

RECOLLECTIONS OF MY FATHER

(By C. N. Boyd, Birmingham, Alabama, June, 1935)

In this round of the Bundle I am going to give you some recollections of my father, who died before any of you were born; even before any of your parents were married; and who, of course, none of you ever saw or, as a character, know anything at all about.

James Smith Boyd was the youngest son and the youngest child of Wilson Boyd, your great grandfather, of whom I wrote in a recent round of the Bundle. In offering these recollections of incidents in my father's life I am directly addressing his grandchildren. True, there are great-grandchildren of his in the circle, but none that are old enough to appreciate this narrative save my own grandchildren, and they may not see this until the Bundle makes the trip around the circle.

For convenience and not egotism, I write in the first person. My father was the father of fourteen children. Two died in infancy, twelve lived to be adults, and eight – five boys and three girls – are still living. “Some family,” you will say; and you will be right. They had big families back yonder. Not one, two, three, or maybe none, as is often the case today; but six, eight, ten, twelve, and in this instance, fourteen. One old Kentuckian, contemporary with Father, had eighteen children – seventeen girls and one boy. Incidentally, that boy was, in common parlance, “rotten.” Others of we antiques likely remember old Hezekiah Foster – or maybe spelled Forrester – who lived out in the “Knob Creek Hills” in Graves, our home county in West Kentucky.

Both Father and old Forrester would have been greatly admired by il Duce, or the late Teddy Roosevelt. Teddy was and il Duce is a great admirer of large families. However, I fear that the idea of “cannon fodder” fostered their admiration in each instance. Personally, I don't favor the idea of large families save where the parents possess sufficient wealth to give each child the advantages to which ushering them into an existence of hard knocks entitles them. Since biblical days no rich man ever has a large family, but, through all the ages, until the present generation, every poor man, when married, has fathered large families.

To my mind it seems a blessing that birth control is now more generally understood by the poor as well as the rich. But, I am digressing.

Father was born and grout up on a farm and was a farmer all his life, but he was never a real success as a farmer. Now, in your minds is the thought that a farm is about the only place that he could have had a proverbial “Chinaman's chance” to make barely subsistence for so large a family. In a way this is true; especially true if one has, let us say, the knack of successful farming. But, while Father was brought up as a farmer, his most successful activities were, as we might say, sidelines. But, of this later.

Father married our mother, Martha L. Poplin, daughter of Dr. Green Lee Poplin, when he was 24 years old and she was not yet 16. Yes, girls married younger in those days than now. After his marriage he remained on the old homestead, he being the youngest child and the one that his old father had chosen to live with.

One year after their marriage their first child, William Poplin Boyd, was born. About two years later their second child, Solena Aslee Boyd, was born, and a little less than two years later Fate wished on them Confucius Napoleon Boyd, and they had made an auspicious showing toward the large family that I have already mentioned.

It was now practically the year 1859 (I was born December 21st, 1858), and danger of the Civil War was imminent. About this time, too, our mother “fell heir” to her grandmother’s old homestead in Bedford County in middle Tennessee. Since our mother was “raised” by this grandmother and this was her old home, she, very naturally, had been a great desire to go back and live on the old farm. So, Father sold out and they moved up and took possession, and it was here that, a few months later, on January 6th, 1861, the fourth child, John Wilson Boyd, was born.

Like most Scotch-Irish of his day, Father was a Presbyterian in belief; and, while Mother was more of the Christian faith, they were both members of the Presbyterian Church. Like most Irish Father had a temper that could reach pretty high levels when he was unduly aroused, but, unlike most Irish, he didn’t know how to “cuss”—which is the old-time word meaning swear. “Dad Chame” was his most-used expletive, and only when unusually wrought up did he ever attempt to make it stronger, and, when he did, it was usually a ludicrous and complete failure. For instance, at one time, years later than the time of which I am now writing, I recall that the calf got in the garden—which, let me say, is only one of the many vexing things that a lively, growing calf can do. To find such a calf loose in a growing garden is not conducive to serenity.

