SAGA, INCIDENTS AND ANECDOTES FROM BYGONE DAYS

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1943

Says the Sage of Concord:

"It is long ere we discover how rich we are. Our history, we are sure, is quite tame. We have nothing to write, nothing to infer. But our wiser years still run back to the despised recollections of childhood, and always we are fishing up some wonderful article out of that pond; until by-and-by we begin to suspect that the biography of the one foolish person we know, is, in reality, nothing less than the miniature paraphrase of the one hundred volumes of the Universal History."

Time passes the fastest when I am writing. The necessary concentration makes me oblivious to the clock. I forget things about me and think only of the story I am trying to tell or the statement I am endeavoring to make. My mind never works fast when I am composing something. Words often elude me and I find that I must consult the "files" of my vocabulary to find whether or not they contain the expression for which I am groping about. Usually such a hunt yields results, but it also consumes time. I envy those whose felicity of expression makes their thoughts come trippingly from the pen or tongue. Their fund of knowledge, to use a mining phrase, is "stock piled," ready for delivery on short notice. My "ore" is not "stockpiled," hence, when I want it I must dig for it, only to find too often that the "vein" I am following has "run out."

I was born in humble surroundings. Poverty received me with open arms and an empty larder. The struggle for existence among my countrymen, at the time of my birth, was a hard one. Recent volcanic eruptions had damaged habitations, destroyed much vegetation, spewn ashes and lava over a large district and filled the air with unhealthy gases. What Nature had grudgingly "rationed" with one hand she lavishly swept away with the other. It is well known that Iceland is a land of contrasts. Fire and frost have won alternate victories; unremitting toil has been the lot of the natives.

I am not now speaking about Twentieth Century Iceland; not about the Iceland that has risen from the ashes of a literally and figuratively burnt out past; not about the Iceland of today with all the accessories that constitute so much of this thing that we call modern life; not of the Iceland that now teems with commerce and industry, has bridged its rivers, harnessed its waterfalls, electrified its cities and its rural communities, has auto passenger buses serving every part of the country, has "more telephones per capita than

any other country," owns an important steamship line whose ships ply regularly between Reykjavik and New York and other up-to-the-minute improvements too numerous to mention.

This Iceland I have visited on two different occasions, in 1930 and 1940. I have seen and noted the marvelous change that the mind and hand of man have wrought in the old Saga Land. But this is not the Iceland which I, as a child, left in 1876, then less than four years old. With my mother I came to Minnesota in the summer of the year mentioned. There were not many Icelanders in Minnesota then. The first two families came in the year 1875 and settled on farms in Lyon County.

Dugout Days

For several years mother and I lived in a dugout, which was merely an oblong hold in the ground. The walls were just the bare earth and the floor was of the same material. A low-pitched roof, resting on the edge of the excavation which formed the first and only "story" of the "structure" was made by laying branches on the short rafters and then covering these with coarse hay and topping the whole with a layer of sod. Following a severe rain storm, it usually began raining inside when it let up outside. This roof, looking for all the world like a squatty dog kennel, was the only visible exterior of this pioneer home, this human pocket gopher habitation. One small window sash with four panes of glass was put in the front gable, and this gave all the light that came in in the daytime, unless the door was open, and this proved quite sufficient when the day was bright -- but then, not all days were bright.

The furniture, as I recall it, consisted of one homemade table, two short and narrow benches, a box-like contraption which was dignified by the name of trunk, bed

knocked together from some old boards, several shelves, being merely short board lengths laid on pegs driven into the earthen wall. this was the household cupboard. The stove consisted of a rickety, old, cast iron contraption which had been discarded by some settler who found it entirely too inadequate for the kitchen needs of a growing family. But even if it had not been found wanting in capacity the fact is that long before it was discarded by its former owner it had definitely passed the age of retirement. On this my mother practiced her culinary art -- an art not learned in any domestic science class room, but sufficient for our needs and fully commensurate with the supplies of our larder. There was no man in our "house" to smoke, no infuriating male to roar about things he did not like. But the stove made up for this. Mostly we burned twisted hay. The average high school graduate of today does not know anything about burning twisted hay, but their grandparents in many instances did. When you burn hay for fuel, you make a wisp of it and feed it into the grate of the stove. I say feed for that is just what you have to do constantly. Twist the hay as you will the flames consume it with a roar, and there is where you get the roar I referred to, and as for the smoke, why, that old stove could emit more wreathes of smoke to the minute than a regiment of Dutchmen with their long pipes all going full blast.

For light in the evenings we alternated with homemade candles and a small kerosene lamp. Both of these also smoked as a general rule. Money there had to be to buy kerosene, so the lamp got many a night off.

On a winter morning it was not a singular occurrence to find the steps leading up from our "ground floor" and the whole excavation surrounding them filled with snow.

This made egress difficult and not to be accomplished without strenuous and awkward shoveling.

It is needless to remark that our dugout did not boast a library. But it is difficult to find an Icelander without a book. Mother had an old hymnbook printed in the early years of the Nineteenth Century and one or two other books of a religious nature. She was a great reader and succeeded in borrowing some books from Icelanders who had brought some of their favorites from the father-land. She appreciated a good Saga and knew a great deal of poetry by heart. She learned quickly and had a good memory which she retained not much impaired to the very last of her eighty-two years. I may as well say it now as later that she had a sharp tongue, a ready wit and was to be reckoned with in repartee. She never had a day of schooling in her life. When she was growing up in Iceland it was not considered necessary to give girls an education, at least not girls of the commonality. It was different with the daughters of the clergy, or the civil officers, of the rich farmers. It was taken for granted that these be given some schooling. This is back of the fact that my mother never learned to write. She learned to read because under the laws of the state church every child of the age of fourteen had to be confirmed. They had to learn their catechism by heart, and in order to do that they had to be able to read. Leaving all religious considerations out of the reckoning, this requirement of the church was a Godsend to the children of the poor who otherwise might never have learned to read.

Reverting to the two or three religious books that Mother had, I think I may say that in the light of a more mature judgement than I had in my dugout days, these good books were designed to bring a minimum of cheer with a maximum of fear. Mother

required of me that I learn verses couched in the lumbering language of the old hymnbook and repeat them each evening, with the Lord's Prayer, as my nightly devotion. To the untrained mind of the little lad these devotional exercises were heavy laden with the mystery of un-understood words. Although my mother's native ability took her far, it was beyond her depth when it came to explaining the old and involved theological allusions in these books. Years and experience have helped that little boy to understand the phraseology "learned at mother's knee," but they have also divested the mind of the primitive "fear of God" thus instilled.

I was taught to say, and religiously held to saying: "God help me" every time I sneezed. This is a hark back to the time when the "black death" killed such a large portion of the inhabitants of Iceland. That disease began with a sneezing spell and although there are now centuries since the "black death," the Icelanders are to this day saying: "God help me!" when they sneeze, at least some of them are.

Another thing that I was taught was to cross myself every time I put on a clean shirt. Such is the power of early habit that although it is a long time since I "was a boy at mother's knee" I still occasionally catch myself doing both of these things. Who was it said: Give me the child until it is seven and I care not who has it after that." Like so many other exaggerations, this statement contains a germ of truth.

In the years from about seven or eight and up into the teens, Hell, with all its lurid horrors, was to me a most vivid reality. I used to wake up in a cold sweat almost paralyzed with the fear of being damned. In those years of childhood and early youth the salvation of my soul was a real concern to me. I was afraid that my wickedness, both "original" and acquired, must needs land me in that outer darkness where the gnashing of

teeth is the only "harmony" heard by the "poor damned souls." As I have grown older my salvation has given me less concern. For, as the realization of the love of God enters into our consciousness all fear of Hell must take its leave. When the soul once awakens to the truth that the "love of God passeth all understanding," fear vanishes and peace abides. In the language of the loving Quaker poet, John Greenleaf Whittier:

"I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air,
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond his love and care."

Difficult Years on the Prairie

Those early years on the prairies were difficult for my mother, who knew no language other than her native tongue, of which but a few scattered families had a knowledge. The community we were in consisted almost entirely of Norwegian immigrant families. Among these good and friendly people my mother sought and secured work from time to time. She readily acquired a working knowledge of Norwegian everyday language and could make herself understood in this, to her, foreign tongue. As the years went by, she became more and more proficient in this language. But in spite of the many years that were spared to her in America, she never learned English to such an extent that conversation could be carried on. The reason for this is that all her contact was with people who spoke either or both Norwegian and Icelandic. Practically every Icelander who came to live in the settlement soon learned to speak Norwegian. This was natural because the people of that nationality were the dominant element of the community and these Norwegian farmers who had been here, in many instances, for quite a number of years became the employers of such of the Icelanders as

sought work and that included about everyone. I as a boy played and associated entirely, in those early years, with Norwegian children and it was not long before I spoke their language almost as well as any of them. In the first decade of life one acquires a language with ease and is apt to learn to speak it without much trace of an alien accent. This I feel was the case with me. I have to hold onto my Norwegian and my knowledge of it has ever been to me a source of pleasure and profit. I claim no proficiency in any language but I manage to make myself understood in several. In a heterogeneous society such as ours in the Middle West, the ability to converse in more than one tongue often stands one in good stead and can be very helpful when people from foreign shores come here to take up their permanent abode among us. To one who can speak the language of the "newcomer" as well as the language of the land, come numerous opportunities of being helpful in a practical way.

As above alluded to, my mother sought work among these Norwegian neighbors. She needed the meager pay that such services brought in order t o procure the bare necessities required to sustain life for herself and her little boy.

To get to the place where this employment was found she often had to walk several miles over the trackless prairie. There were weeds to battle through and high grass and weeds to contend with, but most disagreeable of all there were marshy sloughs, filled with water, more or less shallow, that had to be forded to avoid long and difficult time-wasting detours. I was then five or six years old and many is the time that Mother took me on her back and waded with me nearly a quarter of a mile from shore to shore. I do not know what pay she received for her services, but I do know that many was the day when she was in the field from early in the morning until late in the evening husking

corn. She became quite a proficient husker for a woman. For this work she received twenty-five cents per day! Not much you will say, but money was scarce among the pioneers on the Minnesota prairies in the late seventies of the last century, and laborers seeking employment were plentiful.

I do not know how Mother managed to make ends meet, but I do know that a kind Providence cast our lot among helpful and considerate neighbors, both of our own nationality and our sister race the Norwegians. We were simple folks, our life was simple, we had simple tastes so a simple fare sufficed. It goes without saying that we did not have "strawberries and cream" for dessert every day. Probably it was because of this early bringing up that I eschew dessert to this very day, except where politeness dictates that you eat what is set before you, lest you give your host the idea that you do not like her cooking. Conformity has a way of making hypocrites out of all of us at times.

I Want to Become a Preacher

Pastors of the Norwegian Lutheran persuasion visited the settlement from time to time. I was greatly impressed by these dignified, fluent men, with their white ruff collars, worn on all occasions of worship. Services were mostly held in some of the larger homes. People were crowded, but there were no complaints. Boxes, benches, stools, trunks and other "seatables" were put in use. They were not the most comfortable resting places imaginable, but the pioneers were not used to padded cushions or reclining chairs. The luxury of a modern church would probably have set them to wondering whether such surroundings were compatible with the teachings of Holy Writ.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that I was deeply impressed by these men of God and listened to them with more rapt attention than in later years I bestowed upon

more polished pulpit orators speaking before fashionable audiences seated in padded pews.

Yes, surely the height of my ambition at about the age of six was to become like ones of these, wear a white ruff collar and speak to the multitudes in words of authority. Who can fathom the vagaries of a child's mind or probe the imagination of a six-year old!

I still vividly remember one day when all the children of the household and some visiting youngsters were gathered for play in the barnyard. The occasion was hard upon a ministerial visitation such as I have mentioned and I was all keyed up to enter holy orders as soon as I grew up. We children were all set on having a good time and the question went around: "What shall we play?" As usual, there were about as many answers as there were young throats assembled. Agreement on any one thing seemed hopeless. So I, speaking out of the fullness of my heart, proposed that we play preacher. That was a new game, no one had heard of it. "How do you play it" came from every side. "I will show you," I said and suiting the action to the word I mounted a nearby stump and began to fling my arms about as I had seen the preachers do, and in my best Norwegian launched into a wilderness of phrases, parroting what I could remember from the last sermon I had heard. My audience stood it for a while and then with one voice the cry went up: "This is no fun!" and my congregation began to play "hide and seek" around a nearby manure pile. I was left a deserted pulpiteer cogitating on the perversity of sinful man.

I am sure it must have been a great disappointment to me to so signally fail as a preacher. But at that age disappointments have a way of taking wings. I think it was the

realization of probably having to give up every getting a chance to wear the white ruff that hurt the most.

Things in the Early Days

Wheat was the principal crop sown in this settlement in the years alluded to here. Oats were raised for feeding purposes, but corn was not "King" in those days and a comparatively small quantity was planted.

The threshing season was a long one because there were so few "threshing rigs" making the rounds. The coming of the "threshing crew" with its "separator," its "horse power," its wagons and all the many contrivances that went into making up a complete "outfit" was an event not be forgotten by the small boys of the neighborhood. The crew generally consisted of about a dozen or more swarthy, sunburnt, weather-beaten, greased, begrimed men. They were a husky, hardy, healthy-looking set. When the separator had been pulled in between the grain stacks of the "setting" it was intended to begin on and the places located where the "horse power" should stand, the work of "setting" the separator started. This consisted of leveling the machine by means of a spirit level. Sometimes a wheel had to be sunk or another one raised as the case might be, but level the machine must stand. If not, gears and cog-wheels would not work as they should and there was danger of breakage.

Anchoring the "horse power" was a task not to be done in a slipshod manner. You had here a machine with five "sweeps," extending out from the central mechanism like the spokes of a wheel from its hub. To each of theses sweeps was hitched a team of horses, and the strain on the whole can be imagined when the power of all these horses was applied to the no small burden of propelling the "separator." The so called "horse

power" that I have been describing was merely the "power station" or the "engine" by which the "separator" was run. The power was conveyed from one machine to the other by means of a long and heavy circular rod, which came in sections and was joined by couplings, and when the horses began to travel their circle around the "power" this rod began to revolve and that set every wheel in the separator in motion. What a glorious sight for a boy who beheld this awe-inspiring wonder but once a year!

This noisy group of more or less bewhiskered farmers, with their hired men, shouting, swearing, swaggering, one giving orders here and another there, was a real movie scene, not filmed, but acted. When the "power" and the "machine" were all in readiness and the men had taken their respective places, the "boss" gave the signal for "attack" immediately. The sound of revolving wheels and the whir of machinery in motion announced that action had begun. The pitchers were throwing the bundles of grain from the stacks to the platforms of band cutters, and with one stroke the band was cut and the loosened bundle was ready for the feeder, who standing between two band cutters, grabbed right and left and shoved bundle after bundle with practiced skill into the roaring maw of the machine. These feeders were almost always veritable dynamos of strength and skill. Life and action were everywhere!

It was a trick to do a good job of running the "horse power." An even, steady and equal pull was required for even motion, and without this the best results could not be obtained.

Here was then for the small boy a new and spectacular sight. There was the boss of the rig, usually the owner, giving orders like a general, the man on the "power" with his whip and his picturesque, the feeders, the pitchers and all the rest.

Just a word about the feeders. There were never less than two and they changed time into about hourly shifts. Their's was the hardest task around this beehive of bustling men.

If the threshers and the machinery they operated presented a drama of action, the farm house of the place was not less astir. Every household had to get extra help for the threshing time. Cooking, baking and brewing coffee began about four o'clock in the morning and with the everlasting dishwashing kept the women busy until late at night. There were not only the three regular meals to get, but substantial lunches had to be prepared for both forenoon and afternoon. These lunches had to be "setting" where the crew was working. All this was real work and no play for the kitchen-sweltering women. But to the children who were too young to be "drafted for service," the whole thing presented a panoramic succession of arresting scenes. "Having threshers, as it was called, was no light task for the woman, or women, of any home. Sometimes bad weather might double the stay of a threshing crew at a place. This was as difficult for, as it was hard on, those who had to furnish feed and shelter.

Let me say right here that when you talk about the pioneers, do not overlook the fact that it is not exclusively a masculine term. The women of the early settlement were just as heroic and just as hard working as the men, only I think that in most cases they were more so.

But the small boy is demanding more attention. He has discovered that there is an "appeal" in these men of the threshing crew, with their greasy and dust covered faces and clothes, that makes the immaculate white ruff look like a feminine decoration. Just now the manly thing seems to be to resemble as much as possible these grimy giants who

fill with admiration every waking hour of the small boy's existence. To become a "top" thresherman looms as the only worthwhile ambition.

A while ago the overwhelming desire was to "pray and preach," now it is to occupy a place where the physical alone seems to dominate. So a "call" to the most unlike of "charges" has come to woo and win the impulsive heart of the bewildered boy.

But what is life if not a composite of succeeding emotions. We cherish today what we discard tomorrow. A constant change is Life's only consistency. He who thinks that he is steering his course in a straight and unerring line has failed to take his "observations" or is using for the purpose decidedly inaccurate instruments. It is as true as it is terse that "the times change and we change with them."

Few Pets, Many Pests

The pioneers did not have many domestic pets. There was the ever present cat who did his bit to keep out the undesirables, and that useful and faithful friend of man, the dog. But both these were kept because of their usefulness, not as pets or playthings. The men had no time to tend pets and the women were too busy with their endless house duties, including the care of children, to have time to loll around with lap dogs.

But while there was a dearth of pets there was an overabundance of pests. Chief among these were the housefly, the bedbug, and the ever present mosquito.

People now living in clean and comfortable homes do not know what the pioneers had to contend with in these infesting pests.

There were flies everywhere and hardly a screen anywhere. Mosquito netting was used, but this did not do much good, it was easily torn and wind and rain soon played havoc with it. The houseflies swarmed all over. They were into everything and you

could hardly discern the color of the food on the table because of the mass of flied that fought for a place on every exposed food surface. It was a common thing to have two or three pairs of flies suddenly land on top of the coffee in your cup. Well, you could not afford to throw out good coffee, so you just fished out the flies and made the best of what was left in their swimming pool. This might be repeated several times before you drained the last dregs of that precious coffee. A pan or pitcher of milk, placed on the table, soon displayed a black surface. The process of straining out flies seemed to have no end.

Another choice bit of annoyance was the bedbug. This pest was, and in some places still is, a real menace. While the existence of the bedbug in some homes and some hotels today may safely be laid to uncleanliness, that would be but partly, if at all true, of the pioneer situation. Then the bedbug like the fly seemed to come from nowhere and take its abode everywhere. The bedbug lives and moves and has its being in anything made of wood. That is why the old wooden bedsted, with its cracks and openings all around, was the choicest of breeding places for these brown crawlers, and the humans who occupied these beds furnished delicious food for these hungry nibblers -- these despoilers of the peace and sanctity of the home. The log cabins of the pioneers were the suites deluxe for these prowling pirates.

What, you have never seen a bedbug! Strange! Well, you may have been to college and you may have hobnobbed with the elite, but if you have never been awakened at midnight and found a banquet in full swing on your abdomen, you have missed something! Should it be your lot to sometime meet up with a bevy of well fed bedbug belles, take and segregate one of them, crush it with your thumb or some other suitable instrument and then inhale the emitted odor. I miss my guess if you will not have a lot

of respect for a polecat after that. As for the mosquito, you had him with you morning, noon and night. He buzzed and bit and injected poison into your system at every turn of the road. These were the principal house pests. There were others, but let's "skip it."

Mother, as might be expected, owned no land, so the dugout that we occupied was on land owned by a kind couple of Icelandic nativity, who permitted her to disfigure a little knoll near their own home by the "erection" of this hole in the ground, which I have already described.

Mother had an inordinate fear of a thunderstorm. She did not dare to be alone in our dugout on such an occasion. Many is the night when she awakened me and taking a few bed clothes under one arm would with the other steer my sleepy form to the house where dwelt the couple just referred to. Here she would spread the clothes she had brought on the floor and we would lie down to again court sleep. Mother felt some sort of security in being so close to other grown up people. All her life she was troubled with this fear of a thunderstorm. I think that I was well out of my teens before I could sleep unmindful when the lightning flashed and the thunder roared. I might be sleeping alone, but when crash after crash awakened me and I sat up with a frightened start, I might say: "Mother let's go somewhere." Verily, what we practice when young stays with us long.

A Sad Experience

I shall now relate an incident, it can hardly be called an accident, which left its permanent "mark" on me and caused my mother many anxious days and many a sleepless night and much weeping and almost despair.

It all happened in about this way: Mother was working in the home of a prominent Norwegian family and mother's "little lamb" was following her as usual. One

day the head of the household went to town to market some produce and to buy such groceries and dry goods as were needed. He returned in the late afternoon and drove his wagon up near the door of the house, in order to make it more convenient to unload the supplies he had brought home. He then unhitched the horses and took them to the barn.

I was playing in the door yard at the time and my bump of inquisitiveness asserted itself and I made up my mind to investigate the wagon box to see what was in it. Accordingly I proceeded to scale one of the front wheels. Standing up against the wheel my head was but little above the level of the hub. Using the spokes of the wheel as the rungs of a ladder I climbed up until my head just shot above the upper edge of the wagon box. But I had "reckoned without my host." I had overlooked the presence in the wagon of the faithful, old watchdog of the family, who always went to town with his master and always remained on guard by the wagon while his master went about his business in the stores. Never was there anything stolen from the wagon that this dog watched over. As soon as my head came above the wagon box "old faithful" made a lunge for my face, ripping my right cheek open from the top of the cheek bone down to the chin. The cheek bone was exposed and the flesh and skin of the cheek was hanging down. I shall draw the curtain on mother's misery and my disfiguration. There were no funds in the old dugout to pay for either doctor or medicine, so neither was procured. The kind and wise women of the home and the neighborhood applied such remedies as might be classed among the so called household variety. They laid the torn portion of the cheek back in place and cut slices of fresh pork and laid them over the whole right side of the face, repeating the process as often as they thought necessary.

I do not recall now how long the healing process took, "but in the due course of time," I was as good as ever and only a small and not much noticeable scar is left to tell the story.

Those unlettered women, with but the most rudimentary knowledge of what was necessary, did a "repair job" of which any doctor might have been proud.

In the old Sagas, dealing with the Viking age of a thousand years ago, when the sword was freely used and wounds plentiful, we read of women and men skilled in the art of binding up wounds and administering healing remedies. Measured on present day standards, their skill was crude and their medicines were not a specialized compound of the apothecary's shop, but they were the judicious mixture of applied experience and common sense.

As nature has endowed all animate life, including all manner of vegetation with recuperative powers, so the race of man has always counted among it those to whom has been given an aptitude for ministering to the ills and ails of the sick and wounded.

First School

I remember the first school I attended. I must have been about seven or eight. Mother had abandoned the dugout and we were staying with a Norwegian family that lived on the East bank of the South Branch of the Yellow Medicine River. The school referred to was conducted in a farm home about a mile from the place we were staying. This home was owned by an Icelandic couple who, with a quite large family of children, had emigrated from Iceland a short time before.

The room in which the school sessions were held could not have been more than 10 by 14 feet, floor measure. The side walls could hardly have been more than about

four feet, measured from the floor to the top of the plate where the rafters rested. The ceiling was formed by lathe and plastering on the rafters. A grown-up man could easily stand upright in the center of the room, but he could not have [reached] far to either side and maintained his "uprightness." The pupils sat on benches. the teacher was a fine looking young Norwegian lately arrived from Wisconsin. This little school room was well filled and the pupils were all either Norwegian or Icelandic parentage. If a pupil of some other nationality had strayed in I have forgotten it.

I had been provided with what was called a "First Reader" in anticipation of this school attendance. I had had it for several days before coming to school and so had familiarized myself with the first two or three pages. In the very front of the book was a full page picture of a cat. Then began a series of words which developed into phrases. When the time came for the "First Readers" to be exposed to the gaze of their fellow students, the teacher called on me. I arose and he said: "spell cat." I looked at the page with the reading matter on it and began reading: "A cat. The cat. My cat." Then everybody laughed. I could not understand why they laughed, I thought I was doing splendidly.

It was the custom to have "program" every Friday afternoon. The pupils "spoke pieces," gave dialogues and attempted singing. Usually there were visitors on these days, mostly relatives of the pupils on the program.

Once the teacher prevailed on me to promise to have a "piece to speak" on the coming Friday. I learned this "piece" so well that I could have recited it just as readily backward as forward. When Friday came I was "Johnny on the spot" but the "piece" was not. I tried to unlock my system and get it out, but I had entirely forgotten the

combination and so had to leave the platform and I presume the audience felt somewhat as the poet did who said: "Alas for those who never sing but died with all their music in them." I failed utterly to justify any hopes that might have been raised by my preaching from the stump in the barnyard a couple of years before. Nor did I have the aptness or the presence of mind of the high school orator who stepped to the front of the platform to open the flood gates of eloquence and oratory. Like Webster he probably thrust his right hand under the left lapel of his double-breasted coat and striking an attitude began his discourse in the rumbling tones of distant thunder. The oration and the orator start out thusly: "Forty years ago this country was a howling wilderness!" No go! All blank! Undaunted, the embryo Demosthenes returns to the task: "Forty years ago this country was a howling wilderness!" The "go" sign turns to "stop!" But not content with letting the second be the last howl, and remember that: "Gaul is divided into three parts," he strides forth again with: "Forty years ago this country was a howling wilderness," bowing, he adds: "And I wish to hell it were yet!" The oration was short but it has been remembered much longer than had he been able to proceed with it in its original form.

More Schooling

Speaking of schools and schooling, I never had much of either. I attended the above mentioned school intermittently during the most of one winter, entering late and quitting early. About a year or so later I was invited to come, for the period of a school term, and live with my aunt, who was married to an Irishman, and go to school. Mother accepted the invitation for me and I went to live with my aunt for the part of one winter and attended the country school of the district. I think I was the one Scandinavian in the school. The rest were all either Irish or French with probably some Germans. I have but

a vague recollection of the intellectual part of this school term, but a very vivid picture of the treatment I received from the boys who all made fun of me and picked on me generally. Of course, I was backwards, gawky, green and homely, and my clothes were nothing to "set me off." the worst of all was that I could not fight. I was kicked into scraps and always licked. I was not sorry when Mother decided to take me home -- of course, home was wherever my mother happened to be staying.

My next venture in the school line was when Mother rented a room over a store on Main Street, in the county seat town of Lyon County. She took in washing and it was my job to carry the bundle of clean clothes back to the place from whence they originated as soiled linen. It also fell to my lot to take all the scolding when the Lady of the Linen decided that there had been too much "bluing" applied. It was just as well for my mother, could not have understood what she said anyway.

There was quite a formidable public school in this village; the school building having probably six or eight rooms. I enrolled and was placed in the third grade, no doubt more because of the size of my body than the girth of my mind. I was of the age when I should have been in the third grade so that was, of course, where I belonged. There was no special dunce class, but everything that tended in that direction, I headed. I had no foundation and so could not get interested in my studies. I remember that for a spell I was very much taken up with an Icelandic novel that I was reading at home evenings and was thinking of "what next" in the story when I should have been figuring out some "cat and dog" problem that was placed before us on the blackboard. All day I looked forward to the hour of dismissal. I was picked on by the other kids as usual; this I was beginning to take for granted, in fact had it been otherwise I would have worried

about there being something with me. I do not know why I was the object of all this attention unless it was because I was such an ungainly ragamuffin and looked as if a little beating would do me good. Whether the beatings did me any good or not, I do not know, but I sure got 'em.

A Sunday School Incident

This winter I went with some other children to a Methodist Sunday school; there was no church of mother's denomination in the town. I had a teacher in this Sunday School whom I liked very much. I surmise that she saw that I was not shaped from the stuff from which heroes are hewn and deep down in her heart probably took pity on me and wondered "why I was brought to the kingdom at such a time as this." A child accustomed to the seamy side of things soon senses kindness when it meets up with it. She treated me as if I were "one of God's children" and I liked her for it. One Sunday she set the class the task of having the Ten Commandments committed to memory by the next time we met. I was the only one in the class who had that lesson when the time came. The teacher was pleased, not that the whole class with the exception of one had failed, but that he of whom the least was expected had "kicked through." She said a few words of praise, under the influence of which I mustered up courage enough to tell her that I knew the Commandment in the Icelandic language also. In her enthusiasm she gave the rest of the class a little talk on this "foreigner" who had two sets of Commandments to his credit! I was really being led to believe that I had accomplished something besides heading the dunce class in the public school. At the end of the quarter, I was presented with a large card printed in colors and bearing the caption "Reward of Merit" there was some reading matter on the card, but that I have forgotten. At the

bottom was the signature of this, to me, wonderful teacher. I had the highest respect for her intelligence, feeling assured that she was one of those who "knew a good thing when she saw it."

