea of what it means for a country person to get his name in the county paper.

Each item is a living, breathing short story of real life, that may pack an O. Henry wallop, or there may be a happy chuckle in it for even the stranger.

Even such an item as this, gleaned from the "Marble Hill News:"

"Toots Prevett plowed for J. W. McDonald last Monday."

It would be such fun to run out to the edge of the field, and call, "Hi, Toots! Dinner's ready!"

In this region where droughts are dreaded as plagues, we know the quiet satisfaction with which a country correspondent licked her pencil and wrote (also in the "Marble Hill News"):

"The generous rains which fall quite frequently are of much benefit to fall pasture."

Personally, I prefer the chattiness of the "Backwoods Vaughn Items." The writer had these, and many more, in one single issue of the *Mountain View Standard*:

"Old Rock and Lee Smith kinda deserted Lost Ranch and near-by timber the past week. I was told they went other places, maybe Old Rock got tired chasing the Vaughn foxes.

"Mrs. Roland Jackson and Jim Harrison visited Mrs. Donaldson last Tuesday. Jim still has employment in Kansas, so he won't be moving back for a while, but he loves the Ozarks better than any place in the world and just has to come back every so often to take a look-see.

"Willis Campbell, Fate Sells, Frank Scharff and Wash Winningham played pitch at Des Granges Saturday night. And they claim Wash

isn't such a good player, just plain old lucky. Willis says Wash can shoot the moon and make it oftener than anybody, which is luck indeed.

"Mrs. Scharff is groaning loud and long about that awful big crop of seedling peaches she has to put up.

"Earl Bale is in Memphis for a physical check-up; how he did hate to go. You can't blame him either, with that fine tomato crop of his at its best.

"Don Donaldson had supper with the Brokaws last Wednesday. And he doggone near forgot to come home.

"Charley Jones is on a tractor going around and around in Ralph Penninger's hay field getting it ready for re-seeding.

"Willis Campbell and Oliver Des Granges walked up and down Barn Hollow Sunday morning looking for gravel which Willis wants to use to fix up his new cistern.

"Mrs. Brokaw slipped and fell down their back steps last Wednesday morning. She says it didn't hurt much though she did sit down kinda hard.

"Phyllis Jackson is again having trouble with that same old elbow which jumps out of place ever so often. This time she had to go to

West Plains for treatment, the trouble is getting serious.

“Joe Ulath is still giving me the merry-go-round. I can’t catch that guy at home.

“Mr. and Mrs. Brokaw spent Sunday at Lost Ranch, and if you can tell us girls where the boys went to and why they held up dinner until 2:30 o’clock, we’d be much obliged. However, we got even, we took those young squirts out and saw to it that they picked about two bushels of wild grapes.”

And the column closes with this homely bit:

“Did any of you ladies ever make wild grape and sweet potato butter? Here’s how. Cook wild grapes until soft enough to run through a colander, cook sweet potatoes until soft enough to run through colander. Take two parts of grape pulp and one part of sweet potato pulp, put together and sweeten to taste, cook slowly until done. In other words, cook it just as you would apple butter. I assure you the dish is fit for a king.”

I find news of friends in the columns written up as “Columbia News.” This community takes its name from Columbia Schoolhouse.

“Mrs. Francis Scharff went with Mrs. Rebecca Markham and daughters to Jack’s Fork. They enjoyed

a big dinner and had plenty of fried chicken. After dinner the girls gathered elderberries. Mrs. Markham and Mrs. Scharff will have a nice hot job making jelly tomorrow."

The story would not interest a stranger, perhaps, but Doris was my beloved "neighbor girl" until she became Mrs. Francis Scharff. Here in the hills womenfolks do not see each other frequently, and we have no telephones for hours of chatter! This little item gives me a picture of Doris, lovely and so young, making elderberry jelly on a hot September day, and leaving the glasses in a sunny kitchen window to admire their amethyst tint.

From the Heelstring correspondent, we learn this news:

"Ben Richardson has been doing some work on Vern McClellan's pond."

I'm always so glad when a pond is being fixed up! It will mean a better water supply for someone's thirsty animals when the next drought comes. The column continues:

"The kids seemed to enjoy themselves Friday night at the ice cream social, especially Dempsey Holden."

If we were Dempsey, we would be downright sore at being singled out like that. It should be grounds for a libel suit, or a well-aimed rock.

We know Miss Selma Reese is a popular girl for she rates a long paragraph in the same column:

"Miss Selma Reese was greatly surprised Saturday night when a group of her friends dropped in for a party

bringing cookies, ice and lemons for refreshments. They all seemed to enjoy themselves. The remainder of the crowd left when the chickens began saying, 'Time to get up folks! Maybe there will be another party somewhere before long.'

We like the "Chapel Hill Items," for the folks in that community visit at odd hours:

"Mrs. Clorene Gimple and daughter Edna, Jamie and Leslie Ellet, called at the Cecil Holden home Monday morning."

We wonder what we would do if a group like that, bent on visiting, should swoop down on us just when we've got out the Oxydol and started the Monday wash!

We find mention in the country news columns of one girl named Loueva, another named Arba Faye, and sisters named Avis and Voncille, and wonder why we've never thought up those names ourselves for our pets. And we chuckle over the thoughts an Ozark mother must have had when she named her baby boy Finis.

We like the little items from the "Arroll Gossip" that say:

"Mrs. H. T. Taber and son, Roscoe, and Mrs. Joe Taber visited Mrs. Julia Conoway Sunday evening. Mrs. H. T. bought one dozen hens from Mrs. Conoway and Mrs. Joe Taber bought four geese.

"Mr. and Mrs. Conoway of Springfield spent the week end at the Carson Conoway home.

"Mrs. H. T. Taber helped Mrs. Pearl Smith can peaches Tuesday and Wednesday.

"Ed Busby bought a dozen hens from Mrs. Julia Conoway."

We find ourself waking in the night to wonder why Mrs. Conoway is selling off her geese and chickens.

We learn this from the items written about the "West End of Route 2":

"Mr. and Mrs. Wes R. Holden, Mr. and Mrs. Dan Holden and Rev. Everett Holden and wife were Sunday dinner guests at the Jerry Holden home. In the afternoon, several gathered in and had singing . . ."

It is nice to think of the Holdens gathered about singing. Probably it was hymns, because Reverend Everett was present. In most family reunions the daughters spend the afternoon taking the daughters-in-law apart, and vice-versa.

We wonder about the contradictions in another item in the "West End of Route 2 News":

"They took Mrs. Jim Christian back to the hospital last Thursday morning and she is getting along nicely. The doctor said she would never walk."

We read in the "Teresita News" items:

"From all appearances Dave Hearn really likes to paint. At least he has made the job of painting his store front last about all summer."

From Page One of the *Mountain View Standard* we learn that seventeen boys and girls from Mountain View are enrolled in colleges and universities for the year, the editor modestly naming his own daughter Betty last of all.

We learn also that the Happy Hours Club met at the home of Mrs. Ethel McGrath on Wednesday, and after a delicious dinner was served to fourteen members and a special guest, the club voted to subscribe \$2.50 to the community building fund.

We read the publisher's editorial column with great interest. It begins with the line: "Americans have always been highly gullible when it comes to title-bearing foreigners."

As Exhibit A, he digs into the history of the Marquis de Lafayette, who is pictured in our school books as the unselfish, chivalrous, liberty-loving Frenchman who sacrificed the comforts of a rich home to help the Americans win their independence. In a well-written column, rich in statistics, we learn that the Lafayettes received in cash over half a million dollars from the struggling young United States for the general's thirty-six months of actual service in the Continental Army, not to mention a large part of the 11,520 acres of land given to him near New Orleans.

It is a bit of history that I had never known. I chuckle to find how it fits in with the typical Ozark feeling toward strangers—that every stranger is believed to be a scoundrel until he proves he is!

I even find the name of my own 'book mentioned in the paper. A chap in some far-off state had sent for a sample copy of the paper, after reading about Mountain View in my book, *Take to the Hills*. He wrote back that he was very much surprised to find the names of Sunrise Mountain Farm and its jelly kitchens mentioned in the news items. He had presumed they were fictitious. He sent a dollar to pay for a year's subscription to the paper.



The advertising columns are no less interesting. I find Doc Good offering for a mere pittance—namely, a coupon and eighty-nine cents—a full pint of vitamin B-1 tonic, with iron, in sherry wine. The advertisement reads:

“What all America has been waiting for! Are you tired . . . nervous . . . weak . . . run down . . . tired when you get up and feel all in? It is the time of the year when your system needs Vitamin B-1 and iron.”

I find that Mrs. Mabel Shafer is having a sale in which she is selling a large grindstone, scoop shovel, some potatoes, picked apples, one hundred and fifty quarts canned fruit, and other things too numerous to mention, along with four cows which give a total of eleven gallons of milk each day. I wonder if Mrs. Shafer will feel a great sense of relief that first morning when she doesn't have to get up and take care of the morning's share of eleven gallons of milk! Or will she lift her idle hands to wipe away a tear?

I notice that Charley Weller wishes to rent a place described as:

“Newly decorated 5-room house, electric lights, water and sink in house, screened-in summer kitchen, barn, two chicken houses, and a brooder house, all with electric lights. Good big concrete cellar, five acres good lespedeza; \$8.00 per month.”

He wants a good reliable renter who will appreciate a good home, and gives the location: two miles east and one mile south of Mountain View, on Route 2.

And as I turn the page, I note that Chester Arthur has a “good used milk cow for sale.”

Yes, for living, breathing stories of present-day life in the hills, I read the *Mountain View Standard*.

And for the short short story of life that is no more, I visit the Mountain View Cemetery to see my favorite tombstone. It gives the name of the woman whose grave it marks, and her age—somewhere in her early thirties.

Then it gives to the world this crudely lettered epitaph that sums up one woman's life in the Ozarks:

*"She don what she could!"*

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### SHIVEREE

HERE in the hills," I wrote a year ago, "we have seen Doris, our neighbor girl, grow through those lanky years from thirteen to seventeen. Now she is a lovely young woman, slender and graceful, with fair blonde skin and hair that gleams golden in the sunshine. We have seen her learn how to turn a good-looking profile and have rejoiced to hear her shyly try to speak precisely, without the 'you-uns' and other colloquialisms of the hills."

It was true. High school did much for Doris. In her last year at the Summersville High School she discovered music. She learned how to play the bass viol in the school orchestra. I never heard her play it, and Doris never said how skillfully or how sadly she played. But one time she was telling me about a musician from another town who had visited her school and heard the Summersville High School orchestra play. She said he looked at her and her bass viol kinda funny-like. And then he said suddenly, "Here, let me try that!" So he tried out the bass viol which the school furnished for her playing. I asked what comment he made after that. "He just said, 'No wonder!'" replied Doris.

Doris took her music seriously. All year she dreamed of becoming a member of that famous all-girl orchestra we hear over the radio. I dreamed with her. I could imagine myself looking at the clock and rushing to the radio to say: "Oh, we mustn't miss Doris' orchestra!" Or looking at pic-

tures of girl musicians grouped like flowers in their beautiful long billowy dresses, and seeing none more lovely than Doris, with her golden hair.

But I seemed to have a hunch that our dreams could never come true. I knew at graduation time a big white cushiony mountain moon would be showering its silver light on every mountain by-road. I knew flowers would be blooming, birds would be twittering in their nests, and all nature would be in that romantic spring mood. And if Doris' boy friend didn't think up a good suggestion for Doris' future, he didn't deserve a girl with golden hair.

Then came that great Thursday that was Graduation Day. Doris would be home all that day, because the graduating exercises would not be held until evening. Remembering my own graduating day when I put on my graduating togs at dawn, I told Doris to come up to my house at three o'clock on Thursday so I could take color pictures of her in her cap and gown. She agreed to come. Then all Thursday forenoon I watched the clouds. They grew heavier and heavier. And about noontime the rain poured. It let up in a little while but I was sick at heart, remembering the creek that flows through the woods between our house and Doris' home.

But a flooded creek is nothing at all to a girl who has been brought up in the hills. Promptly at three Doris came up the path from the woods. The long dark blue gown was hitched up about her slim waist with an old belt, showing her pink taffeta graduation dress beneath. Her heavy brown brogues and striped anklets were soaked so completely they were almost black. The tassel of her blue mortarboard cap dangled over one eye. And no wonder! In her arms Doris carried her good shoes and stockings, a big bundle of freshly washed laundry, and her pretty little half-sister!

"Why, Doris!" I exclaimed. "Have you been working on your Big Day!"

"Got to!" she answered seriously. "Mother's working in town at the jelly kitchens. I had to do Miz' Bates's washing today, and take care of Sis!"

After Doris had changed her shoes and stockings we took pictures during the sudden burst of spring sunshine. Then she changed back to the heavy brogans and went on to deliver the washing! I watched her going along the Ferndale road, leading Sis and carrying the heavy bundle of laundry tied up in a sheet. She stepped briskly this way and that to avoid mud puddles, and every now and then she would hitch up the blue gown that seemed to be slipping out of its belt, or give the mortarboard a yank.

After a while they returned from Bateses' and stopped for a second visit while the rain poured again.

As the little sister played with the kittens, Doris sat down to tell me of the graduation gifts she had received. She named them over . . . a handkerchief from this one, some hair bows from another, and other simple things. Then, in a burst of confidence, she drew from her dress pocket a crumpled handkerchief. In one corner was tied a gold ring set with a tiny diamond.

Just as I had suspected, Doris' boy friend had thought of a way to keep Doris in the hills.

On the third of July they were married. The wedding party was enjoying a wedding dinner at the Commercial House when the Judge and I went in for lunch. Doris' golden hair was shimmering as always, and she looked cool as a pineapple flip in her dark blue silk dress. But her groom's suspenders were making two sweaty criss-cross tracks on the back of his white shirt! Even an up-and-coming good-looking young man of twenty-six, with a horse, four cows, a car and a job in the cheese factory, doesn't relish all the folderol that goes with a wedding ceremony.

We had company that night so we couldn't go to the

charivari (pronounced shiverree in the hills). But we heard the tumult all the way to our house! I knew all the neighbors for miles around had gathered in the darkness at the farmhouse where Doris and her bridegroom were staying, to pound on tin pans, clatter pot lids, ring cowbells, and fire off guns until the groom appeared and passed "see-gars" and candy. I was pleased to hear so much noise, for the loudness of the hill charivari indicates the popularity of the bride and groom.

Then at last, the hills were quiet.

Next morning Aunt Lizzie came down rubbing her right arm and moaning softly:

"I'm all tuckered out," she said plaintively.

"Been working too hard, again?" I asked.

"Nope! I went to Doris' shiverree last night. I'd a-bin all right effen I'd a-had sense enough to jis' keep on a-hittin' them pot lids together. But I shore done somethin' turrible to my arm when I picked up the mallet and whammed that circle saw!"

"Why, Aunt Lizzie," I said, "you didn't need to do that! Why didn't you let the men that brought the saw do the beating of it!"

"Well," said Aunt Lizzie, "I've allus liked Doris!"

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### WOMAN OF THE OZARKS

SHE was sitting beside me on the bench outside the general store, a dumpy little woman from yon side of town. Her snow-white hair was tucked under a black hairnet, and her green rayon-print dress was dusty with flour from the sack leaning against her knee.

We had merely passed the time o' day when my young neighbor Doris walked by with her brand new husband and the first bag of groceries for their new home.

My neighbor smiled wistfully and spoke softly:

"Doris kinda puts me in mind o' myself when I was first married. I had that same yaller hair, only mine was most down to my knees. And then, too, I had Ralphie."

"Ralphie?" I was a bit startled.

"Yes, Ralphie, my stepson. One o' the best boys that ever lived. I think as much o' him today as ary one o' my seven."

Apparently her mind was still on our lovely young newly-wed, for she went on: "I do hope Doris won't tan. It's been a heap o' satisfaction to me that I don't tan 'r freckle. None o' my girls, either. None o' the seven!"

"What's that?" I exclaimed. "Are you speaking of seven assorted boys and girls, or seven of each?"

"Seven boys. Seven girls," she answered mildly. "And Ralphie."

"Why, that makes fifteen," I said, thinking of the shoes and flour and biscuits needed for fifteen children.

"And you look—why, you look young!"

"I'm sixty-three! Land, land, it jis' seems like yistidy that I had that houseful runnin' around. I had fun with my children. Oncet we wuz out in the yard playin' ball. I had jis' washed my hair and it was flyin' in the wind, most down to my knees and yaller as a punkin. A feller drove up to the gate and hollered: 'Hey, kids, is y'r paw 'r maw at home?' My young'uns never got over laughin' about that."

"And now you're all alone?"

"Most nearly. I've only got Irene and Little Joe. And my son Bob!"

"Irene and Little Joe! Are they your youngsters?"

"No, they're my grandchildren. The only two out o' twenty-five that I'm a-havin' to bring up. Their maw run off and left 'em a year ago!"

Her hazel eyes snapped.

"The nerve o' that huzzy. Writin' to my son Bob, six months ago, tryin' to euchre him out'n them two kids. I writ her a letter that told her a thing 'r two. I said a yaller pup looked after its young'uns better'n she did hern!"

"But maybe there were things . . . and things . . ." I began lamely, as always, championing the underdog.

"Naw, there wa'n't! She jis' took a notion to leave out when Bob said they'd orta go back to the farm. She knowed he wuz a farm boy jis' workin' a spell in the city when he met her. She might a-knowed he'd go back to farmin' when he come to his senses. But she said she wouldn't live on no farm. Said she couldn't stand it. Too bad about her!" My neighbor stiffened. "She jis' wanted to set around on the flat of her bottom with red stuff on her fingernails and friz that red hair o' hern!"

The angry voice softened for an instant.

"She did have purty hair 'n' teeth. Hope Irene has 'em too." She fixed the sack more comfortably, and continued:

"I said in my letter I'd take keer o' them kids and bring



'em up right, even if they did have a maw who was nothin' but a hunderd 'n' forty pounds o' beef without head 'r heart! I told her effen she knowed what was good f'r her, she'd stay on t'other side o' Rolla. Them two kids has too many kinfolks to git let in f'r any trouble!"

She gave a sharp nod that boded no good to a runaway daughter-in-law.

"Would you have been as hard on your own daughter, if she had left her family?" I asked.

"Shore would," was the reply. "One o' my girls did come a-runnin' home one time. I sent her back a-kitin'. I told her she was hell-bent on marryin' that feller. 'N' now't she's got four kids that worship their daddy, it's her place to git back and take keer o' all o' 'em!"

But I was more interested in the problems of that home with fifteen children than in the current generation.

"Fifteen mouths to feed! However did you do it?" I asked.

"Oh, we allus had a farm. We raised a lot o' stuff. 'N' we butchered reg'lar. I allus believed in feedin' young'uns good. All these things they're a-tellin' us now, about feedin' a lot o' vegetables and sich like, I jis' sort o' knowed all along. Leastwise that's what I done. And the young'uns come along fine!"

"But illness! Or accidents! Among so many children that must have been a problem."

"Shucks, no! Now and then we had a little fracas. But most generally always they wuz all right. Once one o' the boys shot hisself through the hand. But I got the blood stopped and the hole washed out by the time the doctor got there. He said I'd done jis' the right thing, 'n' I was allus kinda proud o' that! My two oldest girls both fainted at the sight o' all that blood, though, instid o' bein' a help to me. I had extry trouble a-bringin' them to after I got the boy fixed up.

"'Nother time Fred was a-playin' with a long wire that had

a hook in one end of it to ketch chickens. He got the hook ketched on somethin' inside his throat 'n' couldn't get it out! The other kids was all a-runnin' 'n' a-screamin', but I jis' held Fred's tongue down with a spoon, 'n' got hold o' that wire 'n' turned it around. 'N' it come out nice as you please. But boys' teeth 'r' sharp, though. He bit my finger clean to the bone while I wuz a-doin' it! Finger's been stiff ever since." She rubbed a gnarled forefinger tenderly.

"Tom's got a bad finger, too. Got it hurt playin' shinny. Tom's in the army now. He runs a typewriter f'r a general, 'r' somethin'. He c'n do eighty words a minute," she said proudly, "even 'f he does have one finger less than most typewritin' folks. He says he had a turrrible time a-hidin' that bad finger in all them tests 'n' things! But he done it!"

A clattering car drove up and stopped with its nose at the sidewalk.

"Well, here's my folks, now," she said genially. "Look at them ice-cream cones a-drippin' all over Irene 'n' Little Joe. Howsumever, we got plenty o' soft water in the cistern now, so washin' ain't so hard."

She climbed nimbly inside, and seated herself between two small red-haired youngsters. A tall, overalled young farmer unwound himself from behind the wheel of the car, got out, and tossed in the sack of flour and other groceries my neighbor had left on the bench. He gave me a bashful grin and I wondered about that girl up in St. Louis who preferred city life—to that grin!

Then the mother of fourteen children—and Ralpie—leaned out of the car.

"Say," she called, "if you ever see my Tom around any o' them army camps, don't say nothin' about that bad finger o' his'n. What they don't know don't hurt 'em. 'N' anyhow it ain't his trigger finger."

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### *DANG WIMMIN FOLKS!*

**J**EB PULLEN climbed out of the wagon box, and tied his gray mule to the hitchrack at the end of our village main street. He gave the sagging front tire a vicious kick as he passed it on his way to the crossing.

"Gol dang it," he muttered. "Leeny'd better be puttin' in her time stuffin' some more hay into them tires! Mighta saved all that bother o' puttin' the wagon box on them old autymobile runnin' gears, effen I'd a-knowed she wouldn't keep them tires stuffed!"

He stepped stiffly up on the sidewalk and peered down the short row of stores. Not much doin' on a week-day, he mused, gloomily.

Drawing a large clasp knife from his pocket, he neatly cut off a mighty chew of tobacco. A near-by door was opened and he caught a fragrant whiff of freshly baked bread.

"That dang bakery," he snorted. His old mother would turn over in her grave effen Leeny ever brung any o' that boughten bread into her house.

He glanced at the next window and hastily turned his head. No wonder wimmin ain't got time to make bread nowadays. Look at 'em in there a-gettin' their hair frizzed. He spat angrily and strode down the street, remembering that Leeny was saving her egg money for a permanent.

Yon side of the bank, he found the door to which he had been headed, the haven of masculinity into which no woman

had ventured for more than forty years. He turned in at the door under the swinging sign, which reads:

SQUIRREL HUNTERS' BARBER SHOP

Shaves, 15c  
Guns Repaired

Haircuts, 25c  
Fiddle and Gittar Strings

Zeb sniffed the heady fragrance, compounded of barnyard boots, old galluses, cob pipes, wool caps, and eatin' tobacco, as he seated himself on the bench.

Although a half dozen men and boys, all in need of shaves, lounged in the shop, one of the two barbers was stringing a guitar for an anxious-eyed young man in a soiled leather jacket. The barber-owner, Bruce Hunt, put a big stick of wood into the fire in the heating stove. Then he plunged his hands into the open bucket of hot water steaming on the top of the stove. He fished out a towel and wrung it slightly, placing it dripping and steaming on the face of his customer in the chair. Paying no attention to the muffled threats and wildly kicking legs of the victim, Bruce went along with his story of the possum hunt at Barn Holler on the night before.

On the bench along the front window young Luke Timmons was sawing "Git Along, John" on a mail-order fiddle, trying out the new string he had just bought.

"Pears like these hyar strings hain't as strong as they useta be," he complained.

"Reckon they must a-come from a Wolf Creek cat," commented a loud-voiced young man from the other side of the room. "I've been a-hearin' they hain't got much insides!"

A roar of laughter went up.

Everyone knew Luke had floored a Wolf Creeker at the square dance on Saturday night for shinin' up to his girl.

But Zeb was in no mood for jokes. He scornfully eyed the long legs of the customer who was getting shaved in the chair.



But Zeb was in no mood for jokes.

The Jedge gittin' shaved agin! Zeb spat contemptuously into the wooden box filled with sawdust. Dang city dude gits shaved nearly ever' week. His disgust deepened, when Bruce brought out a bottle of witchhazel kept especially for the Jedge's tender skin. 'S if water hain't good enough f'r him, scoffed Zeb. He listened half-heartedly to the conversation of his neighbor on the bench.

"I'm a-tellin' you, I thought that pole was a goner when that fish runned under that log. Dang nigh bent it double!"

"Last time yuh told that story, Tom, the pole broke!" The loud-voiced young man had cut in again. "'N' if I recollect rightly, yuh ketched that fish with y'r b'ar hands!" Everyone laughed, except the one who had been telling his favorite fish story.

The boy with the fiddle began to play "Pop Goes the Weasel." Zeb picked up the only magazine in the shop, the dog-eared August number of *Field and Stream*, and pretended to look at pictures as the Jedge told Bruce about Chicago barber shops.

"Now there's one on Wacker Drive that you should see, Bruce!" said the Jedge, while Bruce ran hand-operated clippers over the back of his neck. "It's on the twelfth floor. Even in winter time, there are bouquets of fresh roses in it. The barbers all wear snow-white coats. And while a barber shaves you, a colored boy in a white coat shines your shoes and a girl in a white uniform manicures your nails!"

The barber shop loungers exchanged broad winks. The Jedge didn't think he could make them believe tall tales like that. Roses in winter time! A barber shop twelve stories up! And a woman in it!

"Shucks, Jedge!" commented Bruce, mildly. "Yuh musta bin' gittin' shaved in one o' them there beauty parlors!" He launched into a tale of what he had said to the dang city dude who had tried to sell him a doggone outfit for sterilizing

razors and towels. Dang salesman had never been south of Rolla since, Bruce reckoned.

Zeb hunched his shoulders and nursed his unhappy thoughts. At last another bearded lounge noticed his silence.

"What's eatin' yuh, Zeb? Yo're sittin' there like yuh'd soured on the cob!"

"Dang wimmin folks!" Zeb spat at the sawdust box only four feet away—and missed. Tongues were clicked at this unmistakable proof of a disturbed state of mind. Zeb wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and continued:

"Leeny 'n' the gals 's got some new-fangled notion about cleanin' house. Jis' watchin' 'em work like that got me so dang t'ared I had to git up out'n my rockin' cheer by a good warm f'ar, 'n' come to town!"

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### *GREAT-UNCLE ABNER*

**T**HIS morning Great-Uncle Abner Giddens lay in his bed with his faded blue eyes tightly closed. One might have thought that he had at last wearied of a world that put four major wars into his lifetime, and was listening for the Taps that would soon sound for him. But we knew Great-Uncle Abner was simply having one of his ornery spells.

"Come on, Paw," coaxed his son Hiram. "Lemme change yore mattress. See, here's a plumb new one, boughten f'r you. Set up here in yore cheer, cain't yuh?" Great-Uncle Abner's thin, wrinkled hand only clutched the bed clothes more tightly.

At last Hiram's patience was exhausted. He stooped and gathered the frail old body into his arms. In an instant Great-Uncle Abner, his lean shanks kicking lustily below the tumbled skirt of his long white nightshirt, was deposited in his big chair beside the window.

Gradually the old man lost his petulant spirit. It was good to be there where the morning sunshine made tiny halos around the trumpets of a thousand Heavenly Blue morning-glories.

"Fetch me my cap," he suddenly demanded.

He spoke to Great-Aunt Effie May, a grandmother, who still has traces of the dark-eyed loveliness that was hers when,





"Know ye?" snorted the old man. "Course I know ye!"

at sixteen, she became the wife of Great-Uncle Abner and stepmother of children older than herself. She hastened to obey.

Quickly she brought the felt cap with the ear flaps that Uncle Abner was wearing when he was "took down." Scornfully he waved it away.

"My army cap, woman!" he decreed.

From the depths of an ancient trunk came a threadbare, faded blue peaked cap with a cracked patent-leather visor. Uncle Abner put it on with trembling hands.