This was an unusually hot day in May. The boys were in the field, Mother in the kitchen, Father pottering in the front yard, and – the calf in the garden. Mother, in the kitchen, near the garden, first discovered the calf; but, since he seemed to be engaged in quiet inspection the situation didn’t seem to be very alarming. But, a picture of that garden at the moment and an “after taking” picture a few minutes later would have resembled that of a forest before and after a tornado. Mother called: “Jim, the calf’s in the garden,” and Father decided, of course, that something should be done about it.

When he arrived at the open gate the calf was still engaged in quiet inspection. How, be it understood that a calf is a playful animal and that we boys had indulged many a game of “head the calf” with this one in the orchard which was his realm during the day while his mother was out of the “range.”

Not having been present, I will tell you what happened as our mother, the one eye witness, told it. When Father appeared in the open gate, the calf, within the wink of an eye, changed ends and faced him with head and tail both up and legs stiff and planted fore and aft much after the fashion of an old time “wash bench.” Here, he evidently

thought, was a banter for a game of “head the calf.” And the first move that Father made he whirled and made off at full speed for the far end of the garden, leaving a trail of felled bean sticks, potato tops, cabbage plants, and tomato vines in his wake. Father called Mother to come and stand on the other side of the gate while he would go down and drive the calf back and through the gate.

He went down, rather leisurely, with the idea of gently shooing the calf toward the gate. The calf evidently has inclined to play the game square, for he stood perfectly still and expectant until Father was within ten feet of him, when he made another wild dash over another route through the growing vegetables, past the open gate, past Mother, and on to the opposite end of the garden. Since the calf would not recognize the existence of an open gate, Father decided to give chase with the idea of getting close enough to seize his tail, then his left ear, and forcibly drag him through the gate. Co the performance settle into an actual physical race round and round the garden until Father was completely exhausted; and when the boys came in a few minutes later they found a very disheveled garden, with the calf still in it, and an equally disheveled and freely perspiring Irishman sitting on a stump in the back yard, vigorously fanning with his wide-brimmed straw. “Boys,” said he, “see if you can get that fool d- -n calf out of the garden!” If I remember right, the boys had no trouble whatever in tolling the calf through the open gate.

But, back to Tennessee! After spending a year, or thereabout, in Tennessee, Father, for some reason, sold out and went to Arkansas, where he only camped, as you might say, until he again moved; this time, back to his native Kentucky; and here, in February, as I remember, James Franklin Boyd [born February 2nd, 1863 – ed.], the fifth child was born.

Father was now back in Kentucky with no farm, but with a fast growing family and three slaves in addition, which he had unwisely accumulated in Tennessee. He rented a small farm on which to work his negroes while he personally operated a carding mill. You ask what I mean by a carding mill? Well, you must understand that during the Civil War, or the Ware between the States, or the Rebellion (choose your own name for it), which was now raging, the Southern ladies, save the wealthiest, had to card wool, or cotton, with a pair of hand cards, into rolls, spin these rolls with an old fashioned spinning wheel into warp and filling, with which, on an old time tread loom, they would weave the cloth from which they would cut and make the clothing for the whole family as well as the slaves. During the War, and many times after it was over, I have heard my mother sing a song that, if I remember right, was called “The Bonnie Blue Flag,” in which the refrain ran something like the following:

“Hurrah! Hurrah! For the Sunny South so fair;
Three cheers! three cheers! for the homespun dress
We Southern ladies wear.”

Now, carding the rolls was, by far, the most tedious of these operations in this home building of cloth, and here is where the carding mill functioned nicely. This was a wool machine that Father operated, and it turned out rolls about twice the length that could be

made by hand, and so many people thought it was economy to bring their washed fleeces to the machine and have them carding, giving a certain percentage of the wool as toll.

