I guess he’s going to let us figure it out for ourselves. It would seem that these time-conscious correspondents are in a sort of traveling marathon wherein they must report the “when” and “how long” of all they do. One grows breathless just reading their cards.

Time was indirectly one of my childhood’s greatest disillusionments. Father Christmas and Father Time, hand in hand, tottered across my rosy infant’s horizon teaching me that things are not what they seem. Father Christmas, the vague, intangible “spirit,” was offered as an ever inadequate substitute for the jolly red-faced man of the sleighbells. About this time too, I learned to tell time—was taught the glowing significance of the quaint features of clocks—learned that those ticking monsters kept rigid check on how long I was good or naughty. It was their doing that called me in from play—made me eat when I wasn’t hungry—sent me to bed “by day.” “It’s time to come in” or “it’s time to go to bed” seemed most illogical to me—that people should be regulated by such chiming little nuisances.

Why didn’t mamma regulate them—set them forward or back to suit the occasion?

The only clock I ever really liked was one that lived in a little country town in my aunt’s parlor. Its virtue was that it was always at least half an hour slow. This, thought I, is a clock with a sense of humor. If someone didn’t keep check on it, it would lose so rapidly that soon today would be yesterday, and so on until one would drift deliciously back into the last week without even bothering. Too, its face was adorned with many colored, revolving planets which showed that it had a broader conception of time than merely quibbling over hours.

I can never be as happy again as I was before I had any knowledge of man’s careful division of time by means of clocks. Before I understood timepieces, what bliss! I could wake in the morning into a wondrous eternity. I didn’t know how long the day was or how long it stayed dark—and I didn’t care. Now there are little round glass-eyed consciences leering at me from every desk or mantel-piece in the house—recording my hours of idleness, checking my comings and goings—calling me from contemplation and dreams into attention and action.

According to Ovid, time is the best doctor. True, I know him as a universal surgeon who, without a tremor removes my young and happy hours one by one by one—and, provided there are no more miracles, he will finally amputate me altogether!

Keeper Of The Pump

Max Stuckey

Judge Sylvester Matewan puffed laboriously on a black cigar. He twirled a gold penknife on the end of a heavy watch chain and glanced meditatively up the dusty street.

In front of the general store two grey-haired men sit on boxes. A checkerboard rests between them, and they sit for hours without a word. Three or four young men sit on empty barrels and watch. When the old men die two of the young men will inherit the checkerboard and boxes.

Hardly less lifelike than the checker players, a stodgy wooden Indian holds a fistful of decaying wooden cigars, while across the street, in front of the jewelry store, a big tin
watch says three-thirty. It has been three-thirty in front of the jewelry store for half a century.

Judge Matewan eyed this familiar scene with a sense of propriety. The judge was not exactly an imposing figure. He was rather small in stature, but made up for it in circumference. His rotund waist was solid and substantial.

He stopped in front of the station platform to address a group of Winfield's better citizens. He waved a hand dramatically at Martin Olsen whose slim angular form provided a blue serge drapery for the town pump during most of Winfield's waking hours.

"Now, gentlemen, there is an illustration to my point." Judge Matewan cougnea with political finesse over the too-strong effect of his cigar. "That man and I were boyhood commons. Through hard work I have arisen to my place of dignity. Martin washes the pump. He excels at nothing."

As if to belie the judge's exhortation, Martin Olsen jerked his head backward, screwed his left eye into a mass of wrinkles, and with a faint "plop" dropped a stream of tobacco juice on an unfortunate horse-fly. He leaned back complacently and squinted one eye to see better the dignified waddle of the approaching Sylvester and friends.

The Judge's listeners gaped in assumed awe as he expressed his views on the day's news as parcelled out by the Winfield Weekly Ledger. "Now I think the schools in this county could be run on half the money allotted. They need new blood in the school system. I think I shall drop my present duties and run for County Superintendent this Fall."

Martin Olsen spat disdainfully and grunted.

"Good morning, Martin."
"Mornin', Silver."

Sylvester Matewan grunted.Suddenly his fat face split in a patronizing smile. "The money I loaned you yesterday will carry you through until Fall?" The judge glanced out of the corner of his eyes to be sure his voice had carried to everyone.

There was a slight "plop" and a puddle of water near the judge splashed and faded into a waveless pool. "I reckon it'll last, but th' interest is so high I don't 'low I'll make enough to buy tobaccer."

