CHAPTER TWO
Ponderous Milestones

Each change that today seems to pass with a gallop
Were ponderous milestones that marked off the way,
The slow-growing stocking on Mammie’s deft needles
And even when only a week was remaining
It seemed that the holidays never would come—
I can’t explain yet why they held so much magic
For children as poor as we were in our home.
—“Christmas” in Backward Glances, 32

At least twice a year the old place got a genuine going over. Once in the spring, and again just before Christmas. Of course, there was a weekly cleaning, when the floors had to be scoured with soft soap, and the broom. We had no rugs, and linoleum was unheard of. There were some strips of home made carpet once, I think, but they had been used to cover the sweet potatoes and the apples upstairs. Turnips were holed up in the garden, but sweet potatoes were hard to keep, and had to be kept at just the right temperature, or they would dry rot.

The oak floors were kept scrubbed. Any grease spot showed up ugly, and the walnuts we cracked on the hearth were very bad to make greasy spots, but we couldn’t afford to quit cracking walnuts, especially of winter evenings. They and corn bread together made a good supper.

Mammy usually did the weekly floor scouring anyway, but when the general housecleaning time came, everybody worked. Everything was taken out of the house, so the walls could be whitewashed. The lime was boiling in the big old iron kettle outside (it looked like rocks when it was first bought, but when water was poured on it it swelled and blossomed out into snowy lime).

The old straw was emptied out of the domestic straw ticks, and we children usually had the job of filling them, after they had been washed,
dried, and ironed. Mammy always gave directions as to just what kind of straw to get. We made a hole way into the core of the stack, where it had not been rained on. We shook all the chaff out, then filled the clean ticks as full as we could get them. We would jump on them to smash them down, and then cram in more stuffing, especially into each corner. When it was full the boys would usually carry them to the house on their heads.

Everything in the house was washed and dusted. The bedsteads, and even the slats were washed. The homemade chairs were scrubbed. The cracks in the hearth and around the fireplace were redaubed. In the spring there was a new firescreen made, and covered with all kinds of bright colored pictures, but it had to be recovered real often, as the crickets cut holes in whatever we covered it with.

A fad swept the country about this time of spatter work screens. A cloth was stretched on the screen, then usually green leaves, maple, ferns, or something that would make a pretty design was laid on the cloth, then a brush was dipped in colored water, usually blued with bluing, and spattered around the leaves. Then the leaves were removed, leaving that place white. Somehow we never did catch the spatter fever.

The lace curtains were all washed, starched, and ironed. This in itself was quite a job, as the irons had to be heated at the fireplace, or on the cookstove.

The whitewashing wouldn’t have been such a terrible job, with a good brush, but we never thought of buying anything, if we could make anything else do. Mammy would use an old wornout broom, or tear corn shucks up fine, and tie them together on a stick, or some other homemade contraption, that would answer the purpose of a brush. Although at that time, I am sure, good brushes could have been bought at a very reasonable price.

The walls were not so hard to do, but the overhead work on the ceilings was pretty different. Mammy always got the whitewash in her eyes, and it almost put them out. In fact, I know one woman who was blind in one eye from getting whitewash in it. Anyway, we lived through it, and when it was done, the walls were all as white as snow. The curtains, starched and snowy and back on the windows. The beds, high with their new strawticks, and the featherbeds on top of that, with white sheets, and big ruffled pillow shams. The picture frames re-varnished. New split bottoms had been put in the chairs that needed it. The floors were all as clean as soap and hot water could make them. There was a feeling of deep satisfaction, and the knowledge that we had done the very best that we could with what we had. It did look clean, and it was clean.

Etta, who was crippled, couldn’t do everything the others could do, as she had no use of her right arm and hand. But she did her part steadily, day after day. She pieced quilts, knit, made the new pin cushions,
embroidered, and *hundreds* of little things. In the long run accomplishing more, perhaps, than many who have two good hands. She planted and tended the flowers. Kept the door yard clean with little buckbush brooms. Fed and tended little chickens. Gathered eggs. She even swept floors.

Etta had some pet hens, big old yellow ducklegged biddies, that would not lay anywhere but in the house, usually on a bed. One of them laid abnormally big eggs, with two yellows, and sometimes she laid twice a day. She was a super hen.

I have planned several times to write some little booklets for children. One on Christmas in Kentucky, in the 90's. I did write a stanza or two on it in my little booklet “Backward Glances,” but I would like to go into detail and tell the intimate story of our happy Christmas times, and of the gifts that Santa Claus put in our stockings, and on the Christmas tree (which was always a Cedar, as there were no pine trees near). The Cedar tree brought the Christmas spirit as strong as any stately pine could possibly have done.

We utilized the time, the few days before the happy occasion, by getting the old log house shining upstairs and down. The whitewashing of the walls usually took place before the cold bad weather set in.

---

1. *Backward Glances* was Effie's 63-page book of poetry, a collection of 39 poems based on childhood memories. It was privately printed and gives no publication date on the title page. Some of the poems are “Spring Housecleaning,” “Pickin' Geese,” “Mammy, Carding and Spinning,” and “Our Yearly Visit to Grandma’s.” The poem titled “Christmas” includes these verses:

    A tree of green cedar with flowers of paper,
    With strings of white popcorn and apples of red,
    Gave thrills that were sweeter than any rich treasure
    Could cause in my heart, since my childhood has fled.
    The scent of a firecracker stirs mellow memories
    Of red striped socks and a new "chiny" doll,
    A home-made spool wagon, a *piece* of an orange,
    bladder to bust, and a home-made yarn ball.
    fresh sagey sausage bound up in tight bunches
    With shucks as a cover, and tied at each end,
    And oh, the red gravy we sopped with hot biscuits—
    There is no food now with such exquisite blend.
    And no cake compares with the tall ones in layers,
    With apples, all flavored with nutmeg, between;
    For nutmegs were cheap—we bought five for a nickel
    In cute little nuts that looked powdered and clean.
    A fresh ham or pork that was boiled in the wash-pot
    Was part of our Christmas—’twas peeled and then browned
    And spotted all over with spots of black pepper,
    Our Dad did the slicing and passed it around.
    We knew to prepare for a crowd to come Christmas,
    For music and laughter and dancing and fun,
    Though looked on as sin by the church folks and preachers
    Drew life, like the light and the warmth of the sun.
The autumns in our part of Kentucky were, in one way, the best time of year. There were long golden days when everyone was busy from morning till night getting tobacco cut and cured, (I can just smell the smoke from the tobacco barn when that time of year rolls around), getting the potatoes dug, the beans picked and shelled, the corn gathered and the fodder shocked.2

The hickory nuts had to be gathered, and the black walnuts hulled and stored in the old abandoned corncrib.

The popcorn had to be gathered, and the broom corn cut and stored. We had to break it so the broom heads would hang down and the straws would remain straight and nice for the brooms.3

The turnips were put in a hole in the garden, covered with cornstalks and then with dirt to prevent freezing.

The apples and sweet potatoes were stored upstairs. Sometimes the wheat was stored for a while in an improvised bin in a corner of the upstairs room.

By the time Christmas arrived everything was stored away, safe from freezing. Usually the hog killing was over, the sausage was ground and hanging in the smokehouse in little long sacks. There were usually several little packages in cornshucks, tied at either end, and kept hanging in the kitchen. We thought it tasted better stored in the shucks. Sometimes it was fried in patties, packed in a stone jar and the hot grease poured over it, and the jar was turned upside down. When we wanted sausage quick we could just open a jar, and it was ready. There is no meat that I can think of that can beat it for flavor, when it is browned, seasoned with lots of sage,

2. Effie later wrote that

All of this work fell to the women and children, as the men were kept busy in the tobacco. It was getting ripe, and the leaves were thick and tinged with yellow. It must be cut at the proper time or it would begin to lose weight. The men of the neighborhood swapped work, the ripest crops being cut first. Jugs of cider at the ends of the rows helped to break the monotony. The stalks were split down the center with a sharp knife and cut off at the ground. It was then turned over and stood on its head until it wilted. When it had stood in the sun until it was sufficiently softened that it would not break, it was straddled close together on tobacco sticks that had been split from strait-grained oak and were about three feet long. It was then loaded on the wagon in two large stacks called coops and hauled to the barn, where the sticks were hoisted and handed from one to another until the top of the barn was full. It was then hung, a tier at a time, until the entire barn was filled within six or eight feet of the ground. Here it hung until it was yellow, and then was fired.


and eaten with hot buttermilk biscuits, and with the luscious red gravy it was cooked in.

To make red gravy the main part of the grease is poured off, then water poured in the skillet where the sausage giblets and small particles had browned.

Back bones, spareribs, and boiled hams were a part of Christmas too. Our mother saw that everyone around us who didn't happen to be as fortunate as we were, and who didn't have any hogs to kill, got a generous portion of fresh pork for Christmas.

The boys sawed and chopped the oak and hickory wood and piled it in the open porch (or hallway) to protect it from the snow that we always hoped would fall for Christmas. We longed and prayed for a white Christmas.

Whether there was snow or not, we strung long strings of popcorn, made paper chains, and paper flowers and stars to deck our tree with.

We usually had new wool stockings (and oh how I hated to wear them, they always scratched my legs, but they did help to keep out the cold).

We usually tried to get a load of tobacco stripped and ready to take to market before Christmas. And our dad made axe handles and worked on them during long winter evenings and sold them for three dollars a dozen. He was an expert at it. His handles were shaped perfectly, and were of fine grained seasoned hickory wood, polished as slick as a button. He would get them shaped with the hand axe and drawing knife, then we children would help him scrape them with pieces of broken glass, and then they were finished with (first coarse, then fine) sandpaper. They were a work of art when he got them finished. Three dollars in those days was a lot more money than it is today.4

My brother John said that one time when they were going to Tradewater fishing they stopped at Era, John Roger's store, and bought eggs to take with them.5 They gave twenty-five cents for six dozen eggs. They were five cents a dozen, in one dozen lots, but by taking six dozen they got a dozen extra. Now, six dozen fresh eggs cost $3.60, over twelve times as much as they paid for them then.

Anyway, we never felt poor, as we had a frugal, industrious mother, who did her level best to keep good food and clothing for her children, and to keep good warm, clean beds. She kept a flock of geese, picked them every six weeks, and kept plenty of warm feather beds and pillows for every bed.

---

4. Effie's description of ax handle-making was mentioned earlier on page 57. See Chapter One note 51 for a source on the making of ax handles.
5. Probably John B. Rogers (b. 1847).
Some people think it is cruel to pluck the feathers from the geese, but if they are not picked every six weeks, they shed them, and then there would be feathers scattered everywhere. We were sure that nature planned it that way so we could have the good soft warm feather beds to keep us warm in the winter. That was a custom that goes away back into history. We had no manufactured mattresses. There was a straw tick made from brown domestic (unbleached muslin) and filled with clean wheat straw from the inside of the straw stack. That with a good featherbed on top of it, and plenty of quilts, made a warm bed.

We had no springs when I was a little child. I can remember our first ones, slats, and cored.

We made bedspreads of muslin, and tablecloths too. Made ruffled pillow slips for the bed in the front room, that visitors slept on.

Sometimes there were lace pillow shams that were spread over big pillows that stood upright on the bolster (a long pillow reaching the entire width of the bed).

Our mother made apple layer cakes. The cakes rather thin, and in several layers. Coconut layer cakes also, and solid pound cakes, and fruit pies, and cookies, for Christmas dinners, and almost always a boiled ham, and often a baked goose.