When this good woman complimented me on having two sets of Commandments I really fancied that I had something. what if I should break one set, I had the other one to fall back upon! But I soon discovered that of my two sets one was just as breakable as the other and that no matter which set I has holding, it would in no time become a dead weight and the law of depravity -- not gravity -- would soon exhaust my strength and overcome my endurance.

I kept and cherished that "Reward of Merit" card until long after the boy had become a man. How easy it is for a child to retain the memory of a kindness shown it; and by the same token to forget not a snub, a sneer or an unjust act.

That spring my mother moved from the county seat. I was now approaching an age when I could be useful. My "cattle herding" days had begun. I had done some herding along with other boys in summers past, but that had been mostly just to be along for the fun of it. Now I was to have a herd of my own. This was in the Icelandic settlement in Lincoln county. five farmers, each living within a mile of a central point, joined their cattle into one herd and I was given the job of attending it. Like the old pioneer school masters, I "boarded around." I would remain one or two weeks in a place depending on the number of cattle each farmer had in the herd. This would make several circuits in the course of a season.

The grazing land I had for this herd was quite extensive and most of it was on both sides of a rather shallow brook. In places there were quite deep holes in this brook

where both pickerel and bullheads were to be found. The water was clear and the bottom could well be seen. This made a certain kind of fishing possible which could not be done in muddy water. I refer to snaring, which is a rather unusual mode of catching fish, due principally to the fact that clear water is an absolute requisite. In season, I fished this way almost every day. You use the ordinary pole and line, but you attach a snare instead of the usual hook. The snare consists of a loop of very fine copper wire which when quickly jerked, closes about the fish and your prey is caught. The process is on the principle of lassoing. In either case, the victim is caught in the snare. But this is not as easy as it sounds or looks. Your snare loop is probably eight inches in diameter. You spy your fish, we will say a pickerel, for they are the easiest to snare as they lie perfectly motionless in the water and always some distance above the bottom of the stream. With a steady and exceedingly quiet motion, you insert your snare in the water about 6 to 8 feet in front of the fish, being careful not to ruffle the water for the least wave formation will alarm your fish and he will shoot out like a ball from a rifle and you are through for the time being. If you succeed in not scaring your fish when you insert your snare in the water, you move it by means of the pole and line, inch by inch, until you get it over its head to a point where the head and body meet, then you give your sudden jerk and by all the rules you should then land your game. I know of nothing more exciting than this mode of fishing While you are getting your snare into the right position, a slow and exacting process, your nerves are on edge and your muscles are taut and your whole attention is riveted on the task at hand. It is real sport and you are not luring the fish with a bait. You are matching your skill against his powers of observation and you have an opponent worthy of your steel, or rather your copper. I became quite proficient in this

sort of fishing and many is the fine pickerel I have pulled out of the water, dangling in my snare. Of course, I did a lot of hook fishing also, but whenever possible, I preferred the snare, it was to me so much more sportsmanlike.

There were wild plums and wild grapes along the river and goose berries and choak berries in abundance; of theses I ate my fill with keen relish.

There was nothing that could be called timber along the creek but there was quite a growth of small trees and plenty of willows.

I remember my mother coming to the herd one day and carrying something wrapped up in a piece of cloth. She handed the parcel to me and said that it contained a present for me. Imagine my surprise and excitement when I discovered that it was a brand new hatchet. Shining steel with a keen edge and the upper part painted a bright red. It was the same kind of a "little hatchet" as the one that made George Washington famous. Was I a happy boy! I don't suppose I would have parted with it for the best cow in my herd. After all, when compared with a bright and shining hatchet, what was an old cow to a boy of my age! I was soon busy chopping down willows and small trees. I imagined that I was going to fell a winter's supply of fuel. I remember taking the hatchet by the extreme end of the handle and brandishing it to the accompaniment of one of the numerous "Rimna" verses that I knew:

"Hingad reisti eg hardfeinginn,
hars med neistann bjarta,
til ad freist um manndom minn
mann ef treista her a sinn."

I was brought up on Viking tales and I imagined myself a Viking challenging all comers.

I think it was the next summer, while I was still occupied with the care of the same herd, that my mother brought me a watch. A real watch with hands that moved of their own accord, or rather, because there was a movement back of them. True, it was an old second-hand "turnip" that kept time when it felt like it, or more correctly speaking kept time -- to itself. But what did I care, I had a watch to show off to the other kids when I saw them, and as for time, I had the sun to go by. I had learned, from my own observations to tell time by my shadow. I had never seen or heard of a sundial but I was using myself as one. You can tell time with reasonable accuracy by this method, especially after weeks and months of mindful attention.

I enjoyed these summers along the river with my fishing tackle, my fresh berries, my dog, my herd and my almost daily swimming. No, I did not use a bathing suit, never have had one on in my life.

The people I stayed with in the various homes were all good to me. Most of them have now "passed the portals" and I know that all is well with them for they were an upright, God-fearing folks. They may have lacked something in the line of social culture, measured upon the standard of the elite; but there was no discounting their honesty, their helpfulness, their native good sense, their generous nature, their love for the land of their birth and their unbounded faith in the new land, the promised land of their drams, with its free institutions and ever unfolding opportunities, the land of their adoption and the future fatherland of their descendants. They may have been uncouth, but they never were unkind.

Early the Icelanders in the Lincoln County settlement formed an organization and built for themselves a "meeting house. This they did so as to have some place where they

could meet for social and other purposes. Here took place gatherings of all kinds from dances to the rare but occasional religious services which were held when some minister of the Gospel happened to visit this Minnesota outpost of his wandering countrymen.

A favorite way of raising money for charitable and other worthy purposes was to hold, or put on a "tombola," a lottery. That there could be any moral issue involved in such an innocent pastime, especially when the proceeds were to be used for worthy and proper causes never entered the minds of these upright people.

These "tombolas" were in later years occasionally held to raise money for church purposes, then generally under the auspices of a ladies aid society. The practice was stopped when a young pastor who had charge of the Icelandic congregations in the Minnesota call "put his foot down," saying that if the funds needed to carry on the work of the church could not be raised b free-will contributions among the members, the better cease. The "tombola" had its supporters as well as its enemies and after some discussion the matter was dropped and the "tombola" was dead. But many a "tombola" was held before the thing was finally outlawed.

I remember well one of the very first tombolas held in the meeting house and much publicity had heralded the event. Committees went through the settlement and solicited prizes. People were asked to give something that could be used to stock the shelves of the "tombolas." The response was good. People donated things that they felt they could spare. Most of the stuff thus gathered up was of small value. But everybody was for the enterprise. It meant a "place to go to" and good fun was anticipated.. All manner of things were given and it was soon evident that there would be no dearth of articles to "number." While most of the stuff was practically worthless, there were some

things that were new and of value. There were those who thought it beneath them to give worthless, worn-out things and these sometimes went to town and bought some small article at the store. Thus a plug of tobacco, a pound of coffee, a quarters worth of sugar, a spool of thread, some yards of calico and so on down the line found their way to the storehouse of the "tombola." Then there were some liberal donors, as for instance the one who went and bought a pony keg of beer and the fellow who gave a four months old calf. All this stuff was gathered up and brought to the meeting house and many volunteer workers spent much time in arranging and numbering the articles assembled.

At last the big day dawned. The "tombola" was to be an all day affair and some came in the forenoon prepared to stay as late as interest would keep them. I came with the rest of the youngsters. The shelves in the meeting house were loaded with "prizes" displayed to the best advantage. "Numbers" were sold over the counter. "Barkers" tried their skill in persuading the crowd to part with its money. Everybody was in good spirits and having a fine time. Soon everything was in full swing and there were shouts and laughter all over the hall.

Some bachelor might draw a "bustle," an article of feminine wear, then quite popular but now so long deceased that a generation or two have trodden "o'er its grave." But in the days that I am writing about it was a very much alive "rear admiral." Shouts greeted the bachelor and his bustle. "Who are you going to get to wear it," and "If you don't know how to adjust it call on me." And so on down the line. The poor fellow became so embarrassed that he finally "bustled" out.

Some very proper old maid might receive as her prize a perfectly new pair of men's drawers. This was before the time when men's undershirts and their nether garments were "unionized."

The "belle of the ball" might find herself holding a juicy plug of the popular "J.T." brand. And so there was no end of the fun when some of these misfits were brought to light. People did not expect to get rich from these drawings. They knew that they would land no hundred dollar bills. They were satisfied with what they got and happy over the opportunity to join the general merry-making.

Late in the afternoon the drawing was over and coffee and refreshments were served. Everyone was ready to do full justice to this light repast during the progress of which and long after speechmaking was indulged in, for when were two or more Icelanders assembled when speeches were not in order. I have forgotten what all this oratory was about, very likely I did not know at the time; but I remember one bewhiskered old chap who arose behind me and proceeded to let loose the pent up waters of his soul in a flood of words that threatened to inundate me. He leaned on my shoulders and use me for a pulpit and every now and then would shack me on the top of the head in a gesture of emphasis. I was glad when this torrent of wisdom ceased to engulf me. But he was not the only one to hold forth, although the only one who leaned on me for support, for all over the room gushing jets of eloquence would rise, just like the boiling springs so numerous in the native isle of the orators. It was late when this pleasant occasion came to an end. The folks would have remained longer, but they realized that it was way past milking time. They had had their "tombola," they had had their fun, they

had shared their friendly plugs, they had passed their snuff boxes around, and so all was well!

Yes, the "tombola" was an innocent affair. Money was gathered for whatsoever cause the good folks had at heart. Not that the amount was large, but such as it was, it would help. those who participated felt that they were gainers and not losers by the event and no one begrudged the nickels, the dimes or even the dollar they had donated.

But a few years later this harmless pastime was abolished, because, forsooth, it was a species of gambling and likely to lead the young to dire ends!

I cannot help recalling the 17th of June, 1940, when I attended the dedication ceremony of the then just completed University building Reykjavik, Iceland. Professors, doctors, diplomats, officials of state and church, merchants, professional men, artists, poets, men of the commonality, every one in full dress were there to take part in the solemn and impressive ceremony. Speeches were made in Icelandic, Latin, French, Danish and English. It was a scene never to be forgotten by those fortunate enough to be present.

What has this to do with the Icelandic pioneers in Minnesota and their "tombola," back somewhere in the eighties of the last century? Nothing except that the magnificent building I have mentioned, with all its modern appointments, its art and its elegance, costing millions of crowns and erected entirely from funds raised by means of a huge lottery, legalized by an act of the Icelandic parliament. Verily, as the Good Book says: "We strain out the gnat and swallow the camel."

There were long winter evenings in the pioneer homes in those days. No theatre to go to. Visiting a neighbor of an evening was almost out of the question owing to

distances and generally deep snowdrifts. You could not visit over the telephone for the simple reason that there was no telephone. So there was nothing for it but for each household to entertain its own home-folks, to devise its own form of pastime, to make the best of conditions as they presented themselves. this was nothing new to the Icelandic immigrant who was used to like conditions in the homeland. Centuries of rural isolation had bred in these people an independence and self-reliance that stood them in good stead in many a trying situation.

The problem of what to do these long evenings they solved on the basis of experience, their own experience in their native land. There all the people of a household would gather of an evening in the living room and each would have his or her special task assigned. Spinning, carding wool, knitting, mending, making the light sheepskin moccasins, braiding rope, fixing the packing harness of the horses, mending nets and numerous other indoor activities furnished work for all. Even the small children would be holding skeins of yarn while some older person was winding the yarn into the balls so handy for the knitters. While some or all of these activities were in progress there would always be someone reading a saga, or some book of information, or chanting "Rimur," a most popular form of entertainment, especially when a good voice combined with trained skill in an effort to produce the best results.

This was the background of the kind of evening's entertainment that these "newcomers" to America were used to in the homeland. Not all the things enumerated above were on the evening's program for these people in their humble prairie homes, but many of them, especially the "woolen ones," were and the sagas and the "Rimur" were ever present. This developed good readers and almost everyone could make a respectable

showing reading out loud. Discussions almost always followed these readings and points of interest were brought out and explained. Thus a better understanding of what was read was the invariable result. There are forms of entertainment that we go to these later and livelier days where thinking is not required. But when all is said and done it is a grave question whether the pleasure derived is in any way superior to the more prosaic affairs that furnished these pioneers with their evening's enjoyment. They worked at the same time that they listened, they stored away bits of knowledge and their evenings were by no means void of amusement. Given a good reader or a skilled chanter of the "Rimur," a genial gathering of family and servants and no one needed to worry about a dull evening or the laggardness of time.

When the hour to retire came, and its advent, by the way, was not always heeded, the housewife would frequently stir the fire and soon a cup of steaming coffee was served all around, with a lump of sugar or a bit of "goody" on the side.

In many homes it was also the practice, especially during Lent, to close the evening's "performance" with the reading of a Scripture lesson or a short "meditation" from a book prepared for that purpose. This was closed by all repeating aloud in unison the Lord's Prayer.

Not very exciting you say! No. But better for next morning's nerves than a thrilling movie with a session at some night club or a cocktail lounge to top off the show.

The evening entertainments of these pioneers may seem drab to this generation accustomed to the "bright lights," but they contributed their mite to the building of Character. Oh, I don't mean that the pioneers were superior beings, I knew them too well to harbor any such notion. They raged and roared and cussed like ordinary Christians

when circumstances threw their schemes askew, or when cunning crooks took advantage of their credulity and unsophistication. But in spite of this universal human trait, they were a whole-souled, trustworthy, frank and sincere lot. they tried to meet their fellow men upon the level and they wanted to part with them on the square. They were not immune from the ordinary temptation of life and the frailty of human nature was an inheritance ungrudgingly willed them. But they strove to be right, they were inherently honest, and law-abiding to a most creditable degree. Mingling with them as I did, boy and man, I knew them well and was aware of their sterling character, but I never for a moment suspected that they were saints, else I could not have felt so much at home with them.

We Move to Minneota

It is difficult to follow chronology with exactness when one is after all, just jotting down from memory, unaided by any written data the half forgotten little incidents which occurred more than half a century ago. But it was after my Lincoln County hearing summers that mother decided to venture into the field of home ownership. This was when she moved to the little hamlet of Minneota in Lyon County, some twelve miles distant, by wagon road, from the locality where I had spent my "freshman" period in what might be called the "College of Cows." So well had I mastered the prescribed curriculum that any further pursuit along that line might well be called a post-graduate course.

Mother's act of acquiring a home of her own consisted of purchasing a small one-story, one-room, frame house with a widow who had built it and lived there for some years with her two little boys. It seems to me that the purchase price that mother paid was $75. A good share of this money was borrowed from a friendly disposed Norwegian

farmer, who was well-to-do and lent small sums of money to various people and seemed more concerned about getting his ten per cent when it was due than the principal of the debt. He frequently made the boast that he had "never lost a cent on an Icelander," wherein I am certain he spoke the truth. It should be noted that no land went with this house. The railroad company, which owned the Minneota town site, had extensive bocks of platted lots and unplatted tracts, most of which were not sold at this time. It was customary for poor people to "squat" on this railroad property and themselves shacks to live in. It was one of these "squatters" who sold little, square box of a house to mother. Occupancy of the ground that this and similar structures occupied was really had by sufferance and any building might be ordered removed at any time by the land owners, the railroad company. The strict letter of the law, then as now, vested in the owner of any land title to any and all structures found thereon, unless written agreement to occupy and build on had been entered into and the right to remove had been made as part of the contract.

This was then the status of Mother's title to the home she had bought, obviously not one that a modern loan company would accept. Fortunately, several years later, having bought a small lot not far away, no objection to her moving the shack off the site where it stood was made by the railroad company.

The little village of Minneota was not much of a town when we came to take up our abode there. There were two or three fair-sized stores and a number of small shops, three or four grain elevators, a couple of blacksmith shops, a one room school house and some scattered residences of no imposing pretensions. Yes, I suppose there must have been one or two of those places where minors were not allowed. When those Icelandic

and Norwegian farmers came to town, after having walked, or trudged behind a lumber wagon in cold and miserable weather, for three or four hours, they did not refresh themselves on Coca Cola, it was not to be had at that time anyway.

I think that it is safe to say that when we came to live in Minneota the leading merchants were N. W. L. Jaeger, a Norwegian and Thomas D. Seals, a down East Yankee. Mr. Jaeger was the first merchant in the town, having come there about a decade before, or about 1874. His first store was located near the railroad water tank, about a quarter o a mile away from the present site of the village. About a year later he moved his emporium to the place selected as the most suitable site for the anticipated prairie metropolis.

Doc Seals, ???

the other "leading merchant," already mentioned, Mr. Seals, established himself in business in the new town about 1878. He had come West with General Custer in 1872, but had left him somewhere on the Jim River, so escaped being in on the famous but tragic "Last Stand." Mr. Seals moved back in the direction of Minneota in easy stages, testing the business prospects of various towns before he finally landed in the "right place." A firm that did a flourishing general store business in the last seventies in Minneota was Coats & Davidson. They operated for several years.

T.D. Seals was a "character" in Minneota during the whole of the pioneer period and even long after. He was always known as "Doc Seals" as he claimed to have been an army surgeon in the Civil War and also had a small stock of drugs in his store. He prescribed medicine for any and all ailments and there were those who swore by his "bitters." He also practiced dentistry. some years after the period that I am now covering

in this Saga, I was a clerk in Doc Seals store and one of my jobs was to, almost literally, sit on the shoulders of the "toothachers" who came in for relief. Doc seated them in a high-backed office chair of the swivel variety and then got out his rusty old forceps and wiped off the dust that had accumulated since the last operation. This was a sign for me to pitch in. I grabbed the victim by the head and bent his or her neck over the back of the chair and with all my power and weight pressed and held on for dear life. Doc found the tooth, or some tooth, and then began the tug of war! Sometimes he pulled me up and sometimes I pulled him down. The victim squirmed and screamed. But we could pay no attention to that. Were we not, forsooth, engaged in a life-saving operation and naturally such things hurt. After repeated "pullings" on my part and "jerkings" on the par of Doc, something gave away and the blood squirted from the patient's mouth, all over the floor, making an unsavory mess for me to clean up. when the struggle in the chair was over, I was a profusely perspiring physical wreck.

Doc Seals was also a cattle buyer, besides being a merchant, a doctor and a dentist. He was also justice of the peace and probably a few other things that I have forgotten. I remember well the slogan on his store letterhead. It was: "Everything from a carload of salt to a paper of pins." Did one remember all the anecdotes about Doc and all the wonder stories he told about himself and all the more or less true stories that his associates told about him a book could be written that would rival the Arabian Nights.

The little town of Minneota did not always go by that name. At one time it was called Nordland, but the first name that I can recall having heard applied to it was the crisp and curt cognomen "Pumpa" being the Norwegian word for pump. this because of the hamlet's proximity to the railroad water tank. To go to town was to "gaa ti pumpa."

Herding the Town Herd

The next spring after we came to Minneota the question of the town herd came up. It was customary in those days to have two town herds in Minneota, one on the south and west side of town and the other on the east and north side. Mother wanted to get for me the job of herding the north and east herd, that was the one patronized almost entirely by the Icelandic contingent of the population, although a few others did send their cows to this herd, as for instance the Catholic priest.

Another Icelandic boy, the son of one of the leading families of Minneota's "Reykjavik" as the portion of the town was called, which was inhabited principally by Icelanders, also aspired to herd this same herd this same spring. That made two Icelandic boys seeking the same "public" job. this was not a matter of any great moment and ordinarily one might think that people would have been inclined to say: "Let those interested fight it out." But insignificant as this way, the Icelanders wanted to see the right thing done, so a meeting was called to discuss the subject. This meeting took place at the home of one of the Icelandic residents of the village and was well attended. The deliberation resulted in an agreement to the effect that the two boys should herd one week each and then equally divide the compensation. This was agreeable all around and we started herding on this alternate week's basis. The other boy was Sigurdur A Anderson who afterwards became Minneota's outstanding merchant and leading citizen. The middle of the summer Sigurdur quit herding, having been offered a job that held out a brighter promise for the future.

This left me alone with the herd for the remainder of the summer and I also took care of it the summer following. When Mother was not working she came and kept me

company and also helped with the herd when it was easy. Cattle seem to have their "streaky" days something like people and on these days they seem to rest nowhere and their constant antics are watched with concern by the herder. On days like this, the herd is likely to divide and each faction, following its leader, will start pell-mell across the prairie in opposite directions. It is difficult for one person, on foot, to gather them up at times like that.

The herding season began on the 15th day of May and lasted until the 15th day of October next. This made it a five-month stretch for the herder with no days off as the cows had to have their feed and care alike on Sundays, holidays and weekdays. The pay for herding was one dollar per head for the season and for such cows as you "got" and "fetched" every morning and evening, you received twenty-five cents extra. There was a place on the outskirts of town where the herd was assembled every morning and disbanded at night. To this place every cow-owner was to bring his cow each morning and here he was expected to get her in the evening. The few cows that were taken care of by the herder, in the matter of "getting" and "fetching," were no concern to their owners except to see that the herder did his part.

I recall one morning getting the Catholic Priest's cow about the usual time, she being one of those to whom I was paying special attention for that extra five cents per month. It did not occur to me to pay any attention to whether the cow had been milked or not that morning. When I brought old "Molly" back that evening there was Miss "Housekeeper," "big as life and twice as natural" waiting for me. I soon discovered why she was "receiving me personally," for she proceeded to give a very choice "pieces of her mind," because I had taken "Molly" that morning before she had been milked. I judged

that the housekeeper had slept in that morning and had gotten out on the wrong side of the bed, and not having the nerve to take it out on the pries had nursed her wrath until I should come along. It was self evident that I was guilty of having taken the cow away that morning before she had been milked. I had not given the matter of milked or not milked a seconds thought because the hour had come and the cow was there and so I escorted her, as one who belonged to the upper class, to the herd. But the Housekeeper did not concede that I had a leg to stand on in the controversy and so she proceeded to bring her Irish verbal batteries to bear on me and the force of the attack soon made me beat a hasty retreat.

Looked back upon the compensation of the herder seems like a mere pittance, yet, even less than that. One dollar per head for the whole season of five months and if you "got and fetched" then 25 cents extra for such as received that additional service. This 25 cents service meant to make 60 trips to the home of the person, or cow, served for the big sum of five cents! Or 300 during the five-month season for 25 cents. If the herder ha 65 co2ws that he herded the whole season he would receive for the sum of $65 it would mean an additional $5 for the season. His whole compensation then would total $70. It is difficult to believe that so much service was rendered for so little return, but there is no questioning the statement the facts are as I give them.

What I earned herding and what mother managed to make washing, mending and doing house chores for various women who needed such help gave us enough to live on and buy fuel for the ensuing winter. Of course, Mother did not buy a new bonnet every time the styles changed and my wardrobe did not need pressing and dry-cleaning every week. In those days we did not know what "dry cleaning" was but in the summer time

when I was caught out on the prairie with the herd in a pelting rain storm I was well aware of what "wet cleaning" was like and what it would for my garments. The only shower bath that I indulged in was one that came direct from the clouds, and my regular baths were taken in some convenient "hole" in the river. In winter time one could not take a chance on catching a cold by exposing ones body to the fury of the temperature, indoors or outdoors, just to humor some finical notion about cleanliness. We inhaled our grand and invigorating Minnesota ozone through every pore of the body and filled our lungs with this health-giving balm from the snow covered prairies and the pine clad hills. How infinitely much better this than to chop a hole in the ice on the washtub and dance a jig to the music of some sub-zero orchestra.

Less than one-hundred dollars is not much to put two people through a Minnesota winter. But the number of dollars is only one item in the reckoning. There are two things of prime importance in the matter of evaluating the dollar. One is how long a time you labor to procure it and other is how much will it bring you of the things that you need. If you are paid one dollar for a day's work and the prices that govern the things that you have to buy are on a comparative scale, have you gained anything be getting your wages doubled if the prices you have to pay double at the same time? It seems to me that if your wages double and prices, you are no better off with your two dollars than you were with your one. It is what your dollar brings that spells its value and that value in turn measures the value of your labor. I f you receive as wages for one day of labor one dollar then that unit of coinage becomes the unit whereby you establish the sales value of your marketable labor. But a dollar whose purchasing power has been cut in two is only one half the compensation that it was before one half of its power to purchase was taken away

from it. Although your labor nominally is paid the same number of money units for the same number of time units of labor, yet that pay is only one half of what it was. But I am not writing a treatise on elementary economics so will refrain from discussing the subject any farther.

The vagaries of a boy's mind are not easily accounted for. I knew my herd like a book. I knew to whom every cow belonged. After a while I began to fancy that I could see a striking resemblance in the face of each cow to the face of its owner. I positively identified features in the cow's face with those in the face of the man who owned the animal. To me this was no imagination. I knew I was right and it never occurred to me to entertain any doubt about it or to speculate upon any whys or wherefores. When I looked at the face of Johnson's cow (just to take a name at random) I saw Johnson. Not Johnson's face, as if appearing out of nowhere, but the cow's face taking on, in its most characteristic features, some sort of a shadowy transformation which brought out in dim bas relief the corresponding features of Johnson.

Could I really have seen the features of the owner in the face of every cow? In your smug complaisance I see you shrug your mental shoulders and with a superior air dismiss the foolish vagaries of an ignorant boy. But not so fast Mien Herr! Can you explain that subtle emanation called the aura which surrounds all bodies? What about the transference of thought without words and without regard for distance from mind to mind, commonly referred to as telepathy? I know that this has no apparent connection with my cow faces, but can you with all your erudition, explain the aura or telepathy any more than I can my vagary regarding the cow faces?

We are ignorant because we do not know; we are foolish because we do not heed; we are intolerant because we set our own ignorance on a pedestal and bow down before it in adoration and worship. We see not the beautiful vista before us because we "move forward with averted gaze." Looking backward at the things that we think we have done, instead of fixing our eyes to the front and trying to behold the things that we may do.

We read in the annals of the past about the Sacred Cows and the Deified Ox. I humbly admit that these are grander vagaries than the vagaries of a simple cowherd on the prairies of Minnesota, but the exalted vagary of the great is still but a vagary. The days of a cowherd may be replete with action, but it is not the kind of action that makes history, in spite of the fact that the Sacred Record chronicles that once upon a time there were simple herders tending their flocks who saw a Star.

The herder has to be alert and he sometimes has to move fast, but what he constantly sees before him is a mass of lowered heads and switching tails. There is not much inspiration in the sight! We say that such a life is humdrum, that it is dull, that it is commonplace. Let me ask you: Is there anything commonplace in life? Does not the commonplace soar to the heights when touched by the wand of service and consecration? The jars at Cana were filled with a commonplace, colorless fluid,. but in the presence of Power, consecrated to Service, this colorless fluid became animate, "moving itself aright," for: "The conscious water knew its God and blushed." What is commonplace today may tomorrow "soar to heights unknown."

To take up our friend, the cowherd again, let me say that there are things that break the monotony for him as for instance when the clouds gather and darkness descends at midday, when the lightnings flash and the thunders roar and the heavens open

and the rain comes down in torrents. He tries to stem the dumb animals attempt to stampede, but it is no light task for a small boy to halt the forward movement of a solid phalanx of sullen cows! He moves about drenched to the skin, with the rain pounding his face and blinding his vision, but he stands his ground and eventually, when the elements have spent their fury and the herd has been kept in check, he feels the exultation of success. A success small indeed when measured upon the standard of bigger things. But it is success after all and has it not been said that he who conquers self is greater than he who subdues cities? It is the cultivation of the little home field that yields the greatest return. Things are not always little just because they are not big.

Attending the Village School

During the winters of this period I attended the village school. I usually entered about November first and would continue until about the last part of March or the first part of April. My entry and exit was governed by such work as I might be doing. I usually went out to some farmer for spring work, harrowing behind the seeder. When this work began depended upon the season, early spring early work, a late spring would, of course retard the starting.

