

The Autobiography of an Old House

By LESLIE E. FRANCIS

[The sketches presented herewith constitute the final chapters in the story told by Sen. Leslie E. Francis, formerly of Spirit Lake and now deceased, following those presented in previous issues of the ANNALS, covering the early years of his own life with vivid descriptions of the environs of that locality where his youth and most of his later life were spent.

How nearly he had completed these observations cannot be known for many of them were descriptive references from his own speeches made at various times and selected by him to be included in his book, which never was published.—Editor.]

A METEOR SAILS OVER MY HEAD

A few years after I was completed, a most amazing thing happened in the air a few feet above me. It was one of those warm, lazy days when everyone was sleepy. I myself was scarcely awake, but you may be sure I was very wide-awake when without warning the whole world seemed about to burn up. Half asleep I chanced to glance toward the lake and the western sky. Far away I saw a great pillar of fire high in the air, surrounded by dense, black smoke. The fiery object was moving directly toward me. Almost before I had time to think, it was upon me, passing but a few feet above my chimney. I could feel the terrible heat and was almost suffocated with the gases that in burning made the black cloud which filled the heavens to the westward.

This astonishing object was moving almost as swiftly as light itself and was so near me that my whole frame trembled with the vibration of its movements. Its progress was accompanied by noises that made the heavy thunder to which I was accustomed sound like children's firecrackers in comparison. Almost instantly it disappeared in the east, leaving behind it a long trail of smoke that spread from the western sky to the east. It seemed but a few feet away when it passed over me, and went

by so swiftly I could scarcely follow its course with my eyes.

People came running from every direction—those out of doors seemed to seek the shelter of the house, those inside wanted to get out. There was wild excitement for a few minutes. A hundred years or so before an old woman by the name of Mother Shipman had made a dire prophecy. She had said, "The world to an end will come in the year eighteen hundred eighty-one." Many people believed what she had foretold, and although this meteor did not come at exactly the right date, they felt she might be mistaken in a few years, but still be right. I am sure that fully twenty years had passed before believers gave up the thought that poor Mother Shipman might be wrong. The arrival of this visitor from the heavens was near enough to her set date of destruction to satisfy the earnest advocate of her prophecy, and added much to the excitement of the occasion.

The Boy was playing under the trees a few rods away when the meteor came along. Frightened as I was, I nevertheless glanced toward him. What he did I will not tell in my own words. Only a few years ago the people who were then living with me were reading the local paper and laughing heartily. I heard them speak of my Boy, so I listened to hear what they had to say. I found that the Boy had written an article on this very meteor, and that was what they were reading.

I am sure that I can quote that article almost as it was written, and it will be far more interesting than anything I, myself, can now say. This article was addressed to the editor of the local paper and was as follows:

"I have just read ——'s story of that meteor. I hate to admit that I am fifty years old, but if that meteor blew in fifty years ago, I must be, for I saw it myself. I was playing in the back yard down on the old farm, and it went directly over the house, just missing the chimney.

"I had a white dog called Keno, named after a popu-

lar pioneer game, I am told, and when that thing flew over the house, Keno sat up, folded his front legs and howled so vigorously that he drowned out the 'detonations' that — mentions as produced by the meteor.

"It was well understood in those days that if a dog howled in the daytime, some member of the family would die, and as Keno was looking directly at me when at his loudest, I felt my time had arrived. I remember leaving Keno still sitting up while I made a hasty exit, seeking my mother's protection. If that meteor was over twenty feet above my head when it went by, then I am a liar. It was going in the same direction I took when I abandoned Keno, and I remember distinctly that I overtook and passed it on my way to the house.

"— does not remember what became of that meteor. I do, for in later years, when engaged in the arduous labor of learning the law, I ran across a case in the supreme court between the man who saw it fall and claimed it by virtue of discovery, and the owner of the land where the meteor fell. The land owner was held entitled to the meteor. It is now in the great museum at Vienna, Austria.

"If any other old settler lacks details concerning events back not more than a hundred years, let him take the matter up with me. "How time flies!"

As I was right there and saw Keno sit up and heard him howl and saw the Boy run in, I confirm the above in all respects, except that I am not certain the Boy passed the meteor. I may have been looking at something else at that moment, however.

WATERMELONS AND HONEY

I remember the night the boys decided to steal a neighbor's watermelons. They had many melons in their own garden, but they were sure the neighbor's were far better. My Boy was still little, but he slipped away with the older boys. They didn't want him to tag along and the only real reason they tolerated him was that he threatened to tell their parents of the raid if he couldn't go. So he dragged along in the rear, watching for the fun.

The neighbor lived about two miles away. His watermelon patch was full. The raiders ate what they wanted and then each carried one home for a rainy day. But as these melons weighed fully forty pounds, they became pretty heavy before the two miles were covered. The little Boy had an eye bigger than his stomach, and his melon was too much for him, but by dint of rolling and carrying, he at last reached home with it. He placed it most carefully on some hay covering a calf pen, but when he returned the next day, he found that the melon had rolled down into the pen and the calf had been the gainer.

An amusing thing happened that same night. The melon patch at home was only a short distance from me. I had seen our boys start and knew what they intended doing, so, shortly after they left and I saw some boys entering the patch, I wondered why they were returning so soon. I was surprised to see that they were the boys from the farm where my boys had gone. Possibly the old saying that stolen sweets are best is true.

On another occasion the boys wanted honey. Only a few miles away lived an old man who had the only honey farm in that country. One night the boys decided to raid the hives and again they tried to make the little Boy stay home. It was a very dark night and flashlights were unknown. They found the field without any difficulty, but from then on their troubles were immediate.

The bees were not accustomed to being disturbed so late at night and they resented this intrusion in the only way known to them; they swarmed out in defense of home and family much as ants when their hill is annoyed, but with far more effectiveness. They seemed to realize that the small Boy was very innocent, for they did not sting him, but how they did go after the larger boys. By brave and earnest effort a few small boxes partially filled with honey were obtained, and then a retreat was called.

The boys had heard that honey tasted better with

milk, so on their way home they stopped at another neighbor's farm and had milk with their honey. They had no cups with them and their only method of getting the milk was to milk directly into their mouths. This they did with some degree of success, but more often missing. At last filled with honey and both filled and covered with milk they reached home, tired and happy, but racked with the pain of bee stings. The next day the arms of one of the boys were so swollen that he could not get them into his shirt without first cutting the sleeves. But they had had their fun and were willing to pay the piper.