Sometimes mother made salt rising bread, for special occasions. It was good. I've always wanted to make it, but never have. Most of the time our bread was buttermilk biscuits, or flitters for breakfast, and often cornbread for the midday meal and supper.

Mother baked sweet potatoes in the dutch oven on the hearth, and often cooked the cornbread in it too.

When mother rendered the fat for our year's supply of lard she saved the brown cracklin's and would make cracklin' cornbread. It tasted good, but was too greasy to be healthy, so she didn't make it very often. She molded it into little long "slim" dodgers so there was lots of brown crust. At long last Christmas Eve would finally arrive. I cannot figure out the pure joy, and the actually hallowed feeling, different from any other time of year, far different, that accompanied the Christmas holidays. It was such an extreme happiness that I could hardly endure it. I have often wondered if others experienced the same thrill of joy that I did, and I guess they did, from the things that have been said and written and sung about it.

We built a big crackling log fire, with a huge backlog, had the hearth as clean as could be, and the tree waiting in all its popcorn glory. We never

---
6. "Slim" is written under an unintelligibly stricken word.
7. Bread made of fried or baked corn meal; usually "corn dodger."
had lights on it as we were afraid to have candles, too much danger of fire. The popcorn, paper chains, stars and flowers were enough. If there had been anything more I'm afraid we couldn't have stood it.

The boys made loose wool balls, soaked them with coal oil, set them on fire and threw them high in the air, so the neighbors could see. They would catch them in their naked hands and then throw them again.

We stood big boards up, and then jumped on them as they went down, so that they would make a loud noise. We usually had firecrackers but no one ever saw them till Christmas morning. Old Chris brought them along with our other gifts.

Mother knit yarn socks and mittens for the boys and our father, then made new balls from old worn out socks ravelled out and wound tight. She made warm mufflers for their necks to keep them warm, and made rag dolls if there was no new ones for we girls. Sometimes she would buy doll heads, the china kind, and put bodies to them, and make clothes for them.

I have had a bought doll with china hands and feet, and once, I remember Sadie and I getting bisque dolls with hair, mine was blonde, hers with brown hair.

Elmo made little wagons with wheels made from a round seasoned pole, with sections sawed off, and a hole bored in the center. Sometimes a shoe box was used for the wagon bed, sometimes it was made of wood. He would also make little wagons, with wheels made from big sewing thread spools, for my little dolls (these really rolled).

Sometimes we got a limber jim that danced on a board, and was lots of fun.8 Sometimes we got a fox and goose board, like a checker board, or a peg board. Cecil made some lately.9

Our socks always had an orange, and some stick candy. A bunch of big soft juicy raisins still on the stem. (I never see that kind now.)

Cookies cut like animals and birds, etc. Mrs. Moore cut them in squares.

---


9. The game is for two players, similar to checkers. One player moves the foxes, the other the geese. The object for the foxes is to capture the geese by jumping them. The geese attempt to hem in the foxes, so they have no where to move. The layout of the board and the details of “moving” and “jumping” are described in Pace and Smith, The Foxfire Book of Appalachian Toys & Games, 37–38. Cecil Eugene Carmack (1904–1984) was Effie’s oldest child.
We always had plenty of music and dancing, with the fiddle, banjo, and guitar, and also plenty of singing.

When a racoon, ground hog, or certain other animals with tough hides, were killed, our dad and the boys tanned the hides and made banjo heads, shoestrings, hame strings, etc. out of them.\textsuperscript{10} It was used to patch shoes too. Our dad put soles and heels on our old shoes when they started wearing out, but I never remember of him using metal shoe brads (tacks) to put them on with. He used a section of seasoned hickory or maple cut in a long wedge shape, and then he split it into little wooden tacks, bored a hole in the sole with an awl, and drove the wooden tack in and hammered it down solid.

Sometimes we got new shoes for Christmas, but I can never remember of feeling sorry for myself if I didn’t, or of feeling disappointed over what I got for Christmas. We always agreed that it was the very best Christmas we had ever had.

There were lots of homemade gadgets. Our dad would take a goose quill and tamp it full of dry and damp gun powder (in different layers), then set it on fire and it would go zigzagging all over the floor; first one direction, then another; it would go slow when it came to the damp powder, then fast when it came to the dry powder.

The boys made whirligigs, a contraption the Indians, and the early pioneers used to start a fire with.\textsuperscript{11}

We had to work so hard all summer and fall that it was a happy relief to have a season of leisure, not all leisure of course, as it took lots of wood, to be chopped and hauled, then chopped again into stick length for the cookstove and the two fireplaces. The stock had to be fed and watered. The cows had to be fed and milked.

But the long evenings were happy times, with songs and music, games and dancing, storytelling and reading.

There was \textit{never} any idle time for my mother, or my older sisters. They were always knitting, piecing quilts, mending, or sewing.

Since I have grown older, and since my mother died (in 1899), when I was thirteen, I have marveled at the way she had adjusted her life to a new way of living. Her mother died when she was three months old,

---

\textsuperscript{10} Hame strings are part of a harness; the traces are fastened to the hame strings.

\textsuperscript{11} These “whirligigs” were also called “smoke grinders.” The point of the toy is placed in a slight depression and a horizontal bar is pumped with two fingers. The twisting motion of the string around the shaft and weight of the wooden disk made the disk spin back and forth in the depression. See “Smoke Grinders,” in Eliot Wigginton, ed. \textit{Foxfire 6}, 229, and “Smoke Grinder,” in \textit{The Foxfire Book of Appalachian Toys and Games}, 190–91, 193.
and the slaves raised her, and they did all the work. It would have been the natural thing for her to have been spoiled.

My dad said that grandpa Johnnie didn’t have a very fine house like his father had, but he always had plenty of money. He sent my mother to boarding school at Castleberry. I have never found who any of her teachers were, and I just know of one of her classmates, Margaret Smith (I think that was her maiden name), she married a Martin.

One time, this Margaret Smith Martin and her daughter came to a funeral at the Armstrong graveyard, near our place, and came on down to our house. She and mother hugged each other and cried. They had been chums in school.

How I do wish my mother had kept a diary, or a book of remembrance. I realize now what a priceless thing they can be.

My mother was certainly not spoiled. She could make good soap, could knit like lightning, was a good quilter, and a wonderful seamstress, could manage to scratch up a good dinner on short notice, and had to do it often, and she kept alive and happy. She and our dad would teach us dance steps of winter evenings.

When the M.I.A. started teaching some of the old dances, like “The Lancers,” “The Cotillion,” “The Mazourka,” “Schottische,” and dozens of old square dance patterns, we children, Sadie, Lelia, and I already knew them, the boys knew them too, of course.

The attic at grandpa Armstrong’s old place was full of relics of a past generation; spinning wheels, a flax reel, parts of an old loom, candle moulds, a red corded bedstead, flax hackles, and many other things. I have just one thing, grandma’s old spinning wheel, and I have Cecil to thank for that.

Cecil had the Agency for certain cars, and one time when he was going to Detroit for a load of cars he ran up to the house the evening before he started and asked me what I wanted him to bring me from the big cities. Canvas, paint, brushes, frames, or whatever?

I told him that if he came back through Kentucky to go to the old Boone Fuller place (he married Aunt Ann’s daughter, Mary Susan) and see if the old spinning wheel was still in the smokehouse there. It was,

---

12. Mutual Improvement Association, a social and educational auxiliary of the Mormon Church open to those age twelve and older. The M.I.A. of earlier decades had more adult participation; today a young person usually "graduates" from the current youth organization at age eighteen.

13. A flax hackle, also called a hatchel, is a comb for dressing flax, raw silk, etc.

14. Nathan Boone Fuller (1854–1942) and Mary Susan Fuller (1858–1940).
and the folks who owned the place cared nothing about it, so I have it now, and will pass it on to some of my children or grandchildren.

My mother has spun the wool and made the thread to knit many a pair of socks and stockings, gloves and mittens. She washed the wool and carded it into rolls ready to spin too.

I don't believe she ever sheared the sheep, the men did that. We had a flock of sheep that furnished the wool too.

The farm families of those days were almost self-sustaining. I think that greatgrandmother, Jane Brasher Armstrong, used this same spinning wheel that I have now. I think that it was used before the Civil War, and probably long before that.

Sadie and Lelia tell me that mother did weave the cloth for their linsey wool dresses that they wore every winter, and of Sundays, or when they wanted to dress up. They put a white apron on over it; I suppose sleeveless and low necked.

We were always closely connected with the school, as the teachers usually boarded at our place, that is the lady teachers. Before I was old enough to go Miss Lizzie Owen boarded with us. I think that was the year I was four. When I was five Miss Vie Brasher boarded with us, and I went to school a few days. The older children’s school books were always around, and Etta had taught me to read before I was old enough to go to school. The first lesson was, “See Rob (a dog), see Ann, see Rob has Ann’s hat.”

My first teacher was Mr. Morgan, James Morgan, a good kind man, who never once spoke a cross word to me, and I loved him.¹⁵ It was during Mr. Morgan’s term of school that I awoke one morning late, and nothing seemed natural. Mammy was not in the kitchen, as she usually was at that time of morning. A strange old woman hurried through the room, going into the kitchen for something, and I could see the blind was pulled partly down in the front room. I could hear my mother’s voice, as if she was in pain, and I was terribly worried, but no one paid any attention to me. I wondered if Mammy was going to die, like Mrs. Simpson had. It was one of the worst days that I can remember. Finally, some of them came, and told me that I had a little baby brother, Autie (named Charles); the baby was a big bouncer, with a long upper lip, and a short lower one.

While he was still a tiny baby, he would cling onto Pappy’s forefinger so tight that he could lift him up by them. About two weeks from that time Vera was born (Lelia’s baby).¹⁶ Lelia stayed at our place, and I can still remember how Autie and Vera looked. Vera had a kind of down or

¹⁵. Effie may be referring to James W. Morgan (b. 1867) according to the 1880 census.
¹⁶. This is Vera Alice Ferrell (1891–1927), already mentioned.
fuzz on her face, giving her face a soft look, as if it was powdered, and her hair came down in a little point on her forehead. She was just darling.

Lelia was at our place a great deal, and Vera was like our own baby. After she could walk, she stayed with us most of the time, it seems to me. She never said Grandma and Grandpa, they were “Autie’s Mammy, and Autie’s Pappy.” She was about four years old when Norman was born. Lelia would come walking to our place carrying the baby. Vera would be away behind, walking slowly, and humming to herself. Her cheeks were as red as apples.

When Vera and Autie could just walk they had a crazy habit of putting some chairs together in the middle of the floor, and running around them, keeping step and humming a little melody. As soon as Vera would get there she would say, “Ottie, yes, you and I yum a yound,” and they would be off again, sort of an endurance test.

Pappy made a jumper for Autie, and he would jump till he would fall asleep. No one had to tend him very much, as he enjoyed the jumper, and entertained himself. He was a good child, and grew fast into a big strong boy, and, as I was a little scrawny girl, small for my age, there was not as much difference in our size as there was in our years. We had lots of fun playing together.