"Now fetch me a chaw o' t'baccy and my chiny spittoon."

Throughout the long sunny forenoon Great-Uncle Abner sat there in his big chair, the Union cap set at a jaunty angle above his white nightshirt, gumming his tobacco and talking of days and friends long gone. The past ninety-seven years seemed to be one vast tapestry in his mind, a tapestry where mental fingers could point out figures and events without regard to time or space.

For hours he mumbled dire threats against General McBride. For the ten thousandth time he repeated McBride's famous order of the spring of 1861: that every Union man in Howell county should join the Confederate Army or be hanged high as Haman.

Then he chuckled at remembering how Union farmers, the war over and the General in his grave, donated money to help Mrs. McBride and her children get back to relatives in Texas County. "Old McBride would a-died afore he'd a-took help from Union men," he chortled.

He spoke of possum hunting and splitting rails, of corn shucking and plowing. Suddenly in his rambling talk about making sorghum he paused to call me.

"Rene," he said, plaintively, "why hain't Johnny bin over t' see me! Has little Mary Rose got over the mumps?"

I had to put myself back two generations to answer him.

Rene was my grandmother, Johnny my grandfather, and little Mary Rose my mother!

At last Great-Uncle Abner's snowy beard dropped to his chest and he dozed fitfully. We wakened him quietly and urged him to get back in bed. He grew stubborn again. He'd been putten in that chair and by the living, he was a-goin' to stay there!

Fearful that the old man would take cold, we called Hiram from the field.

Tall, tanned, work-worn Hiram, whose life has been devoted to his father, stepmother, and half-brothers, came in. He approached the bristling, little old man and inquired gently:

"Do you know me, Paw?"

"Know ye?" snorted the old man. "Course I know ye!" He paused to "ping" the china cuspidor with the faded flowers painted on the side. "Ye're that damned smart aleck that was hyer this mawnin'!"

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### GRANDMA'S BIRTHDAY

IT WAS on a rainy Saturday, just two weeks before Pearl Harbor, when Grandma Oliver told me about her birthday.

She began by telling how excited she had been on the day before her birthday which came on Armistice Day, and how she had shifted uneasily in the straight chair when she was gettin' fixed up for the big Birthday Dinner.

"Bad enough," she had thought, "jis' to be a-settin' in this new-fangled cha'r with the shiny frame without this roarin' thing on my head!"

It wasn't like that low, soft chair at Ellie's, she decided.

"Howsumever, I've found mighty few cha'rs easy in the thirty years since I was throw'd out'n that hack back'ards!" She turned sidewise to fit the hump between her shoulders against the chair.

"Better stop my fidgitin'," muttered Grandma, sternly. "Ever' time my head moves, it bats ag'in this dratted head piece! Might bat that paddin' loose and burn my head off!" She lifted an investigating hand.

Across the room, a sharp-eyed young woman in a white uniform wagged a long red-tipped finger in an unmistakable gesture of caution. Grandma folded her hands in her lap. She wished she had brought the rags she was tearing for another rug.

"All this time a-wastin'!" she thought miserably.

The girl in white crossed the room and laid a magazine in Grandma's lap. She picked it up and looked fixedly at the cover, seeing only a hazy blur. She liked the girl in white. She'd just humor her, she decided, by pretendin' to look at the magazine.

More'n likely, thought Grandma, she would be turrrible hurt if she knowed I hain't been able to see a stime for more than forty years. She'd be sorry she took away my glasses when she put me under this roarin' hot thing!

She became more resigned. I reckon this here waitin' is part o' bein' made purty, she decided. She sought for the word Betty Wood had used, when she had seen Grandma stepping stiffly from the porch of Ellie Meade's boarding house to the sidewalk and heading for the Mamie Kendricks Beauty Shoppe. Betty was the nicest one of Ellie's boarders, Grandma thought. Cute as a kitten and smart as a whip!

"Hey, Grandma," Betty had said. "Don't get yourself too glamorous! Remember, I've got my eye on one young feller around here! I'd hate to have you cutting in on me!"

Glamorous! My, my, what words the young people do think up now! Grandma smiled at the memory of Betty's words. How they do think up ways of doin' things, too! Who'd ever a-thought, 'way back when I was a young girl, doin' that tow hair o' mine up in rags, that I'd be a-settin' in a Beauty Parlor, a-gittin' my hair frizzed proper for my eighty-seventh birthday!

Eighty-seven! An old woman. An old woman with a thousand-and-one things to be thankful for, she mused.

Take the children, she thought. The' ain't anybuddy in the world got better young'uns than me!

She thought of each one in turn. Letty, the oldest, so busy and happy with grandchildren of her own now grown to manhood and womanhood. Probably Letty was baking a

birthday cake up there in Springfield right today. It would say Mother on it . . . the first four letters big and bold, and the last two little and scraggly! Maybe running over the edge! Letty never seemed able to get the size of the cake and the size of her frostin' writin' to jibe. She always ran out of room on the cake after the fourth letter.

Grandma smiled to herself. Her appetite hadn't been good lately, but she'd eat some of that birthday cake effen it choked her, she decided. She hoped Letty would get here early tomorrow morning.

"With it bein' Armistice Day," Grandma worried, "like as not there'll be a big crowd on the road." Letty's husband, George, was a good driver, she reassured herself happily. So big, so quiet, so calm!

Grandma thought next of Jeff, her oldest son. Jeff was big, too. He was like his paw, solid as the Rock of Gibraltar.

She wondered what Jeff would bring her. "Somethin' good and substantial," she surmised. Last year it had been long-sleeved flannelette nightgowns. But Angie had brought her a five-pound box of chocolates.

"Ain't that jis' like Angie. Always fritterin' away Jeff's money. But Jeff's got plenty to be frittered. He's done mighty well in his hardware store up there at Joplin!"

Too bad him and Angie didn't have any children of their own. But there's Angie's sister's boy, Harold, jis' turned twenty-one. Jeff and Angie couldn't be any prouder of him if he'd been their own. Probably Jeff has it all fixed to leave his money to Harold.

She hoped Jeff and Angie would get in early tomorrow. Perhaps she would have time to remind Jeff about makin' his will. "But shucks," she thought, "he's a mere boy, only sixty-five."

She thought of Millie, the daughter she hadn't seen for a whole year. Grandma always shuddered when she thought

of Millie away off there in Deetroit! Seems turrible to think of a daughter o' mine livin' in one o' them great big sprawly buildin's with smoke belchin' out of them tall chimneys!

Land sakes, she thought with a smile. I must be gittin' old!

She recalled that Millie had laughingly explained, time after time, that those big buildings were automobile factories, where her husband and sons and thousands of other men worked.

"We really live in houses in Detroit," Millie had said.

But all the pictures of Detroit Grandma had ever seen had shown those big sprawly buildings. Millie, she suspected, was just puttin' on that she lived in a decent house like the folks in Mountain View.

Last birthday, Grandma remembered, Millie and John, their sons and the sons' families drove through the night to get to Mountain View in time for her birthday dinner. Hope Millie don't bring me another sweater, thought Grandma. Up there in Detroit, the weather must git powerful cold . . . seems like Millie has enough sweaters to stock the whole town. Millie always laughs when she's guyed about her sweaters and says she guesses she took after Maw.

"Can't set still without havin' my hands busy, and knittin' keeps 'em out of mischief! When I git enough sweaters knitted f'r all my menfolks, I jis' turn to and knit three or four for myself, and a couple for Maw!"

Land, land, she wouldn't do that, effen she had to wash and card the wool and spin it, like we used to do! 'Tain't much use I got for a sweater, anyway. Ellie keeps my room so hot, I have to keep the door open into the laundry room to keep the plants from witherin' on their stems, and the canary from moultin' all his feathers!

Ellie's awful good to me, she thought gratefully of her third daughter. I hope the Lord won't ever make me any more of a burden to her. Long as I kin git around and take keer o' myself, I don't feel so bad about livin' on her. Ellie's

had a hard time, runnin' this boardin'house these twenty years she's been a widder, and bringin' up three children without a man to help her. Mebbe I could-a helped Ellie more'n what I've done, if 'twarn't f'r losin' ever'thin' Paw left me. Her Paw'd turn over in his grave effen he knowed I lost all that money he worked so hard f'r! Seems like I jis' trusted folks too much.

She resolutely pushed her gloomy thoughts out of mind. She smiled as she thought of Lonnie. Lonnie, her baby! Lonnie, with her own tow hair, and the blue, blue eyes of his Paw. It jis' seems hard to believe even now that Lonnie is a growed man. Past fifty, thought Grandma. So jolly, so gay, like his Uncle Jeff!

Funny Lonnie never married, reflected Grandma. Girls have allus been crazy about him! All but Fanny Clarkson. Grandma clicked a *tsk! tsk!* It loosened her upper plate, and she thrust it back into place with a grimace that had grown habitual. She thought over those bitter hours long ago when Lonnie had received the note telling him Fanny was going away to be a play actress.

Them fellers that come into the hills buyin' lumber put her up to it, thought Grandma. Showin' her all them pitchers o' gals with hardly no clothes on 'em, the huzzies! And her believin' them dudes when they said she was purtier'n any o' them. Reckon she was, she thought grudgingly. 'N' we did hear as how she'd done jis' what she set out to do. But that was long ago! She'd a-done better by herself to a-stayed home and married Lonnie.

She thought sadly of the day Lonnie wept and cursed and vowed he would never look at another woman as long as he lived.

"If Fanny Clarkson would give me the mitten when we've been promised nigh onto a year, and our cabin already bein'



built over in the woods yon side of the spring, what woman could bear trustin'?" he said, bitterly.

Of course, Lonnie got over that long ago, Grandma thought. She thought of his good clothes, his big shiny car, and his handsome gray hair in crisp curls.

That job o' his'n in that big store up there in St. Louis must be makin' him plenty of money, Grandma thought. He's always talkin' about runnin' down to New York! And afore all this business about that turrible feller Hitler, he even crossed the water. That was the year he brought her the funny-lookin' plaid coat that was so scratchy, Grandma remembered.

Lonnie, Grandma knew, would be the last one to arrive for her birthday dinner tomorrow. He wouldn't leave St. Louis until after breakfast, and it would take longer than usual to drive the two hundred miles.

Grandma shriveled inside as she recalled the traffic they had encountered the time Lonnie had taken her up to St. Louis. She had been frightened by cars to the right and cars to the left, darting in and out like water bugs playing at sundown on the old pond. But that was a nice sociable ride, she recalled. It had been nice to have Lonnie all those hours, just to herself. That was the time she had come right out and asked him why in tarnation a nice feller like him hadn't ever got married!

What had he said?

Grandma cudgeled her brains.

He had laughed his deep, hearty laugh, and said, "Why, Maw! Think of all the young hearts that would break if I got married. I'm still playin' the field!"

"Playin' the field!" She had always meant to ask Betty Wood what that meant. It sounded like one of the things she's always saying. Yes, Betty would know. She'd see Betty

at noontime . . . noontime . . . noontime . . . Grandma dozed gently.

As Grandma slept, a smell of singed hair at the next table made her nostrils twitch. In the confused half-world between sleep and waking, Grandma fought with a furious fear.

An old childhood memory was revived by that odor. In her troubled doze, she was reliving a vivid memory of her childhood. "Look out! It's a-fire! Grab up that cotton, boys! Here, don't burn yourself! Look out, Julie, yore apron's ketchin'! Land sakes, don't it burn fast when a spark pops out'n that fireplace!"

Grandma moved uneasily in the hard chair, and moaned softly. In a confused dream she was again telling a story to Betty Wood, yet she was actually living the story too.

Only last week, Grandma had told Betty Wood about those sudden fierce cotton fires. Betty had laughed at hearing how Grandma's father and stepmother would bring in great arm-loads of cotton each evening, and by the light of the fire set each child to picking the seeds out of an apportioned pile of cotton before he—or she—would be allowed to go to bed.

"The children learned that seeds come out easier, effen the cotton was warm," Grandma had told Betty. "But it was dangerous! Mebbe a spark would pop out of the fireplace into the cotton warmin' on the hearth. Before anyone could say Jack Robinson, all the cotton in the room would be a-fire! We'd have to save the cabin o' course, so all the cotton in the room would be dumped into the fireplace! When the last o' that snowy cotton would go up the chimney with a great roarin' sound, us children would grin at one another, thinkin' how easy we'd got out'n the evening's chore."

Roaring! Grandma awoke with a start. She smelled burning hair!

"Lemme out o' this dratted thing," she said tartly to the girl in the white uniform. "Effen a buddy's got to go through

all this, jis' to git her hair frizzed, I'll wear mine straight like the Lord intended I should. Cain't tell me, I know my hair's burned to a cinder. And this thing a-roarin' in my ears is fit to bust my haid wide open!"

"Now, Grandma, don't be like that!" said the pretty girl in the white uniform. "Remember how proud you was the time you got a permanent!"

She flipped the drier aside and felt of Grandma's hair.

"I think it's dry enough to comb out now. Come on over here!" She indicated another chair before the mirror.

Grandma rose on unsteady legs and tottered across the room.

"A-goin' to all this trouble!" scolded Grandma.

"You'll make yore children proud o' you tomorrow, Grandma!" said the young woman in the white uniform.

"Tomorrow!" Grandma remembered. "Tomorrow will be my eighty-seventh birthday. The children will be there! That's why I'm a-goin' to all this bother." She seated herself in the chair and squirmed. This chair, too, lacked a comfortable hollow into which that hump between her shoulders might be fitted. She leaned forward and looked at her reflection in the mirror when the girl removed the net from her head. There was no denying it! She *did* look better. She forgot her annoyance and watched with admiration the deft fingers of the young woman as she combed and brushed the soft thin curls.

She liked having her hair frizzed, Grandma decided. Maybe she'd come oftener. Betty Wood was always saying every woman should go to a beauty parlor at least once every two weeks.

Then at last, Grandma saw Ellie coming for her and soon there was the confusion of paying and tipping and getting into wraps.

"Now, Grandma! Don't put on your hat," said the young woman, hovering about and tucking in a wisp of hair here

and there. "You'll spoil your hair-do! It looks plumb beautiful, Grandma. You look ten years younger!"

Grandma tried to straighten her shoulders. Ah, to *be* just seventy-seven again, as well as to look it!

At home, while Ellie bustled about taking off her wraps, Grandma settled herself into the chair with the comfortable worn hollow.

"Now, Maw," Ellie said, "you rest yourself while I'm a-settin' dinner f'r the folks. I'll have one o' the hired girls bring you a piece of custard pie and a glass o' milk soon's they have a minute's time. And then I'll fix you a nice poached egg and a cup o' tea, when I eat my dinner. After that, you should take a nap and git all rested f'r tomorrow!"

Grandma reached for the basket of rags.

"Might as well be a-cuttin' up these rags while I'm a-restin'," she said.

Next morning, Grandma awoke with a start. Cannon! There was no mistaking the sound. Grandma clutched at the Lone Pine quilt, and the hand-woven counterpane. Could General Blount's army, camped over there on the prairie, be on the move, she thought?

Then she smiled. "Why, that's not General Blount's army. It's Armistice Day! I'm not a little tow-headed gal. I'm an old lady. Today is my eighty-seventh birthday. My children are coming today!" The bed creaked as she moved.

"Maw!" called Ellie, from the depth of the feather bed across the room. "Don't you be a-gittin' up now. It's only four-thirty!"

"I know, Ellie," said Grandma. "But 'pears like my bones is a-achin' so I jis' have to git up and set a spell!"

"Yo're jis' excited, that's what ails you," said Ellie, good-humoredly. "You want to git up and start looking for them young'uns o' yorn!"

Grandma chuckled. Ellie has a way of hittin' the nail on the head jis' like her Aunt Julie, she thought. She slid down from the high feather bed, and groped in the darkness for her slippers. The rag rug was soft and cold to her bare feet! Funny she'd never noticed that before. Everything seemed sharper and clearer this morning than she could remember. She felt young. She'd like to get out in the kitchen and make that birthday dinner for herself. Her fingers shook with excitement as she fumbled with her robe . . . Jeff's Christmas gift, last year. There was no denyin' it, she thought, feeling the soft warmth of the robe, she had ever'thin' she wanted. She turned on the light.

Ellie slipped from her bed to grumble a bit as she put kindling and a half-dozen sticks of wood in the stove and shook down the ashes.

"Looks like you could a-stayed in bed a mite longer, Maw," she said, shaking her hair out of her eyes. She held a parlor match on the figure of a boy hanging on the wall, and yawned widely. She drew the match across a square of sandpaper on the seat of the boy's pants, lighting for an instant the scrawled inscription: "Light your matches on my patches." She touched the match to a crumpled paper and thrust it into the stove.

As the fire blazed up, with a cheery crackling, the alarm clock rang. Ellie hastened to shut it off.

Grandma snuggled cozily in her deep chair.

"See," she said, "you'd a-been gittin' up right now, anyhow. Yo're gittin' a headstart on the day's chores!"

Ellie bustled into the laundry room that separated their combination bedroom-sitting-room from the kitchen. Grandma could hear her washing and dressing hurriedly in the cold room. "Ellie's a great one for clean clothes," she mused. She thought admiringly of the way Ellie hung up fresh things in the laundry room every night, ready for the next day. An instant later, when the rattling of the stove lids showed that

Ellie was building a fire in the big cookstove, Grandma got up stealthily and tiptoed across the room. Ellie would scold like everything, she knew, if she came in and found her peering out of the window this early. But still, she'd heard a car that sounded big and sort of tired.

Millie and John might a-got an extra start from Detroit, and they'd git to Mountain View in time for breakfast.

My, my, what a surprise that would be! Grandma thought excitedly.

She drew aside the curtains and peered into the murky autumn dawn. Only a truck and a broken-down car were parked within sight. Nothing like the big shiny car Millie and John always drove!

Grandma settled herself in her chair and moved her hands nervously. Might as well be a-cuttin' up them rags while I'm a-waitin', she thought. She reached for the scissors and the basket of colorful rags, and hunched her chair under the shaded electric light bulb dangling from the ceiling.

After breakfast, Ellie bustled in and out of the room a dozen times an hour. The beds had to be made with utmost care, each of the two feather beds plumped to their fluffiest height. Then the covers were spread over them, and each bed was topped with one of Grandma's favorite quilts. The new Double Wedding Ring quilt, which Grandma had just finished, on one bed, and the Magnolia Bud quilt on the other. Grandma sat stiffly in her chair, directing the way they should be spread and how the corners should be tucked in.

Later, Grandma dressed with all the excitement of a girl going to her first party. She got out the pink corset she had worn under her good gray dress at the wedding of Ellie's youngest girl. She put it on over her clean white wool underwear. Then she searched at the bottom of the big oaken chest for the chemise edged with the hand-knitted lace in the leaf pattern. Then she put on the gray wool petticoat Ellie had

got from the mail-order house. Over that went a white petticoat with blue featherstitching above the embroidery ruffle. Her head was swimming but she still had that curious sense of lightness. The children will be here any minute now, she thought.

As she slipped into the dark blue woolen dress with the white collar, her heart began to pound. She wanted to sit down and rest, but the children, she thought, would be worried effen they found me jis' half dressed!

She buttoned the fancy buttons on the front of her dress and put her gold pin into the ends of the round white collar at her throat. Maybe she should wear that big brooch Lonnie sent her on Mother's Day. "Land sakes," she giggled, "that's even brighter'n Betty Woods. He must want his maw to look like some fliberty-jibbet." She would tell Lonnie, she decided, that the brooch was too pretty to wear, even on her birthday.

She put on long black ribbed stockings over the long underwear, and drew up round garters to hold them snugly above her thin knees. Then she slipped her feet into the good black shoes Ellie had brought from the wardrobe. They were cold and stiff, but they felt dressy. She shuffled them softly on the rug at her feet while Ellie fussed with her hair, fluffing it around her face like the beauty-parlor girl had said it should be worn. Grandma could hardly believe that dressed-up person in the mirror was herself.

She settled herself back in her chair and reached for the basket of rags.

"Now, Maw," scolded Ellie, "don't you be a-sewin' now. You'll git lint all over yore good dress. You'd be a sight when they git here! I'll git you something to read while I'm busy upstairs!"

Grandma folded her hands in her lap.

"I wouldn't mind readin' a good moral story," she said.

Ellie brought her a copy of a current magazine. Grandma could tell by the feel of it that it was like the magazine that had been handed to her at the beauty parlor. She adjusted her glasses and looked at the cover.

Humph! she thought. This feller looks jis' like that river gambler that come through here last year, when bass fishin' season fust opened up and the town was full o' them city fellers! Reckon the' ain't no use in me clutterin' up my mind readin' about no sich trash.

She held the magazine in her lap and leaned forward so she could see out the window.

Any second now, one o' them cars will come roarin' around the corner, she thought. I'll know it in a minute. Something inside always tells me when it's one of my young'uns. She was looking steadily out of the window when Ellie entered with a yellow envelope in her hand.

"Look, Maw, here's a telegram f'r you! The station agent jis' brought it over!"

Grandma fumbled so long with the telegram, Ellie grew impatient and took it from her. She read aloud, slowly:

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DEAREST MOTHER, AND CONGRATULATIONS ON BEING A GREAT GREAT GRANDMOTHER. ROSE HAS SEVEN POUND BOY BORN YESTERDAY AND SAYS WE CAN'T LEAVE UNTIL SHE IS OUT OF HOSPITAL. WE KNOW YOU WILL NOT MISS US FOR OTHERS WILL BE THERE. OUR GIFTS SENT YESTERDAY BY MAIL. WILL SEE YOU THANKSGIVING. LOVE AND EIGHTY-SEVEN KISSES."

"Gifts!" said Grandma, with trembling lips. "I don't want any gifts. I jis' want to see my children!"

"Now, Maw," said Ellie. "Don't you fret. The others will be along any minute, now. And you don't want 'em to see you lookin' down in the mouth, do you!"

Grandma brightened. Too bad Letty and George can't



git here, she thought, but they must be powerful excited. This is the first new baby for, le'see, Howard—that's George Junior's youngest boy—must be fifteen years old. Why, that's the first new baby in fifteen years in Letty's family! Letty always loved babies. Mebby that's why she spoiled her daughter Bessie so she didn't have no more sense than t' run away with a drummer when she wuz jis' eighteen. Then when Bessie brought little Rose back for her Maw to raise, Letty done a good job. Made Rose a schoolteacher. 'N' she married a pefessor! Prim as a preacher, Grandma smiled. Reckon Rose is in one o' them hoss-pitals, with all the doctors and nurses and things I've hear'n tell about.

Warn't no hoss-pitals when my babies was gittin' born! she thought. My, my, how times has changed! Then it wa'n't thought right for a woman's clothes to be changed till ten full days after her baby was born. Then the fresh clothes had to be smoked!

In memory, Grandma could recall the fragrance of wood smoke when hot coals were being drawn to the hearth for the clothes-smoking ritual. She could smell the pungent odor that filled the house when handfuls of cornmeal were sprinkled on the live coals to make a cloud of smoke.

She could even recall the rustle of the frèsh, clean, starched "shimmy" and nightgown, as they were held over the smoking coals, being turned to right and to left until every thread was impregnated with the acrid odor of smoke. She could almost sense the soothing comfort of the warm slippery garments as they were put on her body. She could almost hear ancient neighbors scolding her on her brashness for demanding clean clothes too soon. Somehow, I couldn't bear to wait the full ten days, she thought. Four was the most I could go without gittin' into somethin' clean!

She wondered what they would say at the hoss-pital if she walked in with a smoked nightgown and an old-fashioned

shimmy for Rose. She laughed! If she were younger, she'd like to do it. Just as a joke. Couldn't smoke up the place any more'n Bessie does with them ceegarettes o' her'n! she sniffed.

Ellie bustled in with a glass of milk.

"Here, Maw," she said. "Drink this to stay your stomach till dinnertime!"

Grandma drank the milk slowly. It was cool and good. She wondered if Rose was allowed to drink milk.

In the old days a woman wasn't allowed to drink milk for nine days after her baby was born. Just a little tea or coffee, and some bread and butter. Law, law, how I craved meat! She laughed at the memory of that hearty young appetite that was hers. How she had argued that meat would keep up her strength—so she could take care o' her baby when she got up.

I still think I was right, said Grandma to herself, with a stubborn set of her chin. I wouldn't a-bin so tuckered out when I had to get up and bat out that big washin' at the end of two weeks! That bat shore seemed heavy, even if it did have holes in it, when I'd pound them first baby clothes. It was a mite easier after Lem Holden begun a-makin' them wooden washboards out'n oak boards. Them ridges shore got wore smooth with all the washin' I had to do!

Ellie came into the room to put more wood on the fire. "Land sakes, Maw!" she said, chattily. "You should see the angel-food cake Ivy Jane jis' put in the oven f'r you! It's so high it's fitten to bust the top offen the stove. Leaves us sixteen egg yolks f'r salad dressin'!" She bustled out.

Angel-food cake, sighed Grandma happily. Wisht I could git out in that kitchen and git dinner for my young'uns! Paw always said he wuz never a-skeered to bring a stranger to our house f'r dinner! He knowed I'd be shore to have plenty. But o' course I would! With a smokehouse full o' hams, and the' wuz allus dried apples and dried corn and dried

punkin. And we allus had jugs o' long sweetenin' to make ginger cake. They call it sorghum molasses now!

Her mind wandered on. Wonder whatever b'come o' that big oven I allus put in the farplace to bake ginger cake. That lid was dished so's it'd hold jis' as many live coals as I wanted it to. Land sakes, many's the time I've had t' run and put ashes on them coals to keep my cake from cookin' too fast!

She nodded gently.

Grandma was dozing fitfully, starting at each sound, when Ellie slipped into the room.

"Here's a special-delivery letter for you, Maw. Clyde Ethel sent it over from the postoffice soon's it got in. The rest o' the mail ain't distributed yet."

"Oh, my, my, what time is it?" asked Grandma, starting from her chair.

"Ten-thirty, Maw! I told you the bus jis' got in from Rolla with the mail! You know that's the time it allus gits here!"

Grandma fumbled with the letter.

"Where's it from, datter?" she asked nervously. "I'm so afraid . . ."

"Now, Maw, don't you go to worryin' and git all upset. Here, I'll read you the letter. It's from Joplin . . ."

"Jeff!" asked Grandma, weakly.

"Yes, it's from Jeff," said Ellie, her eyes skimming over the letter. She read:

DEAR MOTHER:

Angie and I are just leaving for Minnesota, so, much as we regret it, we won't be with you on your birthday. Harold was up north, deer hunting, and was accidentally shot. We're terribly worried. He has been taken to a good doctor, but we want to see that everything possible is done to save his life. As you know, Harold is all the world to both Angie and me. We hope you miss us, even though all the others

are there. We know you'll have a high old time on this great day. If it weren't for this terrible accident, wild horses couldn't keep us away from the fun. By the time you get this, Angie and I will be on the airplane, headed for Minnesota.

Your loving son,

JEFF

P. S. We haven't time to wrap all the gifts we have here for you. We'll bring them Thanksgiving.

Grandma took the letter from Ellie. She smoothed it carefully on her lap, trying to stay the trembling of her hand.

"A birthin'! A dyin'!" she whispered. "What next? Things allus comes in threes!" She put a gnarled forefinger under her glasses and wiped a tear from each eye.

"Now, Mother, don't take on!" said Ellie. "It's too bad Jeff and Angie can't be here! And as for Harold, well, remember he's Angie's nephew. He ain't no kin to us. While he's a nice upstandin' boy and all, still, the' ain't no call f'r you to git all upset. Even if the worst happens!"

Grandma took the clean handkerchief out of her pocket. She unfolded it and wiped her glasses.

