

The Vanguard American

Published monthly by
The Vanguard Guild
Kimballton, Iowa
Holger J. Koch, Editor

Vol. II, No. 5

Subscription Price \$1.00 per year

MAY, 1946

The Town Square

HOLGER J. KOCH.

"In the center of the American community is the Town Square. It is a comfortable, homey sort of place where children play and the hobo sleeps on the grass with yesterday's paper over his face. Towns-people stop to exchange views on the weather, politics, babies, life, death, the new styles, the war, the mayor, juvenile delinquency and the weather. Here the high-school band plays of a summer evening and your remarks to the neighbor and to "that man"—(who is he, anyway?—I should know that fellow!) are more than commonly free of controversial matter and delivered with a touch of the oratorical.

"The Town Square is the community's observation post and its court of opinion. Here a man speaks his mind more honestly than perhaps anywhere else—at least in public. He is less the member of a party, a church, a fraternal organization than just a plain American citizen who has his own peculiar slant on everything and doesn't mind telling all and sundry.

"The Vanguard American's office is located on a park bench in the town square. We have no other object than to discuss leisurely and with the greatest freedom any matter which concerns the American community. Also to listen to the American minstrel and story-teller—of fact and fancy. We invite all congenial souls to join us on our bench. —Tell us, 'What do you know, Joe?' "

This invitation appeared in the first issue of THE VANGUARD AMERICAN a little over a year ago. A good many have joined us on the bench since then and many and varied are the topics we have discussed. None of this, however, reached the pages of The Vanguard and in the press of work we lost sight of our original plans for the column. But now, once more, summer has come to the mid-west. The evenings are balmy under the high elms and maples and until that blue-black cloud in the south-west sends us trotting home to close the up-stairs windows, let's sit here and talk.

Two years ago, Harold, you spoke to us about the soul of America. I remember it well. You gave us the feeling that our people is not a Chinese puzzle cleverly put together from many separate pieces but an entity in its becoming; like a person beginning life with certain characteristics: inclinations, desires, hopes, dreams,—and perhaps a destiny. Of course, we have to discount the surface sound and fury, rush and clash of our nation's outward appearance. They are like the disturbances on the surface of a great river, whipped by every chance wind that blows; underneath is the current that really moves; moves always toward the sea; moving with it even the waves thrusting in the opposite direction.

Other people believe America has a soul. There is Archibald McLeish, the Interpreter:

"The whole history of our continent is a history of the imagination. Men imagined land beyond the sea and found it. Men imagined the forests, the great plains, the rivers, the mountains—and found these plains, these mountains. No force of terror, no pressure of population, drove our ancestors across the continent. They came, as the great explorers crossed the Atlantic because of the imagination of their minds—because they imagined a better, a more beautiful, a freer, happier world; because they were men not only of courage, not only of strength and hardiness, but of warm and vivid desire; because they desired; because they had the power to desire."

Don't you think that's good—"the power to desire"? When people or civilizations lose the power to desire they disintegrate; so do Young People's Societies and churches. We are having a spell of it in this country right now; so we rush about in panting pursuit of things we know very well we shall not care for particularly when we get them, but the rushing gives us the illusion of being in motion toward something. We know well enough that if the motion stops we shall fall apart.

Look at these old fellows on the park benches. Many of them were rushers in their prime; now they have retired and all their moments hang suspended in space; the past has dropped away; the future is nonexistent. I'm reminded of Stanley Vestal's summing up of the comparative "life-expectancy" of the practical man and the idealist: "... your

practical man fights only when his interests are involved, whereas your idealist fights on forever. When he falls fighting, his spirit and his cause may live on; but when a practical man dies, he is dead all over." An idealist, then, by his definition would be a person in whom the past and the future merge. That's the sort of Americans we want to be.

We find more and more people who are submerged in the historical stream and move with it. Deep in the current the surface ripples are unnoticed, only the flow of the stream is felt. Says McLeish, "The new worlds do not bring themselves to being. Men's minds, when they are ready for them, find them. The labor and the longing must be ours." Again, "And how do you find new worlds anyway? By sailing to them? By crossing the mountains? Or perhaps by believing in them?" Yes, by believing in them.

I can't help feeling, Harold, that the individual must become a part of a greater entity moving by its own power in order that he may reach any sort of completion or fulfillment. Individually we may be excellent shoots, but unless we are grafted onto some stalk that has everlasting roots we are going to shrivel up and blow away. I think we all prefer to be individualists, but we certainly can't prove the excellence of individualism by the kind of life we have produced so far!

The spore is fed by the nourishment present in the kernel,—enough to bring it to the point where it can strike root in the soil, but not enough to complete the fruiting process. We have planted tested and certified seed corn in our fields again this year, but we know that even triple-A seed corn alone is not going to grow 8 foot stalks and yield a 400 fold harvest.

