

AMAZING GRACE

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FOREWORD:

Old people are living links between what now is and what has been. Once aged men and women told the story of the past by word of mouth to listening ears that treasured what was heard. Today we write it down lest those who are leaving us behind never know or forget. To some of us, men today seem to be consuming life too fast as they journey through. Some of us are old and our steps are slow. We cannot be hurried and sometimes we look back. When we do we see that life now is vastly different from what we once knew it to be.

So I write about some of my life activities as I have journeyed through, for the pleasure and profit of those who, whether they like it or not, are responsible for the content of life today.

I am still working my way through. I do not know how much of my task is unfinished, I am still interested in what is going on about me and trying to do my part with failing hands at long past fore score years and wondering what is going to be revealed by the curve in the road I see immediately in front of me.

The Author.

## WORKING MY WAY THROUGH

By Henry Richard McFadyen.

## I. A CHILD IN A GREAT FOREST

I came into this world, trailing no clouds of glory, eighty five years ago. My home was a cottage in a small clearing in the midst of a great pine forest in Eastern North Carolina. The big trees came marching down to the fence on every side. Usually the forest was friendly. In the spring we looked for the wonderfully fragrant Trailing Arbutus that hid itself under the straw in the pine woods. The wind through the tops of the long leafed pines made a soothing, sighing sound that is different from any other forest. We could hear it in the quiet of the night but most of all on a warm summer afternoon.

But that forest could be a terrifying thing when the March wind roared and fire had gotten out in the woods. The air was full of smoke and the night a terror with red skies and flying, hissing embers. On the housetop father was stationed with buckets of water and wet blankets to put out the raining fire. It was indeed a fearful thing to a little child to see father and mother anxious and afraid.

There was an abundance of game and a small boy could go fishing in almost any shallow brook. We could sometimes see deer in the distance and wild turkeys ran through the woods. Quail nested in the corners of rail fences. In the winter incredible numbers of migrating robins passed through. As I remember, they stripped the dogwood trees of every berry.

Neighbors were not too near or too numerous, but big families were much in order, and there were boys and girls. Deadly diseases carried off our playmates and mothers wrung their hands and doctors were helpless, but most of us lived and were happy?

We lacked almost everything a child now takes for granted but we had as much imagination and ingenuity as children of today. The West, with its outlaws and gunplay and cowboys had not been heard of or maybe not invented. Certainly we knew nothing of all that but we did know

about the Indians and we filled the woods with them. Was it not that same Colonel Custer who in those days was slaughtered by the Indians who captured my father and his little company when they were trying to get away from the dangerous neighborhood of Gettysburg? The bigger boys built a stockade in the woods and fashioned a fort in the limbs of the trees. Many a murdering, skulking, thieving redskin bit the dust at the hands of some sharpshooter with his trusty corn stalk rifle. But he would not stay dead! Many a brave lad, also, in an effort to bring water from the brook to the beleagued garrison, was ambushed, scalped and left for dead but crawled back into the stockade. Fortunately there was with the settlers certain healing herbs and roots, now lost to the world, which when applied to a man who had been scalped, would in a few minutes, bring him around and allow him to go back to his dangerous position. So the Indian wars went on to the satisfaction of all concerned. My mother had three of these rooster feathered savages at our house for a time. She tried to train them to work. They did not take kindly to it and were afraid of water and the foot tub!

One pastime that was eminently satisfactory was the attempted, I use the word advisedly, conquering of a young ox. Those were the days of the oxcart. The big plantation would have a yoke of big oxen. The little fellow would have his cart. The people went to town, to church, anywhere in an ox cart. It was no shame. It was all some people had and the ox was a slow but dependable animal.

It was a joy to the boys when it became known that there was some where in the circle a young ox, big and lusty enough to try out. We salvaged or abandoned buggy wheels and an axle from the blacksmith shop. We fashioned shafts and a yoke and bow from the trees of the forest and bound the whole together in what could only truly be called a contraption. The great day came when by fair means or foul, we at last got the young animal between the shafts. With two of the bigger boys hanging onto the horns of the beast, the rest of us piled into



the contraption. There were two lines fastened to the horns of the ox but that was merely a concession to the conventional. There was no thought that he was going to be guided anywhere. All the directions in the world began at the front end of the young animal. No one knew where he was going except that it was somewhere else. We hoped to go along at least part of the way. If he struggled and rolled his eyes and bellowed, we were greatly encouraged. Heroes were made in those few minutes after the big boys let go of the horns and fell back. Sometimes a boy would stay with the contraption until the final break up. He it was who would be able to report, that, from the vantage point of the middle of some brier patch, he last saw the ox going through the woods in long, stretching leaps, his tail straight up in the air, with some remnants of our labors still hanging to him!

I do not recollect any event in life more full of pure joy and fulfilled unexpectedness.

