

Goin' to Grandma's

Messing with Dough

Women of my childhood were divided into two classes, those who would, and those who would not, permit a child to “mess with dough,” that is, take the scraps left from biscuit-cutting or pie-trimming, roll them thin, and cut out little biscuits with a thimble, or make tiny pies in fruit-jar tops or in the tin lids of baking powder cans.

The women on the south side of my family tree would, but those on the north side would not. That may have been the reason I long felt that I had come from a house divided against itself and feared that I'd never be able to stand long in the same attitude on any particular subject. Not that I'm chameleon-like; just unstable and inconsistent. I'd find myself swaying first toward the north, then toward the south side of the family tree. Those sides were so different that the strain was hard.

Not only would the south side of the family—the Usserys—which was that of my book-loving Grandpa and my active-minded Grandma—permit a child, namely me, to mess with dough; they actually encouraged me; although when I did so I

scattered flour all around the marble biscuit board and on the floor, and caused the cedar rolling pin to have to be scraped and washed all over again.

If Grandma Ussery was making the breakfast biscuits she would save the “trimmings,” put them into the little cracked and handleless cup that she used for measuring buttermilk, and place them—with a saucer for a cover—over on the back of the kitchen table, ready for me to “roll dough” when I should come to her house later in the day.

If Grandma was not able to be in the kitchen, and if black Aunt Elviry was making the biscuits, Grandma would instruct her to do the same. Aunt Elviry, with her white apron and her wisps of kinky hair tightly screwed up on scraps of stocking legs, was a likable person, but not altogether tactful.

She frequently called my attention to streaks of gray in the dough I was rolling, and declared that she wouldn't eat any of my cooking “fer love ner money.” Grandma never seemed to notice the gray, but she didn't eat any of my biscuits and pies. Only Grandpa Ussery, among all the grown-ups, seemed to have an appetite for child cookery. He and I together, up in the little office, could eat almost all the thimble biscuits that a cupful of trimmings would turn out. Grandpa would even taste my pies—not the mud ones, but the dough ones. If they chanced to be burnt or under-done, Grandpa would say: “Why, Tot, that's just the way I like them.” It is probable that the limits of

Grandpa Ussery's endurance and patience with grandchildren were never reached.

However, Grandma Ussery was generous and indulging in other ways. Many times I have known her to take the thimble off her finger while she was busy darning, and let me have it for as long as I wished to cut biscuits. I strongly suspect that Grandma didn't like darning very much anyway. At least, she gave up the thimble willingly.

One day Grandma gave me a thimble all my own. It was very small and very light, but very, very precious. It was a present I treasured most next to my book. On the day I received that thimble, I felt that I had made a great step toward becoming a woman grown.



The Snuff-Box Churn

Another industry which the south side of the house permitted, even encouraged, was my effort at churning. Not grown-up churning—Aunt Elviry did that—but snuff-box churning. Grandma saved all her snuff cans just for my churning. She even took to buying the largest sized snuff boxes available, the big dime-size tins, so that I would have larger churns.

While splitting kindling Grandpa would watch for straight pieces of soft pine or cedar which could be easily whittled into

snuff-box churn-dashers; and when such a piece was found he would carefully lay it away on a high shelf of the woodshed.

On a rainy afternoon or chilly evening by the fire, Grandpa would whittle out a smooth little round handle and two small flat pieces to be crossed at the bottom of the handle and fastened in place with a shoe peg or the top half of a broken brass pin. When a hole had been punched through the snuff-box lid large enough for the dasher handle to slide through, I'd be ready for milk.

Aunt Elviry usually was willing enough to give me half a snuff-box of milk. I'd have liked a box full, but she advised against that. Sometimes it was "sweet" milk, sometimes buttermilk, but as I suspect now, rarely cream. Grandma, however, would even give me cream to churn in the little contraption, as she called it, but I don't remember ever getting enough butter to print. At times I used soapsuds for milk and, fellow churners, what a fluff was there. I took out suds "butter" by cupfuls.

