

# The Writers' Club Magazine Section

## OUR ANCESTORS

Mary J. Rubin.

In the heart of Russia, there lies a small town that bears my name. I remember my grandmother's having told me the peculiar origin of that name and the quaint person of my ancestor who figured in it.

Many years later, I had occasion to visit this town, Unovy; and as I lay in a very old-fashioned bed in the only inn in town, that old tale returned to my mind. The wind howled revengefully around the old house and rattled the window-panes, until I felt as if an adventure similar to that of my ancestor, Uncle Myrim, would have been very much in keeping with the atmosphere.

Uncle Myrim, grandmother told me, was an innkeeper and sole inhabitant of a deserted village lying on the outskirts of a small town. Travelers bound for that particular town would stop at the inn for refreshments, or on very stormy nights seek lodging there.

It was generally known that the village was deserted because of a band of robbers who had settled in the nearby forests. They would come unexpectedly upon the helpless villagers, rob them of their possessions, burn their cottages, and in case of resistance, would not hesitate to kill. In fact, no form of debauchery was too base for the murderers to attempt. The villagers were so often attacked that finally they packed their scant belongings, and went in search of another home where they could live in peace. Uncle Myrim was the only one who insisted on remaining in the village, in spite of the protests of his growing family. He actually gloated over the desolation, and was even heard to say that since the neighbors moved away, he felt himself a free man. This sort of talk sounded quite strange to his talk-loving wife, Aunt Deborah. But Aunt Deborah knew that she could not move him, so she very wisely prophesied evil consequences for his persistence and let the matter rest.

Uncle Myrim possessed a peculiar temperament. He was highly eccentric, religious but not fanatical; reserved but very good hearted; and to crown it all, very learned. He would be consulted on all matters from far and wide and people in return would honor his opinion by accepting his advice. Certainly, my grandmother's description of him was very suitable, namely, "Uncle Myrim was a man as good as he was wise."

For a year after the villagers left, peace reigned there. It seemed as if the robbers had overlooked Uncle Myrim and were under the illusion that they were sole possessors of the village.

One night Uncle Myrim was awakened by a strange noise. He listened for a while to ascertain where the noise came from; then taking his pillow under his arm, he walked stealthily into the kitchen. He placed the pillow on the edge of the oven, set fire to it, and as the smoke ascended the chimney he heard muttered swearing and shoving as if someone were finding it difficult to escape. When he was sure that he was safe for some time, he went back to bed. He did not think it necessary to awaken the rest of the family; so they slept in sweet oblivion of the danger surrounding them.

In the morning, as Uncle Myrim was standing behind the bar, putting things in order, two rough-looking men entered and asked for a drink. After a while, two more came in and made the same request. Although Uncle Myrim eyed them suspiciously, he greeted the strangers with exaggerated cordiality. He fumbled awhile with some bottles behind the counter and then produced two of them. From one bottle, he filled all their glasses; from the other, his own.

The strangers drank greedily and he encouraged them by refilling their glasses over and over again.

"Drink, gentlemen, to your health," and he raised his own glass. Gradually their eyes became watery and bloodshot. They blubbered, swayed, became hilarious, and slowly fell like logs to the floor, completely intoxicated. Uncle Myrim watched them with alert, keen eyes. For, while he had filled their glasses with the strongest liquor in his inn, for himself he had taken water. When they were all snoring, he searched them and found four long, glittering knives concealed among them. With stout ropes he bound them, and there they lay on the floor, stretched out like corpses. Then he summoned the others.

The women-folk entered, and seeing the sharp, long knives and bound robbers, recoiled and shrieked with horror. The knives looked so blood-thirsty that it seemed as if merely

touching them would inflict a wound.

"Now," began Uncle Myrim gravely, "these robbers will not sleep later than sunset because the liquor I gave them was not strong enough. Despite the fact that we have knives, they will kill us anyhow; for we do not know how to handle them skillfully. The only way I see of saving ourselves is to get help from town."

"I will ride to town and get help, father," cried the oldest son.