"Hand me my clean white apurn with the knitted lace on it, datter," she said, firmly. "It'll keep lint from gittin' on my good dress. My hands has got to git busy, 'r I'll go crazy a-thinkin'!"

Ellie brought out a clean white apron and helped her mother tie the long wide strings around her fragile waist.

"Now git along with y'r dinner work and don't mind me!"

Grandma reached for the basket of rags. In a moment she was cutting strips from a long section of striped pink flannel-ette. Her slim nose, too, was pink at the end.

The little stack of inch-wide strips at the side of her chair grew higher and higher as Grandma's scissors snipped busily. Suddenly, a mighty *boom* sounded in the street. It was followed

by a stirring *boom-boom-boom* on a bass drum . . . and a trumpet call loud and clear.

"Drat them fellers!" Grandma said. "Effen that angel-food cake ain't out'n the oven it'll fall flatter'n a pancake, with all that drummin'. Wonder what's the meanin' of all that noise!"

"Come on, Maw," called Ellie, bursting into the room. "Come see the pur-ade! The soldiers is a-marchin'."

"Soldiers! What soldiers? Who air we a-fightin' now?" asked Grandma querulously.

"Maw!" exclaimed Ellie. "Don't you recollect. It's Armistice Day! These is the Howell County veterans a-marchin'!"

"I don't want to see any parade," said Grandma. "I'll just set here and wait. Millie and John will be comin' any minute now. Then Lonnie'll soon be here!"

"Well, I'll take a little look! But I got to watch things cookin' on the stove while Ivy Jane is out front, watchin' the soldiers!"

Ellie hurried away. Grandma seated herself in her chair and snuggled the crooked place on her spine into the worn hollow. She wished she could remember how far it was to Detroit!

Before she could snip more than a dozen strips, Ivy Jane came rushing in.

"Look, Grandma! Pete Perkins went after the mail afore he come down to fix the far, and land sakes, look at the mail you got! 'Pears like the whole post office was turned over to you-ens! Gotta hurry! The pur-ade is still a-goin' on."

She dumped a bundle of letters in Grandma's lap and ran out of the room.

Grandma was overwhelmed by the number of greeting cards. She had never received so many at one time. Her hands trembled as she turned them over. Pink ones, gray ones, blue

ones! Big square envelopes. Small ones with a satiny feel. And then . . . there it was.

"Somehow," Grandma thought, "I had a feelin' a letter would be there."

Millie's handwriting was neat as always. But it seemed to have a strange slant today! Grandma studied it carefully. Millie had been all het-up over somethin', she decided. The letter was thick, too. Maybe Millie had sent handkerchiefs! Millie was a great one for tucking things into letters she wrote. Little surprises, like a fancy collar or a silk handkerchief.

Grandma's heart sank. If Millie were sending something, that meant she was not coming. Even the fact that she had written was a hint of bad news!

Grandma opened the letter slowly. A carefully folded page from a Detroit paper dropped out. Grandma pushed it to one side and read the scribbled pages slowly, making out one word after another.

Dearest Mother:

I'm heart-broken that I cannot be with you on your birthday. But I know all the others will be there, so you will not miss me too greatly. We're in such turmoil here, now with all this talk of war going on! The big plant where the boys work is to be closed soon by a strike. Tom and Bob do not think it should be closed. They say they will do everything they can to break the strike. Dick says it's right for workmen to strike. Think of my three boys being divided like that! They were all here last night, with their wives. Some other men in the neighborhood came in, and they argued until all hours. We women sat in the kitchen and near cried our eyes out. We're the ones who suffer most when there's trouble. The plant where John works will not be affected, for a while yet at least. But it's no time for me to leave my boys, even though they are grown men with families of their own. So many are hurt in these awful

things. I'm sending you the front page from today's paper, so you can read what is being done. I hope and pray all the terrible talk of war and these strikes will be over by Thanksgiving. Then John and I will be there to eat turkey with you. Maybe one or two of the boys and their families can come, too. I wish you could see their darling children! Peggy, Dick's littlest one, has golden hair, just like you had.

Love,

MILLIE

"A birth! A death! War!" whispered Grandma. A sob caught at her throat. She swallowed quickly. Ellie scolded if she wept. Anyhow, she thought, she wouldn't want Millie to do any different! Millie's place was with her family in time of trouble. Any woman in her right mind would know that!

Grandma tried to read the paper Millie had sent. What in tarnation is them folks talkin' about up in Deetroit, Grandma wondered. Painstakingly, she spelled out "arbitration," "contentions," "ultimatums," and weird alphabetical combinations, then sighing, she put the paper aside. She opened the birthday greetings, slitting each envelope carefully with her slim worn scissors. But she was in no mood to study out the fancy lettering that made long, flowery verses. They sound too sugary, Grandma decided! Maybe the folks who git them up live in another world where the' ain't no sorrow nor disappointment.

"Some of the pictures is right pretty, though," she said. She looked closely at one. The little cabin with roses growing around it and vines clinging to the walls, put her in mind of their old home at Siloam Springs!

Grandma dropped her hands in her lap and gave herself up to memories of her childhood home. Funny to be lookin' at a picture like that and hearin' drums out on the street at the same time, she thought.

Why, that drum out on Main Street in the pur-ade Ellie was watchin' sounded jis' like the cannon they heard when she was still a little tow-headed girl livin' in that log cabin.

War! War! How many wars she had known in her long life! First, the War between the States. Next, the Spanish-American War. Then the World War! Each of them had taken a toll of her dear ones. Her grandson, Jeff's oldest boy, Jeff Junior, died in the World War. Her own son Tom never returned from the Spanish-American War. And her older brother, that gay, joyous golden-haired Jeff, was sacrificed to the War between the States. Jeff had ridden away from that log cabin at the first call to arms, swearing to send back to his sisters a lock of hair from the head of the first dam' Yankee he caught. He had never sent anything, Grandma remembered. Jeff was not born to fight. He was born to laugh, and make jokes, to sing and shout and dance, and . . . to die! Jeff was out of the war before it had scarcely begun. His companions had sent back a mute death message . . . one of the short golden curls from young Jeff's proud head.

That was the beginning of hard times for that motherless brood, Grandma recalled. She thought how her father stayed hidden deep in the woods in a little shack, slipping up to the cabin at rare intervals for food, and to see how his children were faring. He had to stay hidden, Grandma remembered, because the war had brought bushwhackers who killed men on sight as they plundered and burned farm houses. Grandma shivered at memory of other killers, the Indians who often slipped across the near-by Cherokee border, and crazed with liquor, murdered just for the joy of seeing blood.

"War! War! God forbid that it comes again," Grandma prayed. She peered out of the window and gasped at the sight of a group of men in uniform directly in front of the boardinghouse. Before she recalled that they were the end of



the parade, Grandma had a confused recollection of another group of men in soldier garb coming into that old cabin home, laughing and bragging!

"Bushwhackers!" her older sister said, moving her lips without making a sound. "Be careful not to offend them!"

Grandma could remember to this day how the bushwhackers went straight to the quilt shelf at the back of the cabin. There they had jostled one another as they searched among the quilts.

"Let me alone," one man said, "I can pick it out!" When he turned back to the room, he had in his filthy hands the most beautiful quilt in the house, the quilt Grandma's mother had made just before her death.

"For my little towhead!" read the note she had pinned to that colorful mosaic of fabric with its tiny stitches. That note was still pinned to the quilt when the bushwhackers came.

All her life Grandma could remember her blind unreasoning childish anger at the sight of her beloved quilt in those dirty, clutching hands . . . she recalled that she had raised her arms and started forward, to fight for it with tooth and nail. She remembered the restraining arms of her older sister, and the low whisper, "Careful, sis, this is *war time!* Some ornery skunk must have told them about your pretty quilt!"

Now that she had started thinking gloomy thoughts, Grandma couldn't stop them. Millie's reference to war had brought back a flood of bitter memories. She remembered a wooded valley at twilight . . . dark and fearsome . . . and herself running breathlessly like a small frightened rabbit among the great trees. She was being sent to warn her brother-in-law, home on a furlough, that the dam' Yankees were coming.

"A little girl like you will be safer than us in the woods, if the soldiers catch you!" her older sisters said as they kissed her and started her on her way.



... She recalled that she had raised her arms ...

Grandma's tears started at the memory of herself as that little tow-head, running that frightening mile. She remembered how her sister's big handsome husband had kissed his wife and baby and brave little sister-in-law before he put on his gray jacket and slipped away into the night.

Grandma's thoughts moved on.

The Union soldiers were not so bad, she recalled. After General Blount's army went into camp on the prairie near their cabin, a detachment came to the cabin seeking arms and men. One of the men held her on his knee and said a little girl as pretty as she was must be a little Union girl! At that she had told him trustfully about her Paw living in the woods all by hisself because of the bushwhackers and the Indians!

She recalled that the kindly officer in the blue uniform had told her to tell her father to come home and till his fields. He would not be molested by the Union men, the officer promised, and they would protect him from bushwhackers and Indians. And so her father had come home, Grandma remembered, and they had lived neighbors with the Union Army!

And, like many neighbors, the Army had a borryin' habit. Grandma smiled at the memory of her sister Julie, bursting out of the cabin with dark hair flying and apron tossing in the breeze, to shout scornfully to a Union soldier running after their last chicken, "Here, hold on, I'll help you catch her. You've got the rest and I want you to have this one, too!"

Grandma laughed at the thought of the man slipping back to his load of cordwood, his face red as a beet.

Then Grandma dozed gently until she heard Ellie's voice. "Come on out to the dining room, Maw, and let's cut your cake! I've got stewed chicken and noodles for you! Millie and the others may be comin' in time f'r supper!"

Suddenly Grandma remembered. "Millie ain't a-comin'!" she said. "There's a war up there in Deetroit!"

"Millie's not comin'! F'r land sakes!"

Grandma fished the letter out of the stack of gay colored envelopes.

"Well, do tell!" said Ellie, after she had read the letter. "Now, don't you fret, Maw. Lonnie'll be here! He ain't got no other family ties! Come on into the dining room and eat yore vittles while they're hot. I'll git you some good hot gravy, and make you a pot of tea! Most ever'boday et early today, 'count o' the program to be put on at the high school this afternoon."

"I ain't hungry, Ellie. I'll jis' sit here and wait f'r Lonnie!"

"Now, there's no tellin' when he'll git here. You come on out to the dinin' room, like I say."

Grandma crossed the laundry room and busy kitchen, and entered the dining room.

"Now set right down here, Maw. Come on, Ivy Jane! Come on, Jennie!"

Ellie brought in the "hired girls" from the kitchen. Grandma let them help her get seated. She let them heap her plate with food from the steaming dishes and platters. She praised the tall cake, decorated with pink frosting, and bearing a bright red candle, ready for lighting. But there was a lump in Grandma's throat over which food would not pass.

Suddenly the phone rang loudly. Then another ring, longer than the first.

"Humph," said Ivy Jane. "'Pears like Gert Fleming's ringin' the tail offen that phone!"

Grandma's heart gave a jump, and began pounding. "Lonnie!" she thought. "Maybe an accident!"

She heard Ellie speaking.

"New York? Calling Maw?" she was saying, unbelievably. "Who would be calling Maw from New York?"

Then she called excitedly.

"Maw! Maw! It's Lonnie calling you from New York!"

"Lonnie! In New York!" She rose unsteadily and went to the phone. The girls went with her, and clustered around closely, so they could hear the booming masculine voice coming over the phone.

"Hello, Mother! You all right?" asked Lonnie.

"Yes, Lonnie! I'm all right!" Grandma tried to keep her voice steady. "But what're you a-doin' in New York?"

"I'm on my honeymoon! Mother! Mother, do you hear? I'm married!"

"Married? Who to?" asked Grandma, tartly. "That little black-eyed snippit I seen in yere office?"

"No, Mother! I married Fanny!"

"Fanny!"

"My Fanny! You remember! Fanny Clarkson! Mother, do you hear me? I came to New York on a business trip. A chap I know took me backstage to meet his wife, who's in a show here. And I saw the wardrobe mistress . . ."

"Backstage! Wardrobe mistress!" said Grandma, wonderingly.

"Yes, mother! That's the one who takes care of costumes in a big show! And Mother . . . it was Fanny!"

"I declare to gracious!" said Grandma. "Then she wa'n't no play actress, after all!"

"No, mother," Lonnie laughed. "We got married yesterday. Fannie had to get her things together and we're flying back to St. Louis tomorrow! We'll be seeing you Thanksgiving, Mother!"

"Thanksgiving!" echoed Grandma.

"I suppose the others are all there today, and you're having a high old time!"

"Yes, son." Grandma squared her crooked shoulders. "They're all . . . they're all here!" she lied.

"Good! Give them my love. *Our* love! Good-by, Mother!"

"Good-by, son!" Grandma hung up the receiver.

"Love!" she whispered. "Love along with birthin', agein', dyin' and warrin'. Love . . . like Lonnie had. That's the thing that'll keep this old world a-goin', long after sich as us is dead 'n' gone!"

She walked through the swinging screen door and stood in the middle of the long dining room.

"Datter," she said commandingly to Ellie, "come git me my ever'day dress and apurn. I got to start me one o' them fancy Flower Garden quilts f'r Lonnie 'n' Fanny. 'N' better git in a couple o' young turkeys and start 'em fattenin' out in the chicken yard. The young-uns'll all be here f'r Thanks-givin'!"

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### MATTRESS MAKIN'

JRACY EASTON bent low over the trestle table and sent a ten-inch needle through the thick mattress. Arlo Hullinger watched him closely.

"Dog my cats, Trace! Who'd ever a-thought you'd turn out to be the best sewin'-woman in these parts!"

"Blast yore hide, Arlo, don't you call me no dod-blasted sewin'-woman! 'R you'll be a-sewin' yer own mattress!" Trace replied.

"I take it back!" said Arlo. "I ain't one to quarrel f'r no job like that!"

"Come on, Arlo," called Lottie, his wife. "It's yore turn to whack this mattress!"

"Now you know my sore back is a-givin' me fits . . ."

"I don't know anything," said Lottie firmly, "'ceptin' that it's yore turn to take this hickory pole and lambast this mattress! Come on, Grandpa—" she turned to Grandpa Rumley—"can't you help the folks?"

"Nope," said Grandpa. He clasped his hands behind his back and looked up and down the hazy lint-filled room.

"Well, why can't you?" she persisted.

"I don't know, but I jis' cain't!"

Grandpa Rumley watched, with faded blue eyes, when Lottie turned away and began helping the Burchetts stuff cotton into a huge bag of blue and white striped ticking. All about him was the sort of activity that made his head ache. He spat into a corner. The whole thing looked silly to him.

Here in the hills, folks had been sleepin' on good clean straw ticks or feather beds f'r as long as he could remember. Now, the gov'mint, that ought-a have other fish to fry, was a-comin' in and upsettin' everything by givin' folks mattress makin's.

"Folks ack like they's a-gittin' a million dollars when they git fifty pounds o' cotton and ten yards o' tickin' f'r seventy cents. 'N' the wimmin folks is plumb crazy over that extry five pounds o' cotton and stuff to make a quilt!

"Dang foolishment, I calls it," muttered Grandpa, wheezing in the linty air. He reached toward his hip pocket.

"Now, now, Grandpa," said Lottie Hullinger, from across the room. "You know you ain't allowed to smoke in here!"

"Dang wimmin, a-tellin' a feller what he orten to do," grunted Grandpa. "Hits enough to make a feller turn into a danged black Republican, the way wimmin is a-runnin' things these days!"

He made another turn of the room. Mrs. Leroy Chaney, Mildred George and some of the other neighbors were clearing away the dinner things. He thought of the baked beans, fried chicken and big soda biscuits he had eaten. But a dinner wuzn't a dinner 'less'n a feller had a smoke afterwards.

"Come on, Grandpa," called Lottie, "here's a piece of green-tomato mincemeat pie I wuz jis' a-throwin' out. Can't you eat it?"

"Reckon I might," he said, crossly.

He ate the pie with his fingers, brushing the crumbs from his beard. It made his need for a smoke greater than ever. He moved grumpily between the tables, dodging the back strokes of hickory poles as cotton-filled ticks acquired softness through thirty minutes of constant beating. He watched Trace thrusting the long needle through the mattress at the spots marked for the soft fluffy tufts.

"Eee-magine! Trace Easton handlin' a needle, like a dang silly woman!"



He moved on to the front of the room, where grateful women exulted over a stack of finished mattresses, ready for families to take home to their beds. He saw his chance for a little smoke.

"Effen I'm real quiet, and keerful about it, the' won't no-body see me," he chuckled.

While the women's backs were toward him, he crouched beside the huge pile of cotton, waiting for the next day's mattress makin'. He filled his corncob pipe with tobacco from a greasy pouch. He took out a match.

"No," he said to himself, putting the match back in his pocket. "I'd ketch thunder. I'll make this jis' a little smoke!" He took out another match and scratched it on his pants.

Instantly, the whole room seemed to be on fire. Beside him the pile of cotton caught fire and burned with more intensity than he had ever seen in a brush fire after a drought. With more speed than he had shown since the old sow chased him in the early nineties, Grandpa dashed to the door. He peered about him with puzzled eyes as his neighbors ran like fury to their precious finished mattresses and dragged them outside. Men shouted. Women screamed. He saw unfinished mattresses hustled from the beating tables through the wide doorway at the rear. He saw Trace and other neighbors grab rakes and brooms to push the burning cotton through the front door.

In a few minutes, the fire was over. The neighbors stood outside in the chilly autumn air to clear their lungs of smoke and count their burns. Grandpa, with corncob pipe still held in his shaking hand, wheezed and coughed. Suddenly Lottie spied him!

"Grandpa," she called, shrilly. "You done that! You set that place a-fire when you went to light that pipe!"

"Aw, Lottie," he whined. "I never knowed it would make sich a big fire as that. Why, I'm a-tellin' you—" he measured a scant half inch on a gnarled finger—"I'm a-tellin' you, the match I used warn't any longer than that!"

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### PREACHIN' AT HARLOW

WHEN I reached the Sunday noonday preachin' at Harlow schoolhouse, my two young cousins were singing their duet, with Rosa Lou playing the accompaniment by ear on the wheezy little organ. Little Betty Lee's rich alto blended with her sister's thin soprano as they sang their favorite hymn, "Little Feet, Be Careful." I squeezed behind the desk of a rear seat and nodded to my neighbors who had come to the preachin', the Phippses, the Thomases, Mrs. Jacobs, Uncle John, Aunt Lizzie (wearing as a summer coat the bright green smock I brought to her five years ago), and my own kinfolks.

After the duet the next hymn was announced by the preacher, who had come over from Liberty to preach to us. The organist slipped down from the long metal-topped table where she had been sitting beside her sleeping baby boy, and edged past the big iron stove to the organ stool. The hymn proved to be one she didn't know. She looked at the preacher and said shyly, "I'll pitch it for you!" After the pitch, we sang without accompaniment. The preacher waved his hymn-book in the manner of a baton, and led us along at a fast tempo:

So, if at the judgment bar  
Sinful spots your soul shall mar,  
You can *never* enter there!

Sister Jacobs was requested to offer the prayer. She prayed long and fervently, and at the points that hit home the preacher and members of the congregation joined in with vigorous Amens. After that, my Uncle Bert passed a hat for the collection. The preacher counted it, hastily, and announced:

"The collection amounts to ninety-seven cents. Anyone who wants to come up and make it a dollar is welcome to do so!"

(No one went up, for we Ozarkians are not show-offs. But after the preachin' it was built up to \$1.47. This collection is the preacher's pay.)

Then, at last, the sermon began. The preacher was not a learned man, but his blue shirt was clean and neat. And he spoke freely and easily, with a minimum of grammatical errors. "My text today," he announced, "is Mother, Home and Heaven, the three most beautiful words in the world!"

He divided his sermon into three parts, basing the first two sections referring to Home and Mother on his own experiences.

He told first of his own childhood home, where eleven children gathered around the fireplace at night to pick burrs from wool or seed from cotton, or perhaps to polish the ax handles his father had made in a little woodworking shop. He told of his embarrassment as a child because only half of their old porch had a wooden floor. One time when he learned that prayer meeting would be held in their home he said to his mother, with reproach in his voice: "Oh, Maw, we can't have a prayer meeting here! Look at that old floor!" At the memory of that reproach he wept homesick tears! And the congregation wept with him when he said he would love every inch of that old earth floor if he could only see it now.

He told, then, of his mother and of her efforts as a devoted Christian to bring more religion into their hill-bound community. He told how that pioneer woman and an earnest

young minister of her day attempted to start a church in their community, but found the going hard. At one prayer meeting only the minister and that mother of eleven children met to lift their voices to heaven. Heartsick and discouraged, the man of God said to her:

"We'll never be able to start a church here! I'm afraid it's time to quit!"

And the mother answered, "It's never time to quit!"

The words rang in my ears!

"It's never time to quit!"

I looked out of the open door of the schoolhouse to the playground where a late-flowering dogwood tree showered broad, nipped-in petals on brilliant scarlet shooting stars. I saw the fuzzy finger-shaped buds on the hickory trees that seemed as soft and fleecy as the clouds drifting lazily across the azure noonday sky. I wondered why, in a world so filled with beauty, the mothers of every generation must know the agony of carrying on in the face of terrible odds.

And why man's inhumanity to man can upset the peace and happiness of even such humble people as we Ozarkians gathered in a country schoolhouse to talk of Mother, Home and Heaven.

Finally the sermon ended, and the closing hymn was announced. The organist knew this number, and the organ and our voices rang out with:

O, Beulah Land, sweet Beulah Land,  
As on thy highest mount I stand,  
I look away across the sea,  
Where mansions are prepared for me,  
And view the shining glory shore,  
My heav'n, my home, forevermore!

During the singing of the hymn, the organist's little son awoke and looked about with tear-wet blue eyes. He swal-



"O Beulah Land, sweet Beulah Land . . ."

lowed a sob when he finally spied his mother at the organ. After the benediction, the minister requested us all to stay around and visit a while. I promptly went over to say hello to the little boy.

"He's kinda sick," said the mother, with troubled eyes. "He had the croup last night 'n' I was scared to death."

Before I could express my sympathy, one of my neighbors came bustling forward:

"Croup, did you say? Now, honey, don't you be scared of that. Next time he gets it just put a few drops of coal oil on some sugar and give it to him."

So long as there are homes, and mothers to look after sick little boys, there'll always be a Heaven!

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### *THREE HELPLESS WOMEN*

IT WAS sundown when Mrs. Rinehart, Verna Springer and I entered the seventy-five-mile stretch of woods south of Poplar Bluff on our way home from a story-hunting trip. For all that distance one sees no settlement, and only rarely encounters a solitary filling station.

The highway was sound and smooth, our car was good and we had plenty of gas. We were three old friends who enjoyed each other's company, and Verna, a splendid driver who can cope with all the hairpin turns, was at the wheel. We entered the long stretch of lonely road without a qualm. In fact so calm and assured was Mrs. Rinehart that she lay down in the back seat, wrapped herself in a quilt and went calmly to sleep. Within a mile, our nice, faithful, new—well, comparatively new—Ford began to falter. Verna stepped hard on the gas. No sudden sharp pick-up! She eased the car over to the side of the road, just in time. The engine died with a sob in its throat.

I looked about me, seeing nothing but the trees that grew thick as a paling fence to the very shoulder of the road. We were just at the approach of a hairpin curve, but fortunately the road behind us was fairly straight. I took all that in, then turned to Verna.

"Now what does one do?" I asked.

"One gets out," she replied, "and lifts one's thumb."

I got out and stood at the side of the road, with my hand up.

A big trucklike affair came into sight. I held my hand higher. In those fleeting gray minutes between sundown and twilight, the truck looked like a silver monster. But a friendly monster. It came up behind our car and stopped.

Two men were in the seat of the truck, a young fellow and a middle-aged man with his cap cocked on one side of his head. The older man was driving.

They stopped, but they said nothing. It was not an auspicious omen. I looked at the truck. It had a tremendous hoisting gear looming up into the air at the back.

"Now don't tell me you happen to be a towing truck!" I said gaily.

Apparently my greeting didn't help matters any. The older man gave me a look that was halfway between a smirk and a sneer. One might call it a "snirk." He pointed vaguely downward. I thought at first he was consigning me to the place where most Ozarkians think women should be! Then I thought to look at his license plate. It read "U. S. Government."

I knew at that moment how American citizens in troubled foreign countries must feel when Uncle Sam comes in to take over. I said, quite cheerfully, "Okay, Verna. The Marines have landed! The situation will be well in hand in a moment!"

But these were not Marines. They were workmen on one of the Ozark projects back in the hills. And being workmen on a Government job hadn't altered their inborn contempt for wimmin who take it on themselves to go traipsing about the country alone. They sat stolidly in their nice big truck.

"Do you know anything about Fords?" I asked, more humbly.

The older man turned to the younger one. "Do you?"

"Nope!" said the young man, decisively.

The older one snirked again. They got out of the truck.



The sweet fresh evening air promptly carried the unpleasant odor of corn likker. Very, very strong corn likker.

They looked at the innards of the Ford. They looked at each other. Some unspoken masculine message must have passed between them. Perhaps they were reminding each other of those two girls waiting up there at Poplar Bluffs. Or maybe they suddenly remembered that the boss had sent them on an urgent errand, and they had already tarried too long at that jug on the stump back yonder at the crossroads.

With one accord, they started back to their truck. "We'll give you a push!"

"They'll give us a push," said Verna to me doubtfully.

Verna always amazes me. It's hard to believe that such a cute, pert, businesslike little person could *always* have such a grim outlook on life. She always expects the worst.

We got into the car.

"Fine!" I said.

Somehow, I still had the feeling that Uncle Sam was in charge.

They backed up. They came forward. They gave us a push that sent Verna and me lunging forward toward the windshield.

We heard a loud cry, and a frantic scramble in the back seat. Poor Mrs. Rinehart! We had forgotten to awaken her! She thought a train had hit us.

With that, the Ford was put in motion. And what motion! With the giant truck behind us, we were propelled around hairpin curves at seventy miles an hour. Those fellows had awakened to some urgent necessity for speed. Or maybe they were just letting the "dang wimmin folks" have it! Never in our sedate lives had Verna and I driven so fast, even on the straightaway—certainly we wouldn't be guilty of driving at that speed on treacherous mountain curves in the gathering twilight!

I remembered how I had warned all my city friends of open-range country. I remembered that I had told how sheep, cows, hogs, and goats are allowed to wander at will in open-range counties, crossing and recrossing highways at their own gentle ambling gait. If some of those animals show up now, I thought, neither we nor they will have a chance.

When we came to a down grade, our car, being lighter than the truck, would race on ahead at heaven knows what terrific speed. Then on the next up grade, it would slacken speed, and *boom!* the truck would smack into it again with enough force to catapult us fairly to the top of the hill.

I thought of that familiar hill-billy song "Comin' Round the Mountain," particularly of the second stanza: "She'll be drivin' six white horses when she comes!" Driving six white horses at pellmell speed would be a snail's pace compared to our dizzy rate!

Verna and I in the front seat kept our eyes glued to the highway, praying a filling station would show up before an old sow and a litter of pigs decided to cross the road. In the back seat Mrs. Rinehart never opened her mouth after her first outcry.

I remembered that Mrs. Rinehart had always disliked cars. In fact years ago when Mr. Rinehart bought his first car, she refused to ride in it. Townspeople became accustomed to the sight of Mr. Rinehart chugging by in his high-wheeled automobile, while Mrs. Rinehart galloped alongside on her favorite saddle horse. She must have been longing for a horse on that wild twilight ride. I know I was!

Darkness fell. Still we tore at that breakneck speed uphill and downhill, through dark, shadowy, twisting valleys, and along ridges. Sometimes we were higher than the tree tops. Looking down to the drop we would take if Verna missed a curve made my heart skip a beat.