This irregularity in my school attendance made it so that I often had to take things over again and also skip a good deal. I , as it were, dipped in here and dipped in there in this fountain of learning, but never got a dipperful anywhere.

The Minneota school house at that time was a small, one room affair. The old fashioned double seats were in use. Each pupil had one half of the seat, one half o the desk and one half of the bookshelf under the top of the desk. A common inkwell was inserted in the top of the desk, close to the upper edge. From this inkwell down to the

lower edge of the desk top could be seen, on almost every desk, a straight line, the result of a vigorous application of the jackknife, serving as a dividing line marking the boundary between the territories of the right and left occupant of the double seat. Besides this each desk bore "the jackknife carved initial" as in the days of John Greenleaf Whittier.

The room was heated by an oblong, cast iron woodstove. Sticks of cordwood about three feet long were piled into this "furnace," which was situated toward the front of the room. sometimes this stove became literally red hot and there was no living in the seas to either side of it or in the immediate rear. At the same time that this torrid condition was being either dodged or endured at the front of the room, those sitting with their backs against the rear wall were shivering. Sometimes those in the rear would get a chance to move up in front while those in front would move back, one to get "het up" and the other to get "cooled off." Yes, we managed all right.

Drinking water was brought in a pail from a nearby well and the pail was placed on a bench in a corner near the door. A common tin dipper was used. None of us had ever heard of such a thing as an individual drinking cup, and I am afraid that the boy or girl introducing one would soon have regretted the experience. Those were the days when men did not hesitate to take a bite from each others tobacco plug, even if it was necessary to follow in the "wake" of the other fellow's "take." Our school library was contained in its entirety in a book case about four feet wide, and about five shelves high. It stood in a corner up against the front wall.

My first teacher in this school was a young man named C. O. Anderson. He was a Norwegian, bright and active and an exceptionally good instructor.

Every grade from the first to the eighth was taught in this one room by this one teacher. Sometimes it was necessary to hear two classes, in different subjects, at one and the same time. School began at nine in the morning and was dismissed at four in the afternoon. There one hour for lunch at noon and a fifteen minute recess both forenoon and afternoon. The cloak room was a small, narrow corridor leading from the outer door to the door of the school room. Mr. Anderson, the teacher, suffered much from asthma and was in agony most of the time during the last half of the school year. He was very popular with the pupils, and it was a source of keen regret when it was learned that he would not come back next year. He went to Arizona where he regained his health, recovering fully, and lived there since. As far as I know, he is still living.

This was about the first time that I took some interest in school. My previous experiences, as before related, were in each instances short and unsatisfactory. But my career here, although a little more promising was anything but brilliant. I studied hard, took my books home, did my best to keep up and yet it seemed to me that I was always bringing up the rear. It used to cause me envy and aggravation to see boys who I knew never studied, reel of their lesson and carry away the high marks while I who plugged and plodded seldom got a decent mark. It was not the teacher's fault, nor was it mine, I was just cast in so "heavy" a mould, intellectually, that I did not seem to be able to shake the weight that bore me down. This may not be a really true picture, for though I was dull, I was not exactly dense.

My ability as a scrapper was still a matter of investigation by the other boys and I stood the scrutiny in that direction about as I had done in the other schools. I was not mean and aside from my unprepossessing looks and awkward manners, I never did

anything to "provoke assault." In after years, thinking about it, I came to the conclusion that these boys were glad to find someone that they could always lick. When the spell was on them and they had gone "Berserk" they were just like those rare swords of the sagas which when once drawn could not be sheathed until they had drawn blood.

Blizzards were frequent these winters. I remember one evening that when school was let out, there was a blinding snowstorm. I started for home, I knew the direction, but I had to go over an open space of several blocks. When I had gone so far that I thought that I should be at my destination, I stopped to try to get my bearings. I was alarmed, I could see nothing. But as luck would have it a little lull in the storm made it possible for me to see a short distance and I discerned my home. I was headed at an angle of 45 degrees from the course I should have held. Had it not been for the storm's momentary respite, I would have wondered out upon the trackless prairie and been lost, lost for good for the storm kept up all night. Grown up men were known to meet this fate in these years. I did not dare to tell Mother about my narrow escape because I knew it would give her no end of worry whenever I might happen to be out when it was storming. And being out could not always be avoided.

Right across the street form the school house there was a blacksmith shop. We boys used to stop at the open door of the shop and stare at the blacksmith at work. He was a fine specimen of health and strength. With my mind's eye I can still see him, with one hand on the bellows lever and the other holding a pair of tongs with which he kept turning the red hot iron that he intended to shape into some kind of an implement. Suddenly he would bring the iron out and lay it upon the anvil and begin to hammer it

into shape. The sparks flew in every direction and to a little boy, the sight was most fascinating.

That sturdy blacksmith with his bare arms and bare chest, his muscular hands playing with the heavy hammer like a young Thor, his face all smoke and coal dust streaked with furrows made by the sweat that ran in rivulets down his steaming forehead and naturally ruddy cheeks, his burnt and torn leather apron all made a picture of strength and manliness that was sure to appeal to the imagination of a young boy. I can visualize him any time I think of him. How that good natured smile of his could ever penetrate all that grime is hard to understand. To see him shoe horses was a pleasure. He would handle a huge mountain of horseflesh as if he were playing with his favorite dog. Every time I looked in at that smithy door I wanted to be blacksmith. gone was the longing for the white collar and the white ruff.

The first winter we lived in Minneota I saw my first show. It was a panorama. This may not convey much of an idea to the movie fans of today and it will be difficult to make them realize that people still living could have found enjoyment in anything so simple as a crude panorama, for crude this one must have been. The "show" was brought to town by two men who really were but "property men" to borrow a phrase from the terminology of the stage. They had procured the use of the school house for their exhibition and when the "curtain rose" there was a full house. The show consisted of a painted canvas wound into a huge roll. The contrivance worked on the principle of a typewriter ribbon. an empty "spool" at one end of the stage or platform received the canvas as it was wound from one side to the other. This canvas, when stood upright, was about five feet high. Imagine two immense spools about 10 feet apart one being turned to

as to wind the canvas off the other and you have a fair idea of the mechanics of the thing. The show consisted of pictures painted on this canvas which were revealed to the eyes of the audience as this panorama moved slowly, by the winding process described, from spool to spool.

The scenes unfolded as the canvas unwound. It was in every sense of the word a moving picture, the canvas a reel with a succession of views. I have forgotten, I regret to say, what it was all about but I have a shaky recollection of Indians and it is not unlikely that painting represented some episodes from Indian warfare. but what a grand show it was! Remember, it was my very first show. Talk about being "spell bound!" I sat there with my eyes riveted on the moving drama in front of me watching with rapt attention the march of events.

Crude these pictures must have been and unskilled the hand that painted them, but the audience, especially myself and those of my age, were not there as art critics, but to behold a story unfold before our eyes, to see as it were the pages of a mammoth picture book silently and magically turned for our entertainment and pleasure.

It was G. A. Dalmann, the plain-spoken, frank and sometimes gruff appearing Icelander, who came to this country as a poor immigrant boy, whose kind heart and generous impulses belied an exterior of feigned severity, who took it into his sympathetic heart to give three little boys, of whom I was one, a good time and by so doing provide for himself a little amusement watching us kids "climb the golden stairs" to a land of dreams and delight.

I never forgot this my first show nor the man who made it possible for me to live this memorable event. Another little incident happened when I was several years

younger than when I went to this show which long lingered in memory. I could not have been much more than seven years old. My mother was visiting the home of a prominent pioneer family. She was in the house with the women folks. I was running "at large" about the premises taking a sort of inventory of the barns and outbuildings. The head of this household was a gifted, intelligent and able man, a little on the aristocratic order. He was a cunning worker in metals (for the benefit of the initiated, I will say that I use the phrase without any secret order connotation). He had learned his trade with masters in foreign lands. He took pride in his smithy and in his work, which was always efficiently executed. I wandered into the smithy where this man was at work. There were bright and shining tools all around, everything was of the kind that would attract the attention of a boy. Among other things I spied a pipe with a long stem, a beautiful thing to anyone who could appreciate the artistic along this line. I do not mean to say that I could at that time, but that pipe especially attracted my attention. I picked it up and turned it around in my hands and without thinking, I touched the mouthpiece to my lips. I had no more than done this when the owner literally sprang at me, grabbed he pipe and in a state of unmistakable temper said to me: "I do not permit every dog that comes here to lick my pipe!" And so, a not-soon-to-be-forgotten lesson was learned by the little boy, who shamefacedly walked out of that smithy a sadder, and let us hope, a wiser boy.

While regret and sorrow may be short-lived at the age of seven, yet memory lives on -- something that we overlook, something that we are prone to forget as we grow older and so we unthinkingly reenact the blunders of word and deed which disturbed us when we were the youthful objects of scorn or slight or snubbing by some inconsiderate or arrogant elder.

Whether the Icelanders who settled in and around Minneota were religious or not it is difficult to say with any degree of absolute certainty. It is always a problem to distinguish between what is and what appears. So often people's religious practices are "custom made." That is to say, the are the result of early training, which again is based on generations and centuries of usage, traditions and constantly reiterated forms and formulas. I think that it is a common experience for people to go through prescribed ritualistic forms, to address deity in age old phrases and assume a form of adoration without thought and without reasoning. Religious practices have become, through constant use and centuries of conformity second nature. We pray in a certain way and employ certain phrases because we were so taught and so instructed by our parents and religious tutors and because it is easier to assume the role of the parrot than to think independently. These are some of the reasons why it is difficult to discern true piety. Certain it is that church attendance and other outward manifestations of a religious nature are by no means infallible signs of the true state of the inner man. It is not hypocrisy but merely formal acceptance of time honored heirlooms of the mind.

In spite of all this, I am constrained to believe that in the Icelandic community about which I am writing there were genuinely religious souls, men and women who believed as they had been taught to believe. They did not question that there was a God, neither did they doubt that there was a devil; heaven was a goal to be attained and hell a place to be avoided. The desirable end was to be attained only through faith in the redemptive power of the cross. those who thus believed and those who merely conformed made up the major portion of this Icelandic colony.

Others there were who questioned everything and frankly admitted that they were "freethinkers." The old state church in Iceland had ruled with authority and had demanded obedience. They looked upon this as a yoke that they had been compelled to bear, being forced to pay taxes for the support of a system they had no faith in and conform to usages they considered worse than meaningless, the offspring of ignorance and superstition. They were now in a "free country and they proposed to have done with all these nightmares of the past.

I submit that this fragmentary exposition of the religious conditions obtaining among these people is but a cross section of the church environment in most localities. the Icelanders in this Minneota community were not unique in harboring this spiritual hodge-podge.

For the first twelve strenuous years of the life of this colony, it had no ordained spiritual leader. Icelandic ministers of the Gospel had made short visits from time to time. But such religious observance as was felt essential to the soul-welfare of the adult population and the proper bringing up of the young had to be provided by the homes and through the cooperative efforts of those concerned.

In most of the homes in Iceland, from which these people had come, it was the custom to have family worship every Sunday. It was a long distance for many to go to church, and in some places services were not held regularly every Sunday and weather conditions often prevented attendance, hence the home services. These services consisted of a family fathering at which hymns were sung and prayers were said and a discourse was read from a book of sermons by some noted divine. Sundry collections of sermons were available in printed form and contained a discourse for each Sunday and

church holiday in the year. Books of this kind were by different authors and the particular collection used in a given home was dictated by the likings and taste, in such matters of the household concerned, which preference was, as a rule, the outgrowth of what people had, in that line, been brought up on.

Many of the families that came to Minneota had brought with them books of this character, and during the time, there was no pastor in residence. Sermons were read from these books in the individual homes, just as they had been read in the old homeland. An innovation in this home service was after a while introduced in Minneota by the people gathering in one of the larger homes and there conducting a joint service of the character described.

Thus, the spiritual life of the colony was nursed and kept up to the best attainable standard under the circumstances. Certainly it cannot be denied that the company harbored a compelling religious instinct, attribute its existence and manifestation to whatsoever cause you will. Was it the feeling of a need or the following of generations of custom and centuries of tradition it matters not, the fact remains that a wholesome reverence for things held sacred wielded an influence for good among this transplanted contingent of an undemonstrative race.

There was some reading of the Bible, but this was not as general as the reading of the devotional books and was confined to individuals who sought a more intimate acquaintance with the sustaining source of their faith.

In my youth the Icelandic books of the colony were, many of them, printed in German script and this I learned to read as readily as the Roman print. The first books that I owned, which were given to me by two kind-hearted women, were the New

Testament and a collection of poems by Jon Olafsson. I think that I may say that I learned to read by the aid of these two books, different in nature and contents as they were. The method followed by these pioneers in teaching their children to read was the same by which they themselves had been taught in the old country. This method may have been primitive, but I will say this for it that it did not take two years in school before the child could read as is sometimes the case in our generally efficient public schools. The mother, the father, and often some old lady engaged for the purpose would take the child in hand and instruct it in the alphabet and that mastered the combining of letters to form words followed. We were taught to read as soon as we got some hag of the science of combining letters and from the very beginning we were made to read out loud and to pronounce syllables and words distinctly. there was no "silent reading" in vogue then, thanks to the intelligence of the educational system of the day and to those who devoted their time and talent to instructing the children in the homes. I shall not waste either time or space in paying my compliments to this "silent reading" fad because I think that it has had its day. By not having the child read aloud it fostered inability to so read and it also handicapped the pupil in the matter of pronunciation. Why bother about pronouncing words when you could just glide over them and let it go at that!

C.C. Wilson Teaches Valley School

To return to the little gray school house across from the blacksmith shop, C. O. Anderson was succeeded by a man named C. C. Wilson, as I recall he came from Illinois. He was a good teacher and a fine scholar. He took considerable interest in me and was helpful in many ways. He seemed to understand and appreciate the handicap that I was under in having to enter school late and quit early each year. He tried to steer me along

such lines as would aid me in making the best use of my limited time. He encouraged me and never failed to commend my efforts when he felt I had done well. This did me a great deal of good and spurred me on to do my level best. His praise was an invigorating tonic to which I was not accustomed. I began to think that I might in time make a grade or two. All the other pupils seemed right at home in the school room. I was the bashful boy hiding behind the curtains.

Without knowing it and without ever having heard the phrase, I was suffering from an "inferiority complex," a natal ailment from which I have never entirely recovered. In later years I developed a mental combativeness which was nothing but a natural reaction against an ingrained awareness of a partly real and partly imagined inferiority. This is not an enviable state of mind and has, I think, its inception in an early environment which suppresses all natural and health desire for self-assertion. This state or condition is prone to develop a subconscious reaction which may outwardly manifest itself in a seeming pugnaciousness.

It is quite probable that Mr. Wilson diagnosed my case and concluded correctly what my trouble was, for he tried to instill in me self-confidence and a realization of the value of such ability as I might possess. No antidote is as effective against this noxious mental condition as a stimulating injection of a few grains of wholesome self-reliance.

I must mention in passing that Mr. Wilson, every morning as soon as all the pupils were in their seats, would take from his desk a small Bible from which he would read a few verses from the Proverbs. This was a religious exercise, but an attempt to acquaint the assembled youngsters with the concentrated essence of the wisdom of the

ages. This young man who that winter taught the village school in Minneota had a deeper insight into the worthwhile things of life than he probably got credit for.

Under the Influence of F.F. Bucklin

Mr. Wilson taught only one year in Minneota. He was followed by a man named F. F. Bucklin, who was of a temperament much different from that of Mr. Wilson. While he no doubt had a fair education, he was not of the scholarly kind. He had spent some years ranching out west and carried with him the breeze of the open spaces. He was of medium height, slight o build and quick and active in all his movements. He had sharp features and a thin nose and every time he became agitated his nostrils would dilate like those of an animal at bay, ready to turn on its pursuer, or those of a hound in the excitement of the chase. He was high strung, temperamental, musical and dramatic. He played the flute to perfection and when so engaged his face was a study in animation and his whole body would vibrate with rhythm. He was an elocutionist of the old school and could thrill his hearers with his declamations. He insisted on proper and elegant expression by the pupils when reading aloud. In every respect he was very much the actor and to us country-bred children he was a wonder and a delight. But when his temper was aroused, which not infrequently happened, and while the "spell was on him" he scattered fear like a porcupine shooting its darts.

To hear him recite the poem, "the Murderer," was a hair-raising experience. The poor, unfortunate criminal, left alone with his remorse in a prison cell raves on and to hear Mr. Bucklin interpret him was enough to send the cold shivers down any youthful spine. I can still hear the soft cadence of Bucklin's voice as he opens the scene with subdued accents and quivering pathos: "Ye glittering stars, how fair ye shine tonight!

And Oh! Though beauteous moon, thy fairy light comes peeping through those iron bars so near me!" And then the agonizing last lines of the same stanza! "Will this deep sanguinary stain of my dark crime forever haunt my brain! Must I live, die in Hell with Paradise so near!" And so the ravings go on stanza after stanza, 'till his fury wrecks his human habitation and the agonizing spirit, in the moment of departure, wrings from the parched lips, as a belated recognition of the phantom visitor dawns upon the deranged brain: "Ah! I know thee now! 'Tis Death! n' This Death!" To this day I cannot recite this poem without falling into the dramatic tones of F. F. Bucklin.

It was a treat to hear him declaim some of the dramatic orations of Shakespeare's tragedies. I shall never forget his rendition of the impassioned address of Cassius to Brutus: "For once upon a raw and gusty day, the troubled Tiber chafing with her shores, Caesar said to me, 'Dar'st thou Cassius, now leap in with into this angry flood, and swim to yonder point?' Upon the word, accourtered as I was, I plunged in and bade him follow; so indeed he did. The torrent roar'd and we did buffet it with lusty sinews, throwing it aside and stemming it with hearts of controversy." etc.

Listening to this man play with the words of the Immortal Bard kindled in me a consuming ambition to become an orator. I visioned swaying the multitude with my eloquence and holding spell-bound senates in the palm of my hand. I then and there hitched my wagon to a star and soon I was soaring on wings of fancy into realms of airy fame. My ambition was a dream and ended as such. But all this was to leave an impression on my young mind that the years have never effaced. I must admit that I have hardly stepped on the first rung of the ladder of public speaking. The enticing oasis in the desert has turned out a mirage. But I am thankful for the vision, I am glad that once I had

ambitious thoughts about scaling the ladder of oratory to imposing heights. I am inclined to think that while this ambition never led me anywhere, I would not have bone as far without it. Figure that one out! Yes, and it was F. F. Bucklin, the cowboy, the actor, the musician, the elocutionist, the temperamental, high strung, quick-tempered, small village school teacher who opened the vista, just opened and that was all -- but the sight through the open gates was worth something, even if for me they never again were ajar.

Although I have probably dealt disproportionately with Mr. Bucklin in this narrative, that is, given him more space than is warranted, I cannot close this mention of him without relating one incident that occurred this memorable winter. We had a banker in Minneota by the name of James Stells. He was an aristocratic, old Englishman. In his native land he was a man of means and some schemers who knew of this enticed him to come to Minneota where he could soon become rich in the banking business. They had a good bank in that exceptional town, located right in the pulsating heart of buxom America. They sold him the bank building, the banking business and with it all a choice bale of waste paper which turned out to be of far less value than the pounds sterling paid for it. His family consisted of this charming though elderly wife and three comely daughters, the youngest of whom was about in her middle teens. This young lady entered school in the fall. She was not much of a scholar and application was a word which so far had kept clear of her vocabulary. She was socially inclined and a devotee oat the shrine of pleasure, or should I say, in plain English, that she loved a good time? It did not take Mr. Bucklin long to get her number. He talked to her about her remissness in study and tried in a friendly way to admonish her. She "too his suggestions kindly" but that is all she did with them; just "filed them away" and forgot about them. The relations

between teacher and pupil began to show signs of strain. Agnes, for that was her name, was a good enough girl, but she was inclined to be frivolous and not unmindful of the fact that she was the banker's daughter.

There was no improvement in Agnes, as time went on, in the matter of her studies. She began to bring her mail to school every morning and would sit reading letters when she should have been taking up her studies. That her letters were the "billet doux" kind no one doubted and certainly not Mr. Bucklin. He tried to call a halt on her mail reading in school, but his admonitions all went the heedless way. Finally one morning he told her that if she did not desist there would be a sad reckoning with him as the reckoner-in-chief.

The next morning her "billet doux" interest was unabated. She was again reading her letters. Every pupil was apprehensive, they knew that Bucklin was a man of his word. All of a sudden there came a crash as if a wall had fallen in. We all looked up and saw Mr. Bucklin standing at the front seat in the row in which Agnes was sitting, with a small "blacksnake," or cattle whip in his hand, the butt end of which he brought down on the desk in front of him with such force as to produce the sound that so alarmed the whole school. His face was pale and his nostrils dilated and he seemed ready for an immediate spring. But instead he brandished the whip and ordered Agnes to stand up. Scared out of her wits she rather crumbled than rose to her feet. In anything but a gentle voice, Bucklin said to her: "Now, Agnes, either step up and take the worst horsewhipping that I am able to give, or else pick up your belongings and leave this minute and don't come back until you are ready to come and obey the rules and do some work. The way that you have acted since you began school, you have worn out my

patience, set a bad example to the rest of the pupils and been a general nuisance all around. You have heard what I said. Come and take your licking, or get!" In a dazed fright the poor girl picked up a few belongings from her desk and made a rapid exit from the room. Talk about hearing the proverbial pin drop! The room was so silent that you could have heard the pin without its dropping. Eyelids fluttered, hearts palpitated and a reign of inward terror gripped everyone. Bucklin rolled up his limber blacksnake and restored it to its hiding place in his overcoat pocket. His nostrils gradually assumed normal shape and the pupils began to breathe again. After much investigation by the school board and interviews with the teacher who stood pat on his demand for unconditional obedience, the matter was arranged on terms dictated by Mr. Bucklin and Agnes was reinstated and caused no more trouble. She just needed to learn that Mr. Bucklin made no exception in the case of banker's daughters.

Our Entertainments

What did we do when we played? Of what did our entertainments consist when we gathered for recreation? In these early years, about which I am reminiscing just now, there was not much entertainment in the sense that we now use the term. Occasional gatherings of a few friends in some home, where conversation, coffee and cake were about all that the event could boast, were not exciting, but it all helped to satisfy the natural urge for social intercourse, the desire to visit and exchange ideas.

Some years later, when the social life of the community became less restricted by nationality bounds, the young people of the village would gather in a small hall for an evening of fun and frolic. Games were played, games that were really more suited to pre-adolescence years than to that time when maturity takes over.

However, I have attended many of these primitive pleasure functions where the participants range din years from twelve to forty. And what is more, everybody seemed to enjoy themselves. It is something to be able to turn yourself into a youngster at forty and a youth at any age. The whole evening would be devoted to playing games of various kinds. Music was seldom introduced as musicians were scarce and instruments scarcer. These games consisted mostly of marching and circling around on the floor. time was kept to some lilting song to which the company lent its lung power, more capable of making noise than producing music. Most of these games consisted of the participants holding hands and going around in a large circle and at a given cue in the song "grabbing" their favorite of the opposite sex. I have forgotten the names of some of these games, but "Pig in the parlor" was one seldom, if ever, omitted. In this game one of the players occupied the center of the circle and so was the "pig." There was some play whereby he could displace a person in the ring and the one so displaced would take his turn at being "pig." The words to the doggerel that were sung , I have forgotten but the refrain seems to abide with me, it was: "We kept a pig in the parlor and that was Irish too."

Then there was the graceful "Virginia Reel." Here the participants formed in two lines, facing each other, partners were opposite to each other in the lines. Each couple took turns at cavorting, in a manner akin to dancing, between the lines. If you had grace or rhythm in you here was a change to put it in play. This game was also played to the tune of something sung. I seem to recall that a part of this song ran something like this:

"Over the hills to the lofty mountains,
Down by the valley all covered with snow,
all along the crystal fountains
Where the murmuring waters flow."

Then there was the "Miller," a general favorite, which was another of these "circulating" affairs. The song which furnished the "motive power" ran something like this:

"Happy is the Miller as he lives by himself,
As the wheels turn round he's the gainer of his wealth;
One hand in the hopper and other in the bag,
As the wheels turn round he cries out grab."

Another much loved by the young and not scorned by the old, was "the Needle's Eye," almost identical in movement with the "Miller." The music for this was furnished by the players, singing:

The needle's eye that doth supply
The thread that runs to truly;
There's many a lass that I've let pass
Because I wanted you,
Because I wanted you,
There's many a lass that I've let pass
Because I wanted you."

There were also some other games that I have forgotten. At these functions it was too much bother to serve refreshments, although occasionally this was done. When midnight came the party broke up. This ushered in the most interesting part of the whole affair, when the lads with an eye on the lasses would edge up to their favorite with the question: "May I see you home?" The answer was by no means always a foregone conclusion. Some other swain might have spoken first and although the girl would rather have been escorted to her domicile by someone else, she could not very well say: "No, I am waiting for John to ask me." That, while it might have been true, would not have been a gracious response to a gallant offer.

But when the right boy coupled up with the right girl who can doubt that the moonlight walk home or probably better still the moonless walk home, was the best part

of the evening! As to this, who can say, and who will say that can? There were no witnesses on the snow-clad hills!"

One thing, however, is certain and that is that when the "coupling" had turned out as desired the walk home compensated for all the times that you had been a "pig in the parlor," for all the times that you had turned the wheel that ground the "millers" grist and for all the times that you had been dragged through "the needle's eye." These simple, childish games may not have been very exciting to the boy who felt that he was a young man and for that matter, probably was, but they were worth enduring for the anticipated compensation that would come with an auspicious finale.

There were, of course, disappointed youths and maidens and to these the "pig in the parlor" was a real "pig" and as far as they were concerned could stay a "pig" forever. But the next time the young shoat grunted, they would put on their "best bib and tucker" and fire themselves to the rendezvous, for does not "hope spring eternal in the human breast?" Say what you will about the simpleness of these parties, I know that there were many who got genuine pleasure out of them. Pleasure, after all, does not wait upon style and elaboration.

Fourth of July Celebrations

The gala day of the year, of any year of any decade, was the fourth of July. "Are we going to celebrate the Fourth this year?" was the question that was begun to be asked in April. Not every year was there a celebration, but at least every other year. Preparations were begun about a month ahead. A tentative program was made out and very large white posters, printed in red and blue, were gotten out and circulated in all the nearby villages. A large American Eagle, with spread wings, invariably adorned the top

of these posters and held in its talons a cluster of "Stars and Stripes." The wording on the posters was an extravagant recital of the wonderful things in store for the visitors. Nothing was left to the imagination, unless it were how many of the things promised would be realized. But that did not interfere with the enthusiasm attending the announcement that this particular year there was to be a home celebration. Regardless of age or sex all were interested.

The program always consisted of a variety of sports, including the never-to-be omitted baseball game, which was generally a contest between the home team and a team from some nearby village, preferably from one where the largest support for the team could be expected. "Drawing cards" were not overlooked in those days any more than now. Horse races, whether they materialized or not were among the attractions promised. Water sports, which consisted of turning the fire hose, by one group of contestants on another group, was frequently a source of much merriment. Then there was the greased pole that had to be climbed and the greased pig that had to be caught many minor sports like footracing, the egg race, the tug of war and so on down the line came in for their share of attention.

There were also what were called platform exercises, consisting of music by a band, singing of patriotic songs, the reading of the Declaration of Independence, followed by an address by the speaker of the day. Dancing began in the late afternoon and continued until dawn the day after.

Beginning about the first of July there was much extra activity along Main Street. Booths and stands were being erected by those who had made arrangements for concessions. for many, the most important institution of the whole affair was the

Bowery," This consisted of a dance floor, generally about 50 by 100 feet. The sides were open and the roof, consisting of rough boards, resting on rafters, was supported by uprights on the side and strong posts and bracing on the inside. The "Bowery" was always built from lumber rented from the local Lumber yard and the construction was the supervision of a home carpenter who was assisted by a crew of unskilled laborers. All you had to do to qualify for a job on this project was to be able to drive a nail and most of the men employed were able to do that most of time. Within this structure was a platform, raised about two feet from the floor and used as a bandstand, a place for the orchestra, a speaker's rostrum and a place for all those who took part in the program.

