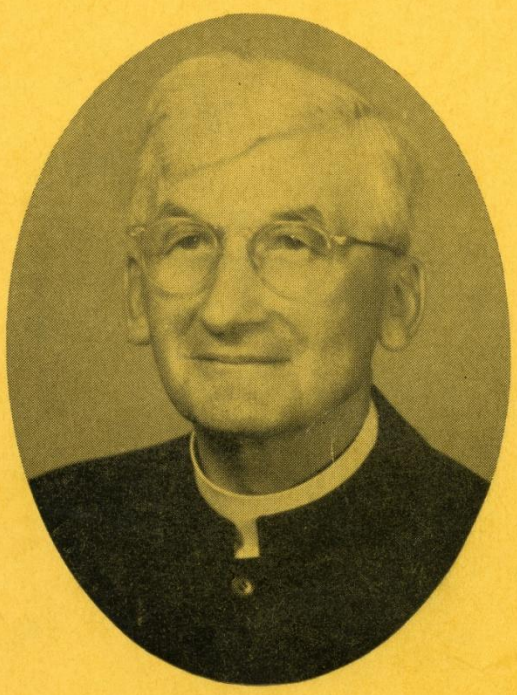

Building
The Grotto Shrine

By Rev. P. J. Wagner
Rudolph, Wisconsin

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Foreword

Oh, ye who believe in Religion,
In God, the Creator of all things,
Who formed all the hills and the valleys—
And ye who love living in nature,
Long countrysides, lakes, or on farmlands;
Oh, list to this bright, happy story,
As sung by the birds in the tree-tops,
By flowers that open like wine cups,
And perfume these sweet-scented Gardens. .. .

When I was asked to write a book on the building of this Shrine, I was worried. How is it possible, thought I, to put on paper the labors, hardships, and trials one endures, and the oppositions, and the difficulties one meets, while undertaking such a vast scheme? Then I thought of the hours I would have to spend poring over notes and manuscripts and dictionaries, in an effort to give a correct picture of a work that entails so much time, and so much labor and money.

May all who read these lines understand that more than mere human efforts were needed to attempt, and continue such task. There is One Who has a Hand in everything we commence, continue, and bring to perfection. With His help and guidance, and the assistance of His Blessed Mother, and St. Joseph, I built my Shrine and wrote this story.

This Grotto-Shrine has been constructed for the purpose of animating all who come to see, with the nobler aspirations of life, with its spiritual values, which shall forever endure. Knowing the importance of the supernatural and the everlasting, which are symbolized and portrayed in religious art, throughout this floral shrine, let this occasion of your visit be one not only of interest and recreation, but also of inspiration and prayer. After leaving these hallowed precincts, may you forever cherish the sacred memories and high ideals gathered here.

The tribute that nature brings to these scenic surroundings and to this splendid art-work, wrought in majestic and beautiful forms, and adorned with rich and colorful vegetation—all speak in silent eloquence of the hearts that raised these altars with true Christian endeavor, and sacrificing endurance—to the Eternal God Himself. Witness the multitudes coming here, during the invigorating and beautiful summer months, to see this loveliness in art and innature! Let them turn in gratitude to God, and in supplication to Mary—praying and meditating beside this Shrine, and before the tabernacle in Church.

Animated with such noble aspirations, the hearts of the pilgrims speak more plainly, in answer to the holy impressions received here, among these glories of nature and art, than in the pleasure seeking and God-forgetting world outside.

Among the pilgrims' happy throng, many indeed are the questions asked: "Why all these flowers and rockeries? What signify these statues and symbols?"

"This is a work of love and devotion—a monument to Religion, a promise to God and His Blessed Mother."
This Shrine is not as reverent as a Church, nor as free as a public park. The hallowed vaults, the sacred statues, and floral areas give evidence of this. A certain degree of gentlemanly conduct, however, with pious reserve is expected at all times.

The building of this Shrine was begun in the summer of 1928. My desire to fulfill a promise, made at Our Lady's Shrine in Lourdes, France, prompted me to begin. With Edmund Rybicki, an excellent and faithful helper, I continued. Without his ever cheerful assistance and courageous endurance, I could never have accomplished what I did. I am also grateful for the help of other men, which I needed from time to time to carry on. To many of this

farming community I owe a debt of gratitude for the abundance of fine material, hauled from their fields and wooded areas. To the businessmen, too, of this town, I turn in thanks for their assistance. And I shall not forget the loads upon loads of choicest plants and flowers which I yearly received from the Ebsen Greenhouses in Wisconsin Rapids. Such an abundance of colorful flowers made Grotto Shrine remarkably beautiful every summer, and so attractive to countless sightseers and pilgrims who came from far and near to see the glories of this far-famed Wonder. My last offerings of gratitude are due to Miss Lydia Lessig (of pleasant memory) for her outstanding perseverance and help in applying the final touches to the art-work of the Shrine. After her departure Edmund continued where she left off.

"I followed a roadway leading on,
And came to a Grotto built of stone;
And entering a Garden here
God seemed, indeed, so very near."

Contents

Chapter Page
I. My Visit to the Grotto at Lourdes, France…….. 5
II. At the Cathedral in La Crosse, Wisconsin……. 6
III. My Coming to Rudolph…… 7
IV. Location of New Buildings and Earlier Activities..... 9
V. The Beginning of a Great Venture……... 16
VI. Rocks from Farms and Fields……..… 22
VII. Those of the Forest ……... 30
VIII. Forest Leftovers……... 43
IX. Commencing the Rock Work……. 46
X. With the Flowers in the Shrine…… 49
XI. What Can Man Do when God Lets Loose? 57
XII. Thank God for Your Animal Friends…… 58
XIII. My "Daily Dozen" …….. 64
XIV. . . . About Those Who Come to See…… 66
XV. Around the Grotto Shrine……. 70
XVI. L'Envoi!..... 81

Introduction

Men will always long to go on journeys and pilgrimages to shrines of patriotism and religion, where the love of great men and noble deeds stirs them to esteem their country; and where a whisper from heaven helps to enrich life, and thus make it worth living. Many of us will never see Lourdes, or Fatima, or have an opportunity to watch the changing lights on the dome and pinnacles of St. Peter's in Rome; nor witness the multitudes passing through Independence Hall in Philadelphia. In our midst are many shrines that call to the heart, and speak to the mind. The Shrine I have been privileged to build, and about which I am writing, is a place of faith and hope, and beauty, where people come in large numbers, and lay their petitions at the feet of Mary, and at the Heart of Jesus.

Here countless assemble from nearby, and yonder,
To see the bright flowers with colors ablaze—
And, oh, to behold this great God-given wonder,
A work made celestial by prayer and praise.

I
My Visit to the Grotto at Lourdes

On a beautiful autumn day, in the year 1912, I walked from the train in Lourdes, France, to the Grotto of Our Lady. The trip to the city from Innsbruck, Austria, where I was studying for the Sacred Ministry, held more interest for me than any journey I had ever undertaken. As I approached the famous Shrine, I saw men and women reclining in wheel chairs. A few were barefooted and their clothes were of a medieval type. They had come from a hinterland in the Pyrenees Mountains, bordering the country to the south.

I spent ten days in the delightful city. A small mountain-train, joyfully tooting its tiny whistle through a most delightful scenery, had taken me there. My health having failed, I prayed to Mary amidst the quiet and beauty of the place. Should it be restored I promised to build sometime, somewhere, a shrine in her honor. As I took baths in the miraculous water, my condition improved, my courage revived, my strength returned.

II
At the Cathedral in La Crosse, Wisconsin

Returning from Europe on the seventeenth of August, 1915, His Excellency, the Most Rev. James Schwebach, Ordinary of the La Crosse Diocese, appointed me assistant to Monsignor Pape at the St. Joseph Cathedral. As I made my first appearance at the eight o'clock Sunday mass, all looked with eyes of curiosity, upon the new curate, whose mass and sermon were brief, strictly orthodox—a commentary on the words of St. Paul: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of God is, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to God ..."

The early mass choir, composed almost entirely of girls in their romantic teens, was thrilled over the text I had chosen, which seemed to have had direct reference to their beautiful singing. After the sermon I thanked the large congregation for being lenient with the shortcomings of my first public sermon, I having been ordained but a few weeks before in the Seminary at Innsbruck, Austria. I did not forget, however, to praise the excellent choir on their joyful rendition of the churchly hymns. With the words of the poet I said:

> "God sent His singers upon earth,
> With songs of sadness and of mirth,
> That they might touch the hearts of men
> And bring them back to heaven again."

Reading the announcements before the sermon, I had very little to bring up in the way of parish activities for the week. The most outstanding were my overseeing of the Young Men's Club, and the Young Ladies' Rowling. Reyond this I made a few fervent remarks on the overdue coal bill.

It wasn't that I minded the work as assistant at St. Joseph's Cathedral; I knew I had been ordained for that purpose. Resides I knew that as a beginner I was supposed to do all that—all the odd jobs, and take the bumps.

It was about two years later; I had been working "hard and heavy" in church, school, on the playground, and in the club rooms. A certain Sunday broke wet and chill, and it took more than a rainy day to dampen my enthusiasm. I enjoyed the early mass, and I knew Father Pape, the old pastor—now Monsignor—would rather take and sing the High Mass. Happily ministering to the crowd, who had turned out in large numbers in a driving rain, my heart was filled with happiness, as I invoked the blessing of God upon their humble heads, before they went out into the deluge once more.

Whistling a few cheery notes, I dashed to the rectory after mass for a cup of coffee and buttered biscuits, which Anna Simon, the old and faithful cook, had prepared, when Father Pape sorrowfully announced, "Bishop Schwebach has appointed you as pastor of St. Philomena's at Rudolph."

"Rudolph—where is Rudolph?" I questioned with interest.
"How big is the place? . . . I never heard of Rudolph."

"Rudolph ... Rudolph!" stammered the old pastor, as he looked over the pages in the Catholic Directory. "Rudolph!—here it is!" He continued: "let's see—Wood County—St. Philomena's—Rev. August Van Sever—cemetery—school—three Sisters of Notre Dame—pupils 84."

III
My Coming to Rudolph

"Rudolph" Wisconsin was the name—
Not the "Red-Nose Reindeer" of great fame.
A worth-while town, make no mistake!
A ' Town-with-a-Grotto"—wide-awake!

Arriving at Rudolph, my first assignment as pastor of a good-sized congregation, there suddenly stood before me, white and grim, St. Philomena Church, its square tower outlined against the sky, built to withstand the stress and strains of time.

Looking inside I saw the pews arranged in such way that every worshiper could have an uninterrupted view of the altar, and the priest offering the Holy Sacrifice. The windows were unadorned, which let in the unsubdued light, entirely adequate for daytime services. The kerosene lamps for night use were the result of the scientific planning of Peter Lamers, the old parish carpenter. The organ and choir-loft were behind, and well above the heads of the faithful. Thus the music and the singing found no obstruction when the choir held forth.

The day was Friday, and the church had been left open for prayer, and perhaps for an occasional visit from some farmer, who would happen to enter on passing by. Had it not been for the Rlessed Sacrament on the altar, and the ruby Sanctuary Lamp, an empty theater, thought I, would have had more character.

"I watched for the gleam of that red lamp,
From that bright little church near the graveyard."

Then I was sorry; it was no way to think about a place, where good people came to pray, sing hymns, and hear a sermon on right living, and to partake of the Table of the Lord. After a short prayer I rose in silence and left the church. The door closed behind with a final sound. The church, rectory, nun's quarters, school—all were of like character.

In the beginning it was difficult to find enough to do besides saying mass, the divine office, and teaching religion to seventy-four youngsters in school. Seven stoves were on the premises to be supplied with wood. I liked splitting wood, it was one of the most refreshing exercises. It was amusing to see the splinters fly to all corners of the woodshed. Several pieces struck me severely on the shins and knees, or cracked across my nose. Sometimes a block skidded madly away beneath the blows of my axe, and much time was spent gathering up the fragments that remained. Usually after an hour or so of this I was quite exhausted.

I also started the fires in the morning, and took out the ashes in the evening. I was often smothered in powdery gray dust, when there was a wind. If it rained the dust thickened into adhesive mud. There also was wood to be brought in from the woodshed, and thrown into the wood box. Oh, how as a boy I used to hate that
wood box!

"Never was a fishing frolic, never was a game of ball,
But that mean, provokin' woodbox had to come and spoil it all.
You might study at your lessons, and 'twas full and full to stay;
But jest start an Injun story, and 'twas empty right away."

Then there was kindling to be cut, snow to be shoveled, floors to be swept, furniture to be brushed and dusted. I cleaned the windows, polished the stove, took up the carpets and beat them, and laid them down again.

Arriving at the rectory, I met Martin Joosten, a trustee of the parish, with his wife Anna, and a few other working women, who had come to make the place presentable for the new pastor. Mrs. Joosten asked: "Are you the new priest, and are you going to stay?" Laughingly I replied: "I'll see—if I like it."

And then came the "flu," the old-fashioned "flu"—the Spanish influenza. I visited the sick and buried the dead. To avoid contamination, churches, schools, and public halls were closed. Not having much to do, I often went hunting squirrels, rabbits, partridges . . . "and there fell in one day" many—often many.

On the first day of May, in the year 1921, there came a grand migration from the "old place" to the new, without constable or police protection. It was a "grand march" with buggies, automobiles, and on foot, along the Rudolph Road.

I love the road that wanders from Wisconsin Rapids down,
'Long pastures green, a brook between,
To Rudolph—Our Town.
I love the clover fragrance, at evening floating wide,
The song of birds, of lowing herds,
In Rudolph—Our Town.
I love to think that always the folks of Our Town
Will bless their days, with gracious ways,
In Rudolph—Our Town.

IV
Location of New Buildings and Earlier Activities

This landscape of the heretofore records,
Of old here roamed barbarian Indian hordes,
Where triumphs now an art uniquely grand,
As some creation bright in Wonderland.

The new buildings and the Shrine are situated on a low elevation north of the town's Main street. Years ago this hill was a part of Peter Akey's farm. With widespread fields all around it was not as pleasing to behold as it is today. There were no charming homes along the eastern slope, where now children run and poodles play.
A vast hay field and a potato patch covered the southern side; and a rail fence trailed along where now the church-road is winding.

Behind the old rails round the pasture,
Were playgrounds for chipmunks and gophers.
There frolicked they up, round and over,
Where seeds of the wild sage and milk-weed
Were feeding haunts for quails and pheasants.

The land had been stripped of its original tree growth and stumps. One did not have to dig very deep before he would strike hard red clay mixed with shale.

Oh, know you the lands where the fields are
Deep-waving and fertile with clover;
Where sinking the golden sun melts into
The shining-green of thousand meadows?

Curiously enough, the soil conditions which appeal to the dairy farmer, on account of wonderful yields of hay and excellent grass for pastures, are ill-adapted for the culture of flowers. The fact that this land has supported giant forests in the long ago is no indication of its suitability for every other type of plant. The red clay subsoil, overlain in some areas with thin productive loam, often becomes a swamp in rainy weather and a frying pan in dry seasons. Even the roots of the alfalfa are unable to penetrate the hard subsoil; consequently its growth, if continued for many seasons, makes unsatisfactory progress.

In the spring of 1919 I drew a diagram of the tree arrangement for the new grounds. I planted deciduous saplings, which were hauled from Walter Joosten's woods on the fourth day in May on six inches of snow, before the sun broke through to deprive the teamsters of good sleighing.

Evergreen trees, mostly balsam firs, too, were assembled from woods in the towns of Sherry and Carson. Among the men who helped with the transplanting were George Bankenbusch, Peter Hartjes, Simon Joosten, and Rudolph's power-man, John Blonien. To dig a tree, even six to eight feet tall, John used neither spade,
shovel, nor grub-hoe, but merely his powerful hands. "John, can you take this one next?" I would say to him when I had discovered another suitable tree. If I offered him a spade or a shovel he replied: "Never mind the tools!" With a grunt, and a "heave ho!" and "here's your timber!" up came the tree.

Many trees were hauled and transplanted during those memorable days. Now behold the excellent shade in Grotto Park, where children play, youths entertain, and elders shuffle cards and talk the time away.

No trees, I believe, exceed the Black Hills spruce in grace and dignity; and no woods seem so romantic when breezes come sighing through the long, green branches. In yesteryears I would have thought it a dream too perfect

for realization, had someone told me that someday I would build a Shrine, and nearby would be my beautiful home, where the soft whisperings of the spruce which I planted would lull me to sleep.

At Christmas, during my first years here, I not only played Santa Claus in school, but I provided the children with a richly laden spruce Christmas tree. This they later remembered when I began building the Grotto. The boys, who helped to roll rocks and pull the ropes of large tackles, expected candy. When the others heard that I was giving candy away, they came like the children who followed the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

> "Out came the children running,
> And all the little boys and girls,
> With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
> And sparkling eyes, and teeth like pearls,
> Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after . . . ."
> —Robert Browning.

They appeared from all over until I felt that I had never seen so many before. The entrance to the school was soon blocked as I continued to throw candy to those near. When the larger boys and girls came to the fore, elbowing their way through the crowd, they soon overpowered me. In less time than it takes to tell, the little ones were trampled underfoot with loud cries, and were in danger of becoming seriously hurt. I escaped through the furnace room in school and made my way back to my living quarters upstairs. The affair, however, had aroused the teachers and on the following morning they stood with grim countenances guarding every classroom door.

> "We plant upon the sunny lea,
> A shadow for the noontide hour,
> A shelter from the summer shower,
> When we plant the apple-tree."
> —W. C. Bryant.

I thought it might be of interest to the public if also fruit trees would be planted in my garden. In consequence I planted at least one apple tree, which became the most popular tree on the grounds, especially among the younger generations, when the apples were ripe. Like the Tree in Paradise, it became a cause of much concern.

When I began planting, I cleared the grass with spade and shovel, and made a hole large enough to receive the tender roots. Then softly I folded the sheet of soil over them.

In that tree I saw how the future buds would lengthen into leafy sprays by the breath of summer days; and how the robin would hide her young, and sing upon its boughs. In May the fragrance of a thousand blossoms poured upon the open air, as countless bees came for their daily bread. In it, too, was a bouquet for the sick girl's room, and a sprig for the smiling infant.

The flowers that blossomed on the tree in April grew to fruit in June, ripened in August, fell in September, and made glad the hearts of children and grown-ups in winter. They were often seen beside the kitchen stove peeling and eating the goodly fruit.

I was often asked why I planted the tree? I said it was in order that people might come and enjoy the fruit of my labor; I was not so selfish that I cared to enjoy it alone.

While building the Grotto there came days on which I loved the blue, gusty afternoons, when the wind-sprites chased each other among the tree-tops, and when there was only quiet raking and weeding to be done, which was accomplished mostly, at that time, by Art Hentjes, Junior, or Bernadine Kempen, a neighbor girl, or by her sisters Janet and Claribel. On mild, still mornings I often spent hours in a comparatively effortless occupation of preparing the soil, mostly on my knees with a five-pronged "scratcher"—I called it. I used to love forking in the brown colored leaf mold, scattering the rich top-dressing over all areas where flowers were to be planted.

Once, I remember, it froze so hard in May that it was impossible in early morning to do anything in the garden. The hoarfrost naturally brought rain, and when it rained I buckled myself firmly into a barrage-balloon, waterproof raincoat, and crammed on my southwestern rubbers, and continued with the job as best I could.

I remember, too, on one unbearably hot afternoon, when acertain species of deluge was emptying itself with an unusual "gusto" upon my gardens and all around. I was wanting to plant several rows of adolescent geraniums in what had, on account of the rain, become an almost complete stretch of bog. Naturally I had to stop, because, as fast as I planted them, the swirling rain washed away the soil from the roots, and the poor things collapsed, like the Vestal Virgins in the stare of Emperor Nero in Rome.

Oft westerns storms in spring like torrents roar
With rain, like cascades, down each corridor.
Thereaft the filtering sun through foliage falls,
A-shedding splendor there on jeweled walls.

I wanted to complete the job of planting flowers. Half-blinded by the rain, I struggled on, my back bent in the shape of a hair pin, while the wind and rain perseveringly destroyed my handiwork, which I had begun in a flower bed, before the Grotto was built.

At last, after many minutes of ferocious battling with the elements, I emerged, but not completely vanquished. A few rows of half-wrecked geraniums stood before me, curved and twisted. The rock work I had begun completely collapsed. All was a total wreck and turned into mud.

At five o'clock my work day was over. To say that I was dead to the world would have been an exaggeration. The evening dinner, however, restored me sufficiently to carry on a few more hours. I supposed my long time in the rain and wind were largely responsible for the ferocity of my appetite. It had reached a pitch that even Germaine Kempen, then my kitchen maid, became alarmed at my ravenous display of wolfishness. It must have been only too evident that I could have swallowed—Like the whale of Jonas—the table, the dishes, the cook and the kitchen. And there would have been no dishes to be washed.

Oh, the task of washing dishes,
Cleaning plates with soap and rag!
It is a calling most delicious,
Not meant for any scalawag.
There's pan and pitcher, saucer, creamer—-
Oh, what pleasure, frolic, fun!
Now, Maiden, wash that platter cleaner!
Hokey-doke, the job is done.

A few days later as I was resting in my room from my weary labors, there came a rap on the door. Opening it I saw standing before me a man with eyes a-flush and careworn features.

"Father," he stammered, "they are after me—they are trying to kill me!"

"What!" I exclaimed in surprise. "Kill you? What's your name? Where did you come from?"

"I am Charlie Chill Blains," said the man. "Two other men were walking with me from Wisconsin Rapids to Junction City—"

"Two other men?" I broke in with surprise. "Where are they now? Are you a tramp?" I continued.

"Just bumming along," he admitted. And he continued, "Two other tramps, Hand-out Harry and Rambling Robert, got into a fight, and they threatened to kill me, but I ran off so fast that they couldn't follow. Father, I am a Catholic—can I go to confession?"

"Oh, certainly!" I replied.

After confession I admonished him to return to Wisconsin Rapids and to reform his life. I said, besides, that I would telephone to the police there to protect him.

"Can't I have a little bite?—I'm so hungry," he pleaded.

When I had given him a large cheese sandwich, he said: "0 thank you, Father, many times I dreamt of cheese in this wonderful dairy state."

He left, and I once more returned to my work in the Grotto.

Walking outdoors in the sun on the following morning, I felt ill at ease. Building the Shrine seemed to have been too difficult for me, sometimes even exhausting. On the following Sunday after benediction, I was scarcely able to drag myself along in church. It was during the Graduation Exercises in June of 1928. My knees wobbled, while the surroundings gave alarming indications that they were about to disappear from sight. Feeling quite unable to proceed, and knowing that I could not run away from weakness, I unhappily sat down in a rocker and waited for developments. Now the words of my own poem came to me:

Survey men from Chile to China,
Wherever men love, live, and labor,
You'll find that the graver their affliction,

The sooner they'll turn to religion.

And I began to pray, to say the rosary. Presently Tony Abler appeared; as he drew near I said: "Tony, can you help me, I don't think I can make it?"

"Certainly," he replied. "What's the matter?" I thought he appeared just a little shocked and surprised. As I explained my trouble, his care became like the solicitude of a nursemaid. Unfortunately I found progress impossible. My knees seemed like those of the man in the Bible, that had turned to water. Clinging to my partner, I stood still.

The "good Samaritan," elderly and strong, looked down at me as though he had a sick calf, or a newly-born donkey to take care of.

"If you have no objection of my catching hold of you?" he suggested apologetically. I assured him that, far from objecting, I was only too thankful for his aid. Thereupon he wound a strong arm completely round my body, relieving me from the burden of my own weight.

In this "lovers' embrace" we proceeded up the stairs in my own home, where he put me to bed. It was indeed fortunate that my escort deposited me in such a comfortable place.

There I "stayed put" but a short time. Soon I heard the electric pump performing terribly, and I said to myself, "I will go down and find where the trouble is. By now the water tank must be overflowing." And I went down in one hop-step-and-jump.

After I had put an end to the pumping and the flow of water, I tried to return upstairs. The attempt was unsuccessful—I cried for help. Soon I saw two charitable beings at my side. The nuns upstairs had heeded my S-O-S call; they supported my vacillating steps till I came to higher levels. There I stayed till a physician, Dr. Looze from Wisconsin Rapids, came to diagnose my sickness. On the following day Louis Joosten took me in the rear seat of his Ford to St. Joseph's Hospital at Marshfield. After Dr. Milby, the nerve specialist, had looked me over, he said solemnly and convincingly: "Nervous prostration—remain quietly in bed at least one month."

On the fourth day I was noticeably restless, talkative, thrashing about, and whirling the bed covers from one side to another. Soon Agnes Provost, the nursemaid, came in with the midday bowl of soup, a few books, The National Geographic Magazine, picture cards, and a hand mirror, which she laid in the folds of my disorderly bed coverings.

Picking up the mirror, I gazed into it a few seconds and said sarcastically: "I look like General Custer after he had taken his last stand against the Indians." "Never mind!" ejaculated the maid, "you aren't as bad as that, you'll be okay in a short time—don't worry. How do you feel? That's more important right now"—and she thrust the thermometer under my tongue.

My aging head turned on the pillow, so that my eyes traversed the entire area of the ceiling. My expression was that of a man in distress. "I feel all right," I mumbled, "somewhat jittery; perhaps I have a fever, though I never had one in all my life. What's my temperature?"

"Quite normal," replied the girl. "It registers exactly 97.99. Here, eat this, it'll make you feel better." And she offered me a spoonful of soup. "Shall I ask a Sister to feed you?"

"No, thanks!" I replied. "I'm not a baby anymore. I'll manage."

Picking up the bowl when the nurse wasn't looking, I drank some of it off. It was delicious. "Genuine hospital soup," I chuckled as I smacked my lips.

After a week I was much better—still a little dizzy. What more could I hope for? Soon I returned to my labors.

Stepping outdoors on the first morning after the ordeal, after I had offered up the Holy Sacrifice, completed my prayers, and heartily breakfasted, I thought, no matter who I am, or what I wish to be:

Whether a mason, a cleric, or clerk,
Think well of your duties, your God, and your work.

And I continued with a short song I had composed:

Winter, summer, autumn, spring,
Among the rocks I work and sing;
Plant the flowers there and here:
Just the work I love so dear.
Every day I work and pray—
Thus I while the time away.

Soon, however, I found that my physical condition had been greatly impaired by the assault, and I caught a cold. Hearing me coughing, Ethel Van Asten, who was then my private secretary, said to me: "Father, you have a bad cold. You should do something for it, perhaps you should see a doctor; you're not going to die?" "I hope not," I replied, "not so soon. How about a swig of brandy?" And I continued:

"It's not the cough that takes you off.
But it's the coffin they carry you off in."

And I laughed loud.

As I continued building the Shrine I was daily in need of additional strength. Almost everyone who knows me in this community also knows that almost since time immemorial I have been afflicted with stomach ailments—nervous indigestion. As consequence I cannot eat as often, and as appetizingly as I would like to. Eating away from home, I usually ask for a special order. I've hear it said that goat's milk was easily digestible. Some years ago I was able to purchase a few bottles from Ernie Hamm's Dairy, here in Rudolph. In late years, however, there was no longer any to be had, except a little for cafe-au-lait. Some months later I heard that a certain farmer, living not too far away, had goats. Driving out to see, I found him not at home. A nanny goat was bleating near the barn; I also met a few cows. I was able to milk (I learned the technique on the farms of Iowa) but how would I get permission to milk? And would a cow or a goat allow me to come near? Poor me! I was thirsty for milk. I would have given a dollar for a bottle. . . . Today I am still carrying on with the help of excellent grade A milk from Hamm's Dairy.

In school I lived for thirty years in a classroom, where I could daily observe the progress I was making in building. The apartment where I dwelt was large and high, with tall wide windows. Temporary partitions divided the floor space into four parts of unequal size. For lavatory there was a large white basin, into which water was poured from a deep pitcher. I went to bed by the light of an amber-shaded electric lamp. There were switches which set other lights burning miraculously in various parts of the room. I marveled at the luxury of my surroundings. After bedtime the place became silent, except for the trippings of nuns' feet on the floor above.

One evening while quiet reigned supreme and I was absorbed in profound thought, in some sort of a "dolce-far-niente" attitude, and, seated in my old cane-bottomed rocker, I unexpectedly heard: "Trump-trump-trump-trump-trump-trump!"—and I wondered what the noise could be. Where did it come from? It sounded like the drum beats of Bumbelburg's marching band, and not too far away. Grasping my flashlight, I went to where an old icebox was reposing in one corner of the small kitchen. I listened . . . and listened again: "Trump-trump-trump-trump-trump-trump! Then I heard a noise like the dragging of chains. The creepers began to play hockey up and down my back . . . goose pimples formed on my skin. "What!" said I, *"Der Deibel ist los!"*

Quoth Hudibras, "I smell a rat!
Ralpho, thou dost prevaricate!"
—Samuel Butler.

Then I saw under the icebox two large, black, shiny eyes. "Wow!" I exclaimed. "I will call somebody—Leo Van Asten, at the telephone!" Leo was then chief operator in town. He came at once. Placing a few boards in a semicircle on the floor around the icebox, I poked beneath it with a broomstick. I let out an emphatic interjection of surprise when there appeared a sleek, shiny, large muskrat! It had come from across the railroad tracks and scrambled up the steps, looking for water. In such strange place it became alarmed and puzzled.

Visitors to the Shrine may now behold in some mysterious cavity, or near some moss-covered rock, a mounted muskrat.

If a snake in a home is a wicked thing, a snake in church is horrifying. After hours of backbreaking toil, one sunny afternoon I walked into my headquarters in school to partake of little refreshments o-o-o-o-o-!! There lay before me on the floor near the telephone a large snake. It was beautiful with bright yellow, red and blue stripes, yet hideous and loathsome. "Kill it! Kill it!" screamed Joyce Etteldorf, who was then my "maid-of-honor, and of kitchen art and exercise." Soon it was decapitated with a garden hoe, and slung away.

A few weeks later another snake was discovered in church by Sister Hildegarde. Seeing the Sister, it raised its head as if to say: "I have as much right here as you have—now what, Madam Sister?" If St. Patrick, by the power of God, drove the snakes from Ireland, thought I, as the story goes, why can't I by the same power command this creature?

"St. Patrick drove the snakes from Ireland, for history tells us so.

He drove them into Germany, for they had no place else to go."

I used to sing in my days at college. And I ordered the snake to leave the Sanctuary of the Lord. But it would not; instead it raised its haughty head in defiance, and stuck out its tongue in anger. Returning with the same garden hoe, I slowly advanced for the kill. . . .