At last I said to Verna, "I can't stand it any longer! Can

we signal to them to turn us loose? I'd rather stay here all night, than risk this longer!"

At that instant we rounded a curve.

"Look!" said Verna. "There's a filling station! Start signaling them!"

It was a forlorn-looking filling station, but more welcome to us right then than a palace!

I put my hand out of the car and waved it downward in the approved city signal for stopping. Verna swerved the car to the shoulder in front of the filling station. The big gray truck swung around us and went down the highway at its headlong speed, without even a good-by toot. I can believe the parting was mutually agreeable.

We sat in the car for a moment in the darkness, to reassemble our shattered nerves. A little boy about nine years old came out of the filling station.

"Is your father here?" asked Verna.

"Nope," the boy said.

"When will he be here?"

"When he gits done workin' at the sawmill."

That might mean anything up to the next week end.

The child's mother came out. Her husband, she told us, worked at the sawmill, about five miles away. He was due home any minute now. No, she didn't think he knew anything about Fords, but he'd try to fix "the cor"!

We asked what sandwiches she had. She didn't have any sandwiches. Did she have any bread or butter? No'm, she didn't. Candy bars? No'm, she was plumb out'n candy bors . . . but it was about time f'r the candy feller to be around agin. Like's not, he'd be there in a day 'r two. Well, could she make us some coffee? Oh, yes, she could do that all right, but she didn't have any cream.

So the three of us settled down to wait for a pot of coffee, and the man who would, we hoped, fix our car.

It grew very dark. The little building behind the gasoline pump looked as though it had crawled up out of the deep woods and was waiting shivering beside the road, lifting its figurative thumb for a ride into civilization. Its unshaded electric bulbs made dim light behind the grimy windows. The thick woods crowded so closely to the road we could see only a narrow streak of sky overhead. We sat in silence for a long time. Then I said:

"Wonder where the Powder Room is!"

"Powder Room! Ha! ha!" said Verna. "It—and I don't mean Powder Room—is around at the back, I suppose!"

It was! Quite a way at the back. Even in the faint starlight that came through the trees we could see that it was a tumble-down, decrepit building. I started to push open the door sagging on one piece of shoe leather. Verna stopped me.

"Let's not go inside," she said. "No telling what's in there!"

"Maybe a snake!" I ventured, with a shiver.

"Or worse!" she said.

I don't know what is worse than finding a snake in a rest room but maybe Verna knows something I don't.

"Where'll we go?" I asked.

"Ten thousand acres of woods," said Verna, "and she asks me where we'll go!"

We went far into the woods. We stepped over bushes, and around brush. We dodged trees and fallen trunks. I began to think a real built-up rest room, even with a snake in it, was preferable. But I always figure that Verna knows her Ozarks, so I went along, gingerly feeling my way in the darkness, and hoping I wouldn't get too close to poison ivy or poison oak.

We had started back to the house when we heard the call, "Coffee's ready, ma'am!"

It made the walk back to the house far less tedious. Then

in a few minutes we were sitting at the counter, drinking strong black coffee without cream.

"Don't you have a cow?" I asked the lady.

"No'm, we hain't got no cow."

"Do you have a pig?" asked Verna.

"No'm, we hain't got no pig."

"Don't you have chickens?" asked Mrs. Rinehart.

"No'm, we hain't got no chickens."

The woman must have noticed our well-I-never expressions, for she added, "We cain't keep nothin' like that around here. You see, the wolves is so bad they ketch anythin'."

Wolves! I turned and looked at Verna. Verna looked at me. The look said, "After this we'll risk a snake!"

Just then there was a mighty clatter outside! We rushed out in time to see a truck drive up with a half dozen men aboard. One of the men hopped off. The truck went trundling on.

"Paw," said the little boy, to announce his father's arrival.

"These here 'uns want you to fix their cor!" said the lady of the house to her husband.

We lifted the hood and the man looked at the engine. He touched some of the innards cautiously. "I'll need more light," he said.

With that he turned leisurely, went out to the highway, and started walking in the direction the truck had gone. We stared blankly at each other. With true Ozarkian disdain for explaining anything to mere females he had simply gone after more light. Where, we didn't know! And neither did his wife!

We waited patiently at first. Then impatiently. Then we began to worry about our husbands worrying about us. That is, Verna and I worried about Ray and Robert. Mrs. Rinehart said Jay wouldn't worry about her if she was out till midnight. He always said he knew she could take care of herself. Like

as not he was home right then, stretched out on the sofa, snoring like a porpoise! And her out there in these wolf-infested woods, starving to death. She became quite angry at him.

Then, after an hour or so, the man came back. He was carrying a light bulb hitched to a long extension cord. With much effort he hitched the cord into a socket inside the house, brought the lamp out through a window and swung it over the car.

"Well, I'll be danged," he said, grinning.

He picked up a piece of the innards and held it in the air.

"Gasoline gauge jis' jarred loose! Here's two o' the screws right here! Reckon I got a couple more some'ers!

"After I walked a mile and a half there and back to borry this light offen a feller yon side o' the hill!" he added glumly.

In less time than it takes to tell it the car was fixed. The price the chap charged us included I'm sure the price of several light bulbs and extension cords. But for walking three miles after working all day in a sawmill I'd have asked a pretty price, too.

Mrs. Rinehart curled up in the back seat under the quilt, mumbling that she hoped Jay would just get good and scared about her sometime. Verna drove on.

It seemed good to be on our way again, under our own power! But we talked very little. Our wild ride had slightly unnerved us. And I was thrilled by the lonely quiet of the night. The woods were so thick and so close to the highway, and the curves came so abruptly and so frequently, my heart was in my throat. Verna drove with eyes glued to the road, her mouth set in a firm line, and both hands solidly clutching the wheel. But she drove with a confidence that made me ashamed of being so fearful.

At last we reached Birch Tree, just twenty miles from Mountain View. Verna drew a deep breath and straightened her shoulders.

"Good old Birch Tree!" she said.

"And there's a car!" I said. "My, it seems so good to see someone after all those empty miles! I feel like stopping and chatting!"

"Parked by the side of the road!" said Verna. "Are you sure you've got your door locked?"

"Must you *always* look on the grim side?" I said. "That's just a pair of young folks doing a little plain and fancy necking! Maybe it's someone having car trouble. Perhaps we should stop and give them a hand!"

To a city-trained person the sight of other humans was reassuring. To an Ozarkian—the strangers were more frightening than the lonely woods!

Verna said nothing. But she drove past the car so fast I couldn't tell how many were in it.

Probably it's just as well. We learned next day that the Birch Tree banker and his family had been held up in their home at the very moment we had passed through. The robbers had announced their intention of holding up the bank too, but the banker was able to convince them he couldn't open the time lock. The robbers escaped in a car that had been held in readiness for them on the highway.

Next morning the whole town of Mountain View was agog with what had happened at Birch Tree. I met Mrs. Rinehart and Verna at the drug store. We looked at each other blankly.

"What did your husband say?" each asked the others.

"Ray says I can't ever drive anyone else's car as long as I live," said Verna.

"Robert says I should be grateful you're a good driver," I said.

"The wildest ride of my life! Wolves! Highwaymen!" said Mrs. Rinehart. "I could have been killed a hundred times! And when I got home, was Jay worried about me? Was he walking the floor? He was not! He was lying there on the sofa, snoring away for dear life! Why, I could have been killed a hundred times, and there he was—*asleep!*"

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### *THE SEER OF THE OZARKS*

*E*VER since we have been in the hills, we have heard of the famous "seer" of the Ozarks, Mrs. Josephine Dunn.

"Uncanny!" our friends said, as they told how she had used a mysterious power to find lost articles and even, it was whispered, to tell an officer of the law that the accused person he was holding in custody was not guilty of the crime! And lo and behold, a wholly unsuspected person confessed the crime a year later!

"Nonsense!" said my husband.

I said nothing. But I knew that someday I would visit Mrs. Dunn, come the right time.

A day in late autumn seemed to be the right time. I drove into town and picked up my good friends, Verna Springer and Mrs. Rinehart. We headed south toward Poplar Bluffs.

It was one of those blue and gold days that autumn brings to the Ozarks. The sky was blue. The sun was warm and golden. The trees still showed enough gold and crimson to accent the purple shadows of the deep woods. It seemed strange to be going to see a woman with strange powers on such a day. Mystery is associated with darkness, in my mind.

We had lunch at Poplar Bluff. There we were directed to the little town near which Mrs. Dunn lived. We drove on. At last we turned sharply to the right, and followed a creek for perhaps half a mile. We made another turn to the right,



across a rickety little bridge, and found ourselves in the midst of a tiny Ozark settlement. A couple of general stores and a few other assorted buildings leaned against each other, or rubbed elbows with the post office.

We stopped in front of one general store and eyed the bearded Ozarkian in denim pants and blue shirt who sat on the bench outside the store.

"Shall I ask him where Mrs. Dunn lives?" I asked.

"Sure," said Verna. "Everybody around here knows Mrs. Dunn!"

I turned to the man.

"Do you know where Mrs. Dunn can be found?" I asked.

The man looked me in the eye.

"Yep," he answered.

Dead silence for a long moment.

"Would you please tell me?" I asked.

"Go back to the highway. Keep on goin' south. Turn off on a woods road about a quarter of a mile fu'ther on!"

We thanked him, and Verna put the car in gear. Our informer suddenly raised himself on bowed legs and leaning on a sturdy stick, appeared ready to speak again.

"Wantin' to throw your money away?"

We laughed, a bit sheepishly.

"Not exactly!" we said. "But Mrs. Dunn does tell a lot of people things that come true!"

"Some says she do. Some says she don't!"

"Well," I began. "With all the mysterious things in the air, like radio and such, maybe other things are possible. Maybe she has some strange power!"

"If she did, it'd have to come from a Higher Power, wouldn't it?" he asked.

"Yes, I guess so," I replied.

"And if it was from a Higher Power, she wouldn't make mistakes, would she?"



"Wantin' to throw your money away?"

"No!" I agreed.

Then I asked: "Does she make mistakes?"

"Some says she do. Some says she don't!"

Our informer shuffled his feet until he had turned his back to us.

Then, with the help of the hickory stick, he marched into the store.

"We'd better go to another store and ask someone else where Mrs. Dunn lives," said Verna, quickly.

"Why?" I inquired.

"It's easy to see that he doesn't think much of Mrs. Dunn. Maybe he has given us the wrong directions on how to get to her house. It's an Ozark trick!"

"A dirty trick, I calls it," I said.

"Some says it is, and some says it isn't!" laughed Verna.

However another villager gave us substantially the same directions, only telling us to go a half mile on the highway before turning to the left.

We retraced our steps along the creek, turning at the mailbox that bore the name "Amos Hogg," and were again on the highway. We drove a quarter of a mile, a half mile, a mile, and almost a second mile before we found a road that turned to the left through the woods. We followed it.

Anyone seeking Mrs. Dunn should be told about this road. It is two miles of rocky trail that will put dents in the stoutest tires. This downhill trail lands eventually in a wide basin. In this basin is the home of Mrs. Dunn and her husband.

It is definitely surprising to find their good-looking, well-painted frame house with a screened back porch in the midst of the thick woods deep in the valley. This house might be called an ordinary six-room dwelling in any suburban town, but here in the hills it is a marvel of modernity. And to find

a snug, well-painted one-car garage at the rear of the cottage is a further surprise.

The Dunns were not at home. This was a distinct surprise. I had imagined a seer always sitting at home peering into the future. Another carful of people had been waiting an hour. We waited too. However we didn't wait in our car. We followed a path to a second house in the valley. There we found a dark-eyed young woman who proved to be the niece of the woman we had come to see. She told us much that we wanted to know.

Mrs. Dunn, said the niece, is definitely annoyed if she is called a "fortune teller." She is, she declared, a seer, like in the Bible. While in a sort of trance she seems able to interpret future events. In this trance she becomes another person, Little Joe. Little Joe can quote pages and pages from the Bible, yet Mrs. Dunn rarely reads so much as one chapter of the Bible. Little Joe can give learned discussions on subjects with which Mrs. Dunn is obviously unfamiliar, such as philosophy, business and law. And while Mrs. Dunn is an elderly woman, close to seventy years of age, little Joe is a comparative youngster, not more than thirty, who writes with a childish hand and delights in playing marbles or ball with her niece's small son, much as another child would do.

We also learned that Mrs. Dunn had had this strange power of being able to find lost articles and to unearth hidden facts for many years. When she was just a young girl, she had suddenly been able to tell where her father's lost cows had strayed. From that time on she was consulted whenever articles were lost, and then finally on many other matters.

In the days before automobiles men and women would come on the train, and then hire rigs to get down to the little home of this woman with the strange gift. Because the way was long and tedious, they would be allowed to stay overnight at her home. Mrs. Dunn made no charge and it made a nice

vacation trip for truth-seekers. Then as automobiles came into general use, more and more people came. The Dunns began to keep a registration book. But after thirty thousand names had been entered, they found the books more bother than they were worth, so they gave them up. Then somehow it became the accepted plan to give Mrs. Dunn at least one dollar for each consultation, although she asks nothing.

In time the old Dunn home, beside the spring house, was abandoned in favor of the snug, modern, white-painted house we could see from the niece's living room.

The niece's respect for her aunt was apparent in every word. Our respect for the niece grew as we talked to her. She was young, and nice looking, and a quilt maker of superlative ability.

In her washing hanging on the clothesline were three beautiful quilts. These three were only a fraction of her store. Each bed had its quota of two or three—she turned back the covers to show us. She had a couple more in a chest, that she said someone was thinking of buying. And she had three or four more in the making, one a name quilt, with blocks signed by friends and kinfolks in the community, including one Lucinda Hogg!

I promptly bought the two that were being "studied about" by someone else. I was so elated by my purchase I felt that the trip would be a success whether or not we saw Mrs. Dunn.

The niece was the wife of a truck driver, and the mother of two boys. One of her sons was a youngster of eleven, who spent his time racing a bicycle over the rocky paths in the basin. The other was a child of four, who came in and sat down behind the stove to rest while we talked with his mother.

About the time she was telling us how Little Joe liked to play with this small boy, we looked at him.

The warmth of the wood fire, after his strenuous playing in

the hills, had been too much for him. He was lying on the floor, sound asleep. His young mother took off his dusty little shoes and socks, revealing feet as clean and white as the most carefully tended city child, and carried him in her arms to one of the clean, quilt-spread beds to finish his nap.

We grew worried about the prolonged absence of Mrs. Dunn. Then suddenly a blue coupé drove down into the basin, and there were Mr. and Mrs. Dunn, home at last.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you something," said the niece. "Aunt Josephine always has to eat something before she can go into one of her trances. Then she has to walk around a little bit to bring herself out of it, after she talks to anyone. Maybe because it's so late, and she may be tired, she may not want to see anyone!"

"And," added the niece, "don't be disturbed at her appearance. Aunt Josephine has an abdominal tumor that weighs one hundred and twenty-five pounds. But Little Joe tells her not to be operated on, because if she does she will die in the operation!"

I began to think a split personality could be a distinct disadvantage. We gathered up our coats and with the niece went to greet Mrs. Dunn. As we went along the path to the home of Mrs. Dunn five white goats appeared out of nowhere and went scampering along the hillside.

"What pretty goats," I said.

"Yes, they are nice," said Mrs. Dunn's niece. "But they're so wild. We've been trying to catch these for the last three weeks. We want to sell them. They're all that's left out of a flock of twenty-three. The wolves got the rest of them!"

White goats! Wolves! And someone with a mysterious power. All in a setting of Ozark woods in a deep valley at sundown. I felt as if I were smack in the middle of a mystery novel! Then suddenly I forgot the coming darkness. We were in the presence of the Seer of the Ozarks.

Mrs. Dunn sat in the blue coupé while her husband unlocked their house. She had the same dark eyes and intelligent face as her niece, and her iron-gray hair was thoroughly and beautifully "permanented" into short ringlets that covered her head. Her first question to her niece didn't seem quite in keeping with one who knew all. She asked:

"How's the baby?"

We heard the niece say something about his cold being much better.

Then there was a low-toned talk about the day's affairs. I drew near. The niece, in spite of our pleasant visit and the quilts I had purchased, didn't seem to be putting up quite the sales talk I had hoped for. I did my own talking.

I told Mrs. Dunn we had come far and had to return at once, and we hoped she was not too tired to see us. Mrs. Dunn's bright dark eyes took me in from head to foot, took in the gray car with the name, Sunrise Mountain Farm, Mountain View, Missouri, painted on the side. She spoke gaily and with a friendly manner.

"These hyar folks wuz here fust," she said, indicating the other car. "So they come fust! But I'll see what I can do. First off, I have to eat somethin'. It's the silliest old thing anyone ever heard of, but I have to do it!"

Mr. Dunn came to the door and called that a fire had been started in the stove inside. Mrs. Dunn climbed laboriously out of the car. She was obviously not in good health. She had to rest twice on the short walk from the car to her own front door. Then, soon after she went inside, Mr. Dunn came out and indicated that she would see one of the people in the first car.

While the ladies from the other car were having their interviews, the niece and we three Mountain View people went around to the back of the house to see the old spring house.

"Here's where her cabin used to be," said the niece.

I looked around at the narrow valley, hemmed in by high hills. On the left, the hillside was almost black in the sunset, the thick woods thinning out to little shrubs that crept close to the spring and the spring house. On the right, the hillside was bright as noontime. Farther along in the valley, where the slanting sun could shine over lower hills, the niece's three quilts on the clothesline under the oak trees looked like a flower garden under trees bearing golden leaves.

The gathering darkness, the utter stillness, with the eerie light farther in the valley, made me feel that almost anything could happen here!

I photographed the spring house, with its pipe running from the spring under the floor and extending beyond, to discharge a constant trickle of ice-cold water. The earth about the spring was marshy and swampy, and my feet grew cold and wet as I backed here and there to get a good angle for my camera shot.

Then the niece said we'd better go near the house—Aunt Josephine might be ready for us. In another moment we were summoned and soon I was entering the kitchen of the quiet white house.

A roaring fire burned in the big wood cookstove, and Mrs. Dunn sat close to the open oven. Before her was a tall scarred ticket chest, such as one sees at the entrance doors of an old-time opera house. It had a narrow slot in its top. Screwed to the chest at Mrs. Dunn's right was a pencil sharpener, the kind that is operated by turning a little handle.

I took a chair on the other side of the ticket chest, facing Mrs. Dunn. I felt small and humble in the presence of this huge woman with the bright black eyes and beautifully curled hair, who had drawn thirty thousand people into her valley to consult her. The familiar movie ticket chest, and the businesslike pencil sharpener which were so much a part of my city life, introduced a realistic note. Mrs. Dunn had a pencil in her



hand, and was making little marks on the top sheet of a tablet of ruled paper. With great precision, she wrote "N" at the top, "S" at the bottom, and "E" and "W" at the sides.

"You can ask me questions," she said.

I hadn't thought up any questions. I was startled for a moment. Then I said:

"Oh, I've had such a happy life—so many good things have happened! Will it . . . will it always be this way?"

She doodled with the pencil, making an unbroken line of something resembling a capital "E."

"Yes," she said, "it will always be like this, if you keep on doin' as you have. You have lots of friends. Men friends! Women friends! You'll allus have 'em, because you're a good friend yourself. And good things will come yore way. But effen you go to gittin' hoighty-toighty, you'll find friends is harder to knock off than a green walnut!"

I pondered the logic of her answer.

"Another question?" she prompted.

I thought quickly.

"Will my second book be a success?"

She thought a moment, pursing her lips and doodling steadily. The line of "E's" had reached across the second line, overlapping each other like Spencerian penmanship practice.

"Yes, it will," she said, suddenly. "It'll be a more bigger success than the fust one. Now I'll explain that! It's just like I went to town with a basket o' eggs and a basket o' tomatoes. A lot o' people'll want the eggs, but a whole lot more'll want the tomatoes! Do you understand?"

I did!

"Then there'll be a third book," she continued. This startled me. I never expected to write three books.

"And then there'll be a fourth book!" she went on. "And that'll be the biggest surprise of all. It'll be a little thing, and you won't think much of it! You'll think there ain't nothin'

to it. But folks ever'where 'll want it. It'll be a story about a boy fourteen years old!"

I was dumfounded. In my desk at home was a story of an Ozark boy, twelve years old. I had written a hundred pages of it one week end—about two-thirds of a contemplated book—and had tossed the manuscript aside because I felt there wasn't much to it.

When I couldn't think of more questions, she gave me a friendly pleasant lecture on health and the importance of keeping calm and placid. Then the interview was over.

I slipped a dollar bill into the slot.

Her interviews with my friends were shorter, and as we drove home we compared notes and wondered about the strange woman. Verna, who has a businesslike head on her shoulders, summed it up neatly. "Anyone who can get thirty thousand people to come down there in the holler and pay her a dollar apiece has got something I'd like to have!"

Some of these days I'll hunt up that story about that twelve-year-old boy, and finish it. And just to make sure, I'll age my hero two more years!

And the Judge never says "Nonsense" now at the mention of the seer. Mrs. Dunn definitely brought him good luck. On our trip to her holler, we ruined two tires on his car. The Judge looked them over next day and said: "Well, I intended to get a new set of tires right after the first of the year. Reckon I'd better get them now!"

So, when the ban was clamped down on tires, we had five brand new ones—thanks to Mrs. Dunn.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

### *THE JEDGE GOES TO THE BIG CITY*

**S**PRING in the Ozarks has a new meaning in our community now. It means that baskets and pails must be hustled out and polished up for the berry pickin'. Of course berry pickin' has always been a summer chore in the Ozarks. But now, for these past several springs, berry pickers get more than scratches and tick bites for their effort! They can sell the berries to the Sunrise Mountain Farm Jelly Kitchens for real money.

And since the berries cost nothing but the scratches, this money is practically clear profit for the berry picker.

Our jam and jelly business grew from an idea that came to the Jedge in Chicago. He saw city people buying jam and jelly, and remembered that bushels upon bushels of wild fruits and berries were going to waste at that very moment in the Ozarks. If people were willing to buy jam and jelly why couldn't he make them some from the fruits so bountifully provided by Nature down in the Ozarks!

The next year, Sunrise Mountain Farm jam and jelly kitchens were started. It was a modest beginning in the cabin in our Arnold Forty. The first jams and jellies were made from wild blackberries, wild dewberries, wild plums and wild grapes. These were sold in Chicago. Then, as other towns got interested, we built a spick-and-span jelly kitchen on the Home Forty. But after strawberry jam and peach preserves

were added to the list this building, too, was too small and the Sunrise Mountain Farm jelly kitchens were moved to town, that is to our nearest town, Mountain View. Our jams and jellies were put on sale in an ever-increasing number of towns. The Judge began to eye New York!

"New York!" I said. "Why, you're crazy!"

"Maybe I am!" he admitted. "But something tells me those New Yorkers would like to eat jam and jelly made down here in the Ozarks!"

"New Yorkers!" I exclaimed. "Now it comes out! You just want to go down to New York and meet those folks on the *New Yorker* that you've been writing to!"

Robert couldn't deny it.

During the previous year, he had written a letter to the *New Yorker* magazine asking for some advertising information. He explained that he had started a little business down in the Ozarks making jams and jellies from wild fruits and berries. Folks liked it pretty good, he said, with becoming modesty. And now he was ready to give it a big advertising campaign. How big an ad, he asked, could he get for twenty-five dollars?

The letter was so naïve it was handed around the *New Yorker* office by the advertising manager. Within a few weeks Robert was getting friendly personal letters from delightful people employed on the magazine, telling about their little farms up in the Berkshires, or tucked in here and there within fairly short distances from New York. Robert loved the letters and answered promptly, sending long descriptions of our sheep, chickens and geese, and, of course, our neighbors. Many a snapshot was exchanged, too. I should have seen the handwriting on the wall!

Shortly after New Year's Robert went to New York.

He had a few samples of jelly in a thirty-nine-cent canvas bag and pockets full of snapshots.

A few days later I received a copy of the New York *World Telegram*. I opened it, wondering why it had come to me. And there, in Clementine Paddleford's column, was a two-column picture of Robert with his Ozark jams and jellies spread on a table before him.

The story told how the Ozarks, in the person of Judge Lyon, had come to New York to sell jams and jellies. But, it said, he didn't sell his products alone! The story told how the Judge sold all the Ozarks—how he brought out snapshots of Aunt Lizzie wearing her "fudge apron" and her buttons of President Wilson, and snapshots of straggling Ozark scenery. It told how he raised sheep, and geese. It told how he cured snakebite in the hills with applications of coal oil. And it announced that the Ozark jams and jellies would henceforth be available at a local New York store. The Ozarks had come to New York to stay.

Robert met the folks at the *New Yorker*, who proved to be just as agreeable as their letters had led him to expect. They helped him meet the people he wanted to see, and then, after he had sold his jams and jellies, they said: "Now what are you going to do?"

Robert knew exactly.

"First I want to see some of these shows and people I've been hearing over the radio. And then I want the best danged dinner in New York. With pompano!"

So that's how it happened that Robert met Mary Margaret McBride, the radio star for whom our Governor of Missouri proclaimed a special day, Estella Karn and other notables in the New York radio world. And how, later in the evening, he attended a broadcast of "Information Please."

He had a very pleasant seat. He happened to be placed between two well-dressed, good-looking women who were attending the show with their escorts. And, because talking is as natural as breathing to the Judge and just about as contin-

uous, he talked to first one and then the other of the women. He told each of them he'd always wanted to see one of these big New York radio shows, just to see if it was like it sounded out there in the Ozark Mountains.

Before long he was chatting with each of them like old pals. In the course of the broadcast the name of Guatemala was mentioned. The Judge promptly said to the Lady-at-the-Right that he knew a girl who went to Guatemala once. The Lady-at-the-Right promptly said she was sure the girl had had a wonderful time for she herself had spent the winter in Guatemala and it was a beautiful place. The Judge turned to the Lady-at-the-Left and said: "The Lady-at-the-Right spent last winter in Guatemala! Wasn't she lucky?" The Lady-at-the-Left replied, quickly: "Indeed she was! I spent last winter in Guatemala, too, and it's a beautiful place!"

So Robert said:

"Here! You two girls should get together. Imagine each of you having spent the winter in Guatemala!"

So the Lady-at-the-Right smiled at the Lady-at-the-Left, and she smiled back. Then each began asking where the other had stayed. And it developed they had both stayed at the same hotel and each had seen the other but no one introduced them. And they talked about the delicious meals, and the arch looking out over the water, and the native help, and the holidays, and the markets, and the incense burning on the church steps. The man from the Ozarks who had come to hear a broadcast of "Information Please" was out-talked for once in his life!

Then, after the broadcast, the Judge went hunting for that pompano dinner. One of the pages at Radio City told him of a very good dining room where one didn't have to dress.

"A floor show, too?" inquired the Judge.

"Oh, yes, sir! A very good one. With a magician!"

The Judge was just in the mood for a magician! After having pulled a jam and jelly business out of the remote back-country in the Ozarks, he felt an honest kinship with anyone who made a business of pulling rabbits out of a hat.

He went to the dining room.

A pompous headwaiter greeted him.

"Listen, Bill," said the Judge, confidentially. "I'm a farmer from the Ozarks, seein' the big city. I want to sit right down there where I can see the show GOOD!"

"You don't look like a farmer," said the headwaiter, looking him over. My husband smoothed down his new gray jacket with self-conscious pride.

"Well, I had to get me a new suit to come to New York," he said. "But I'll probably be buried in it!"

The headwaiter was either profoundly touched or he was born to the show business. He summoned a waiter and indicated that the Judge should have a seat at the very edge of the dance floor.

