1941

The Life and Works of John Fox, Jr.

Arthur Newman Kruger

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation

https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/7846

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
MANUSCRIPT THESIS

Unpublished theses submitted for the master's and doctor's degrees and deposited in the Louisiana State University Library are available for inspection. Use of any thesis is limited by the rights of the author. Bibliographical references may be noted, but passages may not be copied unless the author has given permission. Credit must be given in subsequent written or published work.

A library which borrows this thesis for use by its clientele is expected to make sure that the borrower is aware of the above restrictions.

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

li9-a
THE LIFE AND WORKS OF JOHN FOX, JR.

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

By

Arthur Newman Kruger
A.B., University of Alabama, 1936
1941
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am greatly indebted to Dr. E. L. Bradsher for his generous encouragement and constructive criticism in directing this study. I wish also to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to Miss Fritzi Scheff, of New York City, who was kind enough to recount to me in detail the facts of her married life to John Fox, Jr.; and gratefully acknowledge the helpful communications of Miss Minnie Fox, of Big Stone Gap, Virginia, Mr. I. C. Taylor, postmaster of Big Stone Gap, and Miss Valette McClintock, postmaster of Paris, Kentucky. Thanks are also forthcoming to Mr. T. N. McMillan of the Hill Memorial Library for his kind cooperation in making books available to me.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ............................................... 11

ABSTRACT ............................................................... iv

INTRODUCTION ........................................................ 1

CHAPTERS
   I. EARLY YEARS AND EDUCATION ................................ 4
   II. ADVENT TO MOUNTAINS ........................................ 25
   III. BEGINNING OF LITERARY LABORS ............................ 48
   IV. AS A WRITER OF SHORT STORIES ............................ 74
   V. EARLY NOVELS .................................................. 111
   VI. WAR-CORRESPONDENT IN THE ORIENT:
       FOLLOWING THE SUN-FLAG .................................... 150
   VII. MARRIAGE ..................................................... 200
   VIII. DIVORCE AND LAST YEARS ................................. 241
   IX. FOX THE MAN ................................................ 279
   X. ASPECTS OF TECHNIQUE AND STYLE ......................... 317
   XI. JOHN FOX AND KENTUCKY .................................... 356

CONCLUSION ............................................................ 390

BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................................ 396

APPENDICES
   APPENDIX A ........................................................ 402
   APPENDIX B ........................................................ 403

BIOGRAPHY ............................................................. 404
This dissertation is a study of the life and works of John Fox, Jr., Kentucky novelist, who lived from 1863 to 1919, and was the author of several "best-selling" works, including The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come and The Trail of the Lonesome Pine.

Although his memory was recently honored at the Sesquicentennial Celebration held at Bourbon County, Kentucky, Fox appears to have fallen into a rather complete obscurity since his death. Fortunately, many of his contemporaries, friends and relatives, are still alive and in possession of material which the writer, in most cases, has been able to procure and utilize, in addition to numerous books and periodicals relating to the subject.

The study is divided into eleven chapters, which may be summarized as follows:

1. "Early Years and Education," which includes an account of Fox's genealogy, immediate family, cultural inheritance, reading tastes, early education at his father's school, and later, at Transylvania and Harvard Universities, respectively.

2. "Advent to the Mountains," which includes an account of the author's early journalistic career on
the New York Times and Sun, respectively, and his eventual removal to the Cumberland Mountains, where he made his permanent home and accumulated material for his subsequent fictions.

3. "Beginning of Literary Labors," which includes an account of his early work and publishing experiences.

4. "As a Writer of Short Stories," which includes an account of the different types of short stories which Fox wrote throughout his lifetime; also, of the various techniques embodied in such stories.

5. "Early Novels," which contains an account and criticism of each of Fox's early novels and concludes with a brief account of his activities as a war-correspondent in Cuba for Harper's Weekly during the Spanish-American War.

6. "War-Correspondent in the Orient: Following the Sun-Flag," which contains a rather lengthy account of his experiences as a war-correspondent in Tokio and Manchuria for Scribner's Magazine during the Russo-Japanese War, and an account of his work produced during that time.

7. "Marriage," which contains an account of his courtship of, and marriage to, Fritzi Scheff, well-known comic and grand opera star at the time; also, a discussion of his work produced during this period of his
life.

8. "Divorce and Last Years," which contains an account of the circumstances leading to his divorce, and of the concluding years of his life.

9. "Fox the Man," which is, in a sense, a recapitulation of Fox's qualities as a man: his physiognomy, personality, theology, philosophy, idiosyncrasies, hobbies, interests, and friendships.

10. "Aspects of Technique and Style," which is a recapitulation of the technical aspects of Fox's work, his strength and weaknesses as a writer.

11. "John Fox and Kentucky," which includes a discussion of Fox's relation to Kentucky literature and to the literary trends of the day; also, of his contribution to the then swelling stream of regionalistic literature.

Fox is perhaps best remembered for the thorough manner in which he recreated the Southern, in particular the Kentucky, mountaineer in his work. From both his fiction and essays one gathers a complete picture of the mountaineer—his history, economics, political allegiances, traditions, superstitions, dress, weapons, pastimes, language, psychology, customs, religious, marriage, funeral, and otherwise. It is true that such material is of more interest perhaps to the social historian than to the general reader of fiction.
However, it should be said to Fox's credit that he rarely encumbers his story with superfluous sociological data, that such material as relates to the mountaineer is as a rule skilfully integrated with the narrative, for which he had a gift. Regardless of its background, the story, usually one of love, was always all-important with Fox.

To gauge Fox's achievement properly, one must consider him in relation to his age. His preoccupation with a particular region relates him to such contemporary romantic local-colorists as George Washington Cable, Kate Chopin, Mary Noailles Murfree, Thomas Nelson Page, Francis Hopkinson Smith, and James Lane Allen. Furthermore, the period during which he reached his maturity, roughly around 1895, was one of strong, even tearful, sentiment and jaunty optimism. Besides being constitutionally romantic, Fox was imbued with the spirit of the times. His work, as a result, is marred by sentimentality, by a romantic tendency to stereotype, as well as to oversimplify, characters and dramatic situations. It is this shortcoming, more than anything else, that appears to have deprived his work of a long and honorable life, a circumstance all the more regrettable in view of the fact that Fox, when he chose to be, was an able humorist. Two of his books, it appears, *Following the Sun-Flag* and *A Knight of the Cumberland*, written within a
year of each other, unmistakably reflect the influence of Mark Twain, with whom Fox happened to be friends. Unfortunately, his work, both before and after, is not as frequently and judiciously illuminated by the same comic spirit.

In conclusion, Fox was not a profound thinker. One reads him nowadays for his ability to tell a story swiftly and dramatically, and one remembers him chiefly for his knowledge of mountaineers.
INTRODUCTION

In a highly eulogistic tribute to John Fox, Jr., shortly after his death, Thomas Nelson Page, one of his best friends in life, wrote, "The public awakened to the realization of his art, stamped it with the seal of pronounced approval and has held him since in unchanged esteem."1 Considered in the light of subsequent facts, this statement is somewhat ironical. Not only are Fox's works little read nowadays, but he himself has been practically forgotten by the public at large. What is more, a place in American letters has been almost wholly denied him by literary critics. An unusually scant amount of criticism has been devoted to him; and entries concerning his work in recent histories of American literature have at best been cursory or negligible, consisting in most cases of mere allusions to one or two of his best-known works. The most ever written about him at one time is the essay by Page which appeared in Scribner's shortly after his death, and that is not much longer than nine pages. Surely, nothing even approaching a definitive study has ever been made of his work.

1Thomas Nelson Page, "John Fox," Scribner's, LXVI (1919), 682.
To cite an instance of the nearly complete, and therefore somewhat baffling, obscurity into which he has fallen, in the relatively short period of twenty years since his death in 1919: When the cinema firm of Warner Brothers recently decided to make *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* into a motion picture, they called on the telephone Fritz Scheff—divorced wife of Fox, then and still living in New York—and asked her, "Where are those mountains that Fox writes about, anyway?"

"If you are so interested in knowing, go find out for yourself," was Miss Scheff's curt and justifiably acid reply. When the movie finally was shown, only the slightest reference, "Based on the novel by John Fox, Jr.," placed inconspicuously at the bottom of the screen, was its producer's acknowledgment to the author.

Perhaps, it is not fair to say Fox has been completely forgotten. Doubtless, those who knew him for a friend, and he had a host of these, many of whom are still living, not to mention fellow-Kentuckians and intimates of the Fox family, will ever cherish his memory. As a matter of fact, in September of last year, 1939, during the Bourbon County Sesquicentennial Celebration, a memorial was erected to Fox's memory at the old home site on the Winchester Road, seven miles east of Paris, Kentucky. Further, the children of the Paris schools, in a loving gesture to Fox, contributed
their pennies to purchase a large picture of him which was on display during the Sesquicentennial and now hangs in the school library. In spite of such gestures, however, Fox, to all critical purposes on hand, remains unknown and unduly neglected at large. It is with the hope of arousing new interest in the man and his work, according them a fair and thorough appraisal, as well as preserving facts about his career, still available fortunately, that the present study has been undertaken.
CHAPTER ONE
EARLY YEARS AND EDUCATION

John Fox, Jr., "Kentucky's master maker of mountain myths," appears to have been fortunate both in his environment and ancestry. Like Marshall of The Kentuckians, he had "social distinction" behind him, "and, further back, the proud traditions of Virginia." However, in tracing Fox's lineage, one can go much further back than this. Indeed, he was a descendant of the Chiltons of Westmoreland County, Virginia, an honorable and time-honored family, one of the oldest in England. One member of the family, according to "Domesday Book," a census taken by William the Conqueror in 1086, landed with him on English shores and fought at Hastings. Fox's brother, James W. Fox, spent much time and labor in England when he was alive, tracing the origin of the name. He traced it, with the aid of the best English authorities, through the centuries until it finally becomes "de Chilton." The Chiltons of the northern neck of Virginia came from Kent County, England, near the village of Maidstone. They bore the same arms as the Chiltons in Kent County, and the same Maidstone was used by the early Chiltons in Virginia.

---

1 John Fox, Jr., The Kentuckians, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909, p. 3. (This edition is used throughout and contains, besides, A Knight of the Cumberland.)
in naming one of their homes is Westmoreland. 1

The first John Fox, a major in the English army, after being concerned in a conspiracy to rescue Charles I, fled to Virginia in 1649 and was given a colonial appointment by Governor Berkeley. Interestingly enough, Fox alludes to this incident in Crittenden, when, speaking of Crittenden’s ancestry, he obviously credits him with facts of his own heritage, a not uncommon procedure with him. Remarkably first that his protagonist’s ancestors had been soldiers, he goes on to say that they had played this role “beyond the time when the first American among them, failing to rescue his king from Carisbrooke Castle, set sail for Virginia on the very day Charles lost his royal head.” 2 It is significant, pressing the analogy between Fox and his character, that Crittenden in the story was like Fox himself an aristocratic Kentuckian, whose family a few generations back had come from Virginia.

In The Trail of the Lonesome Pine Fox does very much the same thing with Hale who, like the rest of Fox’s heroes of the Bluegrass, is in many respects autobiographical. Such facts as the following are out of Fox’s own past and are therefore here given:

1Ann Chilton McDowell, “Chilton and Shelton, Two Distinct Virginia Families,” William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, 2nd Series, X (1930), 57.
2John Fox, Jr., Crittenden, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1909, p. 31. (This edition is used throughout.)
One of his forefathers had been with Washington on the Father's first historic expedition into the wilds of Virginia. His great-grandfather had accompanied Boone when that hunter first penetrated the 'Dark and Bloody Ground' [Kentucky], had gone back to Virginia and come again with a surveyor's chain and compass to help wrest it from the red men... That compass and that chain his grandfather had fallen heir to and with that compass and chain his father had earned his livelihood amid the wrecks of the Civil War.

---

1 John Fox, Jr., The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908, p. 40. (This edition is used throughout.) Further likenesses that suggest Hale is Fox himself: Like Fox, Hale went "to the old Transylvania University at Lexington, the first seat of learning planted beyond the Alleghanies. He was fond of history, of the sciences and literature, was unusually adept in Latin and Greek, and had a passion for mathematics." (The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, p. 40) The only somewhat doubtful note is the mention of "a passion for mathematics." It is possible that Fox here had his elder brother James in mind, particularly since the latter, like Hale, was something of an engineer. This conjecture is given some basis by the remaining facts in his account of Hale, notably: "He was graduated with honors, he taught two years [both of which are applicable to Fox himself] and got his degree of Master of Arts, but the pioneer spirit in his blood would still out, and his polite learning he then threw to the winds [as Fox himself and his brothers eventually did]. Other young Kentuckians had gone West in shoals, but he kept his eye on his own State [Kentucky], and one autumn he added a pick to the old compass and the ancestral chain, to look for his own fortune in a land the Cumberland Mountains which [his ancestors] had passed over as worthless." (The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, p. 41) Even if Hale were based in part on his brother James, the facts of their (Fox's and Hale's) common ancestry would in no way be altered.
In point of directness, John Fox was actually descended from William Fox, who came from England to Loudoun County, Virginia, in 1766. His people went from Virginia, and from the Forks of the Pamunkey, where the Foxes were settled in early colonial days. Fox's Bridge, in Hanover County, formerly New Kent, dates back to the colonial history of that region. Page, also of Virginian ancestry, asserts that "traditions still lingered in his childhood of a famous schoolmaster of the name."2

When the Fox family first came to Kentucky, they settled in Athens, in Fayette County, later moving to Clark County, where John William Fox, father of John Fox, Jr., was born. After teaching in Bath County for a time, the elder Fox moved to Bourbon County and established its celebrated boarding school at Stony Point. Here on the farm, now the home of Mr. Henry Geitskill, John Fox, Jr., was born in 1863. His mother was Minerva Carr, a sister of Ollie Carr, noted minister of the Christian Church. Of Mrs. Fox, a friend of the author once remarked, "The impression that his mother makes on me at this distant day, when I come to reflect and remember, is that of a woman of sweetness and wit; and it is a pleasure to recall her with this slight tribute."3

---

1It is significant that in The Kentuckians Fox mentions "the aged pines that had been brought over from old Hanover, in Virginia." (The Kentuckians, 23)

2Page, op. cit., p. 676.

3John Patterson, "John Fox," Library of Southern Literature, IV, p. 1663.
From all accounts of him, John Fox's father seems to have been a remarkable man, "a man," to take this same friend's word for it, "of refined taste and old-time culture, a dignified and kindly gentleman schoolmaster." A scholar and man of profound intellect, it is related of him that in his eightieth year, he attended an old-fashioned spelling bee in Virginia, composed of a large number of young school teachers and modern professors, and at the end of a contest lasting three hours, "spelled down" every one present. As an octogenarian, he was the winner of many such spelling bees. Besides a variety of academic interests, he was a profound lover of Nature, particularly of birds and flowers—a trait which his son apparently inherited from him. Fox, in a loving tribute, dedicated The Kentuckiana, his first novel, to him, and later, at the latter's death in 1912, inscribed on the frontpiece of The Heart of the Hills, "In grateful memory of my father who loved the great Mother, her forms, her moods, her ways. To the end she left him the joy of youth in the coming of spring."

John William Fox, Sr., married twice and had ten children in all, three boys, James, Everett, and Nathaniel by his first marriage, and five boys and two girls by his second to Minerva Carr. John Fox, Jr., was the eldest of the children.

1Ibid., p. 1683.
2"John Fox," National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, XIV, p. 90. (Corroborated by Fritzi Scheff in a personal interview with the latter, August 23, 1939.)
by this second marriage, the others being Richard, Horace, Minnie, Rector, Elizabeth, and Oliver. Of these, Minnie, Oliver and Elizabeth are still living, the first two at Big Stone Gap, Virginia, and the latter in Washington, D. C., the wife of Dr. William Cabell Moore. All apparently lived in perfect harmony and were manifestly devoted to one another. It was on James' mining property at the Gap that John worked as a young man out of college, and it is said that James earlier had some charge of his education. His younger brother, Rector K. Fox, was at one time a senior member of the publishing house of Fox & Duffield, New York; and it was at his home at Mt. Kisco, New York, that John's marriage to Fritzi Scheff in 1908 was solemnized. Fox's devotion to his family is borne out by the fact that he dedicated several of his works to various members among them, A Cumberland Vendetta to Minerva and Elizabeth, Hell-Fer-Sartain to James, and Blue-Grass and Rhododendron to Horace along with two other friends. Furthermore, at the time when writing was bringing him its most lucrative returns, he was most liberal with financial support on their behalf.

The exact date of John Fox, Jr.'s, birth was December 16, 1863, although as a grown man he could rarely be gotten to divulge this fact—for, as Page has said of him, "he held firmly to the theory that no person should know or consider
his age, and that men would live longer and youth continue
derentially did one not know how old he was. He was wont to
discourse humorously on this theme, of the latter part of
which, at least, he was a shining example. Curiously
enough, even Fritzi Scheff, his wife, though she knew he was
a number of years older than she when they married, never
knew his exact age.

Although it has hardly ever been referred to and known
only by a few, Fox's middle name, like his father's after
whom he was named, was William. Regarding this, he once re-
marked in a humorous aside,

I am the eighth to bear it; but I left it
out because there were three J. W.'s in my im-
mmediate family. I have regretted this many
times because of another John Fox, Jr. of New
York City, who seems to have a playful habit
of getting into trouble all over the world.
All over the world his trail has crossed mine
and if the people who read me and read of him
think we are one and the same, they must think
I lead an active life. Just now the other one
is having considerable trouble over the claims
of a wife that was against the claims of a wife
that is—which is a trifle embarrassing to a
bachelor like me.

1Page, op. cit., p. 675.
2Coincidentally enough, Fritzi Scheff now holds the same
philosophy regarding age that her husband once held. This
is summed up by her remarks: "What is old age but a buga-
boo. It's how young you feel inside. The important thing
is to keep working, maintain an active interest in life."
Although fifty-nine, Miss Scheff is still very active in
show business, and certainly seems a perfect living exempli-
fication of this theory. She is still buoyant and youthful
and extremely attractive despite her years, which she takes
very lightly, being not one bit squeamish about telling her
age.

3Minnie Fox, "Observations of Himself written by John Fox, Jr.,"
Born in the heart of the Bluegrass at Stony Point in Bourbon County, Fox attended the school, a short distance from the family home, taught by his father, who, as already indicated, was well known and respected as an outstanding teacher in the neighboring counties and surrounding states. As one should expect, he was well grounded in the classics, his father being a lover of the same. Incidentally, this training later stood him in good stead at Harvard, from which he had the distinction of being graduated the youngest member of his class. In some interesting autobiographical notes left in the possession of his sister Minnie, Fox has given us the facts of his early education thus:

I was educated in the old-fashioned way by my father whose love of woods, fields, animals, birds, trees and flowers I inherited though I never shall have a tenth of his knowledge of them. I was stuffed with Latin and Greek, and when I was seventeen had read more in those two languages than I had in English; for until that time my reading in English had been confined to the secret devouring of dime-novels, blood-and-thunder stories in the 'New York Weekly,' an open passion for Oliver Optic and to the bible. My eldest brother [he is undoubtedly referring to James here] had to keep Oliver Optic away from me for the sake of my studies, and once, when a broad-browed, serious professor of English in a Western college who was lecturing

The Kentucky Citizen, CXXXII (September 1, 1939), sec. 3, p. 7. This obviously was written before his marriage in 1908, though probably a very short time before it, since The Trail of the Lonesome Pine which was dedicated to his newly wedded wife, was already appearing serially in Scribner's Magazine.
on Southern writers asked what my favorite authors had been, I told him Virgil and Oliver Optic. He was offended by my frivolity, but I told him the truth. I wish I could find somebody now who could thrill me as Oliver did then.  

As regards his reading, one is not to take Fox too strictly on his word here, for though it is true his classical education was sound, he was also widely read in English and American literature, as the many literary allusions which appear throughout his work indicate. He could and did quote Latin on occasion, or allude to "the lost digamma in Greek," as well as facilely refer to such classical matter as the Europa myth, a manifestation of which he employs in A Mountain Europa, Pygmalion, Cupid and Psyche, Hymettus, "an Homeric Pine," "an Iliad of Kentucky," Aristides the Just, Virgil, Jason, Juno, Olympus, Caesar, Pontius Pilate, the Rubicon, and Thermopoliae. On the other hand, he could also allude—and to some more than once—to such diverse figures and works, not only in English and American but Continental literature as well, as Shakespeare, Browning, Stevenson, Swift's Gulliver's Travels, Milton, Chaucer, Hemingway and Con- dell, the Spectator of Addison and Steele, Congreve's The Virginia Comedians, Smollett's Roderick Random, Kipling, "The Burial of Sir John Moore"; Oliver Wendel Holm, Cecil Rhodes, Burroughs, Emerson, Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, Paul and Vir-

\[^{1}\text{Ibid.}\]
gina. Writer's The Virginian, Lafcadio Hearn, Bret Harte, James Lane Allen, Whistler, Stephen Crane's Red Badge of Courage, Reynolds Ward, Charles Egbert Craddock (Mary Tudor's Surformance); Dante, Schiller's The Crisis, Pierre Loti, and Cervantes' Don Quixote. A particular favorite was Keats, a pocket volume of whose poems he usually carried with him and from which he frequently paused to read. (He attributed this same practice to Hale in The Trail of the Lonesome Pine.) Also, he seems to have had a passion for Scott whose influence is frequently noticeable in his work. On more than one occasion he alludes to The Talisman and Ivanhoe, and in A Knight of the Cumberland goes so far as to quote liberally from the tournament scene of Ivanhoe, enforcing a humorous parallel of it with his own mountain tournament scene. In The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come there is also a tournament in which Chad and his little friends are involved. Chad, it is recalled, conceived the idea for the tournament after being highly impressed by his reading of Scott. "Sir Walter," as he is referred to on one occasion, is also the favorite, revealingly enough, of Caleb Hazel (the mountain schoolteacher) and Major Buford, two of Fox's most sympathetic characters of the same book.

All in all, Fox spent the first fourteen years of his life in the congenial Bluegrass region of Kentucky where he was born. Here he rode horseback, fished, roamed the fields, and otherwise led a normal, healthy boy's existence. Occasionally, one
Southern writers asked what my favorite authors had been, I told him Virgil and Oliver Optic. He was offended by my frivolity, but I told him the truth. I wish I could find somebody now who could thrill me as Oliver did then.¹

As regards his reading, one is not to take Fox too strictly on his word here, for though it is true his classical education was sound, he was also widely read in English and American literature, as the many literary allusions which appear throughout his work indicate. He could and did quote Latin on occasion, or allude to "the lost digamma in Greek," as well as facilely refer to such classical matter as the Europa myth, a manifestation of which he employs in A Mountain Europa, Pygmalion, Cupid and Psyche, Hymettus, "an Homeric Pine," "an Iliad of Kentucky," Aristides the Just, Virgil, Jason, Juno, Olympus, Caesar, Pontius Pilate, the Rubicon, and Thermopylae. On the other hand, he could also allude—and to some more than once—to such diverse figures and works, not only in English and American but Continental literature as well, as Shakespeare, Browning, Stevenson, Swift's Gulliver's Travels, Milton, Chaucer, Hemingway and Con- dell, the Spectator of Addison and Steele, Congreve's The Virginia Comedians, Smollett's Roderick Random, Kipling, "The Burial of Sir John Moore"; Oliver Wendel Holmes, Cecil Rhodes, Burroughs, Emerson, Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, Paul and Vir-

¹Ibid.
Wister's *The Virginian*, Lafcadio Hearn, Bret Harte, James Lane Allen, Whistler, Stephen Crane's *Red Badge of Courage*, Artemus Ward, Charles Egbert Craddock (Mary Noailles Murfree); Dostoevsky, Schiller's *The Crisis*, Pierre Loti, and Cervantes' *Don Quixote.* A particular favorite was Keats, a pocket volume of whose poems he usually carried with him and from which he frequently paused to read. (He attributed this same practice to Hale in *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine.*) Also, he seems to have had a passion for Scott whose influence is frequently noticeable in his work. On more than one occasion he alludes to *The Talisman* and *Ivanhoe,* and in *A Knight of the Cumberland* goes so far as to quote liberally from the tournament scene of *Ivanhoe,* enforcing a humorous parallel of it with his own mountain tournament scene. In *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* there is also a tournament in which Chad and his little friends are involved. Chad, it is recalled, conceives the idea for the tournament after being highly impressed by his reading of Scott. "Sir Walter," as he is referred to on one occasion, is also the favorite, revealingly enough, of Caleb Hazel (the mountain schoolteacher) and Major Buford, two of Fox's most sympathetic characters of the same book.

All in all, Fox spent the first fourteen years of his life in the congenial Bluegrass region of Kentucky where he was born. Here he rode horseback, fished, roamed the fields, and otherwise led a normal, healthy boy's existence. Occasionally, one
finds in his books autobiographical allusions to this period of his life. In The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come he speaks of the boys' catching catfish, yellow mudcat and perch.\(^1\) In Following the Sun-Flag he mentions that he threw stones at dragon-flies as a boy in the Bluegrass.\(^2\) And in The Kentuckians Marshall on one occasion recalls an incident out of his boyhood days that was apparently taken out of Fox's very own—a typically boyish incident: "When he passed the spring-house, the geese raised their wings with a ready cackling and, with the ducks, went swinging down the riffles, as though they yet expected him to throw pebbles at them."\(^3\)

Here, also, to repeat, he received his education largely at the hands of his father in such an atmosphere of culture as few children enjoy. Fox alludes many times, almost always in glowing terms, to the aristocratic land of his birth. In The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, for example, he says, "It was the rose of Virginia, sprung, in full bloom, from new and richer soil—a rose of a deeper scarlet and a stronger stem. . . . There were the proudest families, the stateliest homes, the broadest culture, the most gracious hospitality, the gentlest courtesies, the finest chivalry, that the state

---

\(^1\) John Fox, Jr., The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903, p. 115. (This edition is used throughout.)

\(^2\) John Fox, Jr., Following the Sun-Flag, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905, p. 118. (This edition is used throughout.)

\(^3\) Fox, The Kentuckians, op. cit., p. 129.
It is not unlikely that the house which the Foxes inhabited was much on the same order of one which he describes in *The Heart of the Hills*—

the rambling old house stuccoed with aged brown and covered with ancient vines, knotted and gnarled like an old man's hand; the walls three feet thick and built as for a fort, as was doubtless the intent in pioneer days; the big yard of... blue-grass and filled with cedars and forest trees; the numerous servants' quarters, the spacious hen-house, the stables with gables and long sloping roofs and the arched gateway to them for the thoroughbreds, under which no hybrid mule or lowly work-horse was ever allowed to pass; the spring-house with its dripping green walls, the long-silent blacksmith-shop; the still windmill; and over all the atmosphere of careless, magnificent luxury and slow decay; ... the mournful cedars harping with every passing wind a requiem for the glory that was gone.

After leaving the Stony Point school of his father, in the year 1878, and being but fifteen years old, he entered the Academy of Transylvania University at Lexington (then known as Kentucky University, but known both before and again after that time as Transylvania University)—the institution "where Jefferson Davis had gone to college while Abraham Lincoln was splitting rails and studying by candle-light a hundred miles away... its campus... dotted with swiftly moving figures of boys and girls on their way to the majestic

---

1 *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, p. 212.
2 John Fox, Jr., *The Heart of the Hills*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, pp. 148-9. (This edition is used throughout.)
ortico on the hill."  In *The Heart of the Hills*, particularly, while relating some of the varied experiences of Jason Hawn, the mountain boy, and Grey Pendleton, like himself a Bluegrass aristocrat, at the University, Fox gives us some interesting pictures of college life in the Bluegrass. Incidents regarding Jason he must have witnessed from time to time as befalling other mountain boys, while those pertaining to Grey, he must have himself experienced to a great extent. As a neophyte, for example, Jason's confusion and wonder at some of the manifestations of college life must have been typical of other mountain boys¹. Fox, even thus early, must have sympathized with them, for their chagrin did not escape him. His observations at this time are well utilized in his work, as the following excerpts show:

Through the windows of one building Jason saw hanging rings and all sorts of strange paraphernalia [apparently a reference to the gymnasium]. . . . and, peering through one ground-floor window, he saw three beds piled one on top of the other by the length of its legs. It would take a step-ladder to get into the top bed—good Lord, did people sleep that way in this college? Suppose the top boy rolled out! And every building was covered with vines, and it was funny that vines grew on houses, and why in the world didn't folks cut 'em off?²

And then this description of the freshman: "Some of the boys wore caps, or little white hats with the crown pushed in all.

¹Ibid., p. 170.
²Ibid., p. 177.
around, and, though it wasn’t muddy and didn’t look as though it were going to rain, each one of them had his 'britches' turned up, and that puzzled the mountain boy sorely.*

Later, in this same book, there are other such characteristic **collegiana** as his description of registration and payment of fees, the opening chapel, the incident of the mountain boy wandering "innocently into 'Heaven'—the senior’s hall—a satanic offense for a freshman," and, as a result, his being "stretched over a chair, 'strapped,' and thrown out;" the cutting, after much struggle, of his hair, "the tonsorial betterment... inflicted" on freshmen; and the flag-rush which gives us this humorous picture, which, one is inclined to believe, had its foundation in reality: "The sophmores had enticed the freshmen into the gymnasium, stripped them of their clothes, and carried them away, whereat the freshmen got into the locker-rooms of the girls, and a few moments later rushed from the gymnasium in bloomers to find the sophmores crowded about the base of the pole, one of them with an axe in his hand, and Jason at the top...‖ One wonders whether or not there is any autobiographical basis for the passage in which he speaks of social distinctions in college, his tone implying a mild censure of such:

Each county had brought its local patriotism to college and had its county club. There were too few students from the hills and a sectional...

---

1 **Ibid.**, p. 178.
2 **Ibid.**
club was forming, 'The Mountain Club,' into which Jason naturally had gone; but broadly the students were divided into 'frat' men and 'non-frat' men, chiefly along social lines, and there were literary clubs of which the watchword was merit and nothing else. In all these sectional cliques from the Purchase, Pennyroyal, and Peavine, as the western border of the State, the southern border, and the eastern border of the hills were called; indeed, in all the sections except the Bear-grass, where was the largest town and where the greatest wealth of the State was concentrated, he found a wide-spread, subconscious, home-nursed resentment brought to that college against the lordly Bluegrass. In the social life of the college he found that resentment rarely if ever voiced, but always tirelessly at work.¹

Being one of the "lordly Bluegrass," Fox may personally have sensed the resentment he speaks of; but it is more than likely that the text here is merely meant to serve a functional, dramatic purpose in the novel, without being the embodiment of an actual experience.

At Transylvania Fox soon displayed "a natural leadership" and a "quick way of responding positively to life" that was always characteristic of him. First hand information is available to tell of his activity in the Periclean Literary Society of his day. Some years after he left the institution he sent a gift to the support of the Society in a letter addressed to the Periclean University, Lexington, Kentucky.² It is significant that in The Little Shepherd of

¹Ibid., p. 200.
²Raymond F. McLain, "Text of an Address on John Fox, Jr.," Lexington Sunday Herald-Leader, (September 10, 1909). (Other data not available.)
Kingdom Come Fox speaks of Chad's being "elected to the Periclean Society," and astonishing "his fellow-members with a fiery denunciation of the men who banished Napoleon to St. Helena."\(^1\) It is not improbable that Fox made that very speech himself upon his own election to the very same society.

In a recent tribute to Fox, at the unveiling of a memorial in his honor, the current president of Transylvania, Dr. Raymond F. McLain, remarked, "as a representative of the educational interests of the institution," that Fox's grades, while a student there, "were distinctly above the average." "In fact," he said, "his average grade for the thirteen subjects he carried in his two years at Transylvania was 92. This average includes his one low mark of 78, made in geometry."\(^2\) From this account, such remarks about Crittenden, like so many of Fox's other remarks about this character, are very probably of an autobiographical cast: "he had been a brilliant student in the old university. . . He had worried his professor of metaphysics by puzzling questions and keen argument until that philosopher was glad to mark him highest in his class and let him go."\(^3\)

Such academic inclinations secured honors for him shortly in Harvard, which he entered in the year 1880, joining the class in his sophomore year.

---

\(^1\) The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, p. 206.
\(^2\) McLain, op. cit.
\(^3\) Crittenden, p. 34.
In addition to distinguishing himself as a student, Fox was also active in sports and dramatics, both at Transylvania and especially at Harvard. At the latter he was a member of his class crew, played baseball, and proved himself to be quite expert at acrobatics. And thus, while he ranked high as a student at both institutions, he was never the typical bookworm and "grind." In recalling his athletic prowess, one of his college friends has remarked in a memoir:

He was a fine gymnast, and possibly the strongest mental picture which I now have of him in our old Harvard days is that of his swinging and gyrating aloft on a trapeze, or diving through a hole in a canvas, imitating to my admiring eyes, the pose and the enchanting motion of the circus-ring 'acrobatic-artist.' Why, he could even do the 'giant-swing!' What were paltry high marks, honors, and indications of future literary success to this wondrous physical feat! 1

Another friend, Page, confirms this impression of Fox, despite his training and academic capacities, he appears, Page has remarked,

... to have signalized himself rather by his social than his scholastic gifts, and he was... a shining member of the Glee Club, having a charming voice and a rare touch on the piano. I have heard him tell with fine humor of a Maine newspaper's caustic account of his Glee Club's performance in a Maine town, which referred to one of the stars as 'a broad-shouldered young jackass, understood to be from Kentucky.' He found himself in a dilemma between ire at being referred to as 'Kentucky jackass,' and pride at having his broad shoulders signalized. 2

1 Patterson, op. cit., p. 1683.
2 Page, op. cit., p. 675.
As one of the leading actors in the Harvard Dramatic Society, he was a distinct success, and much has been said about his mimicry and female impersonations. To a friend of his who knew him intimately while at Harvard, we are indebted for the following information:

While at Harvard, Mr. Fox displayed histrionic talent of a high order, having been "leading lady" of the dramatic society of his class. There has been a college sketch of Mr. Fox, showing him in a quaint old-fashioned woman's garb, with odd little ringlets hanging down all over his head, and a most absurd bonnet perched upon its top. It is the portrayal of the character of Madame Perrichon in that familiar comedy, 'Papa Perrichon.' T. Russell Sullivan translated the work for the Boston Museum, and it was his version that the famous Harvard Society to which he belonged used on its travels, for Fox and the other boys made a trip 'down East' to Exeter, Portland, Bangor, and Augusta, having a great amount of fun, a vast deal of experience, and a rather unpleasant financial loss in the mock theatrical excursion. A sturdy, square-shouldered young fellow would seem to be an odd figure in petticoats, but everyone who has seen the Harvard theatricals knows how cleverly athletes are often turned into buxom maidens.1

It is more than likely his good-looking smooth face had something to do with his being chosen to play women's parts. (Of how he looked at this time, however, more will be said later.)

---

Fox was in his element in these theatricals, entering into them with the same zest with which he later portrayed some of his literary creations on the lecture platform. He could read dialect well; and both he and Page later gave readings together. He was a splendid mimic and could impersonate any of his characters "with an ease and grace of manner that befitted a professional actor."\(^1\)

It has been remarked of Fox that he was a notable exception to the rule that an author's works generally suffer after the man himself who produced them is met. "The fact is," as one critic has put it, "he had all the traits of a born actor. By this is not meant the public pose, the salient mannerisms, the eccentric dress often noticed in actors, but a natural aptitude for mimicry and an ease of manner suitable to the impersonation of any dramatic actor."\(^2\)

While at Harvard, Fox was supposed to be studying law, but, as he says, "I cannot recall the time when I did not think I should someday write. Still I never wrote a line for a college newspaper or magazine while I was at Harvard and never dabbled in poetry at all."\(^3\) It is possible that as a young man, like Marshall of *The Kentuckians*, he wrote verse,

---

\(^2\)M. R. Harkins, *op. cit.*, p. 185.
\(^3\)Minnie Fox, *op. cit.*
but like the hero of his novel saw fit to destroy it. As he says of Marshall, the remarks applying to himself, "Those were the days when he thought he might be a poet or a novelist if either were a manlier trade; if there were not always the more serious business of law and politics to which he was committed by inheritance." In this matter it is not altogether unlikely either that he was too busy with other extra-curricular activities to have any time left for writing.

In June, 1883, at the age of nineteen and a half, Fox was graduated from Harvard with a Bachelor of Arts degree, "honorable mention in English," and with the distinction of being the youngest member of a class of six hundred, which included, incidentally, many who later became quite notable, not the least of which was C. H. Grandgent, famed scholar, philologist, and essayist, then one of the most distinguished professors at Harvard, where he has acted in that capacity for many years. Fox's formal rank at graduation was eighty-nine on the list of "Disquisitions."

At the Eighteenth Anniversary Dinner of the class, held at the Brunswick Hotel in Boston, June 25, 1901, it is recorded that during the course of "good music, good discourse, good fellowship," the following verses were read "inter

---

1 The Kentuckians, p. 22.
How we are nearing Forty,
   The heights don't seem so far;
Let's peep around the corner
   And see things as they are.

What names have we to blazon?
   What right have we to claim
A place beside the giants,
   In Harvard's Hall of Fame? . . .

Our Thackeray?—we have him.
   Put these books in your box;
"Virginians," by Makepeace,
   "Kentuckians," by Fox. . .

And at the Twenty-fifth Anniversary, Edward Kent declared,
   "Of famous authors, we have Wigmore. . . And Fox, whose
stories of Kentucky life and character have made him well
known throughout the English-speaking world."#2

---

#1Ibid., p. 268.
#2Ibid., pp. 293-9.
CHAPTER TWO

ADVENT TO MOUNTAINS

Though Fox had written nothing during his collegiate career, upon being graduated from Harvard, he joined the staff of the *New York Sun* to spend the summer vacation of 1883 until he should enter Columbia Law School the following autumn. He did not stay very long at Columbia, leaving in January following, 1884, and going in March to work as a reporter on the *New York Times*, with which paper he continued until July, when illness compelled a return to his home in Kentucky. Giving his own account of this period, from the time he left Harvard to begin work on the *Sun*, Fox says:

I discovered within a week that while I was prepared to write ponderous essays on the Theocratic Aim of Keats' Poetry, The Value of the Lost Digamma in Greek or the Differentiation of the Quintix (I've forgotten now what that is), I couldn't tell that Tom Jones had fallen into the East river and been rescued by John Smith so that I should recognize my account of it next morning in the 'Sun.' That was a great discovery.

I entered the law school in the autumn and answered but one of the professor's questions. It was about banking:

'You know what a bank account is, don't you,' he thundered.

'Not from personal experience, sir.' For that reason I had to leave the law within three months and go to work. I ate fifteen-cent dinners for two months until I got a place on the 'New York Times.' On that paper
I stayed four months and then went home for a long illness due to a hurt I got in the gymnasium at Harvard.1

It is possible that the steady grind and confinement of his journalistic work and the cage-like life of a big city to one reared in the outdoor freedom of central Kentucky, contributed to the impairment of his health; certainly, they must have aggravated the hurt he had received at Harvard. As it turned out, he was relegated to his home in Paris for a little more than a year, during which time he did some teaching, but, as an admiring friend has remarked, "always in the tentative and casual way of a young man who is conscious that his real leaders in life are not to be Heracles and the centaur, but Apollo and the Muses."2 When he had sufficiently recovered in 1885, Fox left for the Cumberland Mountains in Southeast Kentucky to dabble in timber lands and to work on the mining property of his brother James, "a Kentuckian of culture and reputation."

As Fox himself tells it, "When well enough, I went to my brother's mines on the border of Kentucky and Tennessee. I had never seen a mountaineer until I was seventeen but always the sound of the word 'mountaineer' and the very look

1Minnie Fox, op. cit.
2Patterson, op. cit., p. 1684.
of it in print had a strange fascination for me."¹

In the past, these mountains in the southeastern part of the State had been an almost completely unknown region to, and over-looked field by, most of the Kentuckians of the Bluegrass. But, as Fox has explained in one of his novels, with the "drama of Southern reconstruction" after the Civil War, much of the older order of the South, with its "old traditions—social, agricultural, and patriarchal—" passed. Most young Southern men of this post-war generation "caught the modern trend of things"... and "most of them had gone to work—some to law, some as clerks, railroad men, merchants, civil engineers; some to mining and speculating in the State's own rich mountains." Fox and his brothers were no exceptions. Fox himself, as we have seen, had intended to study law, for, as he says of Crittenden, "his type of Southerner always studies law."²

From 1886 to 1893, Fox oscillated between Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee, being in business with his brothers,—coal, iron, and timber lands and real estate—with headquarters at Big Stone Gap, Virginia.

In spite of his optimistic assertion about the mountain-ear, it is not likely that Fox found the mountains congenial

¹Minnie Fox, op. cit.
²Crittenden, p. 82.
to his temperament right off. For one thing, when he first came there, the coal industry was just opening up, and he must have encountered much sordidness on that account. In A Mountain Europa he describes, for example, the typical mining camp that was then coming into existence:

Outside the kitchen doors, miners, bare to the waist, were bathing their blackened faces and bodies, with children, tattered and unclean, . . . playing about them; within, women in loose gowns, with sleeves uprolled and with disordered hair, moved like phantoms through clouds of savory smoke. . . . At a window close by improvident miners were drawing the wages of the day, while their wives waited in the store with baskets unfilled. In front of the commissary a crowd of negroes were talking, etc., etc., etc.

One can only reflect that the contrast of his new life in such surroundings with his former fastidious student and cosmopolitan life in New York and in the Bluegrass must have seemed radical and, possibly, somewhat painful to him in the beginning. To refer to A Mountain Europa again, the first book he ever wrote and thus the one which contains, perhaps, a little more of autobiographical interest than the others—in this book, he incorporates much of what surely seem to have been his own personal experiences into the character of Clayton, the young engineer, who is made to resemble his creator in many particulars, being college-bred and an aristocratic young man, who, like Fox, on the decline of the

---

1 John Fox, Jr., A Mountain Europa, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909, p. 11. (This edition is used throughout and contains, besides, A Cumberland Vendetta and "The Last Stetson.")
family fortune, is forced to speculate in the mountains in an effort to rehabilitate it. On such instances as the following, one may well take Clayton's feelings as having been Fox's very own: "The transition from the careless life of a student was swift and bitter; it was like beginning a new life with a new identity, though he suffered less than he anticipated." The mountains of course had their attractive side. In this same autobiographical vein, he goes on to say:

He had become interested from the first. There was nothing in the pretty glen, when he came, but a mountaineer's cabin and a few gnarled old apple-trees, the roots of which checked the musical flow of a little stream. Then the air was filled with the tense ring of hammer and saw, the mellow echoes of axes, and the shouts of ox-drivers from the forests, indignant groans from the mountains, and a little town sprang up before his eyes, and cars of shining coal wound slowly about the mountain-side.

A little further on, he gives us this revealing picture: "When leisure came, he could take to the woods filled with unknown birds, new forms of insect life, and strange plants and flowers. With every day, too, he was more deeply stirred by the changing beauty of the mountains—hidden at dawn with white mists, faintly veiled through the day. . . , and enriched by sunsets of startling beauty.

"But strongest of all was the interest he found in the odd human mixture about him—the simple, good-natured darkies who slouched past him. . . , occasional foreigners just from Castle Garden, with the hope of the New World still in
their faces; and now and then a gaunt mountaineer stalking awkwardly in the rear of the march toward civilization."^1

Needless to say, it was the latter, the "gaunt mountaineer," who captured his imagination most of all and provided the necessary filip to his latent literary powers. "Gradually," as he says, (his remarks about Clayton again appertaining to himself),

... it had dawned upon him that this last, a silent figure, traced through Virginia, was closely linked by blood and speech with the common people of England, and, moulded perhaps by the influences of feudalism, was still strikingly unchanged; that now it was the most distinctively national remnant on American soil, and symbolized the development of the continent, and that with it must go the last suggestions of the pioneers, with their hardy physiques, their speech, their manners and customs, their simple architecture and simple mode of life.

And, regretfully,"it was soon plain to him, too, that a change was being wrought at last—the change of destruction. Even thus early, the forces of 'Progress' and civilization were doing their rapacious work in the mountains." Already,

... the older mountaineers, whose bewildered eyes watched the noisy signs of an unintelligible civilization, were passing away. Of the rest, some, sullen and restless, were selling their homesteads and following the spirit of their forefathers into a new wilderness; others, leaving their small farms in adjacent

^Ibid., pp. 13-14.
valleys to go to ruin, were gaping idly about the public works, caught up only too easily by the vicious current of the incoming tide. In a century the mountain-eers must be swept away, and their ignorance of the tragic forces at work among them gave them an unconscious pathos that touched Fox (as it does his character, Clayton).¹

Still apparently chronicling his own experiences, Fox goes on to say:

As he grew to know them, their historical importance yielded to a genuine interest in the people themselves. They were densely ignorant, to be sure; but they were natural, simple, and hospitable. Their sense of personal worth was high, and their democracy—or aristocracy, since there was no distinction of caste—absolute. For generations, son had lived like father in an isolation hardly credible. No influence save such as shock the nation ever reached them. The Mexican war, slavery, and national politics of the first half-century were still present issues, and each old man would give his rigid, individual opinion sometimes with surprising humor and force. He went much among them, and the rugged old couples whom he found in the cabin porches—so much alike at first—quickly became distinct with a quaint individuality.²

It wasn't long, thus, before Fox, with his unusual adaptability, learned the secret of association with the mountaineers—"to be as little unlike them as possible—" and, like Clayton, "he put the knowledge into practice. He discarded coat and waistcoat, wore a slouched hat, and went unshaven for weeks. He avoided all conventionalities, and

²Ibid., pp. 15-16.
was as simple in manner and speech as possible. . . He found it necessary to use the simplest Anglo-Saxon words, and he soon fell into many of the quaint expressions of the mountaineers and their odd, slow way of speech.¹ In this manner he was able to win their confidence; "the shyness wore away," and he was able to observe them as they really were, without the inhibiting self-consciousness invariably manifested in the presence of "furriners." That his course was wholly effective is amply borne out by the numerous studies of them, the fine insight into their natures, as revealed in the many books which he afterward devoted to them.

It was in the "boom" days of 1890 that the Foxes came to settle permanently at Big Stone Gap, which is in Wise County, Virginia, near the Kentucky border, on the Powell river, between the Cumberland Mountains and the Dividing Ridge ranges, "wild and picturesque, which parallel each other very close together."² Eastern capital had undertaken the development of the vast coal-lands of the region, and Big Stone Gap sprang into a little city overnight. But there were many reasons why the Gap should be so attractive, economically and financially, as well as pictorially. Fox, in a semi-fictional essay, mainly autobiographical, has himself given us these. Beginning with a description of its

¹Ibid., pp. 46-7.
²National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, op. cit., p. 90.
scenic and topographical features, he writes:

'The Gap'. ... is down in the southwestern corner of old Virginia, and about eight miles from the Kentucky line. There Powell's Mountain runs its mighty ribs into the Cumberland range with such humiliating violence that the Cumberland, turned feet over head by the shock, has meekly given up its proud title and suffered somebody to dub it plain Stone Mountain; and plain Stone Mountain it is to-day—down sixty miles to Cumberland Gap. At the point of contact and from the bases of both ranges, Powell's Valley starts on its rolling way southward. Ten miles below, Roaring Fork has worn down to water-level a wild cleft through Stone Mountain and into the valley; and the torrent is still lashing the yielding feet of great cliffs and tumbling past ravines that are dark in winter with the evergreen of laurel and rhododendron, and lighted in summer with the bloom.

On the other side, South Fork drops seven hundred feet of waterfalls from Thunderstruck Knob, and the two streams sweep toward each other like the neck of a lute and, like a lute, curve away again, to come together at last and bear the noble melody of Powell's River down the valley. The neck is not over two hundred yards wide, and, in the hearthlike peninsula and from ten to twenty feet above the running streams, is the town—all straightway, but for the beautiful rise of Poplar Hill, which sinks slowly to a level again.

All this—cleft, river, and little town—is known far and wide as 'the Gap.' Through the Gap [to continue with his account of its natural resources] and on the north side of Stone Mountain, are rich veins of pure coking coal and not an ounce of iron ore; to the south is plenty of good ore and not an ounce of coal; the cliffs between are limestone; and water—the third essential to the making of iron—runs like a mill-race between. This juxtaposition of such raw materials brought in the outside world. Nearly twenty years ago [presumably 1881], a wise old Pennsylvanian bought an empire of coal and timberland through the Gap. Ten years ago [1891] the shadow of the 'boom' started southward—
for the boom is a shadow, and whatever of light there be in it is as a flash of lightning, and with a wake hardly less destructive. The Gap was strategic, and there was no such site for a town in a radius of a hundred miles. Twelve railroads were surveyed to the point, and in poured the outside world to make the town—civil and mining engineers, surveyors, coal operators, shrewd investors, reckless speculators, land-sharks; lawyers, doctors, store-keepers, real-estate agents; curbstone brokers, saloon-keepers, gamblers, card-sharps, railroad hands—all the flotsam and jetsam of the terrible boom.1

It was here, as he elsewhere facetiously remarks, "for six months [during that hectic time] I was a Napoleon of finance, met my Waterloo and went to the Hellen-ena of debt for ten years until I was plucked out by the crook of the 'Little Shepherd.'"2

Throughout his works Fox alludes many times to this boom and resultant panic which took place at the Gap in 1891, and supplies us with many interesting particulars of the events in which he himself was very much concerned. The "boom" came in the spring, and, as Fox remarks, "property quadrupled in value and quadrupled again."3 "A railroad

---

1John Fox, Jr., Blue-grass and Rhododendron, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901, pp. 213-15.
2Minnie Fox, op. cit.
3John Fox, Jr., Hell-fer-Sartain, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920, p. 141. (This edition is used throughout and contains, besides, Christmas Eve on Lonesome and In Happy Valley.)
started up the Cumberland. 'Furriners' came in to buy wild
lands and get out timber. Civilization began to press over
the mountains and down on Hazlan, as it had passed in on
Breathitt, the seat of many feuds.' In *The Trail of the
Lonesome Pine*, which contains considerable autobiographical
information about his life at this time, he gives numerous
details of the workings of this sudden financial inflation
thus:

The in-sweep of the outside world was
broadening its current now. The improve­
ment company had been formed to encourage
the growth of the town. A safe was put in
the back part of a furniture store behind a
wooden partition and a bank was started.
Up through the Gap and toward Kentucky, more
entries were driven into the coal, and on
the Virginia side were signs of stripping
for iron ore. A furnace was coming in just
as soon as the railroad could bring it in,
and the railroad was pushing ahead with
genuine vigor. Speculators were trooping
in and the town had been divided off into
lots—a few of which had already changed
hands. One agent had brought in a big
steel safe and a tent and was buying coal
lands right and left. More young men drift­
ed in from all points of the compass. A
tent-hotel was put at the foot of Imboden
Hill, and of nights there were under it
much poker and song. The lilt of a defi­
nite optimism was in every man's step and
the light of hope was in every man's eye.2

1John Fox, Jr., "The Last Stetson," New York: Charles
Scribner's Sons, 1909, p. 236. (This edition is used
throughout and contains, besides, *A Mountain Europa*
and *A Cumberland Vendetta*.)
2*The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, p. 182.
The avalanche was sweeping southward; Pennsylvania was creeping down the Alleghenies, emissaries of New York capital were pouring into the hills, the tide-water of Virginia and the Bluegrass region of Kentucky were sending in their best blood and youth, and friends of the helmeted Englishmen were hurrying over the seas. Eastern companies were taking up principalities, and at Cumberland Gap, those helmeted Englishmen had acquired a kingdom. They were building a town there, too, with huge steel plants, broad avenues and business blocks that would have graced Broadway; and they were pouring out [millions] . . . . In stage and wagon, on mule and horse, 'riding and tying' sometimes, and even afoot came the rush of madmen. Horses and mules were drowned in the mud holes along the road, such was the traffic and such were the floods. The incomers slept eight in a room, burned oil at one dollar a gallon, and ate potatoes at ten cents apiece. The Grand Central Hotel was a humming Real-Estate Exchange, and, night and day, the occupants of any room could hear, through the thin partitions, lots booming to right, left, behind and in front of them. The labour and capital question was instantly solved, for everybody became a capitalist—carpenter, brick layer, blacksmith, singing teacher and preacher. There is no difference between the shrewdest business man and a fool in a boom, for the boom levels all grades of intelligence and produces as distinct a form of insanity as you can find within the walls of an asylum. Lots took wings skyward. . . . Before the autumn was gone, he [Hale is referred to, but the remarks apply equally to Fox] found himself on the way to ridiculous opulence and, when spring came, he had the world in a sling and, if he wished, he could toss it playfully at the sun and have it drop back into his hand again. And the boom spread down the valley and into the hills. The police guard had little to do and, over in the mountains, the feud miraculously came to a sudden close.1

1Ibid., pp. 232–3.
The boom was at its height in the spring, but such unnatural opulence did not last long, however. In the autumn of the same year, 1891, the first crash "came across the water from England when certain big men over there went to pieces. . . It stopped the railroads far down the Cumberland; it sent the 'furriners' home, and drove civilization back." As Fox has reported, "trouble was upon everybody. Notes fell thicker than snowflakes, and, through the foolish policy of the [holding] company, foreclosures had to be made." Fox "went to the wall like the rest." Besides, as he has remarked of Grayson in the short story "A Purple Rhododendron," of the money he had made, "he had given away a great deal to poorer kindred, . . . he had played away a good deal, and he had lost the rest." As of the "boom," Fox has also given us many of the actual details of its unfortunate aftermath.

In time as the huge steel plants grew noiseless, and the flaming throats of the furnaces were throttled, a sympathetic fire of dissolution spread slowly North and South and it was plain only to the wise outsider as merely a matter of time until, all up and down the Cumberland, the fox and the coon and the quail could come back to their old homes on corner lots, marked each by a pathetic little whitewashed post—a tomb—

---

3. Ibid.
stone over the graves of a myriad of
buried human hopes. But it was the gap... that died last and hardest.1

The desolate picture he paints of the deflated region is not a little reminiscent of the "ghost" towns which sprang up out West many years earlier as a result of the mining, and, in more recent times, of the oil "booms" out there. In a passage describing Hale's experience, which we may well take for his own, he writes:

At each one [of the ore-mines] the commissary was closed, the cheap, dingy little houses stood empty on the hillsides, and every now and then he would see a tippie and an empty car, left as it was after dumping its last load of red ore. On the night, as he approached the station, the big furnace stood like a dead giant, still and smokeless, and the piles of pig iron were red with rust. The same little dummy wheezed him into the dead little town. Even the face of the Gap was a little changed by the gray scar that man had slashed across its mouth, getting limestone for the groaning monster of a furnace that was now at peace. The streets were deserted. A new face fronted him at the deck of the hotel and the eyes of the clerk showed no knowledge of him when he wrote his name. His supper was coarse, greasy and miserable, his room was cold (steam heat, it seemed, had been given up), the sheets were ill-smelling, the mouth of the pitcher was broken, and the one towel had seen much previous use. But the water was the same, as was the cool, bunting night-air.2

At this time, aside from commercial preoccupations, one of the most serious factors with which the outsider

1 The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, p. 245.
2 Ibid., pp. 586-7.
in the mountains had to contend was the mountaineer's so-called traditional lawlessness. When Fox, with a number of other college-bred men, "full of the spirit of adventure that was agog during the days of the 'big boom,'"1 settled at the Gap to engage in his timber and mining speculation, he found the locality terrorized by feudists. Law and order were unknown. In an essay, "Civilizing the Cumber-land," Fox deals at some length with this matter, giving at first hand his own experiences. As he says,

It was quiet enough in the beginning, for, besides the cottage set in rhododendron-bushes along the deep bank of South Fork—and turned into a lawyer's office—there was only a blacksmith's shop, one store, one farm-house, and a little frame hotel—"The Grand Central Hotel." But, for half a century, the Gap had been the chief voting-place in the district. Here were the muster-days of war-times, and at the mouth of the Gap camped Captain Mayhall Wells and his famous Army of the Callahan. Incidentally, Fox has written an amusing long short story, "The Army of the Callahan," which deals with some of the events of these days.] Here was the only store, the only grist-mill, the only woolen-mill, in the region. The Gap was in consequence, the chief gathering-place of people for miles around. Here in the old days met the bullies of neighboring counties, and here was fought a famous battle between a famous bully of Wise and a famous bully of Lee. Only, in those days, the men fought with nature's weapons—with all of them—and, after the fight, got up and shook hands. Here, too, was engendered the hostility

1"When John Fox Danced His Last Dance," Literary Digest, LXXXVII (1925), 80. (Condensation of an article by Bruce Crawford in the Dearborn Independent.)
between the hill-dwellers of Wise and the valley men of Lee; so that the Gap had ever been characterized by a fine spirit of personal liberty, and any wild oats that were not sown elsewhere in that region, usually sprouted at the Gap. So, too, when the boom started, the newcomers, disliked on their own account as interlopers, shared this local hostility, which got expression usually on Saturday afternoons in the exhilaration of moonshine, much yelling and shooting and bantering, an occasional fist-fight, and, sometimes, in a usually harmless interchange of shots. But it was the mountain-brother who gave the Kentuckians most trouble at first. Sometimes the Kentucky feudsmen would chase each other over Black Mountain and into the Gap. Sometimes a band of them on horseback—'wild Jayhawkers from old Kanetsuck,' they used to be called—would be passing through to 'Commencement' at a mountain-college down the valley, and there would be high jinks indeed. They would halt at the Gap and 'load up,' as the phrase was— with moonshine; usually it was a process of reloading. Then they would race their horses up and down the street.