My work-days in the Grotto began at about eight o'clock in the morning. At that time there was in front of the school a lawn with flower beds, which I had made with the help of Pete Ruiter, Clarence Van Ert, Gerald Dobbs, and Forrest Wilkins. There were a number of young trees, too, on a slope towards the west, which I had planted. Beyond, along the railroad right-of-way, was a long plowed field, then belonging to Nicholas Ratelle.

If epic stanzas of ancestral lore,
Will sing of man's unyielding strength of yore,
As here with oxen slow and sure of foot,
The wear and tear of time and toil withstood;
Let lyric lines then too entone in rhyme
Of handmade majesty and work sublime,
Of perseverance tried, and patience paid
By Wonder greeting at this garden-gate.

Never will I forget the feverish energy with which I then strode up and down the garden paths with a barrow full of ground and rocks, for the groundwork of the Grotto Shrine. I often think of my endless goings and comings from my workshop, struggling to carry dangerously wobbling pots of flowers, a shovel, and a hoe with but one pair of hands. I still remember, too, my squirrel-like ascent to the loft of the car shed for a sack of cement that burst all over me as I descended with it hoisted on my back, I recollect my prancings on the summit of a compost-heap, filling a large pail of leaf mold, with a school-boy at my elbow, reminding me that, "for sure that night" the rubble-pile must be burnt. And, finally, do I remember the long hours spent in a frightful backbreaking occupation of digging the rocky, muddy, chocolate colored, incredibly heavy Rudolph soil for the planting of another shrub, or tree?

"I hope that digging isn't too much for you," Bernadine Kempen would sometimes say, when she was pulling weeds in the Grotto. At the stroke of twelve I straightened out my long back, scraped the clods of earth from my shoes, with the edge of my shovel, and turned my weather-prophesying nose toward the east, in anticipation of more rain, and my eyes towards my long-yearned-for lunch awaiting me at the invitation of Olivia Lansing, who was then my housemaid.

Naturally I was often half-way up to the kitchen by that time, and I laughed as I assured her I rather liked it, I was that hungry.

Oh, what glory and fame in a splendid repast!
There is pleasure in eating—it's fun unsurpassed,
When the steak or the chicken is A Number One,
With potatoes and gravy and a caraway bun,
And dumplings and doughnuts, and pie a la mode—
To the cooks in the kitchen all honors bestowed!
Men may live without fortune, fond friendships and books,
But where are the men who can live without cooks?
They may live without care in this world anywhere,
And live without work like an old millionaire;
They may love and be loved without a hair on their head,
But no sensible man can e'er live without bread.

Allow me, dear reader, to pause for a moment to introduce Bernadine Kempen, when she was a mere girl long ago. There is a fairytale by George McDonald, about a princess and a goblin, about a king's daughter, who in her father's palace found a room upstairs. In that room dwelt a lady with snow-white hair, and her eyes were younger than the springtime. Bernadine, then, perhaps ten or eleven years old, reminded me of that lady.

About the same time, as it happened, my niece, Mollie Klein, from Texas, stayed with me. It may, however, have been a few years earlier. Mollie was a great lover of nature. Outdoors most of the time at home, with her favorite horses and fowls, and in the sunshine and the fresh air, she was inspired with lovely thoughts. Mollie thought

deeply; as a result her mind was a storehouse of noble ideas. To me the greatest thing about her was her deep and absorbing passion for horses. She rode her pony every day. Often I teased her with:

> "Pony Boy! Pony Boy! Won't you be my Pony Boy?
> Gidi-app! Gidi-app! Gidi-app! Gidi-app!—
> Whoa!—my Pony Boy!"

The Ratelle boys had horses, one of which she borrowed for riding from time to time. I loved Mollie on account of her outdoor likings and activities. And there was her father, Martin, well informed in natural philosophy. He knew all the secrets of the growth of trees, plants, shrubs, and flowers, and the habits and idiosyncrasies of birds, and ground animals. A conversation with him was usually intelligent and informative, and consequently most interesting.

V
The Beginning of a Great Venture

Who worketh with hammer and chisel,
With plowshare, pick, palette, or pencil,
Knows well of profound, peaceful slumbers.
Around swings the hammer of labor;
The chisel rings out and cuts deeply.
The man with the plow and the planter,
May freely confront the whole nation.
He feeds them with beef, bread and butter,
Provides them with linen and leather;
He's lord of all his possessions.

When I began building the Grotto Shrine my capacity for hard labor and grinding toil was prodigious.

Oh, grand achievement! By Devotion made
Of wondrous rocks, by strenuous labor laid.
Majestic Temple—excellent in art!
Ingenious handwork—dear to every heart!

Seeing me roaming the fields and working with rocks, some people thought that I was about to cut my wisdom teeth. Some remarked that perhaps it were better if I would get my horns clipped before I would go too far in this construction game. No one knew, nor suspected, that I was equal to the job.

Calling Edmund Rybicki, when he was still a mere lad in school, I found that he warmed up to my work at once. First I offered him "two bits" a day for his cordial and energetic endeavors. For the thousands of tons of rocks that were hauled from more than fifty farms I did not pay even as much as one postage stamp.

While countless loads from fields unfurrowed rolled,
Here altars rose like temples quaint of old.
Oh, treasured place of prayer and content!
To man's inventive skill—a compliment.

The farmers were happy to see me coming with picks, shovels, chains, and trucks to free their fields of something which they considered of little value, even harmful to their machinery. A certain farmer, Louis Le May, told me: "Take that big rock out o' there; it is right in front of my house; it spoils the looks of the place. Whenever I reap the grain in that field, I often run the binder into the thing, and it requires a few new sections in the sickle-bar every time." With a few powerful men—the Bloniens—and with jacks and hoists (borrowed from Johnson & Sons' Machine Shop in Wisconsin Rapids) and with Harry Hatjes's truck, the large, rough, chocolate-colored boulder was moved to the front of my souvenir shop. Now the children play on it. Often, too, I see men waiting there, until the ladies have finished shopping.

The Woodlawn cabin cozy, neat, and plain—
From heat a shade, a shelter in the rain.

While building the Grotto Shrine, which was a work not too hilarious on account of the burdensome labors entailed, I purchased thirteen wheelbarrows, eleven shovels, five spades, eight picks, four grub-hoes, six tackle blocks, seventeen crowbars, eight jackscrews, five sledge hammers, countless yards of hay rope, and at least seventeen heavy and medium-sized chains. Besides, I bought for myself twelve bottles of skin lotion, eighteen pairs

of men's Oshkosh b' Gosh blue denim overalls and jackets, and countless pairs of gloves and mittens. The Bede Store will bear me up in this.

Grotto Shrine Expenditures

Mosaics, glass, and shells	*$1,030.48*
Trees, flowers and shrubs	*5,047.77*
Labor	*56,330.87*
Logs and lumber	*3,608.84*
Paint and painting	*4,417.58*
Reinforcing	*603.34*
Insurance	*685.15*
Sand and gravel	*1,033.02*
Building cement	*6,319.31*
Printing	*1,440.00*
Marble statuary	*21,380.27*
Mounted animals	*500.00*
Trucking	*1,530.18*
Electric wiring and fixtures	*2,790.21*
Repairs	*580.55*
Construction equipment	*1,738.27*
Miscellaneous	*2,150.12*
Plumbing supplies	*2,228.50*
Blacktop surfacing	*131.50*
Utilities	*135.00*
Advertising	*1,147.73*
Hardware	*394.80*
Total	*$114,224.49*

Humanity here moves like billows roll,
As bright and courteous hours onward stroll:
With gladsome tread Joy saunters o'er the green,
The honored oaks and haughty elms between.

Summer is here a wonderful season, when the gardens swarm with interesting people. I am happy to have had the privilege of meeting so many who take interest in, and a sympathetic view of, our problems and labors. Many believe that it required much patience to undertake a work so vast and strenuous. I tell them that, on the contrary, the work was so fascinating that there were scarcely hours enough in which to accomplish all there was done.
Besides the rock work there was the world-wide field of plants
and flowers to be explored and studied.

Here God plants the lilies the chalice-shaped callas;
Hosannas to Him rise with every bird-call;
The dahlias e'er charming He spreads like umbrellas;
The rocks He moss-covers where bright waters fall.

When I began building I tried to realize the promise I had made at Lourdes to build a Grotto. With His Excellency our Ordinary's permission, and the assured assistance of Edmund Rybicki, I began building. Glancing at our parish grounds, and at the rolling countryside all around, I thought: This is it—the place I was
looking for, where my dreams were to become true.

Now here within this farming zone.
The country sides were full of stone;
Along the hillsides and the vales,

Where men were making hay in bales—
Beside the rocky water-lane,
Where drank the horse with sorrel mane—
Along the farmyard's rugged fence,
Where grew the milkweed tall, by chance—
Behind the barn, the old haystack,
Where stood the young herd's feeding-rack—
All through the meadows, down the roads,
Where hay-hands smiled on well-built loads,
Together with few men, e'er strong,
From day to day and all day long,
Assembled I with help of God,
The truck loads for this garden-lot.

One evening while driving into some sort of lane, where cows were coming through, I came upon a group of ragged children, who, despite the rain that had been falling all day, were screaming and quarreling over some game they were playing in the center of a large puddle of water. They utterly disregarded the traffic—the cows coming through the lane and my "chucking" Jeffry, with which I was trying to worm my way into a nearby field to look for stones. I sounded my klaxon and shouted: "Get out of the way before I run over you!" They paid not the slightest attention to my threats, and perforce my car stopped dead.

Along these green acres behold homes and dairies,
Enshrined with bright meadows and woodland terrains,
Where pastures and rolling fields spread o'er wide prairies;
Where plenty and health cheer the hard-working swains.

With slow and deliberate movements I left my vehicle and, taking two of the ringleaders by their ragged coat collars, I lifted them bodily onto the green sod bordering the puddle. Playing water hockey, they had not seen me, nor heard me coming near.

"You kids better beat it," I shouted. They were Dixon's and Le May's children. As the whole flock wheeled around, like so many pigeons, I saw the prettiest specimen of rocks I ever laid my eyes on—the right kind for a rock garden. They were rough and of a chocolate-brown color, lying in the deepest green beside the road. Elated, I touched their uneven surfaces, wondering how I could use them for my Shrine. Below the hill was a brook, or creek—Le May's, or Mosquito, Creek—cascading over rocks, gray with lichens, and lush with moss. Intent on collecting stones, I noticed small fish darting through the riffles—moss fish, and shiners.

Before we began hauling I blessed the truck, saying: "Oh, God, listen favorably to our prayers, and with Thy right hand bless this truck. Send Thy holy Angels to deliver, and guard from every danger it, and all who ride in it. And as Thou didst grant faith and grace by Thy deacon, Philip, to the man from Ethiopia, sitting in his chariot, and reading Holy Scripture, so also show the way of salvation to Thy servants, so that, helped by Thy grace, and always intent on doing Thy good works, they may, after all the trials of their pilgrimage and life on earth, attain to everlasting joys. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen."

Soon, from Dixon's farm, had been hauled many rocks which I found among barbed-wire entanglements and beneath tall weeds and long grasses; some were behind the barn and henhouse. Climbing over a rock pile, along some fence, I heard rustling noises as of something scampering through leaves and weeds. It momentarily frightened me; I thought it was a snake. Then I saw a black bushy-tailed animal, a thick, ugly brute, running for cover under a stone pile. "A skunk!" I screamed. The place was alive with them. After one was killed, a strong unpleasant smell hung for weeks around the truck and the rocks.

It was a rather formidable beginning of a life I loved. My hands became calloused from using the pick and the shovel; often they bled while manipulating the rough rocks and the cement. It was a life in which one toils that one may eat, and eats that one may toil.

Will passing Praise e'er eulogize enough
The workmanship and elegance whereof

The grandeur of this ornate Shrine was made,
With nature's pageantry so well arrayed?

I remember once, it was early in autumn; there had been a freeze during the night; it lay white on the grass as we passed over the fields with a truck, which I had borrowed from the Bede brothers. As the sun rose into the clear sky, the weather mellowed, and soon advanced into a delightful day. I had taken my gun along. I thought perhaps an occasional grouse or rabbit might cross my path at any moment. There was not a ripple on the water of a nearby pond, not a cloud in the sky, and the branches of the trees in the adjacent woods were as motionless as if they had been stretched upon a canvas. Moving towards a large tree I saw a squirrel running across the boughs.

"... and chattered in his leafy house.
The oriole flashed by—and look
Into the mirror of the brook,
Where the vain bluebird trims his coat,
Two tiny feathers fall and float.
"As silently, as tenderly,
The dawn of peace descends on me.
0 this is peace! I have no need
Of friend to talk, of book to read:
A dear Companion here abides;
Close to my thrilling heart He hides:
The holy silence in His voice:
1 lie and listen, and rejoice."
—J. T. Throwbridge.

As I entered the wooded area, however, it was not too peaceful. The squirrel had fallen with the discharge of my gun; the partridge flew swiftly and precisely through a small opening in the trees. As I fired a second shot, I heard the loud bellowing of an infuriated bull.

Loud trembled the earth to the tree tops,
As when the Lord spake on Mount Sinai.

He was coming closer like the onrushing of a huge military tank, snorting, bellowing, scratching. But I was not to be intimidated. "Shall I let him have it between the eyes, or in his legs?"

I dared. "What! No hunter has any right to kill a cow, or a steer?" Suddenly I veered to the left and fled. Just a few hundred feet away was the truck, into which I scampered to safety. When the bull saw me no more he scratched the earth, bellowed fiercely, and like a defeated Mexican Taurus, slowly walked off.

Sometime later while I stood gazing at a large oak tree in Dixon's cow pasture, some wild animal suddenly passed by and disappeared into some hole under a brush near a stone pile. The hole seemed large enough for the hideout of a fox or wolf. Ed poked a long bar into the deep opening. Since nothing happened, we continued loading rocks onto the truck, taking them to where the Grotto was to be built. On a nearby tree I noticed how the bark had been gnawed away, most likely by a porcupine. Some weeks later Edmund killed one with my shotgun. It was hiding among the branches of a large elm tree. It was covered with quills, which it could easily release in time of danger. After the game warden had been informed of our killing he came to look and to warn us. I was then ignorant that the porcupine was civilly protected.

A cow with an infant calf is often terrifying to a pedestrian. One who lives with cattle, like a farmer, knows how to manage such. I have a vivid recollection of once meeting a cow with a newborn babe where we were loading boulders onto a truck. The mother cow was rather anxious for the safety of her offspring. Any move towards taking, or holding the calf, was retaliated by a fast forward lunge of the infuriated mother.

As we were beginning our building project we knew little about the formation and geology of rocks. In olden days, I remember, people thought that rocks grew, but there is neither growth nor life in minerals. One day Edmund pointed out to me a petrified stump. It was interesting to note how every texture of the wood, even every fiber of the bark, had turned into stone.

Evergreen trees have a curious character and silence quite their own. Beneath such often the largest rocks were found, upon which the sap, in the form of pitch, or tar, had dripped, forming small, black globules on their surfaces.

One day, walking through a forest of evergreens, I came upon a trapper, living in a small log shanty—Joe Kotello. He had been removing pelts from muskrats. The meat he was frying looked appetizing, but, though I was very hungry, I could not eat.

Kotello was an old experienced trapper and hunter. I first met him when hauling a large hollow pine log, found on the banks of Mill Creek, near the remains of the old Sherry sawmill. One morning I spied a trap in the log. During our conversation Joe told me that in his day he hunted and trapped more than twenty-five wolves, and many more fox, and countless muskrats and beaver. (He gave me a beaver tail as souvenir. It would have made an excellent fly swatter, if it had not been too clumsy and heavy).

Hunting along the bottom-lands of the Little Eau Pleine River, I came one afternoon upon a solitary log shanty, where I counted more than a hundred muskrat pelts lying outside. Joe was busy inside with other water animals. When on a wolf hunt, Joe said, he often walked miles and miles over and around Rib Mountain. When night came he was often far from home, and, making a bed of twigs, grass, and weeds near some stump or log, he went to sleep.

Let me continue telling about the "plank without a knot" from which the Grotto Shrine sign was made. The plank had been sawed from a large red-oak log, found six feet deep in silt, beneath the Little Eau Pleine river bed. It had been well preserved, perhaps for hundreds of years.

A few weeks later, hunting in the same territory, I came into dense brushwood where I couldn't see farther than a rabbit's jump away. There I saw a large white rabbit with large fluffy feet and hairy legs—a snowshoe hare. Soon my fleet hound discovered the scent and raced over hills and through the marsh after him. Finally the baying hound was so far away that his yelping sounded like a dream in my ears. After a short time it came closer and closer—and suddenly there was the rabbit prize, but a few paces away. For several minutes he sat still, looking anxiously towards the approaching dog. Leveling my gun, I shot, though I couldn't see him too well. Struggling and writhing, there he lay.

Scarcely had I picked him up—^a twenty-pounder—when Joe Kotello appeared on the scene. A few muskrats and a cottontail were dangling at his side. Holding the large snowshoe high, I exclaimed: "Look what I have!" "Oh you banged him!" Joe said surprisedly. "I heard you shoot." Then he continued in a trapper's slow monotone: "Father, I tell you what—I have a large oak tree up here on the banks of the Eau Pleine. If you want it for your Grotto, you can have it: it's a big one; come on I'll show it to you." His legs were encased in large rubber boots, his strides were enormous. Over tundra and through dense brush, sometimes almost creeping, he hurried on. Catching my breath, I exclaimed: "You're going too fast!" Slowing his steps somewhat, he turned
toward me, snickering: "Oh, can't you make it?" Now and then a rabbit jumped from the brush and sped away, with the dog after him. A partridge, too, frightened from its nest, flitted through the treetops. Arriving near the large oak, he exclaimed: "There it is—a great tree!" Towering high above the other trees and over the river was an immense white oak, about four feet in diameter at the base.

A few days later I guided my car, with Edmund in the seat beside me, down from the Wick's Road, through a fanner's yard, along a rocky and brushy trail. Finally we came to the tree. Between us and the great prize was the swampy, muddy Little Ban Pleine river-bed. "We can't take it now," I said to Edmund. "We'll have to wait till the river freezes over."

The tree still stands today; I'm its sole possessor; I may still claim it and cut it down: My Large Tree on the Banks of the Little Eau Pleine River in Marathon County.

After I had written all this in my study—it was towards evening—I heard amid the twittering of birds a faint noise. Coming up the path on a bicycle was the newspaper boy, Roger Rybicki, bringing the news from around the world, from a world gone mad. After I had read the paper, the Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune,* I went to bed. Soon I fell into a slumber, and dreamt of my ramblings and findings, and labors building the Grotto Shrine . . . then I was fast asleep.

Wandering over fields, and through forests looking for stones, I frequently discovered a number of maple-trees, with pails fastened to their sides. From beneath the bark oozed a translucent liquid (sap), which was taken to a large vat, where it was boiled down to maple syrup, or maple sugar.—Driving through Vermont some years ago, I saw countless utensils hanging along the maples, evidently for the same purpose of catching the sweet liquid.—Can I forget the delicious pan-cakes ("flap-jacks"), at home in Iowa, prepared from buckwheat, or potato flour, with apple-flabs inside, over which rich maple syrup, from our own trees, was freely poured from a sticky pitcher?

I wonder if the country sides, meadows and pastures, hills and valleys, brooks and rivers, woodlands and forests appeal to a young man's imagination today, as much as they did to me when I was young?

Often in spring when the skies were ablaze in the morning with bright crimson, I would exclaim: "It looks like rain!"

Much nearer sounds the aeroplane,
The T-V tower seems so near.
The troubled cows run wild with fear;
They chase each other 'round the yard;
The wicked flies cause them to start.
The frogs, too, on the water rise,
The angry dog is snapping flies.
Besides, the cat is eating grass.
The clouds look red in the window-glass;
Then gray they seem on the horizon's brow.
'Twill surely rain, I see it now.

Then the fields became soft, and our truck got stuck, which required old rails, planks, rocks, gravel, parts of stumps, and what have-you to bring it back to terra firma once more. On such occasions I was not too certain of the temperaments of the men I had employed; in consequence I was especially careful.

Now listen, "Chuck." Don't you get stuck
On a Rudolph road!
You better wait—keep closed the gate,
Till the roads can hold your load!
They're springy now, too soft somehow—
Then, this is what I quoth:
"The mud and slush are just like mush,
Your truck is not a boat."

One time after being mired with a load of rocks, we entered a large log building resting on wooden blocks. It was very attractive. The low pitch of the shingle-covered roof, with good proportions, shut out much of the light. Entering the building one afternoon, I found myself walking on a layer of straw or hay, so deep that it was difficult for me to proceed. My feet sank as though I were walking on quicksand. Edmund, advancing toward me, seemed like a ghost. He was attired in everyday clothes, and his shirttails were loosely tucked, which made him look more like a goblin than an ordinary man. Since he accompanied me every day I had no fears for him.

VI
Rocks from Farms and Fields

Our apparatus for transporting rocks usually consisted of a huge International or Dodge truck, borrowed from the Bede Brothers or from Harry Hartjes or Harvey Sprangers. Later one was used belonging to Henry Dorshorst. The personnel of our rockassembljng party—Eugene Zimmerman, Harvey Sprangers, Gerald Dobbs, Ben Abler, Larry Slattery, and others—was usually cheerful and happy. The help of Edmund Rybicki was unfailing: his eyes were fast to see a rock lying somewhere by the wayside. Clem Blonien often insisted on standing on the rear of the truck to enable him to find things easier. His call for a stop was usually followed
by the loading of a few large boulders, or the finding of some interesting stump or log along some woodland. Eugene Zimmerman was not too quiet; he knew a lot about trees and rocks, and where they might be found. He was a small man, but energetic and fast. And there was Gerald Dobbs, often loaded down with a crowbar, grub-hoe, and a number of ropes and chains, which he brought into action as soon as the truck stopped. He was a good worker and a great eater. For spectators we sometimes crowded into the truck a few youngsters whom we picked up at some home; they \vere eager to see us load the "big ones."

Along some trail from Lawrence Slattery's home to his fertile acres, rocks were plentiful along fences and under trees. There we followed a cow path through a lane, where we could see far over rich country sides, and green meadows. Even Rib Mountain, forty miles away, and the city of Stevens Point were clearly visible on a fair day. It became a standing joke among us that we often drove "one foot from a tip-over," so sloping the hillsides often were.

In Louis Le May's farm the truck rolled over rough pastures bestrewn with thorn-apple trees; and in Percy Ebacher's, exceptionally rough rocks were found under shady oaks and widespread maples. A fox squirrel, not prepared to find people so near, shied away as we approached. It ran into a hollow tree, leaving behind, near an old stump, a number of acorns.

When Autumn wafts his color-wand of fame,
The chatt'ring squirrels to tear of time complain
Of falling leaves, exposing burrowed bow'r—
In Grotto here's no lamentation hour.

I was disappointed not to find in these woods some freak log for my gardens, which would have been interesting for children to play on. In another woods, once belonging to the old Reinhart farm, but which is now owned by Clarence Weidner, a large maple log and stump were discovered. Martin Joosten, with his team of frisky horses and bob-sled, took them to the Grotto after he had a tip-over.

May I digress here from my story to emphasize the fact that horses are no longer used for logging or pulling rocks. In the olden days there were oxen, then came the "horse and buggy days." Now the farmers use tractors.

"The horse and buggy days are gone,
Considered by the world too slow;
And millions now are speeding on,
Just where, nobody seems to know."

Percy Ebacher had a splendid team of horses for pulling, with which he often came to my assistance. When I was logging on Jim Case's farm, Percy was always there with his team. In later years the tractors of Gerald Dobbs, Bob Slattery, Louis Arnold, and George Gums dragged logs from the woods, and rocks from the fields.

Before continuing my story I wish to make it clear that I am no mason; I had never built a wall in my life; before I began here in Rudolph I did not know even how to mix mortar. And now . . .

Behold the Shrine, the glorious Grotto Shrine!

In full-fraught nature, where bright ornaments shine.
A man-made Wonder in a rural scene,
Where flowers hang like jewels on a queen.

I had worked on farms in Iowa for years, before I began to study for the priesthood. When I began this rock work I used an ordinary bread pan, and a large mixing spoon.

One day my spirits were running high. On a perfect morning, Edmund and I left for Milladore and Sherry at an early hour. Soon we found ourselves near the Charles Linzmeier farm. The area looked attractive; we could not resist stopping to look at huge piles of stones. "Just the sorely-needed material I was looking for to complete my Shrine!" I exclaimed. Unable to get near the piles with the truck, we walked through a swamp to higher levels, where we found rocks of reasonable size for convenient handling. I remember with pleasure how Edmund dug and dug and brought one rock after another to a place where they could easily be loaded. I was anxious to find one of odd shape, which I hoped to place near the cross on top of the Sacred Heart Grotto. A few days later one was found; at the same time I had the pleasure of talking to Mr. Linzmeier telling him of our wonderful find. "Take all the rocks you can use," he chuckled; "they cost you nothing."

It was half-past four one afternoon in September, when the outlines of Power's Bluff (often called Skunk Hill), a few hundred feet high, became visible to show that the slopes were covered with rocks. Below nestled the village of Arpin, and before sunset we had motored to its crest, where cliffs were protruding on all sides. The Indians here conducted sacrificial ceremonies. In their language they gave the hill a name which no White Man could neither spell nor pronounce.

"We drove the Indians out of the land,
But a dire revenge these Red men planned,
For they fastened a name to every nook,
And every boy with a spelling-book
Will have to toil till his hair turns gray
Before he can spell them the proper way."
—Eve Tappan.

On Power's Bluff the rocks were of a different texture and nature than the ones we had been using. Many years later, however, truck loads from this hill were taken to the Grotto Shrine for building.

I know of no more fascinating story of intelligence for this dairy community than the giving of an account of the many races and breed of cattle with which we came into contact on farms and pastures while assembling rocks. I know of farm boys and girls who have taken blue ribbons for their heifers, but I challenge them to show me more beautiful creatures than the cattle we witnessed throughout this central Wisconsin area. I am not prejudiced against any certain kind of breed or species, but the delicacy of features, lines of trim bodies, color of hair, slim legs, and short tails made many of the cows we saw appear as graceful as deer. The way they carried their heads, poised on slender necks, gave them an air as though they just appeared on their first spring outing. I am proud of our dairy state, and of our Wisconsin dairy herds. They add interest and beauty to our barns and yards, and our country sides; and are one of the principal supports of our farming endeavors.

Then crowded to the fresh hay mows
Frolicsome heifers, and old cows.
Down into cans the white stream flows,
As the farmer to his milking goes.

Some years ago an item of interest appeared in the Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune,* describing the finding and moving of a huge rock: "A seventy-five-ton rock specimen was hauled with great
effort from Richard Dobbs' field three miles north of Rudolph. It was the latest and largest chunk addition of raw material of the famous Grotto Shrine. By now the stone has been incorporated into the principal part of the Shrine by Father Wagner, the originator and builder, with Edmund Rybicki, his long-time helper." Two fifty-ton jacks, borrowed from the Consolidated Paper Mills, and one thirty-five-ton lift, belonging to Joe Demski, of Portage County, and huge tackle-blocks were used in the undertaking. George Gumz, with a powerful bulldozer, hitched to a fifty-ton steel cable, dug and raised the rock from the field. It was hauled
with the Wood County fifty-ton trailer.

At another time while Edmund Rybicki, the Bloniens, and I were struggling with a huge rock in Louis Le May's front yard, Walter Dixon appeared. After a word of greeting and a few pungent remarks, he came directly to the point. He expressed himself as delighted with the work I was undertaking, and he continued: "Now, don't you start anything you can't finish! Building a grotto seems a staggering undertaking. You are no more fit to build than I am to run a chicken farm, and I don't know a thing about chickens.

"You have no contacts with outside help," he continued. "How do you expect to get rocks without funds? You can't expect to do all that by correspondence. You must talk to the farmers personally, who have rocks on their farms. Take a good reconnaissance of these surroundings. When you'll return you'll really know whether or not you can continue building."

After thinking it over I found that Mr. Dixon was probably right. Nevertheless I felt pretty sure that with Edmund and a few husky young farmer lads, and with the help of God, and His Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, I most probably would be equal to the task.

Any difficult undertaking includes problems and labor difficulties. One afternoon while Edmund was fastening the chains to the wheels of the truck—it had rained during the night and the breaks of the truck were not holding too securely—it began to roll back, and Edmund was squeezed under one wheel. Momentarily he screamed, yet having had enough strength, he jumped, reeled, and fell. Two men carried him into my car. I started with him to the Riverview Hospital in Wisconsin Rapids to have an x-ray taken. When we had gone about three miles, he said he felt better. And I returned him to his labors.

Twice I broke two or more ribs while building the Shrine. The first time *I* fell on a shovel; the second time a shovel fell on me. Both injuries healed rapidly. The experiences I had building the
Shrine may perhaps be compared to the experiences of St. Paul in his travels. In parody I may say that I suffered in journeying often, in over fifty farms and thirty woodlands, assembling building material . . . in perils from the truck being mired . . . in perils in the wilderness . . . in labors and hardships, in many sleepless nights, thinking of the Grotto finances, and where to get the next load of rocks, in hunger and in thirst and in fastings often, in cold and exposure. Resides those outer things, there was my daily pressing anxiety, the care of all the people of my church! Who is weak, I am not weak? Who is made to stumble? Edmund not only stumbled, but he fell. If I must boast, I will boast of the things that concern the building of my Shrine.

When the weather was dry, a peculiar red dust settled on our hands and faces, while we were gathering rocks; it stuck to our clothes like red talcum powder. Often, coming home for dinner, we were as rosy as a sunset. The same might have been said in the evening of our shoes and the lower extremities of our trousers. Loading and unloading the heavy stones wasn't always as rosy as the lines of a poem I wrote of the flowers in my Shrine:

> How brightly, too, here smiles the closing day,
> This gaudy scene in set-of-sun array;
> When dews begin their nectars rich to pour
> In silence o'er this richly flowered floor!

Driving along the church road one day, toward the village—it was Saturday—I heard through a window the most heavenly music. Stopping the truck, I looked toward a home, where I saw the graceful silhouette of a girl playing the piano. To my delight the sounds came directly toward me. The musician was dressed in her Saturday gown. She was alone, except for her instrument, and her sheet music. How sweetly it sounded! All too soon it died away. Those moments still live in my memory as an exquisitely perfect experience. On close observation I found that the musician was none other than a pretty youthful female—Donna Jagodzinski—at the piano.

> When wooded glens begin their springtime song,
> To Grotto Shrine sublimer strains belong.
> In sylvan shades bird melodies surprise—
> Beside the Shrine much nobler tunes arise.