I remember well the first merry-go-round I ever saw. It was at one of these early celebrations and I was quite captivated by the sight. It consisted of a large pole set upright, so fixed that it would revolve on a pivot and to this pole-arms, or sweeps, were attached and on the ends of these sweeps there was a spring seat from a lumber wagon securely fastened. I think that there were four of these sweeps and as each spring seat would easily hold two people, the capacity of this merry whirler was eight. At the end, or near the end of one of these sweeps a horse was hitched that furnished the power; his go-round was not nearly as pleasant as that of the ones who sat in the seats at the end of the sweeps. I do not know whether this contraption was an original idea with Olaf Rye, the owner, manager and driver and thus the forerunner of that now indispensable adjunct to every celebration, the "Merry-go-round." If Olaf's was not the original, he surely succeeded in stealing every essential feature. His venture yielded him a fair return for his investment of time and material. The "fare" was five cents per passenger for a given number of minutes of dizzy enjoyment.

When the morning of the much anticipated day finally dawned, it found many astir who usually did not arise at that hour. The first thing on the program was the one hundred odd guns at sunrise. A "gun" for every year since July 4th, 1776. This cannonading was produced in the manner following: In front of one of the blacksmith shops, two anvils were placed on a large tree stump. One of the anvils stood upright and the other was inverted on top. Between the two a liberal amount of gun powder was sprinkled and when all was in readiness, a blacksmith would step out from the shop, holding a long iron rod, one end of which came red hot from the forge and this hot end would be applied to the powder between the anvils with the result that the upper anvil would be thrown in air and a report produced like that of the firing of a cannon. For each report, the upper anvil had to be replaced and the whole process repeated. It was slow work, but there were many willing hands to help. When these noisemakers had finished their work, the "grand and glorious Fourth" was duly and properly ushered in. The fun had begun.

By eight o'clock the refreshment vendors began to put their stands in readiness and in about an hour or so the street rang with such expressions as: "Ice cold lemonade, made in the shade, stirred by an old maid." Someone who found as the day wore on that he had a larger supply of this refreshing liquid would startle his competitors with the cry: "Two glasses for a nickel, half a dime or five cents." From morning till night you could hear these stand workers keep up a merry-go-round of gab.

The people from the country came in early and by ten o'clock the streets were filled with a milling crowd. Everybody was now waiting for the parade to start. This interesting part of the day's doings consisted for the most part of a long line of horse-

drawn vehicles. There were carts, buggies, lumber wagons and the implement dealers had out their seeders, cultivators, mowers, reapers, sulky plows, hayrakes and every other implement that moved on wheels. Then there was the line of floats. These were of sundry shape, mostly platforms and structures built on the running gear of a lumber wagon. They represented the business concerns of the village and carried a display of the goods handled by each. In style these were as artistic as the skill of the maker could contrive. Bunting and flags decorated everything.

When the parade sallied forth, the order was something like this. Heading the line was the Marshal of the Day on as fine a horse as he could procure and wearing a red silk sash over a "Prince Albert" coat. The star of authority adorned his breast and a shining silk topper added some inches to his dignity. Following him came the brass band with its highly polished instruments blaring and glaring in the sun.

After the band came a carriage occupied by the President of the Day and the Speaker of the Day. The President of the Day was a functionary who appointed and supervised the many committees which had charge of the various activities o f the celebration. There was the committee on finance, the committee of baseball, the committee on bowery, the committee on speaker and program and so on down the line. Of these committees there was a dozen or more.

The Speaker of the Day, who as stated rode in the carriage with the President, was usually someone from a distance. The committee always tried to get someone with a reputation as an orator or some public official who for the moment held the popular imagination. It was not always easy to get the kind of a speaker wanted for there were many celebrations and those capable of filling the bill were much sought after. What the

people seemed to want was someone who could wave the flag and throw in a lot of dramatics. This was in the days of grandiloquence and the well rounded periods of patriotic platitudes were received with enthusiastic acclaim. Bombast was accepted as the true ringing coin of the oratorical realm and the louder the shouting the grander the eloquence. The Fourth of July was a day of noise and everything had to contribute its share in that direction, from the "guns at sunrise" to the last firecracker, that is to say, if one admitted that there ever was a last firecracker. The day itself with its night before and night after was a lull-less succession of explosions. No symbol for the banner of the old time Fourth could be as appropriate as a firecracker rampant.

Close up with the carriage that carried the important personages just described came Coach of State. This was the vehicle conveying the Mayor and Board of Aldermen, that one borrows metropolitan phraseology, of the village. The fourth of July was the only time that these servants of the people rode in state.

On the heels of this official carriage came what might be designated as "the ship of state." This was a veritable floating dream of flags and bunting, a dais on wheels drawn by the finest span of horses available. The driver was usually a man of imposing stature dressed in the livery of his station and sporting a stovepipe hat. The only occupants of the dais back of him were Uncle Sam and Columbia, the former standing and the latter seated. These two deserve more than passing mention. Columbia was always chosen from among the fairest of her sex in the community. Preferably she should have long flowing locks of the blond variety. Although symbolizing Republican simplicity she wore a golden crown and was adorned in a flowing, flimsy gown of

immaculate white, beribboned and bedecked as behooved one of her exalted station. She was a "thing of beauty," and if not a "joy forever" at least the "eyeful" of the hour.

To describe Uncle Sam is not so easy. He was usually a young man with as many of the outer attributes of Apollo missing as one could very well get along without. Tall, angular, rawboned with a tuft of artificial whiskers pasted to his chin and an improvised wig, puffed and powdered to the best of local ability, he looked for all the world like a glorified scarecrow. He was dressed in a suit of red, white and blue made by some local dressmaker. His trousers were a creation of alternating red and white strips running perpendicularly. His coat was of the swallowtail fashion, blue and studded with white stars. When correctly fashioned, his top piece was of gray material and was made up along the lines of the silk hat, only higher. His posture was that of stern dignity and he viewed his surroundings as if he were "monarch of all he surveyed." It was my privilege, after reaching the stature of six scrawny feet to, on several occasions, impersonate this symbol of the Republic. My description of the physical qualities essential eliminate all guess work as to why I was selected for this role.

The float following this was what was called the "Car of States." It carried as many local stars as there were states in the Union. Each state was represented by a girl who wore, diagonally across her bosom, a broad silk sash bearing the name of the state she represented. The girls were dressed in white and were seated on a sort of terrace affair. The seats were long boards covered with bunting and placed like a series of steps, above and back of each other, on three sides of the wagon that bore this burden. It was a pretty sight to see this bevy of beauties sail along on its colorful journey through the town. Following the "States" came vehicles occupied by families, lovers and loafers,

with floats sprinkled in between and a long line of machinery. The rear was generally brought up by a clowning band of ragamuffins. The parade was always formed on the highway, northwest of town. After circling around the principal business and residence blocks, it would wend its way to the bowery. Here the occupants of the carriages carrying the official party would alight and make their way to the platform.

The exercises would not vary much from year to year. There was music by the ban, singing and if some good singer had been found, a solo. Some young lady, who had been picked for her good voice and ability to read, would then start in on the Declaration of Independence. She might be a good reader at an indoor affair, but out in the open her voice would not carry, so far as any benefit to the audience was concerned, the Declaration might just as well never have been declared.

I have just described the kind of a speech that was in vogue so there is no need of going into that matter any further. Only a small portion of the people attending the celebration ever listened to the program. They knew that it was a matter of course too have a speaker and put on a program, but listening to it was another thing. There was too much fun elsewhere. Besides, who ever came to a Fourth of July celebration to listen to "some old speech."

After the program at the speakers stand, there was generally an hour's intermission for lunch. At about two in the afternoon, the sports and games got going. The refreshment stands, with renewed vigor, resumed their activities. There were generally some fakes and fortune tellers about, and occasionally some petty gambling device would edge in.

To go into details about the games, races and the rest would be tedious task for the writer and, I think, very uninteresting to anyone who at some time might glance over these pages. Every Fourth of July celebration has always been played to the same basic tune, with here and there a slight variation. In more than fifty years of interested observation, I have failed to note much that has not been a duplication of something that has gone before. To this statement I must make exception in favor of Olaf Rye's merry-go-round. That stands out in my mind as something new, something original, due no doubt to my limited experience and lack of opportunity to get around before I was introduced to this innovation. On giving the matter thought I have long ago come to the conclusion that this also had its forerunners in like or similar shape, for did not Solomon say: "There is nothing new under the sun?"

To just watch the crowd on a Fourth of July is really a lot of fun. When I say this I am thinking of the crowds I mingled with some fifty or more years ago at the celebrations of which I have been attempting to give a sort of composite picture. The crowd today would be and is just as interesting and presents just as many arresting individuals and groups as the crowd did then. Of course you would find people dressed differently at different periods. At the time that I am especially considering in these recollections, the average person would not be, on the whole, as well dressed as is the case today. And yet when you found those who displayed the latest in style in those days, they were just as much up to date as the newest fashions of today. And here is something to be borne in mind: a stylish creation of today, if seen coming down the street, in the eighties of the last century, would look just as freakish to the people then as does their mode of dress look to us now. A man dressed in the garb of fashion that

prevailed in the days of George Washington, appearing in any modern crowd, would be taken for some circus attaché out for a stroll in his uniform.

It is said that "the times change and we change with them." But as a matter of fact, we humans do not change much, not nearly as much as the "times." Our mode of life and our environment changes, but this human nature of ours remains about the same from generation to generation and from century to century. Salome fascinates the imagination of the Herod of today just as she did the monarch of two thousand years ago and the wife of Potiphar to day casts wistful eyes in the direction of Joseph just as she did in the days that Moses wrote about. Yes, we change the cut of our clothes, but we do not change the nature of the one who wears them. Delilah still ensnares her Samson and David still covets the charms of Bathsheba. This may be a digression from the main topic, but I do think that it is a little elucidating.

Reverting again o the celebration I was discussing: As the day wore on people went in groups from one sport to another, trying to see all that there was to be seen, which was for the most part not much, and by evening everybody was tired out and felt as if a hard day's work had been gone through with. Children were restless, babies were crying and perspiring mothers were approaching the fag end of their endurance. But the Fourth of July comes but once a year and must be enjoyed.

Long before evening many of the male contingent of the crowd, who had found something more exhilarating than "ice cold lemonade," were "whooping it up" in a manner that showed that they were not only intent on celebrating but were actually doing it. The representatives of law and order had their hands full most of the time trying to quell some individual insurrection or stem the tide of rising group pugnacity. There was

not much use in arresting anyone, the local Bastille could accommodate but two guests. To pick out two from so many deserving ones and supply only them with room and bed, would have been rank discrimination, especially on a day that was dedicated to the "self evident truth that all men are created equal." Besides, even Noah, whose name is associated with water more than that of Andrew Volstead or any other man, found the sparking beverage of the bubbling spring inadequate for celebration purposes.

Doing Spring Work

Two succeeding seasons, in about the middle eighties, I hired out to a farmer by the name of Knute Floe for spring work. My job was to harrow behind the seeder. I had forgotten whether I had three or four horses on the harrow, but I remember that the harrow was a large, three-section affair and the horses may have been four although I rather surmise that there were only three. Well, no matter about the number of horses, suffice it to say that we kept up with the seeder, although that, for obvious reasons, always had several rounds the start of us on any field. The seeder was driven by Mr. Floe himself who was a man both steady and careful and sacrificed speed to good work every time. One could learn a good deal from observing how that man worked and acted.

If you want to know why this harrowing, I might explain that it served a double purpose, it covered more effectively, than the seeder did the grain that had been strewn on the plowing and it loosened up the hard surface of the ground, and made the soil more receptive for such "showers of blessing" as might come to gladden into germination the latent life of the new-sown grain.

The Floe farm was situated about three miles from Minneota, in a northerly direction, and the home was located near the west bank of what was at that time quite a formidable stream. all the farm lands in this section were of a surface-character that the real estate men of some decades late came to call "gently undulating." The soil was of the best, rich black loam with a splendid clay subsoil. A good harvest would almost without fail follow any proper sowing. The Floe farm was not large but it was good and the owner and his wife, while having gained prosperity in but a small way had accumulated contentment on large scale. They were an honest, God-fearing Norwegian couple. Grace was said by Mr. Floe before every meal and the last thing before retiring was the reading of a scripture lesson and prayer. This worthy couple had no children and the household consisted of but themselves. They were so kind to me that had I been one of their kin they could not have been more considerate.

Harrowing was not very hard work, nor especially difficult and I soon learned to do it in a passing fair manner. The hours were long and I had to walk behind the harrow all day and that made a good many miles covered from early morning until late evening. This being in the month of April, the weather was very changeable and often cold and raw, but the constant and rather brisk walking kept one fairly warm. The ground was rough in places and the harrow would pitch from end to end and sometimes the horses would take a notion to cut up and one had to be on the alert to keep them to a straight course. On the whole, however, things went along smoothly and the "even tenor" became the daily routine.

This was at the time when I was very much under the influence of F. F. Bucklin's oratory and I must own that I was dreaming dreams of achievement on the rostrum. I had

read about the famous Greek orator, Demosthenes I think it was, who overcame an impediment of speech and gained control of his vocal organs by going out on the seashore and orating to the waves. I conceived the idea that I might do something along the line of developing my voice by declaiming the spirited address of Cassius, which I knew by heart, into the teeth of the howling spring wind that constantly swept over the fields with an accompaniment of dust and dirt that was often both blinding and choking. I raised my voice, imitating the best I could Mr. Bucklin's style of declamation and day after day the horses I drove heard more of Shakespeare than they had ever heard before, or since, I am sure. The result of this, and other similar exercises, practiced at intervals for a considerable period of time, was the strengthening of the voice and the acquisition of vocal power that probably would not have otherwise been acquired. My voice was not trained, it was not gentle and never has been, but it has never lacked a certain degree of force which has stood me in good stead on many an occasion. For it is not always what you say that makes the coveted impression, the way you say it has probably just as much to do with the results. Many a good argument has been lost on an audience because the speaker could not get his message across the footlights. I have never experienced any difficulty in making myself heard. I attribute this in a large measure to the early practice of going out and "orating" to the wind and the open spaces.

My urge was an ambition which, while it may not have gotten me far, was at least a laudable one. I know best how far I have fallen short of any accomplishment in the direction of public speaking, but nonetheless, I feel constrained to admit that the ability to stand up and speak my mind, to give and take in a rough and tumble on the forensic floor, has given me a degree of satisfaction that would not otherwise have been my portion.

Do I owe it to the inspiration I received from listening to F. F. Bucklin declaim? I do not know, after all I did have some such urge along that line as far back as the time when I, at about the age of six, was playing "preacher" to my kid companions in that barnyard on a Yellow Medicine county farm, more than a decade before I sat in rapt attention listening to the Minneota schoolmaster.

The warp and woof of life is a peculiar thing and we weave our web much of the time unconsciously and as we look at the pattern in after years we are often at a loss to account for the source from which we have filched some of the designs we find prominently woven into the fabric. Also, it would be a process well nigh distracting to determine the origin of every piece in a "crazy quilt."

Herding Cattle for John Hunter

The last summer that I herded cattle, I was in the employ of a man named John Hunter who had a farm near the county seat village of Marshall. He had a large farm and the locality was one that had been settled for very many years. The herd I was taking care of consisted of about 20 of 25 head of cattle and quite a large drove of sheep. The grazing grounds were located about a mile from the Hunter home. I had to drive my combination heard out there every morning and the herding consisted mostly of seeing that the animals under my charge did not stray into the grain fields nearby. I carried my noonday lunch with me in a tin pail and I also had a jug of water holding about a gallon which was to be my day's supply. On reaching the place where the herd grazed for the day, I would go to the top of a little knoll where I dug my dinner pail and my water jug into the ground so as to keep my supplies a little cooler than otherwise would have been the case. But by early afternoon my lunch was all eaten and if anything was left in the

water jug, it was by that time so warm that all it would do was to moisten the lips and throat but as for it quenching thirst, there was no such thing. I suffered from thirst these months that I was on this job more than I had ever done before or since for that matter. I was very much alone, never seeing a person to speak to from morning until evening. How I endured those hot and lonesome days is more than I can now understand.

I had been confirmed in the spring of this year. The pastor had given each of us confirmation children a booklet dealing with religious subjects and also containing a two-page Confirmation Certificate. This booklet I had with me and read with attention and interest time and again. This was the only reading matter I had with me, but after a while I got permission from the Hunter folks to take with me some Augusta, Maine, publications that I found up in an attic. Some people, I think to parade their literary taste, used to make fun of these Maine publications, but I found in them some well culled gems of literature for the publishers prided themselves on covering a wide field. I still recall a large portion of a poem that I learned from one of the issues of these periodicals.

There was not a week that I did not dip into my confirmation booklet and garner some gem of religious thought. I know now that the treatment of the subject was simple and elementary and the author brought out that fact by stating that this was "milk" for the young, who still could not digest the "meat" that was intended for adults. I was, if not by nature, at least by training, religiously minded and during all my solitary herding days I had had plenty of time to think and having been much in the company of older people and being the only child in mother's home, my thoughts ran more to the serious than otherwise. These cowherd days on the prairie, with nothing but duty to divert one's mind, were well designed to develop the faculty of thought. So I had much time to think, but

unfortunately, I was lacking the training that would direct thought into the most productive channels.

When I think of all the sanitary regulations and sanitary practices of today, I cannot help but bring to mind some of the experience of that summer with the Hunter herd. These memories crowd upon me when, for instances, I am confronted with the little paper envelope that serves as an individual drinking cup in so many public places, especially on trains, one of which if filled and drained ten times would hardly convey sufficient water to decently quench a healthy thirst. In contrast to this, I will relate one incident that was a common occurrence with me on the hot days of that not-to-be forgotten summer. At about four o'clock in the afternoon, the herd would go panting and puffing to a large slough, nearby where the cattle would wade out into the water, if you could call it that, up their sides in an effort to cool off. I followed suit and waded out likewise. Remember, my jug of water had been exhausted two or three hours before. All tongues were hanging out from heat and thirst, mine with the rest. I was literally spent, with the heat and my longing for water with which to refresh my system cannot be described. I saw the cattle stick their heads into the water and I supposed that they were drinking and I thought that what is good enough for the cow must be good enough for the herder. Standing up to my waist in the liquid mess that filled the slough, I would, with my hands, brush the green scum off the surface and take my felt hat or that which once had been a hat, dip it down into the water and bring it up "rim" full of this hot and stinking stuff. I would put the hat to my lips and down copious draughts. Yes, I know the dangers that lurk in the public dipper, where everybody drinks from the same tin, but I have never been afraid of it. Did we not all, forty to fifty of us, dip the common dipper

into the common water pail in school and drink therefrom? Yes we did, and a surprisingly large number of us have lived to tell the story.

In this connection I must not omit mentioning the arrival at home in the evening with the herd. In the front yard, a distance from the house, there was a deep well with a board curbing about three feet high above the ground with an overhead framework from which was suspended a grooved wheel in which a rope ran and t each end of the rope an iron bound bucket was attached. When you drew one bucket up the other went down and filled itself in the well. This well with its long trough for the cattle right by the buckets that brought the water to the curb, was the first place that the cows and I headed for. You, with your iced water and individual drinking cups have no conception of the ecstasy that attends the drawing of a bucketful of cool water from a well and setting it on the edge of the curb and putting your parched lips to the brim of that blessed fountain. I have enjoyed a variety of refreshing drinks in my limited rambles overland and sea, but from California's sunny clime to Iceland's cooling ozone, I have tasted nothing so invigorating as my evening's libations from the "old oaken bucket" on the John Hunter farm in Lyon County. There are psychological moments for the natural organism as well as for the soul that occupies that organism. Only the propitious moment brings out the fullest appreciation of a word fitly spoken or an act timely performed. The best meal you ever ate was the one when you were the most hungry.

John Hunter was a land agent for one of the branches of the Northwestern railroad system and at this time he conducted a small land office in Minneota. He was seldom at home but for the evening and the night, and this by no means always. The farm was managed by Mrs. Hunter and her brother and a son of Mr. Hunter's These men

mentioned were both young at the time I was there, one about twenty and the other a little older, however, I am guessing as to these ages. We three did the milking and there were fourteen cows to milk so we kept in practice. Six of these cows fell to my lot morning and night. I remember that one morning, when for some reason the other two young men did not show up I milked all these cows alone. It is the largest number that I have ever tackled in one sitting, although I had had considerable experience milking cows before I came to this place.

The longer that I remained at Hunters the more dissatisfied I became. Somehow I did not fit into the family environment, never felt at home and was lonesome and homesick from first to last. To be homesick was nothing new to me. However, it generally wore off after the first couple of weeks, but not here. My mother knew how I felt and that I did not like the place and so she sent me word that I better leave. When I discovered that she agreed to my leaving, I "stood not upon the order of my going," but just went. I did not know anything about the propriety of giving notice and so allowing my employer time to replace me. I merely told John Hunter that I was through, could not stay with him any longer and that he could pay my mother in Minneota whatever I had coming. At first I guess he thought that I had suddenly gone crazy, and this was some kid notion and that my mother should be told and so on. I assured him that it was with my mother's consent that I was leaving, that she in fact had suggested it. It was at this juncture that John broke loose. I minded not his language, nor his threat never to pay me one cent for the months that I had been herding for him. I said goodbye, turned by back on him and headed for the road. My aunt, Mrs. Owen Marron, lived several miles away and it was for her place that I headed. I remained with her and her husband for some

little time before returning to Minneota and Mother. When I gained more experience and understood better the obligations of an employee to his employer, I realized that I had not treated John Hunter according to the rules, by leaving so abruptly, but if I had done wrong, and I supposed I had, I certainly had no regrets.

Plowing for Hoverson

After returning to Minneota I hired out to a Norwegian farmer to do fall work. This was to consist mostly of plowing and some work in threshing. There was still some threshing left and this man was doing what they called exchange work with some of his neighbors. The name of the man was Hover Hoverson, he had two daughters and three sons. Only two of the sons were home at the time and these did most of the farm work. The two girls helped their mother with the housework. "Old Hover," as he was generally called, was a man of means. He was thrifty, frugal and on the whole very careful in all matters concerning finances. People did say that his grip on the dollar often threatened the life of the Eagle. Be that as it may, but when it came to the dollar there is little doubt that Old Hover had a way of reversing the "E Pluribus Unum" and making it read many out of one instead of one out of many. All this was neither here nor there to me. Hover treated me decently, expected me to do such work as was assigned me and paid me everything that he agreed to. Of course, there was not tip nor bonus, but such things were not expected in those days. There were many instances where hired help did not get its pay when promised and there were those who never were aid. But that did not happen to anyone working for Hover Hoverson. He probably did not pay the highest wages when he could manage otherwise, but his word was better than the bond of many a bank. In politics he was a Republican and I rather suspect that there was no doubt in his mind that

there was something wrong with a man who espoused Democratic principles. Ex-Union soldiers were pioneering on the prairies in those days and anything that smacked of Democratic politics was about as popular as Confederate currency. In religion Hover was a Lutheran of the old school; so the preacher had taught them in the days of pre-confirmation and so they believed. What was good enough in the beautiful valleys and among the majestic mountains of Norway was certainly good enough on the prairies of Minnesota. But this primitive code called honesty and how you could find that outside the Lutheran church or within the Democratic party was a conundrum.

But to get to my plowing. I was to plow with a team of horses and a walking plow. I had never plowed before so came to the work without experience. My equipment and I were taken out to a certain stubble field by one of the Hoverson boys and I was instructed in the various ways in which I had to handle the plow and the horses. Much stress was laid on how to hold the plow and what to do in case certain things happened. The young man who was instructing me ran the first furrow, that is he plowed a furrow the length of the field and then turned the team around and plowed another furrow back, the top edge of the two "strings" meeting and forming a ridge. It was now my job to follow the original furrows, going out on one side of the ridge and coming back on the other; thus the plowing, meaning the ground plowed, would widen on each side by a furrow's breadth with every round the plow made. The horses were at one end of the plow and the plowman at the other, and thus a fresh furrow was turned between the horses and the plowboy. The right hand horse walked in the old furrow while the man holding the 0plow handles walked in the new. The plowshare cut the ground and started the "string" up the mouldboard which laid it into and a little over the old furrow, covering

the old furrow and leaving only the new. Thus there was an endless procession of new furrows taking the place of old.

I shall never forget the trouble I had in trying to keep the plow cutting an even furrow. I believe the plow carried a fourteen-inch share, so the furrow should have been fourteen inches wide, but the way that plow had of wobbling from side to side was a caution. I hung on and tried to steer for dear life, but in spite of all my efforts, the furrow I was cutting would be three inches wide in some places fourteen in some and then every other width in between. It goes without saying that my plowing was terrible and for the first two days I was afraid that I would have to give up. But Hover did not inspect often and the boys were for giving me every chance and so I floundered along. I am sure that the boys were not so much bent on making a plowman out of me as they were on keeping me on the job to help with the chores morning and evening. My presence meant a little less chores for them, for I always did my share of these and here they did not have to teach me much. After the first two or three days I began to see daylight in the matter of this plowing and soon I was getting along famously. My course became smoother and my furrows straighter and more even. After a while I came to like the work and really enjoy it. There was something fascinating about steering the plow and seeing the ground turn and the plowing widen fourteen inches on each side with every round. You had some kind of a feeling that in a small way you were helping the future to fruition. I put in long days and walked many miles but I did not mind that so much after the first few days, I learned to throw my weight on the plowhandles and thus let myself be lifted along to some extent.

Old Man Hover was an early riser. I am sure that it was not much after three when he got up in the morning and it was not very much after four when he began to call his sons and me. There were a lot of chores to do, breakfast to be eaten and the teams fed and gotten ready for the field, so it was probably not far from seven when we started for the field. I will say this for Hover that although he was long on hours and a little short on praise, he was, nevertheless, kind to me and I think that I could have, without much effort, assured myself of employment with him the next spring and summer season had I chosen so to do, why I did not I do not now recall.

The Hoverson family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Hoverson, two sons, Hover and Ole and two daughters, Anna and Mary. A third son, Paul, was not at home when I was there. Mrs. Hoverson was a hardworking woman and found but little time for any interest or activity outside her home. Ole was somewhat on the affable order while his brother, Hover, was much like his father although he did not have the old man's mental equipment, except that he was exceedingly careful in money matters. Of the two girls, Anna was the oldest, she was tall and blond and fairly good looking. Mary was much different. She was of medium eight, dark hair, dark brown eyes (I am not positive about the color of the eyes, but dark they were), vivacious and always smiling. She had winning ways, as the saying goes, and a challenging way of throwing her back and laughing at you. I think that she was about my age while Anna was a little older. But I was not paying much attention to girls at that time and both of these young ladies no doubt possessed charms that escaped me. In my boyhood days when a young man went to call on a girl, so as to make a habit of it, they said that he was "sparking" her. At the time I did not know just what that meant and when I, by some accident, happened into a

room where two youngsters were sitting holding hands or making eyes at each other, and it dawned on me that this was “sparking,” I wandered to myself whether going down to the creek and snaring a pickerel wasn’t after all the better sport; the pickerel would at least give you a run for your money, as they say. Do we ever learn in life’s queer school at what age we are the biggest fool?

The Haunted House

Did you ever hear of a “haunted house?” Well, there was something that went by the name about a half mile west of Minneota, not far from the public highway. Diagonally across the highway and the railroad track, about a quarter of a mile in a southwesterly line from this house was the Hoverson home. This meant that whenever I went to town of an evening, while I worked for Hoverson, I had to pass uncomfortably close to the “haunted house.” This house was a vacant, run down, wreck, which evidently never had seen a coat of paint, upon which the sun and the rain and the storms had beaten for years and had turned the original timber color of its boards to black. If you strolled by in the gloaming and took a passing look at it you could not help feeling what an ideal place this would be for any roving spirits that might be on the lookout for a temporary shelter or a permanent abode. Just to look at the open holes in the walls, where windows once had been, and not the forbidding aspect of this sentinel of darkness, would at once suggest ghosts.

There were some stories floating about as to things that had been “seen” on dark and stormy nights by people passing by this ancient domicile of long departed dwellers. If you had a good imagination, and there are those who under such circumstances have a very vivid one, you might see, were the night dark enough and the moon discreetly hiding

its face behind a screen of floating clouds, a dim light moving across the floor, or you might hear some strange and weird noise resembling the nocturnal soliloquy of a hoot owl, and then again, if the clouds were lowering and Thor were plying with blows of his hammer the anvil in the smithy of the Night, sparks might fly about and enliven the gloom, but this would be only for a moment and when the power of the sparks were spent, the returning darkness would be more dense than ever. On a night like this a bolt of lightning might suddenly rend the ink black clouds and for a moment reveal, in the open doorway of this haunted hovel a figure shrouded in white, only to be immediately swallowed up by the blackness of darkness rushing in upon the scene to mend the rift that the fiery dart had caused.

