

THE
Chosen Valley

The Story of a Pioneer Town
By Margaret Snyder



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A Note of Thanks



THIS BOOK is about the way in which one small valley of the beautiful American midland was changed from wilderness to thriving town. In the years before the second World War it announced to travelers on Highway 52: "Fourteen Hundred Friendly Folks Welcome You." The signboard now claims sixteen hundred population, but the folks are still friendly, as I have full reason to know.

They are no less friendly in hundreds of our country's small towns. I have lived in a score of them, and I suspect that any one would yield to patient search a story no less interesting than Chatfield's. A common theme would run through them all—the theme of this country's transformation from a rural to an industrial civilization—though no two stories would be alike in their patterning of that theme. That I have written of Chatfield is the accident of personal experience.

Although the customary paraphernalia of scholarship has been deliberately omitted from this book, it contains no statements that cannot be verified by the approved devices of historical research. Not even the conversations have been invented—at least not by me: they have been gathered through a good many years of listening to, and setting down in notebooks, the talk of Chatfield people.

In general, I have drawn my material from three main sources: First are the written reports contemporary with the events

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themselves. The files of Chatfield newspapers have been of huge importance here, also the official records of village, township, county, and school district. Lodge, club, and church records have also been freely used, and immense amounts of business papers have been gone through. Those of J. C. Easton and of G. H. Haven are incredibly voluminous and may be examined in the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society. Of even more value, for the kind of personal illumination that has been one of the chief aims of this study, have been the scrapbooks, diaries, and letters that I have been privileged to use; they turned up in more abundance than I dared hope when I embarked on this work.

My second major source has been the important body of scholarly studies produced and preserved under the encouragement of the Minnesota Historical Society. Scarcely a volume of the Society's publications has failed to yield some detail of specific value for this book, and their sum is rich in suggestion as well as in solid documentation. The Society's collections of both published and manuscript materials are impressive and invaluable, and I owe large thanks to the Society's staff for the help they gave me in finding my way through those collections.

I have of course drawn heavily upon the work of non-Minnesota scholars for interpretation of the national development within which the Chatfield story has unfolded. Of these the chief are that matchless pair, Charles and Mary Beard, whose *Rise of American Civilization* has greatly aided my efforts to understand this country's life. The intimate relationships of that life to the earth-forms through which it moves have been richly illuminated for me by Lewis Mumford's writing. And my attempts to evaluate the living reactions of the persons who made the Chatfield story owe more than can be defined to the structural analysis of human functioning worked out by Alfred Korzybski.

But beyond all other sources this book has drawn upon the people of Chatfield. In their homes, on the post office steps, in the hardware store, in riverside meadows, they have shared with

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me their memories and their salty, earth-rooted wisdom. I could not possibly list all the people who have helped to make this book: I have tried to do it, and have come to realize that if I omitted any single name of all the Chatfield people I have known, my list would be incomplete. So I have reluctantly decided against naming any living person, either in the text or in this note of thanks.

With one exception. For scholarly concern to preserve significant memorials of his community's history, and for tireless generosity in sharing his wealth of remembrance, both personal and familial, I am deeply indebted to George A. Haven of Chatfield, son and grandson of pioneers.

One further gratitude remains to be expressed. Without the University of Minnesota's grant of a fellowship in regional writing, the long labor of this book could not have been finished. Theodore C. Blegen, Dean of Minnesota's Graduate School, was responsible for setting up those fellowships, and for approval of my request for aid. Beyond the lift of that financial aid, I am grateful to his faith in the job I was trying to do.

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PART

One



Mr. Twiford's Town



ALONG THE wilderness trail that ran from Dubuque to St. Paul a solitary footman made his way. Where the trail ran through the river, for at least the twelfth time, he paused and looked about him. There was nothing here to make a townsite except water power, and he had seen plenty of water power along the Root River. The trouble with Minnesota was too damn many places that looked good enough for a town, he thought as he stepped warily into the river, feeling his way with the length of ironwood sapling he had cut that morning. How was a man to know which one would make a go of it? This time he had to be sure. That Iowa town had looked like a sure thing, but when Allamakee County voted Lansing its county seat all he'd got out of it was the contract for the courthouse. He wouldn't make the same mistakes this time.

He climbed up the north bank of the river and trudged on, a lean, tireless figure that walked through the virgin forest as a woman might cross her kitchen, alert to its demands but unalarmed. The trail bore slightly west beyond the crossing, towards the place where the river would come down against the rise that swung it out of its southerly course.

Where the ground sloped up from the bottom land, thick with water elms, he heard a spring flowing out of the limestone ridge and stopped to sample it. Sweet, like all the springs of the region, and big enough to water a lot of stock if there hadn't been a river

handy. But a spring didn't make a townsite. He pushed up the slope, sharper beyond the spring, his eyes busy estimating the quality of timber through which he passed. Plenty here for a sawmill. For a dozen sawmills, he laughed shortly to himself, but you had to have settlers to make a sawmill pay. Even there in Iowa he wouldn't have made a penny if he hadn't got that courthouse contract to use up the lumber he cut in his mill.

But he was ahead of the game this time. There weren't twenty families in the whole of Fillmore County that Minnesota's territorial legislature had set up last March. Government surveyors had just begun to run the township lines through two and a half million Minnesota acres, lying in the corner between the Iowa border and the Mississippi. Thomas Twiford himself could have joined the surveyors, but when he heard they were going he had set off to pick a townsite of his own.

For two weeks he had tramped the Root River region, lying just north of the Iowa line, and he was filled with the look and the feel of the land he had seen in its late summer fullness. It was rich with wood and water, those two prime essentials for the settler, and its hills folded about generous valleys and uplands where farms could not help but flourish. If a man picked the right place, and got the county seat for his town, he would make his pile in no time.

He came suddenly to the top of the rise he had been climbing and stopped short to look at the valley that opened before him. Its curving serenity held both space and shelter to define a living-place rich in human dignities.

But in Thomas Twiford, as in thousands of others moving through the American mid-continent a century ago, the amazing virginal beauty of the land stirred chiefly a lust for the money to be made by its lucky exploiters. While they could scarcely escape some dim sense of taking part in a vast historical process, their common level of articulation was to brag of "making a pile." Whatever hazy notions they might have had of a satisfying social order seldom found better expression than the boast: "My town's the best town in the whole damn country."

It was of such a town that Thomas Twiford dreamed. As he stared at the hills that closed in the valley at the far northern end, he thought chiefly that they'd serve to shut out the nor'-westers that swept the Mississippi country in winter.

Slowly his gaze traced the westward bounds of the valley. It was something over two miles from where he stood to the head of the valley, and most of the way the river flowed close to the westward hills. Steep bluffs rose from the river's edge for half its length, then opened out to let a creek come through. Good water power and a place for a road to haul in timber from the distant woods. Below the creek the bluffs pushed farther west, and the gentle slope between river and hills was almost bare of trees. It looked as though the Indians had burned it off, but the fire had stopped at the bench halfway up. There was blue clay on the bench, probably, and springs in the ledges above, making a bog that had stopped the burning. Except for that one slope the hills were thick with timber, and they closed down again to the river a quarter of a mile to his left. His gaze measured the river from that point to the big bend at his feet: no water power there, but the stream flowed full even in late August. There'd be a good rush of power up where the creek came in. . . . His thigh muscles twitched with the impulse to plunge down the hill and measure the valley with his stride, but some superior urgency held him where he was. He sat down slowly on the rock where he stood, easing the pack from his shoulders.

From the mid-point of the west creek's inlet he looked a mile or so eastward where a strong ridge thrust into the breadth of the upper valley. It leveled off southward in a wide bench that carried an open grove of oaks, and a second creek swept around the foot of the bench toward the river. Half a mile from where he stood the bench dropped sharply to a minor transverse valley, and still a third spring-fed stream came in from the east. Between the two creeks the river ran full and silver to the foot of the hill where he stood.

The sharp slope from his feet to the water's edge was half grass,

half rocks whose gray edges were softened with moss. Sprangles of cedars rose between the rocks, and a bittersweet vine twisted through the branches of one, its berries pale gold against the cedar's green. There had been bittersweet on the fences back home, he remembered. A clump of birches grew farther down the bank, slender and white-stemmed against the cedars, and across the streams were signs of a recent Indian encampment.

The rock where he sat was warm from the sun, and for a moment he only looked at the sheltered place before him. For two weeks he had scarcely stopped walking except for brief nights when he rolled into his blanket beside a solitary fire. This felt strangely like journey's end. The knowledge that Indians had found it a good place to stop strengthened the sense of human dwelling . . . though Indians scarcely counted as people.

Thomas Twiford slept that night in the middle of the eastward bench, under a hazel bush where dim fire marks told that another man had been, earlier that summer. The next day he walked through and about the valley, verifying his first estimates of water and timber and roadways out of the valley. He had seen it all by midafternoon, and he caught a fine trout at the mouth of the west creek before he returned to the bench. He cut and trimmed four maple saplings and laid them in a square near his hazel bush. He cut his initials deep into a near-by oak; any claim association would recognize the double mark as fixing his right to the land. He slept the second night under the bush with a curious sense of homekeeping. At least one other man had chosen the place for a lodging. Perhaps it was a sign. He tidied his campsite with unusual care before he set off the second morning.

He was done exploring. This was the place. He pushed rapidly up the eastward hill in the early light, pausing briefly for a drink from the spring halfway up the bluff, and a last look from the top of the hill before he turned to Winona. The sun had not yet risen, and the valley was touched with mist along its water courses. But the sun would shine there. Already he saw how his town

would stand in that sunshine, and the vision set him far on his way before that morning's sun was high enough to dazzle his eyes.

He came to Winona that night—forty-five miles on his own feet. He found the log hostelry on the water front overflowing with travelers, and in the warm conviviality of the tavern Thomas Twiford talked as largely as any of the country through which he had come. But of his townsite he did not speak that evening: he was resolved to see how the game lay before he played his cards.

He discovered that there were more people in the region than he had guessed. At the first meeting of the county commissioners, the May before, fifty-three men had been listed for jury service, and two or three times as many more had come in since then, it was certain. The county commissioners had met in July and again in August to draw up assessment rolls and lay out several roads. They had even established four election precincts along the River frontage of the county. The present commissioners were the appointees of the Territorial governor, but new ones were to be chosen in the county election called for October 11. No one said much about the county seat: it was evidently taken for granted that Winona had the honor secure. But Winona, Thomas Twiford thought, was on the far eastern edge of a county that stretched sixty or seventy miles west from the Mississippi.

The first day he listened and asked questions. He had resolved against playing a lone hand this time. A rankling feud of which he had heard, between Henry Gere, one of the county commissioners, and a man named Laird, seemed to offer the opening he sought. In the first winter of Winona's settlement Gere had won a disputed claim in long legalistic argument before the local Claim Association, then left it vacant while he returned to Pennsylvania for his family. While he was gone, Laird and a widowed sister moved into the shanty Gere had built and entered his claim to the plot of ground. Laird and his sister came home from Baptist meeting one Sunday morning to find Gere on the roof of the house, cutting a hole for the pipe to a stove he had

set up inside, and Mrs. Gere placidly rocking in a chair she had brought with her.

The fist-and-club fight that followed was as heartily helped on by the women as by the men, and practically everybody in the little settlement got mixed up in the all-day melee. Gere asked for an armistice at midnight, and Laird and his sister supposed the fight was over. But when Laird left the house the next morning Gere returned with furniture he would have moved into the house if Laird's sister had not fought him off with her bare fists. The Geres were finally routed, but they took the case through the courts clear to the Supreme Court of the Territory, in a fruitless effort to get legal possession of the claim, on which Laird continued to live.

All this had happened the year before, in 1852; but hard feelings still rankled. Gere had since been appointed one of the three commissioners for Fillmore County, and his brother George, who brought the title of "Squire" from long Pennsylvania practice, was commissioned justice of the peace, but neither of these dignities served to offset the resentment that the whole Gere clan cherished against John Laird and the Winona people who had sided with him.

Oddly enough, it was Laird's fire marks that Twiford had found on the bench of his valley; Laird had slept there one night a month or so before on his way from Iowa where he had gone on business. He remembered the place when Twiford spoke of it, but he had no ear for Twiford's schemes. Laird was busy running a sawmill and was quite content with the bustling trade of Winona.

The Geres, however, listened readily to talk of the new town-site and saw at once how admirably it might serve to cancel Winona's claim to the county seat. Squire Gere's eldest son, William Beecher Gere, was particularly eager: a county seat in which he and his family had proprietary right would serve admirably as background for the political career he was beginning to shape for himself.

Within a week the Geres, together with Myron Toms, the

second of the Fillmore County commissioners, and seven other men, had become interested in Twiford's scheme to organize a town company. All eleven set off one fine September morning to look at the valley Twiford had chosen.

They came back in high spirits. It was the paragon of townsites they had found, and they had already settled among themselves to call it after Judge Chatfield of the Territorial courts, a name substantial and respected even beyond the bounds of Minnesota. The eleven men * promptly incorporated themselves as a company and set to work to promote the transfer of the county seat to the new 'town'—where Twiford's four crossed poles were still the whole amount of building.

John Luark, the third appointed county commissioner, had not joined the Chatfield company, but he was neutrally disposed between the Laird and Gere factions. The Chatfield men decided to act at once and called a meeting of the commissioners at the Winona House. Word of their plans, however, leaked to the opposition, and a crowd of Winona partisans pushed into the commissioners' room.

The argument ran hot and high, with more recrimination than logic, for the many who had pinned their prospects to Winona's fortunes were vociferous for their 'rights.' The Chatfield party was near to being overwhelmed by sheer noise, despite their voting majority of the commissioners: it was not long before that a Winona man had been shot in a townsite quarrel less serious than this and was saved from death only by the thickness of the town plat he carried in his breast pocket.

In so much hubbub the Chatfield men welcomed the diversion created by the arrival of a party of surveyors returned that evening from running the section lines through the very valley that was under dispute. Both sides fired questions at the newcomers but neither got much satisfaction from the answers. It was good coun-

* Their names were Henry C. Gere and Myron Toms (county commissioners), Robert Pike (elected commissioner Oct. 11, 1853), W. B. Bunnell (elected commissioner), W. B. Gere (elected register of deeds), G. W. Willis (elected county clerk), T. B. Twiford, Harvey Hubbard, John I. Hubbard, James McClellan, and G. M. Gere.

try thereabouts, and forty-five miles from Winona, was almost all they would say.

The head surveyor, whose month's growth of beard did not obscure a certain suavity of bearing, detached himself utterly from the noisy argument that threatened to break into general fisticuffs. Distance was this man's business. Before long he would be surveying a farther forty-five miles beyond Twiford's valley, and then another, across the limitless plains and so to the Rockies, and then to the Pacific. This local feud was nothing to him.

Yet it was he who broke the impasse. At a moment when the argument subsided for sheer want of breath he straightened from the doorway where he lounged and strode into the light of the candles burning on a bracket above the commissioners' table. His height dominated the confusion of shadows and all listened when he spoke.

Had they considered the legal aspects of the issue, he inquired in a voice whose smoothness commanded attention. The present commissioners—he inclined his head courteously to the three men at the table—were the appointees of the governor of the Territory. That governor was in turn the appointee of the President—a long and circuitous remove from the will of the sovereign people. Was it right to put on them the heavy responsibility of deciding where the county seat should be? Was it not more fair to the gentlemen themselves to relieve them of so burdensome a decision until they should be given the clear mandate of the people in the election which was shortly to be held?

The words were so impressively legal that the crowd was momentarily silenced. Beecher Gere seized the occasion to move the adjournment of the meeting. Exhaustion prevented objection and the crowd was well out of the room before the argument could be resumed.

It was extended in the campaign. In the election Winona put John Laird in Luark's place, but two Chatfield men were elected to the board of commissioners, and the county clerk and the register of deeds were likewise Chatfield men. The new town had a clear margin of success.

The election safely over, Twiford took a young fellow named Case back to the Chatfield valley and built a log house on the site of the four crossed maple poles. That the survey had shown the spot to be only a few hundred feet inside Fillmore County's northern boundary was a most unimportant detail.

On the nineteenth of December, 1853, Henry Gere and Myron Toms, no doubt feeling strengthened by the mandate of the election, rode quietly out of Winona, with G. W. Willis, for a meeting in "Root River Precinct, residence of Mr. Case," as Willis recorded in the commissioners' book, acting as clerk pro tem. The "object of said meeting" was "to locate the county seat." The two commissioners "then and there resolved that the county seat should be located at Chatfield, in the center of section 6, Township 104 North, Range 11 West," and adjourned immediately thereafter. The sovereign people had prevailed.

The uproar in Winona when the decision was announced was terrific. As *appointed* commissioners, Gere and Toms had no right to make such a decision, Laird cried in wrath; neither had they any right to act as proxy for their elected successors, however nefariously the two groups might connive. Besides, they had not notified the third commissioner, either appointed or elected, of their intention to hold a meeting.

Gere and Toms and their successors did what they could in self-protection. They called the first meeting of the elected commissioners for January 2, 1854, at Minnesota City, several miles upriver from Winona. But despite bitter weather, and New Year's celebrations the day before, a considerable number of Winona men were at the meeting. There, as one of them wrote long afterwards, "the matter was so mixed that they did nothing."

The violence of partisanship had scarcely diminished with the months; but cooler heads began to consider that an area upward of three thousand square miles could well afford more than a single county government. John Laird led in laying before the Territorial legislature a proposal to divide Fillmore County, and by January 30 the decision was so far advanced that the commissioners once

more voted Chatfield the county seat. Two new counties were made from the excluded portions of the original Fillmore, and Winona was specified as the seat of one of them. It was a compromise reasonably satisfactory to everyone.

In the meantime Thomas Twiford had made a survey—more optimistic than accurate—of the Chatfield site and sent it to Galena in Illinois to be lithographed. He and his associates sent the prospectus to relatives and acquaintances and newspapers 'back home' with letters extolling the charms of Chatfield—which looked quite impressive on the lithograph. Those letters were published in every state of New England and in the villages of New York and Pennsylvania. In half a dozen states that had been 'the West' only the other day, people heard of the wonderful town in the newest 'West' and began to wonder whether it was not better than the places they had chosen in Indiana or Ohio, in Illinois or Michigan, in Wisconsin or Kentucky. Maybe they ought to go see, when spring opened. . . .

Roads had now to be laid out. The lower house of Minnesota's legislature had already approved a Territorial road to run south from St. Paul to the Iowa line along the path of the old Dubuque-St. Paul trail; Chatfield promoters helped the promoters of other embryo towns on that route to persuade the legislators to start work on the road even though the upper house and the governor had not yet acted on the bill. All through the winter men toiled with axes and ox teams to mark a way for the stream of immigrants confidently expected with the opening of spring.

The trail from Winona westward was fairly well marked for twenty miles or more; and for men who were practiced in making their way through the wilderness, it was not difficult to find Chatfield. James McClellan, one of the town's incorporators, did his part toward further marking that trail before the snow melted. He bought enough lumber for a house and hauled it by ox team and runners from Winona to the Chatfield valley. He had double reason for haste: his house would insure his claim to the eighty acres

lying north of Twiford's acres, and it would give to his wife the reward of the town lot offered to the first white woman to live in Chatfield.

His coming was welcome indeed to the man who had lived alone in the valley for many weeks. With young Case's help, McClellan soon raised the thirty-foot frame of his house, well fastened together with stout hand-whittled pegs. When he went to Winona to bring his wife he brought also a stock of groceries and liquor. Chatfield's first frame house was not only a home for a family but a grocery store and an inn as well.

Twiford and Case had laid out six wide streets the length of the bench, and any traveler who would stop and work for a few days was hired to cut out trees along the lines of those streets. Next to the hill was Winona Street, then Fillmore, then Main; beyond Main lay Twiford, Bench, and River Streets. The block bounded by Main and Twiford, between Third and Fourth Streets, was set aside as the Public Square, to belong forever to the municipality of Chatfield. Winona, Fillmore, and Main were eight blocks long; the others were shortened by the narrowing of the bench. They all followed the main axis of the bench, from northwest to southeast, though no one then gave a thought to the fact that such an angle would give each house its maximum exposure to sunlight. The cross streets were numbered from the northerly end of the town plot. There was plenty of room for expansion, across the river and around the foot of Winona Hill; McClellan promptly laid out McClellan Addition beyond his house at the northerly end of Winona Street.

Grove Willis was the next man to bring his family to Chatfield. He built a log house some two or three blocks southward from McClellan's, on Winona Street. By midsummer he had been appointed Chatfield's first postmaster and distributed the infrequent mail from the desk that stood between the bed and cookstove in the crowded single room. The lot next to his own he reserved for his brother-in-law, Dr. Nelson Allen, who was to bring his family out from Winona early that summer. But before the Allens arrived, J. R. Jones came up from Iowa, where he had recently been

admitted to the bar, built a shanty on Second Street near Main, and hung out his shingle as Chatfield's first lawyer. Where there were town lots to be sold, and a whole county to be pre-empted, there was bound to be legal business.

Those were the first three houses built after Thomas Twiford's, and each of them housed a family. They did not stand alone for long. John Luark, county commissioner, brought his wife and two little children from Winona and built a log house between two oak trees at the point where Second Street ran into Winona Hill. Halfway up the hill behind the house was the fine spring where Thomas Twiford had drunk on the morning he first left the valley, and John Luark found time to devise an ingenious system of hollowed log pipes to bring water down the hill for his wife's convenience. She was a delicate young woman, who took the frontier hardships with a gaiety greater than her strength.

Squire Gere and his family came early that summer and built a log house at the far southerly end of Winona Street, beyond the bounds of the original Twiford plat. Beecher Gere claimed that eighty acres, and platted it as a second 'addition' to the town in partnership with another man. Young Gere was the busiest man in town: scarcely a traveler passed who was not impressed by the young man's vigorous charm and his grasp of the political issues of the day.

The Squire and his wife, with their two daughters and three sons, lived in the little house, where Squire plied his double trade of shoemaker and justice of the peace. They were never too crowded to find a place at their table or a corner to sleep for any extra person who came by. Indeed, with increasing travel along the Territorial road from the south or over the hill from Winona there was seldom a night when Chatfield lacked one or more guests. When McClellan's inn overflowed, the other houses were gladly opened to travelers, and before the middle of summer Isaac Day came up from Indiana and built a second inn, on the corner of Main and Second Streets.

Travelers came in a never-ending stream that summer. All of eastern Minnesota knew their passing, and here and there little

groups stopped and claimed land to live upon. Many were on foot, a few on horseback, more drove oxen hitched to wagons that overflowed with families and their possessions. Those who came through Chatfield were caught by the town's bustling exuberance; some quality in its valley setting marked it as different from other frontier towns they had seen. Travelers began to talk of the Root River country as the Chosen Valley and people who had never seen Chatfield came to associate it with that name.

Now the shrill whine of the sawmill rang across the valley. The sawmill was J. R. Jones's most profitable undertaking that summer. Twiford was too busy promoting the town, and bickering with his partners, to attend to such lesser matters. The man who brought in the machinery built his mill half a mile from a spot Twiford had chosen, on the creek that came down from beyond the bench, but before it was finished he sold out to Jones and disappeared. Jones moved his family to the millsite and with characteristic Yankee ingenuity set the machinery running. It paid him rather better than his lawyering; perhaps he knew more about a sawmill.

In the midst of the summer's bustle, James McClellan's wife gave birth to a baby girl. The event brought immense elation to the townsfolk: what better omen could there be of the new town's increase? The accouchement was attended by two physicians: Dr. Refine W. Twitchell, with his diploma from the University of Michigan, arrived just in time to share with Dr. Allen the honor of attending the first birth in Chatfield. When Twitchell's wife bore a son, not long after she had settled into the log house on Main Street which served as drug store and office as well as residence, the town's rejoicing was complete. Fannie McClellan and Herbert Twitchell, Chatfield's first two babies, were praised by everyone for giving the new town life's most significant sanction.

With only a few small patches of garden planted that year, there was need for constant renewal of food supplies. Three stores had been set up in Chatfield, and their owners kept hired men busy hauling in supplies from the River. The trail to Winona was well marked that summer and each trip brought back word of new settlers clearing a spot of ground somewhere on the way. By another

year there would be a lot of Minnesota wheat, and Chatfield would have a mill to grind its own flour. In the meantime the women baked bread from imported flour and made preserves to eat on it from the berries and plums and crab apples that grew at their very doorsteps. Butter was almost unknown: the two or three cows that had been brought into the valley scarcely gave milk enough for the children, and the butter shipped in from older sections was hardly fit to eat. When the salt pork, hauled in barrels from the river, grew unbearably stale, venison was to be had for occasional change, and there was plenty of prairie chickens and wild duck. Even town-bred families, whose menfolk had no taste for hunting, shared those delicacies when the country dwellers brought game to exchange for the things they needed from the storekeepers' shelves.

So the summer flowed on. Nobody knew just how many people there were in town, because they came and they went. But on the evening when a band of Winnebago Indians came up the Root River from the south and set their tepees in the big bend where Thomas Twiford, a year before, had seen the marks of their encampment, there were those who counted up, in secret uneasiness, the number of white men in Chatfield. It came barely to twenty-five, and the Indians were more than twice as many.

Their swarming over the town was tolerated with wary caution: if they were not annoyed they would probably do no serious harm. But when J. R. Jones visited their camp the next day and saw a number of suspiciously fine horses, he lost no time in taking action. Those horses were stolen. No doubt of it. The dirty vermin must be taught a lesson in the majesty of white man's law.

He looked about for the largest and cleanest tepee and walked boldly into it. To his amazement he found there a chieftain who spoke a more excellent English than Jones himself could command. He said his name was William Bradford and showed a diploma he had earned from a college in Illinois. When Jones recovered his breath, he asked the disturbingly self-possessed Indian about the stolen horses. Bradford admitted the theft but said the thieves were mere hangers-on of the tribe who had come along

without being asked. He admitted that 'the soldiers' might make trouble if they heard of the matter and finally agreed to let the local white authorities reclaim the horses and arrest one of the thieves. To take more than one, he insisted, would cause resentment in the tribe.

Jones hurried back to town and reported the dramatic situation he had found. Squire Gere made out a justice warrant for the arrest of the designated thief and swore in John Luark as constable to serve the warrant, with a posse of six men to support the majesty of the law. The hotheads who wanted to take their guns were overridden and the seven newly sworn officers went to the Indian encampment armed only in the invincible superiority of white law and white skins over red.

They made the arrest in due form and started back to town with their prisoner. But nearly all the Indians followed the posse, with so "evident a disposition to take the management of the matter into their own hands," as one of the Chatfield men wrote years later, that the posse paused to parley. They ended by releasing the prisoner and paying three dollars a head to get possession of the stolen horses. Thus was the dignity of the law upheld!

The Indians moved on a day or two later and the whole town breathed easier. The recaptured horses were claimed the next day by their original owners, who paid the Chatfield men what they had given to the Indians. No one knew or cared that the ancestors of the departed tribesmen had fought for and won the privilege of hunting in that valley.

They did not come again that summer. But all about Chatfield white men were coming, sometimes singly, more often with families, frequently in groups of two or three families, to make homes for themselves. Most of them were of that older American stock which accepted uncritically the generic label of Yankee, whether they came from New England, New York, Pennsylvania, or the younger states that lay west of the Appalachians. There were many young men among them, and they had all worked on farms, in wagon shops, in stores, or taught school before coming West. In

the new country they did whatever job came first to hand, and there was no dearth of jobs.

Here and there an older man represented a striking deviation from the prevailing pattern of experience. One, for instance, had sailed in his father's whaling ship from Nantucket around the Horn before going to Indiana to make a farm out of wilderness acres there. After twenty years he had sold that farm and gone to Minnesota to get a bigger one for his growing family. Another, who platted a village three or four miles up the river from Chatfield, had worked thirteen years in the Chickering piano factory in Boston, and served by night on the Boston city guard.

There was also a sprinkling of men born in other countries. A French-Canadian and two Englishmen took land south of Chatfield that summer. One of the Englishmen, London-bred, had served a term on a British man-o'-war. Four Irish settlers also entered claims in that neighborhood, and a good many more marked out and began work on claims they would pre-empt as soon as they had lived in America the year required for first citizenship papers. Norwegians, too, came into the region: the township east of Chatfield had more Norwegians than Yankees.

As the number of settlers increased, little centers of population grew up in the region. In each, some enterprising Yankee set up a store and an inn and usually managed to get his crossroads designated as a post office. There was a particular pride in the latter, even though the mails that summer came only haphazardly. A post office put a place quite literally on the map and gave to the people who lived near it the sustaining assurance that they were known and taken into account by that vague entity, the Government, which stood as a kind of symbol for the social order they were re-creating in the West.

By the end of 1854, there were a dozen such centers within a radius of ten or twelve miles of Chatfield. One of them began to offer a real threat to Chatfield's pre-eminence. Carimona, twelve miles due south of Chatfield, was almost exactly in the center of the new Fillmore County and its promoters were making much

the same kind of campaign that Chatfield had pushed the year before in Winona.

Thomas Twiford was less alarmed by the threat to his county seat than might have been expected. In the year he had spent in Minnesota new ways of getting rich had opened before him. The big money, he began to see, would come from railroads, and that was a game a man played better with as few associates as he could manage. He spent the summer getting rid of all but two of his original partners. Grove Willis and Beecher Gere were good at politics, and politics was part of the railroad game. If a man played a strong hand there he needn't worry about a county seat.

A lesson in the political involvements of railroad building was already unfolding for Minnesota's enlightenment, though not all of its implications were yet clear. As early as December 19, 1853—the very day that two county commissioners met in Twiford's cabin to name Chatfield the county seat—Minnesota Territory's delegate gave notice in Congress of a bill to grant public lands in aid of railroad construction in Minnesota. It was the first such bill to be laid before Congress by a Territory and although the Senate passed it without division the House brought the whole policy of railroad land grants under review.

The first such grant had been made in 1850 to the Illinois Central, under the skillful manipulations of Stephen A. Douglas, and the company was using the proceeds from selling its lands to build the road at twice the speed required by the terms of the grant. Yet despite this demonstration of the effectiveness of the policy, there was strong opposition to giving a corporation a million acres of land which, as one Congressman said, belonged to the landless people of the world. In May, 1854, the House decisively turned down the proposal, largely on the grounds that the corporation already chartered by Minnesota's legislature was so constituted as to offer no assurance that lands granted it would be used for any other than speculative purposes. It was even rumored that Congressmen supporting the bill had been illicitly provided with stock in the company, and that the White House itself was not indifferent to the fortunes of the enterprise.

Chatfield and the other communities of southern Minnesota were not too well pleased over the plans of the Minnesota and Northwestern, for its proposed route lay north from St. Paul to the head of Lake Superior, which was frozen shut for half the year. What southern Minnesotans wanted was a railroad to connect them with one of the railroads building west from Chicago—and southern Minnesota had four-fifths of the Territory's population.

Yet so great was the political effectiveness of the group interested in the Minnesota and Northwestern that in June they succeeded in getting Congress to grant Minnesota virtually the same lands which had been denied the Territory the month before. To be sure, the new law was drawn with the avowed intention of excluding the rather unsavory "New York speculators" of the Minnesota and Northwestern from getting those lands. The bill, as voted on, provided that the lands should be held in trust by the government of Minnesota until some "future" legislature decided on their disposal; also, that the land should not be given to any company already "constituted or organized." But in the interval between the passage and the printing of the law someone persuaded the Clerk of the House to alter the *or* to *and*, and to omit the word *future*. On the basis of the printed text the Minnesota and Northwestern company set up its claim to the whole million acres. The case dragged on for years, under varying pressures from Washington, before it was finally lost by the company, but the immediate effect on Minnesota railroad hopes was stunning disappointment. When Congress discovered the fraud that had been practiced upon it, the whole grant was rescinded, and Minnesota was left without an acre to give to its clamoring railroad companies.

The lesson of that episode was pondered long by Minnesotans. Most agreed that such flagrant corruption deserved punishment, though it seemed a pity that the whole Territory should suffer for the chicanery of a few. More important was the light shed on the relations between railroads and politics.

To build a railroad required more money than anyone in southern Minnesota had. The best way to raise that money was

to get a land grant big enough to interest Eastern capitalists. The only way to get a land grant was through political influence. Twiford, and Willis, and Gere, and men of similar interests in other towns of the region, grew more and more absorbed in maneuvers for political advantage.

They had plenty of support from their neighbors. In Chatfield every man, woman and child was hungry for news of 'our railroad.' Chatfield men talked about the money a railroad would bring to their town, and so to themselves; but the women put into words what the men scarcely deigned to admit—that a railroad would bring them closer to the old home-places. The iron horse became a kind of symbol for the whole process of webbing the frontier into the larger life of the country.

That process was considerably helped on by the gigantic excursion staged by the Chicago and Rock Island railroad the summer of 1854. To celebrate the completion of the first railroad to reach the Mississippi, its builders invited a thousand prominent Easterners to share a lavish expedition to the river and thence by boat to St. Paul. Every newspaper in the West acclaimed the excursion as it passed, and when its financiers returned to their homes they filled the Eastern periodicals with glowing praise of Minnesota and its capital. Such public interest should make it easy, the settlers in the valley felt, to find backing for a railroad to a promising town like Chatfield. A line from Chicago would soon reach the River opposite Winona and another was pushing fast towards La Crosse, just opposite the mouth of the Root River. A connection with either would bring Chatfield its rightful importance as the first metropolis west of the River. . . . So the summer's excited speculation ran, and Chatfield, like every other settlement west of the Mississippi, saw itself well on the way to metropolitan glory.

But as the summer waned and travelers came less frequently, the future grew less urgent and men bent their efforts to assure the comfort of their families through the coming winter. Great stacks of wood were piled up behind the little houses, and earth was

banked against outer walls to keep the worst cold off the floors. Livestock that had wandered in the open all summer was brought into hastily built log and straw shelters. Merchants sent extra teams to the River and south into Iowa for supplies of pork and flour. Housewives counted such dried and preserved foods as their gardens and the forest had yielded, and hoped they would last until spring brought new abundance.

And a school was begun. Chatfield had plenty of children: Dr. Allen and two of the merchants mustered eleven of school age, and those were only three out of twenty-odd families. It was unthinkable, the more enlightened argued, that when the legislature had provided the legal machinery for public schools this fine new town should not have one. Yet somehow no such organization was effected. Instead, Miss Mary Edwards was employed by private subscription, and held her school in a little log house on Fillmore Street.

That school became, in the uncalculated fashion of human relations, a symbol and a center for the town's self-sustaining life in the face of rigorous cold. When summer blazed up in the final glory of frost-touched maples and oaks, the school children and half the rest of the town made a holiday of gathering the walnuts and hazelnuts that lay thick on the ground. As the leaves fell and the snow came there were spelldowns and 'sings' in the little schoolhouse at early candlelighting, and folks came, afoot and by ox team, from every corner of the valley to share the brief assurance of 'a party.' At a box social to raise money for books and pencils for the school, every girl and woman brought a lunch in a gaily decorated box for which the men bid against each other. When the serious business of the evening was done, whether spelling school or debate, the benches were piled against the walls, and, if someone had a fiddle, the dancing was gay. If there was no fiddle, the games that went with rollicking songs gave as much pleasure.

There was "Happy Is the Miller," for instance, where the couples marched round in a circle, the girls on the outside and a partnerless man inside the circle waiting his chance. They sang:

Happy is the Miller that lives by himself,
 As the wheel turns round he is gaining his wealth,
 One hand in the hopper and the other in the bag,
 As the wheel rolls round he cries out "Grab."

At the last word each man stepped forward one place, and the one in the center tried hard in that shift to get the partner he wanted.

Or, they might play "King William." For this the whole party joined hands in a ring and marched round and round under the uplifted hands of a boy and a girl, who dropped their hands to stop the chosen one at the right point in the song:

King William was King James's son
 Upon a royal race he run
 He wore a star upon his breast
 To represent the Prince of War.

Go choose your East . . . Go choose your West
 Go choose the one that you love best,
 If she's not here to take your part
 Then choose another with all your heart.
 Down on this carpet you must kneel
 As sure as the grass grows in the field
 Salute your bride with a kiss so sweet
 And rise again upon your feet.

Nor did the singing end when the party was over. As the little groups set off on their various ways towards home the valley rang with their songs, the songs that had been sung by many a campfire as these and other people made their way into the West.

Away to Minnesota a journey I'll go
 For to double my fortune as other men do.

Another song that went with the crunching of feet in the snow:

Cheer up brothers, as we go
 Over the mountains, westward ho!
 When we've wood and prairie land
 Won by our toil,
 We'll reign like kings in Fairy Land
 Lords of the soil.

Householders paused to listen a moment as the singers passed out of hearing:

Then over the hills in legions, boys,
Fair freedom's star
Points to the sunset regions, boys,
Ho! Ho! Ho! Ho!

Whatever fears or loneliness might lurk in grimmer hours were for the time forgotten.

And there were grim hours. When January let loose its fury the hills were no shelter against the blizzards that blotted the world in a frenzy of snow, or the sly cold that crept into bed with the sleepers. John Luark's wife died in the depths of that winter's cold, despite the care of two doctors. Every man in town took his turn in the sad labor of chipping out a burial place in ground flint-hard with frost. They made her grave on the slope between the little house she lived in and the road that wound up the side of Winona Hill. The townsfolk stood silent about the grave that January of 1855 as the first of their dead was buried.

PART

Two



The Lovely Land

I



THE MAN SETTLED the heavy plow into place and leaned a little on its handles, looking back over the furrow he had broken. The soil curled black and shining over the edge of the flowering sod. Never before had it felt the touch of the sun. Since the earth was made these acres had never been stirred. He leaned over and broke a lump with his hand. He pressed it against his mouth, ravished by the moment of delight. It was his, this earth. His strength had redeemed it from the forest.

All winter, in cold that lasted longer than Norway's, he had struggled with the trees that stubbornly claimed it as their own. Now they were conquered, cut up for the fires of his house, their roots destroyed in the smouldering piles that had burned through the days of the sun's reluctant returning. His! Five acres of field that he had made.

Here in this virgin earth he would plant wheat—five acres of it. Bread for his wife and their little ones. Maybe, even, his Oluphina would make the white bread that only rich ladies made in the Old Country. White bread on his table! From wheat that he had made grow, on land that was his own.

A meadow lark skimmed the grasses of the field and settled on a stump at its edge; its song rang across the morning, the very voice of the land. The man laid his hands strongly on the plow and urged his patient oxen across the field. Now that the earth permitted itself to be worked there was nothing he could not do, in this America, this Minnesota, where the government let a man own all the land he would faithfully serve.

“Chee-chee, Buck!” he shouted. “Chee-chee, Bright!” The furrow swelled over the Maytime flowers and lay still beneath his feet as he moved forward.

II



IT WAS THE LAND that drew the people into the West. Working on their stony acres, or in the new-fangled factories where machinery cut into a man's pride of making, men dreamed of the independence they could find on the fabulous lands of the West. The rich and powerful of older regions, who wanted 'hands' for their expanding industries, might protest as they would. Men were not enduringly bought by factory wages when virgin acres lay waiting in the West.

It was the land that had defeated the purpose of colonial proprietors to keep in the New World the same social strata that existed in the Old. In both Massachusetts and Virginia the leaders intended to keep their bondservants in decent subjection to authority. But when land was to be had for the clearing, and the man of property was seen to die as readily as his servant, of dysentery or an Indian arrow, the bondsmen plucked up courage to defy the wilderness, and so breached the feudal pattern.

The land played its part, too, in helping thirteen colonies to become a country of united states. Each of those colonies claimed vast regions west of its actual settlement. Conflicts over their claims added to the troubles of the Continental Congress even before independence was won. When those claims were finally pooled under the single authority of the Congress, a large step was taken towards the growth of a united country.

It was not easy to develop a workable policy for making use of that land. What was to be done with obstinate creatures who ignored government regulations and built their huts and grubbed

their fields on whatever spot of the public domain suited their fancy?

Congress 'settled' the question not once but many times. In 1800, local land offices were set up in what was then the West. There land could be bought in minimum tracts of three hundred and twenty acres, for as little as two dollars an acre. Twenty years later that price was reduced, because of protest from Western voters, to a dollar and a quarter an acre, and as few as eighty acres could be bought.

Still settlers persisted in pushing ahead of the legal authority and devised such means as they could for giving their claims the semblance of legality. With the passion for organization so characteristic of American life, they set up Claim Associations complete with officers, constitutions, and by-laws. (It was such an association that had upheld Henry Gere's claim at Winona.) Their chief function was to protect actual settlers, who had occupied and improved a piece of land, from being outbid and dispossessed by 'outsiders' who tried to buy the land for speculative purposes. Their methods were direct rather than subtle, and they were effective, especially in Iowa where the movement came to its height during the 1830's. (The grandsons of those Claim Association men remembered the lesson a century later when Iowa farm mortgages were being foreclosed by banks and other 'outside' agencies.)

But Western people were not content to remain outside the law. Again and again Congress was petitioned to grant pre-emption rights to particular areas where the settlers felt themselves peculiarly imperiled by speculators. When the panic of 1837 broke the fever of speculation, the idea of general pre-emption was strongly pushed. In 1841, Congress passed an act which was supposed to make it forever impossible for any but actual settlers to claim a share in the public domain.

The act provided that as soon as a man had cleared and fenced a half acre of land, built a house on it and lived there for a month, he could file in the nearest land office a declaration of intention which gave him a temporary right to hold as much as one hun-

dred sixty acres. A nominal fee of two dollars and a half was charged for the filing, but no further cost was involved until the land was proclaimed for sale at public auction on a date fixed by presidential decree. Before that date the settler could buy 'his' land at the minimum price of a dollar and a quarter an acre.

Any citizen who was twenty-one could pre-empt, and widows or minors were allowed to file in the same way in the absence of husband or father. Immigrants who had been one year in the country and had their first citizenship papers could also file such claims.

Such was the law when the Chatfield region was settled. The workings of that law were inevitably tied to the workings of the government's Indian policy. The gaudy fiction of national sovereignty attributed to each separate tribe had served well to rationalize the endless series of border wars that cleared the West for headlong settlement.

Minnesota's first delegate to Congress made a stirring appeal for a revision of that policy that should be "worthy of a . . . generous Christian people. . . . Your pioneers," Henry Hastings Sibley said, "are encircling the home of the red man as with a wall of fire . . . you must approach the tribes with terms of conciliation and real friendship or . . . this nation will subject itself to additional and awful retribution of Providence." Sibley had lived for more than a decade among the Sioux and knew whereof he spoke.

But his plea was ignored. A year later the Sioux were removed from their ancient hunting grounds by the old, bad method of negotiating a 'treaty.'

They were reluctant. It took two months of government beef and traders' champagne to persuade them, that summer of 1856. A St. Paul editor reported the "lean and hungry look" of the tribesmen and cited the proverb about the Devil bobbing for a miser's soul with a shilling. "So Uncle Sam baits for Sioux with bullocks, and the way they take the bait off is amazing."

When the 'treaty' was finally signed one of the eldest Sioux said: "You think it is a great deal you are giving for this country.

I don't think so, for both our lands and all we get for them will come at last to . . . the white men who trade with us." But the editor praised the treaty because it would teach the Indians "thrift, economy, and avarice, 'that good old gentlemanly vice.'"

He also chanted prophecies of "magic villages and cities" in the newly opened Suland, that was "larger and fairer than Ohio." Even when he wrote, two years before Thomas Twiford chose his valley, isolated cabins were being built up and down the west bank of the Mississippi. By 1854, when land offices were opened at Winona and at Brownsville, farther down the river, claims had been staked on most of the land for twenty miles west.

It was in the Brownsville office that Thomas Twiford registered his claim to 156.48 acres on August 8, 1854. He paid cash—\$195.60—that same day.

Twice the President announced a date for the sale of those lands, and twice the sale was called off. Settlers were not eager to pay out hard cash, and they were apt to vote for politicians who could get a postponement of the necessity. When rumors rose that still a third sale date would be canceled, the Brownsville officials protested strongly. The sale was urgently necessary, they wrote, for the sake of "the morals and peace of the country." Houses were being burned down and families driven or dragged from the premises by rival claimants. Things had come to such a pass that "if a man so much as walks over or looks at another man's land the owner brussels up for a fight."

Between thirty and forty thousand people poured into Minnesota the summer of 1855—three or four times as many people as lived in the Territory at the beginning of the year. Along the waterways and the upland trails they poured so fast that when the sale was finally held that October, the land was bought for fifty miles west of the river.

In that sale Brownsville felt the cold breath of loss. If its land office was moved farther west there would be little to keep alive the gaudy excitement on which the village had thrived.

But Chatfield expanded in confident pride. It had three times as many buildings in October as it had in March. Where else but to Chatfield could the land office be moved?

III



O. S. ARMSTRONG, a young Vermonter who came up from Iowa the summer of 1855 and taught a few weeks of subscription school in Chatfield, counted twenty-six houses in the town. Five were framed of lumber sawed in J. R. Jones's mill across the river from the town proper. Young Armstrong bought one of the frame houses on Fillmore Street, and late that fall brought his wife to live in it. She stayed at Isaac Day's hotel while the walls of the little house were being plastered; the first night spent in the new house was so cold that the plaster froze solid. It didn't thaw out until spring.

In that chilly place young Mary Armstrong kept house as best she could. There was one fine advantage in the location: they lived just across the street from a pump that supplied water to most of the town. The pump was fed by an extension of the hollowed log pipes which carried water from the spring behind John Luark's house—it was easier to lay pipes than to dig to water through the many feet of stone that underlay the bench.

All these things young Armstrong recorded in his diary. Chatfield, as he described it, did not sound like much of a town, yet to the people who lived there in the winter of 1855 it was already pregnant with the hope of a new life, already knit together in the sharing of significant memories. The dignity of the enfolding hills was somehow wrought into the necessities which adapted old customs to the new country, and afterwards the people who had

lived in that place remembered how they had been comforted by the ancient psalm: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."

Here, for example, a man died, and there was no fitting place for his burial. John Luark's wife had been laid to rest on the hillside behind her home, but it was unthinkable that every household should bury its dead in its own back yard. When James McClellan died, in February of 1855, the men of the town took characteristic action for the future. They organized a Cemetery Association and bought five acres of land a stone's throw from the spot where Twiford first saw the valley. When they buried James McClellan in that plot there was grief at the loss of one so closely associated with the town's beginnings, but there was also a kind of reassurance in the beauty that surrounded "God's new half acre."

There was assurance, too, and challenge, when the Reverend Gardiner K. Clark came to Squire Gere's house one Sunday afternoon and preached the first sermon ever heard in the Chatfield valley. He had arrived a few weeks before in Saratoga, half-way between Chatfield and Winona, to organize a church in that thriving village, but with true missionary fervor he extended his pastoral concern to other settlements. So many came to hear him preach that the little log house would not hold them, and benches were improvised in the clearing behind the cabin.

The Reverend Mr. Clark was a tall and striking figure with white hair that hung to his shoulders. When he rose and announced his text, from the second chapter of Hebrews, the congregation settled to intense consideration of his words: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Through the accents of sound classical and theological learning he spoke his benevolent understanding of Western conditions, and the hearts of his hearers were stirred to the need of a church for their growing town. That was in midsummer of 1855.

The need found an answer sooner than, at that moment, could have been expected. Late in the summer a young man named

George Stephens rode into town and announced that he was licensed as a Methodist local preacher. He lacked the learning and the experience of Father Clark, but so effective were his activities that on November 24 and 25 the Methodist Episcopal Church of Chatfield held its first quarterly conference in the stone blacksmith shop on Main Street, with a presiding elder from one of the river towns to legitimize the occasion. His presence was a visible assurance that Chatfield was webbed into the larger pattern of civilized life through its activities as part of an established church organization.

Although a church body flourished in Chatfield the second winter, the village still had no public school. The men who supported subscription schools for their own children took the lead in trying to set up a free public school, but they were opposed chiefly by the poorest and most westernized people in Chatfield. Men who had been born in Ohio or Illinois were apt to be filled with the old frontiersman's disdain for "book-larin'," that cut down no trees and made no crops. Why should anyone want to pay out good cash-money for school taxes to educate other people's brats? Thus the argument ran.

By the end of April, 1855, the discussion had gone so far that "the electors of Chatfield" met "at the house of Isaac Day," innkeeper, and organized a school district. Three sound Yankee citizens * were elected trustees and the meeting was adjourned to the following week. But the adjourned meeting was never called. Perhaps the original group had acted in semi-secrecy, counting on the weight of an accomplished fact to overcome the opposition. Whatever the reason, the "Chatfield School District" did not meet again until September 14, and the worn calf-bound minute book gives no clue to the reason for the long hiatus.

At the September meeting those present (there is no record of the number) "voted to build a School House . . . and to raise a tax of (\$400) Four Hundred Dollars to apply to its erection." A "comity" of three was appointed to select a site for the school

* T. J. Safford, B. F. Ferrington, Dr. R. W. Twitchell.

and the trustees were "instructed to receive sealed proposals for building a School House up to Saturday, Sept. 22, 1855, at 6 o'clock P.M."

Once more opposition developed, and on November 9 the trustees called another meeting of the electorate. There the trustees were instructed "to see" the man who had been given the contract for the new building and "compromise with him to let the School House that he contracted to build lay over till Spring." By way of compromise the subscription school begun by a Mr. Colby from New Hampshire was to be made public to all children of the district by levying "a Tax on the property of the District to pay for his services." There were still a lot of people for whom larnin' was a waste of both time and money.

But when it came to railroads . . . Ah, that was a different matter altogether. If a man was smart he could make fabulous numbers of dollars out of the business of railroad building. If he wasn't quite smart enough for that he still stood to gain from the success of those who were: everybody within fifty miles of a railroad would gather a part of the golden shower that would follow its Midas-magic.

Chatfield folks had done a lot of planning about railroads since the injudicious rascality of the Minnesota and Northwestern had cost the Territory a cool million acres that might have been used for railroad building. When the petition went to the legislature, praying for the incorporation of the Root River and Southern Minnesota Railroad company, only three of the twenty-three signers were Eastern financiers. Three were St. Paul men with strong interests in the southern part of Minnesota. The rest all lived in the region where the railroad was to be built. They felt that seventeen votes out of twenty-three were a safe majority to protect the region in any possible situation. Thomas Twiford and Beecher Gere represented Chatfield in the company.

The charter was granted by the legislature March 22, 1855. It authorized the company to build two branches. One, a modest proposal, was to run south and west from St. Paul to the Missouri

River. The other, of much more immediate interest to Chatfield, was to follow the Root River northward from a point opposite La Crosse, in Wisconsin, to connect with the railroad that another company was to build west from Winona. Two Wisconsin roads were already pushing westward from Lake Michigan toward Winona and La Crosse. The Root River and Southern Minnesota would insure its patrons a double connection to Chicago and all points east. Chatfield was jubilant over this assurance of its future.

But rejoicing was tempered by outrage when the text of the bill was read. It was found to carry a provision removing the county seat from Chatfield to Carimona, the village whose pretensions had already caused much heartburning among Chatfield people. It was dirty politics, they cried. But the fact was accomplished.

A few craven souls followed the county records to the new county seat in the first shock of the news, but most Chatfield people, including Thomas Twiford, shrugged off Carimona's gleeful assumption of triumph. There was bigger game to be stalked in the political jungle. Chatfield was after the Land Office, a much better way to make money than the capture of a mere county seat. And while they waited for that consummation, they worked to rebuke Carimona for its presumption. A county election was called by the legislature for April, 1856, to choose between Carimona and two other villages as county seat. Chatfield men set up so large a building fund for Preston that the choice fell upon that new little village, which was safely within the scope of Chatfield influence. With the expected Land Office, Chatfield boasted it would have no time to bother with county affairs.

The Federal order removing the Land Office from Brownsville to Chatfield was issued in May, 1856. The transfer was not easy for the officials. Every team in the region was at work in the fields through all the daylight hours, and outrageous prices had to be paid for hauling families and households and office records across the country. Once under way the party found

the so-called roads so deep in mud, and the streams so flooded, that travel was a perpetual peril. At each fording place wagons had to be partly unloaded and two or three teams hitched to each one, with further unloading and reloading to get everything through the spring freshets. Each branch and affluent of the Root River, which laced the region, was a new and separate hazard.

For the two chief officers' delicately bred wives the trip was an extreme ordeal. Mrs. Bennett, from the bluegrass country of Kentucky, left her two-year-old daughter with friends in Brownsville. The eldest boy was fourteen and could look after himself on the journey, but there was a little girl of nine and a baby a year old to take care of on the trip, and Mrs. Bennett was already carrying her fifth child. Mrs. McKinney, Virginia-bred, was more advanced in pregnancy and had five children, ranging from thirteen to two years, in her care.

Yet when the sun was high and the young, green leaves shone in its warmth, even fatigue could not obscure the wonder of the opening land. Last year's fields were already bright with spears of newly sown wheat, and where straining oxen broke the virgin soil the travelers felt themselves witnessing the birth of a new civilization.

The party eventually reached Chatfield without serious mishap, and on the thirteenth of June the Land Office was opened for business in a small frame building which Thomas Twiford had put up between First and Second on the street bearing his name. There was plenty of work to be done at once, for settlers were pouring westward at a rate to make the most orderly pens leap with superlatives of delight at the flood of immigration which was raising Minnesota to unprecedented heights of prosperity. There was land in abundance for all, and to five million acres of that land legal title could be cleared only in the Chatfield Land Office.

The town boomed. Nobody had time to keep count of the new buildings going up during the summer of 1856, or the new people who came. An 'addition' to the town was laid out beyond

the river and christened West Chatfield, and a dozen families settled there. People came from everywhere, drawn by the lure of such leaping prices for land as the country had never seen before. One traveler reported that he could lend out the few hundred dollars he carried with him for such interest as would pay all the expenses of his summer's travel and still leave him a 6 per cent return on his investment.

The greater number of the newcomers were farm folks, single men and families, who sought land where their labor could make a home out of the wilderness. But increasingly Chatfield drew to itself men of all sorts who hoped in the general speculative increase to add to their own wealth.

Surveyors and lawyers and moneylenders swarmed in the Land Office town. Men brought in stocks of dry goods and groceries and liquors and went to storekeeping. An English brickmaker set up a brick yard near the sawmill, the first one in all of Southern Minnesota, and a brick store was built from the first run of its kiln. Other men built wagons, or furniture, or houses as the occasion demanded.

Chatfield had many of those "proper individuals" whom Emerson praised as "capable of thought and of new choice and the application of their hands to new labor." But it also displayed "the vulgarity of wealth" that stood against "any high direction of public money," which Emerson was rebuking as "the sad lesson of these days."

New England's great philosopher and essayist was to lecture a year or two later in St. Paul, but it is doubtful that his words on that occasion found much hearing in Chatfield except as a kinsman living there may have repeated them. For a cousin of Emerson's was among the lawyers who moved from Brownsville to Chatfield. Christopher Gore Ripley and Ralph Waldo Emerson had the same grandmother, and Ripley's father, the Reverend Samuel Ripley of the Old Manse in Concord, was, Emerson said, "The hoop that held us all staunch." His mother, Sarah Alden Ripley, was a close friend of the Aunt Mary Moody Emerson who was so potent an exhorter of the essayist in his early years.

Mrs. Ripley was known as one of the most wonderful scholars of her time. At the age of fourteen she was widely read in the classics of the Latin, Greek, German, French, and Italian tongues and had studied much mathematics and science. President Everett of Harvard said there was not a place on his faculty that Mrs. Ripley could not fill. She would have delighted in a life of solitary scholarship, she wrote her friend Mary Moody Emerson, but yielded to the urgency of family and friends that she marry Mr. Ripley. When his salary as minister of the church in Waltham proved insufficient for their growing family, Mrs. Ripley and her husband conducted a tutorial school for boys seeking admission to Harvard. She herself cooked and scrubbed besides teaching Greek to "her boys," until the Ripley children were all grown and independently established. Thereupon Mr. Ripley resigned his church and with his devoted wife retired to live in the Old Manse which Hawthorne had vacated only the previous spring.

The Ripleys' first son was named for an elder friend, Christopher Gore, who went to London on the Claims Commission acting under the Jay Treaty in 1789. That son, born in 1820, followed family tradition by graduating from Harvard; after a further year studying law there he entered the office of a Boston law firm in 1842, where he remained until he went West.

His decision to leave the familiar and prosperous associations of Boston was no sudden impulse, for Gore, as his sisters called him, had always chafed under the restraints of New England propriety and liked nothing better than to hear Cousin Waldo's reports of his Western trips. When his suit for a gracious young widow, Fanny Houghton Gage, came up against her steadfast refusal to marry until her daughter should be settled in life, C. G. Ripley felt that only distance could make enduring the constraint imposed upon him by his lady's immovable decision. He went to Brownsville to practice law, and at the first hint of the Land Office transfer pre-empted a piece of land lying between Twiford's town plat and the Root River. When the Land

Office was actually moved he set up bachelor's hall in the little log cabin on his land.

Another figure prominent in the pageant of Chatfield's expansive life in the summer of 1856 was Ignatius F. O'Ferrall. He was three years younger than Ripley and was born in Maryland; his grandfather, first of the family in America, had sat in the Virginia legislature when Patrick Henry uttered his treasonable cry of "liberty or death" and his father later sat in the same legislature.

The O'Ferrall family, however, had older and prouder claims to distinction than mere American Revolutionary activity. They were descended, as every biographical notice of I. F. O'Ferrall set forth (in later years when Minnesota became avid of local biography) "from Rossius, son of Rodicus Magnus, or Rory Mor, 86th monarch of Ireland, and Maud, Queen of Conaught, from whom was descended Fergal, king of Conmacue, whose great grandson, Braon, was the first to assume the name of O'Ferrall."

I. F. O'Ferrall did not introduce himself to Chatfield in that manner. He came there from California, where he had gone in 1849 in the very van of the gold rush and mined for a year. Afterwards he turned to storekeeping and bought a share in a coast-wise steamboat company, which paid dividends of 5 per cent per month. Five years of such returns gave him ample stake for new investments, and some chance of association or rumor on the long overland trail east from California brought him to Chatfield.

Quite another sort of person was Dr. Augustus Trow, who arrived in Chatfield before the frost was fairly out of the roads in the spring. He was born in Massachusetts in 1832 and was graduated from Castleton Medical College in Vermont in 1853. He had served in the Vermont legislature and was ordained as a lay preacher of the Baptist faith.

One of the first Sunday afternoons after his arrival in Chat-

field he preached to a company gathered in an oak grove a little north of the house James McClellan had built, reading the Word of God from a sheepskin-covered Bible that his children and his grandchildren were to cherish for years afterwards. So effective were his exhortations on the Sabbath of May 21, 1856, that fourteen people then and there signed the covenant establishing a Baptist Society in Chatfield.

Chatfield's second church organization flourished. In the course of the summer the Baptists collected nine hundred dollars toward the erection of a church building, and they got the structure completed before snow fell that fall. In August they entertained the representatives of three other Baptist churches in the region.

Those four churches organized themselves as the Southern Minnesota Baptist Association and appointed two of their members as "Messengers" to the State Baptist Association which had been organized in St. Paul four years earlier and would shortly be holding its annual meeting in that city. Other "Messengers" were appointed to visit a similar meeting of a Wisconsin group. The Chatfield gathering also petitioned the Baptist missionary society in the East to send three missionaries and a colporteur, or peddler of religious tracts, to labor in the rapidly opening field of southern Minnesota. There was no regional isolationism among these people of the opening West. They sought by every means within their knowledge to knit themselves close into the larger life of their times.

The agitation for more adequate schools continued. A school census taken in January, 1856, showed seventy-nine persons in the district between the ages of five and twenty-one, and it was guessed that at least as many more came in the course of the summer. A new board of trustees elected that spring, with Squire Gere as its chairman, succeeded in persuading the electors to levy a tax of six hundred dollars for building a school. The tax was augmented by four hundred dollars of 'voluntary' subscriptions collected from the 'land office gentry' whose capital lay beyond reach

of the school district's taxing power. A frame schoolhouse was actually built that summer—one of seventy-five new buildings added to the town. It was "30 x 40 feet in the main," and twelve feet from the floor to the roof—an improvement over the huddled quarters previously used on the third floor of one of the 'hotels' but still inadequate to the community's school need.

Men and women whose children were ready for instruction beyond the level of grammar school remembered the academies of Eastern communities and began to talk of a similar institution for Chatfield. The talk was crystallized into action by the urgency of Augustus Haven, who set up a store in Chatfield that summer. He had been for several years a trustee of the Black River Academy in his native Vermont and his wife had taught in that institution before her marriage. Their fifteen-year-old son George had been for two years a student in Boston's notable English High School, but his parents were not ready to consider his education complete. Moreover, their younger daughter would be through with grammar school in a few years. Augustus Haven took the lead in petitioning the legislature to charter the Chatfield Academy.

The charter was granted late in 1856 and the list of its incorporators was a list of 'sound Yankee' names. Only two of them had been born west of the Alleghenies, four were New York men, four were natives of Vermont. Beecher Gere, Captain McKenny, and Augustus Haven formed the executive board, and its chairman, Mr. Haven, was also treasurer of the corporation.† Eight of these men remained a part of Chatfield's life for many years: lived there, raised families, and carried their full share in making the community life.

† The incorporators were the following men, grouped here according to their birthplaces:

<i>Vermont</i>	<i>New York</i>	<i>Others</i>
C. M. Lovell	Chauncey Jones	I. F. O'Ferrall (Md.)
C. G. Hawley	T. J. Safford	C. G. Ripley (Mass.)
Augustus Haven	G. W. Willis	A. H. Trow (Mass.)
R. W. Twitchell	F. G. Raymond	J. H. McKenny (Pa.)
Milo White		W. B. Gere (Pa.)

Haven, McKenny, Hawley, and Willis were the only ones who were forty or more years old.

Yet oddly enough the man who first conceived the town had no part in this or in any group activities for other purposes than the getting of money. Thomas Twiford evidently felt he couldn't afford to fuss around with things like schools if he was to keep his mind on his business.

The biggest business was still the building of a railroad, Thomas Twiford was certain. Getting the company chartered was only the beginning. Stock must be sold both locally and in the East where money was more abundant. Political alliances must be strengthened in behalf of a future land grant, and the control of the whole affair gathered into as few hands as possible.

One of the most vigorous personalities drawn into the cause was Henry Whitcomb Holley, a civil engineer from upstate New York who invested in the Root River Railroad. When word got about that J. H. McKenny, receiver of the Land Office, was about to start a Democratic newspaper in Chatfield, Holley was persuaded to bring out equipment and set up a rival sheet.

The newly fledged Republican party had as yet comparatively few adherents in Minnesota but men in the business of getting favors from the government foresaw that their efforts would be facilitated by the growth of a second party which could be played against the dominant one. The gathering tensions of the 'irrepressible conflict' between North and South, together with Western unrest at the administration of the land laws, afforded hopeful opportunity for such developments.

So the month of October, 1856, saw two newspapers begin their careers in Chatfield. The Chatfield *Democrat* published its first issue on the first day of October: Beecher Gere took an armful of the papers as they came from the press and passed them out in all the business places of town, and wherever he stopped men forgot all other business in their excitement over the town's first newspaper.

"Cap" McKenny had turned out a good-looking sheet, with eight columns of fine print on every one of its four pages. The front and back pages had been printed somewhere in the East, with news from Washington and scandal from New York, and

abundant advertisements of patent medicines and books on phrenology and other popular subjects. The inside pages were printed on McKenny's own press; its editorial salutatory declared support for the great Democracy and steadfast friendship to all that made for the prosperity of Chatfield in particular and southern Minnesota in general.

The Democrats swelled with pride, and the Republicans guffawed in derision, and three weeks later the positions were reversed on the appearance of Holley's *Chatfield Republican*, which proudly named itself the "sworn foe of cant," and called slavery the only real issue of the day. But through all the partisan chaffer ran a strong uniting pride that Chatfield had not one but two weekly newspapers when the town was less than three years old. Find a town anywhere in the West to beat that!

But newspapers, the best of them, could not be eaten, and Chatfield stirred from dreams of greatness to the uneasy realization that its supply of flour was dangerously low. Heavy fall rains had so mired the narrow trails that for weeks no supplies had been hauled into the valley. Storekeepers counted their sacks of flour and wondered if they would last until snow came and bobsleds could be sent to the river.

When the rain let up for a few days young Milo White, a Vermonter who had bought a store during the summer, borrowed the strongest team he could find and set off for Iowa; the Territorial road south was easier traveling than the one to Winona, and Iowa had been settled long enough to have flour mills of its own.

The weather was reasonably good and the wagon empty going down. He bought all the flour his wagon would carry and started back. Still no serious rain hindered him, though the trail was far from easy going, especially as he got nearer to Chatfield. The night before what he had hoped would be the last day of his journey, the heavens let loose their floods and he had no choice but to wait. When the rain finally stopped, the second morning, he set off to a heart-breaking task.

The last part of that journey cost days instead of hours. At one

point he carried the flour on his back, sack by sack, across a swollen stream which by great good fortune was spanned with a fallen tree. When the flour was safely across and piled on a rough scaffolding of branches to keep it off the sodden ground, he managed to swim his team, with the wagon, across the torrent. There he reloaded the flour and went on, soaked to the skin, in an icy November wind.

At Preston, the new county seat, he found the river so enlarged above a new milldam that there was no possibility of taking a team through. The men at work on the mill helped him; they spent a day and much of a night building a kind of roadway along the top of the dam to get the team and wagon across. They carried most of the flour across on their backs.