Father didn't have a Diesel engine to furnish power to operate this machine. Power for such machines, as well as wheat threshing machines and the like, was obtained through the use of mules hitched to the end of from one to four heavy wooden beams, pointing to and connecting with a central and circular cog wheel which worked over and within a small cog wheel on the end of an iron tumbling rod that connected with the machinery at the other end. During the War, however, such wheat was not threshed at all but was hulled and separated from the chaff by the more primitive method of laying the wheat bundles heads-in on a hard-surfaced circular floor about forty feet in diameter, cutting the binds, and riding about four horsed tandem over it for about thirty minutes until the wheat was treaded out from the chaff, after which the straw was raked off, a large wagon cover spread, and while one negro poured the mixture of chaff and the wheat from an elevation of about ten feet, two more husky negroes with a large sheet would fan the chaff away and the clean wheat would fall on the wagon cover below. I've seen Father get his wheat out this way during the War in the sixties.

For driving his carding mill, however, Father used a treadwheel, and the power that drove the treadwheel, which was built on an incline, was old Buck, and old ox, blind in his left eye, chosen purposely because of his defect. When he would tread the wheel slowly, the carding machine would run correspondingly, and a faster tread would turn out rolls much faster; so the amount of work to be done during the day governed the speed required of old Buck. When Father had a lot of work to get out in a hurry he would often, during the day, request old Buck to "giddap", and as he got so he did not readily respond, would touch him up now and then with a whip. Being blind in his left eye, which was the side next to where Father fed the carding machine, Buck couldn't tell whether "giddap" carried with it a whip sentence or not; so he would respond to quite awhile before the whip was again necessary. This was Father's first sideline to farming, and he made more with it than the negroes made on the farm.

After about a year of this, Father moved to another neighborhood to a larger farm for the negroes to work, while he decided to burn a brick kiln. Few, if any, of you youngsters know what burning a brick kiln means. First, find suitable clay to make good bricks. This was on the farm he had taken purposely. Then find a level place about a hundred yards square, clean it off down to firm earth for a floor on which to dry your bricks, build a clay mill, get a couple of dozen brick moulds that carry about four bricks each, hire a man that knows all about making and burning bricks, put him at the clay mill to mould the bricks, hire three brisk young men, or, still better, three strong negroes, to bear the wet bricks from the clay mill to the drying yard, hitch a mule to the sweep of the clay mill, put a negro to feed clay and water to the clay mill – and you are all set. For a kiln of say two hundred thousand bricks with the outfit mentioned above, it would require, as I remember, about six weeks to make and sun-dry the bricks and build them into a kiln ready for the burning. Then about two weeks to burn and cool the kiln and you are ready to pitch bricks at everybody. This was his second try at a sideline, and again he made considerably more than the negroes made with the farm.

Father was a man of unusual energy. I do not believe that more energy was ever housed in 138 pounds of anatomy. He had no education save a smattering of the 3 R's, but he had been well educated, he would have gone far in this world of astonishing achievements. Realizing the need of education keenly, as he did, he made many sacrifices to give each of his large family of children a common school education. I do not believe there was ever a father that loved his family better than did James Smith Boyd. He seemed to have no thought but for their welfare and happiness. He was kind to animals and to the few slaves that he owned. They ate at the same table that we ate – not at the same table, of course, but the same kind of food. But I have often wondered what were his innermost thoughts concerning the negro. He knew, of course, that they were human; but, like many of the slave owners of his day, he believed that their place in the cosmos was slavery and based his idea on his conception of the scriptural authority – a conception not shared by his second son and third child.

When I consider his belief in the negro's inferiority I feel sure that his old Scotch-Irish Presbyterianism was sorely tried at times to determine the status of the negro in Heaven. Study him yourselves while I relate one incident and see what you think. While he was brickmaking, the youngest of his slaves, a girl of around fifteen years (Kitty was her name, but we all called her Nelse) was one day feeding the clay mill and was singing a song sacred in its working; one that none of you ever heard – in fact, it may have been thrown together by Nelse herself – but it ran something like the following:

I have a mother in the kingdom,
I have a mother in the kingdom,
I have a mother in the kingdom,
Set'n on a seat with Jesus,
High up in Heaven,
Set'n on a set with Jesus.