Word must have gone backstage, for the singers came out and sang to the Judge. The dancers kicked their highest close to the Judge's bald head. The comedians did their stuff as though working for the Judge alone. And the Judge, who in his youth had played everything from juvenile leads to Bronze Statuary with the Frank E. Long Stock Company in Wisconsin and Michigan, was the audience every actor dreams of. He roared with laughter at the right spots. He was enchanted by the singers, and applauded with might and main. He was awed by the dancers. When the magician came on, there was no doubt that he had heard of the appreciative chap at the ringside table. He did his tricks practically in the Judge's plate. And the Judge played up to the performer with such frantic dodging, such open-mouthed, incredulous amazement, that the audience became as much interested in the Ozarkian

farmer's reactions as in the magician's performance. The magician got a wonderful hand from the sophisticated audience. A good time was definitely had by all!

But at last the show was over. Robert summoned the head-waiter for his bill.

"Don't go! Don't go!" begged the waiter. "Look! I'll bring you another pot of coffee. You sit here and wait for the next show!"

"Sorry, bud!" said the Judge. "But I'm a farmer. I'm used to going to bed early. I'll have to be going."

Now, when the Judge mentions running down to New York to see about our accounts, I reply witheringly:

"Oh yeah! You go down on business and wind up being a shill for a magician!"



## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

### MARIAN RYMER'S RANCH

A jack-in-the-pulpit waves solemnly above my forehead, giving me my first worm's-eye view of a wild flower. I dig my toe deep into the side of the bluff and pull cautiously on an exposed root to test its strength.

"Look out for these three poison-ivy plants," says Marian Rymer, looking down over her shoulder at me, and scrambling sideways to point out three sturdy plants popping out of the moist soil. "If you can put your foot over here . . ."

She points to a rock that would be a good stretch for Charlotte Greenwood from where I cling. I'm not built like Charlotte, but sheer desperation and five hundred feet of Ozark space below me, drive me to make the stretch. And make it good! Then by grasping at roots, vines and jutting rocks I manage to pull myself to the top of the bluff and scramble over the edge. Panting and perspiring, I sit down on a rock and fan myself with the skirt of my muddy play suit.

"I know now why you always wear riding pants and shirts," I say to Marian. "And how you keep so slim! If there's any buried treasure at Sunrise Mountain Farm it will have to come out of its cave and crawl up on our doorstep to get me interested!"

Marian laughs.

"Well, if I hadn't liked to climb around over the rocks I

might never have found this cave!" she says. "My brother and I were just climbing around for fun, when we happened to notice that these rocks were set into the cliff with a peculiar sort of clay. We got to fooling around with the rocks and found we could get them loose quite easily. That one you're sitting on is the first one I pulled loose. That's why it was a long time before we found the human bones! We'd put the rock right over them! But after we moved it we found the bones right there in that hole at your feet!"

I jump up and look cautiously around, half expecting a ghost to pop out from under the rock.

"Do you think the Spanish treasure is actually buried in this cave?" I whisper.

"Well, everything seems to point that way!" says Marian. "The old miner from Mexico said a Spanish priest that had lived with him there had said that great amounts of treasure stolen by the Spaniards were buried in the Ozarks. He said we would know the most important cave of the buried treasure by the human bones that we would find in front of it!"

"How did the bones get here?" I ask.

"The Spaniards killed the slaves who helped bury the treasure so they couldn't tell where it was hidden!"

It seems difficult to associate murder with these quiet cliffs where now we hear only the songs of birds and the murmur of the creek.

"Right here in this hole we found the bones and teeth, bone beads and even a toothpick that had been whittled out of a bone!"

I move over to look at the great rocks lying scattered about like blocks petulantly flung down by the hand of a giant child. Most of them are crudely shaped in rough triangular or rectangular form.

"These are the rocks they used to seal the cave. They're



It seems difficult to associate murder with these quiet cliffs . . .

of limestone and flint," explains Marian. "Whoever bossed the job did it well! The rocks must have been let down from the top of the bluff. And look at the weight of them. A foot thick and three or four feet across. And the clay! Notice it is different from the earth around here?"

I look at the clay distastefully. I never liked that yellowish-red color! I like it even less here.

"Where do you suppose it came from?" I ask.

"Probably from inside the cave. Possibly this cave tunnels clear under the ridge and comes out on the other side. There's clay like this at the mouth of another cave on the other side of the ridge!"

"How can you rest until you find out!" All at once I begin to think that unearthing buried treasure is the most important job life can hold.

"Well, we have to be pretty sure of what we're doing," says Marian, cautiously.

I'm not listening. I move over to the dry, sandy mouth of the cave and look up at the arched roof. It is pockmarked with the dripping of water at some points, worn smooth in other spots, and in some places twisted and tortured as though molten at some period of its ancient history. The action of the water, Marian explains.

We run our hands over the broad face of the great rock blocking our entrance to the cave. It is huge in size—thick as we are tall. By standing on tiptoe we can extend our hands into the space between the top of the rock and the cave roof and feel the cold damp air of the vast cave behind it.

"That space is big enough for a man to climb over," I say, excitedly. "Maybe if I had a ladder . . ."

"When we had pried out the rocks so we could get this far into the opening," Marian explains, "we found a great pedestal rock that made a natural steppingstone! A man could

have stood on it and tossed stuff over the rock to someone inside the cave."

I could visualize a bearded Spaniard sweating as he upysaidised chests of gold and silver over the great rock.

"Before we removed that stepping rock my brother climbed over and went into the cave. He couldn't go very far, for the way inside is blocked too. But he found that the cave goes down and down, probably to the very foot of the cliff. And on the other side of this doorway rock we found a thick cedar club, charred at one end."

"A torch!" I guess.

"Must have been," says Marian.

I eye the big rock at the door of the cave.

"Wish I had a stick of dynamite!" I say decisively.

Marian smiles. "And ruin our road!"

I know what that would mean!

The Rymer Ranch buildings on the tip of Devil's Backbone would promptly be shut off from civilization.

"Look!" I suddenly storm. "You might unearth all kinds of treasure. And here you are. Your father is ninety years old! Right now you're planting corn, raising hogs, doing the hardest kind of farm work! And in addition, you cook for boarders all summer. What if it does ruin your road! And shut off the ranch! You've lived here since you were a little girl. You've had all this for years. Why don't you take advantage of this chance to get out into the world?"

Marian says, with a smile:

"When we get back to the dining hall and look out over my view, I'll let you decide about the dynamite!"

"I know what I'll decide," I say stubbornly. "I'd get into this cave!"

I pick up a rock and begin knocking chunks off a huge mass of clay and smaller rocks. It's thrilling to think of the

brown hands that fashioned that great mass to chink a telltale crack in sealing the cave. I linger until Marian says we must hurry down if we are to see the old silver mine before we return to the house.

The slide down the cliff is even more hazardous than the ascent. When I get to the valley I remember that I have forgotten to watch out for the three poison-ivy plants on my way down. I decide I'm immune.

A few minutes' walk along the creek brings us to the old Spanish mine. It is a series of crude terraces along the side of the mountain, making it easy for us to see where one entrance after another was made in the side hill. Apparently the miners went in as we would enter a cave, then scooped out the earth beneath to burrow downward. Great rocks, many chiseled with rude crosses, mark the different terraces. Marian points them out as the landmarks of ancient miners who worked for the silver.

While I pant and climb, Marian tells of the divining rods that pull with might and main toward the earth's surface when they are carried across this mountainside, yet will not turn toward the earth at any other point on the farm. I think of the Buried Treasure and wonder if there is anything that will tell about that—but I'm too winded to ask questions. I am definitely not the mountain-goat type.

Finally, I stop to sit down on a rock and pick ticks off my bare legs.

"Haven't you a nice quiet level spot on this farm?" I ask.

"Oh, yes!" Marian laughs. "There's the Indian meadow!"

A meadow sounds very inviting to me after the hills. And an Indian one, at that! I can hardly wait. I hurry her along to it.

I am not disappointed. The Indian meadow lies like a smooth green jewel in the midst of a rugged setting of hills and sparkling streams. It seems to catch and hold the calm

and peace of the Ozark hills sleeping under the springtime Sunday sun. Our voices lower instinctively as we look about us. Even Nature seems to have quieted at this lovely spot.

The deep, dark Johnny Holler in which we had climbed to the Cave of the Buried Treasure and the Sunken Mine had widened into a grassy valley, with yellow daisies, Indian paintbrush, wild sweet williams and dainty wild columbine nodding in the gentle breeze. The lively creek that tumbles along over the rocks in Johnny Holler and leaves stacks of driftwood head-high to show what it can do when fully aroused has quieted down to a gentle murmur. The valley looks so calm one finds it hard to remember it got its name from the bands of Confederate soldiers who hid in its dark depths during the War between the States and plundered the near-by farms of cattle and pigs.

On the left of the meadow, Jack's Fork widens to a quiet dimpling stream, so clear that one can see the rocky bottom over which it flows. It seems to have reformed since it rushed and roared and pounded itself against the rocks down at the bend. It's a gentlemanly river now, inviting the soft swish of a canoe paddle. I wander toward its edge, but stop to investigate a ground-hog home, with its entrance and exit about ten feet apart.

"Look for arrowheads, Marge," calls Marian.

I bend my head and search diligently. Then I suddenly realize I am expecting to find triangular stones neatly marked with tiny labels and numbers, as I have seen arrowheads in museums. I blink and rearrange my hunting sights. I find several unfinished arrowheads, imperfect in shape. I wonder if a little Indian boy's awkward hands were trying to fashion arrowheads, and if he grew impatient and resentful when they didn't turn out like dad's. Then I find a white stone with sharp chiseled edges and a notch at each side. I call Marian and show it to her.

"It's a knife for scaling fish!" says Marian, taking the rock in her slim brown hand and showing how the thumb and forefinger fit in the notches. "Probably a squaw used it!"

The feel of that clean white stone knife in my hand gives me a queer sense of kinship with that long-gone Indian woman. It has a comfortable feel, and the edges are quite sharp. I would like to tell its owner I think it a lovely knife, and that I'm fussy about paring knives, too.

"It's pleasant to think of an Indian woman sitting here on the bank of this beautiful river, preparing dinner for her husband!" I say.

"Maybe she was doing just that when the Spaniards began shooting at them from across the river!" Marian points across Jack's Fork.

"See that triangular-shaped opening up there in the bluff?"

I see it very plainly.

"That was an old Spanish fort. It was entered from the top. Then the soldiers shot the Indians from that opening in the side overlooking the river."

I clutch the white stone knife. Maybe it dropped from a nerveless hand when the Spanish guns roared, to lie forgotten until this May day. Perhaps that woman cleaning fish on the bank of the stream was the first victim of the Spanish guns. I linger on in the meadow, saddened by the memory of those guns. Again Marian has to urge me on to another spot.

"Now we'll go down along the Backbone on the Jack's Fork side, and I'll show you the sign of the Calf!"

The walk along the river is a constant dodging and scrambling to avoid low-hanging branches. But at least it's on the level. Then at the bend, Marian pauses and points across the river to great bluffs on the opposite side.

"Do you see the calf chiseled in the rocks?"

I don't.



She tells me to stand under a certain tree and look through a fork in the branches.

I move over. The fork gives me a perfect bead and I see the animal. It looks like a bear to me. But bear or calf, it seems to be halted in sudden fear, with head held high and pointed directly toward the Spanish fort farther down the river.

"It seems to be sniffing danger!" I say. "Perhaps it was the Indian equivalent of 'Stop, Bridge Out!' or 'Men At Work!'"

"Undoubtedly it was a landmark of some sort," says Marian.

Through binoculars, we examine the new look of the rocks below the animal. Apparently a ledge had projected into space, affording a foothold for the one who chiseled the shape out of the rocks. But since that time, the ledge has fallen away, leaving a sheer wall of rock to the water beneath.

We spend several minutes wondering if the calf (or bear) could be linked with the cave of the buried treasure. Marian recalls that the last Indians in the hills had said contemptuously: "White man fool! He could shoe horse with silver and toe shoes with gold."

At last we start the long walk back to the house. Along the way, we talk of Marian's eventful, busy life. Her little girlhood spent in Nebraska, her coming to the hills with her parents, already well along in years, when she reached high-school age. Then, of her inspiration, at sixteen, to put up some rustic cabins on the very snout of Devil's Backbone, as a summer camp. As we climb up to the buildings that make up Marian's ranch home, we talk about the people who have come through the years to enjoy the beauty and grandeur of the Ozarks at Rymer's Ranch. Two Governors of Missouri are listed in Marian's guest book.

Then we come out on a wide grassy spot where the dozen

Rymer buildings stand in orderly disorder on the very tip of Devil's Backbone. I stand to get my breath and to take in the sight of tumbled mountain ridges extending in every direction. I tell Marian that the six hundred and forty acres of Rymer's Ranch could well be ironed out to twice as many.

Marian hurries me into the dining hall. This building is located at the tip of the long promontory, the Devil's Backbone, that rises abruptly between the two streams, Jack's Fork and Johnny Creek. From its windows we see the streams on each side and beyond them, stretching endless miles, are green hills piled in heaps all over the landscape, hills green and lovely with spring in the foreground, and veiled with that familiar blue Ozark haze in the background.

Marian shows me Dad Rymer's ingenious method of bringing clear, cold water from one of the sparkling springs in Johnny Holler. Over thousands of feet of slanting wire a pail is lowered to the spring, where it fills with water trickling out of the mountain side, then is drawn up the wire by means of a windlass.

We stand at the windows for many minutes, looking out over the great scene.

Far below we see a man in a blue shirt, fishing as he wades hip-deep in Jack's Fork. We see an edge of the Indian meadow.

"Now, Marge," says Marian, "what do you think about dynamiting the Cave of the Buried Treasure?"

Dynamite!

The sound of the word brings a vivid image of destruction to my mind. I put my hand on the white flint fish-scaling knife in my pocket. I could feel the smallness of that hand grip. She must have been a very dainty squaw. Probably she, too, hated noise and destruction. Doubtless, if she had had her way she would have kept the Ozarks forever peaceful and calm . . . forever hidden away from evil minds coveting the

treasures hidden in the great wooded hills and the tumbled rocks.

Suddenly I realize that Marian has this same feeling, the feeling that all the treasure that might or might not be buried under the Devil's Backbone would not be worth the sacrifice of her mountain home and its peace.

My exciting plans to make the cave give up its treasure are abandoned in a wink.

"I wouldn't dynamite," I say. "You have enough treasure now!"

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

### *I SPEND THE NIGHT ON THE ROAD*

**T**HE stewardess handed me my coat as the plane neared the St. Louis airport, and eyed my safety belt. "Too bad you aren't going on to New Orleans with us," she said. "It's a bad night for a motor trip. You'd be safer in the plane."

"Nothing to it," I replied. "Only two hundred miles. We'll be home by midnight!"

Just as Robert had promised in his last letter, Billy Boyd, his young helper, was at the airport to meet me. His plaid mackinaw was easy to find under the lights of the airport. It was a bright rural spot that reminded me of home. Soon we were headed south, rain beating against the car windows.

"Roads all clear from here to the farm?" I asked.

"Yeah!" said Billy. "'Ceptin' one helluva bad deetour yon side o' Rolla!"

I settled myself for a long worry. But the car was comfortable, and Rolla still a hundred miles away. My spirits rose. I always have to keep my mind right on it if I'm going to worry about anything. We stopped at Diamond to eat a hearty supper, and we lingered to watch Cap'n Jimmy's Jivin' Jukes. We lingered some more to buy little things at the souvenir counter.

"Guess we'd better git goin'," said Billy, after a while. "Cain't he'p thinkin' about that gol-danged deetour!"

The rain was worse! It was close to midnight when we passed the big Sinclair Pennant Hotel, and zipped through Rolla. Then . . . there was the detour. It started out bad, and grew steadily worse. Mile after mile, we plowed through mud, slipping and slithering from side to side.

"Gol dang these new-fangled roads!" muttered Bill. "Old-time Ozark roads may be a mite rocky, but they ain't got mud like this!"

"How much farther?" I asked.

"A long way!" he said, emphatically. "An' ever' inch slick as glass when I come over it this morning!" I moaned miserably and swallowed my heart as the car whipcracked toward a ditch.

"Tryin' to foller my mornin's tracks," volunteered Bill. "But so much rain's fell since then, they ain't much of them left."

The tracks in the deep, slippery mud wound snakily up the long hill. We seemed to be traveling more slowly, but I decided that was due to Bill's wish to be careful. Then, suddenly, in the middle of the hill, the car slewed around, panted, shook, and stood still.

"Reckon we're stuck," said Bill, starting the motor. The car slipped again, stopped again. I hopped out to see how far we were from the ditch. Both shoes sank in the mud. I lifted my feet, leaving the shoes. We were a healthy eighteen inches from the ditch!

It could have been worse, I thought.

"Well?" I asked.

"Cut bresh!" replied Bill.

I fished my other shoes out of my bag, and we cut brush—I in my good airplane traveling suit.

"This can't happen to me!" I fumed. "Why, I'm . . . I'm . . ."

"Yeah, I know!" said Bill. "In Shee-cawgo yo're a big shot.

But down here in the Ozarks tonight yo're jis' a stick-in-the-mud!"

I helped pack the wet, cold slippery brush under the car, and got out of the way when Bill started the motor. Nothing happened! The entire hill would have to be paved with brush to get us out, and it was a half-mile long!

We looked around within the circle of our lights. Nothing but straggling, cut-over hills showed on each side. No light! No house! The stillness was stifling. The leaves on the scrub oaks were too sodden to rustle, and there were no friendly little night sounds of a cricket's evening prayer, or a tree-toad serenade. We heard only the gurgle of an unhappy little stream, protesting, like all Ozarkians, at being rushed out of the normal tempo.

Bill and I got back into the car. I worried about the Jedge worrying. I thought of my kinfolks keeping a light in the window until our car should pass. I thought of pneumonia!

"Reckon we're here till mornin'!" Bill said glumly.

He turned off the motor.

"Gotta save gas," he added.

I got into the back seat wondering whether to wrap my cold, wet feet in my coat, or wear the coat and wrap my jacket around my feet. Finally, when Bill had settled in the front seat and was snoring lustily, I curled in the back seat, feeling every one of my years, and slept.

Frozen to the marrow of my bones by the chill and dampness of the mountain night, I woke around five. Thank heaven the rain had stopped! I wakened Bill, who was surprisingly cheerful.

He started the car and it inched along. Bill was highly pleased. The mud had taken on a new feel—it was less slippery, he said. The hill was still impassable, but careful easing for several rods got us on a side road, old as the Ozark settlements. Then, by fording five streams (or one stream five

times), and traveling countless miles over rocky back-country roads, we finally got back on the highway and were on our way to the farm.

As we drove along I remembered something the Jedge had told me.

"True Ozarkians," he had said, "care nothing for time, but dislike distances!"

I had a hunch.

"Bill," I said quite casually, "if we had gone around by Eminence and Salem, couldn't we have stayed on pavement all the way?"

"Why, shore, ma'am," he said. "We could a-went that way. But that'd a-took us *twenty miles* out'n our way!"

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

### INVITING GUESTS TO A PARTY

INVITING guests to an Ozark party is more fun than the party itself. With no telephones, the inviting is always done in person. It develops into a solid day of visiting. Take one inviting trip, for an example.

My first stop, of course, is at Aunt Lizzie's. No party at Sunrise Mountain Farmhouse would be complete without Aunt Lizzie and Uncle John. Aunt Lizzie has just opened a jar of poke in preparation for the noonday meal. I eat a saucerful while I convince her that we will not play cards at the party.

"But what about them three card tables you got upstairs?" she asks doggedly. "You'll be a-gettin' them out, fust thing I know!"

I assure her we won't. I tell her the party is just a picture party, and that she will see that beautiful picture of herself with the dogwood trees in my Kodachromes. She sniffs and counter-attacks. It's all part of the game. Then she finally says she "don't know effen they'll come 'r not." I take my leave, knowing they will be the first ones at the party, as always.

My next stop is at our good friends, the Heaton's. I find three of the "girls" (one is a grandmother) sorting hickory nuts, butternuts, black walnuts, and hazelnuts, while Sister Snow reads aloud to them beside the roaring woodburning



heating stove. The heating stove reminds me that they will see pictures of their "summer kitchen" in my showing of Kodachromes. During the summertime, the girls set up a cookstove out near the woodpile, and do their cooking out in the open. I happened along once just in time to catch the stove roaring with a great fire while a half dozen kettles and saucepans bubbled noisily on its top.

I'm very fond of the Heatons, and I linger to talk with them about books and magazines. In a little while they bring in a stone jar of big flat white sugar cookies, dotted with raisins. I eat a couple and accept a bagful of the choicest nuts. Then I drive on to my kinfolks'.

Uncle Bert is fixing the door of the cellar. He admits that "Mom" had been after him all fall, tryin' to get him to do it. But just today, he had got workbrittle enough to do it. I know it is a mite too chilly to be good fishin' weather, but I don't say so. After all, I've been fixin' to paint our upstairs rooms for three years! Aunt Blanche and my two young cousins, Betty Lee and Rosa Lou, come out to greet me and we make a great to-do over the repaired door before entering the cellar. I gaze with awe at the seven-hundred-odd jars on the narrow shelves. I count them over, peach preserves, apple butter, spiced carrots, watermelon pickles, corn relish, succotash, tomatoes, catsup, chili sauce, beans, peas, beets, grapes in sirup, blackberries, plum jelly and dozens more.

As I look at the jugs of sorghum, the gunny sack full of sweet Spanish peanuts, and bins of turnips and apples, my cousins tell me of the squash, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, dried corn, popcorn and strings of peppers stored in that "little room off the kitchen."

Everything, they tell me, came off their own place, except some strawberries that "Uncle Robert" gave them, when the jelly kitchens got more than they could handle one week end.

"And you tended the garden, and the trees, that gave you

these!" I say to Aunt Blanche, waving my hand at the bountiful shelves.

"Well, I should have done more," she replies hesitantly, "but I was feelin' so kinda ohn-ry last summer, I didn't get as much done as usual!"

These are my people, I think to myself, and I am very proud of them.

By this time the girls have opened a jar of fourteen-day pickles. As we dip our fingers into the jar and eat the sweet, spicy delicious pickles, Aunt Blanche tells how they were prepared. Each day for fourteen days the pickles had to be cooked or spiced, or turned over or something, to give them just this particular flavor! That's where they get their name.

After we eat the pickles we go up out of the cellar, and Aunt Blanche and Uncle Bert put a sackful of peanuts, a pailful of baby turnips, picked just after frost, and a mess of sweet potatoes in my car. I suddenly remember the gourds I have seen in city stores. I ask if Aunt Blanche has ever raised any.

"No," she said. "I'd like to, but I never have. The seed costs a quarter a packet!"

I make a mental note about gourd seed, and remember to mention the party.

Sure, they'll be there!

I drive on to the Springers' to find Verna and her mother canning sausage. It is the aftermath of butchering day. I sit around and drink a cup of coffee and watch them frying the plump cakes of sausage. Then I see the crisply fried sausage given the Springer trick. The hot sausage cakes are put into sterilized glass jars. Then hot fat is poured in upon them. The jars are sealed, and turned bottoms up! In this way, the lard congeals at the top of the jar and, put away in the cellar, stays hard and firm all winter, a perfect seal for the sausage.

I remind Verna that meat is being shipped to our allies with

hard-frozen lard packed around boxes of meat that have been frozen, boxes and all. This unique insulation keeps the meat from spoiling even when the ship does not have cold-storage facilities.

"Humph!" humphs Verna. "We could have told them that long ago. We always use lard to seal the jar! It keeps the sausage from tasting old!"

I eat a couple of hot sausage cakes and some cold biscuits, hoping all the sausage in the jars will keep its young taste. Then I take a mess of spareribs and backbones out to the car before crossing the road to the Rineharts'.

Mrs. Rinehart, wife of a prominent Mountain View banker, is getting dinner. She has opened a jar of her specialty, canned fried chicken.

"Tastes just like it was canned yesterday," she says proudly. "But it was done last spring soon's the young roosters were big enough to bother the pullets."

I eat a drumstick and give it deserved praise. Yes, she will be at the party, even if it is Jay's lodge-meetin' night. She will come with Verna and her folks.

At the Wolf Creek corner I turn through the woods and get to the Hawkins' just as they are finishing dinner. I refuse the baked beans, grown on their own farm and baked in their own stove by Mary's own recipe. But I accept and eat a large cube of warm gingerbread topped with whipped cream thick enough to be cut with a knife. The Hawkins' Jerseys are famous for the richness of their milk, and Mary is famous for her good cooking. I accept a loaf of Mary's crusty light bread, fresh from the oven, and head for the Simmses' farmhouse on the banks of Jack's Fork.

Nonnie Simms, a thin, wiry, indefatigable great-grandmother, is just rounding the corner of the smokehouse with an apronful of green hickory chips. She's on her way to look after the fire that is smoking four big hams. I watch her fix

the smoldering fire while she tells me all the details about smoking and curing. It seems too complicated for me to grasp. When I think of all that effort and reflect that raising the pigs that provide the hams is still another job of considerable proportions—what with mother pigs having their babies in the middle of the coldest winter nights, and for some unaccountable reason developing cannibalistic habits—I shudder at the work that goes into the preparation of a slice of ham. Then we go into the house, to talk about the party, quilt patterns and butchering. I eat a thick slab of crackling cornbread, oozing with sweet butter churned within the hour, and accept a pailful of snowy lard, before I get into the car.

As I drive into town, to pick up the Judge at the jelly kitchens, I wonder about many things. I know the stores of food I have seen represent much of the security for which city women long. These supplies of food, carefully laid by for winter, are largely the women's work. Even gardening, except for the plowing, is "women's work" in the Ozarks. I wonder how many city women would be equal to such a task—how long would it take them to learn the craft of garden making, and acquire the little tricks that make each woman in the community an expert in some particular branch of canning. I have had a six-year start on other city women and I'm a rank amateur, I think humbly.

At the kitchens, the Judge is ready to leave. We get into the car. He looks at his watch.

"Say," he exclaims, "it's really late. Let's go over to the Commercial House and have supper before we go home! We had roast goose there this noon. Maybe some of it's left!"

"No, indeed," I say nobly. "We'll go out home and I'll fix some poached eggs on toast!"

"Oh, we're dieting again, are we?" he asks.

"Yes!" I say sadly.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

### EATS IN THE OZARKS

As you drive through the Ozarks next summer, you may say to your driving companion: "For Heaven's sake, what do these people *eat!*" That's not surprising! It may be a drought year, and you see acre after acre of seared woodlands, with here and there a little cleared farm with its tiny house and its patch of garden. Or you may whisk through sleepy little towns, where a grocery store has a display of corn-shuckin' gloves or rubber boots in its fly-specked windows.

But, my dear, you'd be surprised what we eat! Yes, I'll make it stronger: You'd be *flabbergasted* if you could see the hearty meals to which most of these families sit down. And you'd be even more surprised if you could see how the homemaker has contrived that meal out of "what she had." Maybe she did everything but plow the garden from which most of the meal came. In rare instances, she may have done that, too.

She raised the chickens that laid the eggs that hatched into the fried chicken you're eating.

She walked miles on a hot Ozark day to pick the wild blackberries that are in that blackberry pie. Then after she came in, all tired and dusty, covered with briar scratches and chiggers, and maybe a few wood ticks, she took off her sun-bonnet, and set to work in her kitchen to can those berries.

She carried water from the well—and heaven only knows how far that well is from the kitchen—in order to wash the berries. Maybe she cut the wood for the fire to cook them. It goes without saying that she had to carry in the wood! And yet, when she opens the jar of luscious berries and puts them into a pie that practically melts in your mouth, she's very likely to say, modestly:

"I'm 'most ashamed to give you any o' this pie! 'Peared to me the berries didn't amount to much last summer . . . with the drought and all!"