Thus churning, crocheting, rolling dough, listening, and looking over old and new papers and books, were favorite pastimes when I visited across the street in the Ussery household.



Vacations on the Jones' Farm

When we went to visit the Joneses, who lived what seemed a hundred miles away, then matters were different. There we lived a wild and woodsy life, free as the wind and about as capricious (when we could get out of sight of the prim and precise grown-ups). We managed very well, however, for we had to be accounted for only at mealtimes, naptime, foot-washing time, dark, and on Sunday afternoons.

First-cousin-to-Paradise-to-usthree-little-town-lot-youngsters was that small, edge-of-the-village farm of Grandma and Grandpa Jones. There was the big, grassy, front yard where we were expected to play all dressed up and very gently on Sunday afternoons in case any of the neighbors, the preacher, or passers-by might see us. There was the big, bare, backyard which we were expected to sweep with brush brooms on Saturday mornings, and there was the serene and darkened parlor of afternoon nap acquaintance. Aside from those places, all the rest of the farm seemed just about perfect.

There was the barn lot, which was always a source of interest, and the barn which we used to advantage on rainy days. We jounced in the haymow, borrowed a plowline from the gear-room, made a swing from the rafters, rolled and skidded down the corn pile in the crib; and, if you'll cross your heart you won't tell, ever, I'll confess that we were the "mice" that ate the pumpkin seeds that Grandpa had spread on a suspended board, high in the loft to dry.

He never could understand how mice got up there to those pumpkin seeds. By moving part of the haymow up under the board, we could reach them. After eating plenty and filling our pockets, we would move the hay back to its place again. I still think pumpkin seeds taste better than pumpkins.

There was the meadow, too, or the “lower field” as it was called. The clay in that meadow, especially in the deeper gullies, was perfect for making mud pies, cakes, and bricks, and for realizing other culinary and architectural ambitions.

It was in the meadow that the pound apple tree stood guard (or tempter) over the gate. I couldn’t understand why or how that tree happened to be in the field instead of the orchard across the lane, but there it was.

There was the orchard prolific in apples, peaches, pears, saw-briars, birds’ nests, sassafras toothbrushes, blackberries, dewberries, wild strawberries, quail, and crab apples. Also, there was the chicken-yard with its dense thicket of wild-goose plums.

There was the pasture field where we children rode Old Fan, all three of us on the dear, one-eyed, old nag. We’d manage somehow to get her blind side up close to the rail-fence corner, or up to the ladder-like pasture gate, then by “mane” strength and plenty of pushing and pulling, we’d manage to mount.

GOIN' TO GRANDMA'S



On the Dear Old One-Eyed Nag

Best of the well-loved places of Grandma 'n' Grandpa's farm was the Big Woodslot itself, with its crunchy leaves, mossy glades, clean woodsy smell, cool shades, bright patches of sun, tall trees to climb, numerous playhouse sites, rabbits to chase, birds' nests to spy into, pond, and spring-branch to wade, yearling calves to harness and ride, and its snakes and lizards to throw rocks at.

If the grown-up Joneses and our ex-Jones mother had any inkling of our darings, our outlandish (and to them heathenish) adventurings in that woods-lot, that natural and perfect playground, their hands would have been raised in horror, their hair would probably have risen straight up out of their psyche knots, and we would have been confined ever after to playing "Mrs." in the grassy front yard. Or perhaps to making whistles and popguns from the stems of the pumpkin leaves.

Who knows, we might even have been called into the house and taught to do embroidery—in the summertime! However, fortunately for us, they supposed, or we supposed that they supposed, that we were being nice children in the woodslot. Perhaps we were—as nice as wild young animals.



Getting Ready

That is all getting ahead of the story: First, there was the “goin’ to Grandma’s,” the Great Adventure in its beginning. Out of every year we spent approximately three weeks during the summer at Grandma ’n’ Grandpa’s little farm. We spent the other forty-nine weeks either looking backward to the last visit or forward to the next.