On a busy day as the main street of the town was crowded with tourist cars, and farmer trucks were taking corn and grain to busy grist mills, the 2:00 o'clock train came steaming through. There was an accident. A man with his car was hurtled off the tracks. He was bleeding and unconscious.

> Some travelers are fearless—all hail, and all hurry!

There's "stop, look, and listen!" Yet dauntless they dare.
Come wreckage and ruin, too late they are sorry.
The engine rolls onward. Oh, travelers, beware!

***

Within this wide-awake, old stave-mill town,
Where valley train and country-bus go down,
All life is on the move when summer's here:
The Grotto welcomes all from far and near,
Who come with glad and anxious eyes to see?
This famous Shrine bedecked so lavishly.

Sometimes in winter when the snow was not too deep, Edmund and I, with outside help, gathered stones even in the coldest weather. Often we saw horses browsing in the fields. Scratching the snow away with their front hoofs, they seemed to be enjoying a delectable meal—green grass under the snow. If some rocks were too heavy and clumsy, a farmer with his horses, or tractor and chain, or stone-boat was employed. In this way rocks were easily skidded over the snow to the Grotto hill. Through the kindness of Norman Sprangers many rocks were thus taken, from Clark's or Conway's farm, where Markech's now live, by Erwin Dorshorst, Spranger's hired-man. Often the severity of the winter did not hamper our enthusiasm, nor harm our building project.

Unharmed by wayward winter's mad caprice,
This miracle-of-handworks sleeps with ease;
Till hues of smiling spring are scattered 'round,
Where fringes of eternity abound.

Often when not working, riding on a truck, trailer, or tractor to and from the fields, I frequently said my daily beads, the rosary. Traveling through Greece many years ago, I found that such hand-beads were called "kombologion," or conversation beads. When the weather was very warm, as it usually is on the peninsula, men were sitting on benches in long rows, down the streets of Athens, or Corfu, manipulating the "kombologion." Asking the reason for this, I was told: "It gives the hands something to do, to overcome nervousness, when the heat is great." "Kombologion!" My rosary!

"Sweet, blessed beads, I would not part
With one of you, with all my heart.
On earth you are my richest gem,
In heav'n my sweetest diadem.
Good times have fled, and friends have failed;
But you consoled me when I wailed.
My joys have died, but in my deeds
You are my comrade—blessed beads!"

As our truck rolled through Markech's farmyard, I saw countless pigeons coming from and going to nearby fields to feed. Sometimes the birds ranged over a whole countryside, picking food wherever they might. Their nests were often filled with eggs, or young ones. Well prepared and placed on a table, young pigeons (squabs) are delicious.

Driving through Markech's fields, pastoral and peaceful, we saw closely set shocks of grain drying in the sun. Farther on, green expanses of waving clover were restful to the eye. Set on an opulent eminence, a neat home beautifully adorned, made of chocolate colored stones, and beside a large bulky barn, suggested prosperity, patient toil, and idyllic peace. Lying in the shade, mild eyed cows were chewing their cud, and shiny-backed heifers crowded the feeding boxes, or lowered their heads as they drank.

One day, covered with dust from hauling rocks, about three miles east, I was asked to come into the kitchen at the home of Nick Andres, to partake of a tasty lunch, which "the missus" and
her charming daughters had prepared. Evidently they had pity on me. Surely they knew that I needed continued strength to carry on and to manage the heavy stones.

Mrs. John Bushmaker, too, was a very kindly mother to me. Her graciousness reminded me of "southern hospitality." She often gave me a cup of steaming coffee, and doughnuts and jelly, with bread well buttered.

Whenever I entered her humble farm home, she gave me a loaf or two of delightful home-made bread—the bread like "only mothers used to make."

Women are often criticized for talking much. One morning while getting the mail at the post office I fell into conversation with a man "who knew all the ropes" about rocks—Frank Akey. Being well experienced with horses and plowing of fields, he told me where I could find all kinds of rocks, large and small, heavyweights and lightweights, and of the right color and texture and roughness for the building of my Shrine. Being a native of this community, and having lived here all his life, he was well versed with the lay of the land of all surrounding country sides.

Arriving in mid-afternoon in the town of Sigel, many days after, I spoke to a young man, who volunteered to take Edmund and myself to his farm not too far from the Holy Rosary Catholic Church. It was Harry Johnson, a typical farmer, intelligent and broad shouldered. Happy to see us, he guided us over his many acres, where the finest specimens of red, rough rocks were protruding from his plowed fields. I was struck by the man's simplicity and genteelness. After taking a few loads I thanked him for the amount of building material he gave for my Shrine. From near the same Siegel church fill-in rocks, too, were hauled, also from the farms of Stublaski, Zurkowski, and Novak.

Working around in winter, I often put an apple into my coat pocket for lunch. Once I remember I had pocketed one with a pair of gloves, that had been soaked in tar to prevent them from wearing through. Since then it seemed I had pitch on my teeth, and tar in my stomach. And since then I was mindful of the words I read in the Book Ecclesiasticus, 13, 1: "He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled therewith."

I often wondered why people talked so much of their servants in olden days. This was especially true in the ages of kings. I began to understand this better, however, when I thought of Edmund, the "staff of my life." He was my "right-hand Bauer" by day and by night, and my principal help throughout the years of my building program.

One morning, looking out of a large window of my school apartments (where I lived for thirty years), I saw three deer standing in my front yard. It was a stag, a mother deer, and their daughter. I was contemplating a trip for rocks to the southern extremity of the town of Rudolph that day, near the Biron Dam. It had rained in prolonged flashes during the night, causing the Wisconsin River to go on a rampage. The deer came to look for safety in higher areas. Consequently I thought it advisable not to venture forth.

As the morning train came chugging in from the south, passing on toward Junction City, the clanging bell of the "old puffer," accompanied by a few loud toots of the whistle, caused the deer to turn left-about-face—and away. Across the tracks and over brush and fences, in front of the oncoming train, they leaped, and soon were seen no more. "Dear me!" I exclaimed. "Why didn't they stop, that I could shoot them?" In verse the incident would read:

> The Hiawatha train had time to gain,
> In a rainstorm late in spring;
> At the crossing here, there came three deer—
> Oh, how the bell did ring!
> The engineer saw—the deer go "haw"—
> Along the railway cling—
> "Always on the hop! Why didn't they stop?
> What graceful galloping!"

Once I traveled into Adams County to look for stones; it had been reported that I would find many there, also along Blueberry Ridge, directly west of Wisconsin Rapids. Soon I came to Tenmile Creek, winding on, shallow and narrow. There I saw level plains, studded with small trees here and there. No rocks were anywhere, not even large enough to throw at a cow. On Blueberry Ridge, however, a few were found of odd shapes and sizes and colors. Being accustomed to finding stones in almost every field near Rudolph, it seemed an utter impossibility that whenever I left the truck to look for rock in that area, there were none.

Driving through Sauk County, not far from Prairie du Sac, many years ago, I met a woman carrying a sack of stones. If even old women, thought I, are interested in stones, what should be said of us who have borne the day's heat, and the colds of winter, wrestling with rocks and stumps? Of the lady with a sack on her back, I said:

> "Oh, woman, you're searching 'long hillsides like doves,
> You're picking up stones with your hands, without gloves;
> Performing a task that scarce anyone loves—
> A work that is filled with rebukes and rebuffs."

Her rocks were not for me. She was building her own little Shrine, near her own little home, not far from the highway. It was a pretty little thing, dedicated to Our Lady, and so well built by a woman.

In late autumn, when the weather was often foggy, cold, damp, and dark, we huddled together and worked hard to keep warm. When clouds hung low, the surroundings appeared mysterious, oftentimes we made an attempt to penetrate the gloom, but the mists were too gray. "Did you hear that noise?" I exclaimed. It was the moping of a hoot owl, mousing among fallen timbers and bending brushwood. Later I was walking along lowlands, not too far from Riverside near Marshfield, on the banks of the Little Eau Pleine River. There were huge rocks (gray granite), unsuitable for my Shrine. Nearby were giant poplars turning to gold. Standing by their great trunks, I saw the yellow leaves falling into the placid waters of the river. There were large and small hawks along the riffles, satisfying their thirst with fresh water. Facing the breeze, they rose into the air without flapping their wings. Almost motionless, they remained directly overhead. After watching them for a while, I went back to the rocks, without becoming fascinated by their size and shape. Nearby, the slanting rays of the autumn sun shone dimly into tall pines. For a time I stood amazed at the spectacle. Surely, thought I, large pines with giant ramifications are one of the sights for a lover of nature.

On a beautiful summer day at the Grotto, as people were coming and going, when I was able to break through the lines, I took to the road with a tractor and a trailer. Accompanying me were Mr. Brackman, old and strong, and Janet Kempen. As we climbed on the tractor young and old were watching us.

> See youth and age these cultured courts o'er spread
> In crowded ranks 'long many a flower-bed!

It was during World War II, and Edmund had joined the navy in the Pacific. We were continuing on towards Westphal's farm to get the one thing necessary for the building of the Grotto—rocks. Along the way we stopped a moment to say "good morning" to Joe Peters, plowing near the road. It did not occur to me that there had been any change in my appearance since a few days ago. When on priestly duty at home I always saw to it that I was properly clad in Roman collar, black clothes, with hair not too long, and whiskers shaved. It was a very warm day and I had taken off my clerical collar and vest. Bernadine Kempen was weeding the flower-beds. Seeing her, a sightseer said to me: "Is that girl your daughter?" "No, thanks!" I replied, and walked off. Sometimes I shaved with Burma-Shave, which is perhaps as good as any other.

> "In this vale of toil and sin,
> Your head gets bald, but not your chin.—Burma-Shave."

During the rock-hauling season I sometimes, perhaps, went longer than usual without a haircut or a shave. Now the barber shop becomes a place of refuge for me at least once a month, with George Perry as my regular barber.

When Joe Peters saw me with ordinary workman's clothes on, and heavy work shoes, before I had gone to the Wild Root barber shop, he said: "My gosh, what has happened to your hair? It looks as though it hasn't been cut for months. You had better go right down to Perry's and have him look you over with a clipper and shears. You are a fright! You have a Rip Van Winkle pompadour." On the following day I appeared like the best man in a bridal party, instead of like a mere man of drudgery and toil.

Some days I spent hours assembling rocks, in dripping forests, or barren fields, or along rock-covered embankments. Often, before using the stones, they had to be washed and cleaned of all
foreign matter—sticky, wet earth, or rubbish. During such operations I closed my eyes to prevent the splash and splatter from entering. Once, I remember it did enter and my eyes became loth and weary. When the day's work was over there was usually an interesting supper conversation at home, relative to the day's experiences.

Edmund and I were studying, one day late in April, where to find more rocks for the continuation of our handiwork. This time we thought of Clyde Fuller's fields. As I peered through the large windows in school, I saw it snowing. What of it? It often snows in April, sometimes even in May. Snow was falling on Markech's hill, over Larry Slattery's farm, and along the big flats along Bear Creek. It was covering with a white fleecy shroud houses, roads, and the fields of men. It was falling in the lane near John Athorp's home, and on the broad street in front of the Farmers and Merchants Bank in Rudolph. It was snowing on the just and on the unjust, the rich and the poor, the living and the dead.

With mingled feelings of joy and sorrow, we saw the snow silently coming down upon the rocks, which we were about to load along Fuller's farm. Opening the window, I took a few deep breaths of fresh air, leaped outside, and in ten minutes we were off with truck and implements.

The weather was not too cold. There had been scarcely any winter—no howling blizzards, unceasing snows, bitter cold. Driving along Fuller's north-side fence, we found beauties, lying in
rows, at least a load, or two. As I was tramping among the weeds, a rabbit sprang from behind a rock. It had huge ears and long legs—a jack rabbit. Half asleep, half awake, it was conscious of all the sights and sounds around. Evidently it was feeling the great transformation of the world—the freedom of spring in an unfettered field.

> At springtime's gentle touch, and genial glow,
> All nature chimes the proud magnifico.
> Oh, emerald-painting spring, 'deed charms like these,
> Like heav'n-born melodies, e'er charm and please.

The large hare was rapidly becoming a spring rabbit—brownish —casting off the dress of white winter. By the faint sweeping sounds of my shuffling feet it became frightened and hurried away, reluctant not to tarry, with the rising chorus of men's voices. It hopped a few hundred feet, sat and stretched, and hopped again, following, paralleling the fence between Bushmaker's and Dixon's farms. It seemed to have been intent upon reaching Markech's fertile acres of spring-awakening clover. Then ... was seen no more.

The rocks we intended to load were still where Clyde Fuller had left them—along the fence. "Now for some elbow-grease!" cheered Herold Jagodzinski, as he and Edmund began to drag a
huge boulder onto a plank leading to the truck. And at home the rock pile became larger and larger.

A mid-autumn day was holding the country sides in a golden thrall. The hushed peace of completion, that speaks of gathered harvests and strenuous labor well performed, was lying over the land. A subdued hum of insect life filled the air. The woodlands were showing a brilliance of scarlet and yellow in the waning light of the setting sun. A soft haze enveloped the hills along the horizon's edge. We had come to gather rocks over the hills to the south of Ben Delsing's home. Not far from a huge pile was some sort of a broken-down shanty among trees, roughly built of old lumber, with a rusty smoke-pipe protruding from the roof. "Behold the moonshine parlors!" I exclaimed as a warm smell of hops and soda was easily recognizable. "Not too long ago," I said, "the glory of this humble cot was all 'moonshine.' We might go for a treasure hunt in these hills," I suggested. We did not, however, enter the dilapidated cottage for fear of being detected. "Wildcats and mountain-lions!" I once more broke out, when I saw through a small window-like opening pots, kettles, and pans lying promiscuously about. "Somebody made a few 'bucks' here!" exclaimed Eugene Zimmerman.

The rocks were as heavy as ever as we continued the backbreaking labor of rolling and lifting big ones onto the truck. Here Delsing's team of horses was used to drag the big ones across a creek. For thirty years this kind of work had been going on while the summer sun was spraying heat over the fields. November brought rain and snow from the far east, and January sent icy arrows in silent showers, causing us to discontinue our outside work.

I took special interest in an old lady, Lyda Lessig, the first time I saw and spoke to her. Living not so far from Mosquito Creek, she was a princely lady, honest, quiet, calm, a woman that could be loved and trusted at all times. Knowing that the remains of the old brick yards and sawmill were still on her property, I one day approached her saying: "What would you ask for the pile of brick over the hill, and for the old kiln?" "It is falling down, isn't it?" she remarked. "Take as many as you need; I can't use them. Once upon a time they were worth all kinds of cash, but now they are just rotting away." On the following day, Edmund and I borrowed a truck from Pat Handrick, with which a few loads were hauled. Many of them were used as fill-ins while constructing the walls of the Grotto. As we were loading we came to some sort of a cave-in, which at some time or other might have been a hideout for skunks. Skunks like cabbage, they say, but there was neither a garden nor a cabbage-patch near the brick yards.

In olden days many homes in these surroundings had been built of brick, which had been manufactured in Vesper, or at Lessig's. Brick buildings are substantial, solid, rigid. They withstand the tear and wear of wind and weather.

Originally there were two kilns at Lessig's, side by side, where a special kind of brick had been made, in high temperatures. Onekiln was still intact and perfect. It was held together by a band of
steel, ten inches wide. The kiln was round and high like a barrel. The best brick were inside under the ceiling. To get at them the roof had to be taken down. I told Edmund to strike the roof with a sledge hammer. He did so, but to no avail. The building remained unyielding, adamant. "Get the hack-saw!" I commanded. Placing a short stepladder on one side, Edmund began cutting the steel band. Soon there were but few inches remaining. "Get ready to jump!" I exclaimed. "It may crash at any moment!" Suddenly like a powerful explosion the building crashed. "Edmund shrieked as Kosciusko fell!" Dust rose high above the trees, like the aftermath of an earthquake. Brick flew in all directions. I stood far enough away not to get hurt. Edmund was thrown at least ten feet upon a nearby pile of brick. Both crawled away dazed. The stepladder swerved, missing Ed by a few inches. A crowd would have gathered, but

there was no one nearby. It was a narrow escape—not even a first aid treatment was needed. Now there were sufficient brick to build a barn. Selecting the best, we trucked them to the Grotto Shrine.

Your days may be carefree, yet dare heed this warning
Along life's uncertain, and on-rolling way.
Oh, what surer safeguard than pray'r in the morning!
The ever-best watchword: "Prepared be today!"

VII
Those of the Forest

Among the stone walls and rock arrangements of the Grotto, the visitors will find enormous pine stumps; once the principal elements of mighty trees that stood round, tapering, and high, in Wisconsin's endless forests. Proud they stood, stern, noble, and great, stubborn as a thousand bears that roamed within their shades. They stood headstrong as a herd of deer, resistless as warring Indians. Above, clouds sailed on, and eagles flew. Around their bases hordes of Indian tribes came and went. For hundreds of years the sun flamed his glowing darts across their towering crests, and for countless ages storms and wars raged round their sturdy trunks. There was a time when the lofty pines stood in dense forests, forming an impenetrable shelter for men and beasts. If they had been living beings they might have seen Indian children playing around their sturdy trunks, while the squaws were carrying their papooses, or hanging them on swaying boughs to be rocked to sleep by the wind. Beneath the wide spreading branches of the forest giants Indians maids displayed their beaded necklaces, earrings, and colorful shawls. Along these
same trees passed the bucks and the braves, carrying their game on long sticks to their wigwams, and catches of fish on strings of leather. In the distance on quiet nights was heard the howling of wolves and the calling of wildcats. As time rolled on, these monuments of the wilderness were felled by woodsmen and sawed into lumber for the building of homes and cities. Often great fires, with mad momentum, raged through their swaying branches, changing countless woodland acres into great scars. Still the mighty trees lived on, and after hundreds of years a few of their enormous stumps were transported to our Grotto Park, where sightseers may see them—memorials of past greatness—ornaments of forest prominence and pride, and of woodland integrity.

For many years Nepco Nursery, near Port Edwards, of which Mr. Anderson was then chief operator, had many excellent trees for planting. One day I said to John Morgan, there employed: "How much do you ask for trees?" There I saw many kinds—jumpers, Mugho pines, balsam firs, Black Hills spruce, Colorado blues, arbor vitae. On some acres were millions of seedlings. Pointing to a pretty tree about two feet tall, John said: Eight dollars for this one—it's a dandy! And you can buy that wide-spreading one over there for ten." "They are both beautiful," I cheered. "Sold for eighteen dollars; give me a dozen of the finest, and I will pay you the balance by check tomorrow." "Okay!" said John, as he placed gunny sacks around the roots so that the ground wouldn't fall off. "You know," he continued, "this sand slides easily—different than the clay in Rudolph; there the soil is too heavy and here it is too light—all sand." And he laughed heartily.

While John was preparing the trees for transportation, I asked him what happened to the flat-leaved evergreens (arbor vitae), over to the right. They looked as though they had been nipped by
a severe frost. "An enemy has done this," he replied. "At night the deer of the neighborhood feed on them. They like arbor vitae, the sprigs are somewhat pungent, I believe."

> With pride I duly contemplate each charm,
> Attractive more than forest, field, or farm:
> The stately spruce, the shady maple tree,
> That lovely, leafy room for you and me.

As we were yet speaking there appeared a huge snapping turtle, moving slowly and cautiously: "Boys, look-et that!" I screamed. "What a fuzzy-wuzzy brute—haughty as a horse—gallant as a gorilla! Where did it come from? With difficulty it came through the long grass, from the direction of the river. Ponderously it was lifting its shell-enclosed body on thick legs, with long toes and nails. Its armored spike-tail left a path in the sand. "It will have a heck-of-a-time dragging through all that brush," broke in John Morgan, "I believe it is looking for a place to lay eggs. Did you ever see turtle eggs?" he questioned. "They are round and shiny." "Yes, I remember," I replied, "when I was a boy going to school in Iowa, we often found mud-turtle eggs, buried in the sand, near a river, or pond. Later brightly colored turtles came out, the cutest little things! We took them to school; but the teacher made us take them outside, which we did. 'Dirty things' she said they were. But we didn't think so—they could walk right on our hands."

When the turtle came near, it stared at us with its small squinty eyes, set in a massive head. It continued moving toward a pool, where minnows were darting to and fro.

Arriving home with the load of trees, I ordered Edmund to plant them in places I had designated. When April showers came, and the flowers in May, the young trees began to lift up their heads and look lovely. After a few years they became one of the finest additions to the wooded area of the park.

Driving by Lawyer Smongeski's home in Stevens Point, near Maria High School, I saw a wonderful group of dwarf evergreens. I asked the attorney about selling me a dozen or more of the finest, and he let me have them at a nominal cost. Some people believe that a tree is a tree, but after all these years I can still recognize the elegant specimen of trees I received from Mr. Smongeski.

When the trees came by truck I deposited them in my front yard. While they were resting there, two rabbits came to play amongst them. First they looked at what the new addition of trees signified. Scarcely had they acquainted themselves with the deposit when they began to play. At top speed they raced down one side and up the other. After a few more races they hesitated and watched. Then one rabbit approached the other with a jump and a kick, striking him with his feet. The second rabbit dashed instantly toward the first, and struck him. "Look! Look!" I said—"a fight!" The blows, however, were merely playful. When the cottontails became tired of the mock combat they chased each other down the hill a hundred feet or more. Suddenly the race was reversed. It continued for a few minutes, after which the two sat about two feet apart, breathing heavily, and seemingly ignoring each other. Eventually each went its own way. Their aggressiveness did not lead to any serious results. The little hair that had been shed was the sum total loss of their chase and combat.

In the year 1945, December opened with a sleet storm, a gorgeous event for all nature lovers. It transformed every woodland and every tree into a fairyland of sparkling jewels, and brought out the children with sleds, and the youths with skates. Out hunting for squirrels and rabbits on the day of the great ice, I saw to the north of Wick's road, in Marathon County, a monster tree scintillating in the sun. It was an elm, and one of the oldest and largest trees in that area, measuring from five to six feet in diameter at the base. The other trees nearby seemed dwarfed by its height and wide-spreading branches. This tree I wanted for my Grotto as a curiosity. To take it down and have it brought here would naturally cost labor and time.

> "I think that I shall never see
> A poem lovely as a tree."
> —Joyce Kilmer.

And now came the most difficult part of working in the woods. A cold spell had set in from the northwest, blown by a gale that howled over the tops of the tall timber trees. All through the night the mercury steadily sank, until it had reached twenty degrees below zero. Then like a crippled horse it halted. On the following day the world was locked in a blue-white cold that grew more cruel by the hour. Into the iron door of the furnace in school (it was during Christmas vacation) Edmund fed the precious supply of coal, keeping the temperature of the school cellar at a fairly level sixty.

"This cold snap can be licked in three ways," I said to Edmund and Herold Jagodzinski. "First, of course, we must keep the home fires burning. Secondly," I looked at Herold, "we will bring out all the sweaters, caps, warm mittens, heavy underwear—don't mind how you look—and thirdly"—I took two slices of bread with good Wisconsin cheese inside—"everyone stoke up with this real vitamin A, heat-making, cheap, plentiful hereabouts. 'Inside blankets'—that's what cheese is. In a few days this cold weather will break, then I want you all to be on hand for the transporting of the Big Tree from Treutel's woods to Rudolph.

"Now let's go!" I commanded, and we left the furnace room for another extremely cold afternoon in the woods.

At that time there was in my employ another man—Simon Joosten. He was tall and gaunt, with the few hairs that were left on his noble head partly gray, and with deep-set eyes. With honest, open face he sat listening to the project I had in mind. By this time the ice had fallen from the trees, as we were making our way through scrub pines and dogwoods to the top of the hill. The squirrels had gathered acorns and nuts from among the leaves, lying like a heavy carpet all around. A row of yellow poplars gleamed a rich gold in the winter sun. John Treutel, to whom belonged the woods where the tree was growing, loved every tree in his woods, north of the Big Eau Pleine River, even the scrub pines which covered the hillsides. First he flatly refused to have any of his trees cut down, but after we debated for some time, I once more made an earnest appeal to have the mighty tree moved to a place where thousands might enjoy seeing the immense trunk. He finally acceded to my wishes. After I told Edmund and Simon of my plans, I waited breathlessly for their opinion on how to have the tree grubbed and hauled to Rudolph.

"Yes," said Edmund, "I think it can be done, if we ask the Wood County authorities for their fifty-ton trailer, with a few trucks and a number of men."

After a few dozen pounds of dynamite, and a number of woodsmen's axes and saws had been vigorously applied to the roots of the Big Tree, it was brought to earth with a crash, then loaded and transported to the place which it now occupies in the Grotto Shrine. Since the large county trunks were not sufficiently powerful to move the giant after it had been loaded, a man with an eight-ton caterpillar tractor from the town of Eau Pleine, Marathon County, brought the tree onto the highway.

While we were working on the tree, hunters came with firearms and hounds on a fox chase. They scoured the woods along the river banks. While the hunt continued, with the baying of hounds, few fox were captured and many fled. Isn't it curious how many find pleasure in a bloody chase? To our delight the howling of the dogs, which had echoed through the tall trees, finally died away with the coming of the night.

Walking along Mosquito Creek, weeks later, my attention was directed to where the sun was casting his slanting shafts through a tree that was holding his aged crest high above the surroundings. I could not resist the idea that somehow, somewhere, some day, I would find a suitable place in my gardens to accommodate the spectacular find. Its wide-spreading branches and beauty thrilled me. When Albert Hamm saw me scouting through his woods, he came to me and said: "There, Father, is something splendid for your Grotto—it's a whopper!" After the giant had been felled and the Hamm boys had been summoned—big strappers they were—to assist in sawing it into suitable lengths for convenient loading, it was hauled to a select place in the Shrine Park.

It was said that this was once a tree where woodchucks reared their young. When the tree crashed, no woodchuck appeared. This incident reminded me of a large raccoon that was caught in a hollow tree belonging to William Haumschild, living about four miles north of Milladore. One day I answered William Haumschild's telephone call. He said, "We have a big coon here for you—do you want it?" I said, "Yes, I'll take it—where is it?" The reply came: "We have it cooped up here in a hollow tree—in Haumschild's woods." I had never heard of William Haumschild; neither did I know that men were logging in his woods. When I asked for particulars, the farmers of the neighborhood directed me to a wild-looking area where a number of men were working, along the southern Little Eau Pleine watershed.

Being then a proud possessor of a Dodge car, I drove into Haumschild's woods, where I dodged every log, stump, pile of wood, burning brush pile that came before me. I always liked the wild forests and woodlands, even as a child.

> Oh, oft as a child did I hie to the woodland!
> My young childish fancy sought joy in the shade.
> Among lovely tree groups, I found the wild fern plant,
> The trillium, the violet, the phlox in the glade.

Soon a young man, taking note of my clerical collar, approached me, saying: "Oh, you are Father Wagner from the Grotto in Rudolph?" "I have been so far," I answered laughingly with pride; "where is the raccoon?" "They have it up on the hill in a tree," came the answer. "How big is it?" I broke in. "Let me tell you it's a monster," he assured. "How can I take it?" I asked once more. "They'll force it into a milk can," he replied with determination. While two men held a large can securely in front of the hole in the tree, a third one gave the tree a few taps with his axe.
"Gangway for Woody-Coon!" I exclaimed as the coon rushed into the can. After the cover had been made fast the can was carried into the trunk of my waiting Dodge car. I hurried home, because I knew the animal couldn't live long without air.

In the rear of my car shed I had prepared a large box for the prison of my pet, into which I had placed straw, corn, and water. A hole had been made on one side, and over it a screen to let in fresh air. Large pieces of old blankets were crowded into one corner to make his sleeping-quarters comfortable and cozy—a bed for a queen.

When I arrived in Rudolph with my prize, it seemed the whole town knew about my capture. I was then still living in school— and who can think of a school without students? As I came near the school a score of youngsters captured me at once. Passing around the trunk of my car, they followed me. I could not help wondering whether they had escaped from class before the ringing
of the bell, or whether school had already been dismissed. There were so many that I looked like "oF man Adam among his chillum and gran-chillun." Taking a few steps toward the rear of my Dodge, a few girls began to giggle. Evidently they thought, now we will get a look at what Father has in the trunk. (Many had never seen a raccoon.) I knew that they had to learn to like my "cat in the can" if I was to keep it safe in a box so near to school.

After the youngsters had slowly tramped away one by one (it was getting near supper-time), I tried to empty the contents of the can into the box I had made for the ring-tailed animal. Opening

the lid I saw eyes as black as coal, with dark lines around, staring at me. Beneath a black nose was a black mouth. Its paws appeared like the hands of a child, with long finger-nails. Removing the cover, I poked a long stick into the opening. The enraged quadruped let out a piercing cry, while biting and scratching violently.

To make him leave his prison cell seemed impossible. He would not move one inch. He seemed glued to the very bottom of the can. "All right, Mr. Racky," said I, "no more green pastures and peaceful woodlands for you! You shall come from this can alive, or be taken out dead! What do you prefer?" Taking my rifle I leveled the barrel into the opening of the can—and—"bang!" The animal fell out like an empty sack. After a few weeks the raccoon was one of the finest mounted animals displayed in Grotto Park.

During December of the same year William Dorshorst, Eugene Zimmerman, Clem Blonien, and Edmund were among my regular stand-bys in logging. One day we drove two miles east of Kellner, which is about fifteen miles from here, to a woods belonging to Emil Knippl. There I selected a number of Norway Pines, straight and slender, and had them taken to Vivian Newman's sawmill, in the town of Siegel, where their bark was removed in the form of slabs. At home Clem Blonien and Edmund prepared the logs for the construction of a log house, a souvenir and gift shop. Christ Van Asten was the architect and main builder.

It was getting toward evening, and Edmund had already left for home with a load of logs. I was still rambling through the forest looking for more trees. "Do you know where we are?" I called to Eugene Zimmerman. "Everyone knows I have little sense of directions—I seem to be all turned around." "Oh, yes!" he replied. "The railroad tracks are right over there. (It was the Northwestern Road running from Wisconsin Rapids to Wautoma.) Just then a large deer with huge antlers jumped over a fence and was seen no more. We continued looking for more trees; wonderful material I already had for my log building.

The sun was sinking lower and lower. Long shadows were shooting through the dense woods. Nearby a partridge was pounding, which sounded like the booming of some subterranean sprite.

> Hark! a glad voice, the graceful woodland greets;
> An only sprite from yon, the lone retreats;
> "Give praise to God!" the sounding trees reply;
> The winter spirit wafting lauds on high.