The top piecrust will be whiter than the crust of city restaurant pies because wood cookstoves don't have the intense heat that you can whip up with gas, but that crust will be tender and crisp. And it will have the real, homey, old-time flavor known only to piecrusts made with that real country shortening, lard. Very likely your hostess raised the pig that furnished the lard for that piecrust, but this will not be mentioned. Like so many other things, it is simply taken for granted—one of the "chores" expected of a woman on an Ozark farm.

Another remark that you will hear when you sit down to an Ozark table is this one: "The recipe calls for such-and-such, but I didn't have it. I just did with what I had!"

When the world can settle down to thinking again, I'd like to see a statue put up to honor Ozark women! Not women of the past, but women who are mothers and grandmothers, today. If I could design that statue I'd show an Ozark woman holding aloft a great tray of fried chicken, roas'in' ears, corn bread, wilted lettuce and wild blackberry cobbler, against the stark background of a bare cupboard.

Perhaps I'd have her looking aghast at a cookbook that airily assumes all women have mechanical refrigerators and stoves, thermostatically controlled ovens, bottled milk and telephone connections with a swanky grocery. Or maybe I'd

have her laughing her head off at a roast turkey with paper pants on the drumsticks.

It seems to me that Ozark families are fortunately located, in regard to food. The region is near enough to the Southland to have more than a little trace of the South's traditional love of good food and plenty of it. And it is far enough to the north that women do not depend on "help" to do the cooking. Ozark women have the energy and the innate desire to turn to and prepare good meals. Please understand that I'm speaking of the women who are really interested in the welfare of their families . . . families that don't get into print because they aren't the victims of undernourishment and underfeeding. In short, the kind of woman who can "do with what she has!" The woman-of-the-house who feeds her family well, even though she has very little to do it with, is not a rarity in the Ozarks. She's everywhere—in the country, in small towns, and in the sprawling, countrified Ozark cities.

As this war goes on, more and more women—everywhere—could learn a valuable lesson from our better Ozark homemakers. The ability to make a delicious first-class nourishing meal of what one has in her kitchen, inadequate as it may seem at first glance, is a trait worth cultivating.

At the start of World War II we Ozark women were startled at something we saw in the newspapers. It told us that a commission or something of the sort had been set up in Washington to get women to save bacon grease. The grease saved by the women would go into munitions, but that, to us, was not the startling fact. It was the thought that there were women who had been throwing out bacon grease!

Why, no woman in the Ozarks ever had more bacon grease than she could use. Just as an Ozark woman saves scraps of cloth to make a quilt, so she saves bacon grease to season food or to become the foundation of a meal.

For one thing, bacon grease makes gravy—good, hearty,

thick, white substantial gravy that really sticks to your ribs.

Put about three tablespoonsful of bacon grease in a hot skillet and put it on a fairly hot part of the stove. Just as it reaches the smoking point, add a couple of tablespoons of flour. Stir it around to let the flour brown, then pour in about a pint of milk and season with salt and pepper. Keep on stirring at frequent intervals. When the gravy is thick and bubbly, pour it into a thick, round yellow earthenware bowl, stick a good-sized spoon into it for generous serving, and take it to the table.

The approved way of eating such gravy is to put a thick slice of homemade bread in your plate, then slather the gravy over it.

If you're eating fried potatoes at the same meal, they are stacked alongside the bread and gravy. It's a city custom to put gravy over potatoes.

Or maybe your hostess is serving corncakes with the gravy that day. In that case, she brings you stack after stack of them, to be eaten literally hot-off-the-griddle, and smothered with gravy. The corncakes will not be Crêpes Suzettes, by any means. They'll be about three-eighths of an inch high, with crisp, brown crusty outsides, and interiors light and fluffy and rich with the flavor of corn and bacon grease. And by the way, the outside crusts will have extra richness because the griddle is a big old iron skillet, liberally greased with bacon grease before each trio of corncakes is put into it.

No smokeless griddle for the Ozark homemaker! Of course, the kitchen is thick with smoke as the result of that frying in grease. But there's an aroma, a hint of the eating joy to come, that will make that smoke-laden atmosphere more tempting than any perfume-filled temple. In fact, you will probably grow to look upon the aroma of smoking bacon fat as Ozark incense.

Yet strangely enough, potatoes are fried in lard when they



are put raw into the skillet. Only potatoes that have been previously boiled are reheated in bacon grease. Most usually these are leftovers from a previous meal. But occasionally when the first potatoes of the new crop are being dug, the tiny new pearly-white potatoes are flipped from the boiling kettle into a skillet of smoking bacon fat, and shaken about. Then they are rushed brown and tempting to the dinner table, their velvety whiteness held within a brown crisp crust rich with the flavor of smoky, tangy bacon.

And of course, an Ozark cook always fries eggs in bacon grease. And when one says fried *eggs* in the Ozarks, one means just that! None of this fussy business of cooking one egg at a time, carefully basting it to give just the right firmness to the yolk! No, indeed!

In the Ozarks one brings up a crockful of yesterday's eggs from the cellar, maybe picking a few straws off the dark brown eggs on the way from the cellar to the house. Then the big iron skillet is put on the cookstove, the fire is built up with some chips to get it good and hot. A liberal amount of bacon grease is put into the skillet. When the grease is smoking hot, it's time for the eggs, one after another. Sometimes the eggs are broken into a saucer, and then slid into the skillet, with the minimum of yolk breakage. Other times, the shells are cracked on the edge of the stove, and then the egg is literally dumped direct from its shell halves into the fat. If a jagged edge of the shell punctures the yolk, that's all right! There's sure to be someone at the table who prefers the yolks broken and flattened out.

Maybe a cover is put on, maybe not, but when the skillet bottom is covered with eggs, the skillet is drawn to the back of the stove where the heat is less intense. Anyhow, it's time to turn the fried potatoes smoking away in the other skillet. Or maybe the coffee has begun to boil over, putting a fringe of grounds around the top of the pot. And when the cook

reaches over to tip the lid, and stop the incipient boiling-over, she releases into the kitchen a heavenly fragrance of strong, hot coffee!

Then, back to those eggs with a pancake turner. Flip! Flop! Over they go! It's just too bad for the one who wants an egg cooked straight up. Down here in the Ozarks, we-'uns like our eggs turned over! And by doggies, you'd better like yours that way, too, when you eat with us.

And you will like them. At the table, you'll take that big platter of eggs in your hand, and you'll look them over to select your favorite type. Just as you used to look over a trayful of French pastries at the Crystal Dining Room.

The first eggs that went into the smoking hot skillet will be hard as rocks, with crusty brown edges and brittle transparent rims. Those that went in last will be soft and squashy. In between will be those with the broken yolks, cooked hard enough for an egg sandwich, and the medium-dones. You take a couple that suit your fancy. Then after you've finished your oatmeal and thick yellow cream, your hot biscuits, with home-churned sweet butter, and two helpings of fried potatoes along with your two eggs, washing them down with scalding-hot boiled coffee that has left gravelly-grounds in the bottom of the cup, someone will call your attention to the two or three eggs left on the platter.

"I fried a few extra ones," the housewife will say modestly. "If you don't eat them, I'll have to give them to the dogs!"

And while you like dogs, and wish them well . . . after all—country-fried eggs are something that shouldn't go to the dogs! And you mean that literally. You make short work of those extra eggs. Then you go out to sit under a tree in the early morning sunshine to watch the mist clearing away in the valley.

And you begin to wonder if you shouldn't get that little forty-acre farm you saw behind that "FOR SALE" sign as you

drove south from Rolla. One could, you decide, keep a few chickens . . . and a cow . . . and it wouldn't be much work to raise a garden!

But for me the supreme, the all-time-high use for bacon grease is wilted lettuce.

The recipe for wilted lettuce begins with overshoes. You look out of the kitchen door one morning, when the sun is just peeping over the ridge after a night of drenching rain, and you spy that bed of lettuce you planted a few weeks ago. For some time it's been showing a few wavering lines of green against the dark earth, indicating that the seeds were alive and ready to do business. But this morning those lines of green are thick and high, as though fairly bursting with spring goodness.

You look at the jar of bacon grease. Yep, thank goodness, there's plenty. You'll have wilted lettuce for dinner. You hunt up those overshoes and put them on.

Then you take the dishpan and paring knife, and go out to get what is known in the Ozarks as "a mess of lettuce." The whole earth and sky seem clean and fresh as though newly washed by Mother Nature, and hung out in the sunshine to dry. The sky is bluer, the clouds whiter, the grass greener than you can ever remember seeing them before. Between the kitchen door and the garden, the grass is wet with the night's rain, the back-tilted tip of many a blade proudly holding a clear sparkling drop of water. Your footprints leave distinct marks of deeper green.

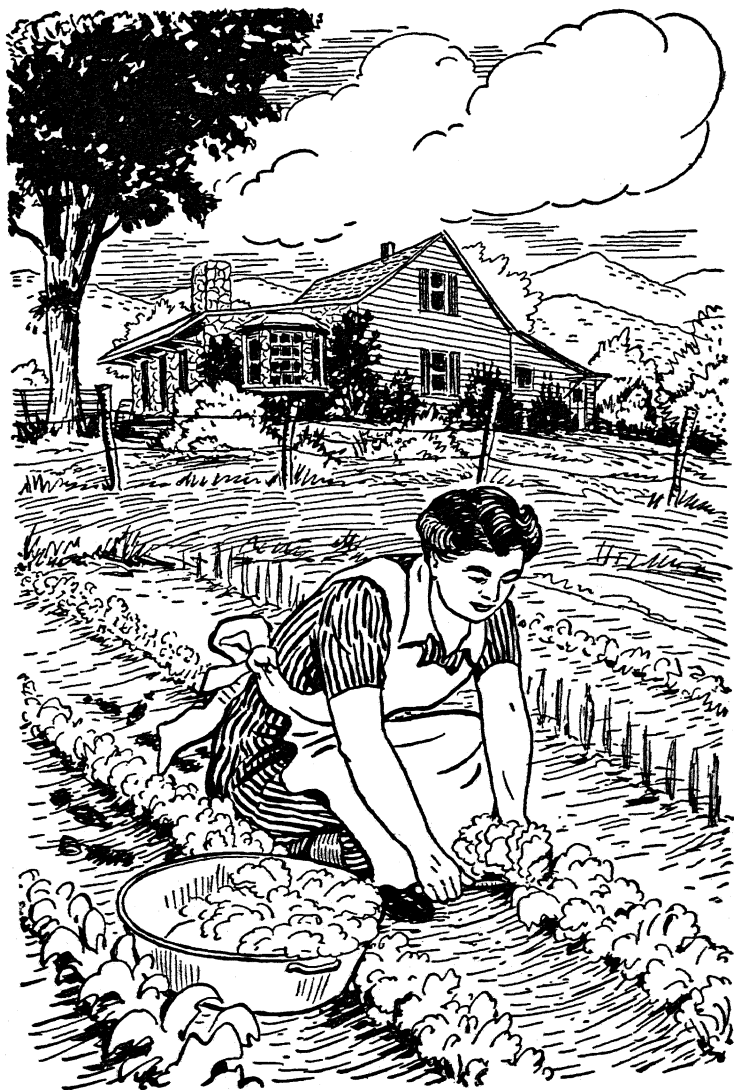
A pair of robins nose the grass along the edge of the garden. You wish the whole world could see the glowing rosy red of Papa Robin's waistcoat, curved over his alderman's tummy. A bluebird flits past you, as if to show off the lovely rose-colored breast that makes such exquisite harmony with its blue, blue coat. Your eyes follow its path of flight to the hollow in the cherry tree in the front yard and you re-

flect that bluebirds are indeed harbingers of good luck. Just the sight of one so trim, so altogether lovely, gives a lift to one's spirits. High overhead at the top of the big old hickory tree you hear the mockingbird doing an imitation of the orioles that have set up housekeeping in a swinging home in the Arnold Forty. You lift your eyes just in time to see him make a graceful curving flight into the air to nip off a passing bug. You watch with fascinated eyes as he settles himself again on that topmost branch and goes into another number of his repertoire.

Beyond, you see the green ridges of Ozark hills and the great expanse of blue sky. And suddenly you think of Sunrise Mountain Farm, and the green mountain ridges about it as a miniature Chinese garden under a great blue bowl decorated with a fleecy cloud pattern. In fancy, you see the farmhouse and other buildings, shining white in the sunshine, as thumbnail replicas of themselves, set among perfectly proportioned but miniature green ridges. The dogwood trees, heavy with blossoms, the bursting lilacs, the graceful bridal wreath bushes could be the flower accents of that lovely dish garden, while the Big Pond, rippling and sparkling in the morning breeze, could be the inevitable water spot. You look at the morning landscape with new eyes, seeing it all as a scene so precious, so lovely, that a great proud Owner keeps it hidden beneath His loveliest blue bowl.

Then a lump comes into your throat at the thought that other women in other lands, loving the beauty, peace and quiet of their homes in this same way, have had their world turned upside down. Even as yours may be! You wish for the millionth time that you could *Do Something!*

Then far at the back of the Home Forty Judy jumps a rabbit and her shrill soprano baying brings you sharply to earth. You didn't come out to dream about Chinese miniatures and blue bowls. Nor to worry about what might happen.



... The very spirit of spring ... in a dishpan.

You came out to gather a mess of lettuce. And time's a-wastin'!

In the garden, you're glad you wore overshoes. Your feet sink deep into the soft earth, but you haven't far to go! When the garden was laid out, you remembered that you would be gathering lettuce on rain-wet mornings, so you thoughtfully wrote "Lettuce" close to the edge of the garden diagram.

Yes, the lettuce has miraculously grown big enough to eat. It's so tender the leaves tear at the slightest harsh movement. Even at the base of the largest leaves there's no hint of woodiness or tough fibres. So you cut the clusters of leaves close to the roots, shaking each cluster as it is cut to flick off the raindrops and maybe a stray bug! Your dishpan is soon filled with a heap of the lovely pale green leaves, fresh as a great bridal bouquet. You look at it and think that somehow you are holding the very spirit of spring . . . in a dishpan.

Then when you have cut enough lettuce, you look over at the long row of onions. Better take in some of them. *Some* of them, indeed! You'll take in a lot. For what's wilted lettuce without green onions? You gather a great bunch of onions, noting how the last week's pearly-white tiny extensions of the green stalks have become bulblets. The long threadlike roots hold the soft moist earth as though reluctant to lose this last touch of their native soil.

Then you turn from the onion rows to the rows of radishes. Stooping over, you move along the row, thrusting the prickly leaves aside to find the round rosy red radishes which are the earliest ones. You find many, pushing themselves halfway out of the ground, as though begging you to pull them out and see how crisp, how zestful, how good they are. You pull a big handful, and try to hold them in your hand with the onions. But you've been too greedy. Your fingers aren't long enough to clasp what you have gathered. So you give up the struggle and place them on top of the lettuce. They can't

crush the lettuce in the short time it takes you to hurry to the well curb.

You sit on the sunny side of the well, and with your paring knife cut the tops from the onions and radishes. You don't leave little fancy fingerholds of stems at the top of the radishes. That's a citified fashion. Nor do you slit the red sides to make the radishes look like fancy little roses. These radishes are not decorations. They're functional.

You draw a pail of water from the well, the bucket hitting the top of the water so quickly you peer into it with surprise. Oh, yes, that heavy rain last night has raised the cistern's water level! You can never remember the direct connection between the last rain and the depths of the water in your Ozark cistern.

And while the mockingbird sings encouragingly overhead, you plunge your hands into this clear ice-cold water that fell only last night, and you wash the onions, radishes and lettuce you have gathered from your own garden. You think of this as you stand still for a moment, before going into the kitchen, filling your heart, your very soul, with the beauty of this spring morning in the Ozarks.

But you can't waste time mooning over beauty. You're an Ozark housewife, and dinner has to be ready come noon.

In the house, you put the lettuce into your big round mixing bowl, giving each leaf a final critical inspection. Then with paring knife sharpened for the task, you slice fifteen or twenty radishes into paper-thin slices, each rimmed with the glowing color of the radish's red coat. A dozen green onions are sliced crosswise, starting with the white end which falls into tiny translucent circles and ending far up on the green stem, so that you have a cupful of mixed green and white segments to put on top of the lettuce.

You peel a half-dozen of the hard-boiled eggs you keep on hand for between-meal snacks and slice them crosswise. They

fall apart into rings of white and solid circles of gold when you put them on the lettuce, but that's all right! Only in the city, where one egg has to furnish slices for a half-dozen servings of salad, does one see perfect slices of hard-cooked eggs. Here in the country we use eggs for their rich hearty flavor and fillingness, rather than for their decorative value.

By this time the mixing bowl has taken on a well-filled look. You put it aside well out of the sunshine streaming over your work table and prepare the rest of the simple meal. Maybe you bake those leftover boiled beans, and make a boiled custard pudding to serve with whipped cream. But these foods are mere satellites . . . the star of your dinner . . . the *pièce de résistance* . . . the center of attraction . . . is the Wilted Lettuce!

And then, just a few minutes before twelve, you put the big iron skillet on the hottest part of the cookstove. In a moment, you're ready to make the sauce for the wilted lettuce. First you put in a generous—and I do mean *generous*—amount of bacon fat. A half teacupful, at least. While it heats, you pour a bowlful of cider vinegar out of the vinegar bottle. You spoon up a few drops and taste it. It seems a bit too strong. You add a little bit of water, and taste it again. Then you add salt, pepper and a few tablespoons of sugar. You taste it again. Needs a little more sugar, you decide. You put in a bit more.

By this time the bacon fat has a faint tinge of smoke hovering over its surface. You approach it with the bowlful of vinegar in one hand and the heavy iron skillet lid in the other. You pour the cold vinegar mixture into the sizzling hot fat and then, with all haste, bang the lid down *fast*. The bacon fat spits and sputters, it grumbles and rolls under the heavy lid, but finally it becomes more quiet. You leave it on the stove for a short time to heat thoroughly. With a heavy tea towel and a pot lifter shielding your hands, you lift the skillet lid and put it on the back of the stove. Then



with both hands you grasp the handle of the heavy hot black skillet and carry it over to the bowl of lettuce. You pour the hot, sweet-sour, baconish mixture over the heaped contents of that bowl . . . the cool, fresh, green lettuce, the crisp, red-rimmed circles of radish, the pearly white and tender green circles of onion no larger than a baby's ring, and the gold and white of the hard-cooked eggs. You have made just enough of the sauce—you can see it coming up through the leaves of the lettuce. You drain the last drop from the skillet. Then, with a twist of the wrist, you invert the skillet and put it bottom-up over the bowlful of lettuce.

You do this more by instinct than anything else! Your mother, and her mother before her, and her mother before *her*, always upended the bacon skillet over the bowl of wilted lettuce. Probably they did it to catch, thriftily, the last drop of sauce that might drain from the skillet. Maybe they found the lettuce *wilted* better if the steam was retained. Or maybe there wasn't a handy place where one could put the skillet.

You leave the skillet there while you dish up the rest of the dinner. Then you remove it and call: "Dinner's ready! Come and get it!"

And so spring comes to the Ozarks . . . in a bowl of Wilted Lettuce.

I can't give you the recipe for my favorite Ozark cake. Only my mother can make it so that it has that "food fit for the gods" taste. It is a quick cake, baked in a shallow rectangular pan, and served in warm unfrosted big cubes from the baking pan at the table. The cake is known in the family as "Dog Cake." This came from a time long ago when my mother took one of these cakes, hot, spicy and fragrant, from the oven and remarked disgustedly, "This cake isn't fit for a dog to eat!"

It was as true a word as she ever spoke. Even at its best,

the cake was indeed much too rich and hearty and starchy for a dog. And that day she had made it over-rich, a quality that endeared it all the more to the family. Forever after, that type of cake has been known as "Dog Cake."

When I ask for the recipe my mother starts out, "Well, you take a dab of butter, and the cream that's left in the pitcher after breakfast . . ." And right then and there I give up.

The dab-of-this and the pinch-of-that cooking method wouldn't get far with the modern generation of cooks. But this method, coupled with the need for using what one has on hand, has made culinary geniuses out of many Ozark housewives.

In seeking some of these real old-timy recipes, as representative of the Ozarks as the rocky hillsides, I went to Verna Springer, my "town friend," in Mountain View, Missouri. Verna is modern enough to get well-written, informative articles on cooking and gardening into national women's magazines. Yet she has a wholesome respect for the old-time cooking methods as they were and still are practiced in the hills.

Now that we must share food with our Allies many of these old-time Ozark recipes could assume national importance for their economy and they could reacquaint Americans at large with the delight of simple foods.

Our own Ozark recipe for Fried Salt Pork is now in use in England, we hear. An American, living in England, found that the only meat within her budget was salt pork. Salt pork is like the little girl with the famous curl—it can be very, very good, or it can be definitely horrid. The English housewife remembered that her grandfather, who hailed from the Middle West, had often told her how salt pork had been fried in his old home. With painstaking care she followed that recipe to the best of her memory, and found the meat tasty, delicious and hearty. She shared the recipe with her

English neighbors. Now, we hear, her entire neighborhood is cooking fried salt pork by that recipe and liking it, just as you will:

### FRIED SALT PORK

Slice the salt pork thin. It slices best when cold.

Place in warm water to soak a short while before frying. (It could be soaked in milk, if you have milk to spare.) Remove from liquid.

Roll in meal. Heat generous amount of grease—(bacon fat or lard) in skillet, until very hot.

Drop in the slices of salt pork.

Fry until crisp and crunchy.

Save remainder of fat. Use it to fry eggs or make gravy.

Cracklin' Corn Bread is another Ozark favorite. In fact at the 1942 Flower and Garden Show in Chicago at the International Amphitheatre, the Men's Garden Club of Highland Park had an exhibit labeled "Dinner for Six in the Ozarks." The dinner consisted of six jugs, a pan of corn bread, and a bouquet of flowers stuck into the neck of an empty Four Roses Whiskey bottle. I was looking at the corn bread, trying to decide without putting on my glasses whether the dark spots in it were cracklin's or make-believe flies roosting on the bread, when the Jedge tossed a thumb at the Four Roses bottle and said: "Some furriner's been here!"

I hope the genius who thought up the exhibit really had cracklin' corn bread! It's a real Ozark treat. Cracklin's actually are the crisp, crunchy bits of fat tissue left in the kettle after lard has been rendered and drained off.

These cracklin's are put into the corn-bread batter when it is mixed. Then the bread is slowly baked for a long time. During this baking the cracklin's give up enough of the fat which they have absorbed to make little moist halos about

themselves, and a wealth of flavor and richness is added to the whole panful of corn bread. Thus, cracklin' corn bread is to Ozarkians what blueberry muffins are to the Michiganders.

### CRACKLIN' CORN BREAD

- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup all-purpose flour
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups yellow cornmeal
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon baking soda
- $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon salt
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons baking powder
- 2 eggs, beaten
- $1\frac{1}{4}$  cups buttermilk
- $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup cracklings (from fresh-rendered lard)

Sift the flour, measure, and resift twice with the cornmeal, sugar, baking soda, salt, and baking powder. Combine beaten eggs and buttermilk, and add all at once to cornmeal mixture. Stir until just combined but not smooth; then fold in the cracklings. Have a 10-inch skillet heated piping hot and greased, and fill two-thirds full with batter. Bake in a hot oven (450 deg. F.), 30 to 35 minutes, or until crust is crisp and golden brown. Serve hot.

Verna has added a note to this recipe, urging you to use meal made on the old-time stone burrs of a water mill, and fresh hog cracklin's if you can get them. Here you may have to follow the Ozark example of "doin' with what you have."

With your cracklin' corn bread you'll want beans of course. And when one mentions beans in the Ozarks he means soup beans or navy beans. And here's something else, unless one definitely and emphatically says baked beans one means boiled beans. This is the accepted way of preparing beans in the Ozarks.

## BOILED BEANS à la OZARKS

Look the beans over and discard those that look doubtful. Wash them well, and arrange to put the beans on around 8:30 to 9:00 A. M. to get them done by dinner. (Dinner is always at noon in the Ozarks.) Select a piece of salt pork (fat back, sow bosom and white mule are other names for it), a ham hock, or a bacon rind. Wash the meat, and place it in warm water in a large kettle on the stove. Add the beans. How many? Well, that depends upon your individual family needs. Three cups will make plenty of beans for a small family's dinner and leave enough cooked beans to make baked beans for next day.

Boil the beans from three to three and one-half hours. If water must be added from time to time, be sure it is hot. Otherwise, the beans will be lumpy. Salt the beans to taste near the end of the cooking process. Do not stir the beans during the cooking as that makes them lose their individuality. However, when you're perishing with hunger along about ten-thirty, you can fish out a little saucerful of beans, with some of the juice, and eat them with some bread and butter. If anyone comes in and catches you eating between meals, when your figger doesn't permit it, you can say: "Oh, I was just seeing if the beans were getting easy."

For baked beans, use the left-over boiled beans. Add more pepper and salt, a taste of mustard, and a small amount of molasses or brown sugar. Mix well. Cook in a moderate oven until well browned with a thick crust coating the top. At Sunrise Mountain Farm I always bury a whole onion in our beans when I'm baking them. But then I'm one of those persons who think that almost everything, except perhaps cocoanut custard, is all the better for a touch of onion!

Baked beans are not a traditional dish in the Ozarks. And 'all-night bean baking is unknown.

When you eat green beans in an Ozark home, you won't find them floating in white sauce, swimming in cream, or dripping with butter. These are city cooking methods scorned in the Ozarks. Green beans are served green and tempting, with a hint of fat lingering about them. This fat may be salt pork again, or a ham hock, or bacon grease. The beans, either the string or snap variety, are put on to cook with water and meat. About three hours are allowed for cooking. Add salt to taste sometime during process. Served with green onions, corn bread, and homemade cottage cheese, you'll find this Ozark meal something you'll long remember . . . with the right sort of memories.

Probably many a city home-maker has never realized that it is possible to make cottage cheese at home. But it is really very simple . . . if you can get hold of a gallon of thickly clabbered milk. I don't mean milk that has been allowed to sour in a mechanical refrigerator. This usually takes so long that the milk becomes spoiled before it sours. And there's a great deal of difference between spoiled milk and soured milk.

Granted that you have obtained a gallon of thickly clabbered milk, place it over low heat. The simmer heat of an electric range is all right. I use the back of our wood cook-stove. Too much heat causes the milk to get stringy instead of becoming the coagulated mass of curds you desire. However, if you keep the milk at just the right temperature, and stir it occasionally, it will eventually become a mass of curds in a sea of whey. When this stage is reached take the cheese from the heat and pour it through a strainer. The old-time Ozark woman puts her cheese or *smear-case*, as it is known in the hills, in a cloth bag, letting the milk drip through until nothing is left except the mass of curds. I don't like to wash that milky, messy bag. You can do as you like. When the whey has drained out, season the cheese

liberally with butter, or cream. If you wish, you can add pepper, salt and just a dash of sugar, to suit your family's taste.

Strangely enough, cheese cake is not a common Ozark dessert. When you get your farm in the Ozarks, and have gallons upon gallons of fresh rich milk from which you can make cottage cheese, you'll probably want a good cheese-cake recipe. Be foresighted and bring one along when you come to the hills.

Now, don't get the idea that we Ozarkians don't have dessert. Even when our real teeth are gone with the wind, we have that figurative sweet tooth.

For instance, a good winter dessert is Fried Dried Peach Pies. It may be the test of a good digestion, but even the most confirmed dyspeptic would try one of these pies served hot on a cold day. To make fried dried peach pies, cook dried peaches until they are a soft mass. Sweeten to taste. Add a dash of salt, and a tiny bit of allspice. Make your regular pie pastry. Roll out the pastry on a floured bread board. Place a dinner plate on the pastry and use it as a pattern for cutting a circle. Crease the circle in half. Fill the right-hand half with the seasoned cooked dried-peach filling. Moisten the edges of the dough by dipping your fingers in a glass of water and tapping the rim of the dough circle. Then fold the left-hand half of the dough over the right-hand half, and crimp the edges with a fork, to seal them.

