

PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLTOP

BY ALBERT BEADLE

When Rev. Cyrus Yale died (1854) he requested his children to keep the old homestead and, so far as possible, use it as a summer home. So for something like three quarters of a century his descendants gathered there. It was a wonderful place for the several series of youngsters.

The following sketches about some high points in the activities of these gangs of boys and girls will indicate that they had much fun, and may suggest that they were full of ginger and devils.

I. THE FAT UNCLES AND COWS IN THE CORN

Once upon a time there was a contest on between Morris Smith (father of Mrs. Ellsworth) and my two uncles as to which could get the largest yield of corn from a small patch. Special fertilizers were sneaked in and very careful cultivation given. One day the gang was exploring in the old garret and discovered my grandfather's cow bell. Immediately a conspiracy was hatched. From neighboring farmers three more bells were borrowed. At that time two girl cousins and two boys were quartered in the two west bedrooms. At 9 P. M. these rather ostentatiously but at intervals said good night and went upstairs--presumably to bed, leaving the old folks deep

in a game of dominoes. In about half an hour the gang quietly got out on the roof from the northwest room, and climbed down the trellis. Our corn patch was located where are now the sad remains of the apple orchard. The bells were assembled at the carriage house and soon there arose a discreet jangling of cow bells in the corn. We could see the door open and there was business of uncles peering out and much excited talk. Then the uncles hustled down to drive out the pesky cows (the two "hired men" ^{boarded} at the next house to the north and so were not available). Of course the cow bell effect ceased and the gang took cover behind the stone wall. After much searching and mystification talk the uncles went back to the house. Then the youngsters climbed the trellis and got into bed with shoes and clothes on. Soon a cloud of suspicion gathered about them and a committee with lighted candles came up to investigate, but it only discovered four nice kids apparently sound asleep. Next morning the conspirators confessed and were pardoned.

2. THE PARADE OF THE ANCIENT HORSES

This parade never came off --because the authorities did not altogether approve. But it was brilliantly planned would have made a big hit.

The Ellsworths had a fine pair that was getting on in years. We also had a pair and a saddle horse that were quite elderly.

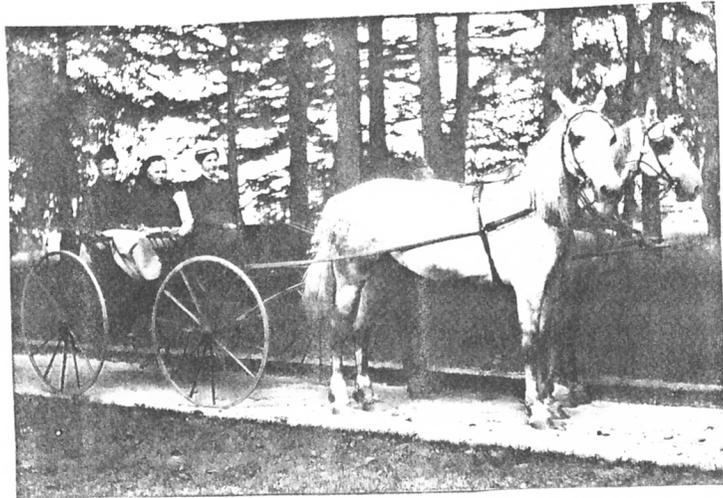
[Picture of Mrs. Condon (Mrs. A. B. Beadle's mother), Mrs. Elias R. Beadle (Martha Ruth Yale, Mr. Beadle's mother), and Mrs. A. B. Beadle, when a bride.]

The procession as outlined was to be headed by the Ellsworth horses bearing a placard

"We are 23 years old"

The Eaglenest pair would follow with a placard

"We are 24 years old"