When you read Stephen Vincent Benet, Russel Davenport, James Truslow Adams and many others you know that America has a soul and therefore must have a destiny. It may not be the "Old Man River" himself, but it is certainly a tributary. Even Indian Creek which flows by our door eventually reaches the broad Mississippi. When we get over being wind-blown individualists, we may regain that stability and sense of permanence and growth which was the great experience of an earlier generation within the Danish people.

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Meet Mr. Shuji Kimura, American, just out of a U.S. concentration camp—euphemistically known as "Relocation Centers". Mr. Kimura, do the barbed wires of suspicion stem the American stream? — Mr. Kimura speaks of

LOYALTY

"Fix up the questionnaire for the Jap concentration camps; ask them if they're loyal to the U.S."—and so the form must have been written in a 10 seconds of an afternoon in an office in Washington, D. C., teletyped and sent to the ten relocation camps in the West. Allegiance—United States—. Did the person who phrased that question ask himself what allegiance means, what United States means? If he did, he could not have asked this question lightly, for this question can only be asked humbly, and only to one's own self.

Loyalty doesn't mean saying "yes" or "no", or extending one's hand to the flag, or raising a hat or standing up when one hears the "Star Spangled Banner"; anyone can do these things. No, loyalty has to be in our hearts and

in our memories; it has to be in our fibre and in our bones. Loyalty comes from having lived in America, and having lived deeply.

Loyalty lies in our memories of having gone to school carrying our lunches in cut-plug cans; in the boyhood of shinny and marbles and Indian fights; of baseball in the spring and football in the fall; of fights after school inside tense, hushed circles; of the joys of Valentines given with burning cheeks. It lies in the memories of algebra and Shakespeare, of work shop and participles and gerunds.

Loyalty comes from the friends we have in our hearts; from the memories of picnics in the hills, the fishing trips, the spilled bacon grease and pork and beans; of soda fountains after basketball games, of giant sandwiches and pickles from raided refrigerators.

Loyalty lies in having loved a person who lives beneath these skies; in the memories of flowers gathered with a singing heart, of a smile treasured and remembered, of awakening to a new and greater world; and too, in the memories of pain and loneliness.

Loyalty comes from knowing the beauties of the country; the ranges of the West white with snow in the winter, blueblack with firs in the summer; seeing the sun slip into the ocean, the sky growing dimmer, the lighthouse blinking in the dusk. It comes from climbing mountains through fog to the clear sun above, from swimming in the cold rivers from snow-fed lakes, from staring across the chasms and coulees of the great western rivers. It comes with the thrill of the first crocus, the dusty leaves of summer, the damp dews of the hunting season.

Loyalty means having worked in America: Plowing the steaming earth in the spring, chopping the weeds and spraying the insects, and harvesting late into the chill dusk of autumn; it means banging paper bags in the fruit stands; it means pitching fish late into the night in the canneries, heaving the rails on the main-line, grabbing the moving river of lumber in the mills; it means having cleared an acre of cedar stumps with dynamite and cap and fuse.

Loyalty in our hearts means having known the bitterness of contempt; the lie, "Sorry, we're full right now"; having known the poverty of the farms, the squalor and the smells of the city; the helplessness against the men who sit in legislature passing laws to drive us from our farms, from our jobs. It means remembering the pain of auctions of our furniture and cattle before a crowd.

But above all, loyalty means affirming and reechoing in our hearts the American dream that we shall live so that the black and white and red and yellow men shall be considered equal as men; that it is the man, and not his color or his wealth or his ancestry that we shall respect. It means realizing that each person who breathes this air is a part of the America, and will be asked to give and share alike, neither to be proud or ashamed.

Loyalty lies in all these, in having been a part of American life; but somehow, if someone asks us about it, we don't want to talk about it; we don't want to be asked about it. It is as if a man were to ask another, "Do you love your wife"? There is no answer because the answer must come too deep, and no thoughtful man would ask such a question. We will have to fight for the day when no American need ask another American of another race, "Are you loyal to the U.S.?"

Children Just Like Each Other

MALCOLM THURBURN, Los Angeles, Cal.

Owen held one of the crutches expertly under his right arm. In his free hand he carried a small bird who watched us with terrified, beady-black eyes.

"What'll I do with it?" he asked me. "It must of broke its wing, and I'm scared the cats will get it."

I considered the situation carefully. If we put the bird back into its nest (assuming we could find the nest), it would probably fall out again. If we kept it at home, it would certainly pine its heart out and refuse to be fed.

Could I put a splint on the broken wing-bone? "Do you think we could mend it . . . if we did it together?"

"We can try," he said confidently. That settled it.

Owen, who is five, has already known what it means to suffer. He is a victim of infantile paralysis. He leaned his crutches against the davenport. With his left hand he helped me clear a place on my desk, meanwhile continuing to grasp, with instinctive gentleness, the bird in his right.

I noticed a distraction in Owen's dark eyes, and knowing him as well as I do (we had been next-door-neighbors since he was one year old) I felt that he was anxious to tell me something important.