Lumbermen soon took note of those miles of standing trees. Then came the log carts and timber wagons. The log cart was a two wheeled affair for hauling the short and smaller logs. The timber wagon was a four wheeled vehicle for handling the really big and long logs. The front wheels were low but strong. The rear wheels were higher than a man's head and big and strong. They had to carry the weight of the log. These big wheels were connected with an iron axle that was bowed up so that when the log was lifted it fitted into this curve. To this curved axle was fastened a tongue or beam that was some fifteen feet long. To this and the axle in turn were fastened two big steel hooks. When the beam was straight up the hooks were on the ground and could be fastened under the log. When the beam was pulled down by a long log chain, the hooks bit into the log and lifted it up till it fitted in the curved axle. The front end of the log was then chained to the beam and both were chained to the axle of the front wheels. With the cracking

of the whip and encouraging cries of the driver, the straining mules would drag the heavy log out of the woods and into the narrow road.

All day long, back and forth, the timber wagons creaked and groaned past our house, the four mules plodding along, each throwing his weight against the heavy load, their long ears flopping in unison as they walked.

The driver was a black man, barefooted, who sat, slumped over in the saddle on the right hand wheel mule. About his shoulder was coiled a leather blacksnake whip which must have been ten feet long. All day long he sat so but when the last log was lifted and the journey to the mill had begun the black man came alive. He knew that another day of honest toil was done. Maybe he thought of his wife and of his brown babies at home.

He stood up to his full height in the stirrups and loosed the long whip from about his shoulder. He began to whirl it round and round above his head, faster and faster till it became a whirling blur that seemed to burn and sting the very air. and the "cracker" began to do that for which a cracker was designed. The man seemed to see no one. He was "in the spirit", and all the woods began to vibrate and re-echo with the music of the blacksnake whip. I would hear him coming and run down to the fence to see and hear this remarkable performance. The mules would quicken their pace but not from fear and the wagon would creak a little more alertly as the woods rang with the pow, pow, pow, . . . . P O W . . . . pow, pow, POW . . . . P. O. W. of the whip musician.

As night settled down sometimes there came to us on the still air the far away musical notes of hog caller. After the long day's work was done a man would take a half bushel basket of ear corn on his arm and, going to the back fence, call his hogs. Stock of all kinds in those days had the free run of the woods. As the man's long musical call floated out, a pig far out in the forest would stop rooting, and, standing stock still. listen. If it was his call, he would start running through the bushes, grunting and squealing as he ran. A how rarely went to the wrong

caller.

Some of these callers had clear, mellow voices that could be heard for long distances. The call was often wonderfully modulated to be in harmony with the quiet of the evening. So these humble men transformed a menial task into a thing of restful beauty.



II. COURT WEEK

Eliza bethtown was our County Seat. It was a pre -Revolutionary village on the Cape Fear river. Here the Superior Court met twice a year. The Judge was a sort of judicial circuit rider. He came in the spring and fall, and for a week, he dispensed justice, and, with the help of twelve men, good and true, settled such dangerous differences of opinion as may have arise in the county.

When court week rolled around there was a stirring among the men all over the county to go up to court. I do not remember that the good women of the land were much concerned about court week but the men were and some of the boys. It brought something different and sometimes new into the lives of men who knew little but the drab and uneventful.

Usually the first man to arrive on the scene was the professional horse trader. He rode into town in an open buggy, followed by a galloping, dust raising drove of some forty or fifty horses of every age, color, character and disposition. A man knew he was risking his shirt and his wife's mother-hubbard to dare to match wits with one of these public servants who had spent his life life looking into horse's mouths. However <sup>no</sup> ~~so~~ did dare to do so. They did not believe it was possible to get worse than they had. Some found they were mistaken.

The court itself was the chief attraction. My father took me into the court room. It was an awesome experience. The judge was sitting in his high chair. He was the greatest man I have ever seen. It made me think of the judgment day we had read about in the Bible at home. The man hit the bench in front of him with a sort of wooden mallet and said in a stern voice, "This court is now in session". Everybody straightened up and an old man who was chewing tobacco made a sort of slight of hand movement across his face with his left hand and came up with a quid of tobacco, which he dropped, when the judge was not looking, in a dark corner. Everybody was very respectful. Nobody was walking about or talking or whispering in anybody's ear. Of course not. That judge could



put you in jail until you were an old man for misbehaving in his his court. I was only a country boy and did not know much but I knew enough not to start anything in that man's court house!

They read papers I did not understand and some big books were opened up. Some people were called up to take certain seats. The Judge ordered them to be sworn. A man at a table told them to stand and hold up their right hands. Then he said some fast words and handed them a little Bible and told them to kiss it. They did but anybody could see it did not mean a thing.

After awhile the judge ordered the sheriff to call the jury. He got up and looked over the crowd and came down to a small boy and asked him whether he could read or write. When he said he could not, the sheriff asked him to come down and help him draw the jury. The boy went down with him to where there was, on a table, a hat full of slips of paper. On each slip was a man's name. The boy would draw a slip and the sheriff would read the name. When he had drawn twelve that was the jury. When he was done the sheriff gave the boy a silver dollar. I was finding out that if you wanted to be helpful about the court house and be paid for it, it was best not to know too much!

