

HOME LIFE IN EARLY INDIANA*

BY WILLIAM F. VOGEL, A. B., Superintendent of Schools, North Vernon,
Indiana.

CHAPTER III. SICKNESS AND PHYSICIANS

PREVALENCE OF SICKNESS

In novels and stories the western pioneer is pictured as a big rough, hardy man with unbounded energy and intoxicating health. This picture is largely a romantic one. The woods of Indiana were not settled without much sickness, many deaths, and great suffering. The pioneers had to contend against invisible, as well as visible foes, and, of the two, the former were the most deadly. No part of America, outside of the tropics, was more subject to malarial visitation than the rich flat lands in Indiana. The very fertility of the soil made it miasmatic. Vast, dense forests, in whose shade immense accumulation of leaves, fallen timber, and other vegetable matter lay rotting from year to year, and the innumerable streams and ponds of stagnant water, exhaled poisonous gases which contributed toward disease. Exposure to the weather, also, was another factor that made for sickness. For many years in the autumn season there were more sick people than well ones. Occasionally whole towns were depopulated. In the southern border counties during the years 1820-1822 sickness was especially prevalent. So alarming was the mortality that the General Assembly of the State set apart a day for public prayer and supplication to the Almighty God, that he might bless the country with fruitful seasons and bring health and peace to the unhappy citizens. In 1821 an epidemic of fevers broke out and continued from July to October during which time nearly every person was sick in some degree, and about one eighth of the population died. One third of the people of Vincennes at one time were confined to their beds with sickness. The whole Wabash country was especially afflicted, and the southern counties were never free from fevers.

HARD LOT OF THE SICK

Medical aid was hard to secure. In the beginning there were few doctors, and the settlers lived so far apart that it was almost impossible for a physician to get around in times of heavy sickness. More

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than one mother has vainly watched over her child through the night, hoping for a visit from the doctor who never came, or, if he did finally come, arrived too late to be of any use. Several deaths occurred at Jeffersonville in the early years which were due to a lack of medical assistance. On the whole the distress of the families during epidemics of fever was pitiable. Often there were not enough well people to care for the sick. Provisions gave out and it was difficult for the sick people to obtain food. A poor settler of Hamilton county describes conditions thus: In September sickness set in in earnest; nearly everyone would be down at the same time, not one to help the other when the ague was on. Our provisions gave out and it was sixty or seventy miles to the settlement. Conner had a little corn which he sold at a dollar a bushel. This they had to pound in a mortar, sift out the finest of it for bread, and boil the coarser of it and eat it with milk. They called it samp. O how tired I got of such fare: but no help for it. They would pound the corn after the ague went off and the fever subsided a little.¹

AGUE AND FEVER

One of the greatest obstacles to the early settlement of Indiana was chills and fever. The story of suffering from ague forms a pathetic part of the history of pioneer life. To newcomers, it was a veritable terror, and, in the fall, everybody looked pale and sallow; the disease being no respecter of persons. It developed, as we have stated, from the impurities of stagnant pools and streams. From the first of August to the first of October in each year no serious labor was undertaken. Sickness reigned supreme. At any gathering half the members wore yellow faces, and moved about with heavy lassitude. The sickness began with a chill of rather indefinite duration, followed by a burning fever, which lasted for hours. Sometimes the attack came every day, but generally on alternate days. Frequently the paroxysms of shaking were so violent that the bed upon which the sick person lay would creak and rattle. But the exigencies of pioneer life would not permit the ague-stricken man or woman to give up work altogether. Sometimes a plowman trudged after his plow with a burning fever, while his poor wife, equally afflicted, drudged at the household work, or ministered to her sickly children. The following story illustrates the effect of the ague: A man was passing through a forest hunting for a stray cow and calf when he came upon a neighbor sitting on a log with a rifle across his knees. "Hello, what are you doing there, John?" he

¹ *Indiana Magazine of History*, VI, 77-78.

called out. John looked up dolefully, his teeth rattling together and his whole frame quivering. "I'm waiting for my ague to go off, so I can hold my gun steady enough to shoot that squirrel up there," he replied, pointing with a shaking finger at the little animal crouching amid the top-most twigs of a tall oak. The cow-hunter kindly took the gun and shot the squirrel for his neighbor.²

DOCTORS AND METHODS OF TREATMENT

With so much sickness the life of the old-time doctor was not an easy one. Poorly trained and poorly equipped, it is wonderful that they accomplished anything. No course of preparation was necessary, and no license was required before they began to practice. Some of them were men of little character, and could be classified only as quacks. Most practitioners received a little training in the office of another physician; some relied on natural wit and experience alone, and hung out a flaming clapboard sign at the first opportunity. Quinine, calomel, tartar-emetic, castor oil, salts, and jalap were standard remedies, and a large lancet for bleeding was found in every medical case. With his saddle-bags full of these, and a good hardy horse, the pioneer physician counted himself the equal of the mightiest disease. Whiskey was a universal remedy for malaria and did not need a doctor's prescription. It was considered the best possible remedy for the bite of a poisonous snake. A person, when bitten, was made to drink as quickly as possible large amounts of the fiery intoxicant. Our early grandmothers were experts at gathering herbs, from which teas and bitters were concocted. Not a few of these simple home made remedies possessed curative virtues, too.

Fever and chills brought the largest number of patients to the doctors. When this disease was deepset the experienced ones knew that it was necessary to secure a reaction. When the doctor came he labored to bring this about. Stimulants, such as brandy, capsicum, and quinine, were given in large doses, and heavy applications of mustard were made. There are instances where, within a period of fourteen hours, one hundred grains of quinine and a quart of brandy were administered before a reaction could be brought about. In other cases they bled the unfortunate patient and then dosed him with large amounts of calomel. This method killed quickly and cured slowly. But, after all, the doctors are not to be despised for they did the best they knew, and their patients frequently got well in spite of them. Doctors traveled long distances, watched

² Thompson, *Stories of Indiana*, 177.

many long nights at the bedside of the sick, and suffered much real hardship. Not infrequently they themselves succumbed to prevalent diseases. At one time, in the town of Franklin, only two out of the five physicians were able to answer calls. Their services were so much needed that they rode from place to place on a gallop. Often they traveled not less than fifty miles a day.

It was a time of quackery and quack medicines. Often in the sickly season all the quinine in the shops was consumed. Then the settlers had no remedy except boneset and gentian. The sick were ready to try anything that promised relief, and pills with big high-sounding names, and guaranteed to cure a whole category of diseases, found a ready sale. Empty medicine bottles could be seen hanging from the walls of almost every cabin. There were quack doctors too. A certain Dr. Burr came to Connersville from Ohio and advertised himself as a "Root-Doctor." He nailed up to the weatherboarding of his hotel an enormous swamp lily root, almost as large as a man, with head, eyes, ears, and nose nicely carved. Arms and legs were attached, and above it appeared the glaring sign, "Joseph S. Burr, Root Doctor: No Calomel." People came from all parts of the country to see the doctor and the big root, and he quickly established a lucrative practice. He granted diplomas to students upon the completion of a three week's course of study. As a result the county was soon filled with root doctors. One of his graduates was a constable who was barely able to write his name. With his quack diploma he went to the "New Purchase" and put out his shingle. Upon being asked one day how his patients were, he replied, "Only tolerable; I lost nine fine patients last week, one of them an old lady that I wanted to cure badly, but she died in spite of all I could do. I tried every root I could find, but still she grew worse, and there being nobody here to detect my practice, like the other regular doctors. I concluded to try calamus, and dug up a root about nine inches long and made tea out of it. She drank it with some difficulty, turned over in bed and died. Still I don't think it was the calamus that killed her, as all the calamus doctors are giving it in heavier doses than I did."³ Such was his ignorance that he did not know the difference between calomel and calamus, and yet he got patients. Another kind of quack was the "steam doctor."⁴ He was not a man of much learning, and often not reasonably intelligent. His pills were made of walnut bark, and he carried around with him a rude apparatus for steaming his ague stricken patients.

³ Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*, 12-13.

⁴ Thompson, *Stories of Indiana*, 169.

MILK-SICKNESS AND CHOLERA

One of the worst diseases with which the settlers had to contend was the milk-sickness. It was peculiar to the new country, and to this day remains very largely a mystery. Both people and cattle were subject to it. Whole families were prostrated from using the milk of a single cow. Death usually came within ten days after the attack began, or the victim gradually convalesced. Although doctors disagree as to its cause, there can be no denial of its prevalence in early times. With the increased cultivation of the fields and the substitution of cultivated grains and pasturage for the wild herbage upon which cattle fed for a large part of the year, it gradually disappeared. It destroyed the value of lands in neighborhoods that were known to be afflicted with it. Indeed some of the finest tracts of land in Indiana were unoccupied on account of springs which were said to cause milk-sickness.

The State suffered to some extent also from the Asiatic cholera.⁵ In 1833 it first appeared on the Wabash, especially on boats that passed up and down the river. During the summers of 1849 and 1854 it swept over the country. Almost every town and village along the Wabash suffered from the attack. During this period Lafayette lost over six hundred of her citizens, chiefly adults.

