

WPA Alabama Writers Project
SAMPLE STORIES: General Informat
Information

Asheville Cotton Mill
Asheville, N. C.
August 22, 1938
I. L. M.

DESCRIPTION OF MILL VILLAGE

On the Asheville side of the French Broad River at the point where a bridge connects West Asheville with Asheville proper, a level strip of land runs southward for about two hundred yards to form a valley-floor which is bounded on one side by the river and on the other by a network of railroad tracks. Situated on part of this land is a big grey brick building which houses the Asheville Cotton Mill. Four hundred people work there and about half of them live on Factory Hill.

The approach to Factory Hill from the West Asheville road is over a brick-paved street on whose sides are dingy, smoke-blackened houses. Factory Hill itself is broken into three sections by intervening houses not belonging to the mill company. There is no distinct beginning or ending to any of the sections and it is only by inquiry that one is able in some instances to determine which are mill houses.

A steep flight of steps leads from the brick-paved street to a rough road on whose edges four houses are located. This is the beginning of the first section of Factory Hill. On up the hill twenty houses squat crookedly against the earth and find their connection one with another by uneven pathways upon which cinders have been dumped in a fight against mud. Four or five inhabitants in this part of Factory Hill have planted

a little shrubbery on the narrow soil-patches around their doors.

The road leading into the second section of mill houses which is Factory Hill proper, is nothing more than a crooked slit of earth on which the company did not build houses. Cars climb over its ravined surface with a tortoise-like effort and chug their way into the street below. Now and then some young boy ventures forth with a four-wheeled contraption on which he bumps his way from one gully's edge to another.

The houses were not built to follow the course of the road. Some of them border on it but more diverge from it and stand crookedly on little spots of barren ground. They range in size from rooms of diminutive proportions to six and eight rooms which serve as two and three family homes. Their painted surface is so blackened by accumulated train smoke that it is necessary to look twice to see which were originally yellow and which were grey. No house has a yard but there on the lower end of the Hill one brave man has dug a flower bed on his few feet of earth in which a bunch of phlox and three marigolds are growing. Others have planted scattered hills of sunflowers. Old buckets and tin cans containing pot flowers line the doorsteps of a number of houses. One looks in vain for even a tiny tree.

Here and there alongside a dingy house an old automobile, braced by a rock, is parked. Not long ago one inhabitant made plans with his neighbors by which

they were to pool their limited space and grade it down so that they might build a partitioned shed in which to keep their cars and protect them partially from the weather. The superintendent would not give his permission, however, because he thought such a building might ruin the appearance of the village.

Big black cans in which dye was shipped to the mill, now used as garbage cans, without covers, are scattered on level spots and form a part of the landscape seen from most of the front porches. The garbage is removed by the company at uncertain intervals.

The road which leads into the village crawls on up the hillside and stops abruptly in front of a one-time dwelling which is now used as a club house. The first floor of the building has been converted into a meeting place for the Girls Club. The Girls Club was organized by the Buncombe County Community Schools and is now directed by a WPA teacher. Meetings are held weekly during the school months of the year. About forty girls between the ages of sixteen and twenty meet for games, instruction and refreshments. Instruction consists chiefly of lessons in table manners and table arrangements. Through the efforts of a former leader the club has been equipped with dishes, a stove, piano, tables, chairs, cooking stove and radio. Holiday parties are given on occasion and each girl may invite her boy friend. Games are played and refreshments, donated by some interested person, are served. The Club serves as the only form of recreation for the

majority of its members.

Upstairs in the same building the company has installed a bathtub and a shower. Every person in the mill village has the privilege of keeping clean by bathing once a week in this bathroom. Little girls may have their baths on Friday afternoon from one o'clock to four. On Friday evening from seven to nine the men may bathe. The hours between one-thirty and four on Saturdays are allotted to the small boys and the hours from four-thirty to seven to the women. The company pays a man six dollars a month to keep the building and build the fires to heat the water for bathing. Several persons who once enjoyed the privilege of a bath in a bathtub have quit because they contracted athlete's foot and they're now afraid of contracting other diseases if they continue to share an ill-kept bathroom with numbers of other people.

The weekly bath is the one outside activity provided for by the mill. It is up to each person to create his own recreational devices in a village where there are no space and no facilities. Young boys, not yet eighteen, with no money, no job, and no particular interest in anything wander aimlessly from neighbor's house to Neighbor's house to talk with boys whose opportunities for recreation are no better than their own. Sometimes they join older boys in drinking sprees which occasionally end in fights and bandaged heads. Infrequently they go on fishing trips to Sandy Bottoms, each taking an old quilt or blanket on which to sleep. Sometimes they loaf at the cafe or one of the filling stations located on the street

below.

On the west side of the paved street below Factory Hill proper is located a string of ten or eleven houses which make the third section of the mill village. In the musty, three-walled basement of one of these houses a recreational feature for children is conducted by Dick Jones. Dick, the ten year old boy who lives with his family in the dingy upstairs, has hung curtains made of old sacks and torn sheets across the street side of the basement, and there he sometimes gives shows when his father's old truck is not parked inside. From behind the flapping edges of the make-shift curtain he peers at passers-by and extends an invitation to any grown-up who greets him with a smile. Already he will have gathered fifteen or twenty of the neighborhood children and have them seated on old tin buckets, small tubs, and stone blocks. The row of seats in front has been sold out for four matches per seat. The unreserved ones behind bring only two matches.

Dick's current number is a two-man performance of Snow White. Dick has never seen the picture but he keeps up with the story in the funny paper, and he saw the play given at school the past year. Only one child out of his regular audience saw the picture while it was showing in Asheville and she would never think of correcting Dick if he fails to keep strictly to the story. With one assistant and limited equipment Dick cannot be exactly accurate and she knows it.

Dick's show is staged after this fashion: A little old wagon is drawn up front and placed at some distance from the eager audience. Dick and his assistant run outside. In a minute Dick reenters, wearing over his devilish little face a Snow White mask. With a mincing step he walks to the wagon, stretches himself and says in a highly pitched voice. "Oh, I feel very lonely. I wish someone would come." And in walks the eleven year old patsy-faced assistant carrying in his hand three tiny green apples plucked from a tree up the street.

"Won't you have a apple?" he says to Snow White in a crackly, witch's voice.

Snow White bites into the proffered apple and says that it's good. The witch hands her another. When she puts her lips to the second one she falls over into a deep sleep. In great glee the witch says "I reckon that fixes you," and departs. Little Snow White, tired of waiting for the next episode, grunts once and the audience yells "Keep still, you're dead."

Presently the assistant transformed now into Prince Charming by the addition of a pepper weed "plume" to his old felt hat walks briskly in, embraces Snow White and exclaims "At last I've found you." And in this manner Dick's version of Snow White ends.

Dick has in his cast two girls who tap dance but sometimes when visitors are present they suffer from stage fright and refuse to perform until properly reprimanded.

Dick's method of reasoning with them is something like this: "Suppose folks in real shows done like that, what do you reckon would happen?" After that the tapping beings.

The last number on Dick's program is the presentation of a smoking dummy. He has acquired from a drugstore a pasteboard Phillip Morris and he has punched a hole in Phillip's mouth. In this opening Dick places a cigarette and while his assistant holds the match Dick puffs at the cigarette until it's lighted. The children laugh in glee as the dummy continues to smoke, unaided.

After the show is over the children talk a little among themselves, play around in the dirty basement, and then go up the hill to their dingy homes.

L.H.

9/20/38

945 Case Street,
West Durham, N. C.
July 7, 1938.
I. L. M.

THE HAITHCOCKS

Down in Monkey Bottoms in a small four-room house there lives a family of four women, two men, and four children. The house in which they live is typical of the houses in that section of the mill village. Monkey Bottoms begins with a washed-out, hilly road, flanked on one side by closely-placed and disorderly-looking houses and on the other by a jumbled growth of hedge, scrubby trees and briars. The road leads down into a bottom and meets at right angles another road of like kind. The houses, of the second road, all located on its right side, maintain the same unlikely appearance. These two roads with their houses comprise Monkey Bottoms.

