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On the whole she preferred feeding and speeding them on to having him hire them to stay, because he was much away from home and after her experience with the drunken man trying to murder his wife she was averse to taking strange men in as workmen.

But my ~~father~~ collected people as avidly as a bibliomaniac acquires books and many were the queer personalities he added to the establishment. One named Conrad Rose memorialized himself in an elegant piece of hand carving on a brick on the outside of one of the chimneys. I never saw him, but ~~that~~<sup>his</sup> carved name gave him an ornate personality to me. And there was another one named, quite simply, Billy. He it was who infuriated my Mother by bringing her his very soiled garments in the expectation of her washing them for him. That she considered flagrant impertinence. Another one I remember not as a name at all but as a person who liked juicy baked sweet potatoes even better than I did. My ~~Mother~~ used to compare my greediness to his and tell how he would eat all that he could hold and then beg her to hide the rest and not let the negroes eat them. "Spaniel potatoes" as he called the improved yams raised on Fisher Farms "are too good for niggers". She, of course, never complied with his request feeling really that the negroes had a better right to them.

But the one ~~I~~<sup>most</sup> liked to hear about was the one named Indian Jim. He was an Indian who spoke very little English; and understood, if possible, less. My ~~Mother~~ was desperateley afraid of him. He came every year or so and was taken into employ for a few weeks by my ~~father~~ who was fond of him. As soon as his first pay was due he vanished without a word, And his return ~~always~~<sup>was</sup> was equally unheralded and mysterious.

Once my Mother sat with the young children at supper, at dusk on a spring night, ~~when~~ just outside the circle of light shed by the candles ~~on the supper table~~ she became uneasily aware of a presence, which noiselessly materialized into Indian Jim returning to his job. My ~~father~~ was away. The time of Indian troubles in Texas was not long past and she was afraid, but determined not to show her fear. Her own description of her vivacious and ficticiously cordial greeting and his grunted replies used to seem very funny to us. Often we rehearsed the scene for very love of



the drama in it.

"Why Jim! I didn't see you come. How do you do? Are You well?" was my Mothers opening remark to which Jim seems to have replied:

"Mumphn."

"Have you come a long way? Are you tired?" she tried next with solicitude.

The reply was the same:

"Mumphn." But he reached for the plate and retired noiselessly into the shadows to consume it, so she considered that he was appeased.

Once he was dawdling over some task in the garden where a negro was working with a young horse not well broken to the plow. Something the negro did wrong caught my Father's attention in the house so he appeared at the back door and in the stentorian voice and picturesque language for which he was famous gave the negro a terrific scolding. Indian Jim thinking this vituperation addressed to himself, threw down his hoe <sup>and</sup> advanced to the back steps to fix his beady black eyes on my Father and <sup>shout excitedly</sup> say "Me go! Me go!" He did go too in spite of explanations. And to my Mother's great relief never came again.

Off the railroad also came peddlers. Somehow I should be able to make that sentence glow in splendid colors because peddlers meant color to us. Color and <sup>to our imaginations</sup> stimulation. Most of them were foreigners, some of whom were women. They wore bright clothes and gay head dresses. The things in their packs were excitingly different from our every day things. They talked to each other in strange tongues. Their names rang queerly in our ears.

Our first faint comprehension of lands far away, across almost boundless seas, came with the appearance of these peddlers. My Mother showed herself a teacher indeed because a couple of Greeks were <sup>utilized</sup> by her to enliven geographical and historical facts which had been meaningless; <sup>to us</sup> a Syrian woman with great ear rings in her ears and her head bound up in a red and yellow kerchief was made to populate the holy land with races of living people instead of words in a book.



"Have you had your supper, Jim? Are you  
hungry?" she hospitably inquired, ~~filling~~  
heaping a plate for him as she spoke. The  
reply was the same grunt



We had ~~names~~ for some of them who came more than once; not their own names to be sure but our idea of what their names might be--"Marie from Syria" was that woman and "Stanopoulos" was a stalwart handsome Greek lad who came with a tottering old man we assumed to be his father.

The railroad meant color and beauty to us in another way also. Lovely flowers sprang up beside it, ~~Many kinds~~ <sup>grew there</sup> that were different from either the wild or garden flowers we were used to. We wouldn't have been our ~~Mother's~~ own children if we hadn't been excited by that. Often we stole away to pick them though we were strictly forbidden to play on the track.

