

neer of comradeship? Must the sensitivity and the kindness of tact be degenerated into out and out dishonesty in order to preserve one's right to earn a living? Neither business, nor government, nor church, nor private citizen can force the falseness of unnatural conformity without first destroying the integrity of the individual. Imposing conformity as a prerequisite for leadership is unrealistic, unhealthy, and unworkable. We would be wiser if we sought to develop an atmosphere of appreciation for those who are capable of original thinking. They have shown the way in the development of our civilization to its present peak, and their distinguishing characteristic—the uniqueness of their own individuality—is still our most valuable possession. Without it, the widening flow of our culture would dry up in rivulets of bigotry and stagnate in ignorance and intolerance.

The Visit

Norman Wilkins

THERE was a funny odor in the house, like the time I was sick and the doctor had given me that awful tasting stuff. Daddy was no longer in his bed where he had been for so many months, and I couldn't find him anywhere. The door to the hall downstairs was closed, but I could hear people coming and going most of the day. Mama didn't say a thing, and I was kept upstairs until Mom Newton came to take me to her farm.

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The spring on the screen door needed oiling, for it clearly announced when someone came out the back door of the farm house. Quickly I dried my tears and scooped deeper into the black earth surrounding the blooming honeysuckle bush. If I were very still, Mom Newton might not see me, with my eyes red. It wasn't her fault that I felt lonely.

Shuffling steps rounded the corner and stopped in front of my diggings. All I could see was legs and shoes. Her legs were covered with heavy, brown stockings, and her black shoes could scarcely hold her feet. In fact, there were parts of the shoes cut away. The holes showed bumps on the side of her feet which seemed to be forming extra toes. I looked down at my own shoes. They were caked with dirt, but they didn't have the openings in them like Mom Newton's. I would have to clean my shoes before I went home this afternoon. It wouldn't be appreciated if I tracked in dirt at home, but Mom Newton never seemed to mind. At least, she never said anything.

"Why, Charles, I didn't know you were playing in here." I rolled out from under the bush, brushing myself as I came. "Next time I'll give you an old spoon so you won't have to use that old tin can to dig with. You might hurt yourself on a sharp edge." Study-

ing each blade of grass, I walked slowly over to the fence that divided the woods from the yard and flipped the can to the opposite side. "Let's take a look at the baby chicks," she said.

The chicken coop stood like a giant piece of white cake with green mint icing on top, and was surrounded by a lacy frill of chicken wire. It had just been built, and the smell of pine was very strong when we came closer. What a contrast to the old chicken coop that sat at the other end of the barnyard and seemed to lean in all directions at the same time. Only a few of the older chickens lived there; I guess they couldn't get used to the new surroundings.

I didn't care to visit the chicken coop by myself, for there was a mean rooster that delighted in chasing and pecking me everytime I came near. Quickly I closed the gap between myself and Mom Newton; and when she pushed open the wooden gate of the chicken pen, I was smothered in her long, faded print dress. The gate closed behind us, and I stopped to make sure that the rusty iron that was the counter-weight was not tangled—just in case I might have to get away quickly.

Mom Newton had already reached the door to the coop and was turning the piece of wood that held the door shut. As the door opened, a blur of yellow met our eyes. I was so busy watching the chicks scurry away that I hadn't noticed that there were three lying very still in the corner of the coop. Mom Newton reached down and put them in her apron pocket. She continued feeding and watering the rest of the chicks, and when she finished, the coop was locked and we left the barnyard.

Mom Newton didn't say a word all the way to the house. She must have known that I was interested in the chicks, but she didn't say anything. She went into the house alone, and in a few minutes returned, carrying an empty shoe box. She handed me the chicks, and told me to put them into the box. It was the first time that I had ever held anything so still. They were cold and stiff, and one side of their fuzzy bodies was matted and moist. Their eyes were tightly closed or, at least, they seemed to be.

We dug a hole in the earth on the shady side of the house, placed the box inside, and covered the hole. We stood there for a few minutes trying to reach each other with words, but there didn't seem to be anything to say. For the first time I realized the meaning of death.

A sudden honking of an automobile horn coming from the front yard told me that my visit on my grandparent's farm was about over. As I ran to the car, I turned to look back. Mom Newton was carrying the shovel to the shed, and there was a smile on her face.