One silly thing I liked to do was keep him from seeing me. The old house was L shaped, with the two big log rooms, the front room and Mammie’s room in front, and the dining room and kitchen running back of Mammy’s room, so we had quite a bit of territory to hide behind. He was free to throw at me if he could see me, but I wasn’t the least afraid of him hitting me. One day we were playing this same game. He had borrowed Pappy’s knife, and was trimming a forked stick for a flipper. He had sat down on the jutting bottom rocks of the chimney, whittling and watching for me to come around the south corner. When I surprised him at the north corner it scared him. He started to throw his stick, and in his haste he threw the knife instead. It was sharp pointed, keen as a razor, and he threw it hard. The blade went into the big part of my left leg, clear up to the handle, and stuck there. It didn’t hurt hardly at all, and didn’t bleed. Autie ran for the orchard, and I went to the porch and sat down. Mammy came and pulled it out. I almost fainted, not from pain, but because it scared me, I guess. It was not so very long in getting well, but while it was healing up seven boils came around it.

18. A flipper is a slingshot.
We called and called for Autie, and looked for him, but he didn't show up until nearly dark. He was sure that he had about finished me. They were sorry for him, and didn't even scold him, for they knew that it was an accident.

Sadie and I were alike in some things, but entirely different in others. She was very feminine, afraid of cows, dogs, and mules. She was afraid of any kind of a dog, just so it could bark. Cousin Alec Ferrell had a little old bench legged fiste,19 not much bigger than a cat, and Sadie would even run from it, and when he could get someone on the run he was supremely happy, and did his part of the chasing. I think it was William who saw her going lickety split down across the field one day with that little fiste doing his best to keep up, till she reached a tall rail fence and took refuge. He teased her unmercifully about it, and said that that rail fence was all that saved her.

Sadie was even afraid of a quiet old milk cow, and would take to the bushes at the sight of one. We had an old mule, named Hunter, that had almost as much sense as some people. He could untie hard knots with his teeth, could let the bars down, and could unlatch most any gate. If he ever failed in opening gates or bars, he always managed to get over the fence somehow. He could jump any fence, even the high one our Dad had built around the horse lot. He couldn't endure to be confined. He would have been in perfect tune with the song "Don't fence me in."

Old Hunter knew that Sadie was afraid of him, and never let a chance slip by to tease her. If he saw her go to the well for a bucket of water, he would travel a mile, and jump several fences to head her off on her way to the house with her water. When she saw him coming she would set her bucket down, fly for the nearest sycamore thicket, and climb a sapling. He would kind of wink, smile, lay back his ears, switch his tail, and graze around the bush where she was perched. He usually drank a little out of her water bucket, and stayed close enough to keep her treed. If she stayed a little too long, when she went for water, we always knew what was the matter. It was a great joke in the family, when we would go out far enough to see her up the bush, and Old Hunter on guard to keep her from coming down. If she started down, he would run up with his ears laid back, threaten to turn his heels, and squeal a little. She hastily retreated back up the sapling, as high as she could.

Old Hunter would never think of chasing anyone else in the family, not even Autie or I. He enjoyed chasing Sadie because he could make her run so easily.

---

19. Usually spelled "feist"; any small dog of mixed breed.
Although she was afraid of things, when it was necessary she would swallow her fear and come to the rescue. One time, when Dolly had a new calf, and Mama was milking her, Sadie and I came to see the little calf. Old Bruno, the dog, came and stood beside me. Dolly didn’t like the dog so near her calf, and she lowered her head, lolled her tongue, and started towards us. Sadie grabbed her by the horns and stopped her.

Years after that Sadie and Lelia were going to town in separate buggies. Lelia was back of Sadie’s horse and buggy. The old black mare Lelia was driving became frightened of something and came tearing around Sadie’s vehicle. Sadie made a leap and grabbed the runaway by her bridle bits and swung on till she got her stopped. In emergencies her fears seemed to leave her. Lelia sympathized with her in being afraid of things, and it aggravated her because I was not afraid. She said, “Some people just don’t have sense enough to be afraid.”

I was not afraid of anything, only snakes, and I was not afraid enough of a blue racer to run from them. They were like Old Hunter. They would chase you if you’d run, but if you just stood your ground, threw a rock, or got a stick, they would go the other way.

There was one other thing I was afraid of, too. It was Jim Williams’ bull, because I had heard the folks say how dangerous he was. And this brings to my mind the very first time I ever prayed. I was going to Aunt Fannie’s, and was taking a shortcut through some tall weeds, when I heard him bellowing, and it sounded like he was between me and Aunt Fannie’s. I knelt in the path and asked the Lord to please make him go the other way. I waited for a while, and could hear my heart beating. Then I heard him baying away up the creek, in the other direction. I knelt again, and thanked God for answering my petition. My faith in prayer, and in the protection of a kind Heavenly Father was made stronger by this incident and my fear of even Williams’ bull was softened a little.

Sadie and I were both tomboys, full of energy and interest in life. She was the best runner in school, and she and John walked the fences for miles, even the picket fence around the garden. They made stilts so tall they had to get on them from the top of the big gate.

Sadie and Evert had a mare they called Daisy. Sadie would drive her to town hitched to the buggy. One day, as she started to cross a bridge that had a loose piece of lumber in the floor of it, Daisy got her foot hung, or something happened, that caused her to not want to go across that bridge anymore. But, if Sadie would get out and go and knock

---

20. Evert Holt (1882-1956) married Alzada “Sadie” Marquess on December 12, 1900. Sadie was Effie’s sister.
around with a hammer, and pretend to fix it, she would cross it O. K. with considerable shying.

One day Evert was with her and she balked when they got to the bridge. Sadie told him that she could manage it, but Evert said that that was foolishness, he was going to make her cross it without all that silly poppycock. He whipped her, and she reared, and nearly turned the buggy over. At long last Evert had to let Sadie pretend she fixed the broken plank, and then she had to lead her across. The rough treatment had her nerves on edge.

Sadie also had a rooster and a cat that were great friends. They stayed together all the time, and seemed to talk to each other.

Sadie saved her clabber milk for the chickens and pigs. One day we went away, and when we got within hearing distance of the back yard we could hear her little chickens making distressed cries, streak, streak, and when we came to the back gate the cat had heard the chickens too, and was looking over the rim of the big bucket of clabber, and the little chickens were in it, and of course could not get out.

Cats will often eat little chickens, and Sadie said let's wait a minute and see what it would do. It reached its right front paw down, got it under the little chicken and scooped it up and over the edge of the bucket. It continued till it rescued every one of them, and then proceeded to lick the clabber off of them.

Evert had an old dog named Rex, too, that loved one of the horses. I can't remember just what it was that happened to the horse, anyway, it was hurt and died, and old Rex would not leave the carcass after they drug it off, but stayed there for days, and kept the buzzards away from it. Stayed without food or water, till Evert supplied it.

In the early days of our sojourn at grandpa Armstrong's old house we had a pet squirrel too, and it was unusually smart and cute, but it became a little too smart. It was continually sneaking things and taking them up to its nest on the shoulder of the chimney; balls of yarn, thimbles, the unfinished sock, the knitting needles. Whenever anything was missing they could guess where to find it. Sometimes, when it didn't get its way it would bite, and it had sharp teeth, too.

We had a pair of pet doves, also, named Romeo and Juliette, that were real interesting, they were gentle and sweet, and we learned why they have been used as a symbol of peace and purity.

So, we became familiar with many of our wild friends, and learned of their ways, and dispositions. We didn't have to tame the partridges. They built their nests in the wood pile, and we looked forward to the little ones hatching out. They do not have a period of helpless infancy, like many young things, but are ready to run around as soon as they are hatched.
The Whip-poor-wills came and sat on the doorstep at night and gave his plaintive call. We found that they turn *around* and *around* while they say *whip-poor-will, whip-poor-will*.

There is another evening bird almost like the Whip-poor-will, but with a different song. We called them Bull bats, an ugly name. They would catch mosquitoes of an evening, and if we threw a stick or a rock up they would dive to the ground after it.

It was about this time that cousin Boone Fuller and his family moved away over on the Princeton road, on another of Dr. Woods’ farms. Our visits, of necessity, became fewer, and farther between, but how we did enjoy them when they came.

I remember them coming over once. Bert and Otho stayed a few days, and we were going home with them. As the men were busy with the horses, on the farm, we were going to walk. I don’t remember how far it was, probably three or four miles, but to me it seemed a long glorious trip. I didn’t mind it one bit. We would take a lunch, walk slow, and rest along the way, as Autie was a little fellow. We made us some pop guns to take along, made from a joint of alder (we called it elder), with a stick of hardwood. There would be plenty of dogwood berries and sassafras berries all along the way to shoot in them.

We children were anxious to get started, but there were many last minute things to be done before Mammy could leave home. Autie, the baby boy, was a great attraction for the boys, and everything that he said was funny to them. We children were all ready to go so we went out to sit on the wood pile while we waited. Autie said to Bert, “I telle what le’s do, le’s be a strikin’ on.” The boys laughed till the tears came, and retold this to their parents when we got there. At last our Mammy was ready, and we struck out.

The road led down through our fields, across the creek, and up the bottoms to Uncle Lawrence’s, up the hill to the lane, that turned south by cousin Filmore’s and Mr. Owen’s. There we left the highway, and turned southeast by Weavers’, then across the woods by Lee Witty’s, and then it was not so very far on to cousin Boone’s. Their place was in that section called south Christian, where the country ceases to be hilly and rocky, and stretches out into smooth green distances.\(^\text{21}\)

We kept our pockets well filled with berries to shoot. Found wildflowers along the way, discovered new kinds of birds, stopped to rest, and ate our lunch. We took turns carrying Autie on our backs when his baby legs grew tired. The last stretch of road led through a big woods, to a gate,

\(^{21}\) This describes the southern border of the Western Coal Fields region and the beginning of the Western Pennyrile region. See U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, *Soil Survey of Christian County, Kentucky*, 2.
and from there on south as far as we could see it was cleared and level, and
the wagon road led down through the fields to cousin Boone's house.

There were many interesting things when we got there. Big straw
stacks to play on, and big hay lofts. A giant tobacco barn, with lots of spar­
row nests up under the rafters, and a row of big maple trees, from the
house to the barn, to climb. Old threshing machines, and other farm
implements to climb over. Big old turkey gobblers that gobbled every
time we hollered at them. A fiddle and a banjo that the boys could play
tunes on. Cousin Boone was a fiddler, and he let the boys practice on his
fiddle when they wanted to.

Besides the things mentioned, there was lots of laughter, and kind­
ness. I don't remember of ever hearing cross or angry words from any of
this family. They were always glad to see us, and there was always plenty of
good food, so it's no wonder the memory of it is pleasant.

Aunt Ann fussed around, and watched we children pretty close, for
fear we would climb too high, and maybe fall, and break an armer leg. "We
don't have any of that kind of legs granny," the boys would say, giggling.

There were lots of tree frogs in the maples, just the color of the
bark, and when we would happen to step on one accidently, they were
cold, even in hot weather.

We would go to the fields, where Leonard and Genie were working,
so we could ride the big old mules back to the house.

Bert and Other [Otho] had several little wagons they had made,
with wheels they had found on the old worn out farm implements, and
we would take turns pulling each other in them. When Other was tired of
pulling, he would run up the bank at the side of the road and make us
think it was going to turn over. It really would sometimes, but they were
so low we didn't have far to fall, and it didn't hurt us.

