

Your Chance in the Home Town



By JOHN F. THORNTON, JR.
(From the American Boy, Detroit).

REMEMBER the parting words of my old schoolmaster that June morning my class graduated.

"What are you fellows going to do now?" he asked. "I suppose every one here has several ideas of what he would like to be fluttering around in his head. It's pretty hard to decide between them on a day like this—when the fish are biting up in 'Old Sandy'."

"My advice to each one of you is to get your fishing pole and carry the question along with you. Near the shores of 'Old Sandy' you will find schools of pollwogs. Learn a lesson from them."

"These pollwogs are on their way to froghood. You fellows are on your way to manhood. But the pollwogs are not in any particular hurry. I don't think you'll find them trying to leap around and lift their voices like frogs. As a matter of fact they are going to assume several different shapes before they settle down into froghood. For the present, however, they are content to go right on being pollwogs."

"You fellows are in the pollwig stage. Your powers and abilities are only half revealed. Look around before you decide what you want to be or do. In a few years you may become aware of qualities in your makeup whose existence you never suspected. At the same time, abilities that you think you now possess may fade away. Take your time. You may save yourself from the fate of a misfit. You've heard of them—the doctors are unhappy because they are not lawyers, the chemists who would be of more service to the world as newspaper men."

I have passed on these wise words to many boys. And I pass them on now with a new application—to the small-town boy who dreams of achieving success in the city.

His mind is crammed with Horatio Alger, Jr., stuff. He has read the picturesque life stories of some of our big men who left the farm for the city. The whistles of a locomotive among the hills makes him yearn for the city, bristling with opportunities. He looks upon the glistering rail as the one avenue to his opportunity.

He is short-sighted.

A few years ago, a big city was the place for an up-and-coming young man. It needed him, and it was prepared to reward him with money and position. Today, however, the story is reversed. "America has grown too fast," say our deep thinking economists and publicists. "She has spread herself thinly over a large area. The future of the country lies in its undeveloped small cities and towns."

Are you looking for opportunity? Examine that little old "one-hoss" town of yours, before you think of buying a one-way ticket from it. There are many ambitious, and very wise, young men who are deliberately leaving the larger cities and moving into towns such as yours.

A few months ago I visited a country store in a typical small town of the West. The owner is a young man. Ten years ago he left the town and went to Chicago for a "real job." But he had not worked long before he realized that it would be many years before he could get the kind of job he wanted. There were opportunities for foremen, managers, superintendents and other "bosses." But they were purely administrative jobs. He wanted to create and build up a business of his own.

The death of his father called him home to care for his mother, and he got a job in a general store of the town. It was a terrible grind. The work itself was not back breaking. But the daily round of little things to do—the same dull routine, hour after hour, day after day, week after week, got on his nerves. Weighing out a bagful of this, wrapping up a handful of that—it was hard work simply because it was not interesting.

Did this young fellow settle down and wear himself deeper and deeper into the rut? He did not. He simply began to look around to see if he could live things up.

He suggested to the owner that he advertise. "Advertise!" snorted the owner. "What for? Why—p'nt!—everyone 'round here knows where we're here. And open for business all the time. P'tul! And carrying almost anything in stock that they'll ever want. Advertise! What for?"

He suggested specializing. "Why not throw out some of these slow-moving articles and put in goods that sell more quickly?"

"No," said the merchant. "We depend on the farmers for the bulk of our trade, and we've got to carry a general line—a little bit of everything. No—p'tul!—we'll go right on with our line of staples."

The next year the young man bought out the old man and started in to be a business-builder. His first reform was to get rid of half the stock. You know what a collection of junk the average country general store is, with its haunting odor of harness grease, calico, soda crackers, horse liniment and cheese.

He had observed that the women did most of the buying. So he invaded his store's service to meet their needs. He investigated their buying habits. He learned that those who could afford to buy finery patronized the large city stores, or sent away to the mail order houses.

The young man visited the jobbers and manufacturers in the city. He brought back a large consignment of hats, suits, dresses and other stylish things that women wear. Then he fitted up a special department in the space from which he had thrown the gun oil and ten-penny nails

and skunk traps and a lot of other odds and ends. The other merchants of the town predicted ruin for the youngster. So did the banker of the community.

"He'll never be able to compete with the city stores," he said.

But the young merchant surprised them. He sent letters to a list of prospective customers. The women's wear was sold in two weeks.

From that time on he gradually turned the old general store into a women's and children's store. He did not specialize on clothing. But he limited his stock to those things in which a woman is naturally interested—clothing and house furnishings and groceries.

