

The Blackberry Patch

By Douglas Malloch.

WHEN Hiram on his ranch out west read in the old home paper that they were going to have a Home-Coming week back in the old home town he slapped himself on the knee and exclaimed, "By gosh, I'll do it!" It was forty years—forty years, think of it!—since he had seen the place of his birth, forty years of wandering like a lost sheep at first, and then settling down on some "government land" to raise real sheep and acquire a modest fortune. He never had lost his affection for the old town, and he never had permitted himself to get quite out of touch with it either, for the County Times had come to him week after week, wherever he was, to remind him of old places and old faces.

"Guess I'll just go along with this bunch myself," he said to the ranch foreman; and five days later he was on the train with his sheep, armed with his slipper's pass, and jolting eastward. "No use spendin' a lot o' money just for a fool idea," he said.

When the last sheep had been delivered and the draft was in his pocket for the last head, he climbed into a day-coach, and in four hours was set down at the old town. The place had changed some, he had to admit. The old depot was gone, and even the new one that he had read about was beginning to show signs of age. He missed the mud, for a neat pavement of creosoted blocks had replaced it. The old oil lamps were gone, and a row of incandescents shone in their place. Up Main street, rounding a curve, he caught a glimpse of an orange-colored interurban car. Yet, withal, Main street still ran north and south as it always did, across the tracks, and it was the same old town, only in new clothes.

There seemed to be fewer idlers around the depot, though the town had grown; and not one of those who were there seemed to know him. He walked up to the new hotel, and felt just a little lonesome when the hotel man, a stranger, showed no excitement or surprise when his signature was scrawled across the page.

"Home-comer?" asked the landlord, acting as though Hiram and not he were the stranger.

"Yep—one o' the Wilkinse," answered Hiram.

"Don't know as I ever heard of them"—and Hiram felt a bit lonesome than ever.

But an old fellow with a badge on, and a smile, followed by two younger men similarly adorned, hopped from their chairs in the lobby and came forward with outstretched hands.

"Hi Wilkins?" asked the old man with wide-open eyes and a look of delight that hid Hiram's heart good to see.

"The guilty party," Hiram replied; and Judge Bennett, "Red-head Bennett," who swam from Maple Bend to Picnic Point, you remember, all but took him in his arms.

"By gosh, Red—I mean 'Judge'—this was worth the whole darn trip," said Hiram, after they had visited.

"Hi Wilkins?" did not mean much to most of the young folks in the community, but it meant a lot to certain persons who used to play shinnay, and likewise hooky, with him. So the word spread around.

But one young person heard it with interest and some amusement. Mary, the wife of the hardware dealer, went right in to mother when she heard about it.

"Who do you suppose is here for Home-Coming week?" she asked with a teasing laugh.

"How should I know?" answered her mother carelessly, yet with a shade of curiosity in her voice.

"Hi Wilkins, that poor father used to josh you about," plumped out Mary.

"Well, land sakes, what do you think of that!"

"I'll tell you what I think of it, mother—'I'm going to invite him up to supper!"

"No, you won't do nothin' of the kind. Why, I wouldn't have him see me now for worlds!"

"How foolish, mother. I know what you're thinking of—that you're a little older—but I don't imagine he's been swimming in any fountain of youth. And I know he'd just love to see one of his old friends."

It took a lot of persuasion—but then, maybe the widow knew more about Hiram than her daughter did—but Mary eventually had Judge Bennett on the phone and invited the judge and Mrs. Bennett, who was a newcomer in the town, having lived there only twenty years, and asked them to bring Mr. Wilkins up that very night.

Five minutes later mother appeared in the kitchen in her gingham apron.

"Why, mother, what are you going to do?"

"I'm goin' to make a blackberry pie. That Wilkins boy was always a terror for blackberry pie."

Meanwhile the judge was having almost as much trouble with Hiram as Mary had had with mother.

"Why, gosh almighty, man, I ain't hardly spoke to a woman, except ranch help, in gosh knows how long!"

But the hour for the supper came, and with the hour came Mrs. Bennett, and with Mrs. Bennett the judge, and with the judge came Hiram. And it was about the merriest supper that ever happened over a hardware store.

My, my, how Hiram and mother laughed over those old days! They talked about the celebrated swim from

Maple Bend to Picnic Point—no other fool kid had ever swum it since, the judge assured Hiram, trying to conceal his pride under that word "fool."

Sometimes the harp of memory was played in a minor key, for there were some whom Hiram recalled who had responded to the final Home-Coming. Yet always the conversation swung back to some funny happening of forty years ago, and mother laughed as she had not laughed in years, and Hiram laughed as he had not laughed since the last tenderfoot broke a broncho.

The judge and Mary's husband told Hiram about the Community club, and about the six trains a day instead of two, and the creamery with a laundry attached, and the township high school, and the interurban, and the pickle station, and the farm demonstrator, and a lot of other things.

"What change do you notice most?" asked the hardware merchant.

"That darn park that used to be the wild blackberry patch," answered Hiram, with half a laugh and half a sigh.

