

Editor's Pages
SIX LONG YEARS GO BY
WILLIAM O. LYNCH

Several things that were significant in my life happened between the fall of 1890 and that of 1896.¹ To me those years passed slowly. Certainly they did not sweep along at such a rate as have similar periods since 1920. Then I was impatient to reach the end of each year, but for a long time now I have ceased to rejoice over the closing of any year. Once there seemed plenty of time ahead to accomplish the things that I expected to do, but today so many remain unfinished, or not even started, that I can only hope to complete a meager part. I think it was well to plan much, and I am glad that I still have the desire to carry on and add a little more to the modest total.

I began to teach in October, 1890. I was married in June of 1894. In June, 1896, I completed my course in the Indiana State Normal School. In September of that year, I became a teacher in the high school of Elkhart, Indiana. My first five years of teaching were done in my native county.² After three years in country schools, each in a different township, I was given the principalship of a village school. This was a new three-room school, formed by the abandonment of two country schools—one about a half mile west and the other about an equal distance east of the town of Yeoman. The following year, my last in Carroll County, I spent at Camden, where I was in charge of a long established four-room school.

After the close of my first term, which ended on the last Saturday in January due to a shortage of funds in Deer Creek Township, I entered the Indiana State Normal School in Terre Haute. The quarter was half gone when I took up the work in four regular classes.³ I passed in three of the courses and

¹ The first chapter of this autobiography appeared in March, 1936, and other chapters have followed regularly since, one in each successive issue. I attempted to persuade several different persons, who reached maturity before 1900, to write their life stories. In each case I failed, and, hoping that no reader would take offence at my boldness, I finally started to tell my own story. The present is the sixth chapter or installment.—*Editor*.

² The three country schools were: "Plank-road" School, in Deer Creek Township; Heistand School, in Madison Township; Dimmitt School in Jefferson Township. In 1893-94, I was principal of the Yeoman Schools in Jefferson Township, and the next year of the Camden Schools in Jackson Township.

³ Having decided to attend the State Normal School, I wrote a letter of inquiry to President William W. Parsons. His reply discouraged entrance at the middle of the quarter, but I wrote again. Being young and innocent, I stated that if "hard work and honest endeavor" could bring success, I believe that I should win in the struggle. This statement and the fact that the schools in my township were closing prematurely brought a second reply which was favorable.

was given credit for the second-half of the course in the fourth subject. In addition, I was given credit in the pennmanship course. I do not mean that it was easy to earn credits in the institution. On the contrary, the members of the faculty seemed to hand out failures rather lavishly. Indeed there were few institutions where the rule that students must work or retire from the scene was more rigidly applied. I remained through the succeeding quarter of 1891, and returned for the spring quarters of 1894 and 1895. I did not teach the next year, but spent the three quarters in the Normal School from which I was graduated in June, 1896.⁴

The free, public schools of Indiana were operating successfully before I was six years old. It is, therefore, still very difficult for me to realize that the system had really been established less than twenty years when I began to teach in 1890. Much progress has been made since, but it would be impossible to name another period in any state or country where a more rapid advance in education was made than in Indiana from 1873 to 1890. In the rural school that I attended for nine years before entering high school, and, in each of the country and town schools with which I was connected as a teacher, the attendance was remarkably regular, textbooks were purchased by almost every family as a matter of course, and rather unusual progress was made by the pupils. My astonishment, when I think of all this, is all the greater when I remember the newness of the school system, the meager training of the teachers, and the absence of truant officers. The reasons seem to be: that, having waited long for the coming of a free school in every neighborhood, there was a very general spirit of appreciation and pride on the part of the people; that, though the training of most teachers was woefully inadequate, a great many of them were devoted to their work and concentrated with much determination on the subjects that they were required to teach; that, in a period of few interesting activities, going to school surpassed everything else in appeal to the children who made up the classes to be taught.

My first school was large, I was inexperienced, and I

⁴In all, I was in residence six full quarters and two half quarters. By earning practically the full number of hours for a quarter in each of the half quarters mentioned and carrying extra work during my senior year, I was able to complete the "old four-year course" (three years for high school graduates) in less than the nine quarters. It was still true, in my period (1891-1896) that most of the students were not high school graduates.