The court room was on the second floor. When the sheriff had the names of the twelve men, he opened a door and stood on a sort of little balcony and began to cry: "O Yez, O Yez, O Yez". Then he called a man's name and said, "Come to Court". A quiet settled over the village as men stopped to listen. When a man heard his name called he quit what he was about and hurried to the court house.

Presently the men began to come in and were motioned to their places in the jury box. They sat down on the edge of their seats, hats held in both hands between their knees, and looked up at the judge.

The law and order and decorum of the court room, unfortunately, did not always spill over into the village. For this the saloons of the town were largely responsible. I do not know how many there were but enough.

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Other business men and professional people carried on their affairs or disposed of their goods to the mutual benefit of all concerned, but not the saloon keepers. All day long their swinging doors bumped back and forth, and those who went in came out somebody else.

The introvert suddenly began to love everybody and fall on the neck of every new found friend. The tight-wad became inclined to make everybody happy and was willing to pay all expenses involved. The meek little man who was so henpecked he had to say his prayers behind the barn, became a rampant trouble maker, going out of his way to take on all comers. He fought in the saloon, out on the street, down in the ditch and never knew who bit off his ear. Others found no new or disturbing spirit, but as they continued to take one too many more, sank down lower and lower.

Someone helped one of these into his buggy, where he slumped in a drunken stupor in the seat or fell unconscious in the bottom of the vehicle. Someone untied his horse and that faithful beast began to plod his way, the wheels grinding slowly in the sandy wheel ruts. The horse was thinking of home and the long well sweep and the pole bringing up up from the well the bucket brimming full of cool water that would come sloshing down into the trough where he too could drink and drink.

Passing travellers turned aside and gave the horse the right of way, and as night settled down an anxious woman looked out her front door and saw the horse standing at the big front gate.

## III. THE MAD DOG SCARE

Our houses in those days were largely frame, built up about two feet above the ground so the air could pass through and there would be no dampness. The house was set up on "house blocks". These "blocks" were sawed out of a heart pine log and shaped up like a four sided pyramid with the top sawed off. They were about ten inches across the top and twenty at the bottom. These held up and fitted the sills of the house and the weatherboarding came down and fitted in turn and the whole made a very neat finish. It was cool and dry under the house and under the edge children loved to play. As a little fellow I loved to build my roads and bridges and frog houses where the first big rain would not destroy my works of art. But not after the mad dog scare!

Every summer there was such a scare. It would usually come along in the hot weather in August when the Dog star was shining down and setting all the dogs crazy. Hydrophobia has never ceased to be a fearful disease and in those days there was no cure. People were justly afraid of a mad dog. If a dog was sick people settled the matter against the dog and buried him deep.

The terror of the thing was magnified by horror tales everybody, first and last, heard. A dog sick with hydrophobia with the fever upon him seemed obsessed with the urge to travel. He would begin roaming from community to community, biting dogs, cats, cattle and humans if any came in his way. There was an idea abroad that human unfortunates had the same urge and did the same only it was worse for people did not like to shoot a man when he started rambling. It might be natural with him!

The children at our house had heard the story of the good blacksmith, who realizing he had been bitten by a mad dog and knowing what was in store for him, chained himself to a tree so he could not start travelling and so be a menace to his neighbors. We did not have enough trees in our yard for our family, so some of us would have to be chained in the woods! That did not suit any of us. Something might happen to us! I was



the little fellow listening to all that talk but I had judgment enough to know that being the last and the least I might be the first! So I decided when the big stir came I would hide under mother's bed!

Then mother, for some reason, locked out the front door and there was a mad dog coming into the front yard. She did not have to look long at those blood-shot eyes and starving ribs and saliver dribbling from his mouth to know that she had a mad dog on her hands. She screamed for the children, locked every door and put down every window. We did not have wire screens in those days. Then she sat down and tried to stop trembling and try to think what to do with a house full of children and a mad dog under the floor! No telephone, no one living under two miles, no gun in the house and father gone and might return any minute and have to fight barehanded a mad dog when he got out of the buggy!

Joining the house on one side was a vegetable garden. It had a high fence about it and the house was a part of that fence. Mother put my twelve year old brother out of a window into the garden and told him to get over the back fence and run to grandfather's.

It was three miles but fear must have given the boy wings for in an hour or so we looked down the road and there was good old grandpa coming on his big gray saddle horse. Across the saddle was his old long barrelled, muzzle loading shot gun. It was loaded with buckshot and that old gray horse was nodding his head to this side and that and picking up one foot and slapping down another just as fast as he could in that running walk of his that was carrying him over the ground. And grandpa sitting up there just like he was a a rocking chair!

Grandpa rode up and called to know where was the dog. Mother opened a crack in the door and told him he was under the house. Grandpa got off of his horse and began looking under the house. He was not afraid of anything. After awhile he saw what he was looking for. He dropped down on one knee and sighted over that longgun barrel for just a little and when that old gun spoke there was one mad dog less



to frighten women and children.