From before the time school was out in May, Mama began getting our clothes ready for the big trip. Why she put so much work on those garments, considering the life we lived there, was more than I could understand. However, Mama had been a Jones, and the Joneses had ideas about impressing the neighbors. So I supposed she was trying to make us look as though she had married well.

At any rate, there were ruffles and laces and ribbons galore—a whole stack of new dresses and starched petticoats for Elsie and me. There were two-piece “little boy suits” for Clarence. They consisted of bloomers for underneath wear and box-plaited, embroidery-trimmed “dresses” for top wear. As Clarence grew a little older, he was promoted to dresses with sailor collars, or Buster Brown styles with fluffy black silk bow ties.

Looking at the matter through my Ussery eye (I suppose I did inherit at least one of my eyes from the unpretentious Usserys), I remember thinking that something to wear on the train; something that wouldn’t show coal-dust; something to

wear in the woods; something that wouldn't tear or show apple stain and mud splatters; and perhaps an outfit of Sunday School clothes for each of us, would have been all we needed. However, both Mama's eyes and most of her ideas had come from her side of the house. So we wore laces and stiffly starched linen to mud-pie makings, to grapevine swingings, and to sapling-steed tournaments.

There were weeks of cutting, basting, stitching, tucking, "trying-ons" and finishing before we could go to Grandma's. Even then there were in the big trunk, in the two big canvas telescope valises, in the little brown grip, and in all the extra bundles, barely enough clothes to last us the three weeks. We did look "stylish" during those three weeks, I am reasonably sure of that, even though fruit stains, saw briars, hay-mow skidding, and such, made a new wardrobe necessary for each of us when we got home again.

I remember that the immediate "getting ready to go" was truly an exciting and exasperating ordeal. It was a strain for the entire family except Papa, who was away all week at work on the railroad. He wouldn't begin his part of the visit to Grandma's until the last Sunday we were there, so Mama had the brunt of getting ready to go, and she seemed to revel in it.

When a neighbor had promised to milk the cow, feed the cat, water the flowers, and gather the eggs (Mama was always a backyard farmer); when the big trunk and two valises had been packed, strapped, locked, roped, labeled, and sent in

the grocer's wagon to the depot; when the windows had been locked, barred, and nailed down; when the doors had been locked and propped with chairs (except the front one); and when all the shades had been drawn except the one nearest the kitchen corner bathing place and the one nearest the bureau in Mama's room where the last primping would be done—then Mama began the final steps of getting us ready.

She brought out the old Saturday night tub and put it in the kitchen behind the stove (we bathed behind the stove in summer as well as winter), then she laid out other bath appurtenances such as towels, soap (castile for that occasion and borax extra), pair of scissors for nails, box of talcum for necks and noses, and comb, brush, Vaseline, and hair ribbons. There was also a leg or sleeve from a suit of last year's underwear, which was cut into suitable size washrags—Mama had subtle ways of taking spite out on Grandma Ussery by never using on us one of the hand crocheted twine-string washrags which she supplied us lavishly on birthdays, Christmas, and other gift occasions.

Clarence was scrubbed first and hardest. There was scouring powder for his knuckles, knees, and ankles, and sometimes for ours. I remember one time after he had been given his very thorough bath, he was dressed only in his next-to-'ims (it wasn't nice to say drawers and drawer body) because you know what a three-year-old can do to a white linen suit if left two hours to his own devices. So semi-dressed he was put in the front hall to play while the rest of us got ready.

Elsie and I then had our ears gouged with a well-soaped washrag, and had our hair, long, fine and full of snarls, untangled to the accompaniment of yelps and tears. Usually Elsie's hair would have been rolled up the night before on strips of stocking legs, so it had to be untwisted and coaxed to arm-pit-length curls and topped off at the upper left with a large pink satin bow. My hair was brushed and combed and Vaselined, then tightly skewed into pigtails. Each pigtail was then tied with a piece of eel-skin which Aunt Ann had given me, as it "would shorely make a young'uns hair grow." My bows, one behind each ear, were always blue, when I so much coveted pink ones.