I have watched human nature for many long years. I know that in every human being is just so much deviltry. In some way each must rid himself of this evil; sometimes he may do so by more evil, sometimes by incidents such as I have described.

Today temptation stands before all young people, but there are more things to do that will not harm. I cannot say, yet, which is the better—the days of my youth or now. Perhaps before my life is ended a solution will become clear.

SCHOOL—AND A FAITHFUL DOG

When I was young, the schoolhouse was located more than a mile from me, making it necessary for the children to walk what seemed a very long distance in cold weather. A few years later the schoolhouse was moved into the timber only twenty rods from me. Before the schoolhouse was moved, I knew of things that happened there only as I heard them discussed within my walls, but after the move, I could see the children at their games and at their lessons. Many things that happened around that schoolhouse I remember and of these I will speak as this autobiography goes forward.

The schoolhouse was placed by the road upon the bank of a deep ravine that carried a small stream to the lake nearby. When heavy rains fell, the stream became a raging torrent, deeply interesting to the children. Once my Boy, who was still just a little fellow,

ran down to this stream right after a heavy rain and found the banks overflowing. He saw a horse trough almost floating but with one end still upon the bank. He gave a little push and as it left the bank, jumped in. The current was very strong at that place and off down stream went the trough at a very rapid pace.

The Boy fairly screamed with delight; the trough whirled around and around, struck an obstacle which almost stopped it, and then rushed over a small waterfall and on toward the lake. The stream grew wider as it neared the lake, but slowed in pace as the fall lessened. Finally the lake came in view and the Boy saw high waves rolling toward him. He became frightened and, without realizing his danger, sprang overboard, intending to wade ashore. However, the water was too deep and he could not swim. Down he went beneath the waves and surely would have drowned but for unexpected help.

All boys love dogs. If they do not have one, they clamor until they get one. My Boy had a dog that followed him everywhere. He followed to the stream that day and when the Boy climbed into the trough, the dog tried to get in too, but the strong current had taken the trough so suddenly that there was no time for the dog to jump in, so he ran along the bank as the trough went swiftly down the stream. He was there when the Boy jumped into the deep water; he seemed to sense the Boy's danger and in an instant was at his side, and in another moment was pulling him ashore.

The Boy was none the worse for his experience and did not realize until many years after how near he had come to death. As soon as he could get his breath, he sat down on the bank with the dog by his side and watched the raging water and saw that even large trees were being washed down the stream. At last he became tired and came home. Here, his mother noticed his wet clothes and made inquiries, and presently the Boy told what had happened. He was scolded and put

to bed, but the dog was praised, patted and given a nice bone.

For years the Boy and the dog were together. If the Boy were given a slice of bread and butter, he shared it with Keno. At meals I could see the Boy hide things in his pockets and later give them to the dog. If the Boy became sleepy and dropped down for a rest, the dog sat by his side until he awakened. At night the dog slept by the bed and at the first stir in the morning, he was at the Boy's side, sniffing at him and seemingly anxious for the Boy to get up and play with him.

Once the Boy was sick for several weeks. He could not go out to play and as his illness was contagious, the dog was not allowed in the room. Day after day he sat by the window looking in. He seemed to know that something was wrong and nothing could induce him to leave so long as he could see the Boy through the window. At last the Boy was well enough to sit up and a little later to go outdoors. It was almost pathetic to watch the dog as he romped around the Boy on that first day; he could not speak words, but words were not needed to express his joy. He jumped high into the air, he rolled upon the ground, he ran far away and raced back, he barked and he growled, he licked the Boy's hands and tried to lick his face. In all he made more fuss over the Boy than anyone else around me and I could not help feeling that the love of an animal for a human being is one of the strongest ties in life.

But dogs do not live so long as boys and one day the dog became sick. He was not truly sick for his only ailment was age. His limbs could not carry him, his eyes were dull, he could eat nothing. The Boy could not fully understand; he only knew that something was wrong. He sat by the dog until forced to go to bed. In the night the dog died and when the Boy came down early to see his playmate, he was gone. The Boy hunted everywhere for the dog, but could not find him. At last he asked his father where the dog was and then learned that the dog was dead. This did not mean much to the

Boy, but the absence of the dog did, so he continued hunting for him, running here and there, calling and whistling, but without the answering bark so long a part of their play. The Boy went out to the field where the men were working; he ran down to the lake, among the trees, along the bank of the big ravine, calling for his dog, but there was no answer.

The Boy went back to the house and then his mother took him upon her lap and explained to him what had happened. She told him where the dog was buried and to that spot the Boy ran. There he found a little mound under the trees. He lay down upon the mound and called the dog's name and wept and sobbed. At last he seemed to know that he could not bring back his dog, so he got up, found two stones and placed one at the head of the mound and the other at the foot.

For a long time he came to that spot each day, for he was lonesome without his constant companion of so many years. The Boy may not have a dog now, but I am sure he has never forgotten the one he treasured so many years ago.

DEATH NOTCH

The people, who in later years built me upon the banks of my beautiful lake, came to this region very soon after the terrible massacre that brought death to every living person in all that country, save two, who after capture and long captivity, were ransomed. Naturally then, the deeds of those marauding red men were well-known to my people and often discussed. As a consequence, I am familiar with much that happened long before I came into being as well as that which occurred after I was completed. It may interest you if I relate some of the events that took place around me.

The massacre took place all around my lake. On the farm north the members of an entire family were killed, and later buried nearby. The log cabin in which they lived was not burned but stood there for many years. I could not see because of the great trees that intervened, but I heard them tell of the grave and of the

little babe whose brains were dashed out against one of the lovely trees.

On the farm south another family was murdered. Six or seven members of this family were buried by the soldiers in one shallow grave. All around the lake other families were killed. It was natural under these circumstances that local history was so frequently the subject of evening talks and served to interest, frighten and send to bed the youngsters who listened.

The Woman often told of a later massacre that took place, as I have already told you. Scarcely a morning came that she did not open the door with fear that from the nearby trees might come the bullet or arrow that would end her life. Under such conditions, it is not strange that the children grew up with very definite ideas about Indians, and with a strong desire to rid the country of them, guilty or innocent.

The lights were poor in my early days and yet the family read much. When I was very young, I remember that for a time the best available light was that obtained from burning a cloth dipped in grease secured from meat or mutton fryings. Later on, ordinary kerosene lamps gave a most brilliant light in comparison.

