



## Whether Common or Not

By WILL M. MAUPIN.

### The Music of the Popper

When the winter winds are blowing  
and the snow begins to fall;  
When the frost rime gathers thickly  
on the pane,

When the apples have been gathered  
and the fodder ricks are tall,  
And the tumbleweeds are rolling  
down the lane;

Then it is we gather gladly in the  
family sitting room

When the daylight dies and evening  
shadows drop;

And our joyous laughter quickly drives  
away the twilight gloom,

And the swelling, heated corn be-  
gins to pop.

Hear the music of the popper, quickly  
swinging to and fro

O'er the glowing coals beneath the  
flinty grain.

Watch the snowy, toothsome dainty  
into richest blossom b'ow

To the rhythm of the popper's glad  
refrain.

And we laugh in joyous measure as  
the bursting grain rebounds

With a snap against the shining  
popper's top;

For no sweeter winter music on the  
evening air resounds

Than the rattle when the corn be-  
gins to pop.

High and higher grows the mountain  
in the dishpan by the stove,

While the syrup kettle boils a merry  
pace;

And our hungry eyes are resting on  
the future treasure trove,

While a joy is beaming bright in  
every face.

Now the popcorn balls are rounding  
with a skill that's unsurpassed,

And are tossed into the waiting  
hands—ker-flop!

Surely other season's pleasures with-  
out doubt are all outclassed

When the swelling, heated corn be-  
gins to pop.

Munching, crunching—O, the pleasure  
that old winter to us brings;  
Rosy apples, nuts and cider—joy gal-  
lore.

And the old home with the music of  
our happy laughter rings,

Though outside old winter's fiercest  
blizzards roar.

Round the fireside then gathers all the  
family. Every one

Of the short day duties brought to  
sudden stop.

And the evening round of pleasure  
midst glad shouts is then begun,

And the popcorn with a snap begins  
to pop.

### Some Vagrant Thoughts on a Variety of Things.

People who live in the steam-heated  
palaces of the city may think they are  
fortunate, but they are missing a  
whole lot of things that go to make  
life pleasant. Pleasure is not always  
wrapped up in steam pipes, velvet car-  
pets, costly paintings, silk gowns, swal-  
lowtail coats and pate d'efol gras. Not  
by a long chalk.

The man who goes to bed in a  
steam-heated room and arises in the  
summer mildness, usually wonders  
why he is not feeling fit. Any coun-  
try boy could tell him.

The country boy may envy the city  
boy, but that's because the country boy  
doesn't know when he is well off. The  
country lad hikes off to bed in a cold  
room. He shucks his garments in a

jiffy, piles in under the thick com-  
forts, and is soon sleeping like a log.  
In the morning, when he is called,  
he bounces up at a pace  
that makes Dan Patch look like six  
lead nickels, and by the time he gets  
down to the kitchen fire his blood is  
tingling, his eyes are bright, and he  
feels as fit as a fiddle. Of course he  
longs for the enervating atmosphere  
of the heated bedroom—but that's be-  
cause he don't know.

The modern furnace has knocked  
a lot of romance out of life. What fun  
is there in sitting in front of a reg-  
ister? Where's the romance in loil-  
ing around in a room minus the rosy  
glow of the baseburner or the dancing  
light of the fireplace? Sometimes we  
wonder how on earth a fellow ever can  
arouse enough romance in his heart  
to propose to a girl in a steam or  
hot air heated room.

But it's different in the old-fash-  
ioned room. Through the mica of  
the baseburner the subdued light  
nickers and gleams upon the low ceil-  
ing; the very atmosphere is redolent  
of romance; the flame of the lamp is  
turned down low, and the reflection  
of the chimney top on the ceiling looks  
like the burnished gold of a wedding  
ring. Snuggling up close to the stove  
"she" sits, her velvet cheek reflecting  
the glow of the coals and her eyes  
dancing like the gears upon the  
walls. The very shadows of the room  
form a halo about her head, and the  
romance of the old days when armed  
knights rode cap a pie to do and die  
for lady fair seems to pervade every  
nook and cranny.

Of course you would never look for  
anything like that in a steam-heated  
flat.

The city man who was born and  
bred in the country never passes a  
popcorn stand without having his  
memory aroused. No matter how  
freshly popped, the city popcorn man's  
wares always taste insipid to the man  
who was reared in the country. The  
butter tastes rancid, and the very  
salt is bitter. And the alleged pop-  
corn balls! What a sickly taste they  
have to the palate of the man who  
remembers the molasses-made pop-  
corn balls of the old country days.

Talk about your city social func-  
tions, the "germans," the cotillions,  
the bal masques, and all that sort of  
thing! Why, they are not to be men-  
tioned in the same day with the coun-  
try corn shucking, the "taffy pull," the  
corn popping and the square dancing  
in the old kitchen. Besides, the so-  
cial function of the city means sleep-  
ing late the next morning and the rest  
of the day yawning and feeling like  
the fag end of turnip time. But after  
the country social it's different. You  
get up at the usual hour and go forth  
to the day's work feeling fine and  
dandy—no headache, no yawning, no  
lassitude, just a pleasant memory of  
a jolly good time in the company of  
jolly good people. My, how pleasant  
it is to recall those old times!