And he advertises. That is one of the main reasons for his success. The town alone could not support his store. One new business idea he uses is very effective. He has appointed "agents" in the surrounding small towns. Their work is to report to him weekly, on printed forms, any information that will put him in touch with new customers. If a girl becomes engaged, or a couple is married, he knows about it, and is after the business that usually results from such events. He knows also whenever a new house is built, or an old house is remodeled, or a new family moves into his territory.

In seven years this young man has built up a business that is known for miles around. Seventy-five per cent of his business is done with farmers and their families, who drive or motor in from points fifty miles away. That is the reason why, during the past year, he has been able to do a business of more than \$750,000 in a town whose population does not run much over 2,900.

Hundreds of small towns hold similar opportunities for young men. If ever there were "golden opportunities," small-town merchandising holds them today. For American farming is fast becoming a mighty fine paying business. Wealth is actually increasing faster in the rural districts than in the cities. And the American farmer and his family are no longer satisfied to exist on the very barest necessities of life. They are buying luxuries and conveniences in large quantities. The introduction of electricity alone into farming communities is creating a tremendous demand for electric churning machines, fans and vacuum cleaners. Water system, porcelain sinks, wall paper, paint and varnish, better house furnishings—these are only a few of the things that are selling heavily in the rural districts.

An expert has figured that the American farm market has a wealth of \$80,000,000,000. Part of that market is around you. The chain stores are spreading out from the cities. The mail order houses have secured quite a hold on the farmer's trade. But if you decide to build up a business in your community you need not worry over their competition. The mail order houses give no better values than it is possible for a local merchant to give. And a man or woman always prefers to trade with a friend whenever that is possible. The young man with a capacity for friendship and a goodly share of brains and energy has every assurance of success in small town merchandising.

But merchandising is only one of several fields in which the small town offers excellent opportunities.

The president of one of our big Pacific coast banks devotes an unusual amount of time to the development of his employees. One day he called two clerks into his private office.

"I believe," he said, "that you two young men are going to make good at banking. But you need a little broader experience with banking problems than your work here affords you. In a big place like this, you know, you are liable to lose your sense of perspective."

"I have made arrangements with two of our correspondents. There is a job awaiting each of you in a country bank. On these jobs you will be called upon to do a little of everything. You will become banking factotums. When your education is completed there is an executive position here for each of you. You have a week to think it over."

The young men thought well of the proposition, and disappeared into the "bushes." But the president's plans went awry. Neither man returned to him. One wrote him a long letter in which he listed some of the advantages of a small-town job over a city job—the cheaper living cost, the more healthful surroundings, and the chance to make more intimate friends. The other man, in a telegram, quoted Caesar, according to Longfellow: "Better be first in a little Iberian village than second in Rome."

There are something like thirty thousand banks in the United States. More than three-fourths of these are situated in towns of less than ten thousand population. It is in these small-town banks that many of our future banking leaders are being formed, for here a new idea in banking is being developed.

As one banker has said, it has been found good business to take interest in people as well as from them. In other words, the bankers of the country are going out of their ways to help their clients to grow richer.

I could mention many instances of the rise of young men in the banking world because of their ability in this direction. But space permits of only one.

In a certain Eastern farming community there were, a few years ago, two banks. They were very strong competitors. A young man in one of the banks said to the cashier:

"There is just so much money in this community. Both banks here are falling over each other, trying to induce farmers to bring their business to them. We have a great many good accounts already. Why not roll up our sleeves and help our

depositors to become richer? If non-depositors see us doing this they have the best argument in the world for bringing their accounts to us."

The farmers of the community were hard workers and intelligent. But they had no leader. Without a single "by your leave" the bank assumed the leadership. It organized a "Farmers' Forum." On the bank's recommendation the farmers employed a "field demonstrator," thoroughly grounded in the theory and practice of scientific farming. The federal government paid half the expenses of this "soil doctor." He spent his time traveling from farm to farm, making soil tests and advising the farmers regarding the products best adapted to their acres. The bank purchased a carload of purebred cattle, selected by a government dairy expert. These were sold to the farmers at cost.

That was three years ago. Today, that community is one of the most prosperous agricultural districts in the country. There is only one bank. The business of the competing bank has been taken over by the "five" bank.

The young man is president of the enlarged bank. He has been offered a vice presidency in a large city bank, with a salary double that which he now receives. He prefers to remain in the "bushes." He, too, would "rather be first in a little Iberian village than second in Rome."

On a trip last year through one of the richest agricultural sections of the Middle West, I was continually hearing the name of one man. I call him Jim Ingalls because that is not his name.

Five years ago he was an overworked reporter on a big city daily. His work did not seem to be getting him anywhere. There were half a dozen men ahead of him in the line for promotion, and the best that he could hope for was an assistant editorship in about ten years.