She Put A White Linen Suit on the Boy

After we had been talcum powdered and had donned petticoats, dresses, new patent leather “baby-doll” slippers, leghorn hats with flowers around the crown, streamers behind, and quarter-inch elastic under our chins, and after Mama was all ready except for putting on her soutache-braided Eton jacket and her rose-covered turban with its stiff maline bows; then she made ready to perform that next to last rite—put the white linen suit on the boy.

She walked out into the hall, but the boy was gone, drawers, drawers body, and all. We looked for him upstairs and down. We called and searched and wondered. Then we found that someone had left the high latch on the front door unfastened. Outside we began a wider search. He was not in the yard; nor at any of the neighbors; nor anywhere up or down the street. Could he have been kidnapped? Gypsies passed that way occasionally!

We were just about to call the police, when we saw a man coming from toward the railroad leading the little near-nudist underwear-clad boy by the hand. He had been in such a hurry to “go to Grandma’s” that clothes hadn’t mattered. He couldn’t wait for us women folks to get primped up. Of course, we felt he had disgraced the family name running around in such an unclothed state, so it was good for our pride that we were leaving on the next train, or were hoping to.

Had it not been for that good old Jones’ family trait of starting to get ready plenty of time beforehand, the delay caused

by the lost boy might have made us miss that wonderful “choo-choo” as he called it, and as a result we would have been a day late in going to Grandma’s—stark tragedy!



On the Train

But we made the train and once aboard there was a mad scramble for next-to-the-window seats. Once we were settled, each by a window, Mama heaved a deep sigh of relief—relief that we were all packed up, all dressed up (and certainly we were), and that we were on our way. Unless there occurred a cinder-in-the-eye catastrophe, or some similar upset, we would give Mama no further concern for some time. She had earned that brief rest.

I remember how impressed I was by how fast the telephone poles, fences, houses, and country roads sped past our windows. I remember exactly how each railroad depot looked along the way, and how the loafers on the depot platforms looked at the people on the train. We felt rather important to be stared at so.

I can remember how the trainman came through in his dark trim uniform, singing out the names of the stations:

“D-a-r-k-s Mill—C-A-R-T-E-R-S’ Creek—Spring H-i-l-l
—Thompson’s Sta-tion—F-r-a-n-k-l-i-n—B-r-e-n-t-wood—

N-a-s-h-ville.” I cannot spell the names as he drawled them, but you, too, know the chant.

Then the train-butcher’s wares. The big polished apples, oranges, waxy delicious looking bananas, packages of chewing gum, and best of all were the little glass trains, lanterns, and pistols filled with colored candies. Only another child can imagine how we longed for those. However, after so long a time we knew it wasn’t worthwhile to ask, or even to hint for anything in the butcher’s basket. We could only look and wish. Mama always said that the “stuff on the train” was too high, cost two prices, in fact. So we never owned a glass train, lantern, or pistol, and never tasted a butcher apple, orange, or banana.

We always took our own food along with us, and such food! Eating supper on the train was the height of the trip. It was a watched-for moment when Mama rose from the red-plush seat, reached to the rack above and brought down the twine-tied shoebox full of food.

The top layer was of biscuits, some plain to eat with the ham, crisp and greasy. The next layer was of biscuits, some plain to eat with the chicken and some with piccalilli, or green-tomato chow-chow soaked through, and others filled with blackberry jam or pear preserves, syrup and all. On the bottom layer were thick slices of cocoanut, chocolate, and pound cake.

Tucked juicily in among the other delicacies were some of Mama’s specialties such as peach sweet pickles, apple pie flavored with bits of stick cinnamon, egg-custard pie heavy

with nutmeg, cucumber pickles, and salmon croquettes. By the time the box was opened, some hours after it was packed, all flavors blended. Eating supper on the train was the next thing to a Sunday School picnic.