In the particular house already mentioned Haithcocks, Ways, Fosters, and Piners live in dreary confusion. One small room into which two beds are crowded serves in the daytime as a place for tagging tobacco sacks. The little available floor place is littered with strings and tags. Freida Haithcock and Hulda Foster sit in this room hours at a time, both fortified by a generous quantity of snuff, tagging the tiny sacks and dreaming of the day when they will again have a job in the mill. Together they share a tin can spittoon which is obligingly shifted from one to the other as the need arises. Flies swarm thickly about the poorly screened house and hunt out the breadcrumbs scattered by the three oldest children.

The walls give one the impression that some member of the mixed family has made calendar collecting a pastime. Over the mantelpiece enlarged pictures of departed relatives hang crookedly against the

wall. On the mantelpiece, the central figure is a large picture entitled "Christ in Gethsemane Praying." On one side of the picture stands a blue and silver tinselled combination with the words, "Book of Life; Is My Name Written There," and on the other, a simply framed assurance, "Jesus Never Fails."

This household grew around four of Perry Haithcocks' daughters, three of whom are now living. Perry, a tenant farmer, was the father of ten children. Their life on the farm was dull and hard and empty of promise. Perry felt that the cotton mill offered his family a slightly better chance than the farm had ever given. He took his ten children to the mill, and as soon as it would have them he put them to work. Of this crowd none went further than the third grade in school.

The youngest of the Haithcocks, Clara, is now twenty-five. It fell to her lot after her mother's death to stay at home and keep house. When the time arrived for her to go to work there was no job for her. Now a slovenly and disgruntled person, she stays on with the three of her sisters whom circumstances have kept together.

The daughter second to the youngest married Evert Piner and they began housekeeping in Monkey Bottoms. She died at the birth of her first baby, and soon after her death, not quite a year ago, her sister, Effie May, with her husband and three children came to Evert Piner's house to live. The mill at which they worked had closed with no prospects of reopening in the near future and they hoped to secure work in Durham.

After weeks of waiting Effie was given a job and she now makes \$16 a week. Her husband Tom, has not found work yet and his health is such that it is problematical whether he will ever hold a job again. Kidney trouble, high blood pressure, and asthma, made it

necessary for him to go to the doctor two or three times monthly. Effie comes home from the mill tired and irritable and she quarrels with her children so much that they have learned to treat with contempt the threats she makes against them.

The fourth sister, Freida, had been living with the Piners before the Ways moved in. Freida had had pneumonia three times and typhoid fever twice. At thirty-six she sits like an old woman, stooped and sallow and wrinkled, as she tags the sacks for which she receives weekly a dollar and a half. Up until a year ago she was a spinner in the mill and drew \$15.98 a week. Her health became so bad that she was forced to give up her job. Each time when she goes back now to ask the superintendent to reinstate her he tells her that he is unable to make a place for her. Should he give her work it is doubtful that she could keep it, for she still goes twice a week to Watts Hospital to receive treatment.

Evert Piner, the only member of the household except Effie May who is working, makes fourteen dollars a week. Out of that he pays board to his sisters-in-law for himself and young baby.

Besides the three sisters Effie May, Clara and Freida Haithcock, the two brothers-in-law, Clarence Way and Evert Piner, the three Way children and the Piner baby, there is in the same house Hulda Foster.

Hulda was left an orphan at fifteen and she came to live with her neighbors, the Haithcocks. One senses in a little while that to Hulda the household owes whatever semblance of order there may be. At ten she went to work in the Belmont mills and there the rest of her childhood was spent. She tells you how glad she was as a little girl to hear the six o'clock mill whistle in the afternoons because it meant that as soon as she had eaten supper her playtime would begin.

The hours from six-thirty until eight-thirty were her own. Tired as she might be from her ten hours of work she was not too tired to join the other children of the neighborhood in their games. As she grew out of childhood there was no form of recreation to take the place of those play hours. The sound of the mill became the one rhythm to which her life was attuned. She says that ever since she has been without a job she has missed the hum of machinery almost as much as she has missed the money with which to buy her food.

Hulda lost her job when the Haw River mill closed. She was then living with the Ways and she moved with them to Durham. A good sinner and a hard worker, she had high hopes of securing a job. A year of unemployment has dimmed her hopes somewhat, but hardship has not yet made her bitter. She sits there, unlettered but not unintelligent, tagging tobacco sacks, while with a quiet concentration she prays for the one thing life has yet given her -- work.

Even though Hulda is unable to contribute financially to this confused family, one feels that she gives to it something which keeps it from sinking lower than its present depth. There is quiet humor in her eyes as she says "Yes, we eat beans and potatoes and hardboiled cabbage mostly. Most cotton mill folks is a fool about beans but here in this family they ain't one of us that cabbage agrees with." She talks on in an effort to keep you from noticing too much the loud, coarse voice of Effie May who, in the adjoining room, is quarreling with her children. Effie's wrangling makes the house seem dirtier and more confused than before. Hulda and Frieda both look at the tin can spittoon and Hulda obligingly passes it to Frieda. After a while Frieda speaks in a sickly, whining voice. "Time was when the mill was always needin' hands and a job was no trouble at all to git." Awed a little by the sound of her own voice she looks at Hulda who nods her

head in support. In a manner more decisive than Freida's Hulda reaches her hand for another sack.

11/17/38

S.J.

Asheville Cotton Mill
Asheville, N. C.
August 10, 1938
I. L. M.

71.5 -

A DAY ON FACTORY HILL

"You'd like to know what a day in my life is like? Well, taint no trouble at all fer me to tell you because every one is so much like the other I've learned the pattern by heart long ago.

"Pink goes to work at seven. I get up at half past five to get his breakfast so's not to be rushed and so's we can have a few minutes for talkin' before he leaves.

"Every mornin' I cook eats for the younguns. They like it and hit's cheap. Me and him eats it too, but now and agin we get a little bacon meat. A body just seems to want a little bacon meat once or twice a week. The children ain't learned to crave it yit. They get up when they hear the dishes rattlin', and we're done with breakfast a little after six. Sometimes they ain't much to talk about and we jest set.

"After he's gone I help the younguns dress and then start cleanin'. 'Sin I git the dishes done, the beds made, and the floors swept, its nine o'clock and almost time to start cleanin' agin. You see, them all bein' girls except the baby, I have to keep 'em in the house most of the time because the boys around here play so rough I'm afraid my girls'll git hurt if they play with them. Then, too, they's no place for children to play but

the road out there and hit's full of black cinders put there to keep the road from washin' worse than it is.

"Most days around half past nine I start fixin' Pink's dinner. I leave here at half past eleven to take it to him. He works in the dye room and the kittles has to be kept boilin' all the time. He caint take no time off, and he eats scatterin'-like when they's a slack in his work.

"When I git back from the mill me and the younguns eat. Most days it's biscuit-bread, potatoes, and beans of one kind or another. After I'm done with the dishes, I wash or iron -- or maybe sew when they's anything to sew on. The other day I bought a quarter's worth of cloth and I've just finished makin' a dress apiece out of it for them two least ones. I usually look at a picture in a catalogue and cut me a paper pattern from it. Most times they fit right well.

"Two evenings a week I wash, and even then I ain't able to keep my children noways like clean. I don't reckon they's a dirtier place in the world to live than here. It takes two evenings, too, for ironin'.

"At four o'clock Pink comes home from the mill. In a little while I start gettin' supper. We gen'ly eat before half past five. When I'm done with the dishes me and him sets in the swing and watches the younguns play. A body don't even visit their neighbors because they'd feel foolish doin' it. We are that jammed up together. We see one another too much anyway. Hardly a day passes

that every one of us don't see the other run out and grab her younguns out of a fight. Like as not we'll meet one another emptying trash in them big garbage cans put out there by the mill. No they's no reason much for visitin' in the evenin'."