Sometimes they would quite take the town, and the store-keepers would close up and go to the woods to wait for the festivities to come to a natural end. This was endured because it was only periodical, and because, apparently, it couldn't be cured.1

But "later on," Fox continues, "after the speculators had pooled their lands and laid out the coming town, and the human stream began to trickle in from the outer world," it was apparent that such lawlessness and rowdiness would have to be effectually checked, if the community and the many business enterprises on foot were to prosper. Accordingly, therefore, under the aegis of two

1Blue-grass and Rhododendron, pp. 216-17.
Kentucky lawyers, Joshua F. Bullitt and Henry Clay McDowell (often alluded to throughout Fox's various works as Logan and Macfarlan), a unique experiment, the establishing of a Citizen's Volunteer Police Guard, was tried, the results of which were phenomenal to say the least.

In the essay just quoted from, Fox has recorded at some length the facts concerning the nature of this organization as well as his own experiences as an active member of it. But first, a few words on the general question of the mountaineer's supposedly incorrigible lawlessness of which nearly all have heard at one time or another and regarding which Fox has some interesting things to say. Discoursing on the mountaineer's general characteristics and remarking on the factors that have accounted in all probability for his so-called notorious disregard for law, Fox wrote, in 1901,

Half a century ago the Southern mountaineer was what he is now, in the main—truthful, honest, courageous, hospitable—and more: he was peaceable and a man of law. During the last fifteen years, fact and fiction have made his lawlessness broadly known; and yet, in spite of his moonshining, his land-thieving, and his feuds, I venture the paradox that he still has at heart a vast respect for the law; and that, but for the war that put weapons in his Anglo-Saxon fists, murder in his heart, and left him in his old isolation; but for the curse of the revenue service that criminalizes the innocent, and the system of land laws that sometimes make it necessary for the mountaineer of Kentucky and Virginia, at least, to practically steal his own home—he would be a law-abiding citizen today.. . .
Of course, the railroad comes first as an element of civilization; but unless the church and the school, in the ratio of several schools to each church, quickly follow, the railroad does the mountaineer little else than great harm. Even with the aid of these three, the standards of conduct of the outer world are reared slowly. A painful process of evolution has been the history of every little mountain-town that survived the remarkable mushroom growth which, within the year of 1889-90, ran from Pennsylvania to Alabama along both bases of the Cumberland. With one vivid exception: in one of these towns, civilization forged ahead of church, school, and railroad.

This exception was of course the Gap at which he himself resided. Here, "the sternest ideals of good order and law were set up at once and maintained with Winchester, pistol, policeman's billy, and whistle." And here, of course, Fox is referring to the famed Volunteer Police Guard with which he himself was prominently associated. As he says, "it was a unique experiment in civilization, and may prove of value to the lawful among the lawless elsewhere; and the means to the end were unique."2

Fox proceeds with an account of the organization, which, since it is of considerable biographical interest, is accordingly here reproduced:

In this town, certain young men—chiefly Virginians and blue-grass Kentuckians—simply formed a volunteer police-guard. They

---

1Ibid., pp. 209-10.  
enrolled themselves as county policemen, and each man armed himself—usually with a Winchester, a revolver, a billy, a belt, a badge, and a whistle—a most important detail of the accoutrement, since it was used to call for help. There were lawyers, bankers, real-estate brokers, newspaper men, civil and mining engineers, geologists, speculators, and several men of leisure. Nearly all were active in business—as long as there was business—and most of them were college graduates, representing Harvard, Yale, Princeton, the University of Virginia, and other Southern colleges. Two were great-grandsons of Henry Clay, several bore a like relation to Kentucky governors, and, with few exceptions, the guard represented the best people of the blue-grass of one State, and the tide-water country of the other. All served without pay, of course, and, in other words, it was practically a police-force of gentlemen who did the rough, every-day work of policemen, without swerving a hair’s breath from the plain line of the law. These young fellows guarded the streets, day and night, when there was need; they made arrests, chased and searched for criminals, guarded jails against mobs, cracked toughs over the head with billies, lugged them to the ‘calaboose,’ and appeared as witnesses against them in court next morning. They drilled faithfully, and such was the discipline that a whistle blown at any hour of day or night would bring a dozen armed men to the spot in half as many minutes. In time, a drunken man was a rare sight on the streets; the quiet was rarely disturbed by a disorderly yell or a pistol-shot, and I have seen a crowd of mountaineers, wildly hilarious and flourishing bottles and pistols as they came in from the hills, take on the meekness of lambs when they crossed the limits of that little mountain-town. I do not believe better order was kept anywhere in the land. It was, perhaps, the only mountain-town along the border where a feud, or a street fight of more than ten minutes’ duration, was impossible. Being county policemen, the guards extended their operations to the limits of the county, thirty miles away, and in time created a public sentiment fearless
enough to convict a certain desperado of murder; then each man left his business and, in a body, the force went to the county-seat, twenty miles away, and stayed there for a month to guard the condemned man and prevent his clan from rescuing him—thus making possible the first hanging that ever took place in that region. Later, they maintained a fund for the proper prosecution of criminals, and I believe that any man in the county, if guilty of manslaughter, would have selected any spot south of Mason and Dixon’s line other than his own county-seat for his trial. Indeed, the enthusiasm for the law was curiously contagious. Wild fellows, who would have been desperadoes themselves but for the vent that enforcing the law gave to their energies, became the most enthusiastic members of the guard. In other parts of the county, natives formed similar bands and searched for outlaws. Similar organizations were formed in other ‘boom’ towns round about; so that over in the Kentucky mountains, a hundred miles away, there is to-day another volunteer police-guard at the seat of what was perhaps the most lawless county in the State, and once the seat of a desperate feud. This was formed at the suggestion of one of our own men, a young and well-known geologist. So that, at that time, it looked as though the force that might one day put down lawlessness in the Southern mountains was getting its impulse from the nerve, good sense, and public spirit of two or three young blue-grass Kentuckians who had gone over into the mountains of Virginia to make their fortune from iron, coal, and law.

Elsewhere Fox has given us this intimate picture of the activities of the Guard:

When a citizen got too offensive, we marched him off to the calaboose; and at first the calaboose couldn’t hold all our prisoners. If

---

1Ibid., pp. 210-13.
a man showed any disposition to defy us, we simply hit him on the head. The next day, perhaps, he would come to town in an orderly manner, and the very one of us that knocked him down and thrashed him would say 'Howdy' to him. That disarmed him of suspicion. He might have thought we were bent on a wholesale feud, but when he found out that we let him have his own way so long as he was on his good behavior, then the great light of law and order came down upon him. In a year and a half we had Big Stone Gap ideally quiet. A woman could walk around town at any time of the night or day and never be insulted [a thing never dreamed of before in that region]. That's what a college police force did for a wild nest in the Cumberland Mountains.¹

In sum, when it dawned upon the mountaineers that this was different from the old spirit that had come down for generations, which every descendant felt in honor bound to foster, and that no ill was harbored, they decided it was best to have order; and, what is more, as we have seen, believing that the Guard was striving to maintain the law and not to stir up discord and disorder, the mountaineers themselves determined to try and effectually did help it.

In practically every one of Fox's books, we read of this Police Guard and its varied activities, notably in *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* where a large section of the novel is devoted to such. Even when he was in the Orient, Fox alluded to his Volunteer Policeman's badge, of which he was justifiably proud.

¹Harkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-91.
When one considers the nature of his life in the mountains at this time, it is not at all surprising that Fox once remarked that many of the happenings in which he was concerned and which he later recorded under the guise of fiction seem veritably more like fiction than fact. And that he was able to adapt himself to such a life, and more, to take a prominent part in it bespeak the fact that he was certainly no ordinary, sheltered man of letters. One who was a neighbor of his was responsible recently for this little, revealing incident: There were big goings-on in town one day, for there was to be an election. And none other than Fox, who was already a famous author, was appointed a special policeman for the day. He was all dressed up, his long black hair combed sleekly, wearing a shiny badge, and carrying a big six-shooter at his side—hardly the picture of the drawing-room sophisticate which he could easily be when occasion demanded.

That he was a great lover of the outdoors will be further illustrated in due time. It might be mentioned here that he was particularly fond of fishing expeditions into the mountains in quest of black bass. In the selections "Through the Bad Bend" and "To the Breaks of Sandy" he describes at length just such expeditions, revelling in the

1Personal interview with Dr. Reed, February 3, 1940.
exhilaration and freedom from the fetters and restraints of polite society which they afforded him—"ragged," sun-baked, bewhiskered," but "happy, in spite of the days of hard, hard luck."\(^1\)

\(^1\)Blue-Grass and Rhododendron, p. 175.
CHAPTER THREE
BEGINNING OF LITERARY LABORS

Although the Outlook once declared that "the Gap" is a place where no sane man would go, it turned Fox to romancing and gave to literature the best interpreter of the dialects and character of the Kentucky and Cumberland mountaineers that it ever had. It was natural that when he turned to the writing of fiction, he should set his stories in these mountains and select his quaint characters from among the inhabitants. As one critic observed, "here in these hills, like a lost tribe, he found a remnant of the true Anglo-Saxon stock, still preserving the customs and the vernacular of the Revolutionary days."¹

In a word, John Fox had discovered a literary gold-mine. He was to be a pioneer (notwithstanding M. N. Hurfree) in a new field of literature. And the more he wrote of the mountains and their inhabitants, the more deeply interested he became in them, for which reason he made his permanent home at the Gap.

One may pause and reflect here that Fox's ability to reveal the life and thought of the mountaineer so honestly as he subsequently did is remarkable when his heritage, early environment, and education are reconsidered. First,

¹Literary Digest, op. cit., p. 70.
born in the lowlands of the Bluegrass, of parents native to that soil, with earlier ancestors from aristocratic Virginia; second, educated in his father's academy until he reached the age of fifteen, then in the halls of a college that, "while it stretched its arms over the entire countryside yet found its meaning and its tradition in Central Kentucky," he would have become further removed from the psychology of the mountains. Three additional years at Harvard would hardly have made him susceptible to the rougher and simpler ways of the mountains. Yet it was there that he found his inspiration. The mountaineers of Kentucky had captured his imagination and he forthwith set out to weave romances about them. *A Mountain Eagle* was the first of these, and it was the first piece of fiction Fox had ever written. In 1890 James Lane Allen, who was visiting Fox's brother James, read and liked the story and suggested that John send it to the *Century* magazine. Fox, who had had the story on hand for two years, complied with this suggestion, and to his amazement it was accepted. The *Century* kept it for two years more before publication, and meanwhile Fox wrote not another line. Incidentally, it is a remarkable feature of John Fox's literary career that he never had a manuscript rejected.

---

1McLain, op. cit.
2Minnie Fox, op. cit.
Sometime later, when asked how he felt when he first knew of his good fortune regarding the immediate acceptance of his first story, Fox burst into a merry laugh.

'It was at the Gap,' he said; 'mail came in late at night. When I got the letter I struck out as hard as I could and dashed through the mud and rain a half mile to show it to my brother.' After this, as his friend Page truly comments, "he could no more have been kept from the pen than a duck from the water," although, from his own assertion, he wrote nothing more for two years.

A Mountain Europa, which is a novelette, finally appeared in two parts in the Century for September and October, 1892. It was dedicated to James Lane Allen, whom, as one commentator has observed, its author had to thank for encouragement when he stood most in need of it.

The story is laid in the Cumberlands, which hereafter Fox was to occupy as his own. From the opening scene wherein Clayton, a young engineer from the "Settlements," discovers Easter Hicks astride a mountain bull like Europa of the classical myth, the story moves with a dramatic swiftness to its tragic finale, the accidental shooting of the mountain girl on her wedding night, that Fox seems to have

---

1Page, op. cit., p. 676.
been instinctively heir to from the beginning. In the ill-fated love affair between the naïve mountain girl and the college-and-city-bred engineer, Fox capitalizes effectively on the moral and social contrasts which the situation offers.

The manner in which Clayton moulds Easter by teaching her urban ways, "her quickness, her docility, and the passionate energy with which she worked," look forward to similar factors and to the identical situation between June Tolliver and John Hale in *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*; and Clayton's qualms over marrying Easter and settling down to a "narrow" life in the mountains, the conflict in his mind between his duty to, (mingled with elements of love for,) the girl whom he had lifted "above her own people" and his duty to himself and family represent the very same conflict in Hale's mind, and later, again, in Gray Pendleton's when the latter becomes associated with Mavis Hawn, in *The Heart of the Hills*.

There are several highly effective scenes in *A Mountain Europa* which are a tribute to Fox's dramatic sense, and which, as remarked, he exhibited from the very start. As an illustration: It is recalled that Clayton has a rival in the person of the mountaineer, Sherd Raines, a pious and serious-minded man who intends one day to be a circuit-rider.

---

1 *A Mountain Europa*, p. 51.  
As a man of the church, he is suspicious of the engineer’s intentions regarding Easter, and, as a suitor, jealous of him. Apprehending Clayton on a mountain path one night, he bids the latter come to his cabin nearby, assuring him, “I don’t mean ye no harm.” Clayton unhesitatingly complyes. Once inside “the miserable little hut,” “the mountaineer did not sit down, but began pacing the floor behind Clayton.” Stopping still a moment later and “resting his eyes, which glowed like an animal’s from the darkened end of the cabin, on Clayton,” he made the startling statement, “I’ve been tryin’ to keep from killin’ ye.” Telling then how he saw the two kiss (for the first time) on the mountain-side, he continued:

‘I sot thar fer a minute like a rock, 'n' when ye two went back up the mount'in, before I knewed it I was hyer in the house thar at the fire mouldin' a bullet to kill ye with as ye come back. All at oncet I heard a voice plain as my own is at this minute:

‘Air you a-thinkin' 'bout takin' the life of a fellow-creatuir, Sherd Raines—you that air tryin' to be a servant o' the Lord?'

‘But I kept on a-mouldin', 'n' suddenly I seed ye a-lyin' in the road dead, 'n' the heavens opened 'n' the face o' the Lord was thar, 'n' he raised his hand to smite me with the brand o' Cain—'n' look thar!'

Clayton had sat spell-bound by the terrible earnestness of the man, and as the mountaineer swept his dark hair back with one hand, he rose in sudden horror. Across

---

1Ibid., p. 75.
the mountaineer's forehead ran a crimson scar yet unhealed. Could he have inflicted upon himself this fearful penance?

"Oh, it was only the moulds. I seed it all so plain that I threw up my hands, fergittin' the moulds, 'n' the hot 'ead struck me thar; but," he continued, solemnly, "I knowed the Lord hed tuk that way o' punishin' me fer the sin o' havin' murder in my mind, 'n' I fell on my knees right thar a-prayin' fer forgiveness..."

In subsequent works in which he appears as a minor figure or is alluded to, Sherd Raines is always identified as the "young preacher up from the Jellico hills, ... with long black hair and a scar across his forehead." (This recurrence of characters is treated at length in another chapter.)

Also effective and very dramatic is the scene describing the marriage of Easter and Clayton, "citizen and furrier," in the former's mountain cabin home. Fox makes good use here of the social contrasts offered and shows himself particularly capable in communicating Clayton's disgust at the rampant vulgarity manifested. The marriage is solemnized by Raines, now a full-fledged preacher; "and his voice deepened with solemn earnestness when he bade Clayton protect and cherish her until death. There was a strange mixture in those last words of the office and the man—of divine authority and personal appeal."

1Ibid., pp. 76-7.
2John Fox, Jr., A Cumberland Vendetta, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909, p. 156. (This edition is used throughout and contains, besides, A Mountain Europa and "The Last Stetson.")
3A Mountain Europa, p. 105.
This entire last scene is skilfully managed to convey a sense of tragic foreboding; and the tragedy comes when Easter's drunken father, in an enraged attempt to kill Clayton, shoots his own daughter dead instead. Incidentally, this is one of the rare occasions that Fox permitted himself a tragic ending. Most of his books end either happily or with an optimistic looking-forward—an ending in accord with the tastes of the age in which he flourished. More often than not it is just such an ending—the "sugary," conventional type—that constitutes the most serious flaw of an otherwise good story. (Most flagrant and regrettable is the one tacked on to The Trail of the Lonesome Pine.)

For a first work, A Mountain Europe exhibits an unusually mature narrative technique, distinguished in the main by its purity of dramatic presentation. The stress is on the story which moves rapidly, and the conflicts, internal as well as external, are developed objectively, without annoying authorial intrusions characteristic of most of the Victorian novelists. Description of character and background is rendered chiefly through the consciousness of the leading protagonist Clayton—a dramatic device reminiscent of Henry James and some of his successors. In the following description of the Hicks' cabin, for example, it is not Fox the author, but Clayton the character, who supplies the details: "Clayton turned for an instant to watch her [Easter], and the rude background, which he had forgotten,
thrust every unwelcome detail upon his attention: the old cabin, built of hewn logs, held together by wooden pin and augur-hole, and shingled by rough boards; the dark, windowless room; the unplastered walls; etc., etc. ¹ Fox the man and writer was inclined to regard the mountaineer's abode as picturesque; but Clayton the character, a newcomer to the mountains, with memories of dazzling student days in Vienna and the gay cosmopolitan life of New York still fresh in his mind, is not apt to regard his new surroundings in this light. Economic necessity drove him to the mountains in the first place, and it is not unlikely that he would resent his new surroundings, leastwise at first, and find the contrast with his former life an "unwelcome" one. Thus, the description is psychologically and dramatically sound, and, further, functionally serves to enhance the later conflict in Clayton's mind when he must decide between marrying Easter (and living in the mountains) and leaving her (and returning to his people in New York). Here again Fox proceeds within the consciousness of Clayton (who at this time is in the city): "Could it be his duty to shut himself from this life—his natural heritage—to stifle the highest demands of his nature? Was he seriously in love with that mountain girl? Had he indeed ever been sure of himself?" ² And so on for

¹Ibid., p. 42.
²Ibid., p. 86.
more than a page. Here the author is not talking about
his character, but has attempted to identify himself with
that character and to dramatize his thoughts and feelings.
Not once does he step in as author and attempt to "explain"
the motivation a la Fielding or comment on his character's
psychology a la Meredith; he simply presents Clayton's state
of mind in a dramatic way (the best he knew) and lets it go
at that.

As in all of his succeeding works, Fox reveals in A
Mountain Europe a warm sympathy with Nature, and evidences
that he is a keen observer of her variegated phenomena. He
reveals in "the freedom of the open sky lifting its dome above
the mountains... the sun shining its benediction... the
changing beauties of night and day... the dripping of dew
or a bird-song."1 One finds descriptions on the order of
the following:

It was late in May. The leafage was luxur-
iant, and the mountains, wooded to the toos,
seemed over-spread with great, shaggy rugs of
green. The woods were resonant with song-birds,
and the dew dripped and sparkled wherever a
shaft of sunlight pierced the thick leaves.
Late violets hid shyly under canopies of May-
apple; bunches of blue and of white anemone
nodded from under fallen trees, and water ran
like hidden music everywhere. Slowly the
valley and the sound of its life—the lowing
of cattle, the clatter at the mines, the
songs of the negroes at work—sank beneath
him. The chorus of birds dwindled until only
the cool, flute-like notes of a wood-thrush
rose faintly from below.2

1Ibid., pp. 72-3.
2Ibid., n. 35.
The wood-thrush is his favorite bird and he never tires of alluding to its water-like song. When Easter lies dying, her spirit is associated with the bird's, and only when it "called from the woods close by were her lids half raised."¹

For all his attachment to Nature, however, Fox rarely encumbers the movement of his story with superfluous description—that is, by dragging it in for its own sake alone.

Not only in description but in the use of functional metaphor Fox appears to have been adept from the first. In *A Mountain Europa* we come across such examples as these: "As [the moon's] brilliant light came slowly down the dark mountain-side, the mists seemed to loosen their white arms, and to creep away like ghosts mistaking the light for dawn";² Easter is described (from Clayton's consciousness) as being "in perfect physical sympathy with the natural phases about her; as much a part of them as tree, plant, or flower, embodying the freedom, grace, and beauty of nature as well and unconsciously as they";³ and Clayton's dream is described as lasting till a summons home "broke into it as the sudden flaring up of a candle will shatter a reverie at twilight."⁴

For all its dramatic intensity and architectural excellence, however, *A Mountain Europa* displays certain flaws from which practically none of Fox's work was exempt. First,

¹Ibid., p. 114.
²Ibid., p. 22.
³Ibid., p. 40.
⁴Ibid., p. 73.
there is the tendency to stereotype his heroines, to glorify and etherealize them in a manner according with the best Southern tradition. His women are most of them angels—whether of the mountains or Bluegrass. There is not enough mixture in them of the forces of Good and Evil; they are too one-sided, too pure to be of this earth. Easter on her wedding night, for example, is described in this tell-tale manner: "A moment later two pairs of rough shoes came down the steps, and after them two slippered feet that fixed every eye in the room, until the figure and face above them slowly descended into light. Midway the girl paused with a timid air. Had an angel been lowered to mortal view, the waiting people would not have been stricken with more wonder."\(^1\) (Italics supplied.) And shortly after she is described as "a mysterious vision." Generally speaking, not only Fox’s women but his men as well suffer from this same white-washing. His heroes are all noble, kind, generous. This unfortunately accords with the sentimental tradition of his age, during which such fictional portraits flourished. As a rule, however, heroines excluded, such remarks do not apply to Fox’s mountain characters. They impress as being true to life, and frequently they are in the literal sense of the phrase, being drawn from Fox’s many actual mountain friends and acquaintances.

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 104.
Fox's shortcomings in characterization tie up, as indicated, with his most serious one, his sentimentalism. This quality appears to have been the bane of his age, and Fox undoubtedly suffered by contagious association. Many times his sentimentalism is the result of the very quality for which he has here been lauded; namely, his dramatic sense. In an effort to achieve a desired dramatic effect, he sometimes loses his balance, as it were, his sense of proportion being jarred in the heat of the narrative, with a resultant strained and unnatural effect. *A Mountain Europa,* however, is surprisingly free, for the most part, of such discoloring. The most glaring example comes toward the end of the book, when Easter and Clayton are alone in the girl's room, the former being asleep on the bed: "As he bent back to look at the sleeping girl, the moonlight fell softly upon her face, revealing its purity of color, and touching the loosened folds of her hair, and shining through a tear-drop which had escaped from her closed lashes. How lovely the face was! How pure! How childlike with all its hidden strength! Etc., etc."¹

As for the mountain background of the story and Fox's treatment of the mountaineer, suffice it to say for the present that Fox's handling of these items constitutes, as

¹Ibid., p. 112.
in all of his books, his greatest strength as a writer.
The subject, which is an important one, is deferred to a later chapter.

Shortly after the publication of *A Mountain Europa* in 1892, Fox was stimulated to another literary effort. "When the boom went down and the 'Europa' ('Eureka,' Allen always called it) found favor," as he once remarked, "and I thought I would try it again, 'The Vendetta' was the result." Like its predecessor, *A Cumberland Vendetta* is a novelette, and, like it, too, first made its appearance in the *Century Magazine*—for the months of June, July, and August, 1894. It is a story of a mountain feud between the two families, the Lewallens and the Stetsons, being based actually upon one of the real mountain feuds of the section in which it is laid. Almost from the very first, when Fox strikes the keynote of hatred between the two families in describing the antithetical location of their respective homes:

Above one of the spurs each family had its home; the Stetsons, under the seared face of Thunderstruck Knob; the Lewallens, just beneath the wooded rim of Wolf's Head. The eaves and chimney of each cabin were faintly visible from the porch of the other. The first light touched the house of the Stetsons; the last, the Lewallen cabin. So there were times when the one could not turn

---

1Minnie Fox, *op. cit.*
blood flows from the pages of the tale. However, *A Cumberland Vendetta* does not leave the impression of being of the ordinary "blood-and-thunder" variety. Rome Stetson's love for Martha Lewallen and the intense inner conflicts experienced by both, particularly the former, lift the story out of this class. Paralleling the external conflict of the feudists, Rome Stetson's internal conflict between the forces of love and honor is vividly adumbrated. Unlike the usual resolution of heroic tragedy, it is the former that finally wins out, as we should expect in a romance. The theme is made explicit at the very end, when Martha and Rome watch the latter's cabin burn down; "and they turned their faces where, burning to ashes in the west, was another fire, whose light blended in the eyes of each with a light older and more lasting than its own—the light eternal."² This ending, highly colored and full of hopefulness as it is, is typical of Fox and characteristic of the romancer. It is usually the most conventional note of his stories, cast, as most of them are, in the alien mould of the Cumberland Mountains.

*A Cumberland Vendetta* deals almost exclusively with the mountaineer, and therefore contains no social or moral

---

¹*A Cumberland Vendetta*, p. 125.
²Ibid., pp. 231-2.
contrasts like *A Mountain Europa*. On the whole, Fox has managed to individualize his characters and to invest them with that certain strength indigenous to their environment. Martha Lewallen is one of Fox's most distinctive heroines, being neither glorified nor spiritualized, but cast in her true native colors: she was not beautiful, for such a woman in the mountains is rare, although "among mountain women the girl was more than pretty." Fox appears to adhere pretty closely to the facts, however, continuing, "elsewhere only her hair, perhaps, would have caught the casual eye. She wore red homespun and coarse shoes; her hands were brown and hardened. Her arms and shoulders looked muscular, her waist was rather large... and her face in repose had a heavy look."

However, Fox cannot desist entirely from glorifying womanhood, and a moment later we are told "her movements had a certain childlike grace." (Italics supplied.) Even more important than her physical attributes, Martha Lewallen behaves as one should expect a woman in her position to behave. Though one suspects she is physically drawn to Rome (earlier she had playfully waved her bonnet at him, not knowing his identity), she scorches him and almost cruelly rebukes his advances, for "the mountaineer was a Stetson, a worm to tread on if it crawled across the path." And this "hard antagonism" persists to the very end, being subdued only when she

herself is physically and spiritually wracked (her father and brother dead, her home lost), when she no longer has the strength to resist, as it were, and when compassion for Rome's sorrowful state—"the shaggy, half-wild figure . . . the hunted face with its white appeal";¹ for he had been living an outlaw's life in the mountains, falsely accused of having murdered Martha's brother, Jasper Lewallen—and his repeated avowals (particularly his final pathetic one) of love for her, finally move her to accept that love and return it.

Besides Martha Lewallen and Rome Stetson, one remembers Isom Stetson, Rome's younger half-brother, "ignorantly credited with idiocy and uncanny powers";² Jas Lewallen, Martha's vindictive brother; Uncle Gabe Bunch, who always "had stood for peace";³ and even such lesser figures as Steve Brayton, Steve Marcus, and Eli Crump. Fox had the knack of being able to illumine a character very often, particularly his mountain characters, within the compass of a few lines. Sometimes a single significant detail is more revealing or more vivid than a lengthy description. Martha, calling cattle, for example, "folded her hands like a conch at her mouth."⁴ More often it is the landscape or a part of it that is revealed in this manner. Thus, "the

¹ Ibid., p. 227.
² Ibid., p. 120.
³ Ibid., p. 135.
⁴ Ibid., p. 159.
stalks and hooded ears" of corn "looked in the coming dusk a little like monks at prayer."\(^1\) Or, "the mists lay like flocks of sheep under shelter of rock and crag."\(^2\) The courthouse is described as "a poor structure, with the look of a good man gone shiftless and fast going wrong."\(^3\) And, to take a last example, "the river moaned like the wind of a coming storm."\(^4\)

Throughout *A Cumberland Vendetta* there are also more detailed descriptions, such as are found in *A Mountain Eagle* and, indeed, in all of Fox's work. For the most part, however, such descriptions are kept subservient to the narrative as a whole. Not infrequently the natural background is made to serve an active function in the story, notably when particular features are interpreted symbolically. In *A Cumberland Vendetta*, for example, the crags lining the banks of the Cumberland where the Lewallen and Stetson cabins repose are effectively made to symbolize the rupture between the two families:

The mountains racing along each bank of the Cumberland had sent out against each other, by mutual impulse, two great spurs. At the river's brink they stopped sheer, with crests uplifted, as though some hand at the last moment had hurled them apart, and had led the water through the breach to keep them at peace. To-day the crags

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 120.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 159.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 183.
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 219.
looked seamed by thwarted passion; and, sullen with fire, they made fit symbols of the human hate about the base of each.¹ 

Incidentally, one notes this tendency growing stronger in Fox's later works, particularly in The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come and The Trail of the Lonesome Pine.

At other times, description fills in or reinforces the setting. On such occasions, Fox, usually in a leisurely manner, often produces word pictures that are intrinsically very beautiful. Take for example the following:

The sun was coming up over Virginia, and through a dip in Black Mountain the foothills beyond washed in blue waves against its white disk. A little way down the mountain, the rays shot through the gap... and, lancing the mist into tatters, and lighting the dew-drops, set the birds singing. Etc.²

As always, however, Fox has his eye on the narrative, which moves with a dramatic swiftness eclipsing even that of A Mountain Europa. Certain scenes in particular are unforgettable etched: Young Jasper riding into town drunk, on his magnificent grey, and precipitating the opening hostilities between the feudists; the fight of Rome and Jasper alone on the mountain peak: "It was like the struggle of primeval men who had not yet learned even the use of clubs. For an instant both stood close, like two wild

¹Ibid., p. 124.
²Ibid., p. 128.
beasts crouched for a spring, and circling about to get at each other's throats, with mouths set, eyes watching eyes, and hands twitching nervously.¹ Attention is called to the movement of the prose here, its very tenseness according with the tenseness of the situation. Such scenes are not unusual with Fox as the subsequent examination of his remaining works will show.

Following A Mountain Europa and A Cumberland Vendetta there appeared in Harpers Weekly for June 29, 1895, "The Last Stetson," a rather long short story, though not long enough to be classified as a novelette. Very shortly after these three were collected and published by Harper Brothers in a single volume, Fox's first, entitled A Mountain Europa.

At first, they attracted from the public little more attention than that usually accorded an author's first volume. But they attracted much attention from the writers and critics themselves. Fox was dealing with a new phase of American life, and had struck a note "as fresh and full of the breath of the mountains" as M. W. Murfree's best stories. Among others whose attention they caught was Theodore Roosevelt, and from this time began a friendship between the two men, based both on personal and literary sympathies, which never changed. The future President had won his literary spurs by a study of early Kentucky, The Winning

¹Ibid., p. 207.
of the West and was at once drawn by the authentic ring of Fox's work.

"The Last Stetson" is a sequel to *A Cumberland Vendetta*, with chief emphasis on the boy Ison, the last of the Stetson clan now remaining in the mountains. The characters and setting are for the most part the same as those of *A Cumberland Vendetta*. To fully understand the story, certain facts contained in its predecessor must be known; and on the very first page Fox supplies the relevant exposition.

The miller, old Gabe Bunch, it will be recalled, had always

... been a man of peace; and there was one time when he thought the old Stetson-Lewallen feud was done. That was when Rome Stetson, the last but one of his name, and Jasper Lewallen, the last but one of his, put their guns down and fought with bare fists on a high ledge above old Gabe's mill one morning at daybreak. The man who was beaten was to leave the mountains; the other was to stay at home and have peace. Steve Marcum, a Stetson, heard the sworn terms and saw the fight. Jasper was fairly whipped; and when Rome let him up he proved treacherous and ran for his gun. Rome ran too, but stumbled and fell. Jasper whirled with his Winchester and was about to kill Rome where he lay, when a bullet came from somewhere and dropped him back to the ledge again. Both Steve Marcum and Rome Stetson said they had not fired the shot; neither would say who had. Some thought one man was lying, some thought the other was, and Jasper's death lay between the two. State troops came then, under the Governor's order, from the Blue Grass, and Rome had to drift down the river one night in old Gabe's canoe and on out of the mountains for good. Martha Lewallen, who, though Jasper's sister, and the last of the name, loved and believed Rome, went with him.

---

1Page, op. cit., p. 676.
And this takes us to the end of *A Cumberland Vendetta*. As for Jasper's death, neither Rome Stetson nor Steve Marcum were lying when they claimed immunity from the cause of it. As a matter of fact, the boy Isom was also a hidden eye-witness to the fight, a fact known only to Steve and Rome, and it was he who shot Jasper when he saw his brother's life endangered. It is around this deed that "The Last Stetson" revolves, treating mainly of its consequences to the boy's mental and religious make-up. In the background, the old Stetson-Lewallen feud, with Steve Marcum and Steve Brayton as leaders, is taken up, "though but one soul was left in the mountains of either name."\(^1\) Also prominent in the story is Eli Crump, "who had been a spy for the Lewallens in the old feud and who was spying now for old Steve Brayton."\(^2\)

"The Last Stetson" is one of Fox's best stories, for here, almost more than anywhere else, the drama is confined mainly to within the human consciousness; the leading conflicts, which are internal, are psychologically potent and intense. Like Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter*, Isom fights a fierce battle with himself, and like the minister, the boy is perpetually being tormented, though unwittingly where

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 237.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 238.
his tormentors are concerned. Lest one doubt that an ignorant boy is capable of such a conflict, it should be remembered that the mountaineer is deeply religious by nature and, as is frequently the case with primitive peoples, very often in a mystical way. Like the negro as regards Christianity, possessed of a mind unable to cope with abstractions, such peoples will accept as literal, concrete fact that which is obviously intended as parable; so for them the torments of Hell are very real. Fox, of course, understood his mountaineer and very often utilized such of his distinctive characteristics. Isom, too, it is recalled, is an unusual child, even among mountaineers, "paler than his fellows, from staying much indoors, with half-haunted face, and eyes that are deeply pathetic when not cunning; ignorantly credited with idiocy and uncanny powers; treated with much forbearance, some awe, and a little contempt; and suffered to do his pleasure—nothing, or much that is strange—without comment." In a word, of a much more highly imaginative cast than his fellows, Isom would be inclined to suffer more intensely, to feel greater pangs of conscience, than they.

Fox develops Isom's inner conflict with much skill. First, it is Eli Crump who reports to the old miller, in Isom's presence, the activities of the new circuit-preacher whom, from one descriptive detail, a long scar across his

---

1 *A Cumberland Vendetta*, p. 120.
forehead, we at once identify as Sheriff Raines. Crump tells of Raines' various efforts and successes in putting an end to the "feud" in the mountains, and, repeating the text of the preacher's last sermon, strikes its keynote with much emphasis: "'He says, 'n' he always says it mighty loud'—Crump raised his own voice—'that the man as kills his feller-critter hev some day got ter give up his own blood, sartain 'n' shore.'" Next, it is kindly old Gabe, the boy's own guardian, who, meaning well, further lashes Isom's conscience. The doctrine just uttered was his "pet theory, and he was nodding approval." After Grump's departure, he addresses Isom directly, and the irony is obvious: "'Hit's a comfort to know you won't be mixed up in all this devilment,' . . . and then . . . 'Hit's a comfort to know the new rider air shorely a-preachin' the right doctrine, 'n' I want ye to go hear him. Blood for blood—life fer a life! . . . I hev nuver knowed hit to fail.'" And go to hear him Isom does, reporting later to Uncle Gabe with a lengthy account that is both humorous and pathetic in its appeal:

'I've been skeered afore by riders a-tellin' 'bout the torments o' hell, but I never heerd nothin' like his tellin' 'bout the Lord. He said the Lord was jes as pore as anybody thar, and lived jes as rough; that He made fences and barns 'n' ox-yokes 'n' sech like, an' He couldn't write His own name when He started out to save the worl'; an' when He come to the

2 Ibid., pp. 244-5.
p'nt whar His enemies tuk hol' of Him, the rider jes crossed his fingers up over his head 'n' axed us if we didn't know how it hurt to run a splinter into a feller's hand when he's loggin' or a thorn into yer foot when ye're goin' barefooted.

'Hit jes made me sick, Uncl' Gabe, hearin' him tell how they stretched Him out on a cross o' wood, when He'd come down fer nothin' but to save 'em, 'n' stuck a spear big as a co'n-knife into His side, 'n' give Him vinegar, 'n' let Him hang thar 'n' die, with His own mammy a-standin' down on the ground a-cryin' 'n' watchin' Him. Some folks thar never heerd sech afore. The women was a-rockin', 'n' ole Granny Day axed right out ef thot tuk place a long time ago; 'n' the rider said, "Yes, a long time ago, mos' two thousand years." Granny was a-cryin', Uncl' Gabe, 'n' she said, sorter soft, "Stranger, let's hope that hit ain't so"; 'n' the rider says, "but hit air so; 'n' He for­give 'em while they was doin' it." That's what got me, Uncl' Gabe, 'n' when the woman got to singin', somethin' kinder broke loose bysh'—Isom passed his hand over his thin chest—'n' I couldn't get breath. I was mos' afreard to ride home. I jes layed at the mill studyin', till I thought my head would bust. I reckon hit was the Spirit a-workin' me. Looks like I was mos' convicted, Uncl' Gabe. His voice trembled and he stopped. 'Crump was a-lyin',' he cried, suddenly. 'But hit's wuss, Uncl' Gabe; hit's wuss! You say a life fer a life in this worl'; the rider says hit's in the next, 'n' I'm mis'ble, Uncl' Gabe.'

Fox probably heard many such sermons while he was in the mountains, and his reproduction of one here is both skilful and amusing and, what is more, functional to the story. The humor throughout is apparent; the homely comparison, Granny Day's remark, and Isom's tragico-comical outburst and assump­tion at the end.

1 Ibid., pp. 253-5.
From here on the story takes several quick dramatic turns. First, Isom discovers Eli Crump on his way to make a "blind" in order to waylay Steve Maroum who, earlier in the story had justly rebuked him. Isom trails Crump, "slipping through the brush after him—Isom's evil spirit—old Gabe, Raines, 'conviction' blood-penalty, forgotten, all lost in the passion of a chase which has no parallel when the game is man."¹ (Apparently Fox was speaking here from his own experiences as a member of the Guard.) A dramatic encounter with Crump ensues after Isom catches him red-handed at his evil work and, at the point of a gun, has him pray for his enemies. "Uncle Gabe says ye must love yer enemies. I know how ye loves me, 'n' I want yer to pray fer me. The Lawd mus' got a powerful store by a good citizen like you. Ax him to forgive me for killin' ye." Although Crump does not know of Isom's intense inner conflict, his prayer is subtle on general principles: "'Have mercy, O Lawd,' prayed Crump, to command... 'on the murderer of this Thy servant. A life fer a life, Thou hev said, O Lawd. Fer killin' me he will folle me; 'n' ef Ye hev not mussy he is boun' fer the loves' pit o' hell, O Lawd—' It was Isom's time to wince now, and Crump's pious groan was cut short."² As it turns out Isom does not kill Crump; he

¹Ibid., p. 258.
²Ibid., p. 262.
"jus' wanted ter banter him 'n' make him beg."

The climax of the tale, wherein Isom, driven nearly to distraction, deliberately tries to throw his life away, is narrated briskly and dramatically, in a tempo characteristically stepped up to accord with the situation. The scene, which takes place at night, is a very effective one. Unfortunately, the story is marred somewhat by its conventional "happy" ending. Isom recovers miraculously, his penance done, and the prospect of Rome and Martha returning to the mountains now bright. Concerning such endings, however, this much can be said for Fox. Being a practical man of letters, he knew what was approved by most editors and the general reading public of the day. It is not unlikely, therefore, that he simply catered to the popular taste in this regard, although such a catering must inevitably prove injurious to his art.

---

CHAPTER FOUR

AS A WRITER OF SHORT STORIES

In 1895 the volume *A Cumberland Vendetta and Other Stories* appeared, containing, besides the title story, first published in the *Century*, a reprinting of *A Mountain Europa*—which made the third time it had been printed in three years—"The Last Stetson", and "On Hell-fer-Sartain Creek." Although Fox's first works, his novelettes, had caught the public eye and achieved a moderate degree of success, he did not actually gain any widespread recognition until he wrote the last mentioned story of the above volume, "Hell-fer-Sartain" (as it is usually referred to). It took him only a few hours to write, but it eventually made him famous. There is an interesting story itself in connection with this short story, and Fox himself has related it:

Some prose pastels attracted my attention in the magazines about that time [1894] and I started to write the little story 'Hell-fer-Sartain' as a burlesque, but I got interested and made it serious. It is the best thing I have ever done and I shall never equal it. [This is highly debatable.] I sent it to *Harper's Weekly* and got back the munificent sum of six dollars. It was printed next the advertisements [November 24, 1894] but two months later when I went to New York, I found myself pretty well known by that story.

Bill Nye had been reading it on the platform. Col. Waring read it aloud at the Author's Club one night, and I saw a column in a paper about that reading and my name was
not mentioned. Later I got an advertisement of a 'Collection of Masterpieces' that some firm was getting out, which said that among the contents was a story that had been pronounced by a 'dozen eminent literary men' as the best ever written in America:

It was 'a marvel of condensation, was by an unknown author and bore the strange title of 'Hell-fer-Sartain.' Wallah!

Page is even more lavish in his praise of the story. He calls it "almost, if not quite, unique. It is really only an outline sketch; but in its portrayal of character in a few lines it has the same mastery of art shown in Rembrandt's etchings. It contains the germ of much that Fox wrote later in his novels of the Cumberland Mountains, and its motif of passion and courage may be said to be that which runs through much of his work like the dominant, recurrent strain in a great composer's symphony." Page's high-sounding mention of "passion and courage" and this talk of "epic breadth" make the present writer seriously wonder if he has even read the story. But he has, several times, as a matter of fact, to make sure that nothing was missed, that something perhaps did not escape his critical judgment; and he can report, therefore, only on what he has read. "Hell-fer-Sartain" contains, at a liberal estimate, about six hundred words, which is considerably less even than what many newspaper columnists pen daily. It is very surprising, therefore, when one stops to consider, that it

---

1Minnie Fox, op. cit.
2Page, op. cit., p. 675.
caused the stir it reputedly did. One could hardly expect anything profound or "sweeping" in a work of prose so short; its brevity alone would constitute a check. As a matter of fact, "Hell-fer-Sartain" is not a bit profound and, what is more, was obviously not intended to be by its author. It is nothing more or less than a light, good-humored sketch, narrated in the first person in mountain dialect. This latter feature might have accounted in large part for its novelty and subsequent popularity. It is the sort of thing Will Rogers used to tell, except in a Western dialect and not so extended as Fox's. Its oral readability is attested to by the attention it was accorded, first by Bill Wye, one of the popular platform humorists of the time, and then by Col. Waring. The opening paragraph will perhaps best give the reader an idea of what "Hell-fer-Sartain" really is:

Thar was a dancin'-party Christmas night on 'Hell fer Sartain.' Jes tu'n up the fust crick beyond the bend ther, an' climb onto a stump, an' holler about once, an' you'll see how the name come. Stranger, hit's hell fer sartain! Well, Rich Waro was ther from the headwaters, an' Harve Hail toted Sance Osborn clean across the Cumberlan'. Fust one ud swing Nance, an' then t'other. Then they'd take a pull out'n the same bottle o' moonshine, an'—fust one an' then t'other— they'd swing her agin. An' Abe Shivers a-settin' thar by the fire a-bitin' his thumbs.¹

¹*Hell-fer-Sartain*, p. 99.
The remainder of the story may be simply chronicled as follows: Then some one told Rich that Harve had said something against him and Nance, and some one told Harve that Rich had said something against him and Nance. They went at each other like wildcats until some one parted them. Harve took Nance back over the Cumberland, and Rich's folks took him up "Hell-fer-Sartain, but couldn't hold him. Rich finally went to the Osbornes, and the two, he and Harve, after spending a friendly night together, shot each other in the morning. While being nursed back to health by "ole" and young Nance, they discovered it was Abe Shivers who had told both the lie. Thereupon they drew straws for Abe, and nobody ever knew who got the shortest, but— (and the story ends very much in the manner of its beginning)

Thar'll be a dancin'-party comin' Christmas night on 'Hell fer Sartain.' Rich Harp'll be ther from the headwaters. Harve Hell's a-goin' to tote the Widder Shivers clean across the Cumberland. Fust one'll swing Nance, an' then t'other. Then they'll take a pull out'n the same bottle o' moonshine, an'—fust one an' t'other—they'll swing her agin, jes the same. Abe won't be ther. He's a-settin' by a bigger fire, I reckon (ef he ain't in it), a-bitin' his thumbs!

This bald account is hardly fair to Fox's piquant reproduction of the mountain dialect; or even, for that matter, to his suggestive powers but, even so, one could hardly call the performance one of "epic" magnitude. It doesn't pretend to be; it is simply an amusing prose sketch, and a rather

\footnote{Ibid., p. 101.}
short one at that.

Page's simile out of music quoted above, when speaking of this story and Fox's work in general, is curiously like one Fox himself used in describing how he came to write the stories immediately succeeding "Hell-fer-Sertain." The passage in which it is found is unique, insofar as it represents practically the only time that he ever wrote anything approaching what may be called literary criticism, or something about the technical nature of his own work. It is not much, to be sure, but it is interesting for the light it reflects on his work, and reveals, among other things, his intimate knowledge of music:

Now I had always been able to twang or thump any instrument by ear, and I noticed that every song or waltz always went back to the key in which it started. I noticed, too, that if I was interrupted at the piano and left it hurriedly, I had to go back and sound the dominant note of the key in which I had been playing—the emotional circuit had to be completed. I wondered if that idea would not be a good one for short stories and so I wrote the stories in the volume called 'Hell-fer-Sertain' as practices in condensation and after that musical idea. 1

"Hell-fer-Sertain and Others consequently appeared in 1895. Besides the title story it contained nine others, five of them in mountain dialect after the manner of their predecessor. These mountain dialect stories follow very

1Minnie Fox, op. cit.
much the same pattern as "Hell-fer-Sertain," all being narrated in the first person, by a native mountaineer, presumably for the benefit of the "furriner," or outsider. This is indicated by the direct form of address to the "stranger" who, from time to time, is implied as the listener. For example, in "Courtin' on Cutsin," before launching into a humorous episode describing the ways of courtship among the mountaineers, the speaker remarks: "An' I know gallivantin' is diff'ent with us mountain fellers an' you furriners, in the premises, anyways, as them lawyers up to court says; though I reckon hit's purty much the same after the premises is over."¹

Furthermore, a certain pattern of opening and closing these compositions is followed, on the order of that which we have already noted in "Hell-fer-Sertain." The ending, one observes, though very much in the same words as the beginning, is modified for a humorous effect. It were as though part of an anecdote were related at the beginning, and concluded simultaneously at the very end with the end of the story. To take one more example, from "The Passing of Abraham Shivers," which opens with:

I tell ye, boys, hit hain't often a feller has the chance o' doin' so much good jes by dyin! Fer 'f Abe Shivers air gone, shorely gone, the rest of us—every dum one of us—air a-goin' to be saved.

¹Hell-fer-Sertain, p. 117.
Fer Abe Shivers— you hain't heerd tell o' Abe? Well, you must be a stranger in these mountains o' Kaintuck, shore.¹

After going on to tell then of Abe's "devilment" and finally of Harve and Rich's drawing straws for him (cf. "Hell-fer-Sartain"), which composing the body of the narrative, the speaker concludes with:

... but 'f by the grace o' Gaddle-mighty Abe air gone, why, as I was a-sayin', the rest of us—every durned one of us—air a-goin' to be saved, shore. Fer Abe's gone fust, an' ef that's only one Judgment Day, the Lawd'll nuver git to us.²

These stories obviously deal exclusively with the mountaineer, being related directly from his point of view, a construction which enables him to reveal theoretically his own character and customs. They are very humorous, as one can readily gather from the few excerpts given here, the humor stemming in part from the mountaineer's own quaint native humor, and in part from the social and moral contrasts, both stated and implied. The remarks about the "Judgment Day" are humor of this first order; while of the second, one finds it in abundance in "Courtin' on Cutshin," where the mountaineer's manner of "courtin'" is described at some length:

When you says "courtin'," now, we says 'talkin' to.' Sallie Sourlock over on Fryin' Pan is a-talkin' to Jim Howard now.

¹Ibid., p. 134.
²Ibid., p. 136.
Sallie's sister hain't nuver talked to no man. An' whar you says "makin' a call on a young lady," we says 'settin' up with a gal'! An', stranger, we does it. We hain't got more'n one room hardly ever in these mountains, an' we're jes obleeged to set up to do any courtin' at all.1

And again:

Well, Jim lets go an' Sallie puts her arm aroun' Jim's neck an' whispere a long while—jes so; an' 'f you happen to wake up anywhar to two o'clock in the mornin' you'll see jes that a-goin' on. Brother, that's settin' up.2

Sometimes the humor arises from a mixture of the two elements, contrast and native comment, as in the last remark above.

These mountain dialect stories, "A Trick O' Trade," "Courtin' on Cutshin," "Preachin' On Kingdom Come," "A Message in the Sand," and "The Passing of Abraham Shivers," are far and away the best in the volume, and suffer not a whit in comparison with the title story, "Hell-fer-Sartain," which received so much acclaim. In fact, "Courtin' On Cutshin" and "Preachin' On Kingdom Come" are superior to "Hell-fer-Sartain," and the others are at least as good; but then "Hell-fer-Sartain" claims the distinction of priority.

Of the four remaining stories in the volume, told in straight English, "A Purple Rhododendron" is the longest

1Ibid., p. 117.
2Ibid., p. 118.
as well as the best, and has even been called by some the best short story Fox ever wrote. This is certainly a little too much to claim for it, though on the whole it is a skilfully executed work of fiction. In the first person, it tells mainly of one, Grayson, who, his religious faith gone, had made a religion of love. Being disillusioned in this, the props of life knocked out from under him, as it were, he wavers constantly between suicide and a conscious desire to be killed. He finally comes to his ill-fated end by falling off a mountain peak, while foolhardily picking a purple rhododendron which at their last and final interview he had promised to send his faithless love. His lawyer (and good friend as well), who tells the story supposedly, remarks, as he had remarked at the beginning, "And that is why I say that though Grayson brought the flower down—smiling from peak to ravine—I do not know that he was not, after all, a coward."¹ One notes here the same type of ending employed in the mountain dialect stories, effectively utilized this time, however, for a serious, a psychological effect. As a psychological study, "A Purple Rhododendron" is not bad, but, as at other times when Fox attempted to be very serious, it is marred by a romantic oversimplification of the facts of life.

Of the others: "Through the Gap" is not much more than the outline of a story. Prefaced by the remark, "Strange

¹Ibid., p. 152.
people and strange tales come through this gap from the Kentucky Hills, it deals presumably with just such people and just such a tale: a peculiar mountaineer, his woman, and a Malungian, half-breed, are entangled in this one.

"Grayson's Baby": Here we meet up with Grayson again, before he had come to his untimely end. One theme of the story seems to be that though mountaineers are not outwardly demonstrative, their feelings run deep. This is evidenced by the mountain woman's gratitude to Grayson, who had been kind to her and above all to her half-starved baby, to whom eventually he became attached. The subsequent relationship between Grayson and the baby after he had saved it from death is a strange one:

"The child knew Grayson's voice, his step. It would go to him from its own mother. When it was sickest and lying torpid it would move the instant he stepped into the room, and, when he spoke, would hold out its thin arms, without opening its eyes, and for hours Grayson would walk the floor with the troubled little baby over his shoulder."¹

Then one day the baby showed a preference for the narrator who had attended it in Grayson's place, the weeks the latter had been gone; and Grayson never returned to the shack thereafter. Hereupon the narrator remarks, "Grayson should have known that the child forgot—that it would forget its own mother."² One might infer that the incident is meant to

¹Ibid., pp. 113-14.
²Ibid., p. 114.
score the fickleness and indifference of the world—that Grayson was disillusioned by the realization that the baby had forgotten him in the same sense that he was later disillusioned in love. And this would seem to be the main theme of the story. However, long afterwards the mountain woman trudged two days to reach the Gap in order to find out if the rumor that Grayson was dead, were true. This would indicate that though perhaps the baby had forgot him, the mountaineer (typified by the woman) never forgets a kindness to him. Viewed in this light, the theme in a sense is bivalent.

"The Senator's Last Trade" deals with a curious Robin Hood of the mountains, the Senator from Bell, once affluent in the "boom" days, now broken, physically and financially, but honor-bound to redeem his obligations. Afflicted with "walking typhoid," he is on his way to make his last trade for his drove of lean cattle. On his return home, after he has been unwittingly tricked by a cattle-dealer "over in Virginia," he runs, fever-stricken, into an icy creek, and is drowned. Comments by friends and relatives after his death indicate "what life held for the Senator. Death was more kind."

The theme, hence, would seem to be that death sometimes is more welcome than life, as an escape from the treachery and avidity of man—a by no means common

\[1\text{Ibid., p. 128.}\]
note in Fox, generally the optimist.

Fox wrote short stories throughout his entire lifetime, with the exception of the last three years; all in all, close to forty-five, most of which appeared first in various periodicals and then subsequently were collected in book form. These collections, after Hell-fer-Certain and Others, were as follows: Blue-Grass and Rhododendron, 1901, which included non-fictional essays as well, Christmas Eve on Lonesome and Others, 1904, and In Happy Valley, 1917. Disregarding chronology for the moment, one may consider these three volumes together before going on to Fox's remaining works.

In Blue-Grass and Rhododendron Fox does largely for the mountain regions of Kentucky what James Lane Allen had previously done for the Bluegrass in his The Bluegrass Region of Kentucky. However, several of the semi-fictional essays (for some are perhaps best described thus) included in Fox's work, also treat of various phases of Bluegrass life (particularly the hunt), as the first element of the title suggests.

One contemporary writer remarked that the volume was "worthy of the attention of the good people who regard the Cumberland Mountaineer as the rankest sort of outlaw."¹ Though the need for reading the book preeminently from this

¹Harkins, op. cit., p. 196.
aspect does not especially press the reader of today, *Blue-Grass and Rhododendron* tells more of the mountaineer, Southern and Kentucky, than most books on the subject, in existence before or since. Much of the material also relates directly to Fox's personal experiences and is, therefore, of especial value to any study of him on the order of the present.¹

Of the individual selections of *Blue-Grass and Rhododendron*, two are wholly essays on the mountaineer, "The Southern Mountaineer" and "The Kentucky Mountaineer," respectively. Both reveal Fox's sociological interest in the mountaineer and are packed with information about the latter. The remaining entries are more or less semi-fictional in nature; that is, stress is primarily on actual fact, of which there is much, secondarily on the narrative element. Three selections treat of three kinds of hunting in the Bluegrass: "After Br'er Rabbit in the Blue-grass," "Fox-Hunting in Kentucky," and "Br'er Coon in Ole Kentucky." These compositions all follow pretty much the same pattern of construction, each being divided into three parts. The first opens on the action of the narrative itself, introduces characters, leads into some dramatic incident tied up with the hunt, and is the shortest of the three; the second is a prolegomenous section, containing many facts

¹Much of the material, as we have seen, has gone into the reconstruction of the chapter on Fox's life in the mountains; much, also, is reserved for the later chapter dealing with the mountaineer.
and a short history of the particular hunt concerned, and is slightly shorter than the third section, which picks up the narrative again, and in a sense achieves a fusion of the first two by utilizing elements of both. Thus, the logical order of the piece would be II, I, III, or, for purely fictional purposes, II could be dispensed with altogether. As it is, Fox's arrangement is aimed at a greater dramatic effect than that offered by the purely logical order, and at the enhancement of the purely factual materials, the *raison d'être* of the composition. It is somewhat suggestive, one observes, of the flashback method commonly used in the cinema and drama, and, for that matter, in fiction.

It is evident from the last-mentioned selections that Fox relished the hunt, in which he was a participator whenever the occasion permitted. His descriptions are vivid, accurate, and informative, being neither overly technical nor vague. In the description of the hunt itself, the rhythms of his prose are very often stepped up to a brisk and lively pace in keeping with the swift beat of the horses upon which the hunters are seated; Fox is exceedingly skillful in modulating the tension and movement of his prose so as to accord with what is being narrated. To take only one of many outstanding examples, from "After Br'er Rabbit":

...
The field has gone mad. . . . The pony's mistress is ahead by two brushes, and the white girth is a little vexed. She declares she is going to catch a rabbit herself. The slouch-hat hears, and watches her, there­after, uneasily. And she does spring light­ly, recklessly, to the ground just as the iron-gray and the thoroughbred crash in toward her, and, right between the horses' hoofs, Br'er Rabbit is caught in her little black riding-gloves. Indeed, the front feet of a horse strike her riding-skirt, mashing it into the soft earth, and miss crushing her by a foot. The louch-hat is on the ground beside her. 'You mustn't do that again!' he says with sharp author­ity.¹

One notes the brevity and directness of the sentences, the staccato effect achieved by the many comma and rhetorical pauses, and the liberal sprinkling of anapests, trochees, and dactyls—as though one were trying to catch his breath in the gay and dangerous excitement of it all.