"What's on your mind, old man?" I asked, trying to make it easy for him.

"Well," he answered slowly, his thoughts groping for the words, "I think we got to have assis . . . assis . . ."

" . . . tance," I supplied.

"I know a boy," he said eagerly.

"Alright," I told him. "Go and find your friend. Only don't be too long, because this is a serious operation and we can't keep the patient waiting. You know how it is?"

"Sure, I know. I'll be back right away," and thrusting the bird into my hand and grabbing his crutches, he was off as quickly as his spindly, awkward legs would carry him.

For 20 minutes I held the warm, brown morsel in my hand. It seemed to relax and its vivid eyes became less terrified.

I thought back over the four years I had lived in that neighborhood—years during which I had learned what brotherhood means, largely through the unchangeable kindness of the "people-next-door," who are Owen's father and mother and aunt and elder brother. The fact that I was of a different race from them wasn't even worth talking about—at least, we never bothered to talk about it. I thought of the appealing charm of the small Owen, who accepted me without question just because I was interested in his wood-blocks and later in his stamps.

I thought back over the years when I had been privileged to learn many new lessons about living with people, lessons which I would continue to learn, pray God, throughout the rest of my life.

I thought back over the years of world-tragedy in which a great American had come to his maturity as his country's leader, but who during the severest stress of war had found time to think and the heart to plan for other sufferers of infantile paralysis, like my pal Owen. I thought back over the years during which . . .

I could hear Owen's crutches tapping on the porch

tiles, and in a minute there he was on the threshold with his friend.

A funny pain—or was it joy—took hold of my solar plexus, as I saw them coming in together.

I knew that here at this unrehearsed moment was the solution to all world tragedies. Here was the answer to the age-old question—what of world-peace? Here was the symbol, so near at hand and so completely attainable, of world-brotherhood.

"This is Mike, he goes to the same hospital," said Owen. Then, by way of explanation, "his mother keeps canaries." Certainly, that explained everything so far as Owen was concerned.

For your friend is yours—well, because you just like each other, or because you have the same things to be interested in, or because you have suffered the same pain.

With that name, Mike should have been a red-headed Irish kid. But he was not. He was perhaps Japanese or Chinese or Korean. I never found out. It didn't matter. Except that he was a small guy who'd had a tough beginning, for his legs and arms seemed to taper off to almost nothing.

Brainy professors in the universities can give you a long spiel on affinities and all that kind of thing. But somehow, I always come out at the other end without having learned anything—or at any rate anything that helps.

But Owen and Mike, two American kids, one of Negro and the other of Oriental heritage, as they helped me put the splint on the bird's broken wing, helped me to see with startling clarity what an easy thing is world-brotherhood.

I wish more people could have seen this. We wouldn't need all those books and papers and magazine articles. It's so easy. All you've got to do is . . . like each other.—From the magazine "NOW," 1899 W. Jefferson Blvd., Los Angeles, Cal.

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"Thirty Years With an Idea"

MARIETTA JOHNSON

IV. LITTLE CHILDREN (Continued)

At six years of age we put them in what we call the "first-life" class. A "life class" is where children live as wholesomely, happily, and intelligently as possible, and incidentally learn something. We do not want to be under any obligation to the parents for what they learn. Two very amazing attitudes persist among adults: first, that education is identical with erudition and skill; second, that the more rapidly a child can be piloted through the grades the better for all concerned! We believe that through happy, wholesome, intelligent experiences learning takes place. One of the most persistent questions of parents is: "Will my child be READY for the next grade when he goes back home?" Usually the children return to their grade in the conventional school with no apparent loss and very often with a noticeable increase of power. Children who have been in this school for some years and are obliged to leave are sometimes graded quite beyond their years in other schools. One father complained that his child did nothing but "play" in our school because she had no home work, but later, when she entered another school he reported

that she had surpassed the other children of her class and had been allowed to "skip" a grade. Of course, the explanation is that the "play" of which he complained gave her opportunity for inner growth, coordination, and integration which manifested as power a little later. They are often noticeable for their frank interest in things, their initiative and poise. Said one mother, "The teacher asked what school my child had attended, saying that he was eager and showed a finer mental grasp than others and was more dependable."

The musical progress for the six-and seven-year-olds consists of songs, singing games, and folk dancing, with varied rhythmic and dramatic expression often inspired by the story. We believe that singing is merely another form of saying something. Children should sing and dance and be filled with musical feeling before an attempt is made to use an instrument or read notes! The usual process in teaching music is to place notes before the child, helping him to read by identifying the note with the keyboard. After considerable experience he learns to HEAR. The process should be singing, hearing, first being filled with musical sounds, then gradually using the keyboard by ear, then at last identifying the sound with the sight of the notes! Happily many music teachers are following the newer process of filling the child with musical feeling through the use of his voice, then the instrument, and finally the notes. We try to postpone the teaching of musical symbols until at least ten years of age. Children should hear and feel music long before the eye is trained to read notes.