I soon overtook Eugene and came to the railway right-of-way. There nothing looked familiar, yet we continued on. We called, but no answer came. A gray squirrel, disturbed by our shouting,
left his nest and, jumping from bough to bough, began chatting like a henpecked husband. "Perhaps there are two railroads, and we are near the wrong one?" questioned Eugene. The trail through brush and brambles and matted leaves became more and more difficult, and it was getting dark. As I was crawling over a fallen tree, a rabbit, frightened from his nest, sped away. The possibility of spending a night in the jungles began to enter our minds. More calling brought no answer. Patiently we plugged along through slush and thickets of ferns covered with snow. In the gloaming all objects began to have a startling look.

There were no mosquitoes to trouble us. Perhaps it would not have been too cold under a thick cover of leaves. Rut it was likely to snow. The chattering blue jays before sunset, the dark blanket of clouds coming from the west, and the wind from the east told me that. A cover of snow, thought I, would naturally keep us from freezing; snow is the best anti-freeze there is. The maddening thing of all, however, was that my Plymouth in Knippl's yard could not have been too far away. We redoubled our calls: "Whoohee! Whoo-hee! Hey! Hey! Whoo-hee we are lost!" And I said to myself: "Gird on thy sword, 0 man! And may thy strength endure to meet the roaming wild cat, or the attacking bear that may come upon us unaware at any time!"

Suddenly from an entirely unexpected direction we heard one answering call, then another, and another, and in a short time there appeared in the gloom the tall clumsy form of Emil Knippl, slouching through the snow and leaves, carrying a clumsy lantern. "What's the matter?" he questioned, "are you lost?" Pointing to his home he said: "Your car is over there!" "Well," I said,
indicating the opposite direction, "I thought that there is where it is." "Oh, no, no, no," said he. "Follow me!" Wheeling around he strode away; we followed with gladsome steps. After some fifteen minutes we came to my Plymouth, standing in the same place. Seeing the vehicle, I said: "My good old Plymouth—there it stands!" Happy beyond words, and hungry, we arrived at the Grotto Shrine. We told the folks of our exciting experience, and they stood wondering at our late return and our wonderful deliverance from a dreadful night in a dreary woods.

One evening while I was taking my evening walk in Grotto Park, I heard a distant rumbling, and lifting my eyes I saw a tornado in the direction of Milladore. It was clearly defined against the sky and seemed about six miles away.

I wished I had photographed its outlines. On Bulgrin's farm I could see objects whirling around in the cloud column that stretched like a gigantic funnel
from the earth to the inky-black clouds above. As I watched it, the funnel drew up, like an elephant pulls up his trunk, and disappeared.

On the following day I heard of the damage to farm buildings and trees. However there were no human fatalities. An unlucky farmer told me: "When I saw the twister approaching, we ran into the orchard and clung to apple-trees." And some trees were still standing.

Oh, see the clouds a-chasing o'er the lea,
Where swallows fly their kites with twitt'ring glee!
The dreadful storm with savage mood is past;
The sun is out, there's peace in the sky at last.

Skirting the Wisconsin River, where the Mosquito Creek empties, I found the water crystal clear.

It slips along rough rocks and ridges,
Then passes on from bridge to bridges;
And through a gravelly farm it flows;
It meets the River as it goes.

It was not too difficult here to observe, in minute detail, the life going on below. Now and then a perch or a sucker swam slowly by. Among the rocks and roots of trees were tin cans, discarded electric light bulbs, orange and lemon peelings, used napkins and plates—a small city dump—to remind me that "civilization" had been picnicking here.

The principals of the Consolidated Water Power and Paper Company of Wisconsin Rapids had given Edmund and me permission to take, without cost, all dry trees from their woods north of the city limits. It was interesting to find some growing so close to the waves, that their branches were hanging far out. Broken-down trees, and many dry ones still standing, were cut down and
trimmed and sawed into right lengths. George Gums, with a powerful tractor, skidded the logs onto a trailer and brought them to Rudolph. Some were sawed into lumber in his mill.

Beyond the home of Lyda Lessig the ruins of a once prosperous brick yard and sawmill were discovered. From there, in olden days, the pioneers traveled from Dowdville (which is no more) across the railroad tracks, then along Mosquito Creek to the Clark and Scott sawmill about one mile west of Rudolph, where the first houses and stores had been built. In Dowdville stood the first school of this community; the first cooper-shop, too, where barrel-staves were made by hand for the first flour barrels of Minneapolis, and the beer barrels of Milwaukee.

After a brief stop-over, a few years ago, some of Hecox's near relatives joined forces with me, and going into an outlying woodland, about two miles to the southwest from our town, we came to a place where the August sun was pouring his golden light through full-leaved trees. We sat down on a log under a large pine, below a terraced hillside. I will never forget the hour. The soft music of many birds echoed along the hillside. Not too far away a squirrel was gathering acorns from beneath large oaks. Before us was a trickling brook—Mosquito Creek—running over rocks
and riffles. On a sloping elevation a few lilac bushes were gracefully waving in the breeze.

Before us we saw what was left of an old log hut, where was born and reared Rudolph Hecox, the first white boy among the Indians of this community, after whom this town was named. Here the boy waded the brook, perhaps even chased a squirrel, or helped the Indians build a fire, and also played with them in a wigwam, perhaps, or near a tree.

With his Indian companions he might even have romped, or sat upon some of the rocks from which this Shrine was built. As a growing lad he may have amused himself with bow and arrow in the primeval forest that shaded this Grotto Hill in the long ago.

When he became a little older he might have been seen beside an Indian chief, or brave, with a fish-pole on his shoulder, and earthworms in his hands, going fishing somewhere down the riffles.

And after he had grown to a man the surroundings of his humble cottage developed into a well-kept homestead, with flowers growing here, and a neat vegetable garden there, perhaps with lilacs, and other ornamental shrubs not far away.

Soon he may have acquired a spotted Indian pony, or two, and progressed little by little on his small farm, until he winnowed barley, or wheat, which he threshed with hand flails, separating the chaff in his home-made fanning mill.

"When I was boy and country lad too,
Those days long ago I love to think through.
Often back to my childhood come scenes like a flash
Of the days on the farm when we ventured to thrash."
—Ottis Shirk.

What wonderful namesake this town has in Rudolph Hecox—a town noted for excellent schools and churches, fine dairy facms, and beautiful homes—a town with a Grotto!

There is a popular song called "Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer" which speaks of this imaginary reindeer with a blood-red nose. Many in this town believe that the education of one traveling through is not quite complete without having seen the fabled animalat least in picture, or having heard of it in song.

We had not gone more than a few hundred yards in Lessig's woods when we came upon the loveliest pines I had ever laid my eyes on. Beneath the trees the grass had been padded down by deer; they had slept there during the night. Along the creek was a newly constructed beaver dam. Small poplars were lying about, which recently had been chewed off by the amphibians. The pines of which I was speaking were almost two feet in diameter, just the right dimensions for wide planks, of which I needed many.

After walking through an open field, we followed a trail leading past a stone quarry, which was in operation. A few men employed by the Ellis Stone Company near Stevens Point were working there during the entire winter. A primitive stove was used to supply heat. I wondered where the smoke was coming from. There was an ancient stove-pipe projecting from the roof of the quarry. Nearby, it was interesting to note how sapsuckers and woodpeckers had drilled unsightly holes into the growing pines to make nests into hidden-away places, to provide shelter for their offspring. Herold Jagodzinski and Edmund felled many trees that had been severely damaged by the birds.

After a large knotty pine had been cut down, Herold indicated with an axe how soft the wood was. As I saw so much damage wrought, a sad picture of destruction of forests in many parts of the world came before me. I recalled how, as a boy, I had admired the woodchoppers of Iowa, watching them fell great oaks and walnut trees, which I had often passed on my way to school. I also saw giant maples and elms falling. I then walked for miles through the burnt-over lands in Wisconsin. Again and again I heard the crashing of countless trees, where huge avalanches mowed them down in the mountains of Switzerland. Finally figures and statistical accounts, showing the swift destruction of our American forests in Idaho and California, by forest fires, came into the picture.

Many years ago when Father (Monsignor) Reding, of Wisconsin Rapids, was still among the living, he one day said to me: "I have a family in my parish, who has a flock of tame pigeons, and a number of rabbits; there are squirrels, too, near the premises. The people want to get rid of them. They say they are eating them out of house and home. Have you a gun?" "Surely, I always carry a gun when I go hunting," I answered with pride. "Take the gun along," said Father Reding," and see what you can kill."

When I arrived at the Keough farm, some distance beyond Nepco Lake, Mrs. Keough, a kind old lady, said to me as I was stepping off Father Reding's buggy (this happened during the 'horse and buggy' days) with a gun in my hand: "Can you shoot?" "Oh, sure!" I said confidently. "Certainly, I can shoot!" "All right, then, shoot!" she said laughingly. And she continued: "Do you see those rabbits?" A number of tame bunnies were grazing in front of her house. "—And the doves on the roof of the barn?" "There are many," I said joyfully. "Shoot as many as you want," she chuckled. "We have too many; they eat everything we have; they are eating all the time."

And forth strode the mighty Nimrod, the great hunter, setting his bow and arrow toward the clouds! And there fell in one hour thirteen rabbits and twelve pigeons. Seeing the universal slaughter all around, the old lady cried out: "My Lord, can you shoot!" "Yes, milady!" I replied, "Oh, this is nothing—I used to shoot jacks on the prairies of the Dakotas, and cottontails and countless woodland birds in the forests along the Turkey River in Iowa. Those rabbits used to run like heck, and the birds fly like arrows through the trees—oh, this is nothing!"

After the bombarding and blasting in the once peaceful barnyard had ceased, pigeons were no longer seen. Higher and higher they sailed through the sky till they appeared like mere specks in the azure blue. Not until I had left the premises did they return.

I had exceeded the hunter's bag limit for one day; nevertheless I was hilarious over my achievement. Returning home, I saw my hunter's license lying on the table, which frightened me but little. I knew that no license is needed for domestic killing.

Years later, remembering the Keough woods and Mrs. Keough's hospitality, I said to Edmund: "I know where we can get more logs." When we arrived at Keough's farm on a sunny afternoon in December it was so cold that we

could hear the "pop-popping" of freezing trees through the forest stillness near the Keough home. The ice on the creek below, too, was cracking as it sought adjustment along the narrow shores, which fettered it on every side.

There was another sound of stirring life nearby. A soft clacking and crunching came from beneath small pines. The noise of striking wings on brittle branches made me look where the sound came from. On a bending branch of a young oak I saw the gentle curving outlines in plain silhouette of a ruffed grouse, commonly called "partridge." It was perched closely upon a limb, hiding its feet under its feathers. Its head darted quickly to the ends of twigs, from which it plucked one by one the shiny brown dormant buds.

> It was the season when ordinarily men of leisure fill up their pockets with cartridges; And go prowling around the woods in search of quails and partridges.

This time I had no firearms; I thought it too cold for hunting. As I took one step in the crunching snow the partridge "stopped, looked and listened"—then it saw me. As *I* took a second step it became as "stiff as a board, and as straight as a stick." And at the third step—"br-b-r-b-r-r-r-r-r-r-r"—and it was gone. Not too far from the creek was a large, branchy knotty pine, the kind *I* would have liked to have. After the tree had been felled and the branches removed, Joe Lang, with his team of horses and sleigh, brought it to the Grotto Park, where the log was sawed in twain. Each half was supplied with clumsy legs. After they had been creosoted they were ready for picnic use.

> Some sight-reviewing stranger here will find,
> Retreats with woodland sun and shade combined,
> Where seats for Age and Ease were deftly made,
> Who seek quiescent comfort in the shade.

While Clem Blonien, Edmund, and I were reclining on the large tree trunk in the woods, Edmund noticed a deer stealing into an opening among the trees, perhaps about eighty feet away.
It turned to see whether others were following. Then looking intently toward us, ears pricked forward, it made a fast move; something had disturbed it. It paused to watch. Raising its right front foot in a nervous gesture, bending it somewhat backwards, the animal held it poised in mid-air for a few seconds, then stomped it impatiently, listened, flicking its tail silently. Taking a few quiet steps, it saw me, and "swift of foot," with a few leaps and bounds it was over the hills and away.

> "The antlered monarch of the waste
> Sprang from his heathery couch in haste . . . .
> Like crested leader proud and high,
> Tossed his beamed frontlet to the sky;. . .
> Fresh vigor with the hope returned,
> With flying foot the heath he spurned."
> —Sir Walter Scott.

About half a mile from where the first tree had fallen stood an oak, not too tall, but full-branched and picturesque. In summer it provided shade for the cattle grazing around. In winter squirrels built nests in it, and crows often roosted there. Seeing the large tree I said to the boys: "We should have that tree; it would be the right thing for my cave."

While the men were sawing and chopping it down, I noticed a woodpecker nearby in full motion, hammering upon a decaying tamarack. His blows were quick, sharp, and energetic. The bird was working hard. Scarcely had the thumping and tapping ended when a red squirrel began his noisy chatter. "There it is!" I exclaimed as the rodent burst into a high-pitched, rolling rattle. Perhaps another squirrel was near for whom it added such sputtering syllables. Dancing up and down, stamping its feet, jerking its tail, it had caught sight of a cat that had followed us to the woods. Who would get excited on account of a mousing cat? thought I. The little squirrel saw the danger and it sounded an alarm.

The material for the shrine was being slowly brought in, and though many trees had been planted in the park, they were still small, and there were scarcely any shade trees or flower-beds. On Sunday afternoons the boys of this neighborhood often played ball near the Grotto. Standing along the sidelines, I one day watched an important encounter between Rudolph and Nelsonville. As "Speck" Tomysick was on second, Steve Kubisiak at short, Oleson on third, Andrzjeski pitching, and Joe Casper catching, Art Hentjes came to bat. Suddenly—"bang!—a slam out into

space the batted baseball flew, a spot against the distant sky, a speck against the blue." But not this one. He had hit a foul which struck me squarely on the right wrist, which I had placed in reflex before my face to avoid being struck on the nose.

"Hey, Father!" It was Art calling in agitation from the plate, "what's the trouble?"

"The trouble is with my wrist!" I exclaimed in agony. Clinching a fist of pain, I stood swaying while the game went on. Sweat was trickling down my face. The ball had missed John Weyers' head, directly in front of me, by an inch and a half. "It's his wrist," echoed John Weyers. "I told him to go inside and see how bad it really is; he doesn't want to go."

"Come along!" Fred Piltz took me by the arm, led me into school, and eased me into a chair beside a radiator.

"I don't think it's broke," I murmured under heavy breathing, "I can't feel any splinters."

"Get some whiskey, Joyce, and hold this flashlight!" Fred Piltz said to my niece, Joyce Etteldorf. "I'm going to take a good look at this thing."

He assisted me in taking off my coat and vest, then gave me a small glass of Kentucky rye to ease my nerves as he rolled back my shirt sleeve and examined the injured arm.

Under the flashlight the depth and extent of the bruise became fairly visible. Wicked streaks of blue and red radiated from the wrist to the palm of my hand. The whole forearm was involved in an ugly pain. The inflammation extended from the wrist halfway to the elbow. A dark spot in the swollen wrist indicated the place where the ball had struck.

"Joyce," spoke Fred, "I'll take him to Dr. Looze to have an x-ray taken; that'll tell the story.

Holding my arm in pain, I stepped into Fred's car, while the ball players and spectators looked on.

In Dr. Looze's office my arm was prepared for the picture, which was a remarkable performance. The negative showed no breakage at all. "There's a little trouble-maker," said the doctor. "Let me squeeze this tendon — hurts, eh? Too bad I haven't any sulfa-powder — left it in my grip at the house — let me put on a little salve."

"It's forty-five per cent better now," I said gladly, after a bandage had been put on. Since I was a clergyman, the doctor charged me nothing for the service. Finishing the bandaging, he said: "You have bones like a horse, otherwise your wrist would have cracked to splinters by the impact. Say an Our Father for me some time, I need it. I think it'll be okay. Good-bye, now!"

On the following day I returned to my work in the Grotto with renewed vigor and determination. Later on Art Hentjes told me, "It was a hard one. I had meant it for a home run, but it glanced off to the right." When his bat cracked I thought I already heard the crowds cheering, and singing :

> "Roll on, thou ball, roll on
> Through pathless realms of space, roll on!"

"The best part of the whole thing was," cheered Art Hentjes, "that we beat Nelsonville." And he laughed loud. Not only did I employ men in assembling building material for the Grotto; when the men were called to fight for our country in the Second World War, I asked women with bobbed hair and bobby socks to help. The people might have made fun of me for picking on the girls. The activities of Janet and Marjory Kempen, and of "Peggy" Van Asten were important elements in the construction of Grotto Shrine. These were once girl graduates of our school; however, they had not as yet graduated in Shrine-building; in consequence I put them to test. Very soon they entered into the work of hauling logs, mixing cement, and dragging stones with continued enthusiasm. For many months they carried on the burden of building.

On a sunny afternoon I motored with Bernadette and Marjory Kempen to look over the situation at the Du Bay Dam project. We went, that is, to look for logs. The Consolidated Power and Paper Company had promised me all the trees I wished to take. Arriving in the woods, we met a number of young men busily employed with axe and saw. When the fellows saw the damsels they hailed them from afar. One of them shouted: "Look—look—what we have here—'floosies' in the Camp!"

We met the foreman of the crew, who remarked: "Are you conducting some kind of a co-ed institution in Rudolph?" "No, no!" I replied, "these are just some of my lunch girls. Perhaps it were well," I continued, "for the welfare of all concerned, if a few women would come here every day to cheer the boys along; perhaps the lads would work better?" "I doubt that very much," he said, "I'm afraid just the contrary would be the case. The lads might become so infatuated with the females that they perhaps would forget all about the trees and the branches." And he laughed loud.

It was during the last winter before the Du Bay Dam was built. I still needed more logs for bridges, stairs, and stands. There were countless trees, and among them many white oaks, in the lowlands that were to be flooded by the

Wisconsin River flowage. Mr. Mortesen, the foreman of the woodchoppers, allowed me to cut all the trees I cared to take. Where many trees were struggling for existence, Clem Blonien and Ed sawed and hauled one load after another to Rudolph.

Driving along the road which is now County Trunk 0,1 noticed that one of the tires of the trailer I had borrowed from Joe Lang had sprung a leak. "What's a flat tire?" I said to myself; "that's nothing to worry about." I unhitched my car, removed the wheel from the trailer, took it to Frank's Garage, had it repaired, placed it on the trailer once more and drove on. "Oh well, that's the way things go," I said. "Such are the ups and downs of life."

"Double, double, toil and trouble
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.
"Eye of newt, and toe of frog,
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog.
"By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes."
—Shakespeare.

Walking through a dense timberland near the Wisconsin River, south of Mosinee, during one of my tree hunting's, I heard a noise coming solemnly and slowly from some large hollow tree: "Toowoo-woo-oo-too-woo-woo-oo-oo!" I listened: "Too-woo-woo—oo-woo-woo-oo-oo!" And all animals: woodpeckers, chickadees, minks, weasels, squirrels, rabbits listened— the hoot-owl was an enemy of all. They knew that it might swoop down upon them at any time for a kill.

Not too far away was Stanley Hadack's home, perhaps three miles west of Knowlton, where was the Big Eau Pleine river bottom, over which the river overflowed on a rampage. There many large trees had overgrown their fellows. Among them were beautiful white birch. "Let us take these," I commanded. "Cut them down, Edmund; soon Stanley will arrive with his team and chains, and drag them to higher areas, where they can be loaded." I gave the orders and the men obeyed. "Go, and he goes, come, and he comes, do this, and he does it," is a passage from sacred Scripture that might well have been applied to the men who worked for me.

We were then logging near the conflux of the Big Eau Pleine and Wisconsin Rivers, in a most beautiful valley.

"There is not in this wide world a valley so sweet,
As the valley in which the bright waters meet."

The waters there were whirling violently and rapidly. "See the ducks!" exclaimed Clem Blonien—"wild ducks—a whole flock of 'em!" Teals, pin-feathers, canvas-backs, mallards were having, as the hunter says: "a heck of a time" dipping, plunging, bobbing, and ducking in real duck fashion. Some were flying away, others were returning. It was interesting to watch these river birds.

Later as I was slashing through brush and ferns, looking for trees—large ones for lumber, small ones for poles and cross-beams, I saw a hunter standing, walking, looking up and peering into hollow trees, looking for squirrels. "Did you see any?" I questioned. "I heard a few barking not too far away. There is a flock of ducks over there," I pointed out. "I know they are there," he replied, "a whole 'sloo' ui 'em—can't shoot 'em—closed season. Get my limit there every fall." And he wandered on.

Farther down along the lowlands where the woodmen were slashing and slushing, mowing down everything that came before them, one man happened upon something that looked like a large clinker from some mighty furnace. A few men rolled it over, looking at it from every side. Today someone would perhaps call the unsightly object a "sputnik"—a Russian satellite. I thought it might be a shooting star, a fast-flitting meteor—a mass of stone or metal that had fallen to earth from outer space.

(It crashes with an awful thud, sinks many feet into the mud.)

The object was interesting. I do not know whether the woodchoppers left it where it fell, or whether it was hoisted upon a truck and taken to some museum, perhaps to Wausau.

Looking toward the railroad tracks, on the same day I saw a number of men working along the rails. They were thinly clad high school students from Wausau. During the noon hour many came to see the Grotto. The building of the cave was then still in its infancy; one side was still wide open. Seeing the young men quenching their thirst at the drinking fountain, I said to them, pointing at the cave: "Boys, I'll give each of you an ice cream (double decker), if you'll carry the big tree yonder into the cave." "Okay!" one of them shouted, "let's go—one—two—three—four!" About twenty "huskies" grabbed the tree and carried it to the place, which it now occupies in the cave. It was one of

the large trees from Keough's woods. After two dippers of ice cream had gone around, the visitors departed with a hearty "Thank you, Father!"

When F. F. Mengel of Wisconsin Rapids began to build his cranberry marsh to the east of the Wisconsin River, near Port Edwards, Edmund and I helped to originate the productive acres by felling many trees that were hindering the great project.

Allow me to offer my gratitude to Mengel's daughter, living near the marsh, for her timely suggestions, encouragements, and first-aid assistance while Edmund and I worked in the neighborhood.

After we had moved a few trees, I waded across the ten-mile creek trickling over stones and debris. Soon I came to a hillside, where a white-breasted nuthatch, a small sharp-beaked bird that
feeds on nuts, seeds, and insects, was hanging downward from a branch of a red-oak tree. It was calling—calling with incessant, wistful cries: "Wick-a-wick-a-wick-a-wick-a-!" It flew to a spruce to call again: "Wick-a-wick-a-wick-a-wick-a-!"—and back to the oak, calling still. It glanced at everything, investigated all movements nearby, searched everywhere, and remained silent only long enough to find what it needed to eat. At length it saw a nut, a tiny bitternut, but how could it break the shell? It was happy—the shell had been broken by the winter frost. Seeing the little birdie flitting, jumping, and chatting, I said:

"Here's a pretty state of things!
Here's a pretty how-de-do!"
—W. S. Gilbert.

When the mate appeared, the nuthatch devoted all its energy to display before her. It spread and shut its stubby tail, extended both wings, bobbed its black-crowned head, swayed from side to side, and uttered faint "wick-a-wick-a-wick-a-wicks." It never tired of its nuptial display. From then on the two nuthatches always stayed together. Male and female hopped and ate together, slept in twin beds "till death did them part." They explored tree trunks, investigated crevices, and carefully tried to locate possible places where to build nests, to lay eggs and to rear their offspring. "Wick-a-wick-a-wick-a-wick-a!"

Witnessing and meditating upon these bird activities, I raised my voice in gladsome song to the Lord.

"How wonderful is God in all His creatures?

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and all that dwelleth therein.

"Praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise Him, all ye people;

"For His mercy has been confirmed upon us, and His justice remaineth forever.

"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit! As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen."

I need more trees, more timbers, thought I one day in early autumn of 1942. I need planks and roof boards, braces and uprights, for the completion of my building program on the picnic grounds. One day a storm broke over Ed Freeburg's timberlands, with a roar like Niagara's falling. A thunderbolt struck the jagged top of a pine skeleton. The rampike swayed, reeled, fell, throwing fragments of bark all around. A fire started.

One day the atmosphere grew pale,
Within a smoke-borne droughty gale.
The solid forests 'gan to reel,
From the fierce flames like thunder peal.

The fire traveled onward and upward, gaining momentum as quickly as the wind; it poured over the ridge, drove the flames through the green tops of evergreens. As the heat increased the fires became one huge blaze of flame and smoke, of swirling gases and exploding debris. The crackling, sizzling, popping sounds were lost in the thunderous roar of the forest conflagration.

The speed of the fire was unbelievable. Within minutes huge pines were smoking skeletons.

Large, sturdy oaks bowed with ado,
It burnt their thick trunks through and through.
And when they heard the fire humming,
They wondered what all there was coming.

Downhill and uphill and beyond, the fire raced unchecked, even to the edge of the woods. Confronted by a roaring inferno, nothing seemingly could escape; yet some animals did. The rabbit sped away over the hills; squirrels, chipmunks, weasels, woodchucks, all followed suit.

The fire swept on through the wood
In cracking, crashing, searing mood . . . .
Young deer and rabbit, squirrel and bear,
Sought refuge from the fire's glare.

Still something remained of the forest. The pinery had been considerably damaged; yet a few scattered groups of trees, some among rocks, others along ravines, had survived the onslaught of
the flames.
After the smouldering fires had died down I took a survey of the damage. I offered Fred Freeburg a certain amount for the trees I might find that were still quite sound. They were cut down and used in the Grotto construction project.

On a quiet morning I walked along a path, leading to the rear of the pond.

Here leisurely I made my routine rounds
Along wild-tangled paths and pictured grounds;
Where art and floral splendors came to view,
Along the lieus I loved, and long ere knew.

Looking over the log piles I found scattered over the ground a number of long, thin bones. What! thought I, who has done this? Tufts of woolly hair, too, were there. I stood amazed with a bone in my hand and meditated: "A bone in my hand, and hair on the ground!" I muttered. Last night strange dogs had made their rounds. "Alas, one more of my darling rabbits has passed into the Shades! What became food for the dogs has become sorrow for me."

Once there was a vast timberland north of Mill Creek, at the end of the Holland Road, which belonged to Mr. Smongeski, of Stevens Point. Speaking to him one day in his law office, I asked him for some logs. "Help yourself to anything you can make use of," he said. "I have acres of valuable timber there, which I received for a song, through some legal transaction, much of which can be made into cordwood. But as to the rest . . . ?" I do not believe that Mr. Smongeski was able to sing a note; perhaps his wife sang for him, she was a good singer. By this conversation I knew that I could take all left-over's. There were soft and hard maples, red-oaks, branchy elms, pine logs, cumbersome windfalls, all of which Avere of reasonably good quality for whatever I had in mind to build.

The weather was fair as gray-bellied sap suckers, back from the south in spring, were pecking rectangular holes into pines and were sucking in the pungent resin. Red squirrels were following them along tree trunks. The catkins and aspens were beginning to burst from their buds. I saw a gray squirrel climbing far out on a swaying branch of a large elm, enjoying the vernal sun. A groundhog was venturing from his long hibernation in his leafy nest. The sparrows were journeying in flocks through the forest, and pausing to scratch for seeds among dry leaves. The loud, clear song of the blue jay rang through the woods.

Water from snow and ice was trickling from branches, and on the brook small cakes and sheets were beginning to break. Wedge-shaped flocks of geese were cleaving northward across the sky,
honking, gabbling, calling to one another in their family groups. The dark forest landscape, lying spread for miles beneath, dotted by the gleam of ice-locked creeks and rivers, offered them no food. They flew onward—onward—ever onward—ever honking—ever gabbling.

I said to Ed: "I'd like to know
Where those geese flying always go
About this time of every year;—
Surely it must be far from here.

"North! north! northward! north!"their undulating goose cries seemed to have been saying. In the twinkling of the white and gray-tipped wings was written: "Return! return!" The north is still locked in ice and snow, that will prompt their indomitable spirits to seek food and shelter in more spring-awakening areas farther south, until the icy blasts of Boreas have dwindled down to mere springtime whisperings.

In autumn the frogs had gone to their "winterizing" silently; now they were rising from inactivity, crawling slowly, and swimming with incipient croaking songs to their citadels in the sun.

Oh-ho! to be a frog, my boys!
To sing frog songs with frog-like voice—
Voice of the bog-lands loud and stern,
Calling all frog-boys in their turn.
At first they study and then play;
They swim the "tick-tock" time away.
Both polliwog and grown-up frog
Are taught in song to praise their God.

A brief snowstorm in early spring challenged April to return the forests to white again. However the tide of sunshine surged too strongly for the cold to persist.

On a certain day in the woods where we were logging no chill wind disturbed the shimmerings of the first spring haze, and there I heard the tom-tomming of a young male grouse. At the first slow beat of his drum, I turned my ears in the direction from which the drumming seemed to have been coming: "Trump! trump! trump! trump! trump! trump-p-p-p-pp-pppppp!"—The hollow muffled mysterious sound ceased. I remained motionless for a few minutes, and listened. Again the drumbeats came evenly measured, first slow, then rapidly increasing, until they became furious. "Trump! trump! trump! trump! trump! trump!-p-p-pp-ppppp!"

Curious about anything interesting in the woods, I cautiously walked toward where the drumming came from. Overgrown by dogwoods, a huge and rotten pine log was lying prostrate upon the ground, covered with moss. Atop the log stood Mr. Drummer, like a drum major in Bumbleburg's Brass Band. The grouse observed the slight movements of plants made by my approach. It turned, and with a slow tread, head held high, it strutted down the length of the log. Quite suddenly it spread its tail fanwise, expanded its glossy black-green neck, raised its head, held its wings in a shell-like curve, away from its body, the lower tips almost touching the rotted wood of the log, and began a courting display.

Discovering there were only trees and stumps and no hen grouse in sight, the cock abandoned his display, allowed his feathers to settle back into place, sputtered, and with slow and sedate steps returned to his hideout among the bushes.

Back to the men I trudged to see what had transpired with the trees and the logs while I had been preoccupied with a grouse and his drumming. Ben Jadack, the foreman of Smongeski's crew, was still working with his men; some were piling wood, others sawing and chopping. Meeting Mr. Jadack I questioned: "Well, Ben, how are they going?" "Oh, fine—doing well," he replied; "the men are really working. How many logs do you want?" he asked. "Oh," I replied, "anything you don't need, or can't use; I'll take them off your hands 'n' haul 'em to the Grotto; I'll get rid of 'em there somehow, someway." "Okay!" he broke in, "that'll save me a lot of trouble cleaning up." "Thank you!" I replied.