SPELLS AND CHARMS

In connection with various diseases, the early settlers practiced many spells and charms.⁶ They sold their warts, and they carried buckeyes or potatoes in their pockets to keep off the rheumatism. If a teamster cut himself, he smeared the axe or knife with tar from the spindle of the wagon. Asafoetida, catnip, southernwood, chamomile, and certain other herbs were supposed to ward off disease if worn about the person. To cure epilepsy, they split the body of a standing shellbark hickory, wedged it far apart and passed the body of the patient three times through the opening, after which performance, the wedges were knocked out. If the parts grew together, a cure was assured. To a large extent those old superstitions survive today among the negroes, and backward whites of the southern mountain regions.

CHAPTER IV. CHURCHES AND PREACHERS

Our forefathers were serious men. They possessed a firm religious faith that enabled them to face the dangers and privations of the frontier with courage and fortitude. As soon as they had built

⁵ Cox, *Early Settlement of the Wabash Valley*, 153.

⁶ *Indiana Magazine of History*, II, 188.

their rude cabins they gathered for simple service and praise. And, within a very short while, they built rough log houses for worship and called ministers of the gospel.

EARLY CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES

In 1769 La Salle came to explore the great west. From his alleged voyage down the Wabash and his exploration in the northern part of the State he may, in truth, be called the discoverer of Indiana. The routes which he marked out were followed by succeeding voyagers, traders and hunters. With these men, sometimes preceding them, came the Catholic missionaries to spread the Christian gospel to the benighted redmen. With a crucifix as their weapon, the Jesuit fathers penetrated the forests, bringing some degree of civilization and religion to the savages, and preserving the spark of religion in the hearts of their countrymen. With the advent of permanent occupation, and the establishment of military posts, the priests played a prominent role. In the midst of each settlement stood the little log chapel with its rude cross pointing heavenward, the only reminder of civilization in the great wild forests.

These early missionaries did a great work. Out of pure zeal for the faith they left comfort and ease in the old world to labor among heathens in the new, where they suffered hardships of every descriptions and often met death itself. A beautiful legend has grown up about the work of the early priests, but at heart of it all there was a heroism, courage, and faith such as is seldom displayed in the history of Christian missions. Their work among the Indians will always be remembered. Gently and kindly they led these simple people to some degree of knowledge of the true God. It was the policy of the French, for the purpose of trade, to encourage the natives to settle around the military posts. Here they came under the influence of the church. They learned a little agriculture and other simple arts; they were led to give up barbarous customs and habits; and they were taught to dress and to live in some degree like a white man. This task was hard enough indeed but it was rendered all the more difficult by the French traders who debauched the artless Indian with fiery liquors for the sake of paltry profits.

EARLY PROTESTANT PREACHERS

The Anglo-Saxon soon followed the Frenchman, and the Protestant ministers were not far behind the Catholic missionary.

In their cabins, or, in the summer, under the great forest trees, the early settlers gathered for worship, clad in their buckskin or

coarse homespun clothes. At first there were no resident pastors, but itinerant preachers came long distances on horseback to minister to the scattered settlements.⁷ These traveling preachers represented all denominations, and visited in rotation within their individual circuits every settlement and village. In an early community the "appointment" for preaching was regarded as a gala day. It is needless to say that all the pews were full. It was not necessary to advertise for a congregation as some churches are compelled to do today. The Methodists were especially active. Their system carried their churches into nearly every settlement, and wherever two or three were gathered together, there one would find a Methodist preacher or exhorter in their midst.

The early itinerant preacher was an earnest man. His faith and zeal was no less extraordinary than that of the Catholic fathers, and the hardships and dangers he suffered were no less extraordinary. He went armed, prepared to defend himself against man and beast. As vehicles of any kind were out of order, he traveled on horseback. On his saddle he had a pair of saddle bags, in one side of which was his clothing, in the other his food. Crosswise on the pommel he bore his long rifle, while strapped to the rear of the saddle was a comfortable blanket. Often when night overtook him, he wrapped himself in this blanket and slept on the bare ground, his trusty horse grazing nearby till morning. At his side hung a coonskin pouch containing ammunition, a good supply of punk, flints, and a piece of steel with which to strike a fire. Thus equipped, he rode from settlement to settlement, visiting the lowly cabins to which he brought the gospel and good cheer. It is said that Reverent Francis Asbury in his ministry rode a distance that would have taken him twelve times around the world. The following quotation gives us a picture of an early itinerant: Lest you might think there was danger of us becoming semi-barbarous in this wild region, I will here state that we have circuit preaching every four weeks, by old father Emmett, a veteran minister of the Methodist denomination, who has been a faithful watchman on the walls of Zion for more than forty years. He is beloved by all who know him—old and young, saint and sinner. His preaching is of the plain, practical, but effective kind that reaches the hearts of his hearers. He has three preaching places within reach of us, viz: at John Simpson's, Kepner's Schoolhouse above the forks of Coal creek, and in White's neighborhood in the direction of Covington.⁸

⁷ Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*, 97; also Thompson, *Stories of Indiana*, 85-86.

⁸ Cox, *Early Settlement of the Wabash Valley*, 50.

The trials and privations of the early pioneer preachers were almost beyond belief. Most of them cleared their own farms and raised crops for the support of their families. Along with this they ministered to the scattered congregations. In early pioneer times a man who did not labor with his hands was held in scorn. While they were off on a long itinerary, their families were left alone to face dangers from sickness, wild beasts, and savages.

Sermons were long and tedious, discourses two or three hours long being the rule.⁹ Written sermons were not tolerated on the frontier. The minister must speak extemporaneously and show his fire and zeal chiefly on doctrinal and controversial points. These earnest men often preached until they were exhausted and fell back into the arms of a brother. Frequently religious debates were held where such questions as elections vs free grace, immersion vs sprinkling, and many others were hotly disputed. The Bible was interpreted liberally, and the people were very emotional.

In many neighborhoods the settlers were not able to build a church for each denomination, so union churches were built, in which the various sects held service on alternate Sundays. In such communities services were held invariably once a month. The minister always had a large congregation. The pioneers longed naturally for companionship and turned out in large numbers. It was a fine sight to see people flocking into the meeting house from every direction for eight or ten miles around. Some families came in ox carts, some came in wagons drawn by horse, and others on foot. Young ladies frequently walked a mile or two to church carrying their shoes and stockings in their hands until within a hundred yards of the place of worship.¹⁰ There were no musical instruments, and usually there was no choir, the singing being entirely congregational. More than one church was divided later by the introduction of an organ. As there were few hymn books, the preacher "lined off" the hymn which all sang with loud enthusiasm.¹¹ The sexes were seated on opposite sides of the house. Services began by reading a chapter from the Bible, followed by a prayer. The hymn was then "lined off" by the minister, and a person, somewhat acquainted with music led the singing, in which all the congregation joined. In later days the parts, bass and treble, were carried in the song, for by that time the singing school had become an established institution and the singing master was a well-known character. Then came

⁹ Levering, *Historic Indiana*, 172.

¹⁰ *History of Johnson County*, 251.

¹¹ Levering, *Historic Indiana*, 174.

the reading of the text and the discourse which lasted an hour and sometimes longer. During the whole service there was utmost decorum.¹² There was no chatting aloud or in an undertone, and whispering was considered such a breach of church manners that it seldom occurred. The audience listened to the service with special interest. The services were characterized by extreme simplicity. There were no flowers on the preacher's stand, none on his person, and they were seldom worn by any of the congregation. This was not due to any lack of respect or regard, but rather to an excessive reverence for the sacredness of the time and place. At the close of the sermon another hymn was sung, followed by a brief prayer or benediction. As soon as the meeting was over the people crowded around the minister to exchange greetings. They talked of the discourse continually on their way home. In fact the sermon became the theme of conversation in the neighborhood for many days.

The minister's salary was very low. For sixteen years the average salary of a typical Presbyterian preacher was only eighty dollars, including money and gifts.¹³ To support his family he farmed on a small scale, taught singing classes, wrote deeds, wills, and advertisements, taught school, and then mended his neighbor's shoes. Most preachers relied largely on their own little farms, and preached out of pure love of the work. With all his limitations the pioneer preacher had a remarkable influence. Being in many cases a man of decided learning, for that day, he was the "most considerable" man in the community, and was sure of a warm welcome and a good chicken dinner. To him the people appealed as arbiter of their disputes; to him the conscience-stricken went for relief and guidance. To a much greater degree, than at present, ministers then shaped the destiny of the State.

FAMILY WORSHIP

Family worship was the rule in early times.¹⁴ Once or twice a day, in the morning before breakfast, or in the evening before bedtime, the father gathered his family around him, read a chapter in the Bible and announced a hymn, in the singing of which all joined. Then he closed the simple service with a fervent prayer. When a pious guest was present he was asked to lead in the exercises. The prayers especially were very wild and fervent. Indeed a man who did not pray in this manner at home, and in public, was consid-

¹² Turpie, *Sketches of My Own Times*, 11.

