Chit Chat Club 2/14/72

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Chapter 1

INTO THE WORLD

(by George R. Stewart)

What I think to be my first memory may well be only the memory of a memory. It might be, I mean, only a construction from bits and scraps of recollections, some of them dating from later times. Still I believe it to have been real.

This first memory, then, is of looking out of a window.

"Surely," anyone will say, "there is nothing remarkable about that!"

I reply (in words reminiscent of the Holmes-Watson colloquy about the dog), "Yes, but in that very fact rests its remarkable quality. Remarkable that I should remember something not remarkable!"

Moreover, and this too is noteworthy, I remember looking through the window, but nothing of what I saw.

Let us, therefore, return to simplicity and fundamentals. To say that there was nothing remarkable is obviously wrong. There must have been something of the kind to impress the event (or fact, or action, or what you will) upon my still infantile brain. I think that I can do something with the case.

First, the background demands attention, especially the date, for which the evidence is only circumstantial. The place, on the contrary, can be exactly located, as is true, indeed, with all my early memories, since I seem to have been oriented spacially.

The place, then, is a large window on the first floor of a house at the corner of Philadelphia (commonly called "Main") Street and Seventh Street in the small town of Indiana, Pennsylvania. The house, as I remember it later from the outside, stood close to the street, and was of brick, painted yellow. In later years I never entered the house, but my impression from this earliest time is that there was a window-seat at

this window with which we are concerned.

My family did not live there for very long, and so the time might be fixed rather exactly. Unfortunately, I have no record of when we moved into the house or out of it, and can only proceed by certain inferences. These, indeed, may be of some interest as giving additional data on my beginnings.

I had been born, May 31, 1895, in the town of Sewickley, Pennsylvania, a western suburb of Pittsburg, on the Ohio River. To judge from things I vaguely remember my mother telling, we remained in that spacious house until I was a year old or a little more, and then moved to Indiana. My mother must have been happy thus to return to her home-town where many of her family still lived, even though a primary reason for the move was certainly economy, my father having lost heavily, as had many others, in the recent financial troubles.

Of more importance in circumscribing the date of the memory is the time of our moving out of the house. This may have been April 1, 1897. I give the precise date only on the ground that that was the customary "moving day." The evidence of slightly later memories, associated with other houses, would point to 1897 as the year. Therefore, when looking out of that window I cannot have been older than twenty-two months. There is nothing very extraordinary in a memory dating from that age. I have talked to at least two friends who have even earlier memories. Again, for anything remarkable, we have to consider the circumstances.

Why do I not remember what I saw? Probably, indeed, because there was nothing of much interest. I would have seen, as I know from later years, a rather broad, small-town street, perhaps inhabited by such then commonplace sights as a pedestrian or two, a horse-and-buggy, and a two-horse wagon. On the other side of the street there stood a small, two-story,

red-brick house, back a little for the street and surrounded by an iron picket-fence. Nothing here to remember!

Yet the event itself must have been in some way memorable, and I can offer at least a theory. This may have been the first time that I ever realized an important fact--that windows were for looking out of.

Of course, people had undoubtedly held me up and pointed at the glass and said, "See, baby, see!" or other such inanities. But I had, I suppose, taken them just for such.

This time, I submit, things were different. I climbed up on that window-seat of my own volition, and I was quite able so to do, having walked, as my father has proudly recorded, at the early age of ten months.

So I climbed up there, and in bright image (not through a glass darkly) I saw the pageant of the world.

My life, I am inclined to believe, was never the same. On that day the one half of my professional life began to take shape, for throughout the years and decades that half has been to look through windows, whether real or figurative. Often, as on this first occasion, there has been nothing of much interest. But sometimes I have beheld scenes in space, and (what has held my attention even more) I have seen that these scenes changed detail and shifted toward greater and greater complication in time.

Then the other and highly active half of my professional life took over, which has been to grasp the pattern of the confusedly-moved pagentry, and then to write it down for others to read. . . .

My second memory, or what I take to be such, must be fixed before June 7, 1897, the date being so close to my birthday on May 31 that it may be considered the same. The date can be so exact because the memory involves my grandfather, that is, my mother's father. He was taken ill with pneumonia on June 7, and died on June 12.

What I remember occurred in the living-room of his house in Indiana, the house where my mother had been born and had grown up. I knew it well in later years, and I think that it is still standing. Since all these early memories are place-fixed, I could go back there and stand in the exact place of the memory.

Again, the actual event is not obviously remarkable. I remember (being then about two years old) a bearded man lifting me up off the floor, caressing me, and making much of me. About him there was what was to me a strange smell, which either then or by later experience I recognized as that of tobacco. This detail is of some importance. My father did not use tobacco, but my grandfather did. Who then but my grandfather could this affectionate bearded man have been? And, in that case the memory must date from before the day of his being taken ill.

I once checked this memory with my mother, and she said that it sounded very reasonable, since my grandfather had been very fond of me.