Soon trailer-loads of various kinds, and shapes, and sizes, and lengths, and measurements, and weights of logs were unloaded in my back yard coming from Smongeski's logging camp. From a long cumbersome white oak, steps were made, leading to an arch over which a clumsy seat was built high over the heads of all who walked under. I called it "the lovers' roost." The young folks
loved to congregate there to make "goo-goo eyes" and print initials along the logs. Other logs were rolled under shade trees, where the adolescent assembled, especially on picnic days, to have tete a-tete talks reminiscing bygone schooldays, days out of school, and other experiences during their years of youth.

One day I saw a man sitting on one of the logs with stern features and careworn brow. It was on our annual picnic day. Seemingly he was recuperating from a fight he had had with another more powerful than he. There were signs of a pugilistic encounter on his chin and forehead. After his opposing forces had multiplied, near the back kitchen door of my home, he was left alone to struggle for supremacy—and he lost the battle. The reason for the fistic engagement most likely was: "He had waited for the good wine until last," and he became "bedoozled." Seeing him meditating on the log, I said to him (his name was Joe): "Well, Joe, how are you making it?" "Oh, so-so," he said. "I'm not too bad—you should see the other fellow!" On the following day he came weeping and apologized for having disturbed the public peace of the Great Day.

Some time before, many white oaks, tall and slender, were found on the banks of the Little Eau Pleine River. The surge of April was all around; the first curls of the ferns were poking their heads through the dead leaves. I saw a single trillium remarkably situated, and in full bloom. Raspberry buds were swelling, almost ready to burst with blossoms upon their leafless branches. White sparrows, myrtle warblers, blackbirds, kingfishers, robins, snipes—all were returning to swamp and ridge and woods, making melodies everywhere.

After the oaks had been sawed and hauled, and barked at home, we found the wood too hard for building purposes. In consequence I turned to pine for the needed material.

Even beyond Stevens Point I motored to investigate for trees.

At John Soik's I bought a number of white cedars, taken from the cedar swamp bordering the Plover River. Walking through the swamp, I saw through brambles of brush and trees a bird
standing in the water.

> Behold a plover—there it stands!
> It has no hair-do and no hands;
> Its cut-off beak is like a pigeon's;
> Knows not of "freedom of religions."
> A few notes to God it does repeat—
> Its talk is mostly incomplete.

Soon I came through a pool of mud. Climbing over submerged logs, I came to a tundra-bog where mosquitoes were most bloodthirsty, and where nature was damp, dark, and threatening. The silence was unbroken by bird and beast. The white cedars rose straight around like a wall—dense and impenetrable, with many acres of leafy splendor all around. The cedars were actually holding court in the swamp. If one tree alone is so beautiful, thought I, what shall be said when their numbers are counted, not by the score, nor by hundreds, but by thousands?

Continuing, I unexpectedly saw shadows come over me, fast and furious, like shadows of death. I heard the noise of wings fluttering, rushing with great speed, then slowing to make good the aim of a large, grayish swamp hawk, with harsh, piercing cry. It swooped down on a young, unsuspecting cottontail. The rabbit plunged away, but an instant too late. There was a quick, hard-killing stroke as the talons sank into the flesh. The hawk picked up the limp rabbit, and carried it, "as a lamb to the slaughter," slowly, laboriously to an old stump not two rods away. Tufts of hair fell to the ground, grayish-white from the body of the rabbit. The bird of prey, with hooked beak, plucked the fluffy growths away from a portion it ate, and for a moment small hairs floated carelessly about; one tuft came to rest on a small sprig of a raspberry, like a large flake of snow.

When the hawk had his fill he dropped the skeletal portions of the rabbit—back, tail, and legs intact—carefully wiped his beak several times, and flew away.

After the deer season was over in November, and the men had returned from the chase, the logs I had selected were pulled with horses and chain unto a clearing, where they were loaded on trucks and taken to Rudolph.

To Louis Arnold is due a special note of gratitude for a number of elegant pines I secured from his forest, when I was sorely in need of lumber for the completion of picnic tables and stands— places of shelter, too, from sun and rain.

VIII
Forest Leftovers

During one summer when people were coming and going to and from Grotto Shrine, when I was able to break through the front lines in my yard, I was told of a freak-of-nature tree, lying somewhere in Little Chute, Wisconsin, about ninety miles from here. At once I dispatched Herold Jagodzinski and Edmund in quest of the rare find. Now the log is resting securely in the shade of St. Jude's Chapel, where visitors may see it, an uncommon sight in a frequented place.

While a number of my men were hauling a hollow log and a few stumps from Weidner's woods, I raised my shotgun at something moving in the treetops; I missed killing a charming little red squirrel, the only one I had ever seen there. In the distance I heard the crowing of a rooster, the gobbling of turkeys, and the lowing of cattle. From the Sigel Holy Rosary Church a bell was ringing—calling—calling to a funeral or a wedding. "Wonderful!" I exclaimed, "isn't it wonderful?—a place so idyllic—so charming!" There was pastoral peace among men and animals on a simple farm. Filled with joy, I raised my voice and sang:

> "Oh, come, let us exult in the Lord; let us rejoice before God,
> our Savior; let us come into His presence with thanksgiving,
> and rejoice before Him with psalms."—Psalm 94.

"What is the philosophy of a hollow tree?" someone may ask. A hollow tree provides shelter for raccoons, owls, wild bees, squirrels. In the tree of which I am writing none of such were found, but can you guess what I discovered? . . . A flying squirrel about as large as a chipmunk. It had wings of skin. Instead of running on a tree, like other squirrels do, it flew away like a bird. Dunbar writes of squirrels and rabbits:

"Folks ain't got no right to censure others about habits;
He who gave the squirrels their bush tails made the bobtails for the rabbits."

Flying squirrels, however, have no bush tails; their tails are short and limp. I have seen but two flying squirrels in my life.

After a certain hollow tree had been dug not too far from Junction City, sometime in January—it was in the Mill Creek bottom lands —the stream went on a rampage from a January thaw, so that the roots of the tree were covered with floating ice. The squirrels could no longer get to the tree, unless they leaped from branch to branch, and from tree to tree. Crows flew cawing over the flood; a solitary owl, however, was not deterred from entering her abode near the tree's crest. She knew that the water could never reach her there.

The owl works only on night shifts. When the shades of night are giving way to early dawn, her last "oo-ooo-oo-oo-o-o-s!" are heard before she goes to roost.

> "Within an ancient hollow oak
> That stood beside the road,
> Just on the border of a wood,
> An aged owl abode."

After the flood had receded, and the ice had melted, the tree was felled. Today it stands in Grotto Park, where woodpeckers are drilling holes through the decaying bark to create a hideout to rear their offspring. From time to time squirrels visit the tree, but do not stay. Blue jaws and robins fly over and around it. Children peer into the holes the woodpeckers have drilled, and into the hollow, once the home of a hoot-owl; now it stands alone and almost forgotten. In one of my ramblings through Le May's timber I came upon another hollow tree. Nearing the old rampike

> I saw two pairs of eyes peep out,
> Two pairs of ears move still about. . . .

There were a son and a daughter raccoon in a nest. When we came to fell the tree, the folks, however, were not at home. They had gone fishing, and to wash the morsels of food they found. Raccoons are exceptionally clean animals; they wash all their food before eating. The raccoon is rather playful, too; some are trained as pets for children.

While the men were cutting the tree, a large fox squirrel came from a dark cavity and sped away to protect its life; momentarily it saved it. Later it was shot while nibbling on nuts.

I wonder if anyone in this community still remembers the old "crow tree"? It stood not far from Valine's old home. It is there no more. It now serves as a rustic bridge, over which countless wander on sightseeing tours along the rocky trail leading over the Grotto Cave.

Scores of crows on their fiestas often assembled on the famous tree. Their cawing could be heard for miles around, when a dead rabbit had been discovered on the highway nearby, or a mousing cat in Peter's woods.

I have always loved trees and forests, fields and farms. I was born a scion of a noble race of farmers, a son of toil, a friend of agriculture. I loved to hear the roosters crow at dawn, and the pigs squeal for their corn before sunrise.

On one late autumn day, Christmas was not too far away, and there was another tree to "be taken home—a freak-of-nature tree. The story goes that the Indians, in order to find the trail of those who went before, would take a sapling and bend it to look like an arrowhead or the point of a spear, and aim it in the direction the trail was leading. In my tramping through woods I discovered such tree signals which had retained then- original shapes, even after they had grown to maturity.

Finding such an oddly shaped tree in Ringer's timber, near highway County Trunk F, about three miles east of Vesper, I asked to have it taken to my Gardens.

After it was brought to earth, there came the problem of how to move it. It was as crooked as a snake, and as clumsy as an ill shaped mustang. While the boys were planning I took a stroll to the edge of the woods. Soon I came to a thicket of jack pines, which stood so densely that there was scarcely any room for all to continue growing. Many were stunted and spindly, yet each one was reaching for a place in the sun. Every few feet were larger ones, some a few inches in diameter, which had managed to get some special push of growth due to higher elevation, moisture, no rocks beneath their roots, and what have you.

"I see a deer!" I exclaimed as I saw a big stag thrashing through loose snow to an unbrowsed cedar tree with low foliage.

Just then a startled stag in haste
Sprang over a wild woodland waste,
And, gazing moments down a glen,
The morning air he sniffed, and then
He bounded onward free and far
To where the woods seemed left ajar.

A few nibbles here—he didn't seem to relish the flavor—then he pawed for wintergreen leaves, and uncovered sweet fern. There was still good browsing beyond the pines, and more along the marsh. The winter was still young. The difficulty was to travel to the feeding places and to uncover the food. The snow was deep and the deer had been growing lean from the great exertion they had experienced during the recent hunting season. The stag gleaned a bud here and a twig there, from a willow, a dogwood, or a low aspen branch. Such animals find their food upon relatively few acres within their browsing territory, and not too far from water. Soon the voice of Edmund was heard: "Hey, hey, where are you? I think we should go home; it's getting late!" Until now I was standing still as a stick, unnoticed by the browsing stag. At my first move he veered to the right, then to the left, then sped away through crackling brush and shaking branches.

Then through dark woods from tree to tree
The deer prolonged his running spree.
As on he ran through glen and glade
New strength and skill the stag displayed.

A few weeks before, Mr. Ringer had given me permission to remove the "crooked tree" from his woods, yet I thought it were well to inform him of my intentions and activities.

The Ringers were living on some sort of an elevation, not far from County Trunk F Highway. The road to their home was uphill, soft, slushy, and sandy. Here and there small plots of clay and gravel were revealed, and there were hollows and broken surfaces.

"How will I ever get up there with my Dodge?" I questioned. I was speaking to Edmund, as we were driving through the gate, leading into the uphill yard. Swerving to the left through a mud puddle, I missed a deep ditch by but a few inches, arriving safely on the ridge. I found no trouble getting down.

At a late hour on Christmas Eve the "freak-of-nature" tree was skidded unto the Grotto grounds. It was standing a few days later "as crooked as a snake" beside the pond, a zigzag puzzle for all who came to see it. After the "teeth of time" had chewed into its interior, I begged Edmund to take it down, lest someone get hurt if it fell.

IX
Commencing the Rock Work

In my years of adolescence I was a spare little lad, weighing but ninety-six pounds at the age of seventeen, yet I was healthy and strong. When I was employed as a day laborer on the farm, I worked from five in the morning till eight in the evening. Those days were strenuous in comparison with the work days of today. Yet, as I look back, the work doesn't seem to have been too strenuous. I am sure it gave me muscle and brawn and character. When I was twenty my three dollars a week seemed big money. I bought my first watch for ten dollars, and sold it to a pawnbroker in Kansas City for eight. I had lost my train ticket coming from Texas, and I needed money to get back to college in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. In those days I bought a ready-made suit of clothes for twelve dollars, and a pair of shoes for two and a half.

I was fifteen years old when I passed from the placid harbor of parental protection into the storm-tossed sea of toil and trouble away from home. It was a crucial period for me, a time of rude awakening from my boyhood's best dreams.

How I recall my days as boy,
All filled with careless childish joy!
When dash and dare endeared each scene
'Long rolling hills and rippling stream;
With restful night and golden dawn
The woodland farm and field along.
Unknown were then dark days of gloom,
Not till my life had reached its noon.
How innocent, and worry-free
Were boyhood's blessed days for me!
Oh, that sweet paradise of joy!
Oh, blessed days when I was boy!

When I came here as a priest, I was used to hard knocks and difficult labor. My ambition led me to do what I did. My first thought when I began building was to make the stonework colorful, shining—at least in some parts. To do this I used all kinds of shells and colored glass. I had., heard that I could obtain colorful glass leftovers from Kokomo Opalescent Glass Company, Kokomo, Indiana. I ordered a few barrels of green, white, blue, red, and yellow glass cullet, and melted it into lumps, for which I needed containers. First I tried a large frying pan, a skillet, then an ash container from some old stove; finally I experimented with discarded paint pails. None of these, however, proved suitable for the experiment. Finally I found that old oyster pails were adequate for the purpose. From then on I was often seen with empty oyster pails banging in the rear of my Maxwell car, which I had begged from Johnson Hill's Meat Market, and from fish stores in Wisconsin Rapids and Stevens Point. To see me with a few boys digging through city dumps and out-of-the-way garbage places for colored glass and old pails was not unusual; to some it may even have seemed interesting and alarming.

To carry on a work of such proportions I, of course, needed money.

"0 money, money, money—I am not necessarily one of those
who think thee holy,
But I often stop to wonder how thou canst go out so fast
when thou comest in so slowly."—Hymn to the Thing
that Makes the World Go 'Round.

In those days it was not too easy to borrow money, and it was quite some trick to pay it back. During the time I was in debt my liquid assets were practically nil. My Whippet automobile was

my only personal property of any value, and my Prudential and Forester insurance policies may have served as securities for loans at the local banks. Good old Jim Case often let me have a few
hundred dollars without interest. During those hectic years of my unbridled ambition, I had been turning the wheels of my parish, of about seven hundred souls, at the same time conducting my personal affairs of Grotto building as best I could, and knew. All too full of curves, however, was my double-tracked mind; too eager was I to have more than one iron in the fire. I never loved a real business, a life that would fill my mind with facts and figures, expenses and sales. I knew that such were a necessary evil, and that only such would lead to real financial success. Yet I always loved the free and open life in the great outdoors with the birds and the beasts and the fishes. Roaming through fields and forests, and along green country sides and rivers, hunting and fishing, and looking for rocks — all this was the life for me.

Before I began building, I had wished for a place on the side of a hill for the Grotto's natural setting. But since there was no such place on these premises, not even a suitable slope, I decided
to build on level ground. First I employed strong farmer hands, Edmund Rybicki and Clemens Blonein as principal helpers. I watched the men as they carried the heavy rocks, or moved them with wheelbarrows, dragging them from piles where huge trucks had deposited them. One rock was placed on the other in a rough and rugged manner. Cement mortar was used in abundance. The large blocks were turned about to form a complete and permanent wall, with windings, curves, ridges, depressions. Some walls were built at a more or less acute angle to the perpendicular. With each foot added, mortar, mixed with pebbles and common field stones, was firmly packed behind the rising walls. I was amazed at the speed with which the quiet, earnest terrace builders worked. And when I viewed the extent of the rock work they completed in one week, I could only feel that I was in the presence of disciplined workmen — men who had learned to toil from childhood, and who did not look upon what too many would consider back-breaking labor, but as something not out of the ordinary. All day these people worked, sometimes even in a pouring rain. And what they accomplished was immense, gratifying, and praiseworthy.

> A Shrine there is of ample size —
> Oh, see its glories — wonders — rise!

After some years' labor on this stone work, there came during one night in April a sleet storm, causing the electric power to go off. There could be no cement mixing, at least not mechanically; as a consequence building operations in the Grotto had to be curtailed. When I snapped the electric switch in the morning I realized that the whole community was without light, heat, and water. Dressing hurriedly in the dark, I went down to the kitchen. By candle-light
I stoked the range with a pail of coal, while my niece, Olivia Lansing, the kitchen maid, was stripping the bacon for the frying pan. She was a good cook; she knew how to prepare a tasty breakfast.

> Oh, what glory and fame in a splendid repast!
> There is pleasure in eating—it's fun unsurpassed,
> When the steak and the chicken are A Number One,
> With potatoes and gravy, and a caraway bun;
> With dumplings, and doughnuts, and pie-a-la-mode.
> To the cooks in the kitchen all honors bestowed!

Olivia's "good morning!" was cheerful; if she saw danger she knew how to suppress every sign of it. I spread the coal evenly with the lid handle, put back the cover, and set the drafts. The effect of so many domestic manipulations was reassuring.

"Very poor light today," uttered Olivia.

The morning was dark as it continued sleeting.

"It's as dark as inside of a potato sack," I affirmed, "although it's already a quarter of six; if it doesn't get light very soon I'll have to dig up the old lantern in the attic. Candles haven't the beam lanterns have."

"How d'you want your eggs this morning?" she questioned.

"Sunny side up, and not too hard," I replied.

After having said my morning prayers and offered the Eucharistic Sacrifice, I sat down to the table, took a small glass of orange juice, poured myself little coffee and much milk. "Olivia, sit down!" I beamed, "and partake of a goodly breakfast and quit your singing.

"You can't start no notes a-flyin'
Like the ones that rants and rings
From the kitchen to the big woods
When Olivia sings."

"Have you hot biscuits?" I continued.

"Not so early in the morning," she rejoined. "I may have some for lunch, though."

"Good-y, good-y!" I cheered, rubbing my 'tummy.'

"What else do you want for dinner?" she questioned.

"Oh, I'm not particular," I countered. "Seeing that we have to mix cement by hand, since the power is off, I suppose I'll be quite hungry by that time; let's make it baked potatoes with the jackets on, a big chunk of Porterhouse—let's see—and carrots with onions and gravy, perhaps a piece of apple-pie. That should be quite enough for a hungry rock-layer—okay?"

"Ya—as!" sang Olivia. "You know Mrs. Blonien in the butcher shop usually cuts the steak over an inch thick—of course she means it well."

"Make it rare," I concluded.

The ice was hanging in pointed sticks from every wire, branch, and twig as I went outdoors. We had worked for quite a spell with hoe, mud-box, and cement-coated pails, when the wind suddenly shifted to the west, driving away every trace of a sleet storm. With the golden sun coming from behind dark clouds, gems and jewels of every color and hue began scintillating and sparkling like a million diamonds. "Oh, Rudolph, thy wreath has found a rose!" I exclaimed.

'Deed many gems with winter on parade
Adorn this Shrine when the Sun stands at the gate.

"Behold the glory of a winter day!" I cheered.

"Glory hallelujah!" chimed one of the men.

"The heavens show forth the glory of God!" I concluded.

The morning train was late on account of the sleet. As Percy Millenbah, who was then railroad agent, went out to pick up the mailbag, the heavy engine began with a chuck—chuck—chuck— chuck—k-k-k-k-a-a-a-a-a!" and the wheels spun like a pig running on ice, which jarred the ground all around. At the same time there came, crash!—a terrific noise. The sudden earth shock from the skidding engine caused the posts and wires all around to collapse. The ice hanging on was too heavy. Posts and wires were lying all over the place. It took many hours before service was resumed. Late in the afternoon building operations in the Grotto continued.

X
With the Flowers in the Shrine

Here buds unfold and spread like orchids fair,
And like cosmetic vials scent the air.

Looking at the Shrine today, it seems strange that I ever found so much time for "extra-curricular" activities. It was typical of me, during all these years that my ideas were followed by action. My thoughts came fast after I began building; and my life around me became constantly invigorated by new and more interesting ideas that were realized in building.

On a wonderful day in spring, a few weeks later, I was strolling through the gardens. The oak trees were red with young leaves, about the size of squirrels' ears. Blood-roots, dog-tooth violets,
and ginseng were coming from under the dead leaves on the ground. With keenest enjoyment I looked at the new spring flowers with dew on them. Later in summer in cloudy weather, when rain was falling, once more I was alone with the flowers. No one, I am sure, appreciated them as much as I did. They were my own; to strangers they may not have seemed so impressive. The new strain of begonias was delicate. One must stand beneath their blossoms, and see their dainty textures against the blue and gray of the sky, to fully appreciate them.

Sometimes, roaming among the trees and gazing at the individual flowers planted beneath them, before the dewdrops vanish from their petals, I may have appeared like a Lilliputian wandering among their soft, velvety surfaces.

Of course I had my favorites among so many. Alas, their names became involved in a nomenclatorial tangle. A great writer has said: "In attempting to create order in the chaotic confusion of flower names, I find that I have set myself an almost impossible task."

However some of the most beautiful varieties have survived with their names. The Muraski, for example, with its deep purplish-pink, semi-double flowers, which covers the ground with a carpet of pink petals as they fall, is still called Muraski. The Amanogawa (Milky Way) with its striking form and upright branches, like garlands stretching upward, never failed to thrill me. It deserves to be widely planted.

Like hillside phantasies of woodland gold,
When autumn's on the oaks, rare beauties hold;
Bright morning makes this garden polychrome,
Cathedral-like for Christ on lofty throne.

Standing near the grandstand in Grotto Park on a quiet day, I looked at a row of huge elms, growing down the hills to the south. Nearby was a large flower bed with bright-red cannas and light blue iris. The trees in the distance had stunning gray trunks and wide waving branches. Going down I placed my arms around one. "Grand old tree!" I said. "A tree that may in summer wear a nest of robins in her hair." And I continued: "This same tree was here already forty years ago, when I came here; then it was almost as large as it is now." Before me on the picnic grounds were many buildings, picturesque structures, with large green roofs and knotty posts, made spacious and strong. I often recall the impression I received, standing under a large live oak on the day following our annual picnic, as I thought of the ready cash which had become ours in this place built and maintained by my own hands and with my own funds.

To beautify my gardens and the Shrine, hundreds of flowers and potted plants are set out every spring. When this place was in its infancy I nourished many plants, mostly geraniums, along the windows in school. They made the rooms look cheerful. In late years I bought hundreds of flowers from the Ebsen Greenhouses in Wisconsin Rapids. When the season is over, every year I receive thousands without cost.

And now behold the flowers on parade in my gardens:

A shivering, shaking in the shade,
Bright pansies near the garden gate.

Small Johnny-jump-ups free and gay,
What busy gadabouts are they!
Along bright stone walls green with moss
The gray-stemmed white hydrangeas toss.
And when the autumn moon red burns,
The grand flora reddish turns.
Along wide crags and rugged rocks
The periwinkle creeping crops.
Aglow, like painted skies of morn,
Petunias by the score adorn.
With colors painted red and pink,
Bright cannas from their high perch wink.
In August, when the aster blue
Parades in crowds the cheery crew,
The golden-rod still wide-awake,
There blooms beside the garden gate.
Then soon the lily folds her vest,
And says "farewell!" to all the rest.

It is difficult to give an adequate description of all flowers blooming in my gardens. Suffice it to say that I usually plant and cultivate such kinds as have a long blooming season.

There is something in a rose petal, in quality and color, seldom equaled in any other flower. Is it little wonder that roses have become so much of the part of the life of a human being? In fact the words "rose" and "garden" seem indissolubly united in many minds. To many people a garden means roses; they will always try to grow them, even in Wisconsin, where they may have to plant them every spring.

"You may break, you may shatter the vase, if you will,
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still."

Oftentimes visitors entering these gardens remark as they sniff the air: "Um-m-m—what smells so sweet?" I often tell them: "Oh, those are my roses! The phlox, too, have a strong fragrance, but I believe the perfume of the rose predominates."

As time went on, the soil conditions for my flowers embarrassed me. It became apparent that something should be done to enrich the flower production of the kinds I had planted. In the beginning I had recourse to ordinary barnyard fertilizer; later, however, I found, with the suggestions of Peter Hartjes, who in the beginning was one of my valuable helpers, that leaf mold is excellent for mulching and enriching the soil in flower gardens. Consequently truck loads of leaf compost were hauled every autumn from forests near Sherry and Milladore, and from the prolific woodlands of Thomas Nash, Peter Hartjes, Anderton, Hafenbrettl, and John Athorp.

Curiously enough, the soil conditions which appeal to the dairy farmer, on account of wonderful yields of clover, are ill-adapted for the culture of flowers. The fact that this land has supported giant forests in the long ago is no indication of its suitability for every other type of plant. The red clay subsoil, overlain in some areas with a thin layer of productive loam, often becomes a swamp in rainy weather and a frying-pan in dry seasons. Even the roots of the alfalfa are unable to penetrate the hard subsoil, and therefore its growth, if continued many seasons, becomes unsatisfactory.

The readers of these lines will agree with me when I say that the days that Edmund and I spent in the woods, and in fields collecting stones, were filled with more interest than perhaps any other days of our lives. I used to spend hours with roses, studying their kinds and characteristics, trying to find out why some grew so slowly, and made such poor showing during the blooming season,
while others were of the "grandflora" type in blooming, if not in name. Climbing vines were always interesting. Oh, how the glorious phlox loves the companionship of waxen vines, of which the Madeira, which grows profusely in my gardens, is an elegant specimen! The pendant blossoms of dark blue of the Clamatis Jackmanii, too, are ever cheerful, and I never tire of watching their development. I cannot understand why so delightful a flowering vine is not grown throughout the United States. The beds of varicolored phlox, with their long pointed leaves, are ever attractive. The harvesting of the tuberous begonias, although more difficult than harvesting of potatoes, is an interesting performance, made still more so by the quiet enthusiasm of Edmund, who for a number of years spent

every spring and autumn planting and harvesting the multitudes I have. O, rare begonia, full-blown flower of glorious beauty, where eyes sublime love to linger, and the tears and laughter of passing multitudes hold unbroken sway!

Here in Wisconsin the summers are beautiful; in June, July, and August the weather is usually fair.

All hail to Wisconsin, bright state of the Nation!
Where morning strews roses and gold o'er the skies;
Where God crowned with glory His Work of Creation,
Where true nature lovers have found paradise.
Wisconsin, I love thee! Oh great Land of Promise!
I love thy great people, e'er kind and sincere;
By real pioneering they rose unto greatness;
By e'er going onward their famed deeds appear.

Here in Wisconsin the youngsters wear light clothes in summer, and take their morning swim. Birds are singing, flowers blooming, gentle breezes, summer in the arms of spring!

When the sun's rays light up the eastern sky in early morning, it is time to rise. The air is haunting; I hear the chirping and warbling of birds far and near. Not too far away I hear a youthful voice from across the fields: Jerry Rybicki calling all cows for the morning's milking. Occasionally I also hear his dog Shep bringing up the rear of the long cow-line. For me it is time for prayer and meditation:

"I love the early morning
When things are sweet with dew,
And everywhere I see the face
Of God come shining through."
F. H. Keith.

Later, after the children have filed to church, I hear their loud, innocent voices during mass, as they repeat the sacred mysteries of the rosary. Then follows a song, beautiful and angelic—poetry in music, a hymn to God. A nun is at the Hammond, the girl choir stands around singing, while I am offering up the Holy Sacrifice. Besides the pond pink hibiscus petals are falling and floating near large white water lilies.

Lily-pads and fish below,
Water-garden next in row.

A pickerel-weed is there with its sword-like leaves, and striking green spikes. I see, tumbling over the wall, a yellow flower, a buttercup, which the moths and the butterflies are visiting. Tall elms, whose branches throw their shadows on the pool, half hide the rocky formations surrounding. Under the wide eaves of the log hut spider webs, spun during the night, sparkle in the morning sun. Large clouds are massing, like distant mountains in the sky, and low murmurs of thunder are heard. There is a charm about these cloudy mornings. The western sky is painted red and purple; on one side a sector of a rainbow is hanging. Reading the thermometer outside of my window—seventy-two degrees—I hear a rattling sound: a stone in the Grotto has broken loose in the vibration of the thunder.

In the wake of a rainy day came a moonlit night, making the flowers all around drip with a greenish sheen. The starry sky, with its constellations and planets, has something of the brilliancy of the wonderful night. The slightest breath of air cools my senses, and brings from all around a fragrance of flowers I cannot distinguish, yet I know they are there. The night is by no means silent. The sharp "chuck-chuck" of the night-hawk and the calls of the screech-owl, the plaintive trill of tree toads, and the high pitched notes of crickets remind me that the surroundings are wide-awake. Often, though, I must confess with sorrow, the mosquitoes spoil the picture.

Coming from my home on the following morning, I saw small striped squirrels (chipmunks) and gophers playing on the grass. When I loudly called, "Chimborazo—cotopaxi!" they scurried to their shelters in burrows and among rocks. To get out of the way hurriedly, one tumbled head-over-heels over a rock and scampered on. Familiarity with these animals brought an actual fondness for them which I had hardly imagined I would acquire. Now I call them my "garden pets." Instead of kicking or stepping on them when they come too near, which seldom happens, I find it more pleasant to watch them run and play, often carrying in their mouths an acorn or a nut, or dry grass for their nests. Once I saw a mother gopher carrying her babies by the nape of the neck, one at a time, to a place of safety.

There are always some rodents about, although in winter they are not seen, except the tiny tracks of field mice, or rats on the soft snow. In spring their rustling through leaves often makes me start, thinking that perhaps I might have stepped on a toad or a snake. In summer they are more lively, and during the last days of September and the beginning of October their winter sleep begins once more.

I imagined that I might include stories about all my flowers in this book, but I found that I could not, there are too many. Were I merely to give a list of all the flowers, large and small, in and around my Grotto, it would make a long line of names as in a nursery catalog. On restless nights, I have tried to repeat all the names, to put myself to sleep; but I never fell asleep—so many names of flowers I had.

I believe more than even a hundred kinds are growing in my gardens. Some have strange and newfangled names. I will try to enumerate a few of the most common varieties. There are roses, of course; many kinds of phlox, hundreds of geraniums of many colors, begonias by the score, sylvias, agarathum, floss flowers, verbenas, and petunias, wonderful for along borders, then cosmos, cannas, gladioli, dahlias, iris, straw flowers, blue bells—let me stop—there will never be an end to the long, long list.

A well-traveled lady, living in the east, drove into my gardens one morning a few years ago. Before leaving her Cadillac she asked if I knew the "tiger flower" and whether I had one hi my garden. "It is my favorite flower," she said. "For many years I had a sprig of tiger flower on my breakfast table every morning; don't tell me you haven't a tiger flower, such wonderful plant. Shame on you!" "I had a few some years ago," I said, "but all died away on me." And she passed on with her car as so many of my fleeting friends do throughout the days.