Judge Matewan covered his chagrin by taking a shiny cup from a bent wire and pumping vigorously on the worn pump handle. The pump groaned squeakily, sputtered halfheartedly; then there was a deep gurgle in its throat, and silence.

Miss Hodgeson swooped down upon the disgruntled judge. Miss Hodgeson was an aged spinster. The years had withered her like a sun-dried apple, sharpened her tongue, and put a glint of sarcasm in her grey eyes.

The judge bowed and tipped his hat.

"Judge, Mrs. Barnard just told me Senator Morris is coming through here on the 4:41. There is a big landslide at Scott and the 4.41 will probably stop here. It always does every time there is a slide up there."

Judge Matewan nodded his head. "It will be an excellent opportunity for me to discuss some important questions with the senator. No doubt he will be grateful for the work I did for him last election. I am a staunch admirer of the senator. You know, we have corresponded with each other."

The forgotten Olsen spat disdainfully at a nearby tobacco can, and snapped his fingers as he missed. Miss Hodgeson eyed him witheringly.

"Sylvester, I think there should be an ordinance against loafing around the town pump. A lady can't get a
drink with tobacco-chewing bums draped over it."

The judge nodded. Martin Olsen grunted, causing Miss Hodgeson to look sharply at him as she thought she heard him say, "Lady? Huh!"

The 4:41 pulled into the garish yellow station. It chugged onto the siding and began puffing wheezingly.

Senator Morris pulled out a heavy gold watch, twisted the item, and cursed his secretary.

"How long are we in this dump?"
"Until the track is cleared, sir."

The senator cursed again. "Couldn't they pick out a better place to stop? This town has been dead so long the station looks like a tombstone." The blare of a six piece band halted the senator.

"Where's that ungodly noise coming from?" he asked the secretary. He stepped out upon the platform, and there, to greet him, was Judge Sylvester Matewan, and the population of Winfield, including all the dogs, most of the cats, and a smattering of poultry. Judge Matewan wore a black derby hat like the senator's, a black frock coat like the senator's, and a shiny purple tie not like the senator's.

"Welcome to Winfield, Senator. I am Sylvester Matewan, in some ways a judge and mayor, but in all ways a good democrat."

Senator Morris shook the extended hand, and nodded to the cheering populace—populace except for Olsen who was draped, as usual, across the pump, eyeing the train with half-closed eyes.

The entire mass moved toward the pump, headed by the senator and Judge Sylvester.

The senator stopped, facing Martin. "I haven't seen a pump like that since I was a boy in Marietta. Young man, how about pumping me a drink?"

"Yore hand sore, guv'nor?"

The senator looked up in surprise, saw a twinkle in the blue eyes, and laughed.

Judge Matewan elbowed Olsen away and began to pump vigorously. There followed the dying moans and gurgles but not a drop of water.

Olsen smiled, retrieved the handle, and in a dozen quick powerful strokes had the pump splashing water all over the senator's shiny black shoes. The senator stepped back until the force subsided. When it had died down he stepped forward. He eyed the cup suspiciously.

"Just a moment, senator, I'll get you a cup from the store." The judge started to hurry away.

Olsen protested. "Ain't nothin' wrong with that cup. Ever'body in town drinks out of it, an' nobody ain' caught nothin' yet."

Sylvester grunted. The senator laughed and stuck the cup under the mouth of the pump.

"Ah," he said, "delicious." Senator Morris paused with the cup half way on its second trip. Martin Olsen had leaned back dangerously, squinted one eye, and with a lurch and an accompanying "plop" a compact stream of brown described a perfect parabola and lit with a dull thud in the center of a Prince Albert can fifteen feet away.

"Remarkable," said the senator. "Let me see you do that again."

"I can give ye the best stuff in the state, but ye'll have to come with me fer it. I live—" Olsen stopped whispering as he saw Miss Hodgeson edge nearer to hear what the town
A little girl lay on the big four-poster, sobbing great tearless sobs that shook her frail body; her head was almost smothered in one of the white pillows. She was sprawled at full length, and turned nervously from side to side at intervals, so that one minute she faced the heavy panelled door and the next, the ornate dressing table with the painted china toilet articles.

The sobs ceased and tears began to flow in abundance. The little girl's mouth drooped and her lower lip quivered as she attempted to dry her eyes with her already too-moist handkerchief. The tears ceased for a moment and she lay quietly on the bed; then they broke out again and she turned her face into the pillow, regaining for a time that climax of emotion which had been hers before.