¹³ *Indiana Magazine of History*, V., 59.

¹⁴ *History of Johnson County*, 252.

ered defective in piety. When there was no church in the neighborhood, the monthly services were held at a settler's home. A double log cabin, inhabited by one of the more prosperous members of the community was usually selected. The congregation assembled at the appointed time. The preacher, before whom was placed a small stand on which lay his Bible and prayer book, took a place in the middle of the entry. The women sat in the rooms on the one side of this entry, the windows and doors being open, and the men in the same way on the other side. The children sat together just in front of the minister, but one or two older persons sat with them as monitors. In simple improvised chapels of this kind, sermons have been preached and prayers prayed that have lingered in the memory of the congregation for a lifetime. In those days, religious subjects predominated in ordinary social intercourse. With the pioneer, religion was a real, vital thing to be applied to the daily walks of life to govern the conduct of men. They gave a literal interpretation to the commandments. Sunday was strictly observed. No work, except the most necessary, no hunting, sport, or play took place in the more Puritanic neighborhoods. Occasionally wheat or hay was harvested on the Sabbath, but only when the crop was in peril. When the last day of the year fell upon Sunday, it was called "Long Sunday" and worship and prayer lasted until midnight.

CHURCH BUILDINGS

Church architecture was as simple as the worship. Most of the meeting-houses were constructed of logs with a heavy clapboard roof. No belfry was built, as a bell would have been out of the question. In later days frame churches with belfry and bell were built. There were also stone and brick structures. An early church, built in 1812, near Brookville, is described thus: It is built of hard bricks of large size. It has a commodious gallery, supported by massive hewn pillars; and in the center of the church was a stone hearth upon which charcoal was burned in cold weather—for stoves were not common in the west in that early day.¹⁵

THE CAMP MEETING

The deep longing of the pioneers for social intercourse is reflected in their religious gatherings. The various conferences, associations, synodical meetings, were largely social in nature.¹⁶ The

¹⁵ *Indiana Magazine of History*, VI., 82.

¹⁶ *Thwaites' Early Western Travels*, IX., 257-264; Turpie, *Sketches of My Own Times*, 104-107; Hall *The New Purchase*, II, 130 ff.

camp meeting was especially characterized by its social features. In summer, after the harvest season, families of the same faith gathered from far and near, traveling on horseback or in covered wagons, sometimes from a distance of forty or fifty miles. The camp-ground was usually located near a creek or river in the shade of a deep woods. The people lived in rough cabins or tents. Some lodged and slept in their wagons. The horses and wagons were arranged roughly in the shape of a horseshoe, at the open end of which stood the preacher's stand. Before this, was the mourner's bench, which was surrounded by a vacant enclosure about thirty feet square. The space beyond this, to the line of the wagons, was filled with seats made of logs and rough planks. Sometimes a rail fence separated the male from the female portion of the congregation. At night the camp was lighted by lanterns or by blazing logs. In a letter, Flint describes the scene thus: "Large fires of timber were kindled, which glast a new luster on every object. The white tents gleamed in the glare. Over them the dusky woods formed a most romantic gloom, only the tall trunks of the front rank were distinctly visible, and these seemed so many members of a lofty colonnade."¹⁷

The leading event of the day was the sermon at eleven o'clock, a more or less formal discourse. In the afternoon a less formal service was held, and in the evening a short discourse was preached followed by prayers and exhortation. The mourners or "seekers" gathered around the preacher's stand in the vacant enclosure. The stillness of the night and the powerful, vivid, exhortations to prayer and repentance produced memorable sensations. Great numbers "fell under the power of the word," becoming unconscious, and remaining in that condition for hours. To prevent others from treading on them they were collected in one place and laid out in order, where they were cared for and prayed over by anxious friends. Sometimes as many as three thousand fell into these ecstatic trances at one meeting. There was much handshaking and giving of testimony. At large meetings the number of worshippers was so great that it became necessary to divide them into groups, to each of which an exhorter was assigned. Prayers, exhortations, hymns, and the cries of the penitent arose from all parts of the ground. Flint gives the following picture: "About dusk I retired several hundred yards into the woods to enjoy the distant effect of the meeting. Female voices were mournfully predominant, and my imagination figured

¹⁷ Thwaites' *Early Western Travels*, IX, 261.

to me a multitude of mothers, widows, and sisters giving vent to their grief, in bewailing the loss of a male population by war, shipwreck, or some great catastrophe.¹⁸

Sinners led a hard life of it. Sometimes they were even forcibly converted. In a camp meeting in 1820 a woman who had just been converted, was dragged away from the altar by her unregenerate husband, who threatened vengeance on anyone who would interfere. The minister took the man in hand, but seeing that persuasion and arguments were of no avail, he seized the fellow, forced him to his knees, and then flat on his face. Seating himself on the back of the victim, the minister refused to let him up until the man would pray. The only response was a chorus of oaths. But the wife and others prayed fervently, and finally the minister joined in. As he prayed he felt the man's muscles relax. Soon the poor fellow began to weep and cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" and at last the shout of victory came.¹⁹

These meetings, which always lasted a week or more, usually closed at midnight. The woods rang with old familiar hymns, and when the echoes resounded among the distant trees one almost thought he was listening to a choir invisible. In the morning the wagons were packed again, goodbyes said, and the worshippers slowly departed for their homes.

DENOMINATIONS

Methodists and Baptists are predominantly identified with the early religious life. Their ministers were largely of the itinerant class. The Disciples of Christ founded by Alexander Campbell gained a strong foothold at a later period. Quakers were especially numerous in the southeastern part of the State. Through the large number of teachers which this sect furnished, its influence has been widely extended. The Presbyterians, from the first, maintained an educated ministry and located their churches in the towns instead of in the country. With a large number of educated members they had little sensationalism in their services and held to a rigorous theology. They founded numerous schools, some of which still exist and whose influence was very potent in shaping the destinies of the new State.

¹⁸ Thwaites' *Early Western Travels*, IX, 261.

¹⁹ *Indiana Magazine of History*, V. 64-65.

CHAPTER V. TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS

EDUCATION UNDER THE FRENCH

The early French settlers cared little for education. The only instruction they received was given by the missionary priests who labored diligently to prevent the happy-go-lucky soldiers, traders, and trappers, who were naturally indolent and careless, from forgetting the principles of their religion. In later years, resident priests attempted to teach the children to read and write, but the frontier Frenchman was as much averse to mental effort as to physical toil. They had no education as we understand the term. All that they knew was handed down from father to son. What was perhaps the first regular school in Indiana was established at Vincennes in 1793 by a priest named Bivet. So there was no school in the territory until it came into American possession.

INTEREST OF INDIANA IN EDUCATION

Americans have always believed in education. The Ordinance of 1787 made provision for the training of future citizens in the Northwest, and, from the very first organization of Indiana, the people have had a deep interest in the education of the coming generations. In one form or another the educational question has been before every General Assembly from territorial days to the present time. Succeeding Assemblies have been asked to aid in the establishment of schools, or to grant special privileges for the building of academies and seminaries in the various parts of the State. The General Assembly of 1821 appointed a committee for the purpose of drafting a bill providing for a general system of education. The conception of education as a public duty is evidenced by the fact that the committee was instructed to guard well against any distinction between rich and poor. The report of the committee was incorporated in the first general school law of Indiana.

HOME SCHOOLS

Schools between 1805 and 1815 were very primitive. The country was sparsely settled; in fact half a dozen pioneers, located two or three miles apart, at that time, formed a large settlement. Consequently the children were taught the rudiments of learning at home.²⁰ There was usually someone in the family capable of teach-

²⁰ Turpie, *Sketches of My Own Times*, 20.

ing the children reading, writing and the simple elements of arithmetic. Even in later times, on account of the great distance from the schoolhouse and danger from wild animals, children were frequently taught at home. This home instruction was not altogether inefficient. Twice a week in the afternoon the mother, usually, gathered the children around her and taught them to read, write, and cipher as far as division. They worked with goosequill pens and ink made from walnut hulls. Those who were old enough, read in turn from some book taken from the family collection. On Sunday they read in the same manner from the Bible, the stories of which were simply explained by the mother. Sometimes children from a neighbor's home would join the family Bible class.

In these times of danger it was also the custom to employ an instructor to go from house to house in the settlement. This circulating teacher spent one-third of a day with each family giving instructions in the rudiments of education; in this way with six families he could give three lessons a week to all the children. When it became less dangerous for the children to pass through the forest, they assembled at the home of the family most centrally located, where they were taught in a lean-to built at the side or end of the cabin. A mother or elder sister gave a little simple training, in reading, writing, and ciphering.