On a shelf in my workshop, where I keep things for my garden stands a small box with a dozen or more shiny blackish-gray seeds, somewhat larger than ordinary beans. They are castor beans which a lady gave me. The castor plant grows six to eight feet tall; it has large star-shaped tropical leaves. A number of such, planted closely together, make a fine backdrop for low-growing flowers and plants. One day I saw a rabbit beneath one of them, sitting hunched up with his mouth between his front paws. Evidently he was eating; one corner of a leaf of the plant had been chewed away. Seeing him I said:

> "Bunny, bunny cottontail,
> Hopping 'long the bunny-trail,

Is it good what you are eating?" I continued. "Do you know that castor oil is made from those leaves? Don't eat too many—they may make you run faster than you can." But he continued nibbling. Some people say rabbits have fleas. I know of one strictly germproof. It wasn't disinfected, nor was it sterilized. At Easter it laid eggs, like a chicken, beautiful colored eggs—brown, blue, yellow, red. It was a fairy rabbit, a sprite—non-existent, like the fairy in Disneyland's TV show.

If you ask a child: "What is your name, little child, and where do you live?" the child may tell you it’s name, and the name and the number of the street where it lives; but if you ask a plant, naturally you'll receive no reply. Is it any wonder that the general run of people, who know the names of their children and those of their immediate neighborhood, are not acquainted with more
than a half do/en trees, shrubs and flowers which grow around their doorstep? Supposing the children could not speak, and had to be tagged, as the Kiwanis members used to tag themselves, wouldn't they forever be losing their tags and getting us into a frightful muddle?

I do not know how I came to learn the names of even the commonest forest trees of Iowa, where I spent my childhood, and my schooldays.

> Oh, glad days of childhood! Oh, bright happy schooldays!
> How quickly your joys and real warmth fleeted by!
> My life's best companions were then with me always
> With their joys in September, May, June, and July.

I lived in a valley near a brook and a river, but I do not recall that any of the trees there were labeled. In those days the sound of the woodman's axe was a familiar song to my ears. We gathered walnuts, butternuts, and hickory nuts. When hazel nuts were ripe we cracked them with our teeth like squirrels, and ate them. We also chewed the leaves of the chamomile, and the bark of the slippery elm. But as for being helped to memorize the names of trees, it was no matter of great interest to me.

When a boy of ten or twelve, I learned the names of the willows and cottonwoods lining our creek bottom. Out in the pastures where I often drove the cows, it was assumed that I knew the elm from the ash, and the white oak from

the red; I suspect that many of the other boys did not know that much. Our near neighbors, the Brockamps and the Hubers, knew the trees better than we did.

Visiting my sister in Texas and my brother in California in recent years, I was bewildered by the species of trees I saw—none of them labeled. Wandering among them, I wondered what kind
they were. Eucalyptus, magnolia, pecans, evergreen oaks, large palms were common there.

When I began planting flowers in my gardens, the problem of keeping their names straight grew day by day. The geranium I knew from childhood. My sisters nourished many along the windows at home. When I began scattering flowers among the spruce and pines and oaks, and seeds over rocks and among stumps, the trouble began. If I planted some in a favorable spot, trying to remember where they were, then I forgot where I had planted them.

Some persons seem to remember where they put things. In that regard Edmund is a genius. We are continually looking for our glasses, or wondering where we laid our false teeth, or our notebook and pencil. We often look in some box or basket for something we know we placed there.

If I asked Edmund for the pliers, or the hammer, he knows where they are. The wrench is in that box, the bolts in another, and the screwdriver in the third. He is confident that when he goes to a certain box or drawer, he will find what he remembers he placed there.

I once showed a rather intelligent lady—a visitor and stranger—a flower called "psystostegia," letting her smell of its spindly leaves, and giving her one of its purplish-white flowers. She took
it in what I considered a rather absent-minded way, as if she had a question to ask.

"What kind of flower is this?" she said.

"This?" I replied holding up the flower. "I suppose you would like to know the name of it. You will find it in the dictionary, or in some flower catalog, or, better still, in a flower encyclopedia. There you will read the word, 'psy-sto-ste-gia'" (I spelled it for her). "That seems difficult to spell," she replied. "Not if you know how," I answered laughingly. "But who can spell it? she questioned once more. If you don't know how to spell the word, how can you find it in the dictionary?" I exclaimed.

"It is merely a matter of instinct, this memorizing names," I continued.

"Not entirely," she broke in. "Just as some people are born with good memories, and some are natural-born spellers, so there are some with amazing memories for names."

"Talking about spelling," I continued (which of course is not about trees and flowers)—" when I went to school we often had down-spelling. All the spellers were asked to stand in a long line. If one missed spelling a given word correctly, he or she was made to sit down. The one who remained standing the longest received a prize. In the last years of the grammar grades, we studied words and spelled them correctly like hippopotamus, hydrocephalus, bdellium, phthisis (a sickness of the heart), metempsychosis, ignis fatuus, and such like. "My," exclaimed the lady, "those were real jaw-breakers!"

"Harder than hickory nuts," I chuckled.

Our conversation continued. "In my days of college I didn't have to remember the street addresses of the boys I played ball with. And there were no telephone numbers to be remembered. The buggies had no license plates, and the horses no horns sounding their coming. In winter they had bells around their bellies that jingled along.

> "Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way;
> Oh what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh!"

Young folks didn't have to ask for a license when they got married; there were no undertakers when someone got buried. Today the names flashed before our eyes in advertisements, newspapers, magazines and television in one day are many more than a child of my time would have seen in a year. "Something," I continued, "must be done, something constructive." (And going back to trees and flowers) "Where are the trees of my boyhood days, the maples, the sturdy oaks, walnuts, cottonwoods, the mighty pines? Gone, mostly gone!" (Then, pointing to a large stump in my garden) "See that pine stump, for example, isn't it a big one?" When the tree stood it was almost seven feet across at the base. What grand sight it must have been in all its green glory! Yes, gone are many majestic trees to make room for structures of steel and cement. These things have no ancestry, and will have no descendants. The forebear of the trees, however, date back a hundred million years, perhaps past ice ages, and iron ages, and ages of stone—epochs during which continents shifted, or sank beneath the sea and rose again. Like children with their building blocks, we erect fantastic structures, and worship them, because we have made them ourselves, but we brush the trees aside. In nature we see the things God has made. And God is EVERYTHING.

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and all they that dwell therein. . . . Lift up your gates, 0 ye princes, and be ye lifted up, 0 eternal gates; and the King of Glory shall enter in. Who is the King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.—Ps. 23.

As we were speaking an airplane was flying over. "Airplane! airplane!" shouted the children on the near-by playground. "See!" I said "the modern trend?" And I said unto the lady: "What beautiful picture of my gardens and Grotto could be taken from up there—from an airplane!" "I would buy one right away," she said, as she walked toward her Lincoln.

When clover-time is high 'long meadow lane,
And hayward moves at morn the jolly swain;
The wary birdman views in lowly flight
This garden tapestry with great delight.

Scarcely a day passed that I did not open the little window in my study, to let in fresh air, and look out into a utterly fascinating world, an absolutely quiet, peaceful world. No horrible roar of city traffic pours in as I open the casement and peer out. Everything is harmonious and in good proportion—flowers, rocks, trees. For hours at a time my imagination can wander about, feeding
on images that come direct from living objects that God has made and maintains.

I take a daisy into my hand from a bed in front of me. It has a solid yellow center; looking at it with my large reading glass, I see a fascinating forest of yellow flowers, each of them a little trumpet from which the pistil, covered with pollen, is protruding, like a bishop's mitre.

"Ouch!" I was stung by something—a mosquito! The nasty thing! I crushed it. A creature of God but a wicked one. Mosquitoes love to drink blood—mostly human blood.

Driving through Natchez, Mississippi, some years ago, on my way to Texas, we stopped for lunch at a small restaurant. The fat-gorged mosquitoes there were not too critical in their judgment of human flesh. Even the darkies were not spared from them.

"There was a young belle of old Natchez,
Whose garments were always in patches.
When comment arose
On the state of her clothes,
She drawled: 'When ah itches, ah scratches.' "

Near dusk one day, as I was reading the Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune*, a baby bug hopped upon my forearm from a blooming red canna, a King Humbert. The small bug was struggling to make its way up my shirt sleeve. It was a real fairy creature. Do you know what a fairy is? A lively and delicate being, with a more graceful form than a child in the full bloom of childhood.

Fascinated, I studied the little fellow, not any larger than one of the letters on this printed page. I watched it standing on its delicate hind legs. I saw it draw each of its four other legs, one by one through its mouth (I couldn't understand why); then it hopped on my reading glass, and looked up into my face. You little rascal, thought I, how dare you, what are you up to now? Then
it scampered onto my forefinger, its long greenish legs moving with a grace no floor dancer could emulate. Then up and over my hand it walked. I called for a number of people visiting here to come and watch the behavior of my "baby bug." From my kitchen came the sound of pans and dishes in preparation for dinner. Edmund could not even spare a glance; so busy was he in the garden, weeding, "heaving to," throwing the weeds he had pulled into a large pail, then into the wheelbarrow. Neither had the clerks in the store (Mrs. Henry Eimerman and Mrs. Herold Jagodzinski) time for bugs and beetles.

It seems that even a child could become conscious that all about him—the small creatures living their lives, the tiny plants opening their buds, and the smaller things our naked eyes can never see—all are but one step to greater things: stars, constellations, galaxies, the Milky Way. The infinitely large things above, the infinitely small below—and God over all.

I would rather write such passages as: "Night's candles are burnt out," or "Jocund day stands tiptoe on the misty mountaintops" (Shakespeare) than to write about all the bugs, beetles, ants, tiny spiders, and ugly worms that infest the flowers in my garden.

I was asked by a grower of dahlias whether it is a fact that there are males and females among the flowers. I replied: "Have you looked at the flowers to see?" "Where would you look?" He had not, nor did a way appeal to him of finding out. Not until he read the answer from a large encyclopedia was he satisfied.

Stinging nettle—what is it? Who has not been stung by it sometime or other? The sensation makes you uncomfortable for a time. This was my feeling after I had been warned by Edmund not to touch the poison ivy, of which there was an abundance in the rear of the Grotto. To prove that I was not afraid of it, I carefully touched one of the small leaves with my forefinger. First I experienced no sensation whatever, as I had expected, but on the following morning tiny ridges had formed on the finger; however, they did not travel any farther. Edmund was allergic to poison ivy. Frequently after gathering rocks along fences and among brush and brambles and weeds, he complained of having been stung by it. Such infection lasted for weeks; he used certain antidotes to counteract the poison. If poison ivy could speak, it might say: "Look for me first where the prettiest flowers blow, where the rose is, for whom the birds sing most."

One of the handsomest plants in my garden is the fern, the maiden-hair, and the common wood fern. Scouring through the wilderness along Mosquito Creek southwest of Rudolph, I discovered exceptionally pretty ferns, with long, lacy fronds. I transplanted some to my garden and watched them grow. Perhaps I shouldn't tell that I "swiped" them. What is the difference between hunting and fishing, and picking blackberries and raspberries, and digging ferns? Some think that hunting and fishing are worse. Hunting: "a dishonorable form of war on the weak and the defenseless" and "a labor of savages." And fishing entails deceptions and lies.

> "I never lost a little fish—yes, I am free to say,
> It always was the biggest fish I caught that got away."

But who would "make any bones" about picking berries, or digging a few "measly" ferns? Such trivialities have since time immemorial been considered free. Oftentimes you will receive them for the asking, and even without asking, Every window gardener who has a fern box knows that ferns, above all Boston ferns, are among the choicest ornaments for a home or window box.

> "Blow softly down the valley,
> 0 wind, and stir the fern that waves its green fronds."

Walking along my lagoon, one day in summer, over dry leaves spread out on the graveled ground, I heard a blue jay seemingly making fun of me. And nearby my eyes rested on a beautiful fern, found only in certain secluded areas. How often did Edmund and I discuss the problem of taking out the ornamental plant, which never seemed to grow larger? I wanted some plant that would screen a corner near the church, where I often recline saying my breviary, when the summer sun is "leaning to" and when on Sunday afternoons the people in the garden are multiplying like bees on buttered bread. It would give me a place of privacy I asked Edmund to transplant it, believing that eventually it would grow tall and protect me there. And it did. Instead of one or two shoots, dozens came up all over the place. As I hail the visitors passing by, they admire the wonderful begonias, planted along the walls of the house and church. Many stop and remark: "Oh, look-it! What gorgeous ferns, and how green and tall!"

One morning early in September, before the first frosts came, I ascended the steps leading to my study, where a sheet of pure sunlight was flashing in front of me. Later I strolled toward the pond, and looking down I saw on dry leaves before me a few berries, dark purplish-red—the fruit of wild grapes. Where did they come from? thought I. I never planted grapes in my garden; this is not a vineyard. And remembering the words of our divine Savior in Matthew 7, 15-21, "Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?" I knew there must be grape vines nearby, And, gazing around, I saw over my head a grapevine. As I touched it there fell down over my shoulders a half dozen or more bunches of small, shiny, purple grapes. High up among the branches of an elm that cast its shadows all around, clusters were hanging, masses of golden-red. I knew the shower of grapes would not last long if the boys in school heard about it. Taking a stepladder, Edmund picked many hanging among the lower branches. The tumult of noises, with fluttering of wings, a few days later told me that the blue jays and robins were having a gala time up there.

Before walking through, under St. Jude's Chapel, I must lower my head to avoid striking the long, curled seed-pods, swinging like pendulums in the breeze. Sometimes I fondle one of the large curlicues to see what is inside. I also watch it grow, and become darker as it ripens. In the nursery they call the tree on which the seed-pods are hanging "mountain ash." To me that seems a strange misnomer. One of the seeds was carried one hundred feet away, sprouted, and grew. But how different the offspring? It has long, spindly thorns, it is simply covered with

them. It could be named "thorn tree." What makes the difference in the two trees? The leaves on both are alike. But whence has it thorns? Such question might be asked, as was asked in the parable of the cockle and wheat, in the Bible. "An enemy has done this," is the answer. Countless sightseers look at the tree but stay away so as not to get "stung."

XI
What Can Man Do when God Lets Loose?

I am as much afraid of stumbling over a child's toys, or falling into a hole at night, or missing a step on the stairs leading to my bedroom, as I am of a tree falling on me. With axe and saw I have helped to fell countless trees in my days in the woods, often calling aloud, "Timber!" So far no tree has ever fallen on me. What awful spectacle it is to see large trees falling in a storm!

It was on August 15th, 1944, at three o'clock in the afternoon, when I beheld a great change in the aspect of the heavens. A hazy thickness had overspread the country. The sky to the southwest became as dark as night. Thunders began to rumble. Suddenly, along the horizon, I noticed an approaching tempest like a dense fog rolling in. It appeared as though the caldron of the storm was coming directly over us. I closed all the windows in school, dismissed Helen and Irene Kempen, who were the clerks in my gift shop. I warned the few visitors still remaining on the grounds, not to venture onto the highways.

The storm struck with a bang! The sudden impact was dragonish. The large door opening to the west of the school was sucked open. With boards standing nearby, I tried to close the opening, holding fast to the crossbars. For twenty minutes the storm raged on like a terrific hurricane, drifting and swirling the rain that fell.

I saw the trees moving in the strangest manner. Their frantic struggle against the wind was horrifying. The mingled mass of foliage and twigs and rain, carried on by the storm, completely obscured the view. Some of the larger trees snapped; others, momentarily resisting, fell uprooted to the earth. The wind, sweeping over Kempen's house, carried the roof a hundred feet away.

All the buildings in Grotto Park were broken down. For many minutes I watched a large elm fight the assault of the elements. It remained standing with a persistence that was remarkable, while its leaves and branches churned in the vengeful air. With the first heavy gusts the electric current went off. At night I brought forth an old lantern and a few candles. The telephone, too, refused to work; worst of all, no water came through the taps. The coal stove and the ice box were the only appliances that operated. Though the windows and doors were closed during the storm, still the rain came through, flooding carpets and floors, and running down stairs into the basement drains.

It was a wild afternoon. The few children visitors that had remained contributed their share to the confusion. The mother was like "Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted."

"There is no sense in mourning over what has been," "No use crying over spilled milk," I encouraged. "Ya, but," she continued, "where's the baby's slipper?" Later it was found far away in a ditch. The storm came and went as so many things in life come and go. It took some days before the leaves, twigs, branches, and uprooted trees and crumbled buildings had been taken away or repaired. After a few weeks, however, the place appeared as charming as before.

XII
Thank God for Your Animal Friends

Nuts! There were nuts in the park—somewhere—hickory nuts and acorns; the squirrels told me that. I see a squirrel sitting there on a branch, like a teapot on a stove, holding a nut or an acorn between his front paws, breaking the shell with his sharp teeth, and eating the kernel. I had two tame squirrels; one died. Today I saw a third one, about thirty feet away among the branches of a large oak. With his chatter he challenged me to come near. The little "sputnik!" He tried to drop a nut on my head—how dare he? Nearby was a hole in the tree. The rascal knew I couldn't catch him.

Along the path leading from the gift shop to the rear of the Grotto stands a Colorado blue spruce thirty feet high, graceful and with large, delicate, fanlike branches, forever waving in the breeze. I should offer the boys a quarter if they would climb it. But wait! I'd better not. If they knew there was a wild pigeon nest up there, they might go up without my asking them. I chanced to look up the other day and I saw a mother dove in the nest, sitting very quietly and looking down at me. My pigeon friends have been here as long as I remember. By now they seem to feel that they have a right of ownership to these premises. "Oo—oo—oo-oo-oo!" I hear one turtling now. The birds have a bluish-gray plumage; their flights are zigzaggy and fast.

In the summer of 1943, as I was strolling among these same trees and stumps, I suddenly saw the cutest animal, larger than a mink, or an opossum, but smaller than a woodchuck. It was not a raccoon; its fur was woolly and gray-like. Going under one stump, it came out from under another. It was "snooping-snooping" around, prowling and sniffing. Where did it come from? What was its name? Looking at illustrations, definitions, and descriptions of animals and mammals in the dictionary, I found that it was a young Wisconsin badger, an animal symbolic of our state.

> "On Wisconsin! On Wisconsin!
> Grand old Badger State!"

Should I trap, or shoot it, or let it wander on? After a few minutes it was gone—gone forever, exploring other regions, other areas, other fields.

A few hours later I saw a gorgeous blue jay fly to a small elm tree outside my study window, then it hopped to the ground looking for food. Going outdoors, I held up an apple I had picked from the tree in the park. The contrast between the blue of the bird's wing feathers and the red and yellow of the apple was striking. The ecstasy of the moment, as I sat there with the apple in my hand, its delightful fragrance filling my nostrils, filled me with gladness worth waiting for. For how long should I say? For how many years? The tree from which I snatched it had apples. I had planted the tree about twenty years ago. And I said to the bird: "Come on, you little blue fellow, here, partake of this apple! You will not feel so blue after you eat this!"

The following happened in Iowa in the long ago: I couldn't have been more than about eight years old, when one of a group of mischievous neighbor boys—rascals they were—hiding behind a large cottonwood tree, watched my brother, Peter, open a small mail package in which he thought he would find a box of fish hooks he had eagerly ordered. Instead, he found only a match box full of earthworms, which the boys had arranged as a surprise for him. They scampered away, but he caught and spanked them soundly.

Earthworms, or angleworms, are one of the great enemies of flowers. If the roots are destroyed, how can the plants survive? No one knows how elated I feel today, seeing the neighbor youngsters coming—Gene and David and Johnny, with Susan Ann and little Janie trailing behind, going to the rear of my gardens to dig, dig, dig for worms to go fishing. The whole back lot has been spaded and shoveled over by the youngsters. I just let them dig; I know the fewer worms there are, the less damage they will do. Oh, how those children like to see giant worms twisting and squirming in their hands! Others again, would say: "Ugh! Ugh! Baakks!" Our neighbor children don't mind the crawling, creeping things.

And now read what a certain farmer says about earthworms—how different his idea! "Look at earthworms," he says, "the only beings that have a refined taste for eating and drinking. What I mean is, these silent little creepers continue eating their way through the earth, enriching it as they go. The farmer doesn't see or hear them. (It seems

the robins do.) There the earthworms are all the time, fertilizing and loosening the soil, preparing it for growing things. Look this up in some agricultural bulletin sometime; you'll find this is true. I don't have to," says the farmer. "Everyone knows that if the earthworm wouldn't do his stuff, there'd be no crops."

There are three mounted eagles somewhere in my Grotto. The one was reared and caught near Babcock; the second came from the northern woods of Wisconsin; the third had flown across the
border from Michigan, and was killed by a hunter. All three were no longer young; they had lived on and on through October, November, December, and into January . . . into another year. How often have they looked from beneath high clouds upon farmers afield, cattle grazing, trains roaring through the valleys?

They have viewed the grandeur and the beauty of beautiful Wisconsin, the margin of lakes, meanderings of rivers. They lived through tempests and blizzards. Now children and grown-ups see their carcasses here, like living birds, adorning some flowery nook or some hidden enclosure in my Shrine. Once living eagles, kings of the sky, defying every other fowl, now dead skeletons, "poked fun at" perhaps by many passers-by.

Even a moose has invaded my shrine-sanctuary—or at least a part of one. The head I have, while the rest of his colossal structure is moldering in a grave somewhere.

When he lived in the swamps of Canada, where the head came from, the beast knew the lay of the land all around—every bush, every tree that grew along the border of a lake or the bank of a river. When a hunter came, he turned his head in that direction, raised his ears, gave a short warning roar, wavered an instant in his determination, whether to attack, or to flee. If the hunter rushed towards him with a shout, he ran off into the forest. The hunter fired. The effect of the shot was only to send the powerful animal off with greater speed.

Suddenly the furious beast charges. He approaches in a great rage. Shots are fired in rapid succession. After he runs a quarter of a mile or so, his body is found dead in a dry watercourse. Today his antlers are hanging on high on an upturned stump of a large pine tree—a spectacle for all to see in Grotto Park.

About ten years ago, as a farmer of this neighborhood, on his way afield, was approaching an old rampike, he watched a large chicken hawk using it as a place of observation. The farmer knew that the bird had taken chickens from his back yard. Andrew Nendza was the farmer's name. Seeing the bird, he said, "I believe a woodchuck trap or a beaver trap would hold this bird." Rummaging through a corner of his car shed, he discovered a catching apparatus for such animals—a real snapper, which he placed on the tree where the hawk usually roosted. He saw the bird far away wheeling her solitary flight high over the country sides. Returning after a few hours, he saw the beast hunched on one side of the rampike. As Andrew drew near, the plumage of the bird's neck raised and stiffened for an attack. With talon uplifted, she was ready to strike. No compromise, no bargaining, only explicit hatred was in1 the hawk's posture. She might have said: "If you come near I will hack you down."

What did the farmer expect? To submit to the hawk's challenge? This is no weak chicken, thought Andrew, like the one of mine sitting pretty on a dozen eggs in my coop. The bird had been queen of the countryside for years, contemptuous of all suitors but one—her only mate. "What chance have I in her affections?" he questioned. Looking sternly at the hawk, he said: "What are you doing here in my domain? Why are you so bent in coming near my chicken coop?"

Low rails of anger gurgled from the captive bird. The man now visioned the hawk, winging her slow gyrations through the sky as he one day returned from plowing on a day of loneliness. How
regal, how grand, how high above, how queenly and overbearing, the bird appeared! And he remembered. Earlier associations came crowding upon him. Once as a boy of thirteen he had taken eggs from a hawk's nest and broken them against a tree.

With a club the angered Andrew put an end to the bird's life. He brought it to me and I had it mounted by a young man, Huser, living near Altdorf. Soon it became one of the finest specimen of mounted birds in Grotto Gardens.

There was a chill in the air, coming down from the north. October had laid a shimmering haze over the land. There were clusters of green moss on rocks in the shade. The blue jays were chanting to other animals of the forest—to the squirrel, the chipmunk, the rabbit, the groundhog, the skunk. It was an occasional chant, never understood, always new, never old. It was the rhyme of the forest, beating on, throughout all times, proclaiming again and again to the violence of the crow, the fear of the mouse, the alertness of the screech-owl.

Seasons come and go; the moon circles the earth, and the sun carries his solar system in vast spirals through the universe. All things change. Many wanderers of field and forest are being summoned to prepare for hibernation. Along lakes and rivers snails and frogs are sinking into the ooze; turtles are scrambling to the ponds before the ice is coming.

Far out among the mountains of Wyoming—wonderful Wyoming—in Yellowstone Park was a herd of buffaloes. I had seen them there. One day one was marching majestically upon an open field, and proudly stalking towards a

caretaker of the vast enclosure. "You are going to leave this domain," cried the man disdainfully to the buffalo. "You are too troublesome; with your powerful horns you break every enclosure we have!"

About that time I inquired of the Yellowstone Park Commission about a buffalo. I had read of an announcement in some newspaper—it may have been the *Chicago Examiner*—about buffaloes the Yellowstone Park authorities wanted to dispose of free of charge. I thought that perhaps a live buffalo would be a great attraction to the sightseers who yearly come here. And I began to harangue about my great idea: "0 great buffalo, king of the western plains, leader of the prairie herds, 0 beast with the eyes of a conqueror, great bison with ferocious horns and curly brow, I have fallen in love with thy name—a name given to thee by the snake-skin Indians, in the days of Indian prowess and chivalry, in the days of Indians with plumed war bonnets, called Medicine Hats, of Indians from Tucson, Deadwood, and Lost Mule Flats—0, buffalo, I welcome thee to these glorious country sides, to the Land of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer!"

In answer, the park commissioner gave me the following required specifications for keeping a buffalo in temporary confinement. For food a certain kind of hay was prescribed (it may have been Bermuda hay), together with a special kind of ground meal. The enclosure for the large animal of the prairie was to be a massive five-foot woven wire fence, rust-resisting, with heavy steel posts, not less than three inches in diameter. And for shelter . . . ? It was to be a building like a hangar for an airplane. Reading the article of the contract, I exclaimed: "Oh, Boy! No buffalo for me! No buffalo for Rudolph! The Red-Nosed Reindeer will have no playmate now!"

Answering the commissioner, I thanked him for the time and effort of giving me the details of the proposed transfer of a buffalo from Yellowstone Park, Wyoming, to Rudolph, Wisconsin.

At about the same time when my ambition of making Grotto Park a place of universal interest was running at high pitch, I wrote to the Chamber of Commerce at Tucson, Arizona, about transportation charges, manner and cost of crating, expense of digging, acclimatization, planting instructions, watering, and what have you, of a huge tree cactus from Arizona to Wisconsin.

The return letter stated that it would be impracticable, perhaps even impossible, to transplant a tree cactus into the North Temperate Zone, where the summers are too cool, and the winters too severe. Besides, it said that the trunk and branches of the tree cactus are rather brittle and would easily break, and that it would hardly endure the hardships of transportation and planting.

At a later date many visitors and sightseers were asking me: "What kind of rock is this? Where did you find so many? What makes them so rough? Aren't they rich-looking and colorful? In answer to so many questions I replied: "Oh, this rock is most famous; it may have been brought here by the giants of the antediluvian era, or by the Darwinian Men, or the cave dwellers!"

One day I wrote to the University of Utah, at Salt Lake City, enclosing a small sample of the stone used for the construction of the Shrine. I imagined that in a state of mines and minerals like
Utah, some mineralogist, or geologist, or even a meteorologist, should be found who might easily solve my problem—telling me whether these rocks are igneous-volcanic, meteoric, brought in by glaciers, or whether they are mere common field stones.

Answering my letter it was stated that the sample of rock enclosed in my parcel was neither volcanic nor meteoric, but that many parts of it were petrifactive. It can be proven; the letter continued to state, that large chunks of wood from windfalls and other logs of this area at some time or other had turned into stone.

> The years roll on, the seasons come and go.
> Aft' springtime hastes its glorious buds to blow,
> The summer toils: its full-blown clusters dance,
> The colored autumn's fading form advance.

Around the shrine the visitor will find a few well-built birdhouses, of which Bernard Krommenaker, an old friend of mine, was both architect and builder. After the small cots had been made, he placed them among the trees around where martins may live and sing their beautiful anthems to God among the flowers and waving evergreens. Every year many birds come and go, but as yet I have not observed a martin among them. Chimney swallows come, wild pigeons and tame doves, too, coo around the place, red-breasts, thrush, thistle finch, chattering sparrows, pestiferous starlings, and robins and larks, of course—all have been here, but martins, it seems, have defied my invitation to come and make their permanent abode with me among the rocks, the flowers, and the trees. It was sad to see the sparrows and starlings move into the lovely abodes, built especially for martins. As result there is an everlasting combat—a fight for supremacy—among these small houses on high posts.

Should someone ask: "What is the climate of Wisconsin?" I would be puzzled, because there is such a variety of weather here. Of late the winters were not too severe. Years ago, twenties, thirties, and sometimes even forties below zero Fahrenheit had frequently been recorded. Then, in January and February, and often even in March, it was so cold, as the old-timers would say, as to "freeze the brass buttons off a stuffed donkey."

"Sometimes wind and sometimes rain,
Then the sun comes out again.
Sometimes rain and sometimes snow—
Goodness, how I'd like to know
Why the weather changes so!"
—Children's song.

Believe it or not. Some time ago an old man told me that, when he was a youngster, every winter they cut the ice on the Wisconsin River for the neighbors and the town creamery. It was during Christmas vacation, he said, and they had no overshoes or heavy stockings, but boots—thick, hard, leather boots. The weather was twenty below zero every day, and the wind piercing cold. "And I froze my big toes," he continued, "so hard that the feeling didn't come back for twenty years. Going to church on Sunday was a man who never wore a cap, but a 'stiff Katy,' a plug hat. (There were no heated automobiles then.) Later he lost his mind, and the people said that he froze his brains. Cold, indeed, it was in those days, very cold!"

"0 daughter, dear!" her mother said,
This blanket round you fold!
Tis such a dreadful night outside
You'll catch your death of cold!"

During the depression years (1931 and 1932) there weren't sufficient funds to go around, not even enough to buy coal for the furnace, and to employ a janitor. I fired the furnace myself. Some parishioners brought wood to heat our large school, even pine stumps. Boys, it was cold! Every fifteen or twenty minutes the stumps in the furnace had disappeared—gone up the flues, which naturally kept me busy firing. In rivers and lakes the water froze down to earth, killing all the fish.

In a remote part of the school basement Edmund has fitted up a combined workshop and paint room. Here he sharpens blades, saws and sickles, tinkers with household gadgets, repairs switches, and keeps tools and electric light bulbs. The chief cook of the hot lunch room, Mrs. Simon Coenen, didn't have any desire to intrude upon any man's privacy, but the breakdown of the deepfreeze unit made it imperative. One fine day, finding her way along a narrow corridor of whitewashed walls, she knocked at the door of the caretaker's workshop.