It was no wonder that Mama found good use for the damp washrag she had brought along in anticipation, to clean those three sticky faces and six greasy hands, all embellished with bits of pickle, preserves, jam, and chocolate icing. Mama had the rag carefully wrapped in one of the many special packages. Sometimes it had to be re-wet during the procedure.

After supper there had to be drinks all around. Like little drunken sailors we reeled to and from the water cooler at the far end of the coach. Sometimes Mama tried to drench us by bringing what water we required in one of those little collapsible cups she carried in her pocketbook, but too often the cup collapsed before it reached its destination. Besides, we were sure that the water tasted better when taken broadside from one of the big tin cups that were chained to the barrel cooler. There we could drink just like everybody else.



Union Station

I can never forget how high the steps at Nashville's new Union Station seemed in those days when our legs were short, nor how much fun it was to slide our hands along the sooty hand

rail although we were well scolded for doing so. That phase of misbehavior called out the wet washrag as soon as we were settled for our long wait between trains in the palatial “Ladies Waiting Room.”

I could never see the need of changing trains in Nashville, but like other conveniences and inconveniences it was accepted as part of the Great Adventure. It was fun anyway to slide our new slippers over the glass-like tile floor, and to trace the tile patterns with the point of Mama’s umbrella, which was among our other bundles.

Time after time we were shushed and told to behave ourselves or we would get a whipping, and all that sort of stuff, but it was hard indeed for us to sit still when we were so dressed up and going to Grandma’s.

One important phase of the trip was gathering up all our bundles from the “baggage table” in the center of the waiting room and trailing with Mama halfway up the block on Nashville’s busy Broad Street to a fruit market to buy two dozen bananas as a surprise for Grandma’s folks. We rarely bought bananas except on this special occasion and they were always a great surprise to those that Mama called “the home folks.”



Lantern Under the Surrey

We always arrived in White Bluff after dark. Uncle "Bubber" met us at the depot with Old Fan hitched to the topless surrey. Grandma's phaeton was never uncovered or taken out of the buggy-shed except on special occasions, and then never at night nor in bad weather. It was never allowed to travel in mud, and the night air was not good for its shiny finish. Besides, the phaeton couldn't be seen at night, so what was the use taking it out. That phaeton was chief means of impressing the neighbors on Sundays, at funerals, and on special occasions. At night the family used the rusty, rattley, mud-spattered old surrey.

In the dim light of the depot platform, with all our baggage, the sack of bananas, and the wet washrag, we climbed and piled into the old open surrey. We jogged down the town's main street, which was neither more nor less than a bumpy country road that seemed always muddy. This muddy appearance might at times have been caused by the light from the lantern swinging under the surrey, but usually there was real mud, especially in ruts and holes.

Often we had to "sooey" the hogs out of their mudholes in the middle of what was to become U.S. Highway 70, "the Broadway of America." One night, as I well remember, we ran over the rear elevation of an old black cow slumbering in the roadway. How she groaned, scrambled up, and jangled her bell. We screamed and clutched for something to hold to. Since the surrey had no top, we could catch only at the air and each other. As the old

cow rose to her feet halfway between the front and back wheels, we thought the surrey would turn over for sure.

This would have been particularly tragic on that occasion for among our other bundles on that night was a decorated wedding cake for one of the aunts whose marriage was to be a special event of our visit. It was lucky for us and the wedding party that the surrey was soon down on four wheels again. The old cow sighed, and we did too. That frightening near-accident might not have happened if Fan hadn't been blind on one side, and if the old cow hadn't chosen to sleep on that side of the road.

Fido and Bugler were always first to greet us. We would hear them barking even before we started up the hill to Grandma's front gate. Then we could see the light in the hall, the silhouettes of Grandma and Grandpa, all the aunts, uncles, and cousins coming out to meet us. There were hugging and kissing all the way around, front gate to house. Then we went inside.