The remaining selections of the volume, of which there are seven, are set directly in the mountains and deal either with general phases of mountaineer life, rafting logs down the Kentucky river ("Down the Kentucky on a Raft"), clans and feuds, etc., or with the author's personal experiences there, slightly veiled by a semi-fictional garb—his various fishing expeditions for black bass in the many mountain streams ("Through the Bad Bend" and "To the Breaks of Sandy"), and his work and association with the Volunteer Police Guard at the Gap. Much of this material, to

¹Blue-Grass and Rhododendron, pp. 95-6.
repeat, is of biographical interest, and much of it has been incorporated in one form or another into his novels, particularly the incidents of "Civilizing the Cumberland," "The Red Fox of the Mountains," and "The Hanging of Talton Hall," which are reproduced almost verbatim in The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, and those of "Down the Kentucky on a Raft," which figure prominently in The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come.

Fox continued to be active in the writing of short stories, and in December of the same year that Blue-Grass and Rhododendron appeared, 1901, one, namely, "Christmas Eve on Lonesome" was published in the Ladies Home Journal. At varying intervals others were published, but Fox's labors in this field were interrupted largely by the writing of The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, his second novel, which appeared in 1903. By 1904, however, enough fugitive pieces had been written to make up another volume of short stories, though a slim one. One of the reasons it was hastened to the press was the tremendous popularity which The Little Shepherd had attained. The public was Fox-conscious and eager for his work; and Scribner's, his publisher, lost no time in giving it what it wanted, though the most that could be dished up at this time was but a morsel compared to his lengthier works. Accordingly, then, in 1904, this volume was published under the title Christ-
mas Eve on Lonesome and Other Stories, and contained besides the title story, four others, one of them the rather long "The Army of the Callahan," which had first appeared in Scribner's for the July issue of 1902.

Of the five stories, none is outstanding, but all measure up to the moderately high level of performance set by Fox from the very first. They contain, moreover, just those ingredients that would appeal to the Fox hungry public of the day. Needless to say, some of these ingredients are not in accord with the canons of the best art and would have been better left out, notably the sentimentalizing that seemed to have been chronic with Fox and at the same time what his age relished.

In the title story, "Christmas Eve on Lonesome," one, Buck, a powerful mountaineer, released from prison, returns to Lonesome (a creek in the Cumberland) on Christmas Eve to kill the man who had betrayed him, and finds, to his astonishment, his enemy married to his own old sweetheart, and now the father of a child. In jail he had thought only of revenge and of the Biblical lesson which the chaplain had thundered at him, 'Vengeance is mine!'

Hidden in the tree, he cannot bring himself to shoot his enemy in so underhanded a manner, though he realizes that this man and his people had ambushed his kinsfolks, and "with their own lips they had framed palliation for him";
they had shot from the brush, and, in accordance with the mountaineer's credo, what was fair for one was fair for the other. Seeing the woman and the child (and here Fox paints an idyllic-sentimental picture thus: the little boy had "yellow tumbled hair, and he had a puppy in his arms."

And presently Fox has him inquire, 'Has oo dot thum tandy?' which is almost a little too much for the mature reader)—seeing all this, Buck resolves to forego his revenge, and leaves the scene for good, thinking "of the Star, and once more the chaplain's voice came back to him. 'Mine!' saith the Lord," (as if to imply 'and no one else's'). And Buck grimly answers back 'Yourn.' The story concludes with the remark, "But nobody on Lonesome—not even Buck—knew that it was Christmas Eve."

Following the pattern which, we have seen, Fox used many times, the story opens with this identical remark, with only the parenthetic "not even Buck" omitted. This phrase is important, however, in that it reinforces the theme, which is that the inscrutable, pervasive spirit of "good will on earth to all men" operates at Christmas time everywhere, even in so remote a place as Lonesome Creek and on so desperate an individual as Buck, despite no outward manifestations of it (trees, exchanging

---

1John Fox, Jr., Christmas Eve on Lonesome, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920, pp. 3 ff. (This edition is used throughout and contains, besides, Hell-fer-Sartin and In Happy Valley.)
of gifts, etc.) in that place. Nobody on Lonesome knew it, but it was there nevertheless. The theme, one notes, one of sweet sentiment, narrowly misses being flatly sentimental on this occasion.

The next story in the volume, "The Army of the Callahan," contains some amusing incidents of the Civil War, treating of the lighter side of that period in the mountains, as opposed to Fox's more serious treatment in The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come. Flitter Bill, an obese storekeeper, in order to protect his store and property from the ravages of the Unionists, of which there were many in the mountains, forges an order making Mayhall Jells a captain in the Confederate army. Mayhall is a giant of a man, with physical endowments to make him a hero, but at heart a coward. The spurious commission brings out the best in him for a while, enabling him to win the respect of the men thereabouts, but acts as a boomerang to Flitter Bill, whose task as "Purveyor of the Army of the Callahan" is to feed them. "The difference," he soon recognized, "between having his store robbed by the Kentucky Jayhawkers and looted by Captain Jells was the difference between tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee." The outcome is that the Army of the Callahan disgraces itself by running in confusion from a supposed attack by Black Tom and his band of "terrible Kaintuckians"; particularly ignominious is the conduct of Captain Jells and his two Lieutenants Jim Shangle
and Tom Boggs. What they had all thought was a cannon turned out to be nothing more than a rock falling in the ravine, kicked loose by Tallow Dick, Flitter Bill's slave, attempting a runaway. Next day, with Lee's surrender, Wells realizes he is licked, but tries to keep up the game. He knows for sure he is when Hence Sturgill, one he had easily beaten earlier in the story, at the time he was commissioned Captain, makes him cry "'nough." Shortly thereafter comes another order that, "whereas Captain Wells had been guilty of grave misdemeanors while in command of the Army of the Callahan, he should be arrested and court-martialed for the same, or be given the privilege of leaving the county in twenty-four hours." Mayhall Wells is his humble self again, and leaves. Both orders, needless to say, the one that had lifted him "like magic into power," and the one "that dropped him like a stone" had come from Flitter Bill.¹ The story is humorous and entertaining enough and aims at nothing more perhaps than to engage the reader for a pleasant hour or so.

"The Pardon of Becky Day" is a "feud" story, taking as its chief point of departure the mountaineer's innate religious sense. Becky Day lies dying as a result of wounds suffered in the Day-Marcum feud, and is attended by a young missionary girl. On the other side of the road

¹Ibid., pp. 10 ff.
is the hostile Marcum cabin, outside of which sits the widow Marcum, whose husband Jim was killed a week before, and inside, lies the wounded brother of Jim. The young girl urges the widow to go to the Day cabin with her to ask Becky's forgiveness. The widow Marcum is reluctant, but the girl, working on the mountaineer's inherent superstitious and religious sense, threatens, "'Listen! Do you want a dying woman's curse?' Dave Day leaves when the two enter and rests outside by one of the window-sills. The wounded Marcum gets out of bed and proceeds to another window of the Day cabin. Inside, the widow begs Becky's forgiveness. Becky, realizing why, is now triumphant and forces from the widow a confession of the truth about the feud: the widow had won Jim Marcum from Becky by lying about her. Both men outside hear the truth. The girl pleads with Becky to forgive the widow and to bid the men shake hands. "It was a hard compromise that she was asked to make between mortal hate and a love that was more than mortal, but the Plea that has stood between them for nearly twenty centuries prevailed, and the girl knew that the end of the feud was nigh." One notes the religious character of the theme, as of "Christmas Eve on Lonesome," and its leaning toward the melodramatic and sentimental.

Becky nodded; then: 'I know what Jim is,' and a moment later, with words that made the girl shrink back,
'An' I'll—git—than—first,' she dies with a smile on her lips.¹

One finds a certain psychological motivation throughout, but it is not sufficiently individualized to be of a high order. In addition, the somewhat melodramatic conception of the piece is not very happy; it was the kind of story, however, likely to appeal to the tastes of Fox's age.

The next selection, "A Crisis for the Guard," contains many autobiographical touches. It is told in the first person, a procedure which tends to lend credence to events that border frequently on the unusual (cf. Defoe's Robinson Crusoe); but this point of view is not consistently maintained throughout, though it is not flagrantly violated. In this respect, Fox is rarely consistent, leastwise to the degree expected of present day fiction writers. Utilizing the author's prerogative to be omniscient, he will be so when it suits his purpose, fusing or confusing, if you will, this point of view with that dictated by the dramatic telling of the story from within one character's consciousness. He is not so errant as Meredith in this respect, but neither is he so pure as James.²

¹Ibid., pp. 46 ff.
²This point is discussed further in a later chapter.
"A Crisis for the Guard" begins with a prim New England tutor having come to the Gap for purposes of preparing the "Infant of the Guard" and his older brother for Harvard. But there are hectic goings-on at the Gap; the Guard arrests three men and puts them in the calaboose. The crowd is indignant and on the verge of a terrible carnage, when, miracle of miracles, the little tutor suddenly comes bursting through on horseback, garbed in an outlandish bathing-suit, to save the day unwittingly by dispersing the bloodthirsty multitude. The next day the men are fined and released.

Richards, the bully, threatens Gordon, the sergeant, personally, and the two fight it out outside the town limits. After that, the author observes, great strides toward order were made. The tale ends with the tutor unexpectedly asking for a billy and remarking, 'I—I believe I shall join the Guard myself.' From this bare outline one can see that the possibilities for humor are many; and of them Fox makes the most. Attention is called also to the episodical nature of the composition. This is true of all of Fox's semi-fictional narratives (invariably his most humorous); and this characteristic, together with their humorous qualities, reminds one not a little of Mark Twain, most of whose work was of just such a nature. Besides reading him, Fox knew

1Ibid., pp. 58 ff.
Twain personally; so the similarity between the two is by no means entirely accidental.¹

The final story in the collection, "Christmas Night With Satan," is the only one not laid in the mountains. Like "The Army of the Callahan" and "A Crisis for the Guard" it is a pleasantry, told in a light, humorous fashion. Lest the title be misleading, "Satan" is merely the pet nickname of a dog. The story has several biographical bases which Page gives for us in his article on Fox. Fox and Page, it is recalled, were close friends, and Fox was accustomed to visit the Pages' a good part of each year:

Among the members of the household in these early days was a black Scotch terrier, 'Satan,' whom, having a poet's license and a hereditary love of dogs, Fox has immortalized in his story, "Christmas Night with Satan," as he has also done 'Will Carey' of the Century Company, the 'Uncle Carey' of the tale. Only the domestic part of Satan's life as given is historical, but 'Satan' and his panegyrist were great friends and had, indeed, something in common besides beguiling ways. The former used to disappear for a run under the stars and returning later, would stand in the street and bark on one key until he was let in. Profiting by his observation of this, if Fox left his latch-key he on an occasion carried out the same manoeuvre, imitating 'Satan' admirably, until some one descended and let him in.²

"Christmas Night with Satan" tells mainly how Satan innocently gets mixed up with a pack of curs on Christmas

1 Twain's influence on Fox is discussed more fully in a later chapter.
2Page, op. cit., p. 676.
night and is nearly shot when the lot are caught raiding sheep. Last of the ten dogs alive, and the only guiltless one, he is let go on a sudden kind impulse by the old overseer (with the author's familiar commentary that "perhaps he remembered suddenly that it was Christmas") and dashes home. There is a happy reunion in the end between Satan and Dinny, his "lovable" little master who sports long black curls, and the faithless drunk's faithful yellow cur rescued from the pound by Uncle Carey. The tone of the narrative, thus, is one of sweetness, in accord with the Christmas spirit, almost too much sweetness, one might say, which has the unfortunate tendency to spoil and cloy easily.

In the later years of his life Fox wrote increasingly less and less. This may be attributed to several causes, which are discussed in their proper place. After Heart of the Hills which appeared in 1913, and which took him nearly five years to write, he wrote practically nothing at all. Several fugitive pieces appeared in Scribner's from time to time, but nothing much to speak of. In 1917, however, a resurgence of energy resulted in eight short stories, all of which appeared in practically consecutive months in Scribner's for that year. Shortly after the last had appeared in October, they were gathered together and, with two additions, were published under the title In Happy Valley.
It was the last book which appeared in Fox's lifetime, *Erskine Dale, Pioneer* being published posthumously in 1920, one year after his death.

These ten stories are full of the touches which mark Fox's work, as a cursory examination of them will reveal. All but one are laid directly in the mountains, in or about Happy Valley, and even the one deals with two mountaineer's in the city. As in the *Hell-fer-Sartain* collection of stories, many of the same characters and incidents reappear throughout, or are alluded to. This characteristic, as previously observed, is common in Fox's work and, by relating his individual compositions, chronologically and otherwise, gives the whole a greater unity, a greater impression of oneness than it would otherwise have achieved.¹ Characteristically also, the best stories in the volume are those which do not at all pretend to be egregious. Those which are meant to be taken most seriously suffer from Fox's chronic romanticizing and oversimplifying of the facts of existence.

The first story, "The Courtship of Allaphair," seems to strike a mean between the two, being a semi-humorous, semi-romantic piece. Allaphair is twenty-one and unmarried, a fact which is considered disgraceful in the mountains

¹This practice is discussed more fully later on.
where early marriages are the rule. What is more, she is unapproachable, 'wuss'n a she-wolf in sucklin' time,' until Ira Combs, a little mountain school teacher, educated in the Bluegrass, comes to board with her and her mother. Jay Dawn, a hulking mountaineer, forces his attentions on Allaphair and threatens to whip little Ira for paying court to his girl. To Jay's, and even more to Allaphair's, amazement, Ira, skilled in the pugilistic art which he had learned in college, gives Jay a sound thrashing when molested by him, thereby winning the respect and simultaneously the hand of Allaphair. Fox's description of the fight between big Jay and little Ira is vivid and skillful. Dealing as he does frequently with man's elemental passions, Fox is much given to describing such encounters between his characters. One finds at least a dozen examples of such throughout his works, and, to his credit, all are sufficiently individualized to escape the charge of stereotyping, and all are exceptionally well done. There is no doubt that he himself had an intimate knowledge of the sport, gained probably in college where he was extremely active in athletics.

In "The Compact of Christopher," Christopher, a mountain lad, attends St. Hilda's missionary school. Four times he has disgraced himself by coming to school drunk. St. Hilda, pained and puzzled, asks the boy what is to be done
with him. The latter suggests a whipping and, after some deliberation, agrees to let his mother administer it. By a coincidence his mother appears on the scene at this point. Chris makes a compact with her to stop drinking if she will. The mother agrees; then: "St. Hilda rose, too, and started for the house—her eyes so blurred that she could hardly see the path. Midway she wheeled.

'Don't,' she cried.

The mother was already on her way home, breaking the switch to pieces and hiding her face within the black sunbonnet. The boy was staring after her.\(^1\) The pathos, one conjectures, lies in the inference that the mother herself is too weak to keep the compact. (hence the shameful hiding of her face).

"The Lord's Own Level" depends for its effect on the quality of the mountaineer's reticence and undemonstrativeness. Martha Mullins passes Lum Chapman, a big, good-natured, sphinx-like blacksmith, when she brings corn to be ground in the mill down the road. Hardly a word ever passes between them. Eventually Martha stops coming, and we learn that she has been led astray by Devil Jake Kilburn,\(^1\)

\(^1\)John Fox, Jr., *In Happy Valley*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920, pp. 170 ff. (This edition is used throughout and contains, besides, Christmas Eve on Lonesome and Hell-fer-Sartain.)
and has a baby by him, though the latter is already married. When Martha next appears, with her baby, carrying corn as before, Lum takes her to his cabin and goes on to carry her meal home. When he returns, Martha waits on him. After dinner, Lum says simply,

'Marthy, the circuit-riding'll be 'roun' two weeks from next Sunday.'

'All right, Lum.'¹ [And one is almost tempted to add, "and that's that."]

Fox's pugilistic interests come out again in the next tale, "The Marquise of Queensberry," which title alone is a good indication. Ham Cage and King Camp are rivals for the hand of Polly Sizemore. At a mission dance directed by Mary Holden, St. Hilda's pretty, young assistant from the Bluegrass, Mary manages to get the two mountain giants to focus attention on her, aiming thereby to prevent trouble, by averting the incident fight over Polly. Unknown to, and unsuspected by, her, they forthwith become rivals for her favor and are about to shoot one another when Mary conceives the idea of having them fight it out next day, fist-fashion, in accordance with the Marquise of Queensberry's rules, with Pleasant Trouble and herself as seconds and Lum Chapman as referee. When the fight is nearly

¹Ibid., pp. 179 ff.
over, Mary's lover rides up to take her back to the Blue-grass; the fight is called a draw, and the two boys, realizing how foolish they have been, become fast friends. Meanwhile Polly has run off and married one of her soldier friends. The story contains many humorous touches and, as light fiction goes, is quite successful.

"His Last Christmas Gift" combines melodrama and a religio-sentimentality which, we have seen, Fox was prone to on several occasions. Jim, his face half shot off, is carried to the hospital and lies there dying. The doctor, on the eighth day, realizing Jim's end is near, tries for the last time to get him to reveal the identity of his assailant. From their conversation one infers Jim's wife is the guilty party. But Jim's last request is, "You jus' tell the old girl Jim says: "Happy Christmas!" And the doctor carried it "like a priest" and "told it to but one living soul."2

"The Angel From Viper" contains more humor than the last, but also strikes a kind of sentimental note. Pathetic, loveable, incorrigible little Willie, aged ten, and his brother James Henry, eight, attend St. Hilda's mission school. (There was no room for them, but St. Hilda was too

1The stories "Christmas Eve on Lonesome" and "Christmas Night With Satan" come at once to mind here.
2Ibid., pp. 209 ff.
The Angel, as Willie is referred to because of his hair, smile, etc., is full of pranks and continually lies about his mother’s being alive, when in reality she is dead.

With "The Pope of the Big Sandy" Fox temporarily leaves the mountains, but not the mountaineer who is set this time against the backdrop of the big city.

He entered a log cabin in the Kentucky hills. An old woman with a pair of scissors cut the tie that bound him to his mother and put him in swaddling-clothes of homespun. Now, in silk pajamas, with three doctors and two nurses to make his going easy, he was on his way out of a suite of rooms ten stories above the splendor of Fifth Avenue.

The man referred to is the Pope of the Big Sandy, a man who, starting as a poor mountain boy, became after a meteoric rise "a king among the coal barons of the land." He is visited now by the little judge of Happy Valley who is completely foreign to, and annoyed by, the ways of the big city. One or two amusing incidents are early introduced by this circumstance. Sitting in the Pope's room, for example, the little judge remarks, 'I'd hate to live in a place whar a feller can't spit out o' his own window.'

It appears that the Pope, 'the daddy an' granddaddy,' as he puts it, of his mountain township, "a man who had refused all his life to run for office," who, because of his generosity alone, "could have been congressman, senator,
governor, . . . had succumbed at last." He was running for councilman now 'to make folks realize their duties as citizens,' against Ole Bill Maddox, his natural enemy, the man who had married the Pope's own sweetheart, Sally Ann Spurlock. Out of complete trust in his people and not out of parsimoniousness, the Pope has refused to spend a cent for his campaign, believing his election to be a certainty. Telegrams announcing the progress of the voting come in at regular intervals, during which meanwhile, the Pope, realizing his end is near, tells the old judge that he has made provisions to leave his fortune to the mountaineers for the building of 'churches, schools, libraries, hospitals, good roads—any durned thing in the world that will do 'em any good,' and a substantial sum for Sally Ann and her ten children. Against the latter legacy the little judge remonstrates on the score that old Bill Maddox, whom he hates for having "cut" the Pope out, is the Pope's enemy and a 'mean critter.' But the Pope is adamant. News finally comes that the Pope is defeated, but the good judge, who has been simulating right along, with the knowledge that the Pope has "one chance in a thousand to pull through," announces happily, 'All over. You've got 'em, Jim. Hooray! Can't you hear 'em yell?' But the Pope, after making nurses and doctors leave them alone, says, 'Judge, you ain't no actor—you're a ham!' And a moment later, '"Beat!' whispered the Pope; 'beat, by
Oodi Beat—for—councilman—in—my—own home town.' And because he knew his fellow man, the good and the bad, the Pope passed with a smile. The philosophy embodied by the Pope's dying with a smile after his somewhat ironical defeat was in accord with Fox's own prevailing philosophy of life. The optimistic dictum that man is innately good, though occasionally corrupted by the vices of society, so common to the romantist, underlay all of Fox's major works.

"The Goddess of Happy Valley", the longest story in the collection, is another thoroughly typical of Fox's work—typical of many of its unhappy qualities, though on the whole it is a pretty good story. It has in common with his most popular novels the shifting of scene from city to mountain, which enables a close and interesting observation of the mountaineer by an intelligent outsider, in this case a New England professor, James Blagden, later affectionately called Doctor Jim by the mountain community which he visits. Doctor Jim is married to an unusual mountain girl, Juno by name, a beautiful, sensitive, and intelligent creature, educated in New England, being formerly one of his pupils. Called back to the mountains by an epidemic of typhoid, Juno, extracting first the promise from her husband

---

1Ibid., pp. 222 ff.
that he will not follow, returns to her people and engages in a valiant campaign of nursing which ultimately results in her own falling seriously ill. At this point, Doctor Jim comes on and does some heroic missionary work himself. It all ends happily with Juno's return to health, with Doctor Jim's winning of the love and admiration of his mountain friends, his building of a cottage in the mountains, and his magnanimous announcement to his wife, 'And you and I are coming down every summer—to help.' To which, out of gratitude, Juno answers, 'Jim—Doctor Jim—my Jim,' to bring the tale to a very sugary close, reminiscent in part to The Trail of the Lonesome Pine. This and Fox's typical "spiritualized" and "glorified" heroine ("and there she lay—his Juno—thin, white, unconscious, her beauty spiritualized, glorified")\(^1\) constitute the story's two most serious flaws. However, there are a number of realistic and humorous touches that compensate for such failings. The nursing episode might very well have been based on Fox's own sister Minnie's experiences, who was known to do such noble work in the mountains.

"The Battle-Prayer of Parson Small," in contrast to the above, depicts some of the amusing sides of mountain life. Parson Small, like "the Red Fox of the mountains"
BlmMlra&y and Rhododendron and The Trail of the Lone-
some Pine) is an archetype of the pious-churlish mountaineer,
preaching the gospel on Sunday, but feeling no compunction
during the week in committing the very unchristian act of
taking a fellow man's life—but only in self-defense, it
should be said to his credit, unlike the "Red Fox" who didn't
mind killing for hate and revenge. The Parson's "battle-
prayer" indicates this fact. Jeb Mullins, a newcomer to
Happy Valley, is a moonshiner and "undesirable citizen in
many ways." The Parson directs an excoriating sermon at
him. On the next Sunday, Mullins, who for several reasons
was not seen during the week, accosts his denouncer on his
way to preach again. 'You lambasted me afore all Happy
Valley last Sunday and now I'm a-goin' to lick you fer it,'
he says. After futilely trying to talk himself out of what
appears to be an inevitable skirmish—for after all it is
Sunday and he is a preacher— the Parson asks time to say
a prayer. Kneeling "in the road with uplifted face and eyes
closed," he gives utterance to the following:

O Lawd... thou knowest that I visit
my fellow man with violence only with thy
favor and in thy name. Thou knowest that
when I laid Jim Thompson an' Si Marcom in
their graves it was by thy aid. Thou know-
est how I disembowelled with my trusty knife
the miserable sinner Hank Smith. (Here the
parson drew out his knife and began honing
it on the leg of his boot.) An' hyeh's
another who meddles with thy servant and
profanes thy day. I know this hyeh Jeb Mullins is offensive in thy sight an' for­
give me, O Lawd, but I'm a-goin' to cut his gizzard plum' out, an' O Lawd-- (Here Parson Small opened one eye and Jeb Mullins did not stand on the order of his going.)

The story has several more such amusing touches and is on
the whole an entertaining one.

"Christmas Tree on Pigeon," the last in the collection, was probably considered one of Fox's most representative, if not one of his best, short stories, judging from the fact that it was one of the two selections from his work that was used for the Library of Southern Literature anthology. (The other was his essay on "The Southern Mountaineer" from Blue-Grass and Rhododendron.) In a sense, it is representa­tive, though by no means represents the best of Fox's work. As a matter of fact, it is a rather inferior piece of work, mainly because of Fox's predilection for the overly sweet and happy ending and of his general catering to lush senti­ment throughout. It tells of an outsider's efforts, the young doctor from the Bluegrass, aided by his sweetheart, the same "Marquise of Queensberry" of the story by that name, to bring Christmas cheer to the mountains by placing a Christmas tree in the little schoolhouse on Pigeon Creek. Though he and his mountain friends are nearly balked by the jealous and scornful mountaineers over Pine Mountain, 1

1Ibid., pp. 257 ff.
as a similar effort, the only one of its kind in the mountains, had been frustrated ten years earlier, everything comes off smoothly and the simple mountain-folk gratefully receive their presents—"presents that were simple" but not to them. And this happy event is capped by the remark that "later, by just five months and one week, . . . and on the clock-stroke of two in Happy Valley there was a wedding that blessed first June afternoon,"¹ which not only brings the particular story to a close, but epitomizes, as it were, the happy ending of the volume.

¹Ibid., pp. 265 ff.
CHAPTER FIVE
EARLY NOVELS

The Kentuckians, which was first published serially in Harper's Monthly, beginning with the month of July, 1897, was Fox's first novel, though a short one, as novels go, being only forty or so pages longer, than A Cumberland Vendetta and A Mountain Europa. Dedicated to his father and his father's Kentuckians, it is a study of life in the Bluegrass, particularly in Frankfort, the state capitol, laid against a mountain background. With this widening of his natural horizon one finds a correlative widening in characterization. His people and the lives they lead are more complex than those of the simple, almost primitive, mountaineer. Consequently, one finds more psychologizing, more stress on internal conflicts. The major theme is epitomized by the very first incident in the book where Randolph Marshall, eloquent and imperious gentleman of the Bluegrass, is opposed in the State House of Representatives by the mountaineer Boone Stallard, deficient perhaps in an aristocratic tradition, but yet a man of native power and dignity. "It was the old fight—patrician against plebian, crude force against culture."

1The Kentuckians, p. 6.
Stallard and Marshall are not only bitter political rivals, but before long one realizes that there is an even more important contest between them, that for the hand of Anne Bruce, beautiful, refined, and cultured daughter of the governor, who is more and more attracted by the strength of the mountaineer. This phase of their rivalry, however, does not come to the surface until the very end, but it is all the more strongly felt throughout by tacitly being there. Anne's interest in Stallard is gradually but delicately established, while it is known from the beginning that both he and Marshall are in love with the girl, though the mountaineer would hardly presume to let her know it. The rivalry between the two men, comes to a head when Marshall, inflamed by something Stallard says in the Mouse, challenges the latter to a duel. On the outside, the two, after due deliberation, shoot at each other and miss; Marshall shoots again, but Stallard's gun has jammed, whereupon the mountaineer flings it to the ground. Marshall is too gallant to take advantage of his helpless adversary. Recognizing this fact the mountaineer comes toward him and the two grasp hands. The whole scene is very forced and melodramatic. And Fox's prose at this point amply bears out the contention: "It was too much for the on-lookers; the strain of mortal expectancy. The gallant magnanimity of the one, the perfect courage of the other."¹ It is almost too much for

¹Ibid., p. 129.
the reader, too—all this "gallant magnanimity" and "perfect courage." But lest one censure Fox too severely, it should be remembered his characters are after all Kentuckians of the most gallant variety, just as Fox himself was, and that their code is an unusual one as contrasted with the ordinary man's. Still, it is the ordinary man and ordinary doings that usually make the best fiction, from a realistic standpoint anyway. But of course, Fox was in the main no realist.

One commentator has remarked that by the duel scene Fox has shown "how slight is the dividing line between the chivalrous bluegrass aristocrat, who shoots to death because of quick anger or a wounded sense of honor, and the semi-savage, who shoots because his father did and because of his love for shedding blood."\(^1\) Though the elements in the case are somewhat exaggerated, the point is worth remembering.

In the end, Stallard feels his place is in the mountains; despite Anne's offer to go with him and the fact there is nothing on earth he more desires he gallantly declines; for he feels, as he has felt throughout, that he is not her equal and that her place is in the Bluegrass.

\(^1\)Rutherford, op. cit., p. 603.
That is the last we see of him, though a year later, we are told, Marshall, who had risen as a Senator of the State, spoke in his behalf in an unsuccessful campaign "for the Senate of the Nation." Eventually, of course, the breach between Marshall and Anne is healed, and the story ends with the suggestion that they marry.

At the time The Kentuckians was written, many were puzzled by what was felt to be an abrupt ending of the book—which left its readers in doubt as to which of the two heroes, Marshall, the son of Kentucky blue blood, or Stallard, the sturdy mountaineer, is to win the daughter of the governor. Fox himself, a little later, supplied this somewhat humorous commentary to a friend:

'I did not mean to make the matter puzzling.
To those who have written me as if an enigma existed, I refer them to "Stallard shook his head," "his home and here," and why "Katherine's eyes filled with tears." Romantic young women, overcome with sympathy for Stallard, may take comfort thusly: "Long, long afterwards, when Stallard was a Cabinet Minister, he was persuaded one night to attend some social function. Looking through the door, he saw a beautiful woman, familiar in face and figure. And she was dressed in black."'

Fox frequently worked by suggestion, which necessitates careful reading—a sound, artistic principle. The three hints which he himself calls attention to in the above

---

1Harkins, op. cit., pp. 192-3.
commentary make perfectly clear the outcome of the story. When Stallard shook his head, he was refusing Anne's proposal to go with him to the mountains. The last two come on the final page, the first being tied up with the text thus: "From an upstairs window, Katherine [Anne's friend] saw the moon rising on the two at the gate, and on the gracious sweep of field, meadow and woodland that had always been and would always be, perhaps, his home and hers." 1

Even if one were not sure that "the two" were Marshall and Anne (one does know for sure that one of the two is Anne), even if Marshall had not been explicitly mentioned in the preceding paragraph, one could surely surmise it from the fact that the Bluegrass scene which is here described is attributed to have been always "his home and hers." (Stallard's home certainly was not in the Bluegrass.) The final suggestion, Katherine's eyes filling, indicates her happiness that the reunion between Anne and Marshall which she had been urging, has at last been consummated.

Fox's improvised ending for "romantic young women, overcome with sympathy for Stallard" is an interesting commentary in itself on the state of fictional tastes of his day—tastes which called for unadulterated sentiment, sugary and oftentimes tearful, and to which, unfortunately

---

1The Kentuckian, p. 160.
Fox and his literary brethren frequently catered.

The theme of *The Kentuckians*, then, coming with the resolution of the main conflict, would seem to be that the Bluegrass Kentuckian and the Kentucky mountaineer are still two distinct classes, not yet ready for fusion, a theme which, by the way, found expression some years later in *Heart of the Hills*.

Though he shifts from mountain to Bluegrass region in *The Kentuckians*, Fox loses nothing in the natural beauty of his setting. The lowlands also offer many opportunities for lavish description, of which Fox took advantage. The many flowers, birds, and trees which abound there all come in for their share of attention. In a highly eulogistic passage, written at first hand, Page gave the background thus: "To one who knew the life of the little Kentucky capitol in that time, set-embossed in a half-moon on the shining river with a green crescent of hills—now azure, now gay with bloom—holding it in its outstretched arms and with all the problems and passions of Kentucky in full play, the story [of *The Kentuckians*] appears like a bit of personal experience reflected in a magic mirror." And he goes on to laud the country, supplying the reader with this choice anecdote:

> Said a Kentucky lady, mistress of one of the fine historic mansions standing in
its shaded grounds, when asked by an ac­
quaintance whose summers were passed in
flitting from one summer resort of fashion
to another, 'Where do you spend your sum­
mers?' 'In my back-yard.' But the other
better knew what that backyard contained.
John Fox and Burns Wilson tried, each with
his art, to paint the blooming peach and
apple trees and the smooth turf starred
with anemones, and narcissi and dazzled
with the sunlight strained through sift­
ing boughs of primeval forest trees, where
the birds sing 'as though love were going
to live forever, and the soft air is like
some comforting human presence!'

As in his other works, nature-descriptions are plentiful
in The Kentuckians. Here is a good example of his art in
that novel:

Not a breath of air moved outside. The
white aspens were quiet as the sombre, aged
pines that had been brought over from old
Hanover, in Virginia, and stood with proud
solemnity befitting the honor. Across the
meadow came the low bellow of a restless
bull; nearer, the tinkle of a sheepbell;
and closer, the drowsy twitter of birds in
the lilac-bushes at the garden gate. Beyond
the lawn and the mock-orange hedge was the
woodland, with its sinuous line of soft
shadow against the sky, and the broken moon­
light under its low branches.

Though one notes a widening of the natural landscape
in The Kentuckians, Fox has by no means found himself as
a novelist yet. The story moves rapidly and skillfully
enough, as all of Fox's stories have a way of doing, but

1Page, op. cit., p. 681.
2The Kentuckians, p. 23.
there is still much floundering around in other departments of the novelist's art.

Of the characters, Stallard, the mountaineer, is the most convincingly drawn, although like practically all of Fox's heroes, he is too pure and noble, and not enough compelled by the forces of Good and Evil to be psychologically real. An early description of him would seem to indicate he was no less than a budding Lincoln: "All his life, Boone Stallard had known only hardship, work, self-denial. There was no love of sloth, no vice of blood, to stunt his growth; as yet, no love of woman to confuse his purpose, nor injure it." That love comes later in the person of Anne Bruce; and Stallard's most impelling conflict becomes that between love and duty to his own people, a slight modification of the old love-honor conflict of heroic tragedy, upon which Fox fondly relies time and again.

Randolph Marshall is very much of the same cloth as Stallard, with the only superficial difference that he is from the Bluegrass. One surmises at the very beginning the kind of man he is, when he is addressing the House, of which, like Stallard, he is a member: "There was an old-fashioned pitch to the vibrant voice, the fire of strong feeling in the fearless eye, an old-fashioned grace and

---

1The Kentuckians, pp. 25-6.
dignity of manner, and a dash that his high color showed to be not wholly natural... It was oratory that one hears rarely now, even in the South.\(^1\) A man distinctly out of the old romantic pre-war Southern tradition, proud, honorable, aristocratic—a man, sad to say, hardly a man, but an ideal, a type of Southern chivalry and manhood; and in his continual romantic self-deprecation, his realization that he has not made "an honest effort to realize the best that is in him"\(^2\).

In other and plainer words, he was little more than a machine, run by the momentum of forces that were prenatal. He deserved little credit for what he had done, and great censure for not having done more. That was the final courageous interpretation he gave her words, and it was not long before his self-searching honesty began to tell him that it was all true. Etc., etc.

In these respects, Marshall strongly foreshadows Crittenden of the novel by that name, with whom, in practically all respects, he might have been twins.

Anne Bruce, the "female" of the book, is typical of Fox's heroine portraiture, being the first of a line of distinguished, or undistinguished as the case may be, Bluegrass heroines, which subsequently includes Judith Page of Crittenden, Margaret Dean of The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, Marjorie Pendleton of Heart of the Hills, Barbara

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 3.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 42.
\(^3\)Ibid., pp. 110-11.
Dale of Erskine Dale, Pioneer, and various lesser lights.

A few of the author's words about her suffice to establish the type quite clearly:

And young as she was, Anne's reign had been a long one. Even as a school-girl she had her little local court of sweethearts, which widened rapidly, as she grew older, through the county, through several counties, through even the confines of the State. It was a social condition already passing away; the pretty young queen and the manly young fellows doing her honor with such loyalty—openly, frankly her slaves—to themselves, to one another, and to the world; declaring love one after another in turn, leaving her with a passionate resolution to throw off the yoke, and bending, meekly to it again. For usually she kept the lover the friend even after as lover he was hopeless, if the lover ever is.¹

Though Fox is not uniformly successful with his major characters, he quite skillfully sketches several of his minor characters, notably Colton, a witty fast-talking journalist, and Buck Stallard, a young good-natured mountaineer, kin to Boone. As a general rule, Fox's mountaineer characters, major and minor, are always his most convincing, and, despite their many likenesses, his most individualized. Those, (and there are but few unfortunately) of The Kentuckians are no exception.

Besides a deficiency in characterization just noted, The Kentuckians suffers from too much melodrama, and, to

¹Ibid., p. 41.
use Fox's own words, too much "high-wrought sentiment." 1
These have already been instanced by the duel between Boone Stallard and Randolph Marshall. Another glaring example follows shortly on the heels of this episode, when Stallard, prior to leaving for the mountains to straighten out some difficulties there, addresses Anne in a very melodramatic manner. 2 It is true Stallard's unnatural tone may be justified in part by the great stress which is upon him at the time; but even so, the whole is too strained, too exaggerated for the reader to accept or condone.

In line with this same tendency is the principle of the "pathetic fallacy" which Fox flagrantly employs here for the first of many times. Marshall is pondering his "defeat," his "disillusionment" and: "His room was cold; the white moon through the window looked cold, and the dead fields and the gaunt moonlit woods. The whole world was cold..." 3

In many ways, The Kentuckians looks forward to Fox's later novels; in theme, as we have seen, to Heart of the Hills, in characterization and specific conflicts to Crittenden, among others. In addition, one notes scenes and other particular conflicts which recur in his later works. Stallard's isolation pitifully emphasized by his walking by a

1Ibid., p. 81.
2Ibid., pp. 130-1.
3Ibid., p. 135.
dance at night, partaking in which are his beloved and his rival, recalls a similar episode in *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* with Chad Buford as the protagonist. Later, his return to the mountains and the contrast—the "bitter, hopeless contrast"\(^1\) with his life in the Bluegrass again recall Chad and even more strongly, Mavis Hawn in *Heart of the Hills*, who undergoes the same experience. One finds here, also, a characteristic device which Fox was to use with increasing frequency throughout all his work—a device tied up with his sentimentalism. It may be described as a looking backward, a sentimental remembrance of things past, embodying, as it does, a series of "reverent" memories, which are "a healing comfort" to the character,\(^2\) and, one presumes, to the reader. It generally comes toward the end of book and is sometimes a review of some of the highlights that have actually transpired during the course of the story. In this instance, however, Marshall looks back to the days of his childhood, "to the little school-house where he and Anne had been playmates" [this "gave him a sharp pang"], "to the old church that had brought its sturdy walls and sturdy faith down from the pioneers . . . the atmosphere of reverence, the droning of old hymns, etc., etc."\(^3\)

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 115.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 138
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 138.
One also finds here the beginnings of a method of symbolism in the manner of a Hawthorne, which became more prominent in his succeeding works, particularly *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* and *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*. The best example of this is Marshall's burning the leaves of his student days' journal (prominent in which were original verses to Anne)—the whole signifying, as it were, a breach with his old life, with his boyhood sweetheart.¹

In passing, one notes there are a number of social and moral contrasts, implicit and explicit, which are more or less natural to Fox's work, in view of its subject matter.

The next year, after Fox wrote *The Kentuckians*, 1899, the Spanish-American War broke out; and when Theodore Roosevelt organized the Rough Riders, Fox was on his way to join them as a private but was persuaded instead to become war correspondent for *Harper's Weekly*. His accounts of the war which appeared from time to time in that magazine² formed the basis of the novel *Crittenden*, which he wrote in 1900, after having sufficiently recuperated from the ill effects of a tropical fever contracted in Cuba.

*Crittenden*, subtitled, significantly, "a story of love and war," was Fox's second novel and longest work to date.

¹Ibid., p. 145
and represented a new departure from his previous works in that he leaves the mountains altogether and follows the history, mainly, of a young aristocratic Kentuckian through the war. Clay Crittenden, the titular character, is even a more pronounced type of the chivalrous Bluegrass gentleman than Marshall, fighting, as one critic put it, "like the true gentleman of all times and races, the fight of life against the odds of despised love, failure, loss of fortune and his own weaknesses. 'And as his father and uncle had fought, so he would try to do, and as they had lived, so he, with God's help, would live henceforth to the end.'\(^1\) Needless to say, he acquits himself gallantly in all of his trials, and, as virtue is its own reward in romances, wins out completely against his multifarious adversaries. Incidentally, the name "Crittenden" was chosen with a purpose, for as Fox well knew, it is an especially honorable one in the annals of Kentucky gallantry. Prior to the Civil War one of the historical Crittendens had led a band of one hundred and fifty Kentuckians against Spanish tyranny in Cuba. He and fifty of his followers, were captured and shot in platoons of six.

"A Kentuckian kneels only to woman and his God," this Crittenden had said proudly when ordered to kneel blindfolded and with his face to the wall, 'and always dies facing..."

\(^{1}\)Patterson, *op. cit.*, p. 1685.
his enemy,¹ a pronouncement cherished since by fellow Kentuckians. The Crittendens of Fox's novel are supposedly descendants of this noble family and are delineated, as indeed all of Fox's Bluegrass characters, with the same spirit that motivated the real Crittendens. One can thus imagine the tone of Fox's novel. Of his other leading characters, Basil Crittenden, Clay Crittenden's younger brother, is stereotyped and unreal, suffering, besides, from being a symbol and not a person—a symbol of the elder Crittenden's "early and better self,"² and in general of the gay, carefree unrestrained, innocent days of boyhood. Intent on praise, a friend and fellow Kentuckian of Fox's characterized Basil as "just the kind of manly, unselfish, impulsive boy, rapidly developing in the mould of his ancestors, that we love to think of as not unusual to our State." And Phyllis, Basil's young sweetheart, this same critic describes as a "delightful, fresh, trusting Southern girl,"³—remarks which betray the very weakness and unreality of such characters. Together with Judith Page, Crittenden's betrothed (the typical Southern belle), one is safe in saying that they are types, prettily painted puppets, who never really come alive.

¹Crittenden, p. 21.
²Ibid., pp. 37-8.
³Patterson, op. cit., p. 1685.
The theme of Crittenden is in a sense two-fold. In the foreground there is the love story of Clay Crittenden and Judith Page, laid chiefly against the background of life in the Bluegrass—the life of "God's country," a phrase which the author says has no humor to the Kentuckians, "because he feels its reality." Added to this is the interest and color of the war—"that much criticized, rattling little war with . . . its one sharp land-battle,"\(^1\) which Fox supplies through numerous sidelights, derived, frequently verbatim, from his journalistic accounts which had previously appeared in Harper's Weekly. The War itself, however, figures prominently in the bivalent theme. Out of it comes Crittenden, supposedly a "new man . . . forged by the fire of battle and fever . . . a new fire in the eyes, a nobler bearing . . . a nobler sincerity, a nobler purpose,"\(^2\) and with 'a thousand times higher and better love [for Judith] than it had ever been."\(^3\) Out of the War, also, comes a more united country, as symbolized by the person of Crittenden, "in blood and sympathy the spirit of secession—bearer now of the Stars and Stripes!"\(^4\) Earlier, after enlisting "as a regular—a plain, common

\(^1\)Page, op. cit., p. 681.  
\(^2\)Crittenden, op. cit., p. 211.  
\(^3\)Ibid.; p. 201.  
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 204.
soldier, with plain, common soldiers," Crittenden significantly, if somewhat chauvinistically, announces, "I am trying to be an American now—not a Southerner."\(^1\)

Crittenden differs from Fox's better known—and better—novels, his mountain novels—not only in its larger concern with the lowlands of Kentucky, in the pictures of which there is a strong suggestion of J. L. Allen's influence, but in its even larger admixture of the sentimentalism which was the bane of the period in which Fox conspicuously flourished, and which will do more than anything else to deprive his novels of a long life.

One manifestation of this sentimentalism is Fox's chronic romanticizing of war, which at times is almost painful to the mature reader. To note only a few typical instances: "The next best thing to a noble life was a death that was noble, and that was possible to any man in war."\(^2\) On another occasion he has a character remark, 'To think of being in the army as long as I have been, just for this fight. And to think of being left here in this hell-hole all summer, and missing all the fun in Cuba, not to speak of the glory and the game... It's missing the fight--the fight--that worries me.'\(^3\) And another, this toast: 'May the war last

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 104.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 37.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 88.
till each man meets death, wears a wound, or wins himself better spurs.1 And so on.

Other manifestations of Fox's sentimentalism in Crittenden, very often tearful sentimentalism, are not difficult to find. To cite a flagrant example: Before going off to war, Crittenden has a meeting with Judith, after which his line of thought, strained and distorted, runs thus:

It was true, then. He was the brute he feared he was. He had killed his life, and he had killed his love—beyond even her power to recall. His soul, too, must be dead, and it were just as well that his body die. And, still bitter, still shamed and hopeless, he stretched out his arms to the South with a fierce longing for the quick fate—no matter what—that was waiting for him there.

One notes in passing that the entire novel is sentimental and oversimplified in its very conception—theme, characterization, and conflicts. The ending, incidentally, looks forward to that of The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, where the lovers, united finally after many trials and tribulations, are clasped in each other's arms:

"'Sweetheart!'

God was good that Christmas.3

Despite its many shortcomings, which stamp Crittenden as inferior to all of Fox's other works, there are several

1Ibid., p. 125.
2Ibid., p. 111.
3Ibid., p. 229.
features in it quite satisfying to the present-day reader. For one thing there is an abundance of accurate and vivid detail which Fox had the true journalistic knack to seize upon. His description, for example, of the hotel at Tampa, where the troops and other entourage of war entrained before leaving for Cuba:

A gigantic hotel, brilliant with lights, music, flowers, women; halls and corridors filled with bustling officers, uniformed from empty straps to stars; volunteer and regular—easily distinguished by the ease of one and the new and conscious erectness of the other; adjutants, millionaire aids, civilian inspectors; gorgeous attaches—English, German, Swedish, Russian, Prussian, Japanese—each wondrous to the dazzled republican eye; Cubans with cigarettes, Cubans—little and big, warlike, with the tail of the dark eye ever womanward, brave with machetes; on the divans Cuban senoritas—refugees at Tampa—dark-eyed, of course, languid of manner, to be sure, and with the eloquent fan, ever present, omnipotent—shutting and closing, shutting and closing, like the wings of a gigantic butterfly; adventurers, adventuresses; artists, photographers; correspondents by the score—female correspondents; story writers, novelists, real war correspondents, and real draughtsmen—artists, indeed; and a host of lesser men with spurs yet to win—all crowding the hotel day and night, night and day.¹

And then there are his battle scenes which, as one critic observed, "are worthy of a place among the best descriptions of the war . . . [showing as they do] a facile and powerful pen, a highly trained power of observation."²

¹Ibid., op. 83-4.
²Harkins, op. cit. p. 193.
In these, curiously enough, are striking proof that Fox was not entirely blinded to the truer and less pleasant aspects, the grim realism, of war—the "t-h-u-p . . . of a bullet going into thick flesh,"\(^1\) or "the crunching noise . . . of [one] crashing into a living human skull as the men bent forward;"\(^2\) "the death-rattle" in a wounded man's throat,\(^3\) and the dead soldier like "a lump of clay;"\(^4\) "the terrible procession," after battle, of men with arms in slings; men with trousers torn away at the knee, and bandaged legs; men with brow, face, mouth, or throat swathed; men with no shirts, but a broad swathe around the chest or stomach—each bandage grotesquely pictured with human figures printed to show how the wound should be bound, on whatever part of the body the bullet entered. Men staggering along unaided, or between two comrades, or borne on litters, some white and quiet, some groaning and blood-stained, some conscious, some dying, some using a rifle for a support, or a stick thrust through the side of a tomato-can. Rolls, haversacks, blouses, hardtack, bibles, strewn by the wayside, where the soldiers had thrown them before they went into action. It was curious, but nearly all of the wounded were dazed and drunken in appearance, except at the brows, which were tightly drawn with pain.\(^5\)

Finally, Fox's powers of observation are demonstrated, as always, in his handling of nature materials, particularly the "strange plants, strange flowers, strange trees, the

---
\(^1\) Crittenden, op. cit., p. 160.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 143-9.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 171.
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 179.
\(^5\) Ibid., pp. 161-2.
music of strange birds,¹ of the tropics, where, as he remarks and ample demonstrates on occasion, "nature loves sudden effects."²

Since a large part of Crittenden was written out of Fox's own personal observations and experiences in Cuba, there is naturally much autobiographical data contained in it. On the whole, the character of Grafton, one of the war correspondents, exemplifies Fox's own trials and adventures. Practically all of the war action is seen through his eyes, and his battle sensations, which we may accept as having been Fox's own, interestingly described:

And he soon saw that his position was a queer one, and an unenviable one, as far as a cool test of nerve was the point of issue. The officers, he saw, had their men to look after—order to obey—their minds were occupied. The soldiers were busy getting a shot at the enemy—their minds, too, were occupied. It was his peculiar province to stand up and be shot at without the satisfaction of shooting back—studying his sensations, meanwhile, which were not particularly pleasant, and studying the gruesome horrors about him.

But as Page once observed, not even Fox could write as inimitably the story of his adventures as he told it—"told how having started out on board a transport with the most complex modern war-correspondent's equipment that could be furnished, [since he represented Harper's Weekly], he

¹Ibid., p. 126.
²Ibid., p. 142.
found it impossible to get ashore; so abandoning everything, he bribed a boat to take him off one night and, having picked up a stray negro as lost as himself [an incident employed in *Crittenden*, by the way], went through the campaign with a body-servant, an empty tomato-can, and one shirt. He turned up lost in Kentucky, arriving with a temperature of 104 degrees, which he declared to be nothing, adding that this was General Wheeler's temperature when he went into the battle of Santiago, and that that night he was normal.¹ Before being hospitalized, it is said that he wandered for several days through the streets of Louisville in a state of delirium. It is also related of him that since yellow fever causes the tongue to turn white, he painted his own red, after he had contracted the fever, in order to escape medical vigilance and remain on in Cuba.² While confined in a hospital, Page reports, a fellow-patient sent by a pretty nurse a card enquiring how he was. The card was sent back with the reply: "Worse, send to enquire often."³

After the Spanish-American War, Fox returned to Virginia and wrote, besides *Crittenden*, the essays and short stories which make up the volume *Blue-Grass and Rhododendron*. Furthermore, he began work on his most ambitious project to

¹Page, *op. cit.*, p. 678.
²Personal interview with Fritzl Scheff.
date, *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*. With the publication of this work in 1907, Fox shows that he made tremendous strides in the novelist's art since Crittenden. The way in which he fused mountain and Bluegrass material, and the amplitude of treatment accorded each, made this, to repeat, his most ambitious work thus far; and the success with which he managed these materials indicates that he was very near the height of his powers. With breadth of vision there is increased vigor and a breadth of technique.

*The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* immediately met with the public's emphatic approval and became the best-seller of the year. In due time the incredible number of over one million copies was sold. When one considers that the book industry had hardly attained to the large scale production of the present day, the number is all the more unusual, and indicates, among other things, how widespread must have been Fox's audience and how prominently his work must have figured where the public's reading tastes were concerned. That these tastes were not of the highest calibre is another point. The fact is, this novel alone should entitle Fox at least to a respectable place in literary history, if not criticism. It is quite surprising that a man who carried as much weight in his day as Fox apparently did should be almost completely ignored by the literary historians and scholars of American literature.
It is not difficult to see why The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come had such a popular appeal in its day. Its simple and idyllic story of peace and war and love, laid against the diorama of the Civil War and the gathering storm which preceded its outburst, furnished enough colorful material to satisfy the most romantically inclined individual, and sufficient opportunities for sentiment in an age that craved it in undiluted form. A critic of the day summed up its appeal by such typical remarks, thus: "Dear Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come making that simple and pathetic apostrophe to his God, 'I hain't nothin' but a boy, but I got to act like a man now!' All of us have loved him from those words on, as he acted his part in the pages of Fox's romance, fighting his way to success."¹

The scene of the novel is laid first in the Cumberland Mountains of southeastern Kentucky and then in the Bluegrass region, and is alternately shifted throughout between the two locales. The central figure of the story is Chad, a little mountain waif ignorant of his parentage, and left alone by the death of the kindly mountaineers who had sheltered him. The boy and his dog Jack start forlornly down the mountain side to escape from a rough and grasping neighbor, old Nathan Cherry, who intended to have Chad bound to him.

¹Patterson, op. cit., 1686.
for seven years by law. Chad pursues his way to the nearby county of Kingdom Come and is unceremoniously greeted by Daws and Tad Dillon, the latter a boy near Chad’s age, though larger. When their dog Whizzer, larger also than Jack, is whipped by the latter, after taunts to Chad by the Dillon boys, Tad, infuriated and vindictive, jumps on the little stranger. Chad is caught at a disadvantage, but he and Tad Dillon are presently separated by one of the older Turner boys, who has been witness to the proceedings. Attracted by the spirit of Chad and his dog, Dolph, Rube and Tom Turner take the little outcast home; and there in old Joel’s cabin, around its friendly log-fire, and in its neighborhood of barnyard, school house, and river of Kingdom Come take place a number of humorous and emotional episodes in the life of the Little Shepherd, which perennially appeal to the reader.

As Chad grows a little older, the scene shifts to the heart of the Bluegrass where, lost after an expedition down the river with his mountain friends, he is befriended by the kind old Major Buford, to whom, it turns out, he is a long-lost kin. This change in his external environment corresponds to even more striking changes, external and internal, in the person of the Little Shepherd; for it is here, in the lowlands of Kentucky, that he evolves from Chad, Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, into Chadwick Buford,
gentleman. And, as one critic remarked, "poor old Jack, the faithful, loveable, pathetic dog, must be left up in the mountains to the care of that ideal Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, whose spirit never really left them."¹

Such is the bare outline of the story. In the background of the romance, however, is the Civil War, events of which, particularly in Kentucky, are skilfully interwoven with the life of Chad. Kentucky was an especially debatable region during the era of national strife. As Fox says, "nowhere in the Union was the national drama so played to the bitter end in the confines of a single state. As the nation was rent apart, so was the commonwealth; as the State, so was the county; as the county, the neighborhood; as the neighborhood, the family; and as the family, so brother and brother, father and son."² This is incontrovertible fact, though from a purely historical standpoint one might object that Missouri was an even more divided state, with two distinct Southern regions and two Northern ones. Be that as it may, it seems to have been the unanimous opinion of the critics that Fox vividly and deftly portrayed and dramatized this fact with the objectivity of an artist, with tact and without prejudice or partisanship. It is as Page has said: "the author is merely the narrator and the narrator

¹Patterson, op. cit., 1686.
²The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, p. 234.
is ever the artist. If his sympathies were manifestly and irrevocably with the one side, . . . his principles gave him a just realization of the other. And his story is in its balanced breadth his serious contribution to the great cause of a restored and liberated Union.  

Furthermore, Fox effectively depicts the feeling which existed between the people of the Bluegrass and the mountains during the war, and attempts to make clear some of the points of controversy which have always existed over certain features of mountain culture, particularly the mountaineer's adherence, though sectionally a Southerner, to the Union cause. 

In the story of Chad may be traced, as one critic has put it, "the social development of a nation from its birth in a log cabin to its highest point of culture." It is this heroic quality, this element of epic sweep, symbolized in real life by another Kentuckian, the President of the United States throughout all the great civil conflict, that constitutes another major portion of its appeal to the average reader. Even as the life of Lincoln is a shining romance, so is the growth and development of the little mountain waif. 

Also, as Page has pointed out, the story of Chad adds another to our gallery of boys, Huck Finn, Tom Sawyer, Peck's
Bad Boy, Penrod and Sam, "who belong to our national literature and to our personal memory." Page's characterization of Fox's protagonist is too highly colored, certainly, but is worth noting nevertheless: "In all the shining list there is none superior to this clear-eyed, solemn, simple, gallant mountain boy, drawn from the depths of a true artist's imagination and given to the world as at once the exponent and the paladin of the section of our race that represents the basic passions and principles of the Anglo-Saxon civilization. But about 'Chad' he assembled with masterly art the life of the mountains and of the lowlands, of peace and of war."

It might be objected that Fox violates artistic propriety by the diversity of his pictures, but whatever he loses in this direction he more than gains in narrative scope and dramatic effectiveness. On the whole, he gains, too, in characterization. Chad Buford is easily his most completely delineated character. Margaret Dean is the typically beautiful, brave and noble female of the pre-War South, embellished with that touch of coquetry that characterizes all his women of this class. Also, his minor characters seem to have become much more distinct than in any of his previous writings, notably those of the mountain

---

1Page, *op. cit.*, p. 682.
girl Melissa, the Dillons, and the Deans, who, as one critic has remarked, "have received just the stroke here and there to make them vivid."¹ Notable also is Fox's understanding of a boy's and a dog's nature, derived from a close sympathy with his subject, which is in evidence throughout all of his work.

Fox's dramatic sense, relative to both content and narrative technique, is always prominently to the fore in everything he writes. This is especially true with regards to *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*. Examples of dramatic technique reside in his use of dramatic soliloquies and of an increasing amount of symbolism. Early in the book, for example, the Little Shepherd, stung by pricks of conscience, argues with himself:

"Uncle Jim said once he aimed to give this rifle gun to me. Mebbe he was foolin', but I don't believe he owed ole Nathan so much, an', anyways," he muttered grimly, "I reckon Uncle Jim 'ud kind o' like fer me to git the better of that ole devil—jes' a leetle, anyways."² giving the reader something very much like what is accomplished by the stream-of-consciousness technique employed by contemporary novelists.

As for Fox's symbolism, by far the most prominent and obvious example of it is the tremendous storm at sunrise

¹Patterson, op. cit., 1637.
²*The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, pp. 6-7.
which takes place when Chad is pathetically making his way toward Kingdom Come, at the very beginning of the book. After a magnificent description of the battle of the elements, Fox himself makes clear the symbolism, in case the reader had not already guessed it: "Never was there a crisis, bodily or spiritual, on the battle-field or alone under the stars, that this storm did not come back to him."