He was at this time seventy-one years old, with a long white beard, a patriarchal figure even to people who were much older than two years. He had ten children, and already had attained a dozen or more grandchildren. I feel honored therefore that he had any affection left to expend upon another toddling brat. But he apparently had. Possibly one reason was that I was my mother's child. She was his eldest daughter (after five sons), and there was a close bond between them. I was "Ellie's boy."

Like the first memory, this second one, though it seems commonplace, must have had something about it to impress a two-year-old. You might say that, being the second child, I was a little starved for affection. I think, however, it was that this affection came from a man. I can remember, vaguely, much fondling from women--my mother, my nurse, several beloved aunts, and probably even a collection of friends and miscellaneous

callers upon my mother, for a small boy is always open game for hugs and kisses, and until a certain age he laps them up.

But my father was an undemonstrative man--typical, you may say, of the Stewarts. Though he was an excellent parent and affectionate in his way, he made little display of emotion. Also, I think that men in general were more restrained and inhibited in such actions than they are now. My numerous uncles, for instance, never seem to have paid me any such attention, in contrast to my aunts.

My grandfather had reached the age and status when he could relax. Moreover, he was a great family man. I think also that there was no one else in the room at the time (at least I remember no one), and so he may have acted in a way which he would not have considered fitting in public.

In any case, I think that this is a real memory, and I treasure this glimpse of my grandfather. As for the memory itself, I am wholly passive in it, and I cannot maintain that suggests or predicts my future development.

Incidentally, however, the book which my father kept for me makes note for my birthday of that year 1897, "Grandpa gave me a velvet suit." Since he kept a kind of large general store, such a gift would have been natural for him. At least, it shows his interest in me, and the selection of that suit must have been one of his last acts. I do not, I am sorry to say, have the slightest recollection of it. . . .

"About this time," as I can best put it, we moved into another house. Associated with it are so many memories that I need not record them all. Most of them have a background of good weather--therefore, the summer--of 1898. By that time, being all of three years old, I was really getting into contact with the world.

Of that birthday, my father made a particular entry:

> A grand day. Mama had a little party for me, and we had our supper in the yard under the plum trees. Mama had a cake baked for me with three candles on it. Papa got me a nice new wagon.

Again I have to confess, though I remember so much about what happened in that summer, I remember neither the party, nor the plum trees, nor the cake with its candles, nor the wagon. How then am I so sure that I remember so much else of the time? There is a curious confirmation.

My wife (if I may so mention her, and she has had to put up with a great deal during more than forty years) used to doubt my memories, but I was finally able to confirm at least one of them.

During that summer, across the street, they were building a church. On one day I remember my brother Andrew, three years older, taking my hand and leading me across the street. (There were no murderous automobiles in those days.) A number of people--twenty, perhaps--were gathered around a place where some workmen were doing something. The people I suppose, were amused and pleased to have two interested small boys added to their number, and so they put us up in the front where we could see. It was the occasion of the corner-stone laying.

I may not, at that time, have grasped the significance of a corner-stone, but at least I remembered the incident. When T.B.S. used to doubt my memories, I would say to her, "Some day we'll go back to Indiana, and take a look at that corner-stone. The church is probably still standing, and the stone is sure to have a date on it." So we did, in October, 1946, on what I think of as the Earth Abides trip, since I later used that route for Ish, when he went to New York.

I had no trouble in driving to the proper street-corner. Not only was the church standing, but also the same old house across from it. I could have walked across the street, on a slight diagonal, just where my brother had led me, forty-eight years before, although in 1946 I would

have been jay-walking.

But, to come to the climax, that corner-stone had the date in big numerals--1898.

On the porch of that house across from the church I remember learning, somewhat laboriously, to ride a tricycle. I remember my father having some boils lanced, and that is the first recollection of something which might be called an emergency, such as one is expected to remember.

At this time I made my first friend. He was my contemporary Robert Fisher, who lived a few doors down the street. I cannot remember any details, except that once we went to the Fishers' old-fashioned outdoor two-holer privy. By that time most houses--ours, I know, and probably the Fishers' too--had a regular 'bathroom,' but many families maintained the old privy, which had been the exclusive facility ten or twenty years earlier.

This trip to the privy may, like other memories, have stayed with me because it was not nearly so commonplace as it may seem. Quite possibly even, we were venturing to do something forbidden. After all, I suppose that a three-year-old might really have fallen through one of the holes. But go we did, apparently taking the responsibility upon ourselves. And we successfully met this challenge of life by neither of us falling down a hole or meeting other disaster. In our young minds might this not be entitled to rank with Columbus's discovery of America in his?

One of my most vivid and significant memories of this summer involves the color red. . . . Some painting was being done on a house across the street, and I went to look. One of the workmen gave me a small can with a little red paint in it, and also either a brush or something with which I could make a smear. That must have been a highly irresponsible workman, for he should have known that red paint in the hands of a three-year-old

is as dangerous as a grenade.

In any case, I carefully carried the can back across the street, my young mind a-dazzle with a great creative idea. Our house was now an undistinguished white or yellow. I would transform it into glory with this wonderful red.

To make a beginning I picked a conspicuous place on one of the street sides. I started to spread paint, and felt infinite happiness at the glorious effect.