Books were few and hard to get, with the result that anything in print was welcomed. One day a story based upon the massacre was brought in. It was called "Death Notch." It seemed that an avenging person started out to even up the terrible massacres by destroying an equal number of red men. This, the man attempted to do by himself. Each time he killed an Indian he immediately made a record thereof by cutting a deep notch in the nearest tree. This practice soon gave him the enviable title of Death Notch.

The story was a thriller and every member of the family, even to the little Boy, read it. He conceived the idea that the story was a true account and was deeply impressed. He armed himself with two revolvers and went through the timber killing Indians on every side; at

least he thought he was, and who am I to unmask a child's imagination?

The events of the story were laid in the lake region and mostly upon our farm. In the story Death Notch was being pursued by a band of Indians who were close behind him and drawing nearer. He ran with great swiftness, but some in the tribe were swifter and he saw that escape was impossible. He was going toward the lake when the Indians discovered him. They immediately gave chase, following on every side save that leading to the lake, and there was no escape. They did not shoot him as he ran, for they wished to capture him for sacrifice and torture. Very desperate indeed was Death Notch, but as usual he was more than a match for mere Indians.

Growing in the water a few rods from shore were many long rushes with stems about as large as one's little finger, and hollow from top to bottom. Into these rushes Death Notch ran, seeking to hide himself among them, but the Indians were too near and the rushes not thick enough to accomplish his purpose. Still he was not discouraged and in the nick of time, he thought of a way of escape. Quickly pulling one of the rushes from the water, he bit off both ends and placing one end in his mouth and leaving the other end through which to breathe above water, he dived to the bottom of the lake. Since this reed was exactly like the other reeds, the Indians could not find him and they felt certain he had drowned. When he was quite sure that the Indians had gone, Death Notch rose to the surface and followed them—with very sad results indeed to the Indians.

All this and other similarly amazing incidents were related with such frankness as to make even the doubting feel it unjust to question so honorable a tale. The Boy was not old enough to have the slightest doubt about it all, and as he went through the woods killing imaginary Indians, he often found notches cut in the trees. He was certain that he was treading on sacred ground. Not until fully grown did he learn that those notches, so

thrilling in his youth, were cut by his older brother for the express purpose of making romance and chivalry grow among the trees on the banks of the lake.

Had the pioneers not possessed the quality of humor and that inestimable ability to obtain enjoyment from the very little things of their day, I am sure that few indeed could have endured the privations and hardships inevitable in a new country. But they could laugh in the face of adversity and struggle all the harder when misfortune came. Thus did they survive and become a strong people.

THE BOY WHO RAN AWAY

Pioneers were greatly interested in horses. Many of them owned fine animals, and some of them possessed race horses. My family was one of the latter. One such animal was known as Plowboy. He was really fast and was run at county and state fairs. One of the older boys rode him, and looked after him at home and at the races.

As Plowboy became better known, he was taken to places farther and farther from the farm. Finally he was taken to a state fair in an adjoining state. Plowboy won these races, and someone who knew horses offered to buy him at such a good price that it was accepted and we never saw Plowboy again.

After disposing of Plowboy, the boy did not return home, but visited around awhile. During this time a great gold discovery stirred the whole nation; this excitement was too much for him, and taking the proceeds from the sale of the race horse, the boy joined a caravan and rushed to the gold fields. For a time he wrote regularly. One day a letter came from a city in Old Mexico. It was a newsy letter and in it he sent word to the Boy, then about five years old, that he was enclosing a strawberry, but upon opening the letter all that remained was a red splotch where the strawberry had been. These letters greatly excited the Boy who wanted to see these interesting places his older brother had so aptly described.

After some years' absence, the older boy ceased writing; his last letter had been written from a western city. In it he told of having been ill, but was better. After many months of waiting, the family decided the boy must have suffered a relapse and died, but a little later they heard through friends that the boy had been seen. Still no letters came and still the mother, the Woman of this narrative, could not believe that her son was dead, but some day would return to them.

For many years while they lived on the farm, the Woman watched the road down which she was certain that her son would return to her. The younger children knew this story well, and whenever a strange man was seen coming down the highway, they would run and lie down behind the willows by the road, hoping that the stranger might be their brother. But the son never returned.

Many years later the Boy went to the west coast to the town where his brother was last seen, seeking to find him. In the directory he found a name identical to his brother's and went to the address given. An elderly woman came to the door. He knew she could not be his brother's wife and he explained the nature of his visit. The poor woman wept bitterly and when she had recovered sufficiently to speak, she told the Boy that she once lived in England and that her boy with the similar name had gone to Australia; how he wrote so often for so long, then ceased writing; how she, too, as the Woman, had been waiting and watching all these years for the return of her long lost son.

The boy never did return and the Woman passed on long ago, to the very end hoping and praying that she might once more see her son. I marvel that children can be so cruel, so unkind, so thoughtless, to the authors of their being.

Perhaps ere this, the son and the mother who loved him have met and are happily together for all the ages.

And so ends this brief story of the boy who ran away.

BOATS

When the Boy was yet a little fellow, I noticed that he seemed greatly interested in boats. As I have said, I was placed on the bank of a beautiful lake, so it was only natural that the boys on my farm should want a boat.

The Boy's first boat was a toy sailboat—he made it himself. It was about three feet long, had two masts and a jib, and weight was placed under the bottom to keep it from tipping over. He often sailed it on the lake, but was always afraid it would get away from him. One day it did get away and, with the wind just right, it sailed off down the lake towards Stony Point, a couple of miles away. He had no way of getting it back. I knew he felt bad about losing it for I remember he walked the shores of the lake for miles looking for it, but it was never found.

His next boat was the Robinson Crusoe canoe I have told you about, but this boat never got beyond the woodpile. Later two of the boys built a flat-bottomed boat. It was made of ordinary pine boards and surely was not much of a boat, but it floated and that made it a boat and as a boat, it brought much happiness. They could go any place on the lake with it, fish from it, and even use it for going to town instead of driving a team around by the long road.