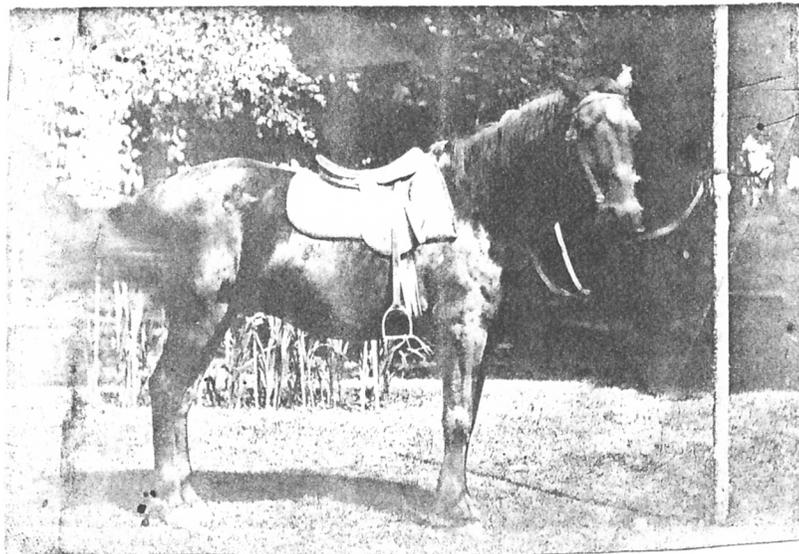
Then would come an old white horse belonging to the Paine girls --which was totally blind but quite serviceable if carefully steered --bearing a sign

"Pity the blind!"

The rear guard would be our horse "Jeff" with a placard

"God only knows how old I am"

[Picture of "Old Jeff"]



3. A HOME-MADE CIRCUS

When Betty B. was about 12 years old she had a school friend visiting her. There were four young ones at the Ellsworth's. This gang put on a circus performance in the barnyard that went over strong. Daughter asked for some old sheets. Her amiable grandmother went up garret and dug up some linen sheets of her mother's era. The kids cut these up into 5 inch strips and pegged out a large ring in the barn yard. Under the carriage house served as a dressing tent for the performers. A wood pile and some benches took care of the audience. At that period my daughter had a charming and very intelligent Shetland pony

[Picture of Betty Beadle, Kennedy Creevey and Carlotta Creevey, with "Rex"]



and we had as a left over a gray mare that was a pet with the children --"Lady Horse". She was celebrated for her elephantine gallop/.

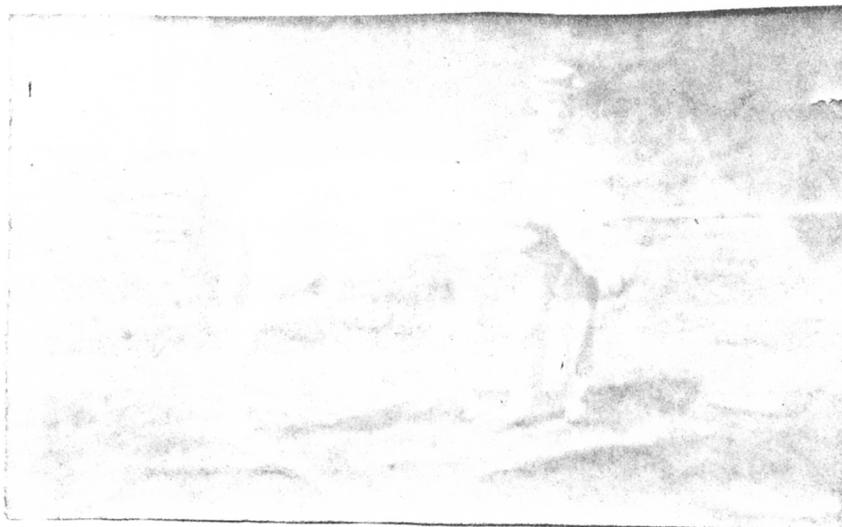
The first act was a Hurdle Chase. A series of hurdles about two feet high had been placed around the ring. An Ellsworth girl on the pony (which had been decorated with flowers) came dashing out and made three circuits of the ring --the pony taking the hurdles most gracefully just like a deer. (Great applause).

Then out came Betty on Lady Horse. The latter had a wreath about her neck and evidently was the clown of the show. She approached the first hurdle in a dignified manner, stopped short and looked at it carefully. Then very cautiously she stepped over it -one leg at a time, and so on around the ring (Riotous applause).

The hurdles were then removed and the equine clown galloped around several times --with elephantine effects.

Then followed various tricks by the pony. For a feature a half barrel was set in middle of ring on which he put his fore feet. Then the ring master stood off ##### about 15 feet and tossed lumps of sugar which the pony deftly caught in his mouth.

4. TALES OF A DONKEY



[Picture of Horace Pitkin, with "Beauty," taken by Mr. Beadle.]