Stories were hinted about some dark mystery, but no one knew how or when. children would not get near the place after dusk. And I who was always afraid in the dark in those days, if I had to pass this house in the dark would get by as fast as I could and once by would never look back. What if anything, out of the ordinary, had taken place within the walls of this old house no one seemed to know. That at times something strange had been seen hovering on the premises was a tradition rather than an established fact. the feeling was: "Well, if it isn't haunted, why isn't it?"

The Icelanders and the Norwegians, for that matter, have always been great on ghost stories. But this house had never been owned or occupied by an Icelander, nor had a Norwegian, to my knowledge ever had anything to do with it, so the stories current could trace no ancestry to Norse soil. but it was not difficult for the people of these nationalities to place some credence in these unlikely tales, for they had brought with them plenty of like baggage from their native soil. The Icelanders, that I speak of those

with whose background I am the best acquainted, had been listening to ghost stories from their childhood up. Stories about ghosts that had annoyed, scared and even physically attacked people. Those whose word they had for these stories were honest and truthful in all matters of daily concern and their word was never questioned.

It was easy for these people to believe that something "unclean" was floating about. Personally, I was used to ghost stories from the first that I can remember and when I heard about this house and the things that were reputed to have been seen there the thought of doubting it hardly entered my mind. People whom I had every reason to know were truthful, and told me about their own experiences with ghosts. To day I may interpret the experiences they told me about . . .

HERE PAGE 84 OF THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT IS MISSING

and in a grove that he planted back of his house were for years held such celebrations and festive affairs as the Icelandic settlement decided to hold. But this was not until some years after 1875 and when the settlement had grown to some proportions. I attended many Fourth of July celebrations in this grove in my youth.

Mr. Peterson came from an old and respected family in Eastern Iceland and his home in Minnesota became the rallying point for all Icelanders who sought to settle in this state. All newcomers headed for the Peterson homestead for information and advice. My mother frequently came to this home and was always well received by Mr. and Mrs. Peterson, hence we were well acquainted with this worthy pioneer couple.

So it came about when in the spring of 1887 I was on the lookout for a job that Mr. and Mrs. Peterson told mother that they thought they could use me on their farm for the summer season. I accordingly went there in the capacity of something more than a

chore boy and something much less than a hired man. As before noted, I had some experience driving horses, but the horses I was used to had been old plugs that would welcome every opportunity to stand still. It was different with the horses on the Peterson farm, they would welcome any chance to run away and it always seemed that they sensed whenever the lines were held by a strange and timid driver. Most of the horses here were young and full of life and even a good horseman had to "look a little out." There is no question that the best "horseman" on the farm was the oldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Peterson, Christine. She was probably about twenty years of age at this time and did much of the field work on the farm. She could drive any horse on the place and when she had ahold of the "ribbons" the most unruly critter would cow down to docility. It was different when I took ahold of the lines. These equestrian demons would then start to act up in a manner anything but genteel and considerate. I think it safe to say that I had a near runaway with every contrivance in the implement line that horses could be attached to. That this was an annoyance to my employer can easily be surmised, but fortunately for all concerned I did not turn up in shreds nor was any machinery seriously damaged.

I might mention the mode of planting corn at this time. I have in mind one particular instance. It was about the only time I planted corn. New ground was being broken and when this was done it was usual to plant the freshly turned sod to corn. The breaking plow, in this case, was a sulky plow, a plow on wheels on which the driver rode. Miss Christine was the driver of the plow and it fell to my lot to deposit the seed in the soil. This I did by walking along every third string and with a hatchet make a small hole into which I dropped three kernels of corn, stepped on the hole so as to cover the seed, took two paces forward, chopped another hole, put in some more seed and then moved

on. It was a slow process and especially hard on the back as you had to move along in a continuously stooped position.

Sunday was a day of rest, but with the everlasting farm chores there was not of a chance to "dress up" and go somewhere. The dressing up would not have bothered me much as about the only change I could have made in my clothing would have been to turn my overalls inside out. Not much attention was paid to social affairs, in fact there was very little going on that could be called that. Miss Christine would occasionally tog up and go to a dance given somewhere in the neighborhood. This after a hard day's work in the field was something else again. Christine was a good looking girl and when gowned in her best togs she did not take a back seat for any of them.

Gunnlaugur Peterson was a man of parts. He was a typical, hardworking pioneer who thought his own thoughts and was decidedly independent in his opinions. He was a freelancer in most things. His politics were Republication, as was the case with most of the settlers thereabouts. In religion I think it is safe to say that he was not much of a churchman. But he was honest and upright, a good neighbor and his desire to be helpful was limited in its achievements only the means at hand. Mrs. Peterson was a woman of strong character, dauntless energy and was a tireless worker both in the house and outside. They were a couple that accepted the hardships of pioneering as something that was to be expected and to be borne with. Their life in Iceland had not been an easy one and they had not come to America with an delusions about living in ease or picking money off the roadway. They seemed to be fitted by nature for the strenuous task of pioneering. Like so many others, of all nationalities who came here to build up the Northwest, they were trail-blazers and founders. They planted the seed that was to

fruition into prosperous communities and a well-organized society. What they planted in the sweat of their brow was to be harvested in far greater ease with those who came after them.

Gunnlaugur Peterson was a constant and faithful reader of the "Skandinaveb," a newspaper printed in the Norwegian language in Chicago. He would often read something from this paper, out loud to the household but he never read it in Norwegian, but translating as he went along rendered it into very passable Icelandic. Did you not know that the test he read was in Norwegian, you would think that he was reading from an Icelandic paper. He was as well informed on current matters as the Skandinaven could make him and to question anything that appeared in its columns was not calculated to curry favor with him. The mailing label on the copy of this publication that came to him read: "Gunnlaugur Peterson (Islander)." to borrow a phrase from the quill-pen days of the race, he "drew no feather" over the fact that he was an Icelander. However, he was not a Jingoist strutting about with his nationality on his shoulder, but you did not have to probe deep to find out that he was not ashamed of the fact that he was born on the "Saga Island."

I Get Run Over

The summer I spent on this farm was uneventful and consisted mostly of ordinary routine farm work. There was, however, one incident which was to me not of a pleasant nature. The circumstances of this happening were as I am about to relate. Mr. and Mrs. Peterson were preparing to go to Minneota to do some shopping as we would call it today. The lumber wagon was to be taken as they had some things to take to town and many things to bring back. To this wagon was hitched the best and most frisky team on

the place, King and Queen. The team and wagon stood ready in the front yard. I had been told to hold the horses while Mr. and Mrs. Peterson were getting ready in the house. One of the things that they were taking with them to town was a live sheep. The four feet of this poor animal were tied together, a rope being passed over the legs which were folded under the belly and it was then laid in the wagon box. It was impossible for the critter to stand up but it could roll from side to side and bleat and stick its head above the top of the wagon box.

It was my assignment to stand by the horses and see that they did not take a notion to walk away. Instead of standing to one side and holding onto the bridle of the horse next to me, as I should have done, I planted myself directly in front of the team with my right hand resting on the end of the wagon tongue. The sheep in the wagon box was becoming very restless and tumbled itself from side to side. The horses were evidently not aware of its presence until it lifted its head above the wagon box and let out a lusty bleat. This was the match touched to the firecracker! The horses became frightened and took a plunge forward. With "full speed ahead" they rushed on and I went under. One wheel passed over my head, the mark of the wheel being plainly visible over my right cheek. The horses, wagon and all went over my body and there were not many spots on my body left untouched. When I was picked up I was pretty much of a wreck but I was bundled into the wagon box and some blankets wrapped about me where I rested with the sheep that had been the cause of my misfortune, the horses having been caught without much trouble the journey to town was begun. When I was lifted out of the wagon at my mother's home I was not anything pleasant to look upon. Dr. Sanderson, the village physician, was called or rather sent for, as there were no

telephones at that time. So the repairing process was begun and salves and bandages were applied. Every tooth in my mouth was loose and the flesh of the gums protruded between each tooth. There was a hole in my chin, right below the lower lip and this was long in healing. I recall that when on the mend I used to amuse myself by closing my lips and expectorating through this hole. But eventually it healed and that source of amusement was denied me. After two or three weeks, or some such matter, I was pretty well healed and the welts and bruises began to disappear. Take it all in all it was a very unpleasant and painful experience and left me no more courageous in handling horses than before. There is no comment to be made on this incident except it were to say that It was a miracle that I was not killed. They say that no one dies who is destined to live longer. Not a profound statement but one that seems to be borne out by the common experience of mankind. A woman in Iceland is said to have remarked when someone suggested that her son might have been killed in a mountain climb: "Well, my Jon has never killed himself before, in fact it is not a habit with him." Much more could I write about this Peterson family. Mr. and Mrs. Peterson met with the crushing sorrow of having their only son die suddenly, when in the early stages of a most promising manhood and their daughter, Christine, also went to an early grave. Hardships they could and did endure, but these losses struck the heart. But they bore up wonderfully and accepted their losses with the courage and fortitude that always characterized them.

How I Came Near Becoming a Shoemaker

I must have been about seventeen when I came near binding myself, although not in the old sense of the term, as a shoemaker's apprentice. It is an incident hardly worth relating, except that it shows how the course of events, even in unimportant lives, has a

way of turning unexpectedly like a brook winding its way in and out. There was in our village a Norwegian shoemaker. He was a man of some education, having begun studies for the ministry in the old country but for some reason changing his mind and deciding on renewing soles instead of saving souls. He then came to America and in the course of time landed in Minneota. He was an entertaining talker and a man of intelligence and good manners. He had his workbench in a corner, by a front window, in a small grocery store. I used to frequent the place and often talked with the shoemaker. He used to suggest to me that it was the part of wisdom for a boy to learn a trade. If after learning a trade he found something that he liked better he could always change and then if something happened he still had his trade to fall back upon. There was no gainsaying the wisdom of this talk. This finally led to his suggesting that I come in with him and he would teach me the shoemaker's trade. Every time I came into the store after that he would ask me whether I had made up my mind to become a shoemaker. His clenching argument I never will forget because of his way of putting it. He said: "If you learn to be a shoemaker, you will have a trade that will last as long as people walk on their feet instead of their heads."

I talked the thing over with mother, but she never enthused much over my settling down to pegging shoes. She thought that I should learn some other trade. To be constantly surrounded by the community's old shoes and patching and renewing its worn out soles was something that did not appeal to her. But here I was without a job and we needed something keep us alive and while the shoe pegging trade did not exactly command my admiration it was something. I was promised some little remuneration as soon as my progress warranted pay. Although without any buoyant hopes, it was finally

agreed to between mother and me that I try "pegging away" for a while. I think that I was a little more willing to try than she was to have me. I had every confidence that I could soon learn enough to make my service of some value. It is possible also that the interesting conversations that I heard the shoemaker engage in and his ability to hold his own in arguments that came up between him and others who lined up around his bench, threw some kind of a glamour about the thing.

My Career as Carpenter

So one forenoon I left home for downtown with the intention of throwing my lot in with S. O. Most, for that was the name of my shoemaker friend. I was not in a hurry but took my time and greeted such people as I met on the sidewalk. In front of the leading general store of the village, a farmer's co-operative enterprise, organized by Icelandic farmers and being the name "Verzlunarfelag Islendinga," I was suddenly confronted by a man whom I knew quite well. He was an Icelander by the name of Josef Josefsson, a highly respected and well-to-do farmer. H e greeted me and said, "What are you doing now, Gunnar?" I replied that I was not doing anything but looking for a job. "Good," he said. "I have a job for you. I am going to build a new barn and I have an old barn that I am going to tear down. You come out with Loftur Jonasson, the carpenter, when he comes tomorrow, or the next day, and help wreck the old barn and take the nails out of the old boards. When that is done Loftur can probably use you as a helper on the erection of the new barn. I will pay you fifty cents a day, that will make three dollars a week. What do you say?" Without hesitation I replied: "I will be there with Loftur when he comes on the job."

I was within a street's width of the store where my shoemaker held forth but I did not go to see him. Instead I hurried home to tell mother what turn the wheel of fortune had taken. She was pleased and said that I had done the right thing in accepting this job and that it might lead to something along the lines of carpentry. A carpenter in the old country was a man looked up to. He had to serve his apprenticeship and before he could receive his papers he had to produce a piece of work, generally some cabinet article, which was known as the "Masterpiece" of the candidate for admission and standing in the craft. This "Masterpiece" was passed on by competent judges and merited recognition given where earned. The masterpiece in craftsmanship, for similar procedure obtained in admitting to all crafts, seems to correspond to the thesis for a scholastic degree.

Thus began my introduction to the building trade, which I was to follow for the next three years. The saw, the hammer and the square were now the implements of my work and the "emblems of my profession." I easily learned the rudiments of simple carpentry and when I rather reluctantly gave up the trade to accept a position as clerk in a general store, I was getting along so that I could safely undertake the erection of a plain frame building. Carpentry has always had a fascination for me and I am sure that had I followed it I could have become a moderately proficient builder. Probably I could also have become a good shoemaker, as a matter of fact, I have no doubt about it. But old shoes never appealed to me like new lumber. Pegging away at an old shoe could never buoy my spirits like seeing a new building arise from its foundation in response to the skill and effort of the builder. I am in no way making light of the trade of the man who devotes himself to the work of repairing shoes, his work is both essential and honorable. But the trouble with me was that all the shoemakers that I saw at this time were not

shoemakers at all, they were merely shoe-repairers. They did not build they patched. Had I been introduced to the art of shoe-building, I think that I could have become enthused. A fine handmade shoe is a work of art and something that any craftsman may well be proud of. The trouble was that I was never introduced to the art of shoemaking. The uninteresting drudgery of shoe mending was all that I saw.

There is little point in telling this story, as I said before, except that it covers an experience of my youth and shows how things sometimes take an unexpected turn by which our careers, unimportant though they may be, are diverted from their course by some trifling incident. Had I not met that farmer, which was a pure accident, for he was not looking for me to offer me a job, but the thought to use me came to him when he saw me, I would have continued across the street and donned the leather apron of the shoe repairer.

As before stated I worked at the carpenter trade for three years, having during that period three different bosses, Loftur Jonasson, S.M.S. Askdal and Kristjan Schram. All these men were good workmen and did their best to instruct me and were kind and considerate. My first pay, fifty cents per day, was soon raised to seventy-five cents per day. I recall thinking that this would net me $4.50 per week and I wondered what I was going to do with all that money.

We went up and down the countryside, wherever the boss had secured a job of erecting either a house or a barn. At one time I worked on a church building and did my share of erecting the steeple. I thought it was wonderful to climb up and up, with scaffolding built on top of scaffolding. One time as we were nearing the top of the steeple, a cross brace that I was standing on broke and I began a rapid descent

groundward. As luck would have it my hand caught another cross brace and so my "downward career" was arrested. When the boss, who was not at the time Loftur, but young Askdal, saw me begin my rapid descent, he said: "There you go!" There was no disputing the truthfulness of that remark. But I stopped my going much sooner than he expected for which I am sure that he was more than glad. It was noon and some went and had our lunch. When we returned to work the boss gave me some serious admonitions about always looking well to the "moorings" of anything to which I trusted my life and limbs. It was good advice and I suppose I followed it about as youth generally follow good advice. The trouble with so much of our good advice is that it comes after and not before. However, I never had any accident befall me while I worked as a carpenter's assistant, barring, of course, the numerous times that I hit my fingernail when I should have hit the steel nail that I was trying to drive. Yes, I always enjoyed building. That is probably why, now that I am laid up with a broken ankle, I enjoy "building" this structure of "recollections" out of the seasoned timbers of my youthful experiences.

These summers that I worked at carpentry were to me pleasant and while not particularly profitable financially, were of value to me in other ways. It was an experience that had nothing of the monotonous about it. Sometimes we would stay one or two weeks in a place and sometimes a month or two. New people, new homes, change of food and change of living conditions were quite the regular thing with us and kept us from getting lonesome. Genial people and fairly comfortable homes were the general rule; occasionally the reverse was the case, but not often. To most places we would gladly return at any time, a few there were where we did not "angle" for a return date.

We put in long hours and worked steady. We were always at work by seven in the morning and instead of quitting at six, we worked as long as we had fair daylight. We had our supper when we were through for the day. In other words we observed farmer's hours, not the union hours of a city laborer.

One time we were putting up a large farm dwelling of the better kind. The new house was being built right near the old one which had done duty since the early days of the settlement. The owner was a Norwegian, dark of skin and black of beard. The cut of his whiskers was of the Civil War style and he was a veteran of that war. Facially, he resembled every picture I had ever seen of General Grant. I am rather of the opinion that he was mindful of the fact and probably did take some little pride in it. His children were all grown up, or nearly so. His wife was an elderly woman of the efficient type. We were well taken care of. Things were pleasant all around. Our work progressed well. It was about mid-summer or a little earlier when we came on this job. All days seemed hot and many was the trip that we had to make to the nearby well of cooling water and freely did we drink therefrom. After we had been there for some time the water in the well began gradually to taste anything but fresh. There was a smell from it and a taste to it that made it almost unbearable and our trips to the well became as few as our thirst would permit. We protested that something must be done, that we could not stand this any longer and, of course, the family did not like the water any better than we did. In response to a general request for an investigation our dark-hued military commander ordered the well court-martialed, and detailed for the trial his two eldest sons, who acted under their father's immediate supervision. After due search and investigation, it was found that two trespassing mice, under cover of darkness, had maliciously and

feloniously entered the sacred confined of our fountain of rejuvenation and defiled the same by drowning themselves therein. The bodies of the two dead mice, in fact very much dead mice, were found floating about on the surface of the water. This then accounted for the gray hairs that we had been fishing out of the dipper as we drank at the well, and for the decomposed taste and smell that went "hand in hand" with every mouthful that we downed.

After removing the corpses the well was pumped out and it was not long until its contents tasted as refreshing as ever. But it was difficult to dismiss the dead mice and the pungent flavor they had imparted from our thoughts when we turned wellward. Everybody tried to forget the incident as all wanted to get rid of the unpleasant memory. But it was not easy for me to forget the taste of that water nor to get the memory of the smell of it out of my mind. Even to this day imagination plays me the prank of bringing back the taste of that water from the well on "General" Maguen's farm, down there on the banks of the Yellow Medicine River, back in the first summer of the nineties of the last century. I know that it seems a long time to remember a bad taste, but don't forget that it was really a bad taste! But smell as it did and taste as it did, that polluted water did nothing worse to us than leave a bad taste in our mouths. Oh, well, they used to say that every person had to eat so much dirt anyway. Take it all in all I guess that I have consumed enough of that "vitamin" to keep my ration balanced for the rest of my life. One time when I was working with Mr. Jonasson and Mr. Schram, they had a joint contract on a large house for a merchant in Minneota, many amusing things happened. I will relate only one. The house had many rooms, both upstairs and down. There were two stairways. The main one led up from the front hall. Then there was a back stairway

which led from the kitchen to the maid's room. There was no door from the maid's room to connect with the rest of the upstairs floor. One day Mr. Schram said to the owner of the building: "don't you think, sir, that it would be better to put a door between the maid's room and the other rooms on this floor? It would be so much handier for her when she has to make beds, dust and sweep and all the other things she has to do up here on this floor, to be able to go direct from her room into these rooms here than to have to go around to the front hall to get a stairway?" We were all working on the upstairs floor and the force of Mr. Schram's argument was plain to us, in fact we had talked about it among ourselves and never could figure out why this peculiar isolation of the hired girl should be made. We listened with interest for the "big man's" reply. It came without hesitation. He pulled his goatee, shook his head vigorously, spat a good-sized mouthful of tobacco juice into a nearby pile of shavings and with a resounding stress on every syllable said: "No connection there whatever, as I have told you. No connection there whatever!" The old gentlemen had three healthy young sons growing up.

One of these summers when I was working at the carpenter trade, I was for a long time quite far away from Minneota, as distance was then measured and as it actually was, not as it is today with our automobiles and paved roads. Even today 18 miles is a healthy hike in hot weather. I had not been home for some time and I was becoming anxious to see the old town and Mother. So I was given permission by the boss to take a day off, and early on a Saturday morning I was off for Minneota, walking. It was a hot day, the atmosphere was sultry and there was much humidity. I think it was shortly after 12 noon that I reached home, a somewhat tired boy.

As the afternoon wore on the heat and the humidity became more and more oppressive. A cloud bank rose above the horizon line in a westerly direction and was augmented by a similar cloud formation to the north. In a very short time the whole "skyline" from west to east was a solid bank of dark and threatening clouds which gradually moved towards the zenith and it was not long until the dome of the heavens was overcast. But most fearsome was the outlook to the north, for here was faced a mass formation of lowering clouds, looking for all the world, as one might imagine the oncoming wall of an engulfing sea. About four-thirty in the afternoon a churning funnel seemed to be let down from the inky canopy overhanging the now nearby horizon. At first this monster appeared to be headed right for the village and the fear of death gripped every soul and I am sure that in that hour many prayed who seldom had prayed before. But suddenly the thing began to veer to the east and passing thus from north to east and from east to south, following a path that might describe as south-easterly by south, circled the village on two sides leaving the inhabitants to gradually recover from their horrors and their fears. I stood outside and with others watched this cyclone as it moved on within about a mile and one-half form where we were standing. Every now and then something that looked like white flakes mingled with the clouds in and about this moving funnel. Afterwards I knew that these were boards from houses and barns that happened to be in the path of this monster of destruction. Many dwellings and barns were tossed into the air and completely demolished. The damage done was great and a number of people were injured but I cannot now recall that any deaths resulted. This I would not aver positively for all this occurred some fifty-two years ago and memory sometimes plays truant in less time than that.

But I can well remember the stories that went around telling of the usual cyclone pranks. At one farm a deep well containing a large quantity of water was sucked completely dry. One some farmsteads one building was taken and another one nearby was left untouched. In one place the superstructure of a dwelling house was lifted into the air and scattered about the prairie, while the floor of the house was left only to be lifted up and carried about a mile to be set down on the ground again. A woman with a child in her arms sat on this floor during its whirlwind passage from the old location to the new, and when it was all over with neither mother nor child had sustained any injury, but one does not have to have any imagination to realize the mental strain that poor woman went through. Many other freak performances were reported and passed current for years afterwards, but most of them have slipped my memory. This is the first and only time that I have been so near to a cyclone or even seen one. I have, however, seen the destruction wrought by similar agencies of the air, at various times. About a quarter of a century later a whole village, not so very far from Minneota was almost completely wiped out by a cyclone and thirty-eight people were killed. For years the people of Minneota and vicinity talked about this gigantic disturbance and the havoc it wrought. I am sure there were many in Minneota who did not sleep any too well during the night which followed this cyclone. I can still see the fear-gripped faces of the little group, of which Mother and I formed a part, as we stood and watched the passing of this mighty force. Mother, who always was afraid when storms arose and lightnings rent the clouds was almost besides herself at the sight of this unusual phenomenon.

The next day I walked my eighteen miles back to the place where we were working. Needless to say, I had to tell the story of the cyclone over and over again. I

was plied with questions. I had to tell and retell. It was a new experience for me. I was not used to occupying the center of the stage. But the interest of the people is very natural when you stop to consider that eighteen miles is not really in your neighborhood, when the horse is the fastest conveyance and walking a common mode of getting around. And remember that there were no telephones. News had to travel by horse or on somebody's two feet. I was like a man coming into a small settlement in an isolated valley among the mountains, in the old country, who had once seen the king.

For a long time afterwards, the thought of this cyclone and the mental picture I carried of it kept me awed. And after all these years I can still see that tunnel as it descended from the clouds and followed its course as it passed along. I can still see the boards and planks from these demolished buildings as they were whirled through the air. And the fear-struck faces of the little group about me, as we watched, are still distinct on the canvas of my memory. The deeper the engraving on the stone, the longer it will withstand the ravages of time. So it is with memory, the deeper the impression made by any experience the longer it will be retained.

When I made this trip to Minneota we were still working on the house for the "general." When we finally finished and before the plasterers took over, the young people decided on having a dance in the new house. Invitations were sent out by word of mouth to the whole community to come and have a good time. From far and near came the guests all togged out in their best bib and tucker anxious and ready to make a night of it. The fiddlers came and several "callers" were in attendance, ready to "spell" each other at the voice-straining job of directing the steps of the dancers. Men of middle-age and even older were there to visit and to look and occasionally to dance. Comely matrons,

with eyes that looked both backwards and forwards, chatted with each other while they watched the movement son the floor and told stories from their girlhood days or pictured the prosperous future that must await their promising offspring. Of course, there were a few "wrinkled scolds with hands on hip" who mingled with the "girls in bloom of cheek and lip." Every big dance was the community's "cosmopolitan club" and not a few were there who did not come to dance. Everybody was always welcome. As soon as a fair crowd had assembled the dancing began. From that hour on until early morning, the fiddlers, the callers and the dancers made the rafters ring, the walls vibrate and the whole house shake. The cane was on the first floor and no partitions had as yet been put in.

Dancing was one of the many accomplishments which I did not possess. But I could look at the girls and listen to the music, with just as many eyes and ears as the next fellow. I sat in a corner and took in the show. There were some “wall flowers” at this dance as there are at all dances, but I was the only “wall thistle,” and I am not so sure but that I enjoyed the distinction, a perverse nature having been bestowed on me from the beginning. Well, I sat, looked and listened for a long time. I did not dance, so was denied the pleasure of embracing the girls, who I thought always giggled when they whirled by my corner. I took the giggling to heart, thinking that I was the source of its manifestation. I did not know then as I do now that there was, in all probability, something else tickling them. Anyway, I began to yawn and feel sleepy and so I made up my mind that it was time for me to “depart hence and seek repose,” as the lodge ritual has it. So I climbed a ladder to the floor above, where my bunk awaited me. I lay down, but for a long time not to sleep. The fiddlers, the callers, the shuffling feet kept me awake. Finally the Gates of Dreamland opened ajar, but as I was about to enter I was for a while

arrested by the bemoaning sound of a voice crooning: "the girl, the girl, the pretty little girl, the girl I left behind me." I wondered what he would have sung had he left all the girls behind him that I left behind me downstairs! But as he kept on singing I could not but wish he had brought the girl with him or stayed behind with her.

The next morning I was, I guess, the first of the young ones to greet the newly risen sun. The music of the dance was still running in my head, I could still hear the shuffling feet, the "girl I left behind me" was still demanding attention. And here I was a mere onlooker! I wondered how the fellows felt who had really acted! And what was it that tickled the giggling girls! There were many unsolved problems crowding in on me that morning, some that fifty years have failed to solve. As I was trying to match the boards of a door frame I would catch myself humming, "first couple up to the couple on the right." It is strange how the echoes of the night before persist in making themselves heard the day after. And now, as I sit here and write, far away from the house that I helped to build more than fifty years ago, there floats an airy vision in the smoke from my cigar and a hundred shuffling shoe-soles approaching the gates ajar. The dance I know is not a waltz, it's just a good, old square, and so my fellow traveler we'll "promenade all and you know where!"

Our days were so filled with work that there was seldom any time to read or do anything else not strictly a part of our employment. If we were not too tired after our long day of work we might pick up a paper or a book and read a while. But most of the time we sought our bed for our tired bodies refused to support any needless effort. Excursions into the land of literature were something to put off, at least until Sunday.

How I remember welcoming Sunday! I seldom slept in but arose early and was up and about, for was not this the only day in the week that was really my own! On this day I could come and go pretty much as I pleased. If there was a book or paper available I would get ahold of it and settle myself down to reading for a while. If not reading I was wandering about by myself. If there was a grove on the place I would be sure to explore it. If there was a river nearby I would seek its banks for a stroll. I sought no companionship for these rambles but chose to be alone.

I was not unsociable by nature, but early environment which sometimes included not too pleasant surroundings, had made me a sort of lone rover. I was pleased and friendly when approached, but generally timid about initiating a conversational contact. Somehow or other I had formed the habit of being by myself and so had missed training essential to becoming a ready conversationalist. A good listener I have always been, but a conversationalist never. Observe me in a crowd and you seldom see me seeking out people with whom to talk. I will be standing, sitting or moving about by myself as if I didn't know how to act in company, a conclusion no doubt often arrived at by those who have bestowed a second thought on me; a conclusion justified by my somewhat strange and boorish manners and, I must confess, on the whole correct and even charitable.