Later the Boy concluded that it would be easier to operate the boat if it had a sail instead of oars and so he made a tall mast and rigged up a big sail. The boat was moored where a stream ran into the lake. One day when the wind was blowing at a high rate, the Boy almost came to grief with this boat. A strong wind was coming up the lake and struck the shore sidewise instead of directly in front. The waves thus struck the shore on the slant and rolled on up the lake towards the north. The Boy set his mast, pulled up his sail, set the jib, and was ready to go. The wind whipped the sail and made a terrible noise, but as the sail was not loosened, the Boy did not realize his danger when he

pushed the boat out and jumped in. It immediately started off shore in the trough of the big waves, leaning far over with the force of the wind, first on the top of a wave and then in the trough, and rolled and pitched in the most amazing manner.

The waves dashed up over the sides of the boat, which began to fill with water. The water was very deep, even near the shore, and had the boat tipped over, it is doubtful if the Boy could have saved himself. Presently the boat was under control and off it sailed at a very great rate. The Boy, by using the oar to guide, managed to keep the boat heading up the lake, but in the heavy wind and aided by the rushing waves, he became alarmed at the speed with which he was passing the big rocks along the shore, and concluded that he better get out of there and back on land.

A little farther up the lake was a sand beach where there were no rocks, and for this he headed. Sailing at full speed, he ran his craft directly into the shore. I could see and was certainly surprised at what happened when he struck land. The flat-bottomed boat slid up out of the water almost entirely above the highest waves; the masts and sail and jib were jerked out of the boat and thrown upon the shore rods away and the Boy himself went out of his seat at the stern clear up against the front end of the boat. He climbed out and looked around, and I am sure he was most thankful that he was on the ground. -I do not remember his setting up that sail again.

One incident involving this boat has always interested me. Threshers were coming and the Boy was sent to town for supplies. The horses were in use so he was told to take the boat, which he did. It was a lovely day, the water perfectly still. He rowed leisurely up the lake to the little town and went up the street to the stores. On the way he stopped at a bookshop and there before him was a red covered copy of Shakespeare's complete works. The book interested him, so he bought it and started home. He read all the way across the lake and

as he walked up through the trees and into the yard, his sister came to the door and asked where he had left the groceries. It was years before the family stopped kidding him about that book.

THE TRAVELER

From the time the Boy was able to read and understand about things away from home, he had a great desire to see the world. Farmers had little money in those days, so traveling was almost impossible, and the farthest the Boy had ever been from home was to a nearby town, reached by the new railroad.

I have told you about the school he taught. After the term was finished, he decided to use that money, which was very little, to take him on his first long trip. I so well remember the family fireside talk. His mother was most reluctant to have him go, but his father seemed to think the experience would be good for him and encouraged his going. Finally the Woman agreed, and with his small salary in his pocket, along with the lunch his mother had prepared for him, and without a suitcase or any extra clothing, the Boy started upon his first wonderful trip.

After spending a night on the train, where he slept little or not at all, so excited was he, the Boy arrived in the city early the next morning. Since he had planned to work part of the time to make his money last longer, he started to hunt for a job immediately. Going down a street, he saw a policeman and stopped to ask him where work might be found. The man sent him to the carbarns not far away, where work could be had. Several thousand men were standing around the entrance, but the Boy thought this was simply what should be expected from a large city. He opened the door and started to enter when several of the men called to him; others started to grab him, and still others cursed at him. He eluded their grasp and closed the door behind him. He asked the first man he saw for a job and he was taken into an office where he was questioned most closely. When these men were satisfied with his an-

swers, another man was called who told the Boy what to do. Of course, all of this was related at home after the Boy's return, but I can yet remember that the Boy thought he was to drive the streetcar immediately. You can imagine his surprise when he found that his first work was to feed many heads of horses and clean out their stables—a job which he never relished at home. However, upon being told that he could drive the streetcar a little later, the Boy set to work, and having had plenty of such experience at home, he took care of more horses than half a dozen other men who were trying to do that same work.

At noon they brought him food and told him not to leave the building until evening. This he did and when he was let out at a back door on an alley, three men ran up and began beating the Boy, swearing violently at him and calling him all sorts of names, among them "scab." The other names the Boy knew about for he had learned them from a gifted hired hand, but this "scab" business was new to him. He was large and husky and had little difficulty in fighting off the three men, who told him what was the trouble when they found that the Boy was not afraid. It seemed that a strike was on and that these men were pickets; that the Boy had taken their work and was, therefore, a "scab." The Boy explained that he only recently had come from the farm, had never heard of a strike, and wanted no man's work. He further stated, rather happily, that he was traveling anyway, and could just as well go on to some other city. These men told him of a city on Lake Superior where they were certain he surely could find work, so after drawing his day's wages, he left on the night's train.

He arrived in the city the next morning and went down to the docks immediately, where he found a number of large shipping vessels. Cargo was being loaded. Since the Boy was young and very husky, he had no trouble in securing work and was at once busy loading ships. Here he worked for almost a week. He was

amazed to see how much a ship could hold. After emptying several large warehouses, a long trainload of wild Montana steers was put aboard. Living on the farm, he was familiar with stock, but this outfit amazed him. These steers had horns about three feet long, and were really ferocious animals, ready to gore anything that came their way.

The cattle filled the ship and all was ready to sail, but just before dark a hard storm came up outside the harbor, so the captain wisely decided to wait until early morning before sailing. At daylight the ship left its dock and headed out into the big lake. It was quiet in the harbor, but the moment the ship passed the breakwater, the waves lifted it high, and then it went into the trough.

The Boy was all excitement and stood at the very prow of the ship so that he could see the waves. The prow rose and fell not less than thirty feet and it did not take the Boy long to realize that something had happened to him—he was drenched from head to feet.

While loading the ship, the Boy had slept in the fore-castle with the regular sailors and it did not take them long to learn that he was a greenhorn of the first dye, and they had much fun at his expense. He was told to sleep in a bunk at the very front of the ship with his head against a large timber which they said was the prow. They talked with each other about the danger he was in if the ship should run head-on into something. They plied him with questions, as to where he had lived, why he was there, and every little detail of his life.

When the Boy told them he lived on a farm close to a large lake, they asked how large the waves were, and he proudly answered that during a storm they were about four feet high. This reply tickled all the sailors and from then on the Boy was teased unmercifully about his high waves. Later on he became quite seasick and again the sailors offered advice. One said that a lemon was a sure cure, and after the poor Boy had sucked the lemon, he found that he felt much worse than before. Another sailor advised tying a string to a piece of salt

pork and swallowing it several times, and even offered to get the pork, but by that time the greenhorn concluded they were spoofing him, and anyway he was too sick to try anything else.

