

Being older and making a map of your home' boundaries -things are not so big and the world is rather smaller than expected- leads one to be disappointed. The adventure is less fun when you know where you are, such as in your neighbor's field and not two counties over. He returns to the site; sits on a stump

A ruined stone chimney still there. Usually it would have been taken, however since his flight to the woods, many thought it haunted.

He revisited it in its former days- only it spiked his sadness immensely as he concurrently remembered how he sat and dwelled diurnally.

He had one thing to do before returning. He would call upon his former house

On a pitch-perfect morning, because even he knew there were times when the terra could wrap you in a warm embrace, he trotted and plotted out along the old ridge. Israel Creek's water pushed through the limestone and sandstone of the county's southerly territory and fought its way to meet the torrentous Monocacy which would one day help feed the canal. Had it known of the future plans to corral, block, and divert its way and waters, it may have shriveled up.

He had one thing to do before returning. He would call upon his former house. He had scoured these woods and ways many a time, but never as a trespasser. The trees were almost at full peak. Acorns and old walnuts covered the ground. He had remembered gathering acorns when younger and making a game of placing them in holes in the grounds and in the trees to feed the squirrels and chipmunks especially. He heard a gulping creek and knew that should he look up he would see there the humble structure stood. He stood a good fifty yards away on the side of the creek that separated the forest from the house and outbuildings, not to be seen. It was like visiting a graveyard, only the house itself was alive. It teemed with people he knew, not his family, but the current occupants, the Bowmans. They were good people and of similar circumstances as his family had been. But they were not his family. And this was no longer his home. The quick glimpse served as a respectful visit, something that had to be done and not an indulgence of nostalgia. He pushed on through the forest to come out into the meadow and cut a hard right to walk parallel to the road to town still a ways to go.

“We are all settlers.” No one starts out as having come into this world being known by all and knowing the world. Many settle with family. Many stay in their homes and villages that are built around them and others too who have grown up with their families, friends, and neighbors. Once comfort is established though, ease can give way to boredom.

They had come in the 1730’s to get away from the masses; but soon they followed in droves. They crisscrossed the countryside and set up house. Some even squatted.

Sticker bushes, redbuds, dogwoods, clover and purple blossoms at his feet and all around. Just there.

It must be done quickly. The only way to get used to ice water was to jump in. To go back first thing in the morning- all would be on their way to work and he could survive the day’s gossip.

Goes back begging a man he only new by name- get there

He knew Jacob Maddox would afford him at least a morning visit. But he was going there to see if Mr. Maddox knew of any work. Mr. Maddox was hopefully still alive. A last beam in the community of the old order. He seemed a gentleman farmer, but was more farmer than gentleman when he could help it. Mr. Maddox was out of sorts not by status, but more so because of his preference of books and disinclination to go about.

Walking into town, he did not feel as awkward as he expected; he had grown a new approach to people; its ownership proved to be a great sheath. He felt because of Mr. Maddox’ long habitation in the community, he of all people would understand the urgency. He hoped Mr. Maddox would see his importunity; after all this was his last sort of means.

The squire lived just outside the main street. His land separated him from the back alley adjoining the town. He inhabited an old German-style stone house as was common to those who had a home passed down. It was a fortress and not as adorned as some homes; but still beautiful because of its stone façade. The home was in a wooded area and he recalled going up 4 stone steps that led to the front porch and there greeted by Mr. Maddox’ elder sister, Glenda . The woman was of a good stock and was so represented in her heavysset nature. She was by no means offputting, but was the quintessential matronly figure. However, a matron in appearance only as she was an old maid.

“Mornin’ y’here to see Mr. Maddox, I reckon?” her dimples appeared invitingly as she mused.

“Yes, ma’am if he is not in the middle of something. I don’t want to be a bother,” he answered, slightly bowing.

No, he is upstairs, having his ponhaus & pudding. Would you like something to eat? Miss Maddox asked as she led him inside.

“No, thank you, I have already aten,” he responded, although it had been sometime since he had a good, filling meal.