The session is now three hours and the work is considerably strengthened. The stories may be those of myths, fables, folk lore, and fairy tales; also stories of information, such as animal stories and other stories of nature. The teacher uses her own method. All method is determined by the aim, knowledge of the material, and of childhood. The aim is to keep the children occupied intelligently, and the knowledge of childhood and material increases with study and experience.

Children should not be over-stimulated, neither should they be bored. Sometimes parents complain that their children suffer from lack of intellectual stimulus. On investigation it is invariable found that the children have not developed initiative and feel they are not "learning" because tasks are not assigned. We think the assignment of tasks often results in immoral experiences, therefore this is postponed until high school. Things that MOVE one in the wrong direction are immoral. Home-work usually moves both mother and child in the wrong direction! The mother gets nervous and is irritated when demands from the school interfere with her home plans, and the child often uses the school tasks as an excuse for neglecting the mother's requests. But the temptation to APPEAR to know when he doesn't know, is perhaps the most weakening and thus immoral part of the child's experience. While children are not conscious of set tasks, they understand perfectly that they are expected to do whatever the teacher wishes them to do. The teacher, however, may learn the art of allowing children full opportunity for self-prompted work without the danger of trifling and disorder.

Stories are told, and the children may tell stories to

the group. Stories are not used, however, for "language lessons," but frankly for the joy of the story. Marionette shows are popular in this group. They enjoy making the little theatre, out of a box usually, arranging curtains, making scenery and the puppets. Then, most exciting of all—giving the show! A deer hunt, when the teacher remains at home to receive the game and enjoy the feast, is a great experience for six-and seven-year-olds. "You better not go with us," explains a child to the teacher, "because we are going through barb wire fences, briars and down in holes"; then, reassuringly, "but you can take the deer when we drive it in."

Most of the dramatic work of this group is quite spontaneous. A group sometimes asks the teacher to take the rest of the children out of the room while they get ready to give a play! "Don't tell them what we are going to do, but please take them out until we call you." So often teachers fear to grant requests lest "all the others may want to do the same thing." This rarely occurs, and if it should, the teacher should be able to meet it. Children must know that their requests WILL be granted whenever it is wise or possible. This deep, well-founded confidence in the adult is a vital factor in the development of personality in the child. A sense of security prevents self-consciousness.

Fundamental conceptions of numbers are given the seven-year-old group if the teacher is able to secure a satisfactory response, otherwise numbers may be postponed until eight years of age. These consist of weighing, measuring, counting, using the ruler, but no use of figures. The use of figures is often a barrier to the mind in gaining number conceptions. Children think that three-fourths is merely a three with four under it. When the right CONCEPTION of number is acquired, we find children USING number constantly in their leisure and in play. "I'm going to take this home to see if Daddy can make a picture of a third of a fourth." One little boy, after "dividing things up," exclaimed, "A fourth of a fourth is an awfully small thing, isn't it?"

There is no reading or writing in this group, since this may interfere with nerve growth and it is a severe form of specialized activity unsuited for children at this age. When the entire organism is in a state of exceedingly rapid activity and change, arrest of development may easily take place. We believe the omission of the use of books for little children results in better thinking. If the schools were frankly engaged in trying to meet the needs of the growing child, no doubt they would insist upon every child having experience in singing, dancing, handwork, stories, and nature. This work adapted to the age of the children would fill the day full of happy, wholesome occupation.

The child who reads early learns to rely upon the printed page for authority and may fail lamentably to understand the meaning of his experiences! The entire race seems quite unable to learn from experience! Isn't it strange that so many people feel there is little or no LEARNING except from books? In fact, they often speak of the "tools of learning," meaning symbols. When one considers the immense amount of learning that takes place before the child reaches school age, it is surprising that such emphasis is placed upon books as TOOLS of learning. Reading should be postponed until ten years of age. If chil-

dren were allowed to think through experience, a tendency to wait for data, to search for truth and use it for authority, might be developed. Children tend to act on thinking. This is intelligence. Excessive or too early use of books may interfere. The use of books too early often develops an un-social attitude. Children are entertained by reading stories when they should be working creatively or playing with others. Many children become quite unfit to live with others as a result of sitting for hours in a bad light, bad position, passively being entertained by a book! The bragging, bossy, irritable, unhappy, self-centered child is quite apt to be the child who reads excessively. We have had children whose behavior was positively sub-normal, caused by too constant use of books—utterly lacking in ability to meet situations. "My child can not do anything with his hands, and he enjoys being with adults more than playing with children," says a perplexed mother.