Grandpa dragged the dog out by a hind foot and buried him deep in the field. The big rains came and washed the poison from the yard but I never played again under the house!

## IV. HOG KILLING TIME

In my childhood stock of all kinds ran free in the woods. Men did not fence in their stock. They fenced their fields. A man would let his hogs run in the woods and fend for themselves. It was said that men then bred their hogs to be able to beat out a bear or designing humans. They were called "Pine Rooters" or "Razor Backs". They were long legged, long coupled, long tailed, long winded and possessed of a long and powerful snout. This beast got one of his names from the use he made of that snout. A good part of his living came from the sweet tender bark on the roots of pine trees. He would locate a root and follow it up. He was willing and able to go down twelve or eighteen inches to get what he loved. He would eat anything that any other hog would eat but these creatures were not dependent on man. They lived on roots, berries, acorns and anything the forest afforded. They enjoyed the white meat under the dangerous scales of a big rattler and knew how to go about getting it. They never laid on enough fat to lead a man to think about getting an extra fifty pound lard stand, but they did make the most wonderful hams, shoulders and side meat for boiling with vegetables and sausage.

How did a man manage to get his hands on one of these liberty loving rangers? It took time. In the late fall when the corn crop had come in, a man would take a basket of corn and go to his back fence and call his hogs. A few old ones at first would come up. He fed them and kept this up until he had quite a bunch coming to get this free corn. Then he built a big pen with one side open, and began to feed them in the pen. After awhile it began to work, and then, one day when they were off guard eating, he closed the gap and began to talk about how many hogs he had to kill!

Hog killing time came with consistent cold weather. There was no refrigeration in those days. People had to depend on continuing cold weather and plenty of coarse salt to save their meat. Then, one cold day maybe, in December, a man would send word to some of his neighbors that

he expected to kill hogs next morning. He could depend on them to be there to help. On his part he gathered firewood at the pig pen. He hauled out the big black iron wash pot and a barrel or so of water. He brought out a half dozen wide boards and laid them side by side near the big pot and sharpened all the big knives he had. Long before day he was down at the pig pen with a roaring fire going under the wash pot full of water. Soon the neighbors began to come, each with his favorite knife well sharpened and ready to begin work.

One time a neighbor had made all these preparations and, as he said, "had a fine chance of meat in the pen", when another neighbor, old man Brisson, appeared on the scene. He came to show his interest and goodwill. He came walking up to the pen in the dim light of the morning. His face was covered with a bristling black beard and he could not speak a word without stuttering. He began, "How, How, How, How" getting louder all the time. The hogs, already excited, stampeded to the far side of the pen and broke out and disappeared in the wilderness. The old gentleman was never able to get out a word and our neighbor was a long time fooling his razor backs a second time!

Usually everything worked according to plan. Someone reached in the pen and caught a hog by a hind foot and began to drag him out. There was a terrible outcry for no true pine rooster ever wanted to be killed. The others, too, would come to his help so that had to be taken into account.

Some one would knock the pig in the head and some one else would cut his throat. No one enjoyed this part of the hog killing but the blood had to be gotten out of the body or the meat would not keep or be good for food. This over, the dead innocent was dragged on the boards.

If the water in the pot was right, it was poured over the dead pig and the scraping began. If the water was not hot enough the hair would not come off. If it was too hot it set the hair. It was right when it was just ready to boil and a whisp of steam, like a cloud, floated over the water. A thin black film came off with the hair and the whole body



was left a pinkish white. Then they laid bare a strong tendon or muscle that is in the back of a pig's hind foot. They had a stout oak stick, sharpened at both ends. One end of this stick they thrust through behind one of these tendons, and lifting up the pig this stick was put over a beam and through behind the tendon on the other foot and there was the pig hanging up with his hind legs spread apart. They washed the body with clean water. Some one came with a sharp knife and cut the body open, beginning at the top and the inside organs of the body came tumbling out, clean and fresh. They left the carcass hanging all night so it would be cool for the cutting up which would come next day.

The small intestines were saved and carefully cleaned. They were turned inside out and an inner lining was scraped away with a dull knife. That left an almost transparent "casing" in which in time the sausage meat would be stuffed. These casings were placed in a tub of cold water to wait for the sausage meat.

Next day, the second of the hog killing, the meat was cut up and the various parts trimmed, hams, shoulders, side meat. The back bones were cut out and chopped into proper lengths and salted down. The ribs were taken out and cut into sizes to fit the baking pan. That is where the "spare ribs" came from. It is not easy to pass this matter with so inadequate a mention!

All the time they were throwing spare parts of meat, odds and ends and some pieces cut off on purpose, into the pile of sausage meat till they had a tub full of "trimmings". Then came the women with the sage and thyme that had been drying on the back porch all the fall. They mashed it up fine and sprinkled it over the meat. Black and red pepper, too, but not too much, and salt and all mixed and ground together. Sometimes mother made some little patties and fried them to see that the seasoning was just right and sometimes she answered the prayer in the eyes of a little boy.