Milo White got home at the end of the next day, every sack of his precious load miraculously unspoiled. There was not a pound of flour left in his own or any other store. The last had been divided out that day among the families most urgently in need.

The people of Chatfield slept better that night for knowing that Milo White was safely returned. But with their gratitude went redoubled certainty that they must get a railroad, and at once. The iron horse, that ran in every weather, would put them forever beyond the clutch of famine's bony hand.

The stockholders of the Root River and Southern Minnesota had met in Chatfield a few weeks earlier to elect a new board of directors. Five of the nine directors, and three-fifths of the executive committee, were Chatfield men †—a safe majority to assure the town against the connivings of rival interests.

The preliminary survey of the route was already begun. Holley, the editor of the *Republican*, who was in charge of that survey, informed the readers of his paper that the accumulating data proved conclusively that the cost of building railroads in the West was much less per mile than the cost of Eastern roads, and urged

† T. B. Twiford was treasurer of the company and H. L. Edwards, Beecher Gere's partner, its secretary. Beecher Gere, T. J. Safford, and Charles Wilson were the other Chatfield directors. On the executive committee were Gere and Safford, with Twiford as chairman.

Chatfield people to keep their friends in the East informed on that and relevant matters. If they would subscribe to the *Republican* for their Eastern friends they would do a double service to humanity: those in the East, authentically informed on the progress of the Root River Railroad, would be able to put their money into it as the finest possible investment; and public opinion would be prepared to insist that Congress grant lands to so important an enterprise in behalf of the general welfare.

Chatfield gave a hearty welcome to a meeting early in December of "those friendly to the railroad." The Baptists threw open their newly completed church building, and despite miserable roads and weather it was well filled with delegations from half a dozen surrounding towns.

The meeting was informed that \$50,000 worth of stock had been sold, and it voted hearty thanks to Colonel T. B. Stoddard, of La Crosse, "for his untiring energies in the services of the enterprise." Stoddard was then in Washington, working for a land grant, and the meeting approved committees to select an additional representative and to raise funds to send him to Colonel Stoddard's assistance in Washington.

Both *Democrat* and *Republican* praised the work of that meeting. The Root River and Southern Minnesota was no mere "two town affair," they agreed; it was "an important link in the vast chain of railroads stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific" and would open all of southern Minnesota, from the Mississippi to the Missouri, to the blessings of immigration.

The enthusiasm engendered by the meeting made it easy to raise a fund of \$13,000, and James Cavanaugh, a young lawyer already known in Washington for a special investigation he had made for the Land Office the winter before, was chosen to work with Colonel Stoddard. He set off for the capital with the undivided good wishes of every man and woman in town.

Then the snow came.

Out on the prairies some miles west of Chatfield, Timothy Halloran and his brother Ed, who had left Ireland three or four years before and reached the Chatfield region only that fall, were living

the required month on their eighty-acre claim. The rain had kept them so short of supplies that for weeks they had only pilot bread and tea to eat. When it stopped Timothy Halloran set off for High Forest, the nearest village, to buy groceries. It began to snow soon after he set off, and when he started back that evening he was glad for the company of an older man who lived on a neighboring claim.

The way lay six miles through "a six-inch fall of new snow, over tall grass and hazel brush, breaking our own way," as Timothy Halloran wrote forty years later. "After the first two miles Mr. Hennesey began to play out, and called to me that he could not see. I went back, took the rest of his load and held him by the arm, dragging him along for the next four miles until we reached home. The night was very dark and he would never have reached home alone."

That was the beginning of a memorable winter. Within two weeks the snow lay two and a half feet deep on level ground, and drifts piled over the eaves of many a little house in the valley.

Timothy Halloran came into Chatfield and hired himself to a man who wanted help in building a log cabin and cutting wood. They went out into the timber west of town, where logs were already cut, and put up the house, ten by twelve feet in size. They plastered the cracks with mud dug out from under the snow and laid a roof of brush, which was covered that very night with a fresh fall of snow. It turned sharply cold after that and Halloran's employer assured him that there would be no thaw until spring.

More snow fell. It lay four feet deep by Christmas day. The next day it began to thaw. The roof leaked and the chinking fell out of the cracks. The two men threw off the brush roofing and covered the rafters with hay. That night it rained, and the next day it froze so hard that the snow was covered with a solid glaze of ice heavy enough to carry a man's full weight. There was no chance of fresh mud to replaster the little house.

For the rest of the winter Timothy Halloran and his employer, with another man, his wife and their child, lived in that place, where two beds, a stove, and a table were all the furnishings. Hal-

Ioran wrote that he never took off his boots or his hat the whole winter through. The plasterless cracks gave "a good view of the starry heavens, and something to occupy our minds when it was too cold to sleep."

It was a bitter season, too, for the deer abounding in the Root River region. Their delicately narrow feet cut through the glaze and they floundered helplessly in the deep snow beneath. A man could walk up on the crust and club a deer to death. Every family in the region had plenty of venison that winter. An ugly glee of blood lust came on the men and boys of the region, and more deer were killed than could possibly be eaten, even though wagon loads of the carcasses were hauled into town for sale. Many animals perished without human intervention, caught in the unprecedented trap of the snow. After that "Winter of the Big Crust" the Root River region was barren of deer.

There was little travel during those winter months, for the crust was not heavy enough to support the weight of a team. More than one sack of flour was carried from a Chatfield store to a distant cabin on a man's back. Little wheat was hauled to the River that winter, though hundreds of bushels had been harvested in the Chatfield province; breaking a road through the crust was an almost impossible task.

It was a hardship for the farmers who had counted on a little cash from the wheat they had raised, but the merchants stretched out their credit and Sam Dickson promised to buy every bushel of wheat in the country when spring should release the waters of his millrace.

Dickson had come up from Indiana the fall before, bought a few acres just below the level of the town, where the West Chatfield road dropped, had dug the race and enclosed his mill building before the weather grew severe. All winter he worked there with Norman Culver, the millwright he had engaged from Galena, building the machinery that should turn the wheat of the region into flour for its people. Sam Dickson was a hearty, irascible fellow; the mill he was building stood to the people of the region as a symbol of their coming to terms with the land they had chosen.

The expanding consciousness of an ever firmer social fabric brought an exuberant gaiety into the pattern of every day. Of all the gay young men of the town none was more gallant than Beecher Gere. No young lady was indifferent to his courtly attentions, made doubly flattering by the public responsibilities that sat so lightly on his twenty-six years. His favorite partner for dances or headlong rides through the countryside was pretty Eunice Hawley, the acknowledged belle of the town, and many a young man envied the grace with which he held his hand for her tiny foot and lifted her into her side saddle. She was a spirited young lady, with no malice in the ebullience that sparkled in her great brown eyes. When she braided her lustrous black hair into a single plait that hung well below her waist he called her Pocahontas. Others took up the name with an affectionate familiarity that suffused the town with merriment.

The merriest of all were "the Land Office boys," who quickly established their prescriptive right as Chatfield's chief pranksters. There were always two, sometimes three or four young bachelors acting as clerks in the Land Office, and no week lacked its tale of their doings in the realm of the practical joke.

One night, for instance, they transferred a whole pile of wood from the alley to the front doorstep of one of Main Street's stores, and were out before daylight to enjoy their victim's wrathful exertions to clear a way into his place of business. Another night one of the more pompous of the moneylenders was startled out of his concentration on account books by a hollow moaning in the cellar beneath him. Investigation revealed no source of the sound, but when he attempted to resume his work the sepulchral wails were renewed in hair-raising force which eventually drove him out of his office. The whole town enjoyed the tale of that 'ghost,' which 'the boys' had raised by thrusting a long pipe through the cellar window and projecting their awesome wailings through it.

But the loudest laughter was for a daylight prank. Another of the moneylending gentry, whose rotundity was frequently the object of genial jibes, was seen one day going down Main Street with an armful of shavings to use as kindling for his stove. One of 'the

boys' sauntered out to intercept him and after a little talk sauntered on his way. He had managed, unobserved, to draw a match across the seat of his pants and touch its spurt of flame to the lower edge of the shavings his friend was carrying. Hugely satisfying was that gentleman's yell of astonishment when a tongue of fire leaped into his face; the most tireless prankster could ask no better audience than Main Street turned out at the victim's alarm.

These elaborations of the practical joke were wondrously delightful to a frontier community art, but they were the mere adornments of arduous labors in the Land Office. Almost half the land in Chatfield township was pre-empted after the Office moved to Chatfield (47 out of 113 claims) and in Elmira, the next township north, 72 out of 110 claims were entered after June 13, 1856, the day of the Chatfield opening. The more distant the township, the higher the proportion of land unclaimed on that date. Five million acres were subject to entry in the Chatfield Land Office, and a million and a half of them were not yet surveyed. Each entry called for triple recordings in the system set up by the Commissioner General in Washington, besides monthly, quarterly, and annual reports to that official and to the Treasurer of the United States.

Deposits had to be carried to Dubuque or St. Croix by the officials, and those journeys were no light undertaking. One time the coach in which one of the men was traveling with Land Office deposits turned over in the middle of a stream swollen with the February thaw, and the luckless official had to rescue his papers and money from the icy flood.

In the face of such difficulties the Chatfield officials sometimes felt themselves justified in adding one or two hundred miles to their report of the distances they must travel; Eastern officials who had no personal knowledge of the frontier could scarcely conceive accurately either the distances or the difficulties encountered by their subordinates.

Many problems rose in the local administration of the land laws. For instance, many of the settlers flooding into the Territory could sign their papers only by "his X mark," and for them

the officials must make out the application papers as well as the certificate of title. Major Bennett, following the precedent set in other offices, charged such pre-emptors a fee of \$4.00, and then was called upon to defend himself to Washington when one of his patrons complained, with the help of a more literate friend, at the 'extortion.'

Most difficult were the cases where two men claimed the same acreage. Two Norwegians were involved in one of the first such cases brought to the Chatfield office. One had lived for several months on a piece of land some eight miles east of Chatfield, had built his cabin and cleared, plowed and planted an ample field, relying on the protection of his pre-emption certificate. Another, covetous of the well-begun farm, "borrowed" the certificate, went to the Land Office and paid cash for the land it represented. He then tried to evict the actual settler by sheer force but was prevented by neighborly intervention. When the case was brought to the Land Office for hearing, Major Bennett wrote to Washington that such claim-jumping must be discouraged, and promptly, "for the peace of the country."

Arrantly annoying was a man named Booth with whom the officials had repeated unpleasantness. Time and again he brought a 'settler' into the office, paid the entry fee on a quarter section of land, then forced the settler, "on the premises," to sign a deed of transfer to himself. He acquired hundreds of acres in that manner and the officials were powerless to act against him. But when Booth tried to seize the land of "an ignorant but very good man" who had lived on his claim "for three or four years" and worked hard to make a home for his family, Bennett and McKenny did their best to protect the original claimant. The case hung fire for several months, waiting word from Washington, despite the local effort to get a decision. Finally the case was settled by Booth paying the other man for a quitclaim deed—a fortunate settlement, Major Bennett wrote, for had the case continued it would have led to "the loss of human life," though he did not indicate who would have been the slayer or who the slain.

On the whole, the letters written by the two Chatfield officials

seem to express a real concern to afford the pre-emption law its optimum functioning. Again and again they rendered judgments against men bearing Yankee names who sought to despoil settlers of Irish or Norwegian or Bohemian origin, whose unfamiliarity with American ways made them easy prey to native-born sharpers. The fact that Chatfield escaped the violence and long-drawn feuds marking some other land office towns is very likely to be credited in some part to the just evaluations of J. H. McKenny and J. W. Bennett.

Yet on one occasion those two men acted on the basis of an attitude which was fast drawing their country into the very extremities of violence. The story is a curious one, recorded in a letter answering an inquiry from the Commissioner General, who had received a complaint from the person chiefly involved.

Late one stormy February evening a man came into the Land Office so muffled in scarves that his face was not visible in the candle-punctuated dusk. The officials supposed that he was suffering from toothache and sympathetically gave him every assistance in making out his papers for the pre-emption of a choice piece of land. He signed the name Leonard J. Cassman and left the office in a great hurry.

Within an hour the officials were told that Cassman had made over his claim to one of the sharpers in town. It was the kind of thing that happened lamentably often but called for no action as it lay quite outside the jurisdiction of the Land Office. The next day, however, the man Cassman walked into the Land Office without his wrappings and revealed the horrifying fact that *he was a Negro*.

Under Bennett's outraged questioning Cassman claimed that he was a citizen of Connecticut, but both officials insisted that "no negro can be a citizen" and put Cassman out of the office. They then went together to the sharper who held Cassman's papers and, jurisdiction or no jurisdiction, forced the return of Cassman's certificate of pre-emption. Thus they vindicated the "great principle" that "no negro is on an equal footing with a white man."

Now Cassman, concealing the fact of his race, had complained

to the Commissioner General of unjust treatment from the Chatfield officials. Major Bennett, replying to Washington's inquiry, ended his letter with the warning that there was "a strong party among us who would, no doubt, be pleased to inflict these objects of their love upon us, if they could use this office as a most effective mode of doing so."

Thus the passions of that 'irrepressible conflict' which was to divide the nation against itself involved even so remote an issue as the disposal of the land in the region of the chosen valley.

PART

Three



The Wheels Roll West

I



IT WAS A REGION rich with delights. Between the countless waterways the hills fanned out in patterns of lovely surprise. Here the bare face of limestone bluffs towered boldly above the streams, crowned with clustered pines. There juniper and cedar alternated with maple and ironwood on gentle terraces. Groves of black walnut grew on southern slopes and below them stood the water elms and the willows at the edge of the streams.

There were maples everywhere. In the autumn their flame deepened into the scarlet of sumac and the white oak, stubbornly green, was adorned with crimson festoons of woodbine, or bore the weight of grapes the frost had sweetened. Butternuts and hazelnuts and acorns were stored by the gray squirrels and their red, and fox, and flying cousins.

As winter fastened on the land, the ravines choked with snow, and open places were haunted by the same whirling snow-phantoms that overpowered the prairies west of the valley. Yet the bison and deer withstood the winter, along with the wolves and foxes. Mink and otter and coon, muskrat and beaver, lived along the streams of the region.

When spring routed the snow the valleys grew lush with grass and starred with cowslips. The white spray of cherry and thorn and plum blossoms foamed under the gold and rose of maple catkins. Raspberry and blackberry thickets bloomed on open slopes and in the margins of the woods the heart-lifting fragrance of rosy crab-apple bloom caught for an instant the whole glory of May. As summer flooded the land, bees hummed all day in the honey-sweet of the basswood.

The streams were alive with fish: trout in every spring brook, pike

and pickerel and bass in the crystalline river. The air was never empty of bird song as finches and field sparrows, thrushes and bluebirds and robins came back to the trees which the cardinals and snowbirds had shared through the winter with owls and hawks. Then young fawns stepped delicately down to drink beside the does or lay among anemones and windflowers, their dappled coats safely obscured in the pattern of branch shadows on last year's leaves. Bare-patched bison rubbed their manes against meadow-edged trees and the great bucks shed their antlers in the margins of the forest.

And here the Indians lived. From the Days of the New, their legends ran, people of Siouan stock had built their half-nomadic villages in the valleys of the Root River and cultivated their maize with hoes fashioned from the bison's shoulder blades. Here they shaped their pottery from river clay tempered with crushed shells, and chipped out their arrowheads. When rival bands, envious of the region's abundance, sought to take it for their own use, the arrows fell thick on headlands and river meadows.

But that was long before Thomas Twiford thought to make himself rich by drawing into the valley of his choice a part of the great migration flooding westward.

II



Americans are always moving on.
It's an old Spanish custom gone astray,
A sort of English fever, I believe,
Or just a mere desire to take French leave.
I couldn't say, I couldn't really say.

—*Western Star*, Benet *

THAT MIGRATION meant the opening of incredibly large and productive farming operations. Yet it was part of the process by which American society was being shifted from agrarian to industrial control.

As crossroad hamlets spread out into manufacturing cities they absorbed increasing numbers of people into labor divorced from the soil. This breaking of the productive pattern of centuries was not easily accepted. There was much unrest among the workmen, part of which fringed off in the migration to the West. That movement alarmed the captains of industry: if the young people of the East went into the wilderness instead of into the factory how were factories to produce for their owners?

The transfer of population was by no means universally condemned. Though factory managers might inveigh against the loss of their 'hands,' Henry Ward Beecher saw a quite different meaning in the movement. In 1820, he issued a call for numbers of

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“pious, intelligent, enterprising ministers” to go into the West and establish schools, academies, and colleges. By inculcating “a sameness of views, and feelings, and interests” they “would lay the foundation of our empire on a rock”—the rock of Puritan theology.

That pronouncement called forth a storm of protest. Beecher was charged with attacking America’s fundamental principle of the separation of church and state and aspiring to fasten his particular brand of theology upon the country. In the face of such criticism Beecher and those who agreed with him retired for the moment into discreet silence, but the idea was by no means lost; it reappeared in various forms in later years. As the motive for Home Missions it was elaborated in pronouncement after pronouncement.

“When Washington feared Western parties he did not foresee Home Missions,” one writer announced in a prominent church organ of the thirties. Century-long processes would eventually bind the swiftly expanding nation into one homogeneous entity, he agreed, but the tempo of American necessity did not permit waiting on such leisure when a swifter instrument of integration was at hand. “Under the ministry of your missionary the thing is done in the twinkling of an eye.”

Nor was the long historical view the only sanction invoked in behalf of Home Missions. Self-interest was even more emphatically called to witness. The laws, particularly in new states, were inadequate to protect creditors, the argument ran. Every businessman knew that he owed his “very wealth . . . in some measure, to the operation of Christian principles diffused through the community.” Ergo, it was better for the “opulent merchant . . . to give his money, not to say his prayers, to make *people good*, than to spend it upon bailiffs to apprehend runaway creditors.” The argument was rounded out with the flat assertion that “The Gospel is the most economical police on earth.” Marx himself said it less baldly, and this pronouncement anticipated the Manifesto by nine years.

But these were the utterances of the high priests. For most

of the Yankee folks who crowded the roads leading into Minnesota, the reasons for making so great a venture were compounded of more earthy and immediate considerations. Some of them had heard that Minnesota was a healthier place to live than the malarial lands of Indiana and Ohio. Others knew the virgin land was more richly productive than the stony acres of New England. Many were sure that the exuberant newness of the West could not help but bring prosperity to their business, be it storekeeping or moneylending or wagon building.

Many New England people turned to the West to escape that "yoke of opinion" which New England's Channing called "a heavy one, often crushing individuality of judgment and action." Channing praised Western ideals because they were tested by their direct betterment of the *average* man, not the exceptional one; he saw the West as holding "all men in one common brotherhood." Certainly the records of the time make it clear that men and women alike were moved by the romantic and infinitely exciting appeal of distance, of adventure, and by the stirring sense of sharing in a great social transformation that had no equal in the whole of human experience.

So they pushed into the West. And as the wagons rolled Westward the travelers heartened themselves with a flood of song that spoke more directly than industrial statistics or theological imperatives for the instant and personal motives that impelled them.

I sing you a song of the wondrous West,
Where the life blood pulses with fiery zest,
Where the swift transition of passing years
Proclaim the push of the pioneers.

The songs that rang on the roads were all 'freedom songs,' for Yankee travelers no less than for those strange wagon loads of fugitive slaves being helped on their way to Canada.

What the turning of those wagon wheels meant to families traveling West was well reflected by a diary kept by Lepha Ann Carter, the daughter of Deacon Gulielmus Carter, as the family journeyed from Tecumseh, Michigan, to the Chatfield region.

Deacon Carter was born in Massachusetts in 1799; when he was fourteen he went with his parents into western New York; when he was thirty-five he took his wife and daughter, Lepha Ann, to Michigan. Now, in 1853, he and his family were moving to Minnesota. They were going to a claim which had been picked out for them by David Allen, a young Michigan neighbor who had gone West in May and selected land some twelve miles west of the valley Thomas Twiford was to choose for his town three months later.

The Carter family set off about three o'clock on the afternoon of October third, and few eyes were dry at their departure. At the first crossroads a cousin was waiting to give them, as a final parting gift, a bunch of flowers from his mother's garden, and Lepha Ann wept again as she wrapped them in paper to preserve their seeds for next summer's garden in faraway Minnesota.

They traveled until nine o'clock that night, and they went to bed supperless, for the family with whom they stopped were too busy paring apples for drying to get a meal for their guests, and the Carters were too tired to get it for themselves. However, breakfast the next morning made up for their missed supper: the fowl, lamb, potatoes, bread and butter, soda crackers, and coffee were all good. The whole accommodation cost thirteen shillings for the four of them.

On the second day, and again on the third, they passed wagon loads of colored people bound for Canada, singing their 'freedom songs.' At the house where they ate dinner one day some of their small possessions were stolen, but when they went back the things "were restored to us . . . by a girl, 12 or 15, who probably thought she had more need of them than we did."

By Saturday night they reached the Indiana border and spent Sunday at an inn presided over by a thirteen-year-old girl whose husband had left her and her baby for California. "The gents pitched quoits after dinner," but Lepha Ann was "puzzled to discover any pleasure in the employment." The only church at hand was Catholic, where Lepha Ann was "both amused and disgusted with the performances." Katie, her younger sister,

walked two miles that evening to attend a Singing School in Indiana.

It was cold the next morning and the wild geese were overhead, flying south. On the Indiana and Illinois prairies they passed "the largest wheat fields I ever saw" and corn "so high I cannot look over it unless I climb the fence." The roads were sometimes good, sometimes "so very bad that Mother's hair fairly stood straight up," but they saw many loads of "movers" going to Iowa. On the tenth day out they came to "the commencement of the Plank Road" into Chicago, and stopped in that city for a few hours so that Deacon Carter could look about.

The two girls held the teams hitched to the two wagons and saw nothing of the city "except what we could by peeking out of our wagons." They "never saw so many carriages and vehicles of different kinds, and they were constantly in motion." When their dog wandered away they let him go because "we would not call or whistle through the streets for a dog that all other dogs were after." Chicago was very large—60,000 inhabitants, the Deacon reported—and Lepha Ann was glad when they were out of it.

They "camped out" the next few nights and Lepha Ann "was afraid. Katie laughed at my fears." The country they drove through was so beautiful that "anyone might be proud to live in it." Finding no place to stay the second Sunday they kept on traveling; they reached Freeport, Illinois, where an uncle lived, just two weeks after leaving Michigan.

Mrs. Carter and her daughters were so worn by the journey that the Deacon took his brother's advice and went on ahead to look at the Minnesota claim, leaving his family in Freeport. There they stayed for three months, and Lepha Ann's diary is full of the doings of that bustling town. They saw a train for the first time and when they watched "the engine turned around, we got some frightened and Uncle Mark laughed. We went inside the passenger cars. Think it is quite comfortable in them."

That winter the whole family suffered severely from colds, and in the low spirits of prolonged ill health Lepha Ann despaired of

hearing from her father "very soon, if ever." Then, all unannounced, on January 21, the Deacon returned. Five days later they set off for Minnesota.

There were many callers the day before they started, and Mrs. Carter was given "a bundle of currant sprouts" and "some apple scions" to take into the new country. The first day on the road they had to stop many times to warm; when the mule they drove with one of the horses grew stubborn, and the teams had to be changed in the middle of "the Ocean like prairie," they almost "froze to death" in the wind.

In the days that followed they were lost more than once in the "vast field" that stretched "as far as the eye can reach in either direction. . . . Not a fence, or a house, or even a tree to give one clue to tell your course. . . . No one who has never lost his way on a prairie in a snow storm can describe or even imagine our feelings."

Yet in all the danger and discomfort Lepha Ann kept an eager eye for the human beings they encountered. There was the woman who had been in a train accident and emerged unscathed. There was the other one who thought Minnesota was in Illinois, and said "fist" and "onst" for "first" and "once." There were the Irish shanties where they stopped to warm and were careful not to lay down even a glove lest they collect some of the lice that were said to abound in such places. In one blessed stopping place the landlady played an accordion and they all sang, and "it seemed like old times"; before they left the next morning Lepha "took a pattern of the Landlady's handsome bed quilt called California."

The country lying near the Mississippi was even more terrifying than the prairies. On its steep hills choked with snow the teams sometimes refused to budge farther, sometimes were pushed down hill by their loads at so perilous a rate that the family expected to go "to the Old Scratches. . . . Such hilly country I could not be persuaded to live in," Lepha Ann wrote, and when they had finally come safe across the river, at McGregor's Landing, she recorded only one comment on the vast panorama from

the top of the bluffs: "Such rocks I never saw. . . . One would think it a piece of mason work." She was badly in need of humanized reassurance after the weeks' struggle with unmitigated nature.

Three days later they reached the home of David Allen's parents, who had settled a few miles south of the Iowa-Minnesota line. There they spent ten days enjoying hospitality of true frontier flavor. There were prairie chicken and venison to eat, and gay sleigh rides to the neighbors and to the schoolhouse for spelling schools.

The Deacon went back to the Landing after the part of a load he had stored there. He forgot the "side pieces for the lounge" but bought pork, lard, and molasses, two tubs and two barrels, a "Queen of the West" cookstove, pails, half a dozen brooms, and sash, glass, and nails for the house he and his neighbors had built on the claim. He also bought six splint-bottomed chairs, a great luxury, and gave two of them to the Allens, who had only "Iowa Stools" in their house—lengths of log cut to chair height and stood on end.

The goods were repacked into three wagons and on February 14 the Carters set off on the last stage of their journey, this time with young David Allen to drive the team his father loaned for the trip. Lepha Ann rode with David the remaining three days of their journey, and with hot stones at her feet found it more comfortable than she had expected.

Yet even so she wrote again that "no one can form an opinion of what it is to cross such a prairie in winter who has not tried it." They crossed the Root River so many times she lost count, and the country "grew more dreary" as they proceeded. When they saw the abandoned shack—"Like the house our swine used to dwell in"—where "the Crying Family" had lived the summer before, Lepha Ann did not wonder that all eleven of them had "united in making the woods ring with vocal music . . . it is enough to make even the wolves howl. I have passed through grass taller than a man's head and brush thicker than the hair on a dog."

But that very day, two hours after they had stopped to warm and meet the Fraziers, their nearest neighbors on that side, they came to Elkhorn Prairie where David Allen and another young man named Hayes had taken claims for themselves and Deacon Carter. It was, Lepha Ann wrote, "the handsomest prairie I ever saw. Small groves are scattered here and there which makes it appear like an ornamental garden, and we are told that in summer and spring nothing can be more magnificent."

When she realized that this was the end of the journey, "Mother was so happy that . . . she commenced singing about the Promised Land, and, not content with singing the original verses, she added one of her own composing, the substance of which was:

'Where, O, where is the Carter family?
Safe now in the Promised Land!'

The mood of that song was perpetuated in the later choice of Jordan as the name for the township.

The travelers' exuberance was not belied by the welcome that waited them. In the snug log cabin of young Mr. Hayes they found every possible comfort. It was "very convenient" to have a stove and furniture ready for their use; Mr. Hayes had a "nice little cellar, an oxtteam, a pony, and many other things for his comfort. . . . He is a better housekeeper than I am." Before the supper things were cleared away the neighbors from beyond, hearing by some mysterious means of the new arrivals, came for a visit.

The next day the Carters spent "arranging things" in their own house. They slept that night beneath their own roof, the two girls in the "Minnesota Bedstead" their father built for them. David Allen boarded with them for a time, and he found three bee-trees the day they settled into their own house; "this is a great country for Bees and Honey." Even the howling of a wolf did not disturb them: "He cried very nicely and seemed to say he would like some of our Pork very much."

David and Lepha Ann were married just a year later and their

son was the first child born in that township. For the Carters it was indeed the Promised Land: the whole family lived out their lives in that region, and some of the Deacon's grandchildren and their offspring are still there.

Nor were they the only family of the sort. A handful of stories preserved in old letters and oral tradition give glimpses of the various forms in which the promise of the land drew people onto the roads leading West.

III



IN INDIANA, John Murphy and his quiet wife had prospered well from the day of their wedding, when paying the license fee left fifty cents in his pocket. Now he owned two tanyards and she had borne twelve children, all of whom were living, though the fever and ague plagued them all the time.

When talk of the new Minnesota country drifted into their hearing what interested them most was the way everybody said Minnesota was so healthy. No one had chills and fever there, they heard, and though the winters were cold the air was so bracing a body didn't mind its being thirty below. When little Will, the baby of the family, came down bad sick the spring of 1854, John and Mary Murphy began to think seriously of going West.

It was not the first such move for either of them. He had been born in Tennessee, of the same Scotch-Irish stock as Andrew Jackson, though the Murphy folks never thought of claiming kin with Old Hickory, however faithfully they voted Democrat. John Murphy's father had died when he was only four. When his mother married again the family went down from the hills to the Ohio and drifted along that beautiful river in a flatboat to one of the openings of the limestone ridges that opened long paths into Indiana.

John went to work for a farmer when he was twelve; when he was eighteen he began to learn the tanning trade; when he was

twenty he married Mary Julian, who had come with her folks from Pennsylvania a few years before. They were Pennsylvania Dutch but it was so long since they'd come from the Old Country that none of them remembered about it, just like the Murphys' folks coming from Ireland.

Now they were turning westward once more. Late in the summer of 1854 John Murphy went down to the Ohio and took a steamer to the Mississippi and thence up to Winona. His absence seemed long to his family and when he came back he was so full of the wonders he had seen that the winter seemed an endless waiting for their start to the West.

He had bought a claim four miles southwest of a new town called Chatfield. The 'old bach' that took it from the government had got so lonesome he was glad to take John Murphy's two hundred dollars for the eighty acres he claimed. "I reckon there's enough of us to keep ourselves company," John Murphy said whenever he talked of their going.

The 'old bach' had built a shanty they could live in while they put up a good log house, and one small field was already cleared so they could start farming the very first thing. A wide stretch of bottom land along the creek would make the finest kind of pasture.

"What's the crick called, Paw?" little Will always asked at that point.

"Well, I reckon you can call it anything you want," his father always answered. "But there's bears in a den up one of them side-hills. Maybe you better ask them before you start calling names."

"Could we call it Bear Crick?" Eight-year-old Will's eyes shone at the notion.

"Reckon Bear's as good a name as any," John Murphy agreed. "They're friendly sorta critters if you don't steal their honey. Why I saw a bee-tree. . . ." The wonders of a country that needed only a few cows to make it flow with milk and honey did not grow less in John Murphy's telling.

So infectious was his enthusiasm that his married son and his son-in-law, with their families, joined the cavalcade that set out

as soon as spring opened the roads for travel. Four covered wagons carried the household goods and the elder Murphy's two wagons were so loaded that two yoke of oxen were hitched to each; the others were drawn by two horses apiece. Mrs. Murphy and the younger children rode in a four-seated surrey hitched to a good team of horses. The four cows they took along kept the pace slow enough so that little Will could trot beside the surrey when he got tired of riding. Four young men, neighbors of the Murphys, went along on horseback to see the country; they got their board for helping look after the stock.

For Will Murphy that journey was one long and unbelievably perfect holiday. To the day of his death, eighty years later, it lived in his memory with the freshness of a beloved fairy tale.

Little things he remembered. Picking flowers for his mother while he jogged along beside the surrey. The fun of stopping at night by some farmhouse where they could get hay for their horses. How delicious the warm milk tasted night and morning. "It was just one long picnic," he said, remembering. "I never enjoyed anything as much in all my life."

When they came to the Mississippi at Galena it took most of a day to get all their gear across. They swam the horses across, two at a time, one fastened on either side of the ferry so they wouldn't drift downstream. The heaviest thing they had to manage was a breaking plow they'd bought at a factory they passed in Illinois; that was so big it took three or four men to lash it up under the high-axed linchpin wagon that the four best oxen pulled.

The last night they camped in a heavy woods about three miles south of Chatfield, and from there on they had to cut their way through the wilderness tangle. That was lonesome work. It took them all day to travel the three miles between the Territorial road and their claim. When they got to the little shanty the name of their creek no longer wore the sound of adventure. The town was four miles away—too far to be anything more than a place of staring wonder—and there were no neighbors between their place and town.

They did all get a lot healthier. But the loneliness got so bad that after a year John Murphy was ready to pack up his family and take them back to their Hoosier home in spite of the fever and ague. Luckily, before they got started one of their Hoosier neighbors brought his family and settled on Bear Creek beside them; in the next year or two, half a dozen families came, most of them kin to the Murphys, and that stretch of Bear Creek got to be called Murphy Street.

At about this time John Murphy went to Chicago and bought the machinery for a sawmill. When he got that hooked up to the creek the family rarely sat down to a meal without one or more men who had brought a load of logs to be cut into lumber. Sometimes they brought one of their children along, sometimes the whole family; there were plenty of times when Mary Murphy cooked for a dozen besides her own. It was no longer lonesome on Murphy Street.

In Lewis County, New York, Western fever overtook Jason Easton. It was really, though he scarcely suspected it, a return of the fever that had burned in the Lowville Academy days when he and Sam Johnson spun enormous schemes for their future.

That had been a curious friendship in the beginning. Sam was much younger than Jason, and his spectacled slenderness contrasted oddly with the older boy's stocky energy. It was Sam's elder sister, Sarah, that Jason liked first, but she so quietly drew her brother into everything she did that Jason could not help but include the boy in his thinking of Sarah.

So they grew to be friends, for Jason discovered in Sam a deep-running intensity that answered some need in Jason's more exuberant nature. When the Johnsons invited him to spend a holiday at their father's 'Mansion,' thirty miles from Lowville, Jason and Sam spent half their time fitting their imaginations to vast constructive enterprises they would some day set in motion on 'Uncle Abner's flats.'

When Sam went to Yale, Jason went with him. But Jason's

impatient energies balked at the mastery of scholarly minutiae, and he was glad when illness gave him the excuse for leaving after a single year. He must be active—and he turned from one undertaking to another. He finally bought the newspaper in Lowville, and by farming a forty at the edge of town and trying his hand at storekeeping he managed to be busy enough almost to convince himself that he was content. When Sarah Johnson consented to marry him, in the summer of 1851, her quiet devotion lulled his restlessness for the time.

Sam went to Germany a few weeks after his sister and Jason were married, on the unprecedented adventure of studying chemistry 'abroad.' It had taken years for him to win that privilege, for 'Uncle Abner,' as half of Lewis County affectionately called the elder Johnson, had been hard to persuade from his conviction that farming, divinity, and the law were the only safe and suitable callings for his sons. Sam's steadfast insistence and patient efforts on his own account, with Sarah's devoted support, had finally won 'Uncle Abner's' consent and his money.

What Sam wanted to study was the chemistry of agriculture. That was farming of a sort, after all, the elder Johnson came to understand, though he could scarcely have conceived that the experiment station his son was to found in Connecticut would serve to initiate one of the most important and widespread influences of American agricultural practice.

Jason took a deep pleasure in the younger man's experience. When, after two years, Sam wrote in distress at the imminent necessity of returning with so much yet unlearned, Jason wrote him: "As much as I want to see you, I do not want you to come home untill you have done all you have intended. I want you to come out a strong man. I am proud of you as a brother and I expect to see you one day one of the first scholars in the country. I wish I was rich, I would send you all the funds you wanted. . . . If you do lack I will help you to stay there six months or a year. . . . Write me a few lines—I will willingly pay the postage. We are all so glad to hear from you that we have a little sort of Jubilee when we get a letter from you."

When Uncle Abner found it possible to provide the funds for Sam's third year of study, Jason rejoiced for his friend but found himself more and more gnawed by a too familiar restlessness which he had thought was overcome. Sam wrote to him about possible positions that might be open to the two of them: there was talk of an experimental farm and school in Pennsylvania, where a practical man would be needed to manage a thousand-acre farm. Would Jason be interested? Or what of a scheme to set up "a school of Agricultural science in connection with the Academy at Lowville?" Would Jason talk with the trustees about that? The old dreams of working together came again and again into Sam's letters, and they fed the flame of Jason's unease.

Jason wrote to Sam that he had "fixed no definite course for the future"; he had thought of "the western country" and if money were the only consideration he would not hesitate to go. But Sarah objected, and he himself hesitated to take a step which would cut them off from "anything like decent society." What would Sam advise?

By December of 1854, Jason had decided at least to plan a trip to look at the West. He would leave the following April and be back in time for Sam's return in July. "I . . . am impatient to see you, the time seems too long," he wrote. And his own hunger for enlarging action spoke in the advice he offered: "We should never cease to be students, yet to be students merely will not do. Our acquirements should be turned to practical account."

The six weeks Jason Easton spent in the West did not resolve his conflict. From Chicago to St. Paul he saw and heard of unnumbered ways in which a man could take his part in the all-to-be-built life of the West, a part whose scope need be limited only by a man's own powers. But Sarah remained unconvinced and Jason hesitated to force the decision. Sam came home soon after, and the renewal of that old companionship both sharpened and appeased Jason's hunger for significant action. Perhaps after all the two of them might work out their future together.

But Sam went to teach at Yale, and Jason was no scholar. As

he carried on his weekly paper and tended his forty acres he continued to ponder on the things he had heard and seen in the West, and wrote of them in his paper. When Lowville's Congressman, W. A. Gilbert, whom Easton had supported in the previous election, came in to talk with the editor about the West, new possibilities began to stir in Easton's mind.

The biggest thing going in Western business was undoubtedly land and the lending of money for the purchase of land. A Congressman maintaining discreet connections with the central Land Office in Washington would be a most advantageous partner for an enterprising dealer in a Western land office town. As the idea developed Easton found it difficult to restrain his mounting excitement.

Though they discussed it only a little, he knew that Sarah did not want to go West, and he felt some resentment, though more at her older brother Lucian than at Sarah herself. Lucian had gone along on the spring's trip of investigation and his shrewd, often sardonic, watchfulness had added much to Easton's knowledge of the country. But Lucian did not hesitate to use the least savory details to tease Sarah.

He was a confirmed bachelor and had never been quite subdued to the decorum of Lowville society. Easton himself admitted a secret enjoyment of Lucian's half-bawdy irrelevancies, but they did the West no good in Sarah's eyes. It was no good telling Lucian to watch his tongue: that would only double his enjoyment of sly teasing. Sarah simply grew more silent and refused to offer any opinion on her husband's tentative suggestions of possible plans.

The unspoken conflict was still unresolved when Easton sold his paper and entered into a real-estate partnership with Congressman Gilbert. Easton was to furnish a thousand dollars and all his time; Gilbert would put in twice the amount of money and such time as he could give in Washington or during the long recess of Congress. Easton was to draw a salary of \$30 a month from January 1, 1856, and for the first three months would work at getting York State men to invest with the new firm; early in

the spring he would go out to a land office town in Minnesota to set up a land agent and moneylending office.

It was here that the particular beauty of the partnership emerged. The Minnesota land offices were due to be moved west from the River towns where they had been first established, and Gilbert would have advance knowledge of the new locations, might even bring some influence to bear on their choice.

Easton preferred Chatfield as the place for the office then in Brownsville. There was something about the place that he liked—it might be the way its river bottoms reminded him of Uncle Abner's flats. It was new enough that a man could have a hand in making it what he wanted. It was not too far from the River yet was sufficiently distant from St. Paul to avoid being overshadowed by the political big guns that gathered there. If Gilbert could make Chatfield the town. . . . The news came through in April, a month in advance of its official announcement, and Easton set off at once. Sarah went to stay with her father.

The letters she had from her husband were unlike any he had ever written her before. Even his praise of the beautiful valley in which he was living had a different kind of vigor from the properly turned periods of his editorials. He wrote, too, of the fine tone of society there: he had never seen more dignity and decorum, together with unusual friendliness, than prevailed at a donation party for the Reverend Mr. Clark who came from a near-by village for occasional preaching. When the Land Office was moved to Chatfield it brought with it a large number of able and cultivated gentlemen, he reported, many of them college-bred. Among them was C. G. Ripley, a cousin of the distinguished Mr. Emerson whose lectures and essays were so fine an ornament to American literature. . . . All that he wrote, whether of business or of pleasure, pulsed with an assurance and a freedom which had long been missing from her knowledge of him.

Her father did not entirely approve of his son-in-law's new venture. Abner Johnson had lived so long in his vast patriarchal 'Mansion' that he had forgotten the grave disapproval expressed by Connecticut elders when he left Kingsboro, thirty years be-

fore, for the York State country that was then considered the West.

Late in the summer Uncle Abner wrote to Sam that Jason was coming home to look after the harvesting of his Lowville forty and expected Sarah to return with him. "How Sarah will like this arrangement I can't tell. I think not very well, but I shall advise her to go. It seems unnecessary to break up and leave their pleasant residence—fitted up in good style—amidst a respectable circle of friends, in a good society with excellent religious and educational privileges. . . . What privations will not men endure for the sake of Earth's treasures!"

But Sarah's decision was made without her father's assistance. If Minnesota meant the end of her husband's discontent, she would go with him whatever pangs it might cost her. He had engaged a house for their residence, he wrote in a letter giving directions for disposing of their furniture. Her favorite things could be boxed and shipped, by rail to the River, thence by steamer and wagon to Chatfield. The new house was small but beautifully situated at the foot of Winona Hill, a landmark and boundary of the town, and water from a spring was carried past the house in hollowed logs; she would have all the convenience of a pump at her doorstep, without its labor. He was sure she would find her health improved in the new country.

That he held out such a hope made her decision the easier. They had been married for five years, and they had no child. In darker moments she had searched that fact for a clue to her husband's unrest. If the Western country could give them a child. . . . Her hopes flamed more intimately when she saw him on his return. His face and his bearing, his very voice, carried the vigorous assurance of a man who had found his proper sphere. She could go gladly with him in such a mood.

In Vermont the Union Store idea—a kind of consumers' cooperative venture—was making trouble for a lot of merchants. William Pease was one of them. For nearly seven years he had

run a store in Weston and had done as well as a man could ask who had begun by driving a peddler's wagon over half the Green Mountain state. He'd liked peddling; it gave him a chance to see a lot more of the world than ever passed his father's farm up in Greeley's Gore. But when he fell in love with Harriet Wheeler he knew peddling wasn't good enough for her. So he set up store, and when Harriet stopped teaching school and married him he thought he had everything a man could want.

Then the Union Store came along. It was hard on him partly because he wouldn't talk mealy-mouthed enough to suit some folks. A man had a right to say what he thought even if he did keep store. He was tired of having to depend on the public for a living. His father always said what he thought.

Not that William Pease wanted to go back to the hard-scrabble farm where he was born and brought up. But there was land out in the West where a man could make a farm that any woman would be proud to live on. Harriet's folks couldn't object to that when her Uncle Sherwin had already gone out to Minnesota, to a new town they called Chatfield. Now if Harriet could just make up her mind she wanted to go. . . .

All winter William Pease collected stories about the doings of folks they knew who'd gone, some to Illinois, some to Chicago, a good many to Iowa. He never said a word about *their* going, but he talked a good deal about the Union Store and the way there wasn't enough business in Weston for two stores. Then Uncle Sherwin sent them a map that showed Minnesota Territory plainly. William Pease couldn't keep his eyes off it, day or night.

"There'll be a big town right there some day," he said one evening, putting his finger on the bend of the Minnesota River. "Folks will settle along that river, and on the two smaller rivers that run into it from the south, and it'll be the biggest town south of St. Paul." He drew his finger over the path of the Minnesota, from its rise in Big Stone Lake to its confluence with the Mississippi. In his absorption he forgot the strategy that had

guarded his tongue for so long. "I'd sure like to see that country."

The candle flame flickered backward as Harriet leaned over the table to look at the map. "You'd better go out this spring," she said quietly. "With the way business is you might as well take a look at the new country."

William Pease turned startled eyes on his wife then looked away to hide his mounting elation. She'd said it, and without his urging! "It's a long way from your folks," he said slowly. "We couldn't eat Thanksgiving dinner there any more if it turned out we liked the new country." He drew his finger across the map from Minnesota to Vermont.

But she put her hand on his shoulder and smiled at him. "They likely can raise turkeys in Minnesota," she said, "and I was a pretty good hand with the fowl at Mother's."

So it was settled. Early in April, 1857, William took Harriet to Ascutneyville to stay with her folks while he took the cars for the West. It was four days' travel from Vermont to Dubuque, and he wasn't in bed four hours the whole time, he wrote to Harriet from Dubuque. But he'd seen two people from Weston since he got to Iowa, besides the doctor the Peases always went to. People were pouring into Iowa that spring at the rate of eight or ten hundred on each day's train.

He saw Uncle Sherwin in Dubuque, but that gentleman went on to a land sale with the other Weston fellows, and William Pease had not yet made up his mind to follow them. He liked the country as well as he had expected, he wrote, but it cost high to live, and he should have to spend considerable money. He wanted to look around a little before deciding what to do.

The next week he wrote from Winona, describing that town, and a week later wrote again, from Chatfield where he had arrived ahead of Uncle Sherwin. Chatfield was a fast-growing place; the lady of the house where he stayed told him there was only one frame house there two years ago. Now it had as many inhabitants as Ludlow or Chester in Vermont. Every house was

crowded; whole families sometimes lived in a single room. "Weston village would fetch more rent in this country in one year than it would *sell* for where it is," he wrote.

There was good land around Chatfield, with plenty of wood and water, but it had all been taken up on pre-emption and was held at high prices. He could buy rich prairie land a few miles out for five dollars an acre but he doubted Harriet would "want to go that price" for prairie. Most of the money he had was hers, a few hundred she'd saved from her teaching and as much more from a little legacy. He had insisted on giving her his note for the whole amount.

Much as he would like to start a business in a new town that he "could feel satisfied would grow like Chatfield," he feared there were "so many thousands on the same errand" that his chance was small. He heard plenty about how you could make 25 per cent on your money, even more if you knew the ropes, but he was determined to take no "such headlong plunges as some are making here every day," he reassured his wife.

The country itself was fine. He had been for a walk along the river the day he wrote and saw some ducks and a bald eagle. He had picked up an elk's horn to bring home, but he had not seen a snake or shot a gun since he left Vermont. The ravines were still choked with snow, and it had snowed that very day but melted as fast as it fell and farmers kept on plowing in the snow storm.

When Uncle Sherwin did not appear William Pease set off on foot for the bend of the Minnesota. It was thick wilderness most of the way and very few folks on the trail. The fifth day he saw not a soul from sun-up to dark. He was beginning to think he'd have to climb a tree if he was to get any sleep, when he spied a glimmer of light back a way from the trail and found the cabin it came from.

He was glad to have a door to knock at, but the woman who answered his knock opened the door only a narrow crack. She looked so worried he spoke his very politest when he told her he was traveling to the Minnesota and would like to find a place to

spend the night. She looked still more worried and said her husband was gone to mill, and they didn't have a very good way to keep a-body, and started to shut the door.

William Pease had been studying her, what little he could see, and he said quickly, "Wasn't your folks from Vermont, up Ludlow way?" and began to call the names of her family. He'd peddled to their place twice a year for seven years, when she was just a growing girl.

The door came wide open at that, and William Pease shared the best there was in the little cabin that night. In return he drew out of his memory every scrap of news from the whole state of Vermont. They talked a good part of the night.

The next day he started on, but when noon came and he hadn't seen a living soul he decided he'd had enough wilderness and started back to Chatfield.

Uncle Sherwin was there when he got back and while they visited around the country William Pease heard more tall talk about all the money a person could make if he knew the ropes. But the more he heard, the more his Yankee caution asserted itself. His money was still in his breeches.

Then one Sunday, when he and Uncle Sherwin came across the river on the Territorial road from the south, they stopped to take a drink at a big spring where Uncle Sherwin said the man that started the town had stopped on his way to the valley. It was as sightly a place as he had ever seen, William Pease thought, and the spring lay between a kind of bench and a piece of river bottom that would make good pasture for a bunch of Short-horns.

Then he heard the partridges drumming in the woods on the steep sidehill across the river, and he wished he had a gun. When he was a boy his folks were such strict Methodists they wouldn't let him shoot a gun on Sunday, and all the other days of the week there was too much work to leave time for hunting, except when it rained. He never did get to shoot all the partridges he wanted.

"Who owns this place?" he asked.

"Fellow named Sawyer. He bought it from a Frenchman named Tribeau, that pre-empted it from the gov'ment."

"Do you s'pose Sawyer'd sell it?" William Pease asked.

"Hell yes. Old Sawyer'd sell his wife if the price was right."

The price for the quarter section was eighteen hundred dollars. William Pease paid down what money he had, gave a note for the rest at 2 per cent per month, and hurried back to Vermont to close out his store and raise all the money he could where interest was only 6 per cent per year. Within six weeks he and Harriet were settled on their own farm in Minnesota.

They lived that summer in the shack Tribeau had built on the bench. The first entry William Pease made in the account book that recorded every expenditure for the next five years was \$2.75 for two windows, and \$32.50 for a stove. That same day he also bought two rakes, twenty-five pounds of nails, two quarts of molasses, and 70 cents' worth of postage stamps.

Harriet Pease wrote a good many letters that summer, for her husband was seldom within sight of the house and it was hard to keep from getting lonely without any neighbors to drop in of an afternoon. Once in awhile someone going by on the Territorial road stopped to ask directions, or to bargain for some of the goods her husband had brought from the unsold remnant of his Weston stock, but those occasions were rare. She pieced a fine quilt for company, and one day when she sat sewing, a little woods mouse ventured over the sill of the open door. She sat still as a stone so as not to scare him. The next day she spread some crumbs beside the door. Before long she had coaxed him clear to the side of her chair. He was a lot of company for her that summer.

In Boston, Augustus Haven was increasingly drawn to the idea of exchanging his salaried position as head clerk in a wholesale dry-goods firm for the independence of his own business in the West. Several of his friends and relatives had already established

their prosperity as Western merchants, and Augustus Haven was more and more inclined to follow them.

It was not as though he lacked experience running his own business. As early as 1834 he shared a partnership in a general store in his native Vermont. Each year he took a train of wagons to Boston, loaded with Vermont wool to be woven into cassimere cloth for his trade, and cheese, and furs to be traded for the goods he needed. Boston was often "dull for cash" in those years, and in 1838 it seemed better to close his partnership and assume management of the agency of Tyson's Furnace.

Tyson's was one of the oldest iron mines and smelters in Vermont. Augustus Haven prospered there and built a fine new house for his school-teacher bride, Barbara Hall—so fine that her brother carried the same plans West and used them to build one of the best houses in Perrysburg, Ohio. By 1843, however, the competition of Pittsburgh smelters had brought evil days to Tyson's Furnace, and Augustus Haven was compelled to close his agency and look about for a new venture. A Boston friend advised against opening another store: "Trade as far as we can judge is not very flattering either in city or country," he wrote, "and were I out of business I would be in no haste about locating myself again."

Haven ignored the advice, but his experience in the next ten years confirmed its soundness. A new business begun in Montpelier collapsed within a year, and Boston wholesalers for whom he later worked had their own violent ups and downs. At one time Augustus Haven was so hard pressed that he appealed to a brother who had gone to Chicago. Aaron Haven's answering farrago was a remarkable mixture of windy boasting of Chicago's "very flattering prospects," with whining enumeration of personal misfortunes; he ended by denying his brother's appeal with the remark that "I started from Boston. Can you be poorer than I am?"

Somehow Augustus Haven weathered the crisis. Late in 1853 the wholesale house where he was head clerk sent him on a trip

intended to reach as far West as Chicago. His business prospects had not been so fair in years.

Perhaps it was the release from long tension of anxiety for himself and his family that induced the collapse which overtook him in Montreal. He managed to get back to the house of an old friend in upper New York, but there he lapsed into utter delirium. His wife and his employer went to care for him and after a few days were able to take him home, but once there his condition became so serious that it seemed to Barbara Haven that the "suffering and agony of a lifetime" was compressed into those ten days. The doctor said that the breakdown was "no uncommon case but such as they have every day . . . induced by the pressing cares of business." The process of establishing our industrial economy took its toll in strange forms and places.

That was in November of 1853. By the following February, Augustus Haven was so well recovered as to set off once more on his delayed trip into the West. It was a momentous journey, but though he went as far as Chicago he wrote home nothing of his impressions of the country, save that he would have much to tell his wife when he returned.

Back in Boston one of his first acts was to see to the shipment of eleven cases of boots and shoes to his brother's new firm in Galena. The old lead-mining town was bustling with fresh vigor as the entrepôt for the newly opening upper Mississippi country. Aaron had offered Augustus the chance to go into the Galena firm, and Augustus was all impatience to make the new start.

Barbara Haven was less ready than her husband to leave the advantages of Boston: its excellent religious privileges, its lectures, and its music, were wholly delightful, especially since Augustus was prosperous enough to permit her to engage an Irish immigrant girl to help with the housework and the care of little Emily.

It was particularly admirable that their son, George Henry, whose serious devotion to study was so like her own, should have the opportunity of attending Boston's excellent English High School. He had even won the Franklin Medal for superior excellence in his studies. Augustus, indeed, held that the boy's ab-

sorption in books was too great, even to the point of imperiling his health, and it was true the boy's eyes were distressingly poor. When George Henry called a cow he saw on the Common "a big hog," Augustus declared it was time for his son to get some solid country sense to balance his book learning. In the summer of 1854, he sent his son to visit old family friends in Vermont, with strict limitations on the time he was to spend in reading.

Barbara Haven had to admit that her husband was right in thinking the boy needed more practical and robust experience. Perhaps she had confined him too closely from playmates of his own age. When he was only ten he had seemed to prefer reading an article in the *Harper's Magazine* to joining the noisy play of other children of the neighborhood. She had dreamed of making him a true scholar like her father, Jairus Hall, who had been graduated from Brown University, or his father, Percival Hall, who was a surgeon with Washington's army all through the Revolution. If they went West all such hopes must be put aside.

There was the loss of church privileges to be considered, also. Even in Perrysburg, Ohio, where her sister Amanda had gone when their parents died a year or two before, there was preaching only once in three weeks, and then for a mere half day. Augustus wanted to go even farther West, where the preaching would inevitably be less adequate. How were her children to know the true religion if they were cut off from Gospel privileges?

Then there was the cholera to fear. Within three months of Augustus' return from Galena they had word of death by cholera taking first Augustus' one-time partner, and then Barbara's sister, Amanda.

But Augustus' heart was set on Galena. He was certain that there he could build a business that would free them all from anxiety. And when Barbara Haven remembered those anguished ten days when she had not known whether her husband would ever recover, she could hold out no longer. By the end of the summer he had gone.

He wrote back with boundless enthusiasm. In Galena he was

selling more goods in a week than he had ever sold in a month in Boston. Galena was a wonderful place for children—there were many more in proportion to the population than in Boston, and they were healthier and better looking than Boston children. In short, he voiced the heresy that the Western town made Boston look “slow.”

When he wrote that he had engaged a house on Ridge Street, far above the Fever River on which the boats came up from the Mississippi, she resigned herself to taking the children and going to join him. George Henry was being troubled with his eyes once more, now that he was in school again; perhaps the Western air would give him fresh strength. Little Emily was big enough to be manageable on the long train trip to Galena.

Barbara Haven sold the beds and bureaus and plain tables in her house—Augustus wrote they would buy new ones from the joiners in Galena—and had her treasures packed for their long journey by packet to New Orleans and thence up the Mississippi. There was the heavy carved walnut bed her father had given her when she was married and the chest of drawers Augustus had ordered to match it. There were the mulberry dishes, and the linen, and the silver she polished each Thursday with such loving care. There were all the furnishings of the parlor, even the shells on the walnut what-not, and the painted vases for the mantel. However strange the new town might be, she would have the comfort of familiar and beautiful objects about her.

She found Galena both more and less than her hopes. The town really was beautiful, with its streets rising stairlike one above the other, and the tall-pillared houses crowning the higher streets. They were beautiful houses, but the gardens and the coaches of their owners were tended by black-skinned slaves whose presence upon the streets of the town was an hourly reminder of the wickedness of the South.

For Galena was half Southern in its make-up. There was something deeply disturbing to Barbara Haven's staunch Presbyterian soul in living in a place where the richest and most important people kept slaves and spent all their time giving parties that

could be nothing but downright sinful, with the dancing and the drinking that went on there. The most important church in the town was Episcopalian, more popish than Protestant.

But Augustus was happy and was making more money than he had ever made in his life. The children, too, took on an exuberance that sometimes alarmed their mother. George Henry did not attend the Academy—it was inferior to the Boston English High School, and the weakness of his eyes gave support to Augustus' urgency that the boy spend a year working in the store, away from his books. His mother grieved at the boy's willingness to give up his studies. When she found little Emily playing 'Southern Belle,' in a fantastic array of shawls and chicken feathers, she was certain that godliness had forsaken her household.

When Augustus began to talk of leaving Galena to establish a business of his own, perhaps in one of the new towns starting up in Minnesota, she was far less reluctant than when he first spoke of leaving Boston. Galena was a godless place, full of trials for the New England soul. More northern towns were settled chiefly by New England people, who would respect rather than laugh at a decent sobriety of thought and manner.

Word began to come down the river of the new Land Office town called Chatfield, and Barbara Haven liked what she heard of it. It was forty miles from the river, and she would not be sorry to have George Henry spared the beguilements of the River packets whose flaunting luxury could mean no good to an impressionable young mind. When Augustus talked of going to Chatfield she encouraged him. He would be among the first merchants to establish himself there, and in such a town a family from Boston could take its rightful place among the leaders of community life.

In June, 1856, Augustus Haven took his son up the river to Winona and thence overland to Chatfield. He liked what he found there so well that he bought two lots on the westerly corner of Main and Third Streets, with a small building already upon one of them. He paid a small part of its price (\$1,500) in cash

and gave his notes for the rest at 20 per cent per year. The interest was high, but prospects were so good that the new business would undoubtedly cover it in a year's time. The next day he went back to Winona and arranged to have his small stock of goods hauled inland from the River. He also bought \$6.88 worth of nails for building shelves and counters in the new store and then returned to Chatfield. When the goods were unpacked and properly displayed, and a responsible man hired to help George Henry look after the business, Augustus Haven went back to Galena, to close his affairs there and bring his family and household goods to the new town.

For George Haven the next few weeks had the heady quality of a fifteen-year-old boy's first independence from parental restraints. To be sure, he grew tired of the salt pork that was served three times a day in the house where he boarded. Years afterwards he remembered how his mouth watered when he went one day on an errand to Dr. Twitchell's house and saw the family just sitting down to a fine roast of beef. It took all his Boston decorum to refrain from asking for a taste. He was too sober and responsible a lad to be tempted to any excess, but the attractions of the new life spoke in the letters he wrote to an old school chum, Charles Metcalf, then working in a bank in Boston.

Charles answered that George seemed "to think very much of the Western country, and I have no doubt but what there are reasons enough to create such attachments. I should certainly like to take a *tour* of the Western country but will notify you now not to expect me as there is not the least prospect of my doing anything of the kind."

He could not understand that George did not suffer from loneliness, though he supposed that with so many Eastern people about "you often see acquaintances, or would were you in Galena, Chicago, or some of the larger cities." He was concerned over George's "strong symptoms of western fever" and feared it might carry him "to 'the sunset shores of our glorious Union.'"

But Chatfield was the end of the Haven questing into the West. A residence was built at the back of the store building,

and when Barbara Haven settled her precious what-not and walnut table into her new parlor she felt that this at last was home. There she stayed for more than thirty years. Her husband died in 1863, but her son carried on the business; when he built the fine brick house to which he took his bride some years later he begged his mother to move into the rooms he had prepared for her there, but she would not go.

It took a fire to move her. When her house burned down all her treasures were saved, and she settled them afresh in the annex her son built on his own house. There they stayed until her death five years later, in 1897. Then the bed, the what-not, and the table, the mulberry dishes and the silver, found their places in the brick house, and there they are today. Her son's children, and his grandchildren, have listened to the sea-song of the shells that came from fabulous shores to Boston and thence up the Mississippi. They still like occasionally to take from the walnut chest the old leather-bound box in which Augustus Haven carried his papers and to turn over the old letters and documents that tell the story of their father's family moving into the West.

The stories of these families are but a sampling of the rich tradition that gathered in Thomas Twiford's valley as the town with its surrounding province drew its share of the travelers into the West. They came from everywhere. Six years after James McClellan brought his wife to claim the distinction of being the first white woman to live in Chatfield, the census-taker reported that the town had natives of twenty-five different states in its population, and the great migration was by no means ended.

Not all who stopped in Chatfield found it the end of their travels. Many a name appears here or there in the old records and then drops out, sometimes with a newspaper note of transfer to a farther West. Chatfield had its share of those who felt it was time to be moving "when the bark started from the fence rails." They made a beginning at subduing the wilderness, easing a little the lot of those who came after them. Some, per-

haps, made a little money out of their sojourn in Chatfield or its province, but they left small personal trace in its life.*

Many other families who came in those first years stayed on and played their various parts in the continuing life of the valley. Often enough the third, even the fourth generation descended from these early comers remain in the Chatfield community.

For long years the Yankees were easily the dominant figures in Chatfield leadership, but they were not the only people who helped to build the common life. From Ireland and Norway, from Prussia and Poland, from old Bohemia, and other lands came men and women and children whose labor and laughter were woven into the fabric of the life that grew in the valley of Thomas Twiford's choosing.

* According to the original census schedules, now preserved by the Minnesota Historical Society, Chatfield's native-born population had the following distribution of nativity:

	<i>Adult, 20 and over</i>	<i>Children, under 20</i>
New York	125	39
Vermont	52	14
Ohio	40	18
Pennsylvania	31	22
Massachusetts	30	10
Indiana	21	22
Kentucky	7	0
New Hampshire	7	1
Illinois	7	10
Maine	6	3
Iowa	6	18
Connecticut	5	2
Michigan	5	14
New Jersey	3	0
Virginia	3	0
Rhode Island	2	0
Tennessee	1	0
Georgia	1	0
Missouri	1	1
Mississippi	1	1
Wisconsin	1	30
Dist. of Columbia	0	1
California	0	1
Maryland	0	2
Minnesota	0	107
Totals	355	316

PART

Four



New Worlds for Old

I



THE PINE-CONE HOUSE was ready for a roof. The child in the blue pinafore sat back to consider. Should it be thatched, like Grandmother's cottage in County Cork, or shingled, like their own house? She reached up to pull a strip of bark from the tree for shingles. The sticky touch of resin on her fingers made her forget the house and look up along the stem of the tree till she was dizzy with seeing how far it was to the sky.

Grandmother talked about the blue skies of Ireland, but they couldn't be as bright and high and shining a blue as this sky was, right now. The child's eyes slid down the brown and red-flecked stem of the pine and flew to Grandmother's face, beyond the spinning wheel. Grandmother was singing. Her long, narrow eyes were crinkly with laughter that bubbled up into the song, and wound between the song of the pine tree and the song of the spinning wheel, as bright as a summer shower in the sun.

It was no good trying to talk to Grandmother when she was singing her Irish songs and had that look in her face. She'd only say, "You're just a little American girl. You couldn't understand." The child turned to look at the cornfield and the pasture, stretched inside the curve of the river, and the field of wheat stubble beyond. When the wind blew on the corn another song came up the hill to meet the song of the pine tree. A cow splashed into the river and stood there up to her knees, taking a drink. Across the wheat field a bobwhite whistled.

The little girl lay very still in the center of a world full of singing.

II



IF THE YOKE of opinion was heavy in New England, in the mid-years of the nineteenth century, a much heavier yoke lay on the laboring people of Europe. In every country the new industrialism was wrenching men out of the familiar ways of a land-based economy. Artisans and peasants alike were sinking into what seemed hopeless poverty. When America's profit-seeking industrialists sent out word that they would hire all who would tend their machines, the laborers of Europe poured through the gates of the New World. The shipowner's exploitation of European distress, and the subhuman conditions on ships bringing the new laborers to American ports form a chapter of American history still to be written, though enough is known to hint at its shame.

Yet it would not be easy to tell that story in terms of living men. For the miracle of America healed the scars of such bitter days and nights, and men who found living room in a virgin continent forgot to tell their children of the hell that bridged the Atlantic. Those who sank in other hells, of sweatshops and blast furnaces, were mere ciphers in the statistics of expanding industry.

It was the land that delivered thousands from such loss of identity. The bolder, more knowing ones of the vast anonymous migration poured into each successive West, looking for land. Men and women and children from half a dozen countries found their ways into the Chatfield province. There as elsewhere their

gifts of personality and labor mixed with the dominant Yankee strain to shape the kinds of people that are American.

More of them came from Ireland than from any other country, though never was a land more loved than "Holy" Ireland. When famine came, and the people died beside the roadways with the stain of roadside weeds upon their mouths, there rose from the green isle's shores a keening sorrow. Not for the dead alone but for the millions of her sons and daughters gone to exile. . . . In 1841 Ireland's people numbered more than eight millions (8,175,000); twenty years later their number had shrunk to less than six millions (5,875,000). The years of the potato famine (1846-49) saw nearly two million persons evicted from the little houses where they had lived. All who could escaped to America.

In the last of those dreadful years the Catholic bishop for Iowa and Minnesota, traveling in Ireland to persuade young seminarians to join his labors beyond the Mississippi, wrote to a friend in his native France: "I assure you . . . the scene of poverty in some quarters was awful. . . . I saw many cottages . . . crumbling in ruins and abandoned by their tenants, who had emigrated to some more hospitable shores. . . . I saw occasionally some of those extensive and princely estates occupied by rich English lords. . . . The contrast between great opulence and extreme poverty was truly appalling, and one is at a loss to understand how this state of things can be tolerated in this age of light and philanthropy."