While information is not the aim in nature study, at this age children are interested to know many things that might escape the notice of younger children. Snakes and toads and all animals are attractive to children if the observation is not pressed upon them. The living creature is studied through actual contact, rather than lessons about them. Gardens are very interesting and excursions and walks and all-day picnics are popular. Our bay is a never exhausted attraction. Here they may dig in the sand to their hearts' content, wade and sail their little boats, build dams, make lakes, waterfalls, islands, and all forms of land and water. The gullies are always stimulating to dramatic or investigating impulses. "Let's play gods! I'm Jupiter . . . I'm Juno . . . I'm Minerva!" shout the children as they troop to the gully. Many happy hours have been spent in the gully dramatizing the old Greek myths and other stories, while the teacher lazily sits on a log in the sun.

Hand-work holds a very prominent place on the program, being almost wholly self-prompted and self-directed. Work in color is very fascinating for these children. They love to illustrate poems or stories, using large sheets of paper, large brushes and vivid water colors. Much work in clay is also done quite independently, though the teacher's help is sometimes solicited. But the great joy of children at this age is wood-working. They never tire of the jig-saw, plane, hammer and nails, and sometimes the lathe, and many happy and profitable hours are spent using tools and soft wood. What do they make and how well is the work done? They make many objects for use and some things are well done, but the work is successful if the children enjoy the activity and experience real satisfaction. "Just think, Mother," exclaims a new boy. "You can make what you want, and you can take it home!" They sometimes need help to persist until an object is finished, and occasionally articles begun may be abandoned. Occasionally parents think that since reading is not taught at this age, excellent hand-work should be produced! "I don't send my child to school to pound nails," said a disgusted mother, removing her child. "He can do that at home."

Children have not the nervous coordination nor control necessary for finished work. All children's work is characterized by the imperfections due to their undeveloped state. "This," said the teacher, handing a photograph to a visitor, "is work done by six-year-olds without suggestion or direction." The visitor, glancing at the picture,

handed it back saying, "It looks it!" Again we repeat, all work must be judged by the spirit of the worker.

In this machine age, the greatest responsibility rests on the schools for developing the power and inclination to use leisure profitably. If inner satisfaction and consciousness of power are experienced throughout the growing years in creative work, the profitable use of leisure is assured. A young man built his own house, saying proudly, "I learned that in old Organic." All children below the high school are given two periods daily in shop and craft work. The creative mind is one that is critical in the best sense—that is, seeking the truth and taking it for authority. It is also the mind that is tolerant, charitable to his neighbor. When one is engaged in absorbingly interesting work, he hasn't time to keep a negatively critical eye on his neighbor, and if he should perchance recognize mistakes in his neighbor, he knows that he too has often failed to reach his ideal. So with a humble spirit he sympathizes instead of condemning.

The standard is an inner, human one. If the work is suitable and wholesome and the children delight in it, there is growth, which is the essence of education. Dewey says education is "vital energy seeking opportunity for effective exercise." You may ask, what is effective exercise? Surely we must agree that it is wholesome, interested activity with consequent satisfactions. Finish and technique come later. The teacher has a program, but she is not obliged to follow it. The whole morning may be spent in the gully, at the bay, or in the woods without a guilty conscience! Much time is given to free play. In many schools direction, even in play, is so constant that children rarely experience the absence of external demands long enough to allow the "inner necessity" to develop! Henderson bemoans the fact that people seem driven by fear, poverty, ignorance, but most of all they are driven by the absence of a redeeming idea. The child always has a redeeming idea until his elders direct, instruct, and thwart his efforts until the inner impulse is destroyed. Behavior and other "problem children" have made remarkable progress in overcoming limitations merely through the removal of external pressure."

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The Loom of Living

NADJESCHDA OVERGAARD, Kimballton, Iowa.

The stuff this thing called happiness is made of! For thousands of years man has been pursuing it. Individuals have attained it in varying degrees but as a whole mankind today seems farther away from this goal of human striving than ever before. Statistics of various sorts seem to bear this out without a doubt.

Man being essentially creative, the greatest happiness comes to him through the process of his creating, be it with mind or hands. In like manner the greatest unhappiness comes to him through a frustration of this capacity for creating or self expression in some form. Availing himself of this key to his destiny man develops the most genial of personalities and at peace with himself through his self expression he learns to enjoy and evaluate the creative

efforts of his fellowmen. On the other hand, denying himself a natural outlet for his abilities or substituting such outlets which do not satisfy him, man tends toward the baser elements in his make up such as aggressiveness, jealousy and mistrust toward his fellowmen.

It becomes apparent then that it is important to our wellbeing to promote experiences that will exercise this inherent urge to create. The difficulty is essentially not in the limitation of abilities but rather in a lack of courage to use the abilities we possess. Once we are aware of this it is gratifying to notice how immensely each new experience adds to our capacity for enjoying and understanding other related subjects.