A voice clear and distinct said, "Come in!"

Mrs. Coenen pushed open the door and entered. How neat and shipshape the place appeared! A bright electric lamp hung on a cord from the ceiling. A large "iron horse," a coal-stoker furnace, kept down the dampness in the low apartment of the building, and at the same time provided heat for the classrooms, and nuns' living quarters upstairs. On one side of the room was Edmund's work bench, with files, chisels, hammers, screwdrivers scrambled into a large wooden box. Two good saws were standing beside. Among curly shavings a handsome jack plane was lying on its side beside a spanking new electric drill. The melancholy disposition of the place was reflected in Edmund's sober looks, and bent posture. As he rose from an old chair to greet the chief cook of the establishment, he reminded her of a busy man with always something to do.

"Excuse me, Edmund," began Mrs. Coenen, "I've got something very urgent. The meat and butter must be taken to Warren's Cold Storage at once." The janitor only smiled. "Besides, I'd like you to make a wooden container, oh, about five or six feet long by eight inches wide on top, and seven inches deep. We would like to plant a few flowers—have something green along the windows—makes the room more cheerful."

Edmund was neither overbearing nor sullen. "I'll start right away," he said. (It was after he had finished sweeping the school.)

"That's a fine boy you've got," continued the lady, as she saw Raymund sweeping near the furnace door.

The janitor's bleak eyes came up a degree in delight. It was probably the first time that anyone had ever mentioned his connection with the lad's existence. The taste of credit was enjoyable but brief.

"Yes," he said, "Raymund is a good boy; his mother and I have tried to do a good job on his training, in fact, on all our children."

"I've to fix a few animals," said Edmund, "before I can place them outside, otherwise the visitors may think that we are conducting a merciless menagerie here. This wildcat should have his legs mended, and that rabbit his ears," he said, pointing at a bobcat and a rabbit. Threading a small needle, he put the spool into his pocket.

"Father Wagner will be coming soon, and he wants these animals ready for their places in the Grotto," concluded Edmund.

In the same room, or workshop, some sort of mechanical and microscopical work was being carried on in the form of colorful symbols and art pictures, made with needle-point perforations through aluminum tin. Books had been studied and notes written about religious signs and symbols, and quotations of the Bible had been copied, referring to these. Such work may seem unbelievable, but there are many pictorial signs, throughout the tunneled cave—artistic work done by the hands of men.

Beneath the sacrosanct and solemn caves,
Where silence joins with spectral architraves;
With lifted head and ever eager heart,
Devotion seeks the pious sculptured art.

The work represented is not theatrical, not pretentious, but simple and solemn. By the obscurity of the places, where the various groups are hid, higher spiritual and liturgical ends have been satisfied, which the public cannot fully comprehend. Yet they may easily guess, since the nature of the representations and their positions proclaim them aloud.

In the darkness of night, many winters ago, while it was snowing heavily, I was startled by a loud sound, as if something heavy had fallen. "Right outside of my window it was!" I said as I pointed to a large tree growing on the grounds. Mrs. Kate Kleisart, my niece and housekeeper, was awakened with a start. Looking out she saw the shadowy form of an immense tree on the ground. It had barely missed one corner of the roof of the cabin store. There wasn't a breath of air stirring. Lying there, the cumbersome log appeared like

A large tomb
In the encircling gloom.

What made the tree fall? In trying to explain, I remembered an incident in 1922. My oldest sister Mary, her daughter Kathryn, and Fred Klein, my second cousin, were sleeping in tents on a mountainside in Yosemite Valley, California. The timer in my Buick engine had ceased to function, causing a lay-over of three days, till the new parts arrived by stagecoach from Sacramento, one hundred and fifty miles away. We were a bit nervous among the large redwoods, on account of wild animals prowling around. Besides, not far away were "moonshine" huts where the smell of imitation brandy could be easily observed. Nearby several men had been held at bay a few nights before by a mountain lion. In the darkness of night suddenly was heard a terrific crash. "What! A hungry lion's grievous roar?" It was merely the crashing of a mighty redwood. The smoke was dense. Nearby, forest fires were raging. When the flames reached a large tree, it began to burn, and it fell with a thundering sound.

The accommodations in our church, school, and residences had become inadequate. In the year 1949-50, a new rectory-church combination building was erected in a new location. For the building committee I chose five men from the parish membership: Lawrence Slattery, Henry Borshorst, Henry Eimerman, Marion Zak, and Elmer Brehm. They moved to erect a home near the church, and a parish hall to be used for dinners, and other social functions.

In the year 1957, on a certain day in September, I drove with my Lincoln car in front of school just as classes had been dismissed at 3:15 p.m. When Kay Brehm saw me, she said: "Look!—look! Father's got a new car, and—boy—it's a Lincoln!" In a moment a group of youngsters gathered around, and I could scarcely proceed without running over a few.

Seeing me, one of the tall boys remarked with surprise: "I wonder where priests get all that money to buy those big shiny cars?" Another boy turning to him answered with obvious contempt for the other's ignorance: "H—uh, don't you know? Every priest has got to have a car. It's one of those things which every priest has got to have—that's all!

"Father Wagner buys his from the money he saves from the Grotto, didn't you know that? Everybody around here knows that." "Father Wagner has to travel around a lot," broke in one of the eighth-grade girls. He has to visit the sick, and make other parish calls—take societies on outings, the graduates on trips, visit other priests, and take his mother for a ride."

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed another girl. "He has no mother, she is dead long ago; that was his sister that used to stay with him."

"Yeah, but then his housekeeper, like Mrs. Smith," continued the first girl. "He has to take her home from the store with packages for dinner, or something like that. Don't you remember Sister
Gustava told us all that? Where do priests get money? Where do you get your money? You get it from working, and all that—don't you know that? That's simple: any first grader knows that."

"What will become of Grotto Shrine, when you and Edmund are no more?" visitors sometimes ask.

Together we have toiled and suffered for over thirty years, building this monumental work, for all coming generations to see and enjoy. We have come to feel that by making a work so permanent for the good of mankind, it should be a worthwhile work, blessed by God and cherished by man.

I love to think that the Grotto is a place where anyone may find enjoyment in happier and nobler things, away from the common unrefined pastimes of everyday living. These happy surroundings should give to all who come to see a desire to love the out-of-doors in contradistinction to the narrow confines of the city.

XIII
My "Daily Dozen"

It is summer, July 16, 1957. The east is breaking with the vermilion, blue, and gold of the coming sun. "Listen to the birds!" I say. "I can distinguish the robin's warbling from the lark's singing its praises to God! What time is it? Five o'clock—time to get up. I haven't slept too soundly—ate a raw apple last night. Though they say:

"An apple a day keeps the doctor away,"

yet this apple almost made the doctor come. Oh, what a beautiful day! The thermometer reads sixty-seven degrees; great for working!"

Now I am dressing . . . don't need a sweater . . . too warm. Then I say my morning prayers:

"O Gott Du hast in dieser Nacht,
So vaeterlich fuer mich gewacht ..."

As a child I learned my prayers in German, and when I began school at the age of six. This was seventy years ago. The prayer above reads in English: "0 God, I praise and thank Thee for watching over me with fatherly care, during this night." A short prayer to my Guardian Angel follows: "Guardian Angel, take care of me during this day and keep me from sin!"

Every day I consecrate myself to the Blessed Virgin, by a beautiful prayer, which I have said for fifty years, since I joined the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin at Sacred Heart College, in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, under the prefecture of James Zachman, and the spiritual directorship of Father Schuette. The consecration follows in part: "Most Holy Mary, Virgin, Mother of God, I, most unworthy though I am, and longing to serve thee, do in the presence of my Guardian Angel, and the whole court of heaven, choose thee this day, to be my Queen, my Advocate, and my Mother . . ." A Prayer for a Priest is next in order.

"0 Jesus, Eternal Priest, keep this
Thy Holy one within the shelter of Thy
Sacred Heart, where none may touch him.

Keep unstained his anointed hands
Which daily touch Thy Sacred Body.
Keep unsullied thee lips, purpled
With Thy precious Blood.

Keep pure and unearthly a heart,
Sealed with the sublime mark
Of Thy glorious priesthood.

Let Thy holy love surround him,
And shield him from the world's contagion.
Bless his labors with abundant fruit;
And may they to whom he has ministered,

Be here below his joy and consolation,
And in heaven his beautiful and
Everlasting crown. Amen."

I cherish this prayer; it gives me strength in trials and temptations, and is a strong support for my priestly labors.

An offering to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus for the Confraternity of the Apostleship of Prayer is then said, after which follows an act of faith, hope, and charity, with a good intention: "May the Almighty God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, ordain and direct all my intentions, actions, and operations of this day for the praise, honor, and glory of His Divine Name. Amen." I then brush my teeth—the old "store teeth!" They have been "real grinders" all these years! Dr. Dahlke in Wisconsin Rapids manufactured them for me. I broke the lowers a few times, once even in New York City. In a rush I once lost both sets on the picnic grounds. Edmund found them after a gravel truck had almost crushed them. Before that happens to you, reader, this my advice:

"The tooth is out once more again,
The throbbing, jumping nerves are stilled;
Reader, would you avoid this pain?
Then have your crumbling teeth well filled."
—David Bates.

The bathing of my eyes in warm water was next in order, which is rather wholesome. Recently my eye doctor told me that my eyesight is as reliable as of a person of fifty years; I am now seventy-five. With these same eyes I've gazed upon cities, towns and countries, mountains, lakes and rivers. I've looked upon men, women and children, millions of them. I've viewed clouds and trees and countless animals, looked upon art paintings and statuary in many European cathedrals and art galleries. For weeks my eyes fell on water—only water, on the waves of the ocean, the billows of the sea. I have perused books, studied manuscripts, and pored over notes on music sheets. In my many travels I have witnessed fields of clover, corn, and cotton, and widespread desert lands. Skyscrapers passed before my eyes in cities, and in shop windows were displayed the wares for sale in many stores. Now here I am today with the same eyes God has given me, for the use of which I must soon give a strict account—on the Great Day of Reckoning.

Then (looking in a mirror) I exclaimed: "Boys, I'm as gray as a goose!" I shave with simple Gem blades; they hold the edge for days; then put on "Aqua Velva," an excellent lotion. After brushing my hair (I am still well covered), I am "spic and span" and all ready for another day's work.

After I clean and adjust my glasses, I go downstairs and say the "Little Hours" of my morning prayers. This is an obligatory prayer for every priest, and the official prayer of the Church. Then I recite the rosary. What day is it? ... Tuesday. The Sorrowful Mysteries should be said. Then I study for an hour or more. Having given the nuns Holy Communion at 6:40, I begin the Holy Sacrifice at 7:30 (when there is no school; at 8:00 o'clock on school days). Although the altar boys talk "pig Latin" during mass, yet before God I hope it will pass as a first-class prayer.

The mass having been concluded, I make a short thanksgiving, eat a hearty breakfast, then go outdoors where Edmund is bringing up another wheelbarrow of rocks or cement for the continuation of the Grotto work.

XIV
... About Those Who Come to See

"I followed a roadway leading on,
And came to a Grotto built of stone;
And entering a garden here,
God seemed, indeed, so very near."

While I am writing these notes a constant stream of visitors is coming in. The entrance to the Grotto-cave must always be open. Most of the sightseers are highly interested in the Grotto work, particularly those from the south, with their Kentucky twang, or Texas drawl: "How are you folks—all?"

Thumbing through my visitors' directory, I am surprised to find many names from faraway states. To those who have never seen this handiwork, allow me to explain that this is a place of exquisite floral grandeur and artistic beauty.

Among these rocks they will also find signs and symbols made of different kinds and species of shells. From Ye Olde Curiosity Shoppe in Seattle, Washington, I purchased pink murex, polished silver mouths, quaker olives, cardium roseas, St. John's drinking cups, polished pyramids, sun and moon shells, chambered nautilus, yellow helmets, and many other kinds. These had been assembled by natives on far-off islands. In a picture I saw shell hunters; in the waters in which they were wading was reflected a snow-capped mountain. Nearby, fish were jumping from the waves, and sea gulls flying over. Seeing this, I thought: "Collecting shells must be fascinating." How often in my journeys have I walked along the sea, as the waves were coming in and going out!

"Alone I walked the ocean strand;
A pearly shell was in my hand;
I stooped and wrote upon the sand
My name, the year, the day."—H. F. Gould.

One day I saw on these grounds men, women, and children scampering to a place of excitement; soon there was a crowd. It was to be a golden wedding anniversary picture. I noticed there were an unusual number of babies in arms. I counted sixteen; some were grandchildren, others even great-grandchildren. The photographer, thinking that perhaps he would never have such an occasion of getting sixteen babies on one exposure, lined them up carefully. Suddenly, it seemed, the whole grounds were filled with children. (It was during intermission of classes on a school day.) I explained that even more were in school. Taking a visitor inside, a nun teacher invited me to enter a classroom. The man, knowing something about music, asked whether any of the students (it was in the room of the seventh and eighth grades) were taking music lessons. In an instant many hands were waving. A certain tall girl, being asked, replied: "Why should we take lessons; we get all the music we like through television?" The teacher, shyly excusing the students broke in: "Music lessons are rather expensive now; here in the country not many can afford to take lessons, and many have no time; they have to work on farms."

In summer visitors come here at the rate of about fifty cars on a weekday, and three hundred on Sundays. Legal holidays, like the Fourth of July, Decoration, and Labor Day, also bring in large numbers. Many come from some most out-of-the-way sections of the United States, some even from Canada and other foreign countries. In the beginning the provisions for then care were quite inadequate, both as to restaurant and motel facilities, and wash-room arrangements. I first began by selling souvenirs and ice cream in one corner of my garage. But as quickly as possible I tried to make things convenient and suitable for everyone. It is my hope and wish that this place will soon become the nearest approach to a public park, and find its way to a favorable public recognition. I meet and mingle with great numbers, and find many interesting. Here they may wander; some perhaps imagine that they are visiting here some Italian Renaissance villa and park, set on the shores of an aquamarine lake, where palms lift their fronds and weeping willows wave.

Much of the daily life of the sightseer is enacted in our park. In warm weather the drinking fountain is seldom idle. One day I saw a young mother washing handkerchiefs there (at least I think they were), and beating them on

the rocks to dry. (A novel wash machine and dryer this was, indeed.) For a time I thought she was trying to give her baby a bath. Evidently too many bystanders prevented her from continuing with her lavatory activities. I saw another young woman washing her long, black hair near the fountain.

Around long tables on the picnic grounds one day sat twenty people—men and women of various ages, and children. Near the center of the group was a lad, playing a harmonica to lighten the work of the women preparing the lunch. It was raining and another lad was holding an umbrella over him, even though they were under a waterproof roof. Acting in such way seemed typical of those people, who had come from Kentucky. Their speech did discover them. They were enjoying Wisconsin cheese and crackers with small glasses of "Kentucky rye." They were not a noisy crowd, as groups of vacationers frequently are; they were quietly sociable, as some are found in public places.

Knowing the interest many people take in our public dinners every year, I arranged with a number of reliable cooks to have a prepared meal, typical of our annual picnic and of our country style of arranging it. The following lines, written by myself, tell the story of the dinner and the picnic every year on our grounds:

Raise up your hearts and hail abroad!
Behold a day that's made by God!
In August when the weather's grand
The Rudolph picnic day's at hand.
Then, like the kiss of maiden love,
The sky is peaceful as a dove.
Good Lord, it is a gracious day,
As joy and glee hold double sway.
Now hark!—Mine ear upcaught a sound:
As children frolic o'er the ground,
The spirit of the picnic day
'Long smiling faces works its way.
Now listen to the hum, I pray,
It whispers loud and long: "Re gay!"
Then onward sweeps the multitude,
The grown-ups, old, the young and rude,
From farm and city, office, home,
They come with names and needs unknown:
Mechanic, workman, artisan,
And farmer with round cheeks of tan.
Then fathers, mothers, daddies, "grand-,"
By scores of dozens—understand?
And sweethearts, sisters, husbands, wives,
Are followed close by younger lives.
From bus and car they run and dance;
In family groups they fast advance,
A-laughing after far and close
The marching band with "ahs!" and ohs!"
When mealtime comes they crunch and chew,
And laugh and chat with much ado.
They taste and eat the goodly meal,
To famished feasters—what appeal!
To cooks and waiters come and go,
With shining eyes and cheeks aglow;
While in long lines another crowd,
For a good meal is holding out.
It's chicken roast, or ham jambon,
"Hot dogs," hamburgers without bone,
With pie, and pudding, chocolate cake,
All filling full the picnic plate.
Then salads, too, with nuts and fruit,
Complaining hunger's taste to suit,

With drafts of cheer from coffee can,
And courtesy crowns th' American plan.
Then from the hall with common rule,
They come like children glad from school.
The joyful crowd from luncheon back,
For pastime revels round a rack,
Where many others play in groups;
Eat cookies, doughnuts, luscious fruits.
Some "scream for ice cream," popcorn, too,
Drink sodas many, orangeades few.
They hear the music's gladsome song,
A-floating o'er the merry throng. . . .

God bless those people, one and all;
They need His blessings there withal.
While nickels roll and quarters clink,
They have no rest, no time to think:
Play countless games of "lost and won,"
Until the picnic day is done.

The parking area and the surrounding grounds are filled with cars and people. At night the whole place is ablaze with lights. People are walking into the noise of electric music, and into the thick smell of hamburgers, beer, and pretzels.

"Hey, this way, if you please!" sounded the clear voice of a young man in shirtsleeves, covered with a "crazy" picnic chapeau, and leaning over from a large wheel, on which numbers are seen. It was Warren Handrick. As a few approached, he began to explain that, out of the kindness of his heart, he was conducting this game of more or less skill, so easy and simple that it amounted to some kind of public charity game, that is, a means for liquidating the parish debt, and of giving the parish finances a lift.

A crowd stood around and listened to his explanation. The wheel was not one of those games where you win a sack of flour, or a bag of popcorn that was evident. In fact, although the game started to roll with a quarter, the cost of the article seemed to rise with every turn of the wheel.

"All you have to do is buy one more ticket, and watch the wheel go round ..." And Warren explained at just what numbers the wheel might stop.

"You put down a quarter," continued Warren Handrick with a voice clear and distinct, "and you will be about to win one of the finest blankets in Wood County. All that is required is your skill, folks! Have you practiced? Come and try—try to win something!" A few gave him quarters.

"Good for you!" cried the operator of the skillful game. "Now you have an opportunity of winning something great, something useful, something perhaps even your children can wear—you haven't any? Whose sweet little tot is this?" he said to a lady coming up. "That's our neighbor's little Patsy," she said laughingly. "See this elegant pair of trousers!" Warren continued. "Aren't they a la-la . . . just for a school-boy!"

"Fine—keep it up!" he exclaimed, as more quarters came rolling in—"you'll win more and more each time—you can't miss—it's i-n-e-vi-table!" He pocketed a roll of dollar bills.

"Glorious Grandma! Here somebody wins! Good for you, Pete—that's the way, men, that's the way—that's the only way to win! Take another try—try your luck—try your skill!" And thus Warren carried on with a voice that rang from a loud-speaker over the crowds, and far, far down the tracks.

After a man came and asked him to explain the numbers on his ticket once more, he continued: "You missed it! Try again— you're so close now, you can't lose!" And . . .

"... he stilled the rising tumult, he bade the game go on."

After a few hours some had tried every device on the grounds. Taking a few beers at a bar, and a hot hamburger near a stand, and after telling a few fibs to the girls in the dice game, a number of young men from Milwaukee completed their picnicking with the men and the maids in the corn game.

As the evening wore on, there was a fairly large crowd on hand. The young men from Milwaukee managed to hold forth quite soberly. They left at an early hour and came home safely.

This picnic is a rather phenomenal institution. It, too, advertises the Grotto. It was established by Father Wagner forty years ago. It had been a great success ever since Mrs. Peter Hartjes and Mrs. Charles Brys were the first

helpers. Every year people from the cities and country sides avail themselves of the invitation: "Come to the Picnic in Rudolph, the Reindeer Town, and "the Town with the Grotto." While older folks sit around playing games, young boys and girls exercise on swings and merry-go-rounds, and on the ball diamond. The aged exchange reminiscences of earlier days. An orchestra, or band often plays in a specially built pavilion.

A few years ago an Irishman drove up with a Cadillac. He said: "I welcome the opportunity of getting out and stretching my legs here in Rudolph. It is like a seventh-inning stretch at a ball game. I enjoy strolling among the flowers and the rocks, and under shade trees, renewing acquaintances, and meeting the country folk, who surely have a splendid picnic. When I heard the sounds of cars driving away, some snorting angrily (it had rained the day before), I soon sped away myself along the highway, stretching fore and aft like a ribbon of lights toward Wisconsin Rapids. In my heart I had locked away the memory of a great gala day in Rudolph."

One Sunday God had made an exceptionally beautiful day in July. The sun was shining on the clean bricks of the new St. Philomena Church, with small windows, laminated rafters, and a well-lighted, simple sanctuary. It is a bright little church, of recent construction, and modernistic. Many visitors to the Shrine go through the wide open doors into the coolness inside. Not only women, but men, too, and mothers with children are entering. People of all classes and ranks, working-men and shop ladies, young and old, visit the church on Sunday afternoons. Many pray before the Blessed Sacrament and beside the statues. I noticed a few professional women, nurses, stenographers, among them. Some offer votive lights before they leave.

On the choir-loft youthful girls, with a few elderly men, were rehearsing for the following Sunday's High Mass. It was the most beautiful singing I ever heard. The organist, who is also the
director, is a young woman, sedate, of precision, and with elegant bearing. It is difficult for me to restrain myself during one of our wonderful High Masses when our elegant choir is holding forth.

"I'm sorry I disturb the choir, perhaps I'm doing wrong, But when my heart is filled with praise I can't keep back a song."

XV
Around the Grotto Shrine

To all to whom the blessings of this Shrine shall come—greetings, and a hearty welcome!

The sacred precincts of this Shrine are definitely more than a place of mere interest and recreation. Realizing the values of the Everlasting, portrayed in Sacred Art throughout this floral Shrine, be this ever a place of pious reflection and of devout prayer, and a symbol of those high ideals which forever endure.

The tribute that nature brings to these surroundings, and to this art-work, wrought in majestic and beautiful forms—all speak in silent eloquence of the hearts that raised these altars with Christian endeavor and sacrificing endurance, to God above.

Witness the multitudes coming here during the invigorating and beautiful summer months to see this loveliness of art and nature. Let them also turn in gratitude to the God of Glory, and pray to Him beside this Shrine, and before His tabernacle in Church.

. . . And now, allow me to introduce my Grotto guide, who will take over. "Come on, folks!" he says, "I will show you the beauties and marvels of this famous Shrine."

A man-made wonder in a rural scene,
Where flowers hang like jewels on a queen.

"In front of you," he continues, "is a symbolism of the Ten Commandments, the Seven Sacraments, and of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, made of colored mosaics, with shells and flowers around.

"Beyond, to the left, on a small elevation, you will see a small stone church, like a castle on the Rhine. This 'smallest church in the world' has room for only one person. It was designed and made by the builder of the Shrine himself. Place a nickel in a slot, folks, and you'll see what's inside: a miniature altar, chalice, paten, missal-stand, flower vases, crucifix, ciborium—all for just one nickel."

"Proceed, people," continues the guide, "and see to the right a sunken garden—pretty, isn't it?—many-colored phlox, and ferns, too, are there hanging in the shade. Flowers to the right, flowers
to the left, marigolds, petunias, verbenas.

"Now here, folks, in front of us we have a small log building modeled after the famous 'Ruetli' in Switzerland," says the guide, pointing to the right (here another nickel is needed). "Look inside and see a small Indian village, a dairy barn, a railroad train and highways, a small church, a school, and a lake, Camp McCoy." "Wisconsin in miniature," reads the sign.

Wisconsin I love thee! 0 great Land of Promise!
I love thy great people, e'er gallant, sincere;
By brave pioneering they rose into power;
By e'er going onward their famed deeds appear.

"See a small truck carrying milk cans to a near-by cheese factory!" exclaims the guide. "Move back, folks, to let this little girl peep in! You want your nickel's worth, too, don't you? Isn't she cute! Where are you from?"

"Minneapolis!" she replies.

"From near Minnehaha Falls?" questions the guide. "There's where the Indians learned to laugh—ha-ha—Minne-ha-ha!—ain't so?"

"There's where Minnie laughs," says the girl, laughing loud.

The guide continues: "The small log huts, the barn, highway, telephone and telegraph—all were made by the Boy Scouts of Milwaukee. They were on exhibition at the State Fair. Afterward they were given to my Shrine. The small log building containing all these was built by Anton Kempen. It was a playhouse for his girls, when they were small.

"Now, folks, we are coming to St. Philomena's Shrine!" exclaimed the director. "This way, please! Stand around! Let the children stand to the front that they may see! Here, you little tot, sit on this rock!" he said to a woolly-headed two-year-old boy from Chicago.

"Dear people, St. Philomena is the patroness of this parish," he continued, "on account of which it is called St. Philomena Congregation. Isn't that a beautiful statue up there?" and he pointed to the saint's statue, of marble from Carrara, Italy. "It was decorated by Edmund Rybicki, Father Wagner's helper. Isn't it lovely, displaying so many bright paints and pigments? How would you like to hear the story of St. Philomena?" One little girl answered, "Oh, goody, goody!" "Then sit around on these rocks and listen."

"Once upon a time (many stories begin that way, don't they?) . . . Once upon a time there was a great saint, whose name was Philomena, which means 'beloved with God,' or 'Daughter of Light.' She made her First Holy Communion at the age of five. When eleven years old she consecrated herself, by a vow of perpetual chastity, to God. She was a princess. Her father was a ruler over a Grecian state. When thirteen years old, she, her father, a king, and her mother, a queen, made a visit to Diocletian, a wicked emperor of Rome. No sooner had the emperor beheld the lovely princess than he desired to make her his wife, an empress. At the same time he promised her father, the king, anything he desired, if he could win the hand of his daughter in marriage. Only too glad of the opportunity, the king acceded to the emperor's desire, and of thus maintaining peace in the land. The girl's parents tried to persuade their daughter to accept the offer. Philomena refused on account of the vow she had taken. The emperor tried by all means in his power to bend the girl's will to his, but in vain. Seeing that all promises, endearments, arguments, and entreaties were useless, he threatened her with the extremities of persecution. Philomena replied that she did not fear him. Overcome with anger, the emperor had the young maiden chained and thrown into prison under the imperial palace. There he visited her daily, trying to gain her consent, and not permitting her anything to eat except bread and water, for forty days.

"On the thirty-seventh day Our Lady appeared to her, and told her of the martyrdom she would have to undergo for the sake of Jesus. Besides, she promised her to send St. Gabriel to assist and strengthen her, and that finally she would be victorious. On the fortieth day the girl was cruelly scourged, and thrown back into prison.

"The emperor tried once more to gain Philomena's consent, but again in vain. Then he ordered her to be taken to the River Tiber, and with an iron anchor tied to her neck, she was cast headlong into the water. (That is what the anchor at her side signifies.) Two angels appeared, severed the cord from her neck, and carried her safely to the river bank.

"The tyrant then ordered the youthful saint to be dragged through the streets of Rome, and shot with arrows. (See arrows in her arms.) But the arrows refused to leave the archers' bows. Crying out that she was a witch, the wicked emperor ordered the arrows to be heated red hot. Again God worked a miracle for his saint, for the arrows this time reversed their flight, and returned upon the men who shot them, killing a number of them. Seeing this, and that the people began to murmur, Diocletian had Philomena quickly beheaded. She went to heaven to receive her glorious crown.

"This, dear folks, is the story of St. Philomena. And now she is 'powerful with God' in heaven.

"To the left behold a sixty-foot flagpole, with Old Glory waving in the breeze. The base was made by Father Wagner. For ornamentation it is inset with shells and colored glass. Now let us pause and raise our voices in song to the Star-Spangled Banner:

> "A song to Our Banner, the watchword recall,
> Which gave the Republic her station;
> United we stand, divided we fall!
> It made and preserves us a nation!
> The union of lakes the union of lands,
> The union of states none can sever,
> The union of hearts, the union of hands—
> And the Flag of Our Country forever!"

"To the right is a rustic gift shop, a souvenir and religious articles stand, a country store.

> A woodland cabin cozy, neat, and plain,
> From heat a shade, a shelter in the rain.

"Stones have been placed on the roof as imitation of the roofs on houses and huts in Austria and Switzerland. Onward! In front of you see gorgeous dahlias, hydrangeas, roses!

> "I will make thee beds of roses,

And thousand fragrant posies."

It was a beautiful day in July; many sightseers were there to witness the glory of the flowers.

See Youth and Age these cultured courts o'erspread,
In crowded ranks 'long many a flower-bed!

"To the right is a small aquarium with goldfish."

"Fishie, fishie in the brook,
Come and take me by the hook!"

This, however, is no place to go fishing. Poor fish! Who wants to be a "poor fish"? The fish have no lungs; instead they have gills.

Near the log cabin is a cozy seat, made from a large block of white oak. Peter Hartjes manufactured it with implements; his father used to make wooden shoes.

"Oh, by yonder mossy seat,
In my hour of sweet retreat,
May I thus my soul employ
With sense of gratitude and joy!
Then while the Gardens take my sight
With all the colors of delight,
I lift my voice and tune my string,
To thee, great Source of Nature, sing."

"Come along, folks! Come along!" the guide exhorts as a few are lagging behind. Passing through, under wide spreading branches of a European larch tree, a boy discovers a robin's nest with four bright, shiny eggs.

"Over to the far right behold an old relic of a once mighty pine, hollowed by the ravages of time and weather. Found on the banks of Mill Creek in the town of Sherry, its strength seemed unyielding, but, annoyed by the elements, it finally collapsed—now a mere forest souvenir.

"Here is something interesting to you girls," the guide ejaculates. "See the remains of a giant spider, the relic of one of Wisconsin's uprooted trees!"

As the crowd continues, the leader once more exclaims: "Behold how wonderful—a rotunda, a circular rock formation, constructed for vines and other creeping plants!"

Can passing Praise e'er eulogize enough
The workmanship and elegance whereof
The grandeur of this ornate Shrine was made,
With Nature's pageantry so well arrayed?

"This way, people, see a small pond!" the guide directs.

A rockbound pond where goldfish fans and frets
Among its broad-leaved water-lily pets.
Oh, the glories of Grotto-Shrine!
Sunshine here, and shadows there;
Flower fragrance fills the air!