The next verse was a repetition of “Won't I be glad when He calls me to set on a seat with Jesus,” followed by the refrain: “High up in Heaven, etc., etc.”

Father happened to walk that way. He stopped just beyond her and, for a few minutes looked at her speculatively, yet very tolerantly. Then, catching the eye of Porter Brown, the moulder, he twinkled as he spoke to Kitty and said, spacing his words in his Scotch-Irish way: “Now—you—would—be—a d—d purty nigger, wouldn't you? Set'n up on a seat with Jesus.”

While at this place in 1865, about February 9th, I think, Robert E. Lee Boyd, the sixth child, was born. This is now too long for the Bundle* and must be somewhat longer still; so I will skip the years from now until 1870, during which time Elexie Blanche Boyd was

* The “Boyd Bundle,” and sometimes called “the Circle,” was a bundle of letters that made a predetermined route from person to person among the descendants of J. S. Boyd. At each stop, the recipient would remove their last letter and replace it with a new one. It usually took 3 to 4 weeks to make the rounds and was typically mailed out a day or two after it was received. It was started by William P. Boyd, the eldest child, around 1890 and continued into the 1950's. – ed.

born in 1867, in June if I remember right, and in 1869 Sarah Adeline Boyd, the eighth child, was born tarried with us a few days only, and passed into the realm prepared by Omnipotence for infants less than a month old. These births every two years continued until finally “Babe,” as we all call her, Esther to you, and Mrs. G. L. Thompson to all of us, completed the family stairway of fourteen steps.

Father loved to sing. He had a good voice – that is to say, a strong voice – and his idea of good singing was to sing loud. Always his singing was confined to sacred hymns. I do not remember that I ever heard my father sing a sentimental or love song. I think his idea was that is was that you of today would call “sissy” to do so. But we knew that he liked to hear us sing them, especially the Irish type, such as:

I'm thinking of Erin tonight,
And a little lone cot by the sea;
Where Jennie, my darling, now swells,
The fairest and dearest to me.

I know that she's waiting me day after day,
And my heart ever longs to be there,
To swell with my darling, my own,
Sweet Jennie, the flower of Kildare.

As I said, Father sang sacred songs and his favorites were those written in minor keys. One of his favorites – I cannot recall the name of it now – was written in minor and I do remember some of the words as follows:

Do not I love Thee, Oh, my Lord?
Behold my heart and see,
And turn each cursed idol out
That dares to rival Thee.

Do not I love thee from my soul?
Then let me nothing love.
Dead be my heart to every joy
That Jesus does not move.

I wish I could write music, so I could give you the tune, or air, for the above two songs as well as the little nigger's song that wanted to “set on a seat with Jesus.” I believe you would like them. They are all in minor, and, whether one is a Christian or not, or whether the words mean anything to you, if you hear them rendered with felling, as I have, they have a “tugging” effect.

Father was an early riser. Many times I have known him to be up and have breakfast over before daylight. And often on such occasions I have known him to sing one, or more, of his favorite minor-key hymns. It is well that such a man lived in the country.

Imagine the effect of such a performance in a city block at four or five o'clock in the morning!

We now find Father operating a saw and grist mill for which he has traded his last owned farm which was situated in Graves County near the Hickman County line. The mill, however, as I remember, was just over the line in Hickman County. Father was now divorced from the farm for the first time in his life. But, this was not to be for long. Operating machinery yielded him more profit than farming; so he did very well here for about a year, when the timber in this section was exhausted and he moved his mill to another location about 50 miles away near the line between Marshall and Calloway Counties. Here he did very well since, having no farm, his energy was devoted entirely to operating his mills.