Once, when we went to visit them, cousin Mary said the boys were
all working over in the old Doyle fields. I wanted to know the way, as I was
anxious to go where they were. She said to go up to the big gate, and there
was a road leading due west through another big gate, and another
stretch of big woods, and I would find the Doyle fields. So I started out
bravely. To the first big gate was easy, as it was in sight of the house. The
stretch of big woods to the next gate was lonely, and it was much farther
than I thought it would be. After awhile I was afraid I had taken the
wrong road, and was lost, as the road led on and on. Then a terrible
sound began echoing through the woods, an awful blood curdling sound,
a jumble of wails and cries all mixed together. I imagined it sounded like
wolves, although I had never heard a wolf. I was scared stiff, and ran with
all my might. After a while a clearing showed through the trees, and I
could see the boys ploughing. I told them of the awful noise, and Genie
got on his mule to go and see if he could find what it was.
The road through the woods was not very far from the highway, and on this highway (the Princeton road) there was a Negro church. A child had died, and what I had heard was the mourners. They must have been doing a real job of mourning, from the noise that was coming through the woods. I had had no idea there was a church in ten miles of me.

We went back to the field, and I had my first experience in plowing that afternoon. I ploughed up some corn, and let the mule tramp on some more, but anyway, I did some ploughing, about my first, and my last.

There was an old negro man and woman who lived on that place, and we went to see if we could get some eggs for cousin Mary. The man was greasing his boots when we got there. He had already greased his face. Aunt Cindy, the negro woman, was doubling her sheets and pillow cases and putting them between her feather bed and straw bed, so it would make them smooth, and she would not have to iron them. She was a big fat woman, with very large breasts and tummy. She told us that a fox had killed a hen that had been setting on some eggs, so she was keeping them warm by carrying them under her breasts. She raised one and showed us, and sure enough there they were, and there didn’t seem to be any danger of them falling out either. I have wondered lots of times since then what did she do with them at night, surely she didn’t keep them there while she slept.

Cousin Mary thought our religion was being neglected. Religion, according to her idea, consisted of going to church and singing. Ours was a different brand.

One time I stayed a week at cousin Mary’s. When Sunday was coming she starched and ironed my dress, made me a new petticoat with lace on the edge, and tucks above the lace. Sunday morning we trudged our way to Brick Church to Sunday School.22

Brother Spurlin, an old man with a white beard, who had been pastor there for many years, conducted the exercises.23 He chewed tobacco, and between every sentence he would spit. It seemed he was not as good a spitter as some tobacco chewers I have seen, who could hit a knot hole ten feet away. His tobacco juice seemed to fly in all directions. He talked a great deal of hell fire and damnation.

When cousin Mary asked me if I liked the Sunday school, I said yes, but really, I was not very much impressed. I did like the singing, though.

Not long after that Etta went to cousin Mary’s to stay for awhile, and Brother Whittenbraker was holding a protracted meeting.24 They attended

---

22. Brick Church is 3.8 miles from Hopkinsville on Princeton Road.
24. Brother Whittenbraker could not be identified.
regularly, and Etta decided to be baptized. Cousin Mary was happy. They all loved Etta very much, and I guess she thought she had saved her. We went to the baptizing, and after Etta waded out in the water I noted she stumbled, and nearly fell down. After the baptism was over, and she was out, she said that a snake wrapped around her legs.

We watched pretty close for a while to see if there was any noticeable change in Etta after she got religion. One day she tried to chase the old cat out with the broom, and instead of going out she scooted upstairs, as the stair door was standing open a little. Etta said, “You infernal old huzzy,” and we told her if she didn’t watch out she’d lose all of her religion. She felt bad, cried a little, and said that we expected her to be perfect. She just thought she ought to be baptized, as the Bible says we ought. We apologized, and told her that we were just joking.

There was one thing we couldn’t side with Brother Whittenbraker on. He was always talking about what a terrible sin dancing was. Even the fiddle was a wicked instrument, and was of the devil.

We were a generation of dancers and fiddlers, and didn’t feel like awful sinners either. It was pretty hard to believe that the devil was in the fiddle. We could agree with him as to drinking, gambling, and swearing.

After Etta was baptized, the folks began to think more about religion, and to read the Bible more. According to the Baptist belief, that she had embraced, she would go to Heaven, and the rest of us would all go to hell, unless we were baptized by a Baptist minister.

Papa said that the more that he studied the question, and the more that he read the Bible, the more determined he was not to join any of the churches around us. He said they didn’t teach the same things Jesus taught. If he ever found one that did teach the same religion, that is described in the New Testament, he would accept it, but that so far he had not found it.

Cousin Filmore Smith had been going to Brick Church, and he and Cousin Serena, and their two children, Lawrence and Worthy, would come over quite often, and the topic of conversation became religion.25 The more they read the scriptures, the more they decided that most of the denominations were far from the way the Savior had taught.

One thing was clear. In the Savior’s time, He and His disciples had preached free. He told them plainly, on one occasion, that they had received the Gospel free, and to see that they gave it to others free.26

Cousin Fil said that it was possible that, this being an entirely different time, maybe it required a different method. But they found a little

26. See, for example, Matthew 10:8.
later on that the Lord had said, “If any man, or even an angel from Heaven, should teach any other Gospel than that which He had taught them, they would be accursed.”27 He also said that His Church was founded on Apostles and Prophets, so if it was to be the same forever it looked like if we ever found the Church we were looking for it would have to have Apostles and Prophets.28

Every time we got together, while we stripped tobacco, or on Sundays, or on long winter evenings, the subject of religion was discussed back and forth without ever coming to anything definite, except this one thing. None of the churches around us were teaching the same Gospel that the Savior taught. So, if Etta's baptism had done nothing else, it had started up an epidemic of investigation, and of reading the scriptures.

Although I was a small child at this time, not more than eight or nine years old, I listened to every word of their discussions, and it seems to me that my judgment then was clearer on a lot of things than it is now. I felt like I knew whether anyone was sincere or not. Whether or not they were telling the truth.

Many times after one of their long discussions I would sit in the half darkness of the old stairsteps, with my rag doll in my arms, and Mammy's old soft brown shawl around me, and think over all they had said, and of the scriptures they had read. I recalled again and again a prayer that Brother Whittenbraker had prayed over at cousin Filmore's one Sunday afternoon. A special prayer. We all knelt around our chairs. I kept thinking that it didn't sound genuine, that he was just trying to impress us. I wondered if it was mean of me to think that.

I had not been to church many times, and the occasional chapters that Mammy read to us from the Bible was about the limit of my knowledge of religion. Except, of course, the everyday life that was ground into us unconsciously. We must never say the name of the Lord, and we must never swear, even on the most solemn occasions. If we wanted to convince [between this page and the next is a drawing by Effie with the caption “The Old Swimming Hole”; see page 176] anyone of our truthfulness, and they would not believe us, the very last resort was to say, “I'll swear it's the truth,” or “I'll swear I will do it.” That was convincing, for to swear a lie would have been an unforgivable sin, and we didn't do it. When we swore a thing it could be depended on.

I don't know whether we kept the Sabbath Holy or not, but one thing sure we didn't work. Pappy said that there was never anything

---

27. A paraphrase of Galatians 1:8: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

28. See, for example, Luke 11:49.
gained by working on Sunday, that we would probably waste more time through the week than we put in on Sunday, and if we would work real hard the six days, we would be ready to rest when the seventh day came, and would need it.

We were a happy bunch, at least we children were happy, and if our parents were unhappy we certainly never knew of it. I have wondered how our mother could possibly have done all that she had to do, stay cheerful, and not lose her patience.

The times when the water ran so low in the spring that we had to take the washing to the creek, seems like a picnic to me, but it must have been quite a task for her. When she got ready to move the washing to the creek, we started packing things down there. The old iron kettle was turned over someone’s head, another would take the old wooden tubs (usually half of a barrel), another would take the clothes, soap, matches, lunch, etc.

We always had horses, mules, and wagons, but I can never remember the washing or tubs and kettle being hauled to the creek in the wagon. Probably the season in which we had to go to the creek to wash was the times when they were using the teams in the fields. The work in the fields was the important thing.

I can remember that I looked forward to washing at the creek with as much joy as I do a vacation now. I hunted for wood to go under the kettle, punched the clothes, dipped water to fill tubs, and was general flunky. Between times, I hunted flowers, sugar haws, black haws, or built little chimneys of the rocks on the creek bank, or fed crumbs to the swarms of little fish that would come waving their little tails up to the bank to eat.

One day I had started gathering buckeyes, a peculiar nutlooking growth, that grew five or six together in a big burr. When it dried, and they fell out, they were as smooth and slick as a button with an eye on one side, making its name very appropriate. There was a buckeye tree growing on the bank just above the wash kettle. It was bent over, and was very easy to climb. I was up in it, filling my apron with the smooth odd shaped nuts. Suddenly I heard Mammy, in a voice a little too calm say, “Effie, sit right still, and don’t move for a minute, and don’t be scared.”

I saw Mammy looking around hurriedly for something on the ground, and wondered what she was doing. I had just picked up most of the loose sticks lying around for wood, so, not being able to find anything else, she reached down by the kettle and got a burning chunk, came over to the tree and whacked a big copper head snake on his pate. It was not

29. Buckeyes are the podded seed of any of several shrubs or trees, resembling the horse chestnut, of the genus *Aesculus*, (esp. *Aesculus glabra*).
more than six inches from my bare feet. He fell to the ground with a thud. I spilled my buckeyes, and almost fell out of the tree.

Mammy had just happened to see him going up the tree where I was sitting. I had not seen him, I was too busy with my buckeyes. The rest of the time we were down there, that day, every twig that moved, I jumped, and I didn’t wade in the weeds looking for wild flowers that day, any more.

I can remember yet just how good the buttermilk biscuits and bacon, or biscuits, butter and blackberry jam tasted, when we got ready to eat our lunch on washday.

We hung the clothes on bushes inside the field, as there was danger of cows chewing them if hung on the creek bank. We had to put the wooden tubs high up on a bank and fill them with water. Although there was plenty of clean running water, if we left a tub down where the cows could get to it they would leave the creek and drink the tub dry. Then the tubs would be ready to fall to staves, and would not hold water until filled again and soaked up.

No park, even with expensive swimming pools, diving boards, etc. could have been any more pleasure than that deep shady creek. In fact, it was a trifle too shady, and as the big hill was on the south side of it, with giant trees all along the south bank, the water was cold, even in the hottest weather.

There was one hole, where the foot log was located, just east of the bars, where they brought the horses and mules through to water them. That place was exposed to the sun, as at this point there was a meadow on the south side of the creek. The only cultivated spot on that side anywhere along our stretch of the creek, so that was the favorite swimming hole for we girls.

The boys found the deeper holes farther down the creek more to their liking. What a luxury, after a long hot dusty day of plowing in the fields, to take a plunge in the cool running water, that was always as clear as crystal, with the bottom floored with clean, bright colored pebbles, keeping the water from becoming muddy, even when we played in it for hours. It spoiled me, for when I’ve seen children go in an old muddy pond, or a ditch of water, or some old stagnant pool where there was danger of cutting their feet on glass or cans, I felt like they were pretty poverty stricken for a swimming pool, as my ideal was a clear running stream with gravel for a floor.

After the Morris folks moved in the house that was located where our country lane joined the public highway, called the Buttermilk Road, that led from Hopkinsville to Dawson Springs, a new and interesting chapter was added to our lives. Before, all I had to play with was boys, as the three families of cousins that were my playmates were all boys. Cousin Narcissy Cook’s baby was a girl, Essie, the only girl they had. Aunt Helen’s
only girl died when a baby, and cousin Mary Susan had no girls. So, when the Morrises moved near with a large family, all girls, it was not very long till some friendships were formed that were to last all through life.