In thus prefiguring Chad's future "storms", physical and mental, and corresponding as it does with his present crisis, the symbolism is a kind of pathetic fallacy. However, the reader does not feel here, as he well might in other instances, that the scene has necessarily been falsified or distorted to serve the author's ends, but accepts the storm as a genuine natural phenomenon. There are other symbols in *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* but none quite so important as this.

Regarding a dramatic subject matter, it is practically incumbent upon the novelist to choose only such, to select the highlights of experience and life, as it were. In this respect all of Fox's material is dramatic. In a narrower sense, there are the many contrasts, social and moral, which his material affords. Because of the scope of this work, *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* naturally

\[1\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 14.\]
offers more such dramatic contrasts than his previous books, which are not nearly so expansive.

Occasionally, however, one finds Fox's dramatic propensity operating to his disfavor—such, for instance, as his use of coincidence. But as there is really only one flagrant example of this in *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, the practice can hardly be called alarming here. This occurs when Caleb Hazel, a mountaineer school teacher, comes to board for his week with the Turners. It is somewhat coincidental that this time should fall just when Chad comes to live with his new-found friends. Moreover, Caleb Hazel ceases to "board around" thereafter, (no reason being given for this action) as was the custom in the mountains, but stays on with the Turners. His presence, of course, is very necessary to Chad's education and to some of the subsequent events of the story; and thus his companionship with Chad is very convenient.

In dramatizing Chad's frame of mind when the war occurs, Fox devotes a whole chapter to the psychology of the conflict between the forces of love and duty (honor) that is so potent in Chad, love for the old Major who had befriended him, and duty to the Union cause, to which, on principle and as an ex-mountaineer, he was instinctively drawn. It is such a chapter as one might expect to find in Meredith

---

or Eliot, or even, more likely, since it is of a prolegomenous nature, in Fielding. According to modern tastes and standards such a chapter would be somewhat out of order. The principle of psychologizing for bringing out internal conflicts is a sound one and dramatically expedient, but the modern reader resents having such psychology flung at him, as it were, by the author, as though the latter were discussing or talking about his character with him. It is expected of the novelist that he penetrate his character's consciousness, but in a way where he does not appear to be intruding and where the reader is aware only of the character himself, living and acting out his own part, revealing his own state of mind.

Of a more, or less, serious charge, as the case may be, is another chapter, earlier in the book, entirely expositional, being devoted to ornate description and lavish praise of the Bluegrass, "God's Country!"—more serious in that it has very little dramatic sanction, less serious in that the reader may elect to skip it entirely if he wishes, and lose nothing from the story thereby. One recalls that Blue-Grass and Rhododendron, which preceded this work, contains several essay-like selections, notably those on the Bluegrass, coincidentally enough, which, though on a different

1Ibid., pp. 126-30.
scale, combine fact and fiction in a similar manner. It is quite likely, therefore, that this practice was still fresh enough in his mind to suggest its use in *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*.

Despite its merits and widespread appeal, there is in *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, as in all of Fox's works, too much, to use his own epithet, "sweet unselfishness," too much altruism and sacrificing, in a word, too much finely-wrought sentiment; too often is good irrevocably good, and bad, bad. There is in addition an abundance of sentimentalizing in the form of Fox's favorite "memories" device, which is somewhat overworked in this book. One finds also an outstanding example of the pathetic fallacy toward the close of the novel, just as there tended to be one at the opening: "The moon shone, that night, for them; the wind whispered, leaves danced, flowers nodded, and crickets chirped from the grass for them; etc." (Italics supplied)

Also, as in *Crittenden*, there is a sentimentalizing of the various aspects of war: For example, on one occasion, Chad, now a young man, is described in such terms as: "He

---

had filled his empty shoulder-straps with two bars. He had a bullet wound through one shoulder and there was a beautiful sabre cut across his right cheek. He looked the soldier every inch of him.\(^1\) However, as in Crittenden, too, Fox recognizes and records some of the shabbier and more realistic aspects of war, as he himself well knew them from experience:

'a cavalryman on some out-post department, perhaps, without rations, fluttering with rags; shod, if shod at all, with shoes that sucked in rain and cold; sleeping at night under the blanket that kept his saddle by day from his sore-backed horse; paid, if paid at all, with waste paper; hardened into recklessness by war--many a rebel soldier thus became a guerilla—consoling himself, perhaps, with the thought that his desertion was not to the enemy.'\(^2\)

And again, describing the ruins of war, both by neglect and destruction:

The worn fences had lost their riders and were broken down here and there. The gate sagged on its hinges; the fences around yard and garden and orchard had known no whitewash for years; the paint on the noble old house was cracked and peeling, the roof of the barn was sunken in, and the cabins of the quarters were closed, for the hand of war, though unclenched, still lay heavy on the home. . . .\(^3\)

As for the historical background of the War itself, Fox has very skilfully worked in just enough material and

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 337.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 342.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 336.
information to convey the vivid color of the period, and at the same time to avoid being tedious. One gets allusions to the "underground railroad," to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, to many of the slavery and abolitionist issues of the day, to actual historical personages of the time—Lincoln, Davis, Grant, General John Morgan, Ward, Clay, Crittenden, Marshall, Breckenridge,—and an excellent description of an actual campaign, Morgan's men and their unusual tactical manoeuvres.

As in all of his work, there are certain recurrent scenes in *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, which have either appeared in an earlier work or which look forward to those of a later one. Mention has already been made of the dance scene,¹ which previously appeared in *The Kentuckians*. One other scene, where Jack is on trial for his life and the schoolmaster Caleb Hazel is forced, out of an innate sense of honesty, to give a damaging testimony against him,² looks forward to an identical circumstance in *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, when June is compelled to testify against her uncle. There is much drama in both scenes, which Fox makes the most of—almost too much, one might say.

As usual, also, there are some fine descriptions of the natural landscape in *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*

¹Ibid., p. 195.
²Ibid., p. 187.
Come, more seemingly than in anything else he ever wrote. Sometimes they strike the reader as being there for their own sake alone, but Fox atones for this deficiency by the vividness and color with which he generally achieves them. Two in particular stand out above the others; one, the electrical storm which occurs right at the beginning of the book and which has already been alluded to, and the other, the description of the river, with "the coming tide" which will carry the various rafts down it into the Bluegrass:

All night it poured and the dawn came clear, only to darken into gray again. But the river—the river! The roar of it filled the woods. The frothing hem of it swished through the tops of the trees and through the underbrush, high on the mountain-side. Arched slightly in the middle, for the river was still rising, it leaped and surged, tossing tawny mane and fleck and foam as it thundered along—a mad, molten mass of yellow struck into gold by the light of the sun. And there the raft, no longer the awkward monster it was the day before, floated like a lily-pad, straining at the cable as lightly as a greyhound leaping against its leash.¹

As with the storm description there is a kind of functional symbolism attaching to the latter. The mountaineers have anxiously waited a long time for the coming of this delayed tide, and their eagerness to begin the journey down the river seems to be implicitly imaged in the surging waters.

¹Ibid., p. 60.
The use of such functional imagery is not at all uncommon with Fox. As a matter of fact, several examples out of previous works have already been noted. Besides those already given from The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come may be added such striking illustrations as: "Rage straightway shook Chad's soul—shook it as a terrier shakes a rat;"\(^1\) and "they walked now down through the pasture toward the creek that ran like a wind-shaken ribbon of silver under the moon.\(^2\)

Although The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come ends on an optimistic note, there is no happy reunion between the lovers that one finds in most of Fox's novels. Instead, it ends very effectively as it began, on the solitary figure of the Little Shepherd, now grown to manhood, and his faithful dog Jack. Chad is again setting out on a pilgrimage from his beloved mountains that holds the unknown for him. "Once again he was starting his life over afresh, with his old capital, a strong body and a stout heart." And then this very idealistic note:

> In his breast still burned the spirit that had led his race to the land, had wrested it from savage and from king, had made it the high temple of Liberty for the worship of freemen—the Kingdom Come for the oppressed of the earth—and, himself the unconscious

---

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 141.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 392.
Shepherd of that Spirit, he was going to help carry its ideals across a continent Westward to another sea and on—who knows—to the gates of the rising sun.1

An eagle flies overhead (and the symbolism is apparent), and Jack comes trotting after him. After caressing the dog, Chad sends him home. "The eagle was a dim, black speck in the band of yellow that lay over the rim of the sinking sun, and after its flight, horse and rider took the westward way."2

From 1903 on, after he had established his reputation with The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, Fox frequently appeared on the lecture platform and as a reciter of his own writings. Being a gifted amateur actor, as we have seen, and a splendid reader, these interpretations of his own characters proved to be very popular and entertaining. Indeed, it were as though his success on the college stage were to be repeated on the wider American platform. Not since Cable's and Twain's ablest days did the American platform hold so delightful a reader of his own writings as Fox. Further, to take a native Kentuckian's word for it, "as a story-teller and mimic, his ability established a reputation which lingers, after sixty years, in Lexington."3

---

1Ibid., pp. 485-4.
2Ibid., p. 404.
3McLain, loc. cit.
As for his ability as a two-fold interpreter of Kentucky mountain life, the foremost Kentucky writer, J. L. Allen, said:

Not only is he a very beautiful reader, but he is the first public reader of the dialect of the Tennessee and Kentucky mountaineers that has yet appeared. Now, in no species of American short story has there been greater need of an interpreter of the dialect than in that of the Cumberland mountains; and this interpretation Mr. Fox is admirably prepared to give. For he has lived several years among the native folk, has talked with them, has studied them, and become himself their literary interpreter through his splendid work in the magazines.¹

¹Quoted by Harkins, op. cit., pp. 187-8.
When the Russo-Japanese War broke out in 1904, Fox, as we have seen, already having seen service in a similar capacity in the Spanish-American War, was sent to Japan by Scribner's as their foreign correspondent. There he met up with Richard Harding Davis (with whom he had been in Cuba), Melton Prior, and other outstanding journalists of America and the Continent over on a similar mission. Though frustrated in his efforts to see an actual battle, Fox recorded his exploits in the Orient in a series of essays which appeared monthly (though not consecutively) in Scribner's from June, 1904, to March, 1905. These essays, with one addition, were subsequently gathered together and published in book form a month or so after his return to the States, April, 1905, under the caption, Following the Sun-Flag.

These essays, thoroughly delightful and written in Fox's usually impeccable prose, reveal many sides of his nature, particularly one which he displayed all too infrequently in his other works, but one for which he was greatly
admired as a man: a keen and lively sense of humor, a
knack of recognizing at once the incongruities inhering
in any particular situation. Needless to say, the Orient,
made up as it is of so many heterogeneous elements, offers
a wealth of humorous incident to the discerning eye, and
this Fox ably seized upon.

Following the Sun-Flag, from the very nature of it,
is unquestionably the most personal of Fox's works. Basic-
ally, it is an autobiographical account of his experiences
during the seven months he had spent in the land he "had
longed since childhood to see." Fox himself was aware of
this and accordingly apologized in his introduction, written
later at his home in Big Stone Gap, "I am very sorry to
have sounded the personal note so relentlessly in this little
book. That... was unavoidable, and will, I hope, be par-
donied." 1 Because it reveals so much of the man himself
not to found anywhere else, as well as his literary ver-
satility, Following the Sun-Flag is invaluable to the
student of Fox and warrants a lengthy discussion.

Fox half facetiously dedicated the book "to 'The Men
of Many Wars' with congratulations to those on whom fell
through chance or personal effort a better fortune than
was mine." For as stated in the introduction, "After a

1Following the Sun-Flag, p. x.
long still-hunt in Tokio, and a long pursuit through Man-
churia, following that Sun-Flag of Japan, I gave up the
chase at Liaoyang. ¹ Setting out on "the Trail of the
Saxon," which led him ultimately into the harbor of Yoko-
hama and the Land of the Rising Sun, with the hope "simply
to see under that flag the brown little 'gun-man--as he
calls himself in his own tongue--in camp and on the march,
in trench and in open field; in assault and in retreat;
to tell tales of his heroism, chivalry, devotion, sacri-
fice, incomparable patriotism; to see him fighting, wound-
ed--and, since such things in war must be--dying, dead,"
after seven months his "spoils of war," as he puts it,
"were post-mortem battle-fields, wounded convalescents in
hospitals, deserted trenches, a few graves, and one Russian
prisoner in a red shirt."² Be that as it may, this loss
in "heroic" or "exciting" materials which he felt at the
time was undoubtedly his literary gain. In normal condi-
tions, that is, in its everyday aspects, life is hardly
very outwardly exciting or "heroic." The unusual external
occurrence is rare, and even when taking place, becomes
suspect when rendered as literature. The reader, for ex-
ample, questions Hardy's unusual or violent incidents and
coincidences, feels they are too melodramatic, untrue to

¹Ibid., p. ix.
²Ibid., p. ix.
everyday life to have what may be designated as an inevit­able artistic verisimilitude. On the other hand, our "petty hopes and fears," our daily trafficking in the marts of everyday experience are usually the substance out of which the best, or at least the most convincing, litera­ture is made. Thus, Fox, unable to get to the front, "diverted" himself by turning to the multitudinous life of Japan and Manchuria around him, and, in order to supply Scribner's with copy, was forced to write about it. And he did so with charm, gusto, and insight. Bringing the same equipment to the East, keen sensual perceptions and an under­standing that enabled him so efficiently to resurrect the Southern Mountaineer in his fictions, he was able to adum­brate the Oriental temperament and to record many of the features and customs of the land with which he came into contact. Fox apparently had the knack not only for picking out the salient and distinctive features of a race, but penetrating to the very core of it, whether that race was akin to his own, as the Kentucky Mountaineer, or totally alien, as the Oriental. Not only was he able to recognize and record particular customs, but to go even deeper than that, to convey the very consciousness of the race.

Fox was by no means entirely pleased with the Japanese. In fact, he had good cause to resent many of their ways: their suspicious movements, their superciliousness toward
the Chinese, and their "polite duplicity" evidenced above all by the manner in which they evaded telling the correspondents the truth. For the Japanese officials had no intention whatever of ever permitting them to get closer than four miles to the firing-line, and, by evasiveness, led them on a "wild goose chase," entailing many hardships and discomfits, for seven months. Looking back, however, after his return to America, Fox is too truthful an artist to rewrite what he had previously recorded about them; for, as he remarked, "were I to re-write these articles, I should doubtless temper both word and spirit here and there; but as my feeling at the time was sincere, natural, and justified, as there is, I believe, no over-statement of the facts that caused it, and as the articles were written without malice or the least desire to 'get even'—I let them go, as written, into book form now."¹

Incidentally, the change which took place in the man regarding the Japanese, no one regretted more than Fox himself; for "no more enthusiastic pro-Japanese than I ever touched foot on the shores of the little island, and no Japanese, however much he might, if only for that reason, value my good opinion, can regret more than I any change that took place within me when I came face to face with a

¹Ibid., p. x.
land and a people I had longed since childhood to see.¹

Starting from the top of the Cumberland around the middle of February, 1904, Fox proceeded along

that old wilderness trail... across the Ohio, through prairie lands, across the rich fields of Iowa, the plains of Nebraska, over the Rockies, and down into the great deserts that stretch to the Sierras. Along went others who were concerned in that trail: three Japanese students hurrying home from England, France, and Germany, bits of that network of eager investigation that Japan has spread over the globe—quiet, unobtrusive little fellows who rushed for papers at every station to see news of the war; three Americans on the way to the Philippines for the Government; an English Major of Infantry and an English Captain of Cavalry and a pretty English girl; and two who in that trail had no interest—two newspaper men from France.²

From San Francisco the party proceeded to Hawaii, in those days a trip of seven days on the Pacific. Two pictures of the Island stuck in Fox's mind: the Hawaiian swimmers, "bronzed and perfect as statues, who floated out to meet us and dive for coins, and a crowd of little fellows, each on the swaying branch of the monkey-pod tree, black hair shaking in the wind, white teeth flashing, faces merry, and mouths stretched wide with song."³ From all present day accounts, Hawaii does not seem to have changed very much.

¹Ibid., p. x.
²Ibid., pp. 4-5.
³Ibid., p. 10.
Eleven days later Fox was in "the Land of the Rising Sun—where," as he says, "Perry came to throw open to the world the long-shut sea ports of Japan."\(^1\)

After an annoying delay of several months in Tokio, during which time Fox had an excellent opportunity to observe and learn much of Oriental customs and manners, his ship "swung out of Yokohama Harbor at last—the Tokio slate for the time wiped clean and all forgiven. We were going to the front and that was balm to any wound."\(^2\) The second night out they stopped at Kobbe, to which, as Fox says, "Kipling once sang a just paean of praise—Kobbe, which he knew at once, he said, was Portland, Maine, though his feet had not then touched American soil. He was quite right. Kobbe might be any town anywhere."\(^3\) From Kobbe Fox proceeded to Koji, from which place he—along with "correspondents, interpreters, servants, horses, a few soldiers, and much ammunition"—set sail on the transport Haijo Maru.\(^4\) Sailing along at slow speed, they reached the Elliott Group of Islands, where they "saw Chinamen for the

---

1 Ibid., p. 10.
2 Ibid., p. 79.
3 Ibid., p. 80.
4 Ibid., p. 87. Concerning the name of the transport, Fox remarked, "Every ship has that 'Maru' after its name, and I have never been able to find out just what it means—except that literally it is 'round in shape.'"
first time on native heath."1 After another delay, this
time of about three days, the ship started one morning
"before sunrise. The start was mysterious, almost majes-
tic at that hour."2 "By noon there was a great cheer.
The Japanese word was good at last—[they] were bound for
Port Arthur . . . that grim easternmost symbol of Russian
aggression," which at the time held "place for dramatic
interest in the eyes of the world. Port Arthur we should
see—stubborn siege and fierce assaults—and gather stories
by the handful when it fell."3 Dalny was to their left,
and Fox thought it rather curious that they did not turn
toward there. But no matter—they were going into Tali-
enwan Bay, which was only a few miles farther away, and,
since they could hear big guns, they were happy. At Talie-
enwan they landed "among carts, Chinese coolies, Japanese
soldiers, Chinese wagons, mules, donkeys, horses, ponies,
squealing stallions, ammunition, a medley of human cries.
The bustle was terrific."4 A man, as Fox remarked, had to
look out for himself in that apparent confusion. However,
since his servant and interpreter, Takeuchi, was especially
faithful that day, Fox was serene and trustful. Davis, one

---

1Ibid., p. 92.
2Ibid., p. 96.
3Ibid., pp. 97-8.
4Ibid., p. 98.
of the party, was not,

... and beckoned to a coolie with a cart. The man came and Davis's baggage was piled on the cart. Along came a Japanese officer who, without a word, threw the baggage to the ground—including a camera and other things as fragile and hardly less precious. Davis turned to the Post Officer:

'Can I have one of these carts?'

'Certainly,' he said.

Davis got another, but while his interpreter was loading his things again, the same officer came by and tossed them again to the ground. The interpreter protested and tried to explain that he had permission to use the carts, but he hadn't time. That officer turned on him [and cursed him roundly].

In spite of such occurrences, however, they were still comparatively cheerful, for they were at least (apparently anyways) on the "war-Dragon's tail." Next day they traveled—where, no one knew—with every boom of a big gun at the Russian fortress behind them "sounding the knell of a hope in the heart of each and every man." They were on the trail of Oku's army into the heart of Manchuria, though nobody knew it for sure, some on horses, some on mules, some on ponies, and a few even on bicycles. On the evening of the third day, they reached Wa-fang-tien, having left Palien-tan in the morning, which made a journey of thirty-two miles for the day. Here they were again delayed. The excuse the Japanese gave was that the roads were bad farther

---

1Ibid., pp. 98-9.
2Ibid., p. 101.
on, and transportation difficult, the only satisfactory reason yet given for their "hideous delay," and, as Fox felt, not the true one. "They simply don't trust us—that's all," was his comment.¹

In due time they continued their tortuous route to Kaiping, and thence to Haicheng in a heavy rain (and "when it rains in Manchuria, it really seems to rain"), after "miles and miles... through muddy cornfields for four hours," and wading waist-high across a yellow river which bordered the high, thick walls of the city.² (It is remarkable that Fox was not taken down with double pneumonia right then and there.) Winding into a city gate, Fox and those who happened to be with him at the time

... were stopped by a sentry and sent on again around the city walls and three or four miles across a muddy, slushy flat, full of deep wagon-ruts and holes. After much floundering through mud, and the fording of many streams, we found the Commandant with his shoes under his chair and his naked feet on the rungs. James clicked his heels and saluted. We all took off our hats, but as he neither rose nor moved naked foot toward yawning shoe, we put them back on again. We must go to Kaiping, he said, and he was very indifferent and smiled blandly when we told him that we had just waded and swum from Kaiping. Just the same we had to wade and swim back—by the same floundering way and through gathering darkness. We missed the way, of course, rode entirely around the city walls, rode through Kaiping.

¹Ibid., p. 116.
²Ibid., p. 125.
and back again, and finally struck an interpreter who piloted us to this Chinese temple where I write. I was cold, muddy, hungry, and tired to the bone.

An hour later, Davis came in half-dead—leading Prior, the dean and eldest of the correspondents, on his (Davis's) horse. They had had the same experience. Davis had struck the same Commandant, had been sent on, and gone into a stream over his head and crawled on hands and knees most of the way through pitch dark. He didn't mind himself, but Prior was elderly and was ill. Davis wanted the Commandant, "the one of the naked foot and yawning shoe," to take them in, but he refused and Davis was rightfully indignant. Fortunately they met the same two "Samaritans" on their way back and were likewise sheltered in the temple. Needless to say, it was incidents like this that deprived Fox (and Davis as well) of much of the pro-Japanese sentiment which he had when starting out.

The party finally reached Haicheng and, as usual, was subjected to another lengthy delay, this time of many days' duration. (Fox appropriately titled the piece which he write of his experiences there "White Slaves of Haicheng.") After being told many times that they were to leave for the front, about twenty-nine miles away, one morning they finally did leave—toward Liao-Yang. For two hours the cortage

---

1Ibid., pp. 126-7.
"marched, climbed then a little hill, left their horses on the hither side, crawled over the top to where a battle was raging—some ten miles away.\(^1\) As a matter of fact, they were still so far away from the actual sphere of operations that the bursting of shells was not even audible, though the smoke from the explosions was perceptible. Fox remarked that the phenomenon impressed him as though "up in the mountains somebody was evidently letting loose giant puffs of cigarette-smoke high in the air.\(^2\) They were naturally too far away to see anything else, so Fox sarcastically observed, "Thus for two hours did we not see the battle of Anshantien."\(^3\)

After idling about the vicinity for another day or so, they "hit" the muddy trail again for another Chinese compound, and evidences along the way pointed to the fact that they were getting nearer to the front; namely, "the flies and fleas were thicker here, a dead pig protruded from a puddle of water in the centre of the compound, and there were odors about of man and horse, that suggested a recent occupation by troops."\(^4\) The correspondents were by this time pretty much impatient and disgusted by the delays and

---

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 161.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 161.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 162.
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 163.
general treatment received at the hands of the Japanese Government and Army officials. That night they had a serious consultation. "The artists couldn't very well draw what they couldn't see. Some of us, not being military experts, and therefore dependent on mental pictures and incident for material, were equally helpless." Hearing that General Oku feared for their safety, they agreed to send him a round robin relieving him of any responsibility on their account, and entreatimg him to be allowed to go closer to the fighting, or their occupation would be gone. Next morning came "the straw that broke the camel's back." The final word came from General Oku, through a Guardsman, that the Russians were in flight, that there would probably be no decisive battle for some time, and that if there should be, they were to be allowed no closer than four miles from the firing-line. "Well," as Fox remarked, "you cannot see, that far away, how men behave when they fight, are wounded, and die—and as all battles look alike at a long distance, there was nothing for some of us to do but go home." So, on a bright sunny morning, R. H. Davis, Melton Prior, Brill ("the wild Irishman"), and Fox proceeded "on the backward trail of the war-dragon for home."¹ They went back through Haicheng and spent a few hours in

¹Ibid., pp. 168 ff.
the same deserted compound that they had left only a few days before; thence, after more uncomfortable travelling, through deep mud and marshy cornfields, to Neuchang; from Neuchang to Chefoo, where, in the harbor, they saw—"glory of glories"—an American man-of-war. Davis and Fox boarded her, and two days later "were threading a way through a wilderness of ships of all the nations of the earth into Shanghai—'Paris of the East'"—where they boarded another ship for Nagasaki. After landing at Nagasaki, they had a three nights' ride to Yokohama "in a crowded car in which it was possible to sleep only when sitting upright." Back in Tokio at last, they received a request from the Japanese: Would they consider going back to Port Arthur? They would not.

"'Please consider the question.' We considered.

'Yes,' we said, 'we will go.'

'You can't,' said the Japanese."3

Right gladly then they "struck the backward trail of the Saxon," the trail which led them back to the States nearly seven months after they had first swung into Yokohama harbor.

---

1Ibid., p. 182.
2Ibid., p. 186.
3Ibid., p. 186.
During his seven months stay in the Orient, Fox naturally came into contact with many interesting and quaint personalities, whom he described from time to time. First, it was the unusual character, "The Happy Exile," who "left America three years ago with a Puck-purpose of girdling the world" and "got no farther than Japan."

"It is the 'lust of the eye,' he says, and the lust is as fierce now as on the day he landed—which is rare; for the man who has been here before has genuine envy of the eye that sees Japan for the first time." The Happy Exile was a painter once, but, as Fox observes, "he came, saw Japanese art, and was conquered... He studies life and Myth in Japan, collects curios, silks, and Satsuma, writes a little, dreams a good deal, and gives up his whole heart to his eye."¹

Then there was the Happy Exile's Japanese friend, Amenemori, "husband of O-kin-san, mistress of the tea-house of One Hundred and One Steps, who herself can talk with her guests from all parts of the world in five languages and is an authority on tea-ceremonies and a poetess of some distinction." Amenemori was not only a linguist, but a scholar, spoke English, French, German, Italian, Russian, several varieties of Japanese, Korean, and Chinese, and

¹Ibid., pp. 18 ff.
even Sanskrit. "One of Lafcadio Hearn's books is dedicated to him, and through him that author acquired the widest acquaintance with old Japanese poetry yet attained by any foreigner. Illustrating the change that has taken place in an ancient Japanese word to its modern form, he quotes Chaucer and the modern equivalent for the Chaucerian phrase!"

There was Kamura-san, the "geisha" girl—that is, a girl who worked in a tea-house---"pretty, and dainty, and graceful," fourteen years old, "which by our computation, would be thirteen only, since the Japanese child is supposed to be a year old when born." Kamura-san was an Eurasian—that is, a half-caste—"a secret which she told a few in confidence since you could not tell it from her face," for "the fact would be no little obstacle to the success of her career as a geisha girl." Taking a special liking to her, and impressed by her quickness at learning and by her apparent desire to go to school, Fox tells of his negotiations to buy her—"the price of the child, body and soul, [being] 750 yen or $375 in gold"—in order to send her off to school, where she would be able to live with her mother. Fox was discouraged from this intention by the interpreter of the tea-house, who assured him in excellent English that her house-mother would only sell her again and that Kamura-san, despite her avowals, did not really want to go to

---

Ibid., pp. 30 ff.
school. Fox relates some amusing things about the child, particularly her misinterpretation of his somewhat paternal motives and attention, and her subsequent talk of marrying and having a child by him, which both staggered and amused him.1

Throughout Following the Sun-Flag Fox makes many references to Takeuchi, another interesting character, his interpreter and servant during much of the time which he spent in Manchuria. Fox jocularly called him

... the ever-faithful or the ever-faithless—just as his mood for the day happens to be. He keeps me guessing all the time. When I make up my mind that I am going to say harsh things next day, I find Takeuchi tucking a blanket around me at three o'clock in the morning. He knows they are coming, and when I do say them Takeuchi answers, 'I beg my pardon,' in a way that leads me to doubt which of us is the real offender after all. Sometimes my watch and money disappear, but Takeuchi turns up with them the next morning, shaking his head and with one wave of his hand toward the table.

'Not safe,' he says, smiting his waist-band, where both were concealed. 'I keep him.' He has both now all the time. His first account overran, to be sure, the exact amount of his salary for one month and for that amount I had him sign a receipt. Two hours later he said, in perplexity:

'I do not understand the receipt I give you.'

'I pointed out my willingness to be proven wrong. He worked for an hour on

1Ibid., pp. 63 ff.
the account and sighed:

'You are right,' he said. 'I mistake. I beg you my pardon.'

He had overlooked among other things one item—the funeral expenses of some relative, which he had charged to me. I made it clear that such an item was hardly legitimate and since then we have had less trouble. However, when he wishes anything, he says:

'I want you, etc., etc., etc.,' and at the end of the sentence he will say 'please,' with great humility; but until that 'please' comes I am not always sure which is servant and which is master. From Takeuchi I have learned much about Japanese character, especially about the Bushido spirit—the fealty of Samurai to Daimio, of retainer to Samurai, of servant to master. It is useless to be harsh with or to scold a Japanese servant. Just make your appeal to that traditional spirit of loyalty and all will be better—if not well. He may rob you himself in the way of traditional commissions, but you can be sure that he will allow the same privilege to nobody else.1

And of course there were the other correspondents with whom Fox travelled and who experienced many of the same disappointing delays and inconveniences as he. "There was the dean of the corps, one Helton Prior, who, in spite of his years—may they be many more—is still the first war artist in the world. He was mounted on a white horse, seventeen hands high and with a weak back that has a history."2 Later Fox remarks, "That a game Dean it is,

---

1Ibid., pp. 89-90.
2Ibid., p. 102.
by the way! He laughs at his sickness, laughs when that big white horse with the weak back goes down in a river or mud-hole with him, and never complains at all.  

Then there was Brill the Brill of the gentle heart, one of the most colorful of the lot, on a nice chestnut. "The wild Irishman," as Fox sometimes referred to him, had a way of communicating with the Chinese and Japanese by nonchalantly talking Irish to them and apparently making himself understood that baffled Fox. Fox was evidently very fond of him and related several amusing incidents in which he was involved. On one instance Fox remarks, "How, on sight, he wins the confidence of these people—men, women, and children—how he makes himself understood, not knowing a word of Chinese, I don't know." Another time, (when Brill was using a bicycle) Fox writes:

His bicycle-tire was punctured and he was trying to mend it, Brill says, with 25-cent postage-stamps. He evidently succeeded, for he has just arrived. He seems to have had a high old time on the way. At the last Chinese village he halted long enough to offer a prize—what I don't know—to the Chinese child that could display the prettiest embroidered stomacher. He had them lined up in a shy, smiling row, and was about to deliver the prize when the winner was suddenly thrust forward with a wonderful piece on his chubby tum-tum. The wild Irishman

---

1Ibid., pp. 143-4.  
2Ibid., pp. 141-2.
gave him the prize, hoisted him on the bicycle and circled the compound swiftly to the delight of the village. I asked him how he communicated with these isolated heathens and he said he talked Irish to them. I'm quite sure he does and he seems to make himself understood.

It was Brill, incidentally, who discovered Song, "a little Chinese boy some eight or ten years old," who, like his master, proved to be an amusing and very likeable little fellow.

There was Burleigh, "the veteran, on a wretched beast that was equally dangerous at either end; Lionel James with cart and coolies of his own, and the Italian on a handsome iron-gray. There were the two Frenchmen—Reggie, the young, the gigantic, the self-controlled and never complaining—so beloved, that his very appearance always brought the Marseillaise from us all—and Laguerie, the courteous, ever-vivacious, irascible—so typical that he might have stepped into Manchuria from the stage. There was White, artist, on the littlest beast with the biggest ambition that I ever saw vaulting on legs; lanky Wallace, whose legs, like Lincoln's, were long enough to reach the ground—even when he was mounted—and there were the two Smiths—English and American—and Lewis, gifted with many tongues.

Ibid., pp. 116-17.
and a beautiful baritone, who, his much-boasted milky steed being lame, struck Oku’s trail on foot. On Fit-a-Pat, a pony that used to win and lose money for us at the Yokohama races, was little Clarkin the stubborn, the argumentative, who, at a glance, was plainly sponsor for the highest ideals of the paper that, in somebody’s words, made virtue a thing to be shunned.*** And last but not least, there was Richard Harding Davis,

... who, for two reasons—the power to pick from any given incident the most details that will interest the most people, and the good luck or good judgment to be always just where the most interesting thing is taking place...is also supreme. Mounted on another big horse was he—one Devery by name—with a mule in the rear, of a name that must equally appeal. Quite early, after purchase, Davis had laid whispering lip to flapping ear.

'I'll call you Williams or I'll call you Walker, just as you choose,' he said.

There was no response.

'Then I'll call you both,' said Davis, and that wayward animal was Williams and Walker through the campaign. A double name was never more appropriate, for a flagrant double life was his.2

Fox had earlier been with Davis in the Spanish-American War, and the two had become fast friends in the intervening years. It is natural therefore that Davis’s name should appear many times in Following the Sun-Flag.

---

1Ibid., pp. 103-4.
2Ibid., pp. 102-3.
On the other hand, writing regularly to his mother, Rebecca Harding Davis, the novelist, Davis frequently mentioned Fox in his letters and on occasion described some of their experiences together. It is interesting to correlate the reports of the two men and to compare their descriptions of the same happenings. Space prevents carrying out the latter here in full, though an account of the former, which includes such comparisons, is feasible.

The first allusion of one to the other was made by Davis who briefly remarked in a letter from Tokio, dated May 2, 1904, "On the 4th, we expect to be on our way to Kioto with Lloyd and his wife and John Fox."¹ On May 22, writing as always to his mother, he expressed some annoyance and crossness over their delay in Tokio and then went on in a better humor thus:

Yesterday we all went to Yokomama. There are four wild American boys here just out of Harvard who started the cry of 'Ping Yang' for the 'Ping Yannigans,' they being the 'Yannigans.' They help to make things very lively and are affectionately regarded by all classes. Yesterday they and Fox and Cecil and I went to the races, with five ricksha boys each, and everybody lost his money except myself. But it was great fun. It rained like a

¹Davis, R. H., Adventures and Letters of Richard Harding Davis, ed., Chas. B. Davis, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917, p. 303. This book, incidentally, contains a picture of Davis and Fox together in Manchuria; both are dressed in khaki.
sieve and all the gentlemen riders fell off, and every time we won money our thirty ricksha men who would tell when we won by watching at which window we had bet, would cheer us and salaam until to save our faces we had to scatter largesses. Egan turned up in the evening and dined with John and Cecil and me in the grand hotel and told us first of all the story the correspondents had brought back to Kobbe for which every one from the Government down has been waiting.

Although Fox does not mention this particular episode, on one occasion he remarks, "We had poker o' nights, and sometimes o' days, and now and then we 'played the horses.'" His first reference to Davis occurs a little before this when he tells of their rooming together at a Japanese hotel (vide above "the grand hotel") in Yokohama: "Richard Harding Davis had gone to a Japanese hotel and had left word for me to follow. So in a rickety rickshaw I rattled after him through the empty street." He goes on to describe their room with its "eighty mats, full of magic wood-work," and the general setting. Then: "The latest occupant of our room had been the Marquis Ito—we found it quite big enough for two of us. Li Hung Chang had the same room when he came over to make peace terms after the Japanese-Chinese War." Writing home from Yokohama, July

1Ibid., p. 304.
2Following the Sun-Flag, p. 91.
3Ibid., p. 83.
4Ibid., p. 84.
26, 1904, Davis's account went, "John and I are here at a Japanese hotel, the one Li Hung Chang occupied when he came over to arrange the treaty between China-Japan," and like Fox's included a mention of the mats and other features.¹

Shortly thereafter Fox again had occasion to refer to Davis when, along with the others, they were aboard the Hello Maru. He relates the amusing incident of

... Guy Scull diving from the railing of the upper deck and Richard Harding Davis diving for coins thrown from the same deck into the water (and getting them, too) [which] created no little diversion for everybody on board. On the third afternoon, Davis, clad in his kimono and nothing else, was halted by the first officer at the gangway. The captain had found a transport rule to the effect that nobody should be allowed to go in bathing—the good reason being, of course, that some of several hundred soldiers in bathing might drown.²

On July 27, Davis wrote to the effect that they were having "pleasant going on the Hello Maru, a small but well-run ship of 1,500 tons. . . . We have reached Dalny and I have just heard the first shot fired which was to send me home. All the others came and bid [sic] John and me a farewell as soon we were sure it was the sound of cannon."³ Before reaching Dalny, however, the Hello Maru pulled into

¹Davis, op. cit., p. 304.
²Following the Sun-Flag, p. 95.
³Davis, op. cit., p. 307.
Talienwan Bay and landed first at Talienwan. Here occurred the unfortunate incident of Davis's baggage (vide p. 158). On July 31, Davis wrote from Dalny, "Fox and I will get out just as soon as we see fighting but before you get this you will probably hear by cable from me. If not, it will mean we are still waiting for a fight." 1 He makes no reference, however, to the aforesaid incident described by Fox.

There are several other allusions, some incidental, to Davis throughout Following the Sun-Flag, such as the mention of his guitar, 2 and a little later, of their bathing together: "Davis and I had a great bath today in a pool which somebody had damned up—for what purpose I know not. What I do know is that it was not meant for us." Fox mentions the date as August 5th, and that "Davis and Lewis are asleep in the sand." 3 A little later he tells of their nasty experience at Kaiping, of having to wade through the river and so forth, and finding shelter finally in a deserted Chinese temple. Apropos of this incident, Davis wrote from Manchuria, August 18, "We did not come to sit in temples, so John and I will leave in a week, battle or no battle," 4 after which he went on to complain

---

1 Ibid., p. 309.
2 Following the Sun-Flag, p. 110.
3 Ibid., p. 115.
4 Davis, op. cit., p. 310.
of the six months wasted and of the Japanese who broke their faith, etc.

There is a revealing allusion to Davis when they arrived in Haicheng where, the correspondents together again, swapped stories anent their recent ordeals. When the others were finished, Fox avers, "Davis answered with the story of our tribulations—his, Brill's and mine"; and then takes a good-natured slap at him, "He told it so well that Brill and I wished we had been there..." Thenceforward, both give similar accounts of their decision to leave, of the final consultation, and both, Davis even more so than Fox, strongly voice their disappointment in, and censure of, the Japanese for the treatment accorded them.

Of the correspondents as a whole, Fox had nothing but high praise, and admired the fortitude of the elderly Dean Prior in particular. Of the others he remarked, "I have never seen such forbearance and patience and good-humor among any set of men." And then gave this very human picture of them:

If a man wakes up cross and in an ill-humor—that day is his. He may kick somebody's water-pail over the wall, storm at his servant, curse out the food, and be a general irritable nuisance; but the rest forbear, look down at their plates, and nobody says a word, for each knows that

---

1Following the Sun-Flag, p. 129.
the next day may be his. This forbearance is one benefit anyhow that we are getting out of this campaign, which is a sad, sad waste thus far. But Reggie appears at the door. As he marches past us we rise and sing the Marseillaise; when he marches back, we sing it again, and that smile of his is reward enough.1

As expected in a work of this nature, Following the Sun-Flag contains many illuminating autobiographical touches, many of which the reader has undoubtedly glimpsed already. Others remain for consideration, which help to round out the personal picture.

On one occasion Fox remarks significantly, "The absence of animals, tame or wild, has depressed me ever since I have been in Japan. Even up there in the hills I had seen nothing hopping, crawling, or climbing by the roadside or in the woods."2 Fox was a lover of Nature in all her aspects, and felt at home among the "hopping, crawling, and climbing" denizens of the woods and hills. Despite its malignant waywardness, he describes his horse Fuji with affection. Oddly enough, on one occasion he was accidentally bitten on the shoulder by another horse. One gathers, however, that Fox was an expert horseman. "Fuji was Japanese and bad, and Japanese are not good horsemen." One Japanese soldier, he remarks, "looked at me with approval that I dared ride him."3

---

1Ibid., p. 144.
2Ibid., p. 37.
3Ibid., p. 140.
While delayed in Tokio, he speaks with a knowledge of music, of "going straightway to the piano [where] I found those notes to be F and D in the scale of F Minor." He likewise discusses the monotonous quality of Japanese music.1 Another time, he gives a picturesque account of his vagaries through the streets, shrines, temples, etc., of the city.2 Occasionally, there is an outburst of disgust with the continual and fruitless (as he thought) delays to which he and the others were subjected:

I shall write no more until the needle of my compass points to Manchuria. A month ago the first column got away when the land was lit with the glory of cherry-blossoms. We have been leaving every week since—next week we leave again. One man among us now calls himself a cherry-blossom correspondent. He was lucky to say it first. Clear across the Pacific we can hear the chuckle at home over our plight even from the dear ones who sent us to Japan. If it were not such a tragedy it would be very funny indeed.3

Incidentally, one notes that practically everything he writes here, whether of complaint or elation, is characterized by a good-natured wit. It is the high, the distinguishing mark of the book, and more than anything else makes it one of the best he ever wrote.

At one point in Following the Sun-Flag there is some interesting talk on poetry, all the more interesting because

---

1Ibid., pp. 40-41.
2Ibid., pp. 47 ff.
3Ibid., p. 50.
Fox, strangely enough, by his own assertion, never tried his hand at this genre:

Whiskey and soda were brought in. We watched the moon, listened to the nightingale, and the Happy Exile's talk drifted to old Japanese poetry—to the little seventeen-syllable form in which the Japanese has caught a picture, a mood, one swift impression, or a sorrow. Here are three that he gave me—but inaccurately he said: 'A mother is sitting on a mat, perhaps alone. The wind rattles the fragile wall and she turns:

'The east wind blowing;

Oh, the little finger-holes
Through the shogis!'

Now, shogis are the little squares of latticed paper that make the fragile wall, and mischievous children delight in thrusting their fingers through them. Those little finger-holes were made by the vanished hand of a dead child.

This is a picture in three strokes:

Moonlight;
Across the mat
The shadow of a pine.

Think of that for a while.

And here is another mother-cry for a dead child. There are summer days in which every Japanese child that can toddle is chasing dragon-flies, and the children who die must pass through a hundred worlds. So this mother's thought runs thus:

Oh, little catcher of dragon-flies,
I wonder how far
You've gone.

But I like best the first:

The east wind blowing;
Oh, the little finger-holes
Through the shogis!

The specimens of Japanese verse which Fox has here given are none other than perfect little examples of "imagistic"

---

1Ibid., pp: 52-4.
poetry which came into vogue in this country around 1919, with the efforts and productions of Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, "H. D." (Hilda Doolittle), John Gould Fletcher and their so-called "Imagistic" school of poets. It is, in a way, a tribute to Fox's critical perspicacity that he was able to appreciate such verse, so different from what was being written at the time (1904), in America and England.

Incidentally, Following the Sun-Flag is especially valuable for the light it throws on Fox's general reading, containing as it does numerous and divergent literary allusions: Owen Wister, R. L. Stevenson, Smollet, LaFcadio Hearn, Chaucer, Artemus Ward, Schiller, Bret Harte, Kipling, Pierre Loti, Dante, Stephen Crane, Scott, Swift, and others.

Fox's humanitarianism comes out from time to time—on the occasion, for example, when he deliberates and actually begins negotiations for buying Kamura-san, the little Japanese geisha girl, and again, when he contributes, along with the other correspondents, a sum of money to Wong, "Cupbearer and Page in Waiting" to Brill, which the little Chinese boy finally put to good advantage in the interest of his family.

In Manchuria, Fox describes with tell-tale evidence his effects and feelings at seeing his first Russian prisoner:
We had a shock and a thrill today—
Brill, Lewis, Davis, and I. It was noon, and while we sat on a low stone wall in a
grassy grove, a few carts filled with
wounded Japanese passed slowly by. In one
cart sat a man in a red shirt, with a white
handkerchief tied over his head and under
his chin. Facing him was a bearded Japan­
ese with a musket between his knees. The
man in the red shirt wearily turned his face.
It was young, smooth-shaven, and white. The
thrill was that the man was the first Rus­sian prisoner we had seen—the shock that
among those yellow faces was a captive with
a skin like ours. I couldn't help feeling
pity and shame—pity for him and a shame
for myself that I needn't explain. I wonder­
ed how I should have felt had I been in his
place and suddenly found four white men star­
ing at me. It's no use. Blood is thicker
than water—or anything else—in the end.

Shortly thereafter Fox vividly gives his impressions
at seeing a troop of soldiers afflicted with the beri-beri:

Next morning there was a sign of war.
At daybreak some red flecks from the dragon's
jaws drifted back from the mist and dust
through which he was writhing forward. It
looked, some man said, like the procession
of the damned who filed past Dante in hell.
Each man had a red roll around him. They
uttered no sound— they looked not at one
another, but stared vacantly and mildly at
us as they shuffled silently from the mist
and shuffled silently on. The expression of
each was so like the expression of the rest
that they looked like brothers. A more creepy,
ghost-like thing I never saw. I knew not what
they were, but they fascinated me and made me
shudder, and I found myself drawing toward
them, step by step, hardly conscious that I
was moving. I do not recall that any one of

---

Ibid., pp. 117-18.
us uttered a word. Yet they were only sick men coming back from the front—soldiers sick with the kakke, the 'beri-beri,' the sleeping sickness. It was hard to believe that the face of any one of them had ever belonged to a soldier—hard to believe that sickness could make a soldier's face so gentle. The man in the red shirt and those gray ghosts that shuffled so silently out of one mist and so silently into another are the high lights in the two most vivid pictures I've seen thus far.\(^1\)

From time to time Fox revealingly tells of his own lot, which was by no means an overly comfortable one, of the hardships and inconveniences endured. During a heavy rainfall in Manchuria, he remarks, "I was on foot in a light flannel shirt, and had no coat or poncho. In ten minutes the road had a slippery coating of mud, I was wet to the skin and, as my boots had very low heels, I was slipping right, left, and backward with every step."\(^2\) And then, after finding refuge in the Chinese temple, his remark that "I was cold, muddy, hungry, and tired to the bone." All this just to see one battle; but since the prospects seemed bright at this point, Fox was elated, despite discomfort and threats to his health: "The button on the dragon's tail was there, and Brill the gentle; and, mother of mercies! they had things to eat and to drink."\(^3\)

---

1Ibid., pp. 120-1.
2Ibid., p. 125.
3Ibid., p. 127.
Besides these natural hazards, there was always the danger of being mistaken for a Russian and shot on the spot. For, as one of the Japanese officers explained, in "partial excuse for shackling" them: "Some of our common soldiers, never having seen a foreigner before, are not able to distinguish between you and the Russians. We wish to provide against accidents." And he laughed.¹

An incident the afternoon before "made this sound plausible" to Fox. And no wonder, judging from what occurred: "I was riding alone, and hearing a noise behind me I turned in my saddle, to see a Japanese slipping upon me with his bayonet half-drawn from his scabbard. I stopped Fuji [his horse] and said: 'Nan desuka?' (What is it) and he, too, stopped, and turned back. Whether this was a case in point or whether he was drunk and showing off before his companions, I don't know..."²

Following the Sun-Flag is replete with such whimsical and highly personal touches. At Haicheng, Fox reports, General Oku sent them over the following:

1 dozen bottles of champagne.
4 dozen bottles of beer.
1 package of fly-paper.
1 live sheep.

¹Ibid., p. 130.
²Ibid., p. 130.
The "poor Manchurian lamb... died voluntarily this morn-
ing before the canteen-man could kill it—but the champagne,
the beer, and the fly-paper are all the heart could desire."¹

At Haicheng, Fox further remarked, "Liao-Yang is only
about twenty-nine miles away, and the Three Guardsmen say
we are not to be here very long. If the Russians can drop
a shell on us here, I wish they would—just one, anyhow.
Even one would save the faces of us a little."²

One especially significant note in Following the Sun-
Flag is that even in far-off Manchuria, Fox could not forget
his native mountains. After noting for example that Prior,
Burleigh, and Davis wore ribbons on the left breast ("Dean
Prior, indeed, seemed to have his color-box there"), he
observes that, as for himself, "I had a volunteer's police-
man's badge that came from the mountains of old Virginia.
I was proud of it, and it meant campaigns, too, but I
couldn't pull it amidst the glory of those three."³ A
little later he hears "the drone of school-children chant-
ing Chinese classics as our little mountaineers chant the
alphabet in a 'blab-school.'"⁴ And still later, the Chinese
impress him as "simple, kindly, humorous, and with a spirit
of accommodation and regard for the stranger that I have

¹Ibid., p. 133.
²Ibid., p. 133.
³Ibid., p. 134.
⁴Ibid., p. 156.
never seen outside of our Southern mountains."\textsuperscript{1}

Despite the fact that Fox never got to witness an actual battle, and complains that he "had lost much," besides seven months' time, that of the war" in detail I knew no more than I should have known had I stayed at home,\textsuperscript{2} actually the time was well-spent; and far from losing, he gained much. At any rate, the student of Fox could scarcely afford to do without \textit{Following the Sun-Flag}, which was the result of his exploits in the Orient. Of the man himself, the reader gains more here than in all of his other books put together. This seven months' diary, as it were, is not only a record of seven months spent in Japan and Manchuria, but furnishes an important key to the personality and character of the writer, which stands the biographer of Fox in good stead. Fox's concluding remarks, for example, strike the keynote of his own character. Censuring the "polite duplicity" of the Japanese, he urges that they "bring in the blunt telling of the truth; for if the arch on which a civilization rests be character, the keystone of that arch, I suppose, must be honesty—simple honesty."\textsuperscript{3} And anyone who ever knew or wrote of John Fox, Jr., underscored, above all, this very quality in him.

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 174.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 188.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., p. 189.
Besides such illuminating portions of the man himself as here included, there is much in Following the Sun-Flag that throws light on Fox's ability as a writer. At all times he writes with charm, facility, and above all, with a keen eye to what is going on around him. Doubtlessly, his journalistic and novelistic training stood him in good stead when it came to noting and jotting down particulars. When only ten days in Yokohama and "the Land of the Rising Sun," for example, Fox observed that there was no sign of war from the outward aspects of the city, and in a passage that reveals his acute perceptive powers, lists such aspects as met his eye:

No sign was to come, by night or by day, from the tiled roofs, latticed windows, paper houses, the foreign architectural monstrosities of wood and stone; the lights, lanterns, shops—tiny and brilliantly lit; the innumerable rickshas, the swift play under them of muscular bare brown legs which bore thin-chested men who run open-mouthed and smoke cigarettes while waiting a fare; the musical chorus of getas clicking on stone, mounted by men bareheaded or in billycock hats; little women in kimonos; ponies with big bellies, apex rumps, bushy forelocks and mean eyes; rows of painted dolls caged behind barred windows and under the glare of electric lights—expectant, waiting, patient—hour by hour, night after night, no suggestion save perhaps in their idle patience; coolies with push carts, staggering under heavy loads, 'cargadores' in straw hats and rain coats of rushes, looking for all the world like walking little haycocks—no sign except in flags, the red sunbursts of Japan,
along now and then with the Stars and Stripes—flags which, for all else one could know, might have been hung out for a holiday.\(^1\)

A little later, he notes "the charm of thatched cottage, green squares of wind-shaken barley, long waving grass and little hills, pine-crowned."\(^2\) Other such notable passages include his vivid description of the transports at sea, "black and more mysterious than ever they looked in that dark hour before dawn";\(^3\) his general description of the country—"a country of cornfields, beans and potatoes, horses, cattle, sheep, dogs, goats, and no freaks in tree-trunk, branch, or foliage";\(^4\) such "minutely observed vertebrae" of the "war-dragon" from a slowly moving freight train drawn by six hundred coolies as "heavy Chinese wagons, the wheels with two thick huge spokes cross-barred, the hoops of wood and studded with big, shining rivets, and the axles turning with the wheels, etc., etc.";\(^5\) his description of a deserted Confucian monastery, its "temples age-worn, old gardens tangled and unkempt and trees unpruned. . . the notched gray walls that shut in the hushed silence of the spot from the noise of the outside world, etc.";\(^6\) and

---

1Ibid., pp. 1-2.  
2Ibid., p. 22.  
3Ibid., p. 96.  
4Ibid., p. 118.  
5Ibid., p. 125.  
6Ibid., p. 142.
finally, his account of Shanghai—'Paris of the East'—

... with its stone buildings and hotels and floating flags; its beautiful Bund bordered with trees and parks and paths, its streets thronged with a medley of races and full of modern equipages, rattling cabs, rattling rickshaws, and ancient Chinese wheelbarrows each with one big wooden wheel, pushed by a single Chinaman with a strap over his shoulder, and weighted, sometimes, with six Chinese factory-girls, their tiny feet dangling down—and all this confusion handled and guarded by giant, red-turbaned Sikh policemen—each bearing himself with the dignity of a god.

In addition to such descriptions, there are, as one should expect, many glowing accounts of the natural scenery and climate of the country. It was natural that Fox should, from time to time, be reminded of his own Cumberland mountains, and in Following the Sun-Flag there are several implicit as well as explicit references to them. There is no question, for example, that he must have been thinking of them when he wrote, "That is why a man who comes from a land where he can fill both lungs fearlessly and stoop to drink from any stream that his feet may cross must go down now and then to the sea or turn his face firmly to the hills." Or again, after climbing to the top of Big Hill, "some 3000 feet past rice squares and barley fields," certain sections of his own Kentucky and Virginia mountains, particularly such a one as Lonesome Cove described later in

\[\textit{Ibid.}\]
\[\textit{Ibid.}, p. 22.\]
The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, must have come to mind when he was writing, "Now smoke suggests human habitation, human food, and human comfort, and that smoke swirling up there gave the spot a loneliness unspeakable."\(^1\) Besides, there are such explicit references to the Southern mountains as when he is telling of "a deep winding gorge from which comes the wild call of free water, and you are in the untainted air of the primeval Cumberland,"\(^2\) or when he remarks that the "rice-mills with undershot water-wheels" are "such as I had left in the Cumberland Mountains."\(^3\)

Like Mother Nature herself, Fox could find refuge "in the big volcanic hills, guarded by great white solemn Fuji, where birds sing and torrents lash with swirling foam and a great roar through deep gorges or drop down in white cataracts through masses of trembling green."\(^4\) Or he exults in being on top of

... a rocky little hill in the centre of the village, where we could look over the low tiled roofs—here and there a tree was growing up through them—over the mud-enclosures, the high-notched city walls, the stretch of white sand beyond, a broader stretch of green still farther on, slit with the one flash-ing cemetery-like sweep of the river—and then over the low misty hills to the tender after-glow, above which wisp-like, darkening clouds hung motionless.\(^5\)

---

1 ibid., p. 37.
2 ibid., p. 24.
3 ibid., p. 31.
4 ibid., p. 23.
5 ibid., pp. 140-1.
In addition, one finds in *Following the Sun-Flag* such affectionate remarks as: "Somewhere outside a nightingale was singing and the fine needle-point of the first cicada jabbing vibrations into the night air."¹

Then there are the scattered descriptions of the sea, interesting because Fox never had many opportunities to describe this aspect of nature (offhand, one can think only of Crittenden). The skill and imaginative sympathy with which he accomplishes them speak for themselves:

> The next daybreak was of shattered silver, and it found us sailing through a still sea of silver from which volcanic islands leaped everywhere toward a silver sky. We were in the Inland Sea. To the eye, it was an opal dream—a dream of magic waters, silvery light and forlorn islands—bleak and many-peaked above, and slashed with gloomy ravines that race each other down to goblin-haunted water-caves, where the voice of the sea is never still. This sea narrowed by and by into the Shimonoseki Straits, which turn and twist through rocks, islands, and high green hills. Through them we went into the open ocean once more. In the middle of the next afternoon we passed for a while through other mountain-bordered straits, and by and by there sat before the uplifted eye Nagasaki, with its sleepy green terraces, rising from water-level to low mountain-top. . .²

Elsewhere Fox shows himself to have been a poet of the other senses than the visual—"the lust of the eye,"

²*Tbid.*, pp. 80-1.
as he calls it—in which he especially excelled. For example, there are recorded such auditory sense impressions as follows: "At every station was a hurrying throng of men, women, and children who clicked the stone pavements on xylophones with a music that some writer with the tympanum of a blacksmith characterized as a clatter." And then of course, in the Orient, there is the nose—"that despised poet of the senses." The mingled smells of Tokio cause Fox to facetiously swear, and boldly:

No call of the East for me,
Till the stink of the East be dead.  

As remarked earlier, Fox had that peculiar knack, or gift, that enabled him to grasp the salient features of a race, or people, alien in temperament and background to his own. One sees this, of course, in his delineation of the mountaineer; he sees it only to a slightly lesser degree in Following the Sun-Flag. Fox would have made an excellent travel-writer; for he was thus endowed by temperament, training, intuition, and an imaginative sympathy that enabled him to project himself vicariously into a variety of characters and situations, despite any sharp divergence from his own. In Following the Sun-Flag he

---

1Ibid., p. 13.
2Ibid., p. 22.
gives much evidence of being an excellent student of the Japanese and Chinese people. As he himself avers at the start, "seeing no signs of war," he straightway forgot the mission on which he had come, and straightway was turned into an eager student of a people and land which since childhood he had yearned to see.1

Fox realizes the limitations of whatever he may write concerning this people; for at the outset he asks, "Who can penetrate the mystery of Japanese life and character—a mystery that has been deepening for a thousand years?"2 Nevertheless, he gives the reader much that is edifying, which he himself had learnt by talking with, observing, listening to, and mingling with them.