"Around half past seven or eight I put the children to bed and me and him sets on till about half past eight or nine.

"He's sleepin' this summer on the single bed in the front room. Usually he sleeps with them two biggest ones and I sleep with the two least ones, but they're so frenzy-like durin' hot weather, hit keeps him from sleepin' as much as he oughter and him workin'."

"Next day starts like the one before and ends about the same. Of course, on Fridays and Saturdays hits a little different. Both of us enjoys Westerns and we gen'ly go once a week to the picture show. I go on Friday night while he stays with the children and then he goes on Saturday. They's always a bunch of women goin' on Friday and I go along with them. Hit'd be nice if me and him could go together sometimes but they's nobody to leave the children with. If it wasn't for that movie I don't know what I'd do. Course, we ain't really able to spend the 15¢ apiece for foolishness when he's just makin' nine dollars and sixty cent a week, but a body caint stand it if he don't have a little pleasure sometimes.

"Pink just gets three days a week in the mill now, but we get up at the same time on the days he don't work. He's so tired

since they put on the stretch-out that he lays around the house and rests a good bit when he's off. Sometimes he goes down to the store and sets and talks with other men from the Hill. The past spring he made them two swinging boxes out of old car tanks and got him some red paint from the ten-cent store to paint 'em with. They make good boxes for petunias. He hauled me dirt from West Asheville to make them two flower beds by the doorsteps. That's his truck settin' out there but we don't use it much since they's no money for gas. Hit used to be a car but he fixed a body on to it. I put out a sight of digging makin' beds for them petunias and phlox but no place seems like home without a few flowers.

"The year goes round briagin' very little change but the weather. Poor folks don't have no vacation, you know, when they's time off from cooking, and washing, and worrying about the grocery bill. The only money I've spent for pleasure this year went for the picture show and for them flowers. I'm glad my flowers done so well. Hit's nicer settin' on the porch when they's somethin' to look at besides a red, ugly hill."

1001 Broad St.
West Durham, N. C.
July 12, 1938
I. L. M.

THE DUNNES

Sally Dunne is the mother of thirteen children, three of whom are dead and three married. Seven of the children ranging from two and a half to eighteen live with their mother and father in an old, four-room, loosely-built house located a short distance from the houses belonging to the company which owns the mill where John Dunne works. Some of the people in the mill village will tell you that the Dunnes were asked to move off the hill because the near-by neighbors discovered that their coal was disappearing at night; others will tell you that they did not take proper care of the company's house. At any rate the Dunnes cannot rent a company house and they pay \$13 a month for the dilapidated one in which they live. It is becoming increasingly difficult for them to find a house of any kind because there have been months when the rent was not paid. John Dunne makes fourteen dollars a week and on that the family of nine must live.

As you come to the intersection of Broad and C Sts. you will more than likely see Sally's smaller children playing in the little patch of front yard and when you ask them where she is they will answer readily, "Mama, is settin' out on the back porch." One of them runs ahead of you into the house and you walk uneasily through the confusion which is their home. The first two rooms are crowded with dirty beds and a few shabby chairs. The bedroom on the right

contains a dusty table and a dustier radio. You look at the dirty floor and your mind is brought back to the fact that the woman who keeps this house is "settin' out on the back porch."

You find Sally out there on the small porch surrounded by three of her children who are helping her tag tobacco sacks. Her unwieldy body bulges over the sides of her chair and an enormous tumor gives her the appearance of permanent pregnancy. She tells one of the children to get up and give you his chair. She waits for you to speak and when you have made some introductory remark she says "I keep alookin' toward you but I can't hardly see you. They ain't no sight atall in one eye and the sight in the other is gettin' dimmer fast."

She speaks of her blindness in a tone of such complete acceptance that you do not know what to say. You look into the dining room at the crude, home-made table with its ugly oilcloth and then at the icebox which is the other piece of furniture in the room. You decide to ask Sally about her work and soon she is telling you that she and the children tag 20,000 of the sacks a week and for it they receive \$1.53. "It seems like that money goes further than John's wages," she continues. Sometimes we use it for clothes and now and again we buy somethin' foolish which I reckon we ought to get along without. I buy the "Durham Sun" for the children and it costs 15¢ a week, but they do love to read the funnies."

As Sally goes on to tell you of her early life you decide that even if her eyes were strong the paper she takes for the

children would interest her very little as reading matter. She had time to go no further than the third grade, for her public work-life started at ten.

Sally was born in Arkansas on a 160 acre farm belonging to her grandfather, Josiah White. As a young man Josiah was a tenant farmer in Durham County and after he was married he moved to Mississippi, hoping to find there such conditions as would give him a chance to become in time a land-owner. Believing, after two years of hard labor, that possibilities of his becoming a land-owner in that State were remote he moved with his wife and one child into Arkansas. No other children were born to him and by the time his daughter, Molly, mother of Sally, was eighteen he had paid for his 160 acre farm and furnished it with live stock. Molly married a neighboring tenant who then came to live with her on her father's place. When he died eight years later he left Molly with Sally and three younger children. It was not long until Josiah died and his widow, after selling the farm and stock for \$1,300, returned to North Carolina.

Near a bad factory in East Durham Molly's mother bought a four-room house for herself and Molly's family. While the grandmother looked after the three smaller children Molly went into the mill. She took Sally, then an energetic child of ten, along and found work for her at twenty-five cents a day. Molly made around fifty cents daily and on the combined wages of mother and child the family subsisted.

Sally had worked a long time before she was sixteen. When she reached that age she felt that life must indeed be half over. Work without any sort of recreation always had been her lot and marriage appeared to offer at least one advantage -- change. Child bearing began immediately and with it even more responsibility and less time for thoughts of recreation. It seems foolish to her today that grown people should want to go to ball games and picture shows. Her dislike of billiard parlors is pronounced but not nearly so much as her fear of liquor stores.

Before she has finished with her remarks about liquor stores it is obvious that John goes to the one just down the street a little too often. "If John was to get drunk and get hisself arrested the company would fire him," Sally tells you in affirmation of what you are already thinking. She says that she has not forgotten the two months not more than six years ago when John was out of work and there was not so much as a dollar to buy the children food.

The mill at which John Dunne then worked was closed suddenly but it took the workmen some time to realize that the shut-down could be permanent. After two weeks John started on a trek through North and South Carolina to look for a job. Sally had gotten up early and made bread from the last dust of flour, and fried the last egg. John looked at the table and turned away. "I ain't hungry" he said. "I'll leave what's there for the younguns." Sally sat there alone in the kitchen long after he had gone. She knew John was hungry. She knew, too, that his mind was miserable

with doubt. He didn't know whether there was any job ahead of him and he didn't know how his family would get food.

Suddenly Sally stops speaking and a smile lights up her ugly face. With an abrupt gesture of her right hand she pushes her hair further up under the bonnet-like cap shading her eyes. Then she says, "We had neighbors close by who was workin' at another mill but my mind wasn't on neighbors that morning John left. I just kept settin' there while the little bit of breakfast got colder and colder. Then all of a sudden I heard a knockin' on the kitchen door. When I opened the door and seen about a dozen folks standin' there with their arms full of groceries I couldn't help but cry. Well, John stayed gone a month and they wasn't a day we didn't have at least one meal. He come back without a job and it was a good month before he got one at another mill in Durham. Them was hard, hard times. I was needin' cover that winter but they wasn't a chance to save ahead for it."

You know that any comment you might make would sound trivial. The silence gets deep and is broken only when a young woman you did not know lived here comes out of the house leading her two-year old baby. The child, dressed in a sunsuit, laughs gleefully as her mother puts him out in the yard to play. The woman sits down on a box in the corner of the porch and begins to smoke a cigarette. "That's my daughter Stella," Sally tells you and then adds "Her and her man both is out of work and they're stayin' with us a while."