knew the boys and girls well, since it was in the home district. For these reasons, I fear that I did a rather poor job. However, I did not fail. In my second school, there were fewer pupils and I was somewhat better prepared. It seems to me that I must have done fairly well under the circumstances. In any event I began to feel an urge to make teaching a life work. For my third year as a teacher, the fates took me to a district in a distant part of the county where I was unacquainted. In this particular school, the pupils had been very poorly taught for a few years by a plodding, unprepared, but opinionated man. It was not only necessary to interest the younger children and show them how to work, but the older ones as well. There was little chance to make any headway with the pupils in the second, third and fourth years until they were taught to write and to read script. It was a discouraging task. At the end of six weeks of labor, I felt that I had exhausted my resources without noticeable results. I had reached a crisis. As I walked toward the home where I had engaged room and board about an hour after the close of school,⁵ I resolved to go back one more day. If I could convince myself that some progress was being made, I would stay—if not, I would quit. I knew a young man who held a teacher's license but who had no job. I was sure that he could be induced to step into my shoes. I do not know why, but things seemed to go better the next day, so I remained at my post and I am still a teacher. I have always felt that I not only taught the boys and girls of that school with some success, but that I somehow lifted them to a higher level of living.

My first year as principal was one of the most delightful of my teaching career. My job was to supervise the work of a primary teacher and an intermediate teacher and to teach the classes of the seventh and eighth years. Compared to my previous work in handling one-room country schools, this was an inspiring task. There was nothing to distract my attention and I was able to make the most of my opportunity. At the close of the year, I accepted an offer from the trustee of Jackson Township to take charge of the schools at Camden. My salary at Yeoman was \$2.75 per day for twenty-one days per month, including pay for one Saturday each month on which

⁵I lived during the term in the home of John Million, which was located about a half mile west of the school house. The family was one of the finest that I have ever had the opportunity to know.

day I was required to attend the Township Institute. Had I remained at Yeoman, I was to have been advanced by twenty-five cents per day. Since I would be paid \$84 per month at Camden, including the "institute fee," with a term of seven instead of six-months, I naturally made the change. The new salary was regarded as very good in 1894, when the country was in the grip of a great depression. In general the wages of teachers were low before the coming of the panic of 1893, but there was no reduction during the hard times, certainly no general cut in salaries such as teachers experienced in the recent depression.

Though I was the first principal at Yeoman, there had been a number of predecessors at Camden. Several of them were able men who rose to higher positions in the educational world. The three teachers associated with me cared for the pupils of the first seven years, leaving me to handle the eighth grade and to introduce the freshman work of the high school as it was then organized in Indiana. I need not say that I had a busy year. There were several bright pupils, with some from homes of considerable culture. The town furnished most of the children, though there were a few from the country. A good many new problems of discipline had to be faced, and it was hard to arouse general or genuine interest in any subject. In short, I found myself in the midst of a community that was too thoroughly sophisticated to get the most out of life. This was a stage that the town had reached not long before and which it tended to pass out of in a year or two. I was young and inexperienced, had only a year of college training plus four months in a business college, and I had neither traveled nor read widely. I had, however, ambition, a curiosity that enabled me to learn, and a fresh outlook on life. Working under several handicaps, I did as much as I could for the school and solved some problems that left a smoother pathway for my successor. Near the end of the term, I handed in my resignation, probably not a necessary procedure, as I feel pretty certain that the newly elected trustee intended to bestow the principalship on another man regardless of any claim that I may have had to be considered.

While I was teaching in Carroll County, I had to deal with four different township trustees as well as the county superintendent of schools. The latter was Charles W. Metsker,

a young man, perhaps ten years older than myself.⁶ He had spent but a short time in college, but he was intelligent and devoted to his work. He was unusually kind to me and showed too much, rather than too little, appreciation of whatever I was able to accomplish. The first township trustee who employed me had been a blacksmith⁷ for many years before he was elected to this public office. He was a substantial man in his community, with a large family, who maintained an equality with the families of the farmers of the neighborhood. The second trustee for whom I worked was an honest, kind, old man who meant well.⁸ At the close of my term in 1892, he told me that he was planning to shift me to a different district possibly to the principalship of a two room school. To the last named place, he appointed a man with more experience. The other school went to a man who canvassed the patrons of the district and obtained their signatures to a petition asking the trustee to hire him. This was a common practice. The plan worked in this case, and I was out entirely. On the recommendation of the county superintendent and the kind, old trustee just mentioned, I was given the Dimmitt School in Jefferson Township.