I can see it even yet, the lamp lit old "settin' room," couch under the window, double decked bureau, sewing machine with its head under a box-like cover and its damask scarf spread over it all. I remember the calendars of various ages on the wall; one with a picture of a race horse labeled "Dan Patch," one with a steaming train "The Dixie Flyer," and others of fruit, fish, and flowers.

However, we stopped in this room only long enough to lay down our bundles, take off our things, and open and pass the

sack of bananas. After kissing us again all around, Grandma would declare that she knew we “poor things must be starved to death,” and she would hustle us off to the kitchen and uncover the table for us to eat another supper.

I can never forget how that kitchen-dining table looked and smelled. Grandma's table was “set” at all times. All that was necessary to put it into service was to remove the “table cover,” which consisted of eight flour sacks flat-felled together, and to turn up the plates. The plates were always turned face down over the bone handled knives and forks. All the spoons stood in a spoon holder in the middle of the table to hold up the cover.

Grandma had two tablecloths for everyday use. The red-and-white checked one was used one week, the blue-and-white one the next week. I was always glad if we could arrive at Grandma's during red-and-white-checked tablecloth week. Meals from that seemed more cheerful.

Back to supper: after we had been well filled with “cold vittles,” which always made up supper at Grandma's house, it was time for one of the aunts to light an extra coal-oil lamp from the small table in the corner of the back hall and lead us off upstairs to sleep. Mama had a big feather-bedded four-poster in the company bedroom, and we had “Baptist pallets” on the floor around her.

We could hardly wait for next morning. Somehow we never cared to sleep late at Grandma's. There was too much to be seen, done, and tasted. Somehow, no matter how early we got up, by

the time we got around to the fragrant old kitchen and back-hall summer dining room, it was time for breakfast. However, before we were permitted to come to the table, we were shooed out to the back porch to wash up. This seemed so unnecessary.



The Foot Bucket

There we dipped the shiny tin wash-pan into the rain barrel under the eaves. After fishing out the wiggle-tails we would wash our hands and faces, or more accurately, dampen our palms and chins, and wipe them dry (and more or less clean) on the meal-sack roller towel which hung nearby. We never failed at some time during the ablutions to slide our fingers over the fragrant cake of pink “florescent” soap that Grandma always kept on the washstand. Then, if anyone doubted our cleanliness, we could let them smell our fingers and know thereby that we had been to the washstand.

Washings over, it was the part of etiquette (and compulsion) to pour the sudsy water into the wooden candy bucket, which we called the “foot bucket” beside the washstand. This was a bucket with a purpose, or rather with more than one purpose. First, it conserved used water for further uses. Second, it served as the place where we children would have to wash our dirty feet when we came in from play in the evenings. We would take turn about standing there almost knee-deep in the old wooden

candy bucket (more or less conscientiously, but in either case languidly), scrubbing the top of one foot with the sole of the other, then reversing the process, and taking out first one foot then the other for inspection.

When we had either washed off or loosened up the worst of the grime we would step out and wipe off the remainder of the dirt and the dingy water on the foot-towel, which had been the face towel the day before. When the foot-bucket's evening work was done it was carried by one of the uncles to the front yard. There the washings of the day served to refresh Grandma's geraniums, the ones parading in whitewashed buckets along the cobble-stone and shell-bordered front walk.

Now back to breakfast. It was at the breakfast table that Grandpa's hospitality shown. It was the height of his pleasure to see us children eat. He sat across the table and watched us with much the same expression on his face that he had when he sat on the pig-pen rail fence and watched his fattening pigs champing their corn.

Besides the "bought grub" that Grandpa brought from the store as special treats for us as company, there was an abundance of food from the farm, garden, orchard, smokehouse, chicken-yard, cellar, dairy house, and Grandpa's mill. My grandparents could never have imagined a toast-and-coffee breakfast.