Then suddenly--perhaps I had painted as much as a foot-long strip--there was no more paint. Probably all that the workman had given me was a can from which he had already poured the paint.

But for me--being perhaps a rather bright three-year-old--the experience struck with a thunderbolt of knowledge. After a first moment of sheer amazement I realized my error. Obviously, all too obviously, I should have looked ahead, and not have started something that I so patently lacked the means to finish.

In that moment then (I think I may say safely) I became conscious of futurity and of the need of foresight, as everyone must so become conscious, sooner or later. Though I have now and again planned more that I could execute, I have never returned to that pre-three state of happy innocence, when one literally gave no thought to the morrow, or even of the succeeding minute.

My family took the incident very calmly, and were, I suppose, more amused than anything else. The little patch of bright red remained for all passers-by to see, and I remember my mother saying that it stayed there as long as they were in the house.

On the whole, if we had a really good autobiography of a three-year-old, we should probably find that he considers the world to be a pretty

treacherous place. So many things that seem to be good and pleasant, shift around and turn out, in the sequel, to be bad and painful. So it went with what might be called my first experience with money.

Someone gave me a penny. Naturally, I put it into my mouth. Neeny, my nurse, warned me not to swallow it, thus, probably, supplying a fatal suggestion.

I can remember having the penny in my mouth, and of its working farther back. And then, suddenly, I had swallowed it. My esophagus must have been well developed, for there was no sticking in the throat but a fine stomach-reaching swallow.

I remember first of all--as with the paint-episode--the moment of sheer amazement. Partly, of course, this must have been amazement that grown-ups could really be right, for we all realize as children that most of the things that we are warned about never occur. But also I felt amazement at the way in which the thing had vanished into me.

Next I felt horror. I had really done it this time! Of course, I had no idea of what would happen next, but I must have assumed that it would be highly unpleasant.

Appalled, I made the fact known, though I could not muster a sufficient store of words to make things altogether clear. But the penny had vanished. Even stupid grown-ups could recognize the significance of such evidence, or lack of it.

I vaguely recall a searching high and low--in my mouth as well as under chairs and table. No penny! My reputation for veracity rose, as my reputation for reliability declined.

Whether a doctor was consulted I do not know. There was no telephone in the house and probably not one in town. I am sure that there was no X-ray machine. People, of necessity, took things more easily in those

days, and so my family, I imagine, simply settled down to a little watchful waiting. Perhaps they gave me a laxative.

Next day I was carefully seated on a pottie, and my achievements scrutinized. Of course, no one was sure, even yet, but that the penny might be in some crack or cranny around the house. I can remember clearly, however, Neeny calling out, "There it is!"

Since I have remembered the incident so long, it must have some significance. First of all, you can say, I learned not to put miscellaneous objects into my mouth. I also may have learned that the advice of other people is sometimes valuable. Finally I may have grasped the valuable principle that one's own self is not altogether to be trusted. For I did not consciously set out to swallow that penny, and would undoubtedly have gagged over it if I had. Merely by putting the penny into my mouth I had given my unconscious a chance, and it had betrayed me. But this is a problem that no man ever masters wholly.

As for public events, little was occurring in those years to make an impression on a three-year-old. My father was a Republican, and my mother's family were Democrats, but neither side took politics seriously enough to start a family quarrel. My Aunt Annie--as I have been told, for I do not remember it--once taught me to cheer for Cleveland. Since he went out of office in March, 1897, this first political participation of mine must have been an early one.

The Buffalo Bill show, a kind of public event, in that famous (to me) summer of 1898, and I remember vaguely something about the parade, but I did not see the show--or, at least do not remember it.

As a first memory of a public event I claim the Spanish-American War. The battle of Manila Bay occurred on May 1, 1898, and I can remember a couplet of a song (more rhyme than sense) that people were singing:

He sent the Span-yards
Back to their tan-yards.

There was also a tag-line which went something to the effect,

Oh, Dewey, what a great man was he!

I must remember those words from that actual summer, for I think the song too bad a one to have lingered in the popular repertoire for very long. As for my recollecting this little snatch of it, that may again be a "first." At this point I had become conscious of the fascinating non-logical properties of language, as embodied in such a phenomenon as rhyme. Much of my professional activity has been concerned with those curious linguistic vagaries associated with names and naming.

So much for early memories--but I think that I can make a case for their significance, almost without exception. Is it too much to conclude that most of them represent important beginnings, marking the maturation of my personality? In the first of them I commence to conceive the world as an objective reality. In another I take independent action--even, probably, against authority. In a third, I grasp the all-importance of foresight. In a fourth I gain foresight in another manner and sense the insidiousness of things. In a fifth, I may even say, I become conscious of the play of language. I conclude, therefore, that these incidents were of first-class importance, and also that, for that very reason, I remembered them.

By the end of the summer of 1898, thus, not only was I walking and talking, but also--fortunately, as far as I can tell, without traumatic experience--I had made an appreciable progress toward mental maturity.