A PIONEER SCHOOLHOUSE

As soon as conditions were favorable the pioneers of the neighborhood constructed a rude cabin schoolhouse, a structure, which at this date, would be a curiosity indeed.²¹ There was no school revenue to be distributed, so each voter himself had to play the part of the builder. The neighbors divided themselves into choppers, hewers, carpenters, and masons. Those who found it impossible to report for duty might pay an equivalent in nails, boards, or other materials. The man who neither worked nor paid was fined thirty-seven and one-half cents a day. A site most convenient to all the settlers was selected, near a living spring if possible. Old settlers still joyfully remember the cool sparkling waters and the long-handled gourd. Logs were cut and hauled to the site and a rough rectangular pen, usually sixteen feet wide by eighteen feet long, was erected. A roof made of four-foot boards, held in place by weight poles, tied with strong hickory withes to the ridge poles, covered the structure. The only openings were a door and window about two-

²¹ Cox, *Early Settlement of the Wabash Valley*, 61; *History of Johnson County*, 265-266; *Indiana Magazine of History*, II, 46-48; IV, 193; Thompson, *Stories of Indiana*, 232-233.

thirds of the length of a log, cut in one end of the building. Greased paper pasted upon slats covered the opening, which gave light to the room. If the school lasted into the fall and winter months, the openings between the logs were chinked and daubed with clay mortar. In the other end of the room a large fireplace was constructed. In later days, however, stoves were used. The room was filled with dirt, to a depth equal to half the thickness of the first side logs. After being well packed, the surface was covered with a thick clay mortar, which was evenly smoothed down to make an acceptable floor. Other school buildings had puncheon floors.

Under the one window a thinly hewed puncheon, resting on wooden pins driven into the log below, served as a writing desk. Seats were constructed of rough slabs which were hewn to remove the splinters. When this was imperfectly done, the bad workmanship was unmistakably reflected on the seats of the boy's pantaloons. Sanford Cox briefly describes a pioneer schoolhouse: "The schoolhouse was generally a log cabin with a puncheon floor, stick-and-clay-chimney, and a part of two logs chopped away on each side of the house for windows, over which greased newspaper or fools-cap was pasted to admit the light and keep out the cold. The house was generally furnished with one split-bottom chair for the teacher, and rude benches made out of slabs for the pupils to sit on, so arranged as to get the benefit of the huge log fire in the winter time, and the light from the windows. To these add a broom, water bucket, and tincups or gourd, and the furniture list will be complete."²² While the early schoolhouses were usually rectangular in shape, this was not always true. A five-cornered building was erected in Hancock county in 1830, and there is evidence of two built in Orange county.

Not all early schoolhouses measured up to the description just given. In parts of the State it is said schoolhouses were constructed with portholes for shooting at the Indians. Schoolmasters may have even gone armed to their work. The first school in Martinsville was a summer school held on a pioneer's porch. In temperate weather barns were frequently used. Indeed, the first school in Newburg, Warrick county, was held in John Sprinkle's barn. John Wilson, a Baptist minister, taught the first school in Vevay in a horse mill. In Waynesville, Bartholomew county, a blacksmith shop served as a schoolhouse. After the close of the Indian wars old forts in various counties were converted into schoolhouses. In some towns the log courthouses were used between terms, and in

²² Cox, *Early Settlement of the Wabash Valley*, 61.

Dubois county, Simon Morgan, the county recorder, kept school for many years in the recorder's office. One man in Delaware county even used his own kitchen as a class room. Abandoned cabins frequently served for school purposes, and it is said that Hanover college originated in a private cabin. In Jackson county, a pole cabin with no window, floor, or chimney was used for educational purposes. The fire was built on a raised clay platform in the middle, the smoke escaping through an opening in the roof. This same opening furnished light for study. Another school in the same county had no windows at all, light entering through the open door and the throat of the large chimney. So far as light is concerned, greased paper marks a later stage of window construction.

EARLY TEACHERS

In many cases the pioneer teachers were men of families and had been educated in eastern schools. Being instructors of real merit, they left a lasting impression upon the communities in which they labored. Another class, hailing also from the east, or from England, Scotland, or Ireland, were adventurers, who sought temporary employment in the winter, while awaiting an opening for business.²³ The Southern States and Pennsylvania also furnished their quota of pedagogues. The chief drawback of the pioneer school was the want of competent teachers. In his message to the State General Assembly in 1833, Governor Noble said: "The want of competent teachers to instruct in the township school is a cause of complaint in many sections of the State, and it is to be regretted that in employing transient persons from other States, containing but little qualification, or moral character, the profession is not held in that repute it should be." In the early times there was a certain lack of respect for the vocation of teaching, due to the fact that the teacher did not work with his hands. Lawyers, ministers, and even doctors suffered in this respect. Frequently they volunteered to show their mettle by acts of manual labor in order to receive favor at the hands of the people.

According to the law of 1824, every school district had three trustees, who were empowered to examine teachers in reading, writing, and arithmetic. This feature of local certification was continued up to the adoption of the new constitution in 1852. Scarcely one in a hundred was fit to conduct a school, some of them could neither read nor write, and yet they examined the candidates for

²³ *Indiana Magazine of History*, II, 83-85.

the profession. As a result of the illiteracy of the examiners, the candidate's handwriting, which could be seen by the uneducated and judged without comment, came to be the chief accomplishment. A man who could write a full, round, smooth hand was considered fully qualified to instruct in the district schools. Ex-Senator Turpie gives the following interesting account of his experience in securing a certificate: "I applied to the trustees of the district for a license to teach. Under the statute then in force, there was a board of trustees who had charge of the educational affairs, within their jurisdiction, and the chairman of the board, upon application, called a meeting of the members and appointed a day for the examination. When we met, the trustees asked me questions for an hour. These were answered promptly and plainly; they were well pleased with the answers and at last asked me for a specimen of my handwriting. Taking a sheet of paper I wrote one of the oldest legends in the copy-books of that time, 'At Dover dwell George Brown, esquire, Good Carlos Finch and David Pryor!' They were delighted with the copy, especially with the capital letters. The chairman then asked me how many branches I intended to teach. I told him I should not go much into the branches but should try and keep along the main stream. Turning towards his colleagues, he said the young man would do very well. They made out, signed, and gave me my certificate."²⁴ In 1837 the law was modified so that the circuit judge appointed three county examiners, in place of the district trustees, to examine all applicants.

After securing a certificate, the teacher yet had no school. The State furnished a building and some furniture, but the teacher was maintained by private payment and subscription. The subscription school was the only kind taught. So, after securing a certificate, the prospective teacher had to collect pupils. He canvassed from house to house with his subscription articles under his arm.²⁵ At every home there was free conversation about the children, the lessons and their needs. He informed the parents where he would hold the school, and what his curriculum would include—usually spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic as far as the rule of three. In addition he announced his charges, and frequently specified the penalties he would inflict for breaches of discipline. For being idle there was a penalty of two lashes with a beech switch, for whispering, three lashes, and for fighting, six lashes. Each family subscribed for the three months session as many pupils as it

²⁴ Turpie, *Sketches of My Own Times*, 74-75.

²⁵ Turpie, *Sketches of My Own Times*, 75.

could send. The attendance was carefully kept for each pupil, and if any attended longer than the time named in their subscriptions, the extra time was charged for in addition. The prevailing price until 1825, or even later, was 75 cts. per quarter for one pupil. It varied however, in some sections \$1 was the ruling price, in others \$1.50 and in some instances \$2.00 were paid. Salaries were ridiculously low.²⁶ John Titus taught in Johnson county for \$6.00 per month, but his board cost only \$1.00 per month. John Martin received \$8.00 per month in Cass county. Rev. Baynard R. Hall, the first principal of the State Seminary, at Bloomington, received the munificent salary of \$250 per year. Some of the teachers eked out their salaries by chopping wood on Saturdays, and in the evening after school. Probably a majority was obliged to take their pay in kind. Wheat, corn, bacon, venison, hams, dried pumpkin, flour, leather, coonskins, labor, and whiskey were given in exchange for teaching. One teacher took his entire pay in corn, which, when delivered, he sent in a flat-boat to New Orleans. In 1842 a teacher in Orange county contracted to teach a quarter for \$36.50, to be paid as follows: \$25 in State (Indiana) script, \$2.00 in Illinois money, and \$9.50 in currency. And he had an enrollment of seventy pupils. In 1844 Anderson B. Hunter taught a school in a smokehouse, which had been repaired for the occasion, for \$8 per month, and boarded himself. When paid in kind, the teacher, at the end of the quarter, would collect his tuition of wheat, corn, pork, or furs and take a load to the nearest market where he exchanged it for such articles as he needed.

The unmarried teachers "boarded round" and thus took part of their pay in board. The teacher computed the time he was entitled to board for each pupil, and usually selected his own time for quartering himself upon the family. But in most instances he was highly acceptable. Since newspapers and books were scarce, and the wilderness was extremely isolated from the outside world the conversation of an intelligent teacher was always welcome. Indeed in most cases it was counted a privilege, if not an honor, to entertain the teacher. Patrons frequently refused to charge a cent for his board and paid their subscriptions in full. The married teacher did not board around. In later days a schoolmaster's house for his own use was quite commonly built adjacent to the school-house. School terms were called quarters. There was a long quarter of thirteen weeks and a short quarter of twelve weeks.