They had a sausage stuffer which was an iron affair that



held a batch of sausage meat. It had a long tin spout at the bottom. On this spout the "casings" were fitted. There was a plunger in the top to which a lever was attached. When the lever was pulled down, the sausage came out of the spout and into the "casings" like a snake coming out of his hole. Soon they had a sausage some five feet long. When a casing gave out, they put on another. Some one pinched the long sausage into proper lengths and gave each a twist and there was a pile of link sausage! Soon the smoke house was festooned with link sausages hanging down. They were good from the very start. There have never been any since just like them. There was no suspicion of fish scrap or reminder of tankage or a filthy pen. The hogs from which these delicacies came were children of the clean woods. They ate clean food and drank from the brook.

Some folks smoked their sausages by building a slow fire of hickory chips on the smoke house floor. Some of these smoked sausages would be hanging there after a month or two but they would have dried out and cured. The seasoning would have gone through and through and become one with the meat. Mother would put about ten of these in the pan and the good smell would go through the whole house. We would sit down at the table and father would give thanks for the morning meal. He would give each of us a liberal helping of grits with a little lake of brown sausage gravy in the center and two sausages that were not as plump as they once were. I hardly know what further to say about this but am tempted to wonder what I have really gained by much wandering?

## THE CAPE FEAR RIVER

The Cape Fear River bulked large in the thought and speech of the people of my early years. Our people lived on both sides of the river and to visit or be visited meant crossing the river, paying the ferryman and, if the river was high, taking what looked to a timid soul like taking a chance for there could be a lot of water in that river. Sometimes, when the water was low, we saved our money and forded the river. My father, with his two horse family rockaway, would boldly drive down into the stream and two overflow boys on the extension seat on the back of the vehicle would drag their feet in the cool water. It always seemed a long way to either bank when we were in the middle of the river.

Near the crossing up the river a little way was a big cypress tree. High up in the branches a board was nailed. On it was written "SHERMAN FRESH". When General Sherman passed through with his army there was the greatest flood in the river men had ever known. Some one noted how high the water had risen on the tree and thought the good General and the flood ought to be remembered together.

Then there was the river hill. Rivers do not run on top of the level ground. This was the only real hill in our country and people paid it proper respect. They got out of their vehicles and walked up the hill to spare struggling animals. There was only one high side to our river but that was our side. That river hill had to be taken into account by everybody. Every article brought by the boats had to be dragged up the hill. Old man Mullford, I think it was, had a big black mule and a dray. Merchants paid drayage to have their goods brought up from the steamboat landing. That mule was the talk of the country because of the loads he could pull up the river hill. Sometimes when the hoarse whistle of the steamboat sounded for the landing, the rain was pouring down and the hill was slick but when the boat nosed up to the landing the black mule and the dray were there. The river did not permit a warehouse. The goods had to be loaded on the dray and covered with a heavy canvass and the black mule bowed himself and



threw all his weight and strength against the iron tug chains of the dray and step by step climbed the hill.

What probably was under the canvass that was the black mule's sorrow? Two bags of green coffee, One box of men's brogan shoes. One box of high top ladie's button shoes. Women in those days did not have any visible means of support but those shoe tops went up on something about eight or ten inches. The buttons could be set over but even so on Sunday mornings some of the ladies suffered from cold feet due to lack of circulation. There was a big box of dry goods from New York. In it were bolts of calico, gingham and red flannel. A bundle of corsets. Not very expensive. They would sell for fifty cents or less. They had strings five feet long and were guaranteed to make a wasp cry for the oxygen tent. Some years after the black mule was gathered to his people, a young lady was playing the organ in the Presbyterian church. She had a beautiful hour glass figure that did not come straight from heaven. In the midst of a lively melody she fell off the stool in a dead faint. In the stir an old Elder was crying, "Cut those corset strings, Cut those corset strings!" I could not see exactly how relief came but suppose the beauty left the church with her back split open but breathing and sheltered by some good women who wished their had been cut!

What else was in the box? Ten white stiff shirt fronts for man and a half dozen boxes of assorted celluloid collars for the same. When you needed a clean collar you wiped with a wet rag the one you had been wearing since the General Conference. They were inflammable. Imagine a celluloid standing collar and it on fire!

There were skeins of white knitting cotton and some small bolts of Hamburg lace. This was for trimming panties and wide enough to show. It was a hog for starch and would be seen at church on Sunday morning.

Then there was a box of drugs for the general store. Let's see what was in it. A dozen bottles of Vermifuge and the same of Hartshorne. This would knock you down to smell it and wake you up if you walked in your sleep. In fact, after you had run afoul of a bottle a time or so you decided to quit trying ~~to~~ sleep walking about the neighborhood!