Once, on such a forbidden jaunt, we found a gorgeous yellow blossom growing on a queer thorny bush--our first sight of cactus. It was so amazingly beautiful that we decided to play on our ~~Mother's~~ weakness for flowers and take home enough to win forgiveness for us. So we gathered the fronts of our dresses up into pouches and filled them generously full of these astonishing new blossoms. Of course a few thorns stuck our fingers but we had embarked on the enterprise so we persevered. Persevered even unto the end which is a credit to our strength of purpose perhaps but not to our judgement. It is the solemn truth that by the time we reached home with our posies there was not a single garment on our little bodies which was not run through and through with thorns; nor any great area on our persons which was not pricked.

We were forgiven all right. And carefully undressed and de-thorned with tweezers. A little sympathy was even expended on us so sorry was our plight. But behind our backs we heard our ~~Mother~~ tell our ~~Father~~ that we need not be punished for disobedience this time. Then they both shouted with laughter, which left us shame faced and embarrassed.

Further to the north of the house than the old graveyard, quite out of sight but not out of hearing, ~~a long deep excavation~~ had been made by the workmen to drain the road bed which was just there built up with a dump to carry it over a swag. This place held water ever through the driest ~~Summers~~ and was appropriated by the



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negroes as a place for baptizing religious converts.

We called it the "baptizing hole". And those Sundays appointed by the negro church for washing away the sins of new church members were to us filled with dramatic excitement. First the long procession of negroes in their Sunday clothes wound past our sight walking on the railroad. Then came the hymns and the shouting.

The same kind of a procession went by when any of the old slaves were buried in the grave yard. Only ex-slaves were allowed to be buried there but the family of every old negro who had belonged to a Fisher claimed and was granted the right to have their dead rest in that spot. These were not gala events like the baptizings but the singing borne to our ears from out the ~~deep~~<sup>lee</sup> pine woods was very sweet.

After ~~funeral~~<sup>of</sup> visits of ceremony were paid to "Miss Sallie" and "Marse Rashie" (my parents) by contemporaries of the one just laid to rest. In this way we children learned to know most of the ex-slaves even though they did not all continue to live on Fisher Farms.

My ~~Father's~~ affection and my ~~Mother's~~ grave courtesy shown to these old negroes are things I like to remember. Often they brought some small gift such as a few choice potatoes or a head of cabbage or hickory nuts out of the woods tied in the end of a spotlessly clean old flour sack. And always they received gifts to take home, usually sugar or coffee or flour or clothes; things which it required money to purchase. And always they wanted to drink water from the old well and pronounced it the best water in the world. Out of a dipper made from a long handled gourd was the preferred way to drink at the well and one hung there always to accommodate.

The wagon road, as we called it, paralleled the roadbed of the railroad taking advantage no doubt of the clearing through the woods which had been made when the railroad was built. It too presented an ever moving pageant to our gaze. It lay on the side of the railroad away from our house but there was a crossing at what we called our "big gate" located about a quarter of a mile to the south of the house.

Along that road from time to time came men with droves of dancing, curveting half wild horses. Buying and selling ~~both~~ as they went, these men's place of business was "under their hat" as they expressed it.

Their coming was the signal for a big time on the farm because with these men my



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often  
Father ~~traded~~ and traded, sometimes selling a nag or <sup>a</sup> colt; sometimes buying if the price was right. Once he bought me a roan poney with a side saddle and bridle all complete for a surprise present. That was a great moment in my life.

Of course I could ride. All of us learned to ride as soon, almost, as we could walk, first sitting in the saddle in front of an elder person then, more hazardously, riding behind the saddle on the horse's bare back. When we were able to stick on back there through all speeds we were accounted able to take care of ourselves on a horse alone.

But not every member of the family achieved a personal mount. That I did was just amazing grace to me then. Now I know that it was because I early manifested a love for the out of door's work with the horses and cattle, and it was good economy to mount me properly for it.

Horse drovers were themselves interesting characters, ranging the country in a fine free fashion grand to think about. My Father collected them as he did travelling workmen. They always spent the night in our home if they arrived on the farm when the great oaks were casting long ~~planting~~ shadows to the east. At the supper table and afterward he turned them inside out to learn all they knew.