Bishop Mathias Loras of Dubuque was so moved by the misery he saw that he wrote to the Dublin papers urging migration to the American West. His letters were among many influences that encouraged Irish emigration. By 1850, nearly a million Irish persons had settled in the United States, and a half million more were to come in the decade that followed.

Too many of them huddled in the foul tenements of seaport cities, where they cheapened an already glutted labor market. Many city priests opposed further migration of their flocks, arguing that the scarcity of priests in the West would expose the faithful to the godless beguilements of the Protestants. But the

Bishop of Dubuque, returned to his diocese, wrote repeatedly to the Boston *Pilot* and the New York *Freeman's Journal* urging Irish immigrants towards the open lands of the frontier.

There was plenty of work for them to do on the way. As early as 1817, Irish immigrants had been enticed to the vast labors of the Erie Canal, and they were the workmen who pushed the canals westward through Indiana and Illinois. By 1850, a notable Irish settlement had grown up in Woodstock County, near Chicago, and when the Illinois Central Railroad began to build, additional thousands flocked into the region. Thoreau's fancy that the 'sleepers' carrying Eastern railroads were each of them an Irishman, was even more applicable to Western roads.

Yet those Irish 'sleepers' were by no means fixed or dumb. When they had earned a little money and gathered a little knowledge of the land, they strolled out into the virgin continent to find their fortunes in their own ways. Perhaps no one living today knows the rhythm and contour of the American land as those wanderers came to know it. They might ride a stagecoach across a county or two, take a steamboat down some river or across some lake, but whole sections of the American terrain came into their knowledge through the slow sure play of muscles carrying them over hill country and plains. The new land became intimately their own through the eager curiosity of senses at leisure to note the unending various detail of woodland and sky.

Stopping here for a day's work, there for a week of harvesting, yonder to chop wood or tend a sawmill for a month, they learned the ways of a people coming to terms with the land. Whatever they saw looked good to them, for hope was in the air and a man's share in this abundance was limited chiefly by his own will. Economic laws rode lightly on the currents moving West, and privation lacked the sting of invidious wealth at its side.

In Norway the revolutionary impulses of 1830 swelled to the long effort of winning more adequate representation for a peasantry just beginning to feel its political identity. Their lot

was unescapably hard. A whole family commonly lived in a cramped room or two half dug into the hillside, often too low for the menfolks to stand upright anywhere except under the center ridgepole. And for the privilege of such residence they worked half their time for the Storbunden, the master of the estate, besides whatever extra time he demanded in wagework.

Had the wages for extra work been in any proportion to the luxury of the master's living, that arrangement might not have been so bad. In reality, they were scarcely enough to buy sugar and coffee for the family, and leather shoes were an almost unknown luxury. They raised their food on the tiny garden plot that was often so steep and stony that even potatoes could not grow until sacks of earth had been surreptitiously carried from the master's forest to fill the hollows between the stones. . . . Nor could they flavor their potatoes with a bit of game or fish from the woods and streams of the estate. That privilege belonged to the master, and woe to the lad who defiantly snared so much as a rabbit to boil in his mother's pot.

It had not always been like that, men began to mutter. Once the Storbunden had lived and labored with his people, and they had shared and shared alike. Now he must have boots and suits from shops in the capital, and a fine carriage from abroad. Time was when the mistress herself presided over the spinning and weaving rooms of the manor house, and all the children of the estate wore clothes cut from the same web; now the mistress got her dresses from Paris—and her manners from the moon. In their new-fangled luxury, the manor-house folk had come to imagine they were of different clay from the peasants.

It was near the towns, among craftsmen and tillers who heard with their own ears of the world beyond Norwegian fjords, that the word "America" first stirred to meaning. When, in 1836, a little band of the more daring gathered together money and wit to elude the heavy hand of official opposition, and sailed to the vast unknown of America, the story was carried back into the farther mountains with a note of awed unbelief. When word returned that the venturers had reached their goal and were find-

ing land more abundant than the Storbunden himself could claim, men forgot the trials and uncertainties of the adventure to marvel over the success of its ending.

Slowly others found the way from Norway to America. By the mid-forties there was scarcely a parish in Norway that had not received at least one 'America letter' either from one of its own sons or from someone of a neighboring parish. Those letters were worn dim in passing from hand to hand. When word went about of a Sunday morning that a new letter had come, the air in the little church grew tense with impatience. The pastor might speak his opposition plainly, but he could not forbid the gathering of his flock outside the church to hear every word of report on the amazing land called "Amerika."

The authorities grew alarmed. Churchmen thundered the perils of eternal damnation upon those who willfully abandoned the stations to which God had appointed them. Even some writers of 'America letters' eventually grew concerned when they saw so many of their countrymen venturing into the new country with none of the protections they might readily have provided for themselves. A series of emigrant guides was published in Norway to give practical assistance to the increasing numbers of Norwegians who were going to America.

The journey itself had hazards to spare. Sixteen weeks in the fetid hold of one of the ships that carried those early emigrants was enough to try the strongest constitution. The decks were so poorly protected that it was dangerous to venture out in any but the calmest weather. One family in the Chatfield province still tells how one of their little girls was almost lost one day when they crowded on deck for the relief of decent air. A mountainous wave broke suddenly over the deck, swept the child off her feet and was carrying her out to sea when a man was lucky enough to grab her skirts just as she was passing out of reach.

Bread grew moldy and cheese turned rancid in the great hampers of food that the emigrants carried. When storm tossed the vessels there were days on end when the single stove available for cooking could not be lighted. Then not so much as a cup of tea

could be made to comfort the sick. Scarcely a ship arrived at its American port with the full number of passengers with which it had sailed.

Yet the Norwegians continued to come. By 1850, substantial Norwegian communities were established in Illinois and Wisconsin. In 1853, several families moved on into the southeastern corner of Fillmore County. As each new little settlement got a foothold it welcomed later comers and helped them find work, and land, and the means of existence. Most of the Norwegians who settled in the Chatfield province had spent a week, or a year, in one or more of their countrymen's centers on the way to their ultimate West.

In Bohemia the Hapsburgs had come to the throne by legal enough process, as those things went in 1526, but they never forgot that they were the rulers and the Bohemians their subjects, or that the Hapsburgs were the champions of the Holy Roman Empire against the heresies of the Hussites. Hapsburg arrogance was answered by a surly submissiveness which nourished itself on a stubborn devotion to Hussite doctrine and dogged continuance of the old Czech language despite repressive edicts. Always there was the thorough hatred of the Hapsburgs and contempt for the immorality credited to their royal amours. One man who lived long in Chatfield remembered how his grandmother would not permit Maria Theresa to be mentioned in her presence: the empress's name was a blot on the purity of all womanhood.

When revolution stirred Europe in 1848, Bohemia too had its moment of hope. But the Hapsburgs denied all petition for enlarged rights, and thereafter the reactionary will of the empire bore down with special heaviness upon the Bohemians. Most bitterly resented were the three years of army service required from every able-bodied man.

When word came of the fabulous land called America, men were slow to believe what they heard. A man from one village wrote that he worked in a huge iron smeltery in a place called Pitts-

burgh and *ate meat every day*. From another came the story of one who had land in a province with the strange name of Wisconsin. He had it direct from the Government itself, not twenty acres but a hundred and twenty.

Such things were not lightly to be believed, but when strangers wearing American clothes and speaking the Bohemian tongue appeared in the villages to tell how magic carpets called steamship tickets could be bought, and how American 'jobs' could be obtained, belief slowly gained over skepticism. By the early fifties, Bohemians had begun to settle in each of the northern states, with specially strong centers in Iowa and Wisconsin. By the end of the eighties there was scarcely a village in all Bohemia from which one or more families had not gone to America.

England did not escape the nineteenth century's distress under the impact of industrial expansion. As early as 1830, the Chartist movement demanded relief from both economic and political injustice. The slight reform in Parliamentary representation that it won looked well on the statute books. It did little to relieve the terrible distress which Friedrich Engels saw and recorded so bitterly.

The artisans suffered most. As factory production got under way, England endured the awful spectacle of masses of artisans from every craft left without employment for their skill or sale for their products. So general was the distress that for a few months the specter of violent revolution stalked the ways of England's ruling class. When the rulers broke the threat of the Chartists in 1848, thousands of young men, trained in one or another trade and seeing no prospect of adequate employment, turned towards America.

The English had less need than most emigrants to gather in little groups for mutual assistance. Their speech was basically the same as American speech, however outlandish one accent might sound to the other ear. Their political heritage of parliamentary procedure was the matrix from which American practice had been

molded. They found their religious consolation in familiar Methodist, Baptist, or Presbyterian churches, for most English emigrants were 'chapel' rather than 'church.' Even Episcopal ritual was more acceptably 'American' than that of the Roman church.

So it came about that the English moved through the American West with less measurable effect than that of many other groups. Almost any community might be graced for a longer or shorter season by an exiled lordling or remittance man. As long as he was content not to arrogate undue importance to himself he was accepted with that mixture of romantic deference and cheerful raillery that has often baffled the foreign observer. For the most part the English artisans slipped unobtrusively into some small niche and did their share of the common work with no special mark of nationalistic distinction.

Often enough they became a permanent part of the first community in which they stopped, though many of them tried two or three, or many different localities before they ended their journeying. In Chatfield, for instance, fourteen English-born men, most of them with English wives and families, were listed in the census of 1857; in 1860 all but two of those men had disappeared.

There were a few Germans, also, among those who came to Chatfield in its early years, propelled from their homeland by those forces of famine and reaction which sent tens of thousands from Germany to the United States after 1848. From 1850 to 1860 they entered this country at the rate of 90,000 a year. A few individuals—a brewer, a butcher, a merchant, a harness maker—came into Chatfield by 1860, but the bulk of German migration to Minnesota settled elsewhere. Their chief center was a hundred miles west and north of Chatfield—so far beyond Chatfield's province that no trace of its Germanic culture was felt in Thomas Twiford's valley.

It was from these national strains under Yankee hegemony

that the Chatfield community was chiefly wrought.* As individuals they differed as widely within each group as the groups differed among themselves. Though in the first years the Yankee banker might enter in his ledgers a payment made to "Norwegian John" or "Bohemian Joe," some of the foreign-born children of those same anonymous newcomers became bankers and members of the legislature within the span of their parents' lives. Less ambitious ones owned farms and built houses, joined lodges and were elected to office there, wrote letters to the editor of the *Democrat* in the unchallenged freedom of an American to say what he thinks.

* The census of 1860 showed the following numbers of persons of foreign birth in Chatfield itself: there were more in the surrounding country.

Country	Adults, 20 and over	Children, under 20
Ireland	64	9
England	18	4
Germany	14	4
Canada	10	12
Poland	9	6
Norway	6	2
Scotland	6	2
Bohemia	4	7
Nova Scotia	2	0
Switzerland	1	0
Totals	<u>134</u>	<u>46</u>
Grand total		<u>180</u>

The listing of Polish nativity affords an interesting comment on nativistic attitudes of the period. Every one of the individuals so designated was born in Bohemia. They named the other country on the advice of earlier arrivals who thought Americans were particularly friendly to Polish immigrants because of admiration for the Revolutionary hero, Kosciusko, who had recently revisited the country.

III



IN JUNE OF 1850, Nicholas Crawley said his sorrowful adieus to parents, and brothers, and sister in Carrickmacross, County Monaghan, and left to try his fortunes in the new land. It was a weary crossing. He barely made his way to a family from his own village, then living in New York, when he succumbed to illness so severe that it was weeks before he was able to write to his family. The answer which his father wrote tells much of both sides of the Irish migration.

October 8th, 1850

Dear Son

I received your welcome letter which give us all the greatest consolation to hear of you being in good health as the same leaves us all at present thanks be to god for all his mercies towards us. Dear son it grieved us all very much to hear of the hardships you went through going to that Country and then your Sickness for so long a time but we thank God after all that you are perfectly recovered at the Present time . . . the day your letter was received was a day of great rejoicing with us for many a long and weary walk we had for it these four months Past . . . we never heard any thing Since you left us give us such Joy as to hear from you . . . your mother in particular was very uneasy night and day saying that Something Come across you when you did not rite us for so long. But she is quite happy now and there is nothing in the world she requests of you so much as to rite often to us for it is a great pleasure for A person to hear from you when We Cannot see

you our dearly Beloved Son . . . it was a happy news to your Brother Edward to hear that you would send for him for he says he would give all ever seen to see one Sight of you and thinks it longer nor his life untill spring . . . we hope in your next letter you will let us no what is best fitted for that Country the way we will have the Pleasure of sending them to you . . . you will be pleased to let us know Is it good place for girls and we will send your Sister with Edward If you encourage them to go there For Ireland is getting so bad that youngsters have no settlement in it only Striving and asking to go to America for it is not the Potatoes Alone has failed this year but wheat and all sorts of Corn . . . We hope you will not think it is sending you bad news we are; it is only letting you know the State of the Country we are . . . we are very glad to let you no that our Landlord's Brother was with us the day that this letter was tote and got the directions of you and Said that he would Call to See you and get a high Situation for you which one he intends to be there in the Course of a month and do all he can for you . . . he advises every one to go there . . . you may let Catherine Casey no that her mother was very glad to hear from her and was present when this letter was tote and we are very glad you are along with them . . . John Manon Requests of you to make all the Enquiry you Could for his brother Edward he is in Carter Street New York No 210 . . . Mrs. Daly requests of you to tell her daughter to rite to her . . . we all join in one and send you our blessing and hope never to be so long again without hearing from you No more at present but we remain your loving Parents untill Death

Patrick & Ann Crowley

The "Landlord's Brother" and the "high Situation" he promised never found Nicholas Crowley. (He changed the spelling of his name early to fit American tongues.) He worked at all sorts of jobs, in Michigan and then in Illinois, brought two brothers to America, and early in 1855 found his way to Chatfield. There he took a claim on the Root River just above Parsley's ford, registering it in the Brownsville Land Office.

He had evidently prospered in the new country, for six months later he paid the Brownsville office the full price of his quarter section—two hundred dollars—with no pressure of an impending auction to force his action. Both times he covered the whole

distance to Brownsville and back—thirty-five miles each way—on his feet. Perhaps a hundred and forty miles of walking seemed a mere stroll after the journey which had brought him across an ocean and half a continent. . . .

His sister never saw America, but years afterward her grown children came at their uncles' invitation and settled in the Chatfield province, where many of the Crowley descendants still remain.

In the same year that Nicholas Crowley left his native Ireland another family began its long journey to America. Mary Burns O'Halloran, of County Cork, had borne ten sons and a daughter before her husband died early in 1850. The eldest son, intended for the priesthood, had died a year or two before, just as he was ready to enter the seminary; he and two brothers lay beside their father in the parish burying ground, and Mary O'Halloran was left with little more than her own hands and a shrewd indomitable will that accepted no defeat.

Somehow she contrived to pinch together enough money to send her two eldest living sons, Edward and Andrew, to America a few months after their father's death, and they in turn, two years later, sent money for the next two brothers, Timothy and Dennis, to come to America.

Half a century later the *Chatfield News* published "The History of Chatfield; Written from Memory by Mr. Timothy Halloran." There he reported his arrival in this country:

When I landed in Boston, in October '52, I was then 17 years old and pretty green I tell you; but I got along very well and never tramped but two days. I earned \$5 the first month, \$4 the second and managed to make out \$2 the third. The next two months I got \$5 per month; I had a good time and did not suffer at all. In the spring of '55 I got the western fever and emigrated west, coming to Chicago. From there I went to Milwaukee. I started out one day, walked 10 miles, and hired out to C. D. Parker for \$14 per month for the season. Mr. Parker was a very intelligent man and gave me my first information in regard to the affairs of this country. [Parker was later elected to the Wisconsin

legislature.] He advised me to go to school, I did so, attending school six weeks. I learned the four fundamental rules of arithmetic, and that constituted my education. . . . In October, '56, I came to Chatfield. . . . I came from Galena by stage across Grant county to where Boscobel now is. My brother Ed. and I started on foot from there to Chatfield. We pre-empted six miles west of High Forest in the town of Pleasant Valley. . . .

It was to that claim he returned through the memorable storm already described, and from that claim that he went to find work in the Chatfield woods, the "Winter of the Big Crust."

Eventually the seven O'Halloran brothers, their mother, and their sister all lived in the Chatfield province. When the mother, with her daughter and two youngest sons, arrived, a railroad had been built to the north of Chatfield and the four O'Hallorans walked the eight or ten miles from the nearest station, marveling at the narrow dusty track pointed out to them as the road to Chatfield. In Ireland such a poor breen would never be found leading to the fine town the sons had written about.

Their walk down that road was the last stage of a hegira which was to make the name of that family one of the most pervasive in the Chatfield community. They early dropped the O', feeling that sign of noble birth unsuited to the large equalities of their new home. The mother of those seven sons lived to see nineteen grandsons who bore her name, besides the five sons of her daughter (who married Nicholas Crowley), and fifteen granddaughters.

Joe Manahan was another Irish boy who found his future in Chatfield. He was even younger than Timothy Halloran when he landed in America, and a man for whom he worked in Woodstock County grew so fond of the lad that he offered food and clothing and such schooling as the district afforded, with forty acres of land when the boy should be twenty-one, if he would only stay. But Joe Manahan wanted no land at the price of his freedom. And why should he, when a hundred and sixty acres would be his for the claiming?

When he was ready to settle down he made his way to Chatfield and chose a piece of land not far northeast of town. The first night he slept in his claim shanty he was visited by the 'Black Dolans' of whom he had been warned, who boasted they would own the whole township, and had brought in assorted relatives to take the claims they coveted. The lot of them—half a dozen huge beetling bullies—bore down on Manahan's shanty at dusk and warned him profanely that if he was still there by morning he could expect nothing but murder as his end. Joe Manahan had held his own in too many railroad camp brawls to be scared by that kind of talk. He gave them as good as they sent, and the Dolans showed their bullying natures by letting him completely alone thereafter.

When he had made his 'improvements' and entered his claim in due form, Joe Manahan went back to Illinois to work through the winter. He returned in the spring with a fine span of horses he had earned—one of the first to be brought into the province. His brother John came a little later, and the two Manahans had so many sons that their name came to pervade the community as largely as did the name of Halloran.

That summer of 1856 when Joe Manahan went back to Chatfield to stay, Ed Tuohy, born in County Galway, set off from Illinois in search of land. He had known Joe Manahan in Woodstock County but he took a different route from the one that led to Chatfield. When he crossed the river at Galena he walked straight across Iowa for a hundred miles before he turned north to Minnesota. In the lake-and-prairie region some sixty miles west of Chatfield he staked his claim and then set off for the Land Office town to enter his pre-emption. There he found Joe Manahan, who gave him so hearty a welcome that he was persuaded to take a claim near Manahan's land.

When he went to the Land Office to look at the plats, Mr. McKenny, the Receiver, offered him a job as 'hired man'—and Ed Tuohy stayed in Chatfield. The decision held more of

his fate than the young man guessed at the moment, for one of the two 'hired girls' working for the McKennys was Margaret Towey, whom a few months later he married.

She had come from County Mayo by a different route from most of the Irish immigrants. The sailing vessel in which she left Ireland had been blown far out of its course by storms and after three months at sea made port in New Orleans. It meant for those wind-driven immigrants an even stranger country than they had anticipated: the heat, the Creole speech, and the great number of black laborers made it utterly foreign to them despite the presence of many Roman Catholic churches. Most of the Irish people who disembarked in New Orleans made their way up the River as fast as they could. . . . If the letters they wrote about their encounters with Southern ways could be found in old chests stored in Irish cottages they might unfold as fascinating a chapter as that of Norway's 'America letters.'

Margaret Towey and Ed Tuohy worked together that fall and winter as the McKennys' 'hired help.' There were no 'servants' in Chatfield, except when the census-taker followed official instructions. Even then only the 'hired girls' were listed as 'servants'; the men were 'laborers.' A society that was all in the making had no use for the hard-and-fast categories of servant and master. A girl might 'work out' for a while, but shortly she married and had a family of her own, and as her husband prospered she hired help for herself.

It was that way with Ed Tuohy and his wife. The pair of them took the stagecoach one spring day to Winona, where the nearest priest lived and came back the next day with his blessing. They called on the McKennys before setting off to their land and Mrs. McKenny gave the bride a beautiful tortoise shell cat to keep her company in the little cabin. They carried the cat in a basket, up over Winona Hill and four miles eastward, and eighty years later their son remembered the comfort Margaret Tuohy had from that gift.

"Your borders were closer in those days," he sometimes says, "and you paid more attention to little things. A cat was lots of

company, and when you had a cow you were rich. It was a great thing to carry a pat of butter or a dozen eggs to a neighbor for Christmas, when your borders were close like those days."

Sometimes the borders pressed close as prison walls, but mostly the hope that swelled in the opening country made any privation or difficulty endurable, because these people knew it would not last. It is not the nearness of borders but their fixity that goads men to bitterness, and the memories that have come down from those early years are shaped by that intuition. In a time and place where people felt their borders continually enlarging, a deeper wisdom than mere economics released vast unspent stores of love and laughter.

In Chatfield itself the Irish people greatly outnumbered the Norwegians, for when the Norwegians came into the Chatfield province they settled at once on the land. Of the 113 original pre-emptions in Chatfield Township, sixteen were taken by Norwegians; in townships east and south the proportion was larger. All through the region many parcels of land came into Norwegian hands later, as Yankee speculators sold out for such profit as they could make.

Among the original Norwegian pre-emptors south of Chatfield was Ole J. Tangen, who left Norway with all his family in 1853. Their first stop was in Chicago, where the men worked at breaking land outside the city. The two married daughters and their husbands settled there, but late in 1855 Ole Tangen, his wife, and their eighteen-year-old son, also named Ole, went out to Minnesota. They made for the little log house which Even Anderson (later Spelhaug) had built south of Chatfield, and stayed there until they had taken land of their own near by and built their own log hut.

During the winter the father girdled the trees near the cabin—peeled off a strip of bark around each tree, so the top would die and let the sun come through—and young Ole 'worked out' for more prosperous settlers in the neighborhood. In the spring the

boy brought home his wages: a steer calf, an unsheared sheep, and potatoes enough to plant the ground which his father had laboriously spaded under the girdled trees.

The potatoes prospered, which was fortunate. The following winter the Tangens seldom had anything to eat but boiled potatoes served with salt. They wore socks and mittens and caps that Mrs. Tangen knitted from the wool she had cut from the sheep and spun on her wheel. The steer calf grew so well that two years later, when they acquired a second steer, they had a fine yoke of oxen to hitch to the plow to turn the field that had finally been cleared. Their first wheat crop was so good that they bought a cow the third fall, and then they lived in luxury. With flour ground from their own wheat, with milk, and cheese, even butter, from their own cow, no family could ask for more.

The son Ole was by that time twenty-one, so he pre-empted eighty acres of his own and built a cabin on it. On the ship coming from Norway he had met the girl who, despite all the misery of the passage, remained in his heart as the girl he would marry. She had stayed in Chicago, 'working out' for a rich family there. Now young Ole went to find her and a few weeks later brought his bride to his little cabin. They were to live there until her death, twenty years later.

His second wife (younger than his eldest daughter) lived out her life in turn in that same log house—though it had been enlarged by several log additions. Nineteen children begotten by Ole Tangen were born in that cabin. When his youngest son inherited the place he built his fine frame house around the original cabin, where it still remains, still owned by a son of Ole Tangen.

A later arrival from Norway was Asle Sundet, a tailor so prosperous that he had eight hundred silver dollars when he arrived in the new country. He was the last one of his family left to care for his grandmother, and it was not easy to persuade her to such a change. When she finally consented he set off with

her, his wife, and their tiny baby for the week's cart-ride from their inland village to the port.

Their baby died on the way and they carried the little body in their arms for a whole day so that they might lay it in consecrated ground. But when they came to the port, their ship was so near sailing they could do no better than leave their first-born to kind strangers who promised to give it Christian burial. It was a sad departure, and a more sad arrival, for the grandmother died the day before they reached their new-world port. Because they were so near to land they were permitted to keep her body for burial there. That double loss made fit symbol for thousands making that journey—the future dying as they left their old world, the past, as they reached the new.

In the New World Asle Sundet turned his back on the pattern of his past and refused opportunities to settle as tailor in the Norwegian communities of Wisconsin. Instead he took land south of Chatfield, built a cabin, and settled his wife and their new-world baby in it. Then Asle Sundet went off to work all winter in 'the pineries,' those northern forests which were being slashed down to the great profit of a few lumber barons. Each winter for years Asle Sundet worked there, and with his wages he bought tools and livestock and land until he owned two hundred and forty acres, as prosperous and well-kept a farm as could be found in the whole Chatfield province.

A dozen such stories could be told, each with some twist of circumstance making it the story of one family rather than another. One more must suffice: it illustrates the kind of social freedom which brought even prosperous people under the lure of the New World.

The second son of a moderately wealthy Storbunden fell in love with the daughter of the poorest tenant on his father's estate. The father was outraged and decided to send the boy to America as the lesser evil. This the son agreed to, but before his departure he persuaded the pastor of a distant parish to pub-

lish the bans and read the marriage lines for him and his peasant sweetheart. When faced with the accomplished fact the father was forced for shame to buy two passages instead of one.

The young pair settled some distance south of Chatfield and prospered, but so deep was the son's resentment that he never wrote to his father. Word did eventually reach the father of his son's location and after some years he grew so anxious that he sent his eldest son to see how the younger brother was faring. The elder son found his brother independent, as no man was in Norway, and rich beyond all dreaming. Forthwith the eldest son wrote back to his wife instructing her to dispose of all their property, hire two men and two maids, and come with all haste to America. She did his bidding and the father never saw either of his sons again.

Few Norwegian migrants made so dramatic a severance of old loyalties, but the New World so absorbed their energies and realized their hopes that there was little grieving for the Old. Now and then a man (more rarely a woman) would return to Norway, but they stayed for no more than a visit. After the heady wine of new-world freedom, there was little in the old to hold them, though now and then one felt himself, as the years grew heavy on his head, an exile suspended between two worlds, neither of which was truly his own. But for the children of the immigrants there was no question of divided loyalty.

Captain McKenny was impatient to be home after his trip to Winona on official business. He decided he could save a little time if he cut down from the ridge a mile east of town instead of following the road over Winona Hill. His horse was as eager as the Captain to be home and went readily enough over the trail toward the level of the bench. They would get safely into town before it grew really dark.

But something unexpected caught McKenny's eye on the other side of the bench just above the Big Bend. Wagons—and they appeared to be coming out of the town. That called for

investigation. The Captain pricked his reluctant horse into a trot tangential to the way home.

There were half a dozen wagons in the group and they were evidently preparing to camp above the Bend for the night. Foreigners, he knew by the outlandish sounds he heard; as he came nearer he saw some of them were still in their old-country clothes. The men wore scarlet-dyed coats, made of sheepskin, fleece turned inward. They looked a decent, self-respecting lot, but he got no intelligible response to the voyageur French he had picked up in his years as sutler at Fort Ripley.

The excited calls that rose about his inquiries finally brought forth a man in American clothes who spoke to the Captain in reasonably clear English. The others, he explained, were all Bohemians from the same village, who had been in Wisconsin for nearly a year and had started out several weeks ago intending to go to Kansas to look for land. But after struggling halfway across Iowa over trails filled with bottomless mudholes, they had given up the effort to reach Kansas and turned northward into the lake-and-prairie region of Minnesota. They had seen nothing they liked as well as the hills of Wisconsin and now were on their way back to the Bohemian settlements there. They had meant to spend that night in the town in the valley, but when they saw Indians camped in the Bend of the river they were afraid and turned back. They would camp here for the night, and hoped they would not be molested.

Captain McKenny laughed at the idea of the Indians hurting anybody. They would steal anything that lay within their reach but they were as harmless as children.

As for the town in the valley—there wasn't a better town anywhere in the whole country than Chatfield. They would really see something when they saw that. The richest soil in the world lay in the valleys around the town. He, Captain McKenny, head man in the government office that disposed of the land, would see that these folks got their full share of that land. They should ride down into town now, and the very first thing in the morning he would pick out their farms for them.

The Captain's eloquence was translated in the oddest fashion he had ever encountered. The man with whom he spoke called his wife and asked the Captain to repeat what he had said about the Indians, the town, and the land. When the Captain had finished, the woman turned to another man in the group and spoke in what McKenny recognized as German. This person in his turn addressed the men in old-country clothes in the odd-sounding gibberish that was evidently Bohemian.

What he said was hard to recognize as a version of the Captain's original eloquence, but it provoked a storm of chattering discussion. When the decision was finally re-translated back into English, it was for the band to spend the night where they were. They would come into the town first thing in the morning.

They did according to their word. When they went down the hill the next morning they were so surrounded by Indian outlandishness that they might have been afraid had Captain McKenny not ridden up to escort them. He laughed heartily at the assault of Indian curiosity, especially when the squaws went into rapturous delight over a two-year toddler, youngest of the Bohemian children. They passed him from one to another, and rubbed his apple cheeks so lovingly against their own that the child was daubed with paint from ear to ear. But he never cried at all, and his crowing readiness to laugh at each new diversion captured them all.

The upshot was that the five Bohemian families all settled in or near Chatfield. Their names were in time simplified to Underleak, Jelineck, Teska, Pavelka, and Chermack, and they were the first of forty or more Bohemian families that came into the Chatfield province. Their ways seemed strange to their neighbors, and many of the older folks worked so endlessly that they never learned much of the new country's ways. But they made farms out of their wild acres, and they prospered, and their sons and daughters reached out in many directions to share in the common life.

By no means all of the immigrants settling in the Chatfield province came during the first few years after Thomas Twiford

chose that valley for his town. The story of one man who left Bohemia in the early eighties is eloquent of the forces that continued to propel men out of their native countries into the American West.

Adolph Pavlish was a big fellow and strong for his seventeen years, but no thanks to the millers for whom he had worked ever since he was twelve. They had fed him a flour-and-water slop they called soup, and potatoes too scabby for the master's table. If his folks had not owned a cow when he was getting his growth he might have been as skinny and scared as the little man who worked in the miller's barns.

One fine April Sunday the miller sat long over his roast meat and pasteries, so long that when the boy was finally allowed to go eat he found the 'soup' stiff and cold, and the potatoes dumped contemptuously on the bare table for him had been so picked over by the other servants that there was nothing fit to put in a man's mouth. In a sudden fury the boy flung out of the kitchen without eating a bite.

The brilliant spring sun made him uncommonly bold. He seized the barnman, just shuffling up to the door, and urged him across the road to the little beer garden before the other quite knew what terrible liberty they were taking. With a fine air of bravado Adolph ordered two beers and sat talking loudly of what a fine country America was, where his sister had gone two years before. A gendarme came in and the barnman nudged Adolph into silence; yet the boy was full of hatred for the fear that pinched him.

"Here comes the master," the barnman whispered, and Adolph was furious that his heart began to beat faster. What if the boss called the gendarme to beat them back to the mill? But the miller smiled at them and ordered bologna and beer for the boys and sat down with them while they waited for the uneasy largesse.

That was really something to have happen. Like the day, a year before, when Adolph had complained about the food and the

master had brought him a little tray with a thin slice of veal, a piece of black bread, and even a cup of tea. It hadn't been enough to stop the constant gnawing of his hunger but it helped. Maybe the boss wasn't such a bad fellow, really.

But when the waiter came back with four inches of bologna and a liter of beer for each of the three, and Adolph saw how smoothly the master devoured the meat after gorging himself at dinner, all his anger rose up again in him. Then, when he had wiped the last bit of foam from his mustache the master said, "Well, boys, I guess you'd better get back and load up that lumber for tomorrow morning."

While he checked and counted the lumber Adolph Pavlish made up his mind. He was going to America.

It took six weeks of pestering the miller to get his signature of honorable discharge on the passbook without which the boy could be picked up and clapped into jail by any gendarme in all Austria. When a journeyman miller came by late in May, the master released the boy in sheer weariness at his importunity. Adolph walked the thirty miles to Sadek, his family's village in the easternmost part of Bohemia. There he found that his mother was sick. When he told her his decision she cried and grew so much worse they sent for the doctor. Adolph tried to get the doctor to sign an exemption from military duty, but he refused. The boy knew he must try another way.

The next day he walked to the county seat to ask for a passport to America. The officer to whom he applied thrust a book at him, thundered, "Can you read?" and left the boy standing a long time before he spoke again. No passport could be issued to any boy sixteen or older who had not served his military time. Adolph was never too easy to take things, and as he walked out of the office he muttered something under his breath. The clerk heard and thundered again, "Be careful! You will be watched! Don't try to sneak away!" The boy forced the civil answer that he had only asked legally for his pass. But he knew that he was going, pass or no.

That was Tuesday, the thirtieth day of May, 1882. As he

walked home he laid his plans. The nearest railway lay twenty-five miles north of the county seat but since that was the chief emigrant route it would be closely watched. The next nearest, to the northeast, would take him too far out of his way. He would take the third, though it necessitated a stagecoach from the county seat, and every hour he remained in the country increased the danger of being caught.

When he told his parents, and an aunt and her grandson who lived in Sadek, they all cried and begged him not to try. If he was caught he would be pressed at once into the army, and after his three years of service they would put him into the guardhouse for four years more. To risk seven years for freedom. . . .

But the boy left as he had planned.

He got safely to the railroad and bought his ticket to a town near the Prussian border. When he got there Thursday afternoon he threw his small handbag out of sight behind the station and walked down the track to get a look at the border. Flagpoles were set up at irregular intervals, farther apart where the ground was clear of obstructions, and the guards walked between those poles. They met each other halfway from one to another, saluted, then each turned back on the way he had come. Adolph Pavlish watched, hidden in the long grass, until he knew thoroughly how they moved, then went back to the station and got his bag.

It was getting on toward evening, and he had eaten nothing in the two days since he left home except some little rolls and bologna he'd bought from a woman peddling in one of the stations. He knew it was horse meat in the bologna, and his stomach had refused it as fast as he swallowed. But he was afraid to go to an inn for proper food. As soon as it was dusk he went back to the border and hid himself again in the place he had chosen.

He was scared. "I tell you," he said, recalling the moment, after sixty years in America, "if you'd cut me with a knife I wouldn'ta bled, I was that scared." Finally, when it was almost dark and the guards came together, saluted, then turned and moved apart, he cut up across the bank, over the rise, and ran—like a rabbit. When he was safely across the fatal line he dropped down into

the grass to listen. They had not heard him. After a while he knew he was free.

He was in a strange country but he found his way back to the railroad and walked into the next town. The officials there asked no questions about his passport, but they examined his bag. The officer who did it poked everything out of the bag onto a table with a little short sword he carried.

The most precious thing in the bag was a razor young Pavlish had found in an old trunk of his father's. It had been through the Napoleonic wars with his grandfather, and the boy had honed it to a fine cutting edge. He had shaved with it seven or eight times before he left Sadek, but the officer barked sneeringly, "What's that for?" When the boy answered, "To use," the officer swept the razor onto the floor and broke a nick in the blade. Young Pavlish was so mad that if he'd dared he'd have busted that officer one, right then and there. That was the way they were in the Old Country: if a man had a little power he took no thought for anyone else in his use of it.

He took the train to Dresden, thence to Leipsig, and from there to Bremen. When he got off the train, in the biggest crowd that he had ever seen, he was scared. But a man came up to him and asked in German if he would come to his boardinghouse. Pavlish had learned German in the school where his father had sent him for three years. Because the stranger looked honest Pavlish went along, saying, "All right, if you don't put me in some kind of a dungeon." He slept that night in a tiny room by himself under the eaves, and the man was very kind.

When the boy went next day to Brennerhaven to buy his ticket he was asked whether he wanted to go on the Sunday boat or on one sailing Tuesday, which was faster. The boy said he'd take the Sunday boat. The ticket seller waved his hand and said, "All right, all right, I understand." By ten o'clock Sunday morning the Bohemian boy was safely beyond reach of pursuit.

By the twentieth of June he had arrived on the Southern Minnesota Railroad at Fountain, the station nearest to Chatfield. He went to the stone hotel to eat, not knowing a word of the language

he heard around him. When he had finished and gone outside, a man whom he had seen in the dining room came out and spoke to him in German, asking where he was going, and where he had come from. Pavlish told him, and admitted he had very little money left. The stranger told him the stage would not leave until five o'clock, but he could have a free ride if he would wait there till a man on a hayrack beckoned him to climb on. Pavlish did as he was bid. He made out from the driver that he had hauled a load of fleeces from J. C. Easton's farm at Chatfield to ship on Easton's railroad. The man seemed so poor and unlucky, for all that he worked for such a rich man, that Pavlish felt sorry for him and gave him the forty cents change he had left in his pocket.

When he got to Chatfield, the driver pointed out the house where the boy's sister lived. She was working in the garden and was overcome with astonishment at her brother's arrival. When the brother-in-law came home his first question was whether the traveler had any money. Pavlish showed the single silver dollar he had left, and the husband said he'd take care of it until the first of the month. Pavlish never saw that dollar again.

He felt bad, in a strange country where he didn't know a word of the language, and had no job and no money. The first Sunday he was there four fashionably dressed young ladies came to his sister's house to "look at the greenhorn," and that did not make him any happier. But the very first day, when he was riding up from Fountain, the country looked kind to him, almost like Bohemia, and he knew, no matter what happened, that was the place where he would stay.

On the twentieth of June, 1932, Adolph Pavlish celebrated the golden anniversary of his arrival in Chatfield. His twelve children and their families, and relatives and friends from other places to the number of sixty, spent a long and festive week end together. A whole string of cars joined the procession on Sunday afternoon, and they drove up and down every street in town, past the forty-odd houses that Adolph Pavlish had built. A nephew, who was a successful doctor in Chicago, wanted to take

his uncle on a trip to Bohemia that summer. But Adolph Pavlish said no. The best part of his life belonged to Chatfield. There was nothing in Bohemia that he wanted.

In Horncastle, a village of Lincolnshire, James Marsar Cussons, son and grandson of millers and with uncles and cousins beyond number in the trade, saw so little prospect before him that when he was eighteen he went, with his father's blessing, to America. He arrived in June, 1852.

His first job was in a mill at Oswego, New York, where he worked eighteen hours a day at a wage of \$26 a month. Board cost \$2.50 a week, and there was fishing in the millpond when an idle moment came, so he made out very well. As the summer waned, however, he realized the mill would be closed when the millstream froze, so he set off westward along the Erie Canal to see what he could see.

It was a fine way to travel, strolling along canal banks astir with a nation's movement west. Half a dozen mills on the way gave him brief employment. In one he spent forty-eight hours instructing the young 'cub' in the art of dressing his millstones and was gratefully rewarded with a silver watch and a shaving set. In another he "was not mealy-mouthed" in telling the head miller what he thought of "his donkey methods" of running the mill—and found a better job two hours later in the next mill up the Niagara River.

On the last boat out of Buffalo that season he started for Cleveland, but a storm blew the boat out of its way so he landed in Toledo instead. Thence he tramped to Akron, then a great flouring center, and found abundant work in the big steam mills there. But when he realized that "the chills kept most millers in bed about four days in seven" he went on, until he came by chance to Canal Dover and the mill of one John Colton, seven years before migrated from Cussons' own village. There he spent the winter, dressing stones for the mill and losing his heart to the miller's lovely daughter.

With the opening of spring he set off toward the Ohio River to seek his fortune. All that summer he made his way from one mill to another, in the unhurried, neighborly fashion of the land. At one place he stopped work and went to school to learn arithmetic in dollars and cents instead of pounds and shillings. Several of the pupils were older than he, and he had the "new and pleasant experience" of sharing the neighborhood frolics in debating society, and corn huskings, singing school, and barn raisings, spelling school, and neighborhood hunts. It was an open way of living, where a man's own quality won him a welcome, with no thought of class distinctions.

When the autumn playtime came to an end he took a boat down the Ohio to St. Louis, but there was no job there, so James Cussons took his gun and his dog and set off on foot, still westward. He lived "chiefly on squirrel and quail . . . cooked on the point of a stick over some coals from a fire of wood" and slept most nights in a haystack. Illinois and Iowa were good country for tramping, but he found little work until Christmas day, when he settled with a miller of Rock Island County, Illinois.

The mill's equipment was so crude that the owner made no attempt to compete with bigger mills. He ground such grists as the neighbors brought in and between times used the water-wheel for log sawing or wool carding. But James Cussons did not accept such limitations. He bought a hundred bushels of wheat at his own cost and turned out such excellent flour that near-by markets absorbed all he could make thereafter.

The winter was a busy time. Besides the milling itself he had his first experience of drawing logs from the woods. His ox team was so clumsily hitched that they got caught astraddle a tree and the mill owner had to get out of a sickbed to untangle them. The hunting was wonderful—seven deer walked across the frozen millpond one morning, and a flock of fifty-six wild turkeys settled beside it another time. There was dancing in the little log houses of the neighborhood at night, even though the neighborhood had no fiddler; the dancers sang or whistled to keep the time.

When the mill owner offered that spring to rent house and

mill together on very advantageous terms James Cussons would have taken it had the location not been "too lonely . . . for a young lady who had been raised in town." Once more he set off for St. Louis.

In June he found employment at Cape Girardeau, some miles below St. Louis, where fishing excursions on the Mississippi with his Negro fellow-workers were his chief recreation. By the following February he had saved enough money to go back to John Colton's mill and marry the "genial, energetic" black-eyed girl to whom he had been bound all the intervening months by "an invisible silken cord." He took his bride to England to celebrate his coming of age on March 13, 1855.

In three months they were back in Canal Dover. But failure of the wheat crop in the Western Reserve meant "famine years" for millers and the Cussons tried their luck in another part of Ohio, then in Michigan, then Kentucky. Often James Cussons felt he would have given way to "the burden accumulated by the continual grind of business and the mill" had it not been for "the relish I still have in innocent recreation by the streams and in the woods."

Not until 1858 did they find a place where they could settle in something like permanence. Godfrey, Illinois, where he took charge of a mill, was "a community without class distinctions" and so congenial they "were very loath to leave." But in 1861 "trouble in the South" cut off the market for Godfrey flour, which was shipped down the river to Memphis and New Orleans. So the mill was closed.

It was perhaps as well, for milling had brought James Cussons a serious tuberculous condition and he was advised to go to Minnesota to regain his health. So the furniture was sold and Ann Colton Cussons took their two children back to her father's house in Ohio. Her husband borrowed fifty dollars from a farmer friend and set off afoot for Minnesota.

"In March, 1861, I called at every flour mill on the Chicago, Alton, and St. Louis Railway, walked through Northern Illinois and across Wisconsin to La Crosse, thence up into Minnesota,

occasionally finding a job at stone dressing," he wrote thirty years later. He traveled much as he had eight years before, with gun and dog, living by his hunting, but with the added burden of concern for his family. On April first he came to Chatfield and took employment in Sam Dickson's mill. After a month's trial he concluded a three-year partnership that was the beginning of a long association with the town in Thomas Twiford's valley.

It was a long and devious way that led him there, but the story reveals so much of the fluent creative mood of the land through which it moves that it is worth while to tell and to ponder.

It speaks first of the friendliness of the land itself. Whatever loneliness or discouragement he might know, James Cussons found comfort in the innocent diversions of woods and streams. It was a rare traveler in that Western land who was untouched by the beauty of the earth he moved upon, though few could express their feelings as well as James Cussons did. Then there was the kindness of the people who lived in that land. Over and over those wanderers from older countries were helped, not merely by their own kinfolk or neighbors, but even by petty officials whose European counterparts found in their office the excuse for arrogance. Many a man and woman found "the new and pleasant experience" of "a classless society."

For where the land was so kind the people had kindness too. The new-found goodness of the earth almost outweighed the disintegrative forces of industrial gigantism. In each new little settlement men felt themselves equal sharers in the fruits of the land they lived on. The shoemaker made boots for his neighbors, from hides that had been raised and tanned by those same neighbors. The miller made flour from wheat raised by men that he knew, and their wives turned it into daily nourishment.

But that homely self-sufficiency was being broken apart by the new industrialism that levied tribute on each local center of production. James Cussons himself was later to be caught by the new imperialism, and in the encounter he made a shrewd guess at the nature of that Manifest Destiny which was to pursue

its course into a universal blood bath that left no continent or island undismayed.

But neither James Cussons, nor Adolph Pavlish, nor Mary Halloran, nor any of their Yankee neighbors guessed at those shapes in the future. For the new imperialism still rode lightly on the currents moving West.

PART

Five



Everyman: Speculator

I



THE STORM BEGAN at nightfall. All day the steely cold had been spitted with little bursts of snow that slanted across the windows and lashed at your face when you went outside. Father came home early and stacked wood clear to the ceiling behind the stove. "If we get a blizzard we'll keep warm," he said, and Mother moved baby's crib to the corner between the stove and the cupboard.

When bedtime came, the wind leaped at the house and shook it till the little girl felt it pushing at her bed. Father made a sudden noise and ran to slam shut the door. The child raised her head and saw him drag the big table and shove it hard against the door. Then he said, "I guess the Rocky Mountains and Hudson Bay sent their biggest winds down here for a convention." Mother didn't laugh but the little girl had to giggle, though she knew she was supposed to be asleep.

The storm shook the little house all the next day, and no one ventured out into the snow that blocked every window and door. When daylight came the second day the blizzard was over, and Father dug all morning to get to the barn. When he brought a pail full of milk to the house Mother drank some of it and said she had never tasted anything so good. She would take some of it to the sick boy down the street as soon as the path was shoveled.

When the sun came up there was never such a beautiful world. Every man and boy and girl was out shoveling paths from one house to another. By supper time everybody knew they were all going sliding, and Sister could hardly eat for excitement.

A big fire was making a signal at the top of Winona Hill when she

started up with Father. She tumbled about in the snow with the other children until Father took her for a ride on the bobsled, with half a dozen other grown-ups. They went flying from the top of the hill almost to the edge of the bench. There was a scared feeling in her stomach when they started, but when they stopped she wished they could go on forever. It was like being a bird.

Then Father showed her the Northern Lights that flashed long streamers of red and blue among the stars. "They were never so bright in York State," someone said, "or in Vermont," said another, "or in Ohio." Everybody was laughing and throwing snowballs and making jokes while they waded through the drifts back to the top of the hill.

Father took her home after that. She went to sleep inside a dream of the vast soft glitter of the valley, pear-shaped and sheltering in its star-pricked snow.

II



IMPERIALISM was not new, even to the newest West. From Columbus on, the rulers of Europe thought the American land was important chiefly as it might help one European king grow richer than his rivals. A case could be made for the theory that European nationalism has owed a good deal of its intensity to the competition for 'ownership' of pieces of America.

Some of the forms of that competition take on an air of *opéra bouffe* absurdity when looked at in strict literality. Take for example LaSalle's performance when he reached the mouth of the Mississippi. He planted a cross in the virgin earth and proclaimed to the four winds of heaven that all the lands drained by that river and all its tributaries belonged to His Most Christian Majesty, Louis the Fourteenth of France. The most willing imagination is staggered at the effort to see the Sun King of Versailles exercising anything like effective ownership over that enormous piece of the earth's surface. Yet three centuries later a scholar solemnly asserted: "On the 'procès-verbal' of that transaction rests every land title in Minnesota."

Several other verbal solemnities were to intervene between LaSalle's magniloquent gesture and Thomas Twiford's claim upon the valley he had chosen. In 1762, when the French king had sound military reason to fear that the English were going to take his new-world empire away from him, he kept what he could out of English reach by signing a treaty with one of his Bourbon kins-

men ceding the land west of the Mississippi to Spain. As a consequence, when England was convinced that the game of holding the thirteen colonies was not worth the candle, the treaty recognizing American sovereignty set its western boundary at the Mississippi. The Americans had enough to worry about on the near side of the Mississippi. They were quite content to agree that America should never go west of that River.

But 'never' didn't last very long. By the time Thomas Jefferson was elected President, Daniel Boone had already found Kentucky too crowded and had gone across the River looking for elbowroom. Tennessee was already a state and its roystering frontiersmen took good long looks at the west bank of the River as they floated their flatboats full of tobacco and corn and lumber down to New Orleans. The Bishop of Louisiana was shortly lamenting the corrupting example of that "restless and ambitious temper" which had already carried those Americans "over the country almost as far as Texas."

Then the port of New Orleans was closed to American trade and the rumor went around that Napoleon was going to set up a new-world empire next door to America. That was too much for the frontiersmen. They talked of invasion, even of a western nation of their own, if the government did not act. Jefferson did act, and the result, to Jefferson's own immense surprise, was the purchase of the whole western half of the continent for a mere fifteen million dollars. On April 30, 1803, fact and ritual were brought together once more in another high ceremonial called the Louisiana Purchase.

The last act in Minnesota's classic drama of sovereignties was played out fifty years later when the Indians signed over their claim at the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux. There the conventions of history's romantic tradition were fulfilled in a Western approximation of the grand manner. After that there was only the march of the common people.

Those people wanted farms, where Europe's kings had jockeyed for continents. And since American law provided that land could be had in exchange for money, they wanted money. Before the

Revolution most of the day-to-day exchange of goods was carried on without the intervention of money. So little was needed that in 1789 there were only three banks in the whole United States. By 1815 two hundred banks had been established, most of them in the East. Western resentment against the scarcity of money, and its concentration in the East, was a large part of the reason for Andrew Jackson's election to the presidency: his policies so effectively changed the situation that by 1837 the country had 788 banks and double the amount of paper money that circulated in 1827. Western people had their way.

The only trouble was that too few people agreed on what 'really' was money, and what money was 'worth.' By the time Minnesota had a Territorial government, practically anyone could issue bank notes and circulate them just as far and as long as he could convince anyone of their 'worth.' The practice was perfectly illustrated in Minnesota itself.

One fine summer day in 1849 a man came into St. Paul with a lot of "handsomely engraved pieces of paper" appearing to be the notes of a new bank in St. Croix, some twenty miles from the capital. One way or another he induced a St. Paul man to sign his name to some of them, then took the boat for St. Louis. There he managed to pass several hundred dollars' worth of his 'money' before he was overtaken by the news that there was no bank in St. Croix. He quietly disappeared and was never heard of in Minnesota again.

But he was remembered. It was years before the legislature permitted any Minnesota bank to issue currency. Minnesota tried hard to be a sound-money state, but the pressure for local issues was very heavy. There simply was not enough money in circulation. More than once the Land Office men had to count out a literal grain-sack-full of pennies and nickels and dimes—every coin a whole family had got its fingers on through years of painful economy. The money needs of those people were very real.

But as the amount of money increased, it seemed to breed an appetite for more of itself. Increasing numbers of people came to

think of the land in a new way: they forgot it as the source of human existence, to be served with labor and devotion, and came to regard it as simply a means of getting rich. A fever of speculation swept the country. People wanted more money so they could buy more land on the outer fringes of settlement and hold it until the arrival of more people made it possible to sell the land for still more money—and start the process all over again. Plenty of actual settlers played that game, but often the man who 'made' the money never laid eyes on the land he bought and sold.

This speculative fever was greatly helped on by the development of what became almost a secondary medium of exchange, whose history reveals a good deal about the ways in which governmental policy can be manipulated to the advantage of a determined group. The new pieces of paper were called land warrants, and after 1852 they contributed notably to the mad speculation in land.

The first land warrants had been issued in 1796 to veterans of the Revolution; the next were issued to those who fought in the War of 1812. These early warrants could be exchanged for specified amounts of public land, and they could be used only by the veteran to whom they were issued. They were not transferable.

With the Mexican War, land warrants were issued as inducements for recruiting: any man who would serve as much as fourteen days was entitled to a warrant for forty acres. Tremendous amounts of land were signed away on that basis, and the war was barely over when a vast cry was raised in Congress to make those warrants transferable.

The noblest sentiments were invoked on behalf of the proposal. If land warrants could be sold, the soldier could enjoy the gratitude of his country without having to endure the hardships of the frontier. When someone suggested that this laudable purpose could be realized by having the government itself buy in the warrants at their face value, outraged patriotism refuted

the notion. Raid the public treasury in such fashion? Deprive grateful citizens of the opportunity to give their money to their country's defenders?

Nobility won the day. In 1852, Congress passed a law permitting the sale of any land warrant—for whatever price the holder could get—and requiring all land offices to accept such warrants at face value from whoever might present them.

It sounded fine, but Horace Greeley warned: "A little money has been secured to the discharged soldiers and a great deal more to claim agents, warrant speculators, brokers, etc., all at the expense of the future pioneers of the states." One of Minnesota's early papers called the law an "infamous scheme of Eastern speculators" and predicted that a mere third or fourth part of the warrants would be used for actual settlement. The moderation of those predictions is attested by a later estimate of the General Land Office that "not 1 in 600" of the warrants presented to local land offices had actually been used by a discharged soldier.

Even those figures told only part of the story. The New York warrant market, developed very promptly after the 1852 act, quoted prices ranging from sixty cents to a dollar per acre on a face value of \$1.25 per acre. Those prices represented from one to half a dozen profits over the price received by the veteran, yet actual settlers seldom paid less than the face value of the warrants. One contemporary estimated that the settlers paid four or five times as much for the warrants as the original holders got, and there is reason to suppose that estimate is low.

The heyday of speculation in land warrants came in the very years of Chatfield's beginnings, and there was probably not a trick of the trade that was not tried out in Chatfield. An 1857 account in an Iowa paper reported that Chatfield—whose total population was something less than a thousand—had three surveyors, six law offices, and twelve land agencies, all of them getting rich in the boom. Other evidence suggests that practically every merchant, doctor, innkeeper, craftsman, and plenty of farmers, not to mention mere travelers, tried his hand, as far as his re-

sources or his daring permitted, at the same game of get-rich-quick.

Chatfield's most notable player in that game was J. C. Easton, whom the town likes to remember as Minnesota's first millionaire. There seems no way to decide the accuracy of that title, but the fact is clear that Easton piled up a notable fortune. What he did, and how he did it, can be seen very clearly through examination of literally tons of his records which his son deposited with the Minnesota Historical Society, and which this study has only skimmed.

III



EASTON ARRIVED in Chatfield in mid-April, 1856. Hazel brush still grew down the middle of Main Street but the saw-mill sang its way through logs all day long and the town was filled with the bustle of building. Even though official word of the Land Office removal from Brownsville had not yet come, the people of Chatfield were sure they were going to get it soon. Easton had to pay five hundred dollars for the lot he bought at the corner of Second and Main, but in the dizzy rush of prices when the word did arrive he could have sold it for twice or three times that sum before he had finished the office he built there.

As the roads dried out, a continuous stream of travelers moved through the town. It was a poor evening that saw only one wagon-load camped out by the Big Spring, and sunset each day brought the ringing trumpet call that announced the arrival of the coach from Winona. Every newcomer was welcome, and as the summer advanced the seventy-five new houses were hardly enough to shelter all the travelers. Some nights even stores and offices had strangers sleeping on their floors.

Lucian Johnson, who had come out with Easton, his brother-in-law, was thoroughly at home in the tall talk of the future that filled the town. His drawling deliberation was disarmingly guileless but his shrewd comments on all that he saw and heard went a long way to fill in Easton's knowledge of the country and its

people. Johnson was lending out some money of his own but he apparently worked with Easton. The office of

GILBERT AND EASTON LAND AGENTS

became one of the centers for the talk of big doings ahead.

By the time the Land Office actually opened in Chatfield there was neither a settler nor a parcel of land within ten miles that Easton did not know pretty well. He poured his enormous energies into the single-minded determination to know the country so thoroughly that no one could pull the wool over his eyes. He made it a rule to lend no money except on land that could be sold for at least twice the amount of the loan. With prices leaping upward week by week such a rule was bound to assure solid profits.

He discovered another way of increasing his money. A lot of travelers carried drafts on Eastern banks but found they could make better deals with gold. Easton used the few hundred dollars of gold coins he had to cash those drafts, and charged 8 per cent on the transaction. In turn, he sent the drafts back East to pay for land warrants—a neat way of doubling the returns on his money.

But the process of getting the drafts delivered proved difficult. Direct mail could not be relied on so he sent his drafts to money-lenders in St. Paul, or lower River towns, who had more or less regular bank clearance in the East. That cost both time and money, and Easton made up his mind he would have an Eastern banking or broker connection of his own.

Lucian Johnson returned to York State early in the summer and arranged for Easton's brother to go out to Chatfield a few weeks later. On his brother's arrival, J. C. Easton went back to New York to get his wife and household goods and work out the arrangements he had decided his business needed.

It was November before he returned to Chatfield and settled his household in the little house he had bought on Winona Street, two lots south of John Luark's house. It took him a few

days to gather up the details of the weeks he had been away, but by November 25 he was ready for the formal opening of the Root River Bank, Gilbert and Easton, Proprietors.

The first ledger entry for the bank credited W. A. Gilbert with \$2,758 Cash, a New York Draft for \$91, and a land warrant for \$151, "making the am't \$3000." Easton himself was credited with \$1948.90 cash and \$137.94 already spent in behalf of the bank. The items in that expense account included his trip to New York City and return, and subscriptions to the *Chatfield Republican*, *Greeley's New York Tribune*, and *Thompson's Bank Reporter and Currency Detector*, the latter indispensable to anyone who had to decide how much various kinds of bank notes were worth. There were small sums for a table, a stove, carmine ink, and two chairs, besides thirty-five dollars for "Safe Iron."

The *Republican* that week carried the announcement that the new bank was prepared to handle "all Eastern exchange" through its New York brokers. It was the only such service available in Chatfield.

In its first four days the new bank received deposits of more than \$1,500, handled fourteen land warrants, collected \$50 in fees for such services as making sales and time entries for distant clients, and took in nearly \$500 in repayment of loans made during the summer. That first week set the pattern for a business that began small but moved briskly and with increasing profits.

Day by day Easton wrote letters to people back East who had money to invest—to neighbors, acquaintances, friends, and friends of friends. Most of them were men who had a few hundred dollars gathered through a lifetime of work and saving, and the appeal he made was to their confirmed habits of personal dealings. Some of them had a little gold coin gathered through the years. Many turned their savings into the currency of some near-by bank of issue. Still others bought up warrants from men in their own neighborhoods who had fought in the Mexican War or the War of 1812, or whose fathers had fought in the Revolution.

To all of them Easton set forth the unparalleled advantages of

Minnesota investments. The letters he wrote were solidly factual in tone but the facts with which they dealt were of dizzy incredibility.

Warrants he placed on mortgages that brought 40 per cent interest per year on the *face value* of the warrant. (Of course no one would ever pay that much to the original holder.) During early December the demand for warrants was small, for bad roads cut the Land Office business to a mere ten or twelve entries a day. But Easton assured his correspondents that the demand would pick up as soon as the first snow improved traveling conditions.

Cash was loaned chiefly in small amounts, under \$100, for periods of less than six months. Such loans brought interest at 5 per cent per month. Most of them were made to persons who bought up pre-emptors' titles and sold them again at an advance in price great enough to cover the interest and leave an additional profit. This sort of deal was the sheerest speculation; pre-emptor's title had been intended to belong to the actual settler and no one else, but thousands of men 'pre-empted' in one West after another and held their titles just long enough to sell out at the first wave of speculation. Easton loaned money for many such deals.

Larger loans, with a year to pay, brought 50 per cent interest per year. Easton wrote to an Illinois man, who had visited Chatfield the summer before, that he could use all the Illinois currency the other would send for such loans. To a pair of New York City bankers he wrote, "in fulfillment of the promise I made you," that he could take "as much currency of your Bank as you see fit to send."

To a York State friend he wrote that he was getting "more than double the rates I should have charged on the same kind of risk East." Three loans he had made for a mutual friend were bringing in 70 per cent per year. "These would be considered ruinous rates of interest in the state of New York," he commented, "but strange as you may consider it the borrower frequently makes the most on these loans."

Yet all the loans he had made during the summer were being repaid promptly, and "on the whole I find it quite as pleasant doing business here as East."

Easton made two chief types of agreement with his Eastern clients. Cash he loaned on land securities and promised the client a minimum return of 10 per cent per year; whatever was made beyond that was divided equally between the client and Easton.

Warrants he handled somewhat differently. Some he used to "enter" land "on joint account" of Easton and client. Such land was held until he could sell it at a good price, out of which the client got his guaranteed dollar an acre, and the "remaining avails" were divided between Easton and client.

Another use of warrants was to 'sell' them to actual settlers in return for a mortgage for the face value of the land warrant. Such a mortgage carried at least 40 per cent interest per year. As Easton explained to his brother, there was "no regulation on entry fees" (amounting to five dollars) and "if the preemptor is sharp he can get his land entered and have these expenses paid, but in half or more of the cases the preemptor pays them." There is no record of any pre-emptor's being "sharp" enough to get his fees paid by Easton.

The summer of 1857, Easton got all the Chatfield dealers to agree "upon a uniformity of rates" for handling warrants. A warrant for 160 acres, face value \$200, was 'worth' \$280, with a year to pay. Any part of either principal or interest left unpaid at maturity could be renewed, on the whole mortgage, with interest at 5 per cent per month until paid. Such mortgages could, often did, run on so long that the interest paid amounted to more than the original loan, yet in the end the entire parcel of land might revert to the lender.

To read the old letter books in which Easton kept copies of his letters is to marvel at the man's capacity for detail. He evidently knew scores, even hundreds of people who had a little money, and no lead was too insignificant to follow up. He appears to have put just as careful thought on the investment of a single forty-acre warrant as on the \$3,000 his brother borrowed at low

interest and sent. And that detailed concern carried through all the stages of an investment.

Easton's activity was undoubtedly an important element in making Chatfield a 'rich' community. He drew out of scattered Eastern places many sums of money that would not otherwise have found their way into the Chatfield province. And that, everyone in Chatfield would have agreed, was the best thing that could happen to the town.

He made it worth while for his clients to send their money to him. Three instances, summarized from letters written over a period of years, illustrate the way that he 'made' money for his clients.

In the spring of 1857 he made a number of loans for one client. One loan of \$100 was repaid a year later, with interest at 50 per cent. Various small loans amounting to \$330 brought 5 per cent per month and were duly paid up. A year's loan of \$200, at 40 per cent, brought \$160 interest in two years, then the mortgage was foreclosed. Five years later the farm was sold for \$1,000, after having brought in enough rent to cover all cost to the investor for Easton's handling of the affair.

Another client sent Easton a warrant whose New York price was \$96, though the client had bought it for less. Easton sold it, partly for a note that was repaid in nineteen days. (That was one of the 'quick turnovers' that characterized the period's headlong speculation.) The total returns amounted to \$136.90, of which Easton got \$8.45. The client's profit was \$32.45. As Easton wrote, "We think you can hardly complain of this although it is not anything extra as it was paid so soon the interest amounts to little."

Still a third. In July, 1857, Easton reported the repayment of four loans he had made for one client. Their total was \$640; in six months that sum brought in \$320 interest—returns at the rate of 100 per cent per year.

As success piled up, Easton's letters became increasingly peremptory in tone. He continued to be meticulously careful in reporting to his investors, but to borrowers his letters were

quite different. One instance may speak for many. An actual settler was unable to repay his loan when due because a long sickness had kept him from cutting the wood that he had expected to sell during the summer. He wrote asking an extension of time. Easton replied that he was willing not to foreclose the mortgage—which carried 40 per cent interest—if the man would come in and make out a new note, covering interest as well as the original loan, at 5 per cent per month. "All I am interested in," he wrote, "is getting the market value of my money." Parenthetically, it is interesting to note that to clients he invariably used the plural, "we"; to borrowers he wrote in the singular, "I."

The "market value" was high enough so that early in 1857 Easton hired young Henry Griswold, whom he had known in York State, as his clerk. He paid Griswold \$40 a month—more than the job was worth in the winter, he wrote, but a sum he could afford for the sake of trained help when the summer rush began. He was certain that Griswold would "always thank me for inducing you to come . . . You can do more business, make more money, in one year than in three, even in 10,000 in Lewis County."

Apparently more money was being 'made' in Chatfield than in the capital of the Territory. St. Paul's interest rates, the summer of 1857, were distinctly lower than Chatfield's. Loans running for six months or less brought $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 per cent per month in St. Paul, as against 5 per cent in Chatfield. On loans running six to twelve months the St. Paul rate was 36 per cent as against 40 to 50 per cent in Chatfield.

Chatfield rates were also higher than those of other land office towns. The Chatfield agreement on warrants eventually broke down and the best Easton could get at home for a 160-acre warrant was \$180 at 50 per cent per year. Even then he had more warrants than he could sell, so offered some to a dealer in one of the other land office towns. He would sell them for \$165 at 48 per cent, he wrote, adding, ". . . rates are lower in your district—we bring ours down to suit."

All this time he was buying all the warrants he could pay for, from his New York brokers, Le Huray & Co., of #9 Wall Street. His orders ranged from 120 to 3,000 acres at a time. When travelers were few and exchange was hard to get, Easton was caught with more warrants than he could take care of. In the middle of December, 1856, he wrote to ask the brokers for "the arrangement we talked of in New York" by which Le Huray would carry occasional overdrafts if Easton paid interest on the sum involved.

Chatfield's lack of regular express service and the difficulty of finding reliable persons with whom to send currency or gold East were described as Easton's reasons for needing the "arrangement." "We expect never to ask *large* credits," he wrote. Yet six weeks later he was asking \$2,000 credit when he had sent only \$805 from Chatfield. At the same time he was appealing urgently to his father-in-law for a \$1,000 loan to be deposited to his credit with Le Huray. He also sent back, with a great show of indignation, a half dozen warrants the broker had sent "without our authorization."

The crisis eased shortly and he ordered warrants for another 3,000 acres. But the pattern was to be repeated more than once.