There was a big mouthed jar of Quinine and another of Calomel. You did not play with this last unless the doctor was standing by and then you were sorry. There was a dozen bottles of Laudanum and two dozen of Paregoric. This was to quiet the baby. These two items were twins but the people did not know it. They were both tinctures of opium and came straight from China. The Paregoric quieted the baby alright. However I will not quarrel too much with the man who forgot to specify what was in the bottle. We had no asperin and we had no dentists but we did have the worst toothaches since the Fall. I cried all day and mother put on the hot pack that did no good save to show her compassion for her homely little boy. I cried on into the night and father came with the blessed old Paregoric bottle on the mantel out of the children's reach. He read the directions by lamp light and poured into a spoon the proper number of drops and the misery began to steal away and I fell into a dreamless sleep.

There was a two pound box of gum Assafetida. It could not be hid. It always had some trash in it and an occasional hair. It did not matter. Nothing could add to its awfulness. The boys believed it was scraped from the beards of wild billie goats in some barbarus land. It seemed reasonable. Mothers put a small portion in a bag and hung it about a child's neck. It was not a love charm. Sometimes when a man was dying at both ends of Cholera Morbus they gave him a dram consisting of hot water in which a hunk of this gum had been dissolved, two tablespoons of whiskey, one of baking soda and maybe epsom salts to taste. When a man downed this he remembered and if he again got sick it was an accident and he said nothing about it.

The remaining space was filled with bottles of Castor Oil. It is not a pleasure to write about it. That was the name for the common garden variety of trouble for a small boy. You did not chew it. Someone held your hands. Another enemy held back your head. Still another held your nose and when you gasped for breath someone else forced into your mouth a table spoonful of the fatal hemlock!

The dray load was completed with a barrel of whiskey. This was a



sore trial to the mule for it was heavy. The negro driver made certain it was secure and he tightened the stanchions on the back of the dray. That cautious soul had no notion of seeing that barrel of liquor break loose and go bounding down the hill the short way and plunge into the river. Maybe sink the steamboat <sup>It may have been</sup> ~~Be~~ just like it to <sup>have done that!</sup> ~~do that!~~

Our so called civilization has been hard on all our rivers. The Cape Fear is still not the open sewer some of our rivers have become but its glory has departed. The stream that still flows in its million year old channel, beset with floods and whelming freshets, hindered by mud flats and sandy shoals and low water is not the river that once was or was when I looked upon it as a little child.

Before the Indian came or the first white man looked upon it the Cape Fear river was a thing of beauty with green banks shaded by great trees and water clear like a mountain brook. This was the river our forefathers found. Fed by innumerable springs and streams great and small. These fed in turn by illimitable forests and great swamps with quiet water standing under the trees, the river, reaching for its sources to the very mountains, never lacked for water even in the dryest seasons and was protected by nature from devastating floods.

We hardly know what fish and birds and beasts delighted in this stream before man let loose the forces of devastation, but in the early spring came the shad run. Maybe for a hundred thousand years they had been coming, beautiful silvery fish. Multitudes and multitudes, they came up out of the great sea and fought their way up the river till they came to the little stream or place where they had been born. There the roe shad deposited her eggs and maybe for a time watched over her nest. Very soon each of the countless eggs developed a miniature head and tail and the nest of eggs became a multitude of tiny fish that looked like a cloud in the water.

The mother fish began her long journey back to the sea. She became a "May shad", poor, boney and maybe, starving. I do not know that

any of them ever <sup>again</sup> reached the ocean. ~~again~~ <sup>Many</sup> Some perished and floated, belly up down the stream. 20

There must have been an incredible number of shad "fingerlings" that at some stage of littleness made their way down the river to disappear in the vast ocean and to return again but I never knew a man who had seen any of these little fish on their way down.

We were all glad to see the shad season come around. Individuals and groups would go shadding and spend the night on the river with their nets. They usually came home with fish for themselves and their neighbors. One morning a man stopped at our gate to show us his catch. He had some shad but in his cart was a big rough fish. Its head was fastened in the front of the cart and its tail was hanging out of the back. It was a sturgeon. The man did not think much of it. I doubt if anyone in that group had ever heard of caviar or knew what to look for in that strange fish.

The river was for long years the only artery of commerce and communication between the interior and the seaboard. Before the railroads came it was the only means by which people or merchandise could be brought in or carried out. For this reason people first settled on its banks or along the river road. Anywhere else was "out back," a vast territory of bad roads, mud holes, puncheoned sloughs and uncertain bridges over dark streams that might be dangerous.

On the river several steamboats made regular runs between Wilmington and Fayetteville, the head of navigation. These stern wheelers, on the trip up carried something of about everything in the world and on the trip down everything else. The first deck was for the engines and boiler and wood racks. The rest was for freight and pens for live stock. There might be considerable bellowing, braying or gobbling.

The second deck was for staterooms and dining area. It was all very genteel. No one bellowed up there. I suppose every one sat at the Captain's table. I thought, as a lad, that a round trip on one of those luxury steamers would be a grand thing. I still think so.