When the ship put to shore, the Boy jumped off, not even waiting to claim his week's wages. He felt better almost immediately and sorrowfully decided that his were not seaman's legs. Locating a depot, he jumped aboard a train that was just pulling out. He did not know where it was going; nothing mattered but to get away from the water. Later in the afternoon, he felt better and when the train stopped at the next station, he wandered around town for awhile. Completely recovered from his seasickness, he wanted to see more of the lake and wandered down toward the harbor. Suddenly he heard a whistle and looking up, saw the ship coming into shore—the ship from which only that morning he had run away. It was heading for a dock some distance away and suddenly the Boy decided that he wanted to go back to his job on that ship. He ran as swiftly as he could, but the ship docked only long enough to discharge a few passengers and then pulled out into the lake again. It was only a short distance away but too far for the Boy to jump, and he was left on the shore.

The Boy was terribly disappointed, for with his seasickness gone, he wanted very much to complete his voyage and also get his money for the week's work. He spent the night in this town and the next day started toward home, his money having reached a low stage. He took a freight train and rode south through the deep woods in Wisconsin. After one day and one night, the train headed in a direction from home, so the Boy got off. The conductor on this freight had carried the Boy all this distance without charge, but when he left, he gave the conductor a dollar.

There was no train toward home on this branch of the road, so the Boy, who was so accustomed to walking, set out for home through the trees and cranberry marshes. After walking for hours, he came to a town,

and upon inquiry learned that a train was due late that evening. Being a boy, he had a good appetite, but his purse was slim, so he was forced to content himself with only a light lunch.

When he went out on the platform, he saw a bunch of young men talking, and being rather lonesome, joined them. Not understanding much of their conversation, he left them and went to the other end of the platform, and scarcely had he left when several policemen with guns drawn arrested the young men with whom he had just been talking. The Boy often thought of that incident. Suppose those young men had committed some crime, as seemed reasonably certain, how could he have escaped being taken with them?

The train finally arrived and after riding several hours, he reached a town on the Mississippi river. A long freight train was pulling in, so grabbing a bite to eat on the way, the Boy boarded the train and was on his way again. All day the train puffed its way along the westward course and at nightfall the conductor told the Boy to jump off at the next crossing when the train slowed down. He gave the conductor his last dollar and began once more another long trek toward home. It was hours before he reached a town and there he spent his last pennies for a place to sleep.

All the next day he trudged toward home, finally arriving at a town twenty miles away. At midnight he had covered about half the distance. He found a barn where he slept until awakened by a loud voiced rooster who felt it his privilege to announce stridently the coming of day. So, on toward home again trudged the Boy and shortly after sunrise, I saw him coming down the road—a tired, dirty, hungry, homesick boy.

He reached the door and entered before anyone saw him. The family was eating breakfast. No one had heard anything from the young traveler for some time and were growing quite concerned about him. You can understand how glad they were to see him, and you can also imagine how happy he was to eat a real meal

again. Such is the forgetfulness of youth that almost before he had finished his breakfast and his tale of adventures, he was planning another trip somewhere. And I know that in the years since that morning, he has often gratified that early wish to travel.

What would I not give were I permitted to see the world of which I have heard so much. Alas, I shall never move from this lonely spot. I shall never look from mountaintop across valley and plain; I shall never see a city; I shall never watch the waters of a wide river roll onward nor ocean waves go far up a sandy beach. Mine it is to sit by the wayside until time and storm and wind shall level me to my foundation. And in the end my rafters will make some pigsty and my broken pieces kindle a fire over which some poor creature will linger in a moment's comfort, warmed against the cold of winter.

THE SECOND JOURNEY

Not long after returning from his first trip, the Boy had another great craving for travel, and away he went. This time he went east. When he reached Chicago, he went directly to the water front hunting for work on a ship. He felt that by working that way he could not only earn his way but see the world as well.

He at once found work as an assistant to the fireman. The engines burned wood, known as four-foot cord on the farm, but on the boat as slabs. His work was to carry the wood to the fireman and to pile it up for future use. He had a helper, a young lad, also from the farm.

The boat was sailing for Milwaukee. A heavy wind was blowing from the east, piling up the waves on the west shore of the lake so that the ship, which was running north, rolled in the trough of the waves in what seemed to the boys as a very dangerous way. The boat was small and the boys were certain it would tip over; they held on tight as the rolling increased. Finally Milwaukee was reached and before dark the ship pulled out into the lake again, heading straight across for the opposite shore.

By this time the waves were very high, rolling the ship up and down with a sidewise roll that was upsetting to stomachs even more experienced than most of those on board. In a few hours the protection of the opposite bank was reached and Traverse Bay was entered. From there on up the coast, the stops were frequent and many passengers came aboard.

One day the Boy was given the gentle job of scrubbing the decks. He was greatly pleased to be up on deck where he could see people and the lake and its shore line. He went at his new work with great enthusiasm. He had a broom and a bucket with a long rope attached to it. It was his work to drop the bucket over the side of the ship, draw up the bucket of water, pour it over the deck and then scrub.

Down went the bucket for the first time, but alas! he did not know that the ship's speed would do things to that bucket when it hit water. The rope was nearly thirty feet long and it was nearly that far from the deck to the water. The bucket filled with a jerk that almost pulled the rope from the Boy's hands, but he held on and was nearly dragged overboard. By running toward the stern of the boat, he was able to hang onto the rope and presently he pulled up the bucket of water. In a short time he learned how to throw out the rope and pull it in with great skill.

There were many people on board. Many of them saw what had happened and were amused. Among the passengers was a very pretty girl about the age of the Boy. He did not care much for girls, but in this instance he was much interested. He saw that she was watching him, and thinking her impressed by him, he spoke to her. He quickly found that there was a vast social distinction between a young woman passenger and an ordinary deck hand. The Boy then and there made a firm resolution that some day he would ride a ship like that one as a passenger and look at the deck hands and sympathize with them.

Two or three days out the ship entered the beautiful

Strait of Mackinac and stopped at the island of that name. The Boy had four hours leave and he roamed over that wonderful little island, thrilled with its beauty. The many sailing craft that plied up and down the straits, their white sails glistening in the sunlight, the white walls of the island, the green shores in view on either side, made a scene never to be forgotten. After a few hours the ship sailed on into Lake Huron and finally back to Chicago.