²⁶ *Indiana Magazine of History*, II, 85-86.

Many shiftless, lazy fellows were found in the teaching profession at that time.²⁷ All kinds were represented, the one-eyed teacher, the one-legged teacher, the lame teacher, the teacher who had fits, the teacher who had been educated for the ministry but, on account of his habits of hard drinking, had turned pedagogue, and the teacher who got drunk on Saturday and whipped the entire school on Monday. The first teacher in Vanderburg county was an eccentric hermit, who lived by hunting, trapping and trading. Once an ex-liquor dealer, who had grown too fat to conduct that business longer, became a schoolmaster. Another pedagogue was so fond of drink that he carried his spirits to school with him and drank at intermissions. Two pupils who found his bottle one day and became drunk were whipped for setting such a bad example to the other students. Wesley Hopkins, a Warrick county teacher, regularly carried his whiskey to school in a jug. An old veteran of the Revolution, who taught in Switzerland county, always took a nap in the afternoon during school hours. The pupils were supposed to study their lessons during this time, but when the master's watchful eyes were closed, they amused themselves by catching flies and tossing them into his open mouth. An old sailor who had wandered out into the Indiana woods and become a pedagogue allowed his pupils to spend most of their time roasting potatoes. Another teacher in the southwestern part of the State employed his time between recitations by cracking hickory nuts on one of the punch-eon benches.

Pioneer schools were controlled by the rule of the rod.²⁸ Its use in those days was universal at home as well as at school. In fact the teacher who did not use a birch was regarded as a failure. One pedagogue, who had an agreeable school, taught six weeks without whipping anyone. Parents began to suspect that something was wrong, and one fond father politely informed him that he was making a mistake, and must mend his methods if he expected to continue in the profession. Schoolmasters punished freely, and often savagely, usually with the full approval of the parents. An Evansville teacher like many others, opened his school with prayer, but he always stood with a rod in his hands and prayed with his eyes open. If he caught a youngster in mischief he stopped short in his supplications, called out, "Woe be to you John," and struck him over the shoulders with his rod, after which he resumed his prayer. Another teacher came early to school in the morning to write a love-

²⁷ *Indiana Magazine of History*, II, 87-88.

²⁸ *Indiana Magazine of History*, II, 138.

letter. Once he left it carelessly on the desk while he proceeded to open school with prayer, kneeling with his rod in his right hand and his right eye open. During his prayer one mischievous boy stole up to the desk to purloin the letter. The teacher, discovering the youngster, broke off in the middle of a sentence and soundly thrashed the culprit, after which diversion he resumed his devotions with equanimity. Girls and boys of all ages expected to be whipped if they should break the rules. The rod was used on the slightest provocation, sometimes on no provocation at all. The boy who was unfortunate enough to get a blot upon his spelling book had to face a corporal reckoning with the master, and a girl caught in the act of tickling the ear of another had to stand up and receive a merry switching. The rod was not the only means of punishment. The "Dunce Block", "Foolscap", and "Leather Spectacles" were employed, besides such exercises as standing in the corner, and standing on one foot. Boys and girls were always seated on different sides of the house. As a punishment, a boy might be required to sit on the girls' side of the house or vice versa. On one occasion a teacher removed a large puncheon from the floor and imprisoned a big girl in the hole beneath.

The pictures of the pioneer schoolmaster given above are not altogether characteristic. They merely show conditions as they were in some instances. On the whole the oldtime country teacher was a man of worth in the community. He usually possessed a certain simplicity of character and singleness of heart that would do honor to any man in the profession today. Although he was, frequently from necessity, a jack-of-all-trades, he was zealously devoted to the duties of his calling, and certainly he worked for the love of the task, because the salary offered no attractions. In the elementary branches he was often exceptionally well versed, especially in geography, spelling, and parsing, as these subjects were understood in that day. Many were expert penmen, some even being able to write short sentences using a pen in each hand at the same time.

BOOKS AND METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

Books were very scarce in pioneer neighborhoods.²⁹ This hampered school work. The more intelligent families brought with them from the east a few favorite volumes, but there was probably not a collection of books in Indiana before 1816 worthy of being called

²⁹ *Indiana Magazine of History*, II, 131-137.

a library. Even ministers and other professional men were very scantily supplied. Persons hearing of new books went long distances to borrow them. One boy became so hungry for reading matter that he read over and over again two exposed pages of the "Western Luminary" which were pasted upon the inside of the lid of his mother's linen box. A few family books found in most neighborhoods were Weem's *Life of Washington*, the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Life of Marion*, Carey's *Olive Branch*, and hymn books and spelling books. It thus became a difficult matter for parents to provide their children with text books. They even went so far as to cut up a volume and paste the parts on boards for the different children of the family. Children were usually taught their letters at home. When the child went to school he first learned to spell out of Dillworth's or Webster's spelling book. About 1850 McGuffey's *Eclectic Speller* came into use. As old time schoolmasters placed great emphasis on spelling, it was the custom to give half a day of each week to a spelling match. Pupils knew the book so well that they could spell the words in the exact order in which they came. After the pupil learned to spell sufficiently well he was set to reading. The elementary spelling book served both as a speller and a reader. But the pupil had to be able to pronounce all the words in the book before he was permitted to do formal reading. In the early period there were few readers of any kind. Any book from home might be used, the Bible often serving the purpose. Even newspapers were elevated to the dignity of readers when nothing else could be obtained. About 1835 Emerson's readers came into use, but they were displaced later by McGuffey's *Eclectic Series*. The latter books ranked high for the time. They introduced the children to higher American literature and gave them a taste for reading that was worth while: so that the name of Longfellow, Irving, Bryant, Hawthorne, and others became familiar to pupils of that day.

The next step on the educational ladder was learning to write. Mothers made copybooks by sewing together a few sheets of foolscap paper. Pens were cut from goose quills. Ink was manufactured from oakballs saturated with vinegar. Even pokeberry juice was employed, but its use was not general because it soured too easily. A favorite inkstand was a section of a cow's horn sawed off and fitted with a wooden, water-tight bottom. The copies set by the teachers were generally moral or patriotic precepts such as, "Commandments ten God gave to men," "Evil communications corrupt good manners," "Eternal Vigilance is the price of liberty."

The next thing in order for the boys was arithmetic, for this was considered peculiarly a boy's subject. Few girls gave much attention to it. Students in arithmetic did not recite, they merely "ciphered" the sums in the book, the teacher giving little attention unless called on for help. Ray's *Arithmetic* was generally used about 1850. In every case the abstract rule was first given, and, with this as a basis, the pupils solved the problems according to rule. Such a system did not foster much thinking. When an applicant for a teacher's license was asked how much 25 times 25 cents are, he was unable to give the answer, stating that he had never met such a problem in any arithmetic. Girls studied geography and grammar, especially, since they were not considered to have "heads for figures." Of all the pioneer text books, geographies were almost the only ones which were illustrated. Yet these two subjects were not much studied by anybody in the early days. The former was considered proper if there was time for it, but the study of grammar was considered an absolute waste of time. As late as 1845, a teacher at Vevay in his written contract was required not to teach grammar. Most school work was done with quill pens, and the making and mending of quill pens was a part of the regular duty and employment of the teacher. Steel pens were not used until later. The blackboard, in some form, came into use earlier, however. Each pupil owned his individual eraser made of raw wool.

In addition to the rudiments of learning some of the masters taught a little correct deportment. They instructed pupils how to stand erect, to walk and bow in good form, to remove the hat on entering the room, and how to replace it on departing. They were especially admonished to respect old age and to reverence the "ministers of the Word."

LOUD SCHOOLS

"Loud" schools were the rule in the early days in Indiana.³⁰ In fact that kind was considered more efficient than the "silent" school. Boys and girls spelled and read at the top of their voices, and sometimes the roar of lesson-getting could be heard as far as three-quarters of a mile. One teacher regularly took his fiddle to school and solaced himself with music while his pupils were shouting over their lessons. It was difficult to keep pupils at work in such an uproar, there being too great an opportunity for the idler, who, while shouting as loudly as the others, really did no work at all. The lazy boy

³⁰ *Indiana Magazine of History*, II, 136.

might continuously roar at one word, or over a line of poetry, or trumpet through his nose, and the teacher be none the wiser. In later times the loud school gradually went out of fashion, supplanted by the more orderly form of the present day.

Friday was often observed as a speech day. In the afternoon the older boys recited selections which they had committed to memory, and the girls read compositions. Both were publicly criticised by the master. Many people who became eminent in later years attributed their success to the old-time speech day.

