

HORSE-AND-BUGGY DAYS

BY DELLA T. LUTES

THE horse and buggy was a primitive means of transportation, to be sure, but it took us places where neither the airplane nor the automobile seem ever to find the way. And it left us imperishable memories which none of the modern conveyances can ever evoke. The child of today who is transported on mechanical wings from port to port will have impressions of flying landscapes, swift, unwinding ribbons of concrete, glimpses of jewelled lake or shadowed hill, but with the effect of a blurred etching, a confused impact as of one film overlaid upon another, rather than of a thousand sharp vignettes.

Just riding to town on the high spring seat of a lumber wagon with my father was more exciting than any breath-taking excursion covering a like period of time that I have taken since. The contents of the wagon would lead to barter and trade, to strange adventures in the market place, to humorous and salty converse with men; and, at the end of a moderately busy day,

the same road, rough, sandy, and, as measured by standards of today, long, but familiar as my mother's face, would take us—home. Countless such simple journeys led us, in fact, to mill and to meeting, to the observance of *amor patriae*, and to more shades and degrees of amusement and entertainment than I have met with in the years between.

Such, for instance, as the Fourth of July celebration. To observe properly this national tribute to our present status of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, we went *en famille* (which included the hired man and anyone else who happened to be either visiting us or working for us) and we took our dinner. For the convenience of numbers we went in the Democrat, a light vehicle comparable perhaps to the beach wagon of today. It was drawn by a team of horses, and besides the two capacious seats comfortably filled, there was plenty of room for the bag of oats for the horses and baskets of dinner for us. There would be, as I remember

certain occasions, my mother and myself with Mis' Lou Esty on the back seat, the hired man and my father in front. Mis' Lou Esty was the seamstress who spent weeks at a time in the various homes of the neighborhood.

The Fourth of July celebration was an event fraught with meaning. There would be the Procession — wagons, often with a hayrack attached, decorated with colored bunting — drawn by horses whose twitching ears were tickled by rosettes of red, white, and blue, and carrying a load of pretty girls dressed in white, with sashes of the national colors. Another wagon was one in which Columbia rode majestically alone, her tall form draped in folds of white with the colors across her shoulder, a golden crown upon her head, and a silver staff in her hands. Interspersed were the marching band, the dashing Zouaves, the G. A. R.'s, stepping, as yet, with proud, unhalting foot. Up the street they went and down the street they came so our enraptured eyes might see them twice, finally to take their places in the Square, where the Governor would make a speech and the best orator amongst the preachers would read the Declaration.

No firecrackers were shot off

during the Exercises and hundreds of people, including children, stood reverently to listen. We were being told why we celebrated this day, what the Declaration had done for us, what it meant to have a Constitution of the United States, and why we must abide by it. It was, we were told, the annual observation of an event that had meant sanctuary of homes, national and personal freedom, and a right to live, unmolested, in this lovely, fruitful State of Michigan. We were filled with gratitude and respect, and we thrilled at the thought of our inheritance.

When the speeches and the reading and the singing of *Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean* were over, when the band had played *Oh, Say Can You See* and *America*, we turned and walked to the back street where our team was left and drove over to the Mound to eat our lunch.

The Mound was a grove of oak trees on a little rise of ground which we flatland people were pleased to call a hill. It was near the spot where the Republican Party was born under the famous Three Oaks. Here we unhitched the horses, took the bits from their mouths, and gave them their oats and some fresh grass. Then Mis' Esty and my mother took out the

dinner baskets and spread the blue-and-white cloth on the ground. And out of the baskets they took plates and cups and saucers and knives and forks and spoons. And out of the eloquently odored rolls of toweling and napkins they took such food as to remember excites the futile weeping of my jaws. Bread — started on its savory way the night before, and baked by my mother in the earliest hour of the morning. Butter — churned yesterday and kept cold in a bucket let down into the cavernous depths of the well, brought forth the last thing before starting and put in a small stone jar with wet burdock leaves around it. Cold chicken — boiled the day before and fried in butter. Cold hard-boiled eggs as if the one should complement the other to the last. Pickled beets — young, sweet globes of garnet hardly larger than the bantam's egg that had been boiled for me. Green onions — not scallions now — these are gone to seed, but the slender striplings that have been thinned from the field, with salt and pepper mixed together and wrapped in a paper. Cherries picked fresh from the overloaded trees that very morning by the hired man, while my father was changing from overall and wam'us to Sunday clothes and white shirt.