Two incidents occurred that illustrate the folly of inexperienced youth. The fireman on this boat was a big, surly fellow and he seemed to have taken a strong dislike to the second boy on his force. He cursed the boy on every excuse, even struck him, and frequently knocked him down, leaving him bleeding from his wounds and with blood coming when he vomited. This was too much for the Boy to stand for long, and one day he grabbed up one of the slabs, and walking toward the fireman, told him that if he so much as touched that boy again, he would kill him. There was something in the situation that frightened the bully, for he promised never to strike the boy again. He kept his promise and the three became good friends.

Nearing Chicago, the former bully found a large bucket and began giving it a very thorough scrubbing with wood ashes from the furnace. The Boy asked why he was doing that and was told that when they landed, he would fill the bucket with "suds" at the "growler." Since the Boy had no idea what the man meant and was ashamed to ask, he kept quiet and watched. Just as soon as the ship landed, the fireman ran over to a saloon and, filling the bucket with beer, called to the boys to share it with him.

The really serious incident happened at a lumber camp where an immense quantity of slabs had been piled, ready for loading. It was the Boy's time off duty and he was watching the men load the slabs. There were seven men engaged in this work and for some reason, or so it seemed to the Boy, they had developed a grudge

against the two country boys. Presently, while down in the hold, he was nearly hit by some of the slabs that were thrown in. He concluded that they were trying to hit him and became angry. He climbed out from the hold, picked up a slab, started for the men, and told them that he would knock off their heads when he reached them. For some reason which he never was able to understand, but for which he remained ever grateful, the seven men ran away.

At Chicago the Boy bought a round trip ticket to Boston and boarded a train that carried him into Canada. He had never heard of a sleeper and slept in the seat all night; since he was tall, it was quite an uncomfortable position, but he was young and hardships meant nothing.

At Niagara Falls the Boy walked about, peeking into everything and having a wonderful time. A reunion of Civil war veterans was to be held in Boston and the trains were filled with old soldiers, who were full of tales and treated the Boy almost as though he had been there himself when they learned that the Boy's father was in the army. I question who was the more excited over the Falls—the Boy or the old soldiers who ran and walked and peeked with him.

Finally, the train pulled out, traveling on the north side of Lake Ontario, and arrived at Kingston about four in the morning. Light was just breaking, but the Boy was up, anxious not to miss a thing. Looking down the lake shore, he saw a large ship and away he sped. The boat was ready for a run down the St. Lawrence river. On board went the Boy. Hundreds of chairs had been placed on the bow of the boat so that the passengers might sit and observe the beautiful rapids and islands through which the ship would presently pass.

These chairs were wooden, with quite a depression in the center seat. It had rained the night previous and these depressions were filled with water. The Boy discovered this when he sat down in one. I am ashamed to tell you that he did not warn anyone of the cold

water, but stood around and enjoyed the surprise of the men and women who used the chairs.

The trip down the river was a marvelous experience for this green country lad, and he made the most of it. He took a position at the very bow of the boat and there he remained all day long, leaving only when the boat stopped somewhere for dinner. They passed two rapids that day that thrilled him to the greatest degree. The first thrill came as the rapids tossed the water high before them and the boat seemed to strike bottom every little way. Waves dashed high and people were thrown from their chairs, and there was much excitement and plenty of thrills for everyone, especially for the Boy.

The other thrill occurred as the boat approached Montreal. Here an Indian guide or pilot was taken on to steer the boat through the rocks. There were many places where the boat was so close to the great rocks that it would have been very easy to have jumped and landed on them.

Finally the ship reached the city and went into a place where the land was about thirty feet above the boat. Here people were standing, looking down and waving to the passengers. The Boy wondered how they were ever going to get to shore, but presently he noticed that the ship was rising. He was utterly amazed and could not imagine what was happening, but upon asking enough questions, found that the ship was in what was known as a "lock," and that water was being run into the place, thus raising the ship.

Soon the ship reached land level and everyone went ashore. The Boy had no idea where to go but roamed around the city, seeing all that he could see until his train for the states was due.

The next morning when the Boy awakened, the train was running along the bank of a beautiful river which he later learned was the Merrimac. Soon the train stopped at Concord and a few hours later rolled into the famous city of Boston. The Boy was greatly thrilled when he found himself upon the streets of Boston. He

had read history and was quite familiar with the events of the Revolutionary war, and to be standing in the very midst of places of which he had read when in school was to him almost unbelievable.

The great national convention of the Grand Army of the Republic was in session and the city was jammed with people from all parts of the United States. The President was due to arrive that morning and the Boy was probably the most excited person in all that city. At last the President came, and in a carriage drawn by a span of black horses, he rode down the streets between lines of cheering people. When the carriage reached the point where the Boy stood, he broke through the policed lines and ran beside the President, cheering like mad. He had not gone very far when he was stopped and was obliged to go back into line. But he had had his thrill and felt almost as though he knew the little President beneath the big stovepipe hat who honored Boston that day so long ago.

When day was done and night came down upon the city, the Boy for the first time thought of a place to sleep. All hotels were filled; he walked miles seeking somewhere to sleep. Someone told him to go up a certain high hill where there were good homes, and very innocently he wended his way into the best residential section of the city. He inquired at many homes, always receiving the same prompt dismissal. He was tired and discouraged and ready to give up, but he knocked at one more door. After being dismissed by a young woman, he heard an elderly voice call out to let the young boy stay—her own boy might be somewhere hunting for a place to sleep and she would not turn this lad out into the street. So there the Boy stayed that night and in the morning, she came to the Boy's room, awakened him, and asked him to come to the kitchen where she had prepared a very wholesome breakfast for him. He left that home with a deep feeling of awe and gratitude and never forgot the incident.

The next day the Boy took in every point of interest

of which he had read in his school books. He visited Old South Church, the Bay where the 'Indians' tumbled the tea overboard, the spot where the first Americans were killed, and Bunker Hill where he climbed the high monument and visioned again the march of the embattled farmers. In all, he had a wonderfully interesting time and regretted that he had no more time to spend there.

At last he left for New York, traveling by boat on the Fall River steamboat line. It was a night trip and he was on the deck all night matching the lights and water. About daylight the boat steamed into New York. Here he stayed for many days and saw everything that a limited purse would permit. One thing he especially remembered was the old Eden Museum where the wax figures were so lifelike that he found himself asking directions of a policeman who proved to be one of the exhibits.