As a teenager I saw my last Cape Fear river steamboat. It was on a down river trip. As I remember, it was painted white with green blinds on the state rooms. The steam from the exhausts was making a sort of sighing sound. The paddle wheel was turning slowly and very quietly and the whole thing was like a swan floating down the river. On the very top deck, sitting in an easy chair, was a man I knew from up the river. He was on his way to Wilmington and would spend the night on the boat. Would it ever be my good fortune to enjoy such luxury or high station? It never has!



## ALMOST FORGOTTEN

In my early years we moved "out back" to a small village on the railroad and the river soon ceased to be important in our thinking. Rattling and screaming freight and passenger trains superseded the hoarse bellowings of the river boats.

To go down to "see the train" became a part of life. If one of those trains came through today we might still be interested. Two things bulked large about those trains, the tremendous smokestack and the whistle. The whistle was large enough in itself as a part of the locomotive but it increased in importance when the whistle cord was pulled. If some small boys gathered that the whistle was the most important part of the outfit, the driver was at least partly responsible for he evidently thought that his arrival in the community was of interest and importance to everybody in that part of the state.

The engines were wood burners and that enlarged smokestack, I suppose, was due to the necessity for an adequate "spark arrester". Otherwise the woods would have been set on fire from one end of the line to the other. They burned split pine wood in four foot lengths. The fireman was a working man though he did not have to feed such monsters as were to come. The wood stations were usually out in the country along the line and adjacent to some wooded area. A wood rack was built on the bank above the track. It was so constructed that when it was full of wood that it was almost on a balance. The tender would be stopped at the right point and the fireman would get out and pull a lever and the whole rack of wood would fall in the tender.

The brakeman was also a working man. He earned his money. It was a familiar sight to see the brakeman running on top of a freight train, jumping from one swaying car to another, setting or releasing brakes in response to the screams of the whistle. He often carried a stout hickory stick about eighteen inches long which he thrust through the spokes of the brake wheel to give him more power. Sometimes he

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stopped the train before it reached the depot and sometimes it ran past and had to back up.

There were no air brakes even on the passenger trains. There were no vestibules between cars but there was a platform on each end and on one end a brake wheel. Between the cars, when the train got up speed, there was going on a raging wind, dust and smoke storm. There was no occasion for going from one car to another but on every trip there were always venturesome young braves who went back and forth with much banging of doors.

For a time there were First and Second class cars. If you did not have the money to sit with Mr. and Mrs. Jones, you looked out the window of the Second class car. You saw just as much of the world as other folks but you hoped not too many of them saw you!

Since we are writing of things almost forgotten, we will write about the "pay car" that came down the line every thirty days. There was an engine and one car. This car was open at the back like an observation car. At a counter sat the paymaster. Sometimes there were other officials. The car stopped wherever there were people who worked for the railroad. A man climbed the steps and heard his name called and came down the steps with his money.

They were not paid much for their work but sometimes a man came down those steps with a twenty Dollar gold piece in his hand. We have almost forgotten that there was a time when a working man might have gold money in his hand. Many of us have never seen a twenty Dollar gold piece. Perhaps the common man will never see one again. It was surprisingly heavy and always astonished you with its bright new look. I am no authority on such things but I doubt if there ever was minted a more beautiful coin. Perhaps it was growing so out of place and so accusatory in our welter of paper that men buried it out of sight. However I never heard it spoken against by anybody who had a piece of it.

Something else also has largely passed. In my early years I spent



a night in the city of Wilmington. I was awakened while it was still dark by a, to me, new sound. "Klop, klop. klop, kloppity klop". These "klops" were multiplied and coming from different directions. I had to hear the roll of wheels before I realized I was listening to the iron shod feet of horses on a cobbled street. One klopper intrigued. He would begin with a splutter of klops and then fall into a regular rhythm, then stop and begin all over again. I was listening to my first early morning milk delivery. There was no such sound in the country.

Are you old enough to remember the sounds that used to come up from a busy, paved street before the automobile came to help change the world? Do you remember how you were silent and what you were listening to, as in brave array, the Tenth Cavalry trooped by? It was what men have listened to since the Goths and Vandals clattered down the streets of Rome. But no more.

On the evening when the "we" passages began to appear in force in my life history, a two horse carriage was standing at the church door. When we came out someone opened the carriage door for us and we sat in the middle of the wide back seat maybe surprised at ourselves. The man climbed up to his high seat and the understanding horses klopped merrily down the city street, making happy, rhythmic music with their feet as the carriage rolled along. I paid the man five Dollars because they were klopping for a wedding!

In those very days a revolutionary and world changing thing was appearing, the Internal Combustion engine. It would be adapted to transportati and the two horse carriage would soon be seen only in some pageant or as a feature of some amusement venture. The long and most honorable history of the carriage would for awhile be recognized in the horseless carriage but that would soon be neither horse nor carriage but "the car",

Something else also went out from among us and so without mention or concern that men hardly know when it came about. The Commercial Dray.