Cookies — the big white sugar kind with fluted edges and a raisin in the center. An apple pie — young green apple pie made from Yellow Transparents — the first to ripen, the choicest of early apples for pie. Apple pie to which I bow my head in almost reverent memory because its like is nearly passed from even the memory of men, as are the buggy and the Democrat wagon. Pie with a crust into which you set your teeth delicately, as a man fingers jewels precious to the touch, in order to taste it to the full; or as one lifting with delicate sense of taste the veil to inner shrines of sweetness.

While we eat we hear the increasing pop of firecrackers, the less frequent boom of the cannon which the boys are firing from the Common where thistles grow. Our dinner eaten, we go back to the scene of festivity. My father drives the horses to the livery stable. It is hot, the flies bother them, and they would be made nervous by the increasing noise. Then we go together, my father and the hired man walking in front, my mother and Mis' Esty becomingly bringing up the rear, me between them. We line up to the curb to watch the fun — the potato race, the sack race, the one-legged race, climbing a greased pole, chasing a greased

pig; we listen to the shouts and yells and laughter and the constant popping of crackers. We drink lemonade from a stand and eat popcorn from a street vendor.

Tired, happy, filled with blissful content, we finally take to the road again. The horses, however, are fresh and eager. There is a well-filled manger awaiting them and they cover the miles with speed, or what, in that day, was accounted speed. On the way, as we come to the top of a little hill, we look over our shoulders to see a skyrocket zoom its way into the darkening sky. "O-o-oh!" Another and another. The sky reddens. But the horses are not interested in fireworks and we slip beyond sight of the display, and without regret, for beyond lies home. We do not talk much. There is nothing to talk about. What we have seen and heard is accepted, has played its part in the fabrication of our lives. There *was* a Revolution. Wise and great men *did* write a Declaration. Other wise and great men drew up a Constitution of the United States. These heritages they left to us. Also the land over which we are driving, the home toward which we are going. We *are* Americans. There is no questioning, no quibbling, no carping, no befuddling our minds with this dissatisfaction or that

doubt. Better men than we had fought the fight for us and given their reasons for doing it. The least we could do was to abide gratefully.

We are at home. We unhitch the horses, unharness them, put them in the barn, give them fresh bedding, and feed them. We roll the wagon into the shed. We enter the house — by the kitchen door — eat our supper and go to bed. We are content. The horse and wagon have done us a good turn today. They took us where there was entertainment as well as inspiration, and brought us home with a feeling of renewed gratefulness for the land in which we live.

II

The wagon, a still sturdier vehicle than the Democrat, functioned actively in the maintenance of life. It hauled our grain and hay from field to barn. It took our grist to mill and fetched back the meal and flour from which were made those breads and cakes now rapidly becoming only a memory.

Going to mill was never a task but always a joy, to man or child. We took buckwheat to mill, for instance, and brought back buckwheat flour from which our mothers made pancakes the like of

which no modern urban dweller ever saw. And cooked with them sausage made from the hogs raised on our own farms, fattened on our own corn, whose hams and shoulders were being smoked in our own smokehouses.

Going to mill was one of the pleasantest journeys I have ever made in my life. The miller was a gray and dusty man; his floors were ashen with flying flour, and worn to the texture of satin by human feet. The water made a happy roar as it came over the flume; the wheel turned with a splash like a giant bullhead flopping about the pond at dusk. My father talked with the miller while I watched the wheel turn, the water fall.

Going to the cider mill was even pleasanter — one of those leisurely tasks pertaining to farm life that came after the bustle of seeding, harvesting, threshing was over and a man could take the remainder of his preparatory chores more at his ease. Winter was not far away, bins and barrels must be filled, but there would be plenty of time. Such jobs as picking apples, digging potatoes, husking corn, flailing beans, making cider — these would fill the fragrant October days to the very last, but they were mainly likeable jobs performed with a

rhythmical synchronization. The tempo of activity had pleasantly slowed.

When I give myself time in which to remember those golden days of Autumn when we, first, filled the wagon with apples from the fragrant orchard, and then, mounting the high spring seat, rolled leisurely away along the narrow country road toward the cider mill, I am filled with regret that modern youngsters are so impoverished for opportunity that they must haul up to a hideous little stand beside a dangerous thoroughfare to swill down some villainous, synthetic liquid tainted in color and insipid in taste. How little do they know — can ever know — of the serene delight in jogging along a narrow country road where upon the hazel brush little brown fuzzy clusters are ripening, soon to be gathered along with walnuts, butternuts, and hickory nuts and stored in the garret for Winter use. Of the thrill with which we come within sound and sight — and smell — of the old cider mill on the creek. How little can they ever know of that rich delectable flavor which meets the itching tongue as the miller hands you a mug of pure, unadulterated juice, fresh-made from apples grown on your own land, gathered by your

own hands. Poor, deprived, satiated, unsatisfied modern generations! All their streamlined cars with their multiple cylinders can never take them to pleasanter — or safer — places than our old Studebaker wagon took us.