The trustee who employed me for the two years from 1892 to 1894, was a farmer with a very limited education and no polish.⁹ He imbibed a little too freely on occasion but possessed native intelligence and had developed good judgment. It was a pleasure to work with him. He was fair to every one and did much to improve the schools of his township. The last township trustee to engage me was a physician of Camden.¹⁰ He was a man of considerable latent force who talked very little. He did nothing whatever to hinder me in my work, but I cannot recall that he made a single suggestion to me during the seven months. When, at the end of the school term, I informed him that I had resigned to spend the next year in school, stating that I might wish a testimonial when

⁶The first term of Mr. Metsker began in 1891, a Mr. Barnes being his immediate predecessor. The term of County Superintendent was then two years. Re-elected in 1893, Mr. Metsker served four more years without the necessity of an election in 1895. This was due to the fact that a new act changing the time of election was pronounced unconstitutional by the Indiana Supreme Court. Superintendents then in office continued to serve until their "successors were elected and qualified". After his period as county superintendent, Mr. Metsker spent the rest of his life as a ward principal, first in Bellingham, and later in Seattle, Washington, where he died about six years ago.

⁷ James A. Arnott.

⁸ James St. John.

⁹ John Dilling.

¹⁰ Dr. Charles Camp.

seeking a position after graduation from the Normal School, he looked me over carefully and said very deliberately: "When the time comes write whatever you care to and I will sign it."

In the summer before taking up my work in Camden, on June 27, 1894, to be exact, I was married to the daughter of a farmer who had come into our neighborhood in the spring of 1889. A little less than twenty years of age at the time of our marriage, this young woman whom I led to the altar had spent two quarters in the Normal School at Terre Haute and had taught one term. I rented a small cottage, which still stands on the same spot in a good state of preservation, for five dollars per month. When I had purchased enough furniture for this modest home, I was a little less than even with the world. I was soon to earn \$84 per month, so I saw no reason to worry over a small debt. Living costs were low at the time. We could buy choice steaks at ten and twelve cents per pound. We could buy choice steaks at ten and twelve cents though not unreasonable in price could hardly be purchased as cheaply as now. This was because ready-to-wear garments for men and women were still very unsatisfactory in the eighteen-nineties. To be well-dressed, a woman must buy the cloth and take it to a dressmaker, while a man who liked to wear properly fitting suits must go to the tailor. Shoes were not expensive, standard brands both for men and women selling for from \$2.50 to \$3.00 per pair. When I bought the first pair of shoes for Bertha Thomas Lynch, she had been my wife for about a week. They cost me \$3.50. In that day this was regarded as a rather fancy price, and to pay as much as \$5.00 for a pair of men's shoes was looked upon as a foolish extravagance.

The panic of 1893 and the years of business stagnation that followed, I remember only too well. The depression did not end with the election of 1896, but lasted through 1897 and 1898. If ever there was a period of hard times when society, through its great democratic agencies, federal, state and local governments, did nothing to bring about recovery, the years from 1893 to 1899, certainly constituted that period. The moving picture and the automobile had not yet come. The entertainment which vast numbers receive from athletic contests, collegiate and professional, except on a very small scale, was unknown. Business was not only dead in the depression of the nineties, but it looked the part. During those periods

there was little movement. People stayed at home as much as possible. During the recent depression, moving-picture houses repeated performances several times daily. Great crowds attended baseball, basket-ball, and football games. Automobiles were constantly speeding along highways and over the streets of the nation's cities. Not only this, but everywhere laborers were employed in order that their families might live and that business and manufacturing might be stimulated through the increased purchasing power created by work projects for those who would otherwise have been idle.

Farm prices were not very high at any time during the two decades following 1873, but were much above the depression level of the years following 1893. There was nevertheless a good deal of discontent among farmers during the last years prior to the panic. When I returned from the Normal School at the end of June in 1891, I found that a chapter of the Farmers' Alliance had been formed in the home neighborhood. Tillers of the soil, with their wives, sons and daughters, had almost all joined the organization. Of course much the same thing had been happening over the Middle West, in the South, and in the great plains area for some time and the movement was still on. Democrats and Republicans alike showed enthusiasm for the aims of the Alliance. A staunch Republican told me that there would be nothing left of the two old parties by the time of the campaign of 1892. As far as he was concerned, his vote had been cast for Republican candidates in the past, but in the future he would vote for his own interests. For a time this sentiment was quite common among the men of the community. The local Alliance chapter struck out against the existing régime to the extent of pooling orders for sugar, tobacco and a few other commodities, but that was about as far as local action went. In many places, grain elevators were purchased by farmer groups in an attempt to save the "excess" profits that were being garnered in by the middlemen.