BARRING THE TEACHER OUT

A common practice in early school days was that of barring out the master. This usually accompanied the Christmas celebration, in case the master did not treat the school. The big boys usually barred the door and kept him out until he agreed to furnish a treat, usually apples. Of course he resisted, otherwise there would have been no fun. If he was obstinate and held out too long he might be ducked in a neighboring creek. One stubborn teacher was ducked in an icy pond, and, when this did not bring a treat, his tormenters placed chunks of ice on his bare bosom. If outsiders had not interfered serious consequences would doubtless have followed. Another pedagogue, who had just had a tooth extracted, despite his warning as to the risk, was plunged into the cold waters of a creek. Lockjaw followed, from which he died. But most teachers yielded after a show of resistance, getting as much merriment out of the affair as the pupils. However, the treat did not always consist of apples. The following quotation describes a treat offered by a certain pioneer teacher: "One Christmas morning our teacher brought a jug of whiskey to which he added some eggs and sugar; he shook it up and called it 'egg-nog.' When noon came he made a little speech and said that the egg-nog was his treat to us; that we must not drink too much of it, and must be good children while he went home to take dinner with his wife and some invited friends. We were good, but we did not leave any of the egg-nog for the teacher and his friends who came to school with him in the afternoon."³¹ A Morgan county teacher found himself barred out and gained admittance with a jug of whiskey. He dealt out the whiskey liberally and it was not long before some of the boys were too full for utterance and had to be sent home. One youngster went home as happy as a lark but his father met him with a big rod that

³¹ Cockrum, *A Pioneer History of Indiana*, 463.

completely brought him to his senses. These, however, are exceptional cases for in most instances public sentiment would not have sanctioned the use of liquors.

HARDSHIPS OF PIONEER SCHOOL CHILDREN

Pioneer children endured many hardships in their efforts to secure the rudiments of knowledge. It was not unusual for pupils to attend from a distance of three or four miles. Many times they encountered wild beasts, or even sulking savages. In the autumn they found it delightful to travel along the winding paths as they trudged over the hills and hollows, to view the many-hued leaves and inhale the fragrance of the flowers, to hear the merry chatter of the squirrels and the glad notes of the birds as they flitted from tree to tree, to walk on the light carpet of velvety leaves, cool and soft to the bare young feet. But in winter there was a different picture. Boots were not in fashion, so boys and girls came to school with their feet encased in old socks or stockings which kept the snow out fairly well. Some children went barefoot winter and summer.³² It seems that their feet and legs, like our hands, became enured to cold. Sanford Cox in his *Early Settlement* draws a graphic picture of the youngsters of Lafayette about 1825, who were skating on the ice, some with skates, some with shoes, and some barefoot. In some cases a barefoot pupil would carry a hot board or stone, by which he made his way through the cold. When his feet became too chilled he stood upon the board or stone until the numbness wore off, after which he would make another dash for the schoolhouse. As the schoolhouse fireplace consumed immense quantities of wood the teacher detailed a number of pupils each day to cut and carry wood for the fire. Indeed our fathers and mothers did not travel an easy path in their quest for knowledge.

REAL EDUCATION OF THE EARLY HOOSIERS

After all, the pioneer children received their real education in the great out-of-doors, in the forests and by the streams. There was plenty of arithmetic, manual training, and physical culture for boys, in the work they did with their fathers, building and plastering cabins, clearing and fencing the farms, and in doing hundreds of other things which had to be done on a pioneer farm. The girls learned likewise through the assistance they rendered their mothers, in spinning and weaving, in making butter and cheese, and in

³² *Indiana Magazine of History*, II, 82.

doing all the little things that a pioneer housewife found to do. And best of all the training the girls and boys received in those days fitted them for their life's work, which is more than can be said of much of our modern education.

CHAPTER VI. SOCIAL LIFE

The life of the Hoosier pioneers was not all hardship and deprivation. They had many pleasures and amusements to relieve their hard toil. Of course there were no theatres, Sunday excursions or league baseball games, or other more genteel amusements to which we are accustomed today, but there was no lack of wholesome fun and frolic. Above all there was about it a hearty and jovial spirit that is altogether absent in our modern commercial merrymaking. Our fathers lived an isolated life in sparsely settled communities; so, any neighborhood social event was anticipated with delight and glee that was almost childish in its nature. Social pleasures, too, were largely connected with the neighborhood tasks of the settlers. If logs were to be rolled, the neighbors assembled to roll them; if a cabin was to be built, the pioneers came for miles around to assist. There were corn huskings, sheep-shearings, apple-parings, sugar-boilings, quilting bees, and hog-killing.

LOG ROLLING

The pioneer himself could fell the trees of his farm, cut them into proper lengths, clear away the brush and limbs, but in order to roll the logs into a heap for burning he was compelled to call in his neighbors.³³ On the appointed day, they all came, they and their wives and children, the men to pile the logs and the women to cook for the feast that always followed the work. Log-rollings, at first sight, do not suggest fun and pleasure, yet they were eagerly looked forward to, especially by the young people. Such undertakings meant much hard, even excessive work, nevertheless the toil itself was turned into sport and play. When the last log was in position feasting and enjoyment began.

Usually the men were separated into two divisions, and the clearing was apportioned so as to give each division relatively the same amount of work. Each chose an experienced man as leader and, when begun, the contest never flagged. The section which first disposed of the last log was declared the winner. This was no little honor, for the victory would be discussed in other settle-

³³ *Indiana Magazine of History*, II, 4-5; Hall, *The New Purchase*, 238-245.

ments and praises of the heroes sung far and wide. As great individual rivalry occurred among the younger men, some amazing feats of strength were performed. A favorite test was to determine which of two men could outlift the other, each lifting at one end of a log with a handspike. After the work was done the log heaps were fired, and a hundred bonfires reddened the sky. A more beautiful sight can scarcely be imagined.

Log rollings were especially frequented by candidates and politicians. Here they had an opportunity to present their claims and defend themselves against trivial or unfounded charges. But such seekers were required to show their mettle. Sometimes rival candidates were assigned as leaders of opposing sections of workers. Then work proceeded under the highest stress. In fact some enterprising farmers, it is said, made a practice of deferring their log rollings until campaign time (some kind of an election was held every year), about a month preceding the election, in order to reap the benefit of the labor and enthusiasm of the various candidates.

After the hard day's work, the boys and young men were still equal to foot races, wrestling matches, pole-vaulting, tug-of-war, lap-jacket, and other feats of skill on which the young fellows prided themselves. Pitching quoits was also a favorite pastime on such occasions.

HUSKINGS

The husking of corn was an important work and was a neighborhood affair. Both sexes participated. They usually assembled in a large barn which was arranged for the occasion, where they sat in a circle and played "brogue it about" while they worked. Each gentleman selecting a lady partner when the husking began, and under the zest of the frolic, the work progressed with surprising rapidity. When a lady found a red ear she was entitled to a kiss from every gentleman present; when a gentleman found one he was entitled to kiss every lady present. After the corn was all husked a good supper was served. Then, after the old folks had left, the remainder of the evening was spent in dancing and in games.

QUILTING BEE

Of equal importance was the quilting bee, where the women had their gossip. In the afternoon, ladies for miles around gathered at the appointed home to manufacture warm quilts, often of curious patterns and design. Such meetings were busy news exchanges for

the women could talk as they worked. As soon as the quilt could be "got off", the entertainment began. In the evening the men came and the time was spent by the young people in games and dancing.

Bounteous feasting always accompanied the hard labor of neighborhood gatherings. A meal, consisting of venison, roast turkey, fried chicken, hominy, ham and eggs, potatoes, wild hog, steaming cornbread, hot biscuits, gingerbread, preserves, jellies, tarts, pies, and good milk and butter, all set on a large table, about which the workers gathered, could not fail to satisfy the appetite of an epicure. Good cider was always at hand to moisten thirsty tongues. Total abstinence was not in fashion in those days, and the farmer who did not supply his hands with liquor was considered stingy indeed. A jug of whiskey was considered necessary for any undertaking of importance.³⁴ The beverage was homemade and often of such little strength that it was likely to freeze or sour.

THE SHOOTING MATCH

To pioneer people and early settlers the rifle was perhaps the most indispensable weapon. With it they procured their meat from the forest, defended their homes from wild men and wild animals, preserved their live stock from prowling enemies, and saved their cornfields from the depredations of squirrels and bears. To be a sure shot was a matter of no little importance. Nothing did more to promote good marksmanship than the shooting match.³⁵ But it served also a larger purpose. It was a day of recreation and amusement, when friends gathered for social intercourse, to crack jokes, spin yarns, and talk of former experiences. Often these matches virtually became political meetings, where candidates read their certificates and made stump speeches. They were usually held on Saturday, and every fellow in the community who could "split a bullet on his knife blade" or "take the rag off the bush" came to display his skill and try his luck. The prizes were beeves, hogs, turkeys, venison, and on some occasions a quantity of meal or a half-barrel of whiskey was the reward of skill. Often a live turkey or goose furnished the target. Each participant was charged his proportionate share of the value of the things offered, the charge depending, of course, on the number of participants. Or, if the number of participants was not equal to the number of chances

³⁴ Levering, *Historic Indiana*, 74.