It is somewhat natural that the first thing that should catch his eye in the time of stress during which he was in the Orient is the Japanese fortitude, their national spirit. "The soldier at the front or on the seas will give no better account of himself than the man, woman, or child who is left at home, and a national spirit like this is too beautiful to be lost."3 Fox is impressed by the sacrifices, the generosity of all classes, from the highest to the lowest, and cites various examples of such.4 Above all, he is won

---

1Ibid., p. 11.
2Ibid., p. 17.
3Ibid., p. 16.
4Ibid., pp. 14 ff.
over by the fortitude of the women—one considers herself fortunate "to be able to give four sons to Japan." As Fox observes, "the Roman mother has come back to earth again, and it is the Japanese mother who makes Japan the high priestess of patriotism among the nations of the world."

From his servant, Takeuchi, Fox, as we have seen, "learned much about Japanese character, especially about the Buschido spirit—the fealty of Samurai to Daimio, of retainer to Samurai, of servant to master." This Buschido spirit has much to do with the effectiveness of the Japanese army. Fox views the matter thus:

As far as I can make out at long distance, the Japanese army and the individual Japanese soldier seem the best in the world: the soldier for the reason that he cares no more for death than the average Occidental for an afternoon nap—the army for the reason that the Buschido spirit—feudal fealty—having been transferred from Daimio and Samurai to Colonel and General—give it a discipline that seems perfect. Imagine an army without stragglers or camp-followers, in which one man is as good as another and all boast of but one thing—a willingness to die. It looks as though for the first time in history the fanatical spirit of the Mussulman who believed that he would step, at death, from the battle-field into Paradise, was directed by an acute and world-trained intelligence. As to the soldier, the pivotal point of effectiveness seems to be this: an Occidental and a Japanese quarrel, and they step outside

1 Ibid., p. 14.
2 Ibid., p. 15.
3 Ibid., p. 90.
to settle matters. The Occidental thinks
not only of killing the Japanese, but of
getting out alive. His energies are divided,
his concentration of purpose suffers. The
Japanese has no such division—he is concern-
ed only with killing his opponent, and he
doesn't seem to care whether or not he comes
out alive or dead.

Interestingly enough, this same Buschido spirit has
much to do also with the Japanese custom of hara-kiri.

Curious to know more about the subject, Fox discusses it
with a Japanese officer, and records their interesting con-
versation thus:

"We do not understand, we Occidentals,
why the Japanese prefers to commit hara-
kiri rather than be captured, and we argue
this way: If I allow myself to be captured,
I may be exchanged or escape, and thus have
a chance to fight another day; if not, my
enemy has to take care of me and feed me, so
that I reduce his force and resources just
that much. If I kill myself I make a gap
in my own ranks that I can't fill again. If
I accept capture, I am worrying and exhaust-
ing you all the time. The only good I can
see in hara-kiri is the effect that it might
have on the fighting capacity of the men who
are left. Is there any economic considera-
tion of that sort under the Japanese idea?"

"Tare left. Is there any economic considere-
sation of that sort under the Japanese idea?"
presently, 'I think we are coming around to
your point of view, and I think we will come
around to it more and more. You see, we have
transferred the Buschido spirit of feudalism
into the army. The loyalty of Samurai to
Daimio has been transferred to soldier and
officer, and this instinct for hara-kiri is
so great an element in the Buschido spirit

1Ibid., pp. 157-8.
that I think our officers are a little fearful about trying to change it too rapidly. But a Japanese will not talk long about such matters with a foreigner.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 165-6.}

Other of Fox's observations of the Japanese people may be glossed here. (All of these, incidentally, are backed up by specific particulars and examples.) On one occasion, he notes that "the Japanese seems prouder of his commerce than of his art and exquisite manners."\footnote{Ibid.; p. 16.} On another, when in Tokio, he is "greatly impressed by the absence of all signs of disorder, street quarrels, loud talking, and by the fact that in Tokio, one of the largest cities in the world, one could go about day or night in perfect safety."\footnote{Ibid., p. 44.} On still others, he describes Japanese marital customs, their stoicism, and the matters of love, marriage, and divorce.\footnote{Ibid., p. 44.} At other times, he speaks about their sports, and devotes a long section to wrestling, the national pastime;\footnote{Ibid., pp. 45 ff.} and about the rapid advancement of the people, their general characteristics, height, education,\footnote{Ibid., pp. 54 ff.} even their dialectical peculiarities,\footnote{Ibid., p. 60.} and several times repeats, with appropriate examples, that "the Japanese are the very
cleanliest people in the world."\(^1\)

Also, there is much enlightening information on the Sino-Japanese relationship as it then existed, and as it exists pretty much today. When apprised of "the attitude of Japanese toward Chinamen for the first time," Fox is quite indignant and calls forth this unflattering analogy: "All the time one memory, incongruous and unjust though it was, hung in my mind—the memory of a town-bred mulatto in a high hat with his thumbs in the arm-holes of a white waistcoat, and loftily talking to a country brother of deeper shade in the market-place of a certain Southern town."\(^2\) And shortly thereafter, of a certain incident, he remarks scathingly:

To me, its significance was in the loftily superior, contemptuously patronizing attitude of the Japanese toward the yellow brother from whom he got civilization, art, classical models, and a written speech. Later, I found the same bearing raised to the ninth degree in Manchuria. Knowing the grotesque results in the efforts of one imitative race to adopt another civilization in my own country, the parallelism has struck me forcibly over here in dress, Occidental manners, the love of interpreters for ponderous phraseology and quotations, rigid insistence on form and red tape and the letter thereof. Give a Japanese a rule and he knows no exception on his part, understands no variation therefrom on yours.\(^3\)

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 157; 186.
\(^2\)Ibid., pp. 92-3
\(^3\)Ibid., pp. 94-5.
And later on, Fox makes this derogatory comparison that leaves no doubt whatever as to where his sympathies lay:

They seem a good-natured race—these Manchurian farmers—genuine, submissive, kindly, but genuine and human in contrast, if I must say it, with the Japanese. Who was it that said the Chinese were the Saxons of the East and the Japanese the Gauls? I know now what he meant. 1

About Japan's future, Fox makes some fateful but true prophecies, the subsequent fulfilment of which qualifies him, in a way, as a competent historian of world affairs. "Give the little island room," he remarks (and this was back in 1904), "and the dwarf pine and fruit-tree may become in time, perhaps, as great a curiosity here as elsewhere in the world. What will she do—when she gets the room? The Saxon hands may never meet. Japan Saxonized may, in turn, Saxonize China and throw the tide that has moved east and west, some day, west and east again." 2 And again, speaking of the upward and modernistic trend of Japanese students, their increased height, education, their rapid adoption of European clothes and manners, Fox conjectures, "But these students—one can't help wondering what, when they grow up, they will do for Japan and to the rest of the East." 3 (The present day reader is tempted with

---

1 Ibid., p. 111.
2 Ibid., p. 17.
3 Ibid., p. 61.
the grim rejoinder that Japan's subsequent imperialistic campaigns against China and her current imbroglio with that country speak for themselves.) Finally, speaking of the richness and fertility of Manchurian land, Fox hits the very crux of the matter when he says, "I don't wonder that the Russians are fighting for that land, nor shall I wonder should the Japanese, if they win, try to keep it."¹ (And that, of course, is eventually what they did.) It is not unlikely that the majority of fair-minded people then (and now) living shared Fox's sentiments when he wrote, "But how it should belong to anybody but the Chinaman who has tilled it in peace and with no harm to anybody for thousands of years—I can't for the life of me see."²

There are many additional social and moral contrasts in *Following the Sun-Flag*, some of which clearly reveal much of the man himself who made them. This is borne out, for example, on the several occasions when Fox deplores the Japanese and Chinese attitude toward women as a whole. Thus, when he thinks "of the exquisite courtesy and ceremony and gentle politeness in this land, I smile." But the American, particularly the Southerner, in him rises when he thinks of the treatment accorded the women. "Then

¹Ibid., p. 120.
²Ibid., p. 120.
I think of the bearing of the man toward the woman in this land, and the bearing of the man—even the mountaineer—toward the woman in our own land, and the place the woman holds in each—and the smile passes.1 Another time, he cites "a pretty story of American chivalry,"2 and everywhere his own gallantry toward women is apparent. He represents, needless to say, the lack of gallantry between the sexes in Japan.3

As in Twain's *Innocents Abroad*, such contrasts as are found in *Following the Sun-Flag* are frequently the source of much humor and amusement, though still relevant and meaningful. "You know," he will blandly remark,

... the Japanese does nearly everything but his fighting—backward. Of course he reads and writes backward. At the theatre you find the dressing-room in the lobby. Keys turn from left to right, boring-tools and screws, I understand, turn from right to left, and a Japanese carpenter draws his plane toward him instead of pushing it away. Sometimes even the Japanese thinks and talks backward. For instance, suppose he says:

'I think I will go wash my hands.' That, in Japanese, is:

'Te-wo aratte kimasho.' Now, what he really has said is literally:

'Hands having washed I think I will come back.'

---

1Ibid., p. 4.
2Ibid., p. 28.
3Ibid., p. 44.
And then add significantly with this bit of sarcasm that defines his true feelings (concerning the delays and evasiveness of the Japanese): “Perhaps then our trouble is that the Japanese tells the truth backward and we can’t understand. He might even be fighting that way—say, for an alliance with Russia—and we still should not understand—at least, not yet.”

We have already had recourse to mention Fox’s comic spirit which kindles this whole book. In the various extracts and abstracts thus far given, the reader has undoubtedly noted the prominence of this spirit, the general buoyancy of the work as a whole—a buoyancy all the more notable considering the adverse circumstances under which it was displayed.

---

1Ibid., pp. 72-3.
2See, further, Chapter Eleven for discussion of Fox’s humor.
After his somewhat varied experiences in the Orient, Fox rested in the mountains for a while, taking periodical trips to New York to visit with his friends. After having sufficiently acclimated himself to his old surroundings, he set to the task of writing again with renewed vigor, and in one week's time produced the novelette, *A Knight of the Cumberland*, which appeared in three installments in *Scribner's* during the months of September through November of the year 1906, and later in book form along with *The Kentuckians* in 1908, the year after his success with *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*.

Like *Following the Sun-Flag*, the work which preceded it, *A Knight of the Cumberland*, though supposedly fiction, is very personal and contains much of an autobiographical nature. Told in the first person, the narrator is none other than Fox himself; and he is not only the narrator, but a fairly important character in his own story, which consists more of a series of incidents than any formal narrative. *A Knight of the Cumberland* has much of the personal essayist in it, and by its constant play of good-natured wit and its episodic nature reminds one not a little...
of Mark Twain's characteristic works. It is significant that Fox's two most humorous works, *Following the Sun-Flag* and *A Knight of the Cumberland*, come so close together, a fact which suggests that the author may have been strongly under Twain's influence at this time.

The highlight of *A Knight of the Cumberland* is a tournament in the manner of that of Scott's *Ivanhoe*, portions from which work are quoted and parallels with Fox's own tournament drawn. Scott, as previously mentioned, was one of Fox's favorites and frequent echoes from the older author may be found throughout his work. One especially recalls at this time the whole chapter in *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* which is devoted to describing a mock tournament between the boys, in which Chad is the "Knight of the Cumberland" and Dan Dean, the "Knight of the Bluegrass." In *A Knight of the Cumberland* everything leads up to the tournament; only this time the participants are young men, who contend, as of old feudal times, for the smiles and favor of their lady-loves, one among which is to be crowned "Queen of Love and Beauty." However, there is a vast difference between Fox's and Scott's respective tournaments, not only as to participants and setting, but as to the spirit in which both are undertaken and described. The scene of Fox's story is laid in the mountains, and the two leading

---

1 *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, pp. 131 ff.
contestants are a young mountaineer outlaw, nicknamed the "wild Dog," and a young engineer, Marston, working in the mountains. The heroine is a Northern girl, alluded to as the "Blight," full of enthusiasm, beautiful, dashing, and fearless, who has a hard task, as one critic has remarked, in managing two lovers so totally unlike. The assemblage of such incongruous elements, and there are many more, such as the "Knight at Large" who "wore plum-colored velvet, red baseball stockings, held in place with safety-pins, white tennis shoes, and a very small hat with a very long plume, and the dye . . . already streaking his face," is the source of a great deal of humor which makes this work, in some respects, one of the most satisfying Fox ever wrote.

One may consider here for a moment some representative examples of the humor found in A Knight of the Cumberland, since the work is so replete with such. First, there is the humorous account of the Hon. Samuel Budd as a politician in the mountains, with an ample side-splitting description of his campaign to procure votes and the opposition encountered. Poor Sam must contend with such slander as being called a corporation 'lie-ye,' and then with such logic from his opponent as: 'He's a fine-haired furriner, an' he come down hyeh from the settlemints to tell ye that

---

1Rutherford, op. cit., p. 604.
2John Fox, Jr., A Knight of the Cumberland, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900, p. 237. (This edition is used throughout and contains, besides, The Kentuckians.)
you hain't got no man in yo' own destrict that's fittin' to represent ye in the legislatur'. Look at him—look at him! He's got four eyes! Look at his hair—hit's parted in the middle!" And, as Fox says, "if the Hon. Samuel could straightway have turned bald-headed and sightless, he would have been a very happy man."1 But Sam manages to get out of his dilemma on this occasion and does fine for himself until one gigantic mountaineer shouts at him, 'Talk on, stranger; you're talkin' sense. I'll trust ye. You've got big ears!'2 That settled things; "the Hon. Sam was having things his own way, and on the edge of the crowd Uncle Tommie Hendricks was shaking his head: 'I tell ye, boys, he hain't no jackass—even if he can flop his ears.'"3

Then there is Budd's grandiloquence, which could come under the classification of exaggeration, a quality, incidentally, of much mountain and frontier humor. Defending one of his clients on a charge of drunkenness, for example, the Hon. Sam is capable of:

'He is a young man of naturally high and somewhat—naturally, too, no doubt—bibulous spirits. Homoeopathically—if inversely—the result was logical. In the untrammeled life of the liberty-breathing mountains, where the stern spirit of law and order, of which your Honor is the august symbol, does not prevail as it does

1Ibid., p. 191.
2Ibid., p. 193.
3Ibid., p. 194.
here—thanks to your Honor's wise and just dispensations—the lad has, I may say, naturally acquired a certain recklessness of mood—indulgence which, however easily condoned there, must here be sternly rebuked. At the same time, he knew not the conditions here, he became exhilarated without malice, prepensely or even, I may say, consciousness. He would not have done as he has, if he had known what he knows now, and, knowing, he will not repeat the offence. I need say no more. I plead simply that your Honor will temper the justice that is only yours with the mercy that is yours—only.1

And later, spurring on his men in the tournament, while commenting on another, he is able to boom out: 'Egad! . . . Did you lusty trencherman of Annie Laurie's but put a few more layers of goodly flesh about his ribs, thereby projecting more his frontal Falstaffian proportions, by my halidom, he would have to Joust tandem!'2

Much of the humor of A Knight of the Cumberland derives from social and moral contrasts between mountaineer and "furriner" standards. One is aware of this particularly in that portion of the narrative where the author, his young sister, and the Blight visit a certain mountain family and stay all night. On their arrival, the narrator (Fox) asks two girls of the household, "Where's your father?" Both girls giggled, and one said, with frank unembarrassment: "Pap's tight!" That did not look promising but we had to stay just the same."3 Later, he has an amusing time trying

1Ibid., p. 170.
2Ibid., p. 249.
3Ibid., p. 198.
to disprove to Buck, a mountain lad, the veracity of the "bottomless pool" tradition which seems to linger in rural communities. After dropping a stone with a line attached to it into the pool in question some fifty feet, at which point it apparently came to rest on the bottom, Fox turned to his young companion and asked, "I guess that's on the bottom, isn't it, Buck?" Buck looked genuinely distressed; but presently he brightened.

"Yes," he said, "ef hit ain't on a turtle's back."

And still a little later, the following conversation with the old mother of the family, "big, kind-faced," and with a "drawling voice," speaks for itself:

'No, "pap" didn't git that a-way often, and he'd be all right jes' as soon as he slept it off a while.' . . .

'Yes, she'd fell down a year ago—and had sort o' hurt herself—didn't do nothin', though, 'cept break one hip,' she added, in her kind, patient old voice. Did many people stop there? Oh, yes, sometimes fifteen at a time—they never turned nobody away.' And she had a big family, little Cindy and the two big girls and Buck and Mart—who was out somewhere—and the hired man, and yes—'Thar was another boy, but he was fitified,' said one of the big sisters.

'I beg your pardon,' said the wondering Blight, but she knew that phrase wouldn't do, so she added politely:

'What did you say?'

'Fitified—Tom has fits. He's in a asylum in the settlements.' . . .²

¹Ibid., p. 199.
²Ibid., pp. 200-1.
As Fox himself notes, there is frequently much "unconscious pathos" in such talk, besides its being a source of amusement to the outsider. Other varieties of humor in A Knight of the Cumberland include such a comical figure of speech as "once the troubled soul with the hoe got up and stumbled out to the water bucket on the porch...";¹ a series of incongruous words as 'This thing is a-goin' to come off accordin' to Hoyle, Ivanhoe, Four-Quarters-of-Beef, and all them mediaeval fellows';² and on two occasions a pun,³ which Fox evidently did not scorn as the lowest form of wit. These latter examples are particularly reminiscent of Twain, who frequently achieved his humorous effects by the same means noted here.

Then of course there is the tournament itself, involving as it does so many ludicrous and incongruous elements, not the least of which is the Knight at Large, described above. The whole thing, the tournament and the writing alike, is carried off with much spirit and good fun.

The tournament, however, also has one or two serious sides to it. In the intense rivalry of the two knights is seen a rivalry of classes, "a conflict between native and 'furriner.'"⁴ Aspects, too, of the Marston-Mart conflict look forward to the John Hale-Dave Tolliver conflict

¹Ibid., p. 207.
²Ibid., p. 226.
³Ibid., p. 212; 229.
⁴Ibid., p. 250.
in *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine,* the next book Fox was
to write. More than any of his other works, however, *A Knight of the Cumberland* must be read in order for its
distinct personal flavor to be fully realized.

In the fall of 1907, Fox met Fritzi Scheff in New York
at a dinner party given in her honor at Delmonico's. Fritzi,
young, beautiful, glamorous, and talented, a native of Vienna,
whose mother, Frau Anna Jäger, was a prima donna in the
Imperial Opera House of Vienna, and whose father, Dr. Gott­
fried Scheff, was a noted Austrian physician and surgeon, was herself at this time a noted grand and comic opera singer,
very near the peak of her career. Long after the guests,
many of them prominent figures of the day, had assembled at
the exclusive eating-place, Fritzi, noting a vacancy at the
table, curiously asked her host, "Whose ghost sits there?"
To which the gentleman amiably replied,

"That is the place of a very remarkable man. I'm sure
you'll like him. He's a writer."

Fritzi, who had been to college in her native country,
was at once interested.

Around 10:30 P.M., the "very remarkable man," dressed
simply in a business suit, in distinct contrast to the lavish

\[1\text{Miss Scheff, incidentally, had entered the theatre against}
their wishes.\]
and formal apparel of the others present, finally arrived, the cynosure of all eyes, not only because of his dress but extreme tardiness. In due time he was introduced to the guest of honor—John Fox, Jr. Incidentally, such dilatoriness was typical of Fox; whether out of indifference, or absent-mindedness, or even out of an inability to make up his mind, he was rarely on time—for parties or otherwise. A word also may be said here about his dress. Though always nattily attired when in the city, like the Southern gentleman that he was, he had little regard for the formalities of dress—fostered in all probability by his easy-going way in the mountains where he could wear what he wanted and even go without shaving for days on end, for all the difference it made.

Fritzi at once found him fascinating, and was charmed by his manners, his beautiful baritone voice, and above all by his keen sense of humor. Later in the evening, her host, proposing a toast, confidentially whispered in an aside to her that here was a man to be jealous of; the remark, it might be added, surprised Fritzi, in view of the fact that the gentleman who offered it was little more than a casual friend, and because he himself was far more handsome than Fox.

After an interval of several months, Fox and Fritzi met again at a gathering at Mrs. Stickman's, a mutual friend.
Have they became better acquainted. Fox at the piano played, while Fritz sang "Kiss Me Again," the wistful Victor Herbert melody which she had popularized and with which she had captivated the New York public. Curiously enough, during the course of the evening, Fox facetiously declared to her, "You know, I never cared much for foreign women." From then on, she later observed, she had a feeling that she would one day marry John Fox, who was seventeen years her senior.

Aside from considerations of heritage and early environment, Fox, it should be remembered, now at the age of forty-four, was quite poised and mundane, and was becoming increasingly so, as a result of his travels and numerous metropolitan contacts. Also, at this time he was still riding the crest of prestige as an eminent author, and, particularly after his phenomenal success, financial and literary, with The Little Shepherd, was regarded as an extremely eligible bachelor and sought after as such by many women.

Usually, he did his best to evade lasting ties, and, considering his age, he was apparently quite "good at it," as Miss Scheff later laughingly remarked. It was quite the other way around where Fritz was concerned; he did anything but evade her; the fact is, he persistently "chased" her, a circumstance which gave rise to several humorous incidents. On one occasion, for example, Fritz came with her show to
Louisville. She hadn't been in town for more than a few hours when she bumped into John Fox, "of all people," at the Seelback Hotel. After he had greeted her cordially, Fritzi asked, "But what are you doing here?"

"Louisville is practically my home," he assured her. (He did actually consider it as kind of second home and spent considerable time there during his life.) In spite of his cordiality, Fox was somewhat fidgety and appeared about to take his leave of her.

"Unfortunately," he said, "I'm on my way right now to catch a train."

"Where to?"

"French Lick Springs."

An hour later he was back at the hotel; he had missed the train, he explained. About a year after this incident, he confided to Fritzi that at the time he had had no intention whatever of catching a train, and that he had known beforehand of her intended visit to Louisville, which accounted for their "coincidental" meeting. He had spent the hour walking around town "to kill time."

In August, 1908, Fritzi and John became formally engaged in the romantic environs of the Adirondack Mountains, where Fritzi was visiting with the Payne Whitneys for a brief interval between shows, and where John had "unexpectedly"
turned up, as he had a way of conveniently doing, whether Fritzi happened to be in Maine or Kentucky.

Shortly before they were married, Fritzi was off to Europe on another one of her abbreviated vacations. Before she departed, Fox secretly gave her maid seven letters to be delivered singly to her mistress, one for each day while on the boat. (Needless to say, communication facilities in those days were not what they are today, or he would undoubtedly have telephoned or radioed her.) When she arrived on the other side, he cabled his marriage proposal. "But I can't discuss such matters in a cable," Fritzi cabled him back. She returned, however, on the very next boat, and they were almost immediately married, Sunday, December 13, 1908, in the home of John's younger brother, Rector K. Fox, at Mt. Kisco, New York. Incidentally, the Sabbath day was chosen for the ceremony, since Fritzi's theatrical engagements kept her well occupied the rest of the week.

Even after her marriage, Fritzi continued in the theatre.

Meanwhile, during this period of courtship, Fox was working on The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, which he completed several months before his marriage and which began to appear serially in Scribner's, beginning with the month of January. In the same year, 1908, it appeared in book form.

---

1His brother, as has been erroneously stated, did not perform the ceremony.
According to the later testimony of Fritzi, Fox, after conceiving the beginning and end of the novel, had encountered considerable difficulty in getting the middle in order. One day he came to her, exclaiming excitedly, "I've got it!" He was referring to the climax of the novel, which, when it was later published in book form, was appropriately dedicated to her. Interestingly enough, several autobiographical touches bearing on their relationship at the time found their way into the book. It is significant, for example, that June is partial to flowers and that one of her favorites is the rose, which Fritzi herself loved; that the mountain girl is attributed with having a good voice, with ambitions to go on the concert stage, and that Hale's term of endearment for her is "little girl," which was Fox's own for Fritzi. On one occasion he goes so far as to write that she might even one day be "mistaken for the comic-opera star whose brilliant picture she had seen on a bill board in front of the 'opera house'"—an obvious allusion to Fritzi. Moreover, in the book Fox occasionally uses the line, "Don't talk through your regret," which was not only a favorite of Fritzi's but one which she herself frequently used in her everyday life. When she later approached John about using it in the novel, his answer was, "I couldn't help it; I

1The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, p. 237.
used it unconsciously.*

Like *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* for 1903, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* became the best-selling book of the year, being second only to *The Little Shepherd* in popularity among all of Fox's works. It was, significantly enough, later turned into a play by Eugene Walter and produced at the New Amsterdam Theatre, January 29, 1912. There is an interesting little story in connection with this matter which is here given for the first time. Fox wanted Elsie Ferguson, then one of the leading actresses of the day, for the ingenue's part of June. But Fritzi herself would have liked to play the part. After all, the book was dedicated to her, the play was her husband's, and she being an actress herself, who had a better right to the leading female role? Of course, at the time she did not take into account the acute difference between the simple mountain girl that the part called for and her own person, a glamorous Viennese opera star who spoke English with a decided accent—a difference that would have shown up in a very incongruous, if not ludicrous, light, to say the least. When the play finally made its appearance on the boards, Charlotte Walker played the part of June.

Interestingly enough, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* was also twice converted into a vehicle for the cinema, the second version, in sound and technicolor, with Sylvia Sidney as the
heroine, coming in comparatively recent times in 1936, slightly over twenty-five years after the book's date of publication. This motion picture, incidentally, contributed considerably to a reawakening of interest in Fox's other works. The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, the most popular of all his works, was the only other one accorded the questionable distinction of being made into a moving picture, with Richard Barthelmess in the leading role. Also, it is the only other one of his books that was produced as a play.\(^1\)

As a whole The Trail of the Lonesome Pine is one of Fox's best books, being marred only now and then by his characteristic faults. Once more the setting is in the Cumberland Mountains, but this time it does not shift as in The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come or in other previous works. The influence of outside civilization plays a major part in the narrative, true enough, but this phase of it is skillfully managed by the characters themselves and by a certain amount of exposition.

The heroine of the book, June Tolliver, reminds one, curiously enough, of The "Little Shepherd"; one can fairly say that she is Chad in female garb. Beginning as a simple

naive child of the wilderness, she blossoms into a beautiful, intelligent woman, attaining finally a degree of civilization where she seems too good even for John Hale, the cultured engineer who patiently taught her so much and who financed her education. After a series of exciting incidents, many of which are at once recognizable as autobiographical material, particularly those chapters dealing with the sudden rise and decline of the Gap, and the organization, development, and activities of the volunteer Police Guard,—after such incidents and several misunderstandings, the lovers are happily reconciled in the end, and settle down, one presumes, to a life of marital bliss in the mountains.

The Trail of the Lonesome Pine shows an advance in dramatic effectiveness and technique over its predecessors. For one thing, the point of view is more skillfully managed here than in any of his other works. Much of the drama is internal, being evolved within the minds of the chief characters, notably Hale's and June's. With the exception, perhaps of The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, The Trail of the Lonesome Pine is more analytical, more psychological than any of Fox's other works. This probing of his character's consciousness and stress on internal motives and conflicts indicates an advance in characterization as well as in technique, although as we have seen, such devices are not new.
or unique with Fox. His best works contain them. Even in the act of describing his characters’ physical make-up he shows increased skill. Fox avoids the mechanical, prolegomenous description, and presents his character to the reader just as the former would be seen through the eyes and consciousness of another character. A good example of this is June’s first meeting with Anne Saunders, a young, comparatively sophisticated, school-teacher from the Bluegrass. Anne represents to the simple mountain-bred girl all that she lacks and would like to have:

And Miss Anne felt uncomfortably that this extraordinary young person was steadily measuring her from head to foot. June saw the smart close-fitting gown, the dainty little boots, and the carefully brushed hair. She noticed how white her teeth were and her hands, and she saw that the nails looked polished and that the tips of them were like little white crescents; and she could still see every detail when she sat at her window, looking down at the old mill. She saw Mr. Hale when he left, the young lady had said; and she had a headache now and was going home to lie down.¹

In a word, we get just those details about Miss Anne that June would be likely to notice. And there is even implied June’s attitude toward Anne, conveyed by the former’s shyness and reticence and by the tone of her voice; a mingling of admiration and jealousy—jealousy not only of her clothes and bearing, but of John Hale. And just prior to the

¹Ibid., pp. 121-2.
circumstance of the description quoted above, John Hale has been called away, and Miss Anne offers to take care of the little stranger until he returns. June's answer, just as everything else about the scene, is psychologically revealing.

"I'm much obliged," she said, and while she was not ungracious, her manner indicated her belief that she could take care of herself."

On several occasions this somewhat Jamesian technique is carried even further, and the reader gets something like that approaching Joyce's free-association-of-ideas procedure, though never in so extreme a manner as Joyce's. Toward the close of the novel, for example, June is poignantly remembering and reviewing in her mind's eye many of the events of her past association with Hale, from whom she is now estranged. His name has been repeatedly ringing in her ears; and her stream of ideas runs:

She could recall his smile and the very tones of his kind voice: 'Howdy, little girl!' And the cat had got her tongue. She remembered when she had written her name, after she had first kissed him at the foot of the beech—'June Hall,' and by a grotesque mental leap the beating of his name in her brain now made her think of the beating of hailstones on her father's roof one night when as a child she had lain and listened to them. Then she noticed that

1Ibid., p. 121.
the autumn shadows seemed to make the river darker than the shadows of spring—or was it already the stain of dead leaves? Hale could have told her.

The mental leap from Hale to hail is psychologically convincing. Joyce undoubtedly would have made much more of it than Fox; besides omitting logical transitions, which in a sense constitute authorial guides to the reader. Joyce's technique presumes the author step out of the picture as completely as possible. Despite the inclusion of such transitions, Fox's method here is basically the same as Joyce's, with use being made of a so-called stream-of-consciousness. Incidentally, earlier in The Trail of the Lonesome Pine there is another serious pun, which indicated that the above example was not entirely accidental. On this occasion, June has just returned to the mountains, and the month is June; and Hale is thinking of "everything that was alive, for the month was June and the spirit of that month was on her way to him."

In The Trail of the Lonesome Pine much is made of the love-honor conflict, manifestations of which are common throughout Fox's stories, for one reason, certainly, that it lent itself so readily to his materials. Such a conflict is embodied generally in a mountain character in whom

1 Ibid., p. 356.
2 Ibid., p. 269.
clan attachments are so strong, with love for some outsider, a "furriner" setting up the internal struggle. In *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, this conflict potently operates in June, who on several occasions must decide between her loyalty to her own people and her love for John Hale. Occasionally, there are other manifestations of this conflict, in the mind of the outsider, for example, who must decide between his instinctive love for the simple mountain girl, and the sacrifice which it necessitates, a breaking away and possible estrangement from his former life in the city, and from his own family who could hardly be expected to condone such a union. Hale at various times feels this, just as Clayton in *A Mountain Europe*. Finally, there is Hale's duty to the girl whom he has raised above her "crude, lonely, lifeless" surroundings. June "could not be happy in Lonesome Cove after she had known the Gap, and now how her horizon had so broadened that she felt now toward the Gap and its people as she had then felt toward the mountaineers." Again the situation is similar to that of Clayton and Easter in *A Mountain Europe*. However, there is a slight modification here. June has developed such a state of independence that she, unlike Easter, is capable of facing the outside world. It is Hale now who

---

realizes that he must continue to live on in the mountains; and June who is faced with the problem of having to decide between her love for Hale and her intense desire to leave the mountains. But Fox is above all a romancer; so love, needless to say, wins out in the end.

In addition to such recurrent conflicts, much of the material in *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* appeared previously in other works. Much of the narrative incident, for example, revolving around the activities of the volunteer Police Guard, of which Hale is a captain, one encounters in several stories and novelettes, notably "A Crisis for the Guard" (Christmas Eve on Lonesome), "Civilizing the Cumberland" (Blue-Grass and Rhododendron), "Man-Hunting in the Pound" (Blue-Grass and Rhododendron), and to a lesser degree, *A Knight of the Cumberland*. In addition, two of the selections, besides those already mentioned, in *Blue-Grass and Rhododendron*, "The Red Fox of the Mountains," and "The Hanging of Talton Hall" appear practically verbatim in the novel, with only some very slight changes of the names of the personages involved. Talton Hall, for example, is Bad Rufe Tolliver of the novel. Both of the outlaws of the respective works are very colorful figures, particularly the "Red Fox," of whom it is fitting to say

---

a few words here. On the order of Parson Small, ("Parson Small's Battle-Prayer") though much more extreme, he is the archetype of the mountaineer who combines the meanest kind of deviltry with religious piety. A few selections both from the short-story and the novel perhaps best bring out the facts in the case; (from the opening of the short story):

The Red Fox of the Mountains was going to be hanged. Being a preacher, as well as a herb-doctor, revenue-officer, detective, crank, and assassin, he was going to preach his own funeral sermon on the Sunday before the day set for his passing.  

(and from the novel):

He would walk twenty miles to preach, or he would start at any hour of the day or night to minister to the sick, and would charge for neither service. At other hours he would be searching for moonshine stills, or watching his enemies in the valley from some mountain top, with that huge spy-glass... that he might slip down and unawares take a pot-shot at them.

He is a strange figure in a country where strange figures abound, even as to dress—he wore moccasins with the heels forward, 'so nary a soul can tell which way I'm going';  

and looks: "one side of [his face] was calm, kindly, philosophic, benevolent; but, when the other was turned, a

---

1 Blue-Grass and Rhododendron, p. 259.
3 Ibid., p. 36.
curious twitch of the muscles at the left side of the mouth showed the teeth and made a snarl there that was wolfish; besides,

...the Red Fox communicated with spirits, had visions and superhuman powers of locomotion—stepping mysteriously from the bushes, people said, to talk at the traveler's side and as mysteriously disappearing into them again, to be heard of in a few hours an incredible distance away.  

He is not the common type of bad man; and Hale cannot help speculating about him—

...this old man with his dual face, who preached the Word on Sundays and on other days was a walking arsenal; who dreamed dreams and had visions and slipped through the hills in his mysterious moccasins on errands of mercy or chasing men from vanity, personal enmity or for fun, and still appeared so sane—he was a type that confounded.

He is finally brought to justice in the book, as he was in real life, by being hanged. With the circumstances of his capture, incidentally, Fox employs some Sophoclean irony. The Red Fox has been absent from home several days now, and his wife patiently awaits him. The reader knows this absence will be a permanent one; thus, the irony of the observation: "It was time, she thought, that the Red Fox was coming home." But even death did not solve the enigma of the man. Not only does he preach his own funeral sermon,

---

1Ibid., p. 37.
2Ibid., p. 38.
3Ibid., p. 72.
4Ibid., p. 332.
but insists that his pathetic little wife keep his body unburied for three days, "because the Red Fox said that on the third day he would arise and go about preaching." And Fox fittingly concludes: "So that even in death the Red Fox was consistently inconsistent, and how he reconciled such a dual life at one and the same time over and under the stars was, except to his twisted brain, never known.

It is this mixture of good and evil that makes the Red Fox one of Fox's most attractive characters. The remarkable thing is he actually lived and Fox knew him, just as he knew in real life many of the others who appear as characters in his fictions. It is no fiction, for example, that he was actually one of the Guard who guarded Talt Hall against a possible rescue by his clansmen, or by his enemies, when that desperado was in jail awaiting the day he was to be hanged—thus making possible the first hanging ever to take place in the vicinity. Such is the material that has gone into the weaving of Fox's fictions, and such that gives it its vitality and verisimilitude.

One source of The Trail of the Lonesome Pine's strength and dramatic effectiveness lies in Fox's more frequent use of, and dependence upon, symbolism here than in other books. This is emphatically brought out by the leading symbol, the

\[\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 368.\]
Lonesome Pine, which is implicitly given several interpretations as the story unfolds. At the very beginning, it seems to stand for the mountaineer's proud and lonely way of life, standing as it does, facing "wind and storm alone and alone lived to defy both so proudly"; it is also the guardian angel of Lonesome Cove, "like a dark, silent, mysterious sentinel guarding the mountain pass under the moon.\(^1\) Later, it is more functional to the action, when a flash of lightning is supposed to demolish it just when Hale himself is experiencing an intense conflict; and the destruction of the tree seems to imply that his love and his former life in the mountains has likewise been destroyed, leaving him but one course—to leave the mountains. The chapter in which this is brought out comes to a somewhat melodramatic close: "A thunderous crash came slowly to his waiting ears, another flash came, and Hale stumbled, with a sob, back into the cabin. God's finger was pointing the way now—the big Pine was no more.\(^2\) And Hale reflects now upon all that the Pine had meant to him:

It had been the beacon that led him into Lonesome Cove—the beacon that led June into the outer world. From it her flying feet had carried her into his life—past it, the same feet had carried her out again. It had been their trysting place—had kept their secrets like a faithful friend.

\(^1\text{Ibid., p. 5.}\)
\(^2\text{Ibid., p. 399.}\)
and had stood to him as the changeless symbol of their love. It had stood a mute but sympathetic witness of his hopes, his despairs and the struggles that lay between them. In dark hours it had been a silent comforter, and in the last year it had almost come to symbolize his better self as to that self he came slowly back. And in the darkest hour it was the last friend to whom he had meant to say good-by. Now it was gone. Always he had lifted his eyes to it every morning when he rose, but now, next morning, he hung back consciously as one might shrink from looking at the face of a dead friend, and when at last he raised his head to look upward to it, an impenetrable shroud of mist lay between them—and he was glad.1

But the big Pine was not gone; it had not been toppled; it was merely Hale's illusion, just as the dissolution of his and June's reciprocal love was illusory. After the storm and stress, physical and internal, in the end all remain standing. "The moon had risen. The big Pine stood guard on high against the outer world."2

Besides the Pine, there are lesser, though also quite effective, symbols in the book. There is, for example, the wood thrush—Fox's favorite bird—who seems to stand for June's beauty and birdlike qualities;3 and the crimson flower which symbolizes her passion and love for John Hale. (Hawthorne, one notes, uses the same symbolism in the

1Ibid., pp. 400-1.
2Ibid., p. 422.
3Ibid., p. 170.
In the early stages of the narrative Hale is unaware of this attachment. Thus, in a dramatic moment of recognition, "startled, Hale had dropped the crimson flower to his feet. He saw it and he let it lie"—an act which apparently stands for his unwittingly painful indifference to the girl.

Then there is June's little playhouse at the base of the beech tree near the schoolhouse, where she had built it, and which, as a little girl, she had angrily kicked to pieces—an act which corresponded to the crumbling of her own little dream world when she realized the futility of her love for Hale who was then much too old for her. Later, when the tables are turned, and Hale's love for June is apparently unrequited, the "scattered playhouse of long ago" takes on a new meaning; he realizes "it was his playhouse, after all, that she had kicked to pieces."  

Finally, there is the symbolism of the garden which Hale gave to June, embodying, as it does, the girl's own beauty and vitality, her own bloom. When June leaves the mountains, the garden is neglected. Then she eventually becomes estranged from her lover, and the run-down garden represents very much her own run-down state of mind:

The gorgeous crowns of the sun-flowers were nothing but grotesque black mummu-heads set on lean, dead bodies, and the

1bid., p. 171.
2bid., p. 275.
clump of big castor-plants, buffeted by the wind, leaned this way and that like giants in a drunken orgy trying to keep one another from falling down. The blight that was on the garden was the blight that was in her heart, and two bits of cheer only she found—one yellow nasturtium, scarlet-flecked, whose fragrance was a memory of the spring that was long gone, and one little cedar tree that had caught some dead leaves in its green arms and was firmly holding them as though to promise that another spring would surely come.¹

Even the glimmer of hopes in her desolate state, one notes, is conveyed by the symbols of the yellow nasturtium and the cedar tree.

This use of symbols is basically related to Fox's use of functional images which has hitherto been noted; both are at the core of the poetical method. And since one finds an increased use of symbols in The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, it is consequently not surprising that there is a correlative increased use of such imagery and metaphor. June's hair, for example, is to Hale "like the golden-bronze of a wild turkey's wing."² Fox was evidently fond of this himself, for he uses it twice here and once two years later in an essay. On another occasion, "the little girl quivered like an aspen-leaf in a sudden puff of wind."³ And again, "her nature had opened precisely as had bud and

¹ Ibid., pp. 354–5.
² Ibid., p. 16; 134.
³ Ibid., p. 173.
flower that spring. All such images convey June's (as her people's) earthiness and emphasize her kinship with nature.

By way of description, we get such striking metaphors as the railroad "ravelling like a wounded snake"; and "then the two passed into a green gloom of shadow and thick leaves that shut her heart in as suddenly as though some human hand had clutched it." And again, the buzz-saw, given in such terms as:

Further up the creek was a buzzing monster that, creaking and snorting, sent a flashing disk, rimmed with sharp teeth, biting a savage way through a log, that screamed with pain as the brutal thing tore through its vitals, and gave up its life each time with a ghost-like cry of agony.

And "the shriek of the coming engine" echoing along Powell Mountain and breaking "against the wrinkled breast of the Cumberland."

In spite of such excellences, however, one must still contend with Fox's sentimentality, which, like the meritorious qualities enumerated, is unfortunately here in abundance. The picture on the wall of June's room, for example, "the one she had first learned to love—two lovers clasped

---

1 Ibid., p. 181.
2 Ibid., p. 45.
3 Ibid., p. 191.
5 Ibid., p. 261.
in each other's arms and under them the words 'Enfin Seul', of which much is made; the quantity of "weeping" scenes throughout: "She had left it there for him, she said, through tears, and through his own tears Hale pointed to the stricken oak; and sentiment on the order of: "He came over and took her in his arms: 'Ah, sweetheart, my sweetheart!' A spasm of anxiety tightened her throat, but Hale laughed from sheer delight." The whole last chapter in particular simply cloys with such sentiment. Fox goes on for some thirteen or so pages describing the reunited, ecstatically happy lovers in their romantic, idyllic background, and all but spoils what up to then is a highly respectable novel and one of the best from his pen. This concluding chapter is not only structurally ill-advised and somewhat superfluous, but detrimental to the novel as a whole, constituting some of the most unbalanced writing Fox ever did. It seems a pity his critical acumen did not restrain him here.

Added to this fault, there is also one flagrant example of coincidence toward the end of the novel, which calls for readjustment—namely, Hale's and June's both coming to the deserted cabin on Lonesome Cove on exactly the same day, and at the very same time, prior to their both leaving the

\[^{1}\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 285.\]
\[^{2}\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 408.\]
\[^{3}\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 412.\]
mountains for good.\(^1\) This coming together is necessary, of course, for their reconciliation and subsequent happy ending of the novel. It would not have been feasible, as far as Fox's public was concerned, to leave the lovers in mid-air, as it were. It is only regrettable that Fox chose such an easy way out of his dilemma, and that he did not try to work out a more expedient ending.

There is much humor in *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* which frequently acts as a corrective to the overly sentimental portions. And on one occasion, at least, Fox does not fall into the easy way of the 'pathetic fallacy', but gives instead what amounts to its antithesis, an effective contrast between the outward aspect of nature and the corresponding feelings of his protagonist:

Color came with the wild flowers and song with the wood-thrush. Squirrels played on the tree-trunks like mischievous children, the brooks sang like happy human voices through the tremulous underworld and wood-peckers hammered out the joy of spring, but the awakening only made the desolate cabin lonelier still.\(^2\)

There is perhaps more nature description in *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* than in any other of Fox's books, with the possible exception of *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*. However, there is some modification here in the

---

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 410.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 385.
handling of his material as compared with that of the latter novel. That is, the reader of The Trail of the Lonesome Pine does not feel the description is so prominent for its sake; it is not given in prolegomenous blocks, but is made to serve as part of the actual background of the narrative and is functional within it in other ways, being, on occasion, integrally tied up with the characters, possibly not to the extent of an Egdon Heath in The Return of the Native, but still to a sufficient degree that a least warrants mention. Particularly outstanding are the descriptions of various flowers, of which Hale, just as Fox in real life, was inordinately fond. Also, Fox never seems to tire of noting the changes in the landscape as the seasons change, the advent of spring being his favorite and the one upon which most care is lavished.

At the time he wrote The Trail of the Lonesome Pine Fox was at the height of his powers. Despite its shortcomings, he never again achieved the mastery and intensity displayed here; from this period on, he shows a falling off not only in powers but industriousness, which can be attributed to several factors, not the least of which was his marital relationship.

At first, everything pointed to a successful and stimulating, if not a somewhat idyllic, union. Before their
marriage, Fritzi had already met Fox's family and found them very much to her liking. John had taken her to Big Stone Gap. Most of the Fox clan were at the train to meet them, and Fritzi was at first a little bewildered by their imposing number. "It seemed to me the whole community was made up of nothing but Foxes," she later remarked. Dinners at the Fox menage were frequently huge affairs. But Fritzi soon became used to this, and thought her husband's family on the whole delightful and charming, as all accounts allege them to have been.

As a result of the financial security that had come with the success of his novels, Fox built an idyllic rustic bungalow at the Gap, where he and Fritzi lived when not alternating with the Plaza Hotel in New York. This cottage must have been very much like the one Doctor Jim in the story "The Goddess of Happy Valley" built for his wife Juno: through a "little vineyard . . . up a little hill underneath cedars and blooming rhododendrons," set there "on the top . . . a little cabin built of logs with the back still on them, with a porch running around all sides but one, and supported by the trunks of little trees. The smell of cedar came from the open door, and all was fresh and clean as the breath of the forest from which everything came." And Fritzi correspondingly felt like Juno, the
"Goddess of Happy Valley," did, that she "had her own little temple at last."

While in New York the couple lived at the Plaza Hotel. (At this stage of his life Fox wrote very slowly, usually a page a day. It took him five years to finish *Heart of the Hills* as contrasted to a week for *A Knight of the Cumberland* a few years back.) Usually, they alternated regularly between New York and Big Stone Gap. Fritzi loved the idyllic, serene life of Virginia and would spend weeks, sometimes months at a time there when not engaged in operatic work. Strangely enough, Fox grew to like New York more and more, coming to such a point where he couldn't stand to stay at the Gap for more than three weeks at a time. As Fritzi later remarked, "the place simply drove him crazy." But stranger was the fact that his mountain home was the only place he could create his fictions; so, regardless of his preferences in the matter, he was forced to return there periodically if he would continue with his writing.

Like Clayton of *A Mountain Europa* who so much resembles his creator, Fox undoubtedly was "quickened . . . into a new appreciation of the luxury and refinement about him," when he would leave the mountains and return to the gay metropolis of New York. And like him, he probably came to

---

1In *Happy Valley*, p. 255.
wonder more and more, after each subsequent return

...how he had inured himself to the discomforts and crudities of his mountain life. Old habits easily resumed sway over him. . . . day after day found him in his favorite corner at the club, watching the passing pageant and listening eagerly to the conversational froth of the town—the gossip of the club, theatre, and society. His ascetic life in the mountains gave to every pleasure the taste of inexperience."

Still the mountains did not relinquish their subtle influence over him. There were times certainly when he sensed the conflict acutely and "was troubled with a vague sense of deception." Like Clayton, perhaps, "this sense of a double identity was keenly felt amid the lights, the music, the flowers, the flash of eyes and white necks and arms, the low voices, the polite, clear-cut utterances of welcome and compliment." There is a scene in A Mountain Europa which describes Clayton's feelings upon his return to the mountains after a gay sojourn in New York, after having just left the cosmopolitan and brilliant society of his friends; and one may well take Calyton's mood on this occasion as having increasingly become Fox's very own: "Jellico [Big Stone Gap would serve as well here] had never seemed so small, so coarse, so wretched. . . . lying dwarfed and shapeless in the afternoon sunlight." There is no

---

1A Mountain Europa, p. 82.
doubt that, like Clayton, he became increasingly disgusted
with the coarse element of humanity with which his refined
and sensitive spirit was continually thrown into contact,
"the worst element of all the mines... drifting in to
spend the Sabbath in unchecked vice... slatternly negroes,
men and women;" and he came to ask himself

...in wonder, were these hovels... the
cabins he once thought so poetic, so pic-
turesque?... Even nature had changed. The
mountains seemed stunted, less beautiful...
The novelty and ethnological zeal that had
blinded him to the disagreeable phases of
mountain life were gone; so was the pedestal
from which he had descended to make a closer
study of the people.1

Some of these statements are not to be taken pat, however,
as applying in their entirety to Fox, but to his character's
frame of mind at the time. As a matter of fact, Fox's at-
titude toward the mountaineer was not that of "an unconscious
condescension"; and his interest was certainly "more than
curiosity—a pastime to escape brooding over his own change
of fortunes," though it may have been that at first. More-
over, Fox never completely lost "the novelty and ethnologi-
cal zeal" for mountain life. Concerning the total observa-
tion, however, there is no doubt more than an element of
autobiographical truth in it.

1Ibid., pp. 89-90.
Regarding his marriage, Fox always put Fritzi on a pedestal and she in her turn idolized him. Since both were near the top of their respective professions, and widely known, theirs loomed as an important marriage and gave rise to a great deal of discussion. Because of the widely divergent backgrounds, lives, careers, and temperaments of each, the newspapers of the day immediately questioned the expediency of the step they had taken. Both, however, were brilliant and fascinated by each other. Fritzi was by no means the insipid or frivolous person one is inclined to associate with the theatre. On the contrary, despite her youth, she was quite sober and mature. It is true, nevertheless, that Fox almost never discussed his work with her. Although he respected her intelligence, he probably thought his wife too much of a "butterfly" to be interested in problems of a literary nature. Even his letters to her, though highly personal, contain no literary commentaries whatever.

Fritzi continued her operatic work, and Fox travelled with her at intervals. If, for some reason, they were temporarily forced to separate, they wrote or wired one another daily. At such times, Minnie, John's younger sister, frequently went along with Fritzi as company, for she did not like to be alone in those days. Fox's letters to her

\[1\] The writer regrets that neither these letters nor others in the possession of Miss Minnie Fox were available to him in the undertaking of the present study.
were "full of advice, devotion, affection, and charm"; some were gay, some morose. Fox did not relish the thought of his wife travelling or of her being in the theatre. However, she had no alternative. She was perfectly willing to give up her career on the stage if he would only settle down and give her a sane and substantial home life, a thing she had always craved. As it was, he was not inclined to do this, and, not being independently wealthy, could do nothing but let Fritzi pursue her own career on the stage.

Despite minor misgivings, their relationship, while it lasted, was on the whole a sober and morally scrupulous one. So far as is known, there was no infidelity on either side. It is true that Fox, when he had been drinking, was roused to jealousy of his young and beautiful wife on the slightest provocation. But this is understandable, considering the attention the glamorous Fritzi, then in her prime, must have received from a host of male admirers. It is only natural that Fox should have resented sharing his wife, as it were, with a gaping public. Although too much of a gentleman ever to question Fritzi while sober, there is no question that the thought of her being so conspicuously in the public eye rankled in his mind; and it was inevitable that he should voice some of his innermost sentiments after a few cocktails had let down the barriers of his restraint and loosened his tongue. There was nothing ugly or vindictive in Fox's makeup, but drink would bring out his least admirable
(though understandable) trait: his jealousy of Fritzi.

Once, shortly after entering a Los Angeles hotel in a somewhat inebriated condition, he walked over to a table and threatened the men there at that he would shoot him if "you look at my wife again." Fritzi ran to her room, mortified, and began to cry. Two hours passed and still there was no sign of John, whereupon she came downstairs to see what had happened to him. To her astonishment, he was at the same table drinking and chatting amiably with the very same man he had so recently threatened. A few words of appeasement and, more, an invitation to highballs, were enough to divert Fox, when intoxicated, from any intention, even one so drastic as "shooting."

When Fox married, he was getting about $1500 for an installment of a novel from Scribner's, but he did not submit such installments regularly. Earlier he had made over a hundred thousand dollars with his The Little Shepherd. Then came another financial boom in the mountains, and Fox's stock at one time was worth over a half million dollars. A short time later a financial crash depleted the family resources and much of his own. In addition, he aided his family considerably, leaving himself, as a result, economically "strapped." Fritzi, on the other hand, when she married Fox, was at the height of her career and consequently earning enormous salaries, in the vicinity of two and three
thousand dollars a week. Fox's income, to repeat, was more sporadic and not nearly so large, being derived solely from his writing. While $1500 for an installment is by no means an inconsiderable sum, it was one which he irregularly received because of his inconsistent output. This sharp disparity in their earning capacities was frequently, as one should expect, the source of vexations between them.

On one occasion, for example, Fritzi, having completed her role in one production, had a two-week layoff before going into another. Feeling in need of a vacation, she wanted to go to Aiken, South Carolina. Fox refused on the grounds that he had no money, couldn't afford it; moreover, he refused to take hers. Such a stand was incomprehensible to Fritzi. As man and wife, she felt and wished him to feel that each should share what the other owned, that whatever belonged to one rightfully belonged to both. But Fox had his Southern pride and couldn't see the matter in this light; and it was only after much difficulty that she finally persuaded him. needless to say, the repetition of such incidents contributed to their eventual breach.

In all justice to Fox, he alone paid their hotel bills; and Fritzi was on the whole very extravagant. Earning much more than he, however, she felt she was entitled to be; but such a state of affairs must inevitably lead to a certain incompatibility between them. Fox also contributed
heavily to the support of his family, so it is not at all surprising that he should experience financial difficulties from time to time and that these should frequently be a source of embarrassment during his married life.¹

¹Much of the biographical material of this chapter owes its origin to a personal interview with Fritzi Scheff, August 23, 1939.
CHAPTER EIGHT
DIVORCE AND LAST YEARS

It is true that Fox's and Fritzi's careers were somewhat conflicting, but they need not have been. In fact, if anything, Fritzi felt her husband's career entirely compatible with her own. Not having any economic or financial ties, Fox was free to travel with her, and, everything considered, they could be together often. In reality, it did not work out this way. It was no easy matter keeping track of Fox, given as he was to unpredictable peregrinations. After they were married the couple lived intermittently with Fox's mother. Fritzi was only twenty-eight years of age at the time and still a stranger in America. Now, with her marriage to Fox she was transplanted to another completely foreign soil and temperament, that of the Virginia mountains. Although she did not complain, it must have been difficult for her, particularly in the beginning. Still she was malleable and adapted herself to her new conditions as best she could. Once, when a typhoid epidemic struck the vicinity, Minnie Fox, John's younger sister, went into the mountains to nurse (an incident used in several stories, incidentally), while Fritzi interested herself in the Civic League and did what she could to alleviate conditions. And one year she donated a huge Christmas tree to the small
mountain township. Although strange and a little baffled at first, she soon came to feel at home among the mountains and the quaint beings who inhabited them. Walking by herself one day, she heard a rustling behind her. Turning frightenedly, she saw a gangling mountaineer, rifle swaying in both hands, a few paces to the rear, apparently scrutinizing and following her. Terribly scared, she kept on; after a few moments, however, she paused, determined to face the matter out. The mountaineer kept coming on and passed her as though totally oblivious of her presence. When he reached the summit of the slope upon which they were, he stopped. Presently, Fritzi heard a shot ring out. Drawn by curiosity, she too mounted the slope, and to her astonishment saw the man shooting fish in the stream below, a practice not uncommon at the time in the mountains. Fritzi soon grew accustomed to such sights. During frequent visits to Virginia and Kentucky, she saw many octoroons, light, yellowish, oftentimes handsome negroes. At first she felt a little uneasy in their presence, but John soon assured her that they were very loyal and exceedingly chivalrous.

Perhaps, the biggest factor in their ultimate divorce was Fox's uneven temperament. Extremely vacillating, he floundered around much of the time, particularly after he was married. Oftentimes he would suddenly disappear and Fritzi would not know of his whereabouts for four and five
days at a time. Much of the time she doubted whether she had a husband. Unwilling or indisposed to shoulder any responsibility, or to recognize any tie, he was hardly congenial to the obligations of marriage. He had, particularly in his later years, what may be called a Jekyll-Hyde personality. Becoming very mundane and sophisticated, he lost much of the poetry, and sweetness, and peace of mind that Kentucky and Virginia had earlier given him. And above all, there was his vacillating nature to contend with. One day he would say to Fritzi, "Little Girl, we are taking a vacation in Maine for two weeks"; thereupon Fritzi would hasten home, pack their things, and make arrangements for the trip. But just as quickly as Fox would make a resolution to leave, so would he, to poor Fritzi's bewilderment, forget all about it. A week or so later, in the midst of a party, perhaps, he would suddenly get up and say to her, "Well, we're going; let's get our things;" and they would promptly leave the gathering and proceed to Maine.

As he became more worldly, more interested in social pleasures and activities, he became less interested in literature; at any rate, he devoted less and less of his time to writing. He would rather dance all night than sleep, with consequent setbacks to his health. He dearly loved life in all its aspects, and ironically, was paving the way to an early death. His moods were highly varied.
He was, to repeat, really two distinct personalities: the simple, contemplative, hearty, direct, out-door loving, wholesome individual of Kentucky and Virginia and the brilliant, sophisticated, witty, rather heavy-drinking, garrulous *bon vivant* of New York. Both sides had their share of brilliance, but it was the former that Fritzi Scheff had fallen in love with. John Fox, the Kentuckian, was fresh and stimulating to her. Of his other nature she had admiration too, but little more than for numerous other sophisticates with whom her associations in the theatrical world continually threw her into contact. The John Fox of Kentucky was somewhat unique among her cosmopolitan associates.