His father eyed him curiously. "Can you not understand that other robbers are watching for the return of these and will seize and kill you without mercy, for they will surely suspect that you are going for the police?" He spoke patiently, but he seemed annoyed because it was necessary for him to explain such an obvious situation.

Aunt Deborah could restrain herself no longer. She had listened hopefully, but now she gave way completely.

"There, what did I tell you? Why did you not take my advice in the first place and move from this hell? But you, you will stay on till they cut you head off. That is as much as you care for your wife and children. Oh, fool that I was to listen to you and now see my sweet little ones killed before my eyes. Oh God, where shall we run, where shall we hide? Robbers around us, death-pits on every side. Yes, that's where your obstinacy leads us—to the grave. Come here little ones and thank your father for your speedy death. Kiss his hand, thank him!" Aunt Deborah stopped, attracted by a gleam in Uncle Myrim's eyes.

"Oh, father, I told you to move, but you would not listen. I do not want to die," and the oldest daughter covered her face with her hands and cried piteously.

Uncle Myrim had stood silently, gazing at them. His eyes had a far-away look, as if he were thinking hard. He appeared not to be listening. Suddenly he turned and without saying a word, left the room. The others stood gazing at his disappearing figure in despair.

The oldest son broke the silence. "What fools we are. Why here are the knives! Why should we wait for them to kill us, when we can kill them?" The daughter shrieked and ran to the door, horrified. The mother caught hold of her son's hand as if to stay him from the deed.

"No," she pleaded, "no Jew may commit murder; no, son, you may not."

The son looked relieved. Saying was easy work, but when his hand had touched the cold steel, he drew it back quickly as if his fingers had been burnt. "No," he murmured, "a Jew cannot commit murder."

"Woe, woe," Aunt Deborah rocked herself to and fro in utter despair. The two younger children sat huddled together in a corner, repelled, yet attracted by the four giants stretched on the floor.

"Look at father, I wonder where he is carrying those logs," said the son, looking out of the window.

"Your father is gone mad," said Aunt Deborah. "Who wouldn't go mad?" and she moaned and swayed more violently than before.

"Oh, mother, look, father has a heap of wood piled high in the field and he is setting fire to it, look mother!" As they watched, they saw the flames rise high in the air. At a little distance stood Uncle Myrim, holding a great bell in his hand and ringing it with all his might.

"Oh, mother," cried the son, "he is using the fire signal to attract the people from the town. Mother, mother, we are saved. Within an hour, we shall have the firemen out here and they will save us. Sisters, we are saved, let us run to father, and help keep up the fire. Oh you robbers, snore away! Within an hour you shall be on your way to prison. Snore away!" and he ran to the field, followed by the others.

Within an hour, the firemen did arrive. They in turn gave the signal for the police; and the robbers, awakened by this time, were too dazed to offer resistance. Now that the police were certain that other robbers were hiding in the woods, awaiting the return of the captives, they made a thorough search and captured two more.

Two days later, Uncle Myrim was summoned to court to relate his adventure. The court listened quietly; then the judge rose and said:

"Because of your wisdom, Myrim Unovy, we grant you all the land in the village and hereafter it shall be named after you, Unovy."

What's the use o' bein' young, if you can't grow old and remember all about it?

## WITH THE EDITORS.

Brevity is the soul of wit, they say. Well, then, this will be indeed a witty editorial.

There are, however, a few remarks that simply must be made. First, no excuses are to be offered. We have done the best we could. But we want more contributions next time. We need 'em.

Second, there are only a few new contributors. We want more. Half the members of the club have yet to turn in material. The water's fine.

Third, this section is still largely woman's suffrage. The ladies, God bless 'em, do most of our writing for us. The masculine members of the club are urged—requested, perhaps, is the

word—to help the good work along. Don't be bashful, boys.

Fourth, we reiterate our platform. This University absolutely has no literary magazine. One is needed. The supply is the Writers' Club.

Fifth, three motives are all that can impel one to become a member of the club. The first is to gain practice in writing for the public rather than for the teacher. The second is the desire "to see it in print." The third is this school patriotism we hear so much about; the desire to see the University of Missouri take a rank in literary activities that is commensurate with its importance in other lines.

We have done. Amen.