³⁵ Cockrum, *A Pioneer History of Indiana*, 493-495; Hall, *The New Purchase*, I, 126-136; *Indiana Magazine of History*, II, 1-2.

at an arbitrary price, the owner of the prize took the remaining chances and shot for himself. A level place in the woods was selected for a range, and a roughly outlined rectangle cleared of bushes and twigs. Along the sides the spectators formed, standing, stooping, or lying in characteristic attitudes. A large tree at one end often served as a target. From its trunk were measured off in a straight line towards the other end of the rectangle two distances for shooting, eighty-five and one hundred yard lines. On the former the marksman who fired off-hand stood; at the one-hundred yard line rests were placed by those who preferred to shoot in that fashion. Each man prepared for himself a separate target which was a poplar shingle having near the center a spot blackened with powder or charcoal as a ground. On this ground a piece of white paper, about an inch square, with a diamond shaped hole in the center, was tacked. The point of intersection of the diagonals of the diamond was the true centers of the target and from this as a center was described a circle with a four inch radius. Each participant was allowed three shots. If any one of them struck beyond the circumference, even by a hair's breath, all the other shots, even if in the center, did not count. The unhappy marksman lost. But if all three struck within the circle they were measured by a line from the center of the diamond to the nearest edge of the bullet hole; however, if a ball grazed the center, the line was drawn from the center of the diamond to the middle of the bullet hole. Then the three lengths were added and estimated as one. The man showing the shortest length won the prize. This was called line shooting. The most scrupulous exactness was always observed in determining distances so that there might be no appearance of cheating. Each man placed his own target against the tree and fired his three shots in succession. On an average it required about fifteen minutes for the firing. One or two fellows stood behind the target trees to announce the results. This seems dangerous, yet accidents rarely happened. On one occasion, however, one man peeped out to learn the cause of delay in the shooting and was unluckily killed. On another occasion an old man was standing behind the tree awaiting the report. At the flash of the gun he fell dead from behind the tree. The trunk was hollow—a mere shell at the place where he stood—and the bullet had passed through it into his body. Practical jokers were always present making fun for the company. They “hoodooed” the crack shot and bewitched the rifle of a prospective prize-winner.

GOOSE PULLING

One of the rudest of early sports was goosepulling.³⁶ A goose with its neck well greased or soaped was fastened to a post at the proper height from the ground, or suspended from the limb of a tree. Men, on horseback, racing at full speed endeavored to grasp the neck of the fowl and tear its head from the live and struggling body. It often took hours for the winner to accomplish his purpose. This cruel practice died out in later years.

DANCING

Neighborhood tasks like house raising or corn huskings as we have stated, were usually followed at night by a dance or play party. The country fiddler came in with his battered old violin, and the dance was held on the puncheon floor by the light of the fire. Occasionally when no fiddler was to be had the party had to depend on vocal music to which they danced. But this was unusual. From his instrument the musician drew such tunes as "Old Zip Coon," "Jay Bird," "Old Dan Tucker," and "Possum up a Gum Stump," all the while violently flourishing his bow and patting his foot in accent. A "caller" called out the different formations of the square dances. Each neighborhood had its own "caller," many of whom attained not a little notoriety, and were even in demand outside the community. The following is an example of a common call:

Balance one and balance eight,
Swing 'em on the corner like you swing 'em on the gate;
Bow to your lady and then promenade,
First couple out, to the couple on the right;
Lady round the lady and the gent solo,
And the lady round the gent and the gent don't go;
Ladies do-ce-do and the gents, you know,
Chicken in a bread pan, pickin' up the dough,
Turn 'em roun and roun, as pretty as you can;
An' why in the world don't you left alaman,
Right hand to pardner and grand right and left,
And a big, big swing, an' a little hug too,
Swing your honey and she'll swing you,
Promenade eight, when you get all straight.
First couple out to the right;
Cage the bird, three hands round;
Birdie hop out, and crow hop in,

³⁶ *Indiana Magazine of History*, II, 4.

Three hands round, and go it again;
Alaman left, back to the pardner and grand right and left,
Come to your pardner, an' a half,
Yellar canary right, and jay-bird left;
Next to your pardner and all chaw hay,
You know where and I don't care,
Seat your pardner in the old arm chair.³⁷

The dancing was vigorous. They knew little of glides, and high steps with flourishing swings were altogether good form. A jig or a "hoe-down" was often thrown in, and some of the gay young fellows could "cut the pigeon's wing" or throw in an extra "double shuffle" to fill out the measure. In later years round dances such as the waltz, polka, and schottische were introduced, much to the dissatisfaction of the old time dancers who had difficulty in acquiring the new setps. Some even refused to learn, claiming that they were new fangled, "citified" notions after all, and quite beneath the notice of a true dancer.

A special form of dancing was the dancing picnic, a reminder of which we still have at the country fourth of July celebrations. People came to a new barn or a green lawn, but more often to some beautiful grove, with baskets of dinner to spend the day in social converse and enjoyment, heightened by a dance in the afternoon. A circular piece of ground was cleared off and covered with green, new saw-dust. Seats were provided around this. A platform on one side was provided for the musicians. Those who danced "paid the fiddler" but all were welcome. This form of dancing was introduced from the South.

SOCIAL GAMES

In some sections of the State dancing was not approved. Drinking and disorder had become so prevalent at such gatherings that ministers and church people made war upon the entertainment and drove it from the better neighborhoods altogether. In such communities the chief amusements were forfeit games and marching games. "Keeping Post Office," "Picking Cherries," and "Building the Bridge," were forfeit games. The forfeits were always kisses. Marching plays had in them all the elements of a dance. In fact "Sociability," "Weev'ly wheat," and "Four Hands Around" were often called compromise dances. Because kissing always formed the chief feature of marching plays, they came to be known familiarly as "gum sucks." "We're Marching Down to Old Quebec,"

³⁷ Levering, *Historic Indiana*, index.

"Sailing on the Boat When the Tide Runs High," "King William was King James' Son", "Old Dusty Miller", and many others, equally interesting, were in high favor with the pioneer belles and beaux. They were sung as the players marched, often with little regard for time or rhythm, but with unbounded energy; and many of them were so similar in air and measure that one selection readily glided into another. A common marching song ran:

Just from Shiloh, skiptumaloo,
 Just from Shiloh, skiptumaloo,
 Just from Shiloh, skiptumaloo,
 Skiptumaloo my darling.

Another which was sung with much gusto was:

Keep one window, tidy oh,
 Keep two windows, tidy oh,
 Keep three windows, tidy oh,
 Jingle at the window, tidy oh,
 Jingle at the window, tidy oh,

Another which in movement was practically a Virginia Reel ran:

Do-ce-do, to your best liking,
 Do-ce-do, to your best liking,
 Do-ce-do, to your best liking,
 And swing your love so handy.

The parties always closed with kissing songs. One was:

Down on this carpet you must kneel,
 And kiss your true love in the field;
 Kiss the one that you confess
 To be the one that you love best;
 Kiss her now and kiss her then,
 And kiss her when you meet again.

SLEIGH RIDES

In winter young people had real unalloyed fun. The bob-sled was an important factor in winter enjoyment. It consisted of two short pairs of runners set tandem fashion, the front pair responding freely to the tongue like the front wheels of a wagon. Thus it afforded extra length for a sleigh. At the same time it allowed turns to be safely made. When surmounted by a big box-bed partially filled with clean straw it made a snug warm nest for a dozen or more boys and girls. Probably no social crowd was so hilarious as a jolly bob-sled party on a bright moonlight night. The big runners sang a song to the crisp white snow, and the night resounded with flying hoofs and jangling bells and the gay songs of boys and

girls. Doubtless the old bobsled was a strong factor in promoting early marriages, for a half-score of buxom girls and husky young men crowded within the compass of the bed of a sleigh was a powerful stimulus to love's young dream. Sleigh-riding to the spelling match or to the singing school was the great joy of the winter months.³⁸

THE SPELLING SCHOOL

One of the chief public entertainments of the early settlers was the spelling school.³⁹ It was looked forward to with much anticipation and anxiety. When the time came the whole neighborhood, or even several neighborhoods, came together for an intellectual contest. Two young people chose sides, and the teacher who was master of ceremonies pronounced the words. They spelled in various ways, each section having its favorite method. Sometimes they spelled across, sometimes "word-catchers" were employed, again the "spelledown" process was the means of determining the contest. After the match the country swains took the girls home, often by very round-a-bout ways.

SINGING SCHOOLS

Singing schools were scarcely less popular than the spelling matches.⁴⁰ They served the double purpose of social gatherings and schools of vocal instruction. The meetings were usually held on Sunday afternoon in a district schoolhouse or church. Here the local singing master, with his tuning fork in his hand and without any accompaniment taught the whole neighborhood to read buckwheat notes and sing sacred songs from the old song books. In the early books, like the *Sacred Melodeon*, *Christian Psalmist* and *Missouri Harmony*, the tunes were represented by four buckwheat notes; the round one called "sol," the square on "la," the triangular one "fa" and the diamond shaped on "mi." They were repeated to make the full octave. About 1850 the round note system was introduced by Yankee singing masters. The pioneer book of the new system was the *Carmina Sacra* in which the tunes were of German or Puritan character, and, naturally, not so well accepted by the old folks as the early songs which they had learned in their youth. A charge of fifty to seventy-five cents per pupil for a term of twelve lessons was made. Not infrequently several masters were conducting

³⁸ *Indiana Magazine of History*, II, 56.