Stella is drawn into the conversation and it is not long before

she has told you of the furniture she tried to buy. When she and Bill were first married they selected a bedroom suite, a cedar chest, an upholstered chair, two linoleums, and a big fine oil stove. When she first saw the bedroom suite marked at \$39.50, she thought it must really be the greatest bargain in town. When, after the sale was made, the proprietor began adding carrying charges which brought the price up to \$61 she was a little baffled, but he explained to her just how easy the payments could be made. The bill for the furniture came to \$200 and she and Bill had paid all of it but \$80 at the time they lost their jobs. She doesn't see yet why they couldn't let her keep at least the bedroom suite. The subject of furniture is soon passed over and Stella tells you why she lost her job.

Stella lost her job when new spinning machinery was installed. The spinners retained were given eight sides instead of seven with a pay increase of two dollars a week. That sum was the regular wage paid heretofore for the operation of one of the old frames. The new Long Draft Machinery has around two hundred spindles and the old spinning frame contained 112 spindles. Stella has a friend still working who says she had never dreamed that eight hours of work could be so hard. Once she was able to catch up with her work and enjoy ten or fifteen-minute rest periods throughout the day, but since the installation of the Long Draft Machinery she stays continuously behind as much as fifteen or twenty minutes.

Stella's husband lost out when the doffers were asked to sign a paper stating that they were willing to do more work.

Out of the sixteen then employed eight signed and they immediately began doing the work of all.

Stella and her husband have been living for the past six weeks on the unemployment insurance which they draw and will continue to draw for ten more weeks if their unemployment continues. They have spent a considerable part of it travelling from mill to mill in hope of finding a job.

Stella looks out into the yard where her baby is playing with her young sisters and brothers. "I hope I don't never have another one," she says. "I had a miscarriage from lifting a heavy tub of water when he wasn't more than a year old. I went to the doctor and asked him what a woman could do to keep from havin' babies. I'm tryin' to do what he told me."

A child runs through the house and says that he sees his sister, Sue, coming down the street. He leaves the screen door ajar and Stella reprimands him for it though there are plenty of holes through which any fly might find his way inside.

Sue with her two children arrive and you are told that she is another of Sally's married daughters. She lives with her husband in the near-by mill village. Her hair-style, voice, and mannerisms show a marked resemblance to Betty Boop. You begin to feel that Sally's prejudice against movies is not shared by her children.

Sue's two children, dressed in sunsuits, go out into the yard to play with Stella's baby. The two sisters discuss the

amount of milk the doctor has prescribed for their children and indicate by their conversation that they try to meet the requirements. In the meantime you knock at flies. "I declare, I bathe that youngun every night before I put him to bed," Stella is saying "but he does get awful dirty." Sally joins in to say that she dreads Wednesday and Saturday nights because on those two nights all of the smaller children take their baths and they make a great commotion dragging the tin tub back and forth from the porch to the kitchen where the bathing is done. You look out into the yard at Sally's children and decide that they do appear cleaner than the house to which they belong.

Sue mentions her grandmother, Molly, and when you manifest an interest in her Sally tells you that Molly still lives in the small house which she inherited when her mother died. With her are her unmarried son and her divorced daughter, who is the mother of two children. The son is a loom fixer with a weekly wage of \$22.00. He not only supports his mother but also contributes toward the support of his youngest sister's family when her wage as part-time worker in a silk mill cannot meet their needs. Molly's fourth child married a tenant farmer and they have no children.

After a while you leave the over-crowded house of the Dunnes and as you go along you recall other things that Sally has told you. Into your mind there come certain conclusions as to how she feels toward her own problems.

With full awareness that her husband's wage can never cover the needs and can hardly touch the wants of her family, she is on the alert for any donations from the outside. She'd like for some of the older children at home to start working in the mill but since the mill cannot use them and the outside world does not need them she has been brought to the attitude that various organizations will have to help her with her problems. Her children had been attending the Methodist Church for a number of years but the kindness of the Baptist preacher at Christmas time last year converted them to the Baptist way of thinking. Sally says "There wouldner been any Christmas at this house if that man hadn't took a interest in providin' for my younguns. He brought a big goods box of things to us and I ain't never been much happier than when I was unpacking it. They was apples, oranges, candy, nuts, tops, dolls, trains, and little wagons -- plenty to divide amongst them still believing in Santa Claus."

The teacher which she likes best is the one who last winter bought her twelve-year old son a pair of shoes after he had been absent from school for three weeks on account of the cold weather. She hopes that by next year the school will furnish free lunches for the children and eliminate her problem of providing three meals a day. If you should manifest any interest in how she manages to provide food for her crowd, her characteristic answer is, "Every head I've got would go hungry if I didn't keep peas aboillin' 'n the pot all the time."

With continual acceptance of unsolved problems Sally has reached a state of lethargy which she does not or cannot disturb. There seems to be no appreciable effort to train her children in the tasks about the house. After the Dunnes have eaten, some of the children will wash the dishes in a hasty and slipshod manner and then join the rest of the family in one of the two dirty bedrooms where the \$12 radio is turned on at full-blast. Some of the children are good looking and as a group appear of average intelligence. With no direction of their energies they play a little, scrap a little, and live from meal to meal while Sally sits among them, usually holding a tobacco sack which she is tagging without being able to see it very well.

Cabarrus Mill
Concord, N. C.
September 26, 1938
M. L. W.

JONES I. FREEZE

In 1886 Concord was a village with a red mud main street, a few stores clustered about a square, and one cotton mill, the McDonald. However, at that time young J. W. Cannon, a partner in Cannon-Fetzer Dry Goods Store, was building another cotton mill. Among the workmen on this job, as bricklayer and carpenter, was a stolid "Dutch" farmer from the Gold Hill section of Cabarrus County. His name was Freeze.

Today two of this man's sons have been with Cannon Mills longer than any other employees. I talked with Jonie, the younger son, who has worked in the mill for forty-nine years. At fifty-nine he is wiry, healthy, young looking. He owns his own home, a comfortable two-story bungalow on Corbin Street. The house is spacious and furnished in better taste than many so-called middle class houses in town.

"I don't know what good hit'll do you to talk to me," Jonie said modestly, "for I ain't done nothing much." But he was really please that he had been sought out and once he started talking he forgot his shyness.

"When Mr. J. W. got ready to open up his mill back in '86, he didn't have but thirteen houses for his hands. That don't sound like many nowadays when many a house jest has one hand in it, but Mr. J. W. figured if he hired big families, he could get enough hands in them thirteen houses to work his mill.

"I reckon that's howcome he wanted us. Anyway he wrote my father a letter asking him to move his force to the mill -- hit

was ready to start work. My sister had that letter, but when she was a-cleaning up sometime back, she burnt it up. I sure hated that; I'd a-give most anything for that letter.

"I won't never forgit that day in the fall of '86 when we moved in to Concord. We started out before daylight and hit was way after dark when we got here. Hit don't look like it could take that long to come sixteen miles, but back then there jest wasn't anything you'd call a road; why two teams always went together so if one got stuck the other could pull it out. I was six years old whenever we moved and what I mainly remember about that trip is hanging my head over the side of the wagon so that I got my chin bumped underneath when we hit the pine log road.

"Soon as the mill opened my father and all the younguns that was old enough commenced to work. There was nine of us younguns, five girls and four boys and everyone of us 'ceptin' one got their start in that same mill-- hit's the one they call plant number one now. I was too little to go to work right away, but whenever I was nine or ten I began. It first I doffed. I got ten cents a day for working from six o'clock in the morning to five minutes until seven o'clock in the evening. 'Course you keep a-goin' up, so I went to the spinning room and on to the weaving room. Then they put me to fixing looms. I've always been a good hand to fix any kind of machinery and after while they made me the overseer of the shop. Well, I stayed at that till fifteen year ago when they give me the job I've got now -- the overseer of the yard. And believe me hit is a job too! I have to weigh ever bit of cotton goin' in and out and see to the loadin' and unloadin' of it. Why jest today we handled close to 500 bales -- that's somethin', let me tell you, and the worst part of it is bossing the niggers that handle it. You have to talk to 'em like you're

a-goin' to kill 'em or they'll lay down on you and not do a lick of work. I've got so I can talk jest as mean and hateful as anything -- oh I don't mean it, but I have to git the work out of 'em.