In the meantime, have a skillet heating over the fire. By the time you are ready to cook the pie, this skillet should be piping hot. Put in as much lard as you would use for frying pancakes—that is, enough to keep the pie from burning. Plop the pie in the skillet. Fry first on one side, then on the other, until well browned. Serve hot.

And what about the bits of dough left after you've cut

circles from the pie pastry? Never let it be said that an Ozark housewife let them go to waste!

If there are only a few scraps, spread them with butter, sprinkle with sugar and cinnamon, and roll up as for a jelly roll. Slice crosswise, and bake in a pan with cut-side down. These are known as roly-polies.

In all the Ozarks there isn't a child, I hope, who hasn't known a burned finger by seizing these delicate crumbly morsels the instant they come out of the oven, forgetting that melted piping-hot sugar leaking out of these tasty tidbits is just about the burningest stuff there is. But who wouldn't risk a burned finger, or a burned gullet, to eat a half-dozen of these roly-polies within thirty seconds after they are baked!

If you have quite a bit of pie pastry, you might make jelly tarts. To make these, cut rounds with biscuit cutter. Leave one-half of the number of rounds plain, but prick them well with a fork to prevent blistery bubbles in the baking. The other half of the rounds should be cut like doughnuts, with a round hole in the center of each. Usually in our Ozark tarts the hole isn't round, for we use a thimble for the cutting, cutting three times, which makes a sort of shamrock-shaped opening. Bake these solid rounds and the rings as you would make a pie shell. While still warm, spread the solid rounds with jelly or jam, and cap each round with a cut-out ring. Children and husbands love these!

Another year-round dessert favorite in the Ozarks is Ozark Wild Blackberry Jam Cake.

#### JAM CAKE

- 1¾ cups all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon cloves
- ½ teaspoon allspice



- ½ cup butter
- ¾ cup sugar
- ⅔ cup wild blackberry jam
- 2 eggs, beaten
- ½ cup buttermilk

Sift and measure flour, and resift it 3 times with salt, baking powder, soda and spices. Cream butter until soft and smooth; add sugar, cream well, then add jam and eggs, and beat until smooth and fluffy. Add flour mixture and buttermilk alternately to the creamed mixture, beginning and ending with flour and beating well after each addition. Turn into a buttered baking pan, 7 x 11 inches, and bake in a moderate oven (350 deg. F.) for about 30 minutes, or until a clean broomstraw inserted in the center comes out clean. Turn the cake out onto a wire rack to cool. When just warm, serve with whipped cream, or white custard sauce. At Sunrise Mountain Farm, we prefer whipped cream. If we are out of wild blackberry jam, we use wild grape jam.

Other year-round favorites on Ozark tables are Molasses Cookies and Gingerbread.

The present sugar shortage makes these recipes more important than ever, and because of their importance I have substituted for our pinch-and-dab recipes the tested recipes Betty Crocker (Gold Medal Flour) gives for these delicacies.

### MOLASSES COOKIES

- ¾ cup shortening
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 4 tablespoons molasses
- 2¼ cups sifted flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons soda
- ½ teaspoon cloves
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ginger

Shape into balls the size of walnuts and dip tops in sugar. Bake 12 to 15 minutes in a quick moderate oven.

The Gingerbread we prefer is the old-time Molasses Cake, rich and dark:

### MOLASSES CAKE

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup shortening  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar  
1 egg  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup molasses  
2 cups sifted flour  
1 teaspoon soda  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon ginger  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1 cup thick sour milk

Cream shortening and sugar together. Blend in beaten egg and molasses. Then stir in dry ingredients, sifted together alternately with liquid. Pour into generously greased and floured 8 or 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch square pan, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches deep.

Bake 45 to 50 minutes in a slow-moderate oven.

The spring and summer stars of the Ozark Dessert Calendar are Strawberry Shortcake and Peach Cobbler.

Strawberry shortcake comes first. You can serve strawberry shortcake when the first berries reach Charles' Grocery, Meat Market and Dry Goods Emporium . . . or when you discover that the strawberry patch on which you have lavished so much care is at last getting somewhere. Clustered under its lovely strawberry leaves, nestling alongside white blossoms, are now enough ripened strawberries for a shortcake! And that's a day to remember.

Not for Ozarkians is the spongecake shortcake! They

would hoot at that as a waste of good berries. In fact, true Ozark shortcake doesn't even have an egg in the "cake" part. It is really a sweetened biscuit dough.

### STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons double-action baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup lard or other shortening
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup milk
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  quarts wild or tame strawberries
- $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar

Sift the dry ingredients with the flour. Work in the lard, as you would work shortening into biscuits. Add milk and combine with deft, light-fingered touch. Divide into two parts, if you want your shortcake to have more than two layers. Roll each section out to fit a pie pan. The dough should not be too thin. It should be between one-half and one inch thick. Bake in a moderate oven. When done, split through the center, placing one-half on the cake plate. While this bottom half of the shortcake is still hot, it should be buttered so generously it fairly drips butter. Then, just before serving, cover with scads and oodles and swarms of crushed, sweetened strawberries, swimming in their own delicious tempting juice. Top this with the top half of the shortcake, which should also be well buttered. Heap crushed berries on this, so that the juice drizzles down the sides to join the pool of juice and berries forming about the base of the shortcake. Then, on the top, arrange the whole berries which you thoughtfully put to one side as you stemmed them—these whole berries should be the acme of perfection. Bring the whole shortcake to the table and serve while the "cake" is still warm.

With whipped cream?

No, indeed! That's an insult, suh, in the Ozarks! Real, old-time Southern shortcake is served with plain cream, rich, yellow and thick. And let him who mentions dieting at a meal like this have to gather the strawberries for the next shortcake!

Ozark Peach Cobbler is not quite so spectacular as the strawberry shortcake. But anyone who has known this delicious dessert as it is served in the Ozarks will forever after sneer at city concoctions mis-labeled on dessert menus as "cobblers." The true peach cobbler is made in a large black dripping pan, rectangular in shape. Never, never in a pie pan. And the pastry is a rich, melt-in-your-mouth type, that is thick and crumbly rather than flaky. Look up such a recipe and make a double amount. Line the baking pan with this pastry. Sprinkle with one-half of the sugar you will put into the whole cobbler.

I can't tell you how much sugar because that depends upon the size of the cobbler as well as the variety and stage of ripeness of the peaches you will put into it. But surely you will need at least a cupful of sugar for the cobbler. Therefore, one-half cupful is sprinkled over the pastry. Over this sugar sprinkle about two tablespoons of flour. Then add the peaches, peeled and sliced thin. Don't be stingy with the peaches. Don't make a scant quart do for a big cobbler. Remember they cook down. And a thin pielike cobbler isn't really a cobbler.

Dot with butter. Add a tiny bit of nutmeg, if you wish.

Add the remainder of the sugar.

Sprinkle about two tablespoons of water over the peaches, just to start the steam when they begin to cook.

Put the top layer of pastry over the peaches.

Make sure there are ample slashes in the dough to allow the steam and juice to escape.

Put into a hot oven and bake to a rich, golden brown. When the cobbler is done, the sugar-flour peach syrup will have bubbled through the top-crust perforations, and turned to brown, sticky liquid candy about the edges.

To serve, bring the whole cobbler to the table, and ladle out generous squares steaming hot, spooning out on the serving plate the hot juice and fruit that goes with each square.

With the peach cobbler serve—not whipped cream—not even plain cream—instead serve “dip.”

“Dip” is made of milk, sweetened slightly, and generously sprinkled with nutmeg.

After an August noonday meal of hot fried chicken, gravy, corn bread and two helpings of piping-hot peach cobbler, the last one to the hammock under the shade trees is simply out of luck!

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

### *GARDENING IN THE OZARKS*

*A*S THIS is being written, the call for Victory Gardens is being sounded throughout these United States. Along with the slogan that "Food is a Weapon," we are being told how much money we can save by raising part of our food, and how nice it is to have vine-fresh vegetables. Shucks! We Ozarkians have known that all along. In fact, if we didn't know it, it'd be just too bad.

When you begin thinking of buying that farm in the Ozarks, you should think about your garden.

First: You should send to the State of Missouri for the Missouri Garden Planting Calendar, or keep the next few pages handy for reference. This calendar can be studied on winter evenings, along with the first seed catalogues that come to your hands.

Second: After you have acquired your farm, look about you for the neighbor who is more workbrittle than her neighbors—(yes, I said "her," because the garden is woman's work in the Ozarks)—and ask her for gardening advice.

You'll have so much city stubbornness it may take you a couple of gardens to realize that she has the right dope on Ozark planting, but that's better than having to work it out by the trial-and-error method.

The Missouri Garden Planting Calendar is hailed by the

was Labor Day when we got the idea of buying a farm in the Ozarks. The idea didn't come gradually, step by step. It was born of a desperate state of mind, and a three-day rain. At the moment it seemed neither my husband nor I would have a job for very long! Where to go, how to keep a roof over our heads—and incidentally, over our furniture, too—how to find food, were problems we had to face.

We chose the Ozarks for these reasons: 1. Land is cheap. 2. The fuel problem takes care of itself because all farm lands are wooded. 3. A family can raise most of its food.

*September, 1935. My sister and brother-in-law go to the Ozarks and select a farm for us.*

We had only a thousand dollars. We told them the farm they chose for us should not cost more than that, since we could see no way of clearing off a mortgage. Somehow, our Guardian Angel made it clear to us that city people like us cannot step right out on a rocky farm and make enough money to keep themselves in comfort and pay off a mortgage, too. We didn't go on the buying trip ourselves for we still had jobs in Chicago. And since we had never been in the Ozarks, we felt that we would make the same mistakes as anyone we might send. I doubt it now, because I like to scrub! My sister never did.

Her judgment of a farm was based solely on the cleanliness of the floors. In a community where we have kinfolks, she found a farm with a scrubbed log house on it. She said to the farmer:

"Our sister gave us a thousand dollars to pay for a farm in the Ozarks. How much do you want for yours?"

The farmer didn't need to use much of his horsetrading training to answer:

"One thousand dollars!"

Thus, by very remote control, Robert and I, back in Chicago, became owners of a farm. My sister and brother-in-law

were to make their home on it until we were ready to take possession.

*June, 1936. We see our farm for the first time.*

The farm was a forty-acre piece of land, with a two-story-and-lean-to house on the front edge. It was a drought year. The forty acres were burned to a crisp. The house was of logs, many of which were rotting into powdery nothingness. And there was a snake in the cellar. We had intended to stay two weeks but a few days gave us all we could take of the Ozarks! We started back to Chicago, where the threatened financial emergency had not occurred, after all. As we drove out of the lane I turned back for one long last look at our Thousand Dollar Mistake.

*August, 1936. Robert secures a job making speeches for Alfred M. Landon.*

All fall, my husband toured the Ozarks with a sound truck, filling the air with Party pleas and Republican predictions. Few, faithful or otherwise, rallied to Mr. Landon's support. But it was an important trip for my husband. Robert learned to love the Ozarks and made enough money to buy us an additional 120 acres. One of the Forties joined our home farm, giving us 80 acres in one piece of land; across the road was the second Forty, and the third one was a patch of wooded hills and hollers, around the corner on the Jack's Fork Road—price \$750.00.

*Thanksgiving, 1936. Robert establishes himself at our farm.*

He started making improvements we had planned. My sister and her husband were still there. They lived in the farmhouse on the hilltop. Robert had the cabin in the valley of our newly-acquired Arnold Forty fixed up for himself and Judy, the Boston Terrier. He took his meals at the farmhouse.

*Holidays, 1936. Robert buys his first sheep.*

These first sheep were a flock of mixed breeds. Robert



housed the sheep in the barn in the Arnold Forty. The barn had to be repaired at considerable expense—\$200.00. Green oak was used, and as the lumber dried, the nails were held so tightly that probably not even a cyclone could dislodge them. I hope a daredevil cyclone won't take me seriously and come along to prove it can blow it down with a huff and a puff. Until that happens, we'll assume that it's an immovable object and look upon it as one of our better mistakes. The lumber cannot be used for any other purpose. The barn is too far away from the farmhouse to house chickens or sheep. And since the valley in the Arnold Forty is a pocket that is always too hot or too cold or too damp or too dry, the cabin is used only occasionally. Therefore, it seems that we wasted some good (and scarce) money on this particular bit of building.

*Late winter, 1937. Robert becomes a shepherd of the hills.*

The lambs began to arrive. Many had to be fed with a bottle. Robert learned that a lamb outdoes the fussiest baby in being finicky.

*Winter, 1936-37. Robert builds fences . . . with the help of all the available hired men in the neighborhood.*

Fence posts were cut from our own woods. Local help cut trees from our own land, made them into fence posts, and drove them into the ground for five cents each. Corner posts were ten cents each. The fencing was a local buy. The total cost of fencing each forty-acre field was approximately \$150.00. When the fences were built Robert painted the fence posts along the lane a bright red, with white tops. Many of our native Ozark neighbors who had been friendly and chatty came no more to see us! The fence was bad enough, they must have thought, but to paint the fence posts . . . well, that definitely set us apart from hill people.

*Spring, 1937. We acquire the Turner Forty.*

Robert traded the around-the-corner Forty for another

forty-acre plot directly in line with our Home Forty and the Arnold Forty. He gave the owner \$200 to boot! We put up more fence.

*Spring, 1937. My sister and brother-in-law leave the Ozarks and return to Iowa. We repair the farmhouse.*

The log walls were covered on the outside with weather boarding. The logs make excellent insulation. These rooms are cool in summer, warm in winter. The lean-to was extended to give us a breakfast room and another room that should have been made into a bathroom long since . . . but will remain an empty room for the duration. Price of repairs, \$350.00.

*May, 1937. We begin to be fond of our farm.*

One night I hauled the typewriter out of the rubbish closet and wrote a story about our Ozark "vittles." I sent it as a contribution to June Provines who was writing the column "Front Views and Profiles" in the *Chicago Tribune*. It was the first of scores of such contributions.

*Summer, 1937. Sunrise Mountain Farm has a bumper crop of wild dewberries.*

Robert had our farm housekeeper, a native Ozark woman, make up about eighty glasses of jam and jelly such as all hill women make up each year. It was the first time he had ever been responsible for any canning effort. He became very jelly-conscious.

*Autumn, 1937. We buy some thoroughbred Shropshire sheep.*

We paid \$200 for a ram and four ewes.

*Autumn, 1937. Robert's inspiration.*

My husband had the bright idea of making jams and jellies for city folks who don't have a chance to get out and pick wild dewberries, wild blackberries, and wild grapes for themselves.

*Winter, 1937. We build a new building for a garage, etc.*

An outdoor toilet was built in one corner, and the building also housed a tool room. Price, \$375.00.

*Winter, 1937-38. Robert worries.*

Robert spent most of the winter pacing the floor, worrying about the berry crop for the next year. He worried about the high-priced Shrops not having lambs. (Only one brought us a lamb, but he was a magnificent ram.) He worried about the mixed breed sheep having lambs. In a letter dated February 28th, he wrote to me:

“Charlotte has been having a barrel of trouble. She is such a nice sheep, I had hoped her lamb would come along without any trouble. But a couple of weeks ago, she developed that awful preparturient paralysis. Her legs seemed to give out so she had to lie down all the time. I have kept doctoring her carefully with a new treatment I heard of, molasses and water, and yesterday she was ready to give birth to her lamb. She tried hard, but nothing happened. I examined her and found that her baby would be still-born. I got antiseptics and went to work, and lo, there were a pair of twins, both dead. However, Charlotte got right up on her feet and is making a very good recovery. Lady, it's tough to be a shepherd, after a lifetime of white-collar work! But one has to give care to his charges and I certainly like to help them in their hour of trouble.”

A course in veterinary surgery is recommended for the man who would be a farmer in the Ozarks.

*Spring, 1938. Getting ready to make jams and jellies.*

We put screens on our cabin in the valley. We bought two kerosene stoves, four kettles, and stirring spoons. We watched the berries.

We sowed lespedeza on the Home Forty.

*June, July, August, 1938. We go into the jelly business.*

We made our first jelly and jam of wild dewberries, wild plums, wild blackberries and wild grapes.

Two neighbor women made up 3,000 glasses of jam and jelly to fill an order from Carson Pirie Scott & Co., in Chicago. Our Ozark products were in demand!

*Autumn, 1938. Our pedigreed ram, the Cracksman, dies.*

*Autumn, 1938. We try to start a comforter business.*

We had 100 wool batts made up from our wool, and prepared to make wool comforters to sell. We rented a building, hired women, selected quilt patterns. Each comforter required 84 hours of hand sewing on it, in addition to the materials, silk, thread, wool and cheesecloth, and the cost of having the wool washed, carded and then made into a batt. The Wage and Hour Law came into being right then, and this business venture, like Charlotte's unfortunate twins, was stillborn.

*Winter, 1938-39. The business grows.*

We had some classy stationery printed and Robert wrote letters to big stores all over the United States, offering our jams and jellies.

We planned a new room for our house. We designed a long living room with French doors across the front, a bay window at the south end and a big fireplace at the north end.

In making plans for furniture arrangements, I always left one corner empty. After my husband's repeated questioning, I admitted that I hoped to use that corner for the big old square piano that my mother had owned for many years. It was an antique when it came into our family.

"You, with a piano!" scoffed my husband. "And besides, your mother won't give up that piano. There are too many memories of her girls' childhood associated with it!"

But the corner remained in the plans.

We began to toy with the idea of putting a store on our farm, when the new Farm-to-Market Highway was built past our farm by WPA labor. With the idea of the store in mind, we allowed the road to cut across a corner of our farm.

We had our hundred wool batts that were orphaned by the

Wage and Hour Law made into dog-size comforters! These were sold to the John Morrell & Company, makers of Red Heart Dog Food, to be given to customers as premiums.

*February 22nd, 1939. The first lamb of the season.*

Orrena's new daughter, born in late afternoon, was promptly named Georgia Washington.

*Friday, February 24th. Just like spring.*

*Saturday, February 25th. The heaviest snowfall in 20 years.*

A six-inch fall of snow was registered. We had to shovel snow on one hill, driving to town. Sheep, chickens and horses were kept in the barns. Punch ran riot in the snow, smiling his doggy-grin. Judy moped in the house because she found herself falling headlong in the snow when she tried to run like Punch. The cat stretched out on the hearth rug, flexing his claws, and probably dreaming of mice.

*Sunday, February 26th. Ozarks still and white with snow.*

*Monday, February 27th. Spring again.*

Weather turned warm. Rain poured. The country became a sea of slush. Five new lambs born in the storm.

*March, 1939. Robert becomes the Jedge.*

Robert was elected Justice of the Peace, the first Republican elected to office in Date Township in 66 years. He became known as "the Jedge" to everyone in the community.

*Spring, 1939. We start our new living room.*

We pointed out its various features to our neighbors who came to see us. They shrugged and said: "You're going to an awful lot of bother!"

*Spring, 1939. We sow 1,000 pounds of lespedeza.*

We got it for 4½ cents a pound by buying a ton in partnership with Oscar Simms. Cost 7½ cents a pound in 1938. We sowed lespedeza on the Turner Forty and thin spots on the Home Forty.

*Spring, 1939. Busy days.*

Robert writes:

"I surely have my hands full. Five bottle lambs to feed every three hours, chickens, old and young, to look after, old sheep to watch and thirty-one growing lambs to keep an eye on, building operations to superintend, jam and jelly business to keep going, dozens of letters to write daily, and in addition to all that, hold court here at the farmhouse every time anyone misses a pig or gets ten rods of fence stolen.

"It's early March, but it's as warm as June. Everything all dried up again after our snow and rains. The sheep are lying in the sun up by the barn, their little lambs beside them, making a lovely picture. Punch and Judy are hot on the trail of a varmint. Ducks and geese are swimming in the big pond, and flying about are more bluebirds, robins and cardinals than I have ever seen before. Guinea hens and chickens are all over the Home Forty. And from the kitchen comes the fragrance of a cherry pie that Pauline is making from a can of cherries a neighbor brought in this morning. It's really springtime in the Ozarks!"

*March 13th. We "make" the Montgomery Ward catalogue.*

We burst into print—with a testimonial about the quilting frames we bought for our comforter business! Result—I began to get letters from strangers, asking about the Ozarks.

Someone gave one of my co-workers a race horse. He gave it to me. While I was figuring how to get the \$126 required to get the horse from New Orleans to Sunrise Mountain Farm, he up and won a race and the owner took back the gift. Bitter disappointment.

*March 21, 1939. Thirty-one lambs and still more to come.*

*May, 1939. New living room finished. Cost, \$1,000.00.*

*Summer, 1939. More jams and jellies.*

A crew of six in cabin at Arnold Forty put up 10,000 glasses. The glasses were washed and sterilized in the farmhouse kitchen, trundled down the hill in a wheelbarrow, re-sterilized and filled. Allowed to cool, then hauled back to farm buildings on hilltop, packed and labeled in the garage.

*Autumn, 1939. A lesson in antiques.*

We went to Iowa to visit my family and drop hints about the square piano. Walk into parlor. No piano.

"Where's the piano?" I ask, trying to sound casual.

"Well, at last, I got rid of that old dust catcher," says my mother. "But I had to pay a fellow sixty cents an hour to bust it up. And he was so slow and pokey about it I had to take the hatchet and do most of the hacking myself, or it would have cost me \$5.00."

"Didn't you save any part of it?" I ask, weakly.

"Oh, there were a couple of boards that look like they'd make good solid shelves. They're out in the barn. If you want them, you're welcome to them."

The two boards are rosewood.

*Winter, 1939-40. We build another building.*

We built a jelly kitchen on the hilltop to centralize all canning and preserving operations. I papered the rear wall with washable paper to catch spatters.

*Spring, 1940. Beautiful early spring.*

Very little farm work. Farm entirely turned to pasture, except for orchard and garden plot.

Lambs came early.

We built a handsome new outdoor toilet (cost, \$100.00) that made us the talk of the country. No one had ever seen a privy with wallpaper and curtains.

*June, 1940. Work for the Jedge.*

The Jedge was busier than a one-armed painter. He wrote one morning:

"Here it is, just five o'clock, and I have let the sheep out to pasture, fed the chickens, geese, ducks, guinea hens and bantams, lighted fires under the water boiler in the Jelly Kitchen, moved 600 glasses of jelly from one table to another, and am writing this while the coffee perks. Then I'll go to town for our crew of jelly workers. We turned out 1,578 glasses of

strawberry jam here yesterday. We should do as much today, and for several days next week. We certainly have a grand-looking crew of cooks working here this year. All except one or two are really good lookers. Redheads, blondes and two brunette sisters that look like dolls. And everything is kept so clean, we're ready for the Food Inspector every minute!

"And you should see our new housekeeper. She's 65, and a born gardener. She's going to have this place so full of flowers there won't be a place for the lawn chairs. I don't know how she finds time to do it, for she keeps the house clean as a pin, gets my meals (all except breakfast) and works the rest of the day in the jelly kitchens. She wanted to know yesterday 'effen I needed any more hands'! Said she knew two girls who could turn off more work than airy man."

*May 10, 1941. I meet June Provines face to face for the first time.*

For four years I had contributed stories about our farm to Miss Provines' column in the *Chicago Tribune*, but had evaded meeting her. I was afraid she might not like me.

*May, 1941. My book, Take to the Hills, is published.*

*June, 1941. The Jelly Kitchen moves to town.*

Sunrise Mountain Farm was neglected through the press of business affairs.

*August, 1941. Roy, our man of all work, leaves us.*

*Autumn, 1941. Major portion of sheep flock sold.*

We kept only special pets. Sheep pastures allowed to rest for a year.

*Pearl Harbor, 1941. Sunrise Mountain Farm booms!*

Plans were promptly made for more farming. Food will be needed. Crops must come first.

*February 1, 1942. Danny Arnold comes to work for us.*

*March, 1942. Farming Again.*

More chickens bought. Not just chickens, but good white Leghorns. The two wings of the barn were lined and roosts



were installed. Cost, \$150.00. Seeds put into hotbed. Garden planned. Plans made to buy more sheep in autumn.

*May, 1942. Danny and Aunt Lizzie shoot seven water moccasin snakes in our big pond.*

Danny started the job. Aunt Lizzie heard the noise and came down to see what "all the shootin's fer." She trudged back home over the field, got her gun and came back to blaze away until no more snakes were seen.

In the midst of the shooting, she said, "Whee! this is more fun than Carter's got oats!"

*June, 1942. Work.*

Gardening. Tending chickens. Ozark jams and jellies reach both coasts.

What about next year? Who can tell? Again, as back in 1935, we turn back to the land.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

THESE are the questions our city friends most often ask about the Ozarks. I am answering them here just as I answer them orally.

*Do they have child marriages in the Ozarks?*

It's true Ozark folks marry very young. Last week a couple came to the Jedge to be married. They had the license and a straggly-haired old woman was with them.

"That's my datter and I'm a-wantin' her to git married!" said the woman.

The Jedge looked at the young folks. He guessed they *might* be fifteen, but they didn't look it.

"Then they'll have to go some place else," he said. "I won't be a party to such a marriage. These youngsters aren't dry behind the ears, yet!"

*What do the Ozarkians think of the war?*

This war has been brought closer to the Ozark people than any other since the War Between the States. The proximity of the army camps, and the great number of jobs that have been created for all who are willing to work, have made the war very real. Many girls from our locality have gone up to Fort Leonard Wood to wait tables, and men have gone to find jobs as carpenters or helpers in the vast amount of construction work.

As to the actual fighting, it seems so far away that the true

Ozarkian can hardly comprehend it. As always, distance baffles the Ozark mind. However, if war ever comes to the Ozarks, and an enemy tries to take our hills, he'll find himself in the midst of the hardest fighting he has ever done. As Doc Good said, looking about at the rocks and hills:

"If Hitler ever comes in here, he'll never get out!"

The Ozark willingness to fight, and complete bewilderment over distance, seems to be summed up in the comment of Bruce Hunt, owner of the Squirrel Hunters' Barber Shop. Bruce paused while shaving the Jedge, wiped his razor on a piece of paper, shifted his cud of tobacco, and said:

"Yep, I reckon I could kill me a helluva mess of Japs, effen I could only git where they's at!"

Ozark women seem to be even more aware of the war than the men. The Women's Farm Clubs, and many other women's organizations, are going in for studying and reviewing current magazine articles on Hitler and conditions in the conquered countries.

Pearl Harbor struck home in several Howell County families. One family near Mountain View had a boy on the *Oklahoma*. Every day war is coming nearer to us as more of our Ozark boys go into the services.

Ozark women are faithfully complying with the government's food-production program. Many women in towns and rural districts signed cards to produce more food of all kinds, raise at least twenty garden vegetables to be canned and preserved, produce more chickens and eggs, increase cream and milk production, butter, etc., and to preserve, both by canning and curing, two hundred pounds of meat for each person in the family.

The Ozarks were a fertile field for isolationism. Preceding Pearl Harbor, even in Springfield, metropolis of the Ozarks, one was scoffed at if he dared mention that the Ozarks might some day be bombed. Now, Springfield has been warned that,

due to proximity to Fort Leonard Wood, it may expect to be bombed as a part of the enemy strategy to confuse and scare the people.

And Springfield is ready.

As to the war making great changes in the Ozark way of living . . . well, I don't think that's possible. If boys have absorbed the get-up-and-go of the outside world, they will stay outside the Ozarks. If they come back to the slow, easy pace of the hills, they will come back because that's the sort of life they prefer.