The Morrises were a good family, clean and intelligent, with high ideals, and as luck was on our side, not over zealous in any of the narrow religions of the surrounding neighborhood, that were so prejudiced against music and dancing.

John and Elmo were both good singers and dancers, both could play the guitar, and sing with it. We had a sort of mania for learning every song afloat, so our place grew increasingly popular, as the boys grew to young manhood.

The ball park was not far from our place, and the croquet yard was in a little glade between our place and Mr. Moore’s. Every weekend, and especially Sunday afternoons, there was always plenty of company there.

The Morris family had two girls about my age. Maud, a little younger than myself, Leona, a little older. Then there was Laura, Sadie’s age, and Fanny and Olive, a little older. There was also a widowed sister, Mary Miller. She and her two children, Kate and Ivis, lived with them, also.30

We became fast friends, and the joys and sorrows of each family was shared by the other. We visited often, and Maud and Leona, and Sadie and I, often stayed all night at each other’s homes. Our parents were very lenient, allowing us to stay up late and carouse as long as we liked, but Mrs. Morris had some strict laws that were enforced with a vim. One of them was that we had to be in bed before nine o’clock, and if there was any giggling after we were in bed, we certainly had to keep it smothered, or we would hear the voice of authority, “Leony, I don’t want to hear any more of that now, shut up and go to sleep.” We usually obeyed.

Maud and I always had to wash dishes, and we drew straws to see which one of us would wash and which would dry them. We both wanted to wash them, but took whatever we got.

Mr. Morris kept the Post Office, called Larkin, and a little grocery in the same building, so there were never many days passed without our seeing each other.

Their lives and ours became very closely interwoven. Maud and I sat in the same seat at school for seven years. The first year I went, she was not old enough to go. Jim Morgan was the teacher. We sat on long planks for seats, without any backs to lean against, with our books lying beside

30. The Morris children were Maud (1886–1915); Leona (1883–1970); Laura (1877–1959); Francis (1875–1958); Olive (1872–1953); and Mary (1869–1910). Mary married Juatt Ivison Miller. Kate never married. Ivis married Fred Marquess and had one daughter, Allie Marquess Gilliland Davis.
us. There was one huge desk up in front, four or five feet wide. As I remember it it seems to me that it was ten or twelve feet long, and real high, but maybe it just seemed enormous to my small childish mind. The older pupils kept their books and slates, etc., in it, and sat up there when it was necessary to write or cipher.

Mr. Morgan taught all of the eight grades. He was a kind teacher. When school was out it was a great grief to me to think that we might not see him anymore. I loved him, and blubbered freely when he told us all goodbye. That was my first year of school, but I had learned to read, write, and spell at home before I was six.

There was a spelling match, the last day of school, and I stood up to spell with the others. Etta and I were standing together. The pupils formed a line all around the building against the wall. Of course he gave little easy words to children like myself. When a pupil missed a word they dropped out and took a seat.

At the last I was still standing with the few older champions. Mr. Morgan knew my capacity and gave me words he knew that I could spell, but at last there were only three of us left standing. The two champion spellers of the older group, and I of the little easy words.

The word was *gourd*, a catch word that we had talked of at home, and I had learned to spell it. The two older spellers were not familiar with it. The first one spelled *goard*, the other hesitated, as there was only one trial. At last he spelled it *gordo*. They both sat down, and I was left standing alone. Mr. Morgan said, “Effie, do you think you could spell gourd?” I sailed through it triumphantly. A loud cheer went up, and Mr. Morgan came and patted me on the back, held me up and said, “Here is our school’s champion speller.”

I was scared, didn’t enjoy it very much, and hardly knew what it was all about, as that was the first spelling match I had ever taken part in. It was followed by many, many others. We specialized in spelling till I was sure I could spell any word in the English language. We gloried in such words as immateriality, hypochondriacal, and elephantiasis. We knew all the small catch words like mullein, phthisic, gourd, and separate.

Often, when we had spelled all the hardest words in the spelling book the teacher would have us give the definitions, and the synonyms, or would switch to the geography, and give us names of countries, cities, and rivers.

A spelling match was fun when you knew how to spell all the words, but I remember one time when I got rattled, and my brain refused to function. When the teacher gave out the word *once*, I couldn’t remember ever hearing it before, it sounded foreign and strange. It was funny to the poor spellers to see one of the champions stumped on a common everyday word of four letters. They giggled and whispered, and the teacher
even smiled, but no one gave me a clue. After a painful silence, the teacher insisted that I give it a trial anyway. I made a stab at it and said $wu\ n\ tz$. I could never figure out what caused that lapse of memory, but later on in life, when I suffered a serious shock, I had a recurrence of this same thing, only more serious.

Now that I am nearing sixty (1944), I am not so sure of my spelling. I often find myself debating whether it is ei or ie, or whether a simple word begins with e or i, or if there are two l's or one.

I don't believe we were as thoroughly drilled on words and their meanings as the generation before us. Lelia studied the dictionary as a regular textbook, and it has stayed with her through life. It is hard today to find a word that she doesn't know the meaning of.

We hear lots said of the "Little Red Schoolhouse," where all eight grades were taught by one teacher, but somehow we managed to absorb a lot of things. I learned as much, or more, from hearing the older ones recite their lessons than I did from my own studies, all but English. I loved the poems, the stories, etc., that were in Sadie's and Lelia's grammar books, but the intricate rules of grammar, and rhetoric just wouldn't take on me, and never did.

Sadie specialized in English grammar, and was expert at parsing and diagramming. I managed to get through somehow, by memorizing, to me, senseless things, that didn't stay with me till they got cold. Right now I don't suppose I could name the parts of speech, or tell what an adverb is. I think I do know what a noun or pronoun is, but that's about the extent of my grammar.

The secret of my ignorance of grammar was the fact that for a year or two, when I should have been laying a foundation for grammar, there was no one in that class but myself, and the teacher didn't have the time or inclination to have a class for just one pupil.

Then, when we got a new teacher she put me in a class that was two or three years ahead of me. I had no idea what they were talking about, and I guess I never did find out.

I really think that in conversation and writing my English was as good or better than many who were far ahead of me in the intricacies of grammar.

We did learn the diacritics, the marks that showed the different sounds of the letters. They have not been taught to my children. A self-pronouncing Bible, or other book, would not be of any advantage to them, as they have no idea what a broad A, or an Italian A means.

31. Effie began writing the autobiography about 1943. She would often parenthetically note the year in which she was writing.
Another thing we learned, that my children have not, was the names of the bones and muscles of the body. We could name every bone in the body from temporal in the forehead, straight on down to the bones of the toes, without a bobble.

We studied a little book called, “The House I Live In,”32 before we got to serious physiology, which taught us the, then, newly discovered knowledge of the harm of tobacco, coffee, tea, and alcoholic drinks to the body. Today, leading doctors are paid fabulous prices to publish statements saying that they have discovered that tobacco, specially cigarettes, are positively not the least injurious to the heart, and many gullible people, who want to, believe it.

Our physiology book said that there was a certain type of heart disease, called tobacco heart, that was caused by the use of tobacco. Of course it was true, and is true, but the tobacco trust, who cares for nothing but money, would rather we would believe a lie, and tear our bodies down. They don’t care for the welfare of humanity, only money. Doctors, who also place the love of money above the love of humanity, are hired to publish the lies to deceive the human race, so that more cigarettes will be sold.

In this, and some other things, we have gone backward instead of forward. They are using the increase of knowledge, not for the betterment of mankind, but for selfish purposes that result in the degradation of mankind, not knowing, poor fools, that they also will fall into the pit they have dug for others, while they who do the smallest thing for the uplift of others, will themselves be lifted up.

I can remember a few times when I didn’t mind my mother, with some disastrous results. She was not very strong on harsh punishment, in fact I can remember the few times she spanked me, or the one time; and one slap is all I can remember from my father.

32. Effie is probably referring to Eli F. Brown’s, The House I Live In; Or, an Elementary Physiology for Children in the Public Schools (Cincinnati: Van Antwerp, Bragg and Co., 1887).

33. This refers to the American Tobacco Company (or Trust) which was commanding the tobacco trade of virtually every major industrialized country. According to a commentary published in the Century Magazine of March 1903, “No amount of protestation convinces the tobaccoists that the score or more of the new, well-equipped, expensively located stores which, under one name, have sprung up like mushrooms all over New York and many other large cities of the country are not trust stores operated by persons in the employ of the trust and designed solely to carry out the veiled intention of that organization to control the tobacco trade from the planter’s field to the smoker’s pocket.” See George Buchanan Fife, “The So-Called Tobacco Trust,” Century Magazine 65 (March 1903): 793. See also Rick Gregory, “‘The Godless Trust’: The Effect of the Growth of Monopoly in the Tobacco Industry on Black Patch Tobacco Farmers, 1890–1914,” Essays in Economic and Business History 10 (1992): 183–91.
An old log barn for smoking tobacco “still in use in some of the rural districts.” From Scherffiuss “Tobacco” (1907), plate XIII.

Someone had put a ladder up to the low eaves of the big old tobacco barn. The roof near the edge was almost flat, and looked very inviting. John and Elmo ran up the ladder in their play, and were chasing each other freely across the roof. Autie, my little brother (I was taking care of him), wanted to get up there so bad. I went and asked Mammy if I could take him up there just a few minutes, but she said firmly, “No sir, you must not.” He was just learning to crawl, and was very active. I was awfully disappointed.
It's funny how very much children want to do a thing sometimes, when it doesn't seem to amount to anything to older folks.

Autie and I played around in the shade of the apple trees for a while, and then went back to the ladder. I took him up a step or two, and sat with him on my lap. He was delighted to be up so high and clapped his chubby little hands in delight, so I took him up a few more steps. There was the edge of the roof just even with my shoulder. Right then I had no intention of getting up on the roof with him, but I thought I would just sit him on the edge, stand on the ladder and hold him tight. There couldn't possibly be any harm in that. It was no worse than sitting on the ladder. About the time I got him planted on the edge of the roof, Mammy came to the woodpile for some stovewood and spied me. To her it looked like willful disobedience, and I could see by all the outward signs that retribution was going to be swift and terrible.

Mammy stopped on the way long enough to break a switch from a peach tree. If I could have explained that we were just sitting on the ladder, and that I was just going to let him sit on the edge just a minute, while I stood on the ladder and held him; but there was no time to explain anything. I had barely reached the ground when the peach tree limb began to descend on my bare legs.

"Can't depend on you to even take care of the baby a few minutes. You'll get his neck broke the next thing. I told you not to put him up there," etc. That was my first lesson on the wages of sin.

The next case of disobedience was at school. The news reached Mammy that we children were see-sawing on top of an old ten rail fence, and she promptly put her foot down on it. She said that a decent see-saw was all right, but with nothing but an old rail as a teeter totter, and it placed so high that it was dangerous. There was danger of our breaking an arm or a leg. The other children's mothers didn't know about it, so they went gaily ahead with the see-sawing project. Inez Armstrong went home and got her daddy's axe to cut the small saplings that were in the way, so the small sharp stubs were left sticking up out of the ground where they were cut.34 At first I didn't do any see-sawing, but just kind of helped out.