## EDITH DEACON AND CUPID

Myrtle Wright.

Three times Edith Deacon had promised to marry George Peabody, and three times she had broken her promise. The last refusal came after the guests had been invited and the minister selected. This was too much even for worshipping Mr. Peabody. He packed his trunk and sailed on the first steamer without saying goodbye or leaving an address.

Edith, at twenty-four, was too self-sufficient to spend the rest of her life frying cakes and pouring coffee. Then, too, she had ambitions. She could write. Each month brought a snug check from the publisher. Perhaps she was too much wedded to personal comfort. When she went story hunting and saw red, untidy women carrying crying babies and bulky bundles, she vowed to live single forever. Then when she saw grim, angular maidens walking about, trying to look as if they had not made a failure of life, she solemnly vowed not to be an old maid if she had to marry the janitor. In this last mood, she always promised to marry George. When the women with the babies and bundles appeared, she broke her promise.

Now Edith was free to reflect. At first she did not consider the outlook serious. She thought George would soon come back. He always did. However, at the end of the year, when he did not show up, Edith began to be mildly interested. If she were mildly interested, her grandmother, the Mrs. Charles H. Baldwin, was beside herself with anxiety.

What could possess the girl? Two years ago, Mrs. Baldwin had spent thousands on the debut. During these two years, she had pulled every string to make a brilliant match for her grand-daughter. Edith, however, looked through the celebrities her grandmother presented at George Peabody, a lawyer of no particular means.

Was Mrs. Baldwin to have an old maid on her hands? She thought not. One morning she called The Star and asked for a reporter. The evening paper contained the following notice: "To recall her charming grand-daughter, Miss Edith Deacon, to the joys of society life which the young debutante has forsaken, Mrs. Charles H. Baldwin has offered a fortune of one hundred thousand dollars as a wedding gift to lure the young girl back into the gay world."

Mrs. Baldwin read approvingly, then went to Edith's den. That young lady wheeled about in her chair and gazed at her grandmother wearily.

"Edith," she began, "don't you think we had better go to Newport for the season?"

"I don't," Edith answered.

"Edith," demanded Mrs. Baldwin desperately, "are you going to be an old maid?"

"From immediate prospects, I shall."

"Oh! Why did you send George away?" groaned Mrs. Baldwin.

"Because I thought he would come back," Edith answered shortly.

"He hasn't, though, and here you are."

"What are you going to do with me? Perhaps you had better send my name to an approved matrimonial agency," suggested Edith lily.

"No, dear," wheedled Mrs. Baldwin, "but see what I am going to do."

Edith read the paragraph, tossed the paper into her grandmother's lap, picked up her pen, and resumed writing.

"Aren't you going to say anything?" ventured Mrs. Baldwin.

"I didn't know any comment was necessary."

Mrs. Baldwin went out baffled.

After she had gone, Edith flung her pen across the room, leaned back in her chair, and cried as only a self-sufficient girl brought to account can cry.

Next morning, at breakfast, there was a stack of letters by Edith's plate. There were square, oblong, and triangular envelopes. Some were pale blue, others white, and some lavender. One was conspicuous for its plainness. Edith opened one and guessed at the rest.

"They are proposals," she told her grandmother, who sat quivering with excitement. "It seems that I am to be entertained, at least. There are probably some good stories among the lot."

In her den, she began to read them. Some were from men who declared themselves women-haters until they saw her. Others were from inventors who wanted to marry her because she would be an inspiration to their work. One was from a poet who sent three pages of verse to her hair. One, the plain one, read as follows: Dear Miss Deacon:

I am very anxious to marry you because I need the money. May I

call Friday evening?

Sincerely yours,  
R. D. C.

"This looks promising," observed Edith. "There is probably a story in him. I guess I'll let him call."

She wrote:  
Mr. R. D. C.:

I shall be pleased to have you call Friday evening at eight o'clock.

Truly yours,  
Edith Deacon.

Friday, Edith was restless. Somehow, since George had gone, she saw only the grim maidens. The other women seemed to be always fondling children.