Matters finally came to such a pass between Fox and Fritzi that a divorce was the only solution of their problems. It was not any one big thing, but an accumulation of little ones. Both were highly temperamental, but reticent when it came to voicing grievances and backward when it came to ironing out difficulties that might arise between them. There is no doubt that if only one or the other had given vent to an explosive outburst occasionally, the tension caused by their differences would have been lessened and perhaps adjustments made possible. As it was, neither would take the offensive in such matters, and little hurts were allowed to fester into great sores. Neither was
argumentative; both were very sensitive, proud, and too well bred to dispute with one another.

Needless to say, the results of this backwardness to cement petty ruptures were, so far as their careers were concerned, dire to both. Fox was in no frame of mind to write, and, as a matter of fact wrote astonishingly little while married. Pressure was brought to bear on each from friends on both sides. Both were near the top of their respective professions, and well-meaning friends felt from the first that marriage was bound to hurt the career of one or the other. As it turned out such misgivings were not entirely unfounded. Certainly, if one goes by records, it affected the quantity if not the calibre of Fox's work; at any rate, it was a contributing factor to his reduced output. From 1908, the year in which he was married, until his death in 1919, a period of eleven years, he produced only three works—a few short stories which, gathered together, make up the slim volume *In Happy Valley*, the two novels *Heart of the Hills* and *Erskine Dale, Pioneer*, and some fugitive pieces that do not amount to much; whereas in the preceding interval of his creative activity from 1892, the composition of his first work, *A Mountain Europa*, to 1907, a period of 15 years, he wrote eleven complete books (although four or so were novelettes), a considerably larger number in proportion.
On the other hand, Fritzi was losing her gaiety on the stage. While rehearsing her part in a play, for example, Fox might come across a line and ask, "Don't you think that's a bit risqué?" When it later came time for her to speak the line before an audience, she would hesitate, as a result of the self-consciousness engendered by her husband's remarks. Since spontaneity and gaiety were the key notes of her art, she felt obliged to retain these, and retain them she could not in the face of chronic altercations with her husband. After repeated efforts, particularly on Fritzi's part, to "make a go of it," they were divorced "some time in 1913" ("I cannot remember unpleasant dates," Fritzi later observed), and met only once or twice thereafter. The first time Fritzi was very upset and ran from Fox to her dressing-room. Later, when Fritzi was passing with a troupe through Kentucky, there was some mention of a reconciliation, but this never came to pass. After their divorce, Fritzi went into a shell from which she never fully emerged. Fox practically stopped writing, became increasingly erratic, drank too much and dissipated more than ever. There were certainly times when he must have felt like his own characters, Crittenden and Marshall, "that he was making a shameful waste of the talents that the Almighty had showered so freely down upon him." But this much can be said to his credit; even in his darkest moments, he really never gave
up hope of himself, nor did "those who knew him best" ever give up hope of him. "The truth was," like Crittenden, "he never fell far, nor for long, and he always rose with the old purpose the same, even if it stirred him each time with less and less enthusiasm." And this "old purpose" was one day to write a classic. The accumulated effect of his dissipations led to the undermining of his constitution; and thus he eventually fell a victim to pneumonia, the disease he had always dreaded, at the comparatively early age of fifty-six. New York really ruined Fox. Not only did the intense life of the metropolis distract him, but above all, it sapped his energies.

By an unhappy coincidence, *Heart of the Hills*, the novel Fox had worked on intermittently throughout his entire married life, nearly five years, was published in 1913, the same year of his divorce. The book was actually completed in 1912, by another unwelcome coincidence, a few months after the death of his father, to whose memory it is accordingly dedicated. The description of the death of J. Sudduth, an elderly Kentuckian patrician, during the course of the novel, was in all probability inspired, at least in part, by this unfortunate event.

---

1Crittenden, p. 31.
2*Heart of the Hills*, pp. 143 ff.
Heart of the Hills is a novel in which, as in The Kentuckians and The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, one finds the love story of the mountain-lover and the girl from the "settlements," and, in addition, the love story, as in A Mountain Europa and The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, of the "settlement"-lover and the girl from the mountains, as well as the love stories, as in Crittenden and A Cumberland Vengeance, of those from the same region. In a word, it is Fox's most complicated canvas, his most highly involved, though by no means confused, plot structure. The many shifts of scene from mountain to Bluegrass and back to mountain region again which the complex plot necessitates are skillfully managed. With the exception of The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come and The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, Heart of the Hills is Fox's most ambitious and longest work.¹ And it contains, besides plot ingredients, many of the same elements contained in his other works. As a matter of fact, it is a curious admixture of just such ingredients which makes it, perhaps, his most representative work. There is hardly an item in it—scene, character, or conflict—which one could not duplicate in his previous works. This is not to say, however, that the novel is a pastiche. Far from it. Besides working on and off nearly

¹The three novels are practically of an identical length, the total pages of each being The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, 404; The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, 422; Heart of the Hills, 596.
five years on the book, Fox managed the parts with such dexterity, that they fall into an entirely new, yet complete, whole. It is the novelist's, just as it is the poet's, license, and usually inescapable practice to employ recurrent themes and scenes (images); and such a recurrence usually contributes largely to the integrity, the organic quality, the impression of oneness or wholeness of a writer's work. With Fox, one feels this wholeness to an unusual degree. In fact, one is sometimes inclined to feel that with him it is partly a narrowness in vision that gives his work this aspect of oneness, such is the recurrent quality of his materials. To an extent this is true; but what he sacrifices in range, he gains in intensity.

*Heart of the Hills* revolves mainly around four characters, Jason and Mavin Hawn of the mountains and Gray and Marjorie Pendleton of the Bluegrass; these two sets of cousins, all around the same age, are involved, almost from the beginning, in what Fox has aptly described as a "rectangular, diametric little comedy."

Jason is reminiscent of Chad in many ways—in regards to his manly struggles as a boy, his subsequent education in the Bluegrass and his ideal love for the aristocratic Bluegrass girl, Marjorie; even his cry as a young boy, when he is refused a marriage license because he "ain't a man,"
"I ain't! . . . I got to be!" strongly calls to mind the Little Shepherd's plaintive appeal to his god, "I hain't nothin' but a boy, but I got to act like a man now." However, Jason is more of the mountaineer than Chad; he is more quick-tempered, vindictive, and savage when aroused, qualities traceable to the mountaineer's abnormal pride and sensitiveness. Consequently, his conflicts are more intense, more keenly sensed. The urges of instinct are stronger within him and render him prone to greater evil. Not infrequently is he reduced to the pathetic, almost tragic figure because of this perpetual warring of reason and instinct which possessed him, especially in the Bluegrass:

Impatiently he began to wonder at the perverse waywardness of his own soul, and without undressing he sat at the window—restless, sleepless, and helpless against his warring self—sat until the shadows of the night began to sweep after the light of the sinking moon.

This mixture of good and evil, regardless of what gives rise to the evil, makes Jason Hawn a more genuinely real person than Chad, who is much too noble and heroic for one person. It makes him one of Fox's most convincing characters. Others, perhaps, like Crittenden or Chad or John Hale, may be more attractive to the uncritical reader, but

2. Ibid., p. 306.
they are not quite so lifelike as Jason.

Navis Raw, Jason's younger cousin, might have been
June, or, to a slightly lesser extent, Easter Hicks of
A Mountain Europe, or even Juno Camp of the story "The
Goddess of Happy Valley." That is to say, she is Fox's
typical mountain heroine, reared like them, in the moun­
tains, beautiful, as the average mountaineer girl is not,
and possessing almost June's very features and characte­
tics—"a riotous mass of black hair, combed straight back
from her forehead and gathered into a Psyche knot at the
back of her head. Slowly the flush passed, but not for
some time did she lift the extraordinary lashes that veiled
her eyes to take a furtive glance about her."¹ (Italics
supplied.) Like June, too, she is educated outside of the
mountains, encountering June's very experiences in the
"settlement" schools, when dressed at first "as a little
daughter of Daniel Boone."

As it was, she felt no less foreign
than she looked, for the strangeness of
the land and of the people still possess­
ed her so that her native shyness had
sunk to depths that were painful. She had
a new ordeal before her now, for in her
sinewy little hands were a paper bag, a
first reader, and a spelling-book, and she
was on her way to school.²

¹Abid., p. 81.
²Abid., p. 76.
Finally, to complete the analogy, she eventually falls in love with an engineer from the Bluegrass. To Fox's credit, however, the match between this second pair is not consummated as it is in The Trail of the Lonesome Pine and other works. That is to say, the ending of this novel is more realistic, though paradoxically, no less romantic, than the others.

Marjorie Pendleton is the Margaret Dean type with which we are already familiar. In not one important particular does she differ from Fox's typical Southern belle heroine, except perhaps that she is a little more outspoken, somewhat more imperious, than the others. Also, Jason's love for her is of the usual, ethereal variety:

In the passing years the boy had actually lost sight of her as flesh and blood, for she had become enshrined among his dreams by night and his dreams by day; among the visions his soul had seen when he had sat under the old circuit rider and heard pictured the glories of the blessed when mortals should mingle with the shining hosts on high; etc.  

Finally, there is Bray Pendleton, who is another John Male, or for that matter, Clayton of A Mountain Europa, a young, noble, generous engineer of the Bluegrass who becomes infatuated with the beautiful mountain lass. His trouble, as with most of Fox's heroes, is that he is too

1Ibid., p. 160.
good. Strangely enough, Fox himself hints that this can be a flaw, when, speaking of Gray's relationship with his cousin and the reason the latter is not more drawn to him than appears, he writes, "Marjorie might weary of hearing Aristides called the Just." It is somewhat unfortunate that Fox did not realize that his reader could grow just as weary on the same score.

The major conflicts of the book are suggested by the interplay of these four characters, and they are the same conflicts which we have encountered before in Fox's work, though the resolutions of them are somewhat different from what we have come to expect. These conflicts, as one might guess, grow out of the social and moral contrasts between the mountain and Bluegrass region of the state in which the protagonists reside. In the very beginning, when Marjorie and Gray, as children, make their first visit to the mountains, the struggle between the forces of the two sections becomes at once perceptible, outwardly so in the malignant physical encounter between Gray and Jason, and more subtly in the minds of the two mountain children.

Hand in hand the two little mountaineers had crossed the threshold of a new world that day. Together they were going back into their own, but the clutch of the new was tight on both, and while neither could have explained, there was the same thought in each mind, the same nameless dissatisfaction.

\[\text{Ibid. p. 202}\]
tion in each heart, and both were in the throes of the same new birth.1

From here on most of the drama of the book hinges on someone or another manifestation of this conflict: Jason, in college, inviting Marjorie to attend the first dance of the season with him, and the girl's subsequent surprise and reluctance, presumably because he is a freshman. "For the first time the boy gained an inkling of that chasm"2 which lay between them; Mavis's "fit of shame and tears" because "Gray had been ashamed to go to that dance with Mavis. . . . There was a chasm, and with every word that Mavis spoke the wider that chasm yawned."3 This social chasm is the dominating motif of the novel. Eventually Jason and Mavis come to understand and accept it without the bitter resentment they had at first felt.

We are made aware of this motif more clearly, perhaps, by a consideration of the leading individual conflicts of each character, for, as Fox remarks, "about each pair the elements of social tragedy began to concentrate, intensify and become active."4 When Gray is working as an engineer in the mountains and Mavis is there teaching, it is natural that they should see much of one another and that the

---

1Ibid., p. 26.
2Ibid., p. 209.
3Ibid., p. 215.
4Ibid., p. 312.
intimacy between them should grow. According to the mountaineers' code only one interpretation could be put on such a friendship: that they are eventually to marry. But "no such interpretation could have been put on the intimacy between him and Mavis at home, for there companionship, coquetry, sentiment, devotion, even, were possible without serious parental concern. . . . Gray could not realize that primitive conditions forbade attention without intention.""^1

His conflict is reminiscent of Nale's and Clayton's, though not so acute, since the element of duty or honor to Mavis is not so prominent as it was with his fictional counterparts who had been so largely instrumental in the education of their mountain girl friends. Nevertheless Gray's meditations, when on the verge of remaining finally in the mountains, strongly resemble theirs:

Often he would be caught out in the hills and have to stay all night in a cabin; and thus he learned the way of life away from the mines and the river bottoms. So far that poor life had only been pathetic and picturesque, but now when he thought of it as a part of his own life, of the people becoming through Mavis his people, he shuddered and stopped in the moonlit road—aghast. Still, the code of his father was his, all women were sacred, and with all there would be but one duty for him, if circumstances, as they bade fair to now, made that one duty plain. And if his father should go under, if Morton Sanders took over his home and the boy must make his own way

---

^1p. 316.
and live his life where he was—why not?
Gray sat in the porch of the house on the
spur, long asking himself that question.\(^1\)

Then there is the relationship of Marjorie and Jason,
when the latter is in his last year in college in the Blue-
grass. This relationship, too, had become intimate, and on
one occasion, to Marjorie's "mother's amazement and dismay
she saw that they were quarreling—quarreling as only lovers
can."\(^2\)

When Gray finally proposes to Mavis, she resolves the
one conflict, and foresees the resolution of the other.
Her lengthy answer to Gray sums up the situation and the
theme of the book:

'Your people ain't mine, Gray, nor mine
yours, and they won't be—not in our life-
time. I've seen you shrinkin' when you've
been with me in the houses of some of my
own kin—shrinkin' at the table at grand-
pap's and here, at the way folks eat an'
live—shrinkin' at oaths and loud voices
and rough talk and liquor-drinkin' and all
this talk about killin' people, as though
they were nothin' but hogs—shrinkin' at
everybody but me. . .

'You see that star there? Well, that's
your star, Gray. I named it for you, and
every night I've been lookin' out at it
from my window in the loft. And that's
what you've been to me and what Marjorie's
been to Jason—just a star—a dream. We're
not really real to each other—you an' me—
and Marjorie and Jason ain't. Only Jason
and I are real to each other and only you
and Marjorie. Jason and I have been wor-
shippin' stars, and they've looked down

\(^1\)Hud., p. 317.
\(^2\)Hud., pp. 318-19.
mighty kindly on us, so that they came mighty nigh foolin' us and themselves. I read a book the other day that said ideals were stars and were good to point the way, but that people needed lamps to follow that way. It won't do, Cray. You are goin' back home to carry a lamp for Marjorie, and maybe Jason'll come back to these hills to carry a lantern for me.1

Before the novel closes, the girl's prophecy comes to pass. Cray returns to the Bluegrass and marries Marjorie, while Jason comes back to the mountains and marries Mavis. On the next to the last page, however, there is this commentary, as though Fox would satisfy the romantic reader:

Gray and Jason had gone back, each to his own, having learned at last what Mavis and Marjorie, without learning, already knew—that duty is to others rather than self, to life rather than love. But John Burnham now knew that in the dreams of each girl another image would live always; just as always Jason would see another's eyes misty with tears for him and feel the comforting clutch of a little hand, while in Gray's heart a wood-thrush would sing forever.2

And then the final paragraph with its optimistic looking-forward:

And, looking far ahead, both could see strong young men hurrying up from the laggard Bluegrass into the lagging hills and strong young men hurrying down from them, and could hear the heart of the hills beating as one with the heart of the Blue-grass, and both beating as one with the heart of the world.3

1Ibid., pp. 336-6-7.
2Ibid., p. 395.
3 Ibid., p. 395.
Curiously enough, this theme of union, of oneness of the two divergent sections of Kentucky, which is seen to come in the future, one might easily imagine as the theme of his preceding work, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, as embodied in the final reconciliation of John Hale, the Bluegrass lover, and June Tolliver, the mountain girl. One also finds, prophetically enough, such a reconciliation in the later short story, "Goddess of Happy Valley," written in 1917.

*Heart of the Hills* is in a sense an historical novel of Kentucky, just as Fox's other two historical novels, *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* and *Erskine Dale, Pioneer*, though perhaps it could not have been thus regarded at the time it was written. Viewed from the present day, however, there is much in it of interest to the social historian of period in which it is laid, just as there is much in Sinclair Lewis's or J. Dos Passos's novels relating to the present period that will undoubtedly come to the attention of the social historian of the future. J. W. Townsend, a fellow Kentuckian, writing in 1913, the year in which Fox's novel appeared, could afford to remark that the economic and political events of the day which are depicted in it were still too hackneyed to be of much interest to the contemporary reader; but twenty-seven years have passed since then, and such events are no longer "hackneyed" or, what Townsend

---

1 Townsend, *op. cit.*, p. 175.
evidently meant by the word, too timely to be viewed objectively. In the light of what has since transpired, the present-day Kentuckian can calmly sit back and read of such occurrences as are presented in the novel, without feeling any personal bias or prejudice, without feeling that his own political philosophy is in any way being assailed or defended. That is to say, he can read the story objectively, without feeling personally implicated, in the same way that the present-day reader at large reads it, or for that matter, the Northern reader, say, of Fox's own day.

Aside from such considerations, the period is an excellent one for the novelist—a period of turbulence and unrest, vivid and dramatic conflicts, capable of an interesting treatment in the skilful craftsman's hands. As though to bear out such a contention, a very recent prize-winning novel, *Night Rider*, has been written by Robert Penn Warren, a Kentuckian incidentally, covering the very same period and many of the same political and economic issues and upheavals accorded treatment in *Heart of the Hills*. And in 1936 an historical study was published, dealing with the tobacco troubles of the period.¹ The background for the entanglements of the leading characters of *Heart of the Hills* includes accounts of the toll-gate war, the rise

of Goebels and his subsequent assassination,¹ the general political confusion and violence, and the tobacco troubles, entailing the activities of the "Night-riders," of the period from 1898 to 1907. Fox himself, as author, voices no open partisanship on any of these issues, though the reader can guess his feelings on what, as a Kentuckian, must have been very close to him through the character, John Burnham. Burnham, however, is no mere vehicle for Fox's opinions, political or otherwise; we may accept him as a mature character, and as such one entitled to his own opinions. The point is, the reader does not feel Fox has violated dramatic expediency or artistic verisimilitude for the sake of propagandizing. Even should the meticulous reader feel that such propagandizing does exist, the amount of space devoted to extraneous issues is insignificant in proportion to that devoted to the story of the four lovers. Despite the intrinsic interest of sociological and historical material, this matter merely furnishes an apt background to the love story which, with Fox, is the primary thing.

In the foregoing account we have had occasion to note the resemblance of Heart of the Hills to other of Fox's novels in certain large particulars. We might elaborate

¹One historian characterizes "the 'Goebels Affair' [as] the most disturbing episode in Kentucky's political history." (Thomas D. Clark, A History of Kentucky, New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1937, p. 617.)
Upon this resemblance by calling attention to other aspects of the work scored in connection with previous discussions. Such, for example, are his propensity for the sentimental and the sensational (pp. 113; 275; 226; 241; 338; 390); his recurrent use of "memories," "requiem for the glory that was gone,"¹ (pp. 371; 389); his use of a favorite type of coincidence (someone appearing on the scene just when something crucial is said or done involving embarrassment either for the appearer or the sayer (p. 211); his occasional use of symbols taken from nature (pp. 385; 389; 392); his lush, poetic descriptions of nature (pp. 12; 22; 27; 37; 39; 46; 74 ff; 96; 107; 157; 172; 176; 190; 308; 356; 372); his use of functional and poetic imagery (pp. 183; 202); his mention or description of certain favorite scenes, such as the mountain boy making a touchdown the first time he has ever been on a football field,² and trial and courtroom scenes;³ and finally, the duplication of certain materials at the end of the book which are given at the beginning, in the manner of his mountain short stories in Hell-fer-Sartain.

All in all, Heart of the Hills is a highly respectable performance so far as the rest of Fox's work goes, comparing favorably with The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come and The

¹ Ibid., p. 291.
² Ibid., p. 197.
³ Ibid., pp. 272 ff.
Trail of the Lonesome Pine, and in many respects is superior to them. It contains, as we have seen, all of the ingredients which made these other works best-sellers; it is, therefore, somewhat surprising that it too did not attain to the popularity gained by them.

After his adventure in matrimony, Fox went about like one lost. How much he cared for Fritzi may be gathered from his own words out of Crittenden: "I wonder if you can know what it is to have somebody such a part of your life that you never hear a noble strain of music, never read a noble line of poetry, never catch a high mood from nature, nor from your own best thoughts—that you do not imagine her by your side to share your pleasures in it all... That doesn't come but once." Such a love likewise came to Fritzi but once. Fox was the only man she ever loved, and to this day, some twenty-six years after their divorce, and twenty years after his death, she still fondly cherishes his memory. The fact that she never married again, though still young and very beautiful and much sought after, after their divorce, is certainly one proof of this, even if one did not have her own irrefutable testimony. One can imagine the effect their permanent separation had on both.

Interestingly enough, in his The Kentuckians, the mood of

1Crittenden, p. 80.
Marshall after he is sure he has lost Anne, very probably parallels Fox's own after his divorce from Fritzi: At first, he was lost, but then gradually came to realize that "love was not everything," that there was a "debt that he owed to his State, his name, and to himself."\(^1\) Possibly he derived consolation ultimately from the same philosophy which he had earlier put into his character's mind; namely, that

...he was not the only thing on earth that had to suffer. Life was a chain of suffering, with nature at one end and nature at the other; a pyramid of cruelty with man at the apex exacting the tribute of sacrifice from below, paying it right and left to the strong, and above to the unseen. He must take his share. There were other motives to action in life than love,... his duty to the world around, and above him.\(^2\)

After his divorce, Fox returned to the mountains for good. He made frequent trips, however, to New York for business and social reasons, and he spent part of each year with T. N. Page, who later became United States Ambassador to Italy. Part of the time he played golf near his home-place. Often was he seen with his neighbor, Bascom Slemp, later secretary to President Coolidge. Fox hobnobbed with coal operators and lawyers and mining engineers. Once in a while he would go, as was his wont when younger, on a solitary ramble in the mountains to hear some homespun

---

1The Kentuckiane, pp. 143-4.
2Ibid., p. 138.
philosophy from a hill-billy, or study a wild flower. And occasionally he would attend a local dance. He was always a great friend of the ladies, who found him charming. As one critic has observed, "Imperious though he was, it was second nature for him to be kind and courteous, even at convivial moments when others lost their heads."\(^1\)

During his last days it seemed Fox wanted to live as a boy again, to be as fancy free as a child at play, smiling often, as he remarks of the old President of the University in *Heart of the Hills*, "for the blissful ignorance of the young," thinking "of how gladly the old would give up their crowns in exchange for the swift young feet on the threshold."\(^2\)

This longing for eternal youth is also one of the dominant motifs of his character Crittenden, and the remarks concerning the latter are easily applicable to Fox himself. Concerning Crittenden's intense love of his younger brother Basil, he speaks of "a passage in Stevenson in which that gentle student spoke of his earlier and better self as his little brother whom he loved and longed for and sought persistently, but who dropped farther and farther behind at times, until, in moments of darkness, he sometimes feared that he might leave him forever."\(^3\) And after the war, Fox describes Crittenden's mood when feverish thus:

\(^1\) *Literary Digest*, op. cit., p. 71.
\(^2\) *Heart of the Hills*, p. 180.
\(^3\) *Crittenden*, p. 38.
It was the spirit of youth come back—that distant youth when the world was without a shadow; when his own soul had no tarnish of evil; when passion was unconscious and pure; when his boyish reverence was the only feeling he knew toward every woman. . . out of the quiet and peace and stillness and purity. . . came his last vision—the vision of a boy with a fresh, open face and no shadow across the mirror of his clear eyes. . . It was 'the little brother' of himself coming back at last—coming with a glad, welcoming smile.1

This nostalgic longing for the serenity and purity of childhood is a typically romantic and somewhat adolescent trait, betokening as it does the Byronic, world-weary, self-pitying attitude, for which there is little need when a mature adjustment to life has been made. Fox unfortunately never made that adjustment. He was ever the emotional adolescent, with the result, as one critic has observed, "tragedy seemed to stalk those last days, haunting his proud face even in moments of frivolity."2 This may be news to Fox's celebrated acquaintances, who saw him only in the East's atmosphere of culture and knew him as a popular romancer, principally as the author of *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* and *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*. Others saw him in a vastly different setting at his home in Big Stone Gap. Few knew of the tragic moments of the novelist who dreamed of writing a classic and who had nearly achieved it with *The

---

2 *Literary Digest*, op. cit., p. 70.
Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come.

In the later part of his life, Fox looked forward to covering the whole gamut of Kentucky life in fiction, and to that end undertook to write Erskine Dale, Pioneer, the last of his books. As a matter of fact, he just fell short of completing it, the last chapter being left to his sister Elizabeth to write from notes and directions which he left. Erskine Dale, Pioneer is a novel of Virginia's western district, Kentucky, in the days of the transition from colonial to revolutionary life and thus, in a sense, constitutes a working back to the source of the current which he had followed in his foregoing works. To take Page's word for it, "Fox thought it as good work as he could do. He aimed at making it a reflection of the life of that stirring period." Page, writing in 1919, shortly after Fox's death, further remarks, "And those who have seen the manuscript declare it is Fox at his best." Such an estimation, however, is exaggerated. The manuscript was finally published posthumously in 1920 by Scribner's, publishers of his other works.

Like The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, then, Erskine Dale, Pioneer, is an historical novel, dealing with a period even more remote than that treated in the former

Page, op. cit., p. 383.
work. Also, it is more of an historical novel than *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* in the amount of research and information utilized to reconstruct the historical background. This historical material relates, to repeat, to colonial, or early frontier, and revolutionary life. The book opens on a frontier outpost of Kentucky, with the inhabitants therein skilfully delineated. The girls, for example, are "vigorous, clear-eyed, richly dowered with health and color and body and limb—typical mothers-to-be of a wilderness race." And a little later, "all turned now to the duties of the day—Honor to her loom, Polly to her distaff, and Lydia to her spinning-wheel, for the clothes of the women were home-spun, home-woven, home-made." As for the frontierspeople as a whole, "healthy, husky, rude, and crude these people were, but hearty, kind, wholesome, and hospitable to the last they had." The men are fighters and hunters, expert in the ways of woodcraft and tracking, and search "the ground for signs of game." In one interesting episode Dave Yandell, hunter par excellence, gives his little Virginia friends, Harry and Hugh, "lessons in woodcraft," shows them what tracking and double-tracking is. Another vivid chapter describes the various methods of

---

*Tbid.,* p. 17.  
*Tbid.,* p. 105.  
*Tbid.,* p. 59.
hunting among the Indians. Erskine Dale "barks" squirrels the way "Uncle Dan'l Boone" showed him how. "I shot between the bark and the limb right under the squirrel, an' the shock kills 'em." As for Boone himself, Erskine remarks, "Shucks, Dave can beat him shootin'." Fox also gives the lighter side of this hardy colonial life. He describes the square dance, a fiddler's contest in which twenty fiddlers "saw away for dear life, each playing a different tune—a custom that still survives in our own hills. After this a 'quire of ballads' was sung for."

On the historically factual side, there are either allusions to, or brief descriptions of, such personages, or events, as the case may be, as Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, Stamp Tax, Tea Tax, etc., Nicholas Bland, Lee, Harrison, Pendleton, Washington, George Rogers Clarke, Burgoyne, Lafayette, General Philips, B. Arnold, Tarleton, Cornwallis, hardships of Washington's campaign, various battles, and, finally, Cornwallis' surrender. As in

---

1 Ibid., pp. 123-4.  
2 Ibid., p. 61.  
3 Ibid., p. 61.  
4 Ibid., p. 54.  
5 Ibid., p. 78.  
6 Ibid., pp. 68-9.  
7 Ibid., p. 70.  
8 Ibid., p. 85.  
9 Ibid., pp. 146-7.  
10 Ibid., pp. 283-9.  
11 Ibid., p. 230.
The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come this matter is not mere exposition, but is vitalized for the reader by being made to figure prominently in Erskine's career. Needless to say, Erskine, like Chad, eventually becomes a soldier, and as such imaginatively plays an active part in what actually happened.

The story begins creditably enough, if somewhat sensational, with Erskine as a young savage, the adopted son of an Indian chief. White Arrow, as he is called by the Indians, because of his fleetness, runs away from his tribe as a boy because of ill-treatment by one of the braves and seeks refuge in the Kentucky outpost. Here he assumes his proper heritage as a white man. As it later turns out, Erskine is none other than the long lost son of General Dale, killed in Indian warfare, and as such, rightful heir of Red Oaks, a munificent Virginian estate, occupied by his uncle, Colonel Dale, and his family. Here, the scene shifts back and forth from Virginia to Kentucky and again to Erskine's childhood home in the wilderness among his Indian tribesmen. A number of remarkable developments occur—such as the discovery of Erskine's mother, long thought dead, living as an Indian squaw—culminating in the Revolutionary War, in which Erskine plays a prominent part. As the novel progresses, there is a definite decline in artistry. Fox seems to lose his perspective and to rely
more and more on the sensational, melodramatic, and incredible. Not only this, but there is a sharp falling off in technique, a carelessness by no means characteristic of him. It were as though he knew he was going to die soon and was working at a fast pace to complete this last work.

As an "historical" story, Erskine Dale, Pioneer, seems to be told frankly from the point of view of a narrator looking back on a time long past, and telling his story as though he were relating a chronicle. There is not the dramatic immediacy felt in The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, where the author himself is quite out of the picture and is content to let his characters act out their own lives, pretty much, one feels, as circumstance, environment, heredity, and psychology dictated them. On several occasions Fox spoils the immediate illusion by the interposition of such remarks as: "They were Americans now, said Colonel Dale—not Virginians, just as nearly a century later the same people were to say:

"We are not Americans now—we are Virginians."¹ Or, "she sat quietly in the agony of waiting that was the role of women in those days."² (Italics supplied)

Also, there are such dramatic inexpediencies as anachronisms. Of Erskine's woodcraft, for example, Fox writes,

¹Ibid., p. 73.
²Ibid., p. 166.
it "had not suffered and the night's story of the wilderness was as plain to his keen eyes as a printed page." ¹

As a matter of fact, Erskine could not read, at least at his stage of the narrative, so "a printed page" would hardly be the thing to compare the plainness of "the night's story" with. And as if this were not bad enough, on the very next page is a figure even more flagrant. A hunting contest between White Arrow and Black Wolf is the setting for this description: "In the woods, wind-blown leaves had dotted and dashed the snow like a stenographer's notebook." ² (Italics supplied). If a serious effect were not intended, one might almost take this as a travesty. But as it is, such a violation of artistic propriety is almost unforgivable.

There are, besides, in Erskine Dale, Pioneer, what may be called literary anachronisms. Erskine is in the best "noble savage" tradition of Rousseau, but this does not entitle him, only a short time back an illiterate savage, to parry in such a manner with Grey, his enemy:

'It seems you have been amusing yourself with my kinspeople at my expense.' Grey drew himself up in haughty silence. Erskine went on:

'I have known some liars who were not cowards.'

'You forget yourself.'

¹This, p. 123.
²This, p. 124.
'No—nor you.'
'You remember a promise I made you once?'
'Twice,' corrected Erskine, Grey's eyes flashed upward to the crossed rapiers on the wall.
'Precisely,' answered Erskine, 'and when?'
'At the first opportunity.'
'From this moment I shall be waiting for nothing else.'

'Precisely!! This is precisely as he would not talk, or for that matter act. Indian and Pioneer training are not so fastidious or delicate, so cognizant of the niceties and conventions of polite society. In a word, the transition here is too rapid, unconvincing. Even with the best tutors (and he had none that are mentioned), Erskine could have hardly attained to such verbal dexterity in so short a time. Moreover, the dialogue, even if it were in character, is bad, being stilted and unnatural; perhaps it is what two highly civilized men ought to say, but not really what they would, under the given circumstances.

Add to such failings, Fox's chronic sentimentalism and sensationalism, and Erskine Dale, Pioneer may be estimated as one of his least meritorious works, in a class with Crittenden. Fox also depends here to a greater extent than elsewhere on the use of coincidence, an element closely tied up with the sensational character of the novel. One might cite, as illustration, much that is related to Erskine's

---

1ibid., p. 163.
life, the facts about his family, his heritage, etc., besides certain isolated incidents, as Barbara appearing in the doorway just at the very moment when Erskine, in a fit of anger, ignominously tries to stab Grey who is unarmed.¹

However, *Erskine Dale, Pioneer* is not all bad. It is relieved from time to time by humorous touches, frontier variety and otherwise; by Fox's unfailingly good descriptions of natural phenomena, for which the subject offers many opportunities. This was one phase of his work, at any rate, that required no research. Here he was able to write at first hand; and Fox ever had a keen and discerning eye, as one brief extract from the novel amply demonstrates:

> The sun was close to the uneven sweep of the wilderness. Through its slanting rays the river poured like a flood of gold. The negroes were on the way singing from the fields. Cries, chaffing, and the musical clanking of trace-chains came from the barnyard. Hungry cattle were lowing and full-udder'd mothers were moaning answers to the bawling calves. A peacock screamed from a distant tree and sailed forth, full-spread—a great gleaming winged jewel of the air.

Admirable also is the use of imagery, from time to time, which captures the Indian idiom. Such, for example, is: "The Indians had crossed the Big River, were as many as the leaves, and meant to attack the whites."² And,

"I will come when the leaves fall," he concluded, "but Crooked Lightning must pitch his lodge in the wilderness and be an outcast from the tribe until he can show that his heart is good."¹ And again, "He is young but his feet are swift, his arm is strong, his heart good, and his head is old. He speaks the tongue of the paleface."² Would it not be better for the Indian to make the white man on his own land a friend rather than the white man who lived more than a moon away across the big seas?³ And lastly, Clark's speech to the Indians: "I shall be a friend to the friendly. If you choose war I shall send so many warriors from the Thirteen Council-Fires that your land shall be darkened and you shall hear no sounds but that of the birds who live on blood."⁴ Such imagery is functional in the same sense that examples of imagery in previous works are.

A final word may be said about the ending. It is thoroughly typical of Fox, and, in general, of the romancer. The lovers, Erskine and Barbara, are finally united after many trials and choose to pursue their lives in the wilderness, on the Frontier. A highly optimistic note is struck

¹ Ibid., p. 105.
² Ibid., p. 127.
³ Ibid., p. 132.
⁴ Ibid., p. 190.
With Erskine's final speech which brings the novel to a close: "To those who come after us."\(^1\) Somehow it seems appropriate that Fox should have concluded his last book in this manner; for it seems almost like a final message from him himself.

Fox had just completed *Erekhine Dale, Pioneer* when he was fatally stricken. He had remained in the mountains and worked steadily all winter and spring finishing it, visiting Lexington and Louisville once or twice for access to the libraries there with their plentiful records of the vivid time which the novel covers; and he was at the very end when he was stricken down suddenly "as though by a secret arrow from the forest which he loved."\(^2\)

Page has given us this somewhat colorful account of the circumstances of his last illness:

He had gone into the mountains on a fishing-trip, one of those excursions where he got his fresh inspiration, and the very day of his arrival he was struck by what was thought a light attack of pleurisy. Unable to continue his trip and rapidly growing worse, he returned home and within two days he passed away, leaving behind him for Kentucky and for his friends everywhere, the fragrant memory of a charming personality, of a loyal, kindly gentleman, with chivalrous ideals. . .\(^3\)

In a more realistic vein, another critic has preserved for us the memory of Fox's last public appearance, the night,

\(^{1}\)Ibid., p. 268.
\(^{3}\)Ibid., p. 683.
in 1919, when he danced with the Forty-nine girl, at the end of a week of Fourth of July celebrating:

Gallantly danced John Fox with Beula, queen of the Forty-nine, on that night which was his last of gaiety. How imperious he was as his sharp, aristocratic face, resembling an Indian chief's, moved through the maze of romping Forty-niners in the carnival dancing tent.

Fox and several friends, all gay and looking for novelty, entered the Forty-nine, accompanied by a curious crowd. The tent must have made a good profit that night, for the famous John Fox was naturally an added attraction.

In the midst of this noisy animation appeared John Fox, eyes merrily lit in a face otherwise, sombre. Beula, queen of the carnival, approached him. Nor did she take him by the lapel, as the other girls did when they wanted a partner, but merely held out her hand.

"Will you dance?" she asked, pleasantly.

"Why certainly, my girl," said Fox, stepping upon the stage. They did not do the jazz stuff. They talked as gentleman and lady. Others leered and yodeled insane songs, but Fox was courteous, gentlemanly. And surprising to all was the girl's quiet recognition of the gentleman in her partner. His gallantry had brought to the surface unsuspected refinement in her. Again and again she returned to him after dancing with others.

Late that night Fox climbed heavily into a motor-car, dog-tired, spent. More, he was sick, it was later learned. To the home of a bachelor friend he went for the night, to awake next morning with double pneumonia. Carried to his home in the Cap, he died two days later, "Erakine Dale" unfinished and his dream of a classic forever unrealized....

"Thus John Fox quit life with a dance."1 The date of his death was July 8, 1919. He was buried in his native

1*Literary Digest*, op. cit., p. 7.
Kentucky, in the Paris cemetery, where the family has a plot. It has been suggested that the death of the old Indian toward the close of Erskine Dale, Pioneer was a conscious foreshadowing of his own death. At any rate, it is something of an unusual coincidence that the last thing he should ever write should be a description of death:

"...and wearily his eyes closed."¹ (Fox, it is recalled, never completed the book, leaving the last chapter, which is very brief, for his sister Elizabeth to finish.)

September 3, 1939, just twenty years after his death, a memorial in Fox's honor was unveiled at the old home site on the Winchester Road, seven miles east of Paris.

It was one of the main features of the Sesquicentennial celebration held at Paris September 3rd to September 6th. The program was in charge of Mrs. V. B. Ardery. Dr. Raymond S. McLain, President of Transylvania College, Lexington, Kentucky, which Fox once attended, made the dedicatory address. (He was introduced by Dr. M. H. Dailey, who was president of the Paris Rotary Club at the time the organization originated the movement to have Fox's birthplace marked. Later the Lions Club, Women's Club and other civic organizations and numerous friends became interested in the idea.)²

¹Erskine Dale, Pioneer, p. 255.
²The Kentuckian-Citizen, CXXXII (September 1, 1939), sec. 1, p. 1.
The marker is formed of two great old millstones which were donated to Miss Lucy Simms, Chairman of the Memorial Fund, by Mrs. A. B. Gay of Woodford County. Friends and admirers donated the bronze tablet set in the face of the stone.

The memorial, unveiled by Lucy Alexander Gay, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gay, and great-niece of Miss Lucy Simms, prominent Bourbon Club woman and lifelong friend of the Fox family who looked toward the establishment of the marker, is erected at the birthplace of the author, near the entrance, which is now the Henry Gaiteskill farm near Stony Point on the Winchester road.

Beloved by little folks for the "Little Shepherd," John Fox's name has also been honored by the children of the Paris schools, who contributed their pennies to purchase a large picture of him which was on display during the Sesquicentennial and now hangs in the school library.

Incidentally, Miss Minnie Fox and Mrs. William Cabell Moore, surviving sisters of Fox, of Big Stone Gap and Washington, D.C., respectively, and Oliver Fox, lone surviving brother, Big Stone Gap, attended the celebration in Fox's honor.
CHAPTER NINE

FOX THE MAN

About five feet, ten inches tall, and weighing between one hundred and forty and one hundred and fifty pounds in the year of his maturity, Fox was slim and wiry, neatly-proportioned, and quite strong for his build. He never became corpulent, even in his later years. One of his friends recalls him thus: "That quaint physiognomy lit by a spirit of humorous mirth; spare, sinewy figure, alert with nervous energy." Although as a young man he was very athletic and in possession of the soundest health, later his health was on the somewhat delicate side. Various factors may be attributed to this. For one thing, he was very temperamental about his eating, hardly ever maintaining a regular diet. As regards food, there are indications that he was something of an epicure, preferring the delicacies of the kitchen, rather than a more substantial fare. In a notable passage in The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, he shows his appreciation of culinary refinements, by describing at some length a dinner at the Deans. The abundance of sensuous details which he gives with a somewhat obvious relish, recalls to

---

1Page, op. cit., p. 674.
mind certain passages of Keats, and, on the whole, would not be unworthy of the English poet, of whom Fox was so fond. Besides eating irregularly, Fox, the older and more mundane he became, was constantly attending parties and dances in New York, sleeping and resting fitfully, and drinking more than was good for him.

Then, too, it must be remembered, earlier in his career, while engaged in the Spanish-American War as correspondent, he contracted yellow fever, the effects of which must have considerably weakened his constitution permanently. One also recalls the many hardships—tramping in the rain or through mud or under a burning sun, desultory food, rest and shelter—which he endured in Manchuria, and which certainly did him no bodily good. One marvels that he was not taken down with pneumonia in the Orient. The fact that he came out of these experiences pretty much unscathed attests to his hardihood and physical endurance.

As to his features, his wife describes them as having been in contour like an Indian's. This is certainly the offhand impression one would have got of him in his late years—dark-complexioned, with a somewhat prominent aquiline nose, and sleek, straight black hair closely plastered down to his head. However, a picture of him during his college

\[1\text{The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, p. 216.}\]
days at Harvard shows him to have been quite handsome, with clean-cut, statuesque features, and a profile almost Greek. He wears no glasses, or the high, starched collar that characterized his dress in manhood. Although his hair is straight, it is not plastered down, but parted in the middle and combed with boyish abandon. On his face is an emphatic look of imperiousness and determination. Everything about him suggests the noble and high-born. Thirty years later he still impresses one as the aristocratic gentleman, the dignified man of letters. His look is gentler, though somewhat imperious; he wears glasses and his nose has become increasingly aquiline.¹

Handsome or not, he seemed to have had that quality that made him a great favorite with the women. Aside from his own beautiful wife's testimony, a neighbor of his in Virginia recently observed with a good-natured chuckle: "I remember him with his long hair and short pants. He used to visit us frequently and he made all the little girls' hearts flutter. He was completely unaffected; and when he visited us, we always had girls to meet him."²

To judge from the various accounts of his friends and even those who knew him casually, Fox must have been a remarkable and wholly loveable man; for when they speak

¹Murrage, op. cit., p. 66.
²Personal interview with Dr. Read.
or write of him, it is always in the most glowing terms; nor is there a single dissenting voice.

"John Fox!" exclaims Page. "What does not this name recall to those who truly knew him. And I who knew him among those to whom he was best known, know well that no words can picture, as he was, that spirit of light and brightness and unchanging youth which was 'John Fox, Jr.'#1 His wife, though she later divorced him, recalls him with the same stirring admiration. "He is the only man I ever loved and I shall ever cherish his memory." And she, too, has characterized him as eternally youthful and buoyant.

Further on in his tribute to Fox, Page writes:

Some authors of any note rather suffer by comparison with their works when one comes to know them. Like those actors who forget that acting belongs to the stage, they sometimes become theatrical even behind the scenes. To this claim John Fox was a shining exception. His marked personal trait, like that of his books, was an absolute naturalness and absence of pose which stamped both with the hallmark of sincerity. It is a high trait either in art or life. He wrote simply and of life as he knew it, and he touched it all as his life was touched with a delicate sentiment as true as it was spontaneous.2

(Sometimes, as we have seen, this "delicate sentiment" violates the canons of good art. But that is another matter.)

All accounts of Fox are unanimous in their singular praise of him and his character and the naturalness and sincerity

---

1Page, op. cit., p. 674.
2Ibid., p. 674.
which he evidently possessed. One who had been to Harvard with him said of him:

Another factor in my admiration of my friend was the charm of his personality and his winning laugh. No one who has heard John Fox laugh will forget it. He laughed his way into the hearts of his comrades, in his youth with as certain a success as, with his forceful and graceful pen, he has written his way into the hearts of his contemporaries in his manhood.¹

Still another contemporary wrote of him, hardly less enthusiastically: "Socially the chronicler of Big Stone Gap is popular. Once met, his presence is ever welcome. His manner is frank, hearty, cheerful, honest, manly. To twist what Samuel Rogers said of Jacqueline, to know him is to love him."²

But the most exalted characterization of Fox comes from Page, to whom we are indebted for much personalia. Among other things he attributes to Fox a

...love of beauty and enjoyment of pleasure, with the keenness and frankness of a child; detestation of the common place; hatred of the ignoble, of egotism, and of bores; richness of sentiment, appreciation of all that makes the joy and charm of life, expressed in sympathetic speech and tone, and in ringing-laughter, mirthful and mirth-inspiring—these united in one were John Fox, but at best only his silhouette.

And Page further remarks of him: "There was that in him of the old adventurers that crossed the seas and pierced the

¹Patterson, op. cit., p. 684.
²Markins, op. cit., p. 199.
mountains—that of the gay lads that sang and sported at the Mermaid and the Kitcat. Like them he drank with zest of the wine of the joy of life, and he gave back with new richness the life and color of whatever company he mingled in, with his joyous and delightful comradeship, friendliness, and spirit. Perhaps it is out of place to remark here that on certain occasions Fox drank too literally of the wine of life; for it is certain that a greater abstemiousness on his part would have prolonged his short-lived life.

The most human account, however, of Fox comes, naturally enough, from his wife, who though she recognized his virtues, was not entirely blinded to his faults as the others seem to have been. But this is not to deny that there is truth in what the others have averred; their reports coincide too much for that. However, it is possible, and only natural that the element of exaggeration should have crept into their accounts of his virtues and that there should be some reluctance on their parts in speaking of his shortcomings; for no one likes to say ill of his friends. For a true picture of him, his wife's account of Fox is indispensable: Fox was not always tolerant. He was, in fact, a man of distinct likes and dislikes, of distinct prejudices, though perhaps that word is a little strong. Like most Southern

1Page, op. cit., p. 674.
gentlemen (of the traditional type), he was a man of positive tastes, strong and high-minded principles whose breach was not to be taken lightly, as witness his censure of Japanese "polite duplicity" and their attitude toward women.

Most of the time he was very affable, possessed of a keen sense of humor and an infectious laugh not easily forgotten. He had a very winning personality, and women, in particular, loved him.

Though, like Edwin Arlington Robinson's protagonist Richard Cory, schooled in all of the social graces, he was not, in later life, as one might suppose from certain of his pictures or his calling as a novelist and lecturer, a poseur. When this was suggested casually to Miss Scheff, she at once took up his defense and was at pains to dispel any such impression of him. His tastes for the most part were simple and wholesome; and he had not that fastidiousness about his clothing and bearing characteristic of the dandy. He was too much of a man to be one. The incident at the dinner party (already cited) at which he first met Fritzi—entering in plain business, where evening clothes were called for—ample bears out his attitude toward the niceties and distinctions of dress. After their marriage, Fritzi bought most of his clothing and tended to such chores as sewing buttons on shirts and suits where they were wanting and would have remained thus if left to Fox.
There are additional proofs that he was no poseur. He was essentially modest and retiring, as most dandies are not. Mornings (when they were living in Virginia) he was unusually reticent, generally passing this time of day in contemplation. He was a great dreamer. Habitually he would go into the woods with his horse and dogs, as he used to do as a young man, and spend many hours there in quiet contemplation, not only of the natural beauty manifest around him, but of his own inner life. Here also would he get many ideas for use in future works.

In the city he was the complete cosmopolite, a brilliant conversationalist, scintillating like some jewel, particularly when he had imbibed a few highballs. Women were captivated by him despite the fact that he was not what one might call handsome at this time, or even very good-looking. To repeat, he had rather an Indianlike face and a not overly imposing build like some tall and strapping collegiate Adonis, though his build was certainly nothing to be ashamed of. But he didn't need to have any unusual physical attributes. His personality, his wit, his rich baritone voice made him the center of attention at social gatherings and one of the most sought after bachelors of his time. In his role as a city-dweller he was invariably entertaining and the best company. And after all, it is not so surprising that he should have been so
cosmopolitan, considering the fact that he was reared in the aristocratic lowlands of Kentucky, educated at Harvard, widely travelled both here and abroad, and a resident of New York much of the time. In the metropolis, it was pretty much with himself as he says of Grayson in one of his short-stories. "You might have guessed that he was a Southerner from his voice and from the way he spoke of women—but no more."¹

But, as Page has noted, "when he visited 'the settlements' he took with him his freedom and his native courtesy, and this was ever one of his charms." Page relates an interesting anecdote in this regard, apropos one of Fox's early visits to New York.

There was an entertainment one snowy night at the house of one of his acquaintances and Fox was invited. Among the belles of the occasion was a beautiful foreigner, [one wonders if this could have been Fritzi Scheff] to whom Fox was presented. When the entertainment broke up, this lady was shown to her carriage by a number of gallants, one or two of them men of distinction in New York society. As they stood about the door after handing her in, a young man, with a 'Beg pardon,' stepped into the carriage, closed the door, and at the sound the horses pranced away through the snow. In great surprise one of the gallants on the sidewalk turned to the others: 'Who is that?'

The answer was: 'John Fox, a young Kentuckian.'

'Well,' said the other, 'by heaven! Fox knows his business.' The simple fact was that Fox, finding the lady unattended, had according

¹Well-far-Sartain, p. 138.
to the Southern custom, asked permission to see her home to her door.1

Besides his native gentility and refinement, one might add his tenderness. This is borne out not only in his attitude toward women, in his consideration of mankind as a whole, but also by his love of all forms of plant and animal life, evidenced in particular by his fond regard for dogs and by the gentle care which he accorded plants and flowers. It is significant that most of his leading sympathetic characters, like Easter of A Mountain Europe, and June and John Hale of The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, show his same fond tenderness for flowers; significant also that dogs, like Satan in "Christmas Eve With Satan," Pug in "Through the Bad Bend," and Jack in The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, to mention the outstanding ones, play a prominent part in his short stories and novels from time to time and that he evidences an acute understanding of canine psychology.

Despite the fact that he had none of his own, with children Fox was ever a great favorite, and he became the friend and playmate of every child he was thrown with. As Page has observed, "It was this sympathy which, when the time came, gave to his description of the boyhood of "The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come" an idyllic quality unsurpassed in the stories of any writer in the English tongue."2 Certainly,

---

2Ibid., p. 676.
his understanding of children and the major parts they
play in his works account, in part at any rate, for the
sweetness of his books. As if to augment this view, Dr.
McLain recently reported, "My own children were thrilled
all out of season, when on a hot August night I read them
'Christmas Night With Satan.' I know they will remember it.
I marvelled, personally, at his understanding of the nature
of a child, and of the child's universal friend, the dog.
Certainly only a childlikeness and simplicity in his own
nature could give rise to such understanding."¹

In a recent dedicatory address to Fox, President
McLain of Transylvania University which Fox once attended,
summed up the goodness of Fox's life. The picture he gives
of him is highly-colored perhaps, but his estimate, if it
does not tell the whole story, is at least essentially true
as far as it goes. To his sympathetic audience President
McLain announced, "His life was good because it was so youth­
ful, buoyant and honest. . . . His life was good because it
portrayed the simplicity and honesty of a day that is pass­
ing. Reading him augments a respect for the quieter, more
philosophic life. It causes one in this modern, gadget­
filled, confused and confusing day to wonder whether or
not we have missed the way.

"His life was good, because it caught, as on a canvas,
the passing colors of his Kentucky."²

¹McLain, op. cit.
²Ibid.
It has been suggested that all was not goodness in Fox, or at least that he possessed traits that weren't exactly saintly. But then he was a human being, and so few are saints. Besides, there is the consolation that saints or paragons as a rule are never as human or lovable as their frailer brethren. And Fox with his mixture of strength and weakness, of firmness and instability was both. In his last book he seemed to have given the clue to his own character when he wrote, "Most fluid and sensitive natures have a chameleon quality, no matter what stratum of adamant beneath." For all his constancy to certain ideals there was ever much of instability, of restlessness, of chameleon-like (to use his own term) mutability that marked him. One sees this in a variety of examples, from a harmless inability to make up his mind to catch a certain train to more serious vicissitudes, fraught, finally, with tragic consequences for him. It was this unpredictable variability, rising at times to an annoying capriciousness, which, more than anything else, caused Fritzi Scheff to divorce him.

Page speaks rather lightly of this side of Fox's nature; but the fact is, he was cognizant of it, and gives us several anecdotes, harmless enough, which illuminate the less serious side of this vacillating disposition, besides

1Erakine Dale, Pioneer, p. 143.
shading light on some of Fox's lesser idiosyncrasies.

He used to find and give much pleasure in descanting on his inability to make a final decision or, at least, hold to it when made—about going to visit anywhere—and especially about leaving a place where he might be. He declared that he had stayed in a little hotel in Bardstown once for a week because he could not summon the resolution to match his socks which the laundress had sent back mismatched. And he rarely arrived without having lost his baggage or some part of it. I recall his arriving once and being met at the station, when his first words after his greetings were: 'Of course, I have lost my valise. But' (cheerfully) 'the conductor will send it on. He knows me.' Just then the station-master, to whom the check for his trunk had been handed, returned with the information that his trunk was not on the train. 'That lost, too?' said he with a laugh. 'Well, thank God for that! Now I can stay as long as I like. I knew I would lose it, but was afraid I'd lose it going somewhere else.'

Once, on this or some other occasion, his trunk on being traced was found to have gone to England.

The decision to take a certain train he declared among the most painful things in life—saying that not only he but his friends would feel that some fundamental change had taken place in him if he kept a travelling appointment.

On one occasion, having accepted an invitation to visit one of his special friends, he went instead to Saratoga, when he telegraphed that he had missed his train. 'You did not miss your train, did you?' asked an acquaintance. 'She knows I did not,' said he. 'She will understand it. She knows me better than I do myself.' And so, in fact, [interposes Page], we all did—and rejoiced to have him as he was.1

Without implying any censure whatever, Page's account continues: "In truth, convention sat lightly upon him, and this extended to literary no less than to social convention. [Page is somewhat in error here as regards literary convention.] Few writers have paid less court to those who are supposed to be the judges in the field of modern literature—'the Literati'." Page's frankly anti-intellectual assertion is hardly a compliment to Fox. The latter would certainly have done better had he paid more attention to these so-called judges. "He was frankly bored by the conventionality of the ordinary literary life and evaded it with joyful satisfaction." This may have been to Fox's benefit, perhaps, as a man, but one can't help conjecturing that it was to his misfortune as a writer. As it is, the most serious charge that can be brought against his works is that they lack depth and mature ideas. "He loved good fellowship mingled with wit and humor [One wonders, were the 'Literati' of his day so devoid of these qualities?]; he was at home amid those who exemplified it; he detested convention and pretentiousness and fled from them—sometimes even to his mountain fastness."

It is probably not out of place to remark here that Fox's life, ironically enough, with its varied and wholesome interests, its complete humanitarianism, was more of a work

---

1Ibid., p. 678.
of art, perhaps, than anything he ever wrote. This, too, throws some light on his shortcomings as an author and thinker: art requires a certain amount of a ascetism in the artist; Fox was too much of a Hedonist ever to achieve greatness. He could not, or preferred not to, give himself wholeheartedly to his craft, and he denied himself the time to think or write consistently and connectedly about his art.

In regard to the less admirable qualities of his character, his wife once again gives us the fairest and completest account. His bibulousness and general independability in later life have already been cited. Like his own character, Jason, in Heart of the Hills, Fox must often have wondered "at the perverse waywardness of his own soul." 1

Fox had much of the dreamer and drifter in his makeup. If he were riding, for example, on a trolley car and something thereon caught his eye or interest, he thought nothing of riding to the end of the line and going even further than that, if need be, to satisfy his curiosity. Such vagaries would sometimes cause him to disappear for as much as two days at a time. Besides such eccentricities, there is no escaping the fact that Fox was somewhat indolent by disposition. Certainly, he could have been very wealthy, had he

1Heart of the Hills, p. 306.
chosen to be. In this regard, however, it can be said that he cared little for material goods. After he had secured a literary reputation, he had numerous opportunities to lecture at handsome fees; most of these he turned down. When he did accept such an offer, which was at rare intervals, it was usually to address a body of school children, where financial remuneration was nil.

As a result of his restlessness, Fox was easily diverted, and, in his later years particularly, shamefully neglected his God-given talents. As a young man, on the other hand, spending most of his time in Virginia and Kentucky, he was very contemplative, and, as already remarked, delighted in long walks in the woods with his horse and dogs. During this period, he also read a great deal; after his marriage, however, his reading was extremely desultory, being confined almost entirely to magazines which he read voraciously. He never discussed either his own works or those of others with his wife. It is entirely possible, however, and very probable, that questions of a literary nature would come up from time to time at his club, where the glib talk frequently alternated from the sublime to the ridiculous; but there is no record of such discussions. He was certainly never a bookworm, in the usual sense of the word, least of all in these later years, and he certainly never gave the impression of being a moth-eaten author.
If anything, he was the outdoor man of letters, given considerably more to action than to introspection. Although, as he grew older, he came to have increasingly less regard for the mountains, he swore, significantly enough, that he couldn’t touch a pen in New York, and consequently did most of his creative work in the cozy, little study of his home at Big Stone Gap.

Besides his friends and the social clubs to which he belonged and in which he liked to while away the time, Fox had many other distractions, particularly sports, and of these mainly golf, on which he was something of a fanatic. He also liked to play cards, relishing a game of bridge or poker for the relaxation which it afforded him. Unfortunately, too, he fell more and more into the liquor habit. His wife reports that he was pretty well “saturated with’alcohol” as were most of his friends. Mark Twain, she observes, was “the soberest of the lot.” However, after his divorce from Fritzli, Fox returned to the mountains, came less and less to New York, and cut down considerably on his drinking. Doubtless, however, there must have been times when, like Marshall of The Kentuckians, he was tempted to "lose himself in the old way." That he was always able to exercise Marshall’s restraint, however, is doubtful.