His ticket took him directly back to Chicago, but he wanted to go the longest way 'round. There were many ticket scalpers in those days and to such an office the Boy went. By paying \$5.00, his ticket was traded for one that took him by boat to Virginia and then to Chicago. The boat left New York late in the afternoon; the water was calm and for once the Boy did not become seasick. Supper was called and everyone started for the dining room, the Boy included. When he showed his ticket, he found to his surprise that there were several kinds of tickets. His original ticket was a first-class ticket; the one traded him in New York was a third-class one. Thus he met his first city slicker and was worsted in the meeting.

The first ticket admitted him to any part of the ship; on this ticket he could go nowhere except down in the steerage where hundreds of men and women and children, all foreigners, were cooking their meals, sleeping anywhere they could find room on the floor. The ship's quarters gave them no accommodation whatsoever. They were like cattle in a pen. Dirt and filth and horrible

smells made the Boy sick and again he had a fine touch of seasickness. He tried to reach the fresh air, but each time an officer would send him back. Finally, he did locate a place on deck where he could hide behind a boat, and there he lay all night long, watching the stars and shivering in the cold air. After interminable hours, daylight came over the waves and soon the sun was shining. With the sun the Boy became warm, but he was very hungry. He had had no supper, no dinner, and no breakfast.

About five o'clock that evening Fortress Monroe came into view and soon the ship landed its passengers at Norfolk. The boat would remain at the dock until the following morning when it would go up the James river to Newport News. The Boy went ashore and found a restaurant on the water front. He asked the waiter what he could get the most of for the least money, and he was told oysters. So, he ordered oyster soup and a large pailful of oysters was placed before him. When he reached home, the general understanding was that he enjoyed those oysters fully as much as any chicken his mother had ever fried. Such is the appetite of youth.

The next morning the ship moved up the James river to Newport News and there was the train, ready for the West. Some three hundred people were in the steerage of the boat and here they crowded into the cars. As the Boy's ticket was also third-class, he was put on the same train with the immigrants and away the train rushed. While waiting for the train to start, a load of watermelons was brought up and many sold to the immigrants. They had never seen anything of the kind before and, cutting the melons open, ate everything, rind and all.

About the middle of the afternoon the Boy saw his first mountain. He was so excited that he ran through the train toward the front in order to get a better view. Presently the train was climbing the mountains, and then was among them. It was a wonderful treat to the

Boy who had been reared on a farm in a flat country, with no mountains for hundreds of miles.

A great river was followed for many miles and on its banks the town of Asheville was entered. Again the Boy was excited for that town was the birthplace of one of his heroes, the great Henry Clay.

Finally the train crossed the Ohio river and was at last in Chicago. There the Boy bought another ticket from a scalper and headed homeward. He had to practice writing the name of the person who originally bought the ticket, but it carried him to a town about eighty miles from home. His money was gone by that time, but out he started on foot. There was no hitchhiking in those days, for the automobile had not been invented and teams were at work in the fields rather than traveling on the roads. However, a strong healthy boy had no fear of distance and in an amazingly short time he was home again. Of course he was pretty hungry after a couple days fast, aided by his long walk, but he was home and great was the rejoicing when he came in one morning in time for breakfast. His clothes were dirty, his hair was long and tangled, he was sadly in need of a bath, but those were matters easily remedied. His mother hovered around him as he ate, urging him to eat more of this and more of that until his father told her she had better stop or he would "bust."

As I listened to his story of the trip, I remembered his first journey away from home and wondered how many more places he would want to see. One thing seemed to amuse him. His mother told of a wind-storm that came while he was away, destroying farm buildings and crops, and asked if he had been in any danger from it. She knew he was in Boston, for he had written her from the old Russell Hotel, but she had been worried just the same, not realizing the distance away.

As he told his story and showed so plainly how happy he was to be home, I could not help wondering when the travel bug would hit him again, but it was a long

time before another trip was possible. I am sure those little journeys away from home and into new lands and among unusual scenes were very helpful, for he carried a small geography and studied it as he went, as well as the history of the places and things he saw. He had an opportunity while on this journey to go abroad upon a big ship, but the ocean looked so wide and deep he decided to go home instead. While I am not sure, I really think that a touch of homesickness was what turned him back from the ocean to the old farm and to me.

And we were as glad to see him as he was to see us. Indeed, I think that getting back home must be the very best part of every journey, judging from what I have seen and heard in my long life.

I AM SOLD AND I AM BOUGHT BACK

One day I heard news that made me feel very bad. A man came and talked about buying the farm. He offered a house in town and a sum of money. It was not a large sum, but I heard the Man and the Woman say they were growing old and they thought it best that they leave the farm. A little later I knew that I had been sold, for one day they went to town to meet this man and when they returned, the children were told that the old farm had been sold, and in a short time they began making their preparations to move into town.

The Man and the Woman had come to my farm when the country was new and wholly undeveloped. It was a wild land, a wilderness, and there they had lived for thirty years. They started with a sod shanty, then a log house and then me, made of lumber. I was the finest house in all that region, but at last age began to tell its story and I was no longer young in appearance.

Many years have rolled on since that day when the farm was sold, but I have not forgotten my grief as I saw the pictures taken from my walls, the rugs from my floors, and the furniture from my rooms. I was empty, alone, forsaken. It was fall and I knew I would

be left in that destitute state until spring. I had endured many hard winters. Another winter was on its way, for that very day flakes of snow came whirling down with the falling leaves. Not one of my rooms would be warmed. The snow would drift through every crevice, every window, every door.

The winter possessed a new terror, the cold a new distress, loneliness a new sorrow, and the future seemed to hold naught but grief, and as my thoughts raced over the events of the years gone by, I am not ashamed to tell you that my tears mingled with the falling flakes. When all was loaded, the boys climbed upon the wagons, ready and anxious to be off to the new life. I thought they were leaving without a glance toward me or a word of goodbye, but at the last moment the Man and the Woman returned and went from room to room—through my big back room, into my deserted kitchen, into the south room and the front room where company was entertained when the minister came, up the stairs to my three bedrooms, and back to the kitchen where they stood for a long time. They talked of the days spent beneath my roof, of the hardships of the years gone by, of the hope that life would be much happier for them and their children, and then with one long last look, they went through my big back room, into the yard and drove away. I could see them for some distance. Not once did they look back and I knew it was not because they cared less for me—but rather they could not trust themselves to look at me and my loneliness.