Then one day during a noon recess there was a rail and only one girl, with no one to sit on the other end to balance her, so I thought just this once wouldn't hurt. Up and down we went, till suddenly, when I was in midair, and the other girl was on the ground, the warpy old rail turned and I hit the ground with a wallop, right on those sharp stubbles. Several

34. Inez Armstrong (1888–1917), daughter of Benjamin Phillip Armstrong (1856–1911) and Leona Wilson Gresham (1868–1911).
of them gouged me, but one stuck to the bone in my shin, and hurt terri-
ibly. I didn’t say much about it, and Mammy didn’t notice it for a day or
two. In fact, it didn’t make a very big place, just stuck straight in. It healed
over in a little while, but still ached.

One night, later on, when I was staying with Mrs. Moore, I woke in
the night, started to straighten my legs out, and could not straighten the
right one. In the morning my shin was swollen up in a big round hump,
and I had a fever. Charlie Cook came by, stopped, and said maybe he had
better carry me home. Mammy was worried when we got there, and I had
to tell her the whole see-saw story.

I didn’t go to school anymore that term, but had to sit with my foot
propped up on a pillow, with poultices and plasters on my shin. A piece of
the stubble had stuck in the bone, and caused an infection. It was months
getting well.

The following summer, I was taking the clothes to the creek on a
little old homemade wheelbarrow, made of new, rough lumber. I was
running with them, as fast as I could, when the wheel dropped into a
hole, stopping the wheel stock still. I went over the top, hitting my sore
shin on a corner of the rough lumber frame, causing another season of
inactivity.

This was the only sickness I can remember having, besides colds in
the winter, and chills in the fall. When I started yawning and stretching in
school, and feeling chilly, when the others were sweating, I knew what was
coming. The teacher could usually tell when a chill was coming, as a
child’s lips turned blue, and the face took on a dull sallow look. Sometime
I went home, other times the headaches and fever, which always followed
the chilly sensation, was so severe that I stopped at cousin
Leona Armstrong’s, or at her sister’s, cousin Octavia Gilliland, who lived
at the old Hubbard house for a year or two.35

One thing that I remember about cousin Octavia, was that she
spoiled her babies. She carried them in her arms while she did her work.
She was always kind to me when I stopped there with a chill.

This one thing stands out in my memory about these chills. After I
would get home, Mammy put me to bed with a cloth on my forehead sat-
urated with camphor, and a handkerchief tied tight around over it. I
would wake about sundown, after I had sweated the fever off, thankful
that my head was better. I would listen to the others as they did the
evening chores; milking, feeding pigs and horses, bringing in wood and

35. Leona Wilson Gresham (1868–1911) was the wife of Benjamin Phillip Armstrong
(1856–1911). Octavia Gilliland (b. 1860).
water for the night, and would hear Mammy say, "Don't make a noise, Effie had another old chill, and her head aches."

It seems to me that John and I were the two who were tormented the most with chills. Elmo had them occasionally, but Elmo's cross was eczema on his face. A terrible thing at times, making the whole family sad to see him have to suffer with it. The doctors didn't seem to do it any good. All he could do was try to find something that would soothe it a little, and keep it from burning and itching so terribly. Cuticura soap and salve, and Hoods Sarsaparilla as a blood purifier were the standbys that he usually went back to, after doctors and their prescriptions failed.

We usually kept a little flock of sheep, to have enough wool for our stockings, gloves, etc. The little lambs in the spring, the sheep shearing time, washing and drying the wool, picking it into small pieces to remove all the trash, cockleburrs, etc. and later the carding of the wool, and spinning it into thread, was all a part of our existence.

To see Mammy take the dirty, matted wool from the sheep's back, and in a short time have it clean and carded into long even white rolls, that she spun into smooth white thread, and knitted into nice warm gloves and socks, was almost a miracle to me.

As the socks and stockings for the whole family depended on the sheep they were guarded carefully. The neighborhood dogs were a constant menace to them. When we would hear the bell on the old bell ewe (we said Yoe) clattering regularly, we knew that she was running with all her might, and we knew the dogs were after them. Usually someone on horseback would hurry to the rescue, but once (when there were no horses in the stable) we heard the telltale clatter and Mammy and I started out afoot. We knew that if we didn't succeed in stopping them the dogs were likely to kill half the flock before they stopped. This time they were not very far from the house, and only one old mother sheep, with two lambs that could not run as fast as the others were caught. Her hips and sides were all torn to pieces by the dogs. She was still living when we found her, and was bleating with every breath for fear harm would come to her babies. I stayed with her while Mammy took the orphan lambs to the house in her apron, and to get some of the men to come and shoot the poor old mother.

36. Effie herself was apparently susceptible to eczema, though her affliction took a different form and she may not have labeled it as such.
37. Cuticura soap and other toiletries were manufactured by the Potter Drug & Chemical Co. in Boston. The company was incorporated in 1883 with Warren B. Potter as its first president. Hoods Sarsaparilla was manufactured and bottled by C. I. Hood & Co. in Lowell, Massachusetts.
We always vowed vengence on the worthless dogs, but rarely ever found them. There were several families of Negroes who lived on the Jim Williams place, and over towards Joe Renshaw's. They usually had a number of dogs that were always hungry, and were forced to hunt rabbits for a livelihood. At the sight of a strange dog the sheep would start running with all their might, so it was not strange that the dogs would naturally join in the chase.

Few people realize, in their dealings with children, how deep the impressions are, that they make; or that some trivial thing that doesn't seem to amount to anything, will be indelibly imprinted on a child's mind, and will stay there through life. Some poet expressed it when he said, "The thoughts of youth are long, long, thoughts."38

The Savior said, "Take heed that ye harm not one of these, my little ones."39 For the memory of a harsh word will stay in their minds forever, as a witness against you (he could have added).

One of the saddest things that I can think of is for little children to have to grow up without love. There is no substitute for it. Neither is it good for one child to be raised alone, and have entirely too much attention showered on them, and to become selfish and spoiled. It's hard to say which is the worst. It seems to me that the ideal conditions for a child to grow up under is to be one of a big family, with mother and father who loves them, who do not have the time or the means to spoil them, with lots of room to play, with woods and fields and streams as playgrounds.

I have been thankful a thousand times that a kind providence caused my lot to be cast in just such an environment.

After I went to my first funeral, and saw the Simpson mother in her coffin, and her children crying, a fear that our mother might die began to torment me. I cried myself to sleep more than once, and one time I dreamed we were going to cousin Ike's, and I thought I pushed my mother into a deep clear ditch of water by the roadside, and I could see her as she floated down with her face turned up. It worried me. I never told anyone of it, but I never forgot it.40

We had no toilet, not even an outdoor one, the different stables in the horse lot were used. My mother kind of secretly smoked a pipe. Pappy

---

38. Effie is recalling Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "My Lost Youth": "A boy's will is the wind's will, / And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

39. Matthew 18:6: "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

40. Such a dream would have constituted an omen or a portent of death. See William Lynwood Montell, "Part I: Omens of Death," in Ghosts Along the Cumberland, 13–55.
hated for her to smoke, so she kept it out of sight. Of summer evenings, after the dishes were done, and the milk vessels all cleaned and put away, Mammy would whisper to me to fill her pipe and light it for her, and we’d go outdoors before going to bed.41

The stables, where the horses and cows were kept, were, of course, heavy with smell, but there are no unpleasant memories of that. In fact, these quiet intimate visits with my mother in the twilight, are like a benediction in my memory. There were big flat rocks in the horse lot, out behind the little old corn crib, where we made our regular pilgrimage, and afterwards we sat on these rocks while she finished her pipe. We talked while the whippoorwills called, and the crickets chirped. She was a sympathetic listener, and talked to me of things that she knew I liked.

There was never much of the “Don’t do this or that” kind of talk. She just lived it before us, and expected us to follow. She often told us that she expected us to be somebody, that there was nothing to hinder us from being great, if we worked for it, as there was good blood on both sides of our family, and nothing on either side to be ashamed of.

When I thought of her dying, the things that made my heart ache most was thinking of milking time without her, and of her not being there to go out-of-doors with me before going to bed.

Planting the garden in the early spring was another thing that I enjoyed to the fullest. When the first bluebirds called, Mammy would get out her box of garden seeds (they had plenty of tobacco mixed in with them to keep the bugs and worms out).

Onion sets could be put out in February, and the English peas, and mustard could brave the frost that we knew would come later. Gourds were planted in February too. They were usually the little handled ones. There were also the long crooknecks, nestegg gourds, and many other kinds. They were planted right by the garden fence where they could run up on it. Sometimes the vines almost covered the little old smokehouse.

The garden was too wet to plow early, so we would find the driest looking places and dig it up with the hoe. I enjoyed helping Mammy, digging up the ground with an old grubbing hoe, then she would break the clods and rake it smooth for the seeds.

There was always plenty of seed for me to have all I needed for my own little garden in the corner. A time or two there were string beans in my garden long before there were any in the big one.

41. While it would be unusual for a woman of today’s society to be found smoking a pipe, the practice was not uncommon in southern tobacco culture. See Lawrence S. Thompson, “Some Notes on the Folklore of Tobacco and Smoking,” Kentucky Folklore Record 10 (1964): 43–46.
Mammy was never stingy in her praise of her children, when they deserved it. It was always sincere, and was deserved, so we appreciated it. She never had the time, nor the inclination for loose meaningless talk. She was too honest and natural.

Mammy was called on frequently to go and care for the sick, summer and winter, and at all hours. We were often awakened in the middle of the night by a “Hello” at the gate. It was not hard to guess that it was someone wanting Mammy to go and see what she could do for a sick neighbor. I don’t remember of her ever refusing to go. Our daddy didn’t appreciate it any too much, for home was thrown out of kilter when Mammy left. I remember one night, when I bawled so long, and so loud, because she left, that Etta and Lelia lost all patience with me and threatened to give me a spanking if I didn’t shut up. They rocked me for a while, and when that did no good, they soused me down on the bed and said, “Just lay there and bawl if you want to.”

Another thing Mammy had to her credit was that she never in all her life ever turned any one from her door hungry. We had lots of tramps, peddlers, and just plain travelers of one kind and another. I can remember several wandering musicians who came by and stopped at our place. One, named McClanahan, could really play an old banjo. That was when I was real small, about 1890. Later, when I was older, a man named Foxworthy came along who could play the old organ like nobody’s business, and we learned a lot of new songs from him. One, “I Was Born About Four Thousand Years Ago.”

Then there was a distant cousin, Buck Cravens, who came at regular intervals and stayed a week at a time. A slim, trim, bachelor who could play the guitar; in fact he could do most anything. Each time he came he brought something interesting. One time it would be an expensive guitar, then a telescope that we could look at the stars with, and once he brought one that we could look across the country to the old Abe Ferrell place, on the hill east of Morrises’, where Lelia lived, and see her as plain as if she was right down at the back of the garden. We saw her come out on the back porch, get some water, and give it to some little chickens. It was a wonderful thing to us.

Cousin Buck was always bringing expensive guns, too, and showing us how he could shoot. Once, when he brought a rifle, he asked Pappy if he wanted him to mark the ears of a bunch of hogs that had come up from the woods lot where they had been eating acorns. Pappy told him that he had better let those hogs alone if he didn’t want to pay for the

---

42. See appendix one for a list of Effie’s song repertoire.
43. Buckner P. Cravens (b. 1862), son of Lycurgus G. Cravens (b. 1827).
ones he shot. Cousin Buck cheerfully assured him he would pay any damages, then he turned the rifle upside down and said, "Here's a hole in that spotted one's left ear." *Crack,* the pig squealed and jumped, and sure enough there was the hole. He went the rounds and shot a hole through the left ear of each one with the rifle bottom side up. Cousin Buck had told so many blowy tales that we hadn't believed him.

