

Comment by the Editor

THE FOUNDATION OF DEMOCRACY

In Ruth Suckow's *Country People* there is not a single character of distinction. From cover to cover the book is peopled with common folks who face their pleasures calmly and meet their sorrows with stolid fortitude. They accept life as it comes, doing what seems to be right at the time and making the best of adversity. The utter simplicity of their thoughts and actions is the most prominent characteristic of their existence.

Precisely the same might be said of the vast majority of people everywhere. Out of the totality of mankind how few achieve distinction! Most folks pursue the even tenor of their course in life, and at the end pass on to join the great democracy of the "unhonored and unsung".

Yet, while a "thoughtless world" may "idolize success", humanity is indebted most perhaps to the hosts of common people never blessed with power or genius. Their thoughts and deeds, their hopes and fears, their customs, morals, and ideals are after all the sum and substance of our culture. It was the innate American faith in the importance of every citizen that caused the first settlers in Iowa to open schools and promote religion, morality, and knowl-

edge which they conceived to be so "necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind". It is popular sanction that lends force to statutes: the general practice is the living law.

EPHEMERAL DISTINCTION

The native talents of the multitudes of unknown, substantial people who

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;

are not the sort that lead to wide renown. Few indeed are they who, endowed with some peculiar virtue, emerge from the commonalty and claim attention even for a little while. No man's name is a household word in every home, and no man was ever constantly in the spotlight of public notice. The most that anyone can hope is to cross the path of glory now and then, as John Johns did in 1860. Old, uncouth, and strange, he appears in the pages of history unheralded, and in a moment he is gone like a meteor in the sky, leaving no trace and to return no more. And yet, what worthier name can anyone associate with Border Plains?

J. E. B.