He sat down on a wooden chair near the fireplace. This place immediately felt like home to him. It was a house that reminded him of his home- his family home. All was functional, but it was not cold. He hoped Mr. Maddox would not be agitated by his early calling. But it was typical here to get an early start. Half-past seven in the morning was the time people came back to eat breakfast- a real breakfast, not the bit and more you eat to satiate yourself before the morning milking.

He nervously stood up behind his chair wondering if he had taken Mr. Maddox’s spot.

Mr. Maddox walked in th room and looked at him quizzically.

“Morning- don’t tell me. I know you. You are Elias Stine?”

“Yes, sir. I am. I hope I haven’t put you out. Sorry to call on you while you were eatin.”

“No. I’ll get back to the grub. Well. I hope you have been better. They say you took to the woods. Did you rebuild again... a house there? I should have come around. But not knowing you directly; I didn’t want to pry when I had heard the- news,” he stated delicately, not knowing if he had entered troubled waters.

The squire then added, “ But you look well enough,” and he smiled and revealed the family dimple.”

“Well sir.” ___ started, “I was at the end of my rope before my dwelling burnt down. The fire instigated the matter. I ain’t goofy, but It just felt that my time had not yet come, and I didn’t know what to do with myself until it did. So, I got away because I was mad. Mad at my situation.

Mad at everyone. I went into the woods far out west to the ridges and rocks. I got my mind on certain things and got it out of my system.” ___ postulated.

He then continued, “I figured the only way to get what I wanted was to go back. And that comes to why I have called on you this morning. Mr. Maddox- I am in want of a means to support myself. I need employment. I was hoping either you may know of something or have something. I know this is sudden, but I came back just this morning, and want to get to the gettin’.

“Yes, son! Of course you do!” Mr. Maddox exclaimed. Relief had come to him as he was expecting a different revelation of sorts.

“I know you have some skills in the field- Have you some education?”

“In the church school and at home,” Elias replied, wondering what Mr. Maddox was fishing about. He had just wanted to be a laborer.

“Well, I may sort you out for the press, too. Would you like to learn a new trade?”

“Yes, sir!” Elias responded, more work meant more time spent and more coin in his pocket.

“You’ve got all the makins’ of a one of my pressman! I need a pressman and a laborer.” Mr. Maddox finished up the formality, led him out of the house, after a visit in the kitchen with Miss Glenda who lined his pockets with biscuits and cheese. For the first time he could remember, he almost burst with hope and pride.

Conversing with Mr. Maddox, he felt he had met a spoke from his wheel. Mr. Maddox was a friend ready to be made. He felt himself becoming flushed as Mr. Maddox detailed what duties he would be taking on with the press, paper, and sundry matters. He was not overwhelmed, but could not believe that something he had envisioned- getting help- was coming true. Something he had set his sights on happened. No disappointing trudge home. (Well, he had a lodging, not a home.) No , This was done. Mr. Maddox was happy to oblige him.

This was fall, so who could worked on the farm to get a better payment if they could. The payment for workin its farm for Mr. Maddox was less, but he had been willing to take anything.

“So, I will meet you at my offices around middle of the morning.”

It's settled, Mr. Maddox reaffirmed.

“Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. I am obliged to you. You have cleared my mind.” Graciously stated.

“No, son. There's no need for that. It's what should be done. I have an opening. Your character is known. It sure is,” Mr. Maddox replied, getting up from his chair and making towards the front door.

Yes, it was as it should be. Mr. Maddox did know his family, he was trustworthy, and that was that.

Walking into town was easier than expected. He was the one who had discretely severed his connection. They had wondered what had been going on with him and were on the opposing end. The Red brick church served as the vantage point for his view. It looked like redbud tree in the middle of a green forest.

He had time to kill and being peckish, called at John Fox's tavern. It was a large stone house with white window frames, similar in style of the grand stock of Mr. Maddox' residence. It had taken new ownership, he observed looking at the sign. Formerly, Mr. Eichelberger had run it when he was young.

He walked in and immediately went to the far corner. There were some breakfasting, but usually everyone was out back to their posts now. He ordered sausage and hominy with coffee. He also searched for a paper. The Schaffersville Bulletin was printed weekly, but last week's would have to do.