My many companionless summers spent as a herder, and my ever-at-homeness when a boy and youth combined to instill in me a solitariness that was probably more the result of environmental habits than a natural bent. For entertainment I became dependent pretty much upon my own resources and this had a tendency to make me an "isolationist" of a sort. Under the circumstances I learned to seek the companionship of books. Not being trained or tutored in the art of reading I did most of my reading by "mood," that is

to say, the mood I happened to be in governed the selection of the book I chose. This kind of reading does not yield the best results, but it does grant you the companionship of the kindred spirit with which you for the moment seek to commune. It may be Paul's "Epistle to the Romans" today and Ingersoll's "Mistakes of Moses" tomorrow. You dip in here and you dip in there but like the mood to which you yield, it is a shadow rather than a substance. Reading is more or less a habit and it is important that that habit be directed and controlled, else the mind becomes like a coarse sieve through which the output of a rich mine may pass without leaving a single nugget to recompense the effort expended. That much of my reading has been of this kind I must confess, but that all of it has I will not admit.

My mental habits, if such they may be called, early inclined me to serious reading. This made me indulge in "meat" which I could not fully digest, when I should have been building up on "milk" that the mental system could assimilate. It was a case where food, highly nutritious when fed to one able to receive it, made for under-nutrition because of lack of strength to cope with its potency. It is quite reasonable to assume that all this accounts for many things in my mental makeup, such as a hair-trigger temper and general taciturnity, attacks of melancholy, depression and pessimism with an occasional bit of cynicism thrown in for good measure. All this is probably due to early mental indigestion, brought on by "food" that the brain was not able to assimilate.

This must not be understood to mean that I have not, on the whole, enjoyed life, for I have. And despite the three score and ten years back of me I feel that I still have a healthy capacity and a lively desire for enjoyment. I have always had a fair sense of humor which has bridged many a chasm and I love fun as well as the next one and can

make merry whenever the occasion and the company are en rapport. But back of it all is a difficult temperamental condition which at times gains ascendancy and I become unfit for company for man or beast. We are admonished in "Holy Writ" and in writings filled with wisdom, although never canonized, to conquer ourselves. It is wonderful advice and like all other advice easily given, but with difficulty followed. It is easy to be good and virtuous when you have no inclination to be otherwise, and by the same token it is little credit to you. It just means that you did not get your full quota of "original sin." In the Icelandic we have a much better word for it than "original sin;" we call it "inherited sin." Applying that term or translation it connotes that you who are so virtuous were gypped out of your rightful inheritance. You just didn't get the bite that you were entitled to from that precious apple that your mother, Eve, purloined.

For the present I will let the above stand as it is, without any further additions, I am not writing any "Confession" a la Saint Augustine. I am not as rich in deeds of sin and things of an evil nature as was that holy man, if we may believe his own indictment of himself, as contained in his famous "broadcast" of his misdeeds. I may later append something to that here already set down, but for the nonce let this "apologia pro vita sua," suffice.

In the late fall of 1892 I registered in the village school for my last winter in that institution. I was entered in Class "A" and the subjects taken appear to have been ten, as follows (the figures back of each subject are the final marks received at the end of the term): Reading (94), Spelling (89), Arithmetic (87), Grammar (93), History (93), Writing (93), Algebra (91), Physics (91), Rhetoric (86), Civil Gov. (95). Noted on the card is: Average 92, Deportment 98, Rank in Class, One. this cad is dated Dec. 23, 1892 and is

signed by C. A. Braley, Principal. This card is now fifty years old and I still have it in a "perfect state of preservation."

My seatmate this year was John B. Gislason, known to all his friends and acquaintances for the last fifty years as "J. B." John and I were of the same age and had been friends for years before this final school year and we still are, "thanks be." I think that this was my sixth part-year in this school. It just seemed that there was no such thing as graduating for one of my itinerant school habits.

J.B. and I had reached that period when we were not as girl-shy as we used to be; or at least not as I was that night of the dance in General Maguen's new house, already mentioned. Ever since I first knew John and that was before either one of us was within "gunshot" of our teens, he has been an exceptionally fast worker. That is why that as early as 1892 he had already discovered his permanent "running mate" for the race of life and was very happy over the fact of having found favor with this estimable young lady.

I, on the other hand, had formed no such attachment and, in fact, had given such subjects but slight thought. This winter, however, I met a girl who was a pupil in our school, although an out of the district resident. While not a striking beauty, she was, nevertheless, pretty and had a cheerful and pleasing manner about her. She had grayish-blue eyes and a most beautiful head of blond hair of the golden-hued variety. She was attractive and a general favorite in school. There was only one drawback about her and that was that she was already engaged to be married, the lucky lad being a farmer's son in her home community. She could not have been but about eighteen at the time that she occupied the second seat in front of J.B. and I that winter. The rumor that she had a fiancé was general, but it by no means ostracized her. The boy did not seem to think any

less of her for it and to the girls she was as one who had already achieved. With me it was a little different, I could not help feeling that the situation presented some kind of a handicap but to whom or what I had not figured out. Of course, had they told me that what she had was a "fiancé" with an accented "e" on the end of it, instead of just saying that she had a sweetheart, I might have thought it a Latin name for some dreadful disease and not exposed myself.

There were many little parties held in different homes this winter and all of them were engineered for the different homes of the individuals who made up our group. Our "set" was almost exclusively made up of young people of Icelandic parentage. We spent these party evenings playing such exciting games as "Post Office" and "Forfeits" and kindred amusements. It was not long until the young blond and I found it convenient, when a party broke up, to walk together on our way home. She was rooming with a widow who lived within a block or so from our home. What could be more natural than that we should walk together as long as we had to tread the same path in the same direction anyway? Surely a young girl should not be exposed to the lurking dangers of a dark night unprotected, even if she were suffering from a protected case of "fiancé" with the "e" accented. Her country lover was not there to look after her and he being an acquaintance of mine from our under-teen days, and in spite of the fact that he and another chap had in those early days, caught me alone on a riverbank and together downed me and held me while they went through my pockets and purloined a perfectly good jackknife, I had forgiven and almost forgotten the incident, and was now ready to do the "safely-home-seeing-act" for his interesting sweetheart. I am not so sure but that I considered my role of escort something of a vicarious nature. Certainly it could not be

wrong to offer your arm to a delicate, little slip of a girl, even if she was pretty, especially considering that the moon had been ungallant enough not to hand its lantern out. Thus these homeward walks, from this or the other party, began as a matter of course and continued by mutual, although unspoken, consent. The thought of trespassing never entered my mind, nor did she obtrude the existence of the distant lover upon me. Not by word, not by the slightest pressure of hand or arm that well known lover's wireless, did we disturb each other's thoughts or feelings. "Platonic friendship," of course! But the plate on Platonic friendship is no more lasting than a lot of other plate.

I began to notice that we both were coming to look forward to these midnight rambles homeward. That was the danger sign which should have been heeded! But who can read signs at midnight when there is no moon? As time went on this friendly relation of ours began to take on a more serious aspect. Our school mates thought they "saw things." Like the deaf read the moving lips, so the observing discern a meaning in the glancing eye. We were singled out by our fellow students for a none too pleasant deluge of childish joshing. The tongues of some of the Icelandic women of the community began wagging. Is not this the girl that soon is to be married? Is not this the betrothed of that honest, innocent and unknowing plowboy? Do not the parents know? Surely they should be informed? They are people who never broke their word and certainly they will not tolerate any child of their s abrogating a solemn compact. This may not have been the exact language used as the various kitchen cabinets convened and conversed, but I put it thus that the Godfearing gossiper's good intentions may be duly recorded on the side of holy zeal.

We were somewhat aware of the talk that was going on but were to inexperienced to understand the many ramifications involved. We could not see that there was anything wrong in our conduct towards each other. Innocent of all that was evil we knew ourselves to be. But that we had allowed ourselves to become the victims of an infatuation we could not have denied. To be victimized is sometimes a pleasing experience. We knew nothing about the "eternal triangle," we were unacquainted with the world tragedies that have followed in the wake of love. We thought that we had been struck by a lightening from on high and did not realize that we were just in the throes of an aggravated case of love measles. Measles is described as an "eruptive disease." That was just what we had only it was of the love variety. A youthful disorder which often shows very alarming symptoms but never kills. A wound which sometimes bleeds freely but heals quickly and never leaves a scar.

But I am not going to dismiss the case in hand with these observations. I am going to tell you more about it and then relate for your delectation the dour but drab denouement. In spite of the absorbing interest of our _____ and others we were as attentive to our school work as were any of our fellow students and received marks which on the whole averaged up in our respective classes. We took with good nature the attention and the joshing that we received and the even tenor of our way. Soon these weekly parties did not come often enough to satisfy our desire for a stroll in the moonlight and so we arranged "accidental" meetings after dusk and made excursions along the railroad track, in a southeasterly direction. The limit of these walks was always the mile post which announced to all west going locomotive engineers that the Minneota station house was within one mile. Religiously we would about face at this

mile post and wend our way homeward. Not a very exciting venture but quite satisfying to two innocent country bumpkins whose sole desire seemed satiated by holding hands.

My friend, John B. was interested in our affairs to the extent of attempting to poetize on the subject. Although this writing is not intended for publication, I shall, nevertheless, not quote J.B.'s poetry.

I might as well relate here as hereafter John's and my spelling incident. To save time, Mr. Braley would pronounce a certain number of words and the class would copy them on sheets of paper and then seatmates would exchange papers and the teacher would spell the words he had pronounced and everyone was to mark the misspelled words on his neighbors paper. The papers were then returned to their rightful owners and the teacher would call each pupil by name and each one, when his or her name was called, was to respond giving the number of misspelled words on the paper held. John and I were no master spellers and nearly every day our number of errors was alarming. We realized that something had to be done about it. Neither one of us could see any sense in the way English words were spelled anyway, for it seemed to us that when it came to this spelling business you were wrong even though you were right. We were both embryo co-operatives and so we agreed that there was no point in our making this spelling so much of an individual affair. As long as he marked my paper and I marked his there should be a way of working together that would result in mutual advantage. We found the way all right, and the spelling marks for both of us improved greatly. This no doubt had a great deal to do with us two becoming lifelong supporters of the principles of cooperation.

My deportment in school was always rated very good. My mother insisted on my making a special effort to behave myself and for well-grounded reasons I had no

inclination to do otherwise. I never started a scrap or a fight for the very good reason that I knew that would invariably get licked. I seldom was deceitful for whenever I tried anything like that I found that I was not smart enough to put it over and so got caught. Did I essay a falsehood no lie detector was necessary, my face and manner would give me away. Thus, I gained a reputation for being a well-behaved, trustworthy boy. As a matter of fact, my seeming virtues were predicated upon physical and moral fear, or cowardice, if you like the word better. I did not have the "guts" to fight; deceit I did not have the cunning to cover up and caught in a falsehood, I could not dissemble. The result was not a positive goodness, but a negative one, springing from no disinclination to do the wrong thing, but rather from a knowledge of my inability to cope with the resultant condition.

I never was a "teacher's pet" but no teacher had a more sincere admirer than I was. Every teacher I had in my Minneota school days was invested in my imagination with both wisdom and virtue. I considered them one after the other authorities on facts and men whose ways and manners were to be emulated.

Referring to the term record card above mentioned, I was proud of my "rank one" in class and no less elated over my 98 in deportment, for in the system of C. A. Braley, 98 was the highest mark you could get in anything. His theory was that there was no such thing as perfection in school work and so 98 was the highest score that could be attained in his school.

Through a fit of temper, I came near losing a very sizable block of my deportment stock one day. This would have been to my mind an irreparable loss. It happened in this manner: I was sitting in the extreme southwest corner of the room and across the width

of the room, in the northwest corner, sat an Irishman of the typical scrap loving kind. A fine fellow, but he was of the kind that "would rather fight than eat." It was four o'clock in the afternoon, the hour of dismissal. Mr. Braley had called the pupils to attention for the final order to march out. Just before the word was given I felt a stinging blow on my left cheek, caused by the impact of a tightly rolled paper ball, which I had just seen being wadded and rolled by my Irish friend. I thought that he was going to take it out with him, I had no idea that he contemplated an "inside job." I was smarting with pain and on fire with fury. I instantly picked up an empty inkwell on the desk before me and hurled it across the room, aiming at the head of my assailant. He was anticipating something of the kind so with a smile and a graceful bow, he let the missile pass over his head. Mr. Braley, who had not seen the first shot of this duel fired, but did see the inkwell fly through the air, stopped abruptly and looking straight at me said: "Were it not the moment dismissal, somebody's deportment record would suffer a decided diminution," or words to that effect. It is strange how an act of retaliation is sometimes noted by a disciplinarian while the cause of it escapes attention. However, my deportment figure was allowed to remain in status quo.

No, I have not forgotten my pretty blond girl which I left behind me a few paragraphs back. Was it not Tennyson who said: "In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love?" Well, my thoughts had been running in that direction quite some time before the ides of March. But now the fateful ides were setting in and with them came disturbing rumors. Two families, on distant farms were becoming alarmed over the possibility of their pet canary escaping from its gilded cage. Something had to be done to save the bird from the claws of the hawk. Word came to my blond that

she just soon make ready to wend her way homeward. The purport of this paternal mandate did not escape the understanding of the two faithful track-walkers in Minneota. They knew that it meant an early severance of their hand-holding along the railroad track. Someday in April was set for the blonde's return to the protecting confined of her natal home among the hills. The exact day I have, strange to say, forgotten, but in April it was. Blustering old April, with its winds, its showers and its leafless bowers!

The evening before the day she left, we met for what was to be our last walk together. I well remember the weather as it was that evening. There was a high wind, dark clouds raced across the sky, the moon in its silvery majesty occasionally showed its austere countenance, as surging battalions of embattled clouds would open ranks before it. The howling of the wind checked all conversation permitting no conversation but its own. However, to us conversation was not necessary. There was nothing that we could say. A pall the wind could not lift rested over us and the tumult that raged in the air had a counterpart in the tossing billows of the emotion that rose and fell in two troubled hearts who knew that their barque, which for a season had sailed the placid waters of an unruffled sea was suddenly, with ruthless fury, being dashed against the breakers of destiny. The fury of the elements soon drove us to shelter ere we had nearly finished our accustomed walk. Soon we found ourselves in the shanty vestibule of the widow's house, where on many another occasion we had cheerfully wished each other a night's full measure of pleasant dreams. We entered this haven in all quietness possible, although such precaution was not necessary, the elements drowning all noise except such as they made themselves. This vestibule was a dark, windowless recess, hardly large enough for a grown man to turn around in, although we had on many occasions been able

to squeeze two rather diminutive beings in there, squeeze I venture is the right word. The storm's fury seemed to increase, we wondered how long the little kennel of a house would hold out against the blasts that bombarded its frail frame. In some kind of a frenzy, or was it stupor, we held onto each other for fear that one might be taken and the other left. That man had separated us we knew, but might not the storm have more of a heart. There is no use trying to prolong that which has already ended and so we said a fairly calm goodbye to each other and she went in and I went out.

This spring I began working as a clerk in Doc Seals' general store, as before mentioned. This store was fairly large but it was stocked mostly with old junk. I think that a man could have made good money taking some of that stuff to Boston and selling it for prehistoric Western antiques. I say Boston, because, when I was there for a few days some time ago, nothing outside of the historic places so impressed me as the number of antique stores there were in the town. Every block or two there would be one of these places stocked to suffocation.

We were not very busy in this store. A few steady customers would spend on an average of a dollar a week, that is the good ones would. Some of the canned goods and calico bolts had been there so long that it was nothing unusual to have a can of salmon call a customer by his first name, or a bolt of calico caressingly tell a young lady that it had yielded up a few windings of itself to make her grandmother a Mother Hubbard, back in the days when no married woman's wardrobe was complete without several of these most convenient gowns and when no trousseau could pass inspection that did not have at least a shift of these then much worn coveralls.

Doc Seals' store was not a busy place. He was not there all the time, in fact he was pretty much in and out and spent a good deal of time at the stock yards as he bought and shipped live hogs. Mr. and Mrs. Seals lived in a small house, which was located alongside the store and there was an entrance from the house to the store. Mrs. Seals was much younger than her husband and the business was carried on in her name, Edith B. Seals, or E. B. Seals, as it was always written. This was because Tomas D. Seals, the "Doc," had, some years before I came to work for him, failed in business. When a King of England died the people shout: "The Kind is Dead, Long lie the King!" Meaning that an individual king is dead, but that another kind has taken his place. The individual passes away but the office marches on serene. It is possible that Seals, the bankrupt, thought along these lines and saw in his young wife possibilities of resuscitation. No doubt he dreamt the multitude surging through the wide doors of a new Seals emporium shouting: The Seals is dead. Long live the Seals." The dream was no less pleasant to the young Mrs. Seals than it was to old Doc. So between them they conceived "E.B. Seals," their one and only begotten as far as I know. I was hired by T. D. Seals to work for E. B. Seals and could have been fired by the two of them collectively or by either one of them singly; all of which made my position rather singular.

In the rear of the store was a lean-to, or shanty as we used to call such structures in those days. Into this the rear door of the store opened. Here was stored fuel, the "in-use" kerosene barrel, a stack of salted hides, frozen or festering according to season, something that looked like a box that most anything might be kept in stood up against the wall of the main building and to this I was introduced by the male part of the "E. B. Seals" as being the ice box in which was kept the supply of meat that "we" had for sale.

Well, smell, hell; but I am not writing poetry. But if that meat wasn't tinted from taint, I ain't no judge. It was about as corrupt as the grammar of the previous sentence. There was a butcher's block on the middle of the floor and if that thing had been scraped since before Thomas D. Seals and Edith B. Seals begat "E. B. Seals" then I am no archeologist. But you probably don't know anything about cleaning a butcher's block. Well, it's done with a large and strong steel brush and a lot of elbow-grease. Here we scraped the largest chunks off with the edge of the meat cleaver. Many a pound of meat did I sell that year over this block. People were not so particular in those days and besides they boiled their meat well.

There was a desk and a swivel chair in one of the back corners of the store. Here Doc Seals practiced dentistry, "tooth jerking" as it was generally called. I will not go into this matter here as I have quite thoroughly covered the subject on pages 34 and 35 hereof and the incident there related is taken from my experience during the year I am here writing about.

There were very large shade trees in front of the store and here, on a hot day, would congregate some of the old cronies of the village and settle in the course of a couple of hours matters that the Congress had been debating for weeks and months. When this comparatively short session of the Seals congress adjourned, you could have floated a flat-boat in the tobacco juice that inundated the sidewalk. This was long before the long skirts began their interesting upward journey and the women who were compelled to ford this sluggish brown pond had to lift their outer garments to the exposing point of the inner. Some of the old duffers used to linger after the session had adjourned, for besides the shade afforded the place was an excellent observation point.

When the last of the old “salts” had betaken himself to his “cabin” it became my chore to take out buckets of water and “swab the deck.”

When some customer would come in who looked to me as if he might fall for a clever sales talk I would try to get rid of some of the antiques on the shelves. I was especially keen for getting rid of some of that speaking salmon, to which I referred in an above paragraph. If the fellow was someone who had got lost and in that way wandered in, probably mistaking the place for a nearby saloon, I would give him a price on a half-frozen cans of “Columbia River salmon,” taking a chance on his not being able to read the labels, and if he bit, and if there were neither T.D. nor an E.B. looking, and if the fellow himself were not too attentive, I would slip in an extra can or two for good measure – and good riddance. Take it all in all I got along pretty well and did my best to get rid of the stuff. I figured that anything that I got for much of that stuff would be clear profit anyway. My two-headed management never complained much about my work although I am sure that there was much that could be said in that direction. Sweeping was a chore until by daily application I had reached and penetrated the last layer and reached the floor proper, after that it was easier. I will not mention the dusting, that was enough to choke an ox.

I have been so busy taking an inventory of the various interesting things, in and about the Seals emporium that I have not gotten around to the denouement of that love affair. The change of occupation and the new things that I had to learn kept my mind off myself and for a while, love-lorn lamentations were put in the background. I never received a letter from my blond friend and I did not expect it for I knew full well that she would not be permitted to write me. I did not write her either as it would not have been

of any use. She never would have seen a letter from me for there was no question about the effectiveness of the blockade. Spring gave way to summer and yet no direct word from my friend. I had resigned myself to the idea my watchful waiting was of no avail and that I might just as well make up my mind to close the account and charge the whole affair to "Loss and Gain," and try to forget. Forget! Ah! There's the rub! as the Bard of Avon would have said.

One day, as I had quite conclusively made up my mind to this course, who should walk into the store but my blond friend! I was somewhat flabbergasted, as the expression goes, for I had no idea of seeing her for a long time to come. She was as cheerful and charming as ever and we greeted each other with the conventional handshake. We entered into conversation of the casual kind. What was said I do not recall, but I know that whatever it was, it was not what either one of us wanted to talk about. There we stood, she in front of the counter I back of it. Halting was our talk and tongue-tied we actually were. How should the subject nearest our hearts be brought to the surface? I was about to make a plunge when in comes a little girl for a peck of potatoes. Of course, I had to wait on her; pesky critter, why couldn't she have gone to some other store! As soon as I could I was back to my position in front of the blond and was about to resume where I left off, or rather to begin where I had not begun before. Just then in comes an old woman for a pound of prunes! Damn it! The prunes having been gotten on their way, I returned to the siege. She smiled and said something about how busy I must be. Yes, says I, potatoes and prunes!" She laughed. Again I tried to get down to brass tacks. But just then the door opened and in walked a surly farmer with enough fertilizer spread all over his overalls to enrich the soil of a quarter section. "I want a pound of J.T.

tobacco and I want it cut into regular plug sizes. Of course, customers had to be waited on no matter what happened. Just as I had his precious plugs all wrapped up and was about to speed him on his way, in comes Doc Seals and greets this bewhiskered soil tiller as if he were a long lost brother. "Sit down on that chair there, John," says Doc. "How about that bunch of hogs you were going to sell me?" Hogs, hogs and more hogs! Hell! I thought to myself with all the mental force at my command. I had not said anything. It wasn't necessary. My exasperation stuck out all over me! The blond let out a cheerless laugh, a laugh that would have rippled in the early months of the year! The hog session showed no signs of adjournment. A weak smile played over the trembling lips of the blond and she said, in a voice that had fallen almost to a whisper: "My folks are over at the Verzlunarfelag Islendinga store. I know that they are by this time wondering what has become of me. I must go before they start hunting for me. Guess they surmise where I am." She held out her hand and again it was goodbye!

The sight of her and the fact that we had had no chance to talk together did not make for any special peace of mind as far as I was concerned. I was angry! Potatoes, prunes, plug tobacco, hogs! I will eat none of you for ever more! Why did she come! Shy didn't she stay tied to her mother's apron strings! To this day I do not understand how she happened to slip away for those few minutes. A wave of pity for this poor girl swept my mind. A good, innocent, capable girl cowed by unreasoning parents into abject submission! Her soul was not her own and her heart had been sacrificed that people soon to be consigned to their graves might have their way! For a while I was far more angry than sorry.

Time wore on and after some weeks there came a rumor that a wedding was scheduled to take place at the home of my blond and that she would take the lead role. This report did not surprise me nearly as much as did the receiving of an invitation to the wedding. To go or not to go, became a very absorbing problem to me, Finally, I decided that I would go; that I should show the whole crowing kit of them that they had not succeeded in breaking my heart nor bruising my spirit. "Know you not that we have the power to hang you?" says a dominant character in one of Beaumont and Fletchers dramas. To which the leader of the group addressed replied: "And we have the power to be hanged and scorn you!"

There were many invited from the village for the bride had numerous relatives and school friends here. Walter Gislason and I joined forces for the journey and procured a team of horses and a light wagon, usually called a Democrat wagon, which was nothing but a smaller and lighter "edition" of the ordinary limber wagon. It was, of course, an open affair and there were two spring seats. I am afraid that to the cushion trained extremities of the youth of today, those seats would feel pretty hard in spite of the so called springs. This Walter Gislason was a dashing young cavalier on whom the eyes of the opposite sex were prone to rest with much favor. This same Walter is still well alive regardlesss of the fact that he has overdrawn his Biblical allowance of three score and ten by nigh unto half a decade. The fact that he is still well alive is best attested by stating that he is now and for a number of years past has been, in the service of Uncle Sam as master of the post that comes to the patrons of the Minneota post office. Two young ladies shared with us the aforementioned spring seats. I am not now so certain of the

identity of these girls that I care to risk a mistake by naming them, or is my reluctance due to some other consideration?

We arrived after an uneventful drive of some over two hours, at our destination in due and ample time. When we drove into the yard, there was still a long time to await the zero hour, or should I say, the zenith hour? The weather was all smiles and so were the people, many of whom had long preceded us. The guests were nearly all outside, enjoying the sunshine and each other. We were well received by the major-domo, whose identity for the nonce escapes me. We were personally acquainted with practically every person there and so felt at home at once. The bride and bridegroom were busy, each by themselves, mingling with the guests and greeting them. The members of our party paid their respects and offered felicitations on the occasion and the weather. It was an ideal day for merry-making and, seemingly at least, everybody was happy.

In about the middle of the afternoon the ceremony was to begin and all guests who could possibly do so found room inside. Strange to say, I found myself among those "on the inside." There was no "improvised altar" and no priest or prelate, canon, churchman or clergyman of any name, nature or description. However, there was a dignified, bewhiskered, kind, genial and courtly Justice of the Peace, who, by the authority of the state and the sufferance of the church appeared in the role of nuptial autocrat. Somehow room was found for the bride and the bridegroom in the center of the floor and the Justice of the Peace, book in hand, whether it was the "justice Manual" or the last issue of the "Farmers' Institute Annual" I do not know. At any rate he didn't use it much, but it is always customary for the officiating dignitary to carry a book and so a book we must have. I think I may say, without anyone taking exception, that this Justice

of the Peace was the leading and most respected man among the Icelanders of the settlement. Wherever there are two or more Icelanders gathered there must be speech making. What a glorious occasion one like this was to tear loose! But no program had been arranged so what the Justice of the Peace chose to say must suffice. He was a man accustomed to speak at small gatherings and always said something sensible. Preceding the performance of this official duty he made a short speech. He dwelt on the blessings of wedlock, how the God-given love of two innocent young hearts was the greatest blessing on earth and the very foundation upon which the social organism was built. Where could more happiness be found than in a union like the one before us! Here was a devoted, confiding, affectionate young woman giving her undivided love to a most worthy young man who accepted her singleness of heart as the greatest honor that could be bestowed upon him, and who hew knew was resolved to "love, honor and respect" to the end of their allotted span of life. The greatest gift that is given a man is the gift to love and when that is augmented by the loyal and freely offered devotion of the woman of his choice a state of greater happiness can not be imagined. This is not all that the good man said, but it gives an idea of his guileless harangue. He then asked the usual questions and received the conventional answers; after which, with becoming solemnity, he gave utterance to that ever thrilling sentence: "I pronounce you man and wife!" Here ended the ceremony and ushered in the congratulatory handshaking and the more or less, to me, disgusting kissing crush indulged in on such occasions. No, I did not kiss the bride! The milling of the guests past the "happy couple" lasted for about half an hour and then the crowd was on the loose again. Bride and bridegroom, sometimes together and sometimes separately, went about chatting with their friends. There was nothing now

that one could be interested in and although mixing with the crowd I felt as if I were by myself on a solitary ramble. I walked aimlessly about with hardly enough energy to give the impression that I was looking for someone. I paid no attention to the Babel about me. I was like one in a trance. Why I use that simile I do not know for I never was in a trance and do not know what the experience is like. Did the following actually occur, or is my imagination directing the narrative? Methinks I hear a soft voice whisper: "Why did you come?" And I recall my ready answer. "Why was I invited?"