Chapter 2

ANCESTORS

A mathematician might write for any single life the equation:

$$H + E = L$$

Here the H is for Heredity which -- in my own case, for instance -- determined at the moment of my conception that I was to be a member of Homo sapiens, male, blue-eyed, and possessing many thousands of individual traits.

But, immediately after conception, my organism came under the powerful influence of E, that is, Environment -- not all-powerful, indeed, since it could not change me to a chimpanzee or shift me to a brown-eyed girl. After my birth I came, even more, under the environmental pressure. In most respects the environment was favorable, since my species had evolved in it. For instance, my heredity required oxygen, which my environment supplied liberally. But in many ways, especially in that it contained numerous rival individuals of Homo sapiens this environment was hostile or at least competitive. My heredity thus modified by my environment resulted in my life.

Biographies and autobiographies in general concentrate upon the struggle of the individual to overcome the environment or to adjust to it. They rarely give much space to consideration of the heredity, partly because of the difficulty of isolating that component. Yet the neglect of such an important factor is unjustifiable. Where heredity can be observed, to some degree, is in ancestors, and to that study I feel justified in devoting some attention.

Before entering upon that topic, however, I wish to return to the mathematical formula, and to question (though not more than question) where it may not be too simple. I would suggest writing it:

$$H + E + X = L$$

Here the X, as the use of that symbol would suggest, is an unknown or doubtful element. It is what some would term God or Providence and others would call Fortune or Chance or Luck.

Probably I would never have thought X worth inclusion except for my research involved in Good Lives. Of the six men there studied, two had a deep-seated sense of the importance of Luck. Since they were men who had gone far in the mastery of life, I have found myself unable to dismiss their views lightly.

Not to become involved in a religious problem, I shall here use the term Luck. People, in general, will know what I mean, even if I cannot define the term. It may be "good or "bad". It means hitting the jackpot at Reno, especially if you do so with your last dime. It means cancelling, just before take-off, your flight on the plane that crashes. It means applying for the job on the day when there happens to be a vacancy. Or it means not hitting the jackpot and not cancelling out or applying for the job just after it has been filled.

Also Luck, good or bad, may function daily in minor events too numerous to count or remember. Theoretically, in the course of a lifetime, good and bad should balance off, so that Luck would end up even. But such men as those in Good Lives, Heinrich Schliemann and John Bidwell, held the contrary.

I have examined, in memory, my own life to see whether Luck has been of importance. I cannot see that it has been so. Naturally my life has had its critical moments and its irrevocable decisions, but I cannot discern any functioning of Luck in these major events.

As for the minor functioning of Luck, I have come to a split conclusion. In my professional life, both as professor and writer, my cumulative Luck was bad; in my personal life, good. To illustrate, the publication of a book at the time of an international crisis is deleterious or disastrous for the book's reception; I had books coincide with the Munich crisis, with Pearl Harbor, and with the death of Stalin. On the other side, some lucky chances have put me, a septuagerian, into a social and familial situation which is much more "successful" than I could, in my younger years, have hoped to reach by my own abilities.

Enough, for the present, of Luck! And since I do not count it of importance in my story, additional mentions of it will be few. I return, then, to Heredity, that is, to Ancestry -- and I find it a difficult subject on which to write gracefully. In fact, I face a dilemma. On the one hand, like the ordinary genealogist, I may write in laudation. On the other hand, by belittling my ancestors I may make myself appear self-important. What I am really trying to do, however, (this being <u>my</u> story) is to explain myself -- that is, my hereditary component -- by examining what traits in this or that forefather, suggest that I was coming along some time in the future. I realize that heredity is a tricky concept, so that much of what someone might suppose to be heredity may be really a cultural tradition,

transmitted environmentally.

Also, I consider my heredity chiefly in a collective manner, partly because I find few outstanding personalities on whom to concentrate.

My materials for the attempt are rather better than most Americans possess, because of records compiled by a grandfather and an uncle. I know at least the names and approximate dates and places of residence of well over a hundred of my ancestors, some of them ~~well~~ back into the sixteenth century. But, unfortunately, I know little of what they were really like. The women, especially, are rarely characterized.

Ethically, my collective origin, as recorded, seems to be approximately 60%-plus Lowland Scottish; 25% - plus, English, -- the small remainder being Highland Scottish, Dutch and Walloon. But these categories themselves are complex. To be Scottish is to be, in some uncertain mixture -- Anglian, Celtic (probably of two kinds), and Scandinavian, and even to have the likelihood of deriving in some small part from the mysterious Picts. As for the English portion, most of my ancestors came from Suffolk where they would have been Angles, imposed upon a sub-stratum of ancient Britons, and in turn subjected to a heavy invasion of Danes. Some of them bore the name Paine, which is of Norman origin.

Two negative features are to be noted. Except for Stewart itself, there is no name associated with the Scottish Highlands. There is no Irish name, even though many of the ancestors were Scots who joined in the Ulster Plantation of the early seventeenth century, and some of the families lived in

Ireland for more than a century. Apparently, Protestants and Catholics simply did not intermarry in that period and area, even though they lived closely together. Those ancestors are thus what has commonly been known in the United States as Scotch-Irish, a term which is not used in Ireland and even seems to be resented. But some of them came directly from Scotland, and some are doubtful.