Obliging they were, too, about telling of the country through which they had been travelling and as their language was often quaint and their experiences odd we children were sometimes hard put to it to maintain a sufficiently decorous behavior to be allowed to remain and listen.

Part of my Mother's system of training in home economics which she gave the girls of the family was to have us wait on the table when guests were present. This business we usually rather enjoyed, but when horse drovers ate at the board we often disgraced ourselves by suddenly dashing from the room bearing with us, before all were served, dishes of food we were engaged in passing.

Once a drover was telling a strange tale about killing a "hoot owl" by walking round and round the tree in which the victim sat. The idea was that the owl would never take its eyes off the moving person and so would twist his own head off. This man was a long, lanky, keen, deeply browned individual with a drawling voice and a pair of sand-



a pair of sandy brown weeping-willow mustaches which he held carefully apart when he drank. And as he reached the climax of his tale, announcing

"And I jus' kep' on walking round and round that tree until the ol' owl just twill his head right off!"

I was simply overcome and fled out into the yard where I was joined by the sister who was my companion waitress. I had the hot biscuits, she had the butter. We put them down on the cistern frame until we could regain our poise when we returned to finish our task. In the face of such behavior our Mother's dignity at the head of the table suffered no diminution. Seemingly she was unconscious of our defection, but in reality nothing missed her eye and if the matter was of sufficient importance there was always a discussion of it later on.

The railroad affected our lives in its economic as well as its social aspects. Sometimes a train would kill livestock, in which case we demanded compensation. The question then was would the company pay the value of the dead creature or would we have to bring suit to compel payment. I don't think in reality that we ever did sue the railroad but the possibility of such a measure was often discussed by the children who enjoyed bandying the words about but probably had no idea what they meant. Certainly I for one did not understand.

Tragedy came into the peaceful scene by way of the railroad once. It was on a lovely autumn afternoon when a belated passenger train steaming south at full tilt, ran headlong into a north bound freight which had just <sup>lazily</sup> pulled its tail after it into the "graveyard cut."

We didn't see it, but we heard the terrific noise and all of the grown-ups rushed away to render aid while we were left to stew with excitement in charge of an old, crippled, half blind negro named Charley Whitesides who lived in a little house near our great one and cut the wood and drew the water for his board and keep. When not working at his chores Old Charley sat on a bench beside the well and he knew the trains by the sound of them better than we did by sight. After the wreck he proclaimed, "I tol' dat engineer when he went by here a - ratter-clatter-ratter-



clatter dat he gwine to wreck his self efin' he keep dat up!"~~Y~~ Several persons were injured and a few killed in that wreck. And freight cars left the tracks and plunged among the pine trees bursting and scattering goods all over the place.

One victim was a former slave named Betty Cain who lost a leg. Her husband Charley Cain was the butcher on the farm and a very cheerful hearty person with a ringing laugh which could be heard a great distance. Hog killing time was always a very gay affair with Charley Cain in charge out of doors and Betty in the kitchen helping with the lard and sausage.

The railroad claim agent quietly visited these negroes ready to pay<sup>in</sup> cash, their claim for damages with release papers all made out to sign. Money had always been scarce with the negroes; they had handled little of it as slaves and very little more during the hard years after the war so they were completely dazzled. The claim agent himself told the story of the settlement at the station before boarding the train to go back to headquarters.

"I brought \$5000 in hundred dollar bills, because I wanted to clean this case right up and not let it get into the hands of a lawyer," he said.

"I laid down five of them before the old negro man and told him the railroad wanted to give him all that money because they were so sorry his wife had gotten hurt. ~~and~~ His eyes flew wide open and he said,

"Yas Sir! Yas Sir! Thanky Sir!" *an' a Gawd's plenty it is too Sir!* And then <sup>he</sup> threw back his head and laughed out loud *so you could have heard him a mile away."*

My Father heard the claim agent tell this story and was furious at Charley and Betty for signing papers without first talking to him, but he had neglected to warn them, never thinking of such quick action on the part of the railroad.

The ~~\$5000~~ went in a great family splurge while Betty's hurts were still healing and no one thought to buy her an artificial limb or a wheel chair out of it. Which in a way was a good thing for the family because whenever they needed a little extra money they took up a collection to buy Betty a leg. She never really had one bought for her <sup>thought</sup> but did fairly well <sup>after all</sup> with a home made peg leg.