A very successful source of income in connection with operating a grist mill is hog raising. Alcy Parrott, a sort of glorified hobo, who blew in one day and was hired as a "mill hand." Remarked to Father one day that "around a grist mill is a d—d good place to raise hogs," which was a true statement, though one of his qualifying adjectives was, maybe, unnecessary. So, Father during the spring and summer months would buy up a number of the best shotes he could find, and feed and develop them until January or February, when they would be fat and ready for slaughter, at which time they would weigh, when dressed, from 200 to 250 pounds.

In connection with his first hog-killing after moving to "Heathen Corner," as Mother called their present neighborhood, I will tell you what we considered a bit of a joke on Father. Now, please be informed that the winters in those days were much more severe than at the present time. Often, at that time, during the winter months in Kentucky the thermometer would drop to ten, or more, below, and it would remain cold for weeks at a time. When hog-killing day would arrive Father would shut the mill down for the day and kill hogs with the mill hands. Now it happened that in this instance when the day arrived it was bitterly cold. So the rough-neck boys told Father that they must have some "likker," as they called it, to help them stand the weather. This seemed reasonable to Father; so he sent out and got a jug of the "oh be joyful" and installed it in the mill house where he would take them about every hour and give 'em a nip. Though it was fearfully cold, they, with the help of regular visits to the mill house, got along reasonably well. About four o'clock in the afternoon they had all the hogs dressed and on the pole save one. Father had to go home for something; so he left them to kill and dress the remaining porker against the time that he would return. For some reason he was detained. "When the cat's away the mice will play." They killed the hog, all right, and got him into the scalding barrel, when the "little brown jug" beckoned too strong; and when Father finally did return all bundled up and shivering, he found the hog frozen tight in the scalding barrel and the rough necks all in the mill house as "drunk as lords." Now, "believe it or not," it was six solid weeks before Father could cut up and salt away those frozen hogs. He just piled them in the "smoke house" like seventeen logs, and there they stayed until the weather moderated.

Father was now yearning for the farm again. Since the timber was now about exhausted in this second location and the volume of the grist patronage was alone not sufficient income, he traded his mill to a man with a body of timber, for a farm within three miles of Mayfield, the county seat of Graves, our home county. Here for four years he had about the same humdrum experience with farming, interspersed with operating wheat threshers and livestock ventures.

Dr. Green L. Poplin, our mother's father, was at this time, and had been for several years, in Poplar Bluff, Missouri, engaged in the drug business as well as editing and publishing a newspaper, The Black River News. Lately, he had also begun the manufacture of a line of preparations known as Poplin's Family Medicines. Believing that Mayfield would be a better outlet for this last venture than Poplar Bluff, he wrote Father suggesting that he become interested with him in establishing "a pretty heavy business" in Mayfield. Father's experience in milling had convinced him that his super energy could be better employed than in farming; so he took rather favorably to the idea. Our mother had not been associated with, or even seen, her father since about the fourth year after her marriage; so she was even more favorable. So, after, the necessary correspondence, understandings, and agreements, Father moved over to Mayfield. Doctor Poplin also sold out at Poplar Bluff, came to Mayfield, and in a few weeks they had organized and begun to operate the Poplin Medicine Company. If I remember correctly, this was the year 1878. Up to this time, since the birth and death of the infant Sarah, there had been born, two years apart, Hugh Beadled Boyd, Benjamin Green Boyd, and Wiley Smith Boyd; and about one month after moving over to Mayfield, Josh Billings Boyd was born. There were now eleven living children, ranging in age from 22 years down to the infant Josh. So, instead of moving into the town proper, Father took a nicely improved farm of forty acres nearly a mile from the court house, that there might be employment for five boys 12 years old and over, as well as a negro boy of about the same age, child of one of the former slaves, that he had taken, at her death, to raise.