Once he brought a fine bicycle, and told us we could ride it all we wanted to. I took it to the top of the slanting field, between the big gullies and the spring woods lot, got on it and started down the hill. I had not calculated on the stop, and as one fork of the gully was across the lower end of the field, me and the bike landed in the bottom of the gully. It was hard to tell which was in the worst condition, me or the bike. I decided I didn't want to learn to ride a bike, not right then anyway.

For several years Cousin Buck was foreman on the Widow Clardy's big farm in south Christian. She had many fine blooded horses, and he would ride a different one each time. How I did enjoy them. I was an ardent lover of horses.

Buck had a collection of old love songs he taught us, too. One was the tragic tale of the Milwaukee Fire. He was gallant, and very chivalrous. He would never let any of us girls carry any water, or bring in any wood. He would go with us to the well, and we would insist on carrying one bucket, anyway, but he declared that one on each side was much easier, as they balanced him perfectly.

He had long slim, blue hands, that didn't look like he had ever done any hard manual labor. His feet were slim, with high arches, and he always wore expensive shoes. I think he had a speculative eye on my sister Sadie, or he wouldn't have come so regularly.

There are a number of peddlers that I can recall, most of them were foreigners, who spoke with an accent. One stands out clearer than the others, a handsome young fellow, who came one winter day wearing a suit of shining brown corduroy, and boots. It was snowing, and very cold. The poor boy was new in America, and had not learned the language very well. He was so homesick that he could hardly live. He told us of his home in Syria, and of how desperately his father had tried to keep him from coming to America. He had even locked him up in hopes he could persuade him not to come. He offered him an allowance that would be far more than he could earn by peddling. The father was a stonecutter, and had taught him the trade.

His name was Haffy Dennis, and when he got to the part of his story where he left his home, and his mother was crying, he cried like a child.

44. "Well" written by hand over "good."
He threw his pack open, with all of its bright shawls, beads, bedspreads, and trinkets, and said that he hated it, to take everything we wanted, that he was not going to be a peddler anymore. He was going back home to his father and mother, and if they were still living he would learn to be a stonemason and help his father.

Another character, though vastly different from young Haffy, was an old Negro, who had a big family. He could never make a living for them, and would come begging, pretty sure of getting something without working for it. One time he came in the spring when our own supply of corn, meat, etc. was getting rather low. My father told him that he was as able to work as he was, and that we had as many mouths to feed as he did, and he just didn’t have anything to give him. His name was Bill Sudkins, and he was a good beggar. He cried and talked at the same time, and he declared that his little chillun hadn’t had anything to eat for two days. Pappy was on to his tactics and didn’t weaken. I stood it as long as I could, thinking surely he would relent and give him something. When the old Negro started off, muttering, with his lip a-quivering, and the tears streaming down his cheeks, I started blubbering in earnest. I went and grabbed Pappy by the legs and told him to give the old man something, he mustn’t let him go without. I guess I yelled so loud that he called him back in self-defense and gave him a sack of corn and some other things, I can’t remember just what. I do remember what the old Negro said, “Thanyk, thanky, Mr. Marcus, may de good Lawd bless yuh.”

The remarkable thing about the Sudkins family was the names they gave their children. I can only remember one of them, a little girl. Her name was Harriet chile-Lizabeth-Rosey-Becky-Black hair-Eda-Margit-Maudy-Tyler, and of course I suppose, Sudkins was added, but it is probably doubtful whether it rightly belonged there or not.

The list of comers and goers would not be complete if I didn’t mention De-Bill Owen, a kind of a simpleton, who was madly in love with Lelia. He would come and stay for two or three days at a time. Once he came when the snow was deep, and as he came through the bottom fields, where the sheep were, they thought he had come to feed them, and all started in his direction. He was not familiar with sheep, and he was afraid of them, and started running. They followed, and by the time he reached the fence, not far from the house, he was completely exhausted. How we children laughed when he told us that the sheep got after him. He brought a big sack of candy beans, the first ones I ever saw. It seems to me that there was at least a half gallon or more of them.

When some of the family would see De-Bill coming across the fields, from the south west, they would hurry and call Lelia. “Lelia, yonder comes De-Bill.” I was always in hopes he would have plenty of candy.
The country down the creek from the direction he came was a mysterious region to me. I guess I thought that all the people in that direction were like De-Bill. He was the only contact we had with the people from downcreek way. I remember hearing Mammy saying that if the geese ever went very far down the creek they always came home picked. Goose feathers were used extensively in those days. Every family had several feather beds, and if they did not have they just didn’t amount to much. Feathers were high, and it was something to lose the pickin’ from twenty or twenty-five full feathered geese.

When the wind was in that direction, from the southwest, as it often is in summer, the sounds carried easily. We could hear voices from the farms in that direction, and one evening, when we mentioned it, Mammy said yes, she had heard men whipping their slaves in that direction. When she was a child, and could hear the slaves beg for mercy, it was a terrible sound to her, as the Armstogons rarely ever punished their Negroes.

The geese, mentioned above, were picked every six weeks. That was the length of time it took the feathers to get ripe, and if they were not picked off they would shed them, and the place would be covered with goose feathers.

It was a common thing in the neighborhood that the men hated the geese, and the women hated the hounds. Though the geese furnished the feathers for the warm feather beds, which the men liked to sleep on, and the hounds caught the foxes that were bad to catch the women’s geese and chickens, nevertheless, the prejudice continued.

It was almost an impossibility to fence the geese out of a field with a common rail fence, and that was the kind of fences that were used exclusively at that time. It seems to me that I was the one who should have hated the geese, as I can’t remember anyone but myself ever having to stop up goose holes in the fence. The others probably had their turn. I suppose the few times I had to do it became magnified.

We would think that we had every crack filled that was big enough for a goose to get through, but in early spring, when the pretty green sprouts of corn would be peeping through the ground in long even rows, we would, some mornings, spy an old goose in the corn field. She would start down one row, and not just eat it off, but would grabble it down to its roots, so it would never grow out again. Then my dad would swear vengeance on all geese, and that one in particular. Sometimes we had goose for dinner, if the offense was repeated two or three times.

We had guineas, too, and although the guinea hens laid an unusual number of eggs, the roosters were very unpopular. They were terribly noisy, with a harsh raspy voice, and if there was the least disturbance in the night the whole flock would set up a chatter that no one could sleep through.
The guinea roosters were always pecking the little chickens, and they would kill them if someone didn’t go to the rescue. One day Mammy was standing in the kitchen door when an old guinea rooster lowered his head, stuck his wings up on his back, and made a dive at a little chicken. He was going after it red eyed. Mammy said, “Confound your old soul, I’ll knock your head off for that.” Reaching down for a stick of stove wood she let it fly right at him. He saw trouble coming and raised his head high just in time to catch the stick right in the neck. The head was severed clear, and flew up in the air. We had a laugh over it, and our Pappy said that Mammy was really a woman of her word. When she threatened to do a thing you’d better look out. We had guinea for supper that time, but they had to be cooked a long time as the meat was blue and tough.

The guinea hens stole their nests out, far away from the house, but they had a peculiar cackle when they laid an egg, and we usually found the nest. They were like a partridge. If you put your hand in the nest for the eggs they would quit laying in it and find another place, but if you would rake the eggs out with a stick they would keep laying there. Sometimes several guinea hens would lay in one nest, and we would get a hundred eggs or more before they would quit laying or change places.

Pappy was good at finding partridge nests, also, and would keep bringing their eggs in his hat as he came from work. Their eggs were almost as large as guinea eggs, but white as snow, while the guinea eggs were brown speckled.

Pappy liked to spring pleasant surprises on us, like bringing a hat full of mulberries, or eggs, or the first early bluebells. Sometimes, when they were burning plant beds, when it was still winter, he would find a bunch of dainty white windflowers growing in a warm sunny location that had blossomed before their time.

I think I surely must have had an unnatural love for pretty things, especially flowers, when I recall the joy that the first early flowers gave to me. After a day or two of warm sunshine, in early spring, we would go out some morning and the old fields would be carpeted with tiny bluets in bloom. The joy of seeing them again, after the long cold winter, with its ice and mud and ugliness, was almost more than I could hold.

I guess I was just a lover of color, and as life in winter in an old log house that was pretty well crowded with children could not contain too much of beauty we were hungry for such things when springtime came.

Mammy used to put a strip of red flannel in the coal oil of the lamp. She said that it was to absorb the grit that was in the coal oil, to keep it from lodging in the lamp wick, but I really believe it was to add a touch of color to the mantlepiece. I can’t recall ever seeing black flannel in a lamp bowl.

My father was school trustee for years and years and the teachers usually came to our place when applying for a position as teacher of our
school. I'll never forget one applicant, Irene Hiser, who came to see about getting the school the following fall. She was riding a beautiful bay horse, and she wore a tight riding suit with a long red ribbon tied in a bow on her left arm. Her hat turned up on the left side with a long flowing plume, and as she galloped away with that red ribbon fluttering in the breeze behind her I thought she was just about the most beautiful creature I ever saw.

Outside of baseball for the men and boys, and a croquet set (privately owned by someone), about the only entertainment for the young folks was dancing. The churches opposed dancing, even going so far as to excommunicate their members for breaking this rule. Entertainment was whittled down pretty narrow for the children of the church goers. They argued that if the young folks went to church of Sundays, and to prayer meeting and singin' through the week, that was all the recreation they needed. They did allow them to have play parties in some communities. These parties were nothing but a form of dancing, only there was no music to dance by but the singing of the dancers (though they were careful never to call it dancing). The songs they sang to dance by were silly old things, not very elevating. One of the favorites was—

Les all go down to Rousers, to Rousers, to Rousers,
Les all go down to Rousers, and get some lager beer,
Good old lager beer, sweet old lager beer,
Never mind the old folks, so we get the beer,
Old folks, old folks, old folks, old folks,
Never mind the old folks, so we get the beer.46

Our father said if there was anything more elevating in that than there was in a nice quadrille to the tune of good music, then he was not a good judge.

Public picnics were very popular, and drew large crowds. Sometimes there was an animal barbecued, and sometimes if you wanted something to eat you had to take it with you. There was usually a stand where gum and candy and lemonade were sold.

46. See appendix one.
There was usually a square smoothed off and covered with sawdust, with a high platform on the side for the musicians, and there was dancing. It was interesting to watch the dancers too, and to see the fights that usually took place before it was over.47

Although these picnics were not very elevating, many good substantial citizens attended them, just to have a chance to visit with friends they were sure would be there too.48

The new tub, with the slices of lemon and chunks of ice floating around in it, and a new tin dipper to drink from, was a refreshing attraction. Ice was rare (in the country) in those days, even the old fashioned ice box was unheard of (in the country) at that time. The loud raucous voice calling, “Right this way ladies and gents, ice cold lemonade, made in the shade, and stirred with a spade,” never failed to arouse plenty of interest. The children crowded around the lemonade stand even if they had no nickel with which to buy a drink for themselves.

It was not an uncommon thing to see a mother or father go and draw a daughter to one side and tell her not to dance with so and so, as he was drunk as a fool, and if he offered her any candy, be sure and not take it.