Evening came with a steady pour of rain, and Edith was more depressed than ever. What did she care about a story? She would probably have three or four decades to write stories with nothing to bother her. Why was it that she never knew her own mind two minutes? The door bell rang.

"I suppose I had better go myself," she grumbled. "He may be a South Sea Islander for all I know."

Edith stepped aside to let a tall dripping figure pass through the door into the full glare of the electric lights.

"George!" she gasped.

"Edith!" he whispered.

All was quiet in the hall below until Mrs. Baldwin, listening at the head of the stairs, heard Edith say: "How cold and wet your face is! Come close to the grate."

"I guess I'll write that check," observed Mrs. Baldwin grimly.

## School Patriotism.

J. L. Ellman.

What is school patriotism? To get a better start, let us ask first, What is patriotism? "Patriotism," say the men who edit the fiction in the dictionaries, "is a love of one's country." Obviously, then, school patriotism is a love of one's school. Love of one's school! It seems as if we are getting into deep water. We are trying to make simple a troublesome word by using more troublesome words. But our friend the dictionary will help us out again: "Love is a strong feeling of affection." Now it is simple again. Anyone who contains a generous amount of affection for his alma mater is a school patriot.

The only objection to this definition is that it makes a school patriot of every student, man and maiden, who "swells the glad refrain" of OLD MISSOURI, and who insists that "ours are hearts that fondly love thee." This would never do. We cannot afford to have too many patriots running around, for then they would no longer be objects of interest to us. So we shall insist that these "hearts that fondly love" their alma mater show their love.

There are a few types of quasi-patriots that are worthy of our attention. The first is a very common type. It is represented by the so-called "noise merchant." He is a dealer of noise, and measures school patriotism according to the noise output. He shines in all his splendor at football and basketball games where he emits great "yi-pahs" and "eat-em-ups". Then he leaves the games satisfied that he is a school patriot. When he goes home during vacations, he defends his school against all comers. He argues hours with anyone who dares deny that his school is the best. He stands up for his alma mater, for he has school patriotism!

Has he?  
Another quasi-school-patriot is the man who is ever ready to render pecuniary assistance to all school activities. He buys an activity ticket, old guard button, musical concert season ticket, and strange to relate, he subscribes for his college paper, without entering into any premium offers with writing clubs.

Though both of these students may be said to have school patriotism to a certain degree, the real patriot must be looked for in the graduate. He it is by whom the institution that graduated him is judged. If his work, after leaving his school, speaks favorably for his alma mater, he is a patriot—a loyal student; if, after a college training, he does things disreputable to his institution, he is a poor patriot. Said a college president: "School patriotism consists in upholding the standards of one's university."

This is an ungodly generation. Not that we admit it ourselves. No, indeed. But sundry philosophers of the generation immediately preceding, moralizing upon us as their sun goes down, behold our shortcomings for us and hesitate not to burden us with the entirety of the truth.

## EXPLAINED

Russell Blankenship.

Lord, what fools these mortals be. What miserable, rash, imitative fools we all are. Once let a fellow a little more original or a little more foolish than the rest do some particularly fool-hardy, hair-raising stunt and all the aping idiots rush gibbering to attempt the same thing.

Let an imbecille Frenchman walk across the Niagara Gorge on an inch rope and every miniature Niagara of America is surrounded by temporary lunatics essaying to cross the hollow on a rope, while the most hopeless cases try the trick with variations, anything from pushing a fellow sufferer across on a wheel-barrow, to driving out the family cow and milking her on this aerial perch.

Let the Wright brothers make a first successful flight in their aeroplane and every aspiring Darius Green in the country sets to putting about with canvas, broomsticks, cardboard, and glue. The results of attempted glides in these home-made contraptions are conducive to numerous sales of six-cylindered machines to undertakers or summers spent in Europe by the same over-worked gentlemen; but disastrous accidents confer no wisdom upon the survivors of the craze. The next perilous feat will call forth a new crop of imitators.

And so it is with everything under the sun, even with marriage. Back in the misty dawn of antiquity there was a happy marriage—at least that is the tradition, for name and date are obliterated by the sweep of time. But still we imitate that one example.