"Since the cut I'm not a-makin' but 56¢ a hour. That sounds like a lot more than what I started out at, but money don't go nowheres anymore. Back when I was a-gettin' ten and twenty-five cent a day you could take your money to the store and have something to show fer it. Why my father, before he died, had a pile of gold pieces he had saved from way back yonder when we used to git paid off in gold money. A body could save then, but it takes everything you make now to live.

"Education? Don't ask me about that 'cause I never did have none to amount to anything. They didn't have no city schools then like they has now. Mr. J. W. had a school that run in the daytime for the young'uns too little to go to the mill and at night for them that worked. Well I went to his school some before I commenced to work and at night for a while too, but it didn't amount to so much.

"My wife, she come from Harrisburg. You know'd old J. D. Harris who used to be sheriff, didn't you? Well, he was her father. She looks stout enough to pull a freight car, but she ain't been so well here lately. My youngest girl, Katie, just finished high school last year so I'm having her to stay here at home and help with the work. No sir, I don't want no nigger girl around the house. I can't stand to have 'em about. There never was but one nigger whose cooking I could eat, and she's dead now. She was all right. When she fixed something, all you had to do was set right down and eat it.

"We've got four children in all, two of 'em is boys and two is girls. My boy that's married and lives down near St. Stephens with his wife's folks, he works in the hosiery mill. My other boy works down here at the State Theatre. Christine, that's my oldest

girl, is a cashier at McLellan's Store, but she's anxious to go to work in the mill. Well, you know, there's lots of 'em in stores now that feels that-a-way about it because they can git better pay in the mill and don't have to work sech long hours. If you was to ask me, I'd take the mill any time, and if my children wants to go into the mill, I'm glad fer 'em to. Hit's jest as good work as anything they can get to do and won't hurt their good name none. Course mill people are jest like anybody else, there's some that's no'count and shiftless and it's no wonder they're looked down on."

"I'll tell you hit's a pleasure to work for a company that treats you like the Cannons does. I've knowed all of 'em well. Many's the time back yonder that I hitched up Mr. J. W. 's buggy for him, drove him up town or down to the mill, and went to the postoffice to get his mail. Charlie and Martin is the boys I know the best and they've turned out the best. Why I consider Martin Cannon jest as good a friend as I've got in this world.

"I've got a picture of Mr. J. W. in with my insurance policy -- I'll show it to you if you'd like to see it. Yessir, he was a fine looking man and a good man too. See this insurance policy? He give every hand down at Cabarrus then one of these, and if I was to die tomorrow, my wife would git \$500. There ain't but four of five of us has these any more because they took the policies away from all the hands that walked out during that big strike some years back.

"Yes, me and a few others kept right on going to the mill all the time they was having the strike. It took nerve too to walk in that gate with all the crowd standin' there hollerin' at you. They'd call us all kinds of names, but I didn't say a word back to 'em -- that was the best way to do. The mill wasn't running, but we got our pay fer going there.

"Plenty of 'em that walked out was sorry they had, some of 'em

didn't want to go out in the first place but they was threatened. You couldn't begin to git me to join one of them unions. All they want is the dues they can git from you, and you don't never know what they do with the money because they won't give a report on it. I read in the paper not long ago where they wanted some union to show its books and it wouldn't do it.

"In this last strike every mill here and up at Kannapolis kept a-running all the time and no hands quit. I jest wisht you could've seen Kannapolis. Law it looked like a war, guns and soldiers all about. The mill had a airplane flying around to watch all the main highways and when it seen a band of cars (flying squadron) starting out from some town, it would fly right low and drop a note down to let us know what was coming. At our mill we never was bothered by anybody. The funniest thing happened up at Kannapolis when one of them squadrons went there. You know the mill owns the whole town. Well, the sheriff was on the lookout for these folks from out of town and every time they started off the main street -- hit's a State highway -- the sheriff would say 'this is private property, you can't come on it.' So that squadron couldn't do a thing but go up and down main street till they got so wore out they jest give up and went back home."

"What party do I belong to? Well I served two terms on the City Board of Aldermen so you know I'm not no Republican. I think what the government's been a-doing is all right. I tell you what's a fact, I believe we'd a had a Rebellion back when Roosevelt come in if the government hadn't done like it did. A man just couldn't hardly keep going when Hoover was in; you can't live on no dollar a day like he said to do. You know, there's a sight of folks down at the mill has changed over to being Democrats in the last couple years.

"You take when they had that NRA, Mr. Cannon made us keep all the rules to the letter. If a man worked overtime one day, I had to

allow him that much time off the next. Mr. Cannon is mighty particular about all sich rules."

"I like to read the paper and listen to the radio right well, but I don't care a thing about the moving picture show. Why I reckon I ain't been to see one -- let's see, hit's been five year or more now. The State Theatre give me three annual passes for fixing some machines for them and I could a'gone to the show, without paying a cent, any time I took a notion to for three years, but I never did use them passes a single time; I wore 'em out jist carrying 'em around in my pocket. Nobody else couldn't use them, because they had my hame written across the front.

"When I git off from work I like to piddle around the house. There's most always something or other to be fixed or some kind of work to do about the yard. I wisht it was light now so you could see my back yard for hit's a lot bigger and prettier than the front. This summer I run lights out there, fixed a pulpit and benches that I keep down under the back part of my house, and every Sunday evening hit was pretty we had preaching down in my backyard. It's mighty nice.

"I'm the sexton up at the church (St. Andrews Lutheran, in mill section). I git \$10 a month for cleaning up, running the furnace, fixing the organ if it gits out of order, opening the church and ringing the bell whenever they're a-going to have a meeting, but I declare hit's more trouble to me than when I git out of it. If they could git anybody else whô could run the furnace right, I don't reckon I'd keep the job, but them young boys they had been getting to fire it just nearly 'bout ruint it.

"Yes, ma'am, this here house is mine; I saved up to build it and I planned it myself. Well now, I like these big rooms too -- I was determined that when I built me a house I was going to have plenty of space about me, so when I planned this one, I made it like I wanted hit

to be. If there's anything I despise it's to be scrouged into little bitty rooms. My wife and the girls see to keeping the rooms fixed up this a-way -- that there music box (piano) is a real old timey one mys sister bought somewhere.

"I've got an electric refrigerator that cost me \$200 -- that's a lot of money and I hated to put it out at that time, but law, now I wouldn't begin to take what I paid fer it. I jest wouldn't be without it since I've got used to it. Something else I like mighty well is my automatic hot water heater. Hit keeps the wæ er hot all the time, all you have to do is jest open any tap and you've got hot water right now, day or night.

"I would sure hate to go back to living like folks used to. Didn't nobody have things then the way we do now, living wasn't as good. There's a lot of people feel they can't git along without a automobile and some of 'em can't so well. I don't have one fer I ain't got no use fer it; I walk down to the mill, to the church, or uptown when I'm obliged to go."

"Well, I've sure enjoyed talking to you and I hope you'll come back agin when my wife's here fer I know she'd like to talk to you.

"I'll just walk across the street with you. I told Paul Ridenbour I would come over some time tonight and work on his stove for him. Cold weather'll catch us soon.

11/21/38

S.J.

West Durham Cotton Mill
West Durham, N. C.
July 5, 1938
I. L. M.

JOSEPHINE WALLACE

If you should meet Josephine Wallace you would more than likely say to yourself, "With a little more 'finish' she'd be a good-looking woman." She has a high forehead, well-shaped nose and mouth, and nice blue eyes. She keeps abreast of the styles -- perhaps a little too well -- and she is never without a permanent wave. Although she has worked in a cotton mill a good part of her life she does not look more than her forty years.