A generous supply of good food had been provided and the hosts saw to it that all guests were well taken care of and properly served. Soon this wedding feast will be a matter of history. I recall no essential detail, nothing of consequence that has been omitted. A permanent barrier between the blond and me has been successfully erected and all is well. The dance began at an early hour and was ushered in by the newlyweds taking the floor. Soon the master of ceremonies announced the first "Ladies' choice" dance of the evening. This did not alarm me for I knew that there would be no rush in my direction, no girl there would bestow her "first" choice on me! Imagine then my surprise when I found myself confronted by the bride and was being asked to dance this dance with her! Was I her "first choice?! Banish the thought! The echo of "I pronounce you man and wife" was still floating about the premises. No doubt she saw my woebegone look and thinking that no girl would be likely to pick me up took pity on me and offered me this signal honor, the kindness of her heart getting the best of her etiquette. If you think that I didn't accept the outstretched arms you have followed this story to no purpose. Innocence had always been the capital of our partnership; we never imagined any evil in that in which we knew there was none. So we danced that dance

together. I know that the incident gave rise to considerable comment. The blonde's kindness was misinterpreted. The memory of that last dance with the blond was to linger with me for a long time as one of life's bitter sweets. Long before midnight the guests began to bid farewell, for is it not a considerate custom to permit the tired and nervous couple, who have been the center of attention for a long and exacting day, an early retirement?

Walter and I hitched up our horses and the young ladies who rode with us came out to take their places in the wagon. Just as we were ready to go, a middle-aged man well known to us all approached and asked to be allowed to drive back with us. He was to us youngsters about as welcome as the dandelions in June. but there was nothing for it. We felt that we must take him on take him we did. I think that I said before that Walter and one of the girls sat in the front seat while the other girl and I occupied the back seat. Well, there was nothing to do but for the extra passenger to sit with us in the back seat. We had the girl squeezed in between us. A third party is seldom welcome under such circumstances. Need I remark that this was such a circumstance? Had I not just lost my blond? Did it not behoove me to begin recouping my loss? But this "extra" slowed up all operations for there are certain activities to which one does not invite witnesses. After what seemed hours, we finally reached home, feeling that we had put in a full day. I never discussed the matter with the girl that sat with me in the back seat that night, but somehow, I have always felt that she too sensed a thwarted purpose and a lost opportunity.

So died in the night air of that long midnight drive home the last strains of my first lovesong; only to be oft repeated with variations in other duets where my voice

mingled with the charming chords, now long lost, of other enchanting singers. He who says that there is only one love in a lifetime has been endowed with a hermit heart or lived but precious little. Mine has been a full five-act drama, with many undeveloped scenes on the side.

Of all those concerned in the First Act of my drama, the Blond act, I am the sole survivor, with the possible exception of the blond. About her I have heard nothing, except that she had been married for the second time many years ago, her first husband having passed away while still in the prime of life. The curtain fell on that First Act more than fifty years ago. Most of the actors have long since received their final "pay envelope." Sincerely I say, in the language of the Mother Church: ""“equiescat in pace!”"

Pjetur Jokull Eldri

The summer of 1889 I worked for Own Marron, on his farm locate four miles north of Marshall, Minnesota. Mr. Marron had married my aunt, Gudrun Bjornson, who was his second wife. All Mr. Marron’s children by his first wife were married and had moved away, excepting his youngest daughter, Lizzie, who was at home, a girl in her teens. Mr. Marron was of Irish extractions, A Civil War veteran and a man looked up to in the community. He was well along in years at this time but alert and active and in good health. He was a tireless worker himself and so tolerated no drones in his hive, every person had to do his or her share of the work that had to be done. He was more than medium height, carried himself erect and his movements did not bespeak his years. He was inclined to be stern and in matters of business exacting. But he had a saving sense of humor an ingratiating smile and eyes that seemed to look through you and when

the mood was on him would sparkle with mirth and register as nothing else his genuine good fellowship which sometimes was eclipsed by an austere demeanor.

This summer he had as hired man an Icelander by the name of Kristjan Arnason, a good and faithful worker. I could be called only a helper as I was not yet seventeen until in August that summer. My wages were $15 per month, a fair compensation at that time for boys of my age. The work was hard and I was not hardened. We had to get up early in the morning as we had many cows to milk and other chores to do before we could get into the field and Mr. Marron did not like to see his neighbors get into their fields much before he got into his. We worked the usual long farm hours and when we came home in the evening, our bovine friends were there awaiting our attention. I never was very fond of milking, but I can remember looking forward to it as I came tired from the field; it was at any rate a chance to sit down.

During grainstacking this year Mr. Marron hired an extra man to help out. This happened to be a man whom I knew, Pjetur Jokull, Eldri, the last word meaning senior. He was somewhat along in years and had come to this country after passing middle age. His home was in what the Icelanders called the "Western Settlement," meaning the neighborhood west of Minneota where there was a formidable Icelandic Settlement. He was a brother of Gunnlaugur Peterson, whom I have already mentioned. The summer that I put in as a helper on Gunnlaugur's farm, which was about two years before this Marron experience, the former practically rebuilt his residence. The carpenters in charge were Pjetur Jokull and Loftur Jonasson. As this building was in progress when there was not very much to don on the farm I was assigned the job of assisting the carpenters. This I did most willingly as I always liked to be around where building was going on, also I

liked to be with these two men and listen to their bantering and I even enjoyed much of their serious talk, although on what I was "raised out" good many times because of my lack of ability to comprehend the drift of the conversation. I formed a liking for Pjetur at that time and that was the reason that I was glad when I learned that he was coming to Marron's.

Mr. Jokull was rather an unusual man. He could build a house, make a fine piece of furniture, work in a smithy, make pen pictures, write a fine hand, produce an original poem and tell you whether the spirits you offered were from Copenhagen or Kentucky. He was not in accord with the creed of the church, but somehow he had picked up a good working knowledge of the code of human kindness. Beneath the homespun exterior of self-made man there beat a guileless heart. Although I was young and inexperienced I felt I knew him well. So I looked forward to his coming to help us in stacking that I would be with at work. I had taken a liking to this gnarled, old human oak and I felt that I understood him and knew how to take him. When he bragged of doing things that leaned toward the seamy side, I knew just about the percentage of discount to apply. He was by nature cheerful and could by his wit and humor dispel the gray fog of depressing gloom. His had been a life of hard work and few comforts. But adverse circumstances had never conquered his dauntless spirit, which was of the Viking type and defied the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

To say that he was misunderstood and often misjudged is but to attest to the fact that his soul at times soared beyond the vision of his plodding associates. He was an eagle whose wings environment had clipped, but whose ambition to fly remained intact. We sometimes say of a man that he is "a diamond in the rough." I think that Pjetur was

that. The trouble with most of us is that we seldom look beneath the rough exterior, the hardened crust we see and stop there. In spite of the fact that we know that it encloses a gem we do not take the trouble to expose it to view. It is too much of an effort to crack the hard nut, so we forgo the meat. And in the case of the "diamond in the rough," will you put it past your human nature to disdain disturbing that exterior because jealousy may suggest that the gem exposed is likely to outshine your own offering in that line.

Pjetur Jokull is one of the very few Icelanders whom I have known who had very little good to say about the land of his birth. He suffered hardship and met with adversity there that he could not forget. He lived through a period of volcanic eruption. His last years in Iceland followed this catastrophe which brought in its wake hard times and difficult conditions. Suffering and want were the common lot and the future seemed to hold but little promise for the discouraged and despairing people of the large district effected.

He did not like the Danish rule of the island. Many Icelandic officials he felt were more prone to favor the Crown which had honored them than to serve the people whose affairs had been placed in their hands. He had the same objection to the church authorities and to the state church generally. Freedom and liberty were important words in his vocabulary. Like many others he probably did not always discriminate to a nicety between liberty and license.

In spite of the fact that he held in disdain much that was Icelandic he was a typical Icelander, independent in thought and restive under what he considered undue exercise of authority. Added to all this was the unsatisfactory trading condition. Merchants were

pretty much autocrats in the matter of buying the farmers products and selling the wares they handled. Pjetur was like most Icelanders are -- an avowed individualist.

This appears to have been a leading trait of the Norsemen. Witness the thirty-one kingdoms of Norway, prior to 860, look at the history of the fighting local chiefs who constantly opposed the encroachment of petty kings, see the individual ever ready to resort to arms to enforce what he considered his rights, glance at the Sagas of Iceland with its centuries of bloodletting over clashing personal interests and you have a background of the Norse and Icelandic character. Pjetur's spiritual pugnacity, as well as his many good qualities, he had inherited from a long line of sturdy Icelandic ancestors. He could trace his descent back to the hardy Norsemen who had left their homes in Norway, because of oppression and misrule, and settled Iceland. The first Norwegian who laid the foundation of the Norse settlement in Iceland did so in the year 874, just one thousand and one years before Pjetur's brother, Gunnlaugur, became the first Icelandic settler in the state of Minnesota. Pjetur Jokull left Iceland for America in the year 18__, just a thousand and _____ years after his Norwegian ancestors left Norway for Iceland. Dissatisfaction with conditions in their native land actuated the emigrants in both instances.

But to return to the Marron farm and grain stacking season of 1889. Those two or three weeks that old Pjetur spent with us were pleasant for me. I was with him every chance I had and he talked to me as if I were a grown up person. I said old Pjetur, that was a mistake. He was not old. He did not die until time after 1889, at the age of 62, if my memory serves me right. He used to tell me that he was going to live to be 80. I think that his ambition to live on was partly due to the fact that all his life he had been

used to bad roads; rocks and lava in Iceland, mud in America. He just felt that he would not know how to walk on streets all paved with gold.

During the noon hour Pjetur and I used to lay in the shade under a hayrack, after having had our dinner. Pjetur sometimes had the habit of bursting forth with a statement that came like a bolt out of the blue. One time I remember him raising himself on his elbow and saying, with a good deal of force:

> "This earth of ours is governed by the law of chance. Blind element fight for mastery. Every creature that crawls, walks, flies, flies or swims sustains life by devouring some other creature. Even today there are beings upon this earth, called men, who feed upon the flesh of other men. Civilized man kills his civilized brother and calls it war. Christian principles are espoused in word and scorned in action!"

I was deeply impressed with the earnestness of the man, but I was too young to fathom his philosophy, so I could not make any intelligent comment. With a keen divination of my dilemma, he proceeded: "Never mind my boy, I know that life has not pillowed your head on eider down, but you have not been cuffed about enough yet to have gained understanding of these things." I was glad he made his own comment. To me at that time it was all Greek. I do not know how profoundly he thought but I do know that he thought much and tried to solve for himself the problems of life instead of "cribbing" the answer from someone else.

At another noon hour we had been discussing Iceland and I ventured some remarks about the beautiful land of the Sagas. After listening to my obviously commonplace statements, he assumed his favorite position, that of raising himself on one elbow, and turning on me with something akin to commiseration on his face, said: "I will

let you hear a verse that composed some time ago." He then recited the stanza in Icelandic. Although I do not have the slightest gift for versifying, I am going to assay a loose translation, for which the best that can be said is that it conveys the meaning of the original:

America is a maiden fair,
Beauty, grace and charm so rare.
Iceland wrinkled, old and gray,
What charms has she to offer, pray?"

I felt lonesome after Pjetur left. His observations interested me very much, and while I did not agree with some of the views he held, his frank and open way of stating his opinions stimulated my thought and helped to widen my youthful and circumscribed mental horizon. I have here written about the Pjetur Jokull that I knew and associated with when a boy in my teens. If others harbor different opinions about him that is no concern of mine. I am not writing from any viewpoint except my own. People that I have been acquainted with I have always judged from my own experience and not from any experience that others may have had. I freely admit that my opinions are bound within the scope of my own contacts, and limited by my ability to judge, both of which may be so circumscribed that a true perspective has not been reached. I confess to being one of these stubborn individualists and hence prone to cast my ideas in a matrix all my own. This is probably a fault. It might be better to run down everybody else's opinion, gather those opinions all up and then produce a composite picture, but such a picture would have precious little of me in it and would not be my opinion. There comes to my mind one line from some doggerel verse, which, while it cannot be sustained in logic or reason, yet has in it a modicum of that which actuates some of us in forming our opinions of others: "If she seem not fair to me, what care I how fair she be."

My First Visit to Minneapolis

I was about twenty-one or twenty-two years old and had never been farther away from Minneota, since I came there, than to Laberton, a village 50 miles distant. I had gone there to attend a district meeting of the I. O. G. T. lodge. The Good Templar Order was the strongest secret society in Minneota in the late eighties and the early nineties of the last century. In fact I think that it was the only secret society in the village. Its official name was" Minneota Lodge No. 74, I. O. G. T. this lodge was organized in the late eighties and was the second lodge of the order to be established in Minneota.

The first lodge was organized a little earlier, probably a little after the middle eighties by a man named John Sobieski. He was a lineal descendant of John III (Sobieski) king of Poland from 1674 to 1696, when the Sobieski Dynasty was overthrown by the Maximilans. Had events followed an even tenor, this John Sobieski, who organized the Good Templar Lodge in Minneota, would have become King of Poland. But nearly two hundred years had elapsed from the time that John III quit the king business to the time that his descendant and namesake organized the Good Templar lodge in Minneota. Although it has nothing to do with me or my trip to Minneapolis, it is, nevertheless, interesting to note, as an example of the irony of fate, a Sobieski-Maximilan incident which happened in 1867. One of the Maximilans, a brother of the long reigning Francis Joseph I of Austria, became Emperor of Mexico in 1864, at the invitation of the Assembly of Notables of Mexico. There was strong opposition to him and in 1867 he was seized and after a trial was sentenced to death. He was shot on June 19 the same year. The irony of fate comes in in that John Sobieski, of Minneota Good Templar fame, commanded the guard that shot him.

But to resume my journey to Minneapolis, that great city about which we heard so much from people of the village who made occasional trips there. I do not recall when the train left Minneota but it was in the forenoon sometime and it took all day to reach the metropolis. I stuck to my seat in the train all the way, for fear of getting lost should I move about. I had quite a desire to step out on the station platform in various towns where the train stopped for a while, but I did not dare to do so for fear that I might not be quick enough to bet on board again. You will say that I was old enough to know better and so I was as far as years were concerned. But it is only physically that we live by years. The age of the mind you can only reckon by experiences. To travel was not one of my experiences, nor to see new towns and strange faces at every turn. Had you shown me a herd of cattle, a cow barn that needed cleaning, a board to be nailed up or something like that, I would have comprehended. But the many towns that we passed through and the constantly changing personnel of well groomed men and women about me had me in a flutter of excitement all the time. I stood in awe, or rather sat, of the gold braided and gold buttoned conductor with his haughty air and everlasting punching and the brakeman with his silver decorations was also something to look upon with respect. The young man who sold applies, oranges and candy planted his basket on the arm of my seat and asked me how much of this or the other I wanted. I thought that I was supposed to buy and so I bought. I was hungry anyway and there was no diner on the train and had there been one I would have been too bashful to go in. So I kept on doing my duty by the obliging news boy. In a word I was as fine a specimen of a green country boy as you would find anywhere.

Well finally we arrived at the station in Minneapolis. I can still remember the dirty, wide, old and long stairway which led from the train level to the station floor and the street level. The rushing crowd, the hubbub, the noise all bewildered me and I did not know where to turn. finally, I found my way out to the sidewalk and there I met confusion more confounded. All along the curb, for about a block it seemed to me, were horse drawn cabs or hacks, the drivers of which acted to me as madmen. They motioned, shouted hollered, yelled and screamed! Everyone of them seemed to want the same thing, and that thing was some innocent human being emerging from the station doors. The noise was so deafening that one could not understand a word they said. Certainly I did not know what it was all about. Suddenly about a half dozen of these savages made a simultaneous lunge for me. I thought this was my grand finale and I began to say the prayers that I could remember from the ritual of the Good Templars' lodge. I thought they were going to tear me to pieces. At last one of these, to my wild beasts, grabbed me by the arm and shoved me into his hack and closed the door. By this time I had exhausted my whole repertoire of prayers and was gasping for breath. My captor then thrust his head in and asked me where I was going. I told him that I was going to Will Paine's barber shop. Will had been a barber in Minneota and was about the only person whose Minneapolis address I had. Says I to the driver: "I spose you know Will?" "Yes," he lied, "of course I know him." Then he drove on for a spell and slowing up the horses said: "By the way, you don't happen to know the address of the shop that Will works in?" I had a slip of paper on which the address was written and so I handed it to him. He looked at it a moment and handed it back. "Why, of course, I should have remembered that," he lied again. But he did tell the truth when he said: "It's not far."

The place was on Western Avenue, a couple blocks off Hennepin. Soon we arrived and he stopped the hack and told me to get out. I paid him what he charged which was very reasonable. He pointed to the door of the barber shop and in I went.

There was William H. Paine as natural as life, but much more stylishly dressed than when he was in Minneota, although he was fashionable enough when he was there. He greeted me cordially and began to ask about different people back home. After a while he asked me where I was stopping. I didn't know just what he meant and I guess he saw a sort of dumb look on my face for he added: "I mean, where are you putting up for the night? Where are you going to sleep? Have you got a room?" I told him I had no room engaged and that I did not know just where I would stop. He hesitated for a while and said that he was sorry that he could not take me to the place that he was stopping at as there was no extra room there. I did not say so, but I thought that he might have asked me to share his bed with him. Of course, I did not know that that was not the fashion among "smart" young men in Minneapolis. He then told me that there was a hotel next door and they made very reasonable charges. He offered to take me there and see that I got a good room. So we went next door. He told the man at the counter, I later learned that they called it a desk in Minneapolis, that I wanted a room and to give me a good one as I was from a little town where he used to barber and that I was a friend of his. I was glad that Will stopped there for I was afraid that they would give me the best they had and the dollars in my purse were so few that there wasn't a quorum to do business. Should I, when I got home, bring to the lodge a bill for expense that exceeded 25 cents per meal and 50 cents for bed, they would not hesitate to say that I must have had

something besides water at the Temple exercises. Will then bade me good night and said I might look in at the shop in the morning.

Will said it was a cheap hotel and little as I knew it did not take me long to discover that he was right. The room assigned me was not a "Royal Suite" by any means. There was an old wooden bed, a kitchen chair, a clothless table on which stood a pitcher of water and an old basin in which to wash. The clerk who took me up told me that these conveniences were placed there for my morning's scrubbing and he showed me where I would find a piece of soap. He had already lit a gas jet which was suspended from the ceiling. As he was about to go out he asked me whether I was accustomed to gas. I replied frankly that I was not, whereupon he registered concern. "Do you know how to put this gas light out?" he asked. "No," said I, "but I am certainly used to blowing the light of a kerosene lamp out and I guess I'll have no trouble with doing the same to this thing." He looked at me and said: "I thought as much. Now look here young man, if you blow that gas out it will not be long thereafter until you are a dead Swede." That was too deep for me. It was my turn to look at him. I said: "Look here fellow, I am an Icelander. Will I be a Swede when I am dead?" Says Mr. Clerk: "Don't get fresh with me. I tell you if you blow that gas out you'll be dead, no matter what you are." Then he went on to explain that I must turn a little jigger, right under the jet and that would put out the light and shut off the gas. As he left the room his last emphatic admonition was: "Don't blow out the gas!"

As I turned back the bed sheets, preparatory to retiring, I noticed a bevy of brown beings scurrying for cover. The next morning I complained about this to the clerk and asked him whether blowing out the gas would have had the same effect on these so

happily domiciled brownies as he said it would on Swedes and Icelanders and if so, I wanted permission to open the jet. "Not on your life," says he, "do you turn on any gas. We make no charge for these little extras, they go with the bed." Well, it was my first visit to Minneapolis and I was unacquainted with the ways of city people. I took for granted that it was one of those cases when a man in Rome had to do as the Romans did and so I asked that the assignment of the room to me be continued until such time as I "checked out." I had caught this phrase in mid air as I heard the clerk say to some one who asked for his bill: "Are you checking out?" That was how I came to hand him this valuable nugget of city vocabulary, feeling that I owed him something on that gas episode anyway.

After breakfast I hied myself to the Masonic Temple where the water-soaked enemies of John Barleycorn were turning the hose of their oratory on him. There wasn't a dry moment in the proceedings. I listened with rapt attention but could not help scratching myself here and there as the thought of what awaited me in my gas lit chamber came to me.

Sometime during the day, as I was passing from the Temple to my Western Inn, I stopped at the barber shop to greet Will. He had with him a young man who had spent his boyhood in Minneota, but was now a resident of Minneapolis. He was of the dashing type and when he used to come to Minneota for a visit, after having taken up his abode in Minneapolis, he was wont to regale us small town youth with thrilling accounts of his adventures, escapades and amours in the great city. "Alas poor Jerrick, I knew him well." Both the young men were more than cordial to me and insisted that I must come out with them that evening and "see the town." I was flooded with fascinating descriptions of

what was in store for me and I was told that going back to Minneota without being able to say that I had seen these things would make me a laughingstock with the regular fellows at home. They told me that I would have a swell time and a lot of fun. I began to smell something akin to the odor of the water on "General Maguen's farm when the mice drowned in the well from which we drew our drinking water, and their bodies were not recovered until more than a week after the accident and all this time the heat and the thirst compelled us who were working at building a house on the place to drink this water. But that incident has already been covered some pages ahead [sic]. What I smelt in this case was that the fun in store for me was to play the role of the country greenhorn for the amusement of my two friends and the inhabitants of such places as they might select as essential to a thorough course in "seeing the town." I was satisfied that the itinerary did not include any "old people's homes."

I told my friends that I could not go out with them as I had made arrangements with some of my Barleycorn fighters to meet them that evening. They took for granted that such was the case. I missed the fun and so did they.

There is not much to be added to the foregoing regarding this Minneapolis trip. I remained about four days in the city and then returned to Minneota feeling quite sophisticated and cosmopolitan. I had seen the great city, seen the famous flour mills, at a distance, ridden on street cars, seen buildings at least ten or twelve stories high, walked around a good deal in the downtown district and mingled with the surging crowds. When I returned to Minneota it looked small, but it was home.

THE MINNEOTA CHURCHES

Saint Edward's Catholic Church

Minneota at one time had five churches, three of which were of the Lutheran denomination, but each belonging to a different branch of that much divided church. There was also a Catholic church and one belonging to the Baptist persuasion.

The Catholics were the first denomination to build a church in Minneota. It was a small frame structure and stood on the south side of the railroad track. There was also a parsonage alongside of it. These buildings faced the highway running south. The congregation was made up mostly of English and Irish immigrants and were of a colony brought to this country through the influence of Archbishop John Ireland, who was then bishop of the Saint Paul diocese and later archbishop.

The first resident priest of St. Edward's parish was Father Cornelius, for whom a street in the vicinity of the old church site is named. Father DeVoss followed him and was resident pastor for a number of years. Next came Father Hanley who bought and operated a fair-sized farm about three miles west of the village; he remained in charge of the parish for a number of years. After Father Hanley left, I think it was that Father Lee Jaeger served the congregation for several years and lived in Minneota. He afterwards became the well known "bee man" of the University of Minnesota. Then there were some who served for a short time only, such as Father Van den Huvel and Father Murlowski and probably others, although I do not recall any. Then came Father Schaefer, who with his two sisters lived in the parsonage. He served the parish for several years.

In 1905 came Father William J. Stewart, who remained for twenty years, or until 1925 when ill health compelled him to seek a change of climate and he left for California. He was followed by Father Green who served the congregation for a short time and was succeeded by Father O'Donald who, after a rather brief period of service, was killed in an automobile accident when returning from the Twin Cities to Minneota. He was very popular and his tragic end caused much sorrow in the parish. The next priest to be sent to St. Edwards was Father John Casey, who is serving at the present writing (1943). I am recording this list of priests from memory and it is quite likely that I have omitted some name or gotten the order of their serving wrong in one or two instances. It is needless to say that any such error, or errors, that may have crept in are entirely unintentional. I am writing this in Minneapolis and have not at hand the data I would have were I in Minneota, and as we all know, memory like a "barefoot boy with cheeks of tan" seems at times to prefer fishing to school. With the exception of Father Cornelius, I knew all the priests above mentioned personally, some, of course, better than others. Father Stewart I was the best acquainted with of any. In fact, I feel that our relationship was that of close friendship.

Father Stewart was born at or near Chasel Rock, Tiperary, Ireland, and received his education in that country and was ordained to the priesthood there. He used to say that he was "loaned" by his bishop in Ireland to the dioceses of Saint Paul. For a while, following his arrival in this country, he served as assistant priest at the Saint Paul Cathedral.

Father Stewart was a man of exceptional talents as well as a "hale fellow well met!" on all occasions. He spoke with a decided Irish brogue, which I used to enjoy

hearing him roll out. He was rather small of stature, quick in all his movements both mentally and physically. As an orator he was outstanding. His fluency, his wit, his humor and his telling logic held his hearers entranced. He was much sought after as a public speaker. Only a small percentage of the invitations that he received to make addresses could he accept, for as a matter of fact, his duties within the parish were more than enough to keep one man busy. He was not the kind of a man to neglect his duties for the glamour of applause. I speak advisedly when I say that the Protestants of the community thought just as much of him as did the people of his own faith. It is no overstatement to say that he was loved and admired by all who enjoyed his acquaintance. Few men that I have known so stand out in my memory as does this man. Father Stewart was, in the best sense of the term, a true Christian gentleman.

When he came to take charge of the work at St. Edward's the congregation was still housed in the pioneer church of the parish. It was old, small and more or less dilapidated. The outside was anything but imposing and the inside pretty much barren. It was not the kind of church surroundings that Father Stewart was accustomed to work in. His father was a church decorator in the old country and young Stewart had acquired some proficiency in the trade. Soon after he came to his new charge, he set about with paint and brush to freshen up the walls and ceiling of the old church and succeeded in making the interior look quite inviting. All this work he did with his own hands.

He entered with a vim into all the work of the parish and always took the lead in whatever had to be done. He was not the kind who say: "Go and do it." Rather: "Come on folks, let's get this done." Without any income except the small stipend that he

received as salary, he was, nevertheless, always ready to do more than his share when money had to be raised for some activity or enterprise of the church.

Gradually the size of the congregation increased, for this was at a time when many Belgian families from the old country and from elsewhere moved in and either bought or rented farms. These people were, and are, good farmers, thrifty and hard working. They make money and most of them manage to hold onto it. It was evidence that a new church had to be built and Father Stewart began laying plans for the new edifice. That he welcomed the opportunity that circumstances brought him goes without saying. Nothing could please him as much as the chance to plan, boost and labor for a new church. All the time that he could spare from other work was devoted to this. His became a "single track" mind with the new church as the dominant objective. Through his influence the congregation acquired a whole city block on the opposite side of town from where the old church stood. This site was in every way a most desirable one for church purposes and Father Stewart's foresight in acquiring it is something that the congregation will ever have occasion to be thankful for. But to change from the old site to the new was not accomplished without engendering some opposition. Sentiment entered into the matter for there were those of the founders of the parish who were reluctant to relinquish the location where they had so long worshipped. But there was no room for expansion on the old site and besides it was too close to the railroad tracks for either comfort or convenience. To get to their cemetery from the old church, they had to cross the railroad tracks and a long freight train might sometimes be clocking the way. Aided by logic and diplomacy, good sense won the day and moving became an accepted and welcomed fact.

Plans for the new church were drawn by one of the leading church architects of the Northwest, a St. Paul man. The contractor was a South Dakota builder, a leader in his profession in that state. He was also a former Minneota boy and had grown to manhood in the village. His name was S. Walter Jonasson and he was a son of Loftur Jonasson, herein before mentioned.

The designs of the stained glass windows were all planned by Father Stewart as were all interior details. There was not anything inside or out but what he had put his approval on. It was a happy day for Father Stewart and all members of St. Edwards parish when the congregation, headed by the standard of the church, borne by Frank J. Bartosh, and followed by Archbishop Ireland and Father Stewart marched in procession from the old church to the new to attend the ceremony of dedication. Priests from all the surrounding territory were in attendance and the people from the countryside and neighboring towns came. Friends and neighbors, irrespective of church affiliations paid their respects and rejoiced with the congregation of Saint Edward in the completion of its new home.

With the church project completed and the church building a highly valued addition to the village, one might think that Father Stewart would rest on his laurels for a while. But he was not of the resting kind. His next dream was that of a school in connection with the church and he began to plan for that and to prepare the people of his parish for this next great step. In fact, his selection of the new church site was predicated on the idea of sometime building a school. There was ample room on the church grounds and the church itself was placed where it was with a view to giving ample room for the school to come and the playground that must be provided.