The several series of children were always much devoted to pets --usually tame crows, gray squirrels in a large cage built around a low limb of an apple tree, dogs of course, and in the early days a white donkey figured prominently. When I was about six years old we lived in Hartford. An old friend of my father's who lived in La Guaira, Venezuela made us a visit and was quite pleased with the little angel-face boy. Upon leaving he said he would send me a halfgrown donkey from his plantation. He owned a ship that ran to New York every month or so. A couple of months later my father received a postal card from the freight office asking him to remove a dead donkey that had died on the freight train from New York. The sad news was conveyed to Mr. Swift. Nothing was heard from him for two months, then one morning someone reported there was what seemed to be a small riot down the street. Soon there hove in sight about 50 small boys surrounding a tall negro. The parade stopped in front of our house and there emerged a small white donkey which the man was leading by a rope, -personally conducted by ship and train by one of Mr. Swift's plantation men. And that donkey was a privileged member of our family for 25 years. He was an amiable pal to several sets of children. I have seen six of them on his back.

One Sunday I faked up some excuse and was allowed to stay at home while two carriage loads went to church in the village. While playing around with the donkey I evolved a brilliant idea. We went up stairs together and wandered about the rooms. When the time arrived for the church parade to return I opened a window and "me and the donkey" looked out to greet the church goers. I really thought it was quite a clever # set up. But my mother hastened up stairs and rather severely asked "how are you going to get that donkey down stairs again?" Then I realized that ~~that~~ it was a case of facilis ascensus sed revocare the stairs was something else again -- for the donkey very positively refused to descend. It finally took four husky men to pick him up and carry him down. As for me I was in deep disgrace.

A little later on another donkey episode occurred on somewhat similar lines. Again I was left at home one bright Sunday morning. There were two cows, a yearling calf, two horses, and the donkey in the pasture. I extracted the donkey and tied him to the carriage house door. Immediately there came to me a flash of artistic inspiration. Some painters had been at work at the house and had left several cans of paint of various colors. So I proceeded to elaborately decorate that donkey. As I remember it

I painted a bold red circle around each eye, the long ears a bright blue, lower legs black, the tail yellow, and then red zebra stripes on his sides. The effect was modernistic and startling. Then I turned him loose in the pasture to see how the other animals would appreciate my high art efforts. The donkey was very popular with them but when they sighted this monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens there was a wild stampede. Poor little donkey could not understand why his friends should run away from him so he trailed along after them. I sat on the fence enjoying the merry-go-round but just then the family arrived from church and hot-footed down to find out what was going on. Far from appreciating and applauding this outcropping of the artistic my mother spoke winged words "Don't you know that all that paint on the skin of that donkey will kill him? Get some turpentine and wash it off immediately!" That was a sad ending to an otherwise happy Sunday morning, and once more there was business of deep disgrace.

5. JACK AND GILL THE WILY CROWS.

Jack was a particularly intelligent crow. He would come to the kitchen door for a hand-out, the cook would give him a piece of stale hard bread. He would solemnly stalk out to his pan of water by the pear tree, immerse the bread till it got soft and then eat it. His special delight was to untie the shoe strings of my uncle, and he also

liked to ride around on somebody's shoulder. The second summer he and his partner developed streaks of ~~###~~ devilment. Once at breakfast the family noticed strange sounds from the library. -the two black devils had found a stretch of wall paper that had become loosened and were merrily tearing it off. Once a girl cousin going to her room heard strange tappings. There was Jack having a merry time banging her watch up and down on the widow sill. That fall my mother decided that the absence of the crows would be a relief so she had them put in a basket and was driven about ten miles to some deep woods where they were released to enjoy life in the wild. When she reached home there were the two crows on the door step to welcome her.

6. Genealogical Repartee

Some years ago when Yale was celebrating her 200th anniversary my mother came down from the country to spend the winter with me in Philadelphia. At New Haven she had to change to the Colonial Express and wait two hours therefor. A nice looking old girl of about her age came and sat beside her and told her much about what had beenⁿ going on up at the college. Finally she remarked "It might interest you to know that my great-great-plus uncle was the first President of the college". My mother smiled sweetly and came back with "Perhaps you would be interested to know that my great-great-plus uncle was the founder of Yale College!"

POWER FAILURE REPORT

TIME: 05/05/1994 08:36
NAME:
FAX : 2033793085
TEL : 2033792525

THE ELECTRICITY FAILED.
THE FOLLOWING DATA WAS LOST

ACTIVITY REPORT
RECEPTION MEMORY



" TIME GROWING OLD CHANGES ALL THINGS "

[Picture of Betty Beadle, with her dog,
in the field south of "The Parsonage"]