The Moonlights were a duplicate of the picnics only they were held after dark, and were far more romantic than the daylight affairs. There were usually paper Japanese lanterns, with candles in them, which shed their soft pale light through the pretty colored paper.49 If any grand ballroom ever caused a greater thrill in anyone’s heart than the sight of rows of these lights and the sound of a fiddle and banjo stirred in me I don’t see how they ever lived through it.

Probably to some poor church member, who had never danced, they would not have looked so glamorous, and the dancing would have seemed a wicked something to be shunned, but our sense of wrong didn’t run in that direction. Our parents had taught us that graceful dancing, and keeping rhythmic time to good music was a good way to show our


48. These gatherings were an embodiment of community and individual values. Dances provided a time for neighbors and family to establish social boundaries within a community. See Burt Feintuch, “Dancing to the Music: Domestic Square Dances and Community in Southcentral Kentucky (1880–1940),” Journal of the Folklore Institute 18 (1981): 49–68.

49. The term “moonlights” is apparently a local term used by—but not limited to—the people of Effie’s community.
appreciations for the beautiful, and the only way dancing was wrong was when we made wrong of it by our own actions.50

We went to Moonlights with a clear conscience, and we had the assurance that no matter how many good dancers were there, we could dance anything they could. Our father had played for the balls when the big boom was on at Cumberland Gap, and for the summer resort at Cerulean Springs. That was the way he earned his living, and I think he taught dancing in the afternoons. He knew all the steps, from the prim Lancers, to the rollicking heel and toe polka. He and Mammy would teach them to us of winter evenings. Lots of times I have seen him, violin to shoulder, play the tune and dance the steps that went with it all at the same time, to show us how it went. How we enjoyed it. Not alone in dancing did they join with us, but in any games that we played.

One thing that we enjoyed more than any other, was for them to tell us of things that happened when they were young. Pappy often told us of the first time he ever saw our mother. He and Uncle Jim were riding horseback to a dance. They had heard that a new girl (just home from school), a girl with a funny name, John Susan Armstrong, was going to be there. Uncle Jim said he was going to take her home. When they got there they hitched their horses and went to the window to look things over before going in. The new girl was singing, I think she was singing:

I am sitting on the stile, Mary
Where we sat side by side
In the sweet long ago, Mary
When you promised to be my bride.

Pappy said that he turned to Uncle Jim and said, “No Jim, I’m going to take her home myself,” and he did. She was only sixteen, but it was not so very long till they were married. She was born in 1853, and they were married in 1869.

The school she went to was at Castleberry, Kentucky, north of us. She probably stayed with the Wooldridges or Fords, her stepmothers’s people, as that was where they lived.

50. According to Effie, “there were two classes of moonlights: if the front yard belonged to a church member, it would only be a promenade, where couples strolled around and around until the candles burned out of the paper lanterns. But if the yard belonged to someone who was not a church-goer, the ground was scraped smooth, music was provided, and the young folks danced. At the end of each set the prompter called out in a lusty voice, ‘Promenade your partners to the lemonade stand!’” See Carmack, “Tobacker,” 101.
They told us of a very careless trick my mother did not long after she met her future husband. She had been eating something and had a particle between her front teeth that bothered her. She pulled a big cockleburr from a bush and was picking her teeth with it. She sneezed, or coughed, or something, anyway she sucked the burr down her windpipe and almost choked to death. Her beau beat her on the back, and tried every way he knew to help her. Finally he picked her up and ran to the house with her. She gave a cough and the burr and the blood both flew from her mouth. Pappy said he found out then how very much he thought of her. I think the bond of affection between them was mutual, and remained strong and unbroken as long as she lived (she was only forty-six when she died).

Of winter evenings, around the fireplace, his chair was usually next to hers (if he was not working at something), with his arm across the back of her chair, or his foot in her lap, while she knit, darned or mended.

Lawrence Smith, cousin Filmore’s son, said that we didn’t need to go away from home for entertainment; that we had a better time there, than anywhere else. They had dances in private homes in winter, as there were no dance halls close enough for us to go to.

When I was about seven they gave a dance at our place. Autie was just learning to walk good. I was highly excited over the preparations and could hardly wait for the activity to begin. The beds and other furniture were removed from the big front room, which had a good smooth floor. A row of seats was made all around the wall by laying planks on stovewood blocks and covering them with quilts, so they would be more comfortable. A platform was made in one corner for the musicians. By dark everything was ready and waiting for the crowd.

Eddie Moore had made it up, that is, he and some others who volunteered to help him went on horseback and invited all the people they wanted to come, and he charged them that there was not to be any whiskey brought. 51

51. According to Burt Feintuch, the concept of neighborhood is at the core of both the pragmatic and symbolic aspects of domestic dance. Participants learned of the dances through neighborhood channels. Word was passed in the course of visiting during the week, and the inevitable country store which was the commercial focal point of the neighborhood served as a source of information—signs were posted or information was shared by word of mouth. Sometimes people would decide on the time and place for the next dance at the conclusion of an evening of dancing, and all the participants would know in advance of a dance to be held the following weekend.

Eddie was a good singer and had been going to Mt. Zoar to sing with a group there. He invited some of the Mt. Zoar church members to come to the dance, and to bring their songbooks, and they would sing during intermission. The folks were surprised to see the Baptist people come to a dance, it was very unusual.

Before any of the crowd arrived, William and Lelia came, as William was going to help make music. Pappy played the fiddle, and William the banjo. I was almost bursting with excitement when they tuned their instruments up in that big, clean, empty room, with a bright fire crackling. When they swung into the stirring tune of "Eighth of January" it was just about more than I could contain. I had to put my hands over my ears to temper it a little.

Right after dark they began coming, and what a crowd. Norman Tyndall and his beautiful wife came, the new folks who had moved into the old East house at the foot of East Hill, and Mrs. Mullen, also a newcomer, came with them. When someone asked her for a dance she said, "Well, sir, I never danced a lick in my life," with a quick northern accent, that sounded funny to us. Mrs. Tyndall had a good voice, and could sing like a bird.

I was entranced with the dancing, but when there was an intermission, and the singers were invited to take the floor for a while, I was really charmed. I don't suppose I had ever heard a group sing together, carrying the four parts before. They sang "I Am Longing For the Coming of That Snowwhite Angels Band," and, "When Jesus Shall Make Up His Jewels," and, "Sweeping Through the Gates." I listened with my mouth wide open, and decided right there that I was going to be singer when I grew up, but the singing didn't last very long.52

George Vaughn was in the prime of his dancing glory. He prompted the dancers, and called the changes with all the flourishes and trimmings. Autie stayed wide awake, and took in everything. When everyone was gone, and the big floor empty again, he got out and showed us how George Vaughn danced. He bent over and stuck his hands out behind him and went shuffling around the floor, causing an uproarious laugh. Of course, everything he did was funny to all of us. He was smart, and learned things quickly.

I was so excited over the dancing and singing I could hardly go to sleep. The beginning of a big new chapter in my life had opened up.

Etta and I got a song book and learned to sing those songs right away. After that, when there was a dance in the neighborhood, if Sadie and the boys went, I bawled to go with them. Of course I never had anything but my coarse winter shoes, but they could be \textit{blackened}, and I never let that spoil things. The shoes didn’t matter, the lights were never very bright anyway, and a clean calico dress was good enough for a little girl to wear.

Some of the girls flourished gorgeous flounces and ruffles, especially at the summer picnics and moonlights. Thin lawns, organdy, and laces were popular, trimmed with narrow black velvet ribbon. It was very impractical, as the ribbon would not wash, and had to be removed when the dress was washed. But that didn’t keep it from being used, it was very effective on sheer pink or yellow organdy.

The question of clothes didn’t bother me then, nor very much ever after. I could dance, and I enjoyed demonstrating that fact. On rare occasions I was allowed to go to the winter dances, riding behind Sadie or one of the boys. Although I was a thin, scrawny child, ugly and small for my age, dressed in calico and coarse shoes, I usually got a partner of some kind. \textit{That} didn’t matter, just so I was on the floor with the other dancers. Nothing but the square quadrilles was danced at the country dances. Not many of the young folks knew how to do the Waltz, Two Step, Schottische, Glide, etc., but sometimes, between sets, a few couples would get the musicians to play a waltz, and they would glide around awhile. The round dances were unpopular, and were booed by the ones who could not dance them. They would yell for a good old square dance tune.

The church people often got up a moonlight, where there was no dancing allowed. They just promenaded around the grounds in couples. To me it was like playing we were eating, when it was only mud pies.

About the first of July, sometimes a little later, the blackberries began to ripen. There was usually a pretty good crop of them, and taking care of the berry crop was serious business. We usually canned a lot, made some jam, and then we picked to sell, in order to get cloth for school dresses. They usually sold for ten or fifteen cents a gallon. I have sold them many times for seven cents a gallon. A very small sum for a gallon of berries, but cloth was cheap also, so it averaged up very well.

We would make us some good strong gloves of old worn out overalls, to keep briars from tearing our hands so. We’d put on some of the boys’ big old shoes, to wade into the middle of a thick briar patch with, an old hat or a bonnet, and then we sallied forth with our numerous buckets clattering. We \textit{really} made a picture, but we got the berries. We had to be careful where we put our full buckets, or we would forget where some of them were.

Pappy was good to take the berries to market for us. There was usually chickens, eggs, butter, and vegetables to be taken to market also. We
appreciated the small amount of money we received from our berries, and we had a real reason for hunting bargain counters, as we had to make this money go as far as possible. None of it was ever spent for any foolishness, and how we appreciated the cloth we bought with it, and how we enjoyed making the dresses of it.

I was not allowed to sew on the machine very much yet, but I got plenty of practice making doll dresses on my fingers. I usually had one or two china dolls, and at least one big rag doll.

One summer Sadie picked enough berries to buy her a sidesaddle. Before that time she had borrowed Mrs. Moore’s saddle when she wanted to go horseback riding. Mrs. Moore herself never used it. In all the years we lived near her I can never remember seeing her on a horse, but she didn’t like to lend it any too well, and Sadie felt duty bound to let Eddie go with her, to even things up, for borrowing the saddle so often. We really felt rich and independent when we got a saddle of our own.

It was pretty easy to hurt a horse’s back if the blankets under the saddle were not arranged just right, and we were always worried for fear the blankets were working out of place, and the horse’s back would be skinned again. We could usually tell when it hurt, as the horse would flinch.

Lelia was always saying that I was equal to George Simpson in finding the blackberries. He must have been a champion berry picker.

We would be a sorry looking bunch when we drug in of an evening, tired and briar torn. Our hands and faces all stained with berry juice (when we grew thirsty we ate berries) and scratched by briars.

The worst feature of berry picking is that we were usually covered with chiggers, a teeny red parasite, no bigger than the point of a pin. But, Oh! the lump he could raise, and if not removed he would bury himself, and the place would itch and stay sore for weeks. The first thing we did when we got home was to get rid of the chiggers and ticks. Strong salt, or soda water, or coal oil, applied to the lumps would usually kill them, but it didn’t keep the place from itching all night (I have a lump on my back now, that has been there for twenty years, where a tick had buried itself, and I failed to find it when I bathed).

Ticks, chiggers, briar scratches and all; including the small price we got for the berries; we never once thought of not picking them as long as there was a berry on the briars. That was just a part of the process, and we didn’t even think of it as a hardship.