However, this dream was not to be realized under Father Stewart's administration. His asthma made it impossible for him to remain in a Minnesota climate any longer, and in 1925, after twenty strenuous and fruitful years, he left Minneota for California. But the school idea did not die with his departure from the community. It was left to the wise and energetic leadership of Father John Casey to see to it that the school dream became a reality. With the zeal of youth and an ample supply of common sense, Father Casey set about securing the erection of a school In a comparatively short time, this gigantic task was accomplished. A school was erected that is no less a monument to the faith and foresight of priest and people than is the church that we have been describing. A new parsonage, a most up-to-date dwelling, has been erected since the completion of the school building. All these buildings are of brick and very substantially constructed. A large frame dwelling houses the sisters who conduct the school. There are not many villages in this state, the size of Minneota, that boast as fine . . . . [end of sentence missing].

A Loyal Son of Rome, Father Stewart

It was Locke who said: "God, when he makes the prophet, does not unmake the man." I feel that it may be truly said of Father W. J. Stewart that he was in a large measure a man of God, but it is no less true that he was equally a man of men. He understood that in the best of human endeavor there is the ever lurking frailty of man; that to expect perfection is but to indulge in childish delusion. He realized that at best men can advance in morals and ideals, but step by step. Life is not only a school, but a process of purging that the dross encumbered soul may emerge purer and better fit for whatever state awaits Beyond. Such it seems to me was the thought which governed this

man's attitude and action in his intercourse with his fellowmen. He tried to lead them step by step on the upward path, knowing that few there are who can scale the heights in an other way.

Even the best of men are constantly faced with the problem of choosing the right fork at Life's ever recurring crossroads. Each individual must descend into the valleys that lie in his course and do the best he can to follow the right path, befogged thought it be by his own and others errors. We may not always know what is right but we are not left entirely without a compass if we can discern what is wrong. Socrates said: "What God is, I know not; but what he is not I know." Truth, which in its very nature must always be positive, we, in our groping after it often approach in a negative way. We may not know what the truth is, but it is something to know what it is not. The benign Quaker poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, in his inspired poem, "Eternal Goodness," spoke words well worth pondering when he said:

"Not mine to look where Cherubim
And Seraphs may not see,
But nothing can be good in him
Which evil is in me."

The seers declare, the sages aver, the simple believe that there is a God. But what that concept entails is not as universally a matter of _____ as is its acceptance. To some God is a creative force. To some a guiding power, to some a personal being, to all a mystery. Images in wood and stone the race has built and called them gods. No longer do we so materially clothe our idea. Away from these toy gods mankind has progressed and the idol has become an ideal. In the mind of man, the idea of God has been constantly subjected to a process of evolution. That he was from the beginning, is now

and ever will be, is accepted as fundamental by all believers in a supreme being. But our conception of this being changes as we advance and grow in moral and mental stature.

The vengeful monster of yesterday has been replaced by a loving power which guards and guides and cares. He has become the ununderstandable Being who "moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform." More and more men are approaching the God-thought with ideals and aspirations that leave no room for hate. Throughout the ages, God has constantly been reborn in the hearts and souls of men. Hell, the nightmare of bygone centuries has vanished. In increased numbers untrammeled souls voice the sentiment: "I know not of his hate, I know his goodness and his love."

It is not that men do not still attempt to corral God in sect-pens, for they do. We still think that God is an heirloom belonging exclusively to our household of faith. But we have ceased to manifest our zeal for God by burning at the stake those whose ideas about him do not agree with ours. It is true that many a learned ignoramus still kindles stake fires for the torture of such as may not hold with him. But such fires no longer sear the flesh and seldom disturb the spirit of any but those who kindle them. Whatever Power guides the destinies of man may well be thanked that in increasing numbers, individual souls adopt as their own the sentiment: "I dare not fix with mete and bound the love and power of God."

The last Christmas that Father Stewart spent in Minneota was that of 1924. It also happened that, to date, it was my last Christmas there, although I did not know it at the time. On this occasion Father Stewart presented me with a two volume edition of a work bearing the title, "The Jesuit Fathers." As I recall, he was educated in a Jesuit institution.

On the flyleaf of the first volume he had written a Gaelic sentiment in Gaelic characters and underneath a translation into English which reads as follows:

A Wish

I pray for you the blessing of Christmas,
I pray for reverence from the Gaeles;
Delight in the company of a friend
And life peaceful and long in America.

The original reads Erin where the translation reads America. But what are names? In themselves they connote but little, except as they help us to mentally visualize the abode of a soul, for places have their peculiar souls as well as individuals. when I hear the name Stewart and know that it is applied to the human entity that I was accustomed to greet as "Father" I immediately visualize the form and face of my friend.

I saw Father Stewart but once after he left Minneota in 1925, the same year that I left there. He came on a visit from California and I happened to come up at the same time from Minneapolis. We met on the speakers platform in the recreation parlors of St. Edward's church. There was a celebration of some kind. There were a number of speakers. Father Stewart made an impressive address. I made some remarks. After his visit, he returned to California and a short time later, his health much impaired, he journeyed to his beloved Ireland where soon after his arrival he harkened to the "one clear call," a summons that brought him "face to face" with the Pilot beyond the Bar.

Dear friend! Happy were the days when we, in the prime of manhood, met on our daily rounds in the obscure home village on the prairies of Southwestern Minnesota. Twenty years is a formidable span in the lifetime of an individual, but not the twinkling of an eye in the sight of Him to whom a thousand years are but a day. My association

with Father Stewart had a wholesome, broadening upon my outlook on many things. Especially did it help to completely erase a fast fading prejudice against the teachings of the "Mother Church." I, a Lutheran born, had in my childhood and youth been brought up to look askance at all things connected with the teachings of the Catholic church. Many of the first pages in my life's book bore the fingerprints of falsehood and ignorance. The process of erasing had begun a long time before I met Father Stewart, but how much easier was not the effacement of these errors when one met with a living refutation of them. He never obtruded his religion on you. He just lived it before your eyes. He did not try to force his religious views on the teachings of his church upon anyone. That he whole-heartedly believed all the teachings of his church I do not in the least doubt. There was a genuine, mental honesty in his avowal of that faith, else he could not have lived the sincere life he did. A sincere life is not the fruition of hypocrisy. The genuine springs not from the counterfeit and only for a short time can the spurious evade the inevitable detection.

Father Stewart and I were no doubt far apart on dogma and creedal detail. But the essentials upon which we were in accord made the nonessentials upon which we might differ of small moment. I sometimes felt like envying him his religious fixidity, his unquestioning acceptance of the dictum of the church and teachings of the fathers, but there in so many ways I could not follow. Far be it from me to compare for worth my views with his. His convictions were his strength; my doubts my weakness. He lived his convictions, I lived with my doubts. I think my feelings were akin to those of Emerson when he said: "Why should the vest on him allure, which I could not on me endure?" The answer is that the Creator, in his wisdom, caste his creatures in varying molds.

Norwegian Lutheran (now Hope) Church

The Norwegian Lutheran church in Minneota was organized in the eighties of the last century (18__). The first Norwegian settlers to come to the locality arrived early in the seventies and probably some before. Some came from Iowa, some from Wisconsin and some from the earlier settled portions of Minnesota. Not a few came direct from Norway; but no matter where they came from, most of them were born in Norway.

The colony did not have a resident pastor for many years, but services were held at intervals by pastors who came from outlying neighborhoods. Pastor Hoel, of Canby, served the Minneota charge with regularity for some time. He baptized, confirmed, married and buried and held services but did not reside with the congregation. The Norwegians were on the whole a churchgoing people and services were at all times well attended. As is well known, the Lutheran church is divided into many branches. Some of these divisions are along national lines while some are caused by minor creed differences. Naturally there were several varieties in the Minneota community, but I think it safe to say that all agreed on the fundamental doctrines taught by the state church of Norway. A free church congregation was organized at an early date in the so called Nordland locality, south and west of Minneota. This congregation was for a number of years affiliated with the Minneota congregation to the extent of sharing the latter's pastor and forming with it a pastoral call or charge. The Minneota congregation built its church in 1889, or about that time. This building was later enlarged and much improved both inside and out. This church is till in use and while it is yet in good condition, it is to

small and in other respects inadequate and he congregation will no doubt build a fine edifice as soon as conditions warrant launching such an enterprise.

The first resident pastor was Rev. A. N. Kleven, who came to the charge from a congregation near Litchfield, Minnesota. He was born in 1849 in Telemarken, Norway, an came to America in 1872. During the seventeen years that he lived in Minneota he served, besides the Minneota congregation, the Free Church congregation before mentioned and also a Norwegian Lutheran congregation at Porter, Minnesota, a village about eleven miles west of Minneota. Rev. Kleven was 43 years old when he came to Minneota, his family consisting of his wife, several daughters and one son.

Rev. Kleven was well liked both within and without his pastoral fold. He took an interest in civic affairs and for a while served as member of the Board of Education of the Minneota High School. He was a forceful pulpit orator and preached the Gospel in the style and spirit of the old school. In politics he was an ardent Republican and as a participant in the deliberations of the local party leaders. His religious views, as publicly expressed, were of the strictly orthodox type. He thought in terms taught him by the theologians of the according to the interpretation of traditional Lutheranism, which was, of course, to him the pure, the undefiled and the only right way. I do not think that he questioned in the slightest degree the creed as handed down by the energetic and militant Luther and the mild and learned Melanchton.

Rev. Kleven harbored strong convictions and was mentally honest in the fullest sense of the term. The inspiration of the scriptures was to him of the plenary kind, and to question aught of the Sacred Saga, as handed down in the canonical books was to put in

jeopardy your soul's salvation. He might yield and compromise where there were no principles involved, but in matters of faith, he was adamant.

He was an entertaining conversationalist and engaging in his ways and manners. It was my privilege to know him quite intimately and to associate with him in various activities. I liked and respected him and always enjoyed his company. I served with him on the aforementioned Board of Education, where he contributed valuable service with an eye single to the school's best interests. One evening we walked together from a meeting of the board and parted on a street corner, each bound for his own home. He was his genial, cheerful self as we bid each other good night, neither of us suspecting that it was to be for the last time. I had been at home for but a very short while when I was called to the telephone and learned that my friend, on reaching home, had suddenly complained of not feeling well. He seated himself on a sofa and in a few moments was no longer in the land of the living. It took me some time to realize that the man whom I had just parted from, apparently in the best of health and spirits, was now no more.

I have had a number of similar experiences in the years that have passed since that balmy May evening in 1909, each attesting to the uncertainly of our earthly tenure. Rev. Kleven was wont to say in his funeral discourses that the departed had laid down his "wandering staff." He himself was not vouchsafed time to lay his down, it dropped from his palsied hand. He would not have been sixty years old until the 9th day of December of the year in which he died.

The next year, 1910, Rev. Engval Johan Hinderlie accepted a call from the congregation and became resident pastor. Rev. Hinderlie was born at Haugesund, Norway, in 1877, and came to America in 1884. He was thirty-three years old when he

came to Minneota with his bride, they having been married that same year. Mrs. Hinderlie, nee Miss Mathilde Bockman, was a daughter of the well known president of Luther Theological Seminary, of Saint Paul, Dr. M. O. Bockman. Although young in years, Rev. Hinderlie was of the old school in religious thought. He served his charge with youthful enthusiasm and the utmost conscientiousness. He was a friendly, vivacious, hail fellow and so was generally liked. He took interest in community affairs and mixed with the people of his charge on the basis of common interest and concern. He was a willing worker in the cause of any movement that had for its aim the betterment of spiritual or secular conditions.

He was pastor in Minneota for going on twelve years. The last of these years he was in failing health and finally had to give up his charge. For a while, some years I think, he was not actively engaged in the ministry. In 1927 he accepted a call from a congregation in Wisconsin and some time later died.

The Minneota congregation, after Rev. Hinderlie's departure, was without a pastor until in the fall of 1925 when Rev. Ole P. Stensland accepted a call to the charge and came there to live. My personal acquaintance with Rev. Stensland has been very limited. The same moving van that brought his household effects from St. Paul took our belongings of that character back to St. Paul on its return trip.

Rev. Stensland was born in South Dakota in 1889 and so was 36 years old when he came to Minneota. He has been successful in his work and has won the regard of the community. His preaching and views are of the accepted orthodox type and in this respect encounters no difficulty in following the footsteps of his forerunners. My recollection is that I have not heard him preach more than twice and in each instance it

was at a funeral service. I thought both of these sermons were very good and one, especially, appealed to me as an outstanding effort. As I am writing this (August 1943) Rev. Stensland is leaving Minneota, having enlisted. He will take up some phase of religious work with the army. That his congregation will look forward to his return goes without saying, for he has endeared himself to his people.

The English Lutheran Church

Sometime in the nineties a congregation was organized which went under the name of the English Lutheran Church. If it had some other official title, I have forgotten it for this is the name that it was always known by. The membership was made up almost wholly of Norwegian people. At this time the Norwegian Lutheran Church in Minneota used the Norwegian language in its services, almost exclusively. All bilingual communities were facing the language problem and no doubt, considerations of this kind actuated the founders of this new church in Minneota. They realized that children growing up would become more proficient in the language of the land, the language of the schools, the language of their daily outside contacts, and that it would be essential to their religious development to teach them to worship in the English language. As this movement developed throughout communities similarly situated, the slogan became: "The faith of the fathers in the language of the children." A contributing factor in the formation of this new organization may also have been the fact that most of the leaders in the movement were staunch adherents of the teachings of that branch of Lutheranism known as the Missouri Synod.

This congregation built a fine little frame church and services were held regularly. With one exception, as I recall, the pastors serving the congregation were non-residents.

Rev. A. J. Nervig was pastor from 1898 to 1901 and I think was the only one who was in residence. Rev. Bernt Askevold, of Tracy, was one of the non-resident pastors as was Rev. Andreas Sorinsen, who was also stationed at Tracy at the time that he served Minneota. After some over a decade, this congregation disbanded and most of the members joined the Norwegian Lutheran congregation. Use of the English language was being extended in the services and gradually, the church became more and more "of that manner of speaking." At this time (1943) the English language is used exclusively, with the exception of an occasional service in Norwegian for the benefit o the older people.

The Icelandic Lutheran Church

The Icelandic settlement in and about Minneota was organized, in the eighties, into four congregations, known as the Minneota, Westerheim, Lincoln County and Marshall congregations. These organizations combined and made one pastoral charge and in 1887 sent a call to N. S. Thorlaksson, then a graduate candidate in theology from the University of Christiania (Oslo) Norway. He was at the time residing in the Norwegian capital, having just recently finished his course at the University. The call was accepted and he came that same year to America and was ordained to the ministry at Mountain, North Dakota, by the president of the Icelandic Synod of North America. Immediately following his ordination, he came to Minneota to take up his work with the congregations aforementioned. Previous to his going to the Christiania University, he had attended Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, and was graduated from that institution. He was a native of Iceland and emigrated to the United States with his parents in 1873, at the age of sixteen.

After forty years in the ministry, he retired at the age of 70, in 1927. In 1929 he and his wife went to Japan, where they spent some time with their son, Octavius, who was for more than twenty years a missionary in that country. Previous to this, they had made two trips to Norway, combining a visit to Iceland with one of these. Rev. Thorlaksson died in February this year (1943), at the age of 86.

I was of confirmation age when Rev. Thorlakkson came to Minneota and was a member of the first class that he confirmed, which event took place on the 27th of May, 1888.

An "In Memoriam" booklet, dealing with the life and services of this esteemed pastor was issued in June of this year (1943). This booklet is composed of articles written by various men associated with him at one time or another during his long career as pastor and leader in the Icelandic Lutheran Synod. I was asked to contribute to this publication an article on his first pastorate, that of Minneota, in the years from 1887 to 1894. From this contribution of mine, written only two months ago, I am going to quote some extracts as there would be no point in rewriting, for the matter seems to fit in with this rambling Saga of incidents and anecdotes which I am here confiding to my typewriter, sans chronology, coherence or spiritually consanguine consequence:

> "To understand some of the things that Rev. Thorlaksson was up against when he came to Minneota, it must be taken into account that the Icelanders of the settlement were by no means all churchly minded. There were many able and intelligent men among them who held themselves aloof from church affairs. They had come from under the thumb of the Icelandic state church, where you were born into the church and taxed by law for its support, whether or not you believed a word of its creed. They had, by coming to America, freed themselves from the authority of this church and they proposed to remain free. They became "freethinkers," as it was called in those days. The word free (frjals) has always been a cherished word in the vocabulary of the Icelander. The teachings of Bob Ingersoll and Kristofer Janson fell like manna into the hearts of these "freedom" loving souls.

“I mention this without meaning any disrespect to these sturdy, independent Icelandic pioneers. As boy and man I knew them all and respected them all. They were upright and honorable men who prided themselves on doing their own thinking and felt fully capable of arranging for own "passport" for the journey across the Styx. The reason that I refer to this is that it is a not-to-be-overlooked factor in the situation that confronted the young pastor when he came to take up his labors in the congregations mentioned. However, let it be understood that Rev. Thorlaksson had many friends among the people who were not of the fold which he shepherded. . . .

“His sermons were based on the doctrines of the Lutheran church which he preached pure and undefiled. There was nothing wishy-washy about his teachings. He spoke "from the shoulder" and compromised with no one on things which he considered essential unto salvation. He hewed to the line and paid small attention to the chips.

“The Minneota charge was not an easy one to serve in those days. When conducting worship in the churches outside of Minneota, he had to drive about twelve miles to one, about thirteen to another and about seven to the third. The eighties of the last century were not automobile days. They were but partly "horse and buggy days." There were no gaveled roads anywhere, pavements were still in the "womb of time." But there were mud roads which at certain seasons were worse than no roads at all. . . . Every winter brought a lot of snow and storms and blizzards were frequent. There was not highway department to keep the roads open and each traveler had to flounder through the drifts the best way he could. These were the conditions that Rev. Thorlaksson had to battle and buffet as he traveled from congregation to congregation. There were elemental "giants in the earth" in those days. The pioneer country preacher and pioneer country doctor knew more about the hardships of travel than anyone else.

“It was in the year 1888 that Rev. Thorlaksson's fiancé came over from Oslo, Norway. After their marriage, which took place in Minneapolis, the young pastor brought his bride to Minneota. The bridegroom had engaged rooms over an old general store. These living quarters were reached by climbing an open, outside stairway. This "suite," as I recall it, consisted of two small rooms and I would not feel at all surprised if the young bride felt that they were "nothing to write home about." The furniture was as little as it was possible to get along with. But nevertheless, much of it was handmade -- made by Rev. Thorlaksson himself.

“Mrs. Thorlaksson came to the Minneota parish as a ray of sunshine. Everybody fell in love with her at first sight. She had quality, culture, geniality, beauty, charm and music. It was some change for this city-bred woman to come to a pioneer, prairie hamlet of but several hundred inhabitants where the only "modern conveniences" consisted of the privilege of getting along without any. She was accustomed to cultured society, to the gay life of a European metropolis, to comparative ease and comfort as a daughter of one of Norway's old and honored families. Yet, cooped up in two dingy rooms over a dilapidated, old store, she never grumbled, she never complained. One cannot explain it except on the theory that heroes and poets are born, not made. The writer of this yields to no man when it comes to admiration for Rev. N. S. Thorlaksson, but it would be

unfair, unjust and ungallant not to accord Mrs. Thorlaksson an equal share in the credit for all the good work that was done by this worthy couple during the seven years that they tarried on this Minnesota frontier.

"In the instruction of the young and preparing them for confirmation, Rev. Thorlaksson was a past master. He imparted knowledge to the children in such a manner that their bewildered and hazy minds were led into the fullest understanding that they were capable of mustering. As before stated, the writer was a member of Rev. Thorlaksson's first confirmation class and so has some firsthand knowledge of what he is speaking about. I would probably be taking some liberties with the truth were I to aver that the winter of learning and instruction which preceded that confirmation was to me, at that age, any special pleasure; but the years that have come and gone since have brought me the realization that I then enjoyed a priceless privilege.

"The hardships and difficulties that Rev. Thorlaksson and his wife encountered during their sojourn in Minneota can better be imagined than described. Suffice it to say that they met them all with fortitude and undaunted faith."

In 1892, Rev. Thorlaksson was granted a leave of absence by his congregations, and he and his wife left for Norway that she might visit her family there. They spent the following year abroad and during that time things happened in the home parish. A young man just ordained to the home mission work of the Icelandic Synod came to Minneota to substitute during Rev. Thorlaksson's absence. He was only about 24 years old at the time, but wore a full beard which made him look much older. Not that it is important but as this narrative of mine deals in unrelated incidents, I might mention that it was not long until he shed this facial adornment for life. This young man's name of Bjorn B. Jonsson and he hailed from Winnipeg, Man. His theological education he received at the Chicago Lutheran Seminary. Owing to the shortage of pastors among the Icelanders he and another Icelandic students were ordained before they had fully completed their course at the seminary. Rev. Jonsson was a native of Iceland and came to Canada with his parents when but a mere boy. An uncle on the father's side was the famous Icelandic poet, Kristjan Jonsson, whose name is a household word in the island. He died when still a

young man and has often been called "the Byron of Iceland." to an extent, the gift of poetry seems to have been in the family, although none reached the heights of Kristjan. However, when it came to making prose poetic, the mantle of the uncle unmistakably fell on the shoulders of the nephew.

Rev. Jonsson's sermons were replete with rounded periods and his style and diction were decidedly of the poetic kind. Rev. Thorlaksson's discourses had been more ponderous and matter of act and while in essence they both preached the same doctrine, the "sugar coated" message, as it issued from the mind and lips of Rev. Jonsson was much more palatable to the pews than the unvarnished remedy handed out by Rev. Thorlaksson. Coupled with his pleasant pulpit utterances, Rev. Jonsson had a genial personality and strove to please in his contact with the parishioners. All this led to an immediate liking for him and he had not been with the congregations long when people began to talk about changing pastors. Strange to say, those who were not connected with the congregations, but outsiders who had refused to join, were to an extent, movers in the effort to get rid of Thorlaksson and call Jonsson. In the Westerheim congregation this went so far that non-church members held a meeting, as the result of which they notified the trustees of the congregation that they would financially render substantial aid were the substitution of pastors made. In February 1894, the trustees of this congregation, after a meeting of the members, at which Rev. Jonsson had been called with but one dissenting vote, officially notified Rev. Thorlaksson that his services were no longer desired and that the same would terminate five months from and after March 1st, 1894. Similar action was taken by the other congregations of the charge, although, as I recall, with less unanimity than in Westerheim. When Rev. Thorlaksson returned from abroad,

he found this state of upheaval obtaining in his congregations. The situation was akin to that which we so frequently find in politics when an incumbent is swept out of office by a whim of the electorate. While I have decided opinions on the modus operandi of effecting this change I shall forbear to confide them even to my typewriter. Fifty years is a long time, but for some purposes not always long enough. Suffice it to say that Rev. Thorlaksson terminated his pastorate in Minneota in the summer of 1894, about seven years after his coming to the charge.

Rev. Jonsson was in every sense of the word a brilliant man. He was a good executive and as before indicated an orator of outstanding ability. He took much interest in all public affairs. Was in politics a Republican and always on the progressive side. During one session of the Minnesota legislature, he was chaplain of the senate. He was president of the Minneota Board of Education and always held offices of importance within the Icelandic Synod, being president of that body for a number of years.
I was very closely associated with Rev. Jonsson in a churchly, political and social way. I feel that I knew him intimately and always regarded him as a personal friend and companion. He was my pastor for twenty years, and we discussed churches and creeds and religion time without number. There were three of us who were in the habit of spending alternate evenings at each other's homes, Rev. Jonsson, Bjarni Jones and I. We were a self-styled "kitchen cabinet" and there were not many things that we did not have under the scalpel on our "operating" table. We cured everything, of course; no case was too intricate, no ailment too far gone for us to tackle it; but I must admit that some times the patient would die while we were disagreeing on what medicine to administer. Ours was an innocent pastime, a pleasing relaxation after a day of petty annoyances, such as

come and go in the management of small affairs. On nights when the "cabinet" met, no matter at whose home it was, the wife in charge would serve coffee and cake about eleven o'clock. That put us in fine fettle for the next "operation" and we would continue in session until about one in the morning. Why we adjourned then I do not know. We all lived within half a block of each other and that made it handy. Let it be said to the credit of our good wives that they kept away from the "operating" room while the "doctors" were in "consultation." They knew that the only interruption that would be tolerated was the bringing of the refreshment tray. Those were pleasant evenings strung over many years. I cannot tell you the exact date of the last meeting of the "cabinet" but I know that there has not been one in thirty years. "Turn backward, turn backward, O, time in your flight, and give me the old "cabinet" just for tonight! But that will not occur on this side of the Styx and I am making no dates for the opposite shore. "B.B." (short for Rev. Jonsson) crossed over several years ago and I have had no word from him since. Bjarni is now about 84 and living in Minneota, and I passed the spring chicken stage quite some time ago and am living in Minneapolis. So the members of the "cabinet" have "dispersed and wandered far away, far away."

I was associated with Rev. Jonsson for twenty years. We were warm personal friends and companioned a great deal. When he first came to Minneota, I was pretty much on the loose as far as church was concerned. I was, of course, a member of the Icelandic Lutheran church, but not as regular in my church attendance as I probably should have been. When confirmed, I became a member of that church and I have held membership in no other and am still, nominally at least, a member of that organization. Since before the turn of the century and until 1925 when I moved away from Minneota, I

hardly ever missed a service when I was at home. I became much interested in church affairs and while I never rose to the dignity of "a pillar of the church" I was, at least, a prop or a post in the organization. I was for many years a member of the Board of Trustees and for a long period chairman of that board. For thirty years I was frequently a delegate to the annual conventions of the Icelandic Synod and took an active part in its affairs and in the deliberations of these annual meetings. I was only 26 years old when I went as a delegate from my congregation to the first synodical convention that I attended, which was held at Hallson, North Dakota, in June 1899. The Synod at that time was only 14 years old. In 1935, I held its Golden Jubilee convention at Winnipeg, the delegates making a tour to Mountain, N.D., where a one-day session was held in honor of the place where the first organization meeting was held in 1885. It fell to my lot to be a delegate to this Jubilee convention. For several years, prior to my leaving Minneota, I was a member of the Executive Board of the Synod.

That I took such an active part in these church affairs was in a large measure due to the influence of Rev. Jonsson, whose religious leadership I, for many years, followed. In 1903 I was married, and my wife was and is a faithful churchgoer and during the more than twenty-two years of our married life in Minneota was an energetic and tireless worker in all congregational activities. She encouraged me very much to take an active part in church work and between her and the preacher, they kept me traveling the path of church regularity. During those years I was orthodox according to the Lutheran formula. My preacher was also, at that time, pretty much of the old school in his teachings, so were practically all the ministers of our Synod.

It is futile for one man to attempt to say what another man believes. I think that any man would have a difficult time precisely defining his own beliefs, to say nothing about vouching for the beliefs of others. But I am sure that years before he left Minneota, Rev. Jonsson was experiencing a gradual modification in his religious views. He was of the type that cannot stand still, he had to go forward. I have heard him say, concerning some of the cherished dogmas of the church creed that he did not consider belief in them essential unto salvation. He discriminated between the things that to him seemed essential and such as seemed nonessential. I have heard him say, in his later years, when discussing matters of creed and doctrine: "After all, nothing matters except Jesus Christ." To attempt to elucidate this statement would be but to confuse. Each individual will make his own interpretation. The infamous doctrine of "infant damnation" he never harbored. The "fire and brimstone" teaching of the church he may at some time have held, but surely in his more mature years he had entirely discarded its literalness.

Doctrines which are primitive, crude and cruel vanish when exposed to the Light of Eternal Love. Burning at the stake and breaking on the wheel and a thousand other forms of torture, invented by insane fanatics and by them inflicted upon helpless victims "for the glory of God," is a staggering commentary on the vileness of man and the depravity of the race. Hell was never created by God, for the simple reason that Eternal Love can never countenance Eternal Damnation. The doctrine is the most vicious of all the evil conceptions that corrupt man has brought forth and does violence to every decent idea of God, all theological sophistry to the contrary notwithstanding. I am not ascribing the views set forth in this paragraph to anyone but myself. I am making the statements "on my own," glad to find that I have made that much progress since the days of my

boyhood, when, as described in the beginning of this "Saga," I used to wake up at night in a cold sweat fearing that I was destined for Hell. What a responsibility rests upon the shoulders of those who wish this nightmare over onto the simple-hearted, be they young or old.