Here, I again ask you to study this man. I have already told you that he believed that God created the negro as a slave for the white man, and this was evidenced by the fact that, before their emancipation, he owned slaves. I have further shown you that while he recognized them as human and, therefore, their likelihood of eternal existence, his mind, it appeared was not clear as to whether their earthly inferiority would still be recognized in a future life. Yet, this same man, who now had a dozen mouths to feed, could find it in his heart to take a little orphan negro, a child of one of his former slaves, as an added responsibility.

The Poplin Medicine Company, because of limited capital, chose to market their products by establishing agencies over the country, supplying them with a sufficient stock of their wares, and visiting them quarterly, collecting for the sales they had made and re-supplying them. According to their agreement, Dr. Poplin had sole charge of the laboratories and production, while Father directed the sales and establishing agencies. This was accomplished through travelling men whose means of transportation was carriages, drawn by one, or a span, of horses. There were no automobiles in those days. With ambition for national distribution they possessed to adapt the jobber and retailer

plan and accomplish national distribution. So, with all the energy that they possessed, they pressed the business along these lines for several years and were enabled to live, not princely but well, and to keep their children in school.

Now, a “good living” for a family the size of Father’s was easier spoken of than supplied, for we were all “heartly” eaters. This propensity on our part to “eat well” was, in the main, the result of good health, with which we were all blessed; yet, it could be truthfully be said to be inherited from Father, who was not a Gourmand but was a great eater. One toothsome delicacy that he greatly loved was apple dumplings. And who doesn’t? Now it took a lot of different provenders for each meal for our family and quite a lot of each kind. For instance, when Mother served apple dumplings she served never less than three dozen; so the family had all that they wanted and father “had his fill.”

Because of his fondness for this best of epicurean delights we children joked and teased him no little. Some one of us had, from some newspaper, or maybe an almanac, picked up an apple-dumpling joke which ran something like the following;

Apple dumplings, from the pot,
Just a dozen, steaming hot,
And the old man, convalescent, says the grace.
Then he takes them, one by one,
Eats eleven, while his son
Sees them disappear with horror on his face.

And the old man takes the last,
Speaks his little son, aghast;
“Pa, I haven’t had one dumpling, nor has Ma!”
“What,” the old man cried, amazed,
As he dropped his fork and gazed;
“Would you take the last one from your poor sick Pa?”

We built a little tune to it and would sing the above lines to him on apple-dumpling days. While he knew that we knew that he could never do such a thing, he could not hide the fact that it teased him.

Not that we had moved to town where there were churches of all denominations, Mother joined the Christian Church and, maybe a year later, Father joined, and they remained members of the Christian Church while they lived.

After one year on the rented farm Father bought an improved twenty acres a half mile further south on the highway and took possession at once. A little later, he bought fifty acres of fertile land a half mile to the east of this in Mayfield Creek Bottom; and, while he looked after his interest in the medicine business, his boys tilled this land. This arrangement continued for two or three years, and finally Father caught the saw-mill fever again. So he bought a pony saw mill and a thresher engine for power, and began in a small way to cut some of his bottom land timber into lumber for the local trade.

After a few months operating this baby mill he found the demand for its products greater than he could supply. So he bought a new and larger mill out of Zanesville, Ohio, and soon had a good trade supplying the town with lumber, especially heavy framework. He supplied all the framing timbers for the Court House that stands in Mayfield to this day. He also supplied the framing timbers for West Kentucky College, as well as a number of other public and semi-public buildings that, no doubt, stand in Mayfield at the present. This last saw-mill venture of his developed into a very substantial business within itself – another sideline venture that proved to be more profitable than farming.

At a number of periods during this narrative I have been tempted to enlarge into greater detail; but to be used as a Bundle contribution, this has been inadvisable. It is too long for such purpose now. Unrestrained, I could write enough about this dearest of fathers to fill a book.

Since Josh's birthday there were two children born to our parents – one a boy, Walter, who lived less than a month, as I am told. I was away in Arkansas and Missouri, for two years, and he was born and died while I was away. After my return, Esther, the last child was born. Here, I feel a bit embarrassed, for I am unable to give you the year or month in which either of these births occurred. Esther, I feel sure, was born in 1882, though it might have been in 1881. Again, I feel sure that she was born June 20th, our Mother's birthday. I am a bit hazy just here and I trust that Esther will give us the facts in her letter.