For instance: I had never been particularly aware of architecture until it was made necessary for us to build a home of our own in order to have a place to live. The fact that it was to be a small, inexpensive home in no way limited the enjoyment and knowledge this experience opened up for me. (I could dream, couldn't I?) Incidentally, I discovered that lavish expenditure too often fails to produce beauty. I had up to this point taken for granted the style and structure of the houses about me. I had likes and dislikes but had never before been conscious of the reason why some give pleasure and others are repulsive. By studying pictures and plans in the better magazines devoted to architecture I acquired a gauge by which to judge these houses I saw. I know now that those which give me the greatest pleasure are those which, while suited to their inhabitants, harmonize with their surroundings and like other works of art are impressive as a unit, with clean lines and good proportions. When you develop this pleasure in looking at the good structures in your community each time you see them your real interest in architecture begins. This interest leads to an interest in furnishings and landscaping which in themselves open up unlimited possibilities for study and creative effort.

I believe anyone may gain much pleasure and appreciation of the art and crafts by this same method, in addition to the value of an emotional outlet. Analyze yourself for any latent talent or desire and make an honest effort to give expression through it. Everyone has some talent and most have several.

A study of painting is a good place to begin, if you have any bent along this line. Colors are fascinating and in the process of giving expression to something actual or imagined you will at least begin to understand this language of the artist. A language built up by means of lines, areas of light and dark and color, through which beauty and inspiration is presented to the eye. Closely related to this is the language appealing to the ear, through poetry and music. There are many others but each must find his, or her, own medium. The important thing is to make a conscious effort to get out of the rut of mental inertia, so prevalent with too many of us.

Up to this point the creative objective has been mainly individual happiness. This, however, should not be the ultimate but rather the initial step that should lead toward the greater happiness that comes from sharing with your friends, your community, etc. Sharing with each other your creative efforts and the joy that comes through an understanding of the finer things in life. Perhaps, after all, this is one simple basis for Good Will Among Men.

In the Wake of Prairie Schooners

HOLGER J. KOCH.

The highway climbs upward in steep, darting turns and lunges; catching a foothold here, skirting a canyon there, and seemingly by the force of sheer momentum and the grace of God clinging to the shoulder of the next ridge. That's climbing the eastern battlement of the High Sierras coming from the West on Highway 40. A climb of 7000 feet over some of the wildest mountain country on the continent.

Suddenly the view breaks through the wall of rock and you know instinctively that you are over "the hump." This, the sign announces casually, is "Emigrant Pass" and it dawns on you that people have lived in this land who actually had the daring to match their bones and their "innards" in a knock-down drag-out battle with this 80 mile, brutal, man-breaking mountain range; not just "traveling light" but bulling and snaking through the timbered crevices their clumsy, heavily-loaded ox-drawn covered wagons. What manner of men and women were these offspring of young America who refused to be beaten by such physical and mental cruelty? And you recall the entreaty of all sagas: In Those Days There Were Giants In The Earth.

As the earth drops away beneath your gaze, you behold far below a pine-bordered lake, nestling peacefully on the lap of the mountains and a name flashes upon your brain with the shock of tragic memories: **DONNER LAKE!** You have to stop the car to take this in; to savor some of the bitter tragedy of things worse than death; of human souls and bodies battered to a bloody pulp against these merciless cliffs; man's capacity for heroism and suffering. You look about you. This, then, is Donner Pass! These are the mountains that beat down everything but the last flicker of sheer animal will to live in fifteen starved and exhausted men and women who left the snow-buried camp on the shores of the lake to throw themselves against the Sierras at their punishing worst, with mountainous snow drifts obliterating all trails; with continuous blizzards howling around the summits; to beat a path on foot to the nearest source of help, Sutters Fort, nearly a hundred miles away. Help for the seventy-odd men, women and children in the camp, remnant of the ill-fated Donner-Reed party which after a series of tragic mistakes and delays finally found itself trapped in the pass by unseasonal snows, already now reduced to drinking the gluey fluid obtained by boiling the hides of their long dead oxen.

The mountain kept almost half their number for its share.

Put the car in gear; best not to dwell on this scene of torture. Hell can be frozen as well as fiery. As we roll down the tortuous path of decent we wonder: Is the West so strong because it was founded by **SURVIVORS** Of all those who started down the Oregon-California Trail 34,000 were buried east of the Sierras.

Turn off the highway by the shores of the lake. Stand before the Emigrant Monument whose bronze figures of a man, a woman and a child look upward toward the Pass; to find a break in the mountain wall before them; the 22 shading their eyes against the glare of the snow; straining foot granite base measuring the depth of the snow that winter of '46. As the sun drops behind the snow capped summits let us look eastward over the 2000 mile long trail and watch the Donner party "chain out" for their rendezvous with fate—and history.

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It is springtime in Illinois in the year 1846. Just one hundred years ago. And the country is young, and most everybody living anywhere in Illinois has moved from somewhere else. There is so much room on this new continent that it is a waste of time to stay long in any one place. Rumors are in the spring wind everywhere. Free land to the west; a county for every man; a land grant from Mexico will make you king of a hundred square miles! Rents and taxes and neighbor troubles over fence lines are for the plodders and the drudges and the stick-in-the-prairie-muds. Kick the gumbo clods off your boots, man, pull the covered wagon from the shed and shake its dusty canvas. It has dreamed overlong of Virginia and Kentucky trails. Load the household goods and the provisions, the plow, the double-bitted axe, the log chains and the squirrel gun. Load the wife and the kids; tie the mare and the colt to the end-gate; hitch three yoke of prime oxen to the old boat and let's see what's across the mountains!