About the same time Easton overdrew his account in a Chicago bank and had several of his drafts refused payment. He was furious. He insisted that his deposits were ample to cover all his drafts, and in the next sentence reminded the office that their senior member had

urged us to 'draw and then remit,' a privilege we have never used. . . . It would have been honorable for you to terminate the account if you wished, or to have paid our possible overdraft of a few hundreds, but this *odd conduct* requires explanation. . . . *We are not doing a Banking business* as you perhaps suppose on credit.

The "miserable business" of his dishonored drafts plagued him for months before he overtook all of them. When he heard that the Chicago firm had failed he wrote to a friend that it was no more than they deserved. Apparently he never guessed that the Chicago failure might be the prelude to a general collapse of

the mad speculation that was inflating land prices beyond all reason.

Indeed, no one in all the region admitted any such dreadful possibility. How could they, when a railroad was all but whistling through the countryside?

At least the campaign for a land grant had been successful. Chatfield's own special representative, "Our Jim" Cavanaugh, and the other lobbyists for the Root River and Southern Minnesota Railroad had toiled manfully through the winter, joining forces with the lobbyists of three other companies. They managed to keep sufficiently within bounds that the grant Congress finally gave them was not recalled. The four roads, all of them to run south from St. Paul, were given four million acres—one-ninth of all the arable land in Minnesota. The Root River and Southern Minnesota got approximately one million of those acres.

The great news reached Chatfield March 7, 1857, and both papers published it with the biggest headlines they could manage. The *Republican* even went so far, under the caption LOOK OUT FOR THE CARS, as to pray "God bless Franklin Pierce in consideration of his signature on this bill"—an astonishing modification of political animosities.

Every land office in southern Minnesota was closed to give the railroads time to survey and file their plats. The grant was on the basis of alternate sections to a depth of six miles on either side of the road. For land already pre-empted within that area, the railroad was allowed to take equivalent acreage at the nearest available point.

If speculation had been feverish before, it now grew fairly delirious. Until the plats were filed no one knew exactly where the railroads were to run, so any given quarter section might lie on the route of one road or the other. Rumors multiplied and men traded land with fantastic disregard of the complete lack of any real information. As Easton wrote a couple of weeks after the announcement of the grant, "The rage for speculation since the news of the railroad grant has been great. If the office had re-

mained open a few days more every 40 of those lands on the Root River, in market, would have been entered."

He insisted again and again that he was *not* a speculator. But the closing of the Land Office caught him with warrants for 6,000 acres and a badly overdrawn New York account. He played for time by telling Le Huray that "our Mr. Gilbert" was collecting funds "in Washington and elsewhere"—subtle reminder of Congressional importance—and was supposed to deposit \$3,000 by the first of April. He made much of his claim that thirty days was the least time in which he could get an answer to any inquiry East. The most casual comparison of dates in his letters makes clear the exaggeration of that claim, but he evidently hoped it would get him time enough to realize on his warrants.

The Land Office reopened April 15. A horde of "outside sharpers" descended on the town and hawked their land warrants on the street corners at prices far below New York quotations. A week of that was too much for Easton. He scraped together every dollar he could get, in gold or currency, and hurried off for the East.

Exactly what happened there is not recorded, but in less than two months he was back in Chatfield, as exuberantly confident as ever, to judge from his letters. He had stopped at a land sale in Iowa and bought up thousands of acres for the firm. For the time being warrants were a drug on the Chatfield market but money was in enormous demand. Wild lands were selling for four or five times the government price. The sky was the limit on the profits a shrewd trader could take. "Pack up your duds," he wrote one old friend, "and be sure to bring plenty of rocks."

There were doings in St. Paul as well. A special session of the legislature had been called to accept the Congressional grant, and strange rumors of bribery came out of the capital. Byron Kilbourne was said to be boasting that the charter for the Root River was cut exactly to his measure. He was the 'boss' of the Wisconsin road with which the Root River road was to connect at La Crosse. The story was that he had given half a million dollars' worth of railroad bonds to the legislators to get what he wanted.

There was plenty of talk and newspaper writing about it. The *Winona Argus* stormed that the Root River and Southern Minnesota was being sold out to "reckless foreign sharpers" whose sole purpose was to build up Wisconsin at the expense of Minnesota. The *Chatfield Republican* answered that the *Argus* was simply a mouthpiece for the Transit Railroad, and the Transit was jealous of the speed of the Root River's development.

Years later one witness to that year's legislative doings set it down as his considered judgment that no state was ever blessed with "a more shamelessly avaricious" set of legislators than Minnesota had in 1857. There must have been plenty of people who knew the facts behind that judgment. Yet no one seemed more shocked than amused by the knowledge. After all, the 'big bugs' were building the railroads, and they had to 'get along' while they did it. Minnesota was big enough to spare a million one way or another, whether in acres or in dollars. Anyway, how many *was* a million? Nobody could count that far, so mostly they just forgot about it.

Then a meeting of the Root River and Southern Minnesota stockholders was held, and the Transit charges came perilously near the proof.

All the old directors resigned. Of the eighteen new directors only three were from the Root River region where the whole project had originated, and Beecher Gere was the only *Chatfield* man among them. Ten of the directors were Wisconsin men. Holley, editor of the *Republican*, lost his job as chief engineer of the road.

When he reported the reorganization he added certain rumors that were circulating about the affair. One claimed that the original directors had been bought out by the Wisconsin interests. Another had it that the resignations were forced by the threat that the Wisconsin men would build their road to Winona instead of La Crosse unless they were given control of the Root River road. . . . A week later the *Republican* published the report that "the city of Milwaukee" was supposed to have put up a million dollars in railroad stock to get control of the Root

River and Southern Minnesota. The *Republican* demanded that the directors be made to "tell *who got the million*"—the Territory, the stockholders, or the officers.

But no answer was forthcoming. The *Democrat* praised the new organization as Chatfield's best assurance for the speedy completion of its railroad. All the *Republican's* talk of bribery it dismissed as the mere sour-grapes babbling of "the little, kicked-out engineer," who was editor of the *Republican*. The offensive phrase was repeated week after week.

Holley retorted in furious kind. All the corruption of the wicked Democrats was clear in the evil doings of the Wisconsin "interests," he thundered. The argument generated more heat than light.

Oddly enough, after a few weeks the *Republican* shifted into rather lame hopes that all would yet be well. Perhaps Holley was given to understand how right the *Democrat* was in threatening that unfriendly criticism was a sure way to keep the railroad from building to Chatfield. Whatever the reason, the *Republican* shortly gave up its effort to find out "what in thunder has happened."

But the most bitterly bewildered of Chatfield's railroad men was Thomas Twiford. He had gone to the June meeting of the directors but the whole affair moved in dimensions with which he could not grapple. There was money in the air, he sensed, big money, but who had it, or who was getting it, or what it was being given for, somehow eluded his grasp.

Only one thing was clear to him—that Byron Kilbourne was running the show. His round face, with the thin mobile mouth framed in muttonchop whiskers, touched Thomas Twiford with something he would have called fear if he had understood how a man could be afraid of a city slicker who hadn't a gun and was too soft to fight with his fists.

Kilbourne's words were soft, too, but somehow they sounded so loud that Thomas Twiford found himself no longer a part of the railroad he had been one of the first to conceive. Smarting under these strange chances, Thomas Twiford was touched with

a hunger for far and silent places, beyond all this talking . . . out West, where a man could go it alone.

But J. C. Easton suffered none of Twiford's frustrations. As far as his books show, he had no stake in the railroad. He was having the time of his life and making more money than he had ever dreamed of. How much money it is impossible to estimate, for his system of bookkeeping does not yield reliable returns to twentieth-century analysis. Moreover, his letters hint now and again at "tall transactions" deliberately omitted from the records he kept in the semi-publicity of his bank.

Gilbert was still a partner and apparently visited Chatfield late that summer, but the business was almost wholly under Easton's management. When a Bohemian or Norwegian or Yankee farmer trudged the ten or twenty miles from his farm to count out on Easton's counter the precious sack of coins that would redeem the mortgage on his land, Easton's were the hands that most often raked the coins into the till and wrote the liberating receipt.

But Easton seldom remembered that other part of the ritual, whose observance helped give I. F. O'Ferrall, for instance, a place in the local legend so different from Easton's. Easton never took his customer into the nearest saloon for the glass of beer or the 'snort' of whiskey that would have re-established the human bond, strained by the moneylending relationship. That it was not prohibitionist sentiment that deterred him, his occasional orders for fine liquors would suggest.

Once in a while Henry Griswold signaled such a farmer to hang around till the bank closed, then bought him the drink the farmer felt was his due. If Easton noticed the implied criticism it did not trouble him. His clerk tended to business and was a good listener when Easton felt an expansive need for talking. Besides, Griswold was piling up some tidy investments of his own under Easton's advice, and he was smart enough to know which side his bread was buttered on.

Anyhow, Easton was too busy to fret himself with what anyone thought of his manners. Though land investments continued

his primary concern, a host of other affairs filled his days and his ledgers. He wrote fire insurance for the Aetna Company of Cincinnati, whom he had represented in Lowville, and he had sub-agents working for him in "several thriving towns around." To one such agent he wrote warning him not to insure at too high a figure, "particularly in this country where men are low in morals and might be tempted to burn their property for the income."

He also collected bills for Eastern creditors and transmitted money between the East and the West. By 1859, he had established banking connections not only in New York and Chicago but in Milwaukee, St. Louis, Memphis, and half a dozen other growing cities.

Bankers had not then developed a nation-wide clearing system. It was not yet possible for a man to write his personal check and have it accepted as money half across the continent. Easton's business of transferring money between East and West was part of the process by which the expanding capitalist economy made banking papers acceptable everywhere.

Of course Easton made his commission on those bank transactions. It ranged from $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent to 8 per cent according to the demand of the moment. When the money market grew tight and the rate of interest on loans fell to a mere 36 per cent the summer of 1857, he was not alarmed. "We have no doubt but the demand for money will be as brisk as ever in the autumn," he wrote to one after another of his Eastern clients.

Then on August 24 the Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Company closed its doors, forcing several other large financial houses of New York to close. The word reached St. Paul, by telegram and river packet, four days later, and within a week the whole Territory felt the effects. The buying and selling of land came to a dead stop, and payments on notes and mortgages were almost equally affected. Gold and Eastern exchange almost disappeared from circulation. St. Paul banks stopped paying out coin of every kind, shipping East all they could gather to cover their threatened accounts.

Easton was caught with the rest. On August 24, the date of the general collapse, Le Huray wrote him that his firm's account was seriously overdrawn. Easton answered that letter on September 2—a curious commentary on his April claim that it took thirty days for a letter from Chatfield to receive a reply from New York.

His letter is a study in the balance between the arrogance of success and the obsequious truckling of threatened failure. Easton wrote that his Washington partner had assured him that Le Huray's account would

be arranged within a few days. We have no doubt but it will have been done before this reaches you. But whether it is or not we shall *certainly* do so from here within 10 or 15 days. We think that when remittances reach you which we have made within a few days, there will not be quite so large a lot against us as you mention, [Easton & Standring, an Iowa firm in which J. C. Easton's brother was a partner, were to send \$2000 to the Gilbert and Easton account.] and the balance *will* come from here immediately. In the meantime do not give yourselves the least uneasiness. Help us out this time and charge us all the *interest* and *inconvenience* to you. We certainly should not have allowed this to occur but upon the certainty, as we wrote you, that our Mr. G. would do the needful for you, on his arrival East. You sent us 6-160's that we did not order. This gave us rather larger stock of warrants for the time being than we have needed, and helped to over-draw our acct. We did not return them as we thought they would be needed, but certainly would have done so if we had supposed that our account was getting so far behind hand. If Mr. G. does anything for you, so much the better. Whether he does or not you can rely upon our doing it from here in the time specified and we think sooner. And as soon as our acct. is made good please send us 2 @ 3000 acres more of Land Warrants as we shall be getting pretty low—do not send them however until our acct. is all right for it. We gave a Chatfield merchant a \$2000 draft on you day before yesterday but he promised not to present it till he leaves the city. We *sincerely* hope you will not throw out our drafts for a short time . . . when we shall be all right and *ahead* of you and be assured we shall not allow this to again occur at least without your official permission.

The next day Easton wrote again, answering Le Huray's "favor of the 26th," repeating his assurances to make the account good from Chatfield "within 10 @ 15 days" and ending, "Bear with us a little longer and all *will be right*."

Easton wrote no more such letters at that time; by September seventh he had left for New York. That same day his clerk wrote three letters to Le Huray. The first transmitted \$750 in New York exchange and promised to "send \$2500 to \$3000 currency and gold tomorrow." The second reported that he had already shipped by express "\$2500 American Gold and \$2999.50 Eastern Bank Notes." The third enclosed a Pennsylvania bank draft for \$199.

One would give much for a glimpse of the precise means by which those sums were collected, for Minnesota was drained of its monetary resources with amazing speed after the Eastern crash. But nowhere did Easton record those details, nor leave a hint of the size of the balance he owed his broker. That can only be guessed by the fact that the seven thousand dollars Griswold sent Le Huray in the two months of Easton's absence were evidently not enough to cover the situation.

That it was eventually dealt with, and successfully, can be glimpsed in the cool assurance of a letter written by Griswold on December seventh. The Chatfield firm needed no more warrants for the present, he informed Le Huray, though they might in the spring, "and possibly on credit. If so we shall be happy to avail ourselves of the proposal you make to furnish us on time."

The necessity for currying favor was past and Easton was not slow to assert his independence. By June, 1858, he wrote Le Huray: "I wish you would be a little more punctual in sending statements of my account on the 1st of each month." A little later he found Le Huray's "*ill-natured duns . . . neither pleasant or satisfactory to me*." The same letter inquired sharply how they came to send warrants "@ 85, when the New York *Evangelist* quotes them at 80 that same day." The next week he demanded interest on his balance.

Somewhat later, Le Huray himself was in difficulties. A Winona banker sent Easton his first word of the broker's closing.

Easton replied that he expected to be "out not more than \$500," but would put his next New York account "with some bank. I have trusted brokers long enough. . . ."

The same day he wrote Le Huray asking why they had not paid the draft returned to him by the Winona bank: "be good enough to frankly give me the reason of your suspicions or whatever is the reason of not cashing my draft." Four days later, Easton replied to Le Huray's announcement of closing with a strong accent of surprise at the "very unexpected news to me and a source of regret to me as I had counted on a continuance with your house perhaps for years." He asserted his "fullest confidence" in Le Huray and declared "*I would rather have sacrificed a larger amount than to have had your house suspended. . . . I have done business with you ever since I have been in the West.*"

This disdainful indifference of Easton's to any need for consistency between his statements to a given person and those about the same person grew more evident with the years. The tendency is illustrated in the letters concerned with the breaking up of his partnership with Gilbert.

The actual break occurred when Gilbert went to Chatfield after Congress adjourned in April, 1858, so there is no record of its details in Easton's letter books. However, he wrote a long series of letters to his clients announcing that the firm had been dissolved on May 3, "by mutual consent," and that Easton would thereafter carry on the business by himself.

Not all the differences were resolved when the partnership was ended. In July, Easton wrote to Gilbert:

Several of your recent letters to me have been *abusive* without any cause whatever. If you have determined to follow up this course in all your future correspondence . . . it will receive no notice from me. On the other hand if you are disposed to trust me . . . I shall . . . endeavor to act fairly and on the with everything . . . in which you are interested.

It is interesting to note his invocation of the Masonic to confirm statements that his correspondent might incline to question.

A few days later he wrote that he did not see how Gilbert could with any reason ask me to advance you on the strength of the deposits assumed by me at the dissolution . . . Besides the inconsistency of your requests I am in no shape to advance a single dollar . . . I have all I can swing at present—running just as close to the weather as I dare. Yet within a week he was writing to a client from whom he hoped for fresh investments:

Since dissolving partnership I have repaired my office, attached a wood shed and nearly doubled the value of the property . . . I was never so well satisfied or . . . making so much money as I am at present.

“Times were rather tight” and collections were difficult but Easton got “a part if possible and additional security, our object being not to oppress but to keep abundantly secured.” To one of his heaviest investors he admitted (in the royal plural, after the dissolution of partnership) that “we may not be able to collect your notes when due but do not know of any in which your security is not ample if the times ease up within a reasonable time. If some of the land should come into your hands I think the cost to you so low it will do to keep.”

As the months passed “times” continued “extremely dull,” whole weeks passing without a single entry in the Land Office. He was “getting a great deal of land on securities I am obliged to take and consequently am anxious to sell.” In March he wrote a client that

property is now about as low as it can ever possibly get here. . . . I would guess that your securities would not exceed 4 @ 6 shillings on the acre . . . a good share of it improved land. . . . It is a good time to loan now as there is a large demand—should you send more funds they will not lie idle long.

In the closing months of 1857 and on through most of 1860 the *Republican* carried long lists of foreclosure notices, frequently six columns, the equivalent of a full page, in one issue. A considerable number of them were Easton's.

One box of his papers, including a series of mortgages drawn

between June, 1857, and the end of 1861, gives suggestive clues to his dealings. Of the 58 mortgages, 19 were paid in full and 39 were foreclosed. A total of 2,540 acres was covered by the mortgages repaid, with an average loan of \$1.32 per acre; the loans on the 4,236 acres foreclosed averaged \$1.51 per acre. It is not to be assumed that the foreclosures represented complete losses, even of the original investments, for they had paid heavy interest, in some cases for two or three years, before foreclosure. Several pieces of land accrued to the lender after he had collected interest equivalent to the entire principal. In 1869, Easton himself paid taxes on 6,000 acres in Fillmore County alone.

His letters betray no tendency to modify his transactions by any considerations outside "the market value" of his money. One single time he remarked that one of his clients was "a little hard" on "the ignorant Norwegian" to whom he had made a loan.

This Aaron Oleson came into Easton's office one day in September, 1858, with \$237.50 to pay his note, but he refused to turn over the money until the mortgage was actually put into his hands. Since the Eastern client held the mortgage, some six weeks passed before the papers were properly 'satisfied.' The mortgage holder insisted that \$13.70 of additional interest must be paid for that six weeks. Oleson refused and two months more were involved in correspondence, for which the lender demanded still further interest. Thereupon Oleson hired a lawyer—but he eventually paid the whole sum demanded.

In another case Easton wrote his client that he had told the borrower his note carried a certain penalty clause. Easton added: If I am right, send me a strong statement; if I am wrong, you need not mention the matter. He will pay the penalty, I think.

Then there was the case of one Kelly, who borrowed \$139 in April, 1859, giving his note for \$182—which included interest for one year. At the end of that year Kelly came in with \$43 and wanted to pay it as interest and let the note run for another year. Easton consented to "receive the amount not as interest but as consideration for forbearance and the extension"—and Kelly had

to pay 4 per cent per month on the entire \$182 until he repaid it.

By these and similar means Easton continued to 'make' money even through the depths of the hard times. Once, to be sure, he himself was well taken in when a stranger sold him a lot of ginseng roots at prices far above the market. Getting rid of "the confounded stuff" cost Easton a pretty penny.

His business fell off so much that there was not enough work in his office to keep two people busy. So he managed to have his clerk, Henry Griswold, elected county treasurer. There were advantages in having a friend in that office. From January, 1859, to late in 1860, Easton did all his own work—even to making fires and sweeping out the office. He collected bills and foreclosed mortgages for Eastern creditors. At least one bankrupt merchant's stock he took over and resold as advantage offered; others he auctioned off—and on one occasion reported gleefully that "the dry peaches were wholly worthless but brought 5 cents per pound."

He got into trouble with his new brokers, Van Valkenburgh, Slawson & Co. Despite his hard words about brokers, at the time of Le Huray's failure, he had not put his New York account with a bank. His dealings with the new firm grew more and more involved. By the spring of 1860 his account there was so badly overdrawn that an "attachment of funds" was served against it.

Easton resorted to every means of protection, short of going to New York. He begged Van Valkenburgh not to let his drafts go to protest. He offered to pay "any amt. of *interest you like on the overdrafts.*" He wrote to an Eastern friend: "I beg of you to let me have even \$100 in gold." He appealed to Beecher Gere, then in the legislature at St. Paul:

. . . some things have occurred during the last 4 weeks rendering it necessary for me to use 3 @ \$4000 *cash* which I had not anticipated . . . I have to call on all my *reliable friends* to make up for the emergency. This will on the be all I need explain to you to know you appreciate *my fix*. . . your father is writing to tell you the sincerity of my case.

But Gere's answer was "a serious disappointment."

There came a day when "an officer from St. Paul" arrived in

Chatfield to serve Easton with a summons to make good on one of his dishonored papers. That cost him \$18.39 besides the face of the paper—"and that was less than his legal demand," Easton wrote indignantly to the New York office. "A *nice* credit your protests are giving me."

A Milwaukee firm wrote him about one of his drafts they had been unable to cash. Easton replied:

. . . It will be paid, whether the *miserable house* who have kept my acct. do so or not. . . . If Van Valkenburgh Slawson & Co. have failed I will remit via Chicago or currency. . . .

That letter rings oddly against other letters Easton wrote within the month concerned with frantic efforts to cover his account with Van Valkenburgh's office.

Eventually he did clear the account, and closed it out. His choice of another New York connection was made in characteristically ambiguous fashion. After correspondence with two different banks he wrote a third asking for "terms and regulations" for an account with "an average balance of \$2,000." Four days later, when he knew he could not possibly have had a reply from New York, he sent that bank \$2,200

. . . in the absence of your advice on keeping my acct. Presume you will do so temporarily . . .

His monthly balance with that bank for the following nine months averaged slightly higher than \$700. It never was greater than \$1,000, and reached that point only twice in nine months.

But from that time on Easton never again ran so close to the wind that he had to cajole an officer of the law into reducing his collection of fees. His apprenticeship was completed by 1861.

One of his accomplishments in that five years can be measured only indirectly. Two or three references to attending Republican meetings occur in his letters, and during the Lincoln campaign he several times mentioned "the great Republican heart of Fillmore County." But the place he held in party councils can hardly be judged from his letters of those earliest years. Something of

its importance can be guessed from his getting Griswold elected to county office. The *Democrat* fulminated: "We know who is behind this nomination and in what picayune note shaver's shop the county funds will be kept if Griswold is elected." (Later it quoted Griswold as saying he expected to clear \$3,000 his first year in office; "the legal emoluments are only \$1,000.")

Easton's influence in the young Republican party was more clearly apparent when the Land Office was ordered, in 1861, to move from Chatfield to Winnebago City. That town was little more than a piece of prairie with a couple of buildings on it. But every foot of it belonged to Easton. He wrote to one of his friends: ". . . for once I am in luck."

Most of the summer of 1861 Easton spent in Winnebago, making the most of his "luck." From that time on he spent rather less time in Chatfield than out of it, though till the mid-eighties his family continued to live there, and he called Chatfield his home.

He had a son, born not quite two years after the move to Chatfield. His letters during the months before and just after the child's birth carried frequent reports of his wife's health and then of his own vast pride in his son. A few years later, when his brother and Mrs. Easton's sister both died, the Chatfield Eastons adopted the boy and girl born of that marriage. The three children grew up together without distinction between 'own' and 'adopted.'

Easton always maintained a lively sense of family loyalties. When his father-in-law, 'Uncle Abner' Johnson, died, some years after the Civil War, Easton promptly arranged for his wife's twin sisters to make their home in Chatfield. His letters at that time were full of careful thought for the comfort of the two young girls. One of the innumerable 'additions' to his house was built to make room for them. They were part of the Easton household until their marriages—Abby's to a clergyman from the East, Anna's to G. H. Haven, of Chatfield.

Yet there was one direful passage when Easton, deep in a cut-throat fight for the wheat markets of the state, refused to go to his mother, who had begged him to come in her serious ill-

ness. His letter to his brother, who had written for the mother, said: “. . . the demands of my business are just now so great that it is impossible for me to leave. My comfort must be in knowing that you are giving our mother every care.” He enclosed ten dollars and urged his brother to “call on me freely if anything more is required.”

As the years went on his letters became more and more the autocratic delivery of orders to inferiors. The old note of equal comradeship, so warm in his letters to Sam Johnson and almost equally appealing to various friends in his first Chatfield months, entirely disappeared. He was hotly Republican in the party's early years, and found time later to push his candidates for various appointments. (Most of them were successful.) But his letters sounded more and more the cry of the lone wolf.

Other evidence supports that impression. Many of his neighbors carried their share of the necessary political labors of their community. They served on the village council and the school board, did the thousand little jobs that helped to build the town. But not Easton. He had, it appears, no time for the kind of immediate civic responsibility in which his country's best traditions had been fostered.

It is too easy simply to damn such a man for 'selfishness.' It is harder to inquire why that tradition permitted a man of Easton's uncommon powers to believe that he could go his way along and take, from the earth and from other human beings, whatever his cunning and his force could command.

In a very real sense, Easton was a victim of the culture in which he was bred. His remarkable energies found no better channel for their expenditure than the ruthless process of accumulating wealth.

He was not the only such man, even in Chatfield. At least a dozen others in the community piled up exceptional amounts of wealth by the very same methods that Easton used. And they were remembered in the same terms of fear and dislike.

There were fortunate exceptions to that pattern. The town could not have nourished the life it did nourish had it not in-

cluded men and women with a sense of their own responsibilities for "life in the concrete, in regions and cities and villages, in wheatland and cornland." Yet even their vision was limited. They failed, in a hundred years, to create a society in which even one creative artist, one genuine maker, could grow strong enough to transmute the beauty of the valley into cultural forms as satisfying as the forms of the landscape.

Easton himself never grew altogether insensible to the beauty of the land. The Chatfield farm that he kept to the end of his life was a place of real solace for him. He made it into a model homestead, though he never lived on it. In the mid-seventies he begged an old York State friend to take it in charge. To that friend he wrote:

You will have the full run of the place yourself. All I ask is that you let me come out sometimes and putter around and look at the stock.

The old friend did not take it, and no other letter of Easton's comes so near to speaking of his hunger for some deeper tie with the land than he found in his financial success.

It is hard to believe that he was wholly unaware of the way men thought of him. A generation after his death the legend remained that there wasn't a man in Chatfield, outside his own family connections, who would call J. C. Easton a friend.

PART

Six



The Law Made Visible

I



NIGHT FELL QUICKLY in November. The man working in the clearing pushed back the darkness a little way by setting fire to a pile of brush as the last sullen red stained the sky. No use to waste good daylight on brush-burning. Besides, the fire would keep his wife company while he went after the cows.

He tucked the gnarly butts deeper into the flames and laid his axe and cant hook in the shelter of a pile of logs before he looked up the slope toward the little house, so nearly swallowed in the night. A point of light starred the darkness. She had set a candle in the window. He stepped beyond the circle of the fire's snap and crackle and stood for a moment listening.

He heard the bark of a fox, the faraway hoot of an owl above the dry whisper of wind. But no tinkle of a cow bell. Drat the pesky critters! They'd grazed till midafternoon within earshot: he should have turned them back when he heard them splash through the river, but he'd grudged the time from his felling. There was no help but to go after them.

The river grew louder in his ears and his feet felt out the uneven line of safety across the ford. Some day there'd be a bridge over that river, and the quicker the better. Every traveler from the south had to cross the river there, and some of them had a bad time of it. He'd taken his ox team and pulled out more than one.

The man moved with a canny Vermonter's ease wrought deep in his sinews through a boyhood of walking through Greeley's Gore at every hour of the year.

At the top of the bluff he listened again and heard, far across the

valley, a faint tinkle of metal on metal. The cows had got clear over on Bear Creek. He had a good two miles to go. He'd be late for supper if he didn't hurry.

His hands tightened about the cudgel he carried. He'd make a farm out here that would make her folks' place in Vermont look like a berry patch. The quarter section he had now was only a beginning: he'd have another, and another, and another. . . . A man could own half as much as the state of Vermont out here and never make a dent in Minnesota's acres. He'd be one of the county commissioners, maybe even help make the laws up in the capital. It was a new country and one man was as good as another if he showed himself right.

He heard a cow bell close at hand and called softly, "Soo-boss, come boss." The cattle thrashed obediently through the brush toward him.

He ran a hand over old Sukie's invisible flank and thought, "It's that dark a black cow looks white!"

"Come boss," he said again and turned the two cows and the yearling bull back toward the river.

He'd have a pasture fenced in for them come spring and buy another two or three fresh heifers. The butter she made brought the best price on the market. If there was too much work for her to do alone he'd get her a hired girl.

"Soo-boss," he called, and smacked a hearty hand against the yearling's flank to hurry them home.

The fire was a beacon as they came to the river's edge, and while the cows picked their way through the ford he started figuring in his head how a bridge could be built at that place. A plan would be a help convincing the rest of the commissioners when he got elected.

II



THERE OUGHT to be a law!

Americans have said that so often they laugh a little when they say it, especially since Prohibition rubbed some of the bloom off their innocent faith in the power of 'the law.' Yet most Americans still agree to the set of symbols that make up the law, and they generally think the most important job of those symbols is to protect the 'rights' of the 'people.'

Such an idea is really quite new, as world history goes. It certainly had little standing in the European countries from which America got its early settlers. Even the small farmers and shopkeepers who left Old England for New hardly went that far. They were good faithful obeyers of the rules set up for them by their religious leaders.

But something began to change in the long hard years of building a civilization in the wilderness. By the time people began to think of themselves as 'Americans' they had come to believe that the laws they made for themselves were more important than the laws handed down by the king—or even those that were said to have come from the Almighty. It was a bold idea to begin weaving into the web of human relations.

By the time Minnesota was settled, the pattern was so well fixed that the chief Western questions about the law were questions of when, and under what leadership, its forms should be established. Its operations were taken for granted, though

different people valued it for different reasons, and political parties grew out of conflicting notions of what interests the law should protect. The trick, for political leadership, was to bring together a sufficient number of divergent interests, and a good resounding slogan was recognized as one of the most effective instruments for such rallying of the hosts. It did not matter too much if the structure of the slogan was a good deal different from the structure of the realities it was supposed to represent. If a political party had enough slogans that people liked, it would probably win the election.

So in Chatfield's early years the leaders of the new Republican party made the most of certain slogans that fitted their purposes.

"Protect our infant industries" was more effective in the East than in the West. It took a while to convince Western people that they were better off with a high tariff. As late as 1883 Chatfield's own Congressman, Milo White, elected as a Republican, voted for a reduction of tariff rates.

"Sound money" had a good deal more appeal for Western voters in the decade before the Civil War. Times had changed since the West sent Andrew Jackson to the White House to break the 'money power' of the East. Now it had got so bad, the people said to each other, that a man never knew whether the money in his jeans would buy a year's supply of clothes for his family, or only a pinch of snuff, by the time he'd walked across the street from the bank to the store. They began to think the Republicans were right when they said all currency should be issued by the United States Treasury.

"Vote yourself a farm" was the most popular slogan, both East and West. The Government had millions of acres, the argument ran; anyone that wanted to farm ought to be able to get himself a quarter section without cost or trouble. Farmers and factory workers agreed about that, and it had bobbed up in Congress time and again for thirty years or more, though probably few recognized the proposal as a form of agrarianism that had been used since Roman days to quiet the unrest of the plebs.

It took some time for America's newly powerful industrialists

to see that 'free land' was a way to stop the dangerous radicalism of their workers. They feared at first that they would lose their 'hands' if land were too easily accessible. But laborers grew more and more demanding; they had the effrontery to talk of cutting the fourteen-hour working day to a paltry ten hours, and muttered that a man should be paid enough that his wife and children would not have to work. The worst of it was that those men could vote in the public elections; their clamor for free schools and other nonsense was heading the country straight for the hell of socialism.

Then someone got the idea that the 'radicals' could be silenced by offering them free land in the West, and filling their places in the factories with workers from foreign countries. Foreigners could not vote. . . . It was a handsome scheme all the way around. So the industrialists agreed with the Westerners, and the Republicans came into power.

As for the issue of slavery—the Republicans had no slogan on that in the beginning. A few 'fanatics' like Garrison tried to make emancipation the new party's central issue, but the party managers avoided it for a long time.

Minnesota had its own crusader on that subject. Jane Grey Swisshelm ran a paper in St. Cloud (some distance north of St. Paul) with the avowed purpose of convincing Minnesota that slavery must be abolished. Besides editing her paper she lectured all over the Territory. When she came to Chatfield most of her hearers agreed with the *Republican* that Mrs. Swisshelm was "some distance ahead of us on the slavery question."

Yet they felt uneasy when they thought about the Negroes. It had been right, they agreed, for the Land Office men to take back the claim papers of that Negro who tried to trick them into thinking he was white; he only wanted a little money from the sharpers. But if he had settled down and farmed it now, some said. . . .

There was Black Henry Barr, whose folks had been freed before he was born, back in Ohio. His wife came from Canada, and they were as decent hard-working a pair as you'd find. When you

thought about them it didn't seem right that anyone could make slaves out of them just because their skins were a little darker than most. And not so much darker, at that. Henry must have had a white grandfather at least, maybe a white father.

When the Dred Scott decision was announced—that slaveholders could take their human chattels into every part of the Union, and the Federal government had no right to exclude slavery from any part of its domain—the whole matter began to look different. The decision meant that slavery could be brought into Minnesota. Indeed, it was in Minnesota that Dred Scott had lived for a time as a free man. Though he scarcely existed as a living individual to the thoughts of Minnesota people, his name became an oriflamme against a half-understood fear.

What would happen if the Southerners could take their slaves wherever they went? In Chatfield they spoke of John Bennett, who had come from Mississippi to the Land Office. What if he had brought slaves with him? He hired three or four people all the time, and many a smart young couple got a start for a farm of their own, working for Bennett. Where would a poor man get his chance if slaves were brought into the region?

These were some of the questions men asked each other as they crunched down the cheese and crackers the merchants set out for their customers.

Those same thoughts helped on the growth of the new-fledged Republican party. Its Minnesota branch was organized the summer of 1855, and the following year it elected a majority of the lower house of the legislature. Democrats were incredulous. Minnesota offices had always belonged to them and always would. . . .

Yet both parties united to ask Congress to pass an act permitting Minnesotans to establish a full-fledged state government. The House passed such an act readily, but the Senate debated long: an additional state would threaten the "equilibrium of the Senate." The bill was finally passed, but twenty-two Southern senators voted against it.

Minnesota's constitutional convention, called after that Con-

gressional action, was a fantastic affair. A leading Democratic paper proclaimed that "the only issue" was "White Supremacy *versus* Nigger Equality." But the Republicans denied it. The Democrats said they won the election, and the Republicans denied that, too. So *two* conventions met, in two different St. Paul buildings. That turned out to be a pretty good idea, because the two parties did not have to spend so much time outtalking each other. Some Republican moved that Negroes be allowed to vote—there were not more than a hundred in Minnesota—but the rest of the Republicans voted the idea down. That was about the only mention of the "only issue."

The two conventions finally got together on a constitution. The really hard-fought battle was over the boundaries of the new state. Most of the Republicans came from southern Minnesota, and they wanted a strictly agricultural state, extending west to the Missouri River and cutting off everything north of St. Paul. The "Moccasin Democrats," whose interests for many years had lain in the fur trade of the northern region, opposed such a division; they wanted the present boundaries, which were finally approved by a margin of only three votes. Holley, Chatfield's Republican editor, was a leader in the fight for the westward extension and was greatly disgusted by the inclusion of the area holding the then-unguessed wealth of the iron range. He thought it was nothing but a place for Indians to skulk in.

The constitution was submitted to the voters in October, 1858, along with a slate of candidates for both parties. Fillmore County went Republican, but the Democrats got the governorship, the Congressional representatives, and a majority in the state legislature. The constitution was almost unanimously approved, and all that remained was for Congress to accept the new state.

But Congress was in no hurry. For six months, the elected governor said, Minnesota hung like Mohammed's coffin midway between heaven and earth. The real reason for the delay was blurted out by one of the Southern senators: "Mark my

words: if you do it, another slave state will never be formed out of the territories of this Union."

What finally jogged the Senate into action was the broad hint that if this constitution and set of representatives were not approved, a new election would be even less favorable to the Democrats. Statehood could not be permanently denied to Minnesota, and in six months the Republicans there had grown so strong that they would have welcomed a new deal of the political cards. So Minnesota was formally admitted to the Union on May 12, 1858.

All these things were turned over and over in the slow talk that went on wherever men came together. The issues were made articulate at national and state levels of discussion, but the ultimate political decisions were shaped, however uncertainly, in every crossroads meeting, in every gathering in store and saloon and office.

So high were the stakes in those fateful years before the Civil War that every available resource of pageantry and ritual was called into play. Much more than political alignments was involved, and the people seem to have sensed it. All the ways of their living were being changed by the decision which was to make industrialism the dominant power of the nation. The torchlight parades and the gusty drama of Wide Awakes parading for Lincoln created allegiances that lasted well beyond their flaring hour. Seventy years later, a woman who as a child had seen those torches flare in Chatfield streets remembered with passion that she "never could abide the very name of a Democrat."

III



CHATFIELD had plenty of partisan drama in the decade that saw the shift of American power from agricultural to industrial control. But in shaping the legal framework for its own local identity it largely ignored national partisan issues.

A United States marshal came in with the Land Office, but his duties took him far beyond the limits of Mr. Twiford's town. In the first four years of that town's existence the majesty of local law rested in the hands of a justice of the peace who had been given his commission before Chatfield had even been thought of. Squire Gere carried on the long back-East tradition of the farmer or artisan who read his law books, and judged his neighbors' affairs, in the homely light of sound neighborhood knowledge. In his log house on Winona Street he "made boots for the bootless," according to an early diarist, "and dealt out justice to those affected."

When the Squire's son, Beecher Gere, was elected to the legislature in 1856 he moved to get a village charter for the valley town, and on April 1, 1857, Chatfield's first village election was held. The 131 votes cast in that election were so narrowly divided that no partisan victory could be claimed.

The president of the village council, and the recorder were Democrats; the three village trustees were sound Republicans. One of the first official acts of the council was to direct the recorder to "furnish the proceedings of Council to the Editor

of the Republican newspaper in Chatfield." Then that partisanship was balanced by the appointment of I. F. O'Ferrall, loyal Democrat, as village treasurer. Certainly no partisan bias can be detected in the seventeen ordinances that council adopted and published within ten days of the election.

Their provisions indicate most of the areas in which Chatfield has ever felt it necessary to invoke the support of the law for its corporate housekeeping. First came the provisions for protection from fire. "The occupant of any house or building" was required to provide himself with "Two Buckets and a ladder of sufficient length to go upon the roof." Fire Wardens were appointed to examine all buildings and see "whether the stoves and stove pipes, flues are in a safe condition, and if necessary to have them made so." Ashes were not to be kept "in wooden vessels"; gunpowder must be stored in metal canisters and no more than 25 pounds could be kept in any building.

The second group of ordinances set up a series of license fees—the only source of revenue the Charter allowed the village. Selling liquor "for consumption on the place" required a license costing fifty dollars. Licenses costing from five to twenty-five dollars, at Council's discretion, were required for the exhibition of "natural or artificial curiosities, caravans, circuses, Theatrical Performances or public shows." Dog licenses were set at one dollar a year, but that provision outraged so many people it was revoked within a few weeks.

All "merchants, traders, Hotel Keepers" were required to pay annual fees fixed by Council; they ranged from \$5.00 to \$50. In return the local businessmen were protected by prohibiting all "Itinerant merchants, hawkers, or peddlers" from plying their trade within the village limits, on penalty of fines that might run as high as \$100, at Council's discretion.

The *Republican* scoffed at the license system: "We might as well put up a board fence around the village and charge a fee of one to five dollars to get in. It would provide handsomely for the councilmen's salary."

The third group of ordinances was designed to protect the

health and the appearance of the village. "Nauseous or unwholesome substances" were to be removed from the vicinity of "any grocery, barn, stable, privy, or other building" and persons neglecting such care of their premises could be fined up to \$50. The village marshal was authorized to remove any "Carriages, Carts, Wagons, Sleds, firewood, Lumber or any other material Whatever" that encumbered the "Streets, alleys, and public grounds," if the owner failed to remove them after due warning, and to collect "suitable fees."

Ordinance Ten provided "That any person neglecting or refusing to restrain his swine and allowing them to run at Large shall forfeit and pay a fine not exceeding Fifty Dollars for Each and Every offense." It was the first round of a half-century struggle to keep the pigs out of Chatfield streets.

The town was so close to its rural base that practically every family kept a litter of pigs, besides a few chickens and perhaps a cow and a horse or two. No one minded a horse or cow grazing the wide grassy strips on either side of the street. But pigs were different. They rooted under the neatest fences, and played havoc in gardens (though they did serve remarkably well as scavengers). Even worse than the damage they did to gardens was the outrage they offered to delicate sensibilities. A lady might be embarrassed any time by the sight of an old sow waddling down the middle of the street, stopping as like as not in front of the church itself to suckle her squealing pigs. Good care was taken that the husbands on the village council were made aware of these offenses, and of the need for ending them.

Of course no woman voted in Chatfield. In all likelihood few or none, in that year of our Lord, would have thought such an act becoming. Yet it was not for nothing that Queen Victoria sat on the throne of England. Godey's *Lady's Book* pointed the American moral of her reign. "The sex" need never sit helpless before conditions offending their modesty.

Certainly some things were not to be tolerated in a Christian community. When the clerk of a respectable store could strip himself stark naked and dance in the middle of a public street,

then it was time for virtuous women to speak out in defense of chastity. That the man came of good Yankee stock only aggravated the offense—he had no excuse for not knowing better. When foreigners got drunk a lady could simply turn her head and ignore them. But for a man of sound American stock to behave so was unforgivable. The fact that his frenzy happened at midnight, when decent people were abed, was no defense. It was the duty of Council to see that decency prevailed at every hour.

Six of the seventeen ordinances promulgated that April were concerned with the decencies. "The playing of Cards, Dice, or other games of Chance for the purpose of Gaming" was prohibited in "any House of entertainment, Hotel, grocery or saloon," on pain of fines up to \$50. Equal penalties were laid against all persons engaged in "riot, disorderly assemblage, or in keeping a disorderly House or Saloon," and on "any person who shall be guilty of Horse racing or immoderate driving in the Streets." Five-dollar fines were levied against any person found guilty of "playing pitching quoits or other amusement in the public grounds or streets or performing unnecessary labor on the Sabbath day." No longer would the ring of horseshoes on an iron stake, or the sound of an impious axe, disturb devout worshippers. A like fine could be laid on any person guilty of "habitual drunkenness" a term left conveniently undefined.

As for the moon-struck male—was it possible that the village fathers felt a secret sympathy with his shamelessness? Ordinance Twelve made a curious coupling of offenses: fifty-dollar fines could be levied on all persons guilty of "gross Obscenity or of mutilating shade trees or ornamental shrubs or fences." How well that contented the ladies is not a matter of record. They might well have swooned could they have guessed that three generations later the town marshal would be called one Sunday afternoon to break up a brazenly erotic embrace in the public park.

This first list of ordinances, together with provisions for sidewalks set up a few weeks later, afford a surprisingly complete summary of the subjects of civic enactment through Chatfield's

whole history. Emphasis shifted and attitudes changed, but the basic preoccupations were the same. Fire protection eventually meant zoning and building regulations, and fire-fighting equipment for the volunteer department. Licenses for 'legitimate' businesses were dropped when the legislature gave Chatfield the right of taxation in its city charter of 1887, but traveling amusements continue to pay for the privilege of showing in Chatfield. Police functions were discharged by an appointed marshal, but it was a long time before major importance was attached to that office.

The problem of liquor licenses provided the chief issue in village politics from the founding of a W.C.T.U. in the late seventies until the town voted 'dry' in 1904; it was to recur in altered form after the Second World War. A health department was set up in the eighties, following provisions laid down by state law, but that might be regarded as an extension of the original provisions against "nauseous and unwholesome substances." The municipal water system was begun primarily as a protection against fire; its rapid extension as a household convenience paralleled the granting of franchises for electric and telephone services which was the distinctively new feature of civic life at the turn of the century.

But village government did not meet the needs of people living outside the village. Hence the legislature provided for the organization of every township having fifty or more people.

Townships were uniform six-mile squares laid out by the federal surveyors; all land titles were drawn in terms of section, township, and surveyor's range. Names are easier to remember than numbers, so the settlers agreed among themselves on what their townships should be called. Chatfield township naturally took the name of the village which lay chiefly within its borders; the adjoining township, in which the northerly part of the village lay, was called Elmira, probably after York State's Elmira.

The first township elections were called by the Territorial legislature for May 11, 1857. The close relationship between village and countryside speaks in the fact that Chatfield township chose

Augustus Haven as chairman of its board of supervisors, and Elmira named Milo White to that post.

Elmira's official activities are recorded in the painstaking bill submitted to the supervisors. The week after election Milo White drove his own team twenty miles to Rochester, the seat of Olmsted County offices, and borrowed the assessment rolls for Elmira. It took him all day to make the trip, two days to copy the names, and a fourth day to return the list to Rochester. For these services he was paid \$4.00. The elected assessor then spent seven days driving over the township to examine each piece of property and list the values at which each should be taxed. For this he was paid \$7.00. The supervisors were paid 6 to 25 cents for copying and filing official papers, 75 cents for posting election notices "in the three most prominent places in the town." Time spent 'viewing' a road or supervising a piece of road building was paid for at the rate of a dollar a day. All these fees were fixed by law; the most active township official collected a maximum of \$30 in one year; most were paid a minor fraction of that.

The most important function of a township was the making of roads. In Elmira seven new roads were laid out in the first six months of its organization, all of them on petition. The township was divided into five 'road districts' and a 'pathmaster' appointed for each district. Every voter in the township was assessed a 'poll tax' of two days' work on the roads, under the direction of the 'pathmaster.' In addition, all property was assessed at 2.5 mills for a road-building fund. This tax in Elmira amounted the first year to nearly \$300 but, thanks to absentee or 'unknown' ownership, less than half that amount was collected. The money was apportioned to the road districts by the supervisors and spent by the 'pathmasters' for road work beyond that provided by the 'poll tax.' That system of road building continued till well past the turn of the century.

Bridges also were built by the township, on individual contract. One such in Elmira cost a total of \$46.64, and that sum was divided among ten Elmira landholders—for "hewing stringer 25 feet long," for hauling lumber with "self, team and boy," for

"putting up buttments," for "raising bridge" (four men got 25 cents apiece for this job), for "framing bridge," and for "one thousand five hundred and Seventy four feet of plank" cut in the farmer's own wood lot and sawed in J. R. Jones's mill.

An interesting sequence emerges in those records of neighborly co-operation in service of local government. Not until 1862 was an Irish farmer hired for any of that work, though a considerable number of Elmira farms were Irish-owned. Six years later the second Irish name appears, with notation of payment for "ditching highway." In 1870, Dan Moriarity was appointed pathmaster in one district, the first such recognition for any Irishman; some years later the *Democrat* was referring to Timothy Halloran as "one of the best road builders in this section."

The county government also had considerable jurisdiction over road building. William Pease, who was elected county commissioner year after year, had more to do with laying out Fillmore County than any other one man in the province. He was known as the storyteller of the board. Whether at board meeting or talking with his neighbors, he always had a story of some kind to tell, that made his point so a body could remember it.

People felt they could trust William Pease. He always *paid* for the crackers and cheese, or sugar lumps, or dried apples, that he ate from the supplies every storekeeper set out for his customers. Folks might laugh at a man who was persnickety enough to pay for what he could have for nothing, but afterwards they told each other they could trust a man like that. So they chose him to look after the common business, first in the county, and later in the state legislature. The 'aristocrats' might laugh at William Pease and his long 'Granger beard,' but he was just about the best farmer in the county, and he took as good care of the people's business as he did of his own.

There was, for instance, the time when the legislature was considering a bill to give any millowner the right of free flowage on land adjacent to his mill, regardless of who owned the land. William Pease remembered the argument his neighbor, John Murphy, was having with J. C. Easton over flowage rights for

Easton's mill. Pease got up in the legislature and said if this law was passed he'd have all the suckers in the Root River coming up in his barn and milking his cows, and he figured he wouldn't like that much. Everyone laughed so hard that the bill never did get to be a law. That was the kind of politics that country folks liked and understood.

They understood the township justice courts, too, though they didn't always like the way those courts were used. Now and then the constable brought in someone accused as a disturber of the peace, but most of the riot-and-disorder cases seem to have happened in town, when country and village and hard liquor came together. The justice courts of the townships were largely used as the means of collecting debts, many of them for 'outside' creditors such as sewing-machine and farm-implement dealers. Gathered resentments against that type of legal procedure was to help on the growth of the Grange, with its antimonopoly program, during the seventies.

About law enforcement in Chatfield itself little can be said, for early justice-court records were lost in the fire that burned down almost a block of buildings in 1877. The newspapers in early years had more urgent business than reporting local law-breaking, though when the McKennys relinquished the *Democrat* their successors put on many a campaign for stricter law enforcement. (Once the editor, ending a story with "as usual no arrests," added that he was going to cast those words in permanent type.) Something of the general state of affairs is perhaps hinted in a story that has come down about the horse thieves of the fifties. They grew so bold in the western part of the county that in 1855 five solid citizens "determined to reassert their right of self-government," and drew up articles of agreement as a "vigilance committee."

Signing that covenant was felt to be a serious matter, but the movement spread rapidly through the entire county. Strange events followed. At first suspects were "arrested," given a trial in vigilante court, and "cautiously fined a small amount." In return they burned barns and hay stacks, stole more livestock,

and even beat up some of the vigilantes. One of the original signers of the covenant, reconnoitering in Iowa where he had heard the stolen goods were taken, saw a wagon and a saddle that had been stolen from one of his neighbors. He returned the next night with twenty-five men and captured two of the three men in the hangout. The culprits were brought back to Fillmore County for trial in the district court, and one of them was committed to the state prison.

In Jordan township the vigilantes heard that one of the thieves was at the house of the justice of the peace. They surrounded the house and found the culprit—in bed with the justice's wife. He was hustled into the woods and "whipped, choked, kicked, and cuffed to the very edge of the river Styx" until he confessed the names of his associates, whereupon he was released.

One of the men implicated in that confession had taken a fire insurance policy with a company that J. C. Easton represented, and when Easton heard of the accusation he terminated the policy, as he reported in a letter to the company. At one time the county sheriff himself was suspected of being in league with the thieves, but two or three years of vigilante justice scared the gang out. When another wave of thievery swept the county twenty years later it was checked rapidly when the word passed around that a new "vigilance committee" was being formed.

Of all this no word was reported in the Chatfield papers. The story was first put into print in a *History of Fillmore County* published in 1882. Vigilantes, however they might adorn the local legend, were not good advertising for a new town that wanted more settlers, and they offered no partisan advantage to either Democrats or Republicans, for members of both parties were equally implicated on both sides of the unsavory affair.

'Hard times' made equally poor advertising, hence the newspapers made as little mention as possible of hardships resulting from the panic of 1857. A few weeks after the August collapse the *Republican* remarked that it was a good thing that "the bubble of speculation" had burst: "the very thing the country needed . . . for now we know what it was worth. . . . With careful

management we shall come through sounder than before."

In those first months no question was raised of political responsibilities for the 'hard times.' Instead, Democrats and Republicans joined forces for an advertising campaign in behalf of the town. The businessmen put up the money, in return for advertising space, and Judson Wade Bishop wrote the text of a *History of Fillmore County* which was circulated all through the East.

"We write of Fillmore County simply because she is our own," the Preface announced, ". . . we would derogate nothing from our neighbors." However, the little booklet contrived to indicate that both state and county derived their importance largely from their position as background for the incomparable advantages of Chatfield. A good fourth of the pages were devoted, one way or another, to Thomas Twiford's town—though Twiford was nowhere mentioned.

The history opened with a poetic invocation:

To the West, to the West, to the land of the Free,
Where mighty Missouri rolls down to the Sea,
Where a man is a man, if he's willing to toil,
And the poorest may gather the fruits of the soil.

Prose made the invitation explicit: "To the young man; to the man of wealth; to the man unfortunate in business; to the manufacturers; to the working men of the crowded cities; and to the poor man of the agricultural districts . . . to all good citizens we say . . . Come to the West."

Minnesota, the *History* went on, with its "green prairies . . . gushing springs . . . crystal lakes . . . unthinned forests" was "capable of sustaining a denser population than perhaps any other in the world." Beyond its boundless natural beauties it offered

a society but recently formed, where every one stands on his own feet—a tablet, as it were in a plastic state, on which he now may easier write his name with a finger's end, than carve it with hardened steel, on the indurated surface of old, established social communities. . . . He is credited at once for whatever of talent, of energy, or of worth he displays and a lifetime is not required to win the confidence of his neighbors.

The man who wrote that panegyric to the shining symbol that the West had become was uttering the fullness of his own spirit. Judson Wade Bishop was born in 1831 in Jefferson County, New York, one of ten children in a clergyman's household. At Fredonia and Union academies he learned something of the classics, but at sixteen he began to earn his own living, first as clerk in a store, then as bookkeeper, teacher, and farmer in turn. When he was twenty he had gathered enough money for a year at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York City. With that training in civil engineering he got a job as assistant engineer for the Grand Trunk Railway of Ontario, Canada.

Early in 1857, he went to Minnesota as chief engineer for the Winona and St. Peter Railroad; when J. W. Holley lost his place with the Southern Minnesota, young Bishop succeeded him. When financial troubles put an end to railroad building, Bishop went to Chatfield to see what he could find to do. Publishing the *History* was his first recorded contribution to Chatfield's development.

His next appearance on the Chatfield scene was his appointment as principal of Chatfield Academy for its first session. Perhaps the enforced pause in speculative profit-taking helped the townfolk to remember the charter they had held unused for two years. It was obviously out of the question to levy a tax for a public school when times were so hard. But all through the early months of 1858 both papers urged the opening of the Academy, and by September a faculty had been assembled, a building rented, and a student body attracted. The first *Catalogue* of Chatfield Academy listed thirty-nine Ladies and thirty-six Gentlemen in that company. The addresses recorded with those names were impressively varied, but most of the students lived with parents or relatives within the valley itself.

The faculty and curriculum described in that *Catalogue* were also quite impressive. There were five faculty members besides the principal. The Baptist preacher, Reverend G. W. Fuller, A.B., was "lecturer and Instructor in Greek Language"; Dr. Cole and Dr. Miller were "Lecturers on Anatomy, Physiology, & Hygiene."

An Englishwoman, Miss Sarah Knight, was "Preceptress of the Young Ladies" and taught "English Branches, Ornamental Work, &c"; she was assisted by Miss Mary Gilman, who taught Music and German. The principal himself taught "French, Latin, Mathematics, and Engineering," and all who studied under him remembered the high quality of his teaching.

The figures reporting enrollment in various classes showed a total disregard for the classical delights the faculty offered; "useful" subjects were the rule, with a smattering of "accomplishments" for the Young Ladies. Academy exercises were described as "practical" above all else, with first emphasis upon punctuality as the sovereign virtue. Mr. Bishop's class in Civil Engineering was highly regarded, and of four Young Gentlemen enrolled in that class, three were later to make substantial careers for themselves in railroad engineering and management.

George Henry Haven spent two years in the Chatfield Academy, and judging from sundry papers that have survived from his student days, all was not solemn within Academy walls. Discussions in its Irving Literary Society ranged from the question "Resolved, That more misery has been caused by pride and ambition than by ignorance and superstition" to such erudition as "If a scolding wife with a broom four feet long can *raise a breeze* in two minutes, how long will it take the citizens of Chatfield to raise a *bell* weighing 150 pounds for the Academy?"

No hint appears in these schoolboy papers of the tightening political divisions that were to lead some of those same young men to fight on opposite sides of the Civil War. A friend of George Haven went South in 1860 and some months later broke off his correspondence with young Haven on a note of protest against Haven's "abolitionist" sentiments. A cousin of Haven's who spent one term in the Academy was later to die in the Union blue, while the friend fought in Rebel gray.

J. W. Bishop himself was drawn from his academic career by partisan politics, after only one year as principal. He was succeeded by Thomas P. Thickstun whom Bishop praised, in the columns of the *Democrat* which Bishop took over, for "constitu-

tional fullness . . . mature preparation . . . earnest devotion." Mr. Thickstun left Chatfield after two years, to open a Baptist college in one of the River towns; the young man engaged to take his place enlisted in the Union army before the term opened. That was the last effort of the Academy trustees to carry on the school; a few weeks later they rented the building to a young couple from Vermont who opened a private school. They were editorially approved as "ripe scholars" but by spring it was apparent that a different basis must be found for Chatfield's schools.

The temper of the townfolk had changed since its first years. The sobering effects of 'hard times' very likely played their part in bringing the recognition that a good school for the town was important. Whatever the reasons, Chatfield got legislative sanction for setting up an enlarged Consolidated School District, and elected a notable school board.

C. G. Ripley, with two Harvard degrees, was its chairman, and two clergymen with university degrees also served. Milo White and a moneylender named Swinburn completed the board. The 'Old Academy' was rented, three teachers were hired, and the public was informed that every person in the district, between the ages of five and twenty-one, was eligible to be a free pupil in the school. Children living outside the district might be admitted on the payment of a small tuition fee.

The principal of Chatfield consolidated public school during its first five years was E. J. Thompson, "late principal of Newton Academy, Shoreham, Vermont." His ability is suggested by the fact that he went from Chatfield to teach at the University of Minnesota. Thirty years after he left Chatfield he was invited back for a reunion dinner for which his one-time students gathered from many places.

It would be delightful to record that all of the men responsible for Chatfield's schools were of equally high quality, and that the town's most able and cultivated citizens were always on its school board. Unfortunately, they weren't. There were times when the penny-pinching and Pecksniffian attitudes of the board merited no better word than mean-spirited, and there was one interlude

when five principals came and went in the space of two years, leaving vaguely scandalous echoes in their passing. Chatfield school salaries were never high, even by comparison with neighboring and similar towns, and 'advanced' ideas were not given a very warm welcome. One time the board saved a lot of money by hiring a woman—a graduate of Wellesley College—as head of the school, but her attempts at progressive reorganization of the school were under frequent criticism. On one occasion the *Democrat* objected stridently against "a special course . . . in female suffrage" that Miss Dunlap was supposed to be "forcing" on her pupils; the board decided that a public debate on the subject might be held as scheduled, but admonished Miss Dunlap to see to it that she never again let school exercises be involved in "politics."

"Politics" was a term of convenient vagueness. It was opprobriously attached to an academic debate on "female suffrage" but never appears in connection with the long and sordid bickering over the provision of adequate housing for the public school, though nothing could have been more clearly a matter of public policy.

Funds for a new building were voted in 1863, but the contractor took two and a half years to finish it, and the board had again and again to force him to undo some flagrantly poor workmanship. Yet official friends of the contractor prevented his being dismissed, or even penalized. The school was too big for the building by the time it was finished, but the annual school meeting would not entertain any suggestion for enlargement. The fight over the building was long and bitter, but it was never officially dignified as "politics."

Necessity drove the electors to authorize the building of two one-room shacks to hold part of the overflow during the seventies, but they turned down every suggestion for an adequate new building. An architect was called in to examine the old shell; he found it five inches out of plumb and so shaky a high wind might easily push it over. "Were I a member of your School Board I certainly should not like the responsibility of continuing the schools in it

for a longer period than it would take to erect a new building," his report ended.

Still the annual meeting refused to budge. It voted to hold the school board "responsible" for the safety of the building, but it turned down one proposal after another aimed at getting a new building under way. Special meetings were held, with the same results. Whenever the issue came up, William Pease took his hired men to town to vote against any money for a new school. It was 1886 before a building program was approved.

A good part of the credit for the belated achievement belonged to G. H. Haven. From 1864 to 1904 he was clerk of the school board. (He did a variety of additional public jobs during all those years—the jobs that nobody gets paid for but that help to determine "the theory and practice of public policy," as Webster defines "politics.") His patient, repeated persuasion had a good deal to do with the election of a new board the year the building was decided on. When the building was finished, the fall of 1887, the board inspected it, then adjourned to Mr. Haven's office and officially received the keys from the contractor. That small, right touch of ceremony, together with the dedication exercises, and the pupils' official moving into the building, speak characteristically of the part G. H. Haven played in his community. Whatever he was responsible for was done decently and in order.

Not so much could be said, however, of the partisan altercations of pre-Civil War years. The *Republican* made heavy use of resentments roused by the 'hard times' of 1858, and the *Democrat* fought hard to preserve the favored status of 'the Land Office gentry.'

No rogue e'er felt the halter draw
That held a good opinion of the law,

the *Democrat* cried, and promised the editor of "that negro-loving sheet" an encounter with the halter if he continued "his personal, vulgar and abusive sheet."

When the 1858 election was over, and a Democratic victory was announced, Chatfield Republicans protested loudly. The bal-

lot box had been kept overnight in the office of Dexter and Ripley, Democrats, and the Republicans swore that the 'Land Office boys' had had illegal access to it: no other hypothesis would account for so small a Republican count as that officially announced.

A group of earnest Republicans set out to get affidavits from Republican voters and laid them before the county Board of Canvassers. The number of sworn Republican votes exceeded the official count by thirty, and the Board of Canvassers threw out the entire vote of Chatfield township. This was enough to turn the Fillmore County vote into a Republican victory, though it did not change the state results.

The *Democrat* raged: "289 votes disfranchised!!!" It quoted the Land Office men's protests against the blame being laid on them by Republicans all over the state; the election judges were *not* connected with the Land Office, they plaintively insisted, nor was the ballot box ever in the Land Office. They appealed to the district court for justification and McKenny wrote to Beecher Gere (then in Washington making sure of his appointment as United States Marshal): "The blacks are playing . . . high-handed villainy . . . political rascality." McKenny assured Gere that "the law and the facts" were "all on Democracy's side." J. C. Easton reported the matter to Griswold, then visiting in the East, somewhat differently: the Republicans "found they had been cheated" by thirty votes.

The court decision hung fire for a long time, but on January 8, 1859, the *Democrat* announced:

THE DIE IS CAST
the long agony is over!!!
REPUBLICANS EFFECTIVELY GONE UP!!!

The court had restored the original count and the Democrats were triumphant in Fillmore County.

Still the 'hard times' persisted, and since no election was possible for another two years the popular quest for a panacea centered on the railroads. All their building had been stopped by the 1857 collapse and people convinced themselves that the way

to get 'good times' back again was to get the companies once more on the job of building their projected lines. Then men would have employment and their wages would put money into circulation. Once the railroads were running they would bring thousands of new settlers into Minnesota, thereby raising prices to the fine speculative level of pre-crash days. Democrats and Republicans were at one in that faith.

Unfortunately the railroad companies had no more money than anyone else. With thousands of acres let go for delinquent taxes, railroad lands were a drug on the market. And the new state constitution forbade the state government to lend money to any private business. Political action was called for, and an amendment to the constitution was supported without regard to partisan division. In Winona only one vote was cast against that amendment, and 1,102 for. Chatfield was more conservative, but it still gave the amendment a three-to-one majority.

The new constitutional provision was a wonderful scheme for icing the railroad cake, eating it to the last crumb, and keeping it intact on the state's pantry shelf.

The plan went like this: for every ten miles that any railroad graded ready for tracks, the company was to receive (in addition to the 76,800 acres previously provided) special state bonds in the amount of \$100,000. When ten miles were complete with rolling stock the company was to get an additional \$100,000 in state bonds and 76,800 more acres of land.

In return the companies were to give the state equivalent amounts of railroad bonds, with which the state would eventually redeem its own bonds. The state, the phrase ran, was lending not its money but merely its credit. The leaders in the scheme gave solemn assurances that the state would never have to pay for the bonds it issued to the railroads. The idea was that Minnesota state bonds would sell more easily than company bonds, thereby affording ready cash for construction costs. Of course, once the trains were running, there would be such a boom that paying back five million dollars would be a mere trifle from any point of view.

Easton voted against the amendment but shortly after wrote to a New York friend:

The work of grading on our Land Grant Railroad has been commenced and is progressing finely. There are 1000 men at work on our Root River and the Transit Road. . . . We shall hear the whistle of cars in Chatfield long enough before you can think of it at Lowville. They are doing things 'away out West.'

But unfortunately Minnesota state bonds sold little better than railroad bonds, despite the governor's personal assurances to Wall Street. Bonds amounting to \$2,275,000 were issued to the railroad companies, but all the state had to show for that sum was about two hundred and forty miles of slovenly roadbed. Not a rail was laid, not an iron horse snorted, but the bonds were to plague the state for long years before they were finally retired. The Democratic governor attributed the impossibility of selling the bonds to "factious interference" by Republicans.

Inevitably the Chatfield papers got involved in the partisan aspects of the problem. The *Democrat* railed against Holley, "the little kicked-out engineer," whose "secret malicious opposition" to the Southern Minnesota was hurting Chatfield's chances for getting the road at all. "It is generally supposed that the 'magnificent favors' offered the editor of the *Republican* of this place . . . for his support of the loan bill, were not quite 'magnificent' enough, hence his failure to accept."

The argument went from bad to worse. In April, 1859, for instance, the *Democrat* said: ". . . Republican editor . . . has been caught in so many political lies heretofore and shamefully exposed, that there is no danger of his being believed now under any circumstances." On July 2, refuting the *Republican's* charge of "publishing the proceedings of the Democratic caucus . . . before the meeting was held," the editor of the *Democrat* admonished his fellow partisans to avoid "the editor of the *Republican*" lest he "sell them as he did Southern Minnesota *lands*, without having the semblance of a title or claim."