The campaign of 1892 found most of the Alliance men of Indiana back in the ranks of the old parties, and Carroll County, though an agricultural community, was no exception to the rule. Indiana was too far east to be much affected by Populism, the true home of which was the eastern, or more heavily peopled, portion of the semi-arid plains, plus consid-

erable parts of the South. In 1892, the voters of my home county, like those of most of the country, were absorbed by the discussion of the tariff question. The pageantry that had been so characteristic of many previous campaigns was conspicuous by its absence. As never before, Democrats and Republicans read arguments and listened to speeches on both sides of the question. Carroll County, at the end of the contest of 1888, when the tariff was first discussed extensively, gave Harrison electors 2,607 votes as against 2,560 for Cleveland electors. Four years later, after a more intense tariff controversy, the returns for Carroll County showed 2,361 for Cleveland electors and 2,230 for Harrison electors. The Populist electors, James B. Weaver being the candidate, received 237 votes.¹¹ In 1894, in the midst of hard times with Democrats in power, the swing was back to the Republicans. In the presidential elections of 1888 and 1892 and likewise in the congressional elections of 1894, the voters of agricultural Carroll responded to changing currents very much as did Indiana and the nation. My first vote was cast in 1892. The Australian ballot system was used for the first time in Indiana in 1890. The election of 1888 had all too completely demonstrated the need of a new system of voting, and the use of official ballots that must be marked in voting booths meant a very timely and wholesome reform. I am sure, however, that the honest men from the country-side felt somewhat ashamed that widespread purchase of votes had made the new method of balloting necessary.

When my school term ended in 1893, I did not go away to school, but entered into a farming arrangement with my father. We rented some ground from a neighbor and planted an extra field of corn. My expenses were small, but I did not do well as a farmer. A long drouth cut the production very low. I was to have had our half of the corn from the rented field. When corn-husking time arrived, that half was traded for a cow. The price of cattle had already fallen on account of the panic, but my father succeeded in making a sale. Since I was already teaching and therefore earning money again, I accepted only half the selling price of the cow. With this sum

¹¹ The three parties together did not poll as large a vote in 1892 as the combined vote of the two major parties in 1888. The Democrats carried the County in 1892, but the Democratic voters were fewer than four years earlier. The Populists drew votes from both the old parties. The falling off in the total seems to have been due largely to the lack of interest in the election displayed by the "floaters". In 1888 this class had been unduly "stimulated" to participate in the balloting.

I purchased a very pretty, simple, gold ring, with a small but genuine stone. This represented the total return on my outlay of capital and labor during the period from the middle of April to the middle of October, but it made me very happy to bestow the ring on the girl of my choice who wears it yet.

I have mentioned that I resigned my position as principal of the Camden Schools in the spring of 1895, in order to complete my course in the Normal School during the following academic year.¹² By attending the spring quarter immediately following the close of my school term, I was able to do this. During the summer of 1895, I taught in a local "normal", or summer review term for teachers, as I had done the summer before and as I did again the next year.¹³ These "normals" were common for a good many years, but passed out quickly after colleges and normal schools established summer sessions. The local "normals" usually ran for six or eight weeks. The teaching was divided between two instructors, and fees were collected from the teachers and prospective teachers who attended. The tuition was five dollars for six weeks and seven dollars for eight weeks. The total garnered in was divided between the instructors who shared the small expense of the venture. No credits were earned and nobody failed. There can be no regrets that such schools passed out of existence, but they served a purpose in their day. During each of the three summers when I was connected with such "normals", I taught United States history, reading, and methods. I cannot honestly say that I did not enjoy the work. I should add that most of the students were really interested in the subjects taught and actually accomplished something.

At the end of the summer, my young wife and I packed our furniture for the first time and shipped it to Terre Haute. There we rented a part of a house, owned by a charming, intelligent, old Irish woman, who lived in the rest of the house alone. At the end of the year, we packed our household goods again and stored them till fall, when we had them shipped to Elkhart, where I had obtained a "position" in the high school.

¹² My plan is to deal with the Indiana State Normal School, as I knew it from 1891 to 1896, in the September issue of the *Magazine*.

¹³ During the six-weeks session of 1894, the "normal" was held in the school building at Camden, my colleague being George Grosjean. In 1895 the session was again held in Camden and ran for eight weeks. Cary D. Landis, now Attorney General for the State of Florida, was my co-laborer. In the summer of 1896, the review session was held in Flora. It ran for six weeks and Isaac F. Myer was the other instructor. Mr. Myer was later County Superintendent and since that period has been in the insurance business. He now lives in Indianapolis.

We still possess a few pieces of the household furniture and some of the dishes that we purchased in 1894, though we have since that time lived in twenty-four houses, stored our effects six times, and shipped our belongings from one town or city to another by train or truck nine times—not a low record, surely, even for a college professor.