When his two-weeks' vacation period rolled around, he made a trip through the rural districts of his state. He did not return to the city. For in a little town he found the subject of many day-dreams—a run-down country newspaper for sale. And into it he put every cent that he had managed to scrape together on his city job.

Not a very promising "baby," you say. But Jim Ingalls had a vision of possibilities. The town was in the heart of a prosperous farming region that was well populated. Most of the farmers had a big city daily delivered at their gates. There was a growing community spirit among the county dwellers. Jim saw the need for a real community newspaper.

The first thing that he did was to improve the appearance of the paper. Then he toured the county, and created a chain of correspondents. Railroad agents, school teachers, doctors, lodge secretaries, justices of the peace—everyone in a position to gather news was supplied with stationery, and given free subscriptions. There were few who did not consider it a privilege to send in news items.

He gave up foreign news entirely, leaving this to the city dailies. His news policy has always been one of intensive reporting of the affairs of town and county. His correspondents pour in to him every week a steady stream of the gossip and chitchat of every hamlet and crossroads village. If Farmer Porter's wife holds a pie social, she knows where she will find a full account of it, and her guests know where they can find their names in all the glory of print. Farmer Lawler and his neighbors are interested in the hay, grain and forage reports from up state. They look in Jim's paper for them. He keeps close tabs on the developments at the county experimental farm, and nothing gets by him at the meetings of the county agricultural societies.

The paper's circulation is now nearly four times what it was when he took it over, and it is recognized as a valuable advertising medium. Jim no longer has to worry over his income. But he has made more of his paper than a mere chatterbox of the county's gossip. He realizes that, in his little newspaper, he has a powerful tool. And he uses it to encourage the dwellers of the county to carry out the improvements which will add to the comfort of all, and make every town a better place in which to live and bring up children.

There are openings for a great many more "Jim Ingalls." In the United States there are about ten thousand centers of population where newspapers are published. There are about twenty-five hundred daily newspapers, and nearly six times as many country weeklies.

Our smaller communities are beginning to awaken. There is increased political activity within their boundaries. And they need fearless, independent local papers.

Which brings us to the question of the small-town boy and politics.

The young man who plans to follow a political career can do no better than to begin at the bottom in his own village, township or county. By mixing in local affairs he will learn how to handle human nature. And he will learn to be practical.

Let not the young man think that participation in small-town affairs will stunt his growth. If he is destined for larger things, a few years will find him, as a matter of course, functioning on a larger scale. And a record of things done—that new school for Beaver Hollow, the park at Four Corners, the new municipal lighting plant, or the new railroad branch—all will serve as recommendations when he goes before the voters.

The AMERICAN LEGION

(Copy for This Department Supplied by The American Legion News Service.)

CONGRESSMEN FORM BODY

Veterans' Association Is Launched by Men Who Served in Various Wars.

The old spirit of the A. E. F. and of America's war-time army, navy and marine corps broke out in the halls of the nation's congress in Washington the other day, when veterans of the World war who are members of the legion, joined by members who served in the Civil and Spanish-American wars, held a big meeting and a regular feed at the University club and formed "The Veterans' Association of the Sixty-seventh Congress."

Two members of the United States senate and 32 members of the house of representatives attended the dinner gathering which resulted in the organization of the congressional veterans into a body. Twenty-six of the members of the house of representatives in attendance were veterans of the World war and members of the American Legion. Representative Henry Z. Osborne of the Tenth California district, a veteran of the Civil war, acted as toastmaster. He felicitated the country upon the formation of the American Legion, saying that the "vets of '61" were willing and proud to turn the reins of patriotic endeavor over to the "boys of '17."

In addition to choosing Congressman Roy G. Fitzgerald of Ohio, president of the association, and Congressman John E. Rankin of Mississippi as secretary, and getting away with an elaborate course dinner billed in the still familiar doughboy French of "over there," the congressional veterans listened to a careful explanation of the legislative program of the American Legion in congress made by John Thomas Taylor, vice chairman of the national legislative committee of the Legion, who was a special guest of honor and the only person present not a member of congress. Mr. Taylor went into detailed advocacy of the consolidation, vocational training, hospitalization and emergency officer retirement bills proposed by the Legion.

WAR ON LEGION BACHELORS

Women's Auxiliary of Sunflower State Issues Ultimatum to Unmarried Ex-Service Fellows.

War on bachelors has been declared in Kansas. Women of the Sunflower State contend that unattached men can't get along without them.

In furtherance of the fight, Miss McCoy of Topeka, Department secretary of the Women's Auxiliary of the American Legion is spreading broadcast the battle cry: "No bachelor posts in Kansas." Every group of Legionnaires is to have an Auxiliary, according to Auxiliary officials.