But mother's laugh was not a half one by any means. She laughed until she was ashamed of herself. She laughed herself to the kitchen and came back laughing with a blackberry pie. And the half-moon gash in the crust, to let the steam escape, with its red lips, looked so much like a mouth that the blackberry pie seemed to be laughing itself.

"Do you remember the last time we went blackberryin'?" asked Hiram. A very clever person might have discovered a tone of tender recollection in his voice.

"Indeed, I do," said mother. "And remember how you dressed all up because I was goin' along, and you tore your pants and dassn't go home?"

"No, that wasn't the last time. The last time was long after that, just before I went West. Why, I guess I was about twenty then."

Well, mother remembered something about that, but not very much. So the conversation drifted back to the park and the playground, but Hiram expressed the idea that the children nowadays didn't get any more fun out of the slides and the swings than he did out of the blackberries.

"But," said mother, as they rose from the table, "you see, now we have both the park and the berries—only we have the berries out in the back yard."

So Hiram and mother went out into the back yard to see the berries. And, as they walked and talked, mother remembered the last afternoon in the berry patch much better. Somehow, they stopped laughing about it. And they stayed out there long enough to inspect each individual berry.

After the company had gone, mother sat up talking about them later than she had been up in years. "And what do you think of Hi—of Mr. Wilkins?" she asked.

"I think he's a fine old man!" Mary answered with enthusiasm.

"I don't see why you call him old," said mother with spirit. "He looks twice as young as the judge."

Hiram dropped in nearly every day during Home-Coming week, and he lingered a week after the big week was over. Then one day he showed up at the courthouse, suitcase in hand.

"Well, off for the West?" asked Judge Bennett.

"Yep."

A pause—then a grin from Hiram.

"Yep—goin' to sell that ranch and come home and settle down."

Full proof of the fact that amusement loving public were awaiting the opening of the Brundage shows was in evidence last evening at the tented city east of the Burlington station, when an immense crowd fell in behind the band and proceeded to take in the feast of high class attractions that are offered by this splendid company. Here are offered a varied line of amusements all in keeping with the Brundage slogan, "We Comply with the Pure Show Laws." Due to the late arrival of the company and the fact that it was necessary to remove the wheels from a number of the wagons before they could be taken through the subway, several of the shows were unable to give a performance, but those who were fortunate to get started did a fine business with the immense crowd that filled the midway. This spot will be the Mecca for the town people of our city as well as the influx of visitors from outside points that will be on hand the last two days of the week, as young and old want amusement and the Brundage shows offer good, clean attractions. A string of lights has been placed to the Burlington subway, lighting the approach to the grounds. The McIntosh military band is a splendid feature to the carnival that is always enjoyed by young and old and their concerts on the street in which they are assisted by Billy Kearns, is proving a decided hit.

LOST—Brown imitation leather suitcase, containing girl's wearing apparel; was lost on road between Papillion and LaPlatte, or Plattsmouth. Finder please return to The Journal office. ltd&w

A LARGE CROWD IN ATTENDANCE AT CARNIVAL LAST NIGHT

VERY INTERESTING PIONEER STORY BY MRS. C. H. PARMELE

CAME TO PLATTS-MOUTH WHEN ONLY THIRTEEN YEARS OLD

THE LAST SAD TRIBUTE TO MRS. JOHN H. BECKER

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VERY INTERESTING PIONEER STORY BY MRS. C. H. PARMELE

A most interesting story of Pioneer life and times is told by Mrs. Catherine Parmele, widow of C. H. Parmele, who was an active factor in the early history of Plattsmouth and Cass county. She with her husband, located in Plattsmouth in 1857, Plattsmouth at that time was a lively frontier town, and an outfitting point for Pike's Peak and the mountains. Mr. Parmele was one of the early freighters, making many trips across the plains; the Indians on some of these occasions giving them much trouble. In 1857 the Pawnee Indians were still around Plattsmouth, and the Parmele family had the usual experiences with these aborigines. They were always a source of annoyance, and created a good deal of fear among the women and children. Mrs. Parmele calls to mind that the business of the village was transacted on Second street, for several blocks north and south on the river front. Boats were constantly landing and discharging their cargo. It was one of the amusements of the times for the young people of Plattsmouth to have dances on the boats, and frequently these parties would last for the trip to Omaha and return. In those days people were generally very sociable and more unselfish than in later years. Mrs. Parmele mentions among leading citizens of that date, T. M. Marquet, Willett Pottinger, Tootle and Hanna, Wheatley Mickelwaite, Samuel H. Elbert and many others who were the moving spirits of that time. Houses were scarce for renting purposes and their first home was in what was known as Patterson Row, which was situated near the Catholic church. Mrs. Parmele has resided for over fifty years in the residence she now occupies on Vine street, which was considered at the time of its construction a pretentious building. Mrs. Parmele is the mother of one of our fellow townsmen, C. C. Parmele; T. E. Parmele, banker at Louisville; Mrs. Myrtle Atwood, of Lincoln; and Mrs. Nellie Agnew, now visiting in this city.

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