Right here the moulder of this de-  
partment is going to endeavor to de-  
pict a couple of scenes, and then he  
is going to ask you which you would  
prefer. Here's scene No. 1:

A stately mansion ablaze with lights.  
Guests arrayed in purple and fine  
linen, but thinking more of sartorial  
display than of hospitality. King  
Gold has left his brand on every heart,  
and everything is perfunctory and run  
according to unelastic etiquette. There

is a little dancing, desultory conversa-  
tion, and then a uniformed butler an-  
nounces dinner at midnight. The  
guests file in and partake of exquisite  
viands concocted by an imported  
French chef, pecking daintily here and  
there and talking nonsensical persiflage  
and making hypocritical compliments.  
At 2 in the morning the guests de-  
part, murmuring oily words into the  
ears of their hosts and then ride home  
in handsome carriages to toss in rest-  
less sleep for a few hours and arise  
in the morning with dull headaches.

Then turn from this and view scene  
No. 2: A cosy country home lighted  
with kerosene lamps and warmed by  
roaring wood or coal fires that add a  
glow to the light of the lamps. Every-  
body is full of ginger and the hand-  
shakes are cordial and honest. The  
compliments may lack the polish of  
the city drawingroom, but they are  
nearty and free, and the merry jokes  
fly thick and fast. Out in the kitchen  
Sue and Mary and Jessie and Hazel  
and Bettie, and George and Will and  
John and Jake and Frank are shelling  
the popcorn, and other maids and  
young men are jovially getting the  
syrup ready. Their laughter is free  
and joyous. And when the corn be-  
gins to pop its fragrance is wafted  
through the house, and the sniffs of  
anticipation would make the heart of  
the French chef beat faster with pro-  
fessional delight. Then, when the  
rich, sweet, snowy popcorn balls are  
ready and passed around in a dishpan  
heaped mountain high, there are shouts  
of delight, gay jokes and gustatory  
joys without a parallel.

Talk about your city banquets  
"after the ball!" Who wouldn't  
rather spend the evening at a country  
home where popcorn balls were the  
only refreshment, unless it happened  
to be complemented by sweet cider  
fresh from the press, or cold water  
drawn from the depths of the old well?

And then the home going. No per-  
functory "Such a lovely time." Not  
by a long shot! It's "Had a splendid  
time, Mrs. Smith." "Never had so  
much fun in my life before, Mrs.  
Smith." And the departing guests  
mean it from the bottoms of their  
hearts. Old Dobbin is unhitched from  
the front yard fence, Sue is helped  
into the buggy, "gid-dap," and away  
they go over the country roads, sing-  
ing and shouting and laughing in an  
abandon of real joy.

Geewhilkens! Look here, my fel-  
low city sufferer; does not the very  
thought of the old country popcorn  
feast or taffy pull make you home-  
sick? Honestly, now; since it's been  
called back to your memory, will you  
enjoy the social function at the stately  
mansion of Mrs. Nurich Asdemud to-  
night? Not by a jug full! You'll be  
bored to death from the time the foot-  
man takes your coat until you languid-  
ly pervaricate to your hostess as you  
are leaving at 2 o'clock in the morn-  
ing. You'll be comparing the poor  
pleasure of that city function with  
glad old times you used to have when  
you had to hitch and unhitch your own  
horse, and there was but one step be-  
tween your overalls and your "Sun-  
day-go-to-meeting suit."

Imagine anything like scene No. 2 in  
a steam-heated flat or in a mansion  
warmed by a furnace! It would be  
sheer foolishness to try it.

O, yes; there's great comfort in  
steam heat, and warm bedrooms, and  
downy couches, and all that sort of  
thing. But they take all the fun out  
of life—the innocent, rioting, glorious  
fun that used to live in the old days  
of the fireplace, the kitchen stove, the  
taffy pull and the corn shucking.

Remember the red ears of corn?

Remember the slow drive over the

long moonlit country road?

Remember the soft cheek heightened

in color by the exercise of keeping per-

fect time to "We'll all go down to  
Kouser's" or "Won't have none of  
your weevilly wheat?"

Remember the game of "forfeits?"  
Of course you do, and you'd give  
your steam-heated mansion and all  
of its imported furniture if you could  
bring back just one night of the long  
ago.

But if you cannot bring back the  
night, at least you can have the pleas-  
ure of recalling it. That's something.

### The Ruling Passion

Senator Fair, according to the San  
Francisco Call, had two marked char-  
acteristics—economy and love of jok-  
ing. He never forgot frugality in his  
extensive business, and he even made  
his own economy a subject for humor.

Once while puttering around over the  
Comstock he slipped and started feet  
first down a deep, narrow shaft. There  
was a long, continuous ladder reaching  
to the bottom, with its every twelfth  
rung of iron to strengthen the struc-  
ture. Down this he sped.

"When I found myself sliding down  
toward the center of the earth," said  
the senator, who used to enjoy telling  
the story, "I thought it was time to be-  
gin doin' something. So I commenced  
to grab at the ladder rungs. As I went  
down I broke every single one of the  
wooden sticks. This checked the speed  
of my fall and I landed 'bout a thou-  
sand feet below, badly shaken up, but  
not hurt."

"But what did you do when you  
came to the iron rungs?" he was asked,

"Oh, I just skipped 'em. Couldn't  
afford to break 'em. Wood was cheap,  
but iron was then durned dear on the  
Comstock."

### Taking No Chances

In one of the Episcopal churches of  
the city, according to District Attor-  
ney Jerome, says the New York Times,  
there was once an old woman who in-  
sisted on bowing her head every time  
the name of satan was mentioned dur-  
ing the service or sermon. The rector,  
after noting this eccentricity for  
many months, asked her:

"Madam, why do you bow at the  
name of satan? It is not customary,  
you know."

"Oh, I know that," said she, "but it  
doesn't cost anything to be polite, and  
one never knows what will happen."

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