A typical, ordinary, everyday breakfast began with fried chicken and "wooly" gravy, and/or fried ham with marble gravy (no bacon—only po' whites and colored folks ate side-

meat). Then there were eggs—fried, boiled, poached, or scrambled—on dishes piled high. In addition to the meat and egg dishes/here were bowls of fried apples, almost candied with brown sugar, fried potatoes, fried corn dotted with lakes of butter, cornmeal mush with milk or oatmeal or both, stewed peaches, apple sauce, plum jelly, pear preserves, jam, honey, molasses, and pickles (sweet and sour). (Those last half-dozen or so staples were kept on the table at all times.)

Then there were hot biscuits, one plate at each corner of the table with plenty of butter nearby, three kinds of milk (we had a choice of sweet milk or buttermilk on the dining table, or clabber from the thick white pitcher on the side table). There was a big pot of Arbuckles' coffee exclusively for Grandpa. He got up early in the morning, ground a cupful of the coffee beans from those that Grandma roasted every Saturday, and made a pot of coffee when he made the fire in the kitchen stove so the womenfolks could cook breakfast.

There was tea for Grandma, usually "tea-kettle," or cambric tea, merely hot water and milk. Ladies didn't drink coffee, and certainly children didn't. Coffee would make children turn black. Usually we drank clabber milk. That seemed the whitest of all breakfast drinks. Daily we watched for Grandpa's complexion to change.

After breakfast when we had washed the remnants of breakfast from faces and fingers, we had play-aprons tied about our necks, and sunbonnets or wide brimmed hats tied under

our chins. We were warned to keep those on because sunburn was then almost a disgrace, and to be freckled was the next thing to being “common.” Well-protected from sunshine, we were off to the fields and woods.

On our way to the woods, we stopped in the barnyard to watch Grandpa curry and saddle Old Fan to go to the mill and the shop. Then we watched Grandma turn out the newest calf and start the morning milking.



Super Grade A Raw

Obtaining the family's milk supply was a ritual that Grandma trusted to nobody but herself. As people said about her milking, she was “particular.” She really was, and was vastly proud of it. As she explained, milk at its best was dirty enough and there wasn't any need of putting extra dirt in it. The product that Grandma took to the spring-house after milking time would surely have rated Super Grade A.

Grandma took with her to the “milk place” three vessels besides the pan of water and towel for the old cow's udder. There were the bucket and strainer, which were sunned all day, aired all night, and scalded before and after each milking with boiling soda water. They were placed high on a fence post and covered with a clean wet flour sack. Also there was the ever-present Jackson cup (a half gallon tin measure with a lip on

one side and a handle on the other) and it was this she used to milk in.

After giving the calf his suck all around, Grandma roped him off with a plowline and a cob. The cob went through the slipknot loop under the calf's jaw and kept the silly fellow from choking himself. After the udder (we always said "bag") was well washed and dried, the flank well brushed (with Grandpa's curry comb and brush), Grandma took her cup in hand (it had been hanging upside down on a fence-paling), and began to take her share of the milk.

No milking stool for Grandma. She stood, or half-stooped, at arm's length and made each spray bury itself in the exact center of the fluff of foam in that half-gallon cup. It was a marvel to me. I suppose Grandma never milked directly into a bucket in her life. No sir, that was a slovenly and dirty way to do, and she was particular.

Grandma's cows always had descriptive and distinctive names. There was Old Cherry, veteran of the herd (mother of most of the others). Then in succession, Old Red, Old Pied, and Old Brindle. All other bovine animals on the farm were called simply "yearlings," even though they may have been as big and as old as the milk cows. The cows all had bells, so they could be found if lost. They all had calves or near-yearlings, so they would come home at night. They all switched flies, and Grandma. We children would volunteer to hold the old cow's tail while Grandma was milking, and she let us take turn about.

GOIN' TO GRANDMA'S

Once in a while we'd let it slip—then, Boyee!—what a wallop
Grandma got, right across the eyes. Cockleburs and all.