He had been gone over a year so seeing what was happening in the world could not hurt him. Elias breathed in for courage knowing he may read something that would set him off, but needing to know his business, he looked at the front page.

Something happening in Washington, something happening in the Capital, and Mr. Alfred Pfeiffer dying at age 83. Family to sell possession to settle debts including farm- youngest son (and only one take mind) to move to Illinois.

He remembered Mr. Pfeiffer. A tall, strong man with a square jaw and teeth a-gap in the middle of both the top and bottom set. Mr. Pfeiffer had tried to start an agricultural society for the county, but everyone was too busy for his efforts.

Well, certainly not good news, but nothing to perplex him, he thought,. and opened the paper.

Advertisement, listings, and a call for instruction on super-phosphates. Help was wanted on a farm on account of it being. He turned again and nothing caught his eye. Good. There wasn't anything pressing on his mind. No letters from Eli Duncan- wonder if he was still alive?

His conviviality was soon desiccated upon meeting the head of the press workshop.

Cornelius Pittsnogle was a thin straw-like, weasely man who deigned to work for the squire at such a post. He knew he was bound for to be a newspaper editor one day, but had agreed to start the Squire's new project the ? bulletin Schaeffersville? For the term of six months. He was too incongruous to be odious. When the squire brought Elias to the workshop in morning, Cornelius looked up from behind the ?? template at the squire and judged that large, broad-shouldered man whom other townsfolk has called as the "wood hermit" was to be his journeyman.

Cornelius had wanted to bring an acquaintance who had worked on several presses near Phildelephia, but the squire, desiring no extra expenditures on an experienced hand, declined Cornelius' request and stated he would choose a fit man from within the county. One who would know the area and the people. Elias was the first man to say yes. All others knew the ?? would be flew daylight work.

Cornelius had merely replied " It is your paper. It is your money, and it will be your regret." Had Cornelius been a larger man (and the Squire a more volatile character), Old Grit n gut would have gathered Cornelius' clothes at the collar with one hand, and then used his other right arm as a cradle to carry Cornelius' legs, holding his body like a battering ram and thrown him out onto the main way for all to see the indignity. However, the squire amusingly retorted " Ohh, huu huu," And shifted his weight frontward in his seat, pulling at the right leg of his trousers, "I've

had bigger regrets just this morning.” Cornelius looked down and walked down the hallway to the front door, unresponsive to Miss ? well-wishes for a “ good, bountiful, glorious day.” all the back to the workshop. His plan was to allow the newcomer to fail and then remind the squire of his acquaintances in the budding industry.

Now, he stood with the student in a cold workshop, waiting to pounce on his first mistake.

The Squire made obligatory introductions but quickly left as if he left a lantern in a haystack.

The squire left after making introductions and invited them both to supper that night.

Elias took full measure of the boy. Suddenly, he felt not as the eager man who sat in the Squire’s home yesterday to secure a place, but in a pissing contest with a stranger. Elias knew this violet would quickly shrink and knew he would humble him first so that Elias would actually learn the trade and stay on. The other outcome involved Elias being fired for smashing Cornelius’ hand in the tymphan press as a result of his haughty nature.

Elias, who had not stopped looking intently at Cornelius, opened fire.

“ I can read. I can write. I can form an epistle and any word you say against this town or the people will be printed in this paper word for word. Should you choose to derail my learning I will let everyone know that you collected revenue on whiskey.”

Cornelius was dumbfounded. Although this brandishment was totally unfounded it would eventually get him run out of town.. if he was so lucky. As soon as he realized he was staring blankly at Elias, he contorted his face into a scowl, looked around the shop, and stammered unintelligible words.