Owing to a complication of diseases Father's health was now failing and steadily grew worse until, in less than a year, he was, or should have been, a bed-ridden invalid. But his unusual energy made it impossible to keep him on the bed. We boys who were at home operated his mill and farm, as well as his interest in the medicine business. Some years before, brother Will, the eldest child, had engaged in the drug business in the new town of Wickliffe, Kentucky, across the Ohio River from Cairo, Illinois, and, after a year or two had sold out and was now in Texas. We operated the mill and his other interests very successfully, and the memory that during the two years or more of confinement to his room and bed he was invariably cheerful is very comforting to me.

It is now near the end of the year 1887 and much had happened during the year. The factory and laboratories burned, with all the equipment, formulae, and everything and, with little or no insurance, and the Poplin Medicine Company were out of business for awhile, but managed to rent temporary quarters and after a time were able to resume business again; but Dr. Poplin continued to neglect replacing the formulae. In January of 1888, Dr. Poplin had contracted a severe cold, and while treating this cold had a call to visit a patient, a very dear friend, and exposed himself by making this call in very severe weather, developed pneumonia and died. Nine days later, while Father was sitting in his big rocker before the fire talking to a neighbor, the Grim Reaper called and he, too, passed away.

His death was without a struggle or pain. His last words were: "Jesus is my Captain; he is with me in the dark water." One or two more slight gasps, and a most unselfish, devoted, loving father had gone (as I have often heard him quote) "to that bourne from whence no traveller had ever yet returned."

A more thoroughly unselfish man I do not believe ever existing at any time; nor was there ever a man, as I believe, who had greater love for his family, or would make a greater sacrifice to secure their welfare. He was a Christian, but not of the long-faced, solemn kind. He was very human, and, for this I love his memory all the more.

Where he is now I have no means of knowing. He passed, and his character is vividly stamped in my memory. I am in my 77th year, and, of course, liable to pass on at any time. Wherever he is, whatever may be his rewards, or penalties, I am more than willing, and would be thankful if permitted, to share.

----- Connie

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Note to Members of the Circle: -- Because Aunt Esther's comments to this installment of Uncle Connie's memoirs supply some extra dates and give additional information on some of the incidents, I append the following excerpts from her Bundle letter written from Dresden, Tennessee, on June 21, 1935 -- W. P. B. [*William Poplin Boyd* – ed.]

"Yesterday was Lexie's birthday and among her birthday pleasures was the arrival of the Bundle. You see, Con, it was Lex who had the sweet privilege of being born on our little Mother's birthday.... We have enjoyed the entire package, and especially Con's contribution. There were lots of things told about Father that I myself didn't know. Our mother was 15 years old in June before she married the 15th day of October. She was born in 1839.

"As I run my eyes along the pages of the letter, I find Nelse's song and remember the tune quite well, having heard Mother sing it quite often. Then I find reference to my birthday which is a little incorrect. I was the thirteenth child, having been born August 16, 1879. Little Walter, who was born July 28, 1883, completed the fourteenth step of the family stairway. Further down the page I find, "I'm Thinking of Erin Tonight." I sang that as I read it yesterday. Lee and his family – except George Wilson, who is in West Virginia – spent the day with us yesterday and we all read the package together. I did not know the tune to the sacred song, but Lee sang it for us. Our Grandfather Poplin practiced medicine, also, at Poplar Bluff, Missouri, which town he named.

"One other thing, Con, that is a slight error, so the others say, and I think I remember to have heard Mother say. She was never a member of the Presbyterian Church. She tried to join them with Father, but when they refused to immerse her she would not join them and was never a church member until she joined the Christian Church. Grandfather Poplin was a Baptist until he joined the Christian Church."

Love, ESTHER.