"Who else can give you fine home cooking with your banquets? Who else can straighten up the club house and give it a homelike appearance? Who knows more about service than the women?" the propaganda reads. Legion prisoners captured in the Campaign are being treated to fried chicken, pies, cakes and dainties and patchings.

Miss McCoy entered the business world as an assistant in a Kansas bank. During the war she stepped into a position vacated by a soldier, held it throughout hostilities and gave it back to the doughboy when he came home.

LEGION FLAG ADDS HISTORY

Ex-Service Men's Emblem Now Proudly Floats Where Five Others Held Sway.

The American Legion flag will fly in a part of New Orleans that has been under five flags, for the city administration has turned over a building in the heart of the old French quarter to posts of the Legion for four years.

Not far from the Legion building is the Spanish Cabildo where the Spanish colors flew in the breezes from the Gulf of Mexico until they were replaced by the French. The Louisiana Purchase in 1804 resulted in the appearance of the Stars and Stripes on the ramparts. In 1812, the British flag flew also in that vicinity for a few days. During the Civil war the Confederate colors waved proudly over the southern city. When the wounds of civil strife were healed the Stars and Stripes again reappeared.

The Legion building will have an auditorium, offices and clubrooms. It will also house Louisiana department headquarters, the Legion employment and service bureau, local posts, the Women's Auxiliary headquarters and the Pellicanire, official organ of the Louisiana department.

RAPID RISE FOR LEGION MAN

Colonel Shaughnessy's Career Has Been on the Upgrade Since He Was a Boy.

When he was in the army, Colonel Edward H. Shaughnessy's career was on the upgrade. Now that he has returned to civil life and joined Fidelity post of the American Legion in New York city, he has voluntarily demoted himself job to one which pays \$5,000 a year.

Colonel Shaughnessy was induced by Postmaster General Will Hays to sacrifice his position as assistant director of the American Petroleum Institute, New York city, to become second assistant postmaster general.

"I understand you've taken a \$5,000 a year job," said a correspondent who interviewed him.

"Does it pay that?" he asked. "I'd forgotten to ask about the salary."

The salary is a minor consideration now, but it would have been different in the days when Colonel Shaughnessy worked as a messenger boy in Chicago. When he was 15 years old he became ticket agent and a year later telegraph operator for the Chicago & Northwestern railroad. Successively he was chief operator, assistant train dispatcher, assistant trainmaster and trainmaster. When the superintendent of the road was ill he took charge.

Colonel Shaughnessy joined the Thirtieth engineers as first lieutenant when the war broke out. He studied French until he spoke it fluently, and worked up a book of rules adapting American methods to French practice. He was promoted fast. Praise came to him from Brig. Gen. George Van Horn Moseley, assistant chief of staff, for his work as superintendent of the transportation corps in the Chateau-Thierry region, and as general superintendent at Is-sur-Tille during the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne offensives and as general manager in the zone of advance.

General Pershing gave him the Distinguished Service medal "for exceptionally meritorious and distinguished services."

MADE LEGION DRIVE SUCCESS

Dare Devil Louisiana Man Put Real Thrills into Campaign for New Members.

When Anthony Kelley was discharged from the navy in New Orleans, La., he found the life of a land-lubber terribly devoid of thrill and peril. He had been going to sea since the age of fifteen and he missed the excitement of stormy nights in the dizzy heights of the crow's nest and hair-raising trips on the ropes far above the deck.

With the start of a membership campaign of Rollin post of the American Legion in New Orleans, Kelley blossomed out as a professional dare-devil to assist his fellow Legionnaires in attracting attention. He climbed a flag pole atop the city hall, several hundred feet above the pavement and rocked back and forth trying to break the pole. A net stretched below was all that was between the daring Legionnaire and some exceedingly hard terrain.

Kelley was unable to break the flag pole, however. So he scaled an eighteen-story building and hung from the coping by his toes. Film companies rushed camera men to take motion pictures of the feat and the Legion membership drive was a success.

"None of it was as thrilling as the four years and four months I was in the war zone," Kelley declares. He



Kelley Atop City Hall Flag Pole.

was plying between American and European ports when war was declared. He entered the navy as an ensign and was discharged in April, 1912. He continued in service as an officer of the Merchant Marine until December, 1920.

Do Not Have to Pay Poll Tax.

Backed by the American Legion, a law providing for the registration of all ex-service men of all wars in the state of Montana was passed by the legislature. The new act exempts all ex-service men from payment of the poll tax and requires each county assessor to keep a record of the names and organizations of all veterans within his county. It is expected that other states will take similar action soon.