Elias remained on the other end ready to fire another volley if need be, but also ready to declare a truce. Elias didn’t care about making a friend, but didn’t want to work with an ass for the next six months either. The day went by quickly. Every task the needed to be done to produce an accurate legible piece of paper was cumbersome. Elias wanted to laugh when Pittsnogle demonstrated the jig that was required for holding down the tymphant and keeping your foot on the footstep and moving one paper to the other pile and lifting up and readying the next sheet. The press was a large contraption and the weight overwhelmed his smaller counterpart. An errand boy stood by to help with the puller if needed his eyes moving skittishly from on the

metal weight coming down to the Pittsnogle's face. Elias wondered what stories those boys could tell about this small shop. All the while, Pittsnogle's lecture continued sprouting words that made no sense and Elias wondered how much longer his show would go on. As if he were demonstrating for the contraption for the first time in the history of the world.

"Well that's the short version of this demonstration. I also cannot teach you everything. You will have to follow along in a pamphlet with your home study," Pittsnogle wiped his hands on his apron and handed Elias a guidebook.

"Did you read this book?" Elias asked the young fellow.

The boy looked up at him with a big grin showing a missing top front tooth and another missing one close to the corner of his mouth. "No, I can't read that good yet," he replied.

Pittsnogle ignored the scene and walked over to the inks. "This might make more sense for you to learn first. It is something the younger boys can't do yet," he explained, "they can make the tympan paste and x can show you later on. So today for now you can make ink and wet the paper.

Supper time at the home of the Squire with his sister, Glenda presiding as hostess was a treat. A veritable feast abounded the long wooden oak table which had been in the family longer than they, but was not quite as old as the house. The Squire knew another guest was to join them, but it being only his foreman, he told Glenda to go on with grace. Glenda, Cornelius, Elias, and the Squire pressed their palms and bowed their heads as sun lowered in the sky, it too commencing its work.

"Thank thee our Heavenly Father for this abundance and for the continued abundance from our fields, friends, and family. Bless all who sit at our table and may we go in peace to rise in the morning and labor fervently in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord."

"Amen," all else agreed.

The squire's foreman George Holtzclaw was a stentorian man. From his vocalizations to his heavy trodden boots, he was most obtrusive, but not arrogant. His entrance into the room gave Cornelius a start, but all else heard him coming up the stone, purposefully kicking his boots

against each step (so as to remove the dirt from his soles) and heard door open wider than needed and then shut. But Cornelius was in the middle of a monologue concerning improvements in nearby county which he had read about and then “confirmed with an elected official whose acquaintance I had the privilege of making when my family hosted his family the summer last.”

“An elected official? Please tell me if such a creature is coming. I will eat my slop with the pigs,” Mr. Holtzclaw remarked, laughing at himself.

“No, no, no. Not that sort of thing,” the squire said as he sawed off his tenderloin with the cutlery, “Cornelius has family ties with one such elected official,” and turning to Cornelius, pointing at him with his knife, “you see Cornelius most here care not for strangers and thieves, so hosting a legislator would be sacrilege. But, your friend may be different. However, I, too would not care to find out,” the squire finished his expounding with a large gulp of ale.

Cornelius maintained his posture and affixed his gaze on the plate before him, wrists parallel to the plate.

“Well, sir, you are an elected official, therefore...”

“That’s different,” Holtzclaw interrupted, chewing his food quickly, “he’s Squire Maddox!” They all laughed jovially.

“Yes, sir. Things are different.” Elias answered hearkening back to the original question.

“But you look familiar,” Mr. Holtzclaw noticed Elias made the suppertime party a quintet this evening. “Elias? Mr. Holtzclaw. Your family and mine attended ?? church.

“Ahh. Yes,” Holtzclaw agreed, still looking Elias square in the eye. He tried to picture the last time he saw him, but his thoughts instead created images of him living in up on the ridge. He wondered if his father knew of his son’s adventures. Then he looked away as he recollected that Elias’ house had burned down and felt guilty for the slight.

“Elias is going to be our pressman. Cornelius will teach him his trade, but I know he can also be of use to you in the fields. I could hook a plow to either of you!” the Squire joked.

“Yes Elias; it is a good time for extra help as you would know. Let us walk the land tomorrow at mid-day.”

“Cornelius, while the days are short, we may have to use Elias elsewhere and you may have use of him at night,” the squire explained.