Thus observed microscopically my forebears seem highly varied. Should I, for instance, attribute to the Celtic strain certain of my imaginative traits?

Viewed more broadly, this ancestry is highly unified. It sprang entirely from Great Britain and a near-by small area on the continent. Except for the hypothetical Picts, all of these people were speakers of Indo-European languages and had developed from the tradition of culture sometimes denoted as "High Barbarism." They had not felt the influence of Rome except indirectly, and they became Protestant with the Reformation. Even Jean Vigne, the Walloon, was a Huguenot.

He landed on Manhattan Island about 1616. Four years later another ancestor probably made it on the Mayflower, though the record is not certain. The others drifted in, decade by decade, the latest arriving about 1810, that is, more than a century and a half ago. I am thus, for better or for worse, very deeply American.

Though many of these immigrants apparently could write, mail-service scarcely existed, and they rapidly lost touch with their families "in the old country." Research has linked up the genealogy in a few instances, but I have not an iota of contact

with any family across the water.

Many of these immigrants apparently had some means by which to acquire a bit of cheap land or otherwise make a start. Jean Vigne owned a farm on Wall Street, and if that parcel were still in the family we would have no financial worries.

In the colonies the collective ancestors show two centers of concentration. The English line lived in Massachusetts, especially around Dedham, spreading out a little into New Hampshire, and, after 1800, jumping to Ohio. The Scottish line, except for little invasions of Delaware and Maryland, spread out across the southern part of Pennsylvania.

They can hardly be called real frontiersmen, though sometimes they got involved in the Indian troubles. Two or three of the Massachusetts boys were out in King Philip's War.

A family story concerns some of the Scots. They built a blockhouse where Homer City, Pennsylvania, now stands. When war broke out, probably in 1775, they had to run from the Indians, but they threw the pots and pans (copper, I suppose) into a ravine. Seven years later they came back, found the pots and pans, and set up housekeeping again.

What did all these people do for a living, that they might be strong and healthy, and thus eventually produce me? Most of them, as we would expect (like Jean Vigne on Manhattan) were farmers, more or less. I add the proviso because they seem to me not to have been really dedicated, green-thumb farmers. They worked the land with a hired man or, occasionally, in Pennsylvania, with a slave. But many of them had a second source of income, such as keeping an inn or making rope or trading with

the Indians. One of them, in 1701, was put under bonds by the Council not to include rum in his trading -- goods. (This, by the way, is the closest thing to a criminal record that the ancestors supply)

They rarely were artisans. One is listed as a blacksmith. Another, after being well-to-do and losing his money, became a jack-of-all-trades -- tanner; then, hatter; then, carpenter; then, wheelwright.

Of the professions, not one was a lawyer. Though several bore such titles as "Captain," and "Colonel," they were militia officers, and not professional soldiers. They all lived inland, and so there were no sea-captains. Two were doctors, one of them doubling by keeping an apothecary shop. One was a minister, noted for his hell-fire sermons. A number of them held local offices, but none were career public-servants. Several were schoolteachers, at least as young men.

To attempt a summing up, they seem to average out as middle-class and colorless, in a society which itself demands the same adjectives. They had only one striking rendezvous with a historical event.

In 1689, when Governor Andros was deposed in Boston, Daniel Fisher in a critical moment, seized Andros by the collar, hustled him out of his place of refuge, and took him through an angry mob to a place of detention. This Fisher was an ancestor.

As to what manner of people these actually were, we gain little insight, from the very nature of the records -- a will,

a tombstone, a land-title or other official document. Being, some of them, innkeepers, they probably sampled the liquor that they sold, and as Scots they must have savored good whiskey. The general violence of their prohibitionism in the nineteenth century may be considered a natural reaction. But whether they laughed at a good story, or even a ribald one, who knows?

In physical type, since no general tradition survives, we must assume that they were somewhat average. There was, as mentioned, the exceptionally powerful Daniel Fisher. There was also James Draper (1654-1698), who was famous around Dedham as a wrestler. On the whole, I imagine that I preserve the physical type, being, like many Scots, tall, blue-eyed, and dark-haired.

One interesting trait is clearly shown even in the scanty records, that is, longevity. The men, indeed, show it more strikingly than the women. A number of the men lived into their eighties and two of them (one on my father's side and one on my mother's) lived past the century mark.

Especially I should mention Thomas Harris, who was born in 1695 and died in 1801, thus accomplishing the difficult feat of living in three centuries. Since I was born in 1895, I feel that he has left me a mark to shoot at.

More difficult to document, but nevertheless, present, is an intellectual interest. It shows in the number of school-teachers. It shows also in an anecdote about Thomas Harris, who was reported, at the age of one hundred, to be reading his Bible without glasses. The remarkable fact is that such a man, born in Ireland in that period, should ever have learned to read at all.

In the Revolution they were against the King, participating generally as Minutemen or in the militia. Because of a remarkable spread of generations, one of my greatgrandfathers served in the Revolutionary War.