The ambition of Josephine's life is to keep her five children, more particularly her two daughters, out of the mill. She does not mind the hard work she does each day because it is to provide advantages for her children. She is making seventeen dollars a week and her husband twenty-two. They apparently dread the impending wage cut more than some families of lesser means because they hate to curtail in any measure the standard of living they have worked out for their family.

If you should go to the Wallace home in all probability you would be greeted by one of Josephine's neatly dressed and well-mannered children who would enter into conversation with you as soon as you were both seated in the living-room. The living room is a cheerful, homey place despite the misapplication of color and the lack of taste in choice of ornaments. The door prop is a big china cat which curls itself in insolent laziness and manages to gaze at you no matter where you are seated. The mantel is adorned with two miniature covered wagons, one polar bear, a cat group, and a china centerpiece which features a little girl looking at a dog and asking, "Can't you talk?" Wherever

you turn in the room you are likely to see a gaudy-looking piece of statuary but in a little while you do not mind. Even the too much greenness of the flowered rug which is vying with the colorful drapery ceases to annoy you. Inevitably you reach the conclusion that the people who live here have created for themselves a home.

The Wallaces are congenial among themselves and they find friends who share their interest in music. The bad-toned piano is the pride of the household. If Ira Belle, the seventeen-year old daughter, were to come in during your visit she would ask you if you could play certain tunes and with a request that she play them for you she would respond readily. She might play Tippy-Tippy-Ten, a number or two from Snow White, several others from recent pictures, and almost certainly Duke University's song. Ira Belle and her sister have taken free music lessons for the past ten years from the WPA teacher who also gives lessons on the Wallace piano to a number of other girls.

Ira Belle will take from the music rack a number of hymnbooks and hand them to you for your inspection. Among them will be a compilation by Gypsy Smith, a favorite of hers. Her grandfather Carrington who was born in England has told her that when he was a lad he ran away from home and lived for awhile with the gypsy tribe to which Gypsy Smith belonged. When you put the books aside Ira Belle will play for you a number of humns which she and members of her family have sung in duet or quartet combinations at the local churches during revivals.

The Wallace children are proud of their mother and father. Josephine has told her children that their father traces his ancestry back to the Wallace clan that saved the Crown of Scotland, and that gives the two girls a certain feeling security as they attend the Durham High School. Ira Belle thinks that many more of the mill girls would go on through high school if they were not made to feel inferior by

classmates who have had superior advantages. The past year she was the secretary of her section, in which, as she expresses it, "All the girls were nice, smart girls and none of them high falutin'." Both of the girls say that Josephine has always seen to it that they were as neatly dressed as anybody in their classes.

One point of pride with Josephine's children is the fact that their father who had very little grade school education passed a correspondence course dealing with arithmetic. Josephine herself went through the seventh grade because a certain security in her home made it unnecessary for her to start to work until she was fourteen.

Josephine Wallace is the oldest of five children born to David and Josephine Carrington. David, one of six children, was born in Bidston, Cheshire County, England. His father, a watch maker and diamond setter, sent him to grade school from the time he was three until he was eleven. At eleven he entered Brassie's shipyards and worked until he was fifteen. Joining the English navy then he served for eight years and came out a skilled mechanic. Service had brought him to the Atlantic coast of the United States and in David's words he had become a "free-thinker and wanted to spend the rest of his days in the United States. England in those days was too conservative for me." Shortly thereafter, having made his way to North Carolina, he met and married Josephine Smith who lived in the backwoods country near Sanford. Josephine had to her credit only six months of schooling. Her father had come home from the War Between the States crippled with arthritis and unable to do manual labor at all. His girls worked hard on the small farm which he owned and managed to subsist in a meager sort of way. David's skill as a mechanic, when a skilled mechanic was hard to find, made it possible for him to keep a job and make Josephine's life a little easier than it had been. Soon after he was married his pay was increased from seventy-five cents to a dollar and a quarter a day.

When he told Josephine the good news she exclaimed "My Lord, that makes us rich folks for sure." She says that no money has ever made her prouder than that first week's wages with the raise for it seemed such a big amount after the lean, hard days she'd known on the farm. From then on David made a fairly decent living for his family and by the year 1912 he had a small bank account.

At that time letters from England reminded him that his mother was ageing fast and her health was failing. David could not overcome the desire to see his mother again. He sold all of his property except his household goods and with his wife and three children went to England. After a month's visit among his people, David and his family returned to North Carolina on the Aquitania.

Shortly after his return David secured a job as a mill mechanic in West Durham and he has been there since. Josephine as the oldest of the children felt the need of contributing to the family at an earlier age than the others. Then, too, all the girls her age that she knew had entered the mill. Her younger brothers and sisters attained the age of sixteen before their life in the mill began. One of her brothers is married to a nurse and one of her sisters whose husband owns two houses in Asheville is supervisor in a cigarette factory in Richmond. The other brother and the other sister are married and working in the same mill with Josephine.

Josephine is proud of her mother and father. She likes to tell you that the older Josephine, now sixty-one, got another permanent last week. She will look at the large photograph of her which stands on the piano, and say "That's a good picture but lot of folks have told me they didn't think it done mama justice." If her father's name is brought into the conversation she will probably tell you that he is a thirty-second degree Mason.

Josephine's ambition for her children is hardly more pronounced

than is her husband's. He is determined to educate his children so that they may make a living of which they will not be ashamed. Though Tom Wallace's father became Chief of Police of Burlington before his death, the older ones of his seven children know many hard days and were glad of a chance to work in the mill when they were no more than ten or eleven years old.

The Wallaces have not saved any money during their married life but they have provided their children with a respectable home. If Josephine's health holds out and the mill continues to need them both they plan to send all their children through high school and to give the two girls business training to equip them for the profession of court stenographer.

11/18/38

S.J.

740 9th St.
West Durham, N. C.
July 15, 1938
I. L. M.

MARY SMITH

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon and Mary was still busy with her dinner dishes. She asked me to come back to her kitchen, and there I met her oldest daughter, Janie, who was with her mother for a two weeks visit. Mary continued washing dishes while Janie, after rinsing them in a pan of hot water, dried them. The kitchen was clean and orderly and the least disturbing of all rooms in the house in which to sit. I was glad that Mary after finishing with the dishes did not suggest that we go into another room.

I had been told that Mary was ill and I expected to find her in bed. When I asked her about her health she replied, "Yes, I'm sick with diabetes most of the time but I try to stay up as much as I can. The doctors at Duke are treatin' me and I go in twice a week when I'm able. They tell me my body is suffering from the brutish treatment I've give it all my life. If they mean work I reckon I have done as much as the next one." Then Mary told me her story.

Mary Smith was born in Orange County fifty-seven years ago. Her father was a renter and he found it difficult to support his eight children on what was left after the landlord was paid. Not that the children didn't lend a helping hand. Mary cannot remember when she did not contribute her quota of work-hours toward her own support. At six she stood up in a chair to wash the dishes and prepare the scanty meals

for cooking while her mother labored in the fields. There were then three smaller children who required the time left over from housekeeping duties. As she grew older there seemed no way to make a little time for school. She thinks that reading must indeed be a great pleasure. Many times she has picked up a book and sat with it in her hands wishing that she might know what was inside its pages.

When she was eleven the family income was supplemented by group participation in a relatively new industry. Smoking tobacco was gaining in popularity and the manufacturers of the product needed many small bags in which to pack it for distribution. The bag factories which grew up in answer to this need sent the bags out by the thousands into the surrounding countryside to be strung and tagged. During periods of slack in farm work Mary and her young brother walked the five miles into Durham and took back to their home two large sacks, each containing ten thousand small bags. She can remember sitting up all night on occasion during the rush season, each member of the family working as hard as he could to string these sacks for which they received thirty cents a thousand. When sleep laid such a heavy claim on her that she felt she could no longer stand it her mother sent her out on the back porch to dash cold water on her face that she might keep her eyes open yet a little longer. The year she was twelve her skill increased so that she raised the family income by several dollars, and her parents out of appreciation of her industry bought her two percale dresses instead of one.