It seems a pity that the following issue of the *Republican* has not survived: it would be interesting to know what, in such an atmosphere, Holley wrote to call forth the *Democrat's* reply of July 9:

The last Chatfield *Republican* contains a most willful, malicious, and libelous charge against us, and which we here pronounce false in every particular. We do not desire to take any further notice of the article in question, further than to here state, that he will be held to answer to a jury . . . for the slanderous charge.

The case was tried in November, and the jury awarded \$100 damages to Hemphill, then editor of the *Democrat*. (McKenny hired him to run the paper for some years, though it is probable that McKenny wrote as many of the editorial blasts as Hemphill did.) Nothing daunted, the *Republican* blazoned the news thus:

OUTRAGED INNOCENCE VINDICATED
FATHER HEMPHILL'S MARKET VALUE ESTABLISHED!!
WHAT AN EDITOR'S CHARACTER IS WORTH
We mean such an editor as he!

The verdict was explained, the story said, by the fact that the jury included ten Democrats and only two Republicans.

A month later "an arrest of judgment" was granted, "so the 'father' stands just exactly where he begun. . . . None but a partisan jury would have given him over ten cents, an amount twice as great as his injury."

These personal conflicts tended to obscure the real issues of the national parties. The Democrats themselves were divided between Douglas moderates and Southern fire-eaters, and Judson Wade Bishop decided to throw his lot with the Douglas faction. He bought out the Hemphill-McKenny Chatfield *Democrat*. "I mean to try it for a year," he wrote to a friend, and in that year his editorials showed considerable grasp of the realities in the gathering conflict.

The Republicans were on the march. In September, 1860, Easton wrote warmly of "the illustrious Honorables from abroad" who visited Chatfield; Carl Schurz and his fellow campaigners

had no more enthusiastic welcome anywhere than in the chosen valley. Chatfield people read approvingly the doctrine enunciated by Seward in his campaign speech in St. Paul: “. . . power is not permanently to reside on the eastern slope of the Alleghany mountains, nor in the seaports. . . . the power that shall communicate and express the will of men on this continent is to be located in the Mississippi Valley. . . . *the ultimate, last seat of government on this great continent will be found somewhere within a circle or radius not very far from the spot on which I stand, at the head of navigation on the Mississippi river.*” What Minnesotan could refuse to vote for a party whose leaders thought so soundly?

Easton was active in the 1860 campaign. How far he had penetrated the inner councils of his party appears in his letter books. When a man whom he disliked maneuvered for a federal appointment Easton instructed the newly elected Congressman from Chatfield’s district “to agree to no such thing,” and sent letters to be delivered to “Honest Abe” in support of Easton’s candidate.

It was the last time that Easton’s political activities were so permanently recorded. Thereafter, apparently, he made his wishes known in personal meetings with effective officials. An intermittent diary of later years contains many items such as these: “Talked with the Governor . . . Saw Thompson after his oath as state senator. . . . Spent the morning in government offices.” The spoils were gathered in many places.

There is no evidence that Easton had yet made any direct connection with railroad affairs. Chatfield’s hopes were still tied to the Southern Minnesota Railroad, but that company, like the others holding state bonds, went bankrupt and had its assets taken over by the new Republican governor early in 1861. In the reshuffling that followed, a Chatfield man, Dr. Luke Miller, was chosen as vice president of the reorganized company. Largely because of that prestige, Miller was sent to the state legislature as Chatfield’s representative. The network of interrelationships between ‘business’ and ‘politics’ was already drawing tighter; the law was no longer a simple affair of such justice as vigilantes could, at need, provide.

Even with sturdy political support, the Southern Minnesota Railroad had its difficulties. T. B. Stoddard, its new president, spent the winter of 1863 in New York trying to raise money but found men there still wary of Western schemes: "They prefer 6 per cent with certainty to any income from . . . the West," he wrote a Minnesota associate. Later he wondered if Philadelphia or Boston would not have been a better place than New York to get money: "Money does abound but schemes do much more abound." At one time he asked his correspondent for a hundred dollars: he was "completely flat" but thought it "unwise to show it just now." (Another man, on the same errand for another railroad, turned to Europe that same winter and secured the investment of Dutch money in what was to become the Northern Pacific.)

Stoddard finally had to give up the struggle. The state once more intervened in the name of the law, and still a different faction took over the management of the Southern Minnesota Railroad. In the reorganization of 1864, H. W. Holley once more took an important place in the company; the business-political wheel had come full circle and the "little kicked-out engineer," editor of the *Chatfield Republican*, had his laugh at his *Democrat* rival—but Chatfield still had no railroad.

It did have a "railroad bank" which was little consolation to anyone in Chatfield, though its functioning affords an interesting instance of the increasing interrelationship between business and politics.

The state bonds in aid of railroad building, for which Chatfield had voted so enthusiastically, had proved no more salable than railroad bonds. So the holders of the state bonds got another law passed, in the hurried closing days of the 1858 legislature. This law permitted the holders of state railroad bonds to organize "banks of issue" authorized to circulate currency in amounts equivalent to the amounts of bonds deposited with the state auditor. United States government bonds were mentioned in the law, along with the Minnesota state railroad bonds, but subsequent reports of those banks show clearly that the law served the

one purpose of enabling holders of the state bonds to turn them, quite literally, into money.

One provision of the law did serve as partial protection of the people of Minnesota against this flagrantly wild-cat currency. All such bills had to be redeemed *in gold* whenever they were presented to the bank that issued it. This provision meant that most of the new money was circulated well beyond reach of the banks themselves: the banks were carefully located in the interior of the state in order to make them as inaccessible as possible to travelers from other states, who might inconsiderately demand their gold.

Chatfield's "railroad bank" was set up late in 1858. The *Democrat* reported one week that "The President and Cashier of the Bank of Chatfield" were stopping at the Medary House and were busy "getting ready their Banking House and a large stock of Dry Goods, Groceries etc." It seems a queer combination for a bank president and cashier to be involved in, but the *Democrat* did not offer any explanation. That can be guessed from items in the reports of the state auditor from 1859 to 1867, the life of the Bank of Chatfield.

Practically all its fifty-thousand-dollar capital was in Minnesota railroad bonds, owned by one Selah Chamberlain. Chamberlain was a Cleveland contractor who had been in charge of the grading for the Root River and Southern Minnesota road; he had acquired large amounts of the bonds, partly in payment for his work, partly in other notorious dealings. His use of those bonds proved repeatedly embarrassing to the state, long after the Bank of Chatfield had been closed. He simply hired the "President and Cashier" and let them earn their salaries by running a store. The real business of the bank was handled far outside Chatfield. The state auditor showed the bank to have about \$30,000 worth of currency in circulation, but the gold held by the bank never went as high as \$2,000.

When the federal government provided federal charters for banks of issue, in 1863, Chamberlain sold the Bank of Chatfield to two Milwaukee men, who withdrew "the State Railroad Bonds and the Currency based thereon" and issued

\$39,575 in new currency "upon undoubted securities"—most of them federal bonds. When Congress put a 10 per cent tax on all state banks of issue, the Bank of Chatfield made its last report, with only \$1,683 currency outstanding.

All this is recorded in state reports, but in Chatfield itself there seems to have been no mention of the railroad bank after the first notice, even in the diaries and letters that mention so many things. Perhaps the silence was part of the general disapproval felt for the railroad banks. Other moneylenders opposed them. Six men in Chatfield, including I. F. O'Ferrall and C. G. Ripley, made public announcement that they would receive "No Minnesota money." Easton did not join that boycott, having decided that "4 or 5 founded upon other bonds" were good; however, he agreed that "Our Banks in this state founded upon the railroad state 7% bonds are *no go*."

Perhaps Chatfield people ignored the bank because it was part of a complex situation that was not very well understood. The intricate process of shifting from an agricultural to an industrial economy, of making 'the law' an instrument of 'business,' was not as clear to those agrarian-minded people as it becomes in the perspective of a century.

But time's passing does not help to explain how it was that Thomas Twiford could drop out of the life of the valley he had chosen and never, apparently, be missed.

The last public mention of his name was in 1857, when he was nominated by the Democratic caucus as Fillmore County's representative to the legislature. A week later the *Democrat* said he had withdrawn his name "in consequence of some local prejudice that seemed to exist in some parts of the county against him."

The only knowledge of his doings after that comes from a letter he wrote to Beecher Gere near the end of 1858. The letter was written from "Village Creek near Strait River," but whether that place was in Minnesota or farther west no available atlas reveals.

The letter complained bitterly against "the people of Southern Minnesota" who were "willing to see the two men who first opened the country . . . trampled down and abused." (Twiford coupled Gere with himself, but Gere was doing pretty well. When Gere's term in the legislature was over he got an appointment as United States Marshal. That kept him busy until the Civil War, and in 1865 he came home a colonel, then shortly returned to a plantation he had acquired in Alabama.) Twiford said that everything he and Gere did had "benefitted Southern Minnesota more than us," and was especially bitter against one "henrey" who had "swindled me out of every dollar I entrusted to him."

Yet that letter of Twiford's ended with vague boastings of "tall arrangements . . . bound to ride out the largest swells . . . when times change."

It was the last Chatfield heard of Thomas Twiford for thirty years. Then one week the *Democrat*, under an editor who had never before heard of the man, printed a dozen lines about a visit from "Mr. Twiford, now living at Eagle Creek near Madelia," who "first platted the site of Chatfield." He must have been an old man by that time.

Sixty years later an old woman living in Madelia remembered that when she was a little girl a man called Mr. Twiford had been hired to build the district schoolhouse on a corner of her father's farm near Madelia. She had seen him working there with "a big boy" that her elders said was his grandson. Mr. Twiford was a thin man, she remembered, and stooped, and the work he was doing seemed too hard for him.

To that end had come the man who was so intent on 'making his pile' that he had no time to be bothered with things like schools in his own town. Yet the money economy he sought to master proved too complex for him, whether he approached it as business or as law and politics and he was all but lost among the nameless unremembered ones whose passing forged a nation and its law.

How consciously those nameless thousands participated in the

tradition that was shaping their nation can scarcely be measured. But what 'the law' meant to the people of Chatfield—and to how many Chatfields—can never be rightly understood without taking into account the rowdy, bumptious hilarity of The Glorious Fourth. The very homeliness of those celebrations symbolized the impious American wresting of 'the law' out of the hands of old tyranny—and Yankee Doodle was its quintessential tune.

Chatfield people loved a celebration. They still do, for that matter. They've had them on every possible scale, but they never had a better one than in 1876.

Because it was the centennial year, plans were begun as early as March. Milo White was President of the Day; I. F. O'Ferrall, chairman of the committee on organization. Nine farmers joined the six townsmen on the committee and every businessman in town contributed to the fund for preparations. In the interests of safety the village council prohibited the sale and possession of firecrackers and fireworks, but that limitation on noise-making was compensated for by the purchase of a cannon that was fired from the top of Winona Hill at sunrise—and at intervals all day long.

The day itself was one of Minnesota's best—hot in the sun, with a thread of coolness in the breeze—and by ten o'clock in the morning there were four or five thousand people in town. The procession was half a mile long, and J. R. Jones and his six assistants marshaled it grandly on its way.

First came the cornet band, in their brand new wagon bought for the occasion, then the carriage with the President of the Day, the Speaker, and the Reader. Thirteen boys representing the thirteen colonies followed, with Washington and his guards riding behind them. Then followed the Car of Liberty with thirty-seven young ladies for the thirty-seven states, and the Goddess of Liberty crowning all. It was "a grand display," the *Democrat* said, "equal to the best in the state."

The "boys in blue" marched after the Car of Liberty, buttons gleaming and muskets on shoulder, and the Grangers followed

in full regalia. Every business in town was represented by some kind of exhibit or tableau-on-wheels. Last of all came the Fusileers, a set of gay blades who had wracked their wits and their families' attics for mirth-provoking costumes; their antics set the crowd roaring.

It took a good hour for the procession to get to Big Springs, where the crowd settled down for the program. There was music by the band and by the young ladies, prayer, and the reading of the Declaration of Independence. No Fourth would be complete without that reading.

At last it was time for lunch—and what a lunch! Great hampers of the heartiest and richest food, with families and friends getting together as they hadn't done in months, perhaps since the last Glorious Fourth. The hours of visiting were all too short but no one wanted to miss the races. There were horse races and bicycle races, sack races and barrel races, boys' and fat men's and old men's races, and a hilarious tub race on the millpond. There was a greased pole to climb and a greased pig to catch.

Two boweries—platforms built in the open air and roofed over with fresh green boughs—provided places for dancing all afternoon and evening; after supper the Grange hall had three hundred dancers, and the Medary House ball was a scene of elegance and chivalry. An hour of fireworks interrupted the dancing near midnight, but the music went on until morning. It was “a happy, well-behaved crowd with not a single incident to mar the peace and rejoicing of the day,” the *Democrat* reported.

John Glissman carried the part of Washington that year. Through many later years he was Grand Marshal of the Fourth processions. That too was part of the tradition. John Glissman was a cavalry officer from Schleswig-Holstein and had come to America when Germany annexed the province where he was born. He took great delight in his role as Marshal of the Day: his white horse and red sash and gleaming sword gave a splendid air to any celebration. The children loved to hear him say, “You look mit my face, you see Chorge Fashington.”

Over an evening glass of beer the next day he would say to a crony, "You know, it iss fonny. In the Old Country it vass *Captain* Glissman. In New York it vass *Mister* Glissman. Here itss yust Old Yohn." A long meditative draught would follow, and as the mug came down and his eyes wandered along the street, he always ended, "I like it here."

PART

Seven



Be It Ever So Humble

I



MAY HAD COME to the valley. As it threaded its way into the attic room before dawn grew gray at the windows, the sleeping girl stirred on her cornhusk mattress, half-aware that wonder was abroad. As the light grew stronger she roused herself from dreaming and wound her braided hair about her head, crownwise. . . . In the kitchen she found a fire burning briskly in the cookstove, and the teakettle was already boiling. Three trout gleamed on the table, ready to be cooked for breakfast. The lad had waked early to go fishing in the creek before time to be milking the cow.

The kitchen sang with May magic that morning. Before the sun was well above the trees the girl had scrubbed her tables with sand and hung the dishcloth on the bush by the door to dry. She poured a saucer of cream for the tortoise cat that rubbed purring against her ankles and set it on the stone that made the back doorstep. Then she picked up two water pails and set off for the tannery spring.

It was as good as a fair in County Cork to walk to the spring that morning. Every chicken and cow and horse and young calf and colt was out in the sun. Every man and woman and child had a word for the Irish girl. Gardens were being planted in every yard. Here and there a row of pale green points already thrust through the dark loam with prodigious promise of peas or lettuce to come.

Four blocks east and south from the house where she worked she left the wooden walks bordering the street and turned up the short Winona Road that bent steeply toward the top of the hill. Her brimming pails were no weight at all when she finally took them from the hands of the teasing gossoons at the tannery and set off down the path, a last

jest flung over her shoulder. When a thrust of hill cut them off from her view she set down her pails and stood for a moment with her face lifted full to the sun.

Below the point where she stood was a scraggly gray willow, all wound about with grapevine. A cardinal flew into the bushes at its foot and the girl turned to watch him.

He was gorgeous—a color to stir the blood, a crest as arrogant as the sun's. He hopped from bush to vine and up its zigzag ladder, whistling at each fresh level a tentative, half-muted note.

As he went higher his voice grew more urgent. Before he reached the top of the tree he was calling, "Pret-tee-ee, Pretty, Pretty, Pretty," with a ringing sweetness that would have drawn an answer from a stone.

But his Pretty was no stone. She sat out of sight somewhere at the top of the hill, answering. When he reached the topmost branch and was like to burst his throat for joy, she flashed into sight, a swift gray body with only a hint of rose to answer his splendor.

He swooped down from his place, over the low bushes where she had hidden herself, into the tree beyond. There he called again. She answered him once, then flew to him, and they disappeared into the sunlight, together.

The girl lifted her pails and went on. Her laughter was stilled and she walked in a dream of her lover's coming . . . together. . . .

II



THE GIANT INDUSTRIES that grew up in the mid-nineteenth century were something new to American life. New, indeed, to the world's life. They brought together increasingly automatic machinery that carried out in one continuous process what had been a whole series of processes. This was a radical change in the organization of production.

The change itself held the possibilities of freeing humanity from the age-old drudgeries of its existence. What prevented industry from realizing those possibilities was the pressure of money capitalism, with its doctrine that the highest achievement of men was to 'make' more and more money.

'Making money' was a new way to measure human worth and it shifted the whole scale of human values. Pride in workmanship and in meeting the needs of the neighborhood had once been strong and satisfying reasons for making things. In expanding new industries such motives and satisfactions almost disappeared. Factories made things to 'sell' at prices to give the owners the largest possible money profits.

Before the industrial age, Americans had made things primarily to meet the immediate needs of themselves and their neighbors. From 1640 on, the colonial governments gave practical encouragement to household spinners and weavers. When England's tax policy roused colonial resentment, the making and the wearing of homespun swept the country so widely that imports of woollen

cloth fell 95 per cent in the three years before the fighting at Concord and Lexington. For years afterwards most American households produced virtually all their own cloth for every use.

Small local factories, run with water power, were set up very early in many communities to perform some part of the cloth-making process—fulling, dyeing, carding, or the like. The first complete power-driven textile mill in America was built at Waltham, Massachusetts, in 1815. Fifteen years later cloth that had cost forty-two cents was selling for seven and a half cents a yard. After that women began to give up their homespun. Girls whose older sisters had made the sheets for their trousseaus out of flax from the family garden went to work in the factories and bought factory sheets for their marriage beds.

The states lying West of New England never did as much home manufacturing as the older settlements did. In Vermont, for instance, the household manufactures were valued at \$2.31 per capita in 1840, while those of Michigan for the same year were worth 54¢. There was even a difference between 'old' and 'new' Wests. Indiana and Illinois, which were settled before American factories got started, did almost three times as much home manufacturing in 1860 as Michigan and Iowa, settled after factory goods were available. People who lived out their lives in the neighborhood where they were born kept up the old ways longer than their kinfolk who went farther west.

To read early-day accounts of what making things at home felt like to living human beings, is to understand at least one reason why home industries went on even when they were no longer strictly necessary. It was fun to make things at home.

Men came together to match their skill in fitting logs to make a house. Women had day-long spinning bees. Young people husked corn in company. In all those gatherings there was laughter and singing and the warm sense of enlargement that comes of doing things 'together.' Quite usually the 'bee' ended with a dance, and the dancing was no less fun for the work that went before it.

Those people won their daily living by making for themselves

the things they needed. They ate because their patience and strength had dealt with the fruits of the earth, not because they laid down a piece of officially printed paper and were given a plate of food in return. They dealt with the world on its own concrete terms, not at some fifth or fiftieth remove of symbolism. There was health in such direct dealings.

In such an economy labor yielded some of the intimate, un-verbalized satisfactions that come only from direct mastery of earth and its resources. Household industry, wrote a man who had been nurtured in its ways, was

based on virtue—cheerfulness is its companion, happiness is its fruit, and independence is its result. Women thus reared will not give suck to a breed of slaves: but teach their offspring a knowledge of their own powers, having furnished them strength to maintain their rights.

It is perfectly true that the society based on household industry was crammed full of imperfections. People had to work too hard and had too little of the leisure that is necessary to the creation of any really splendid way of life. They were provincial in their thinking, and they cherished too many of those irrational attitudes that we call superstition.

But unfortunately superstition did not disappear with the arrival of industrialism. As a matter of fact a new kind of superstition grew up that was as full of mischief as any of the old ones. Hardly anyone seems to have realized what nonsense it is to talk about modern industry as if it were 'private property.'

One loom in one family's house, with one woman weaving on it, was private property. But when several men together owned a thousand looms, and gathered a thousand weavers to operate them, a situation was created that was considerably more 'public' than a town meeting in Chatfield. The people who raised the wool and cotton that was used on those looms, and the organizations through which those materials were shipped, made the public involvement of the process even larger. When the nation's law-making power was invoked to levy tariffs to support the price of the cloth produced on those looms, the public interest in the

whole procedure would have been inescapably evident were it not for the superstitious awe attached to the term 'private property' that had been so violently wrenched out of its proper setting.

Yet despite the altering character of the nation's industrial and political organization, the generation that first settled the chosen valley knew, in endless intimate ways, the personal meaning of genuinely private enterprise, as they spent their labor and ingenuity upon the immediately available fruits of the earth from which they must satisfy their daily needs.

III



THE PRAIRIES that lay just north of the Chatfield woods were so rich that the folks who settled in one neighborhood there called it Little Egypt. They were six or eight miles from Chatfield and nearer by that much to Winona. When James Price married Mary Crandall in June of 1859, there were few but 'old Americans' in Little Egypt.

James Price himself had come to Wisconsin with his family from Wales not many years before, and had gone to Minnesota late in 1858 to look after a mortgage his father had bought through one of Chatfield's moneylenders. When the mortgage was foreclosed he stayed to live on the place. Mary Crandall with her gay competence was a good part of his reason for staying; when the spring planting was done they were married.

The house where they lived was tucked into a fold of the prairies where a spring bubbled up from the limestone to feed a creek and nourish a handful of cottonwoods and elders. Before he took his bride there, James Price added a log lean-to at the back of the house to provide her the unusual luxury of two bedrooms apart from the main room that served as kitchen, dining room, parlor, and workroom.

There Mary Crandall Price settled into the arduous life of a pioneer housekeeper. There her son and her daughter were born. That daughter, after her eightieth year, set down a lively account

of the ways of that pioneer household. It was typical of the province and the time.

The Price cabin was well chinked and warmer than many a frame house of the decade. Its floors were of boards hauled from a Chatfield sawmill, though many a cabin in Little Egypt had floors of pounded dirt.

"Always I can see our old log house," the daughter wrote, "the floor scrubbed with sand, the black dots where a live coal had popped out of the open grate" of the "greyhound stove."

The room seemed large to childish eyes, but in after years "one wondered how the wife had managed to move among her necessary household articles." There was a window in each of the two long walls. Two doors at one end opened into the family bedroom and the tiny guest room for whatever stranger, or friend, or kinfolk might be visiting for a day—or a year. The hired men slept in the loft overhead.

At the other end the "front" door opened into another lean-to. That one held the "overflow from the barn until the granary was built—with soft-soap barrels and men's clothes in it."

The stove stood against the long wall on one side. It burned wood or chips or corncobs, and the top of its large firebox lifted up to take the fuel. The stove had only two "holes" for cooking "and the oven rose from the back of this flat, shallow top. The back legs were long, slender, and gracefully made; there was lots of room under that stove for children to play or a sick man to lie."

Behind the front door there were "pegs and more pegs" driven into the logs to make a place "on which to hang caps and wamuses"—the jackets that men and children wore outdoors. Near the coat corner stood a wash bench—half a log planed smooth, with lengths of sapling driven into the rounded underside—with pail and dipper, and a granite wash basin where every member of the family in turn washed hands and face. The long roller towel hung above the wash bench.

On the other side of the window stood the tall cupboard, reaching nearly to the low log ceiling. It held the dishes and the pots and pans (except for those that hung on pegs near the stove)

and precious stores of cinnamon and sage and vanilla flavoring, the tea and coffee and rare bag of sugar brought on infrequent trips to Chatfield or Winona.

The cupboard had an upper door and a lower door, and a little girl could sometimes open the lower door, push back the kettles and bowls, and crawl into the snug corner with a well-battered book while her mother scrubbed the floor. So much was crowded into the room that "there was no place for a child save under foot."

There was the "milk safe," another, smaller cupboard with tin doors perforated with countless tiny ventilation holes in an elaborate pattern that was marked out with bright paint. The Prices were blessed with a springhouse, where the milk crocks or 'pancheons' sat on stone ledges let down into the water itself—always cold, seldom freezing. For them the "milk safe" was a storage place for other food—the pies Mary Price baked and served at every meal, the jug of molasses or "long sweeting" used even for coffee, the corn meal mush set aside to be fried for breakfast, the dozen odds and ends of family cookery.

Nor were these all the things that found a place in that room. There was a bin for corn meal, and a flour bin big enough to hold five hundred pounds at a time; James Price filled it with flour made from his own wheat when he came back from the Chatfield mill.

Then there was a drop-leaf table (that the Crandalls had brought from the East) "which was used as work table and to eat on." There were two real chairs that had come from 'back East' and enough chair-height lengths of log to seat all the household at mealtime. The mop and the broom stood behind the stove, and in winter the swill pail stood beside it—for frozen swill was impossible hog-feed.

In that room all 'company' was entertained. Whatever work on harness or farm tools needed to be done on winter days was done there. There Mary Price cooked and served the endless hearty meals her household devoured, and there she sewed by the light of candles she herself had made.

The sewing in itself was enough to keep a woman busy, for she

made "all the underwear, dresses, aprons, men's smocks and overalls" for the three or four hired men as well as for her own family. Overalls and wamuses were made of "bought" blue denim, so stiff that each separate stitch almost called for an awl. The little boy must have panty waists and roundabouts besides overalls and wamuses.

The little girl and her mother needed many flannel petticoats and at least one quilted petticoat apiece. These were double garments, filled with sheet-wadding from waist to hem and quilted in small diamonds—not merely for fashion but for warmth, in that house with a single small stove to heat it. Fashion demanded hoop skirts; Mary Price's daughter had her first when she was three and a half years old. A woman's dress required eleven or twelve yards of calico, with no small number of stitches set by hand in the uncertain light of a candle.

Mary Price had the first sewing machine in Little Egypt, and women came for miles around to see the marvel: often she sewed up a set of seams for them, in a pair of pants or the many-gored skirts they all wore. It was a tiny bit of machinery, with a wheel that had to be turned by hand—a fine job for a little girl who wanted to 'help mother.'

Mary Price not only sewed but spun as well. She kept her wheel in the family bedroom, where the children's trundle bed was pushed out of sight under the big bed during the day. Hers was

the large wheel, where you walked back and forth, for an hour or more—if you had that much leisure time at once. . . . There back and forth, back and forth, Mother trudged, singing and spinning. Blessed was the family that had sheep, when in 1858 a woolen mill was started in Chatfield. People could get their wool carded, made into bats or rolls for spinning, and those without spinning wheels could have their yarn spun and take home what they wanted for sox and mittens and wrists and scarves, and have the rest made into blankets or yardage for heavy shirts and drawers. That was still the era of red flannel! . . .

Yarn had to be knitted into things to keep the family—including the hired men—comfortable in the bitter cold. . . .

The young women of the region often bought white cotton yarn to knit their lacy summer stockings, but men, women and children all wore home-knit woolen stockings in winter.

All through Chatfield's province there were women who spun. The older women from Ireland made the yarn for their family's knitting, though not many of their daughters practiced the art. The Norwegian women, living chiefly south and east of Chatfield, not only spun but wove as well.

Every Norwegian chest—of a carved-and-painted sturdiness that too often disappeared in kindling before the third generation came to prize its meaning and beauty—carried in its depths a spinning wheel, a set of 'shii' for a loom, and 'cards' for combing the wool. Those 'cards' were oblong pieces of wood or heavy leather set with rows of metal teeth; they were used, one in either hand, to comb the wool until its fibers lay parallel and well separated, ready to be twisted into a roll for the wheel.

The 'shii' that came in those chests were metal bars fitted with wire loops through which to thread the warp for weaving. As soon as a farmer had a sheep or two, he built a wooden loom frame and set the 'shii' in place at top and bottom of the frame. Then his wife wove cloth for the family's needs.

Flax, too, was universally raised and used by Norwegian families. Many men and women now living remember wearing underwear and shirts, and sleeping between sheets, that their families had made from the first planting of the flaxseed, through the retting, swingling, and spinning, to the final stitch set into the garment.

Another common fabric from the looms of those Norwegian families was linsey-woolsey, linen thread for the warp, wool for the woof. It made fine-wearing shirts and dresses.

Of course all those fabrics, woven or knitted, were better liked if they were colored. Hazel nuts, sumac bark, and walnut husk made brown dyes of various shades; yellow could be extracted from butternut husks, and a somewhat ambiguous red from pokeberries. All these were the wild fruits of the land.

The one 'foreign' dye used was indigo—and "the old blue

dye tub" had "such an odor as never was on land or sea." Mary Price's daughter was "too modest to tell you what was used to dissolve the indigo," but when the pot was working the visitor needed only his nose to tell him of the 'chamber lye' or urine that served that purpose.

Those fabric-crafts have disappeared so completely that few Chatfield youngsters today have ever so much as heard that spinning and weaving were once counted important skills for Chatfield women. Knitting survives, but as a fashionable accomplishment rather than a necessary routine.

Most Chatfield youngsters would be equally at a loss if asked about any of a thousand details of a pioneer household's food. Today their mothers buy meat at the butcher's—even the farmers, for their threshing crews. In the sixties a farmer often hired a hunter to provide meat for his harvest table, to avoid killing a 'critter,' and to give his neighbors a welcome change from the too familiar pork that was their fare, whether fresh or salted. As for bread—here and there a woman bakes every week, but most families eat 'store bread' except when Mother gets a cake of compressed yeast and makes a pan of rolls for a special treat.

But Mary Price and her neighbors made bread or they had none. They also made and preserved their yeast, and there was no truer proof of neighborliness than to lend a 'start' of yeast to one who had the bad luck of losing her own. Most gardens included a few hop vines: when yeast was made a handful of dried hops was steeped in water for a start. Dry yeast was made by thickening the hop water with cornmeal, leavening it with a bit of old yeast, and leaving it to 'raise.' The mass was then turned out on a well-floured bread board, rolled, cut into squares, and dried.

In making bread, hops liquor or potato water was used, thickened with flour to a soft batter, a cake of yeast added, and the whole left to stand two or three hours in a warm place till it had doubled its size. Additional liquid was then added, and salt and flour kneaded in until the right consistency had been attained—a fine point of 'telling by the feel.' This dough was left to 'raise' over-

night, kneaded and 'raised' a second time, shaped into loaves, 'raised' again, and finally baked.

Another form of bread was the salt-risin' bread. Though most New Englanders regarded it as inferior, it was the staple of many Hoosier families, who had inherited it from Southern origins. No yeast was used for salt-risin' bread; it had a large amount of molasses in it, whose fermentation created the gases which leavened the dough. Such dough had to be kept very warm in its overnight rising; some folks were believed to take their bread to bed with them—a practice frowned upon by such housekeepers as Mary Price.

Biscuits, too, were frequently made: "well browned and, I must admit, rather yellow soda biscuit waiting our supper table." "Riz" pancakes (made with yeast, the batter held over from day to day) were a great favorite in most families. "Even if one did grease them with bacon drippings and sweeten them with black strap, they were tasty (when you knew nothing better)." Nearly every farmer raised a patch of buckwheat for the flour that went into those cakes.

For a while Norwegian women solved the bread problem more simply. They continued to make the *flatte brodt* (flat bread) of their heritage. This was nothing more than a paste made with water, salt, and ground grain—barley, oats, ground hulls and all, corn meal, or the 'shorts' or coarse particles of wheat screened out of the white flour at the mills. The paste was spread very thin on the clean, hot stove-top, and baked in a large crisp sheet. For a delicacy, such paste was mixed with an almost equal amount of mashed potatoes and rolled paper thin before baking on the stove. This form was know as *lefsa*.

It was habit, born of sheer necessity, that brought these breads into the Chatfield province. As the Norwegian people became more prosperous they began to make the luxurious white bread of America's common people—as fine as the bread of the aristocrats in the Old Country. But still the *flatte brodt* persisted, especially for festival days.

But man does not live by bread alone. He wants meat, and

vegetables, and fruit besides—and Mary Price had plenty to do in providing those things for her family.

From the first, gardens were the pride and the necessity of every family in the whole region, in country and in town. Most of the common vegetables could be grown, and newcomers delighted in adding new varieties to the list.

Letters and diaries written by people in Chatfield were full of the details of their gardens. They often asked friends 'back East' for seeds. Harriet Pease, during her first winter in Minnesota, asked for dandelion seeds to plant in her garden for early greens; there were no dandelions, she wrote, west of the Mississippi. In his early Chatfield years, J. C. Easton apologized more than once for delay in answering letters by explaining that he had been busy putting in his garden.

When Ed Tuohy worked for McKenny, one of his first jobs was to clear the hazel brush out of the public square that McKenny had rented from the village council, and plant it to potatoes. He got such a crop as had never been seen in Ireland.

In the fall the county fair always had displays of vegetables and fruits. Melons, berries, apples, celery, beets, onions, sweet potatoes, cabbage, squash, turnips, rutabagas, carrots—all these were listed for prizes, in a region which in 1848 was described in Congress as "a hyperborean region" where no man would ever be so poor as to be forced to dwell.

Nearly every house had a root cellar to keep vegetables through the winter. This was a sizable pit dug in the ground, roofed over with logs or planks, then covered with a layer of straw and a layer of earth. There were stored the root crops—potatoes, beets, carrots, rutabagas, and onions—together with pumpkins, squashes, and sometimes cabbages. Cabbages were often buried separately in a barrel sunk well below the frost line.

Vegetables thrived in such storage. Cabbage in particular came out crisp and literally bursting with goodness, a special treat for appetites craving the taste of fresh green things.

Sometimes a barrel or two of apples were stored in the root cellar, though they were the happiest of luxuries. Each fall the

Chatfield stores advertised the arrival of Eastern apples. Twice during his first fall in Minnesota William Pease paid ten cents for five apples. That same fall J. C. Easton sent careful directions for packing a barrel of apples that a New York friend was sending him: they should be placed between layers of well dried straw so they would not 'shuck' in the barrel.

Considerable effort was made to develop local orchards. As early as 1856 two brothers named Sauer started to raise apple trees on their farm near Parsley's Ford. Dr. Twitchell put almost as much time into his nursery, on a few acres just above Dickson's mill, as into his medical practice.

When Bishop published his *History of Fillmore County* he reported 100,000 grafted trees under cultivation, "all grown here from the seed, and which can hardly fail to thrive." His "partial list of varieties which may be confidently expected to succeed here" is a roll of orchardists' delights.

There were pears in Chatfield's nurseries, too. "Most varieties" of cherries and plums were likewise available, as were Clinton, Concord, Isabella, and Catawba grapes. The only fruit that could not be grown in the Minnesota country, Bishop declared, was the peach, and that was too delicate even to be shipped so far. A young man, who had gone to Memphis after a couple years in Chatfield, wrote back to George Haven about the fruit there: "I had not seen a peach in so long a time that the sight of one made my eyes stick out like watches."

Bishop's lists were heartening to Easterners hesitating to leave their orchards, but fruit trees do not come into bearing in a single season. Most farmers did plant at least two or three trees, and a number of larger orchards were established. But their survival was always hazardous.

As late as 1882, the *Democrat* carried on an extended campaign in behalf of more attention to apple orchards. A good many varieties might bear abundantly for several years, then be killed by an unusually severe or prolonged winter.

Many farmers had good orchards for a few decades, but since the first World War most of the apple trees have been left un-

sprayed and unpruned. Orchards take too much time, the farmers say, and the number of pests has increased. Farmers quite generally figure that it is 'cheaper' to buy apples shipped from the state of Washington than to raise them on their own land.

In the early years a good deal of pride was attached to the natural bounty of the region. There were wild strawberries on the open uplands and both black and red raspberries on the sunny hillsides. Gooseberries were abundant, often in the tangled growth of river bottoms, along with blackberries.

High-bush cranberries were so abundant they were shipped to Eastern markets by the barrel; some of the merchants took them in trade from whoever gathered and brought them in. Low-bush huckleberries grew on a few riverside bluffs, and elderberries had a way of springing up at the edge of every road and clearing. Red and black currants made good preserves, and were frequent along prairie watercourses. Barberries and black haws were gathered "to eat fresh, out of the hand." Wild grapes hung heavy from the trees in every woodland. Red cherries and black grew freely, and so did crab apples and wild plums.

Of course those fruits were eaten most abundantly in their season, for methods of home canning had not been developed. Yet with ingenuity and patience a good deal could be preserved for winter use. Blackberries were dried and used for pies—"terribly seedy dried blackberries," Mary Price's daughter remembered them. Crab apples were cooked "in a brass kettle with a pinch of soda to take away the acid, poured off after a short time, then added some sugar, molasses, or sorghum, and cooked," and stored thus in a four- or five-gallon jar, with a clean white cloth tied over its top.

Grapes were sometimes dried and used like raisins; a few people made wine from them, though that process took more time than most housewives could afford. Out along Bear Creek wild yellow plums grew half as big as a teacup, and deliciously sweet. Mary Murphy stored them in half-barrels filled with clear spring water. Her grandchildren still remember dipping into those barrels, ranged along the earthen wall of the cellar that was dug into the

hillside beyond the kitchen. They kept their precious summer fragrance to the last individual plum, and sometimes a fruit or two could be found in the barrels as late as March. The water from those plums, left standing open for twelve or fourteen months, made vinegar.

The wild red plums were made into butter, usually with apples, if any were available. Making fruit butter was a gala, all-day occasion. The fruit was gathered and sorted the evening before, and some of the neighbors were likely to come in to help. In the morning the menfolks hung the big brass caldron kettle on a stout pole between two sawhorses set up a convenient distance from the house, started the fire beneath the kettle, and piled wood near by to keep it going. As the fruit cooked smooth and thick it was sweetened with molasses (sugar was too expensive) and stirred with the long maple paddle one of the men had whittled the winter before.

There was always a dish of the fresh butter for supper that evening, and if it was particularly fine a bowl might be sent to a neighbor's. If one of the neighborhood women was sick at apple-butter time, a four- or five-gallon jar was sure to be set aside for her family.

Farther out on the prairies, where fruit was harder to get, a kind of substitute was made from the pumpkins that grew lush in prairie gardens. When the weather grew cold, pumpkins were cut into pieces and boiled over an open fire, several kettles in succession. The boiled pumpkin was put through a barrel-press and the resultant pulp put back over the fire with molasses and spices. That was boiled, like the apple butter, till it was properly stiffened, and the jars in which it was poured were stored in a snowdrift.

It was served frozen, and Henry Silsbee, who grew up on a prairie farm northeast of Chatfield, remembered to his ninety-fifth year how delicious that 'punkin butter' was, spread on bread with its ice crystals sparkling in its rich brown. "You don't taste anything like that now," he said.

Pumpkin was also peeled, boiled, dried, and stored for pies.

Cucumbers were salted down. When they were used the rule was to "Soak all day in cold water, pour off water at night, put on fresh water, and they were ready to use—with vinegar or not. . . . They were not one bit saltier than the much prized olives of today." Corn was cut from its cob at the right stage of milkiness and dried for winter use.

Sauerkraut was made most commonly by the barrel. The cabbage was shredded with a sharp, well-scoured spade, then packed down with alternate layers of salt. In Bohemian families, barefooted children got into the barrel to tramp down the cabbage; sometimes the mother helped. Both Yankee and Norwegian households made kraut, but the Irish were slow to adopt that particular custom.

Another job for sharp autumn days was butchering. Every farmer raised at least a few hogs, and most town families had one or two, at least. Even Mrs. Easton was not above taking an orphaned litter of pigs into her kitchen to care for till they were strong enough to thrive alone.

When the porkers were well fattened the men killed and scalded the animals, and carved out the hams, shoulders, bacon, and side pork. The rest was pretty much a woman's job.

Most farmers had a 'smokehouse' where they cured the hams and bacon. First the ham or bacon was rubbed thoroughly with a mixture of salt, sugar, and saltpeter, and allowed to 'cure' for a period of time (though not for the two years prescribed for Virginia hams). Then it was hung in the smokehouse above a low fire of corncobs, or sometimes hickory wood, that filled the little building with its smoke. Meat well permeated with such smoke would keep indefinitely, and the fire was occasionally renewed to discourage spoilage.

A good deal of the pork consumed in those early years, before refrigeration was easily available, was put down in brine. Norwegians liked to slice salt pork, especially its fat, and eat it raw on flat bread. The knowledge of trichina put an end to that practice in the eighties.

There was also sausage to be made. All the pork 'trimmings'

were ground together and seasoned with salt, sage, perhaps other spices, according to the family taste, sometimes with a little cereal added for binding. Most of the sausage was made into little patties, packed down in jars, and covered with melted lard. Occasionally the gut casings were cleaned and stuffed with sausage, then hung in the smokehouse beside the hams and bacon and kept for summer use.

A delicacy peculiar to butchering time was 'head cheese.' The skull and other bony parts were boiled until the meat fell off the bones; the resultant meat-filled broth was seasoned and simmered until thick enough to jell when it cooled. It was poured into pans and sliced cold, sometimes eaten on bread, sometimes dipped in flour and fried. A variant of this dish was made by thickening the broth with corn meal; this was later sliced and fried and served with molasses. Such 'scrapple' was a mouth-watering dish to the initiate.

Butchering was a hard, messy job. One animal could rarely be entirely disposed of in a single day's work, and most farmers butchered several times a year—sometimes as many as a dozen for market, besides what their families required. Scrubbing out the grease afterwards meant another day of hard work. No wonder Mary Price's daughter exclaimed, "Oh, what an easy time the Pioneer Woman had! In later years how the men loved to tell about their hard times! . . . Oh, do not get me wound up!"

Occasionally a lamb or a sheep was butchered, but rarely a 'beef-critter,' except by the butchers of Chatfield for their town customers. A cow was more valuable for her milk, and her possible calves, than for her flesh. When a farm beef was killed it was usually divided among three or four neighbors who in their turn repaid the gift. A small amount of beef was salted and smoked and eaten as dried beef, but mostly it had to be eaten fresh, and so was never butchered except in cold weather.

Milk was really scarce in the early years. People who came from Wisconsin could bring a cow or two tied to the back of their wagons, and John Murphy brought three from Indiana. But most came without cattle, and it was a long time before every

farmer had his own supply of milk. In the first years that Ed Tuohy and his young wife lived in their little cabin beyond the top of Winona Hill, it was a great thing to carry a bucket of milk to a neighbor's for Christmas, say, or as a treat for a sick child, or a woman with a new-born baby. And a pat of butter was the wealth of the Indies.

Mary Price had milk almost from the first of her housekeeping. Like many another farm wife, she was frugal with the butter she made in her stone churn, for it brought a good price in town, and the money from the butter and eggs was her own, to use as she would. So she stored a good deal of her butter in the springhouse, between trips to Chatfield or Winona. But the labor of making it remained—and the pride of maintaining a fine quality.

Those frontier housewives made cheese also. The simplest and most common variety was 'Dutch' or 'cottage' cheese. Cream cheese was made by curdling a large amount of milk with rennet from the lining of a calf's stomach. The whey was then squeezed out and the curd pressed into shape and set away to age.

Much of the cheese marketed in Chatfield was made in copper cheese vats brought from Norway. They were huge hand-wrought bowls, four or five feet across and nearly three feet deep, with a hand-riveted seam across the center and graceful handles at each end of the seam. Most of them had started for America packed with food stuff for the family's voyage; in the first years on Minnesota farms they were apt to serve as watering troughs as well as cheese vats. Norwegian women sold cheese and *lefsa* and flat bread from door to door in Chatfield and it was generally well liked. Primost, however, was too strong for most tastes. It was a triumph of thrift, being made from whey drained off the cream cheese, boiled to thickness, and ripened into a dark cake, with a semi-liquid center. It was very strong; the Norwegians ate most of it themselves.

Another rather important source of food in the early years was the game found in the country. Few deer were left after the "Winter of the Big Snow," but prairie chickens, quail, and ruffed grouse were plentiful for years and wild ducks still linger along

the river each fall. Easton invited several of his York State friends out for a season of hunting, and in 1863 the McCormicks from Chicago—makers of the thrilling new grain reapers—camped for two or three weeks near the Big Spring north of Chatfield, for the hunting.

Many of the Yankee families, with their long frontiersman's tradition of hunting, ate a lot of game. The Bohemians, the Irish, and Norwegians did little hunting, though their American-born sons soon discovered they could make money by setting traps for the mink and muskrat and other small creatures of the waterways. Norwegians also caught a great many fish and put them down in brine as substitute for the salt-water fish to which they were accustomed.

But variety of native tradition made little difference in one orgy of game-taking that swept Chatfield and its province. Every spring, from the first settlement to the late sixties, the Chatfield Woods were visited by huge flocks of passenger pigeons, those strange and beautiful birds whose incredible numbers had been a marvel ever since Captain John Smith's report on Virginia.

They nested in the Chatfield Woods. They came in such numbers that their flight literally darkened the sky. They settled on trees so thickly that the stoutest branches broke under their weight. If they chanced to light on a field where grain had been sown but not yet harrowed under, they picked it so clean that not a blade would grow without resowing. And they were amazingly undisturbed by the presence of human beings among them.

Taking the pigeons became an annual excursion for all sorts of people in and about Chatfield. It couldn't really be called hunting. Whole families, even whole neighborhoods, would drive to the woods of an afternoon and camp for the night. At the first finger of dawn they would scatter into the woods. The men climbed trees to poke the young squabs out of their nests while the women and children picked them up and thrust them into bags and baskets. Pigeons made as good eating as you could find, if you got a young one, though the old ones that had done a

lot of traveling were pretty tough. Sometimes the larger ones were killed, plucked, and drawn there in the woods, and sold to a Chatfield merchant on the way home.

When the young birds grew large enough to roost on the limbs outside their nests the young fellows from town would go out with torches to dazzle the birds and poke them down with long poles. It grew into a delirium of exploitation. Some of them were eaten by the people who took them; some were sold on the local market to people too busy or too squeamish to take part in the hunt. And barrels and barrels of plucked and drawn squabs were shipped East. They brought a good price in Eastern cities.

Then one spring, in the late sixties, there were no pigeons. Everyone was astonished, even aggrieved, at their failure to appear. What could have happened to them?

Elaborate theories were spun: they had been caught in a storm and swept out to sea on their annual flight south; a mysterious disease had attacked and killed them; a more mysterious 'natural enemy' had overtaken them. Papers and magazines debated the grave problem for a decade and more.

It occurred to no one that the people of Chatfield, and of a thousand similar places, had any part in that disappearance. The pigeons were 'inexhaustible' just like the soil.

They still thought that way years later, when boys who had hunted pigeons were old men. They could not believe the careful collation of reports that showed how holocausts like Chatfield's had wiped out the pigeons. They were just as blind to the evidence, in their own fields, that the soil was being worn out. Three generations of experience were not enough to teach them that their own headlong exploitation was making the earth steadily poorer.

They thought the Chatfield Woods were 'inexhaustible' too. Many townsmen and most prairie farmers bought from five to fifty acres in 'the woods,' and worked all winter at cutting down the trees. When sleighing was good the road into Chatfield had a string of teams on it all day long, loaded wagons headed into town, empty ones going out. It took immense amounts of wood

to carry a family through a Minnesota winter, and most of the buildings in the province were of wood.

When the local demand for wood grew less, outside markets appeared. Thirty carloads of firewood were shipped to treeless Dakota in one single winter during the seventies. In 1882, a hundred thousand hickory poles were shipped out of Chatfield for use as barrel staves, and the *Democrat* praised the thrift and enterprise which put Chatfield products so importantly on the market.

That same year coal was first advertised for sale in Chatfield. The 'inexhaustible' woods were beginning to dwindle. By the time of the 'great depression' too many hillsides about the lovely valley stood bare. The ugly marks of erosion were so grave that Chatfield was given a CCC camp to build check dams and protect the waterways of the province.

Even the lesson of those years of labor was not enough. When the destruction of a second World War created a voracious demand for wood and more wood, a sawmill was brought into Chatfield again. Its crew of high-speed workmen ripped the remaining woods of the province off the hills and left them bare to the weather. Already those hillsides are gullied and torn. But Chatfield people 'made money' selling their wood. What happened to their soil was nobody's business—not even theirs.

Such problems as these were undreamed of in the days when Mary Price was sustaining the life of her family in the log house out in Little Egypt. The mess and the work of wood piled behind the stove and ashes to be carried out twice a day were unquestioned details in the endless duties of her household. Some of the ashes were put in a barrel with holes drilled in its bottom and sides; when spring came that barrel was set up on a trough and water poured into the barrel to leach the lye from the ashes. It was time to make soap again.

In Little Egypt, as in every neighborhood, one woman was known as a 'master hand' at soap making. She came to the Price's one fine spring day and the big iron kettle was hung over a fire

out in the back yard. There the winter's accumulation of grease was put into it, with the approved proportions of water and lye. Then the mixture was boiled for several hours, stirred all the time with the long wooden paddle kept for the soap making.

When it began to look nearly 'done,' the 'master hand' took a little out in a saucer to cool, and examined it for color and consistency, even took a gingerly taste to decide whether more lye, or grease, or water was required. When her skilled judgment called it 'done,' the kettle was lifted from the fire, left to cool a little, and emptied into the soft-soap barrel.

Fearful and wonderful was the smell of that soap. It was not ready for use until it had stood for a few weeks to "allow its ingredients to incorporate." It was used to clean everything, from faces to floors, and it was certainly no delicacy. Once in awhile Mary Price would have a small amount of specially clear grease to use for making a batch of hard soap, perfumed with bergamot leaves from the creek bottom; such soap was used very sparingly, "for nice."

She made candles, too. That was a fall job. Because there were sheep on the Price farm, she had tallow for her candles, though beef fat could be used. The Price candle mold made six candles at once; some made as many as twelve at a time. While the fat melted she fitted the molds with wicking, looping it over the rod at the top of the mold and drawing it down through the hole at the bottom and knotting it there. Then the molds were filled with tallow and set outside in the cold. When the tallow had hardened, the knot at the bottom was clipped off, the mold dipped lightly in warm water, and the candles taken out. It took a long time to make the five hundred candles that were the minimum requirement for the family.

An easier form of lighting was called the 'slut.' 'Sluts' were lamps of a pattern as ancient as those of the Egyptians: a trefoil-shaped iron box whose center compartment held a wick fed by sperm oil or melted fat in the two outer compartments. A sharp spike on one side of the contraption could be driven into the

log wall wherever the light was wanted. An even simpler lamp was sometimes made by cutting a strip of underwear, coiling it in the center of a saucer with one end pointing up, and filling the saucer with melted grease.

The exciting new 'lighting fluid' known as kerosene was known in Chatfield as early as 1858, but it cost a dollar and a half a gallon and it was apt to explode at any moment. After the Civil War it went down to twenty-five cents a gallon, and then to fifteen cents, but it still exploded too often. A Yankee peddler, more ingenious than forthright, went through the province selling an 'improved' kerosene whose bright red color was supposed to guarantee its non-explosive quality. He collected his high price and went his way, but the kerosene he left behind him exploded as merrily as mere 'store' goods.

A variety of peddlers added much to the Chatfield scene in early years. They couldn't peddle in town because of the fines set by the council. But their jingling carts went over all the remote byways to the little houses tucked away in the woods and the prairies.

The peddler's coming was as good as a party, especially where he stayed all night. He traded dishes, and dress lengths, and ribbons for whatever the farmer's wife had. Eggs, or maple sugar, or a calf's hide would buy a new kettle, or crimping irons, or needles. The gayest of all was the tin peddler's cart, hung inside and out with milk pails, and cream pans, and water dippers. It glittered and rang as it went.

By no means the least valued item in the peddler's load was a washboard. Keeping the clothes clean for the family was a continuous chore for Mary Price and her neighbors. Many women kept a hogshead filled with spring water beside the house, with enough of the lye from the wood ashes to 'break' the water and make the lime settle to the bottom. In winter, often enough, the only source of water was snow, carried into the house and melted.

Dresses and shirts had to be ironed, and so did the many petticoats required for the proper feminine silhouette. It was a long time before someone discovered that a padded board laid be-

tween two chair backs was a better place to iron than an old sheet folded on the table.

For a good many years Mary Price used a 'salamander'—a hollow iron with a solid core that was heated in the fire, then slipped into the iron to heat it for pressing. When the core had cooled it was put back into the coals until it had heated again, and the process repeated.

When she got her "sad iron" it seemed a great improvement. It also was hollow; its interior served as a firebox, with a chimney, and a draft. She filled the firebox with charcoal she had made herself, then picked up a live coal from the stove and put it into the charcoal to kindle it. She ironed with the draft closed; when the iron grew cool she opened the draft and fanned the smoldering charcoal into renewed life with the turkey wing she kept to sweep the hearth.

The family's beds, too, required an amount of labor beyond the knowledge of modern housewives. Bedsteads were fitted with wooden pegs set at ten-inch intervals all around the frame and strung with bed cord to make a coarse net. (The Chatfield stores frequently advertised the merits of their bed cord.) This cording took the place of springs. It had to be restrung often if the bed was to be even approximately straight.

The mattress that rested on the cording was usually a home-made tick filled with straw. The tick must be emptied, washed, and refilled once a year. "Wheat straw was too stiff," Mary Price's daughter remembered, "and barley straw had beards in it. Sometimes, and best of all, shredded cornhusks were used—but it took piles and piles of husks and time without end to make one."

Families who had sheep often laid wool pads over the straw ticks; others used old blankets. Most luxurious of all was a feather bed on top of the straw tick; they too were made at home, from feathers plucked from the barnyard geese that most thrifty families kept as soon as they were able, town and country alike.

The houses were as close to the fruits of the local earth as the food was. In their simplest forms they were built of logs, cut from the land on which the house was to stand, and chinked

with mud dug from the earth itself. Log houses might be of any size up to sixteen by eighteen feet, though the average was probably smaller than that.

One of the most ingenious building materials was known as 'grout'—a kind of earthen mixture not unlike adobe, whose principal ingredient was a yellow clay, the residue of volcanic ash, which is found in abundance through the Root River region. This clay, mixed with varying proportions of water, sand, and gravel, was sometimes poured directly into rough frames outlining the house. Sometimes it was pressed into large blocks that were dried in the sun and laid up like ordinary bricks. In either case the walls were given a final coating of clay-sand-and-lime on the outside and plaster on the inside.

Grout houses gave undeniably better shelter from weather extremes than any other type of structure of the period, but for some reason they were never much used. Perhaps they were too rawly earthen for a people bent upon subduing the land to patterns expressing mastery rather than adaptation.

A certain amount of limestone was quarried from the hillsides and dressed by the Irish stonecutters who came into the region, but it was too costly for general use. Less expensive and almost equally impressive was the brick made in the yard established in 1857 by an English brickmaker, a mile northwest of town. A brick building was erected across from the Medary House that same fall and has housed a drug store ever since.

One by one the log and frame buildings of Main Street gave way to brick structures, until a zoning ordinance in the eighties prohibited wooden buildings within the area defined as the business district. I. F. O'Ferrall built one of the first brick houses in town, and as prosperity became more general a good many of the more impressive houses were of brick.

But by far the greatest number of houses were built of lumber. For a good fifty years a kind of standard design was used: an 'upright' or story-and-a-half section sixteen by twenty-four feet, and a 'lean-to' ten by sixteen feet at one side. The frame was set directly upon the ground, with only a small unventilated pit

under the 'upright' for storage purposes: a full cellar was supposed to make a house colder than it would otherwise be.

The foundation was nothing but rough boards nailed over the lower part of the framing. It was banked each fall with earth or manure, but the cold that blew under and across the single floors was reason enough for multiplied petticoats—and for the chilblains that were an almost universal affliction.

The walls of such a house had little more insulation than the floors. Rough siding was nailed onto the framing, then a layer of clapboards; a layer of building paper between the two was a luxury. On the inside a single layer of lathe-and-plaster finished the walls. The 'lean-to' was commonly divided into two rooms; one served as the 'master bedroom' and the family that could spare the other for a store room was counted lucky. The lower floor of the 'upright' was a single room that served the same general purposes as the main room of a log cabin. Upstairs, the low-ceiled space was divided, usually by a calico curtain, into two rooms; men and boys slept in one, women and girls in the other. Such a house might have a window in either end of the upstairs, and as many as four windows downstairs. Its whole cost was about five hundred dollars. A good many of those first frame houses still stand in Chatfield, though they have been so altered and enlarged that few of their builders would recognize them. For the early builders, a house must first of all shut up a safe place against the violence of the weather. Windows were small and many of the finest houses were built with halls and stairways on the sunny side of the house, their living rooms scarcely touched by the sun. Despite the happy accident of streets so angled as to give each house its maximum exposure to the sun, scarcely a house in the town has been built to take full advantage of that sunlight.

As for building around a view. . . . I. F. O'Ferrall built his brick house on River Street, overlooking the whole sweep of the lower valley and its westward hills. One small window in the kitchen and another in a back chamber were its only concession to the view. When his wife remodeled the house after his death,

making it, according to the *Democrat*, "the finest mansion in Chatfield," she opened several new windows to the street, and two to the south, but she set only one facing the valley.

Every house along that street commands as lovely a stretch of landscape as the region affords, but not even the porches face it. Not until 1940 was a house built with the glory of that view as the focal point for its living room. Three generations have scarcely convinced Chatfield people that they can safely open their houses to a direct relationship with the land about them.

The first really fine house that was ever built in Chatfield remains one of its landmarks. It was built in 1857 by Beecher Gere, for his father's family and his own enlarging dignity. As the house neared completion the *Democrat* proudly quoted "a gentleman from the East" who had inspected it and pronounced it the equal in workmanship, design, and materials to anything to be found "at the East."

The new Gere house stood on the rise of land just behind the log cabin where Squire and his family had lived for three years. Not only was it larger than any other residence then in Chatfield; it had a piazza across its whole forty-foot front, and a railed-in balcony above the piazza. Many windows, as large as doors, opened onto both piazza and balcony; and when Beecher gave a party the windows gleamed with the light of unbelievably lavish candles, and ladies walked to and fro there beside their cavaliers. It was as good as a play to stand in the road, and stare, and listen; the 'common folks' talked endlessly of the fine doings of such 'aristocrats.'

From the very first, Chatfield women concerned themselves with creating the forms of what they thought of as Society. In June of 1860, both the *Democrat* and the *Republican* celebrated the "notable Pic Nic" that marked "the progress from the rudeness inseparable from the pioneer life toward a more elegant and social civilization." On June 13, four hundred and eighteen Chatfield people gathered for an idyllic festival. "The ladies" brought mouth-watering delicacies: "strawberry pie, lemon pie, cake, and all the fixins." And there were around a hundred-and-twenty

ladies to grace the occasion, forty-five of them still unmarried. There could be no better assurance of Chatfield's growth as a center of elegance.

One of the leaders in that fostering of social graces was I. F. O'Ferrall's wife. Amelia Harris was born in Mississippi, but when her father established his steamboat run from Galena to St. Paul he moved his motherless daughter to Galena, Illinois, in so many respects a transplanted Southern community. There she grew into a reigning belle, and there Mr. O'Ferrall met her and fell so headlong in love that he forgot the young woman in Chatfield to whom he was all but formally engaged.

He married Amelia Harris in December of 1857 and took her south for their honeymoon. As they returned up the Mississippi the next spring, the boat on which they were passengers raced a rival until the boiler burst and the steamer sank. The O'Ferralls were the only passengers to be rescued from that tragic wreckage. It was a dramatic beginning of their life together.

Returned to Chatfield, Mr. O'Ferrall built for his bride a brick mansion that rivaled even the Gere house. There Mrs. O'Ferrall gave parties that were the talk of Chatfield, and there, the first summer of her marriage, she entertained her friends from Galena and Mississippi. Her father's steamboat discharged a gay party at Winona, complete with carriages, horses, and servants, and their travel across the deliciously untamed miles from Winona to Chatfield was high adventure. The weeks they spent in Chatfield passed in a whirl of gaiety that even the dourest blue-nose could not ignore. The Civil War, however, prevented a second junket from Galena.

In those first years Mr. O'Ferrall rather enjoyed his wife's extravagance of social achievement, but in time the townsfolk became aware that he would have liked less of "that society business." Yet he continued to play host to such diverse groups as the Bishop and vestry of the Episcopal Church, and the Cornet Band which won honors for Chatfield the winter before his death.

When her year of widow's mourning was past Mrs. O'Ferrall enlarged and beautified her house and continued the entertaining

which gave her name the luster of legend. There were summer lawn parties, with a band from Winona and guests from as far as St. Paul and Chicago. There were winter parties where she taught the young married people of Chatfield the fascinating new game of whist.

Most wonder-touched of all were the Christmas parties that she gave year after year for the children of the Episcopal Sunday school; they still shine in memory as the very stuff of fairyland. The envious said that Mrs. O'Ferrall was stuck-up, and no better than she should be with all the wine and the goings-on in her house. But out of whatever hungers in her own nature—whether a haunting sense of exile, or a need to play the great lady, or some simpler feeling of obligation to the community which was her home—Amelia Harris O'Ferrall was one of those who infused the amorphous flux of frontier society with the cohesive power of created form.

Another woman whose influence was widely felt in Chatfield's social patterns was the wife that C. G. Ripley brought to Chatfield in 1861. Early that year Fanny Houghton Gage married her daughter to a gentleman in the train of Queen Victoria's heir apparent. Within a few weeks her son-in-law—one of the Vickers family that makes Great Britain's munitions—acted as best man when she married Mr. Ripley. The two bridal pairs sailed together for England, and it was full summer before Mr. Ripley returned to Chatfield.

He came alone, and he told no one of his marriage until he had completed a handsome brick residence on his land just west of the village. Then he went East again to bring his bride, and the new house became at once a center for a sedate but delightful social life.

The O'Ferralls left Chatfield to spend a few years in Nevada about that time, and the departure of the Land Office removed some of the more 'worldly' social leaders to other fields. Mrs. Ripley introduced some of the 'literary' forms of social enjoyment familiar to Boston society, besides taking over the Episcopal Sunday school that Mrs. O'Ferrall had directed. Each summer

there was a Sunday-school picnic on the grounds of the Ripley house, where an arborvitae hedge divided the garden from the carefully tended 'park' that surrounded it. Those occasions are no less eagerly recalled than Mrs. O'Ferrall's Christmas parties.

Mrs. Ripley made several trips to visit her daughter in England during the nearly twenty years of her life in Chatfield. When her husband was appointed chief justice of Minnesota's supreme court she went with him to St. Paul for the periods of the court's sessions. On his retirement from that responsibility the Ripleys went back to Concord—her early home as well as his parents'—and spent the rest of his life in the Old Manse. Later she went to her daughter's in England.

Mrs. Ripley was "not tall, but always very erect, with a round pretty figure . . . charming manners, a humorous look at times in her large grey eyes mingled with intense sympathy and tenderness . . ." She was blessed "with a picturesque facility of language"—and she "simply adored her husband." Her departure from Chatfield left a long vacancy that even Mrs. O'Ferrall's return did not fill.

It is not to be imagined that these two women were the only hostesses in Chatfield. Twenty or more could be named who in varying degrees did their share, building in the new town the decorum of older societies, despite limitations imposed by the West. Not many could command the resources of the two leaders, either in money or in imaginative wit, but a common though rarely articulated sense of obligation animated their efforts to create a society fit for cultivated living.

That obligation was partly expressed by the wife of an early businessman, left widowed with the narrowest financial resources. She always gave a formal dinner for the Bishop when he came to Chatfield. When a friend suggested that she spare herself the burden of that affair, she answered: "I can't afford to send my children away to school, but I can teach them to behave in Society. Entertaining the Bishop is my best opportunity for giving them that kind of education." Her daughters learned their mother's lessons well; they were included in every 'important' social event of

the town. One of them, later, was a leader in the club which did much to give Chatfield a public library.

As early as 1858, the town took pride in its literary culture. The *History of Fillmore County* published that year assured prospective settlers that Chatfield people were "decidedly a reading and a writing people"—over three hundred magazines and newspapers were received in the Chatfield post office each month. A little later the students of the Academy organized the Washington Irving Literary Society, which collected a small library and regaled the community with literary programs through the brief life of the Academy.

What books and how many the Society owned has not been discovered, though one gap in the list was humorously recalled thirty years after the Academy closed. In a paper written for the "Attic Bee" literary society, G. H. Haven poked gentle fun at the youthful presumption with which he had offered America's most popular author the honor of giving "a complete set of his works" to the Chatfield society that carried his name. "No doubt my letter never reached him," Mr. Haven concluded, "or perhaps the books were lost in being shipped to Minnesota."

Somewhat later, Chatfield people organized an Atheneum, which for an undefined period bought and circulated books for its membership. At least part of the time the Atheneum books were kept in Mr. Haven's store, as a place convenient to all the members.

But by 1879 a Chatfield Library Association had succeeded the Atheneum. Its membership was probably more inclusive than the Atheneum's had been. In that year it spent \$95 for new books, \$13 for the services of a librarian, and \$2.60 for bookcases. The library was housed in the millinery shop of Miss Anna Darrah, one of Chatfield's most respected business women. The members and subscribers of the Association drew 2,049 books in 1879, and brought a lecturer to town for the benefit of the library.

That year's book list is probably representative of the collection: Jules Verne, Bret Harte, Mark Twain, and William Dean Howells were each represented by two or more titles, along with

the works of Artemus Ward, and General Sherman's memoirs. Three travel books and *McReady's Reviews* balanced the gentle sentiment of *Bitter Sweet*, *Barriers Burned Away* and *What Can She Do?*

From 1892 to 1895 a Young Men's Christian Association seems to have carried on the function of providing a library for the town. In that group the dominance of exclusively Yankee leadership was broken: the president of the Y.M.C.A. was the son of Bohemian parents; its secretary was a young man who had come from Sweden a few years before. When the Y broke up, it turned its books over to the high-school library, which apparently loaned all books to whoever wanted them. That was the status of Chatfield's library service until 1917, when a Carnegie grant supplemented local funds to build a public library.