At the farther end of the pond a triple fountain is sprinkling. People often throw pennies in and make a wish.

"Now listen to the heat-bird!" announced the leader of the conducted tour, "which, however, is not a bird but a bug. The song of the first bug was answered by another: "katy-did—katydidn't! Katy-didn't—katy-did!" While the heat-bird was singing its song, the sightseers were amazed at the parroting of the katy didn't.

They were then led through—under a bridge to the Hall of Fame . . . with gallantry and honor in its name. Then they proceeded to a memorial in honor of the soldiers of the Second World War.

Now hoist the flag to full-blown pride,
Let rousing hurrahs rise!
Our valiant men came home again
In nineteen-forty-five!

"And in honor of those who fell Father Wagner wrote:

"And now they rest beneath the sod, as sunsets come and go;
Where mockingbirds and robins sing, and drowsy cattle low;
Where hawthorn bush and eglantine and amaranthine grow.

"Stand around, folks, and see here a beautiful mosaic, showing the United States flag, beside which is written: 'For God and Country!' " announced the leader of the group. "And see on top a Statue of Victory!"

They fought for right and liberty, long burnished rows of steel;
Midst phalanx air armadas and embattled cannon-peal;
Among dark ocean caverns, o'er booming gunboats' keel.

A small altar in honor of Our Lady of Fatima, made from tiny pieces of wood, stands to the left—to the right you will notice a facsimile of Our Lord resting in the arms of His Blessed Mother, after He had been taken down from the cross—the Pietas.

"Listen, folks—listen to Father Wagner singing," suddenly exclaims the guide:

In winter, summer, autumn, spring,
Among the rocks I pray and sing;
Plant the flowers there and here,
'Tis the work I love so dear.
Every day I work and pray,
Thus I while the time away.

Arriving at a shady place, the guide remarked: "I didn't realize in the beginning of this tour that I had such an amusing crowd with me—where are you folks from?" A man answered: "We are from all over."

Soon they came to a nook, where
Birds were singing all the day,
Clouds a passing fast away.

The birds were of every kind and species. They were unafraid because no one was unfriendly to them. The thrush, the robin, mourning-dove were there, the wren, the finch, and the chickadee, and even the noisy woodpecker was ever chopping, flying, hopping somewhere.

When wooded glens begin their springtime song,
To Grotto Shrine sublimer strains belong.

"If you look closely somewhere you may see a squirrel, or chipmunk in some quiet nook, or on some swaying branch," remarked the guide.

"Give me again my hollow tree,
A savory nut, and liberty."

Flowers—flowers were blooming everywhere. It was in the gorgeous month of July.

'Deed many gems with dewdrops on parade
Adorn this Shrine when Dawn stands by the gate;

When buds unfold and spread like orchids fair,
And like cosmetic vials scent the air.

Coming to a ponderous pine stump the guide announced: "Here, friends you may see an enormous chunk of wood, a left-over from the days of Paul Bunyon." To the right a beam of sunlight was falling . . . . "How sweet the sunlight sleeps upon this bank!"

A few paces onward the group of visitors found themselves among the prongs of another Giant of the Forest, lying full length alongside a sloping glen. Around the stump of the tree was an immense chain, seemingly holding it together. It was an old railroad relic, which had been used in olden days to pull a railroad car back onto the tracks from which it had run off.

"In front of you, folks, now is Grotto Park," continued the guide. "It encloses about three acres of recreation grounds. It is lightly timbered by elms, oaks, ash, and fir trees. It was planned and begun by Father Wagner many years before this rugged mass of rocks was built. Many areas are built over with extensive roofs, supported by heavy rustic timbers, to accommodate the public in hours of play, rest, and rain. Some scenes in the park are often interesting, above all on days of outings and picnics. Shady trees, too, are there, keeping the grounds cool in summer. An abundance of ferns along the edge of the cave, and outer walls, have reached an interesting height.

Now here is an apple tree heavily laden with green apples. "What makes the tree bend over so far?" asked an interested boy sightseer. "You would bend over, too, boy," said the guide, "if you were as full of green apples as that tree."

The park is partly surrounded by an unique wooden fence, made of poles and posts, rambling hither and yon.

"Move onward, folks!" commands the guide. "Tramp—tramp—tramp! Up to Lovers' Rest, where you may have your pictures 'took' and there meet your friends in Lofty Seat." Then down the stairs once more, made of one huge log.

To the left before you now is an ancient well, a wishing well, with an old oaken bucket dangling in it. "The old oaken bucket, the iron-bound bucket, the moss-covered bucket that hung in the well."

The olden well where love and jests go round,
A thatched-roof treasure in a hidden ground.

Southward to the right, friends, you will see a monument, "In Memoriam," erected to the honor of our dead heroes of World War I. Then under through an immense tree trunk to Cave Entrance.

Beneath these sacrosanct and solemn caves,
Where silence joins with spectral architraves,
With lifted head and ever eager heart,
Devotion seeks the pious, sculptured art.

"Pay as you enter, please! Adults fifty cents. Children according to age and poverty."

"Any Big Man born in this town?" asked a stranger at the entrance to the cave. "No!" answered Edmund, the caretaker "—just little babies—babies are free to enter here."

The art which the sightseer witnesses along the winding passage is priceless and beautiful, made in Italy from Carrara marble, according to specifications. The illuminations inside come from countless electric bulbs.

"Watch your heads, folks! Bend down as you enter this archway!" commands the leader of the group.

"To the right see a lighted cross, the symbol of Our Faith . . . . 'By this sign you shall conquer.'

"At the left is a yellow-colored monogram—I-H-S (Jesus Hominum Salvator—Jesus Savior of Mankind).

"Watch your step, now! Farther on and up a grade! Tread slowly and cautiously! Then down and over—follow a cool winding corridor!

"Behold an emblem of a Magnificent Crown! and read: 'Praise to Christ the King!' Shakespeare says in Henry VI: 'How sweet it is to wear a crown!' The only crown Christ ever wore was a crown of thorns. —'My yoke is sweet and My burden is light.'

"Follow the railing down and over, to the left. Wonderful, isn't it?" beams the guide.

"If there is a paradise on earth, it is this. Let us proceed along the footlights.

"In a side cavern to the left—now see! 'Praise the Lord—praise the Lord with sound of trumpet: praise Him with psaltery and harp,' Psalm 150, 3. ... Isn't it colorful, and glorious? . . . Heavenly, indeed!

"Bow down, now, lest you get bumped by overhanging rocks!

. . . To the left symbols of prayer-book and rosary.

"Before you now the way of heaven is represented in miniature, by scores of ruby lights. It is the winding and rugged pathway of Faith, the Commandments, the Sacraments, prayer, virtues, good works—in colorful illuminations, made of aluminum tin. It gives evidence how difficult the way to heaven really is, meandering among trials and tribulations and sacrifices.

"See a small church up there!" exclaims a child . . . . It signifies that the highway to heaven leads through the Catholic Church .... In heaven we shall see God in the fullness of His knowledge, wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, justice, mercy.

"In front of you, people, is a symbol of St. Theresa (the Little Flower) with a shower of roses, and the Holy Face. . . . 'And the flower thereof is fallen away, but the Word of the Lord endureth
forever!' I Peter 24, 25."

The underground passage is a beautiful, happy, holy way, put forth with statue groups and scriptural quotations.

"This way pilgrim, sightseer, stranger, tourist! Behold, and read: Faith, Hope, Charity! 'These things are written that you may believe,' John 20, 31.

"Guardian Angel Group is next. Here an angel is guarding children from a deep precipice. 'He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways,' Psalm 90, 11.

"Now around a sharp curve to the right, and up—" "What beautiful design!" exclaimed a lady.

"This is evidently for the children!"

"Jesus teach me to pray, to study, to work, to play," reads the inscription on the symbol.

"To the left see a statue of the youthful Christ Himself." "If you love me come follow me!" reads an inscription on a tablet Christ is holding. Colorful lights are all around.

"Onward once more; beware; the way is perilous!" warns the leader.

"Now behold Christian Virtues: Fortitude, Chastity, Temperance, exemplified in elegant statuary!"

Oh, Christian Virtue heaven-born!
Noble manhood dost adorn.
Fountain of Gladness! Boon Divine!
Through heaven's courts thy glories shine!

"Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the way of sinners," says Psalm 11.

The virtuous man is e'er pious and noble;
His good name endures after monuments fall;
Though thrones may be shaken, and empires crumble,
The Rampart of Right will last longer than all.

Going down a steep, stony stair you will see Moses receiving the Ten Commandments from the hand of God. Behold, there stands the holy man with flowing beard and dauntless features, receiving from God, 'mid thunder and lightning, two slates with the Decalogue.

"All these that I commanded, take great care to observe." V Moses 8, 1.

"And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt tell them to thy children; and thou shalt meditate upon them, sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping, and rising." Ps. 6, 6, 7.

"Arriving at the bottom of the steps, see before you, folks, an emblem of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, made from aluminum tin," informs the guide.

"From the rising of the sun, even to the going down, in every place there is a sacrifice, and there is offered to my Name a clean oblation." Mai. 1, 11.

"To the left see a symbol of St. Christopher, carrying the Child Jesus, the Patron of Travelers."

"You shall travel in the way the Lord your God commanded, that you may live, and it may be well with you, and your days may be long in the land of your possessions." V Moses 5, 33.

"Lift your eyes and see an emblem of the Holy Spirit, coming from heaven, bringing grace to all who are worthy."

"You shall receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you." Acts 1, 8.

Onward, once more with easy steps, and . . . oh, glorious sight! Behold, the symbols of the Seven Sacraments, with a statue signifying Grace, with two bowing cherubs.

"We exhort you that you receive not the Grace of God in vain." II Cor. 6, 1.

As the group of tourists was about to leave this exquisite scene, Father Wagner came in through a side door. Seeing me, the guide exclaimed: "Here comes Father now!"

"Father, would you mind explaining these symbols of the Sacraments to us? Being a convert, I am not too well informed in religion," said one of the lady tourists.

"The first," I began, "signifies Baptism: the Gateway to Heaven. The second—Confirmation: Strength of the Holy Spirit. The next is a symbol of the Holy Eucharist: the Sacrament of Love. Pointing to the symbol of Penance, I continued, "This one means Penance: the Divine Act of forgiveness." "What is the difference between the Sacrament of Penance and Confession?" a lady broke in. "Both mean the same," I replied. "A few years ago a woman came to me to confession," I continued. "After she had confessed she said, 'Father, I would like to get married.' I said: "That's okay!" She went on: "My boy friend is very firm in his convictions." "Well and good!" I replied. "But, now Father, see I have a set of false teeth," she stammered. "If he finds that out before we get married, he may say, 'You are too old, I can't marry you,' and if I tell him after marriage, he may leave me. He might say, 'You deceived me, old lady!' And the marriage may be declared null and void. Now what shall I do, Father, what advice can you give me?" I replied: "Dear lady, don't worry about such a small thing. I tell you what you do. You just get married, but after you are married, keep your mouth shut, and he'll never find it out." "Thank you!" she said as she left the confessional.

"Then there is Extreme Unction," I continued: "the Hope of the Sick. And Holy Orders: the Divine Call to Sacred Duties, and lastly, Matrimony: the Holy Bond of Wedded Fidelity." "Thank you, Father," said the lady, and the procession through the underground continued.

Beneath a symbol of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, farther on, is printed: "Behold the Heart which loved men so much!"

And under a needle-point picture of the Blessed Sacrament we read: "Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar."

A-M-D-G and J-M-J are letters stamped on another aluminum metal sheet, which signify: "Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam" (for the greater glory of God) and "in Honor of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph."

As the intent group continued, they saw engraved over and against one side of the passage-way a triple crown with the Keys of Heaven, signifying the Power of the Holy Father to bind and to loose the sins of men. "Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church."

The group of sightseers then entered a most sacred place—the Garden of Sorrows—where

> An Angel brought to Christ afraid
> His sweetest Consolation Aid;
> As He for sin in sorrow sweat
> Among the Trees of Olivet.
> When Christ was weak in agony
> He prayed and bled for you and me.

"Here meditate, people, upon what Christ has suffered, in the Garden of Olives, while the Apostles were asleep! And He prayed: "Let this Chalice (this suffering) pass from Me—not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And turning to the Apostles he said: "Could you not watch one hour with Me? *Watch* and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Matt. 26, 40.

"Oh, look—there!" cried a youngster. "See an angel!" An angel from heaven brings a chalice of sweet nectar—heavenly balm, that Christ may endure His sufferings.

A sparkling spring is trickling down to the very feet of the suffering Savior.

> Hosannas to Him rise with every bird-call.
> The rocks He moss-covers where bright waters fall.

"In loving memory of those who passed beyond life's pale, a symbol has been erected to the left—read, people, and understand!" pleads the conductor of the pilgrimage.

"The souls of the just are in the hands of the Lord"—Matt. 6, 26, 28.

"To the right witness the milestones along life's journey: Innocence, joy, sorrow, health, fame, success, failure, sickness, death.

"Now we come to something beautiful, inspiring—children watching the birds fly, and how the lilies grow," continues the the group leader. 'Behold the birds of the air! Consider the lilies of the field! . . . Are not you of much more value than they?' Matt. 6, 26, 28.

"Down below to the right, see a place that appears like Paradise Lost . . . How awful! . . . What does the vista into the cavern signify?—Wreck—ruin-—waste—want. "For the pestilence that walketh in darkness; for the destruction that wasteth away at noonday." Ps. 91, 6.

"See Christmas before you now Glory to God in the highest!" exclaims the leader of the long procession. This scene of the Stable, the Crib, the Shepherds, the Kings, goes back to the beginning of Christianity." "That's nothing!" shouted an Irishman from the crowd, my TV set goes back to Sears Roebuck on the fifteenth of this month! I couldn't scratch enough together to pay for it."

"Undoubtedly, dear folks, you all know of St. Ann the Mother of the Blessed Virgin?" continued the guide. "Here you see a plaque in her honor, and the youthful Mary at her side! Do
you know what the Mother seems to be saying? 'Come, children, harken to me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord.'

"Onward again to the right.... Watch your step! Tread slowly and cautiously! The way is narrowing—be not afraid—through a rocky opening and before you see the Mysteries of the Rosary—the Joyful—the Sorrowful—the Glorious—all artistically made with an electric needle, an electric drill, an electric motor, and a steady hand."

"I will, therefore, that men pray in every place." I Tim. 2, 8.

"Sweet blessed beads, I would not part
With one of you for richest gem
That gleams in earthly diadem.
Ah, time has fled, and friends have failed,
And joys have died; but in my needs,
You are my friends, my blessed beads!"

"To the right now, and down—down! Again watch your steps! Down, some more, slowly, cautiously! And what do you see? Oh, how beautiful! St. Dominic receiving the rosary from the Blessed Virgin! 'Be prudent and watch in prayer.'

"A story goes," said the guide, "that in the city where St. Dominic lived, the people were wicked, so wicked that the saint threatened to leave. The Blessed Virgin appeared to him, and begged him to stay. She taught him to say the rosary with his people, at the same time offering him a set of beads. He prayed the rosary with the inhabitants and the city was converted."

Outside, the light of day once more, the full view of a magnificent panorama of gorgeous flowers, and on all sides green grass andlofty evergreens. It is a colorful garden so pleasing to the eye.

"And now see before you a large Statue of Christ, the Eternal Priest," said the leader.

And yon, on high, the Lord in priestly dress,
To welcome, love, and teach, to aid and bless.
The Virgin Lady blest on lower ground,
With Bernadette seraphic and profound.

"Oh, this is peace; I have no need
Of friend to talk, of book to read;
A dear Companion here abides."

To the right and to the left are children groups—older and younger children. A few youths also are there, a boy, and a girl. Both are kneeling in adoration. The boy is dressed in green, the girl in pink; beautiful garments they are wearing.

"See children holding flower-buds," the director tells his audience.

"What simple, humble, happy tots!
With garments waving in the breeze,
From shoulders down to sun-burned knees!"

To the left and to the right, farther back, and down below, are statues of old folks and of the lame and the sick—invalids. All are coming to Christ for help.

"Come unto Me, all ye who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will refresh you."

To the rear right see a bell in a cavern, a ding-dong church bell, with the names of the donors engraved upon it.

"Hear the mellow wedding bells—golden bells!
What a world of happiness their harmony foretells!
What a gush of euphony voluminously wells!
How it wells! How it dwells! on the future, how it tells. ..."
—Edgar Allan Poe.

On and over, and down again! To the left witness another grand display of flowers, mostly begonias. Every flower enjoys the air it breathes, and the glorious, golden sun.

"Also you, friends," says the conductor of the pilgrimage, "drink in the fragrant air, which is poured around you, and delight your senses with the grace and splendor and the varied sweetness on all sides.

"Down, again, folks, and be careful! Here witness a huge picture, 'Garden Delights.' There see a number of youths of all tribes and tongues and peoples, coming to see the flowers. An angel standing near is directing the attention of the adolescents to God, the Creator of all. On the large plaque can be read: 'Behold the beautiful flowers, and so many wide-awake children lifting up their bright faces to God!'

"Up again!" commands the guide. And grasping a lady in front of him, he lifts her bodily up the stairs, as he says chuckling: 'Up, she goes—up—up—woopsie!" Laughing continues all around.

After crossing a long tree-bridge the procession arrives at "Inspiration Point," the highest place on the Grotto tour, where a grand array of flower terraces and countless trees meets the sightseers' gaze.

With pride I duly contemplate each charm
Attractive more than forest, field, or farm.

"Now let us pass to the right and down past many small symbols in marble reliefs, representing the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mother: The Prophecy of Simeon, the Flight into Egypt, the Loss of Jesus in the Temple, Mary meets Jesus on the Way to Calvary, Jesus dies upon the Cross, Mary receives the dead Body of Jesus in her arms, Jesus is placed in the tomb."

"Up once more and over toward the sundial," directs the guide, "which is a man-made device, an instrument for indicating the time of day by the position of the sun's shadow upon a clock shaped surface."

"In my days of travel and study and leisure," said Father Wagner, "I have heard the strains of the *Cavalleria Rusticana* in the Scala Theater at Milan, Italy, where also Richard Wagner's *Niebelungen Lied* greeted my ears. 'The Hunter's Call with Alpenhorn' was of great interest to me in Switzerland. The chimes of the carillon in the cathedral tower in Gallup, New Mexico, and the bells in the cathedral at Galveston, Texas, the sound of bells at St. Ann de Beaupre's in Canada, and at Our Lady of Lourdes in France; the pipe-organ tones in Notre Dame in Paris, and at St. Steven's in Vienna—all these still ring in my ears. I've heard the bells of St. Peter's and of the four hundred other churches in Rome ring out the Angelus at the hour of six on Holy Saturday evening.

The baritone player in Sousa's Band, and the voices of the choral singers in the "Passion Play"; the youthful voices of the Sistine Choir in Rome, and the singing of the boys in Boystown, Nebraska amused me.

What have I now left of all these musical sounds, of all these tones and tunes, but memories? I would love to hear them once again, also the sounds of bells and the clicking of clocks in all the ancient churches I have visited.

Around my shrine I hear the songs of birds, but our old church bell has been silenced. It seems the ringing of bells has become more or less obsolete. Our bell is hidden away— it is a silent member of the Grotto. The sundial, too, is a silent timepiece. It doesn't tick or took, nor strike the hours. A gnomon shows the time of day, made by the shadow of the sun.

Time goes on; the earth revolves around the sun, and the "sun marks the fleeting hours" upon the earth.

"Down—down again to where we began," urges the guide. To the entrance of the cave once more, then over a huge bridge, made from a thirty-ton elm tree. Once it stood in a deep, gloomy woods, beyond the Big Eau Pleine River, thirty miles north of here. It was brought here by Wood County's fifty-ton trailer. Edmund moved it from the place of unloading, with powerful jacks, to where it now lies.

Arriving at St. Jude's log chapel, I listened to the comments of the people: "Isn't it cute!" "Oh, isn't it a darling!" "See the painted windows!" "Isn't the Statue of St. Jude beautiful?—and how simple!" . . .

"The Chapel, with the Statue of St. Jude, was donated by Louis A. Wagner, a brother of the builder of this Grotto, living near Corsica, South Dakota. St. Jude was an apostle of Our Lord. He is often called 'the Saint of the

Impossible.' Many pray to him in seemingly hopeless cases. They say he always hears their prayers. Do you care to pray to the Saint? Before you are small rustic kneelers.

"Down a few wooden steps, now slow—slow—then turn sharply to the left! Behold, beneath in alcoves are four statues. One of Christ—'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.'

"To the left is a statue of St. Peter with the keys. 'Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it . . . . And I will give to Thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.'—Matt. 16, 19.

"To the right once more. See Our Blessed Lady among the flowers! The Holy Spirit is coming upon her in the Mystery of the Conception. To the left is a drawing of the Holy Manger.

" 'Hail, Full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee . . . . Blessed art thou amongst women.'—Luke 1, 28.

"A statue of St. John is to the right. He is one of Our Lord's apostles, and one of the first priests ordained by Jesus. To his left is a picture of a chalice, to the right a missal.

" 'Do this in commemoration of Me' . . . and so let him drink of this chalice . . . .'

"Onward, folks, now to Resting Rock—the mightiest rock of them all. Its weight is seventy-five tons. Eventually it may gather moss; it is too cumbersome to roll.

"See above: children saluting the flag; they are from a school with their teacher. A boy is hoisting the colors; the others are raising their hands in salutation:

> "I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of
> America, and to the Republic for which it stands. One
> Nation, under God, with Liberty and Justice to all."

One boy was not in school when this picture was taken. Being asked by his teacher why he did not attend, he said: "I was so tired from studying that I went fishing—and I caught a fish to prove it."

Love your country and your flag always! Be prepared to fight, even unto death, for this land of ours!

"To the right you will behold another patriotic picture: 'On, Wisconsin!' "

> All hail to Wisconsin, bright State of the Nation!
> Where Morning strews roses and gold o'er the skies;
> Where God crowned with glory His Work of Creation;
> Where all nature lovers have found Paradise.

"Let us now take a short walk to our cemetery—'All Souls' Cemetery.' There let us move among the graves in a country churchyard. The land for these sacred acres, and the elegant woven fence all around, have been given by Mrs. John and Lillian Blonien, to whom a special vote of thanks is due."

It is evening. Far away we hear the tolling of a bell; it reminds of the passing of time. On a near-by meadow cows are winding their way homeward, leaving us quietly meditating. The country sides are fading from view, and the air is solemn and peaceful. One lonely robin is still chanting his song to God. From a near-by woods a moping owl is complaining of such as molest her solitary reign.

Around us lies a lonesome Field of Sorrow, with the graves of those that have gone to rest. Once happy, cheerful, free, and brave, and having lived through every change, and chance of fate, and fortune, they are now sleeping beneath the sod, where

> "The cock's shrill clarion, and the echoing horn,
> No more shall rouse them from their lonely bed."

A monument has been erected there of rude stones, on which is a beautiful rugged cross, reminding all who pass of the Faith of those who lie moldering in their graves. Above is a statue of Christ, the Judge of the Living and the Dead. On each side stands an Angel—one with the Flowers of Prayer for the dead, the other with a trumpet, calling all in their graves to rise and go to Judgment. An inscription below reads:

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. . . . They shall rest from their labors."—Apoc. XIV, 13. ... They will rise again, but they will not all be changed.

Back to the Grotto once more, and to a wilderness scene. In marble statuary you will see the crucifixion of Our Savior among the trees. A shepherd boy is kneeling a few paces away; a young deer approaches unafraid and

playful. The lad fondles it; walking away a short distance, it stops to look. A squirrel, too, and some rabbits come to see the boy in prayer. How wonderful this woodland scene! And all around is a bird sanctuary.

Oh, have you heard the birds sing loud,
Among the trees, a noisy crowd?
On tree-stumps, oaks, and elms around
Oh, have you heard the woodpecker pound?

"A little to the left you'll see the Virgin Shrine with Bernadette."

Above the rugged rocks on high
The Virgin fair is standing by.
Bernadette has come to see
Who the Lady there could be.
A spreading spruce grows at her right,
Creeping vines on every side.

"Farther on is another wayside shrine: a Crucifixion of Our Savior, made by a Tyrolese wood-carver in the far-off Alps of Austria."

"Oh, all ye who pass by, lo, and behold if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow!"

"To the left, inlaid with green and gold, is a large Grotto garden sign. To the left the sightseer may read a large monogram: '0-AM-D-G': 'Omnia ad Majorem Dei Gloriam' (All for the greater
Glory of God).

"Near the pond you will witness small colonnades fashioned after the ruins of ancient Greek and Boman Temples.

"And beyond the pond on one side is a Palm Sunday scene: grown-ups are carrying palms and children are strewing flowers, as the Bedeemer of the World passes by, sitting on a donkey.

"In the center see a gorgeous picture in marble relief: The Last Supper. There you see the Apostles seated around a table, with Christ in the center. They are marveling at the great miracle of the Transsubstantiation—the changing of Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. At the same time the Holy Priesthood was instituted.

"And, now folks, you may enter a cabin store, or gift shop, where articles of devotion and souvenirs are sold, and where people ask for ice cream and soda. A register is also there where visitors may write their names and addresses. Until today, May 1, 1958, over one million visitors have registered."

XVI
I/Envoi!

This morning I find myself under the same well-shaped maple where I began this story. The moon is hanging low in the west and shining through an archway, made by the boughs of large elms, and lighting up, here and there, the yellow leaves that have fallen during the night. The east is beginning to show the rosy tints of sunrise, and soon its splendor will fall on the many new homes, built along a sloping eminence to the east of our church and school. Against the western sky, in the fading moonlight, I can still distinguish the outlines of many trees—the Colorado blue spruce, and a cluster of shady elms and maples, on both sides of the pond, which grew there from mere saplings. Beside these there grows a leafy basswood, alive with bees and birds in early spring. Farther to the left is a green spruce, with tousled, needle shaped spines, sparkling in the moonlight.

Since I began this project, thirty years have gone down the stream of eternity, and both Edmund and I have grown older—much older. Rubbing my hands together, I may say: "Generally speaking we are about the same as when we began." Nevertheless thousands of experiences, and many changes about and within us, have made it impossible for us to stay as young and agile as we were when we set the first rocks in the building of this Shrine.

As I am getting older, no matter how weary or how fresh I feel at times, I have the certainty that, during the day that lies before, anything may happen, and it often does. The years pass by so swiftly, and many of them were peaceful—years of "simple, quiet, contented *Still-leben,"* which after all is the highest form of living man can enjoy. But now the years are only relatively quiet, for every summer brings an increasing number of visitors to my Shrine.

Working in my Garden some years ago, I straightened from a flower-bed, over which I had been bending, and hobbled down toward an unshaded corner of the Shrine, where the blazing rays of the sun were far from inviting, and meditating there I said:

"My time is in Thy hands, 0 Lord!"

For over forty years I labored in this parish, and over thirty in this Grotto Shrine. I have always been in sole command, with Edmund Rybicki, my faithful helper. Today, more than ever, "touched by the frost of age," I look for the signal that my day's work here is done. As I look at the sundial upon yonder rocks, which "marks the fleeting hours" by the sun's shadow, a siren rings out, telling this small world around that the time has come for rest and prayer. This is a home of peace, well beyond the confines of a busy, weary world outside.

For well-nigh forty years no other hands but mine, with those of a few faithful helpers, have cherished and nourished the "thousand blossoms" in these Gardens—candytuft and bachelor buttons, snapdragon and larkspur, marigolds and poppies, and many others. There are Wandering Jews, and travelling ferns, on the roots of which John the Baptist was said to have lived during his journey in the wilderness.

The time is coming, as it will come to all, when God will beckon me to pass on, and when this Garden and this Shrine will know me no more. My hairs are whitening, my muscles growing softer and leaner, and my figure is becoming slightly bowed. I see the days of my life, one by one, slipping away beneath my tottering feet.

The time is coming when my eyes will gaze for the last time on these pleasant surroundings, and when for me the birds in the trees will sing their last song. With inspired coolness I might –calculate what I might do in the years that remain. Despite the ferocious assaults of wind and weather, worry and want, my features still retain their chiseled outlines. My figure is spare and still nearly erect. It conveys the impression of enduring energy; only my toil-worn hands reveal the laborer.

I am a scion of a noble race of farmers, and I am not ashamed of it. The land still speaks to me, and like a true husbandman, I love the land. It tells of those who have lived and died on it; whose bodies lie moldering in the ground, whose monuments are the trees, the cultivated fields, the vast prairies. Men of great stature they were, and strong, who carved a Free Country—America—out of a wilderness beset with Indians and wild beasts. They left to their sons an inheritance as splendid as that of the first missionaries, who Christianized this nation.

Wisconsin has become my happiness, and Rudolph my home. Mine is not a vision that dwells in far-off and strange countries, and in people foreign and unknown. The clouds that float in the blue, the smiling woodlands, the rippling of brooks and rivers, the fragrant clover blossoms, the cattle grazing over verdant meadows—all these I know. Unspectacular, never hurrying, never late, my orderly days passed by, like white cumulus clouds, that march across the sky. Every day I saw specific tasks completed.

I am now entering upon the last part of my life. From this point forward my thinking, planning, solace in prayer, should become more and more withdrawn from material things, while I still retain my old-fashioned fondness for hard effort, and an energetic willingness to engage in it.

In building this Shrine I worked to create "a thing of beauty which should remain a joy forever." I know that this Grotto Shrine will be something of value, permanence, and benefit. As consequence my life has become a kind of symphonic portrait of a joyful, happy laborer, not of one who is nervously harassed by hard labor, recounting many misfortunes and much grief, and brooding over them; but of one who hopes to end in a splendor on a field of sunlit glow, with an affirmation of belief, and an expressed hope of seeing God face to face at last.

Naturally we become what our surroundings make us. With the building of this Grotto I became a hard-working man, with hands calloused by crushing exertion, gashed to bleeding by rough stones, hardened by digging, till my joints swelled and my fingers stiffened, never again to be slim, soft, and graceful; yet they convey a parable of a laborer in the Vineyard of the Lord, that every thinking person can understand. Like a good soldier, who considers himself expendable, I have accepted this field to wear myself out upon it. These toil-roughened hands, raised in benediction after mass, impart a peculiar kind of blessing that speak of God and His command: "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy daily bread." God and His Blessed Mother have inspired and helped me to build this Grotto-Shrine—the work is now complete.

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Another Shrine beams in a Happier Land,
Built by a Super-Mighty Master-Hand,

Where Springtime glows, and Summer rings with glee—
That Glory-Shrine is meant for you and me.