By the time she was fifteen years old her father had decided his family would have a better living at a cotton mill

than they could ever make for themselves on another man's farm. They sold the mule and the cow but they kept the twenty-six chickens for a while after moving to town. The nice fresh eggs came in handy because wages weren't^{so}/high that such things could be bought in plenty.

Mary began work at twenty-five cents a day. Her hours were from six to six but she will tell you that she doesn't believe the twelve hours then were any harder than eight hours now what with the speed-up system they have. Her man Jim comes in clean wore out at the end of a day, but of course she knows he's not a young man any longer. In fact, his working days are almost over because he's not so far from sixty and his body is none too stout.

When she married at eighteen she was making four dollars a week and Jim four dollars and a half. If it hadn't been for the installment plan she wonders if they ever could have bought the two beds and stove with which they began housekeeping. Nighttimes Jim made four chairs and a table. With so much furniture in their house they decided to take a couple of boarders to help with the installments still to be paid. The furniture wasn't more than paid for when Mary had to have an operation which cost Jim fifty dollars. That was three months before her first baby was born and another baby was on its way before the debt was finally paid.

Sometimes when her health was too bad to work in the mill Mary took up her old occupation of stringing bags. The wage had increased to fifty cents a thousand and with steady use of her spare time she could do a thousand a day. In the course of time five children were born to Mary Smith and four of them

managed to live past babyhood. Mary's last child was born in 1912. It didn't live but three days and the Smiths had to borrow the money to bury it. "That year was one of the hardest in my life," Mary told me that afternoon. "The doctor started comin' to see me in early May and there wasn't a day from then on until the middle of September that he didn't come to our house. As soon as I was out of bed Jim took sick with the typhoid fever and for six solid weeks he wasn't able to work. Two of the younguns took the fever from him. If we couldner got credit we woulder starved. It was many a year before we ever caught up again. We was in such bad shape that the two younguns was forced to go in the mill though I'd hoped to keep 'em out until they'd had a little more chance for schoolin'."

The oldest boy entered the mill at twelve and the oldest girl at thirteen. The boy has been there since except for sick leaves in the past few years when he has been bothered with hemorrhages of the lung. He was such a scrawny, pale, little fellow that many a time when Mary went to rouse him on a cold winter morning she felt like turning away from the bed and letting him rest through the day. But she knew he might lose his job, and the money he made was badly needed. Sometimes now she wonders if his health wouldn't have held out better if she could have kept him out of the mill a few years longer until his body had been given more chance to grow.

This son married after thirty and he has three children, all too young to work, and a wife whose health is so poor she cannot work. He was brought home from the mill with another hemorrhage the other day and Mary is wondering how she can help him. It seems to her that the fourteen dollars a week Jim is making

cannot be stretched over another need.

Mary paused at this point in her story and sat with her hands folded in her lap. Janie looked first at her mother and then at me. "If it hadn't been for Mama my younguns wouldner had no clothes atall the past year," she said. "The mill where my husband works aint give its help but four days' work a week in over a year. Tom makes eleven dollars and its all I can do to feed, let alone clothe, my crowd on that. My children is pretty good about not complainin'. They'll set down one day right after another to dired beans and potatoes without raisin' a row. Of course, that oldest one has got all manner of pride and she caused me a sight of trouble for awhile when she had to wear a old coat to school that never fit her nowhere. The worst hurt I ever seen her, though, was along 'bout the last of school when her teacher tried to collect rent for the school books she'd been usin' all the year. I thought the State was furnishin' 'em free but they say everybody is supposed to pay rent on 'em. Emma Lee kept after me but I never had the money to give her. One day she broke down in school and cries and told her teacher they wasn't a penny at her home to pay for book rent. The teacher told her to stop worryin' then, and she never bothered her any more. Emma Lee says she's not goin' to stop until she goes clear through high school."

Janie's four-year-old child came into the kitchen and propped herself against her grandmother's knee. Mary put her arm about the child and seemed to forget for a while that she was there. "Well, she'll have plenty time to go through high school since the mill can't take 'em until they are sixteen or eighteen,

I don't know which," she said. "Of course it's hard to say if things keep on like they are who's goin' to furnish the money.

"It's been a funny thing about my own family," she continued. "Pa didn't have a single child that wasn't willin' to work to try to get ahead and they aint a one of us that's got anything today. They aint never been a time when one was havin' trouble that the others was able to help him out of the bog. They's three of us livin' now. One of my brothers whose wife died last year is gettin' just two day's work a week and him with eight children. I don't know how on earth he's livin'. The other brother is makin' \$8 a week and he has four children at home.

"This is my pet," Mary continued, changing the subject abruptly as she drew the child closer to her. "She come over a week before her Ma did and I never heard a whimper out of her."

"Is she the next to the yountest?" I asked, addressing Janie.

"No'm, there's two younger than her," Janie answered. "My lap baby is just three months old and the knee baby in yonder room with her is two years old."

"Six children and her thirty-three," Mary said.

"That's more children than a working man can take care of," I ventured.

A queer sort of smile flitted across Janie's face and she lowered her head. Presently she looked up at me and said slowly, "You are right about that."

Before I left, all of Janie's children had been in the kitchen. The oldest girl, twelve, looked pale and unbr nourished. Two of the younger ones played about with a great deal of energy.

They would be considered pretty in any average group of children and as I looked across at Janie I wondered how it could be. At thirty-three she is fat, sallow, and unkempt with a look of forty-five at its worst about her face and figure. Good-naturedly she watches her children at play and thinks no further than the next feeding of her small baby. Mary, clean and not unattractive, smiles with patient affection at her daughter and her grandchildren. She has a capacity for thinking ahead that Janie seems not to have.

Mary looks back over her past life and can see in it no period in which she might have saved for the days that are ahead. She will tell you that she has on occasion spent a little money for foolish pleasure but she wonders if a person could stand all the ups and downs of life without giving over now and then to foolish things. Occupying a prominent position on her mantel in the front room is a rose-colored goddess edged in green, propping itself against a green scooped-out tray which serves miscellaneous uses. She bought it for herself at the fair about ten years ago and she's still proud of it. In no less conspicuous places in her front room are framed pictures of the Rock of Ages; Jesus, the Savior; and a bordered motto of her missionary society. A good many of her extra quarters have gone through the channel of the church to help the heathen in foreign lands to a better way of life.

She faces sixty with assets spent and liabilities yet to be reckoned with. Her chief asset in life has been her capacity for labor and from that, the one material asset she has saved for herself is something like two hundred dollars worth of furniture. The mill can no longer use her and she knows that Jim's days

of usefulness are numbered. There has been talk on the hill in recent months about old age benefits. All that Mary understands out of that talk is that when Jim is sixty-five he will begin to draw a little money. She says it isn't reasonable the amount will be enough to keep them both. Actually Jim will draw with interest the $1\frac{1}{2}\%$ of his wage saved for him and matched by his employer during his work years beginning with 1936. If his fast-failing health will permit him to serve the mill for two more years he will consider that nothing but luck is carrying him on. He will be sixty-one then with only four more years to go before he starts collecting his old age benefits which with care would last him about six months.

Just before I left Mary's house she looked out of her kitchen window and across the hill. For awhile no one spoke and the hum of the mill was the only sound to be heard in the room. When Mary began to talk it was as if she thought that Janie and I, too, must have been thinking with her on the growth of the mill. "Yonder mill want one-tenth the size it is now when I first come here forty-two year ago," she said. "It seems like me and Jim's got old with the mill but age aint hurt the mill none. When it slows down it can git new parts and we caint. What's worse we soon ain't goin' to have money to buy rations for feeding our wore-out bodies. The mill keeps makin' money but it has to give to them that's young and strong, I reckon, and even to them it caint give a regular livin'."