³⁹ *History of Johnson County*, 267-269.

⁴⁰ *Indiana Magazine of History*, II, 51-52; *History of Johnson County*, 269-270.

schools in the same neighborhood. Joint meetings were often held at which there was great rivalry between the classes. Singers were chosen very much as in spelling matches. At the price charged classes frequently became too large for the room. So attractive was the work that young Quakers (the Quaker church then opposed singing) were often enrolled, and it is due to this that the second generation of Quakers has changed its attitude toward music.

DEBATING SOCIETIES

Debating clubs, moot courts, and mock legislatures were common, especially in the smaller villages of Indiana. They furnished an opportunity for social fellowship and afforded practice in impromptu speaking and parliamentary usage. Many of the State's great statesmen, orators, and thinkers received their first inspiration at these meetings. A literary society was found in almost every neighborhood in the early fifties. Joint meetings were often held with neighboring societies. The modern literary club originated in the old Hoosier "Literaries."

WEDDINGS

A wedding was always an event of the greatest importance because it meant a season of feasting and frolic for young and old, lasting several days.⁴¹ Young people in the early days were married much earlier than they are today. A boy of sixteen or seventeen was counted on to do a man's part in the farm work, in hunting, or in scouting against the Indians. There was no inequality of social position or wealth to blight the hopes of cupid, for all occupied practically the same position in life. Money was not necessary. Intoxicating health balanced the lack of a bank account. Money of any kind was very scarce in those days, so scarce that fathers often found it difficult to make financial provision for the legal part of the ceremony. The country swain, in his cowhide boots, and suit of blue jeans, was awkward and self-conscious, but he had a kind heart; and his lady love in her dress of linsey-woolsey was as shy and bashful as he. The following story told by a descendant of a pioneer characterizes the timid lover.⁴² One evening a young pioneer dressed in his Sunday-best went to call upon a comely girl who lived in the neighborhood. When he entered the home he

⁴¹ Hall, *The New Purchase*, I, 153-184; Cockrum, *A Pioneer History of Indiana*, 158.

⁴² *Indiana Magazine of History*, II, 87.

found that all the chairs and stools in the cabin were occupied by visiting neighbors. The embarrassed young man slipped back into the corner of the room where there was a large kettle filled with blue dye, covered with a cloth. The poor fellow, thinking he had discovered a resting place for his awkward form, sat down in it, falling in head and heels in his new tow linen suit. When last seen he was fleeing from the place like a blue streak in the moonlight. The expression, "went like a blue streak" may have originated in that incident. But courtships in those days were as successful as in these, and a marriageable girl that found no husband was considered unfortunate indeed.

Everybody in the entire neighborhood knew he would be invited to the marriage celebration. In fact in most communities no invitation was needed; the latch string was out to all who wished to come, especially to neighbors. In some cases, however, those who wished to do something beyond the ordinary sent a written invitation to the intended guests. A single invitation was sent to all of them, the groomsman riding from house to house with the "invite" as it was called. This important document was composed by the local schoolmaster. Almost every neighborhood had a local preacher who was empowered to perform the ceremony, and there were squires also who could tie a knot for very reasonable fee. The following interesting note was sent to a local minister asking him to perform a marriage ceremony:⁴³

REV. MR. HILSBURY ESQ.,—you are perticularly invited to attend the house of mr. Abrim Ashford esq. to injine upon i the yoke of konjigal mattrimunny with his doter miss Susan Ashford as was—Thersday mornin next 10 oklok before dinner a.m.

MR. JOSEPH REDDEN your humbell sarv't,

MR. WM. WELDON, groomsman.

On the nuptial day the bridegroom and his best fellows usually ten, gathered at his father's home, and all went to the home of the bride, timing their progress so as to arrive about noon. In connection with this journey, a diversion called "running for the bottle" was often indulged in. Two of the best mounted were selected to compete. When within a half mile of the bride's home the word was given and the two started out at breakneck speed. The one who first reached a designated spot became the winner of the prize, a bottle of corn whiskey, with which he treated the remainder of the party when they came up.

⁴³ Hall, *The New Purchase*, I, 155.

The guests usually came on horseback. The men folks went ahead to direct the way through the woods, clear away the brush, and let down the fences.

Wedding garments in those days were entirely homemade like everything else; but the bride in her dress of linsey-woolsey and the groom in his shining new cowhide boots were as well married as any modern bride and groom, even if they did not carry themselves with the same ease and grace.

The ceremony was usually performed about twelve o'clock in the day, although it sometimes took place as late as three o'clock. After the words were pronounced the important part of the celebration—so far as the guests were concerned—began. Great preparations were made for the wedding meal. Tribute was levied upon the whole neighborhood; so in a literal way the whole neighborhood was interested in the event. Dishes of china, pewter, and silver; spoons of pewter, wood and horn; table linen; all things necessary for the occasion, were collected from various parts of the settlement. So few china dishes were possessed that scarce a whole neighborhood could set a wedding table. The menu consisted of the best that the land could afford. Often a monster potpie, holding from ten to twelve chickens, occupied the center of the table.⁴⁴ Potpie was a favorite dish with the early woodsman. Meats of all kinds, (wild meat was plentiful) steaming cornbread, potatoes, onions, pumpkin, butter, pies, preserves of all kinds, wild honey, and delicious pound cakes, weighted down the long rough table which was covered with a piece of white linen that had lain in the garden for weeks to bleach. Around this board the hungry people were seated, the bride and groom at one end, and the bridesmaid and groomsman at the other. After the dinner the old folks returned to their homes, but the young folks always remained for a dance that lasted frequently until the next morning. The happy party played games and tripped away to the merry tunes of the sleepy old fiddler.

THE INFARE

The infare, the wedding reception at the home of the groom's father the next day, was a repetition of the entertainment of the previous day.⁴⁵ The same people gathered, the young men again raced for the bottle, and all had a feast of good things, followed by another dance at night.

⁴⁴ Hall, *The New Purchase*, I, 181-184.

⁴⁵ Cockrum, *A Pioneer History of Indiana*, 186.

Little capital was needed to start a new home. The young people were content to begin life as their fathers and mothers before them had done, with nothing more than what they could manufacture with their own hands. Money was not to be had. The following story illustrates the lack of coin and the scant capital with which some marriages were consummated.⁴⁶ A certain "squire" Jones saw a young man ride up with a young lady behind him. They dismounted; he hitched his horse and they went toward the house and were invited to be seated. After waiting a few minutes the young man asked if he were the "squire." He informed him that he was. He then asked the squire what he charged for tying the knot. "You mean for marry you?"—"Yes sir."—"One dollar," said the squire—"Will you take it in trade?"—"What kind of trade,"—"Beeswax."—"Bring it in." The young man returned to where the horse was tied, and brought in the beeswax, but it lacked forty cents of being enough to pay the bill. After sitting pensive for some minutes the young man went to the door and said, "Well Sal, let's be going." Sal followed slowly to the door, when, turning to the justice, with an entreating look, she said: "Well, Squire, can't you tie the knot as far as the beeswax goes anyhow?" And he did and they were married.

TRAINING DAY

In the county town was held the general muster which was a meeting of the militia of the county for the purpose of instruction and drill. It was held late in the summer after the crops had been "laid by." All persons subject to military duty were notified to attend and take their places in the company and regiment to which they were assigned. The militiamen were not uniformed but came in ordinary clothing. Their weapons were of no particular pattern—rifles, shotguns, carbines, and muskets—and with them they awkwardly went through the manual of arms. This military force was often called the "corn stalk" militia, because it is said they carried corn-stalks in place of guns.⁴⁷ This doubtless is untrue, but some times they wore corn tassels in their hats or caps, which fact may have given rise to the sobriquet.

CIRCUS DAY

In many of the communities a circus came once a year in the summer. In the rough vernacular of the people it was called the

⁴⁶ Levering, *Historic Indiana*, 90.

⁴⁷ Turpie, *Sketches of My Own Times*, 31-32.

“show” even if it was advertised under such high sounding names as the “hippodrome” or the amphitheater.” It traveled by the ordinary country roads, and the people turned out en masse to see the elephant cross the river. At high noon the grand entry into the village was made with gorgeous chariots, horseback processions, and martial music. The whole country attended, and the big tent was filled with simple people, gazing in open-mouthed wonder at the astonishing feats performed in the ring.

On Saturday afternoon the early Hoosiers went to town. It was a holiday and no man was expected to work. A load of produce might be taken for sale or barter, but no serious labor was tolerated. Here the farmers transacted a little business, “swapped” horses, and exchanged gossip with their neighbors.