---

1The Kentuckians, p. 138.
As to Fox's writing habits, one of his contemporaries remarked,

Mr. Fox does his literary work at all seasons of the year. During the winter he divides his time mostly between New York and Big Stone Gap (the bottom has not entirely dropped out of that once prosperous mineral mining-town, and there, too, the climate is always refreshing). Last winter [1902] he and T. N. Page gave some readings together in Washington. In summer he enjoys outdoor life to the full, as his occasional stories in *Outing* suggest.  

In more recent times, there is this statement about Fox's working capacity: "John Fox, Jr. demonstrated a prodigious ability to work. This is revealed by the publisher's date line on some of his major works." Such a list, however, is misleading. In reality, Fox wasted much of his talent and fizzled away a good portion of his energies, particularly in later life. To the casual observer, however, McLain's statement would certainly seem to be true--ten or twelve books and some forty-five short stories in a life span of only fifty-four years, only twenty-five of which, remarkably enough, were devoted to writing. Actually, Fox is not so prolific as he seems; what is more, these same datelines indicate that when, by all reasonable standards, he had reached the height of his literary powers, and

---

2McLain, *op. cit.*
an increased imaginative fertility would have been the natural thing, there is a sharp decline in his productivity. This was undoubtedly due in large part to the division of interest and energies already spoken of. Apropos of his actual writing habits during those years of his married life, his wife informs us significantly: "One couldn't go near him when he was engaged in composing. (This, incidentally, made her unhappy at times.) He was very slow and deliberate about his work, typing out with one finger on an average of only one page a day. At this rate, he rarely bothered to revise his work. He didn't have to, so fastidious was he in the first place. The older he grew, the more golfing absorbed him and deprived him at the same time of those vernal meditations which constituted one of the chief sources of his inspiration. Writing became more and more of a bane to him and he would do anything to get away from it. Golf offered the quickest and easiest escape. Frequently, Fritzl would catch him putting around with a golf ball on the lawn or garden outside the house, and only after chastising him in the manner of a mother to her child, would she get him to return to his literary labors. At this rate it took him nearly five years to complete Heart of the Hills, contrasted with the one week which it took him to write A Knight of the Cumber-land, in 1905, after his return from Manchuria. Surely,
some radical change had taken place in the man.

Although of a long line of Episcopalians and a nephew on his mother's side to the well-known cleric, Ollie Carr, Fox rarely uttered a word on the outside, or for that matter in his books, about his own or formal religion in general. As a grown man, he was never known to attend church. The simple fact of the matter is that he never had time to, or even to discuss such matters. He was always moving about from one place to another, and could tolerate no fetters of any kind. Even marriage was to him a kind of leash, for which reason he was by no means an ideal husband.

Despite this breach with formal religion, however, there is implicitly manifested in much of his work a Christian spirit, which comes out particularly in his many allusions to Christmas and the sentimental aura in which he frequently shrouds this holiday. The theme, good-will-on-earth-to-men, and the inscrutable influence of the "Star of Bethlehem" around Christmas time is the theme of several of his short stories, besides coming in for consideration from time to time in the novels. In The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, for example, not only are there such allusions, but on one occasion, Fox relates with obvious relish through the agency of John Hale the story of the little crystal
Crosses found in Virginia:

There was no crystallization... like them... elsewhere in the world, and that just as crosses were of different shapes—Roman, Maltese, and St. Andrew's—so, too, these crosses were found in all these different shapes. And the myth... was that this little valley was once inhabited by fairies... and that when a strange messenger brought them the news of Christ's crucifixion, they wept, and their tears, as they fell to the ground, were turned into tiny crosses of stone. Even the Indians had some queer feeling about them, and for a long, long time people who found them had used them as charms to bring good luck and ward off harm.

Fox's theology, one infers, was one of humanism. From all available facts, he had little sympathy with dogma, and hated hypocrisy. As to his feelings on the subject of ritual, it is not unlikely his own words in describing Chad in The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come apply to himself. Chad, it is recalled, would slip in to attend the Episcopal church in order to be near Margaret, and would watch her bend "her reverent little head... in obeisance to the name of the Master, though he kept his own held straight, for no popery like that was for him."  

Fox's conception of art was based, as far as one can gather, on his theory of life—a theory whose keynotes are optimism and humanism. He is the typical romancer, believing

---

1 The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, pp. 174-5.  
2 The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, p. 196.
firmly in the innate goodness of man. Most of his stories are redolent of hope, and almost all end on a note of optimism—an optimistic looking-ahead.

In *The Kentuckians*, one of his early books, Fox has Stallard say, "I'm a fatalist, I reckon, as I found out when I studied moral philosophy. I take what comes, if it is better than what I have. I have my wishes, my hopes, even a definite ambition; but I shan't risk wrecking my life on it." Even this view would not seem to conflict on the whole with Fox's philosophy of life. "Fatalist" of course is a little strong. As for the rest of it, it could apply very easily to Fox. He, too, had "a definite ambition"—to one day write a literary classic. Ironically enough, he did risk, or at least endanger his life in trying to fulfill it in *Erskine Dale, Pioneer*, his last work. The nervous physical and mental strain on his system induced by the large amount of research work and by the actual writing which he accomplished when not entirely well undoubtedly hastened his death. Even so, despite resemblances, one cannot at all be certain in the end that Stallard's philosophy was Fox's own. (Stallard, it is remembered, is a mountaineer, and mountaineers are notoriously fatalistic, a fact

---

1*The Kentuckians*, p. 83.
which certainly accounts at least for the first part of the statement.) On the whole, Fox's outlook on life was optimistic.

Despite Fox's dominant optimism, which one associates with the romancer, there were times when he brooded over certain fears. Throughout much of his life, two remained uppermost in his mind—one, a strange fear of pneumonia; the other, that he would be unable to meet his Scribner's deadlines, in which magazine his stories appeared serially from time to time. It is possible that his heavy drinking, particularly in later years, induced the first fear. As a Southerner who loved his leisure, he was a little lazy and always procrastinated writing the next installment on whatever novel happened to be appearing at the time. Both fears, it seems, were prophetically grounded. He finally did die, as we know, of pneumonia, leaving his last novel, 

*Erskine Dale, Pioneer,* ironically enough, just short of being finished.

We have already had recourse from time to time to allude to Fox's multifarious interests. Just how wide and diverse these interests were can be gathered from a cursory review of them. Dr. McLain characterized him as "a many-sided personality [that] provided him with an ability to recognize the interesting, the skilful and the artistic in
life wherever he might find it, . . . and, furthermore, . . . enabled him to be understood as well. There is evidence that his respect for the mountaineer was reciprocated." Among his "interests and abilities," McLain cites various academic and athletic accomplishments, and adds, "to them might be added fishing, hunting and driving."

Fox's wife corroborates these facts in full. He was a great sportsman, and loved almost all forms of athletics, especially tennis as a young man, and golf later. We have already seen where one of his friends praised his gymnastic feats at Harvard, at which institution he also rowed with his class crew, and played baseball. As a result of his tennis proclivities a serious and very painful accident once befell him while visiting in the Adirondacks. He snapped his "Achilles" tendon and was on crutches for a long time thereafter. The tendon never did heal satisfactorily, and, as a result, Fox always had a slight limp during the remainder of his life. He was always a great lover of the so-called national American pastime, baseball. The seven Fox brothers composed almost a whole team by themselves, and frequently played together as such—corn cob pipes dangling from their respective mouths. During his later years, he was a regular visitor at York Harbor, Maine, where he fished, played,

\[1\] McLain, op. cit.
and hunted with such of his friends as the Walter Damreese, of musical fame, and Peter Finley Dunne, creator of "Mr. Dooley." As regards hunting, incidentally, he was one of a party once to a very embarrassing episode. In May, 1916, he got out of favor with the Audubon Societies of the United States, when in a magazine article he wrote that he was one of a party that shot birds in Florida. The article came to the notice of T. Gilbert Pearson of New York, Secretary of the National Association of Audubon Societies, who said that Fox had violated both the Federal and State statutes. 1 Certainly, this violation was unintentional, and Fox was afterwards repentant, for he himself was a fond lover of birds.

From his writings, one can glean many allusions to, and descriptions of, athletic events, given, almost without exception, from a first-hand, authoritative point of view, with considerable gusto. In three stories of the volume Blue-Grass and Rhododenron, "After Br'er Rabbit in the Blue-grass," "Fox-Hunting in Kentucky, "Br'er Coon in Ole Kentucky," Fox devotes considerable space to describing all aspects of the hunt for rabbit, fox, and coon respectively, in which he himself was a frequent participator.

A large portion of the material devoted to the rabbit hunt also appears in *Heart of the Hills*.\(^1\) As to Fox's horsemanship, one might describe him, as he himself described Basil in *Grittenden*, as "sitting his horse as only the Southerner, born to the saddle, can."\(^2\)

Two other selections of *Blue-Grass and Rhododendron*, namely "Through the Bad Bend" and "To the Breaks of Sandy," are concerned almost wholly with accounts of certain fishing expeditions which Fox and his friends went on, periodically, to the mountains—in pursuit, particularly, of shiny, black bass.

In several of his stories, Fox evidences a sound knowledge of football, at least as it was played when he was a young man.\(^3\) And in *A Knight of the Cumberland*, in regards to a track meet that is to take place in the mountains, he speaks of the "jumping broad and high, and a hundred-yard dash and hurdles and throwing the hammer."\(^4\) Evidently he had been a sympathetic observer of such meets in college and elsewhere. In this same narrative, which is related, incidentally in the first person of Fox himself, he revealingly remarks, "We had introduced baseball into the region

---

\(^1\) *Heart of the Hills*, pp. 101 ff.  
\(^2\) *Grittenden*, p. 209.  
\(^3\) *The Kentuckians*, p. 58; *Heart of the Hills*, p. 197.  
\(^4\) *A Knight of the Cumberland*, p. 223.
and the valley boys and mountain boys, being swift runners, throwing like a rifle shot from constant practice with stones and being hard as nails, caught the game quickly and with great ease. We [that is, Fox and his more civilized friends in the mountains] beat them all the time at first, but now they were beginning to beat us. We had a league now, and this was the championship game for the pennant.¹

Fox goes on shortly to describe the game, and his account is so humorous and personally revealing, that it is reproduced here in full.

Now there is no enthusiasm in any sport that equals the excitement aroused by a rural baseball game and I never saw the enthusiasm of the game outdone except by the excitement of the tournament that followed that afternoon. The game was close and Marston and I assuredly were stars—Marston one of the first magnitude. 'Goose-egg' on one side matched 'goose-egg' on the other until the end of the fifth inning, when the engineer knocked a home-run. Spectators threw their hats into the trees, yelled themselves hoarse, and I saw several old mountaineers who understood no more of baseball than of the lost digamma in Greek going wild with the general contagion. During these innings I had 'assisted' in two doubles and had fired in three 'daisy-cutters' to first myself in spite of the guying I got from the opposing rooters. 'Four-eyes' they called me on account of my spectacles until a new nickname came at the last half of the ninth inning, when we were in the field with the score four to three in our favor. It was then that a small, fat boy with a paper megaphone longer than he was waddled out almost

¹A Knight of the Cumberland, p. 227.
to first base and levelling his trumpet at me, thundered out in a sudden silence:

'Hello, Foxy Grandpa!' That was too much. I got rattled, and when there were three men on bases and two out, a swift grounder came to me, I fell—catching it—and threw wildly to first from my knees. I heard shouts of horror, anger, and distress from everywhere and my own heart stopped beating—I had lost the game—and then Marston leaped in the air—surely it must have been four feet—caught the ball with his left hand and dropped back on the bag. The sound of his foot on it and the runner's was almost simultaneous, but the umpire said Marston's was there first. Then bedlam! One of my brothers was umpire and the captain of the other team walked threateningly out toward him, followed by two of his men with baseball bats. As I started off myself toward them I saw, with the corner of my eye, another brother of mine start in a run from the left field, and I wondered why a third, who was scoring, sat perfectly still in his chair, particularly as a well-known, redheaded tough from one of the mines who has been officiously antagonistic ran toward the pitcher's box directly in front of him. Instantly a dozen of the Guard sprang toward it, some man pulled his pistol, a billy cracked straightway on his head, and in a few minutes order was restored. And still the brother scoring hadn't moved from his chair, and I spoke to him hotly.

'Keep your shirt on,' he said easily, lifting his score-card with his left hand and showing his right clinched about his pistol under it. 'I was just waiting for that red-head to make a move. I guess I'd have got him first.'

And speaking of fights, Fox was a close student of boxing and capable of giving a good account of himself, if necessary, with his own fists. Some of his most vivid

---

1Ibid., pp. 229-31.
scenes, out of such diverse works as "The Army of the Cal-
lehan," "A Crisis for the Guard," "The Courtship of Alla-
phair," "The Marquis of Queensberry" (note the very title),
A Mountain Europa, The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, and Heart
of the Hills, are those describing some pugilistic encounter,
with a sufficiency of appropriately vivid and realistic de-
tails, which only a man with a sound knowledge of the art
of boxing could supply.

Besides such virile and out-of-door interests, which
are remarkable for their number and variety, Fox loved and
was devoted to all the arts, painting, music, poetry, drama,
sorcery, etc., even though with the possible exception of
literature and music he could hardly be said to have been
technically schooled in them. (He was a member of the
National Institute of Arts and Letters.) Fox was more the
dilettante, the dabbler, in them, and this dabbling, as
it were, was another manifestation of his wholehearted and
genuine love of life in its entirety. He could sing and
play the piano exceedingly well, accomplishments which he
demonstrated as a member of the Harvard Glee Club, and
later, at various gatherings of friends at which he happen-
ed to be present. In A Mountain Europa, there is a passage
which seems to have been written out of his own personal
experiences, as so much of his work was. When he was a
young man (though Clayton is meant here), "Wagner's tidal
wave. . . reached New York," and it is certain that, like Clayton, he always attended the opening night of the season whenever he could. In his novelette he describes such a night ("The opera was one that he had learned to love") in terms too real for pure invention—"the great theatre aflame with light, the circling tiers of faces, the pit with its hundred musicians, their eyes on the leader, who stood above them with baton upraised and German face already aglow."¹ It is remembered, too, that his wife, Fritz Scheff, was a noted grand and comic opera singer. It is even possible, finally, that like Clayton into whose character so much autobiographical fact appears to have gone, Fox could sketch. However, this is only a conjecture.

Personable and sociable as he was, and with so many interests, it is only natural that Fox's circle of friends should have been wide. Page, one of his close friends, remarked, "He chose and loved his friends because of . . . fellowship. If he became intimate with a 'captain of industry,' a publisher, or a writer, you might be sure that they were good fellows. And had they not been so, he would sooner have 'played with' the smith or the farmer's man. It was the man he chose, not his position."² Thus, Fox had

¹ A Mountain Europa, pp. 84-5.
² Page, op. cit., p. 678.
Legions of friends in all walks of life, and in cities all over the country, as well as abroad, in the literary, theatrical, professional, financial, political, agricultural, and mining worlds. Of these, Peter Finley Dunne, journalist, editor, and author of the Mr. Dooley series was perhaps his best, and the two spent many hours drinking and conversing together. Both were members of two very exclusive, social clubs, the Brook Club, and the Meeting House, which flourished in New York in the early 1900's. Its prominent members would often gather to sip cocktails and parry banter with each other. Such mundane associations were hardly to Fox's benefit, however. They took him from his work, and contributed at the same time to the diminution not only of his literary but physical powers, which eventually led to his early, untimely death.

Among literary men many of Fox's friends were war-correspondents; for as Page has said, "they have at once the literary gift and the adventurous spirit which attracted him." Outstanding of these was R. H. Davis, of whom much has already been written. Since the two were together in the Spanish-American and Russo-Japanese Wars, eating, sleeping, living together, sharing the same hardships and privations, theirs was an especially warm and sympathetic

Ibid., p. 678.
friendship. In 1904, after the Russo-Japanese War, Davis acquired a large estate near Mt. Kisco, New York, within commuting distance of New York City, and called it "Crossroads Farms." Needless to say, Fox, whose brother Rector K. also lived at Mt. Kisco,—Seven Springs Farm, where John and Fritz were married—was a frequent visitor there. In 1917, two years before he died, Fox, as a token of esteem for his friend, dedicated his collection of short stories, *In Happy Valley,* "to Hope, little daughter of Richard Harding Davis."

Other of Fox's prominent friends included Walter Damrosch, the famed concert conductor; the Payne Whitneys, of horse racing fame; Booth Tarkington; Mark Twain, whom he knew well though not intimately; Bob Collier of *Colliers*; Frank Gavin; Thomas Nelson Page; the Longworths; Theodore Roosevelt, of whom he was an admirer; and numerous others in Washington, where his sister Elizabeth still lives, married to Dr. William Cabell Moore.

Fox's friendship with Page is especially significant; for it was Page who wrote about his friend when he died, a lengthy article for *Scribner's,* (the most ever written about him at one time) to which the present-day student of Fox is more indebted for personalia than to any other published piece on him. Page's account is that of a devoted
and sorrowing friend, and in this respect suffers somewhat from being too highly colored. Page was aware of this when he wrote, "In reviewing his work, too many names and too many touches of sentiment reminiscent of the early and abiding friendship and association between the author and the writer of this sketch have met the writer's eye for him to speak of the former without feeling his loss more deeply than one is permitted to express publicly." For all that, however, he gives facts, without which no biography of Fox would be complete.

Fox paid his first visit to Page in the winter of 1894, and was so winning, he was not permitted to leave for five months. Page himself gives the details of their friendship much more completely and vividly than any bald account:

It was back in the early days of his literary life that John Fox and the writer became intimate. He came to pay the writer a visit in the winter of 1894, and was so delightful a guest, not only to host and hostess, but to the children of the family, that he was not allowed to leave for five months. . . . From this time on for a considerable number of years a part of his literary work every year was done during his ever welcome stay with us.2

Fox, it is recalled, wrote a short story, "Christmas Night with Satan," based on the experiences of such visits to Page.

---

1Ibid., p. 675.
2Ibid., p. 676.
Satan was Page's own loveable Scotch-terrier, and Dennie, the dog's even more loveable little mistress in the story aged five or so, "with long black curls," was the counterpart of Page's little niece who lived with him. The whole collection, incidentally, in which this story was afterwards contained, Christmas Eve on Lonesome, was dedicated to Page himself.

In his memoir of Fox, Page gives the circumstances and details of their first meeting which took place

...at an Author's Reading at Chickering Hall in New York—now many years ago.—

Mr. James Russell Lowell presided and William Dean Howells and Charles Dudley Warner and George William Curtis were among the readers. When the reading was over, a smiling young man with white teeth came up on the platform and introduced himself as from Kentucky, and working on The Sun. The writer [Page means himself] began life in Kentucky, and the name and people of Kentucky are bound up with memories of his youth. The next day—I remember the very spot on Broadway between 14th and 23rd Streets—the same young man stopped the writer on the street to say he had not written The Sun account of the reading. That day he entered the writer's life, and a little later the latter read in a theatre in Louisville from John Fox's manuscript a chapter or two of 'A Mountain Europa,' and after a little while, when he began writing, he was for many years a close comrade.2

1Judging from the fact that Fox was working on The Sun at the time, this first meeting between him and Page must necessarily have taken place during one of the summer months of 1883, probably July.  
2Page, op. cit., p. 674.
Page's "privilege of reading" from *A Mountain Europa* gave him, as he says, "the happiness of first introducing [Fox] to a Kentucky audience!"\(^1\)

Page, it is remembered, was a writer of no inconsiderable reputation himself in those days, besides afterwards becoming politically prominent as Ambassador to England. Consequently, his circle of friends was wide, too, and it is likely that many of them were also Fox's. In Page's biography written by his brother, Roswell Page, Fox's name, along with a dozen or so others, is mentioned several times as among his intimate associates. On one occasion, for example, Roswell Page writes: "At his home in Washington he was ever glad to welcome Kentuckians, among whom I might name Major McDowell, John R. Proctor, Helm Bruce, John Fox, Robert Burns Wilson, and James Lane Allen."\(^2\) And on another, the younger Page observes:

> Mr. Charles Dudley Warner often spent a part of his vacation in the Page home, and there one met 'Mr. Dooley,' John Kendrick Bangs, Richard Harding Davis, John Fox, and many other charming people whose names are well known to the reading public.

To visit Page in Richmond came Robert H. Russell and William Carey—'Will Carey'—

---

1. Ibid., p. 675.
that genial soul, one of the men on the Century Magazine, whose wit and humor threatened to keep the Westmoreland Club open beyond the closing hour, and whose reply to 'Nathan' next morning, who wanted to know if the gentleman would have some ice with his apollinaris, became famous: 'If you cannot bring the apollinaris and the ice, bring the ice!' When the young brother of a charming Virginia girl was told by his sister playfully that Mr. Carey was a Yankee, and Carey asked, 'What do you think of Yankees?' the little fellow, who later became a major in France in the United States army, replied: 'We hates 'em, and we fights 'em!'

One notes that 'Will Carey' is the same 'Uncle Carey' of Fox's short story "Christmas Eve with Satan." Fox certainly knew most of the men listed by Roswell Page, if not all as intimately as "Mr. Dooley", R. H. Davis, and Will Carey, at least casually, from having met them from time to time at Page's household, and probably also at other favorite haunts in New York.

Among Fox's literary friends, as among Page's, were Charles and Arthur Scribner and those connected with Scribner's Magazine. They not only published his and Page's books but they gave the authors wise advice about them.

Incidentally, in the summer the Page family usually went to York Harbor, Maine; and we know that Fox and Fritzi likewise spent much of that season there during the years of

*ibid.*, pp. 122-3.
their courtship and marriage.

Much later (about eight years to be exact), when Page returned to the United States after a long absence abroad in line with his duties as Ambassador, the announcement of Fox's death was the first news which he received on his arrival. At the same time he learned, with bitter irony, that on the calendar of John Fox's desk was marked the date on which Fox had planned to greet Page and his kin on their arrival at home.¹

Other of Fox's friends may be inferred from the various dedications of his works. His first work, A Mountain Europa, was dedicated, as already noted, to J. L. Allen, whom Fox knew certainly but was not overly intimate with. Allen was the older man, and Fox in his early manhood looked to him as a teacher and master. (As a matter of fact, Allen actually taught Fox in the pedagogical sense when the latter was a student at Transylvania.) Blue-Grass and Rhododendron was dedicated to Joshua F. Bullitt, Henry Clay McDowell, and Horace Ethelbert Fox—"The First Three Captains of the Guard." The first two were lawyers, fellow Bluegrass Kentuckians who came to work with Fox in the mountains and who figure prominently in his fictions from time to time as Logan and MacFarlan. Horace, of course, was one of Fox's brothers. To

¹Page, op. cit., p. 683.
another brother, his eldest, James, Hell-fer-Sartain, is
dedicated, and to his sisters Minerva and Elizabeth, both of
whom are still living, A Cumberland Vendetta. Two of his
works, incidentally, The Kentuckians and Heart of the Hills,
were dedicated to his father—all of which evidences the close
bond between the author and the various members of his family,
and the esteem in which he held them. Needless to say, this
esteem was more than reciprocated.

After his divorce from Fritzi, Fox stayed almost ex­
clusively in the mountains and was frequently seen in the com­
pany of his neighbor Bascom Slemp, who later became Secretary
to President Calvin Coolidge. Add to the names already given,
numerous cronies among the miners, engineers, lawyers, moun­
taineers and townspeople who inhabited the Gap, and the list
of Fox's friends is indeed imposing.

In conclusion, Page's final tribute "to a friend whom
he knew in the early years of his literary life and in whose
triumphs he took a profound and abiding interest" is perhaps
fittingly given here as the one which his other friends mute­
ly accorded him at his death: "To those who loved him, John
Fox's loss is unspeakable, and though his friends will miss
him and mourn him long, one thought will abide to console
them—that he lived untouched by age and that, having enrich­
ed the literature of his people by his genius, he passed as
he would have wished, with the spirit of youth undimmed in his
heart."1

1Ibid., p. 683.
CHAPTER TEN

ASPECTS OF TECHNIQUE AND STYLE

There is practically no evidence whatever that Fox ever theorized about the craft of fiction. Neither his sister Minnie nor his wife, Fritzi Scheff, both of whom are still living, have any recollection of his ever having spoken or written about the technical aspects of writing, a subject usually reserved for the critic, or of his ever having advanced any pet theories in regards to the construction of his own works. Also, none of his friends or critics who have written about him have ever taken the occasion to mention this matter. Story-telling seems to have been instinctive with him, and the artisanship displayed in his short stories and novels taken for granted. However, every writer has his masters and models, and Fox had his. His liberal education in the Greek and Latin classics undoubtedly inculcated in him an appreciation and apprehension of form and order, directness and simplicity, almost invariable characteristics of his fictions. He was well versed besides in the traditional English classics, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Keats, had read widely in American literature, and was familiar, as his work shows, with certain contemporary novelistic techniques, besides being influenced,
not always happily, by the main literary currents of his day.

Fox's best work shows his technique to have been in advance of the conventional Victorian novelist's; or to put it another way, he seems to stand midway in technique between such Victorian novelists as Thackeray and Meredith and such pre-moderns as Henry James and Joseph Conrad, though he is considerably lesser in stature than any of these. One does not find in his novels the static psychology or the chronic propensity to be morally edifying of a George Eliot; nor the formlessness of Dickens—though unfortunately one finds a great deal of their sentimentality. On the other hand, one does not find technical experiments on the order of either a James or Conrad. However, there is a reminder in some of Fox's works of James' characteristic procedure: the telling or unfolding of a story from the point of view, or from within the consciousness, of one of the characters. One notes this particularly in his two most successful novels, The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come and The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, where much of what takes place is seen through the eyes of the leading protagonists, Chad Buford and John Hale, respectively. But Fox is never consistent in the use of this device. Taking the omniscient author's liberty, he shifts his focal points periodically and thereby gets around the narrowness of vision that results from the fact that one man cannot be everywhere at the same time,
the most serious limitation of the single point of view. Needless to say, however, he also loses in the artistic consistency and dramatic intensity afforded by a strict adherence to such a point of view.

This chapter does not propose to give a detailed account of Fox's technique, for such a discussion would necessarily involve much needless repetition, but intends merely to serve as a recapitulation of what has already been demonstrated in this regard and to illuminate further points which heretofore have been merely suggested.

One comes first to certain matters regarding the structural framework of Fox's stories. As a rule they constitute a logical progression of incident and fact, with occasional nostalgic flashbacks ("memories") toward the end. Once in a while—but this is rare—there are prolegomenous sections containing factual sidelights or comments on the main narrative. As a matter of fact, there are actually only five notable examples of this, three in the short stories, "After Br'er Rabbit in the Blue-grass," "Fox Hunting in Kentucky," and "Br'er Coon in Ole Kentucky," where all general facts about the hunt are given. These selections, however, are more fact than fiction anyway and were intended as such—that is, as instructional essays on Kentucky for the outsider; so this procedure is central to Fox's purpose here. The remaining two examples are
found in The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, Chapters X, "The Bluegrass," and XIX, "The Blue or the Gray," of five and eight pages respectively. In the three stories from Blue-Grass and Rhododendron, just cited, it is interesting to recall, too, that Fox foregoes a logical narrative progression for the sake of a greater dramatic effect.

As regards Fox's other short stories, one remembers that the author is frequently fond of opening and closing them on the same note. This is seen particularly in the Hell-fer-Sartain collection. One finds this occasionally in the novels, but not enough to be called a mannerism—in Heart of the Hills, for example, where the opening scenes disclose Jason and Mavis Hawn playing together as children by a certain fishing creek, and the closing, as adults playing by the same creek; and again in The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, where the first chapter focuses on the forlorn little shepherd, and the last, effectively bringing the novel to a close, on the same solitary figure of Chad, now grown to manhood.

As a rule Fox's stories open thus upon one or more of his leading characters. In A Mountain Europa the opening scene exhibits Clayton's unusual meeting with Easter seated upon her bull; in A Cumberland Vendetta, Jason and Rome Stetson walking along a mountain path; in Crittenden, Crittenden returning by train from the mountains; in The
Kentuckians. Randolph Marshall orating at the State Capitol, and in The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, John Hale, observed by June, fishing in a mountain stream. But Fox is also careful to lead us gradually into an account of such characters and into the story itself. That is, he refrains from telling us everything about these principal personages, gradually unfolding instead their appearance and characteristic traits. For the most part, there are no long, prolegomenous, set descriptions such as occur so often in a novelist like Balzac; one finds no such full-length character-portraits at the beginning of his books as that of "The Chief" in Meredith's Vittoria. One may contrast the technique of Smollet, Scott, and especially Dickens. Their elaborate descriptions of characters on their first appearance go back through the eighteenth century essay to the "character writers" of the seventeenth century. To introduce such full-length portraits into a novel is psychologically bad. One does not really follow this order in observing people. In reality the eye first lights upon some one particular thing—an individuality or oddity of dress or manner or speech—and it is around this quality that other characteristics gradually accumulate. Fox is usually well aware of this. He avoids most successfully the common error of describing at once and in great detail the appearance of persons in whom the reader is not yet interested.
This is generally accomplished by letting the reader come across the character, as it were, much as any stranger in the book might chance upon him.

In no way are Fox's sense of architectural proportion and his feeling for relative values more finely shown than in the comparative amounts of detail that are worked into his character-drawing. In his best novels and novelette the full light is thrown upon a few central figures, and even within that narrow circle there are different degrees of illumination. Fox is here at the opposite pole from a novelist like Balzac, who portrays not only minor figures but often merely incidental persons, people who are but parts of the background and have no influence upon the course of events, with an elaborate care equal often to that expended upon his principal characters. With his eye always on the movement of the story, Fox entirely resists the temptation of such digressions. Throughout his novels it would be easy to chart the degrees in the descending scale from such commanding figures as, say, Chad Buford or June Tolliver or Jason Hawn, through secondary people like Sherd Raines or Basil Crittenden or Caleb Hazel, to the crowd of mountaineers and other people who form a kind of background for the main action. Moreover, in drawing his portraits Fox practices a rigid exclusion of non-essentials. We hear practically nothing, for example, of
Clayton’s life as a student in Germany and only so much of his life in New York as is needed to understand his relations with Easter and the mountaineers. Or, again, nothing is told of Martha Lewallen’s life out West. Fox’s unbroken rule seems to have been to tell just so much of the life story of his characters as it is necessary to know to follow his theme or the course of his narrative. In passing, one notes also that Fox possessed to a notable degree, the valuable knack, like Meredith or Stevenson, of giving a single significant detail which at once sheds considerable light upon a character.

There is a similar subordination (though this is more difficult to illustrate) of details to the total effect in the matter of incidents and episodes, and most events are stressed in proportion to their importance for the general story.

The rural setting of the mountain-novels in a sequestered vale of life, though it restricts Fox’s range of subject and character, possesses corresponding advantages. It confirms the unity of effect. It accounts plausibly for the close interconnections of the various personages. It explains the absence of various conventions that have been imposed on more “advanced” communities and gives ample room for the expression of individuality without the checks that arise from the power of reason when strengthened by
convention. As a rule Fox's plots are simple and the passions which he describes primary, rather than subtle—love, hate, anger, rage, revenge, etc. Many of these, of course, are also elemental, particularly when he is dealing with the mountaineer. When he is concerned with more "civilized" characters, one gets, naturally enough, certain refinements and distinctions—tenderness, duty, contempt, chagrin, disillusionment, etc. Hence the setting of the mountain novels is the appropriate ground for men and women yielding to the dictates of instinct: warm, elemental, vigorous human beings who are close to earth. From this setting, too, comes the sense of detachment and separation from the outside world that makes each novel seem complete in itself and unlike the imaginary scene of many other writers whose novels seem mere fragments of a larger world. There is a consequent loss of breadth, perhaps, but there is a gain in intensity.¹

Despite the impression of completeness within themselves which his individual works convey, there is an even more important completeness of Fox's works as a whole. Taken as such, the reader feels that they possess a certain

¹Incidentally Fox is no strict adherent to the unities, least of all in his novels, though frequently he does adhere to the unity of place. The fact that he does not adhere to them, however, does not detract materially from the essential classicism of his work as a whole, as regards directness, proportion, and form.
organic quality that ties one to the other. It is as
T. S. Eliot has said of Shakespeare, that the whole of his
work is one poem and

...it is the poetry of it in this
sense, not the poetry of isolated lines
and passages or the poetry of the single
figures which he created, that matters
most. A man might, hypothetically, com­
pose any number of fine passages or even
of whole poems which would each give satis­
faction, and yet not be a great poet, un­
less we felt them to be united by one
significant, consistent, and developing
personality.1

—remarks which apply equally to the novelist and in par­
ticular to Fox, though he could not be called a "great"
novelist. Page, for one, felt this unity as inhering in
Fox's works when he wrote,

...and yet, generally each tale, while
a story, is also a novel, in that it
reflects a section of the whole current
of the life of the time. This, indeed,
is characteristic of John Fox's works:
that even in a short story it is never
only a detached episode; but about his
central figure or fact he groups so com­
plete a company and places them in so es­
sential a setting that we feel that we
have a complete picture of the life within
the horizon given by the author.2

There are various ways in which the poet or novelist
achieves this integrity, contributing factors doubtlessly

2 Page, op. cit., p. 679.
being the recurrent use of themes and images. With the
novelist the recurrent use of scenes and conflicts tend
to bolster the impression of totality, and with Fox such
a use has been seen time and again. In addition, it has
been seen where a restrictive setting, such as the Cum­
berland ranges, which Fox frequently employs, can also
contribute to the intensity and compactness of a writer's
work. There is one more important way, however, in which
Fox frequently links his stories together, and that is, by
the reintroduction from time to time of many of the same
characters into different works. Henry James, explaining
the reappearance of Christina Light in The Princess Casa­
massima, speaks of "the obscure law under which certain of
a novelist's characters, more or less honorably buried, revive
for him by a force or whim of their own and 'walk' round his
house of art like haunting ghosts."1 Undoubtedly Fox was
not exempt from this experience, though it could hardly
have been said of him that he ever revived a character
once "honorably buried." However, in projecting a series
of novels the action of which occurs for the most part
within a narrow stretch of country, a district over much of
which it is possible to walk in the course of a week-end

1Henry James, The Princess Casamassima, New York: Charles
excursion, there must have been a special temptation to connect the several books together by introducing the same characters into two or more of them. Zola employed this method through a long series of stories dealing with the fortunes of various members of the same family. In the Comedie Humaine a vast crowd of people come and go, and there is presented now one phase and now another in the career of various principal personages, with a resultant confusion that requires a sort of guidebook if we are properly to follow the lives of the outstanding characters. Thackeray uses such links hardly ever; Dickens, so far as one remembers, only in Master Humphrey's Clock; Hardy, frequently, in the Wessex Novels, particularly by his introduction of someone as a minor character, to reinforce the impression of time and place, as part of the locality (as it were), in one story who in another story is of psychological importance. Fox is very much like Hardy in this respect, as well as in his dependence on the unity of background to link a series of tales together. Thus, Sherd Raines who is a principal actor in A Mountain Europa, is just mentioned or alluded to thereafter in A Cumberland Vendetta, "The Last Stetson," Hell-far-Sartain, The Kentuckians, Christmas Eve on Lonesome, the time and general locality of the tales being thus fixed as about the same. On a more obvious level "The Last Stetson" is a sequel to A Cumberland Vendetta and
thus deals with many of the same characters as its predeces sor. Incidentally, one notes such links almost exclusively in the stories which are laid either directly in the mountains or which contain mountain personages. The Cumberlands are a by-word in such stories, besides which the reader grows familiar with such specific locales as Jellico Spur, Pine Mountain, Hazel, Thunder Struck Knob, Wolf's Head, Troubled Fork, the "Gap", Cuteshin, Kingdom Come, Wallen's Ridge, the Pound, and others which are mentioned frequently throughout. A number of minor figures, serving as a kind of background, also make their appearance from time to time.

In the Hell-fer-Sartain stories such names as Abe Shivers, Rich Harp, Nance Osborne, Harve Hall, Jim Perkins, Polly Ann Sturgill, Talt Hall, and Senator Mahone appear periodically. Two stories in this collection, as we have seen, deal with the experiences of one Grayson, who is later alluded to in The Trail of the Lonesome Pine. The In Happy Valley collection of tales, besides all being laid in or about Happy Valley, contain such familiar names throughout as Saint Hilda, Pleasant Trouble, Jeb Mullins, Lum Chapman, and Parson Small. St. Hilda also plays a minor role in Heart of the Hills, the novel which preceded this collection. Other familiar names are Talt Hall, the Red Fox of the mountains, Logan and MacFarlan, Jack Woods, the Infant of the Guard, and the Honorable Sam Budd, which appear from
time to time in Blue-Grass and Rhododendron, Christmas Eve on Lonesome, The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, and A Knight of the Cumberland,—works which include at one time or another accounts of the activities of the Volunteer Police Guard, another connecting link between such stories. Fox has thus, with faint, fine, infrequent touches linked together the persons and places of his imagination—persons and places often taken from real life—without ever approaching the point where such links become confusing entanglements.

Other aspects of Fox's technique may be glossed here. The greatest weakness of his characters is that they are all too much of one pattern, noble, generous, heroic, morally unimpeachable; they are not enough impelled by the forces of Good and Evil. His mountain characters are as a rule his most convincing, for they do not behave always according to the best dictates of reason, but, being closer to the earth, act frequently out of impulse or elemental instinct which makes them more like ordinary human beings, more prone to the less noble passions such as hate, vindictiveness, revenge, etc., more susceptible, in a word, to the frailties of human nature.

Of the others, we find this romantic colouring dominant in his heroines, particularly, mountain or otherwise alike. Easter Hicks, Anne Bruce, Judith Page, Melissa Turner, Margaret Dean, June Tolliver, Mavis Hawn, Marjorie
Pendleton, Juno, and Barbara Dale are all of the same ilk—beautiful, with a sense of innate refinement, glorified and etherealized for the most part—women to be loved and worshipped at a distance, in sum, not flesh and blood women, but an embodiment of the Kentuckian female ideal, Virgin Marys every one of them. Page, in what is intended as high praise, unwittingly gives this damaging estimate of them: "Their feminine portraiture in lines of incomparable tenderness and charm is his tribute to the women of his people which should place them under obligation to him as long as purity and beauty and feminine grace shall be deemed attributes of woman's loveliness."¹ (Italics supplied.) Unfortunately, the reader is not interested in such a tribute to Kentuckian womanhood as embodied by the abstract generalized type which Fox depicts. As a serious reader of fiction, he is interested in universal human values and demands that the characters embodying or reflecting such values be psychologically individualized. Fox's women on the whole are not. Martha Lewallen of A Cumberland Vendette is a possible exception, and she, significantly enough, is mountain bred.

Fox's heroes suffer from this same one-sidedness. Clayton, Marshall, Stallard, Clay and Bob Crittenden, Chad

¹Page, op. cit., p. 882.
Buffard, John Hale, Gray Pendleton, and Erskine Dale are all too good to be true, gallant, chivalrous, high-spirited. Page, continuing in the same vein as above, paradoxically hits upon their very weakness when again his intention is high praise: "But if beauty drew him, heroism controlled him no less. His heroes are ever cast in an heroic mold, and this heroism is as often moral as physical, and in his pages the latter ever is the handmaid of the former."

(Italics supplied.) As a matter of fact, one tires of being continually accosted with what Page calls "an unbroken record of courage and devotion to ideals"; it gets somewhat monotonous hearing always, to borrow Fox's own figure, Aristides called the Just. Of the more or less major figures only Jason Hawn and the "Red Fox" are perhaps the exceptions to the rule, and they, too, significantly, are mountaineers. Again, as in the case of the women, Page justifies Fox on the score of patriotism to his native State. "In writing as he has he has done [it] an inestimable service." Perhaps this is so, but there is little literary justification for the majority of Fox's leading dramatic personas.

Although Fox's main characters are intrinsically weak, for the reasons just enumerated, his methods of characterization, of bringing them to the fore, are quite often

---

1Ibid., p. 682.
efferacious, being dictated frequently by a psychological urgency. At such times, Fox's recognition of a dramatic immediacy is perceptible. His avoidance as a rule of the set, mechanical description has already been noted and is relative to the point. Other of his dramatic devices for realizing a character include: the presentation of one character through the consciousness of another, the favorite Jamesian device, or the penetrating the consciousness of a character by a recognition of inner motives and conflicts emotionally active within the character himself. This penetration Fox achieves either by a personal introspection, such as found in "The Last Stetson";¹ or by a dramatic soliloquy, such as found at the beginning of The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come,² where the homeless Chad debates with himself whether or not to take some of his late guardian's effects and rationalizes the appropriation of such articles as the gun, corn pone, etc.; or by a free association of ideas, such as found toward the end of The Trail of the Lonesome Pine; or, on one occasion, by a presentation approximating the so-called stream of consciousness, such as found in Grittenden, when the nominal protagonist is in the delirium of a jungle fever.³ Occasionally,

² The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, pp. 6 ff.
³ Grittenden, pp. 194 ff.
one gets the static psychologizing of a Fielding—that is, where the author seems to be talking about, or discussing his character’s conflicts with the reader—the outstanding example of which is found in the “Blue and Gray” chapter of *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*. Such psychologizing is far less dramatically expedient than where the character appears to be thinking and acting for himself. Occasionally, also, one gets the flash-back method of revealing the inner workings of a character’s mind—a technique tied up with Fox’s sentimental use of “memories,” which generally come toward the end of a work. On the whole, however, the reader is not to get the impression that there is overly much of psychological analysis of character in Fox of any kind. The examples cited above are the exception rather than the rule.

Frequently Fox’s dramatic sense was the very thing that led him into his worst transgressions against good taste, by inducing an unnatural straining for effect, which in turn resulted in his too frequent sensationalism and sentimentalism, and his occasional reliance on coincidence. A roll call of all such artistic violations is unnecessary here; the point has been sufficiently exemplified in the discussion of his individual works. Other aspects of Fox’s

---

1*Heart of the Hills*, p. 91.
work which have already been sufficiently treated include his frequent use of symbolism; like one of his characters in "The Pardon of Becky Day," he too "saw a symbol in every mood of the earth."¹ This practice is in a sense, related to his occasional recurrence to the "pathetic fallacy."

One notes also his employment of striking and functional images, which ties up with his knack for choosing an appropriate metaphor.

One might also point out, as Page has already done, Fox's genius for names; for as his friend has said of him, "they meant much to him and he chose them with as much care as Balzac. The names of his stories and novels—A Mountain Europa, A Knight of the Cumberland, 'The Blight in the Hills,' The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, The Trail of the Lonesome Pine [and to these one may add Hell-fer-Sartain, Christmas Eve on Lonesome, Blue-Grass and Rhododendron, and Following the Sun-Flag, among others] occur among his titles, and at once enlist attention by their originality and their poetic suggestion."²

Finally, Fox's work, by the very nature of it, is replete with dramatic contrasts, social, moral, and otherwise, stated and implied. Page was once led to compare Fox with

¹Christmas Eve on Lonesome, p. 47.
²Page, op. cit., p. 680.
Bret Harte, a leading exponent of such contrasts, but curiously enough did not mention them as a quality shared in common by the two authors. Instead, he remarks, "Fox's early stories were as fresh and racy of the soil which brought Bret Harte his fame in the '70's, and with equal reason. . . . His characters amid their artistic setting, stood out with the same clearness, the same individuality and the same compelling recognition of their reality that we find in the earlier novelist's [sic] tales of the Sierras."¹ One might easily extend the analogy between the two men by pointing out the predominance of the sentimental and sensational in both. There is no question that Fox, as other of the "local colorists," owed much to Harte, who with his "The Luck of Roaring Camp" and "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" gave regionalistic fiction its first powerful impetus.

Regarding the contrasts contained in Fox's work, it has been pointed out that "such efforts as A Knight of the Cumberland and The Kentuckians, by their contrast, throw the dominant characteristics of the mountaineer and the patrician of the Bluegrass into bold relief."² One could apply this observation to practically all of Fox's works.

¹Ibid., p. 681.
²McLain, op. cit.
Even in *Following the Sun-Flag* there are numerous social 
and moral contrasts between Western and Oriental civiliza-
tion. Such contrasts not only add an extra dimension to 
Fox's work, as it were, but are frequently functional to 
his stories by constituting the motivation of the internal 
conflicts which characters like Clayton, Hale, and Gray 
Pendleton experience from time to time. They are also the 
source frequently of a certain variety of Fox's humor.

Whatever Fox's place in American letters, the quality 
and quantity of his humor as a whole keep much of his work 
permanially interesting and readable, just as this quality 
of the man himself made him one of the most attractive of 
individuals and invariably the best company. This comic 
spirit lent buoyancy and verve to the man and his work 
alike, and on more than one occasion actually contributed 
to the serious intent of his writings, particularly in *Fol-
lowing the Sun-Flag* and *A Knight of the Cumberland*.

Fox's comic spirit assumed many forms, and his humor 
may be categorized as on several levels: from wit, or 
thoughtful laughter, to broad pictorial humor. In a promi-
nent light is that humor, just alluded to, which results 
from contrast, usually between mountaineer and outside 
standards. This mountain humor, as one might call it, is 
very much on the order of Frontier humor which "long drew
its principal inspiration from the differences between that frontier and the more settled and more compact regions of the country, and reached its highest development in Mark Twain.\textsuperscript{1} The mountains might very well be considered as an arrested frontier, and its inhabitants our living ancestors as it were. As a matter of fact, Fox characterizes the latter just so in \textit{Heart of the Hills}, through the medium of a "passing lecturer," who calls the mountain people 'our contemporary ancestors.'\textsuperscript{2} Incidentally, the mention of Twain in the above quotation is also quite appropriate here, for Fox's humor often shows a strong Twainian influence. That is, Fox frequently achieves his humorous effects in the same manner and by the same means as Twain.

In the class of mountain humor fall such examples as the rendering of a sermon in mountain dialect;\textsuperscript{3} all of the mountain dialect stories in \textit{Hell-fer-Sartain}; and two very amusing scenes in \textit{The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come}—one, where Chad persistently starts the bidding at five dollars at an auction sale of thoroughbreds in the Bluegrass,\textsuperscript{4} and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} \textit{Cambridge History of American Literature}, Vol. 2, p. 159.
\item \textit{Heart of the Hills}, p. 202. This significantly is also Horace Kephart's phrasing.
\item "The Last Stetson," pp. 253 ff; \textit{Hell-fer-Sartain}, pp. 152 ff.
\item \textit{The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come}, pp. 99 ff.
\end{itemize}
the other, a little later, at the home of Major Buford, where the latter jokingly offers the mountain boy a drink and gets for reply,

'I don't keer if I do,' said Chad, gravely. The Major was astounded and amused, and thought that the boy was not in earnest, but he handed him the bottle and Chad poured out a drink that staggered his host, and drank it down without winking. At the first, the Major pulled out his chewing-tobacco. This, too, he offered and Chad accepted, equaling the Major, in the accuracy with which he reached the fireplace thereafter with the juice, carrying off his accomplishment, too, with perfect and unconscious gravity. The Major was nigh to splitting with silent laughter for a few minutes. . . .

Illustrations of such humor in A Knight of the Cumberland have already been given. A few more from Fox's other works may be cited here. In Heart of the Hills, for example, there is the scene of Jason Hawn running frightenedly from a railroad train which he has seen for the first time, and later remarking, 'Danged if I didn't think it was a saw-mill comin' atter me.' And from the same book, the lad's sober comment on college registration, 'That's a mighty big word for such a little doin's.' Then again, in the short story "The Goddess of Happy Valley" one of the characters who has

1Ibid., p. 107.
2Heart of the Hills, p. 96.
3Ibid., p. 183.
been reprimanded by Doctor Jim walks away musing, 'Now, what the hell did he mean by "silly"?" and in "The Battle-Prayer of Parson Small" Aunt Sis Stidham's observation at the conclusion of a vehement sermon against the evils of Whiskey and "King Alcohol": 'That's been so much talk about drinkin', muttered [she] as she swayed out, 'that hit's made me plum' thirsty. I'd like to have a dram right now.'

There is also much humor based on contrast in Following the Sun-Flag, except that here, as already remarked, Oriental and Western customs and ways are contrasted. On one occasion, Fox observes, 'It is pleasant to be welcomed by a host and a host of servants bent at right angles with courtesy—a courtesy that follows you everywhere.' Or again, "'You have your troubles,' the [Japanese] say, 'therefore I must not burden you with mine.' And a man will tell you, with a smile, of some misfortune that is almost breaking his heart." About the Japanese bathing customs, Fox remarks,

The government has tried, I believe, to legislate into the people Occidental ideas of modesty. One regulation provided that the sexes should be separated. They were separated—

---

1: *In Happy Valley*, p. 252.
3: Following the Sun-Flag, p. 24.
4: Ibid., p. 25.
by a bamboo rafts floating on the water. Another time it was announced that bathing trunks must be worn at a certain place by the sea. One old chap issued leisurely from his house on the hill-side and stalked down without clothes, swinging his trunks in his hand. After he got into the water he put the trunks on, and as soon as he came out he took them off again and stalked home swinging them as before. 1

Or of Japanese etiquette, regarding the drinking of tea:

We were to take the bowl, the left hand underneath, the fingers of the right hand clasped about it, lift it to the forehead, a movement of unspoken thanks, and very gently, so as not to suggest that the tea needed to be dissolved, were to roll the tea around in the bowl three times and then take one drink—making much noise, meanwhile, with the lips to show how much we enjoyed it. . . . O-kin-san says that this last swallow should be only the foam, which must be drunk to show that the tea is so good that the guest must have even the foam; and that not until then does the noise of appreciation come, and then only because the foam cannot be drunk without noise. It was well. 2

Or again, regarding the lack of Japanese gallantry between the sexes, "The song of the 'Goo-goo Eyes' would never have been written in Japan." 3 And so on. 4

There are many other varieties of humor found in Fox that warrant mention here. There is that humor based on exaggeration, a quality characteristic of much mountain and

---

1Ibid., pp. 37-8.
2Ibid., pp. 42-3.
3Ibid., p. 44.
4For other examples see Ibid., pp. 63, 65, 68 and 85.
especially frontier and early American humor ("tall" tales of the Bunyan calibre, etc.), and besides, of much of Twain's humor which, as noted, was in the direct line of this pioneer tradition. (See his "The Leaping Frog of Calaveras County"). Examples from Fox include the "tall" anecdotes of the "scholar" in the selection "Down the Kentucky on a Raft," of which the following is typical and which "he always prefaced . . . with the overwhelming authority that: 'Hist'ry says!"

He declared that history said that a bull, seeing some cows across the river, had jumped from the point of a high cliff straight down into the river; had swum across and fallen dead as he was climbing the bank.

'He busted his heart,' said the scholar. 1

Of the same type is such a "reminiscential" tale of old Ben, at one time a ferryman, in the same piece, as:

'Thar was a slosh of ice runnin' in the river,' he said, 'an' a feller come a-lopin' down the road one day, an' hollered an' axed me to take him across. I knewed from his voice that he was a-drinkin', and I hollered back an' axed him if he was drunk.

"'Yes, I'm drunk!'"

'How drunk?' I says.

'Drunk as hell!' he says, 'but I can ride that boat.'"

'Well, there was a awful slosh o' ice a-runnin', but I let him on, an' we hadn't got more'n ten feet from the bank when that feller fell off in that slosh o' ice. Well,

1Blue-Grass and Rhododendron, p. 73.
I ketched him by one foot, an' I drug him an' I drug him an' I drug his face about twenty feet in the mud, an' do you know that damn fool come mighty nigh a drownin' before I could change ends!

Then there are the typical "fish" stories, such as one finds recorded in "To the Breaks of Sandy," one of several selections which describe a fishing expedition through the mountains; at such stories Little Willie—"six feet three in his bare feet"—in particular, seemed to have been quite adept, as evidenced by this tale "that he knew to be true."

'You know how rapidly a bass grows?'
We did not know.
'You know how a bass will use the same hole year after year?'
That we did know.
'Well, I caught a yearling once, and I bet a man that he would grow six inches in a year. To test it, I tied a little tin whistle to his tail. A year later we went and fished for him. The second day I caught him.' Willie knocked the top-ashes from his pipe and puffed silently.
'Well?' we said.
Willie edged away out of reach, speaking softly.
'That tin whistle had grown to a fog-horn.'

The Hon. Sam Budd's grandiloquence in *A Knight of the Cumberland* might be classified as a refined kind of exaggeration, as well as such remarks out of *Following the* 

---

1[End]. pp. 74-3.
2[End]. pp. 170-1.
Sun-Flag as: "I am told that after five or six years
the molecules even in the granite of the New England char-
acter begin to get restless";¹ and (speaking of his ex-
habitant bill at a certain Japanese hotel):

We had to pay in addition for that
room and those eighty mats and that Fuji
landscape of delicate woodwork; we had to
pay for all the brilliant moths that flut-
tered incessantly about, for the chamber-
maids and the smiling bronze scullery-girl
who looked in on us from the hallway; for
the bath-boy and the cook or cooks. Every
junk and sampan that passed had apparently
sent a toll for collection to that hotel.
The gold of the one sunset and the silver
of the one dawn were included in the turkey-
tracked, serpent-long bill that was unrolled
before our wondering eyes. In fact, if
Marquis Ito's breakfast and the biggest dinner
that Li Hung Chang had there nine years before
were not put down therein, it was a strange
oversight on the part of the all-seeing eye
that had swept the horizon of all creation
during the itemization of that bill. That
was business—that bill.²

The circuit-rider's plea for rain in The Little
Shepherd of Kingdom Come may also be cited as a humor of
exaggeration, besides containing a number of intrinsically
"funny" words: "'O Lord, we do not presume to dictate to
Thee, but we need rain, an' we need it mighty bad. We do
not presume to dictate, but, if it pleases Thee, send us,
not a gentle sizzle-sozzle, but a sod-soaker, 'O Lord, a

¹Following the Sun-Flag, p. 9.
²Ibid., p. 86.
gally-washer. Give us a tide, O Lord!\[1

Akin to the humor of exaggeration is that of understatement, of which there are several examples in Fox. Speaking of Dean Prior's horse in *Following the Sun-Flag*, he remarks, "Then he had an ungovernable passion for lying down in mud-holes and streams, which held distinct possibilities for discomfort." On another occasion, in the same book, during the course of a conversation with the Japanese General Oku, Fox observes dryly, "He laughed and his teeth were not good." There is also a certain anti-climatical suggestion in such remarks. Examples of the humor of anti-climax, however, are better apprehended by such comments as: "The women patted and caressed her, and the men doubtless would have liked to do the same, but that is not a Japanese custom"; and, "It's 1:00 A.M. The fleas won't sleep, and for that reason I can't."4

One of the chief attributes of humor, or wit, is its unexpectedness. The witty saying or funny remark catches the reader off guard, as it were, surprises him by its unusual, unlooked-for turn. Such a turn, or effect, is generally produced by the juxtaposition of incongruous

---

1 *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, p. 59.
2 *Following the Sun-Flag*, p. 175.
elements, elements that one does not ordinarily expect to find together. This unexpected juxtaposition accounts for the effect of much humor in general, and in particular of the humor of such phrases and observations out of Fox as:

"and two women give vent to that adaptation of the Methodist hymn that passes for an Hawaiian song";¹

"next summer about two o'clock";²

"the soldier sprouting Japanese with French vivacity";³

"and the chicken—well, it was a question which was the more disturbing conjecture—how long it had lived or how long it had been dead";⁴

"His bicycle-tire was punctured and he was trying to mend it, Brill says, with 25-cent postage-stamps."⁵

Incongruity is also the basis of the humor of such a scene as this:

The Chinaman had never heard a word of English before in his life, but the Irishman was talking to him with perfect gravity and fluency about the war and about us, giving our histories, what we had done and what we had failed to do, and all the time the old Chinaman was bowing with equal gravity, and smiling as though not one word escaped his full comprehension.⁶

¹Ibid., p. 9.
²Ibid., p. 78.
³Ibid., p. 112.
⁴Ibid., p. 113.
⁵Ibid., p. 116.
⁶Ibid., p. 172.
And in the same vein, the sudden transitions manifest in the following conversation explain the humor there:

She turned suddenly on me:

"You have written a book."

"Guilty," I said.

"And what does that mean?"

"It means that I have," I said lamely.

We talked international differences.1

There is much verbal humor in Fox, that is, humor produced by an unusual use of, or by a play on, words. The pun is a distinct form of such humor, and, judging from the frequency with which it appears in his work, Fox was not at all loath to employ this form of wit. There are about a dozen such examples throughout his writings.2

Examples of Budd's bombastic effusions in A Knight of the Cumberland might also be classified as a variety of verbal humor. And certainly such circumlocutory remarks as: "Certain little demons of the dark, which shall be nameless, marked us, as they always mark fresh victims, for their own."3

Although not punning, Fox frequently produces a humorous effect by an alliterative or repetitive play on words.