Mary would like to have a little place of her own on the edge of town where she might raise a garden, and small patches, along with chickens, hogs and a cow -- especially a cow. She knows the country can be hard, bitter hard, because she hasn't

forgotten when she was six years old. But then she was working for the other fellow and she believes it would be different if the land and house were hers. Nobody knows better than Mary that such thoughts are but an idle dream. She says that all her life she has known nothing but half-living and she expects no miracle when her days of usefulness are behind her. She does wonder sometimes what kind of a life lies before her children and grandchildren.

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S.J.

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L. R.

JOHN ROGERS, PRODUCE TRUCKER

John Rogers had had seven hours sleep in the past two nights. He would get about four more hours when he got to Durham after midnight. Then he would get up early to deliver his vegetables and fruits to the Durham grocers. This done he would start the hundred and sixty miles back to Richmond where he would arrive early in the afternoon, buy another load, and get back to Durham in time for four or five hours sleep -- if everything went right.

When driving like this John Rogers sometimes pulls to the side of the road and lies flat on the warm concrete under his truck, completely relaxed. Five minutes of this and he can drive on as if he had slept. He drinks coffee and Coca-Colas to stay awake but doesn't use or trust such aids as Ho-Doz. When he started driving four years ago he weighed 165 pounds and has since gained fifteen pounds. He has never had a wreck.

John Rogers owns, or owns with his three brothers-in-law, four trucks, three of them half-ton pickups and one a ton-and-a-half job, all Fords and all but one thirty-five V-8s. Every day but Saturday and Sunday he takes one of the pickups to Richmond. Doing this five days a week makes him feel all wore down sometimes, he admits, but it's a competitive business and the Durham grocers know his stuff is fresh. The Richmond trips net about fifteen or twenty dollars each. The big truck, driven by one of his

brothers-in-law, runs to Norfolk and nets more. The big truck requires a helper, whom they hire. It gets ten miles to the gallon, loaded or unloaded; the lighter trucks get twice that unloaded and about eighteen loaded. His first truck was a '26 F model and he has traded in for a succession of newer models ever since. Fords, he thinks, are as good as you want for your money.

Two of the brothers-in-law stay in Durham and get advance orders and deliver with one of the pickups. Their market is Durham though they sometimes help supply Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. They are all younger than John Rogers, who is thirty-three.

His load on a mid-September night consists of tomatoes, roasting-ears, black-eyed peas, stringbeans, and peaches. He also carries two dozen eggs for his own home. Most of this stuff, he says, is raised close around Richmond. The other truck gets vegetables and fruits grown in the back country around Norfolk and on the Eastern Shore or even brought in on ships. He follows the markets and has hauled about everything that grows.

Last winter he hauled fruit and vegetables from Florida. This winter he is going to do it again, but as a driver for a Durham fruit dealer instead of as an independent. At least he thinks he will get the job which will pay him twenty-five, maybe thirty dollars and expenses. He says last winter was the toughest he ever saw. He was paying on three trucks, his baby was born and his wife wasn't working. The competition was bad, too many trucking. He knows the Florida markets and is a close buyer and

he will be able to save his employer money on the stuff. He will start about December first and will store his own trucks. He rarely goes further into Florida than Jacksonville. There he can get anything he wants.

John Rogers likes the uncertainty and chance of trucking but he is getting tired of it. The life of a truckdriver, he says, is six years. He thinks this winter may be his last on the highway. He can always get something to do around Durham or he may go back and stay on the farm with his mother and father and take care of the place. Besides, he has an income from his houses and he will have a chance to build more.

Houses seem to be a passion with John Rogers. Before he finished high school in Hillsboro he was getting three dollars a week from a house he had built almost entirely with his own hands with lumber he had cut on his father's farm and had had saved. He never followed carpentry but studied it out, and it's not hard, he says, to learn something you really like. He built his first house in Durham during vacations and spare time, and he did all the work except some of the finishing. Now he can almost completely build a house by himself. Altogether, he has built four houses, three of which he still owns. He says he could have gone to college but he figured that after four years he would be just beginning while if he didn't go he could have a house or two built and be getting three dollars a week rent from each. And he was restless and wanted to do things with his hands.

If another panic comes he says there's nothing better than houses if they're clear and paid for. The next house he plans to

build is to be on a lot he owns in the Negro section of Durham, near the North Carolina College for Negroes. Nigger houses, he says, are the best paying. He plans a three room house which will have only electricity at first but there will be a bathroom and eventually he will put in water. Now, there's a well nearby.

The house he lives in is one he built. It has five rooms. They have two beds but when his brother was married and came there to spend the first night there was only one bed, and John Roberts and his wife spent the night on a cot. Their own honeymoon had been to Asheville on twenty-six dollars.

He married five years ago. His wife was from Durham. She works and on Sunday plays the organ at their church, Methodist. She took music for nine years and they have a piano. His daughter is eight months old. A man, says John Rogers, hasn't known anything until he has a child. They plan to have her go to college and he has begun to set aside something each week in an account for her. They tried to sell him an endowment policy which would have paid her two thousand dollars when she becomes eighteen but he said to hell with that. That way he couldn't touch the money before she was eighteen and he may want to take it out and build her some houses before then.

Though he likes the house where he lives he feels that the farm up in the northeast corner of Orange County, adjoining Durham, is really home. He was born there and home, he says, is the place where you spend your childhood. But he would hate to leave the house he has built and lives in. He doesn't like to

think of other people moving into it. He would almost want to go off and, like the fellow says, leave it empty with a fence around it. But it would rent pretty good since houses are hard to get in Durham.

On the farm his father, who is 61, and his mother and a couple of younger brothers live. The boys are getting ready to leave and the old folks will be alone. His father always talks of building a house and moving to Durham, but John Rogers is sure that he will never be satisfied anywhere except on the farm. He may go and live there with the old folks until they die. He doesn't know whether he would want to stay after that.

His father had 367 acres — he used to say he had 365, an acre for each day in the year. He sold over a hundred acres to the husband of one of the daughters. He settled the place about the time John was born, but he was from just a mile and a half away and the neighborhood is full of relatives. John Rogers doesn't have any trace of his people very far back but they have been there a long while. He has English, Scotch-Irish, and some French blood. The Roberts are Baptists and Democrats. The section is about two-thirds Democrat and a third Republican.

There were ten children, six boys and four girls. One girl died. They were born, twin boys, then John, then a girl and a boy, girl and a boy, girl and a boy, and a girl. One of the twins is manager of an ice plant in an eastern North Carolina town. He was the one who spent the night at the house. One of the girls teaches school in Salisbury. She went to the Womens' College of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and graduated at

Duke. She was always smart in school, he says, while he had a hard time getting by. She always made between 90 and 100 at Duke. The youngest girl is entering Greensboro this year.

His father never had to hire anybody because there were always plenty of younguns on the place. Now he occasionally takes on a helper but he doesn't do much farming. John Rogers figures that his father is worth about \$11,000.00 cash. He made his money on the farm during and after the war. The farm is pretty good land and there is standing timber on the place.

His mother was in the hospital a year or so ago for removal of a gall stone and an operation for female trouble that was from his birth. It cost \$800.00. She always said she had more trouble bringing him into the world than any of the others. And he loved his mummy -- he loved his daddy, too -- but he was his mummy's youngun. He always stayed close to her.

John Rogers thinks Franklin Roosevelt is the best Democrat of all. He doesn't think Hoover was so bad; he had a Democratic Congress and just gave up. He always held it against Wilson for getting us into war after promising to stay out.

John Rogers believes in Christ because, he says, as the saying goes, Christ raised such a stink. However, he wonders if the Bible is written as God meant it to be. He hates to believe that anybody thinks more of God than he does but he just believes there are lots of things in the Bible God didn't mean to be there. When you think about it, he says, man is little, mighty little. We don't know where we came from or where God came from.

John Rogers is not a drinking man. He doesn't fool around with women or know anything about those kind of things. He doesn't cuss or at least he didn't until he started driving, but you have to cuss some of the people who are on the road, he says. He doesn't follow foreign doings much but he says about the Germans that God scattered the Jews and man is going to scatter them.

On Sundays and on his days off John Rogers doesn't go riding but works around his house.