And it is quite possible the world will find the Ozarkian has been right all along! When the smoke and fury of war clear away, the world may discover that a little cabin of one's own, a patch of beans and 'taters, and a lot of fishin' in a crystal-clear stream, spell quite complete happiness.

*My husband and I have always wanted a farm just like yours. What would we have to pay for one in the Ozarks?*

Anywhere from \$250.00 up. I've never seen but one for sale priced at more than \$5,000. And the one at that outrageous price sent us scurrying back to Sunrise Mountain Farm and raising its purely hypothetical price to a perfectly scandalous figure. "If," we said, "they can get *that* for their dump, why Sunrise Mountain Farm is worth a fortune!"

Land is priced anywhere from \$2.50 to \$10.00 per acre, depending on the location and the improvements. A farm near us is priced at \$800.00. It has one hundred and twenty acres and a fairly livable house. About forty acres of the farm are good pasture. The other forty is a rocky hillside that doesn't even look good in a picture. I'd hate to be a sheep or cow trying to get my breakfast out of it.

The government has been buying up acres and acres of land in certain parts of the Ozarks. No one knows why. Perhaps Uncle Sam is looking forward to a time when many more families will be eager to acquire a homestead. As my friend

Lucy Bugg, of Ellington, Missouri, wrote to me last week: "When the war is over, what will all these defense workers do? There'll be no jobs for them, and they'll have nothing to live on! If they would only spend the money they are making now for a little house and a few acres of land, they would have something to fall back on when the lean years come!"

Miss Bugg's thought of subsistence acreage is inspired by the fact that everywhere in the hills we have been hearing about the high wages paid to defense workers. To native Ozarkians dollar bills are scarce as hundred-dollar bills to the average city worker. Consequently news of the high salaries being paid to defense workers arouses the feeling that they should be doing something sensible with all that money.

*If we buy a farm in the Ozarks, can we get a reliable native Ozark couple to live on it and take care of it for us?*

Maybe you can! I'm not saying you can't. But if you do the Judge and I will come over and pay a dollar apiece to look at your reliable, trustworthy couple. And if we can steal them out from under your nose, we'll do it. If an Ozark couple is reliable and trustworthy, land is so cheap here they will have a place of their own. If they are floaters, heaven help you!

We have advertised, sent messages via the Ozark grapevine, begged, cajoled and threatened, in our efforts to get a good reliable couple for our farm. If the woman is good, the man turns out to be the type who finds himself a good shade tree and lets Nature take its course with crops and animals, without help or interference from him. If the man is good, the woman has a glamor-girl complex, and sits around with hands held stiffly in the air so her nail polish won't be spoiled.

We have had both kinds. Our Glamor-Girl-and-Hard-Working-Husband picked up and left without notice when my husband spoke his mind about the fact that not a single clean cup could be found in the kitchen for his morning

coffee (which he had made for himself). The Hard-Working-Wife-Lazy-Husband combination is told about earlier in these pages. The household and farm help situation has grown even more acute in these past months.

*Can you give us the name of a good real-estate dealer from whom we can buy a farm without taking the trip down to the Ozarks?*

As this is written, the thought uppermost in everyone's mind is saving tires. But dire as this need is, I wouldn't advise you to buy a farm without seeing it and walking over every acre of it. When you read advertisements in newspapers about farms with *good houses and barns*, remember these are judged by Ozark standards, not by, let's say, the Wisconsin idea of a good house or barn. If a barn has enough wall to cast a shadow, it is considered a good barn in the Ozarks. And even though a cat could crawl through every wall, the house would be listed as "good." When the advertisements speak of timberland, they mean land with trees on it, not land that is ready to grow prize vegetables.

In fact, some trees won't even grow on it. Several years ago I planted a weeping willow tree in our front lawn at Sunrise Mountain Farm. A few days ago, I sighed and said, "Darn it, I wish that willow tree would grow!"

"Hey, that tree is doing all right!" said my husband enthusiastically. "Look! It's held its own for three years!"

On the other hand, our Heavenly Gate cherry trees are thriving beautifully, making me feel like a fifth columnist.

*What about jobs?*

Jobs? Oh, yes, those things that give you a weekly income, regularly! Well, there are some! But the pay is light. Remember the Wage and Hour Law affects only the business enterprises that employ more than eight persons. There are few of these in the hills. Since the start of the war, most of the able-bodied men in and around Mountain View who want to work have gone to the army camps to take jobs as carpenters

or carpenters' helpers or other laborers. Judged by city standards, even fair-paying jobs here in the hills are just about non-existent. It's an odd situation, but there are few jobs, and few people to fill them. Perhaps with the advent of more city people, both employers and employees, the situation will be ironed out. The true Ozarkian male seems to have an inborn dislike for anyone who is in a position to give him orders. His is a free untrammled spirit that is stifled by orders. And even friendly advice is taken with more than the proverbial grain of salt.

*Can we get a little farm at the edge of town, so my husband can work in town while I take care of the farm?*

It depends upon what town you choose. It is possible, if your occupation is one that will lend itself to a small-town occupation and small-town wages. But remember, your Ozark employer will employ his son, his sons-in-law, his nephews, and his friends' sons, sons-in-law and nephews, before he will consider the most competent "furriner." However, that's one way of getting that little farm.

*Can we two city folks make a living on our farm?*

Well, it's being done! But you've got to know more than a little about farming, poultry and stock raising to supply your own needs and have enough to sell.

At the present moment (June 3, 1942), the prices for the following items are:

Eggs . . . . .	27c
Butter fat, No. 1 . . . . .	36c
Butter fat, No. 2 . . . . .	33c
Heavy Hens, 5 lbs. and over . . .	17c lb.
Leghorn Hens . . . . .	14c
Heavy Springs . . . . .	21c
Leghorn Springs . . . . .	19c
Heavy Roosters . . . . .	11c
Leghorn Roosters . . . . .	8c

You can do a little figuring for yourself, and make your own decision.

*How about the husband keeping his well-paying job in the city while the wife and family hold down the little forty-acre farm in the Ozarks?*

This seldom pans out according to plan. The husband finds that he is spending the greater part of his salary on that little farm, with no accompanying farm income to balance. It becomes just a hole into which he sinks each monthly pay check. There are two divided households to keep up, and unless the wife has had previous farm experience, all labor must be hired. She has no way of knowing if she's getting value received, so it's best not to plan on this way of paying for your Ozark farm. Usually the would-be farmers eventually give up their farm and go back to the city.

*What about country schools in the Ozarks?*

Country schools are surprisingly good. They are taught by kinfolks of the board members, naturally, but even these must have fair education. At the present time, the Jedge is on the school board of Harlow schoolhouse, but he isn't allowed to have any "say" in the conduct of the school. The other two members resent his presence bitterly, since he is still considered a "furriner," and they combine to down any proposition he makes.

When country children have finished the country grade school, they go to the nearest high school. A bus operated at county expense takes them to and from the school.

*Are the Ozarks a good sheep country?*

Yes! But how good a shepherd are you? Sheep demand care, particularly at lambing time. Even our sheep, which had special pasture and snug barns, began to sicken and die when the Jedge found his time fully occupied by the business of manufacturing and selling jams and jellies. The work of worming, drenching and deticking was left to hired help.



And finally the Jedge awoke to the fact that he had to make a choice between a herd of fine, healthy sheep or a nation-wide sale of jams and jellies made from Ozark wild fruit and berries. The jellies won.

However, the thought of a farm without sheep was unbearable. So a few were kept, just as pets. One of these was Orrena II, the sheep that had a broken leg. She had come up to the house one day with one leg hanging broken and limp. The Jedge promptly put it in splints, drove madly into town for plaster of Paris, and had the leg in a cast in practically no time at all. I asked if we should autograph the cast and let her keep it as a souvenir. He coldly said that it was no time for joking. Orrena II went around for weeks with her leg in a cast. Finally it was removed. She bounded away on four perfectly good legs, probably the only sheep in America who can talk about her operation.

*Are the Ozarks a good country for poultry?*

Yes! Excellent! But remember, the price of eggs is lower when you are far from a big city. If you think you will get the same price for your Ozark eggs that you pay your city milkman for fresh country eggs, you're sadly mistaken. You get the market price, which is far, far below the price you pay in the city.

Don't try to raise turkeys and chickens together. Turkeys are more sensitive to diseases than one can imagine, and they can't tell you where it hurts. They just lie down and die.

The good drainage of the average Ozark land is a great help to good chicken raising. And because the climate is mild, chickens can run outside practically the year around. Get complete information on poultry raising through sources recommended by *Prairie Farmer* or other reliable agricultural papers, before you take up poultry raising.

*Do you have snakes in the Ozarks?*

Yes! Even the preachers see snakes in the Ozarks. And

they'd better see them, for the snakes are not coming along with pink elephants—they're really present in the flesh. Black snakes, king snakes, blue racers, whip snakes and garden varieties are found in abundance, and more rarely the poisonous varieties, the copperheads, the cottonmouth moccasin, and the rattlesnake. Also the "spreading" adder, called "spread head," is very poisonous. If you're one of those persons to whom a snake is a *snake*, and you always say you might just as well be bitten as die of fright—take this bit of advice: stay out of the woods. And any place, any time, during your stay in the Ozark woods be on the lookout for the snake that may be lurking about.

Down in the hills everyone has a favorite snake story.

Mrs. Rinehart's concerns the time when she and Mr. Rinehart and a group of their friends were at their summer cabins on the bank of Jack's Fork. Their summer home comprised two buildings, one for sleeping and lounging, the other for dining. Mrs. Rinehart and several other women were getting dinner in the dining hall when suddenly Mrs. Rinehart spied a big black snake lying on the ledge over the door, on the inside of the room. She motioned toward the snake and everyone froze in her tracks. A snake inside the house is one of the most terrible things that can happen in an Ozark home. Quicker than you can say "scat," the snake can wriggle into some hidden spot, and until you locate him home definitely isn't the same. Mrs. Rinehart glanced out of the window and saw another of their friends headed to the dining hall from the other building. She knew she had to act quickly, and surely. But Ozark women can do that.

Her rifle was standing in the corner. She edged toward it without saying a word in the tense, nerve-wracking silence. She grabbed up the gun, flung it to her shoulder, took aim, and fired, practically in one breath. The snake dropped to the

floor, wriggled in its death throes, and was still! A bullet in the head puts an end to any snake.

Although First Aid classes teach various forms of relief for snakebite, the good old reliable Ozark remedy is coal oil (kerosene). If it is possible to submerge the bitten spot in the oil, so much the better. But where that is impossible, compresses wet with coal oil will save the victim's life.

*Do you have forest fires in the Ozarks?*

Yes, we do! That's another reason why I do not tell you to build a little home and leave it to take care of itself! Almost every springtime we have very disastrous fires. Usually they are the result of negligence or of downright cussedness.

In the Ozarks the accepted way of clearing a little garden patch is to burn it off. The farmer who owns the patch chooses a day when the wind is blowing away from his house. He sets the patch on fire to burn off the weeds and stubble left from last summer. It burns, all right. But unfortunately, the fire does not stop at the far edge of his garden! It sweeps on through woods and fields, sometimes for miles and miles. Occasionally it will be stopped by a highway, or a side road, but we have seen tall trees burning to the topmost branch topple across a roadway and instantly ignite the farm on the other side of the road.

As this is written it is less than a week since Sunrise Mountain Farm suffered its annual fire. This fire originated alongside the road, evidently from a cigarette carelessly tossed into the dry grass. At the time, we were getting the tail end of a tornado that swept through Illinois and Tennessee, and the fire, fanned by a forty-mile wind, was on Sunrise Mountain Farm in less time than it takes to tell.

Fortunately, we had back-fired around the buildings a couple of weeks ago, so we lost no buildings, and the animals and fowl were all locked inside. But the flames licked

wicked scarlet tongues along the foundation of our hundred-dollar privy, and actually ignited our woodpile. Then, leaving fence posts, trees and down timber to burn like a thousand campfires throughout the night, the fire hurried on over to Aunt Lizzie's. And our fire-fighting crew, dog-tired and smoky as chimney sweeps, went with it to flail with wet feed bags at the creeping fingers of flame edging toward Aunt Lizzie's house and barns.

During the fire one of the men who had been furiously raking dried grass and fighting back the flames happened to meet the Jedge at the cistern as they both came back up for more water.

"Hello, Mr. Lyon," said the man, panting from his haste and exertion. "I want to introduce myself when we have time." He grabbed up the pail and started away. "I just bought a farm down the road. I'm . . . from Waukegan!"

"Did you ever meet Jack Benny?" shouted the Jedge.

"Took tickets in the theater . . . when he played the violin!"

Our newest neighbor. Practically from Chicago!

*How hot does it get in the Ozarks?*

Let's talk about those nice cool summer evenings when you have to put on a wrap to sit out on the terrace. And when you really and truly must sleep under blankets. But . . . if you insist . . . I'll have to tell you it really gets very warm during the day. So hot that you'd better plan on doing your gardening in the cool of the morning. But there is no humidity, so the minute you get into the shade, it's cool.

*How cold does it get in winter?*

It gets down to zero, by cracky! But it doesn't last long. A week's cold spell is considered most unusual. It even snows occasionally, but the snow may come in the night and be gone by noon.

*Are all the stories about hill folks true?*

It depends on what stories you have heard. Offhand I'd



... He came upon an old man sitting on the fence, just looking.

say that truth is stranger than fiction. And a lot funnier . . . if you're talking about the Ozarks. The true Ozarkian has a sense of humor that is difficult for outsiders to understand. Perhaps because the Ozarkian is slyly poking fun at the outsider himself, right at the moment the outsider is trying to get an understanding of the local point of view.

One of my friends was hunting in the hills, and like most city people in Ozark woods he became lost. He finally stumbled onto a back-country road, and in sheer desperation walked along it, hoping it would lead him to some familiar highway. After walking some time, he came upon an old man sitting on the fence, just looking.

"Good morning," said the lost hunter.

The old man didn't even give a grunt to let him know he had heard.

"I seem to be a bit confused in my directions," said the hunter. "Where does this road go?"

The old man took the pipe out of his mouth, spat at a weed, and said, "I bin here nigh onto forty-nine years, and it hain't went no place yit!"

He put the pipe back in his mouth, and continued to look out over the scenery.

One Sunday morning when we were driving through the hills we happened upon one of the quaintest Ozark dwellings I had seen. It was a little house by the side of the road—scarcely more than a shed, boarded up. And protruding through the side of the wall was a length of stovepipe, with smoke coming out of it. Evidently a pot of beans was simmering inside on a little stove. Seated outside the cabin were a young woman in a clean calico dress, a little girl about three years old, also neat and clean, and two men. The young man seemed to match up with the woman and child; the other was slightly older. There was something amazingly peaceful . . . a sort of completeness . . . about the group sitting there in

the spring sunshine, with dinner cooking inside that crude cabin, and the whole motoring world rushing madly past their door. I wanted that picture, just as it was that spring morning. The Jedge was driving, and by the time I got him stopped—every wife knows what a job it is to get a husband to stop for a picture—we were a half-mile down the road. I picked up my camera, hopped out of the car, and walked back toward the group.

As I walked along, I thought to myself, "Now, I just can't walk up and say, 'You have such a funny cabin, I want to take its picture.' After all, these people have pride!"

When I reached the group, I began taking my camera out of the case, saying, "Darn that husband of mine! It takes him twenty minutes to get the car stopped when I want to take a picture!"

The older man in the group grinned, and said, "Well, when I seen you-ens a-gittin' out'n the car, I said to these folks, 'Well, gol-dang, if yander hain't my sister!'"

They had been making fun of me all the way down the hill.

True hill folk do not like strangers. Even the people in many small towns look upon strangers with suspicion. Part of this may come from the fact that many strangers come into the hills expecting to make a living in the little town or on a tiny farm. And soon he finds that Ozark ways are not his ways . . . that he cannot accustom himself to the slow pace at which life flows on in the Ozark backwoods. And soon he pulls up stakes and is on his way. His Ozarkian neighbors have known it would happen.

Part of the dislike of strangers may come from an instinctive dislike of change. The Ozarkians are happy. In most instances they have reduced life to the fundamentals of food, shelter and clothing. And they do not want to be aroused. They seem to feel that strangers coming in with

new ideas, new plans, new thoughts, will cause a change in their mode of life. Therefore, the stranger is to be avoided, spurned and scorned.

*Is Jack's Fork a real river?*

Yes, indeed! Jack's Fork is a river with as much personality as a problem child. At the point where it passes within a mile of Sunrise Mountain Farm it is a placid little stream, bubbling over rocks that can be seen through the clear water. In fact, when I wade in it I always walk in the sunshine and keep an eye on the rocks just ahead of my bare feet. If I stub my toe on a low gray rock I want to make sure it is really a rock, not a coiled-up snake which might not take my kick in a gentlemanly spirit.

Farther along, Jack's Fork becomes the life of the scenery. It takes a leap and a spin and plunges along for a mile or so as though it suddenly remembers it has a date to meet the Current River over there within sight of Rymer's Ranch.

Then it will slow down and quietly move along under overhanging trees and bushes with scarcely a ripple on its surface. That's the time to remember that "still waters run deep." Don't take off your shoes and stockings for a bit of wading there. You're likely to find yourself trying to remember that Australian Crawl your swimming instructor tried to teach you at the Chicago Towers pool last winter. Then just around the bend the river will make a dash for the ledge of rocks as though trying to batter it down.

You'll probably say, "Can that be Jack's Fork?" when you see it foaming and churning, with vigorous whirlpools and loud fantastic roaring. Then, perhaps, in another stone's throw, you'll find it dimpling and sparkling in the sunshine as it slips along to that rendezvous with the Current River.

It's a lovely river—and an exciting river.

*Are the springs and caves of the Ozarks really interesting?*

We think so! We are particularly proud of Ebb and Flow



Cave. This is not far from the Ebb and Flow Spring. It has some water in it, but for the most part, you can jump across the small streams and then enjoy long stretches of dry walking.

Another scenic bit that always entrances our city guests on the Rymer Ranch is Jam-Up Cave. This cave, according to Ozark lore, was formed centuries ago when two hills were jammed together, making a jumbled cave that wears out the most enthusiastic cave explorer. At the door of the cave stands a giant rock sixty feet high. This rock was "carved" by some freak of nature, so that it appears to be a profile of a man. I always tell the Judge it has his chin but the Rock Man has a brainier-looking forehead!

For tops in dramatic performance we nominate the temperamental Ebb and Flow Spring. Here's a spring that really puts zing into its performance. If you happened upon it during an ebb time, you would stand entranced by its gentle murmuring, its soft smooth flow from out the mountainside. You would take a drink of the clear, cold water, probably quoting poetry about Nature's mysteries, and God's gift of cool water to quench man's thirst. And while you're standing there, saying all the things that might be summed up in three words: "Ain't Nature Wonderful!" the spring will suddenly change its pace. A rush of roaring, foaming water comes spouting out of that gentle spring as though a giant had kicked a hole in some underground Boulder Dam, releasing pent-up torrents of water.

This spring is one of the mysteries of the Ozarks, for its ebb and flow are timed like the tides. Some say it's the only ebb-and-flow spring in the world. Others say there are six others scattered about the world. Well, we aren't complaining if there are six duplicates of our spring! Anything so marvelous and mysterious as this can well be shared with six other localities.

Modern city visitors are not the first to marvel at these

amazing Ozark springs. Long ago, when the young men of the hills owned horses instead of flivvers, the young bloods used to look for excitement among these springs. It was a common Sunday afternoon diversion to empty a bag of oats into one spring. Then away they would ride over hill and dale through the woods, to another spring, miles away. There they would find oats just emerging from the second spring! Hill people take this as an indication that a great underground river connects most of the springs in the hills.

When we witched for water at Sunrise Mountain Farm, the line along which the witching wand indicated water led straight as an arrow to the spring just beyond the boundaries of our North Forty.

When you visit our beautiful Blue Spring, with its blue, blue water, you will see a spring so old that it figures in Indian legend.

Long, long ago, before the white people had come to the Ozarks, the land of swift water, the Shawanons and the Cherokees lived here in their beloved hills. By the bank of the Swift River lived the people of Sauk-na-ton. Mokita, the young daughter of the chief, was the fairest maiden of all Sauk-na-ton's people, and her soul was as lovely as her face and form. Mokita was beloved by all. Even the beasts and the birds came to Mokita without fear. She roamed the woods, and bathed in the crystal-clear streams without a thought of harm. When she floated in her canoe along the current of Swift Water, even the fishes of the stream came to the surface to swim along in the wake of her boat.

Mokita loved her life of freedom and her friends of the woods and the streams. But one there was in her tribe who desired Mokita as his squaw. Oom-ca-son-pi, young brave of the tribe, sang his love songs to Mokita throughout one long golden summer. But Mokita was deaf to his pleadings. Others, too, loved the maiden, and when Oom-ca-son-pi went

to Chief Sauk-na-ton to plead for his daughter, they, too, asked for the lovely Indian maiden. Chief Sauk-na-ton settled the dispute by declaring that the young chief who distinguished himself most valiantly in the chase and in manly sports should have Mokita for his bride.

Mokita went to the old chief and pleaded that she had no wish to become a bride of Oom-ca-son-pi or any one of the other young chiefs. She desired only to continue her life of freedom. The old chief was obdurate. He commanded that the trials be held.

Oom-ca-son-pi threw all of his magnificent young strength into every feat of strength and valor, and was declared victor. Chief Sauk-na-ton ordered the marriage feast to be prepared.

When the feast was ready, the bride could not be found. Chief Sauk-na-ton commanded that search be made and Mokita brought before him. After hours of search, they found the maiden hiding in a small grotto a short way from the bank of Swift Water. She was taken into the presence of Chief Sauk-na-ton. Angered by his daughter's disobedience, the old chief commanded that she be imprisoned in the grotto where she had been found. There she must remain until she would willingly obey her chief and become the bride of young Oom-ca-son-pi.

The maiden was taken back to the grotto. She was thrust inside, and the opening was filled with stones. Only a small opening was left to give the maiden a tantalizing glimpse of the sky and woods and streams she loved so well.

Within her tiny grotto, Mokita prayed to the Great Spirit, Manitou, asking that she might be set free to see the beautiful azure sky, the sparkling ripples of Swift Water and the birds and beasts that had been her loyal friends.

Sunshine and darkness came and went. Mokita remained in her grotto. Her answers to the friends who called to her grew weaker and weaker. At last, on the day when her an-

swer was so faint that it could scarcely be heard, a great storm arose in the land. Thunder crashed, roared. Lightning flashed. Trees crashed to the ground. The Mighty Swift Water became a great flood that raced through the hills with the anger of a thousand demons. And in the midst of the storm a crash mightier than the sound of thunder was heard throughout the land. The tribe of Sauk-na-ton cowered in their tepees. Even the braves wondered if the Great Spirit had been angered by their misdeeds.

When the storm had cleared away, the people of Sauk-na-ton came forth. They tread softly through the hills where they had swaggered and performed their deeds of valor. Thus they came to the dungeon where Mokita had been imprisoned.

There was a great spring, as blue as the summer sky. Manitou, the Great Spirit, had touched with his finger the cliffs below the grotto that held the beautiful Mokita and a great stream of sparkling azure water flowed forth. Forever after, Mokita, the free, would be a beautiful spring of living water, to quench the thirst of the birds and beasts she loved so well.

And to this day, during quiet, beautiful days and moonlit nights, one can hear the singing of the beautiful Indian maiden as her spirit, forever free, roams the woods enjoying the azure sky, the golden sunshine, and the green woods.

And to this day, you can visit the Spring of the Summer Sky, and see on the side of the cliff above the spring, the outline of the grotto in which Mokita was imprisoned. And the water is so blue it can be traced for a long distance after it empties into the Current River.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

### CHRISTMAS IN THE OZARKS

*P*UNCH AND JUDY will wear bows of red ribbon on their collars as they greet you when you drive up our lane here in the Ozark Mountains on Christmas Eve. Please come early, to be on hand for that combination luncheon-dinner of baked guinea hen, smothered in cream, and homemade mincemeat pie. Late in the afternoon, we'll have a walk over our own Ozark hills, gathering pine cones and seed pods and perhaps shaking down a long-lived persimmon, laughing as it plops down to squash in its own sweetness. Then we'll scurry home in the gray-blue twilight knowing our neighbors will come early for the Christmas party.

First to arrive will be Aunt Lizzie and Uncle John, their lantern bobbing along beside Uncle John's long legs as they walk up the lane. Aunt Lizzie will sniff at our heap of pine boughs on the mantel and our espaliered Christmas tree in the bay window as citified foolishment, but she'll bring a tiny bunch of scarlet wild rose hips and other colorful seeds gathered from our Ozark woods. Then, in a moment, other guests, old and young, will be there and the fun will be on.

We'll play our favorite mountain games such as "Peel the Apple" and other contests of dexterity. Perhaps some of the guests will bring fiddles or git-tars, and we'll have a square dance with china rattling on the whatnot shelves.

Then the Jedge will put on long cotton whiskers, just for fun, and pass out the simple little gifts we have for everyone—bright thimbles, handkerchiefs, colorful fabrics, gay aprons—trinkets picked up in the city for a song. Then you'll help me bring in a big baked ham, studded with citron and candied cherries, stacks of buns buttered from the village bakery, and a big earthen pot full of piping-hot spiced cider, with cinnamon sticks, cloves and orange slices floating in its fragrant depths.

After we eat and drink our fill, we shall light the candles on the Christmas tree, and heap more wood on the fire in the great white stone fireplace at the end of the living room. The half-dozen frosty French doors will be left uncurtained; perhaps some of the little woods creatures will share our fire-light when they slip quietly up to the terrace to enjoy the birds' and beasts' own Christmas feasts of nuts, grains and suet tied to the shaggy cedar tree, or spread invitingly beneath its drooping branches. Then we'll talk of other Christmases, when there wasn't a house between here and Jack's Fork . . . and our oldest neighbors will tell you of the ancient Indian who came back to our hills each year to seek the gold his tribe buried here when he was a little boy.

And, suddenly, it will be midnight.

That will remind us of the old tradition—that sheep sleep with their heads toward the east on Christmas Eve. Shall we see? We'll troop out through the long kitchen, where the wood fire burns low in the cookstove, and into the chill air of the mountain night. As we cross the clearing to the corrals, Punch will come out of his warm house, straws clinging to his long golden coat, to walk quietly along with us. From the chicken and duck houses will come muffled sleepy protests at our noise, and from the house where the geese live, far beyond, will come a gabbled shriek of indignation, like an upstairs tenant speaking her mind about the party below. The Jedge will

carry Judy, and swing our big yellow lantern to guide us.

As we enter the quiet, warm sheepfold, our voices will lower instinctively at the sight of the soft, woolly sheep, asleep on their clean, yellow straw bedding. A timid one will rise, and stand poised for flight, but the Jedge will quiet her with a low-spoken word. We shall huddle at the door and count the faces turned eastward—The Dutchess, Orrena, Charlotte, and perhaps Orrena II. See, we shall say in excited whispers, more than half are turned eastward! Chance, perhaps! But we do not mention that! It is enough that a beloved tradition can be kept alive.

We shall quietly close the door and walk eastward a few short steps to the mountain top. Then we shall stand, awed by the majesty of vast space and great silence, to trace the distant ridges velvety black in the silver starlight. *There It is*, the Jedge will suddenly say, pointing. And there It will be . . . the Star of the East! Brilliant, beautiful, mystic in its blue-white radiance. You, perhaps, will start to sing "Holy Night," softly, reverently, your breath visible as smoky puffs in the yellow lantern glow. We shall join with you . . . a prayer in our hearts for those who know not the peace on earth and good will toward men we are sharing at Sunrise Mountain Farm.

THE END























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