III

Winter with its snow brought out the two-bob sleigh, the cutter, and the pung. The pung was a short wooden box set on single runners and drawn by one or two horses. It was used by farmers to haul wood from the wood lot, or for other short loads. It was also used for social purposes as when of a Sunday it was swept of wood and bark and filled with clean straw and the comforting assurance that it would get us to Uncle Frank's house, in spite of drifts and ruts, in time for the Sunday chicken and dumpplings, and safely home again for the evening chores.

These are only a scattering of the thousand-and-one of our dependencies upon the horse and buggy. We went to funerals in buggies — and we moved in a manner befitting the occasion. The hearse led, black and somber, drawn by black horses with black plumes. We went to weddings and housewarmings and sociables and ice-cream festi-

vals and Sunday School picnics; to the County Fair where we met all our relatives on a certain day, never premeditated but always definite. Courting was done in the buggy and the cutter. We went to church in the buggy. You did not enjoy the long sermons particularly, but there was nothing to be done about it except to listen — or not to listen. But always there were the neighbors to meet in the intermission between church and Sunday School, and the churchyard where the boys and girls wandered, sometimes gathering a sprig of myrtle or a spray of rosemary to be treasured until this day. And behind the act of going to church was religion. Good old orthodox religion. We believed in God and Heaven and Punishment, and we behaved ourselves accordingly. We read the Bible, and we heard it read at home. And we neither doubted nor questioned it. The horse and buggy was allied to conscientious earthly living and to our hope of immortality. Men did not live in constant fear of death, because they believed in life.

The horse and buggy contributed to our pleasure in contemplating the world in which we lived. Our roads were dusty in Summer, rutty in Spring, and drifted with snow in Winter. But at least we

saw what was alongside the road, and what was beyond the road. We had time and leisure in which to inspect the growth of running blackberries along the way — ripe in another week; to watch the fireflies over the meadow when coming home belatedly from a Sunday visit to Aunt Hanner, and the Johnny Jump-ups that bloomed alongside the road in June. We could even see the shining minnows in the shallow of the brook as we drove slowly across, and noted that the blue sweetflag was in blossom. Sweetflag made good chewing, pleasanter than slippery elm.

And there was the diversion of driving through the shallows at one side of the bridge where Grand River crossed the road. You drove through to cool the horse and let him drink, and to give the drying wheels a little soak. Besides, it was

fun. You did a good many things for fun those days — simple little things like stopping the horse while you got out to pick some sassafras buds or wintergreen berries. You could *see* things while you were still passing them and had time to stop if you wanted to — not just to get an impression of something you would like to have seen, but did not realize until you were past, traveling at sixty miles per hour.

Our roads were primitive and poor, but they led to honesty. They led also to loyalty. Our neighbors were our friends and they came to us as we went to them both for companionship and in need. They led to reverence, respect, devotion. They led to content. And all these were found, as the slow-moving horse and buggy followed the winding road, over the hill and along the way to home.



CRIME AS A PROFESSION

BY FLETCHER PRATT

THE comparison between European and American police systems, so frequently made to the great disadvantage of the latter, may be said to contain one element of utility — it calls attention to the fact that such comparison is essentially impossible to set up. For in the long run your police force reflects not any abstract standard of conduct, but the general character of the civilization it protects.

American civilization, the American ability for combination and business organization upon a large scale, has presented the police with a problem of professionalized crime which has no European parallel and which is, essentially, not a police problem. The critics of law and order forces overlook the fact that the American police have made amateur crime absolutely unsafe to the criminal; and amateur crime is the only sort Europe knows. The cleverest stick-up, penman, or dummy-chucker the Continent ever produced would hardly last a week in Chicago.

Our police forces are superior to

any on earth; American detectives come from a more intelligent class than those of Europe. Nowhere in the world does the force contain so many university graduates, and nowhere do they make so much use of the latest developments in psychology or so frequently enroll the help of criminological laboratories. Moreover, our police are backed by magnificent private detective organizations like the Burns and Pinkerton agencies, which have no imitators across the sea, where private detectives are more often than not stooges for divorce and blackmail rackets.

Yet there remains the paradoxical fact that with the exception of the three great crime specialties of Western Europe — burglary in England, confidence work in France and Spain, and mass-murder with overtones of cannibalism in Germany — the United States statistically leads the civilized world in every type of unsolved crime, both absolutely and *per capita*. The catch lies in the word "unsolved", which has ac-