An interest in education can, of course, be assumed for Scots, and for English Puritans too. It shows, I think, in my mother's mother (*née* Dick) claiming (as far as I know, rightly) that the famous early-nineteenth century theologian Thomas Dick was a member of her family. There is, to be sure, little record in those earlier years of college or university connections, though one of the family (not an ancestor) was a graduate of Princeton in 1753. But, at least after 1800, the local academies were active. My father's father studied Latin and Greek for three years in Mifflintown, Pennsylvania, and I still have his Ovid and Cicero. The grandfather went on to the University of Pennsylvania to study medicine.

The real educational break-through, however, came with the next generation. Four of that grandfather's sons went to college. My maternal grandfather, frustrated by early poverty in his own desires for an education, sent four sons to Princeton, and -- even more remarkable -- three daughters to Vassar and one to Wellesley. Three of these sons became teachers or professors, and one of them took a Berlin Ph.D.

I therefore take it as a natural development from this ancestry that I should have spent my life in involvement with higher learning.

Collectively, the ancestors display a strong sense of attachment to their churches, Congregational and Presbyterian, and deep feelings of morality and duty, which were closely tied to religion.

One of the early recollections of my mother's father is illustrative. This would have been in western Pennsylvania, about 1830, when the family was living on a poor subsistence farm, and would have been hungry for an additional meat-supply. In his own words:

> About this time I recollect of a large drove of wild turkeys looking in at our cabin windows -- but as it was Sunday, the trusty rifle of the pioneer on the two pegs in the joist had to remain quiet, for it was the desire of the family 'Remember the Sabbath Day.'

This incident was preserved as one of my grandfather's earliest memories, and must certainly have inculcated a strong sense of duty.

Of all the ancestors those of most interest to me -- partly because I have more record of them -- are Joseph, Samuel, and Andrew Wilson (father, son, and grandson), the last being my mother's father. In describing them I several times quote from my grandfather's own narrative.

Joseph Wilson came from Ballymena in Northern Ireland, and as a young man married and went to Belfast, there to work at his trade as a weaver. He was of middle stature, powerful, with a great barrel of a chest, and he had long golden hair, for which a wig-maker offered him a high price. As family tradition told it,

he became involved in anti-English plots. Since this was in the early 1790's, such a procedure is likely, and he would probably have been one of the United Irishmen under the leadership of Wolfe Tone. As usually happens, the conspiracy went awry, and Joseph with his wife sailed out of Belfast, doubtless for his health.

Landing in Philadelphia, he found no work as a weaver, and hired out as a laborer. After a year or two, about 1797, he moved out to Western Pennsylvania, and "took up" some land. Being a late-comer in this northern tip of Appalachia, he had to be content with some hilly acres, where he could not do more than drag out an existence with his growing family.

Yet, in a sense, we may say that he prospered. He lived the life of a free man with a wife who seems to have matched him. They reared four sons and three daughters. The "hair like a golden guinea" paled into gray, but the barrel chest remained. He liked his whiskey, and plenty of it, and he lived "in a respectable manner as compared with any family around", -- which is probably not to say a great deal.

Yet he had also his intellectual interests, based especially on two theological works -- Thomas Boston's Human Nature in its Fourfold State, and Charles Hodge's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. He enjoyed discussing their doctrines.

At some point as he approached old age, he made merry at a house-raising and ended up by falling off the building on his head. He cracked his skull, but survived. His wife, thought thereafter that this mishap "made him a different man when under the influence of drink." (This cryptic conjugal comment

has always intrigued my imagination.)

In the end, in spite of a cracked skull and much whiskey, Joseph suffered no disease and merely quit living at the age of 103--"full of years and full of faith," as my grandfather summed him up.

Though I have much admiration for Joseph, I cannot say that he is my type of man or that I can discover much in him that leads to me. My feelings are much more with his son Samuel, though I may here be suffering from a kind of romanticism.

This Samuel, second child and oldest son of Joseph, was born in the family cabin in 1800. In 1822 he married Elizabeth Wilkins. Then, to quote a passage which also servesto exemplify the best of my grandfather's prose:

> Young, ardent, and full of life and hope, they commenced life in a log cabin on the southeastern slope of the Chestnut Ridge, on a piece of God's earth unclaimed, unturned, and uncultivated, save by the hand of nature, which had covered it with tall oak, chestnut, hickory, with an undergrowth of dogwood, gooseberries, and still another coating of rattlewood, huckleberry, richweed,and ferns.
>
> His own strong arms felled the trees that made his dwelling, split the clapboards to cover it, the slabs to floor it, and built the large open fireplace of logs outside, lined around the fireplace with stone and clay. A single cow, two sheep and a pig were the start of the gathering flock. A mare colt of three years was the team with which the logs were drawn together; the shovel plow was propelled that made mother earth catch the seed for the coming harvest.

The narrative adds, almost like a line from a fairy-tale: "Though poor, they were industrious and happy."

Children came fast. Samuel worked hard at land-clearing, but by that time any land that could be taken up was poor stuff, not really fit for farming at all.