All that long winter I was alone. Day after day passed without a person coming near me. Then one day a stranger came into my back yard. He came into my big back room and on into my kitchen. He seemed familiar to me, but I could not recall him. He talked a little to himself as he walked around and I heard him say it would require much work to make me livable. Then I remembered him—he was the man who had bought me a few months before. Presently he moved

in with his family and I was alone no longer, but I will not tell you of him nor of his family, nor of the years they lived under my roof. I only shall say that I never cared for him. The feeling that he and his family were trespassers, usurpers, not my kind of people, was always with me. He was not one of those who had created me. I tolerated him, but I did not love him.

One day, many years later, I was thrilled beyond any description I can now give, when a young man drove into my yard and asked for the man who lived within my walls. At first I did not know him, but in a moment I knew he was my little Boy, grown up. He looked at me from every side; asked to see my rooms; climbed down the stone steps to my cellar; ran to see if the lizards still had their holes there; rushed out to see if the old pump handle could still draw water from the well; went to the old stable and looked into the stalls; ran down to the great ravine to where the spring gushed forth; wondered if the frogs still made their homes in the bank above the spring; followed the ravine to the lake; and finally came back through the woods by the walnut tree to my steps.

He stood awhile beneath the big trees that raised their branches even higher than my tallest chimney, then he came into the house, went from room to room, climbed the stairs to where he slept when a little fellow—found he could easily reach the ceiling with his hands. He went downstairs, into the room where he was born, and where later he had his first library. He seemed amazed that all the rooms had become so small. He had remembered them as rooms high and large, while now he could reach the ceilings and cross the largest room in a bound.

I heard him ask the man his price for the farm, and I almost cried aloud when I saw him write a check to bind the bargain. I saw him go to his buggy and drive down the road toward town. I watched him go with gladness in my heart. If I grieved when I was sold,

as slaves were sold in a land far away, of which I had heard the old soldiers so often speak, you must know that I now rejoiced—I was so glad, so happy. I could not possess my own calm thoughts. I was greatly excited and throughout the whole night kept wondering if it were a dream or if I really were once more owned by the people who had built me.

It was not a dream—it was true. I was no longer an outcast. I once more belonged to those I loved. Age and falling shingles and loosened windows meant nothing now. While but yesterday I had groaned with the ills of age and loneliness, today I sang with happiness. But alas, in our joys we cannot know how soon will come deepest sorrow, for within less than a year from my day of greatest happiness came my day of greatest sorrow. New buildings took the place of old, a new house replaced me, and I was dragged over the hills to a spot on the treeless prairie where I yet sit. Only bare prairie surrounds me, no trees, no shade, no lake, no beauty anywhere. From the topmost brick of my chimney I can just see the highest branches of the two wonderful oaks beside which I stood so many years. I cannot hear the wind rustle their leaves as in days of old, nor hear the birds sing their happy songs as dawn peered over the eastern hills. Here must I live until storm shall dash me in broken pieces or fire end my days in flame.

Bitter sadness overwhelms me and yet I must not despair. I must bravely meet adversity as so many times I have seen the Man and the Woman meet cold and want and hardship. Their courage must be my courage, their triumph my triumph. As they endured, so must I endure.

I have heard men describe moving pictures and tonight as I conclude these pages, a flood of thoughts flash through my mind as I believe moving pictures must pass before the eyes of men. Those who see pictures move, see with the eye only, while I see with my soul. The events of the past shape and form themselves into

living images, children of my thoughts. Not with my eyes but with my soul I see the years unroll as a scroll.

When youth was still mine, the Old Soldier returned from an army encampment. He met the Man beneath my roof and told the story of his journey, of other old soldiers in numbers as many as the falling leaves, gathering in a great city and marching upon its crowded streets, of meeting old comrades, of campfires at night and the morning bugle call, of shaking the hand of General Hooker and climbing again in peace the rocky sides of Lookout Mountain climbed so long before in war.

The Old Soldier talked for hours and I listened to every word, but he said one thing I shall ever remember. He told of a great orator who by his power brought tears to eyes that had forgotten how to weep, who spoke very simply but so beautifully that none could withstand the spell of his eloquence. The orator rose before that vast throng and won their undivided attention by his first words. He said "The past rises before me as a dream." Then he told of the days when men were needed to preserve our nation, of the volunteers who left home and business to serve that nation, of their parting with loved ones, of the battles and the victory, of the final march down Pennsylvania avenue, of the return to happy homes.

Tonight the past rises before me as a dream. I see a covered wagon creeping slowly over widespreading prairie. I see it turn toward tall trees and there stop. I see great loads of lumber hauled long distances to be used in making of me a home in which men might live and find shelter from storm and tempest. I see that gathering when my walls were raised, that later assembly of friend and neighbor when I was at last finished, the finest home in all that country. I hear the music and rhythmic tapping of many feet, the droning fiddle, the shouted orders to swaying dancers. I see the dance abandoned to gather round groaning tables. I see the little ones gaze with big eyes as they are lifted to their places at the table side. I see the sun rise above

eastern hills as homeward wend the welcome guests.

I see old eyes gazing upward at dark clouds. I see those clouds change to living, creeping, crawling things that devour every green thing, grinding grain and leaf and twig between insatiable jaws that never tired. I see a country destroyed, a people paupered by millions of leaping crawling creatures. I see years of hardship for those who stayed and fought for victory. I see them fight debt and hunger and privation. I see them win that fight and from their victory I see homes rise in every valley and schoolhouses crown the hill-tops.

I rejoice that Fortune has been so kind to me. When discouragement almost overcomes me, I think of other homes denied the companionship and the love that for more than half a century has been mine. Then my blind eyes see, my mind thinks clearly, my soul is lifted high.

What if it be my fate to die? To rot? I but follow the pathway marked by every creature, every tree, every blade of grass that once had life.

And so I face the future without hope, yet hopeful; in blinding sorrow, yet with joy and gladness in my soul; unable to longer accomplish, yet embued with the ambition that is youth.

The secret of Pandora is mine—Hope, though dead, springs eternal.

Iowa Farms Decline in Number

In twenty-two years from 1934 to 1956, the number of farms in Iowa has declined 25,000, there now being 157,000 farms in the state. The decline mostly has been on account of three causes: consolidation of farms, rapid enlargement of cities and towns and platting of new areas by real estate promoters.

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