1 Ibid., p. 35.
2 Blue-grass and Rhododendron, pp. 165, 174, 175; Christmas Eve on Lonesome, pp. 76, 77; A Knight of the Cumberland, pp. 212, 219; Erakine Dale, Pioneer, p. 159. Interestingly enough, there are also two entirely serious puns: The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, pp. 289, 356.
3 Blue-grass and Rhododendron, p. 159.
Thus from *Following the Sun-Flag*:

> When you are looking for a thing you get something else; when you look for something else you get what you were looking for. The trouble was that in neither case should I have been surprised, for the Japanese even say, 'It is not surprising if the surprising does not surprise,' which must be thought about for a while.¹

And again:

> When I got to his office, he had gone to tiffin. Where did he tiffin? The answer was a shake of the head. Nobody could disturb the gallant major while he was tiffining, no matter how urgent the caller's business was.²

Miscellaneous types of humor found in Fox include the humorous figure of speech: "He lifted the lid of the typewriter case [which contained the 'indispensable'], the label of which was slowly emptying to a sad and empty lie."³

The unusual comparison: "He was done fishing for fish; the proper study of mankind being man, his proper study, next day, would be the maid of the mill."⁴

The humor of bad logic, evidenced already in *A Knight of the Cumberland* and again in the selection "A Crisis for the Guard":

> 'Fellow citizens! There's beauty in the stars of night and in the glovin' orb

---

¹ *Following the Sun-Flag*, p. 33.
³ *Blue-Grass and Rhododendron*, p. 172
of day. There's beauty in the rollin' meadow and in the quiet stream. There's beauty in the smilin' valley and in the everlastin' hills. Therefore, fellow citizens—THEREFORE, fellow citizens, allow me to introduce to you the future Governor of these United States...

The humorous series of incongruent words, also found in *A Knight of the Cumberland*. In the following example the element of exaggeration also contributes to the humor. In "The Marquise of Queensberry" the observer of a fist-fight cries out, 'The mutts, the cheeses, the pore dawgs— they don't know how to guard an' they ain't got no lefts.' Part of the humor is traceable, too, to the use of bad grammar.

Pictorial humor, evidenced by the description of a ludicrous person or object. The Knight-at-Large in *A Knight of the Cumberland* is an example of such humor, as is Prior's "seventeen-hand, weak-backed white horse," his belly sagging nearly to the ground.

Pictorial humor, evidenced by the humorous incident or event: the tournament scene in *A Knight of the Cumberland*, the Frenchmen's difficulties at the beginning of *Following the Sun-Flag*, the experience of the "bibulous" gentleman.

---

2 *In Happy Valley*, p. 203.
3 *Following the Sun-Flag*, p. 134.
4 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
5 Ibid., p. 9.
and the incident of Brill nonchalantly talking Irish to a Chinaman,\(^1\) from the same book.

Humor by repetition (see above). The outstanding example of this is likewise found in *Following the Sun-Flag*, in the chapter titled "Hardships of the Campaign." Beginning with the assertion that "truly the life of the war correspondent is hard in Japan,"\(^2\) Fox goes on to mention or describe the many pleasures and comparative luxuries which he enjoyed while lingering in Tokio, facetiously interposing several times and ending the account with, "Truly 'tis hard."

Another kind of humor found in Fox may be designated here as war humor. For as he says, "war is full of grim humor," just as on another occasion he remarks, "Humor is easy in the mountains." The truth of both remarks rises out of the sharp, sometimes violent, contrasts encountered in either circumstance. There are several examples of "war" humor in *Crittenden*, but the two best examples are in *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*. Describing the tactics of Morgan's men during the Civil War, Fox writes:

> From every point of that curving line pours a merciless fire, and the charging men in blue recoil—all but one. . . . On

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 172.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 18.
comes one lone Yankee, hatless, red-headed, pulling on his reins with might and main, his horse beyond control, and not one of the enemy shoots as we sweeps helplessly into their line. A huge rebel grabs his bridle-rein.

'I don't know whether to kill you now,' he says, with pretended ferocity, 'or wait till the fight is over.'

'For God's sake, don't kill me at all!' shouts the Yankee. 'I'm a dissipated character, and not prepared to die.'

And shortly after this incident, there is this conversation (in another context) between the soldiers Dan Dean and Jerry Dillon, the latter a lumbering mountaineer:

"Did you kill him?"

'I reckon not,' whispered Jerry. 'I shot him on the wrong side. I'm al'ays a-fergettin' which side a man's heart's on.'

Occasionally Fox's humor takes on a slight satiric tinge. In The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, for example, he remarks of the Red Fox's trial for murder, "The days of brain-storms had not come then. There were no eminent alienists to prove insanity for the prisoner"—remarks wholly pertinent today. Or, in Following the Sun-Flag, there is this good-natured, though somewhat derogatory reproduction of an Englishman's speech:

---

1The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, p. 271.
2Ibid., p. 304.
Most extraordinary! . . . Do you know, they never minded us at all—not at all. A chap had a camera, and one dear old lady actually stood upright when he was taking a picture. They asked me to come in [a Japanese bath], and I really think I would, but—gad, you know, there wasn't any room.

All in all one sees that Fox was quite a humorist, conversant with the many ways and means of producing humor. His Wittiest book is Following the Sun-Flag, followed by A Knight of the Cumberland, which significantly enough follows also in chronology. Following the Sun-Flag is not only Fox's most humorous work but one of the best he produced; and this is due largely to none other than the comic spirit which continually plays over it and which gives the whole a greater sense of balance and restraint, a wider perspective than that evidenced in his other writings.

A final word may be said here regarding Fox's style. Apropos of this phase of his work, Page remarked: "It is difficult to review John Fox's work so as to convey any just idea of it in either substance or form; for his work was of the kind which no description can present. 'Le style, c'est l'homme.' To get any conception of it, it must be read."2 Another friend, reviewing his work, characterized his style as "fresh, vigorous, and penetrating.

---

1Following the Sun-Flag, p. 39.
2Page, op. cit., p. 678.
as the prickles of the shrub he loves to sing, and, when occasion demands, it is graceful and delicate and finely-colored like the rhododendron's blossoms.¹ Disregarding the element of personal enthusiasm, such impressionistic remarks contain much that is valid. However, one can be somewhat more precise in the matter.

Generally speaking, the outstanding marks of Fox's style are its grace, simplicity, and often classic directness. Almost invariably it is the ideal medium for his straight-forward narratives, from which it never detracts. Fox is no manipulator of language for language's sake, he does not fondle and cuddle works like a Proust; for the most part there is a strict exclusion of non-essentials, as in the construction of the stories themselves. His language itself is rarely strained, even if the sentiments which it is made to convey frequently are. Language and intention are inextricably bound up with each other, as they should be. On many occasions, thus, his prose rhythms are modulated and tempered so as to accord with the movement of what is happening. At the beginning of The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, to take only one of many examples, when Chad is undergoing a crisis, more spiritual than bodily, the rhythms are appropriately long and

¹Patterson, op. cit., pp. 1687-8.
meditative. The crisis over and action decided upon, the movement of the prose becomes brisker, even as the feet of the "Little Shepherd" over the mountain side. Such language adaptations may have been, and very often probably were, unconscious on the part of the author; but his achievement which is ultimately the result of long training is none the less for that.

In the matter of dialogue Fox is weakest when he is recording the conversation of his "educated" characters. Too often their talk is overly polite and refined, stilted and unnatural, devitalized; too often they speak not as they would, in a manner natural to them and to the situation, but according to an intellectual conception of the author of how they should.

As regards the mountaineer dialect, however, Fox appears to have been uniformly successful. His intention was not to record verbatim such talk, just as the novelist does not put down every thing he sees but is rather eclectic in an aim to achieve coherence and a heightened effect for his materials. Fox does not overburden his work with mountain dialect just because it happens to be picturesque. The important thing with him, as said repeatedly, is the total effect of his story, and dialect is simply one

1The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, pp. 14 ff.
factor contributing to that effect. In consideration of the other parts as well as in the interest of clarity the dialect must needs be subdued or modified at times, lest there be a distortion. Thomas Hardy was once criticized on the score of his compromise in the use of dialect in the Wessex novels. In a letter on "Dialect in Novels" he went to the pains of answering this criticism and wrote:

An author may be said to fairly convey the spirit of intelligent peasant talk if he retains the idiom, compass, and characteristic expressions, although he may not encumber the page with obsolete pronunciations of the purely English words, and with mispronunciations of those derived from Latin and Greek. . . . If a writer attempts to exhibit on paper the precise accents of a rustic speaker, he disturbs the proper balance of a true representation by unduly insisting upon the grotesque element.1

This is certainly true and applies to Fox as well as to Hardy. Both successfully accomplished a much more difficult effect than the mere phonological reproduction of dialect, which is a feat not above the abilities of any Sam Slick or Josh Billings. In adopting this compromise Fox (as well as Hardy) opened the way to a far wider audience than could have been reached by any literary work,

however excellent, in dialect form. Take M. N. Murfree, for example, who also dealt with mountaineers. With her more often than not the dialect is an encumbrance that makes reading slow and sometimes painful. This is not the case with Fox. His narratives are never retarded, but rather hastened, as well as heightened, by his use of mountain dialect.
CHAPTER ELEVEN

JOHN FOX AND KENTUCKY

When Fox died in 1919, a critical estimate of his work appeared shortly thereafter in the Nation, which considered among other things his place in Kentucky letters. The remarks made relative to this matter appear to have been quite valid and just. John Fox, so the account begins,

...belonged to the small but marked group of writers who at the close of the nineteenth century as truly discovered and settled Kentucky as had the Boones and Harrods and Hendersons of an earlier generation. Kentucky, of course, was no late comer to the federated republic of romance; she had become a legend almost before she became a fact. The Dark and Bloody Ground from the first cast a strong spell over the pioneers who gazed down from the Alleghany mountain wall upon the superb rivers and mellow valleys of the Blue Grass region. The westward-looking imagination of the entire seaboard took root earliest in Kentucky, and, somewhat capriciously, elected as the proper hero of that adventurous terrain the man who has ever since been for Americans the classic symbol of the frontier—Daniel Boone. His autobiography, actually written by a pedantic backwoods Plutarch, John Filson, had established the Boone saga by 1800, and thereafter travelers, novelists, and the popular tradition rapidly enlarged it to the serene dimensions with which subsequent iconoclasm has struggled quite in vain. Nor was it the exciting deeds of Boone that won honor during the ascendancy of Fenimore Cooper's school of romance.
Site by site with such records of rough, hardy, eccentric virtues grew up the reputation and memory of a more civil Kentucky, a transplanted Virginia, high-hearted and open-handed.

This courtly Kentucky Opié Read and James Lane Allen, in their different fashions, discovered again about 1890 on their journey of escape from what we may call the settlements of realism, districts then somewhat imperially controlled by Henry James and William Dean Howells. South of them along the Mississippi was George Washington Cable, felicitous historian of the dainty exotic world of New Orleans; north of them was Mary Hartwell Catherwood, taught by Francis Parkman to perceive the gay colors of life under the French regime in Illinois. [One might add, there were also Mary Noailles Murfree in the Tennessee mountains, Thomas Nelson Page and Francis Hopkinson Smith in Virginia, Sarah Orne Jewett in Vermont and Maine, Edward Eggleston in Indiana, Kate Chopin and Grace King in Louisiana, and Joel Chandler Harris in Georgia, among others.] In the first Kentucky novels of the new order were united the glory long associated with the founders of the state and the fine glamor thrown upon antebellum conditions by two decades of affectionate memory since the Civil War. Opié Read [who, incidentally, died last year, 1939] has been overlooked and undervalued; James Lane Allen stands up in our opinion as the historiographer royal of a Kentucky opulent in lovely women, chivalric men, faithful blacks, and a landscape subtly fragrant and intoxicating. But there was another Kentucky to be taken account of, the Kentucky whose inhabitants descend, not from the sons and daughters of the Tidewater who set up a new commonwealth on the Blue Grass, but rather from the slaveless, unprospering men and women who stopped in the congenial mountains and continued a species which for more than a century went hardly a step beyond the stage of cultivation in which
it left the earlier wilderness farther east. This neighborhood John Fox took possession of in the name of fiction.1

This account, then, ties Fox up, not only with Kentucky letters, but with the general regionalistic trend of fiction of his day. His contribution to such fiction is as distinct and noteworthy as the others', who for some reason appear to be better known and more widely acclaimed, not only by the general reading public of today but by the general historians of American literature. That Fox should be so neglected and obscured is strange, considering the thoroughness and artistry with which he reconstructed the Kentucky mountaineer in his fictions, and considering also that he was something of a pioneer in this field and that no one as yet has ever quite approached, in fiction, his understanding and sympathetic handling of mountain character; and, finally, from a popular standpoint at any rate, that he wrote at least two tremendously popular novels and one best-selling collection of short stories, a distinction which, if somewhat dubious, is at least more than can be said for most of the others. But before considering Fox's position in regionalistic literature, a few more words may be said regarding his general sympathies with the South,

1"John Fox, Jr., and his Kentucky," Nation, CIX (1919), pp. 72-3.
and in particular, with Kentucky, Bluegrass as well as mountain regions.

Fox was frankly, tenderly Southern in his sympathies—an attitude which the people of his own section naturally approved, and which, in fiction at least Northerners have rarely disapproved since the first bitterness of the war died away. At the same time, his imagination was not irreconcilable or secessionistic, as appears well enough in Crittenden, the story of Kentuckians passionately devoted to a united nation during the Spanish War.

Even more than a Southerner, Fox was a Kentuckian. Although he lived from early manhood in Virginia, at Big Stone Gap, his devotion, both in his life and in his art, was ever for Kentucky. It was of her that he wrote, and every part of which that, like John Burnham in Heart of the Hills, he loved—"from the Peavine to the Purchase, through blue-grass, bear-grass, and pennyroyal; from Mammoth Cave and Gethsemane, the Knobs and the Benson Hills; from aristocratic Fayette and Bourbon, 'sweet Owen' fortress of democracy, to border Harlan, hot-bed of the feud; from the Mississippi to Hell-fer-Sartin Creek in bloody Breathitt."

1The Kentuckians, p. 30.
are well applicable to himself. "From the crest of the Cumberland to the yellow flood of the Ohio he knew that land, and he loved every acre of it, . . . and he knew its history from Daniel Boone to the little Boones who still trapped skunk, mink, and muskrat, and shot squirrels in the hills with the same old-fashioned rifle, and he loved its people—his people—whether they wore silk and slippers, homespun and brogans, patent leathers and broadcloth, or粗hide boots and jeans. "1 "All this," he said in The Kentuckians, "the magic name of old Kentucky meant to her loyal sons, who are to this country what the Irishman is to the world; and who, no matter where cast, remain what they were born—Kentuckians—to the end."2

Everywhere the opportunity presents Fox pays tribute to his fellow Kentuckians, if not as directly as above, then implicitly by his all too flattering delineations of them. For where they are concerned, it is as Page has said, "not one salacious suggestion, not one ignoble thought" intrudes.3 But this is by no means a compliment to Fox's art, as Page obviously intended. Some readers may resent such adulation of a native state and consider such a chapter as appears in The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come in

---

1 Heart of the Hills. p. 144.
2 The Kentuckians. p. 30.
3 Page, op. cit., p. 680.
which Fox calls the Bluegrass "God's Country", and which is wholly taken up with describing this country, an unwelcome intrusion. But this can be condoned on literary, if not on personal grounds, on the score that an author is free to choose his subject wherever he finds it, and is accounted for, in part, by the sectional pride (and the correlative growth of the local colorists) that began to manifest itself during Fox's early manhood. What cannot be pardoned aesthetically, however, is the whitewashing that Fox's Kentucky characters invariably receive at his hands. These the critical reader has a right to deprecate, not on the score of the material utilized but the treatment accorded it.

To sum up here for a moment the progress of Kentucky letters, one can say that on the whole literature was slow to develop in that state. Earlier her gifted men were orators and statesmen and of these, only Henry Clay had his speeches published. Then followed a decade of journalism during which nothing outstanding in a literary way was produced. It was not until the first published work of James Lane Allen that distinction and form became part of the literary effort of Kentucky. Eventually Allen wrote such works as *With Flute and Violin*, *Two Gentlemen of Kentucky*, *The White Cowl, King Solomon of Kentucky*, *The Kentucky Cardinal*, *The Choir Invisible*, and other short stories and
novels, most of which are laid in the Blue-grass and deal with picturesque phases of old Kentucky. Fox at one time went to school to James Lane Allen, who taught at Transylvania University before he took up writing, and was guided in his first literary preparation and efforts by the older novelist. He significantly dedicated his first work, *A Mountain Europa*, to Allen, to whom he acknowledged encouragement. Fox held Allen in the highest regard and took him as a model of style and charm, as one possessed with a sympathetic understanding of his subject. In Crittenden, particularly, the novel of Fox's devoted almost wholly to the Bluegrass, are traces of Allen's influence most perceptible. But on the whole, while Allen was painting the Bluegrass region of Kentucky, that other and perhaps more picturesque region, the southeastern mountains of Kentucky—the Kentucky of moonshiner and feudist—was left in a sense to Fox to discover and mould to effective literary uses. He it was who became the delightful historian of an absolutely unique phase of our national life with which fortune threw him in touch and which caught his fancy by its originality and picturesqueness—a phase, by the way, that is rapidly disappearing before the onslaught of railroad and telephones, airplane and radio.

It is true that Fox did not find the Cumberlands entirely untrodden literary ground. M. M. Murfree (Charles
Egbert Graddock had already displayed with knowledge and skill the related mountaineers of Tennessee, but Fox added to as great, if not greater, a familiarity with his materials as Murfree had with hers a better sense of form, more lucidity, and a distinctive personal flavor. Murfree seems to write about mountaineers more as an outsider, or an alien observer, would. Fox, on the other hand, creates the impression that he writes from the inside, that he understands mountain character more intimately than she. Furthermore, his use of mountaineer psychology is more functional than hers, frequently actuating his leading conflicts.

As regards technique, Murfree is much more in the Victorian tradition than Fox, being given frequently to stale moralizing which impedes the progress of her story. As William Dean Howells said, with discernment, Fox arrived when the right methods of fiction had been ascertained; he was not obliged to "outlive the false school in which we of another generation were bred, and whose influence Miss Murfree did not escape." To extend the analogy between the two, Murfree lacks Fox's narrative proportion, and is considerably weaker in the handling of narrative suspense elements. Intrusions in the form of static character

---

1Quoted by Harkins, op. cit., p. 197.
analyses and set, prolegomenous descriptions, which reveal her Victorian novelistic training, are still very much in evidence in her work. In more ways than one, she lacks Fox's dramatic sense. Though the works of both are full of frequently lavish, ornate descriptions, in the case of Marfree's one feels such descriptions are included more for their own sake, for their intrinsic "beauty" than for anything else, being more decorative and less functional than Fox's who always has at least one eye on the progress of his story.

Much of the material treated by both is naturally the same. As Howells delicately put it, "it is high testimony to the truth of her art that one working in the same field confirms the impression of its reality by his later observation and report, and it is no question of his originality that at his best he makes you think of her."

Despite this assertion, however, it is the present writer's impression that Marfree does not evidence the penetration or deep-rooted insight into the mountaineer's character that Fox does. Perhaps this was because she was a woman, unable to "get around" like him, incapable of worming her way, as to speak, into the mountaineer's confidence and really

1Ibid., p. 198.
getting to know him in his unguarded moments. The setting of Murfree's mountain stories is almost incidental to her theme; one does not get anywhere near the effective social and moral contrasts of Fox.

As regards dialogue and dialect, both record more or less the same dialectical features of mountain speech, although Murfree's stricter adherence to the letter of such speech is not especially felicitous, since it makes her more difficult to read. Also, her mountaineers are too talkative, a fact due largely to her ineffectual and inexpert handling of expository materials. At other times, one gets the impression of too much dialect for its own sake, for the effect merely of its novelty and quaintness. This is never the case with Fox, even in those stories which are wholly narrated in the mountain dialect. Besides, Fox's rendering of dialect, as we have already noted, was particularly happy.

Additional points may be made here. Murfree's conflicts are not nearly so sharply nor so intensively defined as Fox's, which is to say again that she lacked his dramatic gifts. Whereas her dialogue and character "analyses" frequently encumber and impede her story, Fox knew how to tell a story with contagious speed. He could shape a plot to the advantage of tense dramatic moments in which he excelled.
To sum up, Murfree's lacks the wholeness and verisimilitude of Fox's mountain world; she is far less dramatic than Fox and thereby misses many opportunities. Fox's temperament is more modern, and his work has a greater artistry and appeal. Both responded to the moods of Nature and took their symbols from her, Fox more so, as far as one can judge, than Murfree.

Before considering Fox's treatment of the mountaineer, it may be well to make another point here which President McLain legitimately suggested in his dedication speech to the author. That is, Fox never lost, even when living in the mountains and writing skilfully of their inhabitants, his identity with the non-mountainous regions of his native state. As McLain has said, "he continued to be at home there. He understood, and loved, the mountaineer whom he memorialized with such insight; he was accepted by him as friend and neighbor; he joined the police force of the Gap; he was sympathetically at home in the mountain schools—yet withal, he was temperamentally of the Bluegrass. His genius enabled him, uniquely, to overcome and indeed, obliterate, the natural antipathy to the 'furriner' while remaining a man of the 'settlements!'" And as the speaker of these remarks further suggested, "few men could bridge the gap between two types of life and its expression so varied and distinct as the life in the mountains and in
the nestling river region. No doubt, his active, volatile, moving personality, his wide range of interests, and his natural inclination to evaluate a person on his own record, joined with his genius for succinct expression in enabling him so successfully to speak for both.¹

In the cultured lowlander of James Lane Allen and the rough-hewn highland feudist of Fox, Kentucky is perhaps unique in possessing two such exact opposite representatives of civilization. And yet less than a hundred miles divides the habitat of these widely differing types. Curiously enough, as one critic has pointed out, their origin was the same, for their forefathers came west over the Wilderness Road. "The slipping of a linch pin in the mountains kept here and there a family up among the crags, and they remained there nursing their primitive superstitions and hatreds. Their brothers moved on down to the bluegrass, became educated and wore broadcloth."²

Although, as indicated, Fox himself stemmed from the latter, it was the former in their mountainous setting who supplied him in the main with the material for his short stories and novels; and the country itself that furnished

¹Wolfe, op. cit.
him with the details for his most striking scenic descriptions. Any study of Fox that pretended to fullness would hardly be complete without a consideration of his "treatment of Nature." In the discussions of his individual works numerous passages have been singled out as exemplifying his acute powers of observation, his ability to record vividly matters of sensuous appeal. A brief recapitulation is perhaps in order here before considering the mountaineer proper.

Beauty in all its aspects, whether in nature, art, or human life, appealed tremendously to Fox. Page said of him that when he first knew him, he was "wild with admiration for Keats," who, significantly, is generally accredited with being the most sensuous of the Romantics. "He would recite his master lyrics and linger over his jewelled lines with absolute delight." And as his friend suggests, "he was unconsciously absorbing the art of literary jewellery himself."¹

Fox's dominant attitude toward Nature may be roughly indicated: for the most part Nature is regarded, with something of the "pathetic fallacy," as a fellow-sufferer with Man, and more, as offering balm to his ills. As in the

¹Page, op. cit., p. 679.
poems of Bryant and Wordsworth and other of the Romantics, 
Nature is a source of comfort and inspiration to Man—the 
great consoling Mother.

Passages illustrative of Fox's powers of observation 
and description have already been quoted here as well as 
by other writers upon him. Bearing this in mind, one may 
avoid the temptation to gather together a whole anthology 
of exquisite word-pictures of mountain and woodland and 
pasture; of butterfly and rabbit and wood-thrush and all 
of the creatures of the country; and one may be content 
with noting a few typical instances only. The mere turn-
ing of his pages will quickly supply a hundred more.

Of a cornfield Fox observes, "stripped of blade and 
tassel, the stalks and hooded ears looked in the coming 
dusk a little like monks at prayer."¹ During an early morn-
ing sunset "the rays...lance the mist into tatters."² 
Another time, "bees droned like unseen running water in the 
woods."³ At still another, he notes the "trees still and 
heavy with summer; a pine torch over his head like a yellow 
plume."⁴ And he is aware of the woodland "with its sinuous 
line of soft shadow against the sky";⁵ and as he stops to

¹ Cumberland Vendetta, p. 120.
² Ibid., p. 128.
³ Ibid., p. 221.
⁴ Ibid., p. 247.
⁵ The Kentuckians, p. 23.
listen, "a cardinal draws a sinuous line of scarlet through the green gloom and drops with a splutter of fire into a cool pool." At dusk "the sun was cutting like a great red scimitar down through a shadowed hill in the west. . . [and] there was a still purple glow edging the clouds in the east." In the Bluegrass he notes, "the hollows in the black haystacks out in the brown fields were plump and white." And back in the Cumberlands, "a deep curving ravine was slashed into the mountain-side as by one stroke of a gigantic scimitar. The darkness deep down was lighted up with cool green, interfused with liquid gold. Russet and yellow splashed the mountain-sides beyond and high up the maples were in a shaking blaze." During a night in the tropics he speaks of "sailing . . . in a harbour of brilliant lights under multitudinous stars and over thickly sown beds of tiny phosphorescent stars that were blown about like flowers in a wind-storm by the frothing wake of the ships." And again in the tropics, where "nature loves sudden effects. . . a red light ran like a flame over the east, the tops of the mountains shot suddenly upward and it was day." At Christmas time, back in the Bluegrass,
"gray clouds marshalled and loosed white messengers of peace and good-will to the frozen earth until the land was robed in a thick, soft, shining mantle of pure white—the first spiritualization of the earth for the birth of spring."¹ And in his favorite mountains again, "a wood-thrush was singing somewhere in the darkness, and its cool notes had the liquid freshness of the morning."² In The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come there is a magnificent description of a storm that suggests the grandeur of Paradise Lost:

...black clouds marshalling on either flank of the heavens and fitting their black wings together, as though the retreating forces of the night were gathering for a last sweep against the east. A sword flashed blindingly from the dome high above them and, after it, came one shaking peal that might have been the command to charge, for Chad saw the black hosts start fiercely."³

(This description, which continues in similar terms and imagery, is not only one of Fox's most vivid, but is actively functional in the story besides, being symbolical of the "Little Shepherd's" own conflict and crisis at the time.) Also very striking is the description of the rising river as "it leaped and surged, tossing tawny mane and

¹Ibid., p. 224.
³The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, pp. 13 ff.
fleck and foam as it thundered along—a mad, molten mass of yellow struck into gold by the light of the sun. And after this or some other rain, "the sunlight leaped gladly from wet leaf to wet leaf until the trees looked decked out for unseen fairies."2

After observing the fields of central Kentucky in September, Fox could write, "the corn was long ready for the knife, green sprouts of winter wheat were feathering their way above the rich brown soil, and the cut upturned tobacco stalks, but dialy seen through the mists, looked like little hunch-backed witches poised on broom sticks, and ready for flight at dawn."3 But three years later, 

...the cut, upturned tobacco no longer looked like hunch-backed witches on broomsticks and ready for flight, for the leaves, waxen, oil, inert, hung limp and listless from the sticks that pointed like needles to the north to keep the stalks inclined as much as possible from the sun. Even they had taken on the Midas touch of gold, for all green and gold that world of blue-grass was. . .4

Shifting the scene and the season as well, this time to summer, "the trees were full-leafed and as still as though sculptured from the hill of broken shadows and flecks of moonlight that had paled on their way through thin mists

1Ibid., p. 60.
2The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, p. 402.
3Heart of the Hills, p. 172.
4Ibid., p. 309.
just rising.¹ High in the Cumberlands he would ride
"through gray aisles of the forest in a dim light that
was like twilight at high noon," and drop down "into
solemn, mysterious depths filled with oaks, chestnuts,
hickories, maples, beeches, walnuts, and gigantic poplars.
The sun could not penetrate the leafy-roofed archway of
that desolate world."²

At other times one encounters such remarks of intimate
affection as "late violets hid shyly under canopies of May-
apple";³ and "squirrels played on the tree-trunks like
mischievous children."⁴ Or he will be struck by such a
tender and minute observation of a laurel blossom as when
Chad "picked up one of the pretty bells and looked idly at
it, turning it bottom upward. The waxen cup might have
blossomed from a tiny waxen star. There was a little green
star for a calyx; above this, a little white star with its
prongs outstretched—tiny arms to hold up the pink-flecked
chalice for the rain and dew."⁵ No natural phenomenon was
too grand or none too small for Fox; a sunrise at dawn, or
a majestic storm, on the one hand, and the tiny cobwebs
that heralded the rain, on the other. In The Trail of the

¹Lyric. p. 372.
³A Mountain Europa, p. 33.
⁴The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, p. 385.
⁵The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, p. 19.
Lonesome Pine he notes, "the yard fence was festooned with dewy cobwebs, and every weed in the field was hung with them as with flashing jewels of exquisitely delicate design."

He never tires of recording the changes in the animal and vegetable worlds as the seasons pass over them—the coming of spring above all, in the mountains and in the Bluegrass, and its signs in insect and animal life; "weeping April. . ., May. . . with rosy face uplifted, and the birth [and richness] of June"; "the passing sheen of summer's glory"; autumn—"noontide of the year," and the "autumn-greening earth. . . the coming Indian summer," and the spiritualizing effect of Christmas and snow.

In addition, Fox notes in detail the changes in the landscape as the day progresses and as the moods of the earth vary: the "subtle prescience of dawn," the early morning sunrise, mid-afternoon sunlight, the approach of dusk, sunset "in a glory of gold, rose, pink, and crimson," night in the mountains, in the tropics, and in the lowlands of Kentucky; a storm at sunrise, the earth after a night-long rain, the river at flood time, the "moist fragrance of the

---

1 The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, p. 354.
2 Ibid., p. 385.
3 The Kentuckians, p. 69.
4 A Cumberland Vendetta, p. 120.
5 Heart of the Hills, p. 159.
6 The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, p. 11.
7 Ibid., p. 81.
earth at twilight,¹ and even a "withering drought... and the merciful rain."²

Of Jason in Heart of the Hills Fox says that "he knew flower, plant, bush, and weed, the bark and leaf of every tree, and even in winter he could pick them out in the gray etching of a mountain-side—dog-wood, red-bud, 'service' berry, hickory and walnut, the oaks—white, black, and chestnut—the majestic poplar, prized by the outer world, and the black gum that defied the lightning. All this... and much more."³ The remark applies to Fox himself, only his horizon is all Kentucky, and on occasion beyond that. In Cuba, and later in Japan, he is bound to notice "strange plants, strange flowers, strange trees, the music of strange birds."⁴ Throughout the novels and short stories the sights and sounds and smells, the birds and beasts, the trees and brooks and flowers, are recorded with a light, deft touch, neither overscientific and technical, nor inaccurate and vague. The mere lists of such items garnered from his books read like out of some Encyclopaedia Naturalis.

Of birds there are the wood-thrush and its "cool, flute-like notes," his favorite, incidentally; the meadow-lark,

¹A Mountain Europa, p. 90.
²Heart of the Hills, p. 172.
³ibid., pp. 37-8.
⁴Fittenden, p. 126.
the bluebird and its "merry chirp";¹ the whippoorwill, song-sparrow, meadow-lark, and humming-bird; "kingbirds chasing a crow; starling, quail, larks, cardinal, wrens; the "peewee twittering in a thorn-bush and the lusty call of a robin from an apple tree";² the wood-pecker, great horned owl, king-fisher; the crested cock of the woods taking "billowy flight across a blue ravine";³ the "whistle of a bob-white, the darting of a hawk, the whir of a pheasant's wing";⁴ and, in Japan, the nightingale.

Of insects, animals, and fish: "a crowd of yellow butterflies," bees, the "high vibrant whir of toads," ground crickets "chirping modestly upward, the calls of katydids echoing through forest aisles," fireflies, cicada; and in Cuba, "hideous things crawling across the road and rustling into the cactus—spiders with snail-houses over them; lizards with green bodies and yellow legs, and green legs and yellow bodies; hairy tarantulas, scorpions, and hideous mottled land-crabs, standing three inches from the sand, and watching him with hideous little eyes as they shuffled sidewise into the bushes";⁵ possum, coon,⁶

¹In A Cumberland Vendetta he uses the simile "as vagrant as a bluebird's note in autumn," p. 221.  
³Heart of the Hills, p. 37.  
⁴Ibid.  
⁵Strittenden, p. 127.  
fowl, and rabbit; the full-udder cow, the restless bull, sheep, and geese; the "piping of roosting turkeys"; even the cougar, "shuddering deer," buffalo, panther, wildcat, elk, and bear; field-mice, and "a mink after minnows"; squirrel, muskrat, cottontail, mole, and "fearless skunk"; catfish, yellow mudcat, perch, shiny black bass, and hogfish that "darted like submarine arrows from rock to rock"; "crows after crawfish along the edge of the stream"; and in the waters around Cuba, "porpoises fishing at the bows... schools of flying-fish with filmy, rainbow-wings." 2

Of trees: firs, primeval oak and gigantic poplar, giant magnolia and umbrella-tree, beech, lynn, chestnut; "the royal scarlet of the maple and the sombre russet of the oak"; locust-trees, young elders, hemlocks, birches, balsam firs; the "musical whisperings of the pine," which, far away, "looked like a bit of green spray, spouting on its very crest"; 3 hickories, and walnuts.

Of flowers: 4 blue and white anemones, or "wind flowers—because the wind is supposed to open them"; 5 laurel, and

1 The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, p. 201.
2 Brittenham, p. 114.
3 The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, p. 204.
4 In The Trail of the Lonesome Pine Male
      mentions at some length on a variety of flowers to June, fre-
      quently putting in an appropriate quotation out of history or
      literature about them. This is obviously Fox talking out
      of his own vast intimate knowledge of flowers, for
      which he had a passion and which passion was later shared
      by his wife. (The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, pp. 160 ff.)
6 The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, p. 162.
rhododendron, "queen of mountain flowers"; "lace-like ferns," azaleas, violets, willows, dogwood, poplar blooms, "white clouds of peach and of apple blossoms, blue lark-spar seeking the sun, shade-loving trilliums"; and then "white stars," bee-gums, lilac bushes, mock-orange hedge, honeysuckles, clover blossoms, timothy, wild rose-bushes; old-fashioned pink forget-me-nots; wild cucumber blossoms; sassafras bushes; a "giant magnolia with a thick creamy flower"; "catkins greening on elders... willows just blushing into life... the pink-and-white blossoms and the waxy green leaves of the trailing arbutus, that fragrant harbinger of the old Mother's awakening; ¹ the "snowy blossom with a deeply lobed leaf" of the bloodroot; ² a "tiny bunch of fuzzy hepaticas"; liver-leaf; the red bud of the Judas tree, "snowy gusts" of dogwood, and the "white stars" of the service-berry; yellow adder's tongues; holly-hocks, bachelor's buttons and marigolds; lilacs, touch-me-nots, tulips, narcissus, and sun-flowers; "strange grasses and plants": scarlet sage, nasturtium, Oriental grass; "matrimonial vine"; Palmae Christi ("Hands of Christ")—
"tall tropical-looking plants with great spreading leaves and big green-white stalks";\textsuperscript{1} purple asters, sweet fern, and morning-glories; even "the humble burdock, pig-weed and other lowly plants" which Fox knew "were good for ornamental effect" in a garden;\textsuperscript{2} white top, dockweed, ragweed, and cockle burr.

Of nuts and berries and fruits one notes: "winter green service berries swung out with white stars"; persimmons and pawpaws, haws and huckleberries, wild cherries and even wild plums; wild grapes; hickory-nuts, walnuts, and chestnuts; and the pod of the honey locust.

Of topographical aspects he notices rain-clear brooks; "happy waterfalls, shut in by laurel and rhododendron"; cornfields; primitive woods, "fastnesses that hold the sources of great rivers"; fields of pennyroyal, heading wheat, and barley; bluegrass and sassafras pastures and woodlands; and fields of "his merry monarch, King Barleycorn," and of that other monarch, "King Tobacco."

Of the manifold sounds of nature there are the chorus of birds; "twilight sounds of the farm—chickens going to roost, the lowing of cattle, the bleating of calves at the sowpens, the bleat of sheep from the woods, and the nicker of horses in the barn"; "the nervous thud of Raincrow's

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 211.  
hoofs announcing rain;" 1 "night noises. . . strong and clear— the cricket in the grass, the croaking of frogs from the pool, the whir of a night-hawk's wings along the edge of the yard, the persistent wail of a whip-poor-will sitting lengthwise of a willow limb over the meadow-branch, the occasional sleepy saw of crows from their roost in the woods beyond, the bark of a house-dog at a neighbor's home across the fields, and, further still, the fine high yell of a fox-hunter and the faint answering yelp of a hound;" 2 "the woods. . . musical with the cries of blackbirds"; the musical whisperings of the pine; a kingfisher screaming from the river, and an owl hooting in the woods.

And of the manifold odors, "the scent of wild grapes sweet in the air"; 3 the "air deliciously cool and heavy with the wet fragrance of mint and pennyroyal"; 4 "the air rich with the smell of new earth"; 5 "the breath of honeysuckles . . . heavy on the air, and from garden and fields. . . innumerable odours of flower and clover blossom and moist grasses"; 6 "the lane. . . fragrant with the promise

1Grittenden, p. 25.
2Ibid., p. 30.
3A Cumberland Vendetta, p. 221.
4The Kentuckians, p. 17.
5Grittenden, p. 6.
6Ibid., p. 108.
of unborn flowers";¹ and the keen air of the mountains—
"freighted with the coolness of shadows, the scent of damp
earth and the faint fragrance of wild flowers."²

Of all aspects of Nature, and of Kentucky as well, the
mountains above the Cumberland were Fox's chief delight.
Never does he tire of describing or alluding to the majesty
and spell of their great crags and spurs, "the still seas
of white mist and wave after wave of blue Virginia hills."³
Like Clayton in A Mountain Europa he too must often have
stopped at night, "as was his custom, to rest a moment,
with his eyes on the wild beauty before him—the great
valley, with mist floating from its gloomy depths into the
tremulous moonlight."⁴

The Cumberland Mountains constituted the predominat-
ing note, or what William James once called the "single
note", expressed by his life. As President McLain has ob-
served, "others of his many interests and skills are merged
into the one note, adding to its depth and quality, but
detracting nothing from its tone. He became, and remains,
the sweet singer of the mountains and their people."⁵ This

¹ I bid., p. 62.
² The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, p. 257.
³ I bid., p. 74.
⁴ A Mountain Europa, p. 66.
⁵ McLain, op. cit.
identification with a particular region relates him, as already pointed out, with such American writers as Cable, Page, Woolson, Murfree, Jewett, Eggleston, Garland, and Harte, among others, who have figured in the development of the literary genre known as "Regionalism." To go further afield, Fox knows the Cumberlands as Hardy knew Wessex, as Balzac knew Paris and Touraine, as Dickens knew London, as Scott knew the Border Country. It is not to be imagined, however, that he had to go forth into new localities seeking what has come to be called "local color," as Dickens went forth, note-book in hand, into Yorkshire. Fox, on the contrary, appears to be steeped in, and loves, the mountain-valleys and rivers and crests, the customs and traditions and superstitions among which he spent the most important part of his life and which are enshrined in his writings. He describes them, not as the carefully observant tourist would do, from the point of view of an outsider, but as one familiar with them through a lifetime. His knowledge is accurate in detail; but that is not all. He has imaginative sympathy and a consciousness of the close relationship of man and the natural world amidst which he moves and of which he is a part. He came to measure life by the yardstick of the mountains. For purposes of contrast, and apparently in an effort to supply a background against which the mountaineer might be even better understood, he
portrayed life in the Bluegrass as well. But even on those occasions, or when he went further afield, to Cuba and to the Orient, in unguarded moments, a nostalgic reference to the mountains would betray his major interest.

Like Hamlin Garland who draws his greatest strength from prairie and hill, Fox derives his from the mountains, which furnished him, as it were, with a solid, rock-ribbed tradition. The present-day mingling of cultures and modes, urban and rural, the disorder, the rapid and often revolutionary changes effected by the machine, the complexity and confusion of modern, sophisticated society, tend to deprive many of our contemporary writers of direction and meaning, though perhaps many are greater technicians than Fox and men of profounder thought. The dilemma is that many have not yet learned how to handle successfully their complex materials. Fox, on the other hand, benefits by exclusion and simplification, a fact which at once explains his strength and defines his limitations.

There is no doubt that his best work on the whole is that wherein he yields himself to the imaginative appeal of the Cumberlands—their changeful moods and somewhat primitive inhabitants. A certain critic, in predicting some years before his death the popularity he would achieve, once remarked,

Mr. Fox has gone up from the bluegrass region to the wild, rugged hills and brought
down to our view a new type of character—the big, awkward, hulking, rough mountaineer, crude in manner but magnificent in manhood, all his lack of polish having a splendid contrast with his innate sense of humor, his sturdy self-reliance, and his unyielding independence of opinion and action. Mr. Fox has a command of humor as well as strength, brings out the quaint homely speeches of his men—and his women, too—in laconic but lasting emphasis. His pathos is of the suggestive character. He tells you the incidents and then, suddenly stopping, leaves you to think, in spite of yourself, for hours afterward regarding the sad result which must have occurred—not simply the sad result in point of action, but the sad result upon the minds of the characters.1

The crux of such remarks is not far from the truth. If there is anything that will give Fox's stories more than transitory appreciation, it is his skilful characterization of the Kentucky mountaineer. When he deals with people of the Bluegrass or of the "settlements", his personages and dramatic incidents are more like well-known types, less distinctly individual though perhaps more internally evolved than those of his mountain stories. But this is not to say that Fox was a mere observer of mountain phenomena; for he was capable of producing the inner as well as the outer and more obvious manifestations of mountain life.

It was certainly Fox's good fortune to be thrown into contact with the picturesque survival of mountain life,

1Quoted in The New York Times (July 9, 1919), op. cit.
"isolated and crystallized" in its antique form. But it was equally the good fortune of the mountaineers to have found such an understanding chronicler as Fox—one who recorded in his novels and short stories their loves, hatreds, and philosophies, who, like Scott with his Highlanders, felt the picturesqueness and the pathos and the charm of that passing life and possessed the gift to preserve it whole in his art. Though, as we have seen, Fox had much experience in the life of the cities, particularly New York, and could be the complete cosmopolite when it suited him, it was always to the mountains that he returned to write, and only there, as he frequently declared, he could. As Page expressed it, "however he might enjoy his long, recurrent holidays amid the denizens of the cities, he still returned with renewed zest to his mountains and his mountaineers. He still wrote of the 'little race' shut in with gray hills and shining river."\(^1\) Perhaps, as he himself said of Crittenden, it was "to get away for a while as his custom was—to get away from his own worst self to the better self that he was in the mountains. . . ."\(^2\)

Throughout Fox's stories one can easily trace the genealogy and the life of the Southern mountaineer in general,

\(^1\)Page, op. cit., p. 679.
\(^2\)Crittenden, p. 1.
and of the Kentucky mountaineer in particular. Besides fiction, he wrote, as we know, two highly instructional essays on "The Southern Mountaineer" and "The Kentucky Mountaineer," respectively, which appeared in the collection *Blue-Grass and Rhododendron*. All of his material relating to the mountaineer is of course first-hand and authentic. Asked a few years before his death how he came to know the mountaineers, he said, "Well, I have been among them while hunting and fishing and examining coal lands. I was a volunteer policeman for five years. I slept with the people, ate and drank with them, and even fought against them." And he might have added that his permanent home from before the time that he began writing was among them, at Big Stone Gap.

Aside from the mountaineer as fine material for fiction, Fox evidently had something of a sociological and historical interest in him. This is revealed by the thoroughness with which he discusses his origins and backgrounds, customs and traditions, particularly in the two essays wholly devoted to him.

There was never any one quite like the typical southern mountaineer. Owing largely to his isolated environment, remote, until comparatively recent times, from the activities

---

and interests of his neighbor to the east or to the west of him, he became a curious case of arrested racial development, or at least of a development that followed along the eccentric lines of his own choosing. When asked about this isolation, Fox once remarked to a critic:

Outside of Big Stone Gap, the inhabitants, as a rule, live far apart. The mountaineer prefers to have his neighbors at least a few miles off. That was Daniel Boone's preference, too, you remember. When he found a family within some miles of him he moved farther west. His name, by the way, is borne by families in the mountains. I drew the character of Boone Stallard, in 'The Kentuckians,' for instance, from a young man named Boone Logan.1

Thus, in character and manner of life, the Southern mountaineer, and particularly the Kentucky mountaineer, offered an exceptional opportunity to the writer of fiction, which Fox had the fine instinct and literary ability to seize and make the most of. As one critic remarked at his death, "all his stories add to the colorful strength with which he has depicted that amusing and oftentimes tragic life of a race which in another generation will live only in these and similar novels and stories."2

There are few items or facts with regards to the mountaineer which Fox overlooked in his fiction and essays—

1Harkins, op. cit., p. 191.
his history, economics, political allegiances, traditions, superstitions, dress, weapons, pastimes, language, and customs, religious, marriage, funeral, and otherwise. To isolate such data in detail is properly the task of the sociologist or historian. Still, they are such an important part of Fox's work that some account of them is necessary if we are to properly understand this work. Such an account Fox himself has compactly furnished in his essay on "The Southern Mountaineer,"^1 to which the reader is referred. This should be supplemented by his other essay on "The Kentucky Mountaineer,"^2 before one proceeds to read his fiction which, as Page has observed, reflects, "as from so many facets of a jewel, bits of the life of

^1Blue-Grass and Rhododendron, pp. 1-26.
^2Ibid., pp. 27-54. In distinguishing between the Kentucky mountaineer and his fellows, Fox notes that "the Kentucky mountaineer has been more isolated than the mountaineer of any other State. There are regions more remote and more sparsely settled, but nowhere in the Southern mountains has so large a body of mountaineers been shut off so completely from the outside world. As a result, he illustrated Mr. Theodore Roosevelt's fine observation that life away from civilization simply emphasizes the natural qualities, good and bad, of the individual. The effect of this truth seems perceptible in that any trait common to the Southern mountaineer seems to be intensified in the mountaineer of Kentucky. He is more clannish, prouder, more hospitable, fiercer, more loyal as a friend, more bitter as an enemy, and in simple meanness—where he is mean, mind you—he can out-Herod his race with great ease." (Blue-Grass and Rhododendron, p. 28.)
that element of our race that, caught amid the mountains, have remained as in an eddy amid the sweep of the current of progress these one hundred and fifty years.\(^1\)

\(^1\)Page, op. cit., p. 681.
To gauge Fox's achievement properly one must consider him in relation to his age, for, in the end, if a novelist or poet has been honest and sincere, his work will unmistakably reflect the character and temper of the times during which he lived, and his successes and failures as an artist will on the whole be intimately tied up with them.

During the years Fox reached his maturity, the times were of import for this country, and world politics stood on the threshold of a new day. There were mighty movements astir in every phase of life, and a sense of impending change was in the air. The contradictory temper of the last years of the century accounts to a large extent for the strange union of realism and romanticism so often found in the work of the representative writers of the period. Science and invention were affecting modes and values of life. There was much that was stern and harsh if one cared to see it. But liberal spirits were determined to live keenly and joyously; meanwhile the multitude idealized the past. The mood of the hour was to seek refuge from all that was unpleasant.
The time was principally one of feeling, usually on the plane of common emotion. On the stage the fine art of Edwin Booth was succeeded by that of Richard Mansfield; but the actors whom the thousands flocked to see were James A. Herne in *Shore Acres* and Denham Thompson in *The Old Homestead*. The bicycle was first coming in. In Chicago in 1893 the World's Columbian Exposition was opened, just forty years before the Century of Progress, and in January of that year *Trilby* appeared in *Harper's Magazine*.

It was natural accordingly that in 1890 James Whitcomb Riley should be the most popular poet in the United States. The taste of the day was for sentiment—sentiment simple, strong, and even tearful; and "An Old Sweetheart of Mine," "Little Orphant Annie," and "The Old Man and Jim" were sung or recited thousands of times. Close to Riley in spirit were Will Carleton, with "Over the Hill to the Poorhouse," Eugene Field, with "Little Boy Blue," and Frank N. Stanton, with "Mighty Lak a Rose." Richard Hovey and Bliss Carman wrote *Songs From Vagabondia*, and Ella Wheeler Wilcox thrilled many a young and sometimes an older person with her moralizing and tumultuous rhythms. Meanwhile Richard Watson Gilder and Walter Hine Page were prominent as editors, and William Dean Howells was distinguished both as critic and novelist.
It was in this age of sentiment and optimism that Fox found his bearings and subsequently flourished as a writer; so it is somewhat natural then that sentiment and optimism should be the keynotes of his fiction. Aside from personal and temperamental considerations, as a practical craftsman, he knew what was wanted by the public at large and what would be approved of by the editors of his day. This would certainly be one factor at least to account for the conventional happy endings and the general sentimental temper of his romances. That he was naturally inclined to write as he did, naturally imbued with romance and the romantic life of the mountaineers, amid which he was thrown in the impressionable years of his life, tells the rest of the story.

Significantly enough, however, there is more than an element of realism in Fox's work. He had the eye of the true journalist for essentials, and, as Page has said, "he was too close an observer and too true an artist not to present life in its verity," a remark true within certain obvious limitations. One can at least say this much, along with Page, that his pictures of mountaineer life are rendered "with such unconscious art that we know [them]"

Ibid., p. 679.
instinctively to be true. But even so, although his materials were frequently realistic, the spirit and tone of his treatment are prevalingly that of the romanticist.

Final views regarding Fox's work have variously oscillated. On the one hand there is the optimistic summing up of a man like Thomas Nelson Page, who was both temperamentally and aesthetically in accord with Fox, and whose criticism for this reason alone one would expect to be very much biased in his favor. In the essay on his friend, Page tells of an incident where, after his meeting up with a certain magazine publisher, Fox's work was the topic of discussion:

Some years after John Fox had begun to write I was talking with a magazine publisher of American writers and their work, and I mentioned John Fox.

'But he has not yet arrived. His books do not go,' said my companion. This I contested and contended that a book's popularity bears no relation to literature—I pointed out that he was judging by the news-stands' reports and the press criticism, while I was speaking of Literature, and I maintained that John Fox had never written a page that did not sing. Later on, John Fox's books had a great vogue and appeared often among the records of that fallacious standard setter of art—the 'Best Sellers.' But long before that, John Fox was writing stories

\[1\textit{Ibid.}, \text{p. 679}.\]
full of the breath of the Cumberland Mountains, every line of which bore the stamp of literature.¹

On the other hand, there is the evaluation of his work on the order of that which appeared in *The Nation* shortly after his death:

Sugar spoils sooner than salt, in literature. The sweetness of Fox's heroines already cloys. His ideas, too, and his whole interpretation of human life are conventional. He built his tales upon the old romantic formulas, without a sign that he had ever looked deeper than the surface of human existence as it is traditionally reproduced in popular literature. Whether his peculiar charm, and the luxuriant atmosphere of his books, can preserve them alive when his motives no longer convince, it is too hard and too early to say. The solid matter which will help to preserve them must be looked for less in his ideas or his art than in his knowledge of the mountaineers, in his really keen observation of their looks and dress and speech and customs.²

Subsequent events would certainly seem to bear out the contention of this latter critique. Fox is remembered in literary circles today, if at all, as the chronicler of the mountaineer. The true estimate of his work, however, one imagines, is somewhere between this latter appraisal, if noticeably inclined to it, and Page's optimistic

¹Ibid., p. 674.
²*The Nation*, op. cit., p. 73.
evaluation. It hardly seems fair, at any rate, to relegate Fox wholly to the class of historian, or sociologist, as it were, for as such he appears to be regarded at the present time by the critics at large.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

BY JOHN FOX, JR.

BOOSES

_A Mountain Europa; A Cumberland Vendetta; "The Last Stetson._ New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909.


The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903.


PERIODICALS (other than those items never represented in book form)

"Christmas For Big Ame," Scribner's, XLVIII (1910), 690-5.

"On Horseback to Kingdom Come," Scribner's, XLVIII (1910), 175-86.


War Correspondence (Spanish-American War), Harper's Weekly, XLII (1898), 454; 475, 478; 498; 574; 591; 698-9, 700, 702; 724; 744, 750-1; 770; 802-3, 804.

**BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM**

**BOOKS**


Patterson, John, "John Fox," *Library of Southern Literature,* IV, 1633-88.


Rutherford, Mildred L., *The South in History and Literature.* Atlanta, Georgia: The Franklin-Turner Co., 1907.


PERIODICALS

1. ARTICLES

"John Fox, Jr. and his Kentucky," *Nation,* CIX (1919), 72-3.


Page, Thomas Nelson, "John Fox," *Scribner's,* LXVI (1919), 674-83.

"When John Fox Danced His Last Dance," Literary Digest, LXXXVII (1925), 70-1.

2. BOOK REVIEWS AND PORTRAITS

Academy, The, LII (1898), 129 sup. Review of The Kentuckians.

Bookman, The.


XX (1905), 403. Portrait.


Book-Buyer, The (new series).

XV (1897), 160. Review of Hell-Fer-Sartain and Others.

XXIV (1902), 60-1. Review of Blue-grass and Rhododendron.

XXII (1901), 56. Review of Crittenden, by C. Shipman.


Critic, The.

XXVIII (1897), 139. Review of Hell-Fer-Sartain and Others.


Critic, The (new series).


Current Literature.

XXIII (1898), 120. Review of The Kentuckians.

XXXV (1903), 257. Portrait.

Dial, The.

XXIV (1898), 80. Review of The Kentuckians, by W. M. Payne.

XXX (1901), 110. Review of Crittenden, by W. M. Payne.


Independent, The.

XLIX (1898), 1660. Review of The Kentuckians.

LV (1903), 2466-7. Review of The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come.

LV (1903), 2741. Portrait.


Junior Education. XLVII (1898), 155. Review of The Kentuckians.

Literary Weekly. XXIX (1898), 83. Review of The Kentuckians.


Nation. The.

LXV (1897), 363. Review of Hell-Fer-Sartain and Others.

LXXIII (1901), 477. Review of Blue-Grass and Rhododendron.

LXXVII (1903), 390. Review of The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come.

Outlook, The.

LVII (1898), 376. Review of The Kentuckians.

LXXV (1903), 844. Portrait.

CXXVI (1920), 333. Portrait.


Review of Reviews.

XVI (1897), 759. Portrait.


*Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, VI (1903), 105-6. "Book Review," by J. B. Henneman. (Contains allusions to *The Kentuckians*.)

*World's Work*.

VI (1903), 3920-6. Review of *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come.*

VI (1903), 3920. Portrait.

XXVI (1913), 14. Portrait.

**NEWSPAPERS**


*Kentuckian-Citizen*, The, (September 1, 1939), sec. 1, p. 1.

(September 1, 1939), sec. 2, p. 7.

(September 1, 1939), sec. 3, p. 7. "Observations of Himself Written by John Fox, Jr.," by Minnie Fox.

*Lexington Sunday Herald-Leader*, The, (September 10, 1939), (other data not available).


(July 9, 1919), p. 13.

(July 13, 1919), sec. 8, p. 368.
APPENDIX A

A CLASSIFICATION OF THE BOOKS

BY JOHN FOX, JR.

Novels and Novallettes:

A Cumberland Vendetta
A Knight of the Cumberland
A Mountain Europa
Crittenden
Esking Dale, Pioneer
Heart of the Hills
The Kentuckiana
"The Last Stetson"
The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come
The Trail of the Lonesome Pine

Short Stories:

Christmas Eve on Lonesome
Hell-Fer-Sartain
In Happy Valley

Semi-Fiction:

Blue-Grass and Rhododendron: Outdoors in Old Kentucky

Non-Fiction:

Following the Sun-Flag: A Vain Pursuit Through Manchuria
APPENDIX B

A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF JOHN FOX, JR.'S WORKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Mountain Eureka</td>
<td>1894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Cumberland Vendetta</td>
<td>1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roll-Neckertain and Others</td>
<td>1896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Kentuckians</td>
<td>1897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crittenden</td>
<td>1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue-Grace and Husband's</td>
<td>1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Little Shepherd of Kentucky's Come</td>
<td>1903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas Eve on Longfellow and Others</td>
<td>1904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following the Sun-Flag</td>
<td>1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Knight of the Cumberland</td>
<td>1906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Trail of the Longfellow Fine</td>
<td>1906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Heart of the Hills</td>
<td>1913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Happy Valley and Others</td>
<td>1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erakine Dale, Pioneer</td>
<td>1920</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BIography

Arthur Newman Kruger was born in Boston, Massachusetts, February 4, 1916. Moving to New York City at the age of five, he attended the public schools of that city, being graduated from George Washington High School, June, 1932. He then entered the College of the City of New York, where he remained until 1934, transferring at that time to the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, Alabama. From the latter institution he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1936. The year 1936-1937 was spent in reading, studying and occasional employment at Atlantic City, New Jersey, where his family had moved in 1933. He reentered the University of Alabama in September, 1937, with the intention of securing a Master of Arts degree, but before completing his work, transferred to Louisiana State University the next year, where at the present time he is a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Arthur Newman Kruger
Major Field: English
Title of Thesis: The Life and Works of John Fox, Jr.

Approved:
Earl Beardsley
Major Professor and Chairman

Charles W. Fiske
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:


Date of Examination:
April 15, 1941