Old George Donner—he's 62—is young again. Durned if this bottom-farming isn't clotting the blood in his veins. So they want to see him die like a wind-broke horse at the end of the row! Not Old George; not while he can still swing a bull-whack and curl a steer's horns with a bellow! Nor yet George's still older brother, Jacob. — Now we are two! Let's get Jim Reed; he has been dreaming on the plow handles all spring, looking west-ward. Now we are three families with kids and teamsters. Let's go! We'll join up with other companies on the way.

Do the women sigh or perhaps cry a little when the men are not looking? The years have been so full and the days so long! The new homes, the strange country, the children coming and the endless chores. And just when everything was . . . No, there is no time for lament. There's a slew of things to be done.

To the accompaniment of well-wishing shouts of kin and neighbors the nucleus of the Donner-Reed party, later to grow to 80 wagons and nearly a hundred people, grinds slowly out of the mud-caked streets of Springfield. Did Honest Abe wave a lanky arm in fare-well? Good old foot-loose George! Abe had fought the Black Hawk War with him.

In Independence, Mo., wheel tracks from north, east and south gather like spokes in a hub. Here the party is joined by the Patric Breens from Keokuk, Iowa; the widow Murphy with daughters and sons-in-law from Tennessee, the McCutcheons, the Eddy family, Charles Stanton, Hardcoo, the Dutchman; Keseberg, Wolfinger and Spitzer with their families, all Germans. Not one should have gone; but the roster of death must be filled. There are more to

be added later: the Graves family eleven strong, Jay Fosdick and John Snyder, Lewis and Salvador, the Indians. Ninety-two in all. Ninety-two actors ready on the stage or in the wings for the Donner-Reed drama.

Roaring Independence, Mo.! The cataract where the rising stream of pioneers, trappers, fortune hunters, Indian fighters and explorers spills over the westernmost rim of civilization into the Great American Desert rolling uphill to break against the snow-capped Rocky Mountains, sluicing its human current into tortuous canyons and passes on their frenzied search for furs, gold, land and adventure. Independence, the rendezvous of the covered wagon trains. The "Last Chance" saloon, blacksmith shop, outfitters and trading posts. Through its alternately dusty and muddy main streets have passed the men who wrote the saga of the roaring forties: Kit Carson, Jim Bridger, John C. Fremont, John Sutter (on whose 76 square miles of land gold was discovered in 1848 precipitating the gold rush of '49, but himself dying a near-pauper), James Marshall, Francis Parkman, Wild Bill Hickok and all their company.

While last repairs are made and final preparations for the hazardous trip (how hazardous few bothered or dared to contemplate) are completed, various groups or wagon trains are made up. There is safety in numbers, especially through the stretches where savage Indian tribes lie in wait for the unwary or for the wary too, for that matter, whose number of camp fires are unimposing and whose cattle guard invite attack by its weakness. Around the camp fires in the evening the men discuss their plans. The question of leadership, the division of labor and responsibilities, the rules of the trail that will mold this motley crew into an efficient working and fighting unit are decided on. Every day brings new arrivals who must be examined and appraised. Throughout the day over the boiling kettles and the family wash the women strike up acquaintances among the wagons. There is no caste now; rich or poor is of little consequence; the fear of facing the wilderness without the understanding help of their own kind softens the voice and the look.

And so the day arrives when the wagon train moves out on the long, long trail as a unit; still somewhat loosely knit, but the hardships and the dangers and the sufferings will take care of that. As will the fiddles and the banjos, the songs, the jigs and the reels.

With the heavily laden wagons jolting and creaking the Donner party, now counting some fifty white-topped rigs, moves out on the rutted trail with the rising sun behind them. Well into Kansas they turn toward the Kansas river where the train will be ferried across: the final service accorded them by a waning civilization, here represented by a Frenchman and his Indian squaw; from now on they are on their own—survive or perish.

Those waiting their turn at the ferry may have watched another wagon train, manned by swarthy Mexicans and Pueblo Indians, pulling up alongside and veering toward the south-west: freighters on the old Santa Fe Trail. The erstwhile black-dirt farmers eye the easy, relaxed bearing of the dusky mule skinnners and riders speculatively and feel a stir of admiration and envy: those people BELONG in this wild country, they have nothing to worry about;—not Indians, at any rate!