Cornelius who was tired now and knew he was not of a higher use to the Squire than he prized foreman did not contest the arrangement, so he nodded and chewed his tenderloin. He quite liked the idea of Elias being traded like a rented mule.

The meal ended most of the party found their way outside to sit on plank benches near the sycamore trees in the back. Cornelius excused himself to retire and Glenda busied herself in the front room. Elias wanted to leave as well, but stayed on. He knew the Squire to be full of stories and hoped he would indulge them with some story. He also wanted to know more of Mr. Holtzclaw as he could not recollect much of him or his family. He would have to ask Hez.

Their deportment changed when they went outside. The tension had left with Cornelius they were thinking, but would not surface.

“How much wheat you think, we’ll take to the mill?” Mr. Holtzclaw asks the Squire. Holtclaw was always amused as to how the old man not only retained his quick wits with numbers, but knew every minute occurrence on his property and other businesses, the town, the state, the country.

“Let us see,” the squire ponders, looking up to the trees above who sport their autumnal garnish, and purses his lips and clicks his tongue to the roof of his month to emit a ‘too, too, too’ sound, “300 acres planted by the Licking Creek and 156 by Israel Creek. That will lead to x pounds most likely. We will take x amount and let Emmet Lottimore (owner of the grist mill) take the rest to a warehouse.??? Not good to sell right now, of course. Good prices in Frederick, but not good enough to make a special trip just the yet.”

“The almanac says we are due for a drought this summer. Mild winter though. I can believe it with all the rain, we’ve got. Not too good on the peaches at the Jenkins’. Started to rot early,” Holtclaw shared.

Elias was thinking ahead to the days in the fields gathering the wheat. He recalled the backbreaking days of work and looked his hands, which living in the woods had kept broken in, but nothing compared to working the scythe and cradle. But he also looked forward to the early quiet dawns on the golden fields and the smell of the cut wheat. He really needed to call on Hez. He felt guilty for being disloyal to the one person who had tried to visit him out there. Was he really such a miserable cuss?

“This will cure what ails ya,” the squire said to Elias. Glenda had brought out two jugs of whiskey.

Elias took a swallow, sucked in a quick breath, his throat and nose tingling from the brew.

“Well done Eli Duncan,” Holtzclaw commended the distiller quietly, looking at the liquid in his jar, trying to guess the proof.

“I thank you for your hospitality and your benevolence on working for you Mr.?” Elias said as he rose from the plank, but I shall leave you now.

“Such an official tone. I like that. Elias, remember never to suffer any fools,” the Squire advised raising his jar as if it were a toast of sorts. He had remembered the earlier encounter with Cornelius over the hiring of a journeyman. Really rather an apprentice, but one would not call a man of Elias’ age that. What battles may come, he thought.

“Tomorrow. Mid-day,” Holtzclaw said between sips.

“Yes, sirs,” Elias nodded and then went off north past town to the house of Hezekiah_ before it was too dark.

Hez was such a docile creature. Docile, but loyal. Much more cool-tempered than Elias, which Elias could not understand. It did make Elias think less of him at times, but he did have fortitude. Or had.

Elias hoped Hez would have some shine or cider. It would be good night to sit and talk. He had not done such in a while. He was liking for the most part his return to town. Tomorrow however would be spent with Pittsnogle though. But he would work hard for the squire. He was not a quitter. He trudged over the two big hills along the big road that connected Schaeffersville to

Frederick?. It was an old Algonquin path. But they had long since gone before the first Europeans took foundation in this part of the state.

They had come in the 1730's to get away from the masses; but soon they followed in droves. They crisscrossed the countryside and set up house. Some even squatted. Skies, hill, mull and scratch this was also used in earlier times like the repetition. There is no other peace and contentment like the contentment and peace that is felt when you are aware that you are fully enveloped by endless acres of the cornstalks, rolling hills, orchards, and land. It is a happy barrier for the agrarian. Some things can't be spoken nor put into words which though tangible in your hand are intangible to the ear. He felt well, so one Sunday a little after dinner, he decided to indulge in some walking, maybe ending up to see Hez.