And the strange thing about it all is not our marrying, but the vainglorious strain in which we exult over the falls of our comrades and the highly tinged prophecies with which we gleefully sketch our wife-less future.

"Well, Jim's gone. I knew it was coming. The first time I ever saw him with that little girl I said to myself, 'Jim's going to get married.' But you bet I'm not going to my wedding yet awhile. I never saw the woman I'd marry," and so on ad nauseam.

That's what they all say. But finally the imitative instinct overcomes the boaster and there are more exultations from the ranks of the bachelors and more high-flown prophecies. It may happen directly a boy is liberated from grade school and knickerbockers, or it may happen when a man is in his dotage; but sooner or later the desire to equal if not to surpass the traditional couple of antiquity strikes a man as the tang of the deep woods strikes an old hunter in the spring. A pair of brown eyes can turn upside down the most sedate bachelor's quarters, and a smile can shatter the crust about an ogre's heart. The school boy marries, the gravest judge marries, but the survivors can not see that fate has decreed for them the common lot.

But perhaps man can't help marrying. That's a pessimistic utterance liable to drench the bravest of us in a cold sweat, but science bears it out. Have you ever noticed the actions of a moth when in the presence of a flame, or the movement of a growing plant toward the light? The moth can no more help flying into the flame than the young corn plant can keep from growing toward the sun. Scientific high-brows tell us that such movements are tropisms. Now I have a theory that in the case of matrimony the imitative instinct so far gets the better of a man's reason that he can no more control his actions than can the moth before a candle. Hence, his action in getting married is a tropism—he just can't help it.

Far from this being a pessimistic view of the situation, it's optimistic. It relieves mankind of such an awful responsibility that we should all

breathe easier. But doubtless Mother Nature throws up her hands and shrieks in horror at the thought of shouldering such an accusation. The more I think of this theory that marriage is a tropism, the more it appeals to me. But so far it is impossible to account for these foolish exultations and false prophecies that fill the air. However the psychologists say—Wait a minute. There She goes down the street. Where's my hat?

Yes, it's all due to a tropism, we just can't help ourselves.

TO

W. R. B.

Ben Jonson made a right good toast To lovely Celia's brilliant eyes, Too bright to pledge in dreggy wine. But confident I make my boast; His love was not so great as mine.

Young Pinkney filled his cup "to one Made up of loveliness alone;" But he could sing in limpid phrase Of everything beneath the sun— Could I but fitly speak thy praise!

The son of David, Isragl's king, Had dipped his pen within his heart: He wrote in words of hot desire. How swift his thought could take to wing— Might I but stammer half my fire!

The words that Atony did speak— When love his high ambition quenched— To Egypt's fair but subtle queen But half express my feeling deep; My love is fire, his was a sheen.

Shall I presumptuous place myself With those immortalized by fame, Those lovers of the days of old, The Hebrew king, rare Ben himself, The Roman general bronzed and bold?

The test of lovers is in loving; No fair to damn my love for want Of words to make its ardor known. My speech is rough, comes pushing, shoving; They spoke in verse with beauty sown.

Unuttered grief the sharper gnaws; The unshed tear the deeper wells; Unspoken love the redder glows. According to these changeless laws My love burns deeper than it shows.

I love; 'tis all that I can say, I love but thee, I yearn for thee; Here on my breast I long to crush thee.

To gaze within thy eyes, I may— I must—I will kiss thee—ah, kiss thee!

## WORDS OF WELCOME.

Greet me not, Brother, as a woman greets

Another woman, welcoming at the door

With cunning kiss and assurances o'er and o'er

That the visitor seems a God-gift from the streets.

Nor greet me with a stiffness that defeats

Its own set purpose, being so much the more

A clothier's dummy, hand outstretched before,

Without the semblance of a pulse that beats.

Instead, if you would rightly soothe my heart

And make me feel no stranger in the land,

Just look me eye to eye, seeking no blame,

Smile me a smile that knows no studied art.

And then, if satisfied, clasping my hand, Sincerely speak it: "I am glad you came!"

It isn't the man that counts nowadays; it's the adding machine.

We all sing "Old Missouri." How many of us live it?