Over the river the train moves on through the lush green of a Kansas spring, on to where the Big Blue empties into the Kansas. No ferry here and the stream is running wide and deep with spring rains. All your help now, George, is in your strong right arm! Days are spent felling the giant cotton-woods and somehow contriving the clumsy, unmanagable raft that must carry the heavy wagons across one by one. Then the panicky animals are driven into the stream and made to save their lives and the expedition by thrashing their way to the opposite bank of the muddy current. Only a few go down and are lost, and the men swear an oath of relief and reassurance. "Bring on your Platte and your Green and your Snake! We're river-crossing fools!"

Through days of sunshine and blue skies and nights of crashing thunderstorms that peel the canvas from the hoops and scatter the herds over trackless plains the party moves on to the Platte which will walk reassuringly beside them for a thousand miles and leave them only at Pacific Springs where the head waters of Green River flows toward the setting sun.

It's toil and sweat on the shifty sands along the Platte under a scorching summer sun; the nights sultry and breathless; but every day adds its quota of miles to the lengthening trail behind them.

Homestead or trail — life goes on. In Keseberg's wagon there is a new baby. In the Reed wagon Margaret closes the eyes of grandmother Keyes; there is another freshly dug grave on the trail. Life giveth; Life taketh away; without favor, without malice. That's the law. There are evenings of merriment under the stars. The red Irish blood sings in jolly Pat Breen's fiddle; a Southern banjo and a Yanke mouth-organ applaud.

"Now take that lady by the hair
And around that lady over there
Into the center with a Whoa Haw Gee
And round that gent from Tennessee."

The voice that blisters ox hides by day turns soft and laughing by night. Do the oxen watch dully and wonder?

And there are nights when the ghoulish whoops of the Pawnees shatter the stillness and turn the drowsy herds into a mass of flailing legs and horns as the stampede scatters horses, oxen and cattle to the plains' four winds, and days are lost in rounding up the animals; each time fewer than before.

Slowly, monotonously the wheels grind the alkali dust of the Western plains. Tediously the endless rows of days march by beside the creaking wagon trains. Dust burns the eyes and throats; tempers are raw, nerves frayed. Oxen topple over with heaving sides and die in the yoke. Here and there milk cows are yoked with the steers. Slowly the headlands of the mountains appear in the billowing sea of the plains. Giant isolated rocks that presage the nearness of the rocky shore line. They are still so few that the travelers name each one of them: Courthouse Rock, Chimney Rock, Independence Rock. Soon there will be only one name for all rocks—and it will be a blistering one!

Scott's Bluff and Fort Laramie. Circle the first mountain ridge on the north. The Indians are watching the passes! Ahead is South Pass and the Great Divide. A cheer goes up where the first little stream flows to the westward.

"Roll out! Roll out! It's down-hill all the way to Californy!"

A rider gallops in from the West with a letter from Lansford Hastings, explorer and pathfinder, taking a party through to the coast: a new and shorter trail has been found; instead of the round about Fort Hall trail to the north, cross the mountains south of Salt Lake and traverse the salt flats to the westward. Shorten the road by two hundred miles! The cautious warn against the unknown. The tired and the impulsive vote for the shorter route — and prevail. Secretly the fates give them a choice: death by heat and thirst on the salt desert or death by cold and starvation in the Sierras. But the Fates are mute. The train moves on to Fort Bridger. (To be concluded).

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For Meditation

HOWARD THURMAN.

He had buried 60 American sailors who had lost their lives in the fearful bombing his ship had been given in the early afternoon. As the Chaplain and his group of men started toward the landing crafts, one of the sailors said, "Sir, there is another body over there." The Chaplain looked, while saying with just a slight tone of irritation in his spirit, "What another one!" He was tired, nauseated and exhausted in mind and spirit. The men were all for throwing him in the bush as they had become accustomed to doing, it seemed. The Chaplain bent over to examine the body, to discover that he was the pilot whose ship had done much damage to their outfit. It was a moment of great searching of mind and heart. His mind was made up, he called his men together and addressed them as follows: "Men, we must find the right thing to do this afternoon, the right thing to do in the light of eternity. Of course, I know you say that he is a suicide because his orders were to dive his plane into our ship. But in a sense, I am the same kind of a suicide. I have a genuine admiration for this fellow. Too, he is a human being. I find no hatred in my heart for him and if you search your own hearts you may not find any hatred for him either. I ask you to help, not because of any future that you and I will have together, but I do want you to know in a God-forsaken island in the Pacific you and your Chaplain faced, with a naked challenge to the essential humaneness of mankind, sought a level of righteousness that transcends the vicissitudes both of fortune and circumstances. I shall not give him a Christian burial because that would profane his own religious faith that differs from my own. But this we shall do—let us all kneel and pray to our own God in the presence of this dead man as an act of reverence in our own heart. This act will unite us beyond all conflict and all madness. When this is done we shall bury him with a headstone that bears no name because we do not know his name, but with the simple inscription—Japanese Pilot and the date. Perhaps this act of reverence is an expression of the right thing in the eyes of Eternity." For a long time I sat in silence as the words, the terrible words would not be still—'The right thing, the right thing, do the right thing this day—the right thing in the eyes of Eternity.'