To supplement the farm, he taught school, being well-enough qualified: "My father wrote a beautiful old-fashioned round hand..., and could master clean through the Arithmetic, and was in short about the best scholar in Brush Valley."

But teaching paid little, and Samuel rented a farm. Then disaster struck with the death of the devoted wife and mother. In what seems desperation Samuel drove some horses to Canada for sale, but the speculation failed. So the home had to be broken up and the children distributed to kinsfolk. Thus scattered, they were not happy, and the conscientious father, teaching again, set up housekeeping himself on a rented farm:

> Father was a No. 1 cook--we had all the luxury of the times, kept some cows, hens, pigs, etc., etc., just as other folks did. We could make as good bread and butter, buckwheat cakes and all as ever I eat.
>
> We had indeed a happy time. Father taught school this winter in the old school house of Manor Meeting House, about four miles away, traveling morning and evening, often on foot, as merry as a lark, whilst Joseph, fourteen, and myself, eleven years old, thresed out a crop of oats

His son remembered this year-and-a-half as an idyllic time, and never forgot the chicken and the buckwheat cakes.

But then a "Dutch" neighbor overbid for the farm, and in 1839 Samuel had to give up again, selling even the pet lambs at auction. He went to teaching school, and the older boys more or less shifted for themselves.

In 1843 Samuel remarried and moved onto a run-down farm owned by his wife's rather shiftless father.He lived there permanently, working hard, improving the farm and -- one has the suspicion -- a little hen-pecked. At least, his second wife wanted nothing to do with the older children, and the unusually affectionate and conscientious father really went out of his oldest son's life. He died in 1865.

Why should I identify more with the unfortunate Samuel than with his colorful father or his successful son? Because, I suppose, his very failures and his lack of adjustment to his crude environment suggest that he cherished some dream. He, who was the best scholar in Brush Valley, might have been the best at Harvard College, if he could ever have got there. His good qualities were legion; his tragic flaw was that he was born in a hostile time and place. In spite of the estrangement fomented by the second wife, his son Andrew cherished an unusual love for his father.

I have another bond of sympathy with Samuel. In young manhood he came down with a severe pneumonia, which left him subject to periodic pulmonary flare-ups -- my own story.

Wilson

Andrew Wilkins (the first of the line to bear a middle name), second child and son of Samuel, was born in 1826. He suffered with the family misfortunes, but enjoyed what was apparently a warm love from both father and mother. The latter taught him to read at an early age, an interesting evidence of the way in which literacy was maintained among these isolated and poverty-fighting people.

Andrew eagerly picked up what schooling he could -- much of it, indeed, as he himself vaguely realized, scarcely to be called "relevant". On one occasion he undertook six weeks of work in "grammar," only to discover that it meant nothing more than memorizing definitions and rules. Perhaps, however, he really profited by this course, for his writing shows scarcely any grammatical lapses.

Of himself at the age of fourteen he wrote, "My mind was now set on obtaining a liberal education." But he refused to be a burden on his hard-pressed father -- "Instead of pursuing my studies I went to Uncle Andrew's, and put in his spring crop of corn and oats."

Shortly afterwards, at the age of fifteen, he announced himself as prepared to teach Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and Grammar. He assembled fifteen paying students, earning $7.50 a month, plus board and lodging, the latter consisting usually of half a bed. In some later schools he got his rate of pay up to $14 a month. One must remember that the country was in the depression following the panic of 1837.

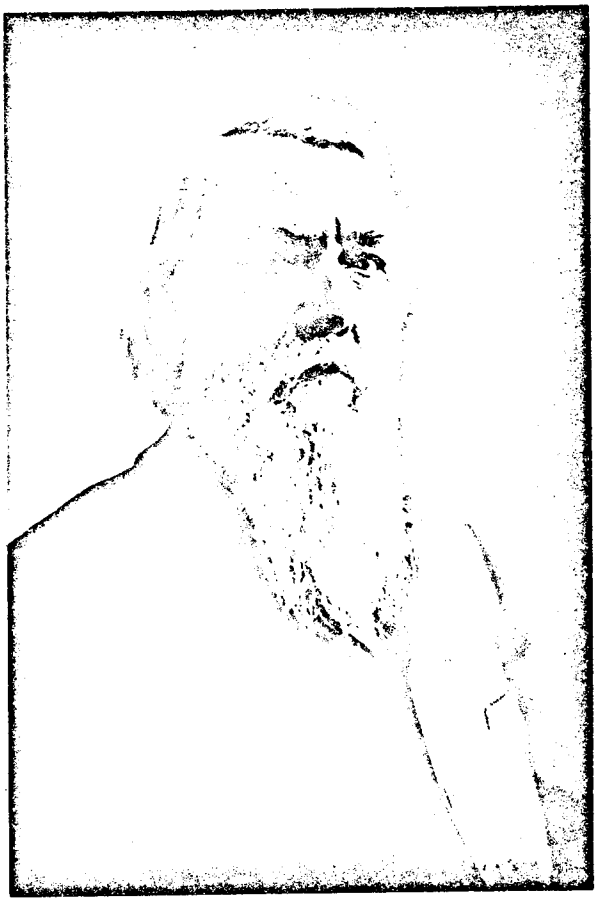
At the age of sixteen, on his father's re-marriage, he was finally put entirely upon his own by a loving but frustrated parent, who was forced, with tears, to confess that he had no home or resting-place to offer his boy.

