

Excerpts

I

. . . Silence stirs the soul! What is more uplifting than the tranquility of a beautiful summer night? One may walk for miles down a country road with a starry dome overhead and be thrilled by the quietness of it all. Not a sound of the rushing, busy city is audible. One is in a world apart. This is the hour for thought. . . . This is the hour which changed the world. On such a night so long ago, shepherds watched, and the Christ was born! — on a silent night.

Silence is an artist sitting at eventide beneath the great, leafy arms of an elm by the side of a peaceful brook. Nothing disturbs him as he sketches the rocks, the meadows, and the ripe, golden grain. Then, as the painter lifts his eyes to the far horizon, he catches a vision of things to come. This silent beauty he embodies in his masterpiece . . . From "Silence" by Robert E. Barnes.

II

. . . Suddenly, in the east, a light gray replaces the deep black of the sky. As suddenly as it came, it departs, and once more all is darkness. The false dawn is a warning that soon all will be bright and sunny in a new day.

Again in the east, the black turns gray and the gray turns to orange. Everything casts a shadow, long and slender. Slowly these shadows become shorter as a great golden ball becomes visible in the east. A thick, heavy mist arises, and the air feels damp and refreshing against the cheek. As the fire dies a dwindling death, its comfortable heat is slowly replaced by that of the golden ball; and the dense vapor, which has clung to the ground so tenaciously, finally gives up and rises skyward . . . From "Sunrise" by Carver McGriff.

III

. . . I reckon he couldn't a-been nothin' else but a preacher. He was always a-takin' some part in the church work. Even after he growed up and was a-workin' at the factory, he was forever goin' around makin' speeches at the young folks' meetin's . . . Then there was his Ma, one of the God-fearin'est women I ever knowed. His Pa was a mighty fine man too, but he died when the kid wasn't much bigger'n ole Bounce; so he didn't have much say-so in the kid's bringin' up. His Ma though, was teacher and example to the whole bunch, as they growed up. He seen what religion means when it's put to work. Why, he was pert-near raised in church. . . From "He Had To Preach" by W. S. McLean.

IV

. . . The average American probably does not realize exactly what his definite ideals are; he does not know because they are no longer ideals. They have been bred into every true American until they are his characteristics. It is doubtful whether any intelligent person would pretend to be able to enumerate and describe these characteristics in detail, for, except for a few, they are gloriously intangible. Every American knows they are in him, but does not know why, or what they are . . . from "The Modern American Character" by Jack Walker.

V

. . . I sincerely believe that no mortal has the intelligence, scope, or comprehensive ability to analyze the American character if, indeed, a nation has a static, observable character that can be scrutinized with any degree of accuracy. . . From "Johnny Doughboy" by Arthur Graham.