The thing the black mule pulled. It was an adaptation of the common farm cart but was longer and the wheels were lower and stronger. Every thing about it was built to carry a load. There was no sides but stout stanchions were set on all sides, those in the back removable. It had a slanti down look about it. These drays were practicable and economical and they handled the merchandise of the nation. ~~At the~~ At the bottom of every invoice a merchant received was an item for "drayage". They swarmed on our water fronts and about our warehouses and then they were gone.

I asked an elderly citizen, "Do you know what a dray is?"

"Surely I know what a dray is", he said.

"When did you see one?" I asked. He thought about that awhile and then he replied, "It has been over forty years".

I doubt if there is one genuine specimen in all the land. Surely this useful one horse machine is worthy of being remembered.

## VII. VISITING ENTERTAINERS

While I was still looking at teenagers with envy and admiration, we had little in our community of what we now think of as recreation. There was hunting in the fall and winter and fishing in the spring and summer and the opportunity to get drowned in some convenient swimming hole almost any time. From time to time there came entertainers from the outside world who corrupted no one and carried away little.

There was the peddler with his enormous pack. He would gladly open his pack on the front porch and invite everybody to see his stock of wonderful merchandise. There were red table cloths and genuine Irish linen napkins, needles and pins and exotic perfumes and laces the ladies could not refuse for they made their own undies. It was all for the ladies and girls. These peddlers were Armenians and Jews and they were not interested in men and boys.

The Turks had better judgment. They came with their dancing bears. An old, old lady once told me she had never been anywhere and the only "varmint" she had ever seen where right there in her yard. Our best dictionaries are not much help in some matters, so I asked her what "varmint" she had seen. She said a monkey, a baboon and a bear. She said a man brought them. They said he was a Turk but "he did not look any different from any other man" that she could see". The Turks brought the bears. I never saw a man have more than one bear. The bears were muzzled and led by a chain fastened to a collar about the neck. They were brown or black and some were taller than a man when they stood up on their hind legs to do their shuffling, side stepping dance while the man sang some sort of crooning Turkish song. I never saw a girl or woman at a bear and Turk show.

Then there were the Italians who came with their grinding organs and dressed up monkeys. These visitors walked in on the railroad. They did not use the country roads and always managed, somehow to take

up a collection. The monkey usually went around with his little tin cup. One day an Italian and his monkey came to the village and began to put on his show. He stirred up interest by declaring his monkey could whip any dog in the country. That seemed a rash statement for we had some fighting dogs and we had seen about all the different kinds of dog fights that could lawfully be pulled off in eastern North Carolina. One boy had one of the meanest of dogs. They mighty near had to give him soothing syrup to keep him from fighting during church on Sunday mornings. All our dogs went to church ~~every~~ <sup>on</sup> Sundays but it did not help them. This boy lät out for home ~~and~~ soon he was back leading his dog ~~with~~ <sup>on</sup> a rope. As soon as the dog saw the monkey his bristles stood up and he began to snarl and show his teeth. The man said for us to make a big ring. He took off his hat and went around and got all the money he could. Then he set the hat down and said that if the dog won the money went to the boy. If the monkey won the money was his. He said something to the monkey and told the boy to untie his dog. As soon as the dog was untied, he made a lunge at the monkey and we heard his jaws snap but the monkey was not there. He had jumped over the dog and was at the end of the dog that did not bite and that is where he stayed all during the fight. At last the monkey jumped high and landed on all fours on the back of the dog. Now a monkey has the advantage of the rest of us. He can grab what he wants with all four feet and hold on. That monkey got a handful of hair and loose dog skin and settled down on his haunches to ride. The dog could have gotten rid of him by rolling over but, apparently, he could think of nothing but home. He made a round or so, then, seeing an opening, he was gone, the monkey standing up in his stirrups, as it were, the tail of his red jacket flying in the breeze. The dog was doing the best piece of running of his career but still was not satisfied. After about a hundred yards the monkey droped off and came back chattering in his



little bird like voice. The man picked up the hat and put the money in his pocket.

One day a very dark man, dressed in flashy, flowing robes, got off the train. He said he had been a chief of some across the water tribe. His people had been cannibals but they had changed their eating habits and he was now going about telling the world about their ancient customs. He was asking to use the one room school house that evening for an educational lecture. The door was opened and the lamp was lit for him and every boy who could find a nickel was present before the horn blew and some others. After all, a real live cannibal does not show up every day. So the lecture began. There was the man in his robes and back of him was a table on which several styles of butcher knives were laid out in order along with some African looking things. I remember the first words of the lecture: "I have eat human flesh". I do not remember anything else that was said, but that statement and the display of knives was enough to start any boy's imagination wandering. There was not a boy there but was perfectly familiar with the procedure on hog-killing day, those pigs, hanging up there to that pole with a stick through their hind feet, being cut half in two and their heads hanging down, half cut off. We wanted to ask the chief if that was the way they got a man ready for link sausages and the smoke house? Maybe it was a woman? He did not say.

I heard my father and an uncle talking about the chief. They agreed that his people lived in Africa but they thought he learned about cannibalism in New York or Philadelphia!