So Andrew continued his precarious life as a school-teacher, at the same time, however, as we are glad to learn, spending what he later considered to be "too much time in company and night meetings."

In the spring of 1844, aged eighteen, he was looking for a school to teach when he heard of an opening as a clerk in the store of Sutton and Moore in the county-seat, Indiana. He got the job, and from that time on he followed the "rags-to-(moderate) riches" course. Mr. Moore died, and the firm eventually became Sutton and Wilson. In the best tradition of what has rather curiously been called the Protestant Ethic, Andrew's industry, sobriety, and honesty brought him financial success and the high regard of his fellow-townsmen.

So much granted, there is little more to be said about his life as a business-man. In fact, he himself pays that subject scant attention in his own narrative, but emphasizes his family.

From the age of 18 to the age of 26 he was the rising young businessman, but he also reports "I passed much time in society," and he even mentions "flirtations". Of this gayety, however, he later wrote that it utterly failed "to satisfy the desires of the mind."



Andrew Wilkins Wilson (1825-1897). Of him I have written sufficiently in the text. This picture must have been taken shortly before his death.



Anna Graham Dick Wilson (1833-1912). She is sitting, well-preserved at the age of about 75, by a morning-glory vine in her own back yard, where a professional photographer has come to take her picture. Of my grandparents she was the only one that I really knew. She had many grandchildren, and I cannot remember that she paid me any special attention, though I have pleasant memories of her.

He had long been attached to a certain little Anna Graham Dick, and in 1853 they were married.

One must put that marriage down as a remarkable life-partnership. As is obvious from his narrative, Andrew came to think of himself in patriarchal terms, as the founder of a family. Ten children were born, and (what is more remarkable) all ten lived to full maturity. The big house, where the post-office now stands, housed not only the couple and children, but generally a stray aunt or two or a needy cousin, besides the cook and hired girl. Andrew supplied the financing. Little Anna, though she seemed tiny for the role of matriarch, ran the household with a kind but decisive firmness that her children remembered.

One of the most remarkable of Andrew's achievements is his autobiographical narrative. He began it about 1870 -- telling what he knew of the family tradition, and adding the thoroughly American story of his own early life. He returned to it at about ten-year intervals, bringing the story of the family up to date. These additions are of less general interest. The errors in spelling display a man who, by our standards, had not even finished primary school, but the style of writing is good -- in places, even excellent. There is a knack for thumb-nail characterization (sometimes, adverse), a good feeling for anecdote and concrete illustration, and a minimum of moralising.

One wonders why this hard-working small-town merchant went through all this labor of writing. He was not well read,

and probably had no literary aspirations.

I suppose that we must credit the motivation to that deep-seated need for self-expression which characterizes so many people, even some in whom it seems anomalous. Also, the narrative was probably conceived as a kind of rallying-point for the family. By the time of his starting to write, most of his children had been born, and his own parents and grandparents were dead, having left him little memorial. In America, generally speaking, the death of the head of the family means the family's disintegration. I think that Andrew sensed as much, and was trying to give his children some feeling of unity and to make them, in proper degree, proud of their ancestral history, even if it was merely honorable survival in the face of backwoods poverty.

Of course, he was not very successful. The ten children hung together better than is to be expected, and even the grandchildren had some sense of being a family. But now we have come to the fourth and fifth and sixth generations, many of whom would not recognize each other on the street or know the name Andrew Wilkins Wilson.

Although he was not much of a reader, he was, I think, an intellectual man. His early struggles for an education show it. So also do all those children sent to college. So does the composition of his autobiography.

Also, he was one who helped found the local Normal School, which by the process of evolution has now become a university.

There used to be a building on the campus named for him, but I am not sure that it has survived the modern expansion. He served as President of the Board of Trustees.

He was also, as tradition declares and the record would substantiate, an infinitely kind man. Not only his own sons but also other promising but poor boys received his subsidies for education. One of these was John Fisher. Many years later, Governor Fisher of Pennsylvania remembered, and aided the husband of one of the granddaughters.

Andrew, in a small-town way, may have been a great man. I am proud to remember, if I do remember, that he once picked me up and made much of me.

As to how I, such as I am, came out of this ancestry, certain details are obvious enough. I probably represent the physical type. Having taught in a leading university, I have followed an intellectual profession. My present account should indicate very clearly that in so doing I follow the indications of my heredity -- and also of a cultural tradition.

As for my imaginative capacity which has enabled me to write novels, I find no indication of it anywhere, my attempts to see it in the frustrations of Samuel Wilson having no real evidence on which to be based. Apparently that quality sprang from some new shake-up of the chromosomes and genes, or else developed out of a special environment.