A common interest in reading drew many different groups together at various times. Reading and discussing new books continued as a social diversion for some years after Mrs. Ripley left Chatfield, and an ambitious hostess frequently planned a dinner or evening party around the life and works of such a writer as Burns or Shakespeare. Not until after the turn of the century did literary pleasures take on the air of an exclusively feminine prerogative, though for some time before that Chatfield's most highly visible exponent of culture was a woman.

Elizabeth Barnard was an Englishwoman who brought with her a considerable range of learning and a rather unusual library. Calf-bound volumes of Cicero, Vergil, Voltaire, Cowper, Milton, and Addison, and an early edition of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* graced her book shelves, along with Owen Meredith's *Lucile* and the *Poems* of Eliza Cook. As she and her goldsmith-druggist husband established their place in Chatfield life, Mrs. Barnard was increasingly active as a teacher of history, of French, of music, and other areas of culture. The remembrances of those who knew her indicate that she made a strong impression on the women who joined her 'classes.' So serious was her dedication to learning that she felt, the legend persists, that it was unseemly for her ever to smile. Certain irreverent masculine snortings tempt

one to speculate on how much she may have helped the local acceptance of the spreading attitude that culture was the business of women, not of men.

Mrs. Barnard was a poet in her own right. Innumerable elegiac verses appeared "by request" in the *Democrat*. Their quality is fairly represented in the verse "On the Death of Jennie Mills":

A prayer went up to the courts above
That thy young life God would spare;
It rose from hearts full of hope and love,
Up to Him who answereth prayer.
An answer of blessing came instead,
And 'grace sufficient' was given,
A glorious light shown round thy head
Which merged in the light of heaven.

This appeared in 1883, just after the publication, "By the Author" of Mrs. Barnard's volume entitled *Heart Offerings*. The *Democrat* took duly respectful notice of "the little gem" and assured its readers that the book was "quite elegantly bound."

There was plenty of verse, not much worse than Mrs. Barnard's, in the columns of the *Democrat* during the last two or three decades of the century. It has a certain interest as evidence that mid-western people were still sufficiently unself-conscious to make such fumbling gestures toward the public expression of inchoate personal feelings, but it scarcely enriches the total of American literature.

Some of the vigorous topical verse that turned up in the *Democrat* from time to time looks to today's reader rather better than the elegiac outpourings that were most frequent. An amusing drawing of street-corner loafers accompanied a sixty-line satire on the

. . . crowd of idle Loafers . . .
Standing 'round upon the door-step,
Sitting down upon the railing, . . .
Filling every vacant space up.
After supper every loafer,

Every ragged, homely loafer,
 Every dandy, 'biled shirt' loafer,
 With his pipe and his tobacco,
 With both hands stuck in his pockets,
 Nightly stands around the doorway, . . .
 Smokes, and chews, and spits tobacco,
 Knocks off hats, and swears, and wrestles . . .
 And the people of our village—
 Just the people, not the loafers—
 Wonder why this dispensation,
 Why this thundering scourge of loafers . . .
 Gathers nightly 'round the office . . .
 And some men, with souls irreverent,
 Wonder if Almighty Wisdom
 Could discover why the loafers . . .
 Line the corners of the office
 Every evening after supper—
 Every evening until bed-time.

Another bit caught a familiar mood of springtime exasperation:

Unpack the hairy buffalo,
 Hang up the summer hat.
 Poke up the fire, make it go,
 Tuck up the squealing brat.
 The extra quilts produce,
 Stuff up the broken pane.
 Jump into bed,
 Cover your head—
 May has caught cold again.

One Chatfield poet achieved national publication. H. W. Holley found time between newspapers and railroads to get four volumes issued by established Eastern publishers, including Harper's. Most of his verse was vigorously satiric, about figures familiar to any Western scene. A good many Chatfield persons can be detected behind the thin disguise of Holley's verse, but its fashion is outmoded. One passage is interesting for its doggerel expression of the idea which Emerson had argued so eloquently twenty-odd years before in "The American Scholar":

Wanted! A Poet! one that can go o'er
Some other track than that well trod before;
An independent thinker, who dares look
With eyes wide open into Nature's book;
Who is no willing slave to foreign rules;
Who apes no custom of established schools;
Who studies not so much the *standard* books,
As his own country's mountains, lakes, and brooks;
Whose song is not an echo, but a peal
Fresh, clear and ringing, which men's hearts can feel.

Many who never saw a line of their writing in print knew the solace of putting words together to impose the semblance of fixity on the flux of their days. Keeping a journal was a resource in both town and country. One invalid recorded the daily weather, and details of family and neighborhood doings that she knew chiefly by report. Another woman set down all the new babies and the sick and the dying that she helped to care for. A young husband wondered over the inner miracles of early manhood, and in later years made weekly summaries of Chatfield's growth and political tensions. Even J. C. Easton jotted down his business travels through two or three years. His brother-in-law, Lucian Johnson, kept track for almost twenty years of the "bargains" he made and the "snorts" he shared with his cronies.

Few of those early diaries were as self-revealing as the one kept from November, 1862, to the following July by Mary Caroline Price. She was a sister-in-law of Mary Price, whose housekeeping was so vividly recorded by her daughter. Mary Caroline was only nineteen, and much of her diary is in the approved manner of Fanny Fern annuals and Mrs. Sedgewick's rose-leaf sentimentalities. Yet something deeper than an outmoded fashion speaks occasionally in the girl's attempt to interpret for herself the world that she knew.

An unstaled passion for "these grand Minnesota prairies" runs all through her pages. She found them "exhilarating, inspiring," and was never in "such good spirits as when riding over those prairies." Morning and evening she looked with fresh delight on

the world around her, and wrote of its sights and sounds and fragrances.

Besides her delight in the summer land, her diary recorded a constant flow of visiting through the neighborhood. From mid-April to early July she paid thirty-eight separate visits (not counting her morning music practice at a neighbor's) and mentioned sixty-two callers either at school or at the house where she happened to be, besides four group-trips to church and town-meeting. Winter somewhat limited that social exchange; yet from late November to early February she went visiting a round dozen times, besides weekly singing schools and almost as frequent "sleigh-rides and social parties."

In the privacy of her journal she practiced a part of the doctrine that Emerson pleaded, but she failed to find either the individual power to carry her farther, or the full social integration that might have satisfied her needs. She was just articulate enough to leave a dim report of a hunger she was never able to define.

It was, of course, the continuous hunger of human beings to find or create a form through which they can interpret the seeming-chaotic movement of their world. From Mary Price's housekeeping to the preachers' reporting of heavenly courts, the same drive for creating order was at work.

One expression of that quest for an ordered tradition was the increasingly elaborate observances of Christmas. Lavish festivities at that season were by no means universal in the Yankee communities from which Chatfield settlers had come. J. C. Easton's brother-in-law, S. W. Johnson, had been fascinated by the "great amount of amusement furnished to children" by the families he knew during his years of study in Germany. He wrote to his York State family a long account of the toys and sweetmeats, and "the Christmas tree, a pine branch 5 or 6 feet high, set upright in a wooden pedestal, having little candles made of various colored material burning at the ends of twigs, and hung with ribbons, colored papers, a lot of nuts, raisins, little cakes, etc."

The strong influence of the Irish tradition of midnight mass, with its lights and pageantry and Christ-child images, may have

played a part in accentuating the Christmas observances in Chatfield, but some families had the tradition of a tree firmly fixed when they went to the West. One such household, too far out on the prairies to have a real Christmas tree, cut a wild plum tree from the creek thicket and bound every twig with green paper to satisfy their longing for a Christmas tree. In another, the hired man drove fifteen miles to cut a cedar for the children, and was almost lost in a blizzard bringing it home. Many of those trees were poorly enough decked, but Christmas was kept in some fashion from the first, in nearly every family, and after the Civil War the Chatfield stores advertised increasing riches of things to be bought and given for Christmas.

Most of the children's toys were homemade, even so. Henry Silsbee remembered some really exciting playthings he had. His father killed and stuffed a badger that made a wonderful toy, and there was a homemade sled another year, on which he slid from the ridgepole of the house clear across the yard when the January blizzard piled the snow solid against the eaves of the house. A blacksmith uncle, who lived a mile down the road, made a wagon for his boy and Henry to play with, and the two youngsters hacked out a road from Henry's house clear to the top of the bluff, a good half mile distant. They built themselves a stone house at the top of the bluff, using their wagon to "haul in supplies." When they could "cop a few eggs" or a handful of potatoes they would stop at the pond to wrap them in mud, then roast them in their fireplace under their roof of bundled grass.

When Henry and his cousin were eight they made a threshing machine, complete with cylinder, spout, fan, straw-carrier—everything the big machine had but an elevator. When the wheat was ripe they put their machine onto the wagon and took it out to the field, cut off the heads of some of the wheat, and threshed it in their miniature machine that turned with a hand crank. They even made themselves tiny sacks to hold their grain. People came for miles around to see the small-scale wonder. "That was our kind of play, mostly," Mr. Silsbee remembered in his ninety-third year, "—tinkering."

Other boys cared more for playing ball, though not many could afford to buy one. It was a poor father who couldn't take his cobbler's kit and make a ball out of leather sections cut from an old boot top, sewed over a sphere of hard-twisted rags the mother supplied. One pair of brothers were more ambitious. They caught a woodchuck when they wanted a new baseball, skinned it, "put down" the hide in a pan of wood ashes and creek water, and scraped the hide clean when it had "cured." The hair came off "just as smooth and even as your hand," and when the hide had soaked for two or three weeks in their mother's soap barrel it was as white as any buckskin. The balls they made out of that sort of leather were the envy of all their friends.

Little girls, of course, wanted dolls. One little girl remembered all her life how heartbroken she was when the china head was smashed from the rag body of her precious dolly. No new doll was to be had, so she dressed an old hammer in the dead doll's clothes, and cuddled it as well as she could when she and her sister tended their 'babies' in the playhouse they had contrived in the straw shed. The ache of that difficult make-believe came back to her when she dressed dolls for her grandchildren. Another recalled how furious she always was, no matter how often it happened, when her big brother strung up her doll to "hang by the neck until she is dead," as he loved to intone. Yet she and that same brother never failed to hang around their mother when apples were being peeled, begging for an unbroken peel to toss over a shoulder and see by the way it fell whether their wish would come true. They loved, too, to 'steal' raisins, and sugar lumps, when their mother was not looking. And it was hard for a little girl to stifle her laughter when a big brother "took just one little diggle" at the most solemn moment of family prayers.

That home was a happy one, but there were other children who lived in less happy places. One man, now full of years and honors, still remembers the time he found a knife that had been dropped on the circus grounds. It was a wonderful knife—four blades and a shining haft—such a possession as he had never dared even dream of having, in his barren and loveless days. Then a lordly

young buck claimed he had seen the knife first, and demanded its surrender. When the boy stoutly refused, the young man pretended to change his mind and asked for a look at the knife. The boy, trusting and proud, handed it over, only to see it thrust into that grown man's pocket. At the boy's wail of protest the man said, "I'll make you a give-or-take offer: you give me a quarter and take the knife, or the other way round." . . . "He knew I never had a quarter to my name," the boy-grown-man remembers. "What I should have done was make him go before a Justice and make him give it up, but I didn't know enough then."

There were other unhappy stories of children. Early in January, 1890, a twelve-year-old girl was arrested for having stolen a book from one of the stores—actually arrested by the marshal, and her story printed in the paper. She had given the book to a teacher; it was the only present she could find when all the other children were bringing things their mothers had made. The marshal held her in jail for four days until she pled guilty, then let her go, even though she was "suspected of other thefts. . . . she is thought to be scared out of a career as a thief." Thus the *Democrat* withheld the child's name, but in a town as small as Chatfield there could scarcely have been a person who did not know exactly who she was.

That was half a century ago. But only the other year the city fathers decided the way to enforce proper respect for elders was to refuse the petition of high-school youngsters for a youth canteen, even though the youngsters begged to do the work of getting it ready for themselves. . . . There have been wide differences in the experience of children in Chatfield. The man who found-and-lost the wonderful knife has been known to say, "If I had to take my choice of living through my childhood again, and going to hell, I'd take hell." But a woman of nearly his own age rocks as she retells the things she remembers; "If heaven is any better than my childhood . . .," she smiles and is silent a little, ". . . it'll be all right."

PART

Eight



The War Drums Throb



“COMPANY HALT!” forty-odd ill-assorted pairs of boots scuffed into line.

“Present arms!” The guns swung awkwardly forward were of forty-odd different styles, gathered from all over the Chatfield province. One of them had been to the War of 1812, another had gone through the Cumberland Gap with Boone. Some couldn’t be fired for love or money, others had brought down prairie chickens for the dinners eaten that very day by the boys who carried them.

“Company at ease!” The muskets clattered irregularly to the floor and Captain Bishop turned to Colonel Jones in low-toned colloquy. The colonel’s grandfather had gone with Boone to Kentucky, and the Company had invited him to be present at their drill.

Lincoln had not yet reached the White House, but the military spirit raged in Chatfield. With the Douglas defeat, J. W. Bishop had joined the Republicans in organizing the company, and even Major Bennett of the Land Office had nothing to say against it. Bennett was pale and distraught those trying days, despite the bustle of the Land Sale: old allegiances pulled hard against each other. Easton was convinced that nine-tenths of the sentiment of Minnesota was with Lincoln. “If there is any fighting necessary to be done to preserve this Glorious Union,” he wrote his New York brokers, “we are ready for it *this* winter.”

Then the Rebs fired on Fort Sumter, and the governor of Minnesota ordered the Chatfield Guards to report to St. Paul for induction into the First Minnesota. Recruits flocked to the Company and three times a day the throb of drums and the shrilling of a fife filled the valley.

Suddenly an order came for the Company to disband. Captain Bishop and the Republican governor had had a misunderstanding, Easton wrote his father-in-law. But Bishop started in right away to raise a new company, this time with some of the leading men in town as its officers. Bishop was chosen captain once more, but all the other officers were well-known Republicans, including J. C. Easton as second lieutenant.

When orders came for the Chatfield Guards to muster in as Company A of the Second Minnesota, they marched off bravely enough. The flags flew, the fife shrilled, and the drums rolled heartily to the cheers of the townsfolk gathered to see the company off. They began their march at the park, went down Main Street to the Medary House, then turned eastward toward the hill. Easton and Holley and Griswold cheered them, as did a dozen others who had petitioned the governor for the Company's acceptance; they had hired substitutes to go in their places.

As the Company came to Winona Hill they found it hard to keep up their swaggering pride, for there the mothers watched with brimming eyes. Only the drum and the moving feet were heard as Captain Bishop led his men up the flank of Winona Hill, and a woman's smothered sobs threatened the touch of panic.

Then one of the boys broke out of his place in the ranks. "Wait a minute!" he yelled in startled dismay. "I forgot my gun!"

The crowd roared with grateful laughter. That boy was never known to remember anything! "You'd forget your head if it wasn't fastened on!" someone yelled, and another shouted huzzas for Captain Bishop's good-natured order to halt. The grip of tragedy was broken, and the hill hummed with cheers when the Company finally marched out of sight.

The town seemed empty when they had gone. But not many weeks passed before Major Bennett of the Land Office began

recruiting. He applied for a colonel's commission, on the strength of his experience in the Mexican War, but when that was refused he and Beecher Gere raised a second Chatfield company with Bennett as captain.

Holley had been appointed to take over the Land Office by that time, and had sold his newspaper to a man who moved it down to the county seat and renamed it the *Preston Republican*. In October, Holley and the Land Office moved to Easton's town of Winnebago, and Bennett marched his company over the hill. Chatfield was empty indeed as winter closed in.

Before Christmas a third company was being raised. Norman Culver, the millwright, did most of the recruiting. When the farm boys marched up and down in the streets with Culver at their head his twelve-year-old son Charlie was so excited he didn't care whether school kept or not. He got old Mr. Denny, out west of town, to teach him how to drum, and when his mother finally gave up trying to make him go to school he spent all his time marching behind the men thumping his drum.

Somehow he managed to go along when the company reported to Fort Snelling. Maybe because he was too much of a handful for his mother to manage alone. At Fort Snelling, Dr. Mayo who examined the men for the army said he was altogether too little to enlist. But when he heard the boy would be with his father he let him stretch up tall—on his tiptoes—and so passed him as drummer boy for Company B of the Fifth Minnesota.

After a month at Fort Snelling most of the Fifth was ordered South, but Company B was sent to Fort Ridgely, two days' travel down in the Indian country, just below the Sioux Agency on the Minnesota River.

That was where twelve-year-old Charlie Culver learned what the Army was like. He beat all the calls for his Company, from reveille to taps. He stood guard in his turn. He lived in the barracks among the men. One of the first days he went up to headquarters to see his father but was so roundly disciplined that he never tried that again. If the boy sometimes wished he were back in Chatfield with his schoolmates he never admitted it.

So the long spring idled into summer, and Charlie Culver whiled away some of the hours talking with the young Sioux braves who lounged in friendly fashion about the Fort. The days were dull enough and the boy talked as eagerly as any of how much livelier things would be when they got on active duty in the South.

One hot August morning he got up half an hour early and went out on the parade grounds, where he found the sergeant of the Regular Army who had charge of the ordinance of the Fort. "Hello, youngster," he said. "You're out pretty early." They walked across the parade grounds together and saw the sun come up, as big as a wagon wheel, and just as red. . . .

In the slanting light they saw a man coming across the prairie north of the Fort and went to meet him.

The man was staring-wild. "The Injuns has broke out," he gasped. "They're killin' people. I stepped over a dead man's body to get out of the Agency. I seen two since I left there. I been all night on the road to tell you."

That was the beginning. In half an hour the first wagon came—a man bringing a neighbor that was wounded. He went back to get his own family, but they never came. The Indians got them.

Men and women and children poured into the Fort and they babbled of the terror they had seen. As the confusion mounted, the drummer boy from Chatfield lost count of the terrible things he saw and heard.

Late in the afternoon someone let him look through a spy glass. Out on the prairies a string of Indians a mile long was cavorting around, showing off their dexterity with their horses. They were so exalted with all their victories they couldn't think of a thing but celebrating.

That was lucky for the Fort, because half the soldiers had gone off the day before, led by Charlie Culver's father, to fetch lumber for a hospital. A man rode off to warn them back in a hurry but no one knew whether he would get through alive. And they hadn't even breastworks around the Fort.

A detachment set off to relieve the Agency, twenty-odd miles

up the river. The captain and half of his men were killed before they got half way, and a seventeen-year-old Chatfield boy, Tom Gere, led the remnant back to the Fort. They were all Chatfield men. Charlie Culver saw the wounded come crawling back to the Fort, and counted the ones who were missing.

The Indians came nearer after that, and the boy saw men killed when they went down the dugway to the river for water. Flaming arrows were shot into the Fort, and men and women scrambled to cover the roofs with earth. The women in the Fort melted lead and molded bullets for the harried garrison.

The second night Lieutenant Culver brought his men safely back into the Fort, but they were still too few to make a sally against the Sioux. For nine days they kept caution before troops came down from Fort Snelling and drove the Indians north. The drummer boy could not remember having slept that whole time.

The tale of terror blazed across the state. It came to Easton's town of Winnebago, where Easton was making more money than ever out of the Land Office business. So horrifying were the tales of massacre that the town was emptied in a panic of flight.

Easton himself drove the hundred miles to Chatfield in less than twenty-four hours, goaded by fears for his wife and their baby son. When he had assured himself that Chatfield was in no immediate danger he rode off for the county seat, twelve miles south, and his wife wrote to her father in York State that Jason was raising a company to march against the Indians. Her house, she reported, was full of people who had fled from the Indians.

The story outraced Easton's speed. Along all the roads families were hurrying to the greater safety they thought the towns would provide. The word flew from farm to farm.

A frightened boy brought it to one Norwegian cabin south of Chatfield, where the men were scything grain beside the river, and two neighbor women with their children were helping get dinner for the harvesters. One of the women rushed down to tell the men and begged the others to go with her and hide in the woods. But the other woman was a Yankee, with the re-

membrance of Yankee forebears who had known such terrors in older Wests. She filled a kettle with ashes and set it to heat on the coals. Let the murdering redskins come! They wouldn't get far with their scalping when she threw red-hot ashes in their eyes.

Even her intrepidity was at length persuaded that safety lay in numbers. The men went off to a Yankee neighbor whose cabin stood on a hilltop, and under his direction they stationed themselves to watch from every vantage point. The women took the dinner off the stove and all the food they could find in a hurry and piled it into the wagon with the children.

At the meeting place there was some comfort in being together. But there was also a terrible fear. Only the two Yankees had guns. The rest were armed with clubs and scythes and axes. What could they do against the Indians? All day they stayed together, and well into the next day, before the thought of overripe grain sent them back to their cabins and fields.

Out on Bear Creek, John Murphy was working at his sawmill when his two hired men went racing into the house and out again. He stepped out to stop them. "Well, boys, what's the trouble?" he asked. "Are you going to jump the job?"

"We're going to fight the Injuns," they said and panted out the story they had heard from a passer-by, nowise diminishing it in the telling. They asked for the horses, but John Murphy said no. When they were gone he led his team deep into the woods and hid them. There might be Indians around, but when a scare like that was on, a lot of white men didn't act any better than Indians when it came to another man's horses.

Many a farmer heard the news in his fields and unhitched his horses from the wagon, or the new-fangled harvester, he was driving, and went off to fight the redskins. Most all the young fellows went, and they took half the horses, and most of the guns in the country, often enough without so much as a by-your-leave. Little groups came together in Chatfield, and Milo White gave blankets and provisions from his shelves to equip the militia. Some of the married men brought their families to town and rode away.

Every house in Chatfield was crowded with refugees; some of them had come from as far west as Winnebago.

For a week each day's rumors were worse than those of the day before. The frightened townsfolk burned with indignation when McKenny expressed the opinion in his paper that there weren't any Indians within a hundred miles. The event proved he was right.

A company of militia, waiting to make up its mind about where to march, eased the torments of resentment and whiskey, with mighty blusterings about what they would do to the dirty copperhead that called himself an editor. McKenny and his friends spent the night on guard in the printing shop.

But Chatfield suffered no attack, either from militia or from Indians, and the frenzy slowly subsided as news came that the Sioux were driven north and defeated by militia under the command of General Sibley.

No one remembered that years before Sibley's plea in Congress for "terms of conciliation and real friendship" to the tribes was also a plea to protect the country from "an awful retribution of Providence." The only providence most people perceived in the Sioux revolt of 1862 spoke in apocalyptic thunders from the pulpits, commanding the righteous to thrust in their sharp sickles and cast the redskin devils into the winepress of God's wrath.

And who, the hotheads clamored, could fail to see the mark of the beast on such a man as Sibley, who still flaunted the daughter of his dead squaw, even now that he was decently married to a white woman? When McKenny praised Sibley's campaign the ugly whisper of squaw man went about Chatfield, reviving the rumor that McKenny's own wife was half squaw. . . . There were ugly days that summer in Chatfield, and in later years people were glad to forget some of the things done then.

There were no draft riots in Chatfield or its province, but here and there a man disappeared from his farm and made his way to Canada to avoid being pressed for the army. The *Democrat*

charged that the Norwegians were learning the perfidy of Republican promises. Conscription officers, the *Democrat* said, were forcing more Norwegians than anyone else, despite promises of exemption that had beguiled the Norwegians into voting Republican.

The drafting of men for the army was less scientifically totalitarian in the Civil War than in World War II. If a given locality could raise its full quota by enlistment, it was exempt from the operation of the draft machinery. Chatfield, like many another community, went to considerable lengths to gain such exemption, both for practical advantages involved and from local pride. When recruiting fell off, in the summer of 1862, several of Chatfield's leading Republicans went to Winona to consult with Senator Windom on means for encouraging enlistments.

Immediately thereafter a Loyal National League was organized and a Chatfield War Meeting called, which passed resolutions calling for a big army and for a uniform county bounty of at least twenty-five dollars for every man who enlisted. At the same time the League was raising a fund for local payments to recruits. Milo White led off the subscription list with forty dollars, and that sum was later matched by Ripley, Haven, and Easton.

Over three hundred dollars was raised, mostly in five-dollar amounts, and within a week sixty-five volunteers were paid five dollars apiece from that fund. Shortly afterwards the county commissioners voted a bounty of twenty-five dollars to each single man, fifty to each married man, who enlisted.

When Lincoln called for a half million men early in 1863, the townships took over the bounty problem. Elmira township paid fifty dollars to each of its thirteen volunteers that April. The following February the township voted "to pay bounties of one hundred dollars to so many volunteers as should be required to fill the quotas of said Town."

Seven months later the township bounty was raised to three hundred dollars in order to get the one volunteer still required by the quota, and that larger sum was paid to each of the eight

volunteers to answer the last call issued in the war. The cost of 'volunteers' came higher as men heard of their neighbors dying in the long bloody struggle.

Charlie Culver was the first of Chatfield's soldiers to come home from the war. He had gone south with his father's company when the Indians were beaten, and from Vicksburg Captain Culver got his son discharged and put him on a steamer going north. From Winona to Chatfield the boy 'staged it', and when he got home he went to bed and slept.

Twenty-four hours later his mother tried to rouse him enough to eat, but the boy shook his head and slept on. For three whole days and nights his family waited for him to waken. He was all worn out from his soldiering. He was willing enough to go back to school, but playing hero to his schoolmates wasn't as much fun as he had thought it would be.

Feeling intensified as the war dragged out its tragic length. In 1862, Easton had boasted that Minnesota had "wiped out the so-called Democracy"; yet two years later the election returns in Chatfield were within measurable distance of a Democratic majority, though the county and state were safely Republican.

A good share of Chatfield's 'opposition vote' could be credited to Editor McKenny, who maintained a running criticism of all things Republican.

Again and again McKenny warned that the nation's "sectional pilot" was letting "black Abolitionists" drive the country to "the shores of everlasting ruin." When the Emancipation Proclamation was issued the *Democrat* prophesied that the soldiers would refuse to fight when they learned they were being sent out to die so that "niggers should be the equal of white men."

One of his bitterest outcries was against the performance of "a very silly young lady" at a promenade following a "donation for the Baptist minister . . . Egged on by older heads" the girl insisted on taking as her partner the Negro boy who had recently been hired by Easton—"Black George, also known as Easton's Nigger." The girl had paraded shamelessly through the promenade on the Negro's arm, and the next day had her justly humiliating

reward when "the nigger presented her with a fifty cent pair of white cotton gloves." The whole affair was an infamous attempt to "cram the doctrine of miscegenation" down people assembled for "a charitable function," and McKenny quoted Othello against such

. . . judgment maimed and most imperfect
Against all rules of nature.

The type for that outburst was set by young Will Murphy, who had come in from his father's farm to live with the McKennys and work in the printing office. He had learned typesetting quickly, and his country senses were quickened by the unfamiliar excitements of living in town. Every happening of the whole countryside sifted through the endless talk he heard in Chatfield's stores and saloons and streets. The best listening post of all was the *Democrat* office, though much of what was said there never was set in type.

When smallpox broke out, the *Democrat* warned its readers to stay away from the victims of the disease but did not report how two who had died in Chatfield were buried. All Chatfield repeated that story, half shamefaced at the fears which had left only one man in all Chatfield with courage enough to help a neighbor. The mother and the daughter of one family, who lived a block above the Medary House, had both died; their bodies were lowered from an upstairs window in the night, and taken away by a friend who waited outside and gave them such burial as he could manage alone.

The good friend was unscathed by the dread disease, though another man, who rode past the house a few days later when the blankets and clothing of the dead were being burned, caught the smallpox, he swore, from the smoke that blew upon him. He never lost his grudge at the family whose sickness caused him to be pock-marked.

Out on Bear Creek one of the families got the smallpox from using blankets their boy had sent home from the army. The whole family came down at one time, and the neighbors were

all scared to go into the house, though they took care of the livestock and left dishes of hot food on the doorstep where one of the sick folks could crawl out and take it into the house.

The *Democrat* reported the Thanksgiving dinner that Isaac Day served to the wives and children of twenty of Chatfield's soldiers. It was a wonderful feast—he even gave them oysters, that prime treat of the frontier—and one of the ladies offered a touching prayer for the success of the Union armies and the safe return of absent loved ones. The *Democrat* congratulated Mr. Day on his generosity and patriotism, but as he set the type for that story Will Murphy remembered the talk he'd heard about how Old Ike must be trying to buy off his conscience the way he'd bought off the conscription officers who were going to take him to the army the year before.

Nearly two hundred men from Chatfield itself went into the army, and more than that number enlisted from its province. From time to time one of the men came home wounded, and there were many who would never return. Early in 1864 the survivors of Chatfield's first Company came home, the term of their enlistment completed. The town went wild with rejoicing and gave the returning heroes such a banquet as the Medary House had never seen before.

Captain Bishop had come home a Colonel and he announced at the banquet that he would re-enlist for the duration of the war. A good many of the others did likewise and new enlistments took a great spurt from their example. Within three weeks Colonel Bishop went back to Fort Snelling with a full company, and not long afterwards Chatfield heard that Judson Wade Bishop was made a Brigadier General. (He was later to write the official history of the Second Minnesota with which he served.)

When the call was issued six months later for another half million men, Easton and other staunch Republicans voiced bitter resentment at "some of our sourheaded democracy" who argued that a peace should be made before more men were sacrificed.

Recruiting efforts in the province were redoubled and a hundred and fifty men marched out of Chatfield that August. The long anxious vigil stretched through the winter.

Then came the news of Richmond's fall, and Chatfield rejoiced that the war was almost over. McKenny arranged for a special courier to bring the expected news of Lee's surrender from Winona, the nearest telegraph station. . . . The rejoicing at that news had scarcely spent itself when another dispatch brought more dreadful news. Lincoln was assassinated.

The news came to McKenny in the late afternoon and after the first stunned moment he set his presses to work on a broadsheet announcing the catastrophe. He kept the courier in his office lest the effect of the "scoop" should be lost.

A kind of hush fell on the town as the broadsheets passed from hand to hand. But before Will Murphy got back to the printing office the ugly murmurings had begun. One loafer tore his broadsheet into bits and swore he'd "larn McKenny to make money out-a killin' Honest Abe." Another "reckoned he'd enjoy to make pye out-a McKenny's type." The notion grew that the *Democrat* office would make "right smart of a bonfire."

McKenny's friends carried sober warnings to the editor that there might be trouble ahead. He was neither surprised nor daunted, and in the midst of his planning he found time to send Will Murphy out to Bear Creek to warn his father. The word would spread through the countryside like wildfire, and like wildfire no man could foresee what it might consume. John Murphy had been too staunch a Democrat to rest secure from danger.

The boy set off across the hills with a handful of broadsheets to leave at the farms he passed. Twilight was gathering, and men were leading their oxen home after the long day's plowing. They took the sheets and read them wonderingly, but the boy was gone before they could frame their questions. In one house where he knew the woman could not read he stopped long enough to tell her the news. She threw up her apron and cried, "Glory be! Now Tim'll come home from Canada!"

When he got home his father had just finished a job of sawing

and stood outside the mill talking with two or three neighbors. The boy gave the paper to his father. John Murphy read it without a word, then nailed it up on the side of his mill. "I reckon you'll all want to read the news," he said, and went off into the house with his son.

All the Murphys on Bear Creek kept watch that night, but nothing happened. A few of the hotheads in the neighborhood tried to stir up trouble and passed around the story that John Murphy had shouted "Hooray!" when he heard that Lincoln was dead. But others remembered how often John Murphy helped out his neighbors, and the mob never got under way.

Trouble came nearer to happening in Chatfield. McKenny took his family down to the *Democrat* building where some of his friends helped him stand guard that night. Others kept watch on the streets. Some of Chatfield's chief Republicans helped break up little knots of men who swore they would fix the damned copperhead.

It was far past midnight when the last drunken mobster had left the streets, but even then McKenny did not relax his guard. For two more nights he kept watch. Then the anger faded out, and the people of Chatfield were thinking of the return of their soldiers.

They came by ones and twos and dozens. From Fort Snelling and from Winona they struck across the country, carrying the memories of long miles of distant land where they had marched. As they came into the Root River country their eyes leaped to each familiar landmark, measured every new field that had been made while they were gone. They walked over hills and through rivers, cutting straight through the country to their homes with the sure instinct of a generation that was walking across a continent.

One little girl, out gathering berries on the point of land between two branches of the river on her father's farm, saw fifteen of them coming through the woods, shouting at each other as they came. She hid herself in the bushes as they waded through one river and plunged across to the next. They passed so near

that she could have touched them, but she was shy of the bearded men in the funny peaked caps.

They splashed through the second river and on towards town never knowing they were watched. They had been in country as strange as a foreign land, and they were returning to their own places with a pride and a humility that swelled beyond their own understanding.

But of these things they had no words to speak when they came to their families and friends. They stood between noise and silence, and none of the things they had felt could ever be said.

Perhaps they never were said, even when "the boys in blue" gathered for long evenings in their new organization, the Grand Army of the Republic. But something of the nature of those things found expression in the story of General Zollicoffer's trunk.

Chatfield's first company had part in the battle of Mill Springs where that general was defeated and killed. When the fighting was over some of the men found the general's trunk. They packed it with other 'relics' and sent it home for safekeeping. It was on display in one of the stores for a while and brought out for Company A's homecoming banquet, then put away in somebody's attic and forgotten.

Then, near the turn of the century, a strange letter came from the South. It was addressed to "The Men of Company A, Second Minnesota Regiment, Chatfield, Minnesota," and when it was opened it told a touching story.

The writer was engaged to marry a granddaughter of the lost General Zollicoffer. The one thing the young lady wanted for a wedding present was the trunk that her grandfather had used. The young man had searched the records and had come to the guess that the trunk might possibly be in Chatfield. He offered to pay any sum that was asked for its safe delivery to his fiancée.

The story went all over town and its quality of wonder and romantic faithfulness filled everybody's thoughts. The old trunk was pulled out of its dusty corner and put on display again in one

of the store windows. The town's best blacksmith made a metal plate with an inscription that told how the trunk had been found, and the names of the men who were giving it to the General's granddaughter.

Then it was shipped south, at the Chatfield men's expense. The letter of thanks that came back was almost worn out passing from hand to hand. There was still much that could not be put into words, but perhaps no one in Chatfield was left entirely untouched by the sense of something like gratitude for the opportunity of such a gesture of amends for old and unintended wrongs.

PART

Nine



Churches Are Good for a Town

I



THE MAN straightened stiffly above the block of salt fixed to the stake and looked at the young cattle ringed about him. The pasture was holding out well and the stock was looking good. This bunch would be ready to sell in another month, maybe sooner if the market was right.

A stir among the cattle down near the river brought him round to face the swinging bridge he'd built years before. Someone was coming toward him from the bridge. Someone in breeches, but it didn't look like a man, somehow. What was a woman doing in his pasture this time of night?

He bent over the salt again; maybe if he paid her no heed she'd go on past and let him mind his own business. He heard her footsteps come nearer and stop. "Good evening," she said.

Her voice was smooth with book learning but friendlier than most, and somehow almost shy. When he made no answer she went on, "I've been sitting on your swinging bridge . . . I thought I'd like to say thank-you. . . ." Her voice stumbled a little, then she tried once more. "You are Mr. ——" His name sounded strange in her voice, but she went on to tell her own.

"That's what they've called me the last sixty-eight years," he said, looking past her face to the hills fast darkening under a single star. "I reckon the woods are free for those that like to walk there."

The unfamiliar voice laughed a little. "That's what Emerson said: the grove belongs to the man who walks in it with an open heart. . . . On that basis I guess I've owned part of your woods for a good many

years. . . ." She made a final effort. "I've always wanted to thank you. . . ."

Something deeply hidden stirred in him. "There's a stump up there, in the notch of the woods," he said slowly, "that before the timber grew so tall you could stand on it and see all over this country."

He kept still a minute, remembering, then, "I used to stand up there an' look at things, an' wonder how they come to be like they was, an' how the hills was created, an' all the things in Nature. . . . I told my wife I guessed all the religion I ever had I got standin' on that old stump, a-wonderin'. . . ." He turned his face away from her.

She helped him out. "I know about that, a little. This afternoon I saw. . . ." Her account of a thing she had really taken time to look at eased him, and he answered with telling of the badger den at the foot of the swinging bridge.

When she had gone he turned to watch her. After a moment she stood clear and unmoving against the sky. You could hear the sounds of the river where she stood. She was one that could stand still long enough, he thought, really to hear what a body was saying, or a river.

Then she walked down the farther side of the slope and was gone.

II



EVERY SOCIETY has created in its early stages a legendry that borders on the mythical—tales of things done in a free and ample fashion felt to be unacceptable in stories of one's contemporaries but delightful as interpretations of the past. The telling of such tales affords an invigorating sense of release from the hard-pressing limits of the actual, and their content often yields significant indications of the values on which the society has been based.

Such a story is told in Chatfield, Minnesota, as the 'history' of founding the town's first church. I. F. O'Ferrall, the story goes, was one day shaken out of his concentration on business by a tremendous racket going on in the Land Office next door. He went over to see what was up and found the two chief officials dancing about in hilarious glee and chanting, "We're going to start a church! We're going to start a church! Whoo-ooop-ee-ee!" Mr. O'Ferrall joined the hilarity, and when breath was exhausted the three men sat down to consider what kind of church they should start.

This was more difficult, for while they agreed heartily that a church would be 'good for' Chatfield there were such wide discrepancies in their personal church relations that common ground was hard to find. One of the men was a Unitarian, one was an Atheist, and Mr. O'Ferrall had been bred in the Catholic faith. None of the three seemed a practicable basis for their purpose,

but finally Mr. O'Ferrall suggested an Episcopal church: his new bride was an Episcopalian and she would like having her own kind of church in town. The others gallantly accepted the suggestion and proceeded to act upon it.

Within a short while they organized a parish, fitted out a chapel in a room that Mr. O'Ferrall added to his office building, engaged a clergyman, and invited Bishop Whipple to visit Chatfield and dispense his blessing upon the pious *fait accompli* that gave Chatfield its first church. . . . Thus the town still retells the story.

Its legendary character emerges clearly enough when set beside available documentation. To take the most obvious point: Mr. O'Ferrall did not reach Chatfield until 1856, the year after the Methodist church was organized there, and it was two years later that he brought his southern bride to the valley. The diocesan records of 1858 report that a missionary from one of the River towns held Chatfield's "First Service of the Episcopal Church" in a log schoolhouse that spring. On July 8 following, the *Republican* reported, "the Strawberry Festival . . . got up by the Ladies of the Protestant Episcopal Society . . . was very well attended." Three days later Bishop Kemper of Iowa and Minnesota, noted in his diary that he had held a service that day in Chatfield's "Baptist Chapel" and that Chatfield was "a place which with several others demands our earliest attention." On July 14, legal papers for the organization of St. Matthew's Episcopal church were signed by I. F. O'Ferrall and several others, including a number of "land office gentlemen" who were not communicants of the Episcopal church. The articles of incorporation for the parish were dated August 25, 1858, and were recorded with the Clerk of Fillmore County on September 2 following. But it was three years later—1861—that the diocesan *Journal* reported that the Chatfield Parish had "fitted up and suitably furnished a vacant land office as a chapel." (Mr. O'Ferrall took his family to California that year, for a three-year sojourn.) Six years later Bishop Whipple "consecrated to the worship and service of Almighty God a beautiful chapel . . . the generous

offering of noble-hearted friends in the East," * and St. Matthew's parish received its first resident rector. It had been served up to that time by visiting mission clergy from near-by towns. Yet Chatfield people still love to repeat the legend of how the Land Office boys started the town's first church. It is a satisfyingly dramatic statement of the persistent belief that churches are 'good for a town.'

That belief rose partly from the assurance of stability that churches added to a frontier settlement. And there was a feeling that a variety of churches would attract a wider variety of settlers. As it happened, the denominations represented in Chatfield and its province reflect the widest possible gamut from the strictly hierarchic absolutism of the Roman Catholic church to the ultimate individualism of Quaker Inward Light. The Quaker group in Jordan township scarcely survived the first generation of the region's settlement, while today Chatfield's largest church is Catholic St. Mary's.

Such an outcome could scarcely have been foreseen in the years when Bishop Loras was recruiting French and Irish seminarians to serve in the untamed wilderness of his diocese, now comprising Iowa and Minnesota. His appeal was uncompromising: "No Salary; No Recompense; No Holidays; No pension. But: Much Hard Work; A Poor Dwelling; Few Consolations; Many Disappointments; Frequent Sickness; A Violent or Lonely Death; An Unknown Grave."

Reports of his early missionaries bore out that promise. One wrote: ". . . our poor house is a complete ruin, open to the wind . . . as in a field." Another knew "great joy" in coming to a settlement for "I was thinking that I would eat bread there." And when Minnesota reached the point, in 1854, of requiring a bishop of its own, Father Cretin consented very reluctantly to being "affixed to the cross of St. Paul" in "so distant an exile in frozen lands."

* That building, which was enlarged and refurnished in 1894, contains tablets to Reverend Leonard J. Mills, Henry K. Horton, and Josiah Bardwell, Esq., all of Boston, memorializing their gifts to the original building. The tradition is that they were friends of the Ripleys.

The first Episcopal missionaries appear to have suffered less extreme privations, perhaps because they were later in entering the Minnesota region. A "quality of 'upper-classishness'" in that church, which one of its historians deplors as having "handicapped its work in this country" since colonial days, was perhaps an element in delaying the sending of missionaries. Benjamin Whipple's ordination as Bishop of Minnesota in 1859 was almost the beginning of substantial efforts to carry the Episcopal church into the West.

The Methodist church had been a frontiersman's church from the first American preaching of John and Charles Wesley. Their proclamation of Free Grace, opening to every man "the pardoning love of God," was intimately satisfying to the people of each successive West. Methodist acceptance of any man with "the Call of the Spirit" to be a preacher, without regard to institutional training, proved a great organizational advantage in the westward advance. The small local groups, or 'classes,' of the Methodist organization, supervised by circuit-riding preachers, proved an ideal instrument for following the frontier, and the Methodist Discipline was set forth in terms so intensely practical that the barest literacy could follow them. It laid out in minute detail the "methods" by which each individual member and preacher could share the Grace of God and "give the world no occasion to say that Methodists are no better than other people." John Wesley's admonition to "Earn all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can," fitted admirably into the get-rich-quick philosophy of the frontier.

Baptist organization was even more flexible. Although the church maintained colleges for the education of Baptist ministers, any congregation could ordain any one of its members who satisfied the elders of his fitness to preach the gospel in Baptist terms. The Baptist practice of complete local autonomy for each congregation fitted well into the frontier period, but it was apparently less effective as agrarian self-sufficiency gave way to centralized industrialism. In 1867, the Southern Minnesota Baptist Association, meeting in Chatfield, issued a circular letter mourning

the fact that in a state population of sixty thousand the Baptists numbered less than one thousand. The weakness of the church was explained by reference to "currents of business and population, as well as in the nationality of our people. . . . We live in a fast age. Steam and electricity are producing mental activity everywhere."

Presbyterians were somewhat less disturbed by evidence of mental activity, though Western elements in the communion had twice broken with Eastern leadership in controversies over how much university education should be required of the clergy. Yet the official Presbyterian creed was a masterpiece of defining the bounds beyond which change could not go: "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life . . . and others fore-ordained to everlasting death. . . . These angels and men . . . are particularly and unchangeably designated; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished." No man could know, the creed asserted, who are of the elect, but unofficial opinion gave weighty preference to Presbyterians.

Despite the creed, Presbyterians like every other Western church group were swept by those mighty tides of feeling known as 'revivals,' which did so much to change the polity and the practice of American churches as they developed.

How could it be otherwise? Men whose own brawn and brains were changing a wilderness into a home simply could not accept a damnation "so certain and definite that it cannot be increased or diminished." They knew, in every powerful use of their muscles, in each patient obdurate exertion to subdue the wilderness, that a man's wit and will *could* alter the constitution of life. The hot immediacy of change in a revival, where 'sinners' were being 'saved', was a kind of heightened emotional sanction to the conviction born of daily labors.

Perhaps something deeper than the dictates of convenience set those 'protracted meetings' for the long cold evenings of winter. In that northern season the sun stood far off in the heavens, and

the tides of life ran low. As the brief days closed the frozen earth to darkness, it was good to crowd into the tight little building that stood as the symbol of grace from Eternal Powers. Good to stand shoulder to shoulder with neighbors and sing the lusty hymns of threat and exaltation. The promise of salvation in this breathing hour touched levels of human need far older than the theological terms in which it spoke.

And as the need leaped to lay hold on the promise, the persons gathered within those walls transcended their separateness and became, for a moment, or a winter's season—perhaps even for a lifetime—members of one another in a mystical union that healed the scars of separation. To enter thus into the beloved community of man's long seeking was an experience both humbling and releasing, and set loose such power as even the uninitiate must respect, however little they might understand it.

III



ON JUNE 21, 1857, a handful of men and women gathered in Chatfield's Baptist chapel to consider the feasibility of organizing a congregation more congenial to their concepts of theological decorum than the existing Methodist or Baptist organizations. 'Father' Clark, who had preached Chatfield's first sermon two years before, acted as moderator, and the group was so evenly divided between Presbyterian and Congregationalists that it took the moderator's vote to decide the question of denominational affiliation. Thereupon J. C. Easton rose and moved that the decision to organize as a Presbyterian congregation be made unanimous. The action was so recorded on the first page of the little calf-bound volume that is still the official minute book of Chatfield's Presbyterian church. It was further voted that the congregation should join the New School synod, which had broken with the conservative East on the question of slavery.

Barbara Haven was one of the group that June evening, though her husband preferred to continue his Baptist affiliation; her daughter, "little Emma," was the only child at the meeting. Her son was not then much interested in church affairs, but by the time the Chatfield Presbyterian church celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary many would have agreed that one of the best achievements of that church was its part in nurturing the growth of a man who is still remembered as one of Chatfield's most honored citizens.

George Henry Haven was an able lad, liked and accepted as a leader in all the goings-on of Chatfield Academy. In the spring of 1860, the little group of his school cronies scattered and George Henry went seriously to work in his father's store. The following winter the Presbyterians held a 'revival' as a kind of dedication of their new church building, and G. H. Haven was 'converted' in that revival. That experience, it was felt in the community, was a determining factor in a life that is remembered without reproach by his fellow citizens. Some have smiled at certain rigorous scruples in his behavior, and many have stood a little more in awe of him than they found quite comfortable. But to this day the opinion stands: "He was a good man, and he was always thinking about the town."

It would be hard to find any other person who, after a lifetime of active leadership, called forth such unexcepted trust from Chatfield people. Even his close family ties with J. C. Easton (Mrs. Easton and Mrs. Haven were sisters) and the fact that he took over Easton's bank in the '80's evoked no feeling that Mr. Haven shared in 'Millionaire Easton's' ruthless self-interest. To the time of his death in 1926 every creative activity of the community was strengthened by his patient and painstaking helpfulness. Withal he seems never to have forgotten that "he who is greatest is the servant of all," and his integrity was as unmistakable as that of the hill that towered above his house.

One of the most revealing memorials of the man's spirit lies hidden in the yellowing pages of the Village Recorder's minutes. G. H. Haven himself was Village Recorder for several years, and his records there, as in the minutes of the School Board, are full, orderly, impeccable. After a year's absence from the village council he was elected mayor. Immediately the minutes, which the year before were the confused efforts of a man more at home with a carpenter's tools than with a pen, took on the clarity and coherence of all Mr. Haven's records, though still written in the same journeyman's hand. It is clear that George H. Haven, banker and civic leader, found ways to give to George Frey, German immigrant and working man, something of the ordered understand-

ing that informed all Mr. Haven's services to his community.

Such leadership did not spring full-blown from the fervors of a revival. There is something at once touching and a bit ludicrous to modern notions in the record of the young convert's first high-pitched act of allegiance to his new-found faith. He wrote letters to several of his Academy classmates reporting his conversion and urging each of them to a like decision. His letters have not been preserved but the replies they evoked yield a vivid sense of how difficult, yet exalted, his task had been.

One wrote to "Dear George" that his letter was "an epistle so different from any that I have been in the habit of receiving" that it was "hard to answer. . . . The subject you write to me about I have paid little or no attention to, but hope to some day. I may put it off (as you say) until too late. If I do I am only to blame and no one else will suffer from my neglect." A second of his correspondents expressed pleasure that George had "chosen the right path of happiness for now and hereafter" although he himself made "no pretension of being a Christian," and could "not claim to be free of fear for the future."

A third unregenerate youth professed his ignorance of "the religion you write about," though he assured young Haven that he did "not hate those who join the church." In best debating-club style he proceeded to set forth the propositions that he knew he did "not serve God," that common sense shows "there is no neutral ground," that therefore he "must be serving the Devil." He hoped he might sometime change his "way of life" and then asked, more urgently, for "a long letter in reply. . . . I am discussing grammar questions with three of my correspondents—not very interesting, but we want something to do in these long winter evenings."

"Something to do . . ." It was the cry of an immature and spiritually impoverished society, cut off by winter cold from the expenditure of its energies on the physical remaking of the earth. Lacking other channels of expenditure, those energies spoke out in one form or another of that discontent which was the oft-described malaise of American life. Rare indeed was the person

who could so spend himself that the passing years brought tolerance and true wisdom. Only in unwearied identification of the self with those other selves which together create the beloved community of all men's dreaming, could a man become a complete personality. Nor did church membership guarantee such identification. That it grew in G. H. Haven's life was the consequence of more factors than any are competent to assess with finality. What is unmistakable is that the identification with both church and community did grow in that man.

His apprenticeship was commonplace enough. Even while he was writing to his schoolmates, he took around the town a subscription list for a melodeon for the new church. The building itself had cost \$2,500, Easton wrote to a friend back East, and a melodeon was more than the congregation could manage alone. Augustus Haven led off his son's list with five dollars, which Easton and one other man each matched; within a few days \$58 had been raised. Less than half of the 34 subscribers were Presbyterians: such community support was a common expression of the prevailing belief that churches were 'good for a town.'

Yet despite that belief, Chatfield's Presbyterian Church, until 1875, was financially dependent on its denomination's central mission board in the East. No one worked more faithfully to make the church self-supporting than G. H. Haven. He kept the church records year after year. A casual inspection of those records, and of his astonishingly complete personal ledgers, suggests that he probably paid from his own pocket, year after year, to the end of his life, a considerably larger share of the funds for his church's support than any other person.

There were able men among the ministers serving that church. Father Clark presided over its first two years. Perhaps the most widely loved of the Presbyterian ministers was Reverend Samuel H. Murphy, whose twelve-year pastorate was broken midway by a mission to the Gabons of Africa, during which he left his wife and family in Chatfield. He was followed by the Reverend George S. Hayes, newly returned from a mission in China. Still another minister directed the building of the fine new church that the

Presbyterians dedicated on New Year's Day, 1898. It was complete with "parlors" and a kitchen in the basement, and a Sunday School room with folding doors opening into the auditorium. The dedication services crowded both auditorium and Sunday School room, morning and evening, and a dinner and reception gave everyone in town a chance to admire the wonderful innovation in church building. The auditorium was filled with flowers coaxed into bloom by the Chatfield ladies themselves. Scarlet begonias, white Chinese primroses, vinca, green and white myrtle, with calla lilies and white Roman hyacinths banked the platform. From a Chicago florist had come white, red, and pink carnations, with roses, marguerites and smilax to dress the organ. Even the pulpit was wreathed with smilax.

All these details Mrs. Haven reported to a Chatfield friend who was wintering in Florida. "You may be sure George Haven is a happy man these days," she wrote, and admitted that she herself had wakened, that eventful day, long before daybreak and "stared with wide-awake eyes into the darkness of the early morning," filled with thankfulness for the wonderful achievement. The day came to its climax in the evening service, when one of the visiting clergymen "helped raise the debt . . . he said it was so small a debt it was not worth keeping . . . there were tears of joy in everybody's eyes," Mrs. Haven reported.

Methodists were not the people to sit by and let the Presbyterians outdo them. Ten months after the Presbyterian festival, the new Methodist church was dedicated, complete from basement to steeple. *They* had bishops at their ceremony, and Chatfield's Congressman to entertain the bishops. Milo White and his church had gone a long way in the forty years since the Sunday morning when he and the other worshippers had been called out of their little one-room building to fight the forest fire that raged on Winona Hill and threatened to engulf the town.

They had their own pride, these Methodists. If they couldn't pay their preachers very much salary, at least they had paid that salary out of their own pockets from the very first, and every Methodist family shared what it had with the preacher's family

—pork at butchering time, apples when the orchard came into bearing—and only the stingy told the preacher that the sack of potatoes or the ‘boiling hen’ delivered to the parsonage door should “apply on the salary.” ‘Donation Visits’ to the preacher—sometimes at his house, sometimes at a hall on Main Street loaned for the occasion—were only a just and acceptable opportunity for people who didn’t belong to the church to help its good work along. The *Democrat* carried as many notices of ‘donations’ for Presbyterian and Baptist preachers as for Methodists, and Easton and Haven and White set down in their ledgers five-dollar contributions for each one, irrespective of denomination.

Of course the Methodists were glad when they could add the assurance, “No part of this donation will apply on the preacher’s salary.” They were proud, too, when the *Democrat* could report the fine returns of \$78 from one such donation, and they never quite understood why the preacher put his notice of thanks the way he did: “The above is a word too much. But please allow me to add my grateful acknowledgement of the very gratifying contribution to my comfort from the people of Chatfield, in this donation.” There was no telling about preachers. . . .

Methodists had a lot of experience with them. In its first forty-five years the Chatfield church had thirty-one different preachers. That was the way Methodists did things. And they got along all right, even if sometimes a family of Methodists did join the Presbyterians because they thought they were high-toned and rich. Take the Cussons family. They’d been brought up Methodist in England; some of their relatives there were well-known Wesleyan preachers. But they turned Presbyterian in Chatfield, because they thought Presbyterians were more high-toned. Not that it mattered. Chatfield’s Congressman, Milo White, belonged to the Methodist Episcopal church, and was proud of it, and the mansion he built out in North Chatfield was the finest house in town. Besides, one of the most famous preachers in the whole Methodist church was a Chatfield boy.

Henry C. Jennings was born in his father’s parsonage back in Illinois in 1850, and his mother was a preacher’s daughter. They

came to Minnesota when Henry was just a little boy and took a piece of land out southeast of Chatfield. The father died not long afterwards, and the mother had a hard time making ends meet with a houseful of children. The summer Henry was nineteen he was converted out at the Fillmore Camp-Meeting, and that fall he walked into Chatfield to get himself some education so he could be ordained a preacher. He worked as janitor at the school-house, and he swept out stores to pay for the crackers and cheese he practically lived on, except when some Methodist family asked him to Sunday dinner. After a winter in Chatfield, he taught school; and the year he turned twenty-one he was ordained a Methodist preacher. He married Charlie Culver's sister that same year, and not long afterwards he was appointed to the Chatfield charge.

He was a good preacher, even though some of his ideas were almost too advanced for his hearers; he talked from the pulpit about higher wages and an eight-hour day. But in less than twenty years from the time he was ordained, he had one of the largest churches in St. Paul, and in 1896 the General Conference elected him Publishing Agent for the Western Methodist Book Concern in Cincinnati. He spent the rest of his life making that the best church publishing house in the country, but he was always proud of being from Chatfield. He visited there whenever he could and when he died he was buried in the Chatfield cemetery. Chatfield Methodists, proud of him, could hold up their heads with anyone, especially when they got their new building.

Orrin Thurber never liked that kind of talk, even though he'd been a Methodist all his life. A lot of people thought it was he who wrote letters to the *Democrat* every once in a while urging that if people were really Christians they would all work together in one big church. It angered him to hear anyone run down any kind of church. He even reproached a lot of preachers one day for that kind of talk.

It happened during a Methodist conference held in Chatfield: the Thurbers asked a tableful for dinner, and while Uncle Orrin

was serving fried chicken and fixings, the preachers got started lambasting the Christian Science church. Uncle Orrin listened till he'd served a plate for each one, then he said, "Brethren, I'll have to ask you to change the subject. This is the first time that anyone at my table has ever spoken a word against any Christian church, and I don't know as it's the privilege even of preachers to break that rule." Then he picked up a dish of Aunt Eunice's spiced peaches and passed it down the table and went on talking about the weather and the crops just as if nothing had happened. Those preachers were startled but one of them thought it was such a good lesson that he told it at the meeting that afternoon, and it went all over town. Folks said that was what started Uncle Orrin studying Christian Science. Anyhow, he and Aunt Eunice turned Scientist not long after, though they kept on going to the Methodist church, and supporting it, because there wasn't any Science church in Chatfield.

Uncle Orrin was quite a character, but he and Aunt Eunice were the first ones anybody thought of when they had sickness or death in the house and needed someone to 'sit up' and look after things. Nobody ever counted how many babies Aunt Eunice helped into the world, or the number of people that died easier because she was there. Uncle Orrin always went with her and helped out with the family.

He bought the old Presbyterian building when the new one was finished, and had it hauled all the way down Winona Street and set up in his back yard. He didn't use it for much of anything, and folks wondered why he had bought it. Then the Methodists built, and he bought *their* old building too, hauled it down Winona Street and set it up right beside the other one. After that there was nothing he liked better than to take people out to see the two churches. "They get along all right in my back yard," he'd say. "I don't know as I've ever heard any good reason why the folks that built them can't do as well."

By that time the Baptist church had dropped out of the competition for Chatfield leadership. While the Reverend Mr. Fuller

was their pastor he lent a note of high intellectuality to the services. His sermons were not always approved: O. S. Armstrong, a convinced Calvinist, noted in his diary that he was "not satisfied by Mr. Fuller's exposition of Free Will." But his lectures each winter were hailed by the *Democrat* as brilliant additions to the series set up to fill "the long winter evenings." When he returned East, after the death of his wife in 1865, the Chatfield Baptists got on as they could with local lay preachers.

Dissension seems to have developed in the congregation thereafter. Dr. Trow, who first organized the congregation, was read out of it, reputedly on account of his persistent profanity. "He was a good man," one of his friends remembered, "but it just seemed like he couldn't help himself swearing at the critters." No record remains to indicate how far that act of excommunication affected the unity of the Baptist congregation, but in 1867 its report to the regional association lamented "no religious interest . . . we mourn our coldness." For years, except for a brief season following a 'revival' in 1885, the Chatfield society had only Sunday School activities to report, and in 1902 the congregation was formally disbanded.

Such weakening of Baptist congregations was not unique, the records of regional and state associations indicate. The circular letter that deplored the effects of "mental activity" affords a naïvely revealing view of the confusion generated by the impact of industrialism upon a faith generated in an agrarian society. Baptists, like most Americans, believed in progress, but they could not escape the recognition that progress was somehow breaking down their cherished traditions. The solution worked out by the Southern Minnesota Baptists was a plea for renewed individual consecration to local church activities, curiously coupled with an appeal to support a mission enterprise that had recently been planted, with conscious daring, in Italy, "under the eyes of the Pope of Rome."

The mission to Rome as a cure for local failure was a characteristic expression of the common human tendency to project immediate frustrations upon distant whipping boys. Yet in that projec-

tion the dim and unanalyzed instinct of plain people touched closely, though confusedly, upon substantial fact.

Probably none of those Minnesota Baptists knew of Bishop Loras's earlier appeals for Irish immigrants to make Iowa "a Catholic commonwealth," or of Bishop Cretin's later denunciation of Eastern priests whose opposition to the westward movement of their congregations lost him the chance of creating such a commonwealth in Minnesota. It is unlikely that they had heard of Bishop Cretin's appeal to European supporters for schools to "save the children" from "the propaganda of protestants." These, like the jurisdictional feuds between priests of different national origins (recorded by the Catholic historian of the region) were strictly intramural matters. What was obvious to all was the immediately European source and character of Catholic missions and missionaries to the opening West—a fact not to be overlooked in evaluating the anti-Catholic feeling exhibited here and there by western nativism.

Tradition has it that the first Mass in Chatfield's province was said in Hugh Parsley's house, at the fording place on Middle Branch, in 1854. The priest came westward from Winona, and his coming was heralded a day or two in advance by a messenger sent from a neighborhood where the priest had already been.

The first thing to do after getting such word was to let the neighbors know of the priest's coming and to send word to the next place on his itinerary. "They was regular Paul Reveres," a son of one of those early families remembered, in imagery incongruously derived from those public-school dens of "propaganda for the protestants" lamented by Bishop Cretin.

It was on the women that the chief weight of both delight and responsibility fell. Food must be made ready for all who came—a feast for a multitude, however the family might have to skimp thereafter. If the visit fell on a fast day the boys were sent to the nearest stream to catch fish for the dinner. The house must be cleaned, and a bed prepared for the priest, with perhaps a precious pair of homespun linen sheets brought from Ireland to be bleached afresh, for His Reverence. An altar must be improvised

and dressed with flowers and greenery, and perhaps a bit of Irish damask. These were the offices of love, the prelude to release from long-gathered pressure of borders that were too close.

The men could afford to take the priest's visit more lightly: the most remote farmer saw other people than his family when he took wheat to the mill for grinding or hauled it to one of the River towns for sale. Their sons remembered that "the men didn't think much about it except when they went. They had plenty else to occupy their minds." But for the women, with tasks that were never done, with children too young to take into winter cold for the long trip into town, the coming of the priest meant both the immediate delight of day-long visiting and the more exalted consciousness of renewed communion with the saints, who were blessedly the same in Ireland and in Minnesota.

The missionary not only heard confession and celebrated the Mass, he also baptized the children born since the last priest had been there, read marriage lines, blessed the graves of those who had been laid to rest without such blessing. And always he kept before both women and men their responsibility for establishing a parish of their own, and erecting a suitable building.

It took twenty-four years to pay for that church. Migration had given Irish peasants not only new prosperity but a new independence as well. When Father Riordan, in 1875, pressed for collection of notes he claimed to hold from members of his parish, Ed Tuohy and four other men of the parish published in the *Democrat* a call for a Catholic community meeting to inquire into parish finances. Father Riordan retorted, in the next issue of the paper, with a public notice accusing his accusers of assuming "an office which lies within the province of the Bishop of St. Paul . . . to question the integrity of my financial administration." The priest was apparently sustained by his bishop and remained several years longer in charge of the Chatfield parish. If there were parish squabbles thereafter, they did not break into public print.

Only once did anti-Catholicism come even briefly into the *Democrat's* columns, and then it was in some degree an outgrowth of other doctrinal disputes. In February of 1890 someone

arranged for a public disputation between two Universalists, one Baptist, and an apostate Catholic, who apparently was more against Catholicism than for anything else. The *Democrat* reported the affair but briefly, with the comment that religious leaders might better spend their efforts in promoting Christian fraternity than in displaying such sectarian animosities. Three weeks later the one-time Catholic spoke again, and the hall was crowded. After the meeting a little group of Protestants, including several women, waited to escort the speaker to the house where he was a guest. When they came into the street they were peppered with eggs thrown by a bunch of hot-headed Irish lads who had heard the lecture. A frenzied free-for-all was well on the way when C. L. Thurber (a nephew of Uncle Orrin) hastily exercised his authority as City Recorder to swear in several solid citizens as special police. The mob was dispersed and the speaker and his friends proceeded on their way.

The *Democrat*, reporting the affair, deplored equally the "dastardly attack" on women, and the uncalled-for violence of the speaker's words. Yet free speech was involved, the editor insisted, and "older, more staid Catholics" did not countenance the attack. Letters to the editor carried on the controversy for two or three weeks and several Irish subscribers "stopped the paper." Finally the editor called a halt to further discussion of the affair in the same issue that reported the success of the St. Patrick's Day celebration: its lottery had raised \$300, and the day had passed with only one fight!

Anti-Catholicism never again came to such public discussion in Chatfield, though from time to time dark Protestant fears were whispered that the current priest was using the horrendous secrecy of the confessional to advise his young men to 'get Protestant girls in trouble' so they would have to marry Catholics and produce children to the glory of the Pope. In the twenties, when the Ku Klux Klan was rampant in the state, a handful of hare-brained youngsters were reputed to have stolen sheets from their mothers' clothesbaskets with the notion of burning a fiery cross on top of Winona Hill, but sober elders put a stop to the project. The Klan

got no such foothold in Chatfield as in some of the neighboring towns, though not until the mid-thirties was the first Catholic elected to Chatfield's school board. In general, Thomas Twiford's town has acted on the assumption voiced one time by the *Democrat* as the moral of a gleeful tale about a family argument in which "She" burned "His" spiritualist papers, and "He" tore up "Her" fifteen-dollar Bible: "This is a free country and every man and woman has an indisputable right to travel his or her own road to heaven."

That everyone was trying to get to Heaven was assumed as self-evident even among the "atheists" who thrived on the febrile excitement precipitated throughout America's midwest by Bob Ingersoll. "We [atheists] are as concerned about our future as anyone is," one of them wrote to the *Democrat* in 1883 during a spate of theological controversy. "Our God never yet pronounced a curse upon any human being he has made and in our opinion he never will." The writer further asserted that atheists were engaged in "the necessary work of . . . licking the sores of total depravity, of infant damnation, of predestination . . . of a personal Devil" so that "charity, good works, good will . . . shall be considered more to be desired than a forced attempt at faith in the atonement . . . that no human being can explain." Such brash questioning of the established order of faith had all the charm of conspicuous defiance, and it is interesting to note that it did not appear openly in Chatfield until the frontier stage was past and the social fabric firmly established.

In the early years many country neighborhoods that could not maintain churches carried on Sunday Schools as partial substitutes for the "church privileges" that were not within reach. Many families felt acutely the lack of those "privileges," as Mary Caroline Price called them. "Deliver me from Sunday in Minnesota," she wrote one time in exasperation. "It is the most wearisome of the seven, no meeting of any kind, nor anything interesting to read! The usual programme is to lay abed late in the morning, get breakfast and wash the dishes, gape and stretch around a little while, or write letters, then get dinner and wash dishes and clear

up litter after the boys, then get supper and wash dishes, then to bed."

It was better in summer, when a load of young people could make a Sunday trip to camp meeting, but even that proved a little disappointing to Mary Caroline. "A good sermon," she wrote, "but . . . folks acted more like a crowd at a fair or a Fourth of July Celebration than like an assembly come together to worship God, I thought." And she recorded the variety of foods as an important part of the day's experience.

Indeed food played a major role in the history of all Chatfield churches, and many a Chatfield woman found "her symphonies in fresh-baked bread, her drama in a chicken pie," as one daughter of pioneers later wrote. The ritualistic overtones of breaking bread together carried far beyond the ceremonials of the Lord's Supper, practiced in some form by all the churches. Church people, a Chatfield wag once remarked, had to eat their way to heaven. Serving food to the townsfolk was an approved method of raising money for church purposes, and the act of eating together generated a glow of good feeling that tended to modify the sectarian divisions within the community.

Church programs and entertainments of all kinds played their part in strengthening the sense of community. When the Presbyterians hung Japanese lanterns in the trees of Mr. Haven's yard against the curving shelter of the hill, or Episcopalians spread their tables in view of the river behind Mrs. O'Ferrall's house, anybody in town who could pay his ten or fifteen cents for homemade ice cream and cake, or strawberries and cream, was welcome. It was good for people to dress in their best and practice their company manners with those whom they saw every day in working mood.

The young people who practiced together for weeks to prepare a concert or a "pageant of tableaux" found 'something to do' of a kind that satisfied both creative and social impulses. Real ingenuity went into those affairs: a Library Entertainment presented twenty-three characters, ranging from Sweet Maud Muller and Minnehaha to Little Lord Fauntleroy and Hamlet. The lad

who played the role of Chivalry in a Court of Honor pageant fell so in love with the Queen of the Court that he married her a few months later. A Japanese Social to raise money for the missionaries sanctioned the daring naughtiness of wearing kimonos right out in public, and a Soap Bubble Social was a deliciously hilarious return to childhood pleasures. 'Everybody' went to those socials; they came away feeling closer to each other and somehow committed anew to an entity larger than even the sum of their separate selves.

If there were those who had no part in these churchly doings, that was rarely charged to the churches. If people were too wicked, or too lazy, or even too poor, to do their share of church work, that was their responsibility. There were plenty of women who were so poor they 'worked out' to raise their families, who were yet a part of church life.

Not until near the turn of the century did any group take concerted action to carry the blessings of religion to those on the outer fringes of the community. Townsfolk were more than a little skeptical when three or four Salvation Army 'lassies' began to hold their tambourine-thumping sessions on Main Street. But no one bothered them. And some of the folks from Sandtown, as the poorer section of North Chatfield was beginning to be called, and the 'swamp angels' from 'out Jerdan-way' actually pulled themselves up into respectability under the proddings of the Salvation Army.

The Army 'lassies' left after a while, in a vague aroma of scandal, but the needs to which they had ministered did not entirely disappear. From time to time thereafter one or another obscure, emotionally persuasive sect gathered followers among the people who one way or another found themselves outside the centrum of the Chatfield community. In their own terms they too gave evidence that churches are 'good for a town.'

But that churches had any responsibility for the ways in which America's new industrialism was beginning to penetrate the world, was a notion only vaguely apprehended in Chatfield. Church people raised money to send missionaries to teach Japan the Christian virtues of justice, and mercy, and humility. They

largely regarded the American Navy's exploit in forcing Japanese ports as God's way of opening the way for the spread of the Gospel, and some may have been pleased by the coincidence that the exploit had fallen in the same year that saw the first settlement in the Chatfield valley.

A generation later Chatfield people were immensely interested in a letter received by the local Board of Trade asking for local contributions to "a display of American industries" that the Navy was going to send around the world in America's biggest battle-ships. It was a pity, people felt, that the plow factory had moved away from Chatfield: it would have been fine to set up a trade in plows between Chatfield and Japan.

Nobody dreamed then that in Chatfield's third generation the churches were to display gold stars for young men of their membership who had been killed by Japanese shells. Shells made, as like as not, from plows that had been scrapped by Chatfield farmers. Whether they knew it or not, Chatfield people and churches were being increasingly involved in the problems of a world made amazingly one.

PART

Ten



Wheat Is King

I



THE AUGUST SUN climbed strongly up the morning sky. It poured insistent power upon the fields. It beat upon the backs of men bent parallel to the earth as they worked. It picked out the scarlet pride of the contraption whose clattering blades drowned the hum of crickets. It pulled into the air the warm and infinitely exciting smell of ripened wheat.

The clatter of the ungainly machine stopped short and the hush pulled upright the man who worked at one end of the field alone. He had been so intent on the great golden sheaves he was handling that he had not noticed how far the others had moved. Now he looked at the sturdy shocks he had made and gave himself to the swelling pride of the harvest.

This was better than working in the store, he thought. His mind gave him a picture of the way the deserted town would be looking. Not a team on the streets, nor a puff of dust coming down from Winona Hill. No one but a few women and children in the stores, and a few old men to wait on them. Every one of the young fellows had been out in the fields for three weeks, and it would be another week before they returned. Yet the stir and tingle of harvest was the biggest thing in the town. Even the womenfolk felt it; the wife of the richest man in town went out every day to this farm to help get the harvest dinner. She liked to help, she said—and she made the best apple pies in the county. Funny about people. You couldn't like her husband even at harvest time, but she was always friendly, and just as common . . .

This upland field was a good place to work, the man thought, shredding out a handful of kernels from the shock he had just built, and

chewing deliberately on the half-sticky sweetness. It was open to all wind there was, and high enough that you could see the country while you worked. A hundred acres in this one field, and a hundred more across the road. A dozen such fields making golden patches in the land that swelled greenly upward to bring earth and sky together.

A thin shout from the half dozen figures clustered about the reaper drew him down the field toward them. He saw the familiar gesture of head thrown back and elbow lifted as one of the men raised the jug of 'the critter' to his lips, and thought how good the cool-fiery stuff would feel sliding down his own throat in his turn. He took off his hat to let the wind dry his hair and kicked at a shock he was passing. He liked the feel, and the little crunching noise, of the stubble under his feet, and the wind was cool against the shirt he had drenched with his sweat. These were days when a man knew where he belonged.

II



EVEN WHEN THEY were selling thousands of bushels of wheat on the world market, Chatfield people had little awareness of the world-meanings in what they did. They raised wheat first because they and their neighbors needed it. When Milo White carried his load of flour through threatening torrents, he knew that wheat was essential to make life in the Chatfield valley secure. Two short years later a St. Paul newspaper reported that a steamer had taken a load of Minnesota wheat and flour eastward. The following year the wheat shipped out of Minnesota was worth more than the furs. Those events were marked by no bells or bonfires, but they held potentially more meaning than the noisy celebrations of Minnesota's statehood.

Minnesotans were already feeling concern over markets for the swiftly increasing flood of Minnesota wheat. The state's first Republican governor had so little understanding of the economic forces from which his party had sprung that he announced in 1860: "For many years to come immigration [into the state] ought to make our best market, consuming whatever surplus of flour, meal, wheat, corn, oats, beef, pork we may raise and have to sell." J. W. Bishop's *History of Fillmore County* had already touched on the theme when it urged manufacturers to move to Chatfield: a factory population would afford a steady market for the produce of the county's farms.

But immigrants turned farmers rather than factory workers,

and by 1861 the expansion of Minnesota wheat fields had shown the inadequacy of an immigrant market. The State Commissioner of Statistics that year quoted "an English gazette" as saying: "One fact is clear, that it is North America that we must look to in the future for the largest amount of our cereal produce." The Minnesota official pointed out the moral of that expectation for Minnesota farmers. A St. Paul paper set forth an apocalyptic vision of St. Paul receiving tribute from all parts of the earth: cotton from the South, spices from the Orient, money from the East, all in payment for Minnesota wheat.

The *Winona Republican* that fall praised the Almighty for His aid "in putting down this unnatural rebellion" by so ordering the seasons that the West had produced "the most bounteous crop ever known in the history of the world. The scepter of power passes from King Cotton of the South to King Wheat of the West," and the new king's power was buttressed by Europe's need for wheat to feed her industrial population.

The Chatfield province was indeed fortunate in the timing of its great wheat production. In the second year of Minnesota's wheat export, the New York price climbed to \$1.16. In 1867, it reached the unprecedented figure of \$2.47. Before the world price plummeted in 1882, repeated failures of the crop in Chatfield's province had forced farmers there, however unwillingly, to diversify their economy, and so they escaped the worst consequences of slavery to the one-crop system.

Chatfield's timing was fortunate in still another way. The farmers could never have produced such large amounts of wheat without the mechanical reapers that Cyrus McCormick was manufacturing in Chicago. Those reapers were crude enough at first, little more than mowers, that a man walked beside to rake off the grain when enough had accumulated for a 'bundle.' Adding a platform to carry the man with a rake was a great improvement, and the invention of a 'self-rake' device seemed like the last word in mechanical perfection, though the 'bundles' still had to be bound by hand. Not until 1873 did the machines begin to bind as well as cut the grain. Yet even the crudest of those reapers cut astonish-

ing multiples of the grain a man could reap with primitive scythe and cradle. As mechanical seeders and other devices came into use they increased enormously the amounts of land that one man could farm.

Tales of how the farmers learned to use that machinery sound oddly like later reports of Russian peasant's mechanical ineptitudes. One man forgot to put twine in his new binder, and when he saw the grain falling loose he unhitched his horses and rode one of them into town in a rage at the unspeakable so-and-so who had cheated him by selling such a "consarned worthless contraption." Another filled the bin of his new seeder with seed-wheat and drove it all morning without opening the valve between the bin and the drill. When he looked at the bin at noon he was delighted to see how saving it was of seed! Only the chance call of a neighbor, stopping to admire the new machine, saved its owner from unseeded fields.

Stories like these went all through the province and did much to help people learn the ways of mechanical devices. Yet farmers were very slow to master one essential to the economical use of machinery. They treated those costly objects with the same carelessness with which they treated their land. The reaper was left out in every weather, from harvest to harvest, and the plow stood rusting at the end of the season's last furrow. The cost of that carelessness is reflected in such records as those of Elmira township, showing the increasing foreclosure of chattel mortgages by implement dealers during the seventies and eighties. From the *Chatfield Democrat* to *Harper's Magazine* editors admonished farmers to take better care of their machinery, but the lesson was hard to enforce.

It was even harder to learn how to make railroads serve the public interest, despite their battenning on gifts of public lands and funds. By the end of the Civil War the skeleton of America's railroad system was sufficiently articulated to make possible the pouring of American wheat into the world market. But completing that transportation system was a devious process that did not produce the uniformly happy results claimed by the prophets of

laissez faire. Some of the operations of that process can be seen in Chatfield's continued efforts to get a railroad.

After its 1864 reorganization, in which H. W. Holley regained his position as Chief Engineer, the Southern Minnesota Railroad began actual building from the west bank of the Mississippi. By 1867, it had reached the town of Rushford, thirty-odd miles south-east of Chatfield. To Chatfield inquiries about running the line from that point up the Root River to Thomas Twiford's valley, company officials replied with a demand for \$60,000 in municipal bonds 'in aid' of the railroad. Chatfield people turned unexpectedly stubborn and voted against those bonds. The company went through another reorganization the following year and a Chatfield group petitioned the new set of officials to build to Chatfield. They were told the ante had been raised to \$100,000. Dr. Luke Miller was elected to the state senate on the basis of his promise to get a law authorizing the four townships surrounding Chatfield to join in raising the railroad fund, by issuing township bonds in various sums. The law was passed and a spirited campaign was begun among the country people to get them to vote approval of the proposed bond issue; a surveyor's crew working on the Chatfield end of the route gave visible encouragement to the campaign. But before the vote could be taken, the survey was withdrawn and Chatfield heard that its own state senator was involved in building a completely new town, christened Lanesboro, to which the railroad was being built instead of to Chatfield.

Rage was the chief emotion at that denouement, but by November sober calculation had convinced many people of the truth of the threat in a letter that I. F. O'Ferrall had from one of the railroad officials: "If the bonds [still \$100,000] are issued soon, your people have no reason to fear, but they will get their Railroad. . . . Chatfield will quickly decay *without* the Railroad."

So the campaign began again (it was hard to convince the country people), the bonds were approved, issued and deposited in escrow against the completion of the road, and the surveyors once more appeared—for the fifth time since 1856.

The same comedy was played through twice more without giving Chatfield a railroad. In 1871, the work of grading was actually begun at Parsley's Ford, south of town, and the *Democrat* was jubilant. But after three months of work, in which the workmen were paid almost none of the wages due them, work on the Chatfield line stopped again. The governor of the state had vetoed a bill to divide among the railroads a half million acres of so-called 'swamp land' that the federal government had conveyed to the state, and the railroads went on strike against such "dangerous grangerism," as the *Democrat* called the governor's action. There was a rumor that J. C. Easton had gone to New York to raise money to continue the work on the Chatfield branch, but whether he went or not, the work was not resumed.

The *Democrat* was right in tracing the veto to the influence of the Grange. Although that organization—officially called the Patrons of Husbandry—was non-political in its original purposes, it served very rapidly to focus the confusion and discontent of the farmers upon political issues.

The Grange came into being as the result of a government clerk's trip through the South early in 1866 to gather information for the federal bureau of agriculture. Oliver Hudson Kelley came back from that trip oppressed by the dull fatalism with which the farm people he had seen accepted the crude and barren patterns of their lives. Being himself half-Western—he was a New Englander who had taken land near the headwaters of the Mississippi—and a man of creative imagination, he could not rest in the face of such acceptance. Out of his unrest he conceived in fresh terms the too widely forgotten fact that no person can be fully human except as a conscious part of the web of relatedness which is the essence of humanity. For two years he pondered on that intuitive response to experience, and with a half dozen Washington friends evolved the framework of the secret order of Patrons of Husbandry. Then he resigned his safe government clerkship and set off Westward to persuade farmers that in the Grange they could find the means of working together to help themselves to fuller lives. Besides his faith, he had just two and a half dollars to carry

him beyond the Pennsylvania town that was his first stopping point.

The act of persuasion was not as easy as he had dreamed, but five years of dogged labor, partly from his farm in northern Minnesota, began to create the substance of things hoped for. By May of 1873, Minnesota had 358 Granges and there were 3,360 Granges scattered through twenty-eight states. Two years later the Grange had nearly seven times as many local organizations, spread through every state and territory of the Union.

Each local Grange met at least once a month, usually twice, and its ritual gave a place to young people and to women as well as to men. Its stated purposes included the increase of comfort and beauty in farm homes, and the overcoming of personal and sectional prejudice, as well as the economic betterment of farmers. It seems to have done an amazingly successful job of stirring the minds of many farm people to the effort of understanding the complex relations between the new industrialism and the problems of agriculture. And it left bright images of enjoyment in the memories of those who knew it in their childhood. "We'd take our baskets when we went to town Saturdays," one woman recalled sixty years after the Chatfield Grange had died, "and we'd all eat together, and sing, and hear the news. The men-folks talked about prices and such. We had a good time together." And a man remembered: "It was a good thing, I guess. They had wide sashes they wore over their shoulders, with red ribbons on the edge. We got some of them upstairs yet." There was so little, in the chosen valley, of that "evocation by ritual of the spiritual experiences necessary to man."

Even so shallow a ritual as that of the Grange released a new sense of dignity, that turned in an amazingly short time upon one of the central problems of the economy. The talk "about prices and such" set in motion forces which eventually established a legal principle that is now recognized as an essential bulwark of human freedoms in an industrial society—the principle that a privately owned business may be so "clothed in the public interest" that it is rightly subject to governmental regulation.

The principle did not spring full blown from the talk of the Grangers. Its first fumbling statements were made as early as 1866 when an Anti-Monopoly Convention in St. Paul let loose much cloudy rhetoric on the evils of collaboration between wheat buyers, railroads, and railroad warehouses. The same people who ten years before had clamored that railroads would solve the economic problems of the frontier, now complained that railroads were the cause of those ills. 'Monopoly' was the scapegoat of the period, and indignation at its evils brought inward easement to men harassed by fears of the moneylenders to whom they were indebted—as often as not for land bought in the hope of speculative profits. The individual incidence of new fiscal and industrial forces created a vast confusion in the minds of the people.

By 1871, that confusion had been clarified, largely through Granger discussion, enough to be focused in a demand for state regulation of railroads and warehouses. Minnesota was one of four states (Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois were the others) to pass laws that year creating the authority for such regulation.

Those laws were very soon brought to the courts to test their constitutionality. The first Minnesota case originated in the Olmstead County District Court, just north of Chatfield, in a suit against the Winona and St. Peter Railroad to recover freight charges in excess of those established by the 1871 law. The railroad defense claimed that the law was invalid because it infringed on "the sacred right of contract" established by the railroad's charter. The District Court upheld the railroad contention, and the case was appealed to the Minnesota Supreme Court.

There it was heard, and the decision written by a citizen of Chatfield. C. G. Ripley was elected chief justice of the state's highest court in 1870, and his four years of service in that office (before ill-health led him to retire) produced a series of decisions that leads one to wonder why his name is so little remembered in the town that was his home for nearly twenty years. Perhaps the answer is to be found in the attitude expressed by a poem in one of H. W. Holley's volumes:

JUDGE BUNKUM

He *was* a worker, ah! to spy him
 With many books of reference nigh him;
 And hear him talk of statutes hid
 By Osiris in the Pyramid;
 Which he'd dug out, sifted and sorted
 And would in due time have reported,
 One's soul with admiration burning
 Stood paralyzed at so much learning! . . .
 There was not then in force a law
 But in it Bunkum found some flaw;
 Such fearful cracks he found to mend,
 His work seemed like to have no end; . . .
 Ah happy state, which never lacks
 These volunteers for closing cracks!

Judge Ripley's learning, no matter what scoffing it evoked in Chatfield, shone brilliantly in various decisions that he wrote. He was no doctrinaire opponent to railroads, but out of his learning he drew precedent and justification for a new concept of legal right that might well have been a source of pride to his philosopher-kinsman, the great Emerson. That his patient, lucid, and practical examination of both law and fact commanded the respect of his professional peers is attested by the circumstance that much of Judge Ripley's point of view and mode of reasoning were later embodied in the famous 'Granger decisions' (1876) of the Supreme Court of the United States.

Those decisions established the right of the people to use their governments, both state and federal, as protection against abuses by the swelling aggregations of economic power.

There were still too few who understood the connection between those hated 'monopolies' and the world markets on which they were dependent. When financial 'panic' struck the country in 1872 great numbers of farmers drew back from their brief adventure with the Grange, and in the backwash of reaction Min-

nesota repealed its 'Granger laws.' But a beginning had been made, and the nature of its origins permitted a hope, had an Olympian considered the matter, that "the people, yes" were capable of creating solutions for the problems that beset them.

III



“WHEAT, WHEAT, WHEAT! That was all you could see around here. A man had a quarter section, he’d put it all in wheat except for oats enough to feed his horses. All you had to do was sow it right on top of the ground! Why, I remember one time our folks sowed a ten-acre patch and a big rain came along before they could drag it. Before it got dry enough to work, that wheat just sprouted and come right up. Had a good crop out of it, too.”

Thus William Murphy, not long before his death in his ninetyeth year, remembered the years of his youth. Through all the stories of those early years the same golden thread is woven: it was wheat that ‘made’ the country.

The rich virgin soil of the prairies north of the valley, “black as ink, and rich almost to glutinousness,” had only to be turned over during the summer and fall, left open to the weather until spring, then dragged, and it was ready for planting. Mary Caroline Price was fascinated by “teams on the prairie, quite a sight, four breaking teams in one field . . . It looked like business; the long strings of oxen and horses [farmers often drove as many as six animals to one breaking plow] and the drivers shouting and cracking their long whips.” The clearing of woodland cost much more labor. William Pease’s son and a hired man spent 165 man-days of labor cutting and grubbing a ten-acre patch to the point where it was ready for the plow. Newly cleared woodland would raise only turnips or potatoes its first year or two, but when it was

planted to wheat it, like the prairie, produced double the yield of older land; twenty to thirty bushels an acre was the average for the first two or three crops and thereafter sixteen to twenty bushels could be expected. One Bohemian family who bought an eighty-acre farm in the early sixties made the whole \$1600 of its price out of the first year's crop.

Such fabulous crops called for fabulous labor in its harvesting. Ripened grain permitted no delay, and every man and boy in the region turned out to help with the harvest. Even clergymen laid aside their professional dignities. Chatfield's first resident Episcopalian rector, the Reverend F. G. S. Schatzel, wrote a vivid description for *Harper's Magazine* on the basis of his own experience in binding wheat after a self-rake reaper.

He urged "all, no matter how small and fragile," to try it the coming season. After two days of "toughening out," he reported, "A feeling of physical endurance and power came over me which struck me as being peculiarly noble. . . . My mind seemed to expand in its strength and assume a serener, because more powerful, empire over my body. . . . Farewell now to old weaknesses and despondencies." All sorts of men shared in the experience: "a tailor, a shoemaker, a harness-maker . . . lawyers, doctors, preachers . . ." and all returned from the harvesting with "their frames knit and toughened with toil . . . their health invigorated, and their brains clear and powerful," feeling "they were in these things more fully paid than in the fifty or seventy-five dollars with which their pockets were lined."

Even with these reinforcements the local labor supply was not enough, and the Schatzel article described the arrival of "'field hands' from below." They were "a rough-looking set of fellows, each . . . with a bundle or valise . . . looked like a detachment of Goths or Vandals. . . . They want a regular Thanksgiving dinner every day, and a breakfast and supper to match. . . . The boys offset the burdens of the day with fun and song," and their swearing was something fearful to hear: "very common in the Northwest. An oath at every ten words is perhaps a fair average." The farm wife seemed to Reverend Mr. Schatzel to bear the

heaviest burden of the season. Every day for three weeks she had to cook for a dozen men, "ravenous as wolves." She was "nearly worked to death . . . but she keeps up her spirits . . . always has a smile of courage and strength . . . perhaps contributes her small quota to the running repartee and laughter of her boisterous 'family'—as she loves to call her guests . . . so patient, and willing, and obliging, that you hardly suspect how great the strain of that harvest month must be to her system."

After harvesting came threshing, and until well into the seventies that continued to be done largely in the ancient, primitive way. Those so fortunate as to have a barn floor large enough, spread the sheaves there and drove the oxen over it, or beat out the grain with a flail. More often a piece of earth was scraped bare and tramped smooth to serve as threshing floor. The women sometimes helped with the flail; it was a pair of sticks of uneven length, bound loosely together by strips of leather. The thresher knelt at the edge of the floor and twirled the shorter stick over her head, then brought it down on the heads of the grain. Afterwards the chaff was winnowed out by tossing the loose grain in broad wooden scoops and letting it fall again so the wind would blow through it.

By 1867, a threshing machine of sorts had been brought into the Chatfield province, a great clumsy contrivance powered by a dozen horses or oxen hitched to a long pole and driven round and round. Such a machine cost seven or eight hundred dollars, but it threshed three or four hundred bushels a day, and the man who bought it was busy from first harvest till mid-November, threshing for the farmers of the province. By 1876, steam threshing machines had come into use but one of them exploded and killed three men instantly, besides injuring several others. The flail took no such toll; some farmers preferred for years afterward to stick to the old way.

When the grain was threshed it still had to be taken to market. In the first years it all went to the River. The dust never settled on the road to Winona in the weeks just after harvest. William Murphy stopped on the top of a hill one day to count 65 teams going

down through Burns's Valley to the river, and the editor of the *Democrat* reported another day that he had met 110 loads of wheat as he drove home from Winona.

It was a good two-day journey to Winona from Chatfield, and there were wheat fields many miles to the west of Chatfield whose harvest had to be hauled to the river. Some of the men who did that hauling slept under their wagons and ate food they carried from home, but those who could afford it stopped at wayside inns. Henry Silsbee remembered how he used to hurry each evening to his uncle's inn on the Winona road to listen to the talk of the men staying there. One man told of sleeping under his wagon the night before and waking in the dawn to look straight into the eye of a copperhead coiled on the 'ex' above him. He vowed then he'd never sleep out again.

Prices were always lowest at harvest time, so every farmer who could wait for his crop money hauled his wheat after snowfall. Few could wait for peak prices in May or June, or could spare their teams at that season when the fields had to be planted. No winter passed without some luckless traveler being lost on the long, tortuous trails, and each spring there were freshly whitened bones along the way, both beasts' and men's. Henry Silsbee remembered the winter night when the talk at his uncle's inn was pitched in lower key as the men told of a poor Norwegian they had found frozen to death, pinned under his load where it had tipped over in one of the pitch-holes in the snow.

Every farmer kept enough of his wheat to make his year's supply of flour, and the local mills bought a certain amount of wheat. Merchants, too, would take wheat in payment for the bolts of calico and the sugar, the coffee and other goods that a farm family had to buy. But both those markets together could absorb only a small part of the region's production, and it was seldom that either could pay in cash. Farmers had to have cash—to pay their taxes, and to keep up with their obligations to the moneylenders. Anyone who could devise the means for a cash wheat market in Chatfield was meeting a real need.

J. C. Easton saw that need very early. On July 23, 1859, he wrote to an Eastern friend:

I propose this fall to ship wheat and perhaps other grain to Chicago, Milwaukee, or St. Louis. Our harvest promises to be very abundant and there will be a large surplus.

I think $\frac{3}{4}$ of the farms in Minnesota are encumbered [*sic*] from \$100 @ \$500 at high rates of interest. I hold a large amt. of mortgages and can see no way of making the money but to devise some plan for our surplus wheat.

I do not engage in this from any desire to speculate, as I have plenty to do in my legitimate business—but as there seems to be no one else here to take it up I propose to see what I can do.

He went on to inquire after the possibilities of raising money among his friends in the East for the venture and planned to deliver such wheat as he might buy to Winona till the River closed, then to La Crosse which already had a railroad connection to Chicago.

Apparently nothing came of that plan, for a year later he wrote to another friend that "last year buyers from St. Louis, Milwaukee and Chicago went all through the country and bought every bushel" at 70 cents to 80 cents, approximately Winona prices, though some 17 cents to 42 cents below Milwaukee prices for that season. He thought there should be "plenty of buyers" for the 1860 crop. Milo White had built a 20,000 bushel granary in Chatfield, and Easton was providing Augustus Haven with credit up to \$1,000 at a time for Haven's dealings in wheat and flour. Since the Chatfield market was so well covered, Easton was looking afield. During the winter of 1859-60 he had bought some ten thousand bushels in territory well to the west of Chatfield's province, had it hauled to Winona, and sold it in May at an advance of 20 cents a bushel—"as nice a thing on a short run as I have made in the West."

Yet by the following year he decided the grain business on the whole was "too uncertain . . . I think hereafter I will not dabble

with it . . . but stick to my legitimate dealings in land and money." He found plenty to do in his own new Land Office town, Winnebago.

But by 1867, he had pretty well skimmed the cream off that "legitimate business," and conditions of the wheat market had stabilized considerably with the extension of railroads. The Winona and St. Peter line had come within eight or ten miles of Chatfield in 1864, and the Southern Minnesota, at Lanesboro, was only twelve miles from Chatfield. That year Easton borrowed "all the money I can to buy wheat" at Chatfield and Lanesboro. Two years later he tried his hand at a flyer in futures on the Chicago market. The venture started small: he and three Chatfield associates * put up \$250 apiece, so the risk was divided, though the manipulations were in Easton's hands. They were so successful that Easton set up a commission house in Chicago in the name of Easton and Holley, and started buying wheat and other produce at most of the stations along the Southern Minnesota.

By 1870, Easton had agreements for the purchase and storage of wheat in towns scattered from the River westward for nearly two hundred miles, on both the Winona and St. Peter and the Southern Minnesota railroads. The following year he was deep in both the Milwaukee and the Chicago markets, then neck-and-neck competitors for control of the American wheat and flour markets.

That year he noted in a pocket diary the places where he was each day, and the record is instructive. He made 14 different trips to Chicago and Milwaukee and spent a total of 96 days in those two cities, often going from one to the other and back again in one day. From March 7 to April 4, he spent all his time "on 'change" in those two cities. He also made two trips to New York City and other eastern points, two to St. Paul, and one to Duluth, which was then competing with Milwaukee and Chicago for the lake trade in wheat shipments. By January of 1872, Easton could

* They were Easton's brother-in-law, L. A. Johnson, a friend of Johnson's named Shaw, and H. W. Holley, chief engineer of the Southern Minnesota.

write to his Chicago house that he handled "¾ of all Minnesota flour."

Easton was no longer a small-town operator. He had by that time built warehouses at every station on the Southern Minnesota and established banks in half a dozen towns in the southeastern quarter of the state; most of the towns were larger than Chatfield. The grasp of those banks on the towns is suggested by a letter he wrote to his representative in the Winnebago bank: "I expect you to get *all* the business in your town, as my other banks do."

That same letter hints also at Easton's relations to the Southern Minnesota. H. W. Holley, then general manager of the road, had complained to Easton that his representative was "talking against the railroad." Easton reminded his employee that "the railroad is what makes the town. . . . The policy for . . . you and every citizen is to stand by your road and conceal its faults and above all never to advertise its faults. . . . Railroad men like all men want to be treated courteously." He then gave "a form of a letter" for his employee to write to Holley, saying it would be "ok if it has plenty of nonsense in it *of the right kind.*"

The "nonsense" that Easton recommended is of a curious variety. The Winnebago altercation had apparently grown out of some question of collecting certain notes that the bank held from Holley's church. After smoothing over the details of that transaction the letter concluded: "And now dear Friend let me ask an interest in your daily prayers (and all the business you can send me, which I hope to do to your entire satisfaction hereafter). You have mine now, particularly that Bro. Reynolds may early convert you . . . back to the true faith." Churches were evidently 'good for' business, too, when treated to the right kind of "nonsense."

There was no nonsense in the single-mindedness with which Easton went after the wheat business along the Southern Minnesota. He evidently had a special agreement on shipping rates in 1871, and perhaps before that, though it apparently was not put into writing. Even with the advantage of preferential rates, he had a hard fight that year, with a man named Voss, for the con-

trol of the wheat-buying business. In May, 1872, he proposed to Holley that "we pool the whole road" with Voss. "He and I could close all the rest of the buyers . . . I am not weak-kneed in this suggestion but think it might be best for the road. . . . He proposed it last fall and would probably welcome it now. . . . In doing so I think we can still run our contract (inside), *retain peace*, and make perhaps as much all round."

But Voss evidently did not welcome the proposal. In the ensuing fight Easton squeezed every resource he had to gather the funds required. It was a bitter fight. Several times Easton's letters speak of "more trouble than is convenient," and expressed regret that he had so little time at home—"only once in three weeks." When a Chicago business associate suggested that his son would like a job with Easton he was advised that the boy would not like wheat buying, for it was "rough business." He accused one of his own agents of joining "those who think I am such a low scamp," and warned him to change his tune if he wanted to keep his job. And it was during that fight that Easton wrote that he could not visit his mother in her serious illness, because "things here are so tight."

By June 8 (a month before the current crop was ripe), he could write: "The fight on our road is over . . . I am buying all the grain on the S.M. Road." About that same time he ordered his Chicago office to "shift \$4,000 from the wheat act. to my personal account via the Rushford office . . . say nothing to anyone about this rebate." A few days later he wrote to Holley that he was "glad Col. Thompson [president of the road] was not here during the fight; it could not have gone better *thanks to your plucky generalship.*"

But the peace so won was not enough. Easton, with 40,000 bushels of wheat for which he could get no cars, began looking about for "a commission house arrangement that can control more than the S.M. Road." In July, he wrote the manager of the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad, which ran from St. Paul to Duluth, asking his rates to Duluth: "rates on the S.M. Road

are too high." A little later he advised his Chicago office that he might "give up wheat on the SMRR."

He did not "give up wheat." As the new crop ripened he went into the fields of a dozen Chatfield farms to examine the prospective yield, and laid plans to finance even bigger operations. To one bank in which he had an interest he wrote suggesting that they put their "surplus" into his business; he was putting \$50,000 out of his Chatfield bank's operating capital into wheat buying—not precisely orthodox banking methods. He wrote that he was further assured of "up to \$100,000 or \$200,000" from one Camp, apparently known to his correspondent.

On August 15, 1872, he signed a contract with Clark Thompson, president of the Southern Minnesota, covering his operations along that road. That agreement was, apparently, the first time that Easton's dealings with the road were put into writing. The contract was a clear and unmistakable violation of the law that the state legislature had passed the year before, though the contract made no reference to the law. Here, as in earlier dealings in land, Easton and his associates evidently did "not care a fig for the law." Why he should have taken the risk of putting such a contract into writing, when he had operated on what was evidently a similar though unwritten agreement for at least two years before, is nowhere made explicit; circumstances that developed later suggest it may have been a move in the interminable jockeying of one group against another for the control of a profitable railroad.

By that contract Easton agreed to provide all facilities and personnel necessary for the buying of wheat at every station on the road, "at prices dictated by the SMRR." He was in turn to be paid all expenses of such purchase, plus 10 per cent on all money used in the transaction, plus a commission of $\frac{3}{4}$ cents per bushel. The wheat was to be sold, each day, 'to arrive' on the Milwaukee market. Whatever the sale yielded, over and above the payments to Easton, was to be kept by the company as payment of freight charges. According to the contract itself, its purpose was "to en-

able the Railroad to regulate and sustain rates of freight." It completely ignored the state law that set up a system of freight rates.

The obvious effect of this contract was to cut Easton's freight charges to the point where he could pay prices nearer to the Milwaukee market than would otherwise be possible. His competitors, forced to meet his prices while paying the higher freight rates, simply could not stay in business.

Another, and hidden, advantage accrued to Easton. Although the contract said he was to buy "at prices dictated by the SMRR" his letters make it clear that he himself largely decided his prices. While he was freezing out competition he ordered his Milwaukee office to send both *highest* and *lowest* prices each day, and he bought on the basis of the highest price. When most of his competitors had been forced out, and the Milwaukee market went up, he ordered only the *average* price sent, making his local prices lower. Still later, when he was *selling* wheat to four Minnesota mills, he ordered the "taking price" so he could "get the maximum" out of his sales. As the prices he ordered were sent over the railroad telegraph wires, and were the only daily market information available along the Southern Minnesota, other dealers could do nothing but act on the basis of those quotations, whatever discrepancies might appear when later weekly reports were issued in market publications. It all made for a nice manipulation of the sacred 'laws' of supply and demand.

Yet it is clear that Easton was not the only one to benefit by that contract. Rival buyers suffered, but for the whole period of Easton's operations on the Southern Minnesota the prices paid to farmers were from three to five cents nearer Milwaukee prices than they had been before. There is nothing to show that Easton understood the social implication of the world market on which he dealt, but there can be no question that he was one of the men who did much to create the techniques by which that market could operate. And the prices he paid during the life of his illegal contract meant substantial increases in the money that circulated in that section of the state. For one ten-month period for which

figures are available, from \$50,000 to \$80,000 was added to the money in the pocket of farmers in southeastern Minnesota, a sum that made a real difference in their economic well-being, in that particular period.

The process of getting that money into the hands of the farmers themselves involved a host of lesser fry called 'wheat buyers' who were "in a class by themselves," according to Reverend Mr. Schatzel's article in *Harper's*. Chatfield usually had about a dozen in operation—one for each of the local merchants, plus those hired by Easton and outside dealers. Most of them were local men, familiar figures among the loungers on street corners and barrooms, galvanized at harvest time into the activity they sedulously avoided through most of the year.

The wheat buyers took their stations each morning at strategic points along Main Street, disputing loudly among themselves for particularly coveted posts. Each was armed with a 'wheat tester'—a copper quart measure on a long rod scaled for use as a balance. When a wagonload of wheat appeared they rushed into the street brandishing their testers and shouting their prices and the names of their principals, each striving to outshout his rivals. As the unpaved street filled with creaking wagons and the hot afternoon air grew heavy with dust, the hubbub mounted to pandemonium. C. M. Lovell, a merchant who liked to do his own buying, was particularly given to high excitement: as the day wore on and the bidding grew frenzied he often climbed onto a moving wagon he had marked for his own and whipped the horses past the other buyers to his warehouse. Sometimes the buyers stationed themselves outside of town on one of the roads leading in from a section where the crop was known to be particularly good.

When a farmer accepted a bid the buyer climbed onto the wagon, plunged his tester into the golden grain, and weighed a measureful to determine its grade. Then he filled out a printed ticket, with the name of the farmer, the grade, and the price. The farmer thereupon drove to the warehouse to which the buyer was attached, had his load weighed and the amount entered on

his ticket. If a man hauled his wheat on to the railroad he was paid two or three cents a bushel more than if he unloaded it in Chatfield. The tickets were sometimes cashed at the warehouse (Easton used that method), sometimes credited against the farmer's account with the merchant to whom he sold, sometimes taken to some local bank or merchant for cashing. G. H. Haven did not buy wheat for himself, but he cashed the tickets issued by buyers for Van Dusen, a Rochester merchant turned wheat buyer, who came to control an extensive and very profitable line of elevators across the southern half of Minnesota.

The fever of speculation was almost as widespread in the wheat boom as in the earlier land boom. Almost everybody who could scrape together a little money tried a flyer in wheat at one time or another. Lucian Johnson was one small speculator whose intermittent diaries afford amusing instances. Besides his successive and variously patterned partnerships with his brother-in-law, Easton, he was continuously engaged in "deals" of his own. On September 15, 1871, for instance, he recorded: "John O'Leary and I have made a bargain like this. I am to pay him for 200 bushels of wheat delivered in good order in Chatfield and if wheat does not reach 1.25 here or St. Charles I am to have the wheat for 80¢ per bush. within 3 months from this date." The sporting excitement could be heightened by a variety of devices. On a February day, Johnson "went to Dover and St. Charles with a load of stump-tail wheat could not sell to either got it ground at Troy 3¢ a bushel." Twenty-five miles by team in a Minnesota February seems a high price for the slim chance of passing off worthless wheat at the market price of \$1.05.

That sort of petty speculation went on with dozens of persons, but all added together they were small-time stuff compared with Easton's operations. Besides his contract with the Southern Minnesota he was buying wheat in at least seven major towns on other railroads, and was carrying on large-scale operations in oats, pork, salt, and other commodities. At this point he also took on large-scale operations in railroad stock.

Early in 1892, Easton wrote to a Vermont associate that he

had been "invited to form a syndicate to buy huge amounts of Southern Minnesota Stock" and suggested that his correspondent invest from \$25,000 to \$100,000 in the venture. No further reference to the deal is found in Easton's extant letters, but in November of that year the Southern Minnesota was forced into bankruptcy by a group of New York men, including Russell Sage, who had just acquired a heavy interest in the Milwaukee road, to which the Southern Minnesota was attached. The petitioners described themselves as "trustees" for holders of Southern Minnesota bonds whose interest had been defaulted ninety days earlier.

Clark Thompson, president of the Southern Minnesota, tried frantically to prove that the company was not bankrupt; the court before which the issue was drawn characterized his affidavit as "very long . . . filled with an account of the machinations of enemies . . . many matters not necessary to be considered at this time." The petition of the bondholders was granted and a receiver was appointed.

Easton's name appears nowhere in these proceedings, but the choice of Charles McIlrath as receiver makes it clear that Easton was of the winning party. He and McIlrath had accumulated a long list of mutual favors since the days when they both operated in Chatfield, just after the Land Office went there. As state auditor for some years thereafter McIlrath had been in a position to be useful to his friends.

Easton's contract with the Southern Minnesota was renewed on May 6, 1873, and the next month McIlrath asked the court for instructions on rates under the Minnesota Railroad act of 1871. At the same time Easton petitioned for permission to sue the company under that act for having charged him excessive freight on salt shipments. Easton's wheat-buying contract was not mentioned, but affidavits were presented showing that "none of the railroads of the state have obeyed the statute" because it was an "unconstitutional invasion of charter rights." Moreover, McIlrath argued, the Southern Minnesota could not make enough for running expenses if it obeyed the law.

The Court professed itself "embarrassed" because the "constitutional aspect" of the law was still to be determined: "We decline to order the receiver to disregard the state law," the decision read, "but we do not at present make any more peremptory order."

That was in June, 1873. The Southern Minnesota bankruptcy dragged on for another four years, while the various interested parties jockeyed for advantage. In the meantime Minnesota Grangers had rallied their strength and elected a substantial number of antimonopoly legislators and other state officials. They repealed the clumsy law of 1871, which had proved unworkable without regard to its constitutionality. A new, much milder, regulatory law was passed, and an investigation was ordered to determine whether Easton's wheat buying had been, in fact as in rumor, monopolistic. Quantities of evidence were taken, including Easton's 1872 contract with the SMRR, and the story was not very hard to make out.

No use was made of the evidence collected by the legislative investigation until after the United States Supreme Court had approved the right of the states to regulate the railroads. Thereupon "Greiser and others" sued McIlrath, receiver for the Southern Minnesota, for having discriminated against them in the matter of freight rates, "contrary to the provisions of the act of Minnesota Legislature," and cited Easton's contract with the railroad in evidence. The Federal Court, District of Minnesota, found, in 1877, that the plaintiffs were entitled "to equal rates, or to the refund of the amount of the discrimination" in Easton's favor. A "special master" was appointed to "collect data, examine books and witnesses in addition to proofs already taken." Either the "special master" was very thorough, or the Southern Minnesota was very successful in stalling off the decision: his report was not ratified until 1882. The railroad was then ordered to pay the complainants \$69,399, or 3.97 cents per bushel they had shipped. Whether or not those payments were made, or what part of them was met by Easton, does not appear in the records.

In the meantime the control of the Southern Minnesota had been determined for that generation. Early in 1877, a 'new' company was organized by the holders of the second mortgage, and the holders of other bonds were forced into what might be characterized as a junior partnership. The president, vice president, treasurer, and four of the directors of the 'new' company were from New York and Connecticut; the one Westerner on the board of directors was J. C. Easton. For three years he acted as general manager of the road, giving Lanesboro as his address in the company's reports to the state railroad and warehouse commission, though he continued to 'live' in Chatfield.

In 1879, Easton, with two New York men, formed the committee which prepared the final absorption of the Southern Minnesota by the Milwaukee Railroad. He was mentioned, a year or two later, as likely to be the next president of the Milwaukee, but that position never devolved upon him. Whether that was his choice or his defeat is not recorded; the temper of much of his record gives leave to suppose that he was quite content to leave others the public show of power so long as he held its substance. He continued as a director of the Milwaukee until his retirement from active business in 1896.

In 1883, he built himself a baronial hall above the River outside La Crosse, and lived there until his death. The farm he kept in Chatfield's province and the show place he developed at La Crosse—he spent a lot of money breeding race horses there—seem to have absorbed most of his interest in later years. He was reputed, in Chatfield, to have been Minnesota's first millionaire, and he left a substantial fortune on his death. But now the show place above the River is an empty shell.

That the countryside where Easton began the gathering of his fortune is not likewise an empty shell might, in a hasty judgment, be called no fault of his. But to judge thus would be to judge partially. The Root River valley remains a region more than commonly blest in the soil it was given in the long sum of geological time. If its hillsides begin to wear thin and its streams

are choked each spring with living soil, the fault lies no more with Easton than with the men who resented his power, and joined the Grange to make laws to limit it.

For even the Grangers, for the most part, thought that Minnesota soil was "inexhaustible," and went blindly ahead gutting their land with crop after crop of wheat. They understood the nature of their land little better than they understood the nature of the world markets that absorbed the wheat from that land. Perhaps the best of the region's "luck" was an event that in its happening called down men's curses on the land. In 1878, the wheat crop failed almost utterly, struck by a disease that withered it stock and ear. Do what they would thereafter, farmers could not grow wheat enough to keep them alive. They were forced to diversify their farming, and thus, unwittingly, to preserve themselves from the ruthless exploitation of a one-crop system.

PART

Eleven



Happy Is the Miller

I



A SICK OLD MAN fumbled with the latch of the oaken lattice that barred him inside the little bedroom behind the parlor. His attendant had gone for an hour and he was lonely for the sun that shone on the new grass outside his window. When the latch suddenly gave way and the latticed door swung open, his loose-jointed length swayed with excitement as he shuffled into the other room. If he went out the front way 'they' would see him and talk him into such confusion that he would find himself locked in again. He felt his way to the back of the house.

Outside the kitchen door he stood sheltered by a clump of lilac bushes and blinked in the clean light, groping after memories of the years when he had driven a spanking team through such light as this. He had followed every road out of the valley in those days. He had bought wheat and swapped horses and bargained with farmers for everything they raised or needed, and men had laughed with his joking even when he took away the best of their cows or the most of their money.

The roads all ran together in his mind and a dizziness came over him. He looked at the grass under his feet. A mole was working there, and the old man followed its trail. From the first mound of black earth pushed up through the grass it was four paces to an open hole with earth thrown out beside it. He counted eleven such exits in the eighty-seven paces of its length before the trail stopped at the foot of the maple, but nowhere had the mole made good an escape from his darkness. The man stood bowed beside the tree, fumbling dimly with the pattern of peace-and-unpeace in the earth at his feet. It was so like the pattern of his days since his team and his bargaining and the old jocose ways were gone from him.

Swaying a little, he felt the nearness of the tree. A twig brushed his face, and he reached a hand to break it off. He counted five clusters of buds on the twig. They were the color of wine, and each bud opened to let five threads of white spray out. There would be five seeds from every bud, he figured . . . and suddenly emerged from dimness into the memory of a day when he had watched the man on his farm open the furrows of black earth, and helped with the planting of thousands on thousands of maple seeds. They had come up thick, he remembered, and maple trees had been planted all over the town from that field. This very tree . . .

He lifted his head and looked at the tree dressed in April radiance. He had planted it there, with his own hands, when it was a sapling so slender that he could have broken it as he broke this twig. Now its trunk was thicker than his own and it stood adorned in light. But he . . .

His hands fell slack at his side. Unpeace closed in upon him and he stumbled slowly back to the house, where someone was calling his name.

silk, to remove the bran and other coarse particles, the flour was complete.

With Minnesota's hard spring wheat, however, this process heated the grain and clogged the stones. A French miller solved the problem. Perrigault, of Paris, bought Minnesota wheat because it was cheap and his customers were poor. But possessing a craftsman's integrity he experimented with its grinding and discovered that rather simple alterations obtained from hard wheat a flour whose excellence was soon known beyond his own neighborhood.

What he did was to set his first run of stones the maximum distance that would crack the wheat berries, and run them at about half the usual speed. After one such grinding the mash was sent through a series of sieves and fans that drew off the troublesome bran. The resultant 'middlings' were then sent back through one or more pairs of stones, this time set closer, and ground into "the finest flour any miller could produce." There was little waste in such milling; the flour was faintly dark in color, but it made white bread of a quality exceeding that of any other flour. As other millers learned the process the demand for Minnesota wheat went up, and so did the price.

By 1865, three brothers named LaCroix were teaching the French method to millers in Montreal. Alexander Faribault, whose father had left Canada for the Minnesota fur trade in 1796, heard of their skill and persuaded them to set up the new process in his mill on the Cannon River. Within five years there were forty mills on that river, some sixty to eighty miles northwest of the Root River, and all were making flour by the French process. The LaCroix brothers were kept busy building their 'middlings purifiers' for millers throughout the state.

Millers thrived on the Root River as well. The state geologist in 1874 reported thirty-two flour mills on the Root and its affluents, sixteen of them within twenty miles of Chatfield.

One of those mills stood at the point where the West Chatfield road dropped from the bench to the river bottom. Another, the most famous, stood a mile and a half northwest of town, on

the site of Chatfield's first sawmill. A third was about the same distance south of town, just below the point where Thomas Twiford had forded the river for the last time when he first came to the valley. The story of those three mills, of their meaning for village and wheatland, and of the forces that eventually dismantled them, is yet another chapter in the story of America's transformation from a local to a world economy.

III



WHEN SAM DICKSON arrived in Chatfield he had seen the American land from Sangamon County to California. What brought him to Chatfield, a year ahead of the Land Office, no one remembers, but he had with him a couple of thousand dollars that he turned to good account in the bustling speculation in land. By the time Milo White made his memorable journey to bring flour to Chatfield, Sam Dickson had already built the shell of a flouring mill.

It stood below the westerly edge of the bench, and its wheels were turned by water brought from the creek in a 'race' half a mile long. The walls of the lower floor were of stone cut from Winona Hill on the opposite side of town; the upper part was built of lumber from the sawmill a mile up the creek. The race was dug and the building enclosed before the cold came, so that Dickson and the millwright he brought up from Galena were able to work through the winter building the elaborate system of 'chests' and 'elevators' and 'chutes' on which the operation of the mill depended.

Norman K. Culver, the millwright, came with his family on the stage from Winona a day or two after Milo White got home with his flour. (His wife never forgot the God-forsaken look of the town that day, and never ceased to long for the York State home she had left.) When the storage bins were ready, Dickson

went through the countryside persuading farmers to sell their wheat to him instead of hauling it to Winona. With the first rush of water after the ice went out, the millwheel began turning, and Chatfield produced its own flour.

The mill was a center of interest, partly from the immemorial fascination of the milling process itself, partly from the salt and eccentric character of the miller whom Dickson had engaged.

John Kaercher came from Alsace-Lorraine and his broad Alsatian speech was itself an entertainment. Honest John was one miller whom the farmers trusted. He attended no church, but on Sundays he "invited his hands and others to hear him expound the gospel from his viewpoint," which was that of "an extreme optimist." His first wife died, and Chatfield folks were vastly edified when they heard that 'Honest John' had advertised for another: "Time was too precious for courting," he told them. He got one—"a fine-looking, well educated woman" who wasn't afraid of work: she'd get up on a farmer's wagon and throw off the sacks of wheat as quick as a man. And she always had a cheerful word for everyone. But she wore bloomers! It was the first pair ever seen in Chatfield—or in Minnesota, for that matter—and they were perhaps a sign of the independent spirit which after a few months brought John Kaercher to agree to a separation and her return to the East.

'Honest John' left Chatfield not long after to run a mill he had bought at Troy, a few miles down the road to Winona; in all he owned and operated four different mills within twelve miles of Chatfield, and was reputed to have made and lost as many fortunes. In 1861, his place at Dickson's mill was taken by James Cussons, the English miller whose nine-year stroll across the continent was so engagingly set down a half century later in his own reminiscences.

Cussons immediately recognized Chatfield's need of an additional and year-round cash market for wheat. He stopped grinding grists and paid for all wheat either in cash or with flour at a fixed ratio. A Winona firm advanced the money for this operation and marketed the flour, and the Nonpareil mill was soon

turning out eighty barrels of flour every day. A steam engine was installed to run the mill when the creek was frozen.

The miller's life was not an easy one. He worked from six in the morning to twelve at night, with only a half-grown boy to help him, and the air he breathed was filled with impalpable dust of the flour he made. Three years in Dickson's mill left James Cussons seriously ill with the old tubercular complaint that had set him walking northward three years before, and he gave up the mill for a summer of hunting and fishing on the Root River. In the fall he undertook to 'keep store' as a theoretically easier way of earning a living for his family, but by spring he was convinced that "not all burdens are carried by millers." His health was worse rather than better: a doctor told him he could not hope to live through another winter.

But James Cussons thought otherwise. For the second time he sent his wife and children to her father's home and betook himself to the open air. This time he went into the pine woods of Wisconsin, with "a noted pioneer and trapper" from their borders. Two Chatfield men went along for the summer, and James Cussons fished and kept the camp while the others hunted deer and bee-trees. The Chatfield men went back in the fall, with two barrels of honey and a quantity of 'jerked' venison, but Cussons and the trapper stayed on, pushing up the Menominee even still farther into the wilderness. Flour for biscuits was their only 'civilized' food, and Cussons grew steadily stronger on his diet of "catfish and yearling coon," with venison and honey. By mid-December he was ready to return so the two men built a pair of boats out of boards they hewed from basswood trees, and loaded them with the camping equipment and the furs they had taken. (The furs later sold for several hundred dollars, and Cussons took the three finest beaver skins to his wife.)

The river was filmed with ice in the quiet shallows near the banks when the two started for the Mississippi and home. A few miles above Winona they were caught on an island and had to stay there through two days of a blizzard. Then the ice was firm enough that Cussons, the lighter of the two men, could venture

across to the Minnesota shore for help. At the first house he reached he found a woman alone, frantic with fear that her husband had been lost in the blizzard on his way to mill, which was two days' journey distant. She had no flour, nor any other food but a little salt pork. Cussons found a bag of 'shorts'—a milling waste used for cattle feed—in the barn and showed the woman how to make cakes from it. When he had eaten, he went on to the next house to borrow a team. By that time it was thirty degrees below zero, and the next settler would not venture out for fear he would freeze. He did let Cussons take the team, however, and when he got back to the River the ice was so thick that he drove easily to the island after his partner and their furs. That night they slept in a house, "the first time in four months." . . . When Cussons reached Ohio, a week or two later his wife received him "as one from the grave." Interestingly enough, he never suffered again from tuberculosis.

Two years later Sam Dickson again offered Cussons a three-year partnership in the Nonpareil mill. Cussons had picked up enough of the new technique of flouring that he did considerable rebuilding of the mill, and his flour soon commanded premium prices in New York, where he shipped by way of Duluth. By the terms of the contract Cussons was to pay half of the expenses and take a third of the profits from the mill. At the end of the three-year period his share of profit was \$30,000. Dickson was outraged by the figure despite his own \$60,000-dollar profit and refused to renew the contract. To all Cussons' offers to buy or rent the mill Dickson's answer was: "You're crazy if you think I'll part with a mill that pays as this does." He could hire a miller for \$50 a month and keep all the profits. So for the second time James Cussons left Chatfield not knowing that he would ever return.

Dickson's mill went on with a succession of hired millers, who could scarcely avoid 'making money' for their employer in those particular years. But the flour lost the pre-eminent quality that had commanded premium prices, and the mill on the West Chatfield road was just one of the sixteen operating in the province.

The little sawmill up the creek had long since been turned into a gristmill; its title was held jointly by Dickson and Cussons, but during the early seventies it lay idle most of the time. Cussons was too far away to attend to it himself, and Dickson had bigger fish to fry.

He had gone into partnership with J. C. Easton and Lucian Johnson in a new milling project, down on the North Branch of the Root River, a mile or two south of town. The land had come to Easton in a mortgage foreclosure some years before. Dickson held a half interest in the undertaking, and Easton and Johnson divided the other half between them. The building was done in the summer of 1873, and Lucian Johnson took general charge of the construction.

It was exactly the kind of job Johnson liked best. For thirty weeks he had from three to a dozen men working for him, with enough shift in the actual persons to give him a continuously fresh audience for his stories and sly humor. He had enough authority to accord with his standing as a "top buggy farmer," and enough division of responsibility to make it somebody else's business if the deal didn't turn out well.

It held, too, the chance for the kind of personal dickering and management of shifting details which delighted Johnson. Except for parts of the actual machinery, the mill was entirely fabricated from local materials. The stone for its foundations was cut on John Murphy's land by one of the Halloran boys, and the heavy beams were hewed by two farmers in the neighborhood from their own trees. Lath and flooring came from one sawmill and siding from another. The hundred bushels of lime used for plaster and whitewashing were burned by Orrin Thurber in a limekiln up Cumminsville way, and the plastering hair was provided by one of the local butchers. Assembling those materials must have given Lucian Johnson endless delight: he set down every least detail in the pocket diary of that year.

North Branch Mill went into production early in 1874, turning out a hundred and fifty barrels of flour each twenty-four hours.

A little hamlet grew up around the mill to house the workers in the mill and cooper shop. After three years it showed so large a profit that its capacity was doubled—at a cost of \$50,000, the local legend says, though in light of the original cost of \$30,000, set down in Johnson's diary, that figure seems unlikely. The first harvest after the enlargement was almost a total failure, and the legend remains that Easton himself lost the whole sum of \$50,000. That too seems unlikely; though no complete account can be put together, occasional items from Easton's books suggest a different story. In 1883, for instance, Easton's ledger recorded the expenditure of \$99,571.67 for wheat at North Branch Mill, over a period of slightly more than twelve months. It is unlikely that such spending would have continued without commensurate profit.

Four years later, however, the mill had lain idle long enough for Sam Dickson to decide he wanted to wind up the partnership. Early in March one of the clerks in Easton's bank wrote to Easton in New York that Dickson had come into the bank and made "a give or take offer" with the mill on one side and the land-plus-a-thousand-dollars on the other. The clerk thought the mill was the better bargain, and enclosed an itemized estimate of the value of its equipment, amounting to \$8,285. He wrote that he had "been advised that these prices are low, and that firms in Minneapolis make a business of buying such machinery." (A millwright who had worked in that mill saw the inventory half a century later and said the prices were about double the actual worth of the equipment.) The clerk felt that Dickson should make a better offer if he did not "want the mill torn down," and complained that Dickson was saying around town that he would apply for a court order if there was no other way to get a settlement.

Easton took his time about answering. His reply, on Milwaukee Railroad stationery, said: "I can't see the need of so much haste on Sam's part. I won't be hurried but will go to Chatfield as soon as convenient. If . . . he wants to go into court, all right—in

fact, am not sure but that is best. . . . Confidentially I am inclined to say take the \$1000 and land, but don't tell anyone that. When I see you we will decide."

It was full summer when Easton got back to Chatfield, and he had other things to attend to before he settled the matter of the mill. He transferred the ownership of the Root River Bank to G. H. Haven that summer, and began preparations for moving his family to La Crosse, where he was building his big estate on the banks of the River. He had blooded horses to buy, and to race against other noted trotters in the region. But eventually he got around to making a settlement of the mill matter.

The scene of that discussion is not hard to imagine. Sam Dickson by that time was a white-bearded patriarch who enjoyed the nickname of Uncle Sam, and was as little inclined as his prototype to be "put upon," even by the richest man in Minnesota. The years of financial success had hardened Easton's impatient energies into authoritative crispness yet he never lost his enjoyment of country bargaining with the men he had known through his thirty years in Chatfield. The two men, with Lucian Johnson, met in the office of the bank, and Johnson's long loose figure and sly ribaldry made a curious foil for the other two. G. H. Haven very likely served as a quiet moderator for the wider extremities of the argument when Dickson renewed his give-or-take offer.

The legend says that Lucian Johnson suggested they flip a coin to decide which way the bargain should go, and that G. H. Haven demurred against such an approach to gambling in the office where he had assumed responsibility for his depositors' funds. The three principals, respecting the integrity of a man whose scruples were beyond them, stepped outside and flipped a half dollar on the sidewalk in front of the bank. Years afterward there were Chatfield men who loved to tell how mystified they had been by the spectacle of that flip-of-a-coin, and by Easton's peering through a crack of the board walk to see which way the coin had fallen.

Whatever the truth of the story, the mill became Dickson's property in 1887. It was operated only intermittently after that,

for flour prices had fallen so low, and the huge Minneapolis mills so dominated the flour market that the local mill was no longer a source of easy profits.

Something comparable was happening to a dozen lesser manufacturing enterprises in Chatfield, and the *Democrat's* comments on the circumstances that led to the town's loss of one small shop after another add up to an impression that after the Civil War the national philosophy of 'rugged individualism' went far towards destroying those elements of community planning which had contributed so much to both the flavor and the substance of Chatfield's earlier years.

In 1859, Bishop's *History of Fillmore County* had offered a prophecy that was nine parts invitation. "The rapidly increasing demand for manufactured articles in a new and growing settlement, with the high prices of transportation, must soon add largely to the present investments in manufacturing here." Less than a year later a new sawmill was built (at the rapids where the West Chatfield road crossed the Root River) and a set of wool-carding machinery was installed alongside the saw. A few years later that mill was completely equipped for spinning and weaving woolen cloth. In 1868, the *Democrat* reported the woolen mill was "going full blast . . . doing as good work as is done in the West, if not in any other part of the country," and selling more than twelve thousand yards of cloth a year. In 1880, that mill was completely refitted, and sold "10,000 yards of cassimere, doeskins, and flannels, about as many miles of yarn, besides stockings for the million"; it gave steady employment to twenty-five persons, besides fifteen more hired during the busy season.

The mill burned down in 1896, and when the owner asked City Council to provide a "bonus" of \$2,000 to enable him to rebuild, the *Democrat* supported the request saying that "two of the best Twin City firms" wanted to contract for the next season's output, assuring the success of the mill. But City Council refused and the owner of the woolen mill took his skills to another town that offered the inducements Chatfield refused.

The same kind of story was reported of a number of enter-

prises. A foundry was built by a joint-stock company in 1878, and for five years made fence posts and other equally simple objects; then it was sold to a man who made a new type of platform scales, that sold "as fast as he can manufacture them." He would employ twenty-five men as soon as he could expand the foundry. But fire took the foundry, too, and all of the owner's appeals were not effective in raising enough Chatfield capital to rebuild his shop. An Iowa town made him an offer and he built a very successful business there.

The *Democrat*, under a succession of editors, tried repeatedly to encourage greater support for the achievements of local craftsmen who developed various promising processes. Samuel Crittenden, a millwright, developed a flour 'purifier' that eventually was bought up by one of the big mills in Minneapolis under monopoly rights; the *Democrat* called it "a pity he can't get capital to manufacture them here." The same man later patented a butter package that La Crosse men backed very profitably when no money was forthcoming in Chatfield. A cigar factory, growing from one man's work to the employment of half a dozen workers, developed so large a market that its owner foresaw employment for fifty persons, if he could raise the capital necessary for expansion. When no one in Chatfield would invest he moved to Winona and prospered as he had foreseen. The same thing happened with a tailor shop. It was after those two episodes that the *Democrat* exclaimed: "If Chatfield genius and capital could get together this would be the best manufacturing center in Southern Minnesota."

It was not lack of money that obstructed those enterprises. More than a dozen Chatfield men left money enough at their deaths to make it clear they, or their heirs, could easily have backed those modest factories that contributed to the prosperity of other towns; but what those men had gotten by exploitation they did not invest for co-operative advances.

And yet . . .

It was concerted action that finally achieved a railroad for the town. Although Chatfield had not "decayed" as summarily as Southern Minnesota officials had predicted, the need for a rail-

road grew more urgent each year. When the Southern Minnesota went into bankruptcy for the last time before its absorption into the Milwaukee system, the *Democrat* argued that Chatfield should give up hope for help from that quarter and look to the Winona and St. Peter that ran some miles to the north: "We must have a railroad or Chatfield has seen her best days." Proposals for a road to run from St. Paul to the Iowa line led to talk of a Chatfield company to co-operate with a St. Paul group in 1877, and almost at once the Southern Minnesota made counter proposals. The *Democrat* reported that J. C. Easton, "the richest man in Minnesota" and owner of "over one-fourth interest in the Southern Minnesota Railroad" had promised that if the Chatfield company would build to connect with the Southern Minnesota he personally would see that "the cars" were operated over the line. A week later Colonel Thompson was reported as having made "good propositions" for the disposal of the grading he had done a few years before (without paying his workers) and offered to finish the job "if Chatfield wishes it." Railroad hopes once more ran high. Even the youngsters felt it, the *Democrat* reported: a small boy was asking fifty cents for a ten-cent string of fish—"Railroad talk has begun; prices are going up."

Then the familiar pattern repeated itself—delay, impatience, explanations, and nothing done. In December, a long letter to the *Democrat* argued that the Southern Minnesota would never build as long as Chatfield's freight was hauled to its stations anyhow; Chatfield was "one of the richest towns in the state" but its money was "all in the hands of a few moneylenders" and they in turn were tied to the Southern Minnesota. The town's only hope lay in breaking away from that unholy combination and looking to Winona for outside connections. As more weeks passed without action, letters appeared announcing plans for immediate emigration westward, "to the former grasshopper country . . . if we do not get a railroad."

So the winter passed, filled with rumors and planning. Finally, on May 4, 1878, the *Democrat* published the legal notice of incorporation of the Chatfield Railroad Company, which was

authorized to build from a point within the village to connections with both the Southern Minnesota and the Winona and St. Peter. I. F. O'Ferrall was the new company's president, Milo White, vice president, and G. H. Haven, treasurer, with H. S. Griswold (Easton's one-time clerk and currently state senator) on the board along with Sam Dickson. Easton again made "a proposition" on behalf of his road, but the matter of which way to build the Chatfield road was still left open when the issuing of bonds was voted on. Jordan Township was hard to convince, but it finally voted \$5,000, Elmira voted \$10,000, and Chatfield voted \$35,000; the bonds were to be delivered to the local company only if it had trains running by September 1, 1879, either north or south.

The decision was finally made. After years of involvement with the fortunes of the Southern Minnesota, Chatfield built its own railroad northward to connect with the Winona and St. Peter which was well on the way to absorption into the Chicago and Northwestern company. Exactly why, nobody knows any more. The "inside history" of Chatfield's relations with the Southern Minnesota "would make remarkably rich reading, if faithfully portrayed," a county history of 1884 remarked. "But in view of 'other hearts that would bleed' the story perhaps better be left untold in this volume." And that is as near as anyone came to leaving a coherent account of the affair.

The first train ran into Chatfield on November 28, 1878. The *Democrat* reported the occasion thus:

THE GREAT EVENT

Just at 5 o'clock Tuesday afternoon the shrill crowing whistle of the locomotive announced its arrival at the depot grounds at the foot of Spring Street. The effect was electrical and hundreds of our citizens, many of whom had waited twenty years for that cheering sound, flocked to the scene. There was no mistake this time—the iron horse stood there, puffing and crowing like a thing of life, while our people were running over with enthusiasm, the citizens of Chatfield, Elmira and Jordan had done their duty; through the untiring energy of the

contractors and laborers the promises of the Northwestern Company were fulfilled and the RAILROAD WAS COMPLETED.

After the usual preliminaries, a delegation of our citizens informed the employees of the company, seventy-five in number, that Chatfield, fully appreciating their good work, had prepared for them a repast which awaited their presence. The 'boys' were agreeably surprised at this announcement and after three rousing cheers for Chatfield formed in line and marched to the hall where they did justice to the good things before them. Supper over, the party thanked the citizens for the manner in which they had been received and after a parting song returned to their quarters, happy as lords.

Bon-fires lit up Main street during the evening, while the prolonged ringing of bells and the incessant firing of the big gun told that 'great tribulations' were over and the time for rejoicing had come.

(A few days later the village fathers voted \$37.35 to pay for that "entertainment.")

The Chatfield Railroad Company lasted just long enough to get the road built and turn it over to the Chicago and Northwestern. By 1881, the name of the Chatfield Railroad Company had disappeared from the reports of the Minnesota Railroad Commission. The trains ran into the chosen valley on 'the branch.'

But they ran. That was the all-important fact. They were not always satisfactory: the mail was often late, and the coaches were second-best or worse. Connections with the Twin Cities were never very good—the Chicago and Northwestern was oriented to Chicago as the Southern Minnesota had been to Milwaukee.

Now and again protests were loud, as when Francis Drebert, editor of the *Democrat* since 1889, voiced his displeasure in 1894. He was tired of having the mail from the Twin Cities delayed time and again, and, after weeks of complaining, he told the world just what he thought of the railroad company:

In 1878 Chatfield and the adjoining townships . . . turned over to the Northwestern railroad the Chatfield branch as a free gift and the Northwestern laid the track with old iron rails. As a return for this magnificent bounty the people of this vicinity are allowed to travel in a mean . . . emigrant car at the highest rate of fare. If they want to

visit Chicago they pay a much higher fare than it would cost them to reach that city from St. Paul. Obstacles are thrown against their traffic with St. Paul and Minneapolis, and connections are frequently broken between those cities and this place. The road squeezes the orange with the firmest and most relentless grip and gets all the juice there is in it, notwithstanding all the railroad laws and railroad commissioners.

Drebert had no political aspirations, and he wore, he was fond of saying, no man's collar. But a few weeks after that outburst a curious passage appeared in the *Democrat*. Its criticisms of the railroad had

unfortunately . . . made a harsher impression than was intended . . . no road has more gentlemanly, obliging and courteous officers than the Northwestern, and we believe they feel a special friendship for Chatfield and will do all they can to render their relations with her business men and citizens pleasant.

Not long after that, the editor reported enthusiastically on the delights of a trip to Chicago—a trip made possible, he told the world, through the generosity of the Chicago and Northwestern in providing him with a pass. Corporations, it seemed, had their own means of gaining their ends.

Yet one man in Chatfield remained, to the end of his life, amazingly independent, in both act and understanding, of the growing concentrations of economic power that were changing the folkways of America. James Cussons, so far as can be judged by the records that survive, understood those changes more clearly than any other Chatfield person.

He came back to the chosen valley in 1876, a man who had faced the temptations of despair, and in rising above them he seemed to have attained uncommon insight into the nature of the forces at work in his adopted country.

His first venture on leaving Chatfield in 1870 was a partnership in Wisconsin, fifty miles west of Milwaukee, where he planned to supply his mill with wheat bought at stations on the Southern Minnesota. There he ran head-on into the power of the railroads. The Southern Minnesota was dominated by the Milwaukee

policy of channeling all of Minnesota's hard wheat into Milwaukee markets. Consequently the only freight rates that Cussons could get for the wheat he proposed to ship were 'local' rates—the sum of separate rates from station to station, amounting to nearly twice as much as the long-distance rate to Milwaukee. Such rates were ruinous, so Cussons and his partner took the remedy that still functioned as a cure for the economic dislocations of individuals caught between competing forces of the new industrialism. They packed up their milling equipment and went West.

The West they chose was Easton's town of Winnebago, then just entering the upsurge of the wheat boom. The new mill's first season established Cussons' flour once more at the top of the New York market and James Cussons thought that at last he had found his El Dorado.

Then the grasshoppers came. For three years they stripped every living leaf from the prairies beyond the Root River region. The Cussons mill stood idle so long that its creditors forced a bankruptcy. After twenty years of labor James Cussons was left with nothing to provide for himself and his family.

It was a bitter time. "I had a real longing to get away," he wrote years afterwards, remembering, "and were it not that my family needed all the aid and sympathy I could bestow on them, I should have been, as were the pioneers, looking up something farther west, where I could live a quiet life." When the sorry business was over he went for a week to find "comfort in adversity by getting close to nature, courting solitude, isolating myself from my fellows." Then he came back nerved for another beginning.

There is temptation to read into the decision he made then a prescience that the "quiet life" of a farther West would not outlast his need, that one way or another he would have to meet, on its own grounds, the growing industrial challenge to all individual craftsmen. More probably his action was based on the fact that his only remaining property resource was a half interest in the property that included the little mill up the creek from Chatfield. Sam Dickson consented to take the Cussons' Winne-

bago house, plus a mortgage, for his half of the Elmira mill and its ninety acres, and the Cussons family moved into the "small unfinished house" that stood on the property.

James Cussons put the mill into such order as was possible without any money to spend, set his eldest son, then seventeen, to run it, and set himself to work with axe and grub hoe to hack a farm out of the uncleared land around the mill. Anne Colton Cussons managed to infuse the whole situation with such gaiety that her children afterwards remembered those years as the best of their lives. They all worked, but they made friends everywhere, and they felt no sting in their poverty.

Little by little the old patrons of Cussons' earlier years began to find their way to his mill, asking for flour as well as grists of feed. After a year so many townfolk were asking for Cussons flour that I. F. O'Ferrall offered to advance credit so Cussons could buy wheat and make flour for the local stores. Dickson and other millers in the neighborhood, annoyed at Cussons' emerging prosperity, cut their charge for feed grinding; Cussons matched them three times, then stood on his own price, for his limited capacity was crowded with flour, and losing the "small amounts of feed grists was an advantage."

It was the beginning of a prosperity that really endured. Ten years after he had taken over the Elmira mill, Cussons had paid off his mortgage, doubled the capacity of his mill, and was selling all the flour he could produce in year-round operation. Farmers drove their teams as much as forty miles to exchange their wheat for his New Style flour. "I am doing a strictly home trade," he wrote in 1882, ". . . and it does me good to hear our neighbors' wives declare that [our flour's] . . . sweetness and moist bread producing qualities make it preferable to all others." With the enlarged capacity there was sometimes a surplus to be shipped to New York, where it commanded premium prices. There might have been more money in marketing exclusively in New York, but James Cussons took his satisfactions otherwise.

It is a heartening story to follow. Here was a man who never

lost his sense of responsible relationship with the community in which he lived. When the wheat crop failed he set himself to find a way around the failure. At that distance from Milwaukee he could have shipped wheat in from areas farther west: other mills flourished on such a basis and Chatfield got its railroad in the year of the wheat failure. But such a solution did not satisfy Cussons' feeling that a miller should first of all provide bread for the people among whom he lived. So year after year he experimented with different varieties of seed, and when Saskatchewan Fife seemed to meet his requirements he put on a shrewd and energetic campaign to induce his farmer-patrons to plant the seed that he arranged to distribute. It answered well for a time, but chinch bugs made new inroads and he tried a fresh line of attack. By one means and another he managed to keep his mill going on local wheat year after year.

The crowning recognition of his skill came from the Columbian Exposition in 1893. There his New Style flour was awarded a bronze medal and "diploma" certifying its excellence in "color, strength, purity, and granulation." The *Chatfield Democrat* reported that the "diploma" had been framed and hung in the post office, "that all may know the merits of his flour." With expansive local pride the *Democrat* declared the award was given for "the best specimen of flour exhibited from Minnesota . . . When the large milling interests of the state is considered, together with the high reputation of Minnesota flour, it is a great honor to Mr. Cussons to carry off such prizes for his modest mill in Chatfield."

The *Democrat's* definition of that award still passes current in Chatfield, but here again local pride and attested fact do not wholly agree. The Cussons award was one of seventy-four identical awards to the flour of seventy-four Minnesota mills. Yet even so it was no mean distinction for the little mill that ran with only a 12-foot head of water. The flour exhibited at the Exposition came from a dozen foreign countries as well as from most of the American states. That Minnesota should capture one-half of the total awards was indicative of the state's relative importance in

flour production. Eleven of the awards went to Minneapolis mills, but the small mills were still, in 1893, important producers of Minnesota's famous flour.

They were not to remain so for long. The spring after the Columbian Exposition, James Cussons received a letter from Charles Pillsbury, president of one of the big milling companies in Minneapolis, warning the local miller against violating an injunction the company had taken out to prohibit anyone from "selling flour . . . under a brand which is a 'colorable imitation' of Pillsbury's Best." James Cussons was outraged by the letter and sent a spirited reply:

I trust you will be honorable enough not to copy my 'New Style' brand or sell any flour under a resemblance of it. . . . I have neither copyrighted it or have I seen cause to notify other millers against infringing on my property until I received your very courteous notice. . . . You may feel justified in advertising your flour in this unique manner but I am proud to inform you that it has not been necessary for me to build up a home trade by such questionable methods. I would rather treat my competitors as honest upright men until I had cause to give them notice not to counterfeit my brand. I have plenty to eat and wear, and am rich in honor.

Pillsbury replied impersonally that the letter which so aroused Cussons had been sent "to every miller in the Northwest whose name we could obtain." And there the episode might be said to have ended.

Yet a curious thing happened some time afterwards. Milo White began to sell Pillsbury's Best at a price well below the market. Milo White was a rule-or-ruin kind of man, people said, and he'd hated Cussons ever since the miller told that story about how White bought a load of 'shorts' and never knew the difference; he'd be glad for the chance to help the big mills ruin his rival.

Whether or not the Minneapolis mill was directly involved in the local price war, Cussons managed to outlast it without disaster. And the experience seems to have been an element in the thinking that found its fullest expression in a letter he wrote to

a near-by paper on Christmas Eve, 1900. He thanked the editor "for the stand you take in behalf of the principles on which this government was founded." Cussons had formed his opinion of those principles from a study he had made of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, before taking out his first citizenship papers, and he was strongly moved by what he saw, in 1900, as

the impending danger menacing our free institutions. . . . This plea for acquiring colonies [after the Spanish War] from a commercial standpoint is a fallacy. . . . Shall we endanger our liberties for the pottage of commercialism that a few multi-millionaires may be the better enabled to rivet the chains of power over us and thus entail on our posterity an inheritance not a whit better than slavery or serfdom? . . . I am unalterably opposed to trusts, combines, colonizations, and a large standing army . . .

A few years after writing that letter Cussons left Chatfield for the last time—driven out by local jealousies, so he felt. The *Democrat* characterized the situation as an instance of the town's "prevailing policy . . . everybody for himself, and the devil take the hindmost . . . a sure way to have all fall into the hands of his black majesty in the end."

The story had its beginning when Cussons bought a lot opposite the town square and announced he would build a large steam mill there. Work had begun on the basement when five men (including Milo White) got out an injunction to prevent the building of a mill on that location, on the grounds that it would be a nuisance and an eyesore. Cussons' friends urged him to fight the injunction, but he would not. "If they don't want me here I can go somewhere else," he said rather sadly to one of the men working for him. But he was persuaded to continue in his Elmira Mill, and the *Democrat* deplored the local "jealousy of the individual that his neighbor will prosper a little more than himself."

When the old Dickson mill was sold at auction a year or two later, Cussons bought it and called in Adolph Pavlish to rebuild

the interior. The new machinery had scarcely settled into working order, and the bins were full of wheat, when fire broke out at the mill in the dead of night. It burned to the ground, and the Cussons family always believed the fire had been set. The wheat stored in the bins was alone worth twice the amount of the insurance on the mill. Within a few weeks the entire family had moved to Stewartville, some thirty miles distant, where the two eldest Cussons sons were already established in a mill their father had built for them.

The *Democrat* quoted an editorial from the Stewartville paper gloating over the Cussons move and calling Chatfield "Sleepy Hollow." The jibe, the *Democrat* said, was "ill-natured but justifiable." Chatfield had grown conservative, and jealousy and cliques were well on the way to destroying its prosperity. What was needed was "a united effort to build everybody up rather than an attempt to pull somebody down."

That move marked the end of Chatfield's flouring industry, though not the end of warm and frequent social exchange between the Cussons family and their many Chatfield friends. Thirty-odd people went from Chatfield to join Stewartville friends in celebrating the Cussons golden wedding. The *Democrat*, reporting the occasion in lengthy detail, said Chatfield had never had citizens more loved and honored than James Cussons and his wife.

He enjoyed the leisure of those later years, when "the boys let me tend the dam," as he wrote in one of his many letters to the *American Miller*, his favorite trade journal. Its editor called Cussons' "Reminiscences of a Half Century of Milling in America," published during 1904-05, one of its most interesting features. "He himself wrote us he was loath to leave a world in which there was so much to interest the inquiring mind, and . . . so much to love." But on April 5, 1911, death overtook him.

By curious chance it happened in Chatfield, when he was attending the Masonic Lodge where he had been so long a member. As an infrequent guest he was called upon to speak, but had uttered only a few sentences when "he moved toward his seat, with

a hand pressed upon his breast and saying, 'Excuse me, gentlemen,' sank lifeless to the chair."

It would not be difficult to see in that moment the passing of more than one man's life. James Marsar Cussons was of that elder craftsman's tradition which knew, in the skill of hands and the alert flexibility of thought, how it is that men subdue obdurate matter to human purposes. The excellence of his flour stemmed from that tradition rather than from any aggregation of powerful machinery and scientifically trained technicians such as made Minneapolis the flouring capital of the world. The excellence of his life, if one may venture to judge, sprang equally from his conscious and unbroken commitment of those skills to the needs of the community of which he was a part.

PART

Twelve



The New Gospel: Diversify

I



THE SCREEN DOOR slammed shut and the red cocker sleeping in the sun behind the little house opened an eye to see if this was the signal she'd been waiting for. A small boy scuffed across the grass to the well house and slammed a pail down on its stones while he unhooked the windlass and waited for the water to smack against the wooden bucket. When the bucket had filled he heaved his nine-year strength against the bent handle of the windlass till the bucket careened into sight, dripping and heavy. He splashed the water into the metal pail and carried it into the house. When the screen door slammed for the third time the dog stood quivering beside it, and the boy leaned over to rub her ears before he picked up the bamboo pole leaning beside the door. "C'mon, Curly, we're goin' fishin'."

They trudged soberly across the town. Where the West Chatfield road left the old mill behind, he pushed back his hat and shifted the long pole on his shoulder. "C'mon, Curly," he said. "Rabbits!"

The dog let out a joyful yip and the pair zigzagged down the dusty road, weaving their own pattern of joyous escape. A team clattered across the little bridge over the creek and the town urchin and the farmer shouted cheerful obscenities at each other. The dust settled again, except for quick spurts between the toes each time a bare foot patted down onto the road. At the big bridge the boy ducked under the strand of barbed wire into moist shadow where the black muck of the river bank gave cool cushioning to his feet. Now he carried his pole carefully parallel to the ground.

A muskrat plopped into the water ahead of him and he stopped long to see just the angle of its hole beneath the cottonwood root. He'd

put a trap there, come winter. Pa said he could get some traps if he had the money to buy them. He stopped to untangle his line, frowning that he'd let it get caught in the old scrub elder that leaned over the water.

A little farther on he laid down his pole and scratched in a rotten log for hellgrammites while Curly barked at a squirrel she'd treed. Time for squirrels when he'd caught some fish. Next summer he'd have a gun. Maybe that dandy one he saw in the catalogue, or maybe the one Uncle Mel said he might sell. If he had a gun . . .

The ripples of his planning ran one with the ripples of the water where he dropped his hook, and he sank deep into the morning stillness. The bluffs rose green and steep across the river and a mile upstream he heard the faint clatter of a team going over the Cummingsville bridge. A kingfisher swooped above the river and a killdeer cried from the shallows. School was over and the long summer paradise of fishing every day settled upon him.

II



"THE MERE FACT of a man settling on a prairie, putting up a house, raising wheat until his farm was skimmed then selling out and going West was not to be considered making a home," an Irish farmer wrote to the *Democrat* in 1884, quoting from a speech by Senator Wilkinson. "Home . . . to be loved and respected by children ought to be surrounded by shade, fruit, and ornamental trees and shrubs . . . supplied with good wholesome literature . . . to keep the young people out of the saloons." Raising livestock, the farmer went on, encouraged farmers to plant more trees and build more barns, thus changing the very look of the landscape and making the country "more like a home than where grain raising is the staple."

That letter was part of a long campaign carried on in the *Democrat* for the raising of more livestock in Chatfield's province. The Old Editor, J. H. McKenny, was one of the first to recognize the need for diversified farming. He argued the cause with humor and resourcefulness, and when the wheat crop suffered partial failure in 1869, McKenny pointed the moral: "For years we have been preaching the new gospel, diversify, but no one paid any attention. . . . If farmers learn the folly of depending on a single crop, this year's failure will be worth all the misery it is costing."

Ten years were to pass before that lesson was at all generally learned. Yet from the first settlement of the province there had been a few farmers who took pride as well as profit in raising live-

stock. Out on Elkhorn Prairie, H. S. H. Hayes already had a few head of Shorthorns when the Carter family first arrived in 1854. Four years later William Pease was buying up all the calves he could feed. By 1861, there was enough beef stock in the country to make it worth while for J. C. Easton to send a man sixty miles south to Decorah, Iowa, to investigate the possibilities of marketing it there, though no record remains of what, if anything, he did about it.

Yet for a long time one of the real problems of the province was to get enough livestock for local breeding needs. Not many of the westward migrants could afford such an array as the eight oxen, six horses, and four cows included in John Murphy's cavalcade. And in those years there was no established market to which an entrepreneur could wire his order for so-many-head to be delivered on-such-a-date. If a man wanted livestock to sell, he had to go where livestock was, and take his purchases West himself. What that process involved is well set forth in Lucian Johnson's diaries of a series of horse-buying expeditions that he undertook in 1866-68.

He apparently got the idea from a man named Unthank who brought a string of horses from Indiana to Chatfield late in 1865. They sold so well that Johnson and one of his cronies named Shaw undertook a joint flyer in horse-trading.

They set off on January 3, 1866, by stagecoach to La Crosse, where they took a train for Chicago. Two days later they were in Oberlin, Ohio, where they spent eleven days buying up thirteen mares and a stallion, at an average price of slightly more than eighty dollars a head. Shipping those horses back by train was a wearing business. It took five days to reach La Crosse, and twice Johnson thought two or three of the mares might not survive. He gave them twelve hours rest in the barns at La Crosse while he bought saddles and bridles for himself and Shaw. Each of the men rode one horse and led a string of six as they made their way back to Chatfield by easy stages. The horses were in pretty good condition when they got there the third day out of La Crosse.

Then the fun began. For a full month Johnson's diary is con-

cerned with the details of the marvelously complicated 'bargains' that he made—and unmade—with the farmers who wanted his fourteen horses. This was no mere merchandising operation; this was a homely epitome of the confusions that beset a society in painful transition from production-for-use to production-for-profit. In a final reckoning Johnson figured his *profit* at \$1,415 on a total investment of \$1,200. That profit had cost him just two months of obviously enjoyed activity.

In May, he set off again, this time alone, and went into Indiana where Unthank helped him buy up six good mares. He found the last two near "North Manchester, on the Eal River," and set off from that point to return home. He spent seventeen days on the road. The June weather was fine, and his way went through some of "the finest country I ever saw all fenced up and dotted with farm buildings, some fine ones." In Chatfield he sold one team, turned the rest out to pasture, and set off almost immediately on a third trip, once again with Shaw.

Altogether Lucian Johnson made seven horse-buying trips, two to Ohio, two to Indiana, and three to Iowa, which had been settled long enough to function in some particulars as an East for Chatfield. In the same month with Johnson's final trip, Easton imported a pedigreed breeding stallion from New York State. Thereafter Johnson's interest in horses, so far as his diaries reveal, was chiefly centered in breeding and training his own colts. By 1882, the cycle had been completed. On February 4 of that year Johnson recorded: "Horse buyers are around." Chatfield itself had become an East.

No such detailed story can be told for the bringing of cattle into the province, though a few landmarks emerge. Late in 1866, Johnson's friend, Shaw, bought up sixty-two head of cattle in the province and drove them to La Crosse for sale; the next spring he and Johnson took a somewhat larger herd from the province to graze on the open prairies some miles to the west. How they disposed of their herd is not recorded but Chatfield already had at least one man, D. D. Farrell, whose whole business was the buying and selling of farm animals. That fact is an indication of the growing im-

portance of livestock in the economy of Chatfield and its province; another is in the report in 1869 that one Chatfield merchant shipped East four tons of butter in a single week. In 1875, the first carload of fat cattle was shipped to Chicago by a Chatfield stock buyer. By 1880, the census showed that Fillmore County had many more dairy cattle than any other county in the state and ran a close second in the number of beef cattle. Four years later 150 head of breeding cattle were shipped from Chatfield to Montana. Chatfield was indeed becoming an East.

Hog raising had been a part of the local scene from the earliest years, and in 1880 Fillmore County was far ahead of the rest of the state in hog production. Two or three years later the *Democrat* was reporting proudly the frequent sales of pedigreed and 'grade' hogs of the Poland China, Jersey Red, and Chester White breeds.

Sheep also came into the province very early. The cold Minnesota winters were supposed to cause an increase in the amount of wool produced, and sheep were moved westward on their own power more easily than horses or cattle. In 1864, the *Democrat* reported that a flock of 2,200 sheep had been driven through town on their way to farms beyond. "Bring on your wool bearers," the editor added. "We have room for several thousand more." Easton, in that same year, was reported as having 6,000 sheep on his farms, and he arranged with an Illinois breeder to exchange a pedigreed Southdown buck for one of Leicestershire strain, as a means of introducing fresh blood into both flocks.

Easton's interest in fine farm animals continued all his life, and he was among the first to bring pedigreed breeding stock of every species into the region. In 1882, when he took his family on the Grand Tour of Europe, he found time in Scotland to buy a flock of Galloways and hire a Scottish shepherd to take them to his farm near Chatfield. The flock proved an excellent investment. A few years later Easton's farm manager was reported in the *Democrat* to have shipped 3,500 fat sheep in the St. Paul market, besides 625 head of breeding stock that went to Dakota. All this was in addition to the heavy sales of wool each spring.

Easton's Scottish shepherd, Robert MacMoran, was a great boon to his sensation-hungry neighbors. His kilts, and skirling bagpipes, and the way he bought oatmeal by the barrel "to feed the bairns," were wonderful topics for Chatfield's cracker-barrel sages. 'Mac' was a good shepherd but a poor businessman when he came up against the free-and-easy American way of doing things. Easton was continuously involved in keeping 'Mac' and his sons out of the trouble they made for themselves; his letters on that subject sketch a vastly appealing side of Easton's later years.

Almost equally appealing was his outspoken glee whenever one of his farm animals took a prize at the Olmsted or the Fillmore County Fair. By the mid-eighties those fairs had long lists of prizes for a great variety of purebred animals, and advertisements of pedigreed stock from Illinois and Iowa as well as Minnesota appeared frequently in the *Democrat*.

In 1875, the Old Editor died, but his successors continued the campaign for better livestock. In 1883, the editor attended a three-day meeting of the Northwestern Dairy Association in Mankato (the city that William Pease had foreseen on the bend of the Minnesota) and reported its discussions in a series of practical and helpfully detailed articles. Two years later the *Democrat* carried a long account of a sale of imported cattle held on the State Fair Grounds in St. Paul and expressed much satisfaction that Eastern dealers were at last aware that they could not palm off their culls on Minnesota farmers. The sale proved, he wrote, that "we of the northwest want the best and most profitable stock, believing the best is the cheapest in the long run." The report particularly praised the University Farm for buying some of the imported Friesian-Holsteins for testing in comparison with other breeds under Minnesota farm conditions.

All this and more the *Democrat*, under a succession of editors, put before the people of Chatfield and its province, in a sustained and remarkably effective campaign of public education. Week after week the paper reported the achievements of both producers and marketers of livestock and its products, and showed no preference between farmers and townsmen in the reporting. Weekly

market reports were given, the farmers who raised the stock were as warmly and individually praised as the townsmen who marketed it, and townfolk were encouraged to produce their own milk and butter and meat.

There was, for instance, a series of stories boasting the rival merits of individual cows kept by families living in town. One woman had "a very tasty bookcase filled with complete sets of the standard authors . . . the whole costing not less than \$60," which she had bought with the profits from her cow after making "liberal provision for the family." James Cussons reported that his seven-eighths Durham cow provided "all the milk for ten children and all the grandchildren" plus all the butter the family could use, plus skim milk to fatten pork, turkeys, ducks, and chickens for the family table. The most idyllic of those stories was the report of the Hon. Milo White's "favorite Jersey cow, which he looks after himself . . . She unexpectedly threw her head around . . . while he was attending her one evening . . . and struck him on the nose with her horn, making quite a severe wound." A much later editor, reading that item, thought it "pretty tough that the congressman had to milk his own cow," but the episode speaks eloquently of that elder American tradition of intimate and conscious interdependence between farmland and village.

Some of that tradition was to persist locally for a long time, despite the accelerating shift from self-sufficiency to an export-import economy, and the accompanying growth of city influences. Chatfield and its province were more fortunate than many areas of the American midland: all but 14 per cent of the farms in Fillmore County were owner-operated in 1880, and very few foreclosure notices appeared in the *Democrat* in the subsequent and recurrent periods of 'hard times.' The adoption of diversified farming was to shield the valley from the most painful consequences of agricultural practices that in other regions despoiled the American earth. When continental winds scooped up the soil of the Great Plains to hang it in palls of dust about the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, only the bold juttings of limestone gulches spoke to Chatfield people of the peril to their soil. The

young men of the CCC camp built dams and waterways about those picturesque alterations in the landscape, but few people in either town or province saw any relationship between those marks of erosion and the 'forced sales' that by 1934 found more than 40 per cent of Fillmore County land in the hands of tenant farmers.

All that was undreamed of as Chatfield moved towards the turn of the century. In the mid-eighties the village, by act of the state legislature, became a city, and its new dignities and powers comported well with the mood of a period that some still remember as "The Reign of the Belles." The fourteen to sixteen hundred people of Chatfield no longer felt any great urgency to make their town any bigger. What was good in the life of large cities it would have on its own terms; what was bad was happily remote. Its 'Society' was as brilliant as anyone could wish, and its business was sound. The editor who recorded its news of both business and society summed up the local complacency in his comment on the 1894 failure of the wheat crop in western Minnesota: "Let them diversify. We did 10 years ago and we have not suffered a failure since."

The prosperity on which Chatfield's new elegance thrived owed much to a man who was doubly an alien. As early as 1875 the *Democrat* said that Chatfield's reputation as southern Minnesota's best market for meat was improving now that Mr. Bauer had convinced the farmers it paid them "to fatten their cattle to the top notch." That same year Bauer shipped the first carload of live cattle from Chatfield's province, and in 1883 the *Democrat* gave him credit for inducing the Chicago and Northwestern to build in Chatfield "the largest and most complete" stockyards in southern Minnesota. Between January 1 and November 3 of that year Bauer shipped 171 carloads of stock, and the *Democrat* commented: "There is probably not another shipper on the line that has shipped the half of that."

Levi Bauer had arrived, with wife and child, in Chatfield in 1868, from his birthplace in the ghetto of Baden, Germany. He knew no English, and the townspeople gaped to see that grown man sit patiently day after day among the little children in the

public school. Within one school term he leaped through all eight grades and could read and write his new country's language, though his tongue always retained some trace of the Yiddish in which he was nurtured. For two years he clerked in a store, and he and his family lived in bitter poverty while they saved capital to start, in 1870, a meager trade in fur, wool, and hides. Three years later he opened a butcher shop, which soon commanded a fine retail trade. By 1875, he was well started as a wholesale dealer in livestock, and his business acumen was evidently joined to appealing personal qualities, for in 1884 he was elected mayor of the town, an office that he held for two terms. His daughters are still remembered as among the prettiest and most charming young ladies of the town, and after the family moved to Chicago, in the early nineties, they often exchanged visits with the 'best' families in Chatfield. The Chatfield-born son, Aleck Bauer, helped to found a pharmaceutical firm of national proportions, and he and his sisters contributed generously to the support of the Chatfield library, long years after they had left the town of their birth.

There are still many persons living in Chatfield who remember the Bauer family with such pleasure and affection that later-day sneering at 'Jews' carries a strange note of faithlessness to the valley's heritage. Perhaps few realize how their casual mouthings of stock phrases about 'what a Jew does to a town' betray not only the American dream of human brotherhood, but betray as well their own community's experience with a Jewish family that made rich contributions to Chatfield living. That note of betrayal takes on added stridency when set against the fact that, except for a few brief experiences with poverty-ridden junk dealers who have come and gone through the town, the Bauers were the only Jewish people ever to live in Chatfield.

If the farmers owed much to Levi Bauer for an adequate livestock market, they were equally enriched by a market of their own devising. In 1880, Fillmore County reported three thousand more dairy cattle than beef cattle, and the problem of marketing the produce from such herds had not been satisfactorily solved. A

cheese factory flourished for two or three years in the seventies, but when it burned down it was not rebuilt for several years. Finally a joint-stock company of local men built another cheese factory and soon added butter-making to its activities. Within a year it was sending out fifteen teams every day to collect the farmers' milk, and the *Democrat* was exuberant in its praise of the wonderfully progressive undertaking. It reported that the new creamery paid out \$80,000 for cream in its first year, and urged farmers to report the amounts of their monthly cream checks "so we can show the poor wheat counties what we are doing in this flourishing district."

But when trouble developed, the *Democrat* was more reticent and the story can only be guessed at. Somehow C. M. Lovell came into sole ownership of the creamery, and he apparently did not inspire confidence in the farmers. Whatever the reason, the creamery closed down in 1887, and dairy farmers were left without a market for their unprocessed milk.

Then Chatfield saw the fruits of the embryonic attempts at cooperative organization with which some of the farmers had fumbled in earlier years, first in the Grange, then in the name of the Knights of Labor. Timothy Halloran had publicly laughed at himself for his zeal in the Knights of Labor "folly," but out of folly a new kind of wisdom emerged. In 1889, the farmers themselves organized a Co-operative Creamery Association that marked a new level of co-operative action in Chatfield's province. F. L. Tesca, the president, was of Bohemian parentage; William Brennan, vice-president, was of Irish birth; Forest Henry and C. L. Case, the secretary and the treasurer, were Yankees. All were hard-working, dirt farmers. The Association rented the Lovell property, hired a buttermaker, and set to work to persuade other farmers to join in the venture.

There was skepticism in both town and countryside: What did farmers know about running a business, and whoever heard of a business with dozens of bosses? In 1891, only \$8,000 worth of cream was brought to the Co-op, but it was building a name for quality produce: Mrs. G. H. Haven wrote to the *Democrat* from

Kingston, Jamaica, where she traveled with the Eastons that winter, that Kingston's leading hotel served only Chatfield butter. From that year forward the Chatfield Co-operative Creamery grew steadily, as did the dairy herds in its province; by the middle of the second World War the Co-operative Creamery was paying its patrons almost a quarter of a million dollars a year for the cream they produced.

The success of that experience was to suggest solutions for later problems that confronted the farmers. When resentment against St. Paul commission houses came to a head in 1912, a group of Irish farmers set about organizing a Chatfield Co-operative Livestock Marketing Association, with Anthony Sharp as its manager and zealous prophet. The Livestock Co-op, as it is affectionately called, reached the quarter-million-dollar mark before the Co-op Creamery did, and its members believed that their efforts brought better prices even for those who sold to private stock buyers. Then when automobiles and tractors made gasoline a farm necessity, the lesson of co-operation was carried into a third area.

Many townspeople came to feel it a point of honor never to buy a gallon of gas from the Co-op, though they ate Co-op butter without question—perhaps because there was no 'private' competition in that field, perhaps because the Co-op Creamery had been a bulwark of Chatfield economy for so many years. During the direful thirties many a farmer had nothing with which to pay the doctor, or the grocer, or the shoemaker except his Co-op Creamery check.

Something more than raw economics worked through the framework of those farmer organizations. Their annual picnics brought together farm families from all parts of the province, and though few townspeople attended them they were reported in the *Democrat*, and they often had Chatfield leaders as their speakers.

Milo White was a favorite on such occasions, even when he no longer represented Minnesota's First Congressional District. As 'Friend of the Farmer' he had made an appealing candidate in a hiatus between two eras of stalwart Republican organization, and his successful sponsorship of federal restrictions on the marketing

of oleomargarine endeared him to his farm constituents. No local notice was taken of his equally successful support for tariff-free importation of foreign publications, nor of his repeated—and ignored—presentation of petitions for a constitutional amendment to give women the right of suffrage. But when, in his second term, he voted against the Republican high tariff, on the well-argued grounds that the tariff was injurious to the interests of his constituents, he was retired (in 1888) by the customary contrivances of a rejuvenated Republican machine.

Something of the esteem in which he was held by Chatfield people appears in the fact that the local legend accepts without question White's own statement that his fine brick mansion was paid for out of his savings from four years of Congressional salary. (The same legend includes a story—as dramatic as the tale of Chatfield's 'first' church, and no more amenable to proof—of another local representative whose 'right' vote on a critical occasion was richly rewarded by Jim Hill, builder of railroad empires and boss of the Minnesota legislature.) Although Milo White had walked for four years with the 'great' of the nation's capital, the farmers still trusted him as one of their own.

Not all who left Chatfield returned to it as Milo White returned. From the first there were numbers of people who stopped in Chatfield long enough to function as an integral part of the valley's life then suddenly felt the lure of a farther West and disappeared. When the Dakota country opened up, considerable numbers of the younger Chatfield men, some of them with wives and children, turned to that West to seek their fortunes. One of the Old Editor's last paragraphs, argued against the current "epidemic" of departures for "the howling wilderness of Dakota" in terms curiously reminiscent of those with which J. C. Easton's father-in-law objected to Easton's removal to Minnesota. There is no evidence that any were deterred by the argument.

A few years later the *Democrat* conducted a running survey of where "Chatfield boys" had gone: "We have reared and educated them and they are gone from among us to help other communities

by the contribution of their energy and business enterprise." Of the fifty-nine "boys" reported, fourteen were in the western and northern sections of Minnesota, fourteen in Dakota, and eleven in states farther west. City life had claimed only eight—three in Chicago and five in Minnesota's Twin Cities. None had ventured farther east than Ohio, but fifty years later there were to be graduates of Chatfield High School in the cities of both East and West coasts. In 1889, the *Democrat* made no mention of feminine emigrants, but when a Chatfield girl attained the glamour of playing small parts in Hollywood the town was quick to claim the new distinction as its own.

Nearly half of the fifty-nine "boys" listed in 1889 were "in business," besides five in banks and six working for railroads; at least three of those six rose to positions of considerable importance in their railroad careers. Newspaper editing and legal practice claimed five each, and three held political office in their localities; three preachers and three doctors completed the list.

Perhaps the most distinguished person in that list was A. J. Sawyer, then a struggling young lawyer, later to be mayor of Lincoln, Nebraska, member of Congress, and trusted lieutenant of Bryan, the Great Commoner. He was remembered in Chatfield as the lame boy who often trudged the three miles from his father's farm to sell in town a string of fish he had caught in the dogged endeavor to save money for an education. When he revisited Chatfield in his later years he found in all that beautiful countryside only the bitterness of an unhappy childhood. Yet from bitterness he brought forth honey. After his death there came from Lincoln many stories of young persons to whom A. J. Sawyer had given the lift that his own youth had so painfully lacked.

Most of the young men on that 1889 list of Chatfield emigrants bore Yankee names. But a few years later an impressive roster could have been drawn of Irish, Norwegian, and Bohemian lads who had made their way from Chatfield farms into the learned professions. Most of them had little enough encouragement from their immigrant fathers: college didn't teach you to handle an

axe or drive a straight furrow. But somehow they made their way. An Irish storekeeper gave one lad a suit of clothes fit for the University, a sympathetic Norwegian uncle loaned money to another. The first law class graduated from the University of Minnesota included Chatfield-born James Manahan, who was to support the Bryan campaign against monopolies and win election as Minnesota's Congressman-at-large in 1912 because of the wide admiration his liberal leadership had evoked. Duluth, the third largest city in the state, was enriched by a medical clinic one of whose founders was a son of an Irish immigrant to Chatfield; a grandson of the same immigrant was later to serve on the medical faculty of Harvard University. Another of Chatfield's Irish families was to produce a political commentator known throughout Minnesota and its neighboring states. . . . The chosen valley was as good a place as any in America for a boy or girl of energy and purpose to be born.

The people who stayed in the valley sometimes talked as though the ones who had left it lived chiefly for the time when they could return. They enjoyed the poem that a "Chatfield boy," Herbert Twitchell, sent to the *Democrat* in 1880; it was reprinted at least three times thereafter.

Dear old Chatfield—how I love thee!
 How I love thy very name—
 How thy image comes before me
 Pictured out within my brain:

There's the mill and there's the meadow,
 There's the creek and there's the pond;
 There is dear old Root River
 With the woodland just beyond.

Now I'm wandering o'er the hilltops,
 Viewing all the village o'er—
 Recognizing every building
 As I used to do of yore. . . .

Now far removed from those fond scenes,
 A shade will gather on my brow,

As I sit and think and wonder
Where are all my schoolmates now?

Dear old Chatfield! How I love thee!
Though far away my lot is cast,
How I hope in years that follow
To return to thee at last!

If few of the yearning exiles ever actually came back to settle in the valley, enough dropped in from time to time to keep alive the comfortable legend that "Anyone who's ever lived here always wants to come back."

For the most part, however, the people who lived in Chatfield were too busy with their own affairs to think very much about the people who had left the valley. There was not only business to attend to, but a considerable variety of social pleasures to enjoy. As the population became relatively stable, and the excitement of change and conquest was lost, new ways were found for satisfying the individual's sense of his own worth. Fraternal orders were one means to that great end, and before the turn of the century Chatfield had its full complement of 'lodges.'

The oldest of these was the Masonic Blue Lodge, organized in 1857. One of J. C. Easton's early letters East requested a demit from the Lowville chapter to the one in Chatfield. True to their democratic tradition the Masons included not only lawyers and moneylenders but the harness maker and the barber as well as storekeepers and blacksmiths. And the brotherhood was more than merely ritualistic. When one of the members was sick the others took nightly turns in nursing him, and one man was supported by his lodge for years when tragic circumstances had driven him to the disintegrative refuge of opium dreams, destroying his competence as physician and citizen.

Being a Mason was an exclusively masculine prerogative—and the ladies were not altogether pleased. A feminine strategem against such division was reported by the *Democrat* in the mid-eighties. It was customary for the men to adjourn to the Medary House for supper when the 'work' of the monthly chapter meeting

was over. On one of those evenings—in a season that had been singularly scant of ‘social’ enjoyments—the Masons found their table twice its expected length and “a bewitching feminine form” behind each alternate chair. The men succumbed gracefully enough to that grand assault on their ‘naughty secrets,’ and before many years the ladies had their own, somewhat dilute, version of Masonry in the Order of the Eastern Star.

Even before that happy event, the annual Masonic supper and ball were a cherished part of each winter’s festivities. The grandest of those occasions was in 1872, when the lodges in fourteen near-by villages helped Chatfield Masons stage a huge ‘benefit’ for the debt they had incurred in building a hall above the brick store that C. M. Lovell had put up on Main Street. To judge by the phrases of the *Democrat*, New York itself never made more lavish display of beauty and chivalry than that occasion afforded.

Much later on the scene was the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, organized in 1890. A special train brought one hundred fifty Odd Fellows from Rochester and ten other places for the first initiation. The ‘work’ lasted all night and was crowned with a banquet in the Medary House’s best style. Four years later the seventy-fifth anniversary of Odd Fellowship was celebrated by the Chatfield lodge and the *Democrat* gave two full columns to reporting the affair. The Opera House (the favorite euphemism for the hall that had been built by the city officials a few years before) was the scene of the festivities. Exactly seventy-five guests were seated at a diamond-shaped table and served an epicurean supper by “the ladies,” who were given “especial credit . . . for the quiet, orderly manner . . . with no crowding” in which they managed the affair. Besides the “social intermingling” there were songs by the town’s most talented and beautiful young ladies, orchestral music, and a recitation by one of the belles.

The pastor of the Methodist church was the “orator of the evening”; he traced the growth of the Order, from five men in Baltimore to nearly a million scattered “over the entire world,” and praised its principles, “as old as mankind . . . the common brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God.” Not content

with the evening's scope of praise the Reverend Mr. Williams wrote a letter to the *Democrat* thanking the Lodge "for this contribution to the social life of our town," and the "wisdom they displayed in giving us an entertainment which ministered to the aesthetic part of our nature." The letter ended on a note provocative of curious musings on the role of the Protestant churches in the American life of the times: "As a preacher of righteousness I am trying to help men to be better and happier, and I assure you I am glad of any social outside aid."

The official attitude of the Catholic church was rather different. It regarded Masonry and apostasy as virtually synonymous, and Odd Fellowship was but little better. However, the joys of fraternal association were not denied to the faithful: two younger orders, the Workmen, and the Woodmen, acceptable to Roman orthodoxy, were organized in Chatfield during the nineties, and included considerable numbers of Catholics in their membership. Their mingling of 'the Irish' with people of Yankee heritage marked a definite advance in the integration of the community.

The new lodges combined ritualistic observances with life-and-health insurance programs on a co-operative cash basis. That type of organization-for-security marked a kind of penultimate recognition of the new production-for-profit economy. In the old economy of exchange-in-kind an individual or a family found its security in the mutual readiness of neighbors to share what they had in times of distress. The new basis of security was money: one paid monthly 'dues' into a common fund, and in time of sickness or death that fund provided the money to buy what was needed.

Not that the old neighborly exchange was entirely lost. Nor was financial security the whole purpose of the younger lodges. Like Masons and Odd Fellows, the Workmen and Woodmen had their gala occasions and their share of good fellowship. At the turn of the century each of the lodges numbered well toward two hundred members, besides their 'women's auxiliaries.' Fifty years later the men's lodges had dwindled to minor lists of insurance holders, but many women continued to find in lodge membership

the paradoxical pleasures of association and exclusiveness. They played bingo where other groups played bridge, but it would be brash indeed to assume that one game yielded more satisfaction to its players than the other. Something very like 'class' lines of social division could be discerned, there and elsewhere, but however clear that class-consciousness might be, especially to groups regarding themselves as 'upper,' perhaps no one accepted for himself any binding notion of basic inferiority.

The first explicit local statement of class-consciousness was contained in an outburst of Francis Drebert, editor of the *Democrat* from 1889 to 1898. He reported one year, with considerable gusto, the activities of the high-school graduating class, praising the beauty and the accomplishments of the "sweet girl graduates" appearing in various "exhibitions" by the school. But somewhere in the course of that spring another idea took hold of him and he wrote a violent denunciation of the "misplaced pride" which led hard-working mothers to spend long hours over the washtub in order to support their daughters' "pretensions" to accomplishments "beyond their station." Such encouragement, with all the tinsel flutter of commencement and party dresses, could lead to "nothing but misery" through making the daughters of "working families . . . dissatisfied with their lot in life" and unwilling to settle into the marriages they would make with "poor but deserving young men of their own class."

It was a startling outburst from one whose own daughters were then graduating from high school. Had they suffered from the rivalry of some "poor" classmate? The story which might explain it has been lost in the years, but it was a shadow perhaps inseparable from the increasing urbanization of the chosen valley. There was not even a letter to the editor to protest such open discrimination.

A more proudly visible evidence that Chatfield was no mere country village was its fine Silver Cornet Band. Henry Silsbee and a group of music-making friends had become so important in Chatfield's life that in 1885 the town council appropriated \$50 towards a fund subscribed to pay for a series of summer concerts

in the town park. The custom of such concerts was to be maintained virtually unbroken through the following years, and when state 'tournaments' began to pit high-school bands against each other for competitive ratings, Chatfield made an enviable record of winning first place year after year.

Chatfield people have always been fond of music. In the earliest years it was a poor winter that did not have at least one Singing School, sometimes with a local leader, more often with a teacher from outside who took on a circuit of half a dozen towns and country communities for a series of six to twelve meetings in each. The town even boasted a number of composers, one of whom, Harry D. Jones, had several compositions published by Oliver Ditson and other Eastern houses. For a few years Jones operated a music press of his own in Chatfield, and it was not uncommon for local church choirs to regale their congregations with anthems composed and printed in Chatfield.

When spring came round each year serenades filled the evening air. Henry Silsbee liked nothing better than to gather three or four young musicians and make the rounds of the belles of the town, serenading each one in turn through the winsome May evenings. Always the young men were invited in and feasted with the best the house afforded. Occasionally the young ladies themselves ventured forth, in bands of three or four to a dozen, to wander singing through the streets. Only a few weeks before his death the Old Editor wrote a paragraph of touching thanks for the serenade he had been given: the "sweet lady voices and melodious guitar," he wrote, sounded "like angels singing."

Professional musicians and entertainers from the western circuit visited Chatfield, from the earliest years to the advent of movies and radios. Each year the *Democrat* appealed for someone to provide "intellectual refreshment for the long winter evenings ahead," and each year someone responded—usually some church group concerned both with edifying the community and with replenishing its own treasury. White's Hall, a large room above Milo White's store, was the favorite place for such programs until the town council built a City Hall, that soon came to be known as

the Opera House. There everything was presented, from amateur tableaux and home-talent musicals to Donivan's Original Tennesseans, whose dark skins and unfamiliar songs were doubly thrilling because the singers had been slaves not many years before. Belva Lockwood, the notorious campaigner for female suffrage, sounded her bizarre gospel there; and at least once a year a wandering company gave *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the Opera House—the one play that good Methodists could attend without violating the collective conscience of their church. And there, in 1884, Edwin Stuart and his company gave a full month of such theatrical delights as really stretched the *Democrat's* vocabulary of praise to the limit, week after week.

Edwin Stuart had married a Chatfield girl, and he brought his company to her home town year after year. Mrs. Stuart played opposite her husband, and that notable season of 1884 the *Democrat* reported that she had made "remarkable strides in a short career." But it was Mr. Stuart who called forth the mounting superlatives of both the editor and various letter writers. He was "a polished actor" such as was "rarely met in country halls." "We have seen good actors, and in large cities, too, which were not his equal for versatility," one admirer wrote, and his repertoire of that season was indeed a varied one. It included *Rip Van Winkle*, *The Streets of New York*, *Driven from Home*, *The Villain Still Pursued Her*, *The Phoenix or Risen from the Ashes*, *Lost in London*, *Kathleen Mavourneen*, *Over the Hills to the Poorhouse*, *Uncle Solomon Isaacs*, and *Oliver Twist*. On the final evening of the season; when he repeated his performance of *Oliver Twist* by request, Mrs. O'Ferrall presented the actor with "a handsome basket of elegant greenhouse flowers from Chicago"—such a gesture as Chatfield had never before seen. When the actors had gone the *Democrat* reflected the mood of emptiness that fell on the town.

Not, however, for long. There were always the meetings of local groups to attend, with their varied pleasures and duties. With the extension of urban influences Chatfield people turned increasingly to formal organization for the accomplishment of purposes

that earlier simplicities either had ignored or had carried out on the spontaneous impulse of neighborly concern.

There was, for instance, the matter of fire-fighting. Except for occasional revisions of town ordinances—which seem to have been more impressive on paper than in practice—no concerted effort was made in early years to provide fire protection. When a building caught fire everybody within reach joined the bucket brigade, but there was no particular system to the effort. From time to time there was talk of organizing a fire company, but nothing was done even after the famous Saturday night fire of 1877, that burned everything on one side of Main Street for nearly a block. Not until 1891 was the Chatfield Fire Hose Hook and Ladder Company organized, with the full panoply of officers and constitution.

That constitution is an interesting reflection of the kinds of problems that had to be worked out when people undertook the unfamiliar task of organizing themselves on their own responsibility, to accomplish ends of their own determination. Most of the men in the Fire Company had no previous experience in organizational procedure and their constitution clearly was drawn to enforce the rudiments of parliamentary decorum.

It outlined even more definite duties for members than for officers. Each meeting was to be called "precisely at the time specified, a majority of the watches present deciding the time." Any member not answering roll call was to be fined 25 cents. No member was to leave the room without permission from the chairman, again on penalty of a 25-cent fine, and any member "not obeying the call to order shall, for the first offence, be fined 50¢, and for the second be expelled from the Company, provided two-thirds of the members present vote therefor." In the conduct of the meeting "Any member addressing the chair shall stand in an erect position. No motion shall be entertained unless the above is strictly complied with." A member could be fined 50 cents "for using profane or indecent language or any personalities toward any member during a meeting of business." Unpaid fines could

themselves be the occasion for expulsion if allowed to accumulate, "provided two-thirds of the members present vote therefor."

The constitution was reworked in various details a number of times in the first months of the company, but the minutes suggest that attendance was not very regular after the first flush of organizational pride, and there is no record of any member's expulsion.

The Fire Company was to maintain its identity, and its very real services to the community, from that time forward. Its activity was an element in the agitation for a municipal water supply. From 1859 there had been intermittent campaigns for one mode or another of fire-fighting water arrangements, but it took thirty years to make the first start at the process of building a municipal water system. The first unit consisted of four hydrants on Main Street, connected with the millpond below the bench; a few years later water was piped to the houses on Winona Street from a well at the top of Winona Hill, and through the ensuing sixty years the system was expanded until city water was within reach of all the houses inside the city limits.

More immediate pleasure was taken in the planting of hundreds of elm and maple trees. Lucian Johnson raised the seedlings on one of his farms; he furnished enough to plant the park, when the town council finally decided to quit renting it for pasture or garden plots and took down the board fence that had been built around it. G. H. Haven and I. F. O'Ferrall planted with their own hands the trees that still adorn the square beside the schoolhouse, where succeeding generations of children have played; where the weekly band concerts entertain strolling crowds; where old men sit on benches in the sun, remembering; and younglings disport themselves, in not always decorous ways.

Other trees were planted by householders at the same time. Some of the fine old oaks and a few elms that must have been at least sapling-size when Thomas Twiford chose the valley for his own are still cherished in various parts of the town. But most of

the maples and elms that arch the streets of Chatfield today were planted during the seventies and eighties. Chatfield people often chuckle over the story of one of 'the boys' who went to California in recent years and talked so much about his 'old home town' that his friends demanded to see a picture of that fabulous garden city. He finally showed them a picture of one of the biggest elms; when they asked, "But where is the town?" he answered, "Chatfield's right behind that tree."

There were other reasons than trees for Chatfield's expanding pride in the variety of its new comforts, even though its population stayed about the same. In one single year, 1897, the town saw the beginning of three notable and exceedingly 'modern' undertakings, that certainly put at rest any question of whether Chatfield merited the name of a city.

First came the newest magic, electricity. The Bohemian-born son of one of the valley's earliest immigrants organized the Chatfield Electric Light & Power Company, bought the property where Easton, Johnson, and Dickson had built a mill twenty-five years before, and installed a hydroelectric plant, with a franchise authorizing the company to sell their strange new merchandise to anyone in the valley. The company was capitalized for \$20,000, and before the end of the first year it had installed 337 separate electric lights in the town. Tariffs were based on the number of lights in any given building; and a house with three separate lights was generally thought to be as well lighted as the average family had any need for. It was not unknown for a house to be limited to a single bulb affording the magical enjoyment of getting light by the simple turning of a little button.

The next great modernity to come to the town, and within a matter of weeks, was a telephone system. A comparative newcomer was responsible for that achievement, and there are plenty of people still living in Chatfield who remember the wonder of their first telephone conversation. The first instruments were installed in a doctor's office and his house, and when the system was so far established as to print its first directory twenty-seven names

listed were therein—or thereon—for the whole thing was printed on a single sheet of cardboard. That sheet also carried instructions for using the strange new instruments:

HOW TO TALK—Push in slightly but firmly on bell crank, and turn crank about three times. Take down the receiver and listen for Central, and when Central “hellos” to you state the **NUMBER** you wish to talk with. Listen and wait for a few moments, and you will have the desired party.

When a call comes for you, simply take down the receiver and say “Hello.” If you get no response, repeat again in a few moments.

When done talking, hang up receiver and give bell one ring.

The third new business venture of that year of 1897 was less dramatic in its impact on the town’s immediate life, but it was to continue, and to grow, until it became one of the valley’s largest enterprises. That was a new type of fire-insurance company, organized by C. L. Thurber, a nephew of Uncle Orrin Thurber and of Aunt Eunice Thurber, who had been known as Pocahontas in the first gay years of the valley’s settlement. ‘Young’ Thurber had been selling fire insurance for Eastern companies for several years, when the idea came to him that insurance would cost everybody less if it was organized on a basis of mutual sharing in both losses and profits. His dogged enthusiasm and repeated explanations finally won support from a number of other men with rather more money than Thurber had to put into the business, and by the end of the year it was agreed to organize the Security Mutual Fire Insurance Company, with Charlie Thurber as its manager and, for a while, complete office staff. The formalities were not completed until January, 1898, and the new company hung on a slender thread of hope and hard work. But before its founder’s death the business had grown till it employed eight or ten persons full time in Chatfield, besides numerous ‘agents’ in Minnesota and its neighboring states. The business was to expand even further in the years after the first World War; the bulk of its mailing was great enough to raise the Chatfield Post Office from third-class to second-class, and the number of its employees more than doubled.

What none of the three new business groups of 1897 realized was the way in which their proud local ventures were to be absorbed into nation-size corporations. The details of those instances of de-localization were to be vastly involved, in local cross-currents no less than national competitions, but, one after another, each of the three was absorbed. In 1916, the Chatfield Light and Power Company was absorbed by the Interstate Power Company, incorporated in Delaware. A little later the telephone company became part of the Northwestern Bell system, itself a subsidiary of American Telephone and Telegraph. The insurance companies held out rather longer, but in 1929 outside pressures so manipulated internal divisions that the insurance company was compelled to affiliate itself with a company operating on a national basis.

But none of all those shifts from local to national control were anticipated in that year of notable beginnings. Indeed, the year was marked by a function that seemed to put the stamp of final urban achievement on Chatfield society. "The Reign of the Belles" had its apotheosis in the wedding of C. M. Lovell's daughter.

He had died two or three years before, leaving his family still living in the old frame house that had been both store and residence in the first years of his marriage. The story was that Mrs. Lovell had insisted on a better house, when Lovell built his new store, and work was begun on a fine brick residence catercorner from the original store. Then, according to the legend, Mr. and Mrs. Lovell had a quarrel over some detail of the plans, and the lord and master ordered his workmen to fill in half of the already-excavated basement, and reduce the whole house in the same proportion. When the house was finished Mrs. Lovell refused to move into it. There the matter stood at his death.

After a decent interval of 'mourning,' with some travel in the East and abroad, Mrs. Lovell returned to Chatfield with a set of architect's plans for the most elegant residence ever built in Chatfield. She bought the Winona Street property in which J. C. Easton had lived until his removal to La Crosse ten years earlier,

and proceeded with the building of a truly handsome mansion, surrounded by terraced lawns running up the flank of Winona Hill.

That house was the talk of the town. It had five fireplaces besides the best furnace to be bought; it boasted three bathrooms, and the first sun porch ever seen in Chatfield. Its rooms were finished with curly birch, bird's-eye maple, and the fabulous California redwood; the plan was to spend a full year in the completion of its elegant details. The house was named Oakenwald, even when blueprints were the only evidence of its dignities.

Then Miss Anna Lovell, the only daughter, returned from her Eastern finishing school and met "a highly esteemed young business man of Minneapolis" who wooed her with such ardor that the wedding was set for February 25, 1897, instead of the June date that Mrs. Lovell would have preferred. Additional workmen were imported and the house was rushed to completion. On February 24, the family moved into the new house; the next day decorators, caterers, and florists from 'the Cities' took over, and that evening, at nine-thirty, "the wedding commenced," according to the *Democrat's* ecstatic report.

"The profusion of cut flowers, English violets, jonquils, tulips, roses, carnations, and smilax were scattered with a lavish hand in every available nook and corner. . . . A handsomer picture can hardly be imagined than the march of the bridal party to the back parlor, to the music of Roweder's orchestra of Winona."

About half of the "150 admiring friends" present at the wedding had come from Minneapolis "by private Pullman car, 'Cupid,' chartered by Mr. Jenkins [the bridegroom] for the occasion. . . . The car was decorated with cut flowers and the . . . travelers were entertained enroute by progressive cinch under the direction of Col. Fahnestock, who has the reputation of being the champion Minneapolis whist player. . . . Dorsett, the Minneapolis caterer, furnished refreshments in the car both going and coming," and Mr. Jenkins had thoughtfully provided Dresden china and Venetian glass prizes for the winners at cinch.

The pastor of Chatfield's Presbyterian church solemnized the

marriage, and immediately afterwards "a delicious collation was served by colored caterers from Dorsett's, Minneapolis." After that the guests repaired to the white-draped and canvas-floored ballroom on the third floor of the mansion, while the bride retired to change her gown. She soon reappeared in "the exquisite gown which she is to wear at the inaugural ball in Washington. It is of heavy brocaded white satin cut décolleté, and much more elaborate than the wedding gown, though not *en traîne*. A fragrant bunch of English violets adorned the front of her gown, and a pompon of them was placed in her hair, while she carried a bouquet of delicately tinted orchids."

As the wedding party danced through the long winter night, what Chatfield guest could doubt that here were gathered the elite to set on their town the final seal of urban sophistication? The chosen valley had exuberantly embraced the idols of America's new industrialism.

PART

Thirteen



“If You Could Eat Scenery”



THAT THE EMBRACE did not bring the paradisaical perfection of its promise might have been guessed by the time that the Chatfield paper reprinted the story of the Lovell wedding in its "Echoes of the Past—Fifty Years Ago." Travelers noticed Chatfield as the prettiest town on Route 52, and visitors were charmed by the ample lawns and ready hospitality of Chatfield houses. Yet there were sons and daughters of those wedding guests, still living in the valley of their birth, who found themselves "weary, and wary, and dull," for all the comfort of their days. And a detached observer might sometimes have wondered how it was that an earthplace so utterly fair as the chosen valley should nourish a life so meager in those interpretations of experience that create the great rubrics of a culture.

If, like many in that later generation, he should try to ask questions that would help to a more functional understanding of his country, he might have been puzzled to know why the energy released by Chatfield's 'high standard of living' found so little expression in the creation of significant form. Why did the musician, the dramatist, the painter find in those tree-arched streets no challenge to vigorous originality? Or are well-ordered homes and friendly neighborhoods the most that society can achieve in a unit as small as Chatfield? There is leisure in Chatfield; must it forever be spent in guffaws at radio ventriloquists, or mooning transference to Hollywood lovers?

If he were concerned with the *sources* of things he saw, he might ask how far the stifling of the creative impulse in the people was chargeable to the frontier, that ‘ordeal’ which has been credited with distorting such a genius as Mark Twain’s. Or what part had been played by those forces suggested in the terms ‘capitalism’ and ‘industrialism.’

And had he heard the talk among some Chatfield people of invoking political pressure to prevent the publication of “anything we don’t like,” he might well have been alarmed. Was the poison of political corruption astir in this friendly place? Were the forces so shockingly set forth by Lincoln Steffens coiled within America’s country towns as well as its cities? If that poison was everywhere, what was becoming of America’s freedoms? As it happened, the publication issue was never drawn in Chatfield. Yet the fact that such use of political pressure could be considered by Chatfield people was not without its terror for the questioning mind.

But a sharper terror broke over the valley when troops began moving on the plains of Europe. It touched first the women in country kitchens, that fateful morning of September 1, 1939. Between setting teakettles over brisk new flames and filling coffee pots, they paused to snap on their radios for music to get the children up. Many a farm wife stopped motionless, her hands full of cups and plates, or lifted the sputtering bacon off the fire the better to hear, when the professional blandness of the announcer’s voice gave way to dreadful urgency: “We interrupt our program to bring you dispatches from Berlin and other world capitals . . .”

There was little chatter over that day’s breakfast, and the men were in no hurry to go out to their fall plowing. Little business was done in Chatfield, and voices on Chatfield streets were muffled by the screaming of bombs over Warsaw.

The chosen valley, that bright September day, was too remote to fear the immediate rain of hell. But its people knew they were in that hell. If not that day, sometime before it was ended; if not in their own streets, somewhere the flesh of their sons would be torn, the blood of their children turned to foul putrefaction. As twilight closed, the streets were empty except for the sound that

poured from the radios in every house. And as day followed day, mothers looked at their sons, and counted the months, or years, until they should be as old as the boys that England and France and Russia were sending into the war.

When school began, the fifth day of the war, and the streets filled with lounging lads in bright sweaters and girls with shining untrammelled hair, the people of Chatfield almost dared to hope that the defending hills did actually shut out the war. Had not the President said, the third night of the war, that "this nation will remain a neutral nation"? His voice had carried the warming assurance of a good father's voice.

As farm prices mounted and this one and that one left to work in 'defense plants,' the 'times' were good, and the war seemed far away. Voices grew jocose again, and even when the boys were called away to the camps hastily thrown up across the continent, it seemed somehow something other than war that called them. Mothers thought of the travel their sons were getting, and sisters and sweethearts had a new interest in going for the mail each day. By the time that bombs were dropped on American ships, the life of the valley had been so largely geared into the demands of war that its actual beginning came almost as a relief. Now Chatfield boys would be squandered over the globe, instead of merely the continent, but once they were in it they would finish up the dreadful business. Writing letters and packing boxes became doubly urgent when they were addressed in care of the Postmaster, San Francisco, or New York.

As month followed month the talk of Chatfield people was filled with names that geography classes had never taught. Private allusions in travel-stained letters were pondered in the search for some clue to where the letter had been written, some estimate of the degree of danger from which it had come. Now and then the dreaded telegram arrived—"The War Department regrets to inform you . . ."—but astonishingly few boys of the valley or the province were wounded in ways that spelled an end to fighting. What hidden wounds they might carry no one could say.

Whatever far places they saw, they wrote home again and again,

“I haven’t seen anything that looks as good to me as Winona Hill,” or “Main Street,” or, most often, “Nothing as good as Chatfield.” While endless, aimless lines of displaced persons crawled over the shattered continents, rootless and rejected people with neither place nor hope, the men from Chatfield and its province held fast to their memories of the earth-place where they were at home.

There was no sudden proof that those men, or their families at home, had come to understand the ways in which their valley’s life was part of the forces that now were shaking a civilization. In the war, as in the long years of peaceful growth, the people of the valley were more intent upon fulfilling the day’s demands than in asking why such demands were laid upon them. They listened—a few more than usual—to the interpretations their preachers offered, and they spoke sometimes of gratitude that there was no need in this war to talk of hating. They gave their money to help care for the victims of the war they had not wanted. They read newspapers and listened to commentators, trying to satisfy such need as they felt for a Why, but they were too little skilled in the discipline of interpretation to forge out their own answers to that Why. They comforted themselves with thinking of the peace that would come: there would be a United Nations this time, better than the forgotten League, and they would support its creation. But there was little probing into the reasons for the old League’s failure, even when they affirmed the new venture’s necessary success.

It was not surprising, even in so vast a crisis as the war. “For what is the present, after all,” Whitman asks, “but a growth out of the past?” A people who had always been intent on the future, believing in their power to shape it as they would, had never seen the reason for learning how to interpret any past, even their own.

A cause for fear might have been found in that ignoring of the past, that failure to question the present. For the future, in its turn, would become the present, and no present can wholly escape the effects of its past. Where should the people begin the task of understanding the things-that-are, if always they set it aside for

the headier wine of things-to-come? While they had a continent, and a limitless bounty of time, they could perhaps afford such blithe inebriation. But a vast period was to mushroom in the sky before that war was over, and the culture of which it was the punctuation afforded little guidance for what came after.

Unless, indeed, it should be created by "the people, yes."

When the day should come that they recognized their deep kinship with the earth and found in its beauty a challenge to more inward making than the building of houses and railroads . . . when they should turn their unworn energies to the communication of the fullness of human experience . . . when the long practice in meeting common problems by doing things together should be searched for the meanings that stretch between continents no less than between houses. . . . Then indeed the people might utter the vast affirmation that alone can harness the terrible beauty that hung in the sky above Hiroshima.

That they were beginning to grope for some such inward using of the beauty of their land might daringly be hoped when one pondered a casual saying that came from one of Chatfield's women, on a day while the war still thundered.

She was standing on the station platform, waiting to send a birthday cable to her Air Force son in Ireland. She would pay for that cable with money she had earned ironing other people's clothes. A passer-by paused to look with her across the river bottom to the hills, brilliant with October colors. "It's such a lovely view," the passer-by said.

"Yes," the woman answered slowly, her eyes on the westward